The Tale of Genji

The countless admirers of Lady Murasaki's delightful novels will welcome this reprint of the omnibus Genji, which includes the six books of the Genji saga—*The Tale of Genji, The Sacred Tree, The Wreath of Cloud, Blue Trousers, The Lady of the Boat,* and *The Bridge of Dreams*

This Japanese classic is undoubtedly one of the world's great books, and the *Daily Telegraph* has said that "knowledge of this book adds the same pleasure to life as knowledge of the works of Shakespeare or Proust"

Lady Murasaki must be one of the earliest women novelists of the world, she was born about A D 998 and kept a diary, which still exists, of the years 1007-1010 *The Tale of Genji* was read aloud to the Emperor of Japan in 1008, and Lady Murasaki remained at his court till 1025, or later

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INTRODUCTION

MURASAKI SHIKIBU was born about A D 978 Her father, Tametoki, belonged to a minor branch of the powerful Fujiwara clan After holding various appointments in the Capital he became Governor first of Echizen (probably in 1004), then of a more northerly province, Echigo In 1016 he retired and took his vows as a Buddhist priest

Of her childhood Murasaki tells us the following anecdote [1] 'When my brother Nobunori [2] (the one who is now in the Board of Rites) was a boy my father was very anxious to make a good Chinese scholar of him, and often came himself to hear Nobunori read his lessons On these occasions I was always present, and so quick was I at picking up the language that I was soon able to prompt my brother whenever he got stuck. At this my father used to sigh and say to me "If only you were a boy how proud and happy I should be" But it was not long before I repented of having thus distinguished myself, for person after person assured me that even boys generally become very unpopular if it is discovered that they are fond of their books For a girl, of course, it would be even worse, and after this I was careful to conceal the fact that I could write a single Chinese character This meant that I got very little practice, with the result that to this day I am shockingly clumsy with my brush')

Between 994 and 998 Murasaki married her kinsman Fujiwara no Nobutaka, a lieutenant in the Imperial Guard By him she had two daughters, one of whom married the Lord Lieutenant of Tsukushi and is reputed (very doubtfully) to be the authoress of an uninteresting novel, the *Tale of Sagoromo* Nobutaka died in 1001, and it was probably three years later that Murasaki's father was promised the governorship of Echizen Owing to the machinations of an enemy the appointment was, at the last minute, almost given to someone else Tametoki appealed to his kinsman the Prime Minister Fujiwara no Michinaga, and was eventually nominated for the post

Murasaki was now about twenty-six To have taken her to Echizen would have ended all hope of a respectable second marriage Instead Tametoki arranged that she should enter the service of Michinaga's daughter, the very serious-minded Empress Akiko, then a girl of about sixteen Part of Murasaki's time was henceforth spent at the Emperor's Palace But, as was customary, Akiko frequently returned for considerable periods to her father's house Of her young mistress Murasaki writes as follows [3] 'The Empress, as is well known to those about her, is strongly

[1] *Diary*, Hakubunkwan text, p 51
[2] Died young, perhaps about 1012, while serving on his father's staff in Echigo.
[3] *Diary*, p 51

opposed to anything savouring of flirtation, indeed, when there are men about, it is as well for anyone who wants to keep on good terms with her not to show herself outside her own room I can well imagine that some of our senior ladies, with their air of almost ecclesiastical severity, must make a rather forbidding impression upon the world at large In dress and matters of that kind we certainly cut a wretched figure, for it is well known that to show the slightest sign of caring for such things ranks with our mistress as an unpardonable fault (But I can see no reason why, even in a society where young girls are expected to keep their heads and behave sensibly, appearances should be neglected to the point of comicality, and I cannot help thinking that Her Majesty's outlook is far too narrow and uncompromising) But it is easy enough to see how this state of affairs arose Her Majesty's mind was, at the time when she first came to Court, so entirely innocent and her own conduct so completely impeccable that, quite apart from the extreme reserve which is natural to her, she could never herself conceivably have occasion to make even the most trifling confession (Consequently, whenever she heard one of us admit to some slight shortcoming, whether of conduct or character, she henceforward regarded this person as a monster of iniquity)

True, at that period certain incidents occurred which proved that some of her attendants were, to say the least of it, not very well suited to occupy so responsible a position But she would never have discovered this had not the offenders been incautious enough actually to boast in her hearing about their trivial irregularities Being young and inexperienced she had no notion that such things were of everyday occurrence, brooded incessantly upon the wickedness of those about her, and finally consorted only with persons so staid that they could be relied upon not to cause her a moment's anxiety

'Thus she has gathered round her a number of very worthy young ladies They have the merit of sharing all her opinions, but seem in some curious way like children who have never grown up

As the years go by Her Majesty is beginning to acquire more experience of life, and no longer judges others by the same rigid standards as before, but meanwhile her Court has gained a reputation for extreme dulness, and is shunned by all who can manage to avoid it

Her Majesty does indeed still constantly warn us that it is a great mistake to go too far, "for a single slip may bring very unpleasant consequences," and so on, in the old style, but she now also begs us not to reject advances in such a way as to hurt people s feelings Unfortunately, habits of long standing are not so easily changed, moreover, now that the Empress s exceedingly stylish brothers bring so many of their young courtier-friends to amuse themselves at her house, we have in self-defence been obliged to become more virtuous than ever'

There is a type of disappointed undergraduate, who believes that all

his social and academic failures are due to his being, let us say, at Magdalene instead of at St John's Murasaki, in like manner, had persuaded herself that all would have been well if her father had placed her in the highly cultivated and easy-mannered entourage of the Emperor's aunt, Princess Senshi [1] 'Princess Senshi and her ladies,' Murasaki writes, 'are always going off to see the sunset or the fading of the moon at dawn, or pursuing some truant nightingale amid the flowering trees The Princess herself is a woman of marked character, who is determined to follow her own tastes, and would contrive to lead at Court a life as detached as her present existence at the Kamo Shrine How different from this place, with its perpetual "The Empress has been summoned into the Presence and commands you to attend her," or "Prepare to receive His Excellency the Prime Minister, who may arrive at any moment" Princess Senshi's apartments are not subject to the sudden alarms and incursions from which we suffer There one could apply oneself in earnest to anything one cared for and was good at, there, occupied perhaps in making something really beautiful, one would have no time for those indiscreet conversations which at our own Court are the cause of so much trouble There I should be allowed to live buried in my own thoughts like a tree-stump in the earth, at the same time, they would not expect me to hide from every man with whom I was not already acquainted, and even if I addressed a few remarks to such a person, I should not be thought lost to all sense of shame Indeed, I can imagine myself under such circumstances becoming, after a certain amount of practice, quite lively and amusing!'

While pining for the elegance and freedom of Princess Senshi's Court, Murasaki was employed by her earnest young mistress for a purpose that the world would have considered far more improper than the philandering of which Akiko so sternly disapproved The Empress had a secret desire to learn Chinese The study of this language was considered at the time far too rough and strenuous an occupation for women There were no grammars or dictionaries, and each horny sentence had to be grappled and mastered like an untamed steer That Akiko should wish to learn Chinese must have been as shocking to Michinaga as it would have been to Gladstone if one of his daughters had wanted to learn boxing Murasaki had, as we have seen, picked up something of the language by overhearing her brother's lessons She did everything in her power to conceal this knowledge, even pretending (as she tells us in the *Diary*) that she could not read the Chinese characters on her mistress's screen, but somehow or other it leaked out Since the summer before last, very secretly, in odd moments when there happened to be no one about, I have been reading with Her Majesty the two books of 'Songs" [2] There has of course been

[1] 963–1035 Vestal at Kamo during five successive reigns One of the most important figures of her day, known to history as the Great Vestal

[2] The third and fourth body of Po Chü-i's poetical works, including *Magic*, *The Old Man with the Broken Arm*, *The Prisoner*, *The Two Red Towers*, and *The Dragon of the Pool* all of which are translated in my '170 Chinese Poems.'

no question of formal lessons, Her Majesty has merely picked up a little here and there, as she felt inclined All the same, I have thought it best to say nothing about the matter to anybody.

We gather, however, that what in the long run made Akiko's Court distasteful to Murasaki was not the seriousness of the women so much as the coarseness and stupidity of the men Michinaga, Akiko's father, was now forty-two He had already been Prime Minister for some fourteen years, and had carried the fortunes of the Fujiwara family to their apogee It is evident that he made love to Murasaki, though possibly in a more or less bantering way In 1008 she writes 'From my room beside the entrance to the gallery I can see into the garden The dew still lies heavy and a faint mist rises from it His Excellency [1] is walking in the garden Now he has summoned one of his attendants and is giving directions to him about having the moat cleared In front of the orange trees there is a bed of lady-flowers (*ominabeshi*) in full bloom He plucks a spray and returning to the house hands it to me over the top of my screen He looks very magnificent I remember that I have not yet powdered my face and feel terribly embarrassed "Come now," he cries, "be quick with your poem, or I shall lose my temper" This at any rate gives me a chance to retire from his scrutiny, I go over to the writing-box and produce the following 'If these beyond other flowers are fair, 'tis but because the dew hath picked them out and by its power made them sweeter than the rest' "That's right," he said, taking the poem "It did not take you long in the end" And sending for his own ink-stone he wrote the answer "Dew favours not, it is the flower's thoughts that flush its cheeks and make it fairer than the rest'

The next reference to Michinaga's relations with Murasaki is as follows 'His Excellency the Prime Minister caught sight of *The Tale of Genji* in Her Majesty's room, and after making the usual senseless jokes about it, he handed me the following poem, written on a strip of paper against which a spray of plum-blossom had been pressed "How comes it that, sour as the plum-tree's fruit, you have contrived to blossom forth in tale so amorous?" To this I answered "Who has told you that the fruit belies the flower? For the fruit you have not tasted, and the flower you know but by report" [2]

'One night when I was sleeping in a room which opens onto the corridor, I heard someone tapping So frightened was I that for the whole of the rest of the night I lay dead still on my bed, scarcely daring to breathe Next morning came the following poem from His Excellency "More patient than the water-rail that taps upon the tree-root all night long, in vain I loitered on the threshold of your inhospitable room" To this I

[1] Michinaga.

[2] 'You have neither read my book nor won my love' Both poems contain a number of double meanings which it would be tedious to unravel

answered. "So great was your persistence that for a water-rail I did indeed mistake you, and lucky am I to have made this merciful mistake"'[1]

Again, in 1010 'Today His Excellency had an audience with the Emperor, when it was over they came out of the Audience Chamber together, and banqueted As usual, His Excellency became very drunk and, fearing trouble, I tried to keep out of his way But he noticed my absence and sent for me, crying out ' Here's your mistress's papa taking dinner with the Emperor, it is not everyone who gets the chance of being present on an occasion like this You ought to be uncommonly grateful Instead of which your one idea seems to be how to escape at the earliest possible moment I can't make you out at all!"

'He went on scolding me for some time, and then said "Well, now you are here, you must make a poem It is one of the days when the parent's[2] poem is always made by a substitute You will do as well as anybody, so be quick about it" I was afraid at first that if I showed myself he would behave in such a way as to make me feel very uncomfortable But it turned out that he was not so extraordinarily drunk after all, indeed, he was in a very charming mood and, in the light of the great lamp, looked particularly handsome '

It has often been observed that whereas in her commonplace book (the *Makura no Soshi*) Sei Shonagon[3] scarcely so much as mentions the existence of the other ladies-in-waiting, Murasaki refers constantly to her companions, and to one of them at least she was evidently very strongly attached Her great friend was Lady Saisho 'On my way back from the Empress's rooms I peeped in at Saisho's door I had forgotten that she had been on duty at night and would now be having her morning sleep She had thrown over her couch various dresses with bright-coloured linings, and on top of them had spread a covering of beaten silk, lustrous and heavily scented with perfume Her face was hidden under the clothes, but as she lay there, her head resting on a box-shaped writing-case, she looked so pretty that I could not help thinking of the little princesses in picture-books I raised the clothes from her face and said to her "You are like a girl in a story" She turned her head and said sharply "You lunatic! Could you not see I was asleep? You are too inconsiderate" While she was saying this she half raised herself from her couch and looked up at me Her face was flushed I have never seen her so handsome So it often is, even those whom we at all times admire will, upon some occasion, suddenly seem to us ten times more lovely than ever before'

Saisho is her constant companion and her fellow victim during the drunken festivities which they both detested The following is from a description of an entertainment given on the fiftieth day after the birth of

[1] *Kui-na* means 'water-rail' and 'regret not.'

[2] The parent of the Empress.

[3] Lady-in-waiting to the Empress Sadako, Akiko's predecessor

the Empress Akiko's first child 'The old Minister of the Right, Lord Akimitsu, came staggering along and banged into the screen behind which we sat, making a hole in it What really struck us was that he is getting far too old [1] for this kind of thing But I am sure he did not at all know that this was the impression he was making Next followed matching of fans, and noisy jokes, many of which were in very bad taste.

'Presently the General of the Right came and stood near the pillar on our left He was looking at us and seemed to be examining our dresses, but with a very different expression from the rest He cannot bear these drunken revels If only there were more like him! And I say this despite the fact that his conversation is often very indecent, for he manages to give a lively and amusing turn to whatever he says I noticed that when the great tankard came his way he did not drink out of it, but passed it on, merely saying the usual words of good omen At this Lord Kinto [2] shouted "The General is on his best behaviour I expect little Murasaki is somewhere not far off!" "You're none of you in the least like Genji," I thought to myself, "so what should Murasaki be doing here?" Then the Vice-Councillor began pulling about poor Lady Hyobu, and the Prime Minister made comic noises which I found very disagreeable It was still quite early, and knowing well what would be the latter stages of an entertainment which had begun in this way, I waited till things seemed to have come to a momentary pause and then plotted with Lady Saisho to slip away and hide Presently however the Prime Minister's sons and other young Courtiers burst into the room, a fresh hubbub began, and when they heard that two ladies were in hiding they tracked us down and flung back the screen behind which we had ensconced ourselves We were now prisoners'

The *Diary* contains a series of notes chiefly upon the appearance but also in a few cases upon the character of other ladies at Court Her remarks on Lady Izumi Shikibu, one of the greatest poets whom Japan has produced, are of interest 'Izumi Shikibu is an amusing letter-writer, but there is something not very satisfactory about her She has a gift for dashing off informal compositions in a careless running-hand, but in poetry she needs either an interesting subject or some classic model to imitate Indeed it does not seem to me that in herself she is really a poet at all

'However, in the impromptus which she recites there is always something beautiful or striking But I doubt if she is capable of saying anything interesting about other people's verses She is not intelligent enough It is odd, to hear her talk you would certainly think that she had a touch of the poet in her Yet she does not seem to produce anything that one can call serious poetry

[1] He was now sixty-four

[2] Fujiwara no Kinto (966–1041), famous poet, cousin of Michinaga.

Here, too, is the note on Sei Shonagon,[1] author of the famous *Makura no Soshi* 'Sei Shonagon's most marked characteristic is her extraordinary self-satisfaction (But examine the pretentious compositions in Chinese script which she scatters so liberally over the Court, and you will find them to be a mere patchwork of blunders (Her chief pleasure consists in shocking people, and as each new eccentricity becomes only too painfully familiar, she gets driven on to more and more outrageous methods of attracting notice She was once a person of great taste and refinement, but now she can no longer restrain herself from indulging, even under the most inappropriate circumstances, in any outburst that the fancy of the moment suggests) She will soon have forfeited all claim to be regarded as a serious character, and what will become of her [2] when she is too old for her present duties I really cannot imagine'

It was not likely that Murasaki, who passed such biting judgments on her companions, would herself escape criticism In her diary she tells us the following anecdote 'There is a certain lady here called Sayemon no Naishi who has evidently taken a great dislike to me, though I have only just become aware of it It seems that behind my back she is always saying the most unpleasant things One day when someone had been reading *The Tale of Genji* out loud to the Emperor, His Majesty said "This lady has certainly been reading the Annals of Japan She must be terribly learned" Upon the strength of this casual remark Naishi spread a report all over the Court that I prided myself on my enormous learning, and henceforth I was known as "Dame Annals" wherever I went'

The most interesting parts of the *Diary* are those in which Murasaki describes her own feelings The following passage refers to the winter of A.D 1008 'I love to see the snow here,[3] and was hoping from day to day that it would begin before Her Majesty went back to Court, when I was suddenly obliged to go home [4] Two days after I arrived, the snow did indeed begin to fall But here, where everything is so sordid, it gives me very little pleasure As, seated once more at the familiar window, I watch it settling on the copses in front of the house, how vividly I recall those years [5] of misery and perplexity! Then I used to sit hour after hour at this same window, and each day was like the last, save that since yesterday some flower had opened or fallen, some fresh song-bird arrived or

[1] See p xi. Shonagon was about ten years senior to Murasaki She was lady-in-waiting first to the Empress Sadako (died, A.D 1000), then to Sadako's sister Princess Shigesa (died, A.D 1002), finally to the Empress Akiko

[2] Murasaki suggests that Shonagon will lose Akiko's confidence and be dismissed There is indeed a tradition (*Kojidan*, Vol II) that when some courtiers were out walking one day they passed a dilapidated hovel. One of them mentioned a rumour that Sei Shonagon, a wit and beauty of the last reign, was now living in this place Whereupon an incredibly lean hag shot her head out at the door, crying 'Won't you buy old bones, old rags and bones?' and immediately disappeared again.

[3] At the Prime Minister's [4] Her parents' house.

[5] After the death of her husband

the Shining One.' Such 'alternative explanations' are a feature of early annals in most countries and occur frequently in those of Japan. Lastly, Michinaga's joke about the discrepancy between the prudishness of Murasaki's conduct and the erotic character of her book implies no more than that half a dozen chapters were in existence It may be thought odd that she should have shown it to anyone before it was finished But the alternative is to believe that it was completed in seven years, half of which were spent at Court under circumstances which could have given her very little leisure It is much more probable, I think, that *The Tale of Genji*, having been begun in 1001, was carried on slowly after Murasaki's arrival at Court, during her holidays and in spare time at the Palace, and not completed till, say, 1015 or even 1020 The middle and latter parts certainly give the impression of having been written by someone of comparatively mature age In 1022 the book was undoubtedly complete, for the *Sarashina Diary* refers to the 'fifty-odd chapters of *The Tale of Genji*' In 1031 Murasaki's name is absent from a list where one might expect to find it, and it is possible that she was then no longer alive [1]

The Empress Akiko lived on till 1074, reaching an even riper age than Queen Victoria, whom in certain ways she so much resembled

[1] Murasaki was outlived by her father, so that it is improbable that she reached any great age

Part One

THE TALE OF GENJI

flown away (So I watched the springs and autumns in their procession, saw the skies change, the moon rise, saw those same branches white with frost or laden with snow And all the while I was asking myself over and over again 'What has the future in store for me? How will this end?" However, sometimes I used to read, for in those days I got a certain amount of pleasure out of quite ordinary romances, I had one or two intimate friends with whom I used to correspond, and there were several other people, not much more than acquaintances, with whom I kept up a casual intercourse So that, looking back on it now, it seems to me that, one way and another, I had a good many minor distractions

'Even then I realized that my branch of the family was a very humble one, but the thought seldom troubled me, and I was in those days far indeed from the painful consciousness of inferiority which makes life at Court a continual torment to me

'Today I picked up a romance which I used to think quite entertaining, and found to my astonishment that it no longer amused me at all And it is the same with my friends I have a feeling that those with whom I used to be most intimate would now consider me worldly and flippant, and I have not even told them that I am here Others, on whose discretion I completely relied, I now have reason to suspect of showing my letters to all and sundry If they think that I write to them with that intention they cannot know very much of my character! It is surely natural under such circumstances that a correspondence should either cease altogether or become formal and infrequent Moreover, I now come here so seldom that in many cases it seems hardly worth while to renew former friendships, and many of those who wanted to call I have put off with excuses . The truth is I now find that I have not the slightest pleasure in the society of any but a few indispensable friends They must be people who really interest me, with whom I can talk seriously on serious subjects, and with whom I am brought into contact without effort on my side in the natural course of everyday existence I am afraid this sounds very exacting! But stay, there is Lady Dainagon She and I used to sleep very close together every night at the Palace and talk for hours I see her now as she used to look during those conversations, and very much wish that she were here So I have a little human feeling, after all!'

A little later in the same winter Murasaki sees the Gosechi dancers [1] at the Palace, and wonders how they have reached their present pitch of forwardness and self-possession 'Seeing several officers of the Sixth Rank coming towards them to take away their fans, the dancers threw the fans across to them in a manner which was adroit enough, but which somehow made it difficult to remember that they were women at all If I were suddenly called upon to expose myself in that fashion I should completely lose my head But already I do a hundred things which a few years ago I

[1] See below, p 420

should never have dreamed myself capable of doing. So strange indeed are the hidden processes which go on in the heart of man that I shall no doubt continue to part with one scruple after another till in the end what now appears to me as the most abandoned shamelessness will seem perfectly proper and natural. Thus I reflected upon the unreality of all our attitudes and opinions, and began sketching out to myself the probable course of my development. So extraordinary were the situations in which I pictured myself that I became quite confused, and saw very little of the show.'

The most direct discussion of her own character comes in a passage towards the end of the diary. 'That I am very vain, reserved, unsociable, wanting always to keep people at a distance — that I am wrapped up in the study of ancient stories, conceited, living all the time in a poetical world of my own and scarcely realizing the existence of other people, save occasionally to make spiteful and depreciatory comments upon them — such is the opinion of me that most strangers hold, and they are prepared to dislike me accordingly. But when they get to know me, they find to their extreme surprise that I am kind and gentle — in fact, quite a different person from the monster they had imagined, as indeed many have afterwards confessed. Nevertheless, I know that I have been definitely set down at Court as an ill-natured censorious prig. Not that I mind very much, for I am used to it and see that it is due to things in my nature which I cannot possibly change. The Empress has often told me that, though I seemed always bent upon not giving myself away in the royal presence, yet she felt after a time as if she knew me more intimately than any of the rest.'

The *Diary* closes in 1010. After this we do not know one solitary fact concerning Murasaki's life or death, save that in 1025 she was still in Akiko's service and in that year took part in the ceremonies connected with the birth of the future Emperor Go-Ryozen.

The Composition of Genji

It is generally assumed that the book was written during the three or at the most four years which elapsed between the death of Murasaki's husband and her arrival at Court. Others suggest that it was begun then, and finished sometime before the winter of 1008. This assumption is based on the three references to *The Tale of Genji* which occur in the *Diary*. But none of these allusions seem to me to imply that the *Tale* was already complete. From the first reference it is evident that the book was already so far advanced as to show that Murasaki was its heroine, the part of the *Tale* which was read to the Emperor[1] was obviously the first chapter, which ends with a formula derived directly from the early annals. 'Some say that it was the Korean fortune-teller who gave him the name of Genji.'

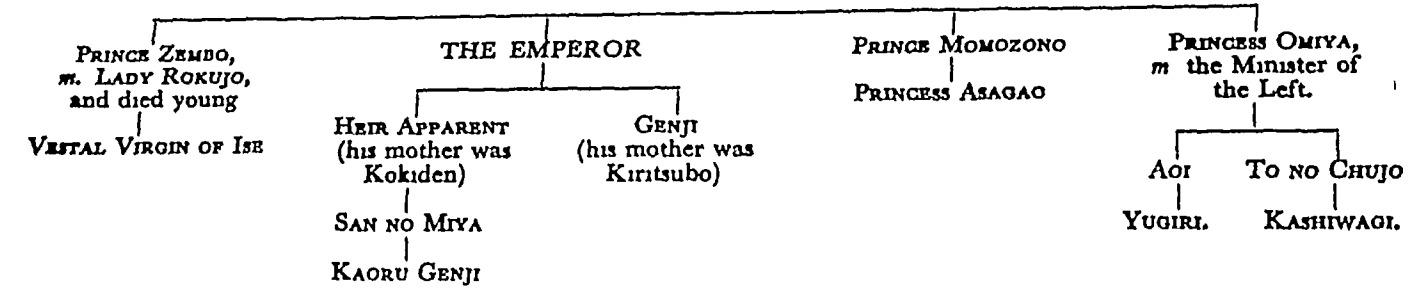
[1] For the Emperor's remark, see above, p. xiii.

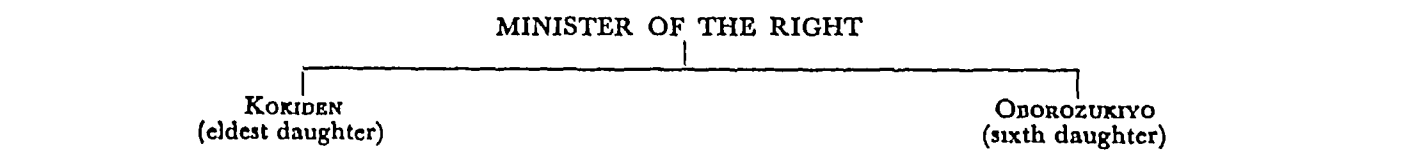
LIST OF MOST IMPORTANT PERSONS

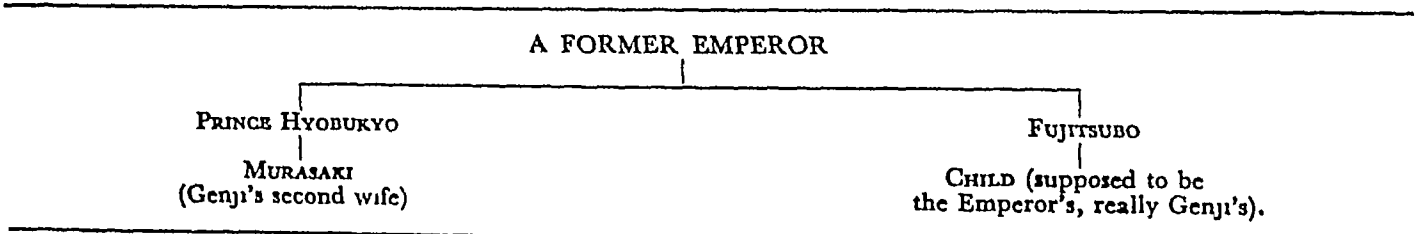
(ALPHABETICAL)

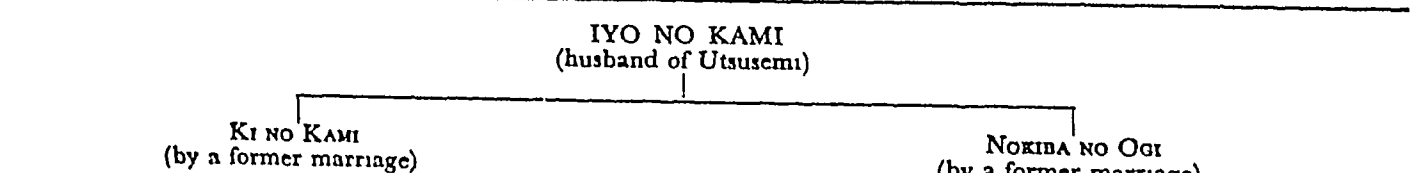
AOI, PRINCESS	Genji's wife.
ASAGAO, PRINCESS	Daughter of Prince Momozono Courted in vain by Genji from his 17th year onward
EMPEROR, THE	Genji's father
FUJITSUBO	The Emperor's consort Loved by Genji Sister of Prince Hyobukyo, aunt of Murasaki.
GENJI, PRINCE	Son of the Emperor and his concubine Kiritsubo
HYOBUKYO, PRINCE	Brother of Fujitsubo, father of Murasaki.
IYO NO SUKE	Husband of Utsusemi
KI NO KAMI	Son of Iyo no Kami, also called Iyo no Suke
KIRITSUBO	Concubine of the Emperor, Genji's mother
KOKIDEN	The Emperor's original consort, later supplanted by Kiritsubo and Fujitsubo successively
KOREMITSU	Genji's retainer
LEFT, MINISTER OF THE	Father of Aoi
MOMOZONO, PRINCE	Father of Princess Asagao
MURASAKI	Child of Prince Hyobukyo Adopted by Genji Becomes his second wife
MYOBU	A young Court lady who introduces Genji to Princess Suyetsumuhana
NOKIBA NO OGI	Ki no Kami's sister
OBOROZUKIYO, PRINCESS	Sister of Kokiden
OMYOBU	Fujitsubo's maid
RIGHT, MINISTER OF THE	Father of Kokiden
ROKUJO, PRINCESS	Widow of the Emperor's brother, Prince Zembo Genji's mistress from his 17th year onward
SHONAGON	Murasaki's nurse.
SUYETSUMUHANA, PRINCESS	Daughter of Prince Hitachi A timid and eccentric lady
TO NO CHUJO	Genji's brother-in-law and great friend
UKON	Yugao's maid
UTSUSEMI	Wife of the provincial governor, Iyo no Suke. Courted by Genji
YUGAO	Mistress first of To no Chujo then of Genji. Dies bewitched.

GENEALOGICAL TABLES









CHAPTER I

Kiritsubo[1]

AT the Court of an Emperor (he lived it matters not when) there was among the many gentlewomen of the Wardrobe and Chamber one, who though she was not of very high rank was favoured far beyond all the rest, so that the great ladies of the Palace, each of whom had secretly hoped that she herself would be chosen, looked with scorn and hatred upon the upstart who had dispelled their dreams Still less were her former companions, the minor ladies of the Wardrobe, content to see her raised so far above them Thus her position at Court, preponderant though it was, exposed her to constant jealousy and ill will, and soon, worn out with petty vexations, she fell into a decline, growing very melancholy and retiring frequently to her home But the Emperor, so far from wearying of her now that she was no longer well or gay, grew every day more tender, and paid not the smallest heed to those who reproved him, till his conduct became the talk of all the land, and even his own barons and courtiers began to look askance at an attachment so ill-advised They whispered among themselves that in the Land Beyond the Sea such happenings had led to riot and disaster The people of the country did indeed soon have many grievances to show and some likened her to Yang Kuei-fei, the mistress of Ming Huang [2] Yet, for all this discontent, so great was the sheltering power of her master's love that none dared openly molest her

Her father, who had been a Councillor, was dead Her mother, who never forgot that the father was in his day a man of some consequence, managed despite all difficulties to give her as good an upbringing as generally falls to the lot of young ladies whose parents are alive and at the height of fortune It would have helped matters greatly if there had been some influential guardian to busy himself on the child's behalf Unfortunately the mother was entirely alone in the world and sometimes, when troubles came, she felt very bitterly the lack of anyone to whom she could turn for comfort and advice But to return to the daughter In due time she bore him a little Prince who, perhaps because in some previous life a close bond had joined them, turned out as fine and likely a man-child as well might be in all the land The Emperor could hardly contain himself during the days of waiting [3] But when, at the earliest possible moment,

[1] This chapter should be read with indulgence. In it Murasaki, still under the influence of her somewhat childish predecessors, writes in a manner which is a blend of the Court chronicle with the conventional fairy-tale.

[2] Famous Emperor of the T'ang dynasty in China, lived A D 685–762

[3] The child of an Emperor could not be shown to him for several weeks after its birth.

the child was presented at Court, he saw that rumour had not exaggerated its beauty. His eldest born prince was the son of Lady Kokiden, the daughter of the Minister of the Right, and this child was treated by all with the respect due to an undoubted Heir Apparent But he was not so fine a child as the new prince, moreover the Emperor's great affection for the new child's mother made him feel the boy to be in a peculiar sense his own possession Unfortunately she was not of the same rank as the courtiers who waited upon him in the Upper Palace, so that despite his love for her, and though she wore all the airs of a great lady, it was not without considerable qualms that he now made it his practice to have her by him not only when there was to be some entertainment, but even when any business of importance was afoot Sometimes indeed he would keep her when he woke in the morning, not letting her go back to her lodging, so that willy-nilly she acted the part of a Lady-in-Perpetual-Attendance.

Seeing all this, Lady Kokiden began to fear that the new prince, for whom the Emperor seemed to have so marked a preference, would if she did not take care soon be promoted to the Eastern Palace [1] But she had, after all, priority over her rival, the Emperor had loved her devotedly and she had borne him princes It was even now chiefly the fear of her reproaches that made him uneasy about his new way of life Thus, though his mistress could be sure of his protection, there were many who sought to humiliate her, and she felt so weak in herself that it seemed to her at last as though all the honours heaped upon her had brought with them terror rather than joy

Her lodging was in the wing called Kiritsubo It was but natural that the many ladies whose doors she had to pass on her repeated journeys to the Emperor's room should have grown exasperated, and sometimes, when these comings and goings became frequent beyond measure, it would happen that on bridges and in corridors, here or there along the way that she must go, strange tricks were played to frighten her or unpleasant things were left lying about which spoiled the dresses of the ladies who accompanied her [2] Once indeed someone locked the door of a portico, so that the poor thing wandered this way and that for a great while in sore distress So many were the miseries into which this state of affairs now daily brought her that the Emperor could no longer endure to witness her vexations and moved her to the Koroden In order to make room for her he was obliged to shift the Chief Lady of the Wardrobe to lodgings outside So far from improving matters he had merely procured her a new and most embittered enemy!

The young prince was now three years old The Putting on of the Trousers was performed with as much ceremony as in the case of the Heir Apparent Marvellous gifts flowed from the Imperial Treasury and Tribute House This too incurred the censure of many, but brought no enmity to

[1] I e. be made Heir Apparent.

[2] She herself was of course carried in a litter

the child himself, for his growing beauty and the charm of his disposition were a wonder and delight to all who met him Indeed many persons of ripe experience confessed themselves astounded that such a creature should actually have been born in these latter and degenerate days

In the summer of that year the lady became very downcast She repeatedly asked for leave to go to her home, but it was not granted For a year she continued in the same state. The Emperor to all her entreaties answered only 'Try for a little while longer' But she was getting worse every day, and when for five or six days she had been growing steadily weaker her mother sent to the Palace a tearful plea for her release Fearing even now that her enemies might contrive to put some unimaginable shame upon her, the sick lady left her son behind and prepared to quit the Palace in secret The Emperor knew that the time had come when, little as he liked it, he must let her go But that she should slip away without a word of farewell was more than he could bear, and he hastened to her side He found her still charming and beautiful, but her face very thin and wan She looked at him tenderly, saying nothing Was she alive? So faint was the dwindling spark that she scarcely seemed so Suddenly forgetting all that had happened and all that was to come, he called her by a hundred pretty names and weeping showered upon her a thousand caresses, but she made no answer For sounds and sights reached her but faintly, and she seemed dazed, as one that scarcely remembered she lay upon a bed Seeing her thus he knew not what to do In great trouble and perplexity he sent for a hand litter But when they would have laid her in it, he forbad them, saying 'There was an oath between us that neither should go alone upon the road that all at last must tread How can I now let her go from me?' The lady heard him and 'At last!' she said, 'Though that desired *at last* be come, because I go alone how gladly would I live!'

Thus with faint voice and failing breath she whispered But though she had found strength to speak, each word was uttered with great toil and pain Come what might, the Emperor would have watched by her till the end, but that the priests who were to read the Intercession had already been despatched to her home She must be brought there before nightfall, and at last he forced himself to let the bearers carry her away He tried to sleep but felt stifled and could not close his eyes All night long messengers were coming and going between her home and the Palace From the first they brought no good news, and soon after midnight announced that this time on arriving at the house they had heard a noise of wailing and lamentation, and learned from those within that the lady had just breathed her last The Emperor lay motionless as though he had not understood

Though his father was so fond of his company, it was thought better after this event that the Prince should go away from the Palace He did not understand what had happened, but seeing the servants all wringing their hands and the Emperor himself continually weeping, he felt that it

that 'real things in the darkness seem no realer than dreams,' and he longed for even so dim a substance as the dream-life of those nights

The messenger had reached the gates of the house She pushed them back and a strange sight met her eyes The old lady had for long been a widow and the whole charge of keeping the domain in repair had fallen upon her daughter But since her death the mother, sunk in age and despair, had done nothing to the place, and everywhere the weeds grew high, and to all this desolation was added the wildness of the autumn gale Great clumps of mugwort grew so thick that only the moonlight could penetrate them The messenger alighted at the entrance of the house At first the mother could find no words with which to greet her, but soon she said 'Alas, I have lingered too long in the world! I cannot bear to think that so fine a messenger as you have pressed your way through the dewy thickets that bar the road to my house,' and she burst into uncontrollable weeping Then the quiver-bearer's daughter said 'One of the Palace maids who came here, told his Majesty that her heart had been torn with pity at what she saw And I, Madam, am in like case ' Then after a little hesitation she repeated the Emperor's message '"For a while I searched in the darkness of my mind, groping for an exit from my dream, but after long pondering I can find no way to wake There is none here to counsel me Will you not come to me secretly? It is not well that the young prince should spend his days in so desolate and sad a place Let him come too!" This he said and much else, but confusedly and with many sighs, and I, seeing that the struggle to hide his grief from me was costing him dear, hurried away from the Palace without hearing all But here is a letter that he sent '

'My sight is dim' said the mother 'Let me hold His letter to the light ' The letter said

I had thought that after a while there might be some blurring, some slight effacement But no As days and months go by, the more senseless, the more unendurable becomes my life I am continually thinking of the child, wondering how he fares I had hoped that his mother and I together would watch over his upbringing Will you not take her place in this, and bring him to me as a memory of the past?' Such was the letter, and many instructions were added to it together with a poem which said *'At the sound of the wind that binds the cold dew on Takagi moor, my heart goes out to the tender lilac stems '*

It was of the young prince that he spoke in symbol, but she did not read the letter to the end At last the mother said 'Though I know that long life means only bitterness, I have stayed so long in the world that even before the Pine Tree of Takasago I should hide my head in shame. How then should I find courage to go hither and thither in the great Palace of a Hundred Towers? Though the august summons should call me time and again, myself I could not obey But the young prince (whether

he may have heard the august wish I know not) is impatient to return, and, what is small wonder, seems very downcast in this place Tell his Majesty this, and whatever else of my thoughts you have here learnt from me For a little child this house is indeed a sorry place . ' 'They say that the child is asleep' the quiver-bearer's daughter answered 'I should like to have seen him and told the Emperor how he looks, but I am awaited at the Palace and it must be late.'

She was hastening away, but the mother 'Since even those who wander in the darkness of their own black thoughts can gain by converse a momentary beam to guide their steps, I pray you sometimes to visit me of your own accord and when you are at leisure In years past it was at times of joy and triumph that you came to this house, and now this is the news you bring! Foolish are they indeed who trust to fortune! From the time she was born until his death, her father, who knew his own mind, would have it that she must go to Court and charged me again and again not to disappoint his wishes if he were to die And so, though I thought that the lack of a guardian would bring her into many difficulties, I was determined to carry out his desire At Court she found that favours only too great were to be hers, and all the while must needs endure in secrecy the tokens of inhuman malice, till hatred had heaped upon her so heavy a load of cares that she died as it were murdered Indeed, the love that in His wisdom He deigned to show her (or so sometimes it seems to me in the uncomprehending darkness of my heart) was crueller than indifference '

So she spoke, till tears would let her speak no more, and now the night had come

'All this' the girl answered 'He himself has said; and further "That thus against My will and judgment I yielded helplessly to a passion so reckless that it caused men's eyes to blink was perhaps decreed for the very reason that our time was fated to be so short, it was the wild and vehement passion of those who are marked down for instant separation And though I had vowed that none should suffer because of my love, yet in the end she bore upon her shoulders the heavy hatred of many who thought that for her sake they had been wronged "

'So again and again have I heard the Emperor speak with tears But now the night is far spent and I must carry my message to the Palace before day comes '

So she, weeping too, spoke as she hurried away But the sinking moon was shining in a cloudless sky, and in the grass-clumps that shivered in the cold wind, bell-crickets tinkled their compelling cry It was hard to leave these grass-clumps, and the quiver-bearer's daughter, loath to ride away, recited the poem which says Ceaseless as the interminable voices of the bell-cricket, all night till dawn my tears flow ' The mother answered Upon the thickets that teem with myriad insect voices falls the

dew of a Cloud Dweller's tears', for the people of the Court are called *dwellers above the clouds* Then she gave the messenger a sash, a comb and other things that the dead lady had left in her keeping — gifts from the Emperor which now, since their use was gone, she sent back to him as mementoes of the past The nursemaids who had come with the boy were depressed not so much at their mistress's death as at being suddenly deprived of the daily sights and sensations of the Palace They begged to go back at once But the mother was determined not to go herself, knowing that she would cut too forlorn a figure On the other hand, if she parted with the boy, she would be daily in great anxiety about him That was why she did not immediately either go with him herself or send him to the Palace

The quiver-bearer's daughter found the Emperor still awake He was, upon pretext of visiting the flower-pots in front of the Palace which were then in full bloom, waiting for her out of doors, while four or five trusted ladies conversed with him

At this time it was his wont to examine morning and evening a picture of The Everlasting Wrong,[1] the text written by Teiji no In,[2] with poems by Ise[3] and Tsurayuki,[4] both in Yamato speech, and in that of the men beyond the sea, and the story of this poem was the common matter of his talk

Now he turned to the messenger and asked eagerly for all her news And when she had given him a secret and faithful account of the sad place whence she had come, she handed him the mother's letter 'His Majesty's gracious command I read with reverence deeper than I can express, but their purport has brought great darkness and confusion to my mind' All this, together with a poem in which she compared her grandchild to a flower which has lost the tree that sheltered it from the great winds, was so wild and so ill-writ as only to be suffered from the hand of one whose sorrow was as yet unhealed)

Again the Emperor strove for self-possession in the presence of his messenger But as he pictured to himself the time when the dead lady first came to him, a thousand memories pressed thick about him, and recollection linked to recollection carried him onward, till he shuddered to think how utterly unmarked, unheeded all these hours and days had fled

At last he said 'I too thought much and with delight how with most profit might be fulfilled the wish that her father the Councillor left behind him, but of that no more If the young Prince lives, occasion may yet be found It is for his long life that we must pray'

[1] A poem by the Chinese writer Po Chü-i about the death of Yang Kuei-fei, favourite of the Emperor Ming Huang *See* Giles, *Chinese Literature*, p 169

[2] Name of the Emperor Uda after his retirement in A.D 897

[3] Poetess, 9th century

[4] Famous poet, 883–946 A.D

He looked at the presents she had brought back and 'Would that like the wizard you had brought a kingfisher-hairpin as token of your visit to the place where her spirit dwells' he cried, and recited the poem *Oh for a master of magic who might go and seek her, and by a message teach me where her spirit dwells*

For the picture of Kuei-fei, skilful though the painter might be, was but the work of a brush, and had no living fragrance And though the poet tells us that Kuei-fei's grace was as that of 'the hibiscus of the Royal Lake or the willows of the Wei-yang Palace,' the lady in the picture was all paint and powder and had a simpering Chinesified air

But when he thought of the lost lady's voice and form, he could find neither in the beauty of flowers nor in the song of birds any fit comparison Continually he pined that fate should not have allowed them to fulfil the vow which morning and evening was ever talked of between them — the vow that their lives should be as the twin birds that share a wing, the twin trees that share a bough The rustling of the wind, the chirping of an insect would cast him into the deepest melancholy, and now Koki-den, who for a long while had not been admitted to his chamber, must needs sit in the moonlight making music far on into the night! This evidently distressed him in the highest degree and those ladies and courtiers who were with him were equally shocked and distressed on his behalf But the offending lady was one who stood much upon her dignity and she was determined to behave as though nothing of any consequence had taken place in the Palace

And now the moon had set The Emperor thought of the girl's mother in the house amid the thickets and wondered, making a poem of the thought, with what feelings she had watched the sinking of the autumn moon, 'for even we Men above the Clouds were weeping when it sank'

He raised the torches high in their sockets and still sat up But at last he heard voices coming from the Watch House of the Right and knew that the hour of the Bull[1] had struck Then, lest he should be seen, he went into his chamber He found he could not sleep and was up before daybreak But, as though he remembered the words 'he knew not the dawn was at his window' of Ise's poem,[2] he showed little attention to the affairs of his Morning Audience, scarcely touched his dried rice and seemed but dimly aware of the viands on the great Table, so that the carvers and waiting-men groaned to see their Master's plight, and all his servants, both men and women kept on whispering to one another 'What a senseless occupation has ours become!' and supposed that he was obeying some extravagant vow

Regardless of his subjects' murmurings, he continually allowed his mind to wander from their affairs to his own, so that the scandal of his

[1] 1 A.M.

[2] A poem by Lady Ise written on a picture illustrating Po Chü-i's *Everlasting Wrong*

negligence was now as dangerous to the State as it had been before, and again there began to be whispered references to a certain Emperor of another land Thus the months and days passed, and in the end the young prince arrived at Court He had grown up to be a child of unrivalled beauty and the Emperor was delighted with him In the spring an heir to the Throne was to be proclaimed and the Emperor was sorely tempted to pass over the first-born prince in favour of the young child But there was no one at Court to support such a choice and it was unlikely that it would be tolerated by the people, it would indeed bring danger rather than glory to the child So he carefully concealed from the world that he had any such design, and gained great credit, men saying 'Though he dotes on the boy, there is at least some limit to his folly And even the great ladies of the Palace became a little easier in their minds

The grandmother remained inconsolable, and impatient to set out upon her search for the place where the dead lady's spirit dwelt, she soon expired Again the Emperor was in great distress, and this time the boy, being now six years old, understood what had happened and wept bitterly And often he spoke sadly of what he had seen when he was brought to visit the poor dead lady who had for many years been so kind to him Henceforward he lived always at the Palace When he became seven he began to learn his letters, and his quickness was so unusual that his father was amazed Thinking that now no one would have the heart to be unkind to the child, the Emperor began to take him to the apartments of Kokiden and the rest, saying to them 'Now that his mother is dead I know that you will be nice to him.' Thus the boy began to penetrate the Royal Curtain The roughest soldier, the bitterest foeman could not have looked on such a child without a smile, and Kokiden did not send him away She had two daughters who were indeed not such fine children as the little prince He also played with the Court Ladies, who, because he was now very pretty and bashful in his ways, found endless amusement, as indeed did everyone else, in sharing his games As for his serious studies, he soon learnt to send the sounds of zithern and flute flying gaily to the clouds But if I were to tell you of all his accomplishments, you would think that he was soon going to become a bore

At this time some Koreans came to Court and among them a fortune-teller Hearing this, the Emperor did not send for them to come to the Palace, because of the law against the admission of foreigners which was made by the Emperor Uda [1] But in strict secrecy he sent the Prince to the Strangers' quarters He went under the escort of the Secretary of the Right, who was to introduce him as his own son The fortune-teller was astonished by the boy's lineaments and expressed his surprise by continually nodding his head 'He has the marks of one who might become a Father of the State, and if this were his fate, he would not stop short

[1] Reigned 889–897 The law in question was made in 894.

at any lesser degree than that of Mighty King and Emperor of all the land But when I look again — I see that confusion and sorrow would attend his reign But should he become a great Officer of State and Councillor of the Realm I see no happy issue, for he would be defying those kingly signs of which I spoke before '

The Secretary was a most talented, wise and learned scholar, and now began to conduct an interesting conversation with the fortune-teller They exchanged essays and poems, and the fortune-teller made a little speech, saying 'It has been a great pleasure to me on the eve of my departure to meet with a man of capacities so unusual, and though I regret my departure I shall now take away most agreeable impressions of my visit ' The little prince presented him with a very nice verse of poetry, at which he expressed boundless admiration and offered the boy a number of handsome presents In return the Emperor sent him a large reward from the Imperial Treasury This was all kept strictly secret But somehow or other the Heir Apparent's grandfather, the Minister of the Right, and others of his party got wind of it and became very suspicious The Emperor then sent for native fortune-tellers and made trial of them, explaining that because of certain signs which he had himself observed he had hitherto refrained from making the boy a prince With one accord they agreed that he had acted with great prudence and the Emperor determined not to set the child adrift upon the world as a prince without royal standing or influence upon the mother's side For he thought 'My own power is very insecure I had best set him to watch on my behalf over the great Officers of State ' Thinking that he had thus agreeably settled the child's future, he set seriously to work upon his education, and saw to it that he should be made perfect in every branch of art and knowledge He showed such aptitude in all his studies that it seemed a pity he should remain a commoner and as it had been decided that it would arouse suspicion if he were made a prince, the Emperor consulted with certain doctors wise in the lore of the planets and phases of the moon And they with one accord recommended that he should be made a Member of the Minamoto (or Gen) Clan So this was done As the years went by the Emperor did not forget his lost lady, and though many women were brought to the Palace in the hope that he might take pleasure in them, he turned from them all, believing that there was not in the world anyone like her whom he had lost There was at that time a lady whose beauty was of great repute She was the fourth daughter of the previous Emperor, and it was said that her mother, the Dowager Empress, had brought her up with unrivalled care A certain Dame of the Household, who had served the former Emperor, was intimately acquainted with the young Princess, having known her since childhood and still having occasion to observe her from without 'I have served in three courts' said the Dame 'and in all that time have seen none who could be likened to the

departed lady, save the daughter of the Empress Mother She indeed is a lady of rare beauty ' So she spoke to the Emperor, and he, much wondering what truth there was in it, listened with great attention The Empress Mother heard of this with great alarm, for she remembered with what open cruelty the sinister Lady Kokiden had treated her former rival, and though she did not dare speak openly of her fears, she was managing to delay the girl's presentation, when suddenly she died

The Emperor, hearing that the bereaved Princess was in a very desolate condition, sent word gently telling her that he should henceforward look upon her as though she were one of the Lady Princesses, his daughters Her servants and guardians and her brother, Prince Hyobukyo, thought that life in the Palace might distract her and would at least be better than the gloomy desolation of her home, and so they sent her to the Court She lived in apartments called Fujitsubo (Wistaria Tub) and was known by this name The Emperor could not deny that she bore an astonishing resemblance to his beloved She was however of much higher rank, so that everyone was anxious to please her, and, whatever happened, they were prepared to grant her the utmost licence whereas the dead lady had been imperilled by the Emperor's favour only because the Court was not willing to accept her

(His old love did not now grow dimmer, and though he sometimes found solace and distraction in shifting his thoughts from the lady who had died to the lady who was so much like her, yet life remained for him a sad business)

Genji ('he of the Minamoto clan'), as he was now called, was constantly at the Emperor s side He was soon quite at his ease with the common run of Ladies in Waiting and Ladies of the Wardrobe, so it was not likely he would be shy with one who was daily summoned to the Emperor's apartments It was but natural that all these ladies should vie eagerly with one another for the first place in Genji's affections, and there were many whom in various ways he admired very much But most of them behaved in too grown-up a fashion, only one, the new princess, was pretty and quite young as well, and though she tried to hide from him, it was inevitable that they should often meet He could not remember his mother, but the Dame of the Household had told him how very like to her the girl was, and this interested his childish fancy, and he would like to have been her great friend and lived with her always One day the Emperor said to her 'Do not be unkind to him He is interested because he has heard that you are so like his mother Do not think him impertinent, but behave nicely to him (You are indeed so like him in look and features that you might well be his mother)

And so, young though he was, fleeting beauty took its hold upon his thoughts, he felt his first clear predilection

Kokiden had never loved this lady too well, and now her old enmity

to Genji sprang up again, her own children were reckoned to be of quite uncommon beauty, but in this they were no match for Genji, who was so lovely a boy that people called him Hikaru Genji or Genji the Shining One, and Princess Fujitsubo, who also had many admirers, was called Princess Glittering Sunshine

Though it seemed a shame to put so lovely a child into man's dress, he was now twelve years old and the time for his Initiation was come The Emperor directed the preparations with tireless zeal and insisted upon a magnificence beyond what was prescribed The Initiation of the Heir Apparent, which had last year been celebrated in the Southern Hall, was not a whit more splendid in its preparations The ordering of the banquets that were to be given in various quarters, and the work of the Treasurer and Grain Intendant he supervised in person, fearing lest the officials should be remiss, and in the end all was perfection The ceremony took place in the eastern wing of the Emperor's own apartments, and the Throne was placed facing towards the east, with the seats of the Initiate-to-be and his Sponsor (the Minister of the Left) in front

Genji arrived at the hour of the Monkey [1] He looked very handsome with his long childish locks, and the Sponsor, whose duty it had just been to bind them with the purple filet, was sorry to think that all this would soon be changed and even the Clerk of the Treasury seemed loath to sever those lovely tresses with the ritual knife The Emperor, as he watched, remembered for a moment what pride the mother would have taken in the ceremony, but soon drove the weak thought from his mind

Duly crowned, Genji went to his chamber and changing into man's dress went down into the courtyard and performed the Dance of Homage, which he did with such grace that tears stood in every eye And now the Emperor, whose grief had of late grown somewhat less insistent, was again overwhelmed by memories of the past

It had been feared that his delicate features would show to less advantage when he had put aside his childish dress, but on the contrary he looked handsomer than ever

His sponsor, the Minister of the Left, had an only daughter whose beauty the Heir Apparent had noticed But now the father began to think he would not encourage that match, but would offer her to Genji He sounded the Emperor upon this, and found that he would be very glad to obtain for the boy the advantage of so powerful a connection

When the courtiers assembled to drink the Love Cup, Genji came and took his place among the other princes The Minister of the Left came up and whispered something in his ear, but the boy blushed and could think of no reply A chamberlain now came over to the Minister and brought him a summons to wait upon His Majesty immediately When he arrived before the Throne, a Lady of the Wardrobe handed to him the Great

[1] 3 P.M.

White Inner Garment and the Maid's Skirt,[1] which were his ritual due as Sponsor to the Prince Then, when he had made him drink out of the Royal Cup, the Emperor recited a poem in which he prayed that the binding of the purple filet might symbolize the union of their two houses, and the Minister answered him that nothing should sever this union save the fading of the purple band Then he descended the long stairs and from the courtyard performed the Grand Obeisance [2] Here too were shown the horses from the Royal Stables and the hawks from the Royal Falconry, that had been decreed as presents for Genji At the foot of the stairs the Princes and Courtiers were lined up to receive their bounties, and gifts of every kind were showered upon them That day the hampers and fruit baskets were distributed in accordance with the Emperor's directions by the learned Secretary of the Right, and boxes of cake and presents lay about so thick that one could scarcely move Such profusion had not been seen even at the Heir Apparent's Initiation

That night Genji went to the Minister's house, where his betrothal was celebrated with great splendour It was thought that the little Prince looked somewhat childish and delicate, but his beauty astonished everyone Only the bride, who was four years older, regarded him as a mere baby and was rather ashamed of him

The Emperor still demanded Genji's attendance at the Palace, so he did not set up a house of his own In his inmost heart he was always thinking how much nicer *she* [3] was than anyone else, and only wanted to be with people who were like her, but alas no one was the least like her Everyone seemed to make a great deal of fuss about Princess Aoi, his betrothed, but he could see nothing nice about her The girl at the Palace now filled all his childish thoughts and this obsession became a misery to him

(Now that he was a 'man' he could no longer frequent the women's quarters as he had been wont to do But sometimes when an entertainment was afoot he found comfort in hearing her voice dimly blending with the sound of zithern or flute and felt his grown-up existence to be unendurable) After an absence of five or six days he would occasionally spend two or three at his betrothed's house His father-in-law attributing this negligence to his extreme youth was not at all perturbed and always received him warmly Whenever he came the most interesting and agreeable of the young people of the day were asked to meet him and endless trouble was taken in arranging games to amuse him

The Shigeisa, one of the rooms which had belonged to his mother, was allotted to him as his official quarters in the Palace, and the servants

[1] These symbolized the unmanly life of childhood which Genji had now put behind him.

[2] The *buto*, a form of kowtow so elaborate as to be practically a dance.

[3] Fujitsubo

who had waited on her were now gathered together again and formed his suite His grandmother's house was falling into decay. The Imperial Office of Works was ordered to repair it The grouping of the trees and disposition of the surrounding hills had always made the place delightful Now the basin of the lake was widened and many other improvements were carried out 'If only I were going to live here with someone whom I liked,' thought Genji sadly

Some say that the name of Hikaru the Shining One was given to him in admiration by the Korean fortune-teller [1]

[1] This touch is reminiscent of early chronicles such as the *Nihongi*, which delight in alternative explanations. In the subsequent chapters such archaisms entirely disappear

CHAPTER II

The Broom-Tree

GENJI the Shining One . He knew that the bearer of such a name could not escape much scrutiny and jealous censure and that his lightest dallyings would be proclaimed to posterity Fearing then lest he should appear to after ages as a mere good-for-nothing and trifler, and knowing that (so accursed is the blabbing of gossips' tongues) his most secret acts might come to light, he was obliged always to act with great prudence and to preserve at least the outward appearance of respectability Thus nothing really romantic ever happened to him and Katano no Shosho [1] would have scoffed at his story.

While he was still a Captain of the Guard and was spending most of his time at the Palace, his infrequent visits to the Great Hall [2] were taken as a sign that some secret passion had made its imprint on his heart (But in reality the frivolous, commonplace, straight-ahead amours of his companions did not in the least interest him, and it was a curious trait in his character that when on rare occasions, despite all resistance, love did gain a hold upon him, it was always in the most improbable and hopeless entanglement that he became involved)

It was the season of the long rains For many days there had not been a fine moment and the Court was keeping a strict fast The people at the Great Hall were becoming very impatient of Genji's long residence at the Palace, but the young lords, who were Court pages, liked waiting upon Genji better than upon anyone else, always managing to put out his clothes and decorations in some marvellous new way Among these brothers his greatest friend was the Equerry, To no Chujo, with whom above all other companions of his playtime he found himself familiar and at ease This lord too found the house which his father-in-law, the Minister of the Right, had been at pains to build for him, somewhat oppressive, while at his father's house he, like Genji, found the splendours somewhat dazzling, so that he ended by becoming Genji's constant companion at Court They shared both studies and play and were inseparable companions on every sort of occasion, so that soon all formalities were dispensed with between them and the inmost secrets of their hearts freely exchanged

It was on a night when the rain never ceased its dismal downpour There were not many people about in the palace and Genji's rooms seemed even quieter than usual He was sitting by the lamp, looking at various

[1] The hero of a lost popular romance. It is also referred to by Murasaki's contemporary Sei Shonagon in Chapter 145 of her *Makura no Soshi*.

[2] His father-in-law's house, where his wife Princess Aoi still continued to reside

books and papers Suddenly he began pulling some letters out of the drawers of a desk which stood near by This aroused To no Chujo's curiosity 'Some of them I can show to you' said Genji but there are others which I had rather ' 'It is just those which I want to see Ordinary, commonplace letters are very much alike and I do not suppose that yours differ much from mine What I want to see are passionate letters written in moments of resentment, letters hinting consent, letters written at dusk. '

He begged so eagerly that Genji let him examine the drawers It was not indeed likely that he had put any very important or secret documents in the ordinary desk, he would have hidden them away much further from sight So he felt sure that the letters in these drawers would be nothing to worry about After turning over a few of them, 'What an astonishing variety!' To no Chujo exclaimed and began guessing at the writers' names, and made one or two good hits More often he was wrong and Genji, amused by his puzzled air, said very little but generally managed to lead him astray At last he took the letters back, saying 'But you too must have a large collection Show me some of yours, and my desk will open to you with better will ' 'I have none that you would care to see,' said To no Chujo, and he continued (I have at last discovered that there exists no woman of whom one can say "Here is perfection This is indeed she ") There are many who have the superficial art of writing a good running hand, or if occasion requires of making a quick repartee But there are few who will stand the ordeal of any further test Usually their minds are entirely occupied by admiration for their own accomplishments, and their abuse of all rivals creates a most unpleasant impression Some again are adored by over-fond parents These have been since childhood guarded behind lattice windows [1] and no knowledge of them is allowed to reach the outer-world, save that of their excellence in some accomplishment or art, and this may indeed sometimes arouse our interest She is pretty and graceful and has not yet mixed at all with the world Such a girl by closely copying some model and applying herself with great industry will often succeed in really mastering one of the minor and ephemeral arts Her friends are careful to say nothing of her defects and to exaggerate her accomplishments, and while we cannot altogether trust their praise we cannot believe that their judgment is entirely astray. But when we take steps to test their statements we are invariably disappointed '

He paused, seeming to be slightly ashamed of the cynical tone which he had adopted, and added 'I know my experience is not large, but that is

[1] panese houses were arranged somewhat differently from ours and for many of the which constantly recur in this book (*kicho*, *sudare*, *sunoko*, etc.) no exact English equivs can be found In such cases I have tried to use expressions which without being [illegible] will give an adequate general idea of what is meant.

the conclusion I have come to so far.' Then Genji, smiling 'And are there any who lack even one accomplishment?' No doubt, but in such a case it is unlikely that anyone would be successfully decoyed The number of those who have nothing to recommend them and of those in whom nothing but good can be found is probably equal (I divide women into three classes Those of high rank and birth are made such a fuss of and their weak points are so completely concealed that we are certain to be told that they are paragons About those of the middle class everyone is allowed to express his own opinion, and we shall have much conflicting evidence to sift. As for the lower classes, they do not concern us.)

(The completeness with which To no Chujo disposed of the question amused Genji, who said 'It will not always be so easy to know into which of the three classes a woman ought to be put For sometimes people of high rank sink to the most abject positions, while others of common birth rise to be high officers, wear self-important faces, redecorate the inside of their houses and think themselves as good as anyone How are we to deal with such cases?')

At this moment they were joined by Hidari no Uma no Kami and To Shikibu no Jo, who said they had also come to the Palace to keep the fast As both of them were great lovers and good talkers, To no Chujo handed over to them the decision of Genji's question, and in the discussion which followed many unflattering things were said Uma no Kami spoke first ('However high a lady may rise, if she does not come of an adequate stock, the world will think very differently of her from what it would of one born to such honours, but if through adverse fortune a lady of highest rank finds herself in friendless misery, the noble breeding of her mind is soon forgotten and she becomes an object of contempt.) I think then that taking all things into account, we must put such ladies too into the "middle class" But when we come to classify the daughters of Zuryo,[1] who are sent to labour at the affairs of distant provinces — they have such ups and downs that we may reasonably put them too into the middle class

'Then there are Ministers of the third and fourth classes without Cabinet rank These are generally thought less of even than the humdrum, ordinary officials They are usually of quite good birth, but have much less responsibility than Ministers of State and consequently much greater peace of mind Girls born into such households are brought up in complete security from want or deprivation of any kind, and indeed often amid surroundings of the utmost luxury and splendour Many of them grow up into women whom it would be folly to despise, some have been admitted at Court, where they have enjoyed a quite unexpected success And of this I could cite many, many instances

'Their success has generally been due to their having a lot of money,'

[1] Provincial officials. Murasaki herself came of this class

said Genji smiling 'You should have known better than to say that,' said To no Chujo, reproving him, and Uma no Kami went on. 'There are some whose lineage and reputation are so high that it never occurs to one that their education could possibly be at fault, yet when we meet them, we find ourselves exclaiming in despair "How can they have contrived to grow up like this?"'

'No doubt the perfect woman in whom none of those essentials is lacking must somewhere exist and it would not startle me to find her But she would certainly be beyond the reach of a humble person like myself, and for that reason I should like to put her in a category of her own and not to count her in our present classification

'But suppose that behind some gateway overgrown with vine-weed, in a place where no one knows there is a house at all, there should be locked away some creature of unimagined beauty — with what excitement should we discover her! The complete surprise of it, the upsetting of all our wise theories and classifications, would be likely, I think, to lay a strange and sudden enchantment upon us I imagine her father rather large and gruff, her brother, a surly, ill-looking fellow Locked away in an utterly blank and uninteresting bedroom, she will be subject to odd flights of fancy, so that in her hands the arts that others learn as trivial accomplishments will seem strangely full of meaning and importance, or perhaps in some particular art she will thrill us by her delightful and unexpected mastery. Such a one may perhaps be beneath the attention of those of you who are of flawless lineage But for my part I find it hard to banish her ' and here he looked at Shikibu no Jo, who wondered whether the description had been meant to apply to his own sisters, but said nothing 'If it is difficult to choose even out of the top class ' thought Genji, and began to doze

He was dressed in a suit of soft white silk, with a rough cloak carelessly slung over his shoulders, with belt and fastenings untied In the light of the lamp against which he was leaning he looked so lovely that one might have wished he were a girl, and they thought that even Uma no Kami's perfect woman,' whom he had placed in a category of her own, would not be worthy of such a prince as Genji

The conversation went on Many persons and things were discussed Uma no Kami contended that perfection is equally difficult to find in other spheres The sovereign is hard put to it to choose his ministers But he at least has an easier task than the husband, for he does not entrust the affairs of his kingdom to one, two or three persons alone, but sets up a whole system of superiors and subordinates

But when the mistress of a house is to be selected, a single individual et be found who will combine in her person many diverse qualities ill not do to be too exacting Let us be sure that the lady of our choice ssesses certain tangib[illegible] which admire, and if in other ways

she falls short of our ideal, we must be patient and call to mind those qualities which first induced us to begin our courting

But even here we must beware, for there are some who in the selfishness of youth and flawless beauty are determined that not a dust-flick shall fall upon them In their letters they choose the most harmless topics, but yet contrive to colour the very texture of the written signs with a tenderness that vaguely disquiets us ✓But such a one, when we have at last secured a meeting, will speak so low that she can scarcely be heard, and the few faint sentences that she murmurs beneath her breath serve only to make her more mysterious than before All this may seem to be the pretty shrinking of girlish modesty, but we may later find that what held her back was the very violence of her passions

Or again, where all seems plain sailing, the perfect companion will turn out to be too impressionable and will upon the most inappropriate occasions display her affections in so ludicrous a way that we begin to wish ourselves rid of her

Then there is the zealous housewife, who regardless of her appearance twists her hair behind her ears and devotes herself entirely to the details of our domestic welfare The husband, in his comings and goings about the world, is certain to see and hear many things which he cannot discuss with strangers, but would gladly talk over with an intimate who could listen with sympathy and understanding, someone who could laugh with him or weep if need be It often happens too that some political event will greatly perturb or amuse him, and he sits apart longing to tell someone about it He suddenly laughs at some secret recollection or sighs audibly But the wife only says lightly 'What is the matter?' and shows no interest

This is apt to be very trying

Uma no Kami considered several other cases But he reached no definite conclusion and sighing deeply he continued 'We will then, as I have suggested, let birth and beauty go by the board Let her be the simplest and most guileless of creatures so long as she is honest and of a peaceable disposition, that in the end we may not lack a place of trust And if some other virtue chances to be hers we shall treasure it as a godsend But if we discover in her some small defect, it shall not be too closely scrutinized And we may be sure that if she is strong in the virtues of tolerance and amiability her outward appearance will not be beyond measure harsh

'There are those who carry forbearance too far, and affecting not to notice wrongs which cry out for redress seem to be paragons of misused fidelity But suddenly a time comes when such a one can restrain herself no longer, and leaving behind her a poem couched in pitiful language and calculated to rouse the most painful sentiments of remorse, she flies to some remote village in the mountains or some desolate seashore, and for a long while all trace of her is lost

'When I was a boy the ladies-in-waiting used to tell me sad tales of this kind I never doubted that the sentiments expressed in them were real, and I wept profusely But now I am beginning to suspect that such sorrows are for the most part affectation She has left behind her (this lady whom we are imagining) a husband who is probably still fond of her, she is making herself very unhappy, and by disappearing in this way is causing him unspeakable anxiety, perhaps only for the ridiculous purpose of putting his affection to the test Then comes along some admiring friend crying "What a heart! What depth of feeling!" She becomes more lugubrious than ever, and finally enters a nunnery. When she decided on this step she was perfectly sincere and had not the slightest intention of ever returning to the world Then some female friend hears of it and "Poor thing" she cries, "in what an agony of mind must she have been to do this!" and visits her in her cell When the husband, who has never ceased to mourn for her, hears what she has become, he bursts into tears, and some servant or old nurse, seeing this, bustles off to the nunnery with tales of the husband's despair, and "Oh Madam, what a shame, what a shame!" Then the nun, forgetting where and what she is, raises her hand to her head to straighten her hair, and finds that it has been shorn away In helpless misery she sinks to the floor, and do what she will, the tears begin to flow Now all is lost, for since she cannot at every moment be praying for strength, there creeps into her mind the sinful thought that she did ill to become a nun and so often does she commit this sin that even Buddha must think her wickeder now than she was before she took her vows, and she feels certain that these terrible thoughts are leading her soul to the blackest Hell But if the *karma* of their past lives should chance to be strongly weighted against a parting, she will be found and captured before she has taken her final vows In such a case their life will be beyond endurance unless she be fully determined, come good or ill, this time to close her eyes to all that goes amiss

'Again there are others who must needs be forever mounting guard over their own and their husband's affections Such a one, if she sees in him not a fault indeed but even the slightest inclination to stray, makes a foolish scene, declaring with indignation that she will have no more to do with him

'But even if a man's fancy should chance indeed to have gone somewhat astray, yet his earlier affection may still be strong and in the end will return to its old haunts Now by her tantrums she has made a rift that cannot be joined Whereas she who when some small wrong calls for silent shows by a glance that she is not unaware, but when some large offence demands admonishment knows how to hint without severity, will end by standing in her master's affections better than ever she stood before or often the sight of our own forbearance will give our neighbour gth to rule his mutinous affections

'But she whose tolerance and forgiveness know no bounds, though this may seem to proceed from the beauty and amiability of her disposition, is in fact displaying the shallowness of her feeling "The unmoored boat must needs drift with the stream" Are you not of this mind?'

To no Chujo nodded 'Some' he said 'have imagined that by arousing a baseless suspicion in the mind of the beloved we can revive a waning devotion But this experiment is very dangerous Those who recommend it are confident that so long as resentment is groundless one need only suffer it in silence and all will soon be well I have observed however that this is by no means the case

'But when all is said and done, there can be no greater virtue in woman than this that she should with gentleness and forbearance meet every wrong whatsoever that falls to her share' He thought as he said this of his own sister, Princess Aoi, but was disappointed and piqued to discover that Genji, whose comments he awaited, was fast asleep

Uma no Kami was an expert in such discussions and now stood preening his feathers To no Chujo was disposed to hear what more he had to say and was now at pains to humour and encourage him

'It is with women' said Uma no Kami 'as it is with the works of craftsmen The wood-carver can fashion whatever he will Yet his products are but toys of the moment, to be glanced at in jest, not fashioned according to any precept or law When times change, the carver too will change his style and make new trifles to hit the fancy of the passing day But there is another kind of artist, who sets more soberly about his work, striving to give real beauty to the things which men actually use and to give to them the shapes which tradition has ordained This maker of real things must not for a moment be confused with the carver of idle toys

'In the Painters' Workshop too there are many excellent artists chosen for their proficiency in ink-drawing, and indeed they are all so clever it is hard to set one above the other But all of them are at work on subjects intended to impress and surprise One paints the Mountain of Horai, another a raging sea-monster riding a storm, another, ferocious animals from the Land beyond the sea, or faces of imaginary demons Letting their fancy run wildly riot they have no thought of beauty, but only of how best they may astonish the beholder's eye And though nothing in their pictures is real, all is probable But ordinary hills and rivers, just as they are, houses such as you may see anywhere, with all their real beauty and harmony of form — quietly to draw such scenes as this, or to show what lies behind some intimate hedge that is folded away far from the world, and thick trees upon some unheroic hill, and all this with befitting care for composition, proportion, and the like — such works demand the highest master's utmost skill and must needs draw the common craftsman into a thousand blunders So too in handwriting, we see some who aimlessly prolong their cursive strokes this way or that, and hope their

flourishes will be mistaken for genius But true penmanship preserves in every letter its balance and form, and though at first some letters may seem but half-formed, yet when we compare them with the copy-books we find that there is nothing at all amiss

'So it is in these trifling matters And how much the more in judging of the human heart should we distrust all fashionable airs and graces, all tricks and smartness, learnt only to please the outward gaze! This I first understood some while ago, and if you will have patience with me I will tell you the story'

So saying, he came and sat a little closer to them, and Genji woke up To no Chujo, in wrapt attention, was sitting with his cheek propped upon his hand Uma no Kami s whole speech that night was indeed very much like a chaplain's sermon about the ways of the world, and was rather absurd But upon such occasions as this we are easily led on into discussing our own ideas and most private secrets without the least reserve

'It happened when I was young, and in an even more humble position than I am today' Uma no Kami continued 'I was in love with a girl who (like the drudging, faithful wife of whom I spoke a little while ago) was not a full-sail beauty, and I in my youthful vanity thought she was all very well for the moment, but would never do for the wife of so fine a fellow as I She made an excellent companion in times when I was at a loose end, but she was of a disposition so violently jealous, that I could have put up with a little less devotion if only she had been somewhat less fiercely ardent and exacting

'Thus I kept thinking, vexed by her unrelenting suspicions But then I would remember her ceaseless devotion to the interests of one who was after all a person of no account, and full of remorse I made sure that with a little patience on my part she would one day learn to school her jealousy

'It was her habit to minister to my smallest wants even before I was myself aware of them, whatever she felt was lacking in her she strove to acquire, and where she knew that in some quality of mind she still fell behind my desires, she was at pains never to show her deficiency in such a way as might vex me Thus in one way or another she was always busy in forwarding my affairs, and she hoped that if all down to the last dewdrop (as they say) were conducted as I should wish, this would be set down to her credit and help to balance the defects in her person which meek and obliging as she might be could not (she fondly imagined) fail to offend me, and at this time she even hid herself from strangers lest their poor opinion of her looks should put me out of countenance

'I meanwhile, becoming used to her homely looks, was well content with her character, save for this one article of jealousy, and here she showed no amendment Then I began to think to myself "Surely, since she seems so anxious to please, so timid, there must be some way of giving her a fright which will teach her a lesson, so that for a while at least we

may have a respite from this accursed business" And though I knew it would cost me dear, I determined to make a pretence of giving her up, thinking that since she was so fond of me this would be the best way to teach her a lesson Accordingly I behaved with the greatest coldness to her, and she as usual began her jealous fit and behaved with such folly that in the end I said to her, 'If you want to be rid for ever of one who loves you dearly, you are going the right way about it by all these endless poutings over nothing at all But if you want to go on with me, you must give up suspecting some deep intrigue each time you fancy that I am treating you unkindly Do this, and you may be sure I shall continue to love you dearly It may well be that as time goes on, I shall rise a little higher in the world and then"

'I thought I had managed matters very cleverly, though perhaps in the heat of the moment I might have spoken somewhat too roughly She smiled faintly and answered that if it were only a matter of bearing for a while with my failures and disappointments, that did not trouble her at all, and she would gladly wait till I became a person of consequence 'But it is a hard task" she said to go on year after year enduring your coldness and waiting the time when you will at last learn to behave to me with some decency, and therefore I agree with you that the time has come when we had better go each his own way" Then in a fit of wild and uncontrollable jealousy she began to pour upon me a torrent of bitter reproaches, and with a woman's savagery she suddenly seized my little finger and bit deep into it The unexpected pain was difficult to bear, but composing myself I said tragically "Now you have put this mark upon me I shall get on worse than ever in polite society, as for promotion, I shall be considered a disgrace to the meanest public office and unable to cut a genteel figure in any capacity, I shall be obliged to withdraw myself completely from the world You and I at any rate shall certainly not meet again," and bending my injured finger as I turned to go, I recited the verse 'As on bent hand I count the times that we have met, it is not one finger only that bears witness to my pain" And she, all of a sudden bursting into tears "If still in your heart only you look for pains to count, then were our hands best employed in parting" After a few more words I left her, not for a moment thinking that all was over

'Days went by, and no news I began to be restless One night when I had been at the Palace for the rehearsal of the Festival music, heavy sleet was falling, and I stood at the spot where those of us who came from the Palace had dispersed, unable to make up my mind which way to go For in no direction had I anything which could properly be called a home I might of course take a room in the Palace precincts, but I shivered to think of the cheerless grandeur that would surround me Suddenly I began to wonder what she was thinking, how she was looking, and brushing the snow off my shoulders, I set out for her house I own I felt uneasy,

but I thought that after so long a time her anger must surely have somewhat abated Inside the room a lamp showed dimly, turned to the wall Some undergarments were hung out upon a large, warmly-quilted couch, the bed-hangings were drawn up, and I made sure that she was for some reason actually expecting me I was priding myself on having made so lucky a hit, when suddenly, "Not at home!", and on questioning the maid I learnt that she had but that very night gone to her parents' home, leaving only a few necessary servants behind The fact that she had till now sent no poem or conciliatory message seemed to show some hardening of heart, and had already disquieted me Now I began to fear that her accursed suspiciousness and jealousy had but been a stratagem to make me grow weary of her, and though I could recall no further proof of this I fell into great despair And to show her that, though we no longer met, I still thought of her and planned for her, I got her some stuff for a dress, choosing a most delightful and unusual shade of colour, and a material that I knew she would be glad to have "For after all" I thought "she cannot want to put me altogether out of her head " When I informed her of this purchase she did not rebuff me nor make any attempt to hide from me, but to all my questions she answered quietly and composedly, without any sign that she was ashamed of herself

'At last she told me that if I went on as before, she could never forgive me, but if I would promise to live more quietly she would take me back again (Seeing that she still hankered after me I determined to school her a little further yet, and said that I could make no conditions and must be free to live as I chose So the tug of war went on, but it seems that it hurt her far more than I knew, for in a little while she fell into a decline and died, leaving me aghast at the upshot of my wanton game And now I felt that, whatever faults she might have had, her devotion alone would have made her a fit wife for me I remembered how both in trivial talk and in consideration of important matters she had never once shown herself at a loss, how in the dyeing of brocades she rivalled the Goddess of Tatsuta who tints the autumn leaves, and how in needlework and the like she was not less skilful than Tanabata, the Weaving-lady of the sky')

Here he stopped, greatly distressed at the recollection of the lady's many talents and virtues

'The Weaving-lady and the Herd boy' said To no Chujo 'enjoy a love that is eternal Had she but resembled the Divine Sempstress in this, you would not, I think, have minded her being a little less skilful with her needle I wonder that with this rare creature in mind you pronounce the world to be so blank a place'

'Listen' replied Uma no Kami 'About the same time there was another lady whom I used to visit She was of higher birth than the first, her skill in poetry, cursive writing, and lute-playing, her readiness of hand and

tongue were all marked enough to show that she was not a woman of trivial nature, and this indeed was allowed by those who knew her To add to this she was not ill-looking and sometimes when I needed a rest from my unhappy persecutress, I used to visit her secretly In the end I found that I had fallen completely in love with her After the death of the other I was in great distress But it was no use brooding over the past and I began to visit my new lady more and more often I soon came to the conclusion that she was frivolous and I had no confidence that I should have liked what went on when I was not there to see I now visited her only at long intervals and at last decided that she had another lover

'It was during the Godless Month,[1] on a beautiful moonlight night As I was leaving the Palace I met a certain young courtier, who, when I told him that I was driving out to spend the night at the Dainagon's, said that my way was his and joined me The road passed my lady's house and here it was that he alighted, saying that he had an engagement which he should have been very sorry not to fulfil The wall was half in ruins and through its gaps I saw the shadowy waters of the lake It would not have been easy (for even the moonbeams seemed to loiter here!) to hasten past so lovely a place, and when he left his coach I too left mine

'At once this man (whom I now knew to be that other lover whose existence I had guessed) went and sat unconcernedly on the bamboo skirting of the portico and began to gaze at the moon The chrysanthemums were just in full bloom, the bright fallen leaves were tumbling and tussling in the wind It was indeed a scene of wonderful beauty that met our eyes Presently he took a flute out of the folds of his dress and began to play upon it Then putting the flute aside, he began to murmur "Sweet is the shade" [2] and other catches Soon a pleasant-sounding native zithern [3] began to tune up somewhere within the house and an ingenious accompaniment was fitted to his careless warblings Her zithern was tuned to the autumn-mode, and she played with so much tenderness and feeling that though the music came from behind closed shutters it sounded quite modern and passionate,[4] and well accorded with the soft beauty of the moonlight The courtier was ravished, and as he stepped forward to place himself right under her window he turned to me and remarked in a self-satisfied way that among the fallen leaves no other footstep had left its mark Then plucking a chrysanthemum, he sang

> 'Strange that the music of your lute,
> These matchless flowers and all the beauty of the night,
> Have lured no other feet to linger at your door!'

[1] The tenth month.

[2] From the *saibara* ballad, *The Well of Asuka* 'Sweet is the shade, the lapping waters cool, and good the pasture for our weary steeds. By the Well of Asuka, here let us stay'

[3] The 'Japanese zithern', also called *wagon*. A species of *koto*

[4] As opposed to the formal and traditional music imported from China

and then, beseeching her pardon for his halting verses, he begged her to play again while one was still near who longed so passionately to hear her When he had paid her many other compliments, the lady answered in an affected voice with the verse

Would that I had some song that might detain
The flute that blends its note
With the low rustling of the autumn leaves

and after these blandishments, still unsuspecting, she took up the thirteen-stringed lute, and tuning it to the *Banjiki* mode[1] she clattered at the strings with all the frenzy that fashion now demands It was a fine performance no doubt, but I cannot say that it made a very agreeable impression upon me

'A man may amuse himself well enough by trifling from time to time with some lady at the Court, will get what pleasure he can out of it while he is with her and not trouble his head about what goes on when he is not there This lady too I only saw from time to time, but such was her situation that I had once fondly imagined myself the only occupant of her thoughts However that night's work dissolved the last shred of my confidence, and I never saw her again

'These two experiences, falling to my lot while I was still so young, early deprived me of any hope from women And since that time my view of them has but grown the blacker No doubt to you at your age they seem very entrancing, these "dewdrops on the grass that fall if they are touched," these "glittering hailstones that melt if gathered in the hand " But when you are a little older you will think as I do Take my advice in this at least, beware of caressing manners and soft, entangling ways For if you are so rash as to let them lead you astray, you will soon find yourselves cutting a very silly figure in the world '

To no Chujo as usual nodded his assent, and Genji's smile seemed such as to show that he too accepted Uma no Kami's advice 'Your two stories were certainly very dismal' he said, laughing And here To no Chujo interposed 'I will tell you a story about myself There was a lady whose acquaintance I was obliged to make with great secrecy But her beauty well rewarded my pains, and though I had no thought of making her my wife, I grew so fond of her that I soon found I could not put her out of my head and she seemed to have complete confidence in me Such confidence indeed that when from time to time I was obliged to behave in such a way as might well have aroused her resentment, she seemed not to notice that anything was amiss, and even when I neglected her for many weeks, she treated me as though I were still coming every day In the end indeed I

[1] See *Encyclopédie de la Musique*, p 247 Under the name Nan-lü this mode was frequently used in the Chinese love-dramas of the fourteenth century It was considered very wild and moving.

found this readiness to receive me whenever and however I came very painful, and determined for the future to merit her strange confidence

'Her parents were dead and this was perhaps why, since I was all she had in the world, she treated me with such loving meekness, despite the many wrongs I did her I must own that my resolution did not last long, and I was soon neglecting her worse than before During this time (I did not hear of it till afterwards) someone who had discovered our friendship began to send her veiled messages which cruelly frightened and distressed her Knowing nothing of the trouble she was in, although I often thought of her I neither came nor wrote to her for a long while Just when she was in her worst despair a child was born, and at last in her distress she plucked a blossom of the flower that is called "Child of my Heart" and sent it to me

And here To no Chujo's eyes filled with tears

'Well' said Genji 'and did she write a message to go with it?' 'Oh nothing very out-of-the-ordinary said To no Chujo 'She wrote. "Though tattered be the hillman's hedge, deign sometimes to look with kindness upon the Child-flower that grows so sweetly there "This brought me to her side As usual she did not reproach me, but she looked sad enough, and when I considered the dreary desolation of this home where every object wore an aspect no less depressing than the wailing voices of the crickets in the grass, she seemed to me like some unhappy princess in an ancient story, and wishing her to feel that it was for the mother's sake and not the child's that I had come, I answered with a poem in which I called the Child-flower by its other name "Bed-flower," and she replied with a poem that darkly hinted at the cruel tempest which had attended this Bed-flower's birth She spoke lightly and did not seem to be downright angry with me, and when a few tears fell she was at great pains to hide them, and seemed more distressed at the thought that I might imagine her to be unhappy than actually resentful of my conduct towards her So I went away with an easy mind and it was some while before I came again When at last I returned she had utterly disappeared, and if she is alive she must be living a wretched vagrant life If while I still loved her she had but shown some outward sign of her resentment, she would not have ended thus as an outcast and wanderer, for I should never have dared to leave her so long neglected, and might in the end have acknowledged her and made her mine for ever The child too was a sweet creature, and I have spent much time in searching for them, but still without success

'It is, I fear, as sorrowful a tale as that which Uma no Kami has told you I, unfaithful, thought that I was not missed, and she, still loved, was in no better case than one whose love is not returned I indeed am fast forgetting her, but she, it may be, cannot put me out of her mind and I fear there may be nights when thoughts that she would gladly banish burn fiercely in her breast, for now I fancy she must be living a comfortless and unprotected life'

'When all is said and done' said Uma no Kami, 'my friend, though I pine for her now that she is gone, was a sad plague to me while I had her, and we must own that such a one will in the end be sure to make us wish ourselves well rid of her The zithern-player had much talent to her credit, but was a great deal too light-headed And your diffident lady, To no Chujo, seems to me to be a very suspicious case The world appears to be so constructed that we shall in the end be always at a loss to make a reasoned choice, despite all our picking, sifting and comparing we shall never succeed in finding this in all ways and to all lengths adorable and impeccable female'

'I can only suggest the Goddess Kichijo'[1] said To no Chujo 'and I fear that intimacy with so holy and majestic a being might prove to be impracticable'

At this they all laughed and To no Chujo continued 'But now it is Shikibu's turn and he is sure to give us something entertaining Come Shikibu, keep the ball rolling!' 'Nothing of interest ever happens to humble folk like myself' said Shikibu, but To no Chujo scolded him for keeping them waiting and after reflecting for a while which anecdote would best suit the company, he began 'While I was still a student at the University, I came across a woman who was truly a prodigy of intelligence One of Uma no Kami's demands she certainly fulfilled, for it was possible to discuss with her to advantage both public matters and the proper handling of one's private affairs But not only was her mind capable of grappling with any problems of this kind, she was also so learned that ordinary scholars found themselves, to their humiliation, quite unable to hold their own against her

'I was taking lessons from her father, who was a Professor I had heard that he had several daughters, and some accidental circumstance made it necessary for me to exchange a word or two with one of them who turned out to be the learned prodigy of whom I have spoken The father, hearing that we had been seen together, came up to me with a wine-cup in his hand and made an allusion to the poem of The Two Wives[2] Unfortunately I did not feel the least inclination towards the lady However I was very civil to her, upon which she began to take an affectionate interest in me and lost no opportunity of displaying her talents by giving me the most elaborate advice how best I might advance my position in the world She sent me marvellous letters written in a very far-fetched epistolary style and entirely in Chinese characters, in return for which I felt bound to visit her, and by making her my teacher I managed to learn how to write Chinese poems They were wretched, knock-kneed affairs, but I am still grateful to her for it She was not however at all the sort of woman whom I should have cared to have as a wife, for though there may

[1] Goddess of Beauty

[2] A poem by Po Chü-i pointing out the advantages of marrying a poor wife.

be certain disadvantages in marrying a complete dolt, it is even worse to marry a blue-stocking Still less do princes like you and Genji require so huge a stock of intellect and erudition for your support! Let her but be one to whom the *karma* of our past lives draws us in natural sympathy, what matter if now and again her ignorance distresses us? Come to that, even men seem to me to get along very well without much learning'

Here he stopped, but Genji and the rest, wishing to hear the end of the story, cried out that for their part they found her a most interesting woman Shikibu protested that he did not wish to go on with the story, but at last after much coaxing, pulling a comical wry face he continued 'I had not seen her for a long time. When at last some accident took me to the house, she did not receive me with her usual informality but spoke to me from behind a tiresome screen Ha, Ha, thought I foolishly, she is sulking, now is the time to have a scene and break with her I might have known that she was not so little of a philosopher as to sulk about trifles, she prided herself on knowing the ways of the world and my inconstancy did not in the least disturb her

She told me (speaking without the slightest tremor) that having had a bad cold for some weeks she had taken a strong garlic-cordial, which had made her breath smell rather unpleasant and that for this reason she could not come very close to me But if I had any matter of special importance to discuss with her she was quite prepared to give me her attention All this she had expressed with solemn literary perfection I could think of no suitable reply, and with an "at your service" I rose to go Then, feeling that the interview had not been quite a success, she added, raising her voice, "Please come again when my breath has lost its smell" I could not pretend I had not heard I had however no intention of prolonging my visit, particularly as the odour was now becoming definitely unpleasant, and looking cross I recited the acrostic "On this night marked by the strange behaviour of the spider, how foolish to bid me come back tomorrow" [1] and calling over my shoulder "There is no excuse for you!" I ran out of the room But she, following me, "If night by night and every night we met, in daytime too I should grow bold to meet you face to face" Here in the second sentence she had cleverly concealed the meaning, "If I had had any reason to expect you, I should not have eaten garlic"'

'What a revolting story!' cried the young princes, and then, laughing, 'He must have invented it' 'Such a woman is quite incredible, it must have been some sort of ogress You have shocked us, Shikibu!' and they looked at him with disapproval 'You must try to tell us a better story than that' 'I do not see how any story could be better' said Shikibu, and left the room

[1] There is a reference to an old poem which says 'I know that tonight my lover will come to me. The spider's antics prove it clearly' Omens were drawn from the behaviour of spiders There is also a pun on *furu* 'day' and *furu* 'garlic,' so that an ordinary person would require a few moments' reflection before understanding the poem.

'There is a tendency among men as well as women' said Uma no Kami 'so soon as they have acquired a little knowledge of some kind, to want to display it to the best advantage. To have mastered all the difficulties in the Three Histories and Five Classics is no road to amiability But even a woman cannot afford to lack all knowledge of public and private affairs. Her best way will be without regular study to pick up a little here and a little there, merely by keeping her eyes and ears open Then, if she has her wits at all about her, she will soon find that she has amassed a surprising store of information. Let her be content with this and not insist upon cramming her letters with Chinese characters which do not at all accord with her feminine style of composition, and will make the recipient exclaim in despair "If only she could contrive to be a little less mannish!" And many of these characters, to which she intended the colloquial pronunciation to be given, are certain to be read as Chinese, and this will give the whole composition an even more pedantic sound than it deserves Even among our ladies of rank and fashion there are many of this sort, and there are others who, wishing to master the art of verse-making, in the end allow it to master them, and, slaves to poetry, cannot resist the temptation, however urgent the business they are about or however inappropriate the time, to make use of some happy allusion which has occurred to them, but must needs fly to their desks and work it up into a poem On festival days such a woman is very troublesome For example on the morning of the Iris Festival, when everyone is busy making ready to go to the temple, she will worry them by stringing together all the old tags about the "matchless root", [1] or on the 9th day of the 9th month, when everyone is busy thinking out some difficult Chinese poem to fit the rhymes which have been prescribed, she begins making metaphors about the dew on the chrysanthemums," thus diverting our attention from the far more important business which is in hand At another time we might have found these compositions quite delightful, but by thrusting them upon our notice at inconvenient moments, when we cannot give them proper attention, she makes them seem worse than they really are For in all matters we shall best commend ourselves if we study men's faces to read in them the "Why so?" or the "As you will" and do not, regardless of times and circumstances, demand an interest and sympathy that they have not leisure to give

'Sometimes indeed a woman should even pretend to know less than she knows, or say only a part of what she would like to say'

All this while Genji, though he had sometimes joined in the conversation, had in his heart of hearts been thinking of one person only, and the more he thought the less could he find a single trace of those shortcomings and excesses which, so his friends had declared, were common to

[1] The irises used for the Tango festival (5th day of 5th month) had to have nine flowers growing on a root.

all women 'There is no one like her' he thought, and his heart was very full The conversation indeed had not brought them to a definite conclusion, but it had led to many curious anecdotes and reflections So they passed the night, and at last, for a wonder, the weather had improved After this long residence at the Palace Genji knew he would be expected at the Great Hall and set out at once There was in Princess Aoi's air and dress a dignified precision which had something in it even of stiffness, and in the very act of reflecting that she, above all women, was the type of that single-hearted and devoted wife whom (as his friends had said last night) no sensible man would lightly offend, he found himself oppressed by the very perfection of her beauty, which seemed only to make all intimacy with her the more impossible

He turned to Lady Chunagon, to Nakatsukasa and other attendants of the common sort who were standing near and began to jest with them The day was now very hot, but they thought that flushed cheeks became Prince Genji very well Aoi's father came, and standing behind the curtain, began to converse very amiably Genji, who considered the weather too hot for visits, frowned, at which the ladies-in-waiting tittered Genji, making furious signs at them to be quiet, flung himself on to a divan In fact, he behaved far from well

It was now growing dark Someone said that the position of the Earth Star [1] would make it unlucky for the Prince to go back to the Palace that night, and another 'You are right It is now set dead against him' 'But my own palace is in the same direction!' cried Genji 'How vexing! where then shall I go?' and promptly fell asleep The ladies-in-waiting, however, agreed that it was a very serious matter and began discussing what could be done 'There is Ki no Kami's house said one This Ki no Kami was one of Genji s gentlemen-in-waiting 'It is in the Middle River' she went on, 'and delightfully cool and shady, for they have lately dammed the river and made it flow right through the garden' 'That sounds very pleasant said Genji, waking up, 'besides they are the sort of people who would not mind one's driving right in at the front gate, if one had a mind to' [2]

He had many friends whose houses lay out of the unlucky direction But he feared that if he went to one of them, Aoi would think that, after absenting himself so long, he was now merely using the Earth Star as an excuse for returning to more congenial company He therefore broached the matter to Ki no Kami, who accepted the proposal, but stepping aside whispered to his companions that his father Iyo no Kami, who was absent on service, had asked him to look after his young wife [3] 'I am afraid

[1] The 'Lord of the Centre,' i.e. the planet Saturn

[2] I e. people with whom one can be quite at ease It was usual to unharness one's bulls at the gate.

[3] Ki no Kami's stepmother

we have not sufficient room in the house to entertain him as I could wish.' Genji overhearing this, strove to reassure him, saying 'It will be a pleasure to me to be near the lady A visit is much more agreeable when there is a hostess to welcome us Find me some corner behind her partition !' 'Even then, I fear you may not find ' but breaking off Ki no Kami sent a runner to his house, with orders to make ready an apartment for the Prince Treating a visit to so humble a house as a matter of no importance, he started at once, without even informing the Minister, and taking with him only a few trusted body-servants Ki no Kami protested against the precipitation, but in vain

The servants dusted and aired the eastern side-chamber of the Central Hall and here made temporary quarters for the Prince They were at pains to improve the view from his windows, for example by altering the course of certain rivulets They set up a rustic wattled hedge and filled the borders with the choicest plants The low humming of insects floated on the cool breeze, numberless fireflies wove inextricable mazes in the air The whole party settled down near where the moat flowed under the covered bridge and began to drink wine

Ki no Kami went off in a great bustle, saying that he must find them something to eat Genji, quietly surveying the scene, decided this was one of those middle-class families which in last night's conversation had been so highly commended He remembered that he had heard the lady who was staying in the house well spoken of and was curious to see her He listened and thought that there seemed to be people in the western wing There was a soft rustling of skirts, and from time to time the sound of young and by no means disagreeable voices They did not seem to be much in earnest in their efforts to make their whispering and laughter unheard, for soon one of them opened the sliding window But Ki no Kami crying 'What are you thinking of?' crossly closed it again The light of a candle in the room filtered through a crack in the paper-window. Genji edged slightly closer to the window in the hope of being able to see through the crack, but found that he could see nothing He listened for a while, and came to the conclusion that they were sitting in the main women's apartments, out of which the little front room opened They were speaking very low, but he could catch enough of it to make out that they were talking about him

'What a shame that a fine young Prince should be taken so young and settled down for ever with a lady that was none of his choosing!'

'I understand that marriage does not weigh very heavily upon him' said another This probably meant nothing in particular, but Genji, who imagined they were talking about what was uppermost in his own mind, was appalled at the idea that his relations with Lady Fujitsubo were about to be discussed How could they have found out? But the subsequent conversation of the ladies soon showed that they knew nothing of

the matter at all, and Genji stopped listening Presently he heard them trying to repeat the poem which he had sent with a nosegay of morning-glory to Princess Asagao, daughter of Prince Momozono [1] But they got the lines rather mixed up, and Genji began to wonder whether the lady's appearance would turn out to be on a level with her knowledge of prosody

At this moment Ki no Kami came in with a lamp which he hung on the wall Having carefully trimmed it, he offered Genji a tray of fruit This was all rather dull and Genji by a quotation from an old folk-song hinted that he would like to meet Ki no Kami's other guests The hint was not taken Genji began to doze, and his attendants sat silent and motionless

There were in the room several charming boys, sons of Ki no Kami, some of whom Genji already knew as pages at the Palace There were also numerous sons of Iyo no Kami, with them was a boy of twelve or thirteen who particularly caught Genji s fancy (He began asking whose sons the boys were, and when he came to this one Ki no Kami replied he is the youngest son of the late Chunagon, who loved him dearly, but died while this boy was still a child His sister married my father and that is why he is living here He is quick at his books, and we hope one day to send him to Court, but I fear that his lack of influence

'Poor child! said Genji 'His sister, then, is your stepmother, is that not so? How strange that you should stand in this relationship with so young a girl! And now I come to think of it there was some talk once of her being presented at Court, and I once heard the Emperor asking what had become of her How changeable are the fortunes of the world ' He was trying to talk in a very grown-up way

'Indeed, Sir' answered Ki no Kami, 'her subsequent state was humbler than she had reason to expect But such is our mortal life Yes, yes, and such has it always been We have our ups and downs — and the women even more than the men '

Genji 'But your father no doubt makes much of her?'

Ki no Kami 'Makes much of her indeed! You may well say so She rules his house, and he dotes on her in so wholesale and extravagant a fashion that all of us (and I among the foremost) have had occasion before now to call him to order, but he does not listen '

Genji 'How comes it then that he has left her behind in the house of a fashionable young Courtier? For he looks like a man of prudence and good sense But pray, where is she now?'

Ki no Kami 'The ladies have been ordered to retire to the common room, but they have not yet finished all their preparations '

Genji's followers, who had drunk heavily, were now all lying fast asleep on the verandah He was alone in his room, but could not get to

[1] We learn later that Genji courted this lady in vain from his seventeenth year onward Though she has never been mentioned before, Murasaki speaks of her as though the reader already knew all about her This device is also employed by Marcel Proust.

sleep Having at last dozed for a moment, he woke suddenly and noticed that someone was moving behind the paper-window of the back wall This, he thought, must be where she is hiding, and faintly curious he sauntered in that direction and stood listening 'Where are you?' I say 'Where are you?' whispered someone in a quaint, hoarse voice, which seemed to be that of the boy whom Genji had noticed earlier in the evening 'I am lying over here' another voice answered 'Has the stranger gone to sleep yet? His room must be quite close to this, but all the same how far off he seems!' Her sleepy voice was so like the boy's that Genji concluded this must be his sister

'He is sleeping in the wing, I saw him tonight All that we have heard of him is true enough (He is as handsome as can be' whispered the boy 'I wish it were tomorrow, I want to see him properly' she answered drowsily, her voice seeming to come from under the bed clothes Genji was rather disappointed that she did not ask more questions about him Presently he heard the boy saying 'I am going to sleep over in the corner-room How bad the light is' and he seemed to be trimming the lamp His sister's bed appeared to be in the corner opposite the paper-window 'Where is Chujo?' she called 'I am frightened, I like to have someone close to me' 'Madam' answered several voices from the servants' room, 'she is taking her bath in the lower house She will be back presently' When all was quiet again, Genji slipped back the bolt and tried the door It was not fastened on the other side He found himself in an ante-room with a screen at the end, beyond which a light glimmered In the half-darkness he could see clothes boxes and trunks strewn about in great disorder Quietly threading his way among them, he entered the inner room from which the voices had proceeded One very minute figure was couched there who, to Genji's slight embarrassment, on hearing his approach pushed aside the cloak which covered her, thinking that he was the maid for whom she had sent 'Madam, hearing you call for Chujo [1] I thought that I might now put at your service the esteem in which I have long secretly held you' The lady could make nothing of all this, and terrified out of her wits tried hard to scream But no sound came, for she had buried her face in the bed clothes

'Please listen' said Genji 'This sudden intrusion must of course seem to you very impertinent You do not know that for years I have waited for an occasion to tell you how much I like and admire you, and if tonight I could not resist the temptation of paying this secret visit, pray take the strangeness of my behaviour as proof of my impatience to pay a homage that has long been due' He spoke so courteously and gently and looked so kind that not the devil himself would have taken umbrage at his presence But feeling that the situation was not at all a proper one for a married lady she said (without much conviction) 'I think you have made

[1] Chujo means 'Captain,' which was Genji's rank at the time

a mistake.' She spoke very low. Her bewildered air made her all the more attractive, and Genji, enchanted by her appearance, hastened to answer. 'Indeed I have made no mistake; rather, with no guide but a long-felt deference and esteem, I have found my way unerringly to your side But I see that the suddenness of my visit has made you distrust my purpose Let me tell you then that I have no evil intentions and seek only for someone to talk with me for a while about a matter which perplexes me ' So saying he took her up in his arms (for she was very small) and was carrying her through the ante-room when suddenly Chujo, the servant for whom she had sent before, entered the bedroom Genji gave an astonished cry and the maid, wondering who could have entered the ante-room, began groping her way towards them But coming closer she recognized by the rich perfume of his dress that this could be none other than the Prince And though she was sorely puzzled to know what was afoot, she dared not say a word Had he been an ordinary person, she would soon have had him by the ears 'Nay' she thought 'even if he were not a Prince I should do best to keep my hands off him, for the more stir one makes, the more tongues wag But if I should touch this fine gentleman . ,' and all in a flutter she found herself obediently following Genji to his room Here he calmly closed the door upon her, saying as he did so 'You will come back to fetch your mistress in the morning ' Utsusemi herself was vexed beyond measure at being thus disposed of in the presence of her own waiting-maid, who could indeed draw but one conclusion from what she had seen But to all her misgivings and anxieties Genji, who had the art of improvising a convincing reply to almost any question, answered with such a wealth of ingenuity and tender concern, that for a while she was content But soon becoming again uneasy, 'This must all be a dream — that you, so great a Prince, should stoop to consider so humble a creature as I, and I am overwhelmed by so much kindness But I think you have forgotten what I am A Zuryo's wife! there is no altering that, and you !' Genji now began to realize how deeply he had distressed and disquieted her by his wild behaviour, and feeling thoroughly ashamed of himself he answered 'I am afraid I know very little about these questions of rank and precedence Such things are too confusing to carry in one's head And whatever you may have heard of me I want to tell you for some reason or other I have till this day cared nothing for gallantry nor ever practised it, and that even you cannot be more astonished at what I have done tonight than I myself am ' With this and a score of other speeches he sought to win her confidence But she, knowing that if once their talk became a jot less formal, she would be hard put to it to withstand his singular charm, was determined, even at the risk of seeming stiff and awkward, to show him that in trying so hard to put her at her ease he was only wasting his time, with the result that she behaved very boorishly indeed She was by nature singularly gentle and yielding, so

They could only see him indistinctly across the top of a partition in the verandah Among them was one, perhaps, whose heart beat wildly as she looked ?

The moon had not set, and though with dwindled light still shone crisp and clear in the dawn It was a daybreak of marvellous beauty But in the passionless visage of the sky men read only their own comfort or despair, and Genji, as with many backward glances he went upon his way, paid little heed to the beauty of the dawn He would send her a message? No, even that was utterly impossible And so, in great unhappiness he returned to his wife's house

He would gladly have slept a little, but could not stop trying to invent some way of seeing her again, or when that seemed hopeless, imagining to himself all that must now be going on in her mind She was no great beauty, Genji reflected, and yet one could not say that she was ugly Yes, she was in every sense a member of that Middle Class upon which Uma no Kami had given them so complete a dissertation

He stayed for some while at the Great Hall, and finding that, try as he might, he could not stop thinking about her and longing for her, at last in despair he sent for Ki no Kami and said to him 'Why do you not let me have that boy in my service — the Chunagon's son, whom I saw at your house? He is a likely looking boy, and I might make him my body-servant, or even recommend him to the Emperor ' 'I am sensible of your kindness' said Ki no Kami 'I will mention what you have said to the boy's sister ' This answer irritated Genji, but he continued 'And has this lady given you stepbrothers my lord?' 'Sir, she has been married these two years, but has had no child It seems that in making this marriage she disobeyed her father's last injunctions, and this has set her against her husband '

Genji 'That is sad indeed I am told that she is not ill-looking Is that so?'

Ki no Kami 'I believe she is considered quite passable But I have had very little to do with her Intimacy between stepchildren and step-parents is indeed proverbially difficult '

Five or six days afterwards Ki no Kami brought the boy He was not exactly handsome, but he had great charm and (thought Genji) an air of distinction The Prince spoke very kindly to him and soon completely won his heart To Genji's many questions about his sister he made such answers as he could, and when he seemed embarrassed or tongue-tied Genji found some less direct way of finding out what he v anted to know, and soon put the boy at his ease For though he vaguely realized what was going on and thought it rather odd, he was so young that he made no effort to understand it, and without further question carried back a letter from Genji to his sister

She was so much agitated by the sight of it that she burst into tears

and, lest her brother should perceive them, held the letter in front of her face while she read it. It was very long Among much else it contained the verse 'Would that I might dream that dream again! Alas, since first this wish was mine, not once have my eyelids closed in sleep'

She had never seen such beautiful writing, and as she read, a haze clouded her eyes What incomprehensible fate had first dragged her down to be the wife of a Zuryo, and then for a moment raised her so high? Still pondering, she went to her room.

Next day, Genji again sent for the boy, who went to his sister saying 'I am going to Prince Genji Where is your answer to his letter?' 'Tell him' she answered 'that there is no one here who reads such letters' The boy burst out laughing 'Why, you silly, how could I say such a thing to him He told me himself to be sure to bring an answer' It infuriated her to think that Genji should have thus taken the boy into his confidence and she answered angrily, 'He has no business to talk to you about such things at your age If that is what you talk about you had better not go to him any more.' 'But he sent for me' said the boy, and started off

'I was waiting for you all yesterday' said Genji when the boy returned 'Did you forget to bring the answer? Did you forget to come?' The child blushed and made no reply 'And now?' 'She said there is no one at home who reads such letters' 'How silly, what can be the use of saying such things?' and he wrote another letter and gave it to the boy, saying 'I expect you do not know that I used to meet your sister before her marriage She treats me in this scornful fashion because she looks upon me as a poor-spirited, defenceless creature Whereas she has now a mighty Deputy Governor to look after her But I hope that you will promise to be my child, not his For he is very old, and will not be able to take care of you for long'

The boy was quite content with this explanation, and admired Genji more than ever The prince kept him always at his side, even taking him to the Palace And he ordered his Chamberlain to see to it that he was provided with a little Court suit Indeed he treated him just as though he were his own child

Genji continued to send letters, but she, thinking that the boy, young as he was, might easily allow a message to fall into the wrong hands and that then she would lose her fair name to no purpose, feeling too (that however much he desired it) between persons so far removed in rank there could be no lasting union, she answered his letters only in the most formal terms

Dark though it had been during most of the time they were together, she yet had a clear recollection of his appearance, and could not deny to herself that she thought him uncommonly handsome But she very much doubted if he on his side really knew what she was like, indeed she felt sure that the next time they met he would think her very plain and all would be over

Genji meanwhile thought about her continually He was for ever calling back to memory each incident of that one meeting, and every recollection filled him with longing and despair He remembered how sad she had looked when she spoke to him of herself, and he longed to make her happier He thought of visiting her in secret But the risk of discovery was too great, and the consequences likely to be more fatal to her even than to himself

He had been many days at the Palace, when at last the Earth Star again barred the road to his home He set out at once, but on the way pretended that he had just remembered the unfavourable posture of the stars There was nothing to do but seek shelter again in the house on the Middle River Ki no Kami was surprised but by no means ill pleased, for he attributed Genji's visit to the amenity of the little pools and fountains which he had constructed in his garden

Genji had told the boy in the morning that he intended to visit the Middle River, and since he had now become the Prince's constant companion, he was sent for at once to wait upon him in his room He had already given a message to his sister, in which Genji told her of his plan She could not but feel flattered at the knowledge that it was on her account he had contrived this ingenious excuse for coming to the house Yet she had, as we have seen, for some reason got it into her head that at a leisurely meeting she would not please him as she had done at that first fleeting and dreamlike encounter, and she dreaded adding a new sorrow to the burden of her thwarted and unhappy existence Too proud to let him think that she had posted herself in waiting for him, she said to her servants (while the boy was busy in Genji's room) 'I do not care to be at such close quarters with our guest, besides I am stiff, and would like to be massaged, I must go where there is more room,' and so saying she made them carry her things to the maid Chujo's bedroom in the cross-wing

Genji had purposely sent his attendants early to bed, and now that all was quiet, he hastened to send her a message But the boy could not find her At last when he had looked in every corner of the house, he tried the cross-wing, and succeeded in tracking her down to Chujo's room It was too bad of her to hide like this, and half in tears he gasped out, 'Oh how can you be so horrid? What will he think of you?' 'You have no business to run after me like this,' she answered angrily 'It is very wicked for children to carry such messages But,' she added, 'you may tell him I am not well, that my ladies are with me, and I am going to be massaged ' So she dismissed him, but in her heart of hearts she was thinking that if such an adventure had happened to her while she was still a person of consequence, before her father died and left her to shift for herself in the world, she would have known how to enjoy it But now she must force herself to look askance at all his kindness How tiresome he must think her! And she fretted so much at not being free to fall in love with him,

that in the end she was more in love than ever But then she remembered suddenly that her lot had long ago been cast She was a wife There was no sense in thinking of such things, and she made up her mind once and for all never again to let foolish ideas enter her head

Genji lay on his bed, anxiously waiting to see with what success so young a messenger would execute his delicate mission When at last the answer came, astonished at this sudden exhibition of coldness, he exclaimed in deep mortification, 'This is a disgrace, a hideous disgrace,' and he looked very rueful indeed For a while he said no more, but lay sighing deeply, in great distress At last he recited the poem 'I knew not the nature of the strange tree[1] that stands on Sono plain, and when I sought the comfort of its shade, I did but lose my road,' and sent it to her She was still awake, and answered with the poem 'Too like am I in these my outcast years to the dim tree that dwindles from the traveller's approaching gaze' The boy was terribly sorry for Genji and did not feel sleepy at all, but he was afraid people would think his continual excursions very strange By this time, however, everyone else in the house was sound asleep Genji alone lay plunged in the blackest melancholy But even while he was raging at the inhuman stubbornness of her new-found and incomprehensible resolve, he found that he could not but admire her the more for this invincible tenacity At last he grew tired of lying awake, there was no more to be done A moment later he had changed his mind again, and suddenly whispered to the boy, 'Take me to where she is hiding!' 'It is too difficult,' he said, 'she is locked in and there are so many people there I am afraid to go with you' 'So be it,' said Genji, 'but you at least must not abandon me,' and he laid the boy beside him on his bed He was well content to find himself lying by this handsome young Prince's side, and Genji, we must record, found the boy no bad substitute for his ungracious sister

[1] The *hahakigi* or 'broom-tree' when seen in the distance appears to offer ample shade, but when approached turns out to be a skimpy bush

CHAPTER III

Utsusemi

GENJI was still sleepless 'No one has ever disliked me before, he whispered to the boy 'It is more than I can bear I am sick of myself and of the world, and do not want to go on living any more ' This sounded so tragic that the boy began to weep The smallness and delicacy of his build, even the way in which his hair was cropped, gave him an astonishing resemblance to his sister, thought Genji, who found his sympathy very endearing At times he had half thought of creeping away from the boy's side and searching on his own account for the lady's hiding-place, but soon abandoned a project which would only have involved him in the most appalling scandal So he lay, waiting for the dawn At last, while it was still dark, so full of his own thoughts that he quite forgot to make his usual parting speech to his young page, he left the house The boy's feelings were very much hurt, and all that day he felt lonely and injured The lady, when no answer came from Genji, thought that he had changed his mind, and though she would have been very angry if he had persisted in his suit, she was not quite prepared to lose him with so little ado

But this was a good opportunity once and for all to lock up her heart against him She thought that she had done so successfully, but found to her surprise that he still occupied an uncommonly large share of her thoughts

Genji, though he felt it would have been much better to put the whole business out of his head, knew that he had not the strength of mind to do so and at last, unable to bear his wretchedness any longer he said to the boy, 'I am feeling very unhappy I keep on trying to think of other things, but my thoughts will not obey me I can struggle no longer You must watch for a suitable occasion, and then contrive some way of bringing me into the presence of your sister ' This worried the boy, but he was inwardly flattered at the confidence which Genji placed in him And an opportunity soon presented itself

Ki no Kami had been called away to the provinces, and there were only women in the house One evening when dusk had settled upon the quiet streets the boy brought a carriage to fetch him He knew that the lad would do his best, but not feeling quite safe in the hands of so young an accomplice, he put on a disguise, and then in his impatience, not waiting even to see the gates closed behind him, he drove off at top speed They entered unobserved at a side-gate, and here he bade Genji descend The brother knew that as he was only a boy, the watchman and gardeners would not pay any particular attention to his movements, and so he was

not at all uneasy Hiding Genji in the porch of the double-door of the eastern wing, he purposely banged against the sliding partition which separated this wing from the main part of the house, and that the maids might have the impression he did not mind who heard him enter he called out crossly, 'Why is the door shut on a hot night like this?' '"My lady of the West"[1] has been here since this morning, and she is playing *go* with my other lady' Longing to catch sight of her, even though she were with a companion, Genji stole from his hiding-place, and crept through a gap in the curtains The partition door through which the boy had passed was still open, and he could see through it, right along the corridor into the room on the other side The screen which protected the entrance of this room was partly folded, and the curtains which usually concealed the divan had, owing to the great heat, been hooked up out of the way, so that he had an excellent view

The lady sitting near the lamp, half-leaning against the middle pillar must, he supposed, be his beloved He looked closely at her She seemed to be wearing an unlined, dark purple dress, with some kind of scarf thrown over her shoulders The poise of her head was graceful, but her extreme smallness had the effect of making her seem somewhat insignificant She seemed to be trying all the while to hide her face from her companion, and there was something furtive about the movements of her slender hands, which she seemed never to show for more than a moment

Her companion was sitting right opposite him, and he could see her perfectly She wore an underdress of thin white stuff, and thrown carelessly over it a cloak embroidered with red and blue flowers The dress was not fastened in front, showing a bare neck and breast, showing even the little red sash which held up her drawers She had indeed an engagingly free and easy air Her skin was very white and delicate, she was rather plump, but tall and well built The poise of her head and angle of her brow were faultless, the expression of her mouth and eyes was very pleasing and her appearance altogether most delightful Her hair grew very thick, but was cut short so as to hang on a level with her shoulders. It was very fine and smooth How exciting it must be to have such a girl for one's daughter! Small wonder if Iyo no Kami was proud of her If she was a little less restless, he thought, she would be quite perfect

The game was nearly over, she was clearing away the unwanted pieces She seemed to be very excitable and was making a quite unnecessary commotion about the business 'Wait a little,' said her companion very quietly, 'here there is a stalemate My only move is to counter-attack over there' 'It is all over,' said the other impatiently 'I am beaten, let us count the score', and she began counting, 'ten, twenty, thirty, forty' on her fingers Genji could not help remembering the old song about the wash-house at Iyo ('eight tubs to the left, nine tubs to the right') and as this

[1] Ki no Kami's sister, referred to later in the story as Nokiba no Ogi

lady of Iyo determined that nothing should be left unsettled, went on stolidly counting her losses and gains, he thought her for the moment slightly common It was strange to contrast her with Utsusemi,[1] who sat silent, her face half-covered, so that he could scarcely discern her features But when he looked at her fixedly, she, as though uneasy under this gaze of which she was not actually aware, shifted in her seat, and showed him her full profile Her eyelids gave the impression of being a little swollen, and there was at places a certain lack of delicacy in the lines of her features, while her good points were not visible But when she began to speak, it was as though she were determined to make amends for the deficiencies of her appearance and show that she had, if not so much beauty, at any rate more sense than her companion

The latter was now flaunting her charms with more and more careless abandonment Her continual laughter and high spirits were certainly rather engaging, and she seemed in her way to be a most entertaining person He did not imagine that she was very virtuous, but that was far from being altogether a disadvantage

It amused him very much to see people behaving quite naturally together He had lived in an atmosphere of ceremony and reserve This peep at everyday life was a most exciting novelty, and though he felt slightly uneasy at spying in this deliberate way upon two persons who had no notion that they were observed, he would gladly have gone on looking, when suddenly the boy, who had been sitting by his sister's side, got up, and Genji slipped back again into his proper hiding-place The boy was full of apologies at having left him waiting for so long: But I am afraid nothing can be done today, there is still a visitor in her room ' 'And am I now to go home again?' said Genji, 'that is really too much to ask ' 'No, no, stay here, I will try what can be done, when the visitor has gone ' Genji felt quite sure that the boy would manage to find some way of cajoling his sister, for he had noticed that though a mere child, he had a way of quietly observing situations and characters, and making use of his knowledge

The game of *go* must now be over A rustling of skirts and pattering of feet showed that the household was now retiring to rest 'Where is the young master?' Genji heard a servant saying, 'I am going to fasten this partition door,' and there was the sound of bolts being slipped 'They have all gone to bed,' said Genji, 'now is the time to think of a plan ' The boy knew that it would be no use arguing with his sister or trying beforehand in any way to bend her obstinate resolution The best thing to be done under the circumstances was to wait till no one was about, and then lead Genji straight to her 'Is Ki no Kami's sister still here?' asked

[1] This name means 'cicada' and is given to her later in the story in reference to the scarf which she 'discarded as a cicada sheds its husk.' But at this point it becomes grammatically important that she should have a name and I therefore anticipate.

She opened her eyes She was naturally somewhat startled, but did not seem to be at all seriously put out She was a thoughtless creature in whose life no very strong emotion had ever played a part Hers was the flippancy that goes with inexperience, and even this sudden visitation did not seem very much to perturb her

He meant at first to explain that it was not to see her that he had come But to do so would have been to give away the secret which Utsusemi so jealously guarded from the world There was nothing for it, but to pretend that his repeated visits to the house, of which the lady was well aware, had been made in the hope of meeting her! This was a story which would not have withstood the most cursory examination, but, outrageous as it was, the girl accepted it without hesitation

He did not by any means dislike her, but at that moment all his thoughts were busy with the lady who had so mysteriously vanished No doubt she was congratulating herself in some safe hiding-place upon the absurd situation in which she had left him Really, she was the most obstinate creature in the world! What was the use of running after her? But all the same she continued to obsess him

But the girl in front of him was young and gay and charming They were soon getting on very well together

'Is not this kind of thing much more amusing than what happens with people whom one knows?' asked Genji a little later ' Do not think unkindly of me Our meeting must for the present remain a secret I am in a position which does not always allow me to act as I please Your people too would no doubt interfere if they should hear of it, which would be very tiresome Wait patiently, and do not forget me ' These rather tepid injunctions did not strike her as at all unsatisfactory, and she answered very seriously 'I am afraid it will not be very easy for me even to write to you People would think it very odd ' 'Of course we must not let ordinary people into our secret,' he answered, 'but there is no reason why this little page should not sometimes carry a message Meanwhile not a word to anyone!' And with that he left her, taking as he did so Utsusemi's thin scarf which had slipped from her shoulders when she fled from the room

He went to wake his page who was lying not far away The boy sprang instantly to his feet, for he was sleeping very lightly, not knowing when his help might be required He opened the door as quietly as he could 'Who is that?' someone called out in great alarm It was the voice of an old woman who worked in the house 'It is I,' answered the boy uneasily 'What are you walking about here for at this time of night?' and scolding as she came, she began to advance towards the door 'Bother her,' thought the boy, but he answered hastily, 'It's all right, I am only going outside for a minute', but just as Genji passed through the door, the moon of dawn suddenly emerged in all her brightness Seeing a grown

man's figure appear in the doorway, 'Whom have you got with you?' the old lady asked, and then answering her own question, 'Why it is Mimbu! what an outrageous height that girl has grown to!' and continuing to imagine that the boy was walking with Mimbu, a maid-servant whose lankiness was a standing joke in the house, 'and you will soon be as big as she is, little Master!' she cried, and so saying came out through the door that they had just passed through. Genji felt very uncomfortable, and making no answer on the supposed Mimbu's behalf, he stood in the shadow at the end of the corridor, hiding himself as best he could 'You have been on duty, haven't you dear?' said the old lady as she came towards them 'I have been terribly bad with the colic since yesterday and was lying up, but they were shorthanded last night, and I had to go and help, though I did feel very queer all the while ' And then, without waiting for them to answer, 'Oh, my pain, my poor pain,' she muttered 'I can't stop here talking like this' and she hobbled past them without looking up

So narrow an escape made Genji wonder more than ever whether the whole thing was worth while He drove back to his house, with the boy riding as his postillion

Here he told him the story of his evening's adventure 'A pretty mess you made of it!' And when he had finished scolding the boy for his incompetence, he began to rail at the sister's irritating prudishness The poor child felt very unhappy, but could think of nothing to say in his own or his sister's defence

'I am utterly wretched,' said Genji 'It is obvious that she would not have behaved as she did last night unless she absolutely detested me But she might at least have the decency to send civil answers to my letters Oh, well, I suppose Iyo no Kami is the better man ' So he spoke, thinking that she desired only to be rid of him Yet when at last he lay down to rest, he was wearing her scarf hidden under his dress He had put the boy by his side, and after giving much vent to his exasperation, he said at last, 'I am very fond of you, but I am afraid in future I shall always think of you in connection with this hateful business, and that will put an end to our friendship ' He said it with such conviction that the boy felt quite forlorn

For a while they rested, but Genji could not sleep, and at dawn he sent in haste for his ink-stone He did not write a proper letter, but scribbled on a piece of folded paper, in the manner of a writing exercise, a poem in which he compared the scarf which she had dropped in her flight to the dainty husk which the cicada sheds on some bank beneath a tree

The boy picked the paper up, and thrust it into the folds of his dress

Genji was very much distressed at the thought of what the other lady's feelings must be, but after some reflection he decided that it would be better not to send any message

The scarf, to which still clung the delicate perfume of its owner, he wore for long afterwards beneath his dress

When the boy got home he found his sister waiting for him in very ill-humour 'It was not your doing that I escaped from the odious quandary in which you landed me! And even so pray what explanation can I offer to my friend?' 'A fine little clown the Prince must think you now I hope you are ashamed of yourself'

Despite the fact that both parties were using him so ill, the boy drew the rescued verses from out the folds of his dress and handed them to her She could not forbear to read them What of this discarded mantle? Why should he speak of it? *The coat that the fishers of Iseo left lying upon the shore* [1] those were the words that came into her mind, but they were not the clue She was sorely puzzled

Meanwhile the Lady of the West [2] was feeling very ill at ease She was longing to talk about what had happened, but must not do so, and had to bear the burden of her impatience all alone The arrival of Utsusemi's brother put her into a great state of excitement No letter for her? she could not understand it at all, and for the first time a cloud settled upon her gay confiding heart

Utsusemi, though she had so fiercely steeled herself against his love, seeing such tenderness hidden under the words of his message, again fell to longing that she were free, and though there was no undoing what was done she found it so hard to go without him that she took up the folded paper and wrote in the margin a poem in which she said that her sleeve, so often wet with tears, was like the cicada's dew-drenched wing

[1] Allusion to the old poem, 'Does he know that since he left me my eyes are wet as the coat that the fishers left lying upon the shore?'

[2] The visitor

CHAPTER IV

Yugao

IT was at the time when he was secretly visiting the lady of the Sixth Ward [1] One day on his way back from the Palace he thought that he would call upon his foster-mother who, having for a long while been very ill, had become a nun She lived in the Fifth Ward After many enquiries he managed to find the house, but the front gate was locked and he could not drive in He sent one of his servants for Koremitsu, his foster-nurse's son, and while he was waiting began to examine the rather wretched-looking by-street The house next door was fenced with a new paling, above which at one place were four or five panels of open trellis-work, screened by blinds which were very white and bare Through chinks in these blinds a number of foreheads could be seen They seemed to belong to a group of ladies who must be peeping with interest into the street below

At first he thought they had merely peeped out as they passed, but he soon realized that if they were standing on the floor they must be giants No, evidently they had taken the trouble to climb on to some table or bed, which was surely rather odd!

He had come in a plain coach with no outriders No one could possibly guess who he was, and feeling quite at his ease he leant forward and deliberately examined the house The gate, also made of a kind of trellis-work, stood ajar, and he could see enough of the interior to realize that it was a very humble and poorly furnished dwelling For a moment he pitied those who lived in such a place, but then he remembered the song 'Seek not in the wide world to find a home, but where you chance to rest, call that your house', and again, 'Monarchs may keep their palaces of jade, for in a leafy cottage two can sleep'

There was a wattled fence over which some ivy-like creeper spread its cool green leaves, and among the leaves were white flowers with petals half-unfolded like the lips of people smiling at their own thoughts 'They are called Yugao, Evening Faces,' one of his servants told him, 'how strange to find so lovely a crowd clustering on this deserted wall!' And indeed it was a most strange and delightful thing to see how on the narrow tenement in a poor quarter of the town they had clambered over rickety eaves and gables and spread wherever there was room for them to grow He sent one of his servants to pick some The man entered at the half-opened door, and had begun to pluck the flowers, when a little girl in a long yellow tunic came through a quite genteel sliding door, and holding out towards Genji's servant a white fan heavily perfumed with in-

[1] Lady Rokujo Who she was gradually becomes apparent in the course of the story

cense, she said to him, 'Would you like something to put them on? I am afraid you have chosen a wretched-looking bunch,' and she handed him the fan Just as he was opening the gate on his way back, the old nurse's son Koremitsu came out of the other house full of apologies for having kept Genji waiting so long — 'I could not find the key of the gate,' he said 'Fortunately the people of this humble quarter were not likely to recognize you and press or stare, but I am afraid you must have been very much bored waiting in this hugger-mugger back street,' and he conducted Genji into the house Koremitsu's brother, the deacon, his brother-in-law Mikawa no Kami and his sister all assembled to greet the Prince, delighted by a visit with which they had not thought he was ever likely to honour them again

The nun too rose from her couch 'For a long time I had been waiting to give up the world, but one thing held me back I wanted you to see your old nurse just once again as you used to know her You never came to see me, and at last I gave up waiting and took my vows. Now, in reward for the penances which my Order enjoins, I have got back a little of my health, and having seen my dear young master again, I can wait with a quiet mind for the Lord Amida's Light,' and in her weakness she shed a few tears

'I heard some days ago,' said Genji, 'that you were very dangerously ill, and was in great anxiety It is sad now to find you in this penitential garb You must live longer yet, and see me rise in the world, that you may be born again high in the ninth sphere of Amida's Paradise For they say that those who died with longings unfulfilled are burdened with an evil Karma in their life to come'

People such as old nurses regard even the most blackguardly and ill-favoured foster-children as prodigies of beauty and virtue Small wonder then if Genji's nurse, who had played so great a part in his early life, always regarded her office as immensely honourable and important, and tears of pride came into her eyes while he spoke to her

The old lady's children thought it very improper that their mother, having taken holy orders, should show so lively an interest in a human career. Certain that Genji himself would be very much shocked, they exchanged uneasy glances He was on the contrary deeply touched 'When I was a child,' he said, those who were dearest to me were early taken away, and although there were many who gave a hand to my upbringing, it was to you only, dear nurse, that I was deeply and tenderly attached When I grew up I could not any longer be often in your company I have not even been able to come here and see you as often as I wanted to But in all the long time which has passed since I was last here, I have thought a great deal about you and wished that life did not force so many bitter partings upon us'

So he spoke tenderly The princely scent of the sleeve which he had

raised to brush away his tears filled the low and narrow room, and even the young people, who had till now been irritated by their mother's obvious pride at having been the nurse of so splendid a prince, found themselves in tears

Having arranged for continual masses to be said on the sick woman s behalf, he took his leave, ordering Koremitsu to light him with a candle As they left the house he looked at the fan upon which the white flowers had been laid He now saw that there was writing on it, a poem carelessly but elegantly scribbled 'The flower that puzzled you was but the *Yugao*, strange beyond knowing in its dress of shining dew ' It was written with a deliberate negligence which seemed to aim at concealing the writer's status and identity But for all that the hand showed a breeding and distinction which agreeably surprised him 'Who lives in the house on the left?' he asked Koremitsu, who did not at all want to act as a go-between, replied that he had only been at his mother's for five or six days and had been so much occupied by her illness that he had not asked any questions about the neighbours 'I want to know for a quite harmless reason,' said Genji 'There is something about this fan which raises a rather important point. I positively must settle it You would oblige me by making enquiries from someone who knows the neighbourhood ' Koremitsu went at once to the house next door and sent for the steward 'This house,' the man said, 'belongs to a certain Titular-Prefect He is living in the country, but my lady is still here, and as she is young and loves company, her brothers who are in service at the Court often come here to visit her ' 'And that is about all one can expect a servant to know,' said Koremitsu when he repeated this information It occurred at once to Genji that it was one of these Courtiers who had written the poem Yes, there was certainly a self-confident air in the writing It was by someone whose rank entitled him to have a good opinion of himself But he was romantically disposed, it was too painful to dismiss altogether the idea that, after all, the verses might really have been meant for him, and on a folded paper he wrote 'Could I but get a closer view, no longer would they puzzle me — the flowers that all too dimly in the gathering dusk I saw ' This he wrote in a disguised hand and gave to his servant The man reflected that though the senders of the fan had never seen Genji before, yet so well known were his features, that even the glimpse they had got from the window might easily have revealed to them his identity He could imagine the excitement with which the fan had been despatched and the disappointment when for so long a time no answer came His somewhat rudely belated arrival would seem to them to have been purposely contrived They would all be agog to know what was in the reply, and he felt very nervous as he approached the house

Meanwhile, lighted only by a dim torch, Genji quietly left his nurse's home The blinds of the other house were now drawn and only the firefly glimmer of a candle shone through the gap between them

When he reached his destination [1] a very different scene met his eyes A handsome park, a well-kept garden, how spacious and comfortable it all was! And soon the magnificent owner of these splendours had driven from his head all thought of the wooden paling, the shutters and the flowers

He stayed longer than he intended, and the sun was already up when he set out for home Again he passed the house with the shutters He had driven through the quarter countless times without taking the slightest interest in it, but that one small episode of the fan had suddenly made his daily passage through these streets an event of great importance He looked about him eagerly, and would have liked to know who lived in all the houses

For several days Koremitsu did not present himself at Genji's palace When at last he came, he explained that his mother was growing much weaker and it was very difficult for him to get away Then drawing nearer, he said in a low voice, 'I made some further enquiries, but could not find out much It seems that someone came very secretly in June and has been living there ever since, but who she really is not even her own servants know I have once or twice peeped through a hole in the hedge and caught a glimpse of some young women, but their skirts were rolled back and tucked in at their belts, so I think they must have been waiting-maids Yesterday somewhile after sunset I saw a lady writing a letter Her face was calm, but she looked very unhappy, and I noticed that some of her women were secretly weeping' Genji was more curious than ever

Though his master was of a rank which brought with it great responsibilities, Koremitsu knew that in view of his youth and popularity the young prince would be thought to be positively neglecting his duty if he did not indulge in a few escapades, and that everyone would regard his conduct as perfectly natural and proper even when it was such as they would not have dreamed of permitting to ordinary people

'Hoping to get a little further information,' he said, 'I found an excuse for communicating with her, and received in reply a very well-worded answer in a cultivated hand She must be a girl of quite good position' 'You must find out more,' said Genji, 'I shall not be happy till I know all about her'

Here perhaps was just such a case as they had imagined on that rainy night a lady whose outward circumstances seemed to place her in that Lowest Class' which they had agreed to dismiss as of no interest, but who in her own person showed qualities by no means despicable

But to return for a moment to Utsusemi Her unkindness had not affected him as it would have affected most people If she had encouraged him he would soon have regarded the affair as an appalling indiscretion which he must put an end to at all costs, whereas now he brooded con-

[1] Lady Rokujo's house

tinually upon his defeat and was for ever plotting new ways to shake her resolution

He had never, till the day of his visit to the foster-nurse, been interested in anyone of quite the common classes. But now, since that rainy night's conversation, he had explored (so it seemed to him) every corner of society, including in his survey even those categories which his friends had passed over as utterly remote and improbable. He thought of the lady who had, so to speak, been thrown into his life as an extra. With how confiding an air she had promised that she would wait! He was very sorry about her but he was afraid that if he wrote to her Utsusemi might find out and that would prejudice his chances. He would write to her afterwards.

Suddenly at this point Iyo no Suke himself was announced. He had just returned from his province, and had lost no time in paying his respects to the Prince. The long journey by boat had made him look rather swarthy and haggard. 'Really,' thought Genji, 'he is not at all an attractive man!' Still it was possible to talk to him, for if a man is of decent birth and breeding, however broken he may be by age or misfortune, he will always retain a certain refinement of mind and manners which prevent him from becoming merely repulsive. They were beginning to discuss the affairs of Iyo's province and Genji was even joking with him, when a sudden feeling of embarrassment came over him. Why should those recollections make him feel so awkward? Iyo no Suke was quite an old man, it had done him no harm. 'These scruples are absurd,' thought Genji. However, she was right in thinking it was too queer, too ill-assorted a match, and remembering Uma no Kami's warnings, he felt that he had behaved badly. Though her unkindness still deeply wounded him, he was almost glad for Iyo's sake that she had not relented.

'My daughter is to be married,' Iyo was saying, 'and I am going to take my wife back with me to my province.' Here was a double surprise. At all costs he must see Utsusemi once again. He spoke with her brother and the boy discussed the matter with her. It would have been difficult enough for anyone to have carried on an intrigue with the Prince under such circumstances as these. But for her, so far below him in rank and beset by new restrictions, it had now become unthinkable. She could not however bear to lose all contact with him, and not only did she answer his letters much more kindly than before, but took pains, though they were written with apparent negligence, to add little touches that would give him pleasure and make him see that she still cared for him. All this he noticed, and though he was vexed that she would not relent towards him, he found it impossible to put her out of his mind.

As for the other girl, he did not think that she was at all the kind of person to go on pining for him once she was properly settled with a husband, and he now felt quite happy about her.

It was autumn Genji had brought so many complications into his life that he had for some while been very irregular in his visits to the Great Hall, and was in great disgrace there The lady [1] in the grand mansion was very difficult to get on with, but he had surmounted so many obstacles in his courtship of her that to give her up the moment he had won her seemed absurd Yet he could not deny that the blind intoxicating passion which possessed him while she was still unattainable, had almost disappeared To begin with, she was far too sensitive, then there was the disparity of their ages,[2] and the constant dread of discovery which haunted him during those painful partings at small hours of the morning In fact, there were too many disadvantages

It was a morning when mist lay heavy over the garden After being many times roused Genji at last came out of Rokujo's room, looking very cross and sleepy One of the maids lifted part of the folding-shutter, seeming to invite her mistress to watch the Prince's departure Rokujo pulled aside the bed-curtains and tossing her hair back over her shoulders looked out into the garden So many lovely flowers were growing in the borders that Genji halted for a while to enjoy them How beautiful he looked standing there, she thought As he was nearing the portico the maid who had opened the shutters came and walked by his side She wore a light green skirt exquisitely matched to the season and place, it was so hung as to show to great advantage the grace and suppleness of her stride Genji looked round at her 'Let us sit down for a minute on the railing here in the corner,' he said 'She seems very shy,' he thought, 'but how charmingly her hair falls about her shoulders,' and he recited the poem

Though I would not be thought to wander heedlessly from flower to flower, yet this morning's pale convolvulus I fain would pluck!'

As he said the lines he took her hand and she answered with practised ease

You hasten, I observe, to admire the morning flowers while the mist still lies about them,' thus parrying the compliment by a verse which might be understood either in a personal or general sense At this moment a very elegant page wearing the most bewitching baggy trousers came among the flowers brushing the dew as he walked, and began to pick a bunch of the convolvuli Genji longed to paint the scene

No one could see him without pleasure. He was like the flowering tree under whose shade even the rude mountain peasant delights to rest And so great was the fascination he exercised that those who knew him longed to offer him whatever was dearest to them One who had a favourite daughter would ask for nothing better than to make her Genji's handmaiden Another who had an exquisite sister was ready for her to serve in his household, though it were at the most menial tasks Still less could these ladies who on such occasions as this were privileged to converse with him and stare at him as much as they pleased, and were moreover

[1] Rokujo [2] Genji was now seventeen, Rokujo twenty-four

young people of much sensibility — how could they fail to delight in his company and note with much uneasiness that his visits were becoming far less frequent than before?

But where have I got to? Ah, yes Koremitsu had patiently continued the enquiry with which Genji entrusted him 'Who the mistress is,' he said, 'I have not been able to discover, and for the most part she is at great pains not to show herself But more than once in the general confusion, when there was the sound of a carriage coming along past that great row of tenement houses, and all the maid-servants were peering out into the road, the young lady whom I suppose to be the mistress of the house slipped out along with them I could not see her clearly, but she seemed to be very pretty

'One day, seeing a carriage with outriders coming towards the house, one of the maids rushed off calling out 'Ukon, Ukon, come quickly and look The Captain's carriage is coming this way' At once a pleasant-faced lady no longer young, came bustling out "Quietly, quietly," she said holding up a warning finger, 'how do you know it is the Captain? I shall have to go and look," and she slipped out A sort of rough drawbridge leads from the garden into the lane In her excitement the good lady caught her skirt in it and falling flat on her face almost tumbled into the ditch ' A bad piece of work His Holiness of Katsuragi [1] made here!" she grumbled, but her curiosity did not seem to be at all damped and she stared harder than ever at the approaching carriage The visitor was dressed in a plain, wide cloak He had attendants with him, whose names the excited servant-girls called out as one after another they came near enough to be recognized, and the odd thing is that the names were certainly those of To no Chujo's [2] grooms and pages '

'I must see that carriage for myself,' said Genji What if this should be the very lady whom Chujo, at the time of that rainy night's conversation, despaired of rediscovering? Koremitsu, noting that Genji was listening with particular attention continued 'I must tell you that I too have reason to be interested in this house, and while making enquiries on my own account I discovered that the young lady always addresses the other girls in the house as though they were her equals But when, pretending to be taken in by this comedy, I began visiting there, I noticed that though the older ladies played their part very well, the young girls would every now and then curtsey or slip in a 'My Lady ' without thinking, whereupon the others would hasten to cover up the mistake as best they might, saying anything they could think of to make it appear that there was no mistress among them, and Koremitsu laughed as he recollected it

Next time I come to visit your mother,' said Genji, 'you must let me

[1] The god of bridges He built in a single night the stone causeway which joins Mount Katsuragi and Mount Kombu

[2] Genji's brother-in-law

have a chance of peeping at them' He pictured to himself the queer, tumbled-down house She was only living there for the time being, but all the same she must surely belong to that bottom class which they had dismissed as having no possible bearing on the discussion How amusing it would be to show that they were wrong and that after all something of interest might be discovered in such a place!

Koremitsu, anxious to carry out his master's every wish and intent also on his own intrigue, contrived at last by a series of ingenious stratagems to effect a secret meeting between Genji and the mysterious lady The details of the plan by which he brought this about would make a tedious story, and as is my rule in such cases I have thought it better to omit them

Genji never asked her by what name he was to call her, nor did he reveal his own identity. He came very poorly dressed and — what was most unusual for him — on foot But Koremitsu regarded this as too great a tribute to so unimportant a lady, and insisted upon Genji riding his horse, while he walked by his side In doing so he sacrificed his own feelings, for he too had reasons for wishing to create a good impression in the house, and he knew that by arriving in this rather undignified way he would sink in the estimation of the inhabitants Fortunately his discomfiture was almost unwitnessed, for Genji took with him only the one attendant who had on the first occasion plucked the flowers — a boy whom no one was likely to recognize, and lest suspicions should be aroused, he did not even take advantage of his presence in the neighbourhood to call at his foster-nurse's house

The lady was very much mystified by all these precautions and made great efforts to discover something more about him She even sent someone after him to see where he went to when he left her at daybreak, but he succeeded in throwing his pursuer off the scent and she was no wiser than before He was now growing far too fond of her He was miserable if anything interfered with his visits, and though he utterly disapproved of his own conduct and worried a great deal about it, he soon found that he was spending most of his time at her house

He knew that at some time or another in their lives even the soberest people lose their heads in this way, but hitherto he had never really lost his, or done anything which could possibly have been considered very wrong Now to his astonishment and dismay he discovered that even the few morning hours during which he was separated from her were becoming unendurable 'What is it in her that makes me behave like a madman?' he kept on asking himself She was astonishingly gentle and unassuming, to the point even of seeming rather apathetic, rather deficient perhaps in depth of character and emotion, and though she had a certain air of girlish inexperience, it was clear that he was not by any means her first lover, and certainly she was rather plebeian What was it exactly that so fascinated him? He asked himself the question again and again, but found no answer

She for her part was very uneasy to see him come to her thus in shabby old hunting-clothes, trying always to hide his face, leaving while it was still dark and everyone was asleep. He seemed like some demon-lover in an old ghost-tale, and she was half-afraid But his smallest gesture showed that he was someone out of the ordinary, and she began to suspect that he was a person of high rank, who had used Koremitsu as his go-between But Koremitsu obstinately pretended to know nothing at all about his companion, and continued to amuse himself by frequenting the house on his own account

What could it mean? She was dismayed at this strange love-making with — she knew not whom. But about her too there was something fugitive, insubstantial Genji was obsessed by the idea that, just as she had hidden herself in this place, so one day she would once more vanish and hide, and he would never be able to find her again There was every sign that her residence here was quite temporary. He was sure that when the time came to move she would not tell him where she was going Of course her running away would be proof that she was not worth bothering about any more, and he ought, thankful for the pleasure they had had together, simply to leave the matter at that But he knew that this was the last thing he would be likely to do.

People were already beginning to be suspicious, and often for several nights running he was unable to visit her This became so intolerable that in his impatience he determined to bring her secretly to the Nijo-in [1] There would be an appalling outcry if she were discovered, but that must be risked

'I am going to take you somewhere very nice where no one will disturb us,' he said at last 'No, no,' she cried, 'your ways are so strange, I should be frightened to go with you ' She spoke in a tone of childish terror, and Genji answered smiling 'One or the other of us must be a fox-in-disguise.[2] Here is a chance to find out which it is!' He spoke very kindly, and suddenly, in a tone of absolute submission, she consented to do whatever he thought best He could not but be touched at her willingness to follow him in what must appear to her to be the most hazardous and bizarre adventure Again he thought of To no Chujo's story on that rainy night, and could not doubt that this must indeed be Chujo's fugitive lady. But he saw that she had some reason for wishing to avoid all questions about her past, and he restrained his curiosity So far as he could see she showed no signs of running away, nor did he believe that she would do so as long as he was faithful To no Chujo, after all, had for months on end left her to her own devices But he felt that if for an instant she suspected him of the slightest leaning in any other direction it would be a bad business

[1] His own palace.

[2] Foxes, dressed up as men, were believed to be in the habit of seducing and bewitching human beings.

It was the fifteenth night of the eighth month. The light of an unclouded full-moon shone between the ill-fitting planks of the roof and flooded the room What a queer place to be lying in! thought Genji, as he gazed round the garret, so different from any room he had ever known before It must be almost day. In the neighbouring houses people were beginning to stir, and there was an uncouth sound of peasant voices 'Eh! how cold it is! I can't believe we shall do much with the crops this year' 'I don't know what's going to happen about my carrying-trade,' said another, 'things look very bad' Then (banging on the wall of another house), 'Wake up, neighbour Time to start Did he hear, d'you think?' and they rose and went off each to the wretched task by which he earned his bread

All this clatter and bustle going on so near her made the lady very uncomfortable, and indeed so dainty and fastidious a person must often in this miserable lodging have suffered things which would make her long to sink through the floor But however painful, disagreeable or provoking were the things that happened, she gave no sign of noticing them That, being herself so shrinking and delicate in her ways, she could yet endure without a murmur the exasperating banging and bumping that was going on in every direction, aroused his admiration, and he felt that this was much nicer of her than if she had shuddered with horror at each sound But now, louder than thunder, came the noise of the threshing-mills, seeming so near that they could hardly believe it did not come from out of the pillow itself Genji thought that his ears would burst What many of the noises were he could not at all make out, but they were very peculiar and startling The whole air seemed to be full of crashings and bangings Now from one side, now from another, came too the faint thud of the bleacher's mallet, and the scream of wild geese passing overhead It was all too distracting

Their room was in the front of the house Genji got up and opened the long, sliding shutters They stood together looking out In the courtyard near them was a clump of fine Chinese bamboos, dew lay thick on the borders, glittering here no less brightly than in the great gardens to which Genji was better accustomed There was a confused buzzing of insects Crickets were chirping in the wall He had often listened to them, but always at a distance, now, singing so close to him, they made a music which was unfamiliar and indeed seemed far lovelier than that with which he was acquainted But then, everything in this place where one thing was so much to his liking seemed despite all drawbacks to take on a new tinge of interest and beauty She was wearing a white bodice with a soft, grey cloak over it It was a poor dress, but she looked charming and almost distinguished, even so, there was nothing very striking in her appearance — only a certain fragile grace and elegance It was when she was speaking that she looked really beautiful, there was such pathos, such

earnestness in her manner If only she had a little more spirit! But even as she was he found her irresistible and longed to take her to some place where no one could disturb them 'I am going to take you somewhere not at all far away where we shall be able to pass the rest of the night in peace We cannot go on like this, parting always at break of day' 'Why have you suddenly come to that conclusion?' she asked, but she spoke submissively He vowed to her that she should be his love in this and in all future lives and she answered so passionately that she seemed utterly transformed from the listless creature he had known, and it was hard to believe that such vows were no novelty to her

Discarding all prudence he sent for the maid Ukon and bade her order his servants to fetch a coach The affair was soon known to all the household, and the ladies were at first somewhat uneasy at seeing their mistress carried off in this fashion, but on the whole they did not think he looked the sort of person who would do her any harm It was now almost daylight The cocks had stopped crowing The voice of an old man (a pilgrim preparing for the ascent of the Holy Mountain) sounded somewhere not far away, and, as at each prayer he bent forward to touch the ground with his head, they could hear with what pain and difficulty he moved What could he be asking for in his prayers, this old man whose life seemed fragile as the morning dew? NAMU TORAI NO DOSHI, 'Glory be to the Saviour that shall come' now they could hear the words 'Listen,' said Genji tenderly, 'is not that an omen that our love shall last through many lives to come?' And he recited the poem 'Do not prove false this omen of the pilgrim's chant that even in lives to come our love shall last unchanged'

Then unlike the lovers in the 'Everlasting Wrong' who prayed that they might be as the 'twin birds that share a wing' (for they remembered that this story had ended very sadly) they prayed, 'May our love last till Maitreya comes as a Buddha into the World But she, still distrustful, answered his poem with the verse 'Such sorrow have I known in this world that I have small hope of worlds to come' Her versification was still a little tentative [1]

She was thinking with pleasure that the setting moon would light them on their way, and Genji was just saying so when suddenly the moon disappeared behind a bank of clouds But there was still great beauty in the dawning sky Anxious to be gone before it was quite light, he hurried her away to the coach and put Ukon by her side

They drove to an untenanted mansion which was not far off While he waited for the steward to come out Genji noticed that the gates were crumbling away, dense shinobu-grass grew around them So sombre an entrance he had never seen There was a thick mist and the dew was so heavy that when he raised the carriage-blind his sleeve was drenched

[1] We gather later that she was only nineteen

'Never yet has such an adventure as this befallen me,' said Genji, 'so I am, as you may imagine, rather excited,' and he made a poem in which he said that though love's folly had existed since the beginning of the world, never could man have set out more rashly at the break of day into a land unknown But to you this is no great novelty?' She blushed and in her turn made a poem. 'I am as the moon that walks the sky not knowing what menace the cruel hills may hold in store, high though she sweeps, her light may suddenly be blotted out'

She seemed very depressed and nervous But this he attributed to the fact that she had probably always lived in small houses where everything was huddled together, and he was amused at the idea that this large mansion should overawe her They drove in, and while a room was being got ready, they remained in the carriage which had been drawn up alongside of the balustrade Ukon, looking very innocent all the while, was inwardly comparing this excursion with her mistress's previous adventures She had noticed the tone of extreme deference with which this latest lover had been received by the steward, and had begun to draw her own conclusions

The mist was gradually clearing away They left the coach and went into the room which had been prepared for them Though so quickly improvised, their quarters were admirably clean and well-provided, for the steward's son had previously been a trusted house-servant of Genji's and had also worked at the Great Hall Coming now to their room he offered to send for some of Genji's gentlemen, 'For,' he said, 'I cannot bear to see you going unattended' 'Do nothing of the kind,' said Genji, 'I have come here because I do not wish to be disturbed No one but yourself is to know that I have used this house,' and he exacted a promise of absolute secrecy No regular meal had been prepared, but the steward brought them a little rice porridge Then they lay down again to sleep together for the first time in this unfamiliar and so strangely different place

The sun was high when they woke Genji went and opened the shutters himself How deserted the garden looked! Certainly here there was no one to spy upon them He looked out into the distance dense woods fast turning to jungle And nearer the house not a flower or bush, but only unkept, autumn grasslands, and a pond choked with weeds It was a wild and desolate place It seemed that the steward and his men must live in some outbuilding or lodge at a distance from the house, for here there was no sign or sound of life 'It is, I must own, a strange and forsaken place to which we have come But no ghost or evil fairy will dare molest you while *I* am here'

It pained her very much that he still was masked, [1] and indeed such a

[1] I.e. covered part of his face with a scarf or the like, a practice usual with illicit lovers in mediaeval Japan.

precaution was quite out of keeping with the stage at which they had now arrived So at last, reciting a poem in which he reminded her that all their love down to this moment when 'The flower opened its petals to the evening dew' had come from a chance vision seen casually from the street, half-turning his face away, for a moment he let her see him unmasked 'What of the "shining dew?"' he asked, using the words that she had written on the fan 'How little knew I of its beauty who had but in the twilight doubted and guessed ' — so she answered his poem in a low and halting voice She need not have feared, for to him, poor as the verses were, they seemed delightful And indeed the beauty of his uncovered face, suddenly revealed to her in this black wilderness of dereliction and decay, surpassed all loveliness that she had ever dreamed of or imagined 'I cannot wonder that while I still set this barrier between us, you did not choose to tell me all that I longed to know But now it would be very unkind of you not to tell me your name ' 'I am like the fisherman's daughter in the song,'[1] she said, '"I have no name or home "' But for all that she would not tell him who she was, she seemed much comforted that he had let her see him 'Do as you please about it,' said Genji at last, but for a while he was out of temper Soon they had made it up again, and so the day passed Presently Koremitsu came to their quarters, bringing fruit and other viands He would not come in, for he was frightened that Ukon would rate him mercilessly for the part he had played in arranging the abduction of her mistress He had now come to the conclusion that the lady must possess charms which he had wholly overlooked, or Genji would certainly never have taken all this trouble about her, and he was touched at his own magnanimity in surrendering to his master a prize which he might well have kept for himself It was an evening of marvellous stillness Genji sat watching the sky The lady found the inner room where she was sitting depressingly dark and gloomy He raised the blinds of the front room, and came to sit with her They watched the light of the sunset glowing in each other's eyes, and in her wonder at his adorable beauty and tenderness she forgot all her fears At last she was shy with him no longer, and he thought that the newfound boldness and merriment became her very well She lay by his side till night He saw that she was again wearing the plaintive expression of a frightened child, so quickly closing the partition-door he brought in the great lamp, saying 'Outwardly you are no longer shy with me, but I can see that deep down in your heart there is still some sediment of rancour and distrust It is not kind to use me so,' and again he was cross with her.

What were the people at the Palace thinking? Would he have been sent for? How far would the messengers pursue their search? He became quite agitated Then there was the great lady in the Sixth Ward[2] What

[1] Shin Kokinshu, 1701 [2] Lady Rokujo

a frenzy she must be in! This time, however, she really had good cause to be jealous. These and other unpleasant considerations were crowding into his head, when looking at the girl who lay beside him so trustfully, unconscious of all that was going on in his mind, he was suddenly filled with an overwhelming tenderness towards her. How tiresome the other was, with her eternal susceptibilities, jealousies and suspicions! For a while at any rate he would stop seeing her. As the night wore on they began sometimes to doze. Suddenly Genji saw standing over him the figure of a woman, tall and majestic. 'You who think yourself so fine, how comes it that you have brought to toy with you here this worthless common creature, picked up at random in the streets? I am astonished and displeased,' and with this she made as though to drag the lady from his side. Thinking that this was some nightmare or hallucination, he roused himself and sat up. The lamp had gone out. Somewhat agitated he drew his sword and laid it beside him, calling as he did so for Ukon. She came at once, looking a good deal scared herself. 'Please wake the watchman in the cross-wing,' he said, 'and tell him to bring a candle.' 'All in the dark like this? How can I?' she answered. 'Don't be childish,' said Genji, laughing and clapped his hands.[1] The sound echoed desolately through the empty house. He could not make anyone hear, and meanwhile he noticed that his mistress was trembling from head to foot. What should he do? He was still undecided, when suddenly she burst out into a cold sweat. She seemed to be losing consciousness. 'Do not fear, Sir,' said Ukon, 'all her life she has been subject to these nightmare fits.' He remembered now how tired she had seemed in the morning and how she had lain with her eyes turned upwards as though in pain. 'I will go myself and wake someone,' he said, 'I am tired of clapping with only echoes to answer me. Do not leave her!' and drawing Ukon towards the bed he went in the direction of the main western door. But when he opened it, he found that the lamp in the cross-wing had also gone out. A wind had risen. The few attendants he had brought with him were already in bed. There was indeed only the steward's son (the young man who had once been Genji's body-servant), and the one young courtier who had attended him on all his visits. They answered when he called and sprang to their feet. 'Come with a candle,' he said to the steward's son, 'and tell my man to get his bow and keep on twanging the string as loud as he can. I wonder anyone should sleep so soundly in such a deserted place. What has happened to Koremitsu?' 'He waited for some time, but as you seemed to have no need of him, he went home, saying he would be back at daybreak.'

Genji's man had been an Imperial Bowman, and making a tremendous din with his bow he strode towards the steward's lodge crying 'Fire, Fire' at the top of his voice. The twanging of the bow reminded Genji of the

[1] To summon a servant.

Palace The roll-call of night courtiers must be over, the Bowman's roll-call must be actually going on It was not so very late

He groped his way back into the room She was lying just as he had left her, with Ukon face downwards beside her 'What are you doing there?' he cried 'Have you gone mad with fright? You have heard no doubt that in such lonely places as this fox-spirits sometimes try to cast a spell upon men But, dear people, you need not fear I have come back, and will not let such creatures harm you ' And so saying he dragged Ukon from the bed 'Oh, Sir,' she said, 'I felt so queer and frightened that I fell flat down upon my face, and what my poor lady must be going through I dare not think ' 'Then try not to add to her fright,' said Genji, and pushing her aside, bent over the prostrate form The girl was scarcely breathing He touched her, she was quite limp She did not know him

Perhaps some accursed thing, some demon had tried to snatch her spirit away, she was so timid, so childishly helpless The man came with the candle Ukon was still too frightened to move Genji placed a screen so as to hide the bed and called the man to him It was of course contrary to etiquette that he should serve Genji himself and he hesitated in embarrassment, not venturing even to ascend the dais 'Come here,' said Genji impatiently, 'use your common-sense ' Reluctantly the man gave him the light, and as he held it towards the bed, he saw for a moment the figure which had stood there in his dream still hovering beside the pillow, suddenly it vanished He had read in old tales of such apparitions and of their power, and was in great alarm But for the moment he was so full of concern for the lady who now lay motionless on the bed that he gave no thought to that menacing vision, and lying down beside her, began gently to move her limbs Already they were growing cold Her breathing had quite stopped What could he do? To whom could he turn for help? He ought to send for a priest He tried to control himself, but he was very young, and seeing her lying there all still and pale, he could contain himself no longer and crying 'Come back to me, my own darling, come back to life Do not look at me so strangely!' he flung his arms about her But now she was quite cold Her face was set in a dull, senseless stare

Suddenly Ukon, who had been so busy with her own fears, came to herself again, and set up the most dismal weeping He disregarded her Something had occurred to him There was a story of how a certain minister was waylaid by a demon as he passed through the Southern Hall The man, Genji remembered, had been prostrate with fear, but in the end he revived and escaped No, she could not really be dead, and turning to Ukon he said firmly Come now we cannot have you making such a hideous noise in the middle of the night ' But he himself was stunned with grief, and though he gave Ukon distracted orders, scarce knew what he was doing Presently he sent for the steward's son and said to him 'Someone

here has had a fright and is in a very bad way I want you to go to Koremitsu's house and tell him to come as quickly as he can If his brother the priest is there too, take him aside and tell him quietly that I should like to see him at once But do not speak loud enough for the nun their mother to hear, for I would not have her know of this excursion ' But though he managed to say the words, his brain was all the while in a hideous turmoil For added to the ghastly thought that he himself had caused her death there was the dread and horror with which the whole place now inspired him

It was past midnight A violent storm began to rise, sighing dismally as it swept the pine-trees that clustered round the house And all the while some strange bird — an owl, he supposed — kept screeching hoarsely Utter desolation on all sides No human voice, no friendly sound Why, why had he chosen this hideous place?

Ukon had fainted and was lying by her mistress's side Was she too going to die of fright? No, no He must not give way to such thoughts He was now the only person left who was capable of action Was there nothing he could do? The candle was burning badly He lit it again Over by the screen in the corner of the main room something was moving There it was again, but in another corner now There was a sound of footsteps treading cautiously It still went on Now they were coming up behind him

If only Koremitsu would return! But Koremitsu was a rover and a long time was wasted in looking for him Would it never be day? It seemed to him that this night was lasting a thousand years But now, somewhere a long way off, a cock crowed

Why had fate seen fit to treat him thus? He felt that it must be as a punishment for all the strange and forbidden amours into which in these last years he had despite himself been drawn, that now this unheard of horror had befallen him And such things, though one may keep them secret for a time, always come out in the end He minded most that the Emperor would be certain to discover sooner or later about this and all his other affairs Then there was the general scandal Everyone would know The very gutter boys would make merry over him Never, never must he do such things again, or his reputation would utterly collapse

At last Koremitsu arrived He prided himself on being always ready to carry out his master's wishes immediately at whatever hour of the night or day, and he thought it very provoking of Genji to have sent for him just on the one occasion when he was not to hand And now that he had come, his master did not seem able to give him any orders, but stood speechless in front of him

Ukon, hearing Koremitsu's voice, suddenly came to herself and remembering what had happened, burst into tears And now Genji, who while he alone was there had supported and encouraged the weeping maid-

servant, relieved at last by Koremitsu, could contain himself no longer, and suddenly realizing again the terrible thing that had befallen him, he burst into uncontrollable weeping 'Something horrible has happened here,' he managed to say at last, 'too dreadful to explain I have heard that when such things as this suddenly befall, certain scriptures should be read I would have this done, and prayers said That is why I asked you to bring your brother '

'He went up to the mountain yesterday,' said Koremitsu 'But I see that there has been terrible work here afoot Was it in some sudden fit of madness that you did this thing?' Genji shook his head So moved was Koremitsu at the sight of his master weeping that he too began to sob Had he been an older man, versed in the ways of the world, he might have been of some use in such a crisis, but both of them were young and both were equally perplexed At last Koremitsu said 'One thing at least is clear The steward's son must not know For though he himself can be depended upon, he is the sort of person who is sure to tell all his relatives, and they might meddle disastrously in the affair We had best get clear of this house as quietly as we can ' 'Perhaps,' said Genji, 'but it would be hard to find a less frequented place than this ' 'At any rate,' Koremitsu continued, 'we cannot take her to her own house, for there her gentlewomen, who loved her dearly, would raise such a weeping and wailing as would soon bring a pack of neighbours swarming around, and all would quickly be known If only I knew of some mountain-temple — for there such things are customary [1] and pass almost unnoticed ' He paused and reflected There is a lady I once knew who has become a nun and now lives on the Higashi Yama She was my father's wet-nurse and is now very old and bent She does not of course live alone, but no outside people come there.' A faint light was already showing in the sky when Koremitsu brought the carriage in Thinking that Genji would not wish to move the body himself, he wrapt it in a rush-mat and carried it towards the carriage How small she was to hold! Her face was calm and beautiful He felt no repulsion He could find no way to secure her hair, and when he began to carry her it overflowed and hung towards the ground Genji saw, and his eyes darkened A hideous anguish possessed him.

He tried to follow the body, but Koremitsu dissuaded him, saying, 'You must ride back to your palace as quickly as you can, you have just time to get there before the stir begins,' and putting Ukon into the carriage, he gave Genji his horse Then pulling up his silk trousers to the knee, he accompanied the carriage on foot. It was a very singular procession, but Koremitsu, seeing his master's terrible distress, forgot for the moment his own dignity and walked stolidly on Genji, hardly conscious of what went on around him, arrived at last in ghostly pallor at his house 'Where do you come from, my Lord?' 'How ill you look.' Questions

[1] The bringing of a corpse. Temples were used as mortuaries.

assailed him, but he hurried to his room and lay behind his curtain He tried to calm himself, but hideous thoughts tormented him Why had he not insisted upon going with her? What if after all she were not dead and waking up should find that he had thus abandoned her? While these wild thoughts chased through his brain, a terrible sensation of choking began to torment him His head ached, his body seemed to be on fire Indeed he felt so strange that he thought he too was about to die suddenly and inexplicably as she had done The sun was now high, but he did not get up His gentlemen, with murmurs of astonishment, tried every means to rouse him He sent away the dainties they brought, and lay hour after hour plunged in the darkest thoughts A messenger arrived from the Emperor 'His Majesty has been uneasy since yesterday when his envoys sought everywhere for your Highness in vain'

The young lords too came from the Great Hall He would see none of them but To no Chujo, and even him he made stand outside his curtain while he spoke to him 'My foster-mother has been very ill since the fifth month She shaved her head and performed other penances, in consequence of which (or so it seems) she recovered a little and got up, but is very much enfeebled She sent word that she desired to see me once more before she died, and as I was very fond of her when I was a child, I could not refuse While I was there a servant in the house fell ill and died quite suddenly Out of consideration for me they removed the body at nightfall But as soon as I was told of what had happened I remembered that the Fast of the Ninth Month was at hand and for this reason I have not thought it right to present myself to the Emperor my father Moreover, since early morning I have had a cough and very bad headache, so you will forgive me for treating you in this way'

'I will give the Emperor your message But I must tell you that last night when you were out he sent messengers to look for you and seemed, if I may venture to say so, to be in a very ill humour' To no Chujo turned to go, but pausing a moment came back to Genji's couch and said quietly 'What really happened to you last night? What you told me just now cannot possibly be true' 'You need not go into details,' answered Genji impatiently 'Simply tell him that unintentionally I became exposed to a pollution, and apologize to him for me as best you can' He spoke sharply, but in his heart there was only an unspeakable sadness, and he was very tired

All day he lay hidden from sight Once he sent for To no Chujo's brother Kurodo no Ben and gave him a formal message for the Emperor The same excuse would serve for the Great Hall, and he sent a similar message there and to other houses where he might be expected

At dusk Koremitsu came The story of Genji's pollution had turned all visitors from the door, and Koremitsu found his palace utterly deserted 'What happened?' said Genji, summoning him, 'you are sure that she is

the face and form that he had loved so well So with Koremitsu and the one same groom to bear him company he set out upon the road

The way seemed endless The moon of the seventeenth night had risen and lit up the whole space of the Kamo plain, and in the light of the outrunners' torches the countryside towards Toribeno now came dimly into sight But Genji in his sickness and despair saw none of this, and suddenly waking from the stupor into which he had fallen found that they had arrived

The nun's cell was in a chapel built against the wall of a wooden house It was a desolate spot, but the chapel itself was very beautiful The light of the visitor's torches flickered through the open door In the inner room there was no sound but that of a woman weeping by herself, in the outer room were several priests talking together (or was it praying?) in hushed voices In the neighbouring temples vespers were over and there was absolute stillness, only towards the Kiyomizu were lights visible and many figures seemed to throng the hillside [1]

A senior priest, son of the aged nun, now began to recite the Scriptures in an impressive voice, and Genji as he listened felt the tears come into his eyes He went in Ukon was lying behind a screen, when she heard him enter, she turned the lamp to the wall What terrible thing was she trying to hide from him? But when he came nearer he saw to his joy that the dead lady was not changed in any way whatsoever, but lay there very calm and beautiful, and feeling no horror or fear at all he took her hand and said, 'Speak to me once again, tell me why for so short a while you came to me and filled my heart with gladness, and then so soon forsook me, who loved you so well?' and he wept long and bitterly by her side

The priests did not know who he was, but they were touched by his evident misery and themselves shed tears He asked Ukon to come back with him, but she answered 'I have served this lady since she was a little child and never once for so much as an hour have I left her How can I suddenly part from one who was so dear to me and serve in another's house? And I must now go and tell her people what has become of her, for (such is the manner of her death) if I do not speak soon, there will be an outcry that it was I who was to blame, and that would be a terrible thing for me, Sir,' and she burst into tears, wailing, 'I will lie with her upon the pyre, my smoke shall mingle with hers!'

'Poor soul,' said Genji, I do not wonder at your despair But this is the way of the world Late or soon we must all go where she has gone Take comfort and trust in me ' So he sought to console her, but in a moment he added 'Those, I know, are but hollow words I too care no longer for life and would gladly follow her ' So he spoke, giving her in the end but little comfort

[1] Pilgrimages to Kiyomizu Temple are made on the seventeenth day

'The night is far spent,' said Koremitsu, 'we must now be on our way' And so with many backward looks and a heart full to bursting he left the house A heavy dew had fallen and the mist was so thick that it was hard to see the road On the way it occurred to him that she was still wearing his scarlet cloak, which he had lent her when they lay down together on the last evening How closely their lives had been entwined!

Noting that he sat very unsteadily in his saddle, Koremitsu walked beside him and gave him a hand But when they came to a dyke, he lost hold and his master fell to the ground Here he lay in great pain and bewilderment I shall not live to finish the journey,' he said, 'I have not strength to go so far' Koremitsu too was sorely troubled, for he felt that despite all Genji's insistence, he ought never to have allowed him, feverstricken as he was, to embark upon this disastrous journey In great agitation he plunged his hands in the river and prayed to Our Lady Kwannon of Kiyomizu Genji too roused himself at last and forced himself to pray inwardly to the Buddha And so they managed to start upon their journey again and in the end with Koremitsu's help he reached his palace

This sudden journey undertaken so late at night had seemed to all his household the height of imprudence They had noted for some while past his nightly wanderings grow more and more frequent, but though often agitated and preoccupied, never had he returned so haggard as that morning What could be the object of these continual excursions? And they shook their heads in great concern Genji flung himself upon his bed and lay there in fever and pain for several days He was growing very weak The news was brought to the Emperor who was greatly distressed and ordered continual prayers to be said for him in all the great temples, and indeed there were more special services and purification-ceremonies and incantations than I have room to rehearse When it became known that this prince, so famous for his great charm and beauty, was likely soon to die, there was a great stir in all the kingdom

Sick though he was he did not forget to send for Ukon and have her enrolled among his gentlewomen Koremitsu, who was beside himself with anxiety concerning his master, yet managed on her arrival to calm himself and give to Ukon friendly instruction in her new duties, for he was touched by the helpless plight in which she had been left And Genji, whenever he felt a little better, would use her to carry messages and letters, so that she soon grew used to waiting upon him She was dressed in deep black and though not at all handsome was a pleasant enough looking woman

'It seems that the same fate which so early stayed your lady's course has willed that I too should be but little longer for this world I know in what sore distress you are left by the loss of one who was for so many years your mistress and friend, and it was my purpose to have comforted you in your bereavement by every care and kindness I could devise For this reason,

indeed, it grieves me that I shall survive her for so short a time.' So, somewhat stiltedly, he whispered to Ukon, and being now very weak he could not refrain from tears. Apart from the fact that his death would leave her utterly without resource, she had now quite taken to him and would have been very sorry indeed if he had died.

His gentlemen ran hither and thither, distracted, the Emperor's envoys thronged thick as the feet of the raindrops. Hearing of his father's distress and anxiety, Genji strove hard to reassure him by pretending to some slight respite or improvement. His father-in-law too showed great concern, calling every day for news and ordering the performance of various rites and potent liturgies, and it was perhaps as a result of this, that having been dangerously ill for more than twenty days, he took a turn for the better, and soon all his symptoms began to disappear. On the night of his recovery the term of his defilement also ended and hearing that the Emperor was still extremely uneasy about him, he determined to reassure the Court by returning to his official residence at the Palace. His father-in-law came to fetch him in his own carriage and rather irritatingly urged upon him all sorts of remedies and precautions.

For some while everything in the world to which he had now returned seemed strange to him and he indeed scarce knew himself, but by the twentieth day of the ninth month his recovery was complete, nor did the pallor and thinness of his face become him by any means ill.

At times he would stare vacantly before him and burst into loud weeping, and seeing this there were not wanting those who said that he was surely possessed.

Often he would send for Ukon, and once when they had been talking in the still of the evening he said to her, 'There is one thing which still puzzles me. Why would she never tell me who she was? For even if she was indeed, as she once said, "a fisherman's child," it was a strange perversity to use such reticence with one who loved her so well.'

'You ask why she hid her name from you?' said Ukon. 'Can you wonder at it? When could she have been expected to tell you her name (not that it would have meant much to you if you had heard it)? For from the beginning you treated her with a strange mistrust, coming with such secrecy and mystery as might well make her doubt whether you were indeed a creature of the waking world. But though you never told her she knew well enough who you were, and the thought that you would not be thus secret had you regarded her as more than a mere plaything or idle distraction was very painful to her.'

'What a wretched series of misunderstandings,' said Genji. 'For my part I had no mind to put a distance between us. But I had no experience in such affairs as this. There are many difficulties in the path of such people as I. First and foremost I feared the anger of my father the Emperor, and then, the foolish jesting of the world. I felt myself hedged in by

courtly rules and restrictions But for all the tiresome concealments that my rank forced upon me, from that first evening I had so strangely set my heart upon her that though reason counselled me I could not hold back, and indeed it seems sometimes to me that an irresistible fate drove me to do the thing of which I now so bitterly and continually repent But tell me more about her For there can now be no reason for concealment When on each seventh day I cause the names of the Buddhas to be written for her comfort and salvation, whom am I to name in my inward prayer?'

'There can be no harm in my telling you that,' said Ukon, 'and I should have done so before, did I not somehow feel it a shame to be prating to you now about things she would not have me speak of while she was alive Her parents died when she was quite small Her father, Sammi Chujo, loved her very dearly, but felt always that he could not give her all the advantages to which her great beauty entitled her, and still perplexed about her future and how best to do his duty by her, he died Soon afterwards some accident brought her into the company of To no Chujo [1] who was at that time still a lieutenant and for three years he made her very happy But in the autumn of last year disquieting letters began to arrive from the Great Hall of the Right,[2] and being by nature prone to fits of unreasoning fear she now fell into a wild panic and fled to the western part of the town where she hid herself in the house of her old wetnurse Here she was very uncomfortable, and had planned to move to a certain village in the hills, when she discovered that it would be unlucky, owing to the position of the stars since the beginning of the year, to make a journey in that direction, and (though she never told me so) I think, Sir, it troubled her sorely that you should have come upon her when she was living in so wretched a place But there was never anyone in the world like my lady for keeping things to herself, she could never bear that other people should know what was on her mind I have no doubt, Sir, that she sometimes behaved very oddly to you and that you have seen all this for yourself'

Yes, this was all just as To no Chujo had described 'I think there was some mention of a child that Chujo was vexed to have lost sight of,' said Genji more interested than ever, 'am I right?' 'Yes, indeed,' she answered, 'it was born in the spring of last year, a girl, and a fine child it was' 'Where is it now?' asked Genji 'Could you get hold of it and bring it to me here without letting anyone know where you were taking it? It would be a great comfort to me in my present misery to have some remembrance of her near me', and he added, 'I ought of course to tell Chujo, but that would lead to useless and painful discussions about what has happened Somehow or other I will manage to bring her up here in my palace I think there can be no harm in that And you will easily enough

[1] Chujo means 'Captain', see above, p 40

[2] From To no Chujo's wife, who was the daughter of the Minister of the Right

find some story to tell to whatever people are now looking after her' 'I am very glad that this has entered your head,' said Ukon, 'it would be a poor look-out for her to grow up in the quarter where she is now living With no one properly belonging to her and in such a part of the town'

In the stillness of the evening, under a sky of exquisite beauty, here and there along the borders in front of his palace some insect croaked its song, the leaves were just beginning to turn And as he looked upon this pleasant picture he felt ashamed at the contrast between his surroundings and the little house where Yugao had lived Suddenly somewhere among the bamboo groves the bird called iyebato uttered its sharp note He remembered just how she had looked when in the gardens of that fatal house the same bird had startled her by its cry, and turning to Ukon, 'How old was she?' he suddenly asked, 'for though she seemed childlike in her diffidence and helplessness, that may only have been a sign that she was not long for this world' 'She must have been nineteen,' said Ukon 'When my mother, who was her first wet-nurse, died and left me an orphan, my lady's father was pleased to notice me and reared me at my lady's side Ah, Sir, when I think of it, I do not know how I shall live without her, for kind as people here may be I do not seem to get used to them I suppose it is that I knew her ways, poor lady, she having been my mistress for so many years'

To Genji even the din of the cloth-beaters' mallets had become dear through recollection, and as he lay in bed he repeated those verses of Po Chü-i

In the eighth month and ninth month when the nights are growing long
A thousand times, ten thousand times the fuller's stick beats

The young brother still waited upon him, but he no longer brought with him the letters which he had been used to bring Utsusemi thought he had at last decided that her treatment of him was too unfriendly to be borne, and was vexed that he should feel so Then suddenly she heard of his illness, and all her vexation turned to consternation and anxiety She was soon to set out upon her long journey, but this did not much interest her, and to see whether Genji had quite forgotten her she sent him a message saying that she had been able to find no words in which to express her grief at hearing the news of his illness With it she sent the poem 'I did not ask for news and you did not ask why I was silent, so the days wore on and I remained in sorrow and dismay' He had not forgotten her, no, not in all his trouble, and his answer came 'Of this life, fragile as the utsusemi's [1] shell, already I was weary, when your word came, and gave me strength to live anew' The poem was written in a very tremulous and confused hand, but she thought the writing very beautiful and it delighted her that he had not forgotten how, cicada-like, she had shed her scarf

[1] Cicada.

There could be no harm in this interchange of notes, but she had no intention of arranging a meeting She thought that at last even he had seen that there could be no sense in that

As for Utsusemi's companion, she was not yet married, and Genji heard that she had become the mistress of To no Chujo's brother, Kurodo no Shosho, and though he feared that Shosho might already have taken very ill the discovery that he was not first in the field, and did not at all wish to offend him, yet he had a certain curiosity about the girl and sent Utsusemi's little brother with a message asking if she had heard of his illness and the poem 'Had I not once gathered for my pillow a handful of the sedge that grows upon the eaves,[1] not a dewdrop of pretext could my present message find' It was an acrostic with many hidden meanings He tied the letter to a tall reed and bade him deliver it secretly, but was afterwards very uneasy at the thought that it might go astray 'If it falls into Shosho's hands,' he thought, 'he will at once guess that it was I who was before him' But after all Shosho would probably not take that so very hard, Genji had vanity enough to think

The boy delivered the message when Shosho was at a safe distance She could not help feeling a little hurt, but it was something that he had remembered her at all, and justifying it to herself with the excuse that she had had no time to do anything better, she sent the boy straight back with the verse 'The faint wind of your favour, that but for a moment blew, with grief has part befrosted the small sedge of the eaves' It was very ill-written, with all sorts of ornamental but misleading strokes and flourishes, indeed with a complete lack of style However, it served to remind him of the face he had first seen that evening by the lamplight As for the other who on that occasion had sat so stiffly facing her, what determination there had been in her face, what a steady resolution to give no quarter!

The affair with the lady of the sedge was so unintentional and so insignificant that though he regarded it as rather frivolous and indiscreet, he saw no great harm in it But if he did not take himself in hand before it was too late he would soon again be involved in some entanglement which might finally ruin his reputation.

On the forty-ninth day after Yugao's death a service in her memory was by his orders secretly held in the Hokedo on Mount Hiyei The ritual performed was of the most elaborate kind, everything that was required being supplied from the Prince's own store, and even the decoration of the service books and images was carried out with the utmost attention Koremitsu's brother, a man of great piety, was entrusted with the direction of the ceremony, and all went well Next Genji sent for his old writing-master, a doctor of letters for whom he had a great liking,

[1] 'Sedge upon the eaves' is *Nokiba no Ogi*, and it is by this name that the lady is generally known.

and bade him write the prayer for the dead.[1] 'Say that I commit to Amida the Buddha one not named whom I loved, but lost disastrously,' and he wrote out a rough draft for the learned man to amend 'There is nothing to add or alter,' said the master, deeply moved Who could it be, he wondered, at whose death the prince was so distressed? (For Genji, try as he might, could not hide his tears)

When he was secretly looking through his store for largesse to give to the Hokedo priests, he came upon a certain dress and as he folded it made the poem 'The girdle that today with tears I knot, shall we ever in some new life untie?'

Till now her spirit had wandered in the void [2]

But already she must be setting out on her new life-path, and in great solicitude, he prayed continually for her safety

He met To no Chujo and his heart beat violently, for he had longed to tell him about Yugao's child and how it was to be reared But he feared that the rest of the story would needlessly anger and distress him, and he did not mention the matter Meanwhile the servants of Yugao's house were surprised that they had had no news from her nor even from Ukon, and had begun to be seriously disquieted They had still no proof that it was Genji who was her lover, but several of them thought that they had recognized him and his name was whispered among them They would have it that Koremitsu knew the secret, but he pretended to know nothing whatever about Yugao's lover and found a way to put off all their ques tions, and as he was still frequenting the house for his own purposes, it was easy for them to believe that he was not really concerned in their mistress's affairs Perhaps after all it was some blackguard of a Zuryo's son who, frightened of To no Chujo's interference, had carried her off to his province The real owner of the house was a daughter of Yugao's second wet-nurse, who had three children of her own Ukon had been brought up with them, but they thought that it was perhaps because she was not their own sister that Ukon sent them no news of their mistress, and they were in great distress

Ukon who knew that they would assail her with questions which her promise to Genji forbad her to answer, dared not go to the house, not even to get news of her lady's child It had been put out somewhere to nurse, but to her great sorrow she had quite lost sight of it

Longing all the while to see her face once more though only in a dream, upon the night after the ceremony on Mount Hiyei, he had a vision very different from that for which he prayed There appeared to him once more, just as on that fatal night, the figure of a woman in menacing posture, and he was dismayed at the thought that some demon which haunted the

[1] *Gwammon*

[2] For forty-nine days the spirit of the dead leads the intermediate existence so strangely described in the *Abhidharma Kosa Sastra*, then it begins its new incarnation

desolate spot might on the occasion when it did that terrible thing, also have entered into him and possessed him

Iyo no Suke was to start early in the Godless Month and had announced that his wife would go with him Genji sent very handsome parting presents and among them with special intent he put many very exquisite combs and fans With them were silk strips to offer to the God of Journeys and, above all, the scarf which she had dropped, and, tied to it, a poem in which he said that he had kept it in remembrance of her while there was still hope of their meeting, but now returned it wet with tears shed in vain There was a long letter with the poem, but this was of no particular interest and is here omitted She sent no answer by the man who had brought the presents, but gave her brother the poem 'That to the changed cicada you should return her summer dress shows that you too have changed and fills an insect heart with woe'

He thought long about her Though she had with so strange and inexplicable a resolution steeled her heart against him to the end, yet each time he remembered that she had gone forever it filled him with depression

It was the first day of the tenth month, and as though in sign that winter had indeed begun, heavy rain fell All day long Genji watched the stormy sky Autumn had hideously bereaved him and winter already was taking from him one whom he dearly loved

> Now like a traveller who has tried two ways in vain
> I stand perplexed where these sad seasons meet

Now at least we must suppose he was convinced that such secret adventures led only to misery

I should indeed be very loath to recount in all their detail matters which he took so much trouble to conceal, did I not know that if you found I had omitted anything you would at once ask why, just because he was supposed to be an Emperor's son, I must needs put a favourable showing on his conduct by leaving out all his indiscretions, and you would soon be saying that this was no history but a mere made-up tale designed to influence the judgment of posterity As it is I shall be called a scandalmonger, but that I cannot help

CHAPTER V

Murasaki

HE fell sick of an ague, and when numerous charms and spells had been tried in vain, the illness many times returning, someone said that in a certain temple on the Northern Hills there lived a wise and holy man who in the summer of the year before (the ague was then rife and the usual spells were giving no relief) was able to work many signal cures 'Lose no time in consulting him, for while you try one useless means after another the disease gains greater hold upon you' At once he sent a messenger to fetch the holy man, who however replied that the infirmities of old age no longer permitted him to go abroad What is to be done?' said Genji, 'I must go secretly to visit him', and taking only four or five trusted servants he set out long before dawn The place lay somewhat deep into the hills It was the last day of the third month and in the Capital the blossoms had all fallen The hill-cherry was not yet out, but as he approached the open country, the mists began to assume strange and lovely forms, which pleased him the more because, being one whose movements were tethered by many proprieties, he had seldom seen such sights before The temples too delighted him The holy man lived in a deep cave hollowed out of a high wall of rock Genji did not send in his name and was in close disguise, but his face was well known and the priest at once recognized him 'Forgive me,' he said, 'it was you, was it not, who sent for me the other day? Alas, I think no longer of the things of this world and I am afraid I have forgotten how to work my cures I am very sorry indeed that you have come so far,' and pretending to be very much upset, he looked at Genji, laughing But it was soon apparent that he was a man of very great piety and learning He wrote out certain talismans and administered them, and read certain spells By the time this was over, the sun had risen, and Genji went a little way outside the cave and looked around him From the high ground where he was standing he looked down on a number of scattered hermitages A winding track led down to a hut which, though it was hedged with the same small brushwood as the rest, was more spaciously planned, having a pleasant roofed alley running out from it, and there were trim copses set around He asked whose house it was and was told by one of his men that a certain abbot had been living there in retirement for two years 'I know him well, 'said Genji on hearing the abbot's name, 'I should not like to meet him dressed and attended as I am I hope he will not hear Just then a party of nicely dressed children came out of the house and began to pluck such flowers as are used for the decoration of altars and holy images 'There are some girls with them, said one of Genji's men

'We cannot suppose that His Reverence keeps them Who then can they be?' and to satisfy his curiosity he went a little way down the hill and watched them 'Yes, there are some very pretty girls, some of them grown up and others quite children,' he came back and reported

During a great part of the morning Genji was busy with his cure When at last the ceremony was completed, his attendants, dreading the hour at which the fever usually returned, strove to distract his attention by taking him a little way across the mountain to a point from which the Capital could be seen. 'How lovely,' cried Genji, 'are those distances half-lost in haze, and that blur of shimmering woods that stretches out on every side How could anyone be unhappy for a single instant who lived in such a place?' 'This is nothing,' said one of his men 'If I could but show you the lakes and mountains of other provinces, you would soon see how far they excel all that you here admire', and he began to tell him first of Mount Fuji and many another famous peak, and then of the West Country with all its pleasant bays and shores, till he quite forgot that it was the hour of his fever 'Yonder, nearest to us,' the man continued, pointing to the sea, 'is the bay of Akashi in Harima Note it well, for though it is not a very out-of-the-way place, yet the feeling one has there of being shut off from everything save one huge waste of sea makes it the strangest and most desolate spot I know And there it is that the daughter of a lay priest who was once governor of the province presides over a mansion of quite disproportionate and unexpected magnificence He is the descendant of a Prime Minister and was expected to cut a great figure in the world But he is a man of very singular disposition and is averse to all society For a time he was an officer in the Palace Guard, but he gave this up and accepted the province of Harima However he soon quarrelled with the local people and, announcing that he had been badly treated and was going back to the Capital, he did nothing of the sort, but shaved his head and became a lay priest Then instead of settling, as is usually done, on some secluded hillside, he built himself a house on the seashore, which may seem to you a very strange thing to do, but as a matter of fact, whereas in that province in one place or another a good many recluses have taken up their abode, the mountain-country is far more dull and lonely and would sorely have tried the patience of his young wife and child, and so as a compromise he chose the seashore. Once when I was travelling in the province of Harima I took occasion to visit his house and noted that, though at the Capital he had lived in a very modest style, here he had built on the most magnificent and lavish scale, as though determined in spite of what had happened (now that he was free from the bother of governing the province) to spend the rest of his days in the greatest comfort imaginable But all the while he was making great preparations for the life to come and no ordained priest could have led a more austere and pious life'

'But you spoke of his daughter?' said Genji 'She is passably good-looking,' he answered, 'and not by any means stupid. Several governors and officers of the province have set their hearts upon her and pressed their suit most urgently, but her father has sent them all away It seems that though in his own person so indifferent to worldly glory, he is determined that this one child, his only object of care, should make amends for his obscurity, and has sworn that if ever she chooses against his will, and when he is gone flouts his set purpose and injunction to satisfy some idle fancy of her own, his ghost will rise and call upon the sea to cover her

Genji listened with great attention 'Why, she is like the vestal virgin who may know no husband but the King-Dragon of the Sea,' and they laughed at the old ex-Governor's absurd ambitions The teller of the story was a son of the present Governor of Harima, who from being a clerk in the Treasury had last year been capped an officer of the Fifth Rank He was famous for his love-adventures and the others whispered to one another that it was with every intention of persuading the lady to disobey her father's injunctions that he had gone out of his way to visit the shore of Akashi

'I fear her breeding must be somewhat countrified,' said one, 'it cannot well be otherwise, seeing that she has grown up with no other company than that of her old-fashioned parents — though indeed it appears that her mother was a person of some consequence ' 'Why, yes,' said Yoshikiyo, the Governor s son, 'and for this reason she was able to secure little girls and boys from all the best houses in the Capital, persuading them to pay visits to the seaside and be playmates to her own little girl, who thus acquired the most polished breeding ' 'If an unscrupulous person were to find himself in that quarter,' said another, 'I fear that despite the dead father's curse he might not find it easy to resist her '

The story made a deep impression upon Genji's imagination As his gentlemen well knew, whatever was fantastic or grotesque both in people and situations at once strongly attracted him They were therefore not surprised to see him listen with so much attention 'It is now well past noon,' said one of them, 'and I think we may reckon that you will get safely through the day without a return of your complaint So let us soon be starting for home ' But the priest persuaded him to stay a little longer 'The sinister influences are not yet wholly banished,' he said, 'it would be well that a further ritual should continue quietly during the night By tomorrow morning, I think you will be able to proceed ' His gentlemen all urged him to stay, nor was he at all unwilling, for the novelty of such a lodging amused him 'Very well then, at dawn,' he said, and having nothing to do till bedtime which was still a long way off, he went out on to the hillside, and under cover of the heavy evening mist loitered near the brushwood hedge His attendants had gone back to the hermit's cave and only Koremitsu was with him In the western

wing, opposite which he was standing, was a nun at her devotions The blind was partly raised He thought she seemed to be dedicating flowers to an image Sitting near the middle pillar, a sutra-book propped upon a stool by her side, was another nun She was reading aloud, there was a look of great unhappiness in her face She seemed to be about forty, not a woman of the common people Her skin was white and very fine, and though she was much emaciated, there was a certain roundness and fulness in her cheeks, and her hair, clipped short on a level with her eyes, hung in so delicate a fringe across her brow that she looked, thought Genji, more elegant and even fashionable in this convent guise than if her hair had been long Two very well-conditioned maids waited upon her Several little girls came running in and out of the room at play Among them was one who seemed to be about ten years old She came running into the room dressed in a rather worn white frock lined with stuff of a deep saffron colour Never had he seen a child like this What an astonishing creature she would grow into! Her hair, thick and wavy, stood out fanwise about her head She was very flushed and her lips were trembling 'What is it? Have you quarrelled with one of the other little girls?' The nun raised her head as she spoke and Genji fancied that there was some resemblance between her and the child No doubt she was its mother 'Inu has let out my sparrow — the little one that I kept in the clothes-basket,' she said, looking very unhappy 'What a tiresome boy that Inu is!' said one of the two maids 'He deserves a good scolding for playing such a stupid trick Where can it have got to? And this after we had taken so much trouble to tame it nicely! I only hope the crows have not found it,' and so saying she left the room She was a pleasant-looking woman, with very long, wavy hair The others called her Nurse Shonagon, and she seemed to be in charge of the child 'Come,' said the nun to the little girl, you must not be such a baby You are thinking all the time of things that do not matter at all Just fancy! Even now when I am so ill that any day I may be taken from you, you do not trouble your head about me, but are grieving about a sparrow It is very unkind, particularly as I have told you I don't know how many times that it is naughty to shut up live things in cages Come over here!' and the child sat down beside her Her features were very exquisite, but it was above all the way her hair grew, in cloudy masses over her temples, but thrust back in childish fashion from her forehead, that struck him as marvellously beautiful As he watched her and wondered what she would be like when she grew up it suddenly occurred to him that she bore no small resemblance to one whom he had loved with all his being,[1] and at the resemblance he secretly wept

The nun, stroking the child's hair, now said to her 'It's a lovely mop, though you are so naughty about having it combed But it worries me

[1] Fujitsubo, who was indeed the child's aunt

very much that you are still so babyish Some children of your age are very different Your dear mother was only twelve when her father died, yet she showed herself quite capable of managing her own affairs But if I were taken from you now, I do not know what would become of you, I do not indeed,' and she began to weep Even Genji, peeping at the scene from a distance, found himself becoming quite distressed The girl, who had been watching the nun's face with a strange unchildish intensity, now dropped her head disconsolately, and as she did so her hair fell forward across her cheeks in two great waves of black Looking at her fondly, the nun recited the poem 'Not knowing if any will come to nurture the tender leaf whereon it lies, how loath is the dewdrop to vanish in the sunny air' To which the waiting-woman replied with a sigh 'O dewdrop, surely you will linger till the young budding leaf has shown in what fair form it means to grow'

At this moment the priest to whom the house belonged entered the room from the other side 'Pray, ladies,' he said, 'are you not unduly exposing yourselves? You have chosen a bad day to take up your stand so close to the window I have just heard that Prince Genji has come to the hermit yonder to be cured of an ague But he has disguised himself in so mean a habit that I did not know him, and have been so near all day without going to pay my respects to him' The nun started back in horror, 'How distressing! He may even have passed and seen us' and she hastened to let down the folding blind I am really very glad that I am to have an opportunity of visiting this Prince Genji of whom one hears so much He is said to be so handsome that even austere old priests like myself forget in his presence the sins and sorrows of the life they have discarded and take heart to live a little longer in a world where so much beauty dwells But you shall hear all about it'

Before the old priest had time to leave the house Genji was on his way back to the hermit's cave What an enchanting creature he had discovered! How right too his friends had been on that rainy night when they told him that on strange excursions such as this beauty might well be found lurking in unexpected quarters! How delightful to have strolled out by chance and at once made so astonishing a find! Whose could this exquisite child be? He would dearly love to have her always near him, to be able to turn to her at any moment for comfort and distraction, as once he had turned to the lady in the Palace

He was already lying down in the hermit's cave when (everything being at very close quarters) he heard the voice of the old priest's disciple calling for Koremitsu 'My master has just learnt,' said this disciple, 'that you were lodged so near at hand, and though it grieves him that you did not in passing honour him with a visit, he would at once have paid his respects to the Prince, had he not thought that Lord Genji could not be unaware of his presence in the neighbourhood of this hermitage, and

to recognize it when I came here today' At this the priest laughed 'Your dream seems to have come rather suddenly into the conversation,' he said, 'but I fear that if you pursue your enquiry, your expectations will be sadly disappointed You have probably never heard of Azechi no Dainagon, he died so long ago He married my sister, who after his death turned her back upon the world Just at that time I myself was in certain difficulties and was unable to visit the Capital, so for company she came to join me here in my retreat'

'I have heard that Asechi no Dainagon had a daughter Is that so?' said Genji at a venture, 'I am sure you will not think I ask the question with any indiscreet intention' 'He had an only daughter who died about ten years ago Her father had always wanted to present her at Court But she would not listen, and when he was dead and there was only my sister the nun to look after her, she allowed some wretched go-between to introduce her to Prince Hyobukyo whose mistress she became His wife, a proud, relentless woman, from the first pursued her with constant vexations and affronts, day in and day out this obstinate persecution continued, till at last she died of heartbreak They say that unkindness cannot kill, but I shall never say so, for from this cause alone I saw my kinswoman fall sick and perish'

'Then the little girl must be this lady's child,' Genji realized at last. And that accounted for her resemblance to the lady in the Palace[1] He felt more drawn towards her than ever She was of good lineage, which is never amiss, and her rather rustic simplicity would be an actual advantage when she became his pupil, as he was now determined she should, for it would make it the easier for him to mould her unformed tastes to the pattern of his own 'And did the lady whose sad story you have told me leave no remembrance behind her?' asked Genji, still hoping to turn the conversation on to the child herself 'She died only a short while after her child was born, and it too was a girl The charge of it fell to my sister who is in failing health and feels herself by no means equal to such a responsibility' All was now clear 'You will think it a very strange proposal,' said Genji, 'but I feel that I should like to adopt this child Perhaps you would mention this to your sister? Though others early involved me in marriage, their choice proved distasteful to me and having, as it seems, very little relish for society, I now live entirely alone She is, I quite realize, a mere child, and I am not proposing' Here he paused and the priest answered 'I am very much obliged to you for this offer, but I am afraid it is clear that you do *not* at all realize that the child in question is a mere infant You would not even find her amusing as a casual distraction But it is true that a girl as she grows up needs the backing of powerful friends if she is to make her way in the world, and though I cannot promise you that anything will come of it, I ought certainly to

[1] Fujitsubo, who was Hyobukyo's sister

mention the matter to her grandmother' His manner had suddenly become somewhat cool and severe Genji felt that he had been indiscreet and preserved an embarrassed silence 'There is something which I ought to be doing in the Hall of Our Lord Amida,' the priest presently continued, 'so I must take leave of you for a while I must also read my vespers, but I will rejoin you afterwards,' and he set out to climb the hill Genji felt very disconsolate It had begun to rain, a cold wind blew across the hill, carrying with it the sound of a waterfall — audible till then as a gentle intermittent plashing, but now a mighty roar, and with it, somnolently rising and falling, mingled the monotonous chanting of the scriptures Even the most unimpressionable nature would have been plunged into melancholy by such surroundings How much the more so Prince Genji, as he lay sleepless on his bed, continually planning and counter-planning! The priest had spoken of 'vespers,' but the hour was indeed very late It was clear however that the nun was still awake, for though she was making as little noise as possible, every now and then her rosary would knock with a faint click against the praying-stool There was something alluring in the sound of this low, delicate tapping It seemed to come from quite close He opened a small space between the screens which divided the living-room from the inner chamber and rustled his fan He had the impression that someone in the inner room after a little hesitation had come towards the screen as though saying to herself, 'It cannot be so, yet I could have sworn I heard ,' and then retreated a little, as though thinking, 'Well, it was only my fancy after all!' Now she seemed to be feeling her way in the dark, and Genji said aloud, 'Follow the Lord Buddha and though your way lie in darkness yet shall you not go astray' Suddenly hearing his clear young voice in the darkness, the woman had not at first the courage to reply But at last she managed to answer 'In which direction, please, is He leading me? I am afraid I do not quite understand' 'I am sorry to have startled you,' said Genji 'I have only this small request to make that you will carry to your mistress the following poem Since first he saw the green leaf of the tender bush, never for a moment has the dew of longing dried from the traveller's sleeve "' 'Surely you must know that there is no one here who understands messages of that kind,' said the woman, 'I wonder whom you mean?' I have a particular reason for wishing your mistress to receive the message, said Genji, 'and I should be obliged if you would contrive to deliver it' The nun at once perceived that the poem referred to her grandchild and supposed that Genji, having been wrongly informed about her age, was intending to make love to her But how had he discovered her granddaughter's existence? For some while she pondered in great annoyance and perplexity, and at last answered prudently with a poem in which she said that he who was but spending a night upon a traveller's dewy bed could know little of those whose

gusty mountain-wind, and with this solemn sound was mingled the roar of hurrying waters 'Startled from my dream by a wandering gust of the mountain gale, I heard the waterfall, and at the beauty of its music wept.' So Genji greeted the priest, and he in turn replied with the poem, 'At the noise of a torrent wherein I daily fill my bowl I am scarce likely to start back in wonder and delight' 'I get so used to it,' he added apologetically A heavy mist covered the morning sky, and even the chirruping of the mountain-birds sounded muffled and dim Such a variety of flowers and blossoming trees (he did not know their names) grew upon the hillside that the rocks seemed to be spread with a many-coloured embroidery Above all he marvelled at the exquisite stepping of the deer who moved across the slope, now treading daintily, now suddenly pausing, and as he watched them the last remnants of his sickness were dispelled by sheer delight Though the hermit had little use of his limbs, he managed by hook or crook to perform the mystic motions of the Guardian Spell,[1] and though his aged voice was husky and faltering, he read the sacred text with great dignity and fervour Several of Genji's friends now arrived to congratulate him upon his recovery, among them a messenger from the Palace The priest from the hut below brought a present of strange-looking roots for which he had gone deep into the ravine He begged to be excused from accompanying Genji on his way 'Till the end of the year,' he said, 'I am bound by a vow which must deprive me of what would have been a great pleasure,' and he handed Genji the stirrup-cup

Were I but able to follow my own desires,' said Genji taking the cup, 'I would not leave these hills and streams But I hear that my father the Emperor is making anxious enquiry after me I will come back before the blossom is over' And he recited the verse, 'I will go back to the men of the City and tell them to come quickly, lest the wild wind outstripping them should toss these blossoms from the cherry bough' The old priest, flattered by Genji's politeness and captivated by the charm of his voice, answered with the poem 'Like one who finds the aloe-tree in bloom, to the flower of the mountain-cherry I no longer turn my gaze' 'I am not after all quite so great a rarity as the aloe-flower,' said Genji smiling

Next the hermit handed him a parting-cup, with the poem· 'Though seldom I open the pine-tree door of my mountain-cell, yet have I now seen face to face the flower few live to see,' and as he looked up at Genji, his

[1] The Guardian Spell (*goshin*) is practised as follows
The incantant holds the palms of his hands together with middle fingers touching and extended, first fingers separated and bent, tips of thumbs and little fingers bunched together, and third fingers in line with middle fingers so as to be invisible from in front. With hands in this sacred pose (*mudra*) he touches the worshipper on forehead, left and right shoulder, heart and throat. At each contact he utters the spell

ON · BASARA GO JI HARAJUHATA SOHAKA

which is corrupt Sanskrit and means 'I invoke thee, thou diamond-fiery very majestic [illegible]' The deity here invoked is Vairocana, favourite Buddha of the Mystic Sect.

eyes filled with tears He gave him, to keep him safe in future from all harm, a magical wand, and seeing this the nun's brother in his turn presented a rosary brought back from Korea by Prince Shotoku It was ornamented with jade and was still in the same Chinese-looking box in which it had been brought from that country The box was in an open-work bag, and a five-leafed pine-branch was with it He also gave him some little vases of blue crystal to keep his medicines in, with sprays of cherry-blossom and wistaria along with them, and such other presents as the place could supply Genji had sent to the Capital for gifts with which to repay his reception in the mountain First he gave a reward to the hermit, then distributed alms to the priests who had chanted liturgies on his behalf, and finally he gave useful presents to the poor villagers of the neighbourhood While he was reading a short passage from the scriptures in preparation for his departure, the old priest went into his house and asked his sister the nun whether she had any message for the Prince It is very hard to say anything at present, she said Perhaps if he still felt the same inclination four, or five years hence, we might begin to consider it ' That is just what I think,' said the priest

Genji saw to his regret that he had made no progress whatever In answer to the nun's message he sent a small boy who belonged to the priest's household with the following poem 'Last night indeed, though in the greyness of twilight only, I saw the lovely flower But today a hateful mist has hidden it utterly from my sight ' The nun replied That I may know whether indeed it pains you so deeply to leave this flower, I shall watch intently the motions of this hazy sky ' It was written in a noteworthy and very aristocratic hand, but quite without the graces of deliberate artistry While his carriage was being got ready, a great company of young lords arrived from the Great Hall, saying that they had been hard put to it to discover what had become of him and now desired to give him their escort Among them were To no Chujo, Sachu Ben, and other lesser lords, who had come out of affection for the Prince 'We like nothing better than waiting upon you,' they said, rather aggrieved, it was not kind of you to leave us behind ' But having come so far,' said another, it would be a pity to go away without resting for a while under the shadow of these flowering trees', whereupon they all sat down in a row upon the moss under a tall rock and passed a rough earthenware wine-jar from hand to hand Close by them the stream leaped over the rocks in a magnificent cascade To no Chujo pulled out a flute from the folds of his dress and played a few trills upon it Sachu Ben, tapping idly with his fan, began to sing The Temple of Toyora ' The young lords who had come to fetch him were all persons of great distinction, but so striking was Genji's appearance as he sat leaning disconsolately against the rock that no eye was likely to be turned in any other direction One of his attendants now performed upon the reed-pipe, someone else turned out to be

a skilful *sho* [1] player Presently the old priest came out of his house carrying a zithern, and putting it into Genji's hands begged him to play something, 'that the birds of the mountain may rejoice' He protested that he was not feeling at all in the mood to play, but yielding to the priest's persuasion, he gave what was really not at all a contemptible performance After that, they all got up and started for home Everyone on the mountain, down to the humblest priest and youngest neophyte, was bitterly disappointed at the shortness of his stay, and there were many tears shed, while the old nun within doors was sorry to think that she had had but that one brief glimpse of him and might never see him again. The priest declared that for his part he thought the Land of the Rising Sun in her last degenerate days ill-deserved that such a Prince should be born to her, and he wiped his eyes The little girl too was very much pleased with him and said he was a prettier gentleman than her own father 'If you think so, you had better become his little girl instead,' said her nurse At which the child nodded, thinking that it would be a very good plan indeed, and in future the best-dressed person in the pictures she painted was called Prince Genji,' and so was her handsomest doll

On his return to the Capital he went straight to the Palace and described to his father the experiences of the last two days The Emperor thought him looking very haggard and was much concerned He asked many questions about the hermit's magical powers, to all of which Genji replied in great detail 'He ought certainly to have been made Master Magician long ago,' said His Majesty 'His ministrations have repeatedly been attended with great success, but for some reason his services have escaped public acknowledgment,' and he issued a proclamation to this effect The Minister of the Left came to meet him on his way from the Presence and apologized for not having come with his sons to bring him back from the mountain 'I thought,' he said, 'that as you had gone there secretly, you would dislike being fetched, but I very much hope that you will now come and spend a few days with us quietly, after which I shall esteem it a privilege to escort you to your palace' He did not in the least want to go, but there was no escape His father-in-law drove him to the Great Hall in his own carriage, and when the bullocks had been unyoked dragged it in at the gate with his own hands Such treatment was certainly meant to be very friendly, but Genji found the Minister s attentions merely irritating

Aoi s quarters had, in anticipation of Genji's coming, just been put thoroughly to rights In the long interval since he last visited her many changes had been made, among other improvements, a handsome terrace had been built Not a thing was out of its right place in this supremely well-ordered house Aoi, as usual, was nowhere to be seen It was only after repeated entreaties by her father that she at last consented to appear

[1] A Chinese instrument, often translated 'mouth-organ'

in her husband's presence Posed like a princess in a picture she sat almost motionless Beautiful she certainly was 'I should like to tell you about my visit to the mountain, if only I thought that it would interest you at all or draw an answer from you I hate to go on always like this Why are you so cold and distant and proud? Year after year we fail to reach an understanding and you cut yourself off from me more completely than before Can we not manage for a little while to be on ordinary terms? It seems rather strange, considering how ill I have been, that you should not attempt to enquire after my health Or rather, it is exactly what I should expect, but nevertheless I find it extremely painful ' 'Yes,' said Aoi, 'it is extremely painful when people do not care what becomes of one ' She glanced back over her shoulder as she spoke, her face full of scorn and pride, looking uncommonly handsome as she did so 'You hardly ever speak,' said Genji, 'and when you do, it is only to say unkind things and twist one's harmless words so that they seem to be insults And when I try to find some way of helping you for a while at least to be a little less disagreeable, you become more hopelessly unapproachable than ever Shall I one day succeed in making you understand ?' and so saying he went into their bedroom She did not follow him He lay for a while in a state of great annoyance and distress But, probably because he did not really care about her very much one way or the other, he soon became drowsy and all sorts of quite different matters drifted through his head He wanted as much as ever to have the little girl in his keeping and watch her grow to womanhood But the grandmother was right, the child was too absurdly young, and it would be very difficult to broach the matter again Would it not however be possible to contrive that she should be brought to the Capital? It would be easy then to find excuses for fetching her and she might, even through some such arrangement as that, become a source of constant delight to him The father, Prince Hyobukyo, was of course a man of very distinguished manners, but he was not at all handsome How was it that the child resembled one of her aunts and was so unlike all the rest? He had an idea that Fujitsubo and Prince Hyobukyo were children of the same mother, while the others were only half-sisters The fact that the little girl was closely related to the lady whom he had loved for so long made him all the more set upon securing her, and he began again to puzzle his head for some means of bringing this about

Next day he wrote his letter of thanks to the priest No doubt it contained some allusion to his project To the nun he wrote Seeing you so resolutely averse to what I had proposed, I refrained from justifying my intentions so fully as I could have wished But should it prove that, even by the few words I ventured to speak, I was able to convince you that this is no mere whim or common fancy, how happy would such news make me ' On a slip of paper folded small and tucked into the letter he wrote the poem 'Though with all my heart I tried to leave it behind me, never for a

moment has it left me — the fair face of that mountain-flower!' Though she had long passed the zenith of her years the nun could not but be pleased and flattered by the elegance of the note, for it was not only written in an exquisite hand, but was folded with a careless dexterity which she greatly admired She felt very sorry for him, and would have been glad, had it been in her conscience, to have sent him a more favourable reply 'We were delighted,' she wrote, 'that being in the neighbourhood you took occasion to pay us a visit But I fear that when (as I very much hope you will) you come here purposely to visit us, I shall not be able to add anything to what I have said already As for the poem which you enclose, do not expect her to answer it, for she cannot yet write her "Naniwa Zu" [1] properly, even letter by letter Let me then answer it for her "For as long as the cherry-blossoms remain unscattered upon the shore of Onoe where wild storms blow — so long have you till now been constant!" For my part, I am very uneasy about the matter'

The priest replied to the same effect Genji was very much disappointed and after two or three days he sent for Koremitsu and gave him a letter for the nun, telling him at the same time to find out whatever he could from Shonagon, the child's nurse 'What an impressionable character he is,' thought Koremitsu He had only had a glimpse of the child, but that had sufficed to convince him that she was a mere baby, though he remembered thinking her quite pretty What trick would his master's heart be playing upon him next?

The old priest was deeply impressed by the arrival of a letter in the hands of so special and confidential a messenger After delivering it, Koremitsu sought out the nurse He repeated all that Genji had told him to say and added a great deal of general information about his master Being a man of many words he talked on and on, continually introducing some new topic which had suddenly occurred to him as relevant But at the end of it all Shonagon was just as puzzled as everyone else had been to account for Genji's interest in a child so ridiculously young His letter was very deferential In it he said that he longed to see a specimen of her childish writing done letter by letter, as the nun had described As before, he enclosed a poem 'Was it the shadows in the mountain well that told you my purpose was but jest?' [2] To which she answered, 'Some perhaps that have drawn in that well now bitterly repent Can the shadows tell me if again it will be so?' and Koremitsu brought a spoken message to the same effect, together with the assurance that so soon as the nun's health improved, she intended to visit the Capital and would then communicate with him again The prospect of her visit was very exciting

About this time Lady Fujitsubo fell ill and retired for a while from the Palace The sight of the Emperor's grief and anxiety moved Genji's

[1] A song the words of which were used as a first writing lesson.

[2] There is here a pun, and a reference to poem 3807 in the *Manyoshu*.

pity But he could not help thinking that this was an opportunity which must not be missed He spent the whole of that day in a state of great agitation, unable whether in his own house or at the Palace to think of anything else or call upon anyone When at last the day was over, he succeeded in persuading her maid Omyobu to take a message The girl, though she regarded any communication between them as most imprudent, seeing a strange look in his face like that of one who walks in a dream, took pity on him and went The Princess looked back upon their former relationship as something wicked and horrible and the memory of it was a continual torment to her She had determined that such a thing must never happen again

She met him with a stern and sorrowful countenance, but this did not disguise her charm, and as though conscious that he was unduly admiring her she began to treat him with great coldness and disdain He longed to find some blemish in her, to think that he had been mistaken, and be at peace

I need not tell all that happened The night passed only too quickly He whispered in her ear the poem 'Now that at last we have met, would that we might vanish forever into the dream we dreamed tonight!' But she, still conscience-stricken 'Though I were to hide in the darkness of eternal sleep, yet would my shame run through the world from tongue to tongue' And indeed, as Genji knew, it was not without good cause that she had suddenly fallen into this fit of apprehension and remorse As he left, Omyobu came running after him with his cloak and other belongings which he had left behind He lay all day upon his bed in great torment He sent a letter, but it was returned unopened This had happened many times in the past, but now it filled him with such consternation that for two or three days he was completely prostrate and kept his room All this while he was in constant dread lest his father, full of solicitude, should begin enquiring what new trouble had overtaken him Fujitsubo, convinced that her ruin was accomplished, fell into a profound melancholy and her health grew daily worse Messengers arrived constantly from the Court begging her to return without delay, but she could not bring herself to go Her disorder had now taken a turn which filled her with secret foreboding, and she did nothing all day long but sit distractedly wondering what would become of her When the hot weather set in she ceased to leave her bed at all Three months had now passed and there was no mistaking her condition Soon it would be known and everywhere discussed She was appalled at the calamity which had overtaken her Not knowing that there was any cause for secrecy, her people were astonished that she had not long ago informed the Emperor of her condition Speculations were rife, but the question was one which only the Princess herself was in a position definitely to solve Omyobu and her old nurse's daughter who waited upon her at her toilet and in the bath-

house had at once noted the change and were somewhat taken aback But Omyobu was unwilling to discuss the matter. She had an uncomfortable suspicion that it was the meeting which she arranged that had now taken effect with cruel promptness and precision It was announced in the Palace that other disorders had misled those about her and prevented them from recognizing the true nature of her condition This explanation was accepted by everyone

The Emperor himself was full of tender concern, and though messengers kept him constantly informed, the gloomiest doubts and fancies passed continually through his mind Genji was at this time visited by a most terrifying and extraordinary dream He sent for interpreters, but they could make little of it There were indeed certain passages to which they could assign no meaning at all, but this much was clear the dreamer had made a false step and must be on his guard 'It was not *my* dream,' said Genji, feeling somewhat alarmed 'I am consulting you on behalf of someone else,' and he was wondering what this 'false step' could have been when news reached him of the Princess's condition This then was the disaster which his dream had portended! At once he wrote her an immense letter full of passionate self-reproaches and exhortations. But Omyobu, thinking that it would only increase her agitation, refused to deliver it, and he could trust no other messenger. Even the few wretched lines which she had been in the habit of sending to him now and again had for some while utterly ceased

In her seventh month she again appeared at Court. Overjoyed at her return, the Emperor lavished boundless affection upon her The added fulness of her figure, the unwonted pallor and thinness of her face gave her, he thought, a new and incomparable charm As before, all his leisure was spent in her company During this time several Court festivals took place and Genji's presence was constantly required, sometimes he was called upon to play the *koto* or flute, sometimes to serve his father in other ways On such occasions, strive as he might to show no trace of embarrassment or agitation, he feared more than once that he had betrayed himself, while to her such confrontations were one long torment

The nun had somewhat improved in health and was now living in the Capital He had enquired where she was lodging and sent messages from time to time, receiving (which indeed was all he expected) as little encouragement as before In the last months his longing for the child had increased rather than diminished, but day after day went by without his finding any means to change the situation As the autumn drew to its close, he fell into a state of great despondency One fine moonlit night when he had decided, against his own inclination, to pay a certain secret visit,[1] a shower came on As he had started from the Palace and the place to which he was going was in the suburbs of the Sixth Ward, it occurred

[1] To Lady Rokujo

to him that it would be disagreeable to go so far in the rain He was considering what he should do when he noticed a tumbled-down house surrounded by very ancient trees He asked whose this gloomy and desolate mansion might be, and Koremitsu, who, as usual, was with him, replied 'Why that is the late Azechi no Dainagon's house A day or two ago I took occasion to call there and was told that my Lady the nun has grown very weak and does not now know what goes on about her' 'Why did you not tell me this before?' said Genji deeply concerned, 'I should have called at once to convey my sympathy to her household Pray go in at once and ask for news' Koremitsu accordingly sent one of the lesser attendants to the house, instructing him to give the impression that Genji had come on purpose to enquire When the man announced that Prince Genji had sent him for news and was himself waiting outside, great excitement and consternation prevailed in the house Their mistress, the servants said, had for several days been lying in a very parlous condition and could not possibly receive a visit But they dared not simply send so distinguished a visitor away, and hastily tidying the southern parlour, they bustled him into it, saying, 'You must forgive us for showing you into this untidy room We have done our best to make it presentable Perhaps, on a surprise visit, you will forgive us for conducting you to such an out-of-the-way closet' It was indeed not at all the kind of room that he was used to 'I have been meaning for a long while to visit this house,' said Genji, 'but time after time the proposals which I made in writing concerning a certain project of mine were summarily rejected and this discouraged me Had I but known that your mistress's health had taken this turn for the worse' 'Tell him that at this moment my mind is clear, though it may soon be darkened again I am deeply sensible of the kindness he has shown in thus visiting my death-bed, and regret that I cannot speak with him face to face Tell him that if by any chance he has not altered his mind with regard to the matter that he has discussed with me before, by all means let him, when the time has come, number her among the ladies of his household It is with great anxiety that I leave her behind me and I fear that such a bond with earth may hinder me from reaching the life for which I have prayed'

Her room was so near and the partition so thin that as she gave Shonagon her message he could hear now and again the sound of her sad, quavering voice Presently he heard her saying to someone, How kind, how very kind of him to come If only the child were old enough to thank him nicely!' 'It is indeed no question of kindness,' said Genji to Shonagon 'Surely it is evident that only some very deep feeling would have driven me to display so zealous a persistency! Since first I saw this child, a feeling of strange tenderness towards her possessed me, and it has grown to such a love as cannot be of this world only [1] Though it is but an idle

[1] Arises out of some connection in a previous existence.

fancy, I have a longing to hear her voice Could you not send for her before I go?' 'Poor little thing,' said Shonagon 'She is fast asleep in her room and knows nothing of all our troubles ' But as she spoke there was a sound of someone moving in the women's quarters and a voice suddenly was heard saying 'Grandmother, Grandmother! Prince Genji who came to see us in the mountains is here, paying a visit. Why do you not let him come and talk to you?' 'Hush, child, hush!' cried all the gentlewomen, scandalized 'No, no,' said the child; 'Grandmother said that when she saw this prince it made her feel better at once I was not being silly at all ' This speech delighted Genji, but the gentlewomen of the household thought the child's incursion painful and unseemly, and pretended not to hear her last remark Genji gave up the idea of paying a real visit and drove back to his house, thinking as he went that her behaviour was indeed still that of a mere infant Yet how easy and delightful it would be to teach her!

Next day he paid a proper visit On his arrival he sent in a poem written on his usual tiny slip of paper 'Since first I heard the voice of the young crane, my boat shows a strange tendency to stick among the reeds!' It was meant for the little girl and was written in a large, childish hand, but very beautifully, so that the ladies of the house said as soon as they saw it, 'This will have to go into the child's copy-book '

Shonagon sent him the following note 'My mistress, feeling that she might not live through the day, asked us to have her moved to the temple in the hills, and she is already on her way I shall see to it that she learns of your enquiry, if I can but send word to her before it is too late ' The letter touched him deeply

During these autumn evenings his heart was in a continual ferment But though all his thoughts were occupied in a different quarter, yet owing to the curious relationship in which the child stood to the being who thus obsessed his mind, the desire to make the girl his own throughout this stormy time grew daily stronger He remembered the evening when he had first seen her and the nun's poem, 'Not knowing if any will come to nurture the tender leaf ' She would always be delightful, but in some respects she might not fulfil her early promise One must take risks And he made the poem 'When shall I see it lying in my hand, the young grass of the moorside that springs from purple [1] roots?' In the tenth month the Emperor was to visit the Suzaku-in for the Festival of Red Leaves The dancers were all to be sons of the noblest houses The most accomplished among the princes, courtiers and other great gentlemen had been chosen for their parts by the Emperor himself, and from the Royal Princes and State Ministers downward everyone was busy with continual practices and rehearsals Genji suddenly realized that for a long while he had

[1] Purple is *murasaki* in Japanese. From this poem the child is known as Murasaki, and hence the authoress derived the nickname by which she too is known.

not enquired after his friends on the mountain He at once sent a special messenger who brought back this letter from the priest 'The end came on the twentieth day of last month It is the common lot of mankind, yet her loss is very grievous to me!' This and more he wrote, and Genji, reading the letter, was filled with a bitter sense of life's briefness and futility And what of the child concerning whose future the dead woman had shown such anxiety? He could not remember his own mother's death at all distinctly, but some dim recollection still floated in his mind and gave to his letter of condolence an added warmth of feeling It was answered, not without a certain self-importance, by the nurse Shonagon

After the funeral and mourning were over, the child was brought back to the Capital Hearing of this he allowed a short while to elapse and then one fine, still night went to the house of his own accord This gloomy, decaying, half-deserted mansion must, he thought, have a most depressing effect upon the child who lived there He was shown into the same small room as before Here Shonagon told him between her sobs the whole tale of their bereavement, at which he too found himself strangely moved 'I would send my little mistress to His Highness her father's,' she continued, 'did I not remember how cruelly her poor mother was used in that house And I would do it still if my little lady were a child in arms who would not know where she had been taken to nor what the people there were feeling towards her But she is now too big a girl to go among a lot of strange children who might not treat her kindly So her poor dead grandmother was always saying down to her last day You, Sir, have been very good to us, and it would be a great weight off my mind to know that she was coming to you even if it were only for a little while, and I would not worry you with asking what was to become of her afterwards Only for her sake I am sorry indeed that she is not some years older, so that you might make a match of it But the way she has been brought up has made her young even for her age ' 'You need not so constantly remind me of her childishness,' said Genji 'Though it is indeed her youth and helplessness which move my compassion, yet I realize (and why should I hide it from myself or from you?) that a far closer bond unites our souls Let me tell her myself what we have just now decided, and he recited a poem in which he asked if 'like the waves that lap the shore where young reeds grow he must advance only to recede again ' 'Will she be too much surprised?' he added Shonagon, saying that the little girl should by all means be fetched, answered his poem with another in which she warned him that he must not expect her to 'drift seaweed-like with the waves,' before she understood his intention 'Now, what made you think I should send you away without letting her see you?' she asked, speaking in an offhand, familiar tone which he found it easy to pardon His appearance, which the gentlewomen of the house studied with great care while he sat waiting for the child and singing to himself

a verse of the song 'Why so hard to cross the hill?' made a deep impression upon them, and they did not forget that moment for a long while after.

The child was lying on her bed weeping for her grandmother 'A gentleman in a big cloak has come to play with you,' said one of the women who were waiting upon her, 'I wonder if it is your father' At this she jumped up and cried out 'Nurse, where is the gentleman in a cloak? Is he my father?' and she came running into the room. 'No,' said Genji, 'it is not your father, but it is someone else who wants you to be very fond of him Come' She had learnt from the way people talked about him that Prince Genji was someone very important, and feeling that he must really be very angry with her for speaking of him as the 'gentleman in a cloak' she went straight to her nurse and whispered, 'Please, I am sleepy' 'You must not be shy of me any more,' said Genji 'If you are sleepy, come here and lie on my knee Will you not even come and talk to me? 'There,' said Shonagon, 'you see what a little savage she is,' and pushed the child towards him She stood listlessly by his side, passing her hand under her hair so that it fell in waves over her soft dress or clasping a great bunch of it where it stuck out thick around her shoulders Presently he took her hand in his, but at once, in terror of this close contact with someone to whom she was not used, she cried out, I said I wanted to go to bed,' and snatching her hand away she ran into the women's quarters He followed her crying, 'Dear one, do not run away from me! Now that your granny is gone, you must love me instead' 'Well!' gasped Shonagon, deeply shocked 'No, that is too much! How can you bring yourself to say such a wicked thing to the poor child? And it is not much use *telling* people to be fond of one, is it?' 'For the moment, it may not be,' said Genji 'But you will see that strange things happen if one's heart is set upon a thing as mine is now'

Hail was falling It was a wild and terrible night The thought of leaving her to pass it in this gloomy and half-deserted mansion immeasurably depressed him and snatching at this excuse for remaining near her 'Shut the partition-door!' he cried 'I will stay for a while and play the watchman here on this terrible night Draw near to me, all of you!' and so saying, as though it were the most natural thing in the world, he picked up the child in his arms and carried her to her bed The gentlewomen were far too astonished and confounded to budge from their seats, while Shonagon, though his high-handed proceedings greatly agitated and alarmed her, had to confess to herself that there was no real reason to interfere, and could only sit moaning in her corner The little girl was at first terribly frightened She did not know what he was going to do with her and shuddered violently Even the feel of his delicate, cool skin when he drew her to him, gave her goose-flesh He saw this, but none the less he began gently and carefully to remove her outer garments, and laid her down Then, though he knew quite well that she was still frightened of

quated than he remembered it years ago How depressing it must be for a handful of persons to live in these decaying halls, and looking about him he said to the nurse 'No child ought to live in a place like this even for a little while I must take her away at once, there is plenty of room in my house You' (turning to Shonagon) 'shall be found a place as a Lady-in-Waiting there The child will be very well off, for there are several other young people for her to play with ' He called the little girl to him and noticing the rich perfume that clung to her dress since Genji held her in his arms, the Prince said, 'How nicely your dress is scented But isn't it rather drab?' No sooner had he said this than he remembered that she was in mourning, and felt slightly uncomfortable 'I used sometimes to tell her grandmother,' he continued, 'that she ought to let her come to see me and get used to our ways, for indeed it was a strange upbringing for her to live alone year in year out with one whose health and spirits steadily declined But she for some reason was very unfriendly towards me, and there was in another quarter [1] too a reluctance which I fear even at such a time as this may not be wholly overcome ' 'If that is so,' said Shonagon, 'dull as it is for her here, I do not think she should be moved till she is a little better able to shift for herself '

For days on end the child had been in a terrible state of grief, and not having eaten the least bite of anything she was grown very thin, but was none the less lovely for that He looked at her tenderly and said 'You must not cry any more now When people die, there is no help for it and we must bear it bravely But now all is well, for I have come instead ' But it was getting late and he could not stay any longer As he turned to go he saw that the child, by no means consoled at the prospect of falling under his care, was again crying bitterly. The Prince, himself shedding a few tears, did his best to comfort her 'Do not grieve so,' he said, 'today or tomorrow I will send for you to come and live with me,' and with that he departed Still the child wept and no way could be found to distract her thoughts It was not of course that she had any anxiety about her own future, for about such matters she had not yet begun to think at all, but only that she had lost the companion from whom for years on end she had never for a moment been separated Young as she was, she suffered so cruelly that all her usual games were quite abandoned, and though sometimes during the day her spirits would a little improve, as night drew on she became so melancholy that Shonagon began to wonder how much longer things would go on like this, and in despair at not being able to comfort her, would herself burst into tears

Presently Koremitsu arrived with a message saying that Genji had intended to visit them, but owing to a sudden command from the Palace was unable to do so, and being very much perturbed at the little one s grievous condition had sent for further news Having delivered this mes-

[1] His wife.

sage, Koremitsu brought in some of Genji's servants whom he had sent to mount guard over the house that night 'This kindness is indeed ill-placed,' said Shonagon 'It may not seem to him of much consequence that his gentlemen should be installed here, but if the child's father hears of it, we servants shall get all the blame for the little lady's being given away to a married gentleman It was you who let it all begin, we shall be told Now be careful,' she said turning to her fellow-servants, 'do not let her even mention these watchmen to her father ' But alas, the child was quite incapable of understanding such a prohibition, and Shonagon, after pouring out many lamentations to Koremitsu, continued 'I do not doubt but that in due time she will somehow become his wife, for so their fate seems to decree But now and for a long while there can be no talk of any such thing, and this, as he has roundly told me, he knows as well as the rest of us So what he is after I cannot for the life of me imagine Only today when Prince Hyobukyo was here he bade me keep a sharp eye upon her and not let her be treated with any indiscretion I confess when he said it I remembered with vexation certain liberties which I have allowed your master to take, thinking little enough of them at the time ' No sooner had she said this than she began to fear that Koremitsu would put a worse construction on her words than she intended, and shaking her head very dolefully she relapsed into silence Nor was she far wrong, for Koremitsu was indeed wondering of what sort Genji's misdemeanours could have been

On hearing Koremitsu s report Genji's heart was filled with pity for the child's state and he would like to have gone to her at once But he feared that ignorant people would misunderstand these frequent visits and, thinking the girl older than she was, spread foolish scandals abroad It would be far simpler to fetch her to his palace and keep her there All through the day he sent numerous letters, and at dusk Koremitsu again went to the house saying that urgent business had once more prevented Genji from visiting them, for which remissness he tendered his apologies Shonagon answered curtly that the girl's father had suddenly decided to fetch her away next day and that they were too busy to receive visits The servants are all in a fluster at leaving this shabby old house where they have lived so long and going to a strange, grand place ' She answered his further questions so briefly and seemed so intent upon her sewing that Koremitsu went away

Genji was at the Great Hall, but as usual he had been unable to get a word out of Aoi and in a gloomy mood he was plucking at his zithern and singing, 'Why sped you across field and hill So fast upon this rainy night?' [1]

The words of the song were aimed at Aoi and he sang them with much feeling He was thus employed when Koremitsu arrived at the Great Hall Genji sent for him at once and bade him tell his story Koremitsu's

[1] The song is addressed by a girl to a suspicious lover, Genji reverses the sense.

news was very disquieting Once she was in her father's palace it would look very odd that Genji should fetch her away, even if she came willingly It would inevitably be rumoured abroad that he had made off with her like a child-snatcher, a thief Far better to anticipate his rival and exacting a promise of silence from the people about her, carry her off to his own palace immediately 'I shall go there at daybreak,' he said to Koremitsu 'Order the carriage that I came here in, it can be used just as it is, and see to it that one or two attendants are ready to go with me' Koremitsu bowed and retired

Genji knew that whichever course he chose, there was bound to be a scandal so soon as the thing became known Inevitably gossips would spread the report that, young though she was, the child by this time knew well enough why she had been invited to live with Prince Genji in his palace Let them draw their own conclusions That did not matter There was a much worse possibility. What if Hyobukyo found out where she was? His conduct in abducting another man's child would appear in the highest degree outrageous and discreditable He was sorely puzzled, but he knew that if he let this opportunity slip he would afterwards bitterly repent it, and long before daybreak he started on his way Aoi was cold and sullen as ever 'I have just remembered something very important which I must see about at home,' he said, 'I shall not be away long,' and he slipped out so quietly that the servants of the house did not know that he was gone His cloak was brought to him from his own apartments and he drove off attended only by Koremitsu who followed on horseback After much knocking they succeeded in getting the gate opened, but by a servant who was not in the secret Koremitsu ordered the man to pull in Genji's carriage as quietly as he could and himself went straight to the front door, which he rattled, coughing as he did so that Shonagon might know who was there 'My lord is waiting,' he said when she came to the door 'But the young lady is fast asleep,' said Shonagon, 'his Highness has no business to be up and about at this time of night' She said this thinking that he was returning from some nocturnal escapade and had only called there in passing I hear,' said Genji now coming forward, 'that the child is to be moved to her father's and I have something of importance which I must say to her before she goes' 'Whatever business you have to transact with her, I am sure she will give the matter her closest attention,' scoffed Shonagon Matters of importance indeed, with a child of ten! Genji entered the women's quarters 'You cannot go in there,' cried Shonagon in horror, several aged ladies are lying all undressed' 'They are all fast asleep,' said Genji 'See, I am only rousing the child,' and bending over her 'The morning mist is rising,' he cried, 'it is time to wake!' And before Shonagon had time to utter a sound, he had taken the child in his arms and begun gently to rouse her Still half-dreaming, she thought it was the prince her father who had

come to fetch her 'Come,' said Genji while he put her hair to rights, 'your father has sent me to bring you back with me to his palace' For a moment she was dazed to find that it was not her father and shrank from him in fright 'Never mind whether it is your father or I,' he cried, 'it is all the same,' and so saying he picked her up in his arms and carried her out of the inner room 'Well!' cried out Koremitsu and Shonagon in astonishment What would he do next? 'It seems,' said Genji, 'that you were disquieted at my telling you I could not visit her here as often as I wished and would make arrangements for her to go to a more convenient place I hear that you are sending her where it will be even more difficult for me to see her Therefore make ready one or the other of you to come with me'

Shonagon, who now realized that he was going to make off with the child, fell into a terrible fluster 'O, Sir,' she said, 'you could not have chosen a worse time Today her father is coming to fetch her, and whatever shall I say to him? If only you would wait, I am sure it would all come right in the end But by acting so hastily you will do yourself no good and leave the poor servants here in a sad pickle' 'If that is all,' cried Genji, 'let them follow as soon as they choose,' and to Shonagon's despair he had the carriage brought in The child stood by weeping and bewildered There seemed no way of preventing him from carrying out his purpose and gathering together the child's clothes that she had been sewing the night before, the nurse put on her own best dress and stepped into the carriage Genji's house was not far off and they arrived before daylight They drew up in front of the western wing and Genji alighted Taking the child lightly in his arms, he set her on the ground Shonagon, to whom these strange events seemed like a dream, hesitated as though still uncertain whether she should enter the house or no 'There is no need for you to come in if you do not want to,' said Genji 'Now that the child herself is safely here I am quite content If you had rather go back, you have only to say so and I will escort you'

Reluctantly she left the carriage The suddenness of the move was in itself enough to have upset her, but she was also worrying about what Prince Hyobukyo would think when he found that his child had vanished And indeed what *was* going to become of her? One way or another all her mistresses seemed to be taken from her and it was only when she became frightened of having wept for so long on end that she at last dried her eyes and began to pray

The western wing had long been uninhabited and was not completely furnished, but Koremitsu had soon fitted up screens and curtains where they were required For Genji makeshift quarters were soon contrived by letting down the side-wings of his screen-of-honour He sent to the other part of the house for his night things and went to sleep The child, who had been put to bed not far off, was still very apprehensive and ill at ease

in these new surroundings Her lips were trembling, but she dared not cry out loud 'I want to sleep with Shonagon,' she said at last in a tearful, babyish voice 'You are getting too big to sleep with a nurse,' said Genji who had heard her 'You must try and go to sleep nicely where you are' She felt very lonely and lay weeping for a long while The nurse was far too much upset to think of going to bed and sat up for the rest of the night in the servants' quarters crying so bitterly that she was unconscious of all that went on around her

But when it grew light she began to look about her a little Not only this great palace with its marvellous pillars and carvings, but the sand in the courtyard outside which seemed to her like a carpet of jewels made so dazzling an impression upon her that at first she felt somewhat overawed However, the fact that she was now no longer in a household of women gave her an agreeable sense of security

It was the hour at which business brought various strangers to the house There were several men walking just outside her window and she heard one of them whisper to another 'They say that someone new has come to live here Who can it be, I wonder? A lady of note, I'll warrant you'

Bath water was brought from the other wing, and steamed rice for breakfast Genji did not rise till far on into the morning 'It is not good for the child to be alone,' he said to Shonagon, 'so last night before I came to you I arranged for some little people to come and stay here,' and so saying he sent a servant to 'fetch the little girls from the eastern wing' He had given special orders that they were to be as small as possible and now four of the tiniest and prettiest creatures imaginable arrived upon the scene

Murasaki was still asleep, lying wrapped in Genji's own coat It was with difficulty that he roused her 'You must not be sad any more,' he said 'If I were not very fond of you, should I be looking after you like this? Little girls ought to be very gentle and obedient in their ways' And thus her education was begun

She seemed to him, now that he could study her at leisure, even more lovely than he had realized and they were soon engaged in an affectionate conversation He sent for delightful pictures and toys to show her and set to work to amuse her in every way he could Gradually he persuaded her to get up and look about her In her shabby dress made of some dark grey material she looked so charming now that she was laughing and playing, with all her woes forgotten, that Genji too laughed with pleasure as he watched her When at last he retired to the eastern wing, she went out of doors to look at the garden As she picked her way among the trees and along the side of the lake, and gazed with delight upon the frosty flower-beds that glittered gay as a picture, while a many-coloured throng of unknown people passed constantly in and out of the house, she

began to think that this was a very nice place indeed Then she looked at the wonderful pictures that were painted on all the panels and screens and quite lost her heart to them

For two or three days Genji did not go to the Palace, but spent all his time amusing the little girl Finally he drew all sorts of pictures for her to put into her copybook, showing them to her one by one as he did so She thought them the loveliest set of pictures she had ever seen Then he wrote part of the *Musashi-no* poem [1] She was delighted by the way it was written in bold ink-strokes on a background stained with purple In a smaller hand was the poem 'Though the parent-root [2] I cannot see, yet tenderly I love its offshoot [3] — the dewy plant that grows upon Musashi Moor' Come,' said Genji while she was admiring it, 'you must write something too' 'I cannot write properly yet,' she answered, looking up at him with a witchery so wholly unconscious that Genji laughed 'Even if you cannot write properly it will never do for us to let you off altogether Let me give you a lesson' With many timid glances towards him she began to write Even the childish manner in which she grasped the brush gave him a thrill of delight which he was at a loss to explain 'Oh, I have spoiled it,' she suddenly cried out and blushing hid from him what she had written But he forced her to let him see it and found the poem 'I do not know what put Musashi into your head and am very puzzled What plant is it that you say is a relative of mine?' It was written in a large childish hand which was indeed very undeveloped, but was nevertheless full of promise It showed a strong resemblance to the late nun's writing He felt certain that if she were given up-to-date copybooks she would soon write very nicely

Next they built houses for the dolls and played so long at this game together that Genji forgot for a while the great anxiety [4] which was at that time preying upon his mind

The servants who had been left behind at Murasaki's house were extremely embarrassed when Prince Hyobukyo came to fetch her Genji had made them promise for a time at any rate to tell no one of what had happened and Shonagon had seemed to agree that this was best Accordingly he could get nothing out of them save that Shonagon had taken the child away with her without saying anything about where she was going The Prince felt completely baffled Perhaps the grandmother had instilled into the nurse's mind the idea that things would not go smoothly for the child at his palace In that case the nurse with an excess of craftiness

[1] 'Though I know not the place, yet when they told me this was the moor of Musashi the thought flashed through my mind "What else indeed could it be, since all its grass is purple-dyed?"'

[2] Fujitsubo The fuji flower is also purple (*murasaki*) in colour

[3] The child Murasaki, who was Fujitsubo's niece. Musashi was famous for the purple dye extracted from the roots of a grass that grew there.

[4] The pregnancy of Fujitsubo

might, instead of openly saying that she feared the child would not be well treated under his roof, have thought it wiser to make off with her when opportunity offered He went home very depressed, asking them to let him know instantly if they had any news, a request which again embarrassed them He also made enquiries of the priest at the temple in the hills, but could learn nothing She had seemed to him to be a most lovable and delightful child, it was very disappointing to lose sight of her in this manner The princess his wife had long ago got over her dislike of the child's mother and was indignant at the idea that she was not to be trusted to do her duty by the child properly.

Gradually the servants from Murasaki's house assembled at her new home The little girls who had been brought to play with her were delighted with their new companion and they were soon all playing together very happily

When her prince was away or busy, on dreary evenings she would still sometimes long for her grandmother the nun and cry a little But she never thought about her father whom she had never been used to see except at rare intervals Now indeed she had 'a new father' of whom she was growing every day more fond When he came back from anywhere she was the first to meet him and then wonderful games and conversations began, she sitting all the while on his lap without the least shyness or restraint A more charming companion could not have been imagined It might be that when she grew older, she would not always be so trustful New aspects of her character might come into play If she suspected, for example, that he cared for someone else, she might resent it, and in such a case all sorts of unexpected things are apt to happen, but for the present she was a delightful plaything Had she really been his daughter, convention would not have allowed him to go on much longer living with her on terms of such complete intimacy, but in a case like this he felt that such scruples were not applicable

CHAPTER VI

The Saffron-Flower

TRY as he might he could not dispel the melancholy into which Yugao's sudden death [1] had cast him, and though many months had gone by he longed for her passionately as ever In other quarters where he had looked for affection, coldness vied with coldness and pride with pride He longed to escape once more from the claims of these passionate and exacting natures, and renew the life of tender intimacy which for a while had given him so great a happiness But alas, no second Yugao would he ever find Despite his bitter experience he still fancied that one day he might at least discover some beautiful girl of humble origin whom he could meet without concealment, and he listened eagerly to any hint that was likely to put him upon a promising track If the prospects seemed favourable he would follow up his enquiries by writing a discreet letter which, as he knew from experience, would seldom indeed meet with a wholly discouraging reply Even those who seemed bent on showing by the prim stiffness of their answers that they placed virtue high above sensibility, and who at first appeared hardly conversant with the usages of polite society, would suddenly collapse into the wildest intimacy which would continue until their marriage with some commonplace husband cut short the correspondence

There were vacant moments when he thought of Utsusemi with regret And there was her companion too, some time or other there would surely be an opportunity of sending her a surprise message If only he could see her again as he had seen her that night sitting by the chessboard in the dim lamplight It was not indeed in his nature ever to forget anyone of whom he had once been fond

Among his old nurses there was one called Sayemon to whom, next after Koremitsu's mother, he was most deeply attached She had a daughter called Taifu no Myobu who was in service at the Palace This girl was an illegitimate child of a certain member of the Imperial family who was then Vice-minister of the Board of War She was a young person of very lively disposition and Genji often made use of her services Her mother, Genji's nurse, had afterwards married the governor of Echizen and had gone with him to his province, so the girl when she was not at the Palace lived chiefly at her father s

She happened one day when she was talking with Genji to mention a certain princess, daughter of the late Prince Hitachi This lady, she said, was born to the Prince when he was quite an old man and every care had been lavished upon her upbringing Since his death she had lived alone

[1] The events of this chapter are synchronous with those of the last.

and was very unhappy Genji's sympathy was aroused and he began to question Myobu about this unfortunate lady I do not really know much either about her character or her appearance,' said Myobu, 'she is extremely seclusive in her habits Sometimes I have talked to her a little in the evening, but always with a curtain between us I believe her zithern is the only companion in whom she is willing to confide ' 'Of the Three Friends [1] one at least would in her case be unsuitable,' said Genji 'But I should like to hear her play, her father was a great performer on this instrument and it is unlikely that she has not inherited some of his skill Oh, I am afraid she is not worth your coming to hear,' said Myobu You are very discouraging, he answered, 'but all the same I shall hide there one of these nights when the full moon is behind the clouds and listen to her playing, and you shall come with me ' She was not best pleased, but just then even upon the busy Palace a springtime quiet seemed to have settled, and being quite at leisure she consented to accompany him Her father s house was at some distance from the town and for convenience he sometimes lodged in Prince Hitachi's palace Myobu got on badly with her stepmother, and taking a fancy to the lonely princess s quarters, she kept a room there

It was indeed on the night after the full moon, in just such a veiled light as Genji had spoken of, that they visited the Hitachi palace I am afraid,' said Myobu, 'that it is not a very good night for listening to music, sounds do not seem to carry very well ' But he would not be thus put off 'Go to her room,' he said, 'and persuade her to play a few notes, it would be a pity if I went away without hearing her at all ' Myobu felt somewhat shy of leaving him like this in her own little private room She found the princess sitting by the window, her shutters not yet closed for the night, she was enjoying the scent of a blossoming plum-tree which stood in the garden just outside It did indeed seem just the right moment 'I thought how lovely your zithern would sound on such a night as this, she said, 'and could not resist coming to see you I am always in such a hurry, going to and from the Palace, that do you know I have never had time to hear you play It is such a pity ' 'Music of this sort,' she replied, gives no pleasure to those who have not studied it What do they care for such matters *who all day long run hither and thither in the City of a Hundred Towers?*' [2] She sent for her zithern, but her heart beat fast What impression would her playing make upon this girl? Timidly she sounded a few notes The effect was very agreeable True, she was not a great performer, but the instrument was a particularly fine one and Genji found her playing by no means unpleasant to listen to

Living in this lonely and half-ruined palace after such an upbringing (full no doubt of antiquated formalities and restrictions) as her father was

[1] Wine, zithern and song — in allusion to a poem by Po Chü-i

[2] Evidently a quotation.

likely to have given her it would be strange indeed if her life did not for the most part consist of memories and regrets This was just the sort of place which in an old tale would be chosen as the scene for the most romantic happenings His imagination thus stirred, he thought of sending her a message But perhaps she would think this rather sudden For some reason he felt shy, and hesitated

'It seems to be clouding over,' said the astute Myobu, who knew that Genji would carry away a far deeper impression if he heard no more for the present 'Someone was coming to see me,' she continued, I must not keep him waiting Perhaps some other time when I am not in such a hurry Let me close your window for you,' and with that she rejoined Genji, giving the princess no encouragement to play any more 'She stopped so soon,' he complained, 'that it was hardly worth getting her to play at all One had not time to catch the drift of what she was playing Really it was a pity!' That the princess was beautiful he made no doubt at all 'I should be very much obliged if you would arrange for me to hear her at closer quarters ' But Myobu, thinking that this would lead to disappointment, told him that the princess who led so hermit-like an existence and seemed always so depressed and subdued would hardly welcome the suggestion that she should perform before a stranger 'Of course,' said Genji, 'a thing of that kind could only be suggested between people who were on familiar terms or to someone of very different rank This lady's rank, as I am perfectly well aware, entitles her to be treated with every consideration, and I would not ask you to do more than hint at my desire ' He had promised to meet someone else that night and carefully disguising himself he was preparing to depart when Myobu said laughing

It amuses me sometimes to think how the Emperor deplores the too strict and domesticated life which he suffers you to lead What would he think if he could see you disguising yourself like this? Genji laughed 'I am afraid,' he said as he left the room, that you are not quite the right person to denounce me Those who think such conduct reprehensible in a man must find it even less excusable in a girl ' She remembered that Genji had often been obliged to reproach her for her reckless flirtations, and blushing made no reply

Still hoping to catch a glimpse of the zithern-player, he crept softly towards her window He was about to hide at a point where the bamboo-fence was somewhat broken down when he perceived that a man was already ensconced there Who could it be? No doubt it was one of the princess's lovers and he stepped back to conceal himself in the darkness The stranger followed him and turned out to be no other than To no Chujo That evening they had left the Palace together, but when they parted Genji (Chujo had noticed) did not either go in the direction of the Great Hall nor back to his own palace This aroused Chujo's curiosity and, despite the fact that he too had a secret appointment that night, he

decided first to follow Genji and discover what was afoot So riding upon a strange horse and wearing a hunting-cloak, he had got himself up altogether so villainously that he was able to follow Genji without being recognized upon the road Seeing him enter so unexpected a place, Chujo was trying to imagine what business his friend could possibly have in such a quarter when the music began and he secreted himself with a vague idea of waylaying Genji when he came out But the Prince, not knowing who the stranger was and frightened of being recognized, stole on tiptoe into the shadow Chujo suddenly accosted him 'Though you shook me off so uncivilly, I thought it my duty to keep an eye on you,' he said, and recited the poem 'Though together we left the great Palace hill, your setting-place you would not show me, Moon of the sixteenth night!' Thus he remonstrated, and Genji, though at first he had been somewhat put out by finding that he was not alone, when he recognized To no Chujo could not help being rather amused. 'This is indeed an unexpected attention on your part,' he said, and expressed his slight annoyance in the answering verse 'Though wheresoever it shines men marvel at its light, who has before thought fit to follow the full moon to the hill whereon it sets?'

'It is most unsafe for you to go about like this,' said Chujo 'I really mean it You ought always to have a bodyguard, then you are all right whatever happens I wish you would always let me come with you I am afraid that these clandestine expeditions may one day get you into trouble,' and he solemnly repeated the warning What chiefly worried Genji was the thought that this might not be the first occasion upon which Chujo had followed him, but if it had been his habit to do so it was certainly very tactful of him never to have questioned Genji about Yugao's child [1]

Though each of them had an appointment elsewhere, they agreed not to part Both of them got into Genji's carriage and the moon having vanished behind a cloud, beguiled the way to the Great Hall by playing a duet upon their flutes They did not send for torchbearers to see them in at the gates, but creeping in very quietly stole to a portico where they could not be seen and had their ordinary clothes brought to them there Having changed, they entered the house merrily blowing their flutes as though they had just come back from the Palace.

Chujo's father, who usually pretended not to hear them when they returned late at night, on this occasion brought out his flageolet, which was his favourite instrument, and began to play very agreeably. Aio sent for her zithern and made all her ladies play on the instruments at which they excelled Only Nakatsukasa, though she was known for her lute-playing, having thrown over To no Chujo who had been her lover because of her infatuation for Genji with whom her sole intercourse

[1] Chujo's child by Yugao

was that she sometimes saw him casually when he visited the Great Hall — only Nakatsukasa sat drooping listlessly, for her passion had become known to Aoi's mother and the rest, and they were being very unpleasant about it She was thinking in her despair that perhaps it would be better if she went and lived in some place where she would never see Genji at all, but the step was hard to take and she was very unhappy

The young princes were thinking of the music they had heard earlier in the evening, of those romantic surroundings tinged with a peculiar and inexplicable beauty Merely because it pleased him so to imagine her, To no Chujo had already endowed the occupant of the lonely mansion with every charm He had quite decided that Genji had been courting her for months or even years, and thought impatiently that he for his part, if like Genji he were violently in love with a lady of this kind, would have been willing to risk a few reproaches or even the loss of a little reputation He could not however believe that his friend intended to let the matter rest as it was much longer and determined to amuse himself by a little rivalry From that time onwards both of them sent letters to the lady, but neither ever received any answer This both vexed and puzzled them What could be the reason? Thinking that such images were suitable to a lady brought up in these rustic surroundings, in most of the poems which they sent her they alluded to delicate trees and flowers or other aspects of nature, hoping sooner or later to hit on some topic which would arouse her interest in their suit Though she was of good birth and education, perhaps through being so long buried away in her vast mansion she had not any longer the wits to write a reply And what indeed did it matter whether she answered or not, thought To no Chujo, who none the less was somewhat piqued With his usual frankness he said to Genji 'I wonder whether you have had any answer I must confess that as an experiment I too sent a mild hint, but without any success, so I have not repeated it' 'So he too has been trying his hand,' thought Genji, smiling to himself 'No,' he answered aloud, 'my letter did not need an answer, which was perhaps the reason that I did not receive one' From this enigmatic reply Chujo deduced that Genji had been in communication of some kind with the lady and he was slightly piqued by the fact that she had shown a preference between them Genji's deeper feelings were in no way involved, and though his vanity was a little wounded he would not have pursued the matter farther had he not known the persuasive power of Chujo's style, and feared that even now she might overcome her scruples and send him a reply Chujo would become insufferably cock-a-hoop if he got into his head the idea that the princess had transferred her affections from Genji to himself He must see what Myobu could be persuaded to do 'I cannot understand,' he said to her, 'why the princess should refuse to take any notice of my letters It is really very uncivil of her I suppose she thinks I am a frivolous

person who intends to amuse himself a little in her company and then disappear It is a strangely false conception of my character As you know, my affections never alter, and if I have ever seemed to the world to be unfaithful it has always been because in reality my suit had met with some unexpected discouragement But this lady is so placed that no opposition from parents or brothers can interrupt our friendship, and if she will but trust me she will find that her being alone in the world, so far from exposing her to callous treatment, makes her the more attractive' 'Come,' answered Myobu, it will never do for you to run away with the idea that you can treat this great lady as a pleasant wayside distraction, on the contrary she is extremely difficult of access and her rank has accustomed her to be treated with deference and ceremony' So spoke Myobu, in accordance indeed with her own experience of the princess 'She has evidently no desire to be thought clever or dashing,' said Genji, 'for some reason I imagine her as very gentle and forgiving' He was thinking of Yugao when he said this

Soon after this he fell sick of his fever and after that was occupied by a matter of great secrecy, so that spring and summer had both passed away before he could again turn his attention to the lonely lady But in the autumn came a time of quiet meditation and reflection Again the sound of the cloth-beaters' mallets reached his ears, tormenting him with memories and longings He wrote many letters to the zithern-player, but with no more success than before Her churlishness exasperated him More than ever he was determined not to give in, and sending for Myobu he scolded her for having been of so little assistance to him 'What can be going on in the princess's mind?' he said, 'such strange behaviour I have never met with before' If he was piqued and surprised, Myobu for her part was vexed that the affair had gone so badly 'No one can say that you have done anything so very eccentric or indiscreet, and I do not think she feels so If she does not answer your letters it is only part of her general unwillingness to face the outer world' 'But such a way of behaving is positively barbarous,' said Genji, 'if she were a girl in her 'teens and under the care of parents or guardians, such timidity might be pardoned, but in an independent woman it is inconceivable I would never have written had I not taken it for granted that she had some experience of the world I was merely hoping that I had found someone who in moments of idleness or depression would respond to me sympathetically I did not address her in the language of gallantry, but only begged for permission sometimes to converse with her in that strange and lonely dwelling-place But since she seems unable to understand what it is I am asking of her, we must see what can be done without waiting for her permission If you will help me, you may be sure I shall not disgrace you in any way'

Myobu had once been in the habit of describing to him the appearance of

people whom she had chanced to meet and he always listened to such accounts with insatiable interest and curiosity, but for a long while he had paid no attention to her reports Now for no reason at all the mere mention of the princess's existence had aroused in him a fever of excitement and activity It was all very unaccountable Probably he would find the poor lady extremely unattractive when he saw her and she would be doing her a very poor service in effecting the introduction, but to give Genji no help in a matter to which he evidently attached so much importance, would seem very ill-natured

Even in Prince Hitachi's lifetime visitors to this stiff, old-fashioned establishment had been very rare, and now no foot at all ever made its way through the thickets which were closing in around the house It may be imagined then what the visit of so celebrated a person as Genji would have meant to the ladies-in-waiting and lesser persons of the household and with what urgency they begged their mistress to send a favourable reply But the same desperate shyness still possessed her and Genji's letters she would not even read Hearing this, Myobu determined to submit Genji's request to her at some suitable moment when she and the princess were carrying on one of their usual uneasy conversations, with the princess's screen-of-honour planted between them 'If she seems displeased,' thought Myobu, 'I will positively have nothing more to do with the matter, but if she receives him and some sort of an affair starts between them, there is fortunately no one connected with her to scold me or get me into trouble ' As the result of these and other reflections, being quite at home in matters of this kind, she sensibly decided to say nothing about the business to anybody, not even to her father

Late one night, soon after the twentieth day of the eighth month, the princess sat waiting for the moon to rise Though the starlight shone clear and lovely, the moaning of the wind in the pine-tree branches oppressed her with its melancholy, and growing weary of waiting, she was with many tears and sighs recounting to Myobu stories of bygone men and days

Now was the time to convey Genji's message, thought Myobu She sent for him, and secretly as before he crept up to the palace The moon was just rising He stood where the neglected bamboo-hedge grew somewhat sparsely and watched Persuaded by Myobu, the princess was already at her zithern So far as he could hear it at this distance, he did not find the music displeasing, but Myobu in her anxiety and confusion thought the tune very dull and wished it would occur to the princess to play something rather more up-to-date The place where Genji was waiting was well screened from view and he had no difficulty in creeping unobserved into the house Here he called for Myobu, who pretending that the visit was a complete surprise to her, said to the princess 'I am so sorry, here is Prince Genji come to see me I am always getting into trouble with him

for failing to secure him your favour I have really done my best, but you do not make it possible for me to give him any encouragement, so now I imagine he has come to deal with the matter for himself What am I to say to him? I can answer for it that he will do nothing violent or rash I think that considering all the trouble he has taken you might at least tell him that you will speak to him through a screen or curtain' The idea filled the princess with consternation 'I should not know what to say to him,' she wailed and as she said the words bolted towards the far side of the room with a bashfulness so infantile that Myobu could not help laughing 'Indeed, Madam,' she said, 'it is childish of you to take the matter to heart in this way If you were an ordinary young lady under the eye of stern parents and brothers, one could understand it, but for a person in your position to go on for ever being afraid to face the world is fantastic' So Myobu admonished her and the princess, who could never think of any argument against doing what she was told to do, said at last 'If I have only to listen and need not say anything he may speak to me from behind the lattice-door, so long as it is well locked' 'I cannot ask him to sit on the servant's bench,' said Myobu 'You really need not be afraid that he will do anything violent or sudden' Thus persuaded, the princess went to a hatch which communicated between the women's quarters and the stranger's dais and firmly locking it with her own hand, stuffed a mattress against it to make sure that no chink was left unstopped She was in such a terrible state of confusion that she had not the least idea what she should say to her visitor, if she had to speak to him, and had agreed to listen to him only because Myobu told her that she ought to

Several elderly serving-women of the wet-nurse type had been lying half-asleep in the inner room since dusk There were however one or two younger maids who had heard a great deal about this Prince Genji and were ready to fall in love with him at a moment's notice They now brought out their lady's handsomest dress and persuaded her to let them put her a little to rights, but she displayed no interest in these preparations Myobu meanwhile was thinking how well Genji looked in the picturesque disguise which he had elaborated for use on these night excursions and wished it were being employed in some quarter where it was more likely to be appreciated Her only consolation was that so mild a lady was not likely to make inordinate demands upon him or pester him with jealousies and exactions On the other hand, she was rather worried about the princess 'What,' thought Myobu, 'if she should fall in love with him and her heart be broken merely because I was frightened of getting scolded?'

Remembering her rank and upbringing, he was far from expecting her to behave with the lively pertness of an up-to-date miss She would be languorous, yes, languorous and passionate When, half-pushed by Myobu,

the princess at last took her stand near the partition where she was to converse with her visitor, a delicious scent of sandalwood [1] invaded his nostrils, and this piece of coquetry at once raised his hopes He began to tell her with great earnestness and eloquence how for almost a year she had continually occupied his thoughts But not a word did she answer, talking to her was no better than writing! Irritated beyond measure he recited the verse 'If with a Vow of Silence thus ten times and again my combat I renew, 'tis that against me at least no sentence of muteness has been passed ' 'Speak at least one word of dismissal,' he continued, 'do not leave me in this bewilderment ' There was among her ladies one called Jiju, the daughter of her old nurse Being a girl of great liveliness and intelligence, she could not bear to see her mistress cutting such a figure as this and stepping to her side she answered with the poem 'The bell [2] had sounded and for a moment silence was imposed upon my lips To have kept you waiting grieves me, and there let the matter rest ' She said the words in such a way that Genji was completely taken in and thought it was the princess who had thus readily answered his poem He had not expected such smartness from an aristocratic lady of the old school, but the surprise was agreeable and he answered 'Madam, you have won the day,' adding the verse 'Though well I know that thoughts unspoken count more than thoughts expressed, yet dumb-crambo is not a cheering game to play '

He went on to speak of one trifle or another as it occurred to him, doing his very best to entertain her, but it was no use Thinking at last that silence might after all in this strange creature be merely a sign of deep emotion, he could no longer restrain his curiosity and, easily pushing back the bolted door, entered the room Myobu, seeing with consternation that he had falsified all her assurances, thought it better to know nothing of what followed and without turning her head rushed away to her own apartments Jiju and the other ladies-in-waiting had heard so much about Genji and were so anxious to catch sight of him that they were more than ready to forgive his uncivil intrusion Their only fear was that their mistress would be at a loss how to deal with so unexpected a situation He did indeed find her in the last extremity of bashfulness and embarrassment, but under the circumstances that, thought Genji, was natural Much was to be explained by the strict seclusion in which she had been brought up He must be patient with her

As his eyes grew used to the dim light he began to see that she was not at all beautiful Had she then not one quality at all to justify all these hopes and schemes? Apparently not one It was late What was the use of staying? Bitterly disappointed he left the house Myobu, intensely

[1] Used to scent clothes with.

[2] The bell which the Zen-master strikes when it is time for his pupils to fall into silent meditation

curious to know what would happen, had lain awake listening She wanted however to keep up the pretence that she had not witnessed Genji's intrusion and though she plainly heard him leaving the house she did not go to see him off or utter a sound of any kind. Stealing away as quietly as possible he returned to the Nijo-in and lay down upon his bed This time at least he thought he was on the right path What a disillusionment! And the worst of it was that she was a princess, a great lady What a mess he was in! So he lay thinking, when To no Chujo entered the room 'How late you are!' he cried, 'I can easily guess the reason ' Genji rose 'I was so comfortable sleeping here all alone that I overslept myself,' he said 'Have you come here from the Palace? 'Yes,' said Chujo, 'I was on my way home I heard yesterday that today they are choosing the dancers and musicians for the celebrations of the Emperor's visit to the Suzaku-in and I am going home to tell my father of this I will look in here on my way back ' Seeing that Chujo was in a hurry, Genji said that he would go with him to the Great Hall He sent at once for his breakfast, bidding them also serve the guest Two carriages were drawn up waiting for them, but they both got into the same one

'You still seem very sleepy,' said Chujo in an aggrieved tone, 'I am sure you have been doing something interesting that you do not want to tell me about '

That day he had a number of important duties to perform and was hard at work in the Palace till nightfall It did not occur to him till a very late hour that he ought at least to send the customary letter It was raining Myobu had only the day before reproached him for using the princess's palace as a 'wayside refuge ' Today however he had no inclination whatever to halt there

When hour after hour went by and still no letter came, Myobu began to feel very sorry for the princess whom she imagined to be suffering acutely from Genji's incivility But in reality the poor lady was still far too occupied with shame and horror at what had happened the night before to think of anything else, and when late in the evening Genji's note at last arrived she could not understand in the least what it meant It began with the poem 'Scarce had the evening mist lifted and revealed the prospect to my sight when the night rain closed gloomily about me

I shall watch with impatience for a sign that the clouds are breaking,' the letter continued The ladies of the household at once saw with consternation the meaning of this note Genji did not intend ever to come again But they were all agreed that an answer must be sent, and their mistress was for the time being in far too overwrought a condition to put brush to paper, so Jiju (pointing out that it was late and there was no time to be lost) again came to the rescue 'Give a thought to the countryfolk who wait for moonlight on this cloudy night, though, while they gaze, so different their thoughts from yours!' This she dictated to her

mistress who, under the joint direction of all her ladies, wrote it upon a piece of paper which had once been purple but was now faded and shabby Her writing was coarse and stiff, very mediocre in style, the upward and downward strokes being of the same thickness Genji laid it aside scarcely glancing at it, but he was very much worried by the situation How should he avoid hurting her feelings? Such an affair was certain to get him into trouble of some kind What was he to do? He made up his mind that at all costs he must go on seeing her Meanwhile, knowing nothing of this decision, the poor lady was very unhappy

That night his father-in-law called for him on the way back from the Palace and carried him off to the Great Hall

Here in preparation for the coming festival all the young princes were gathered together, and during the days which followed everyone was busy practising the songs or dances which had been assigned to him Never had the Great Hall resounded with such a continual flow of music The recorder and the big flute were all the while in full blast, and even the big drum was rolled out on to the verandah, the younger princes amusing themselves by experimenting upon it Genji was so busy that he had barely time to pay an occasional surreptitious visit even to his dearest friends, and the autumn passed without his returning to the Hitachi Palace The princess could not make it out

Just at the time when the music-practices were at their height Myobu came to see him Her account of the princess's condition was very distressing It is sad to witness day by day as I do how the poor lady suffers from your unkind treatment,' she said and almost wept as she told him about it He was doubly embarrassed What must Myobu be thinking of him since she found that he had so recklessly falsified all the assurances of good behaviour that she had made on his account? And then the princess herself He could imagine what a pathetic figure she must be, dumbly buried in her own despondent thoughts and questionings Please make it clear to her,' he said, 'that I have been extremely busy, that is really the sole reason that I have not visited her' But he added with a sigh, I hope soon to have a chance of teaching her not to be quite so stiff and shy' He smiled as he said it, and because he was so young and charming Myobu somehow felt that despite her indignation she must smile too At his age it was inevitable that he should cause a certain amount of suffering Suddenly it seemed to her perfectly right that he should do as he felt inclined without thinking much about the consequences When the busy festival time was over he did indeed pay several visits to the Hitachi Palace, but then followed his adoption of little Murasaki whose ways so entranced him that he became very irregular even in his visits to the Sixth Ward,[1] still less had he any inclination, though he felt as sorry for the princess as ever, to visit that desolate

[1] To Lady Rokujo

palace For a long while he had no desire to probe the secret of her bashfulness, to drive her into the light of day But at last the idea occurred to him that he had perhaps all the while been mistaken It was only a vague impression gathered in a room so dark that one could hardly see one's hand in front of one's face If only he could persuade her to let him see her properly? But she seemed frightened to submit herself to the ordeal of daylight Accordingly one night when he knew that he should catch her household quite at its ease he crept in unobserved and peeped through a gap in the door of the women's apartments The princess herself was not visible There was a very dilapidated screen-of-honour at the end of the room, but it looked as if it had not been moved from where it stood for years and years Four or five elderly gentlewomen were in the room They were preparing their mistress's supper in Chinese vessels which looked like the famous 'royal blue ware,' but they were much damaged and the food which had been provided seemed quite unworthy of these precious dishes The old ladies soon retired, presumably to have their own supper In a closet opening out of the main room he could see a very chilly-looking lady in an incredibly smoke-stained white dress and dirty apron tied at the waist Despite this shabbiness, her hair was done over a comb in the manner of Court servants in ancient days when they waited at their master's table, though it hung down untidily. He had sometimes seen figures such as this haunting the housekeeper's rooms in the Palace, but he had no idea that they could still actually be seen waiting upon a living person! 'O dear, O dear, cried the lady in the apron, 'what a cold winter we are having! It was not worth living so long only to meet times like these,' and she shed a tear 'If only things had but gone on as they were in the old Prince's time!' she moaned 'What a change! No discipline, no authority To think that I should have lived to see such days!' and she quivered with horror like one who 'were he a bird would take wing and fly away'[2] She went on to pour out such a pitiful tale of things gone awry that Genji could bear it no longer, and pretending that he had just arrived tapped at the partition-door. With many exclamations of surprise the old lady brought a candle and let him in Unfortunately Jiju had been chosen with other young persons to wait upon the Vestal Virgin and was not at home Her absence made the house seem more rustic and old-fashioned than ever, and its oddity struck him even more forcibly than before

The melancholy snow was now falling faster and faster Dark clouds hung in the sky, the wind blew fierce and wild The big lamp had burnt out and it seemed to be no one's business to light it He remembered the terrible night upon which Yugao had been bewitched The house indeed was almost as dilapidated But it was not quite so large and was (to

[1] *Pi-se* See Hetherington, *Early Ceramic Wares of China*, pp 71–73

[2] *Manyoshu*, 893

Genji's comfort) at least to some small degree inhabited Nevertheless it was a depressing place to spend the night at in such weather as this. Yet the snowstorm had a beauty and fascination of its own and it was tiresome that the lady whom he had come to visit was far too stiff and awkward to join him in appreciating its wildness The dawn was just breaking and lifting one of the shutters with his own hand, he looked out at the snow-covered flower-beds Beyond them stretched great fields of snow untrodden by any foot The sight was very strange and lovely, and moved by the thought that he must soon leave it 'Come and look how beautiful it is out of doors,' he cried to the princess who was in an inner room It is unkind of you always to treat me as though I were a stranger ' Although it was still dark the light of the snow enabled the ancient gentlewomen who had now returned to the room to see the freshness and beauty of Genji's face Gazing at him with undisguised wonder and delight, they cried out to their mistress 'Yes, madam, indeed you must come You are not behaving as you should A young lady should be all kindness and pretty ways ' Thus admonished, the princess who when told what to do could never think of any reasons for not doing it, giving her costume a touch here and there, reluctantly crept into the front room Genji pretended to be still looking out of the window, but presently he managed to glance back into the room His first impression was that her manner, had it been a little less diffident, would have been extremely pleasing What an absurd mistake he had made She was certainly very tall as was shown by the length of her back when she took her seat, he could hardly believe that such a back could belong to a woman A moment afterwards he suddenly became aware of her main defect It was her nose He could not help looking at it It reminded him of the trunk of Samantabhadra's[1] steed! Not only was it amazingly prominent, but (strangest of all) the tip which drooped downwards a little was tinged with pink, contrasting in the oddest manner with the rest of her complexion which was of a whiteness that would have put snow to shame Her forehead was unusually high, so that altogether (though this was partly concealed by the forward tilt of her head) her face must be hugely long She was very thin, her bones showing in the most painful manner, particularly her shoulder-bones which jutted out pitiably above her dress He was sorry now that he had exacted from her this distressing exhibition, but so extraordinary a spectacle did she provide that he could not help continuing to gaze upon her In one point at least she yielded nothing to the greatest beauties of the Capital Her hair was magnificent, she was wearing it loose and it hung a foot or more below the skirt of her gown A complete description of people's costumes is apt to be tedious, but as in stories the first thing that is said about the characters is invariably *what they wore*, I shall once in a way attempt such a description Over a

[1] The Bodhisattva Samantabhadra rides on a white elephant with a red trunk.

terribly faded bodice of imperial purple she wore a gown of which the purple had turned definitely black with age Her mantle was of sable-skins heavily perfumed with scent Such a garment as this mantle was considered very smart several generations ago, but it struck him as the most extraordinary costume for a comparatively young girl However, as a matter of fact she looked as though without this monstrous wrapping she would perish with cold and he could not help feeling sorry for her As usual she seemed quite devoid of conversation and her silence ended by depriving Genji also of the power of speech He felt however that he must try again to conquer her religious muteness and began making a string of casual remarks Overcome with embarrassment she hid her face with her sleeve This attitude, together with her costume, reminded him so forcibly of queer pompous old officials whom he had sometimes seen walking at funeral pace in state processions, hugging their emblems of office to their breasts, that he could not help laughing This he felt to be very rude Really he was very sorry for her and longing to put a quick end to her embarrassment he rose to go 'Till I began to look after you there was no one in whom you could possibly have confided. But hence-forward I think you must make up your mind to be frank with me and tell me all your secrets Your stern aloofness is very painful to me,' and he recited the verse 'Already the icicle that hangs from the eaves is melting in the rays of the morning sun How comes it that these drippings to new ice should turn? At this she tittered slightly Finding her inability to express herself quite unendurable, he left the house Even in the dim light of early morning he noticed that the courtyard gate at which his carriage awaited him was shaky on its posts and much askew, daylight, he was sure, would have revealed many other signs of dilapidation and neglect In all the desolate landscape which stretched monotonously before him under the bleak light of dawn only the thick mantle of snow which covered the pine-trees gave a note of comfort and almost of warmth

Surely it was such a place as this, sombre as a little village in the hills, that his friends had thought of on that rainy night when they had spoken of the gate 'deep buried in green thickets' If only there were really hid-den behind *these* walls some such exquisite creature as they had imagined How patiently, how tenderly he would court her! He longed for some experience which would bring him respite from the anguish with which a certain hopeless and illicit passion was at that time tormenting him Alas, no one could have been less likely to bring him the longed-for distraction than the owner of this romantic mansion Yet the very fact that she had nothing to recommend her made it impossible for him to give her up, for it was certain that no one else would ever take the trouble to visit her But why, why had it fallen to him of all people to become her intimate? Had the spirit of the departed Prince Hitachi, unhappy at the girl's friend less plight, chosen him out and led him to her?

At the side of the road he noticed a little orange-tree almost buried in snow He ordered one of his attendants to uncover it As though jealous of the attention that the man was paying to its neighbour, a pine-tree near by shook its heavily laden branches, pouring great billows of snow over his sleeve Delighted with the scene, Genji suddenly longed for some companion with whom he might share this pleasure, not necessarily someone who loved such things as he did, but one who at least responded to them in an ordinary way

The gate through which his carriage had to pass in order to leave the grounds was still locked When at last the man who kept the key had been discovered, he turned out to be immensely old and feeble With him was a big, awkward girl who seemed to be his daughter or granddaughter Her dress looked very grimy in contrast with the new snow amid which she was standing. She seemed to be suffering very much from the cold, for she was hugging a little brazier of some kind with a stick or two of charcoal burning none too brightly in it The old man had not the strength to push back the door, and the girl was dragging at it as well Taking pity on them one of Genji's servants went to their assistance and quickly opened it Genji remembered the poem in which Po Chü-i describes the sufferings of villagers in wintry weather and he murmured the lines 'The little children run naked in the cold, the aged shiver for lack of winter clothes' All at once he remembered the chilly appearance which that unhappy bloom had given to the princess s face and he could not help smiling If ever he were able to show her to To no Chujo, what strange comparison, he wondered, would Chujo use concerning it? He remembered how Chujo had followed him on the first occasion Had he continued to do so? Perhaps even at this minute he was under observation The thought irritated him

Had her defects been less striking he could not possibly have continued these distressing visits But since he had actually seen her in all her tragic uncouthness, pity gained the upper hand, and henceforward he kept in constant touch with her and showed her every kindness In the hope that she would abandon her sables he sent her presents of silk, satin and quilted stuffs He also sent thick cloth such as old people wear, that the old man at the gate might be more comfortably dressed Indeed he sent presents to everyone on the estate from the highest to the lowest She did not seem to have any objection to receiving these donations, which under the circumstances was very convenient as it enabled him for the most part to limit their very singular friendship to good offices of this kind

Utsusemi too, he remembered, had seemed to him far from handsome when he had peeped at her on the evening of her sudden flight But she at least knew how to behave and that saved her plainness from being obtrusive It was hard to believe that the princess belonged to a class

strange present, and spreading out her letter he wrote something carelessly in the margin When Myobu looked over his shoulder she saw that he had written the verse 'How comes it that with my sleeve I brushed this saffron-flower[1] that has no loveliness either of shape or hue?'

What, wondered Myobu, could be the meaning of this outburst against a flower? At last turning over in her mind the various occasions when Genji had visited the princess, she remembered something[2] which she had herself noticed one moonlit night, and though she felt the joke was rather unkind, she could not help being amused With practised ease she threw out a verse in which she warned him that in the eyes of a censorious world even this half-whimsical courtship might fatally damage his good name Her impromptu poem was certainly faulty, but Genji reflected that if the poor princess had even Myobu's very ordinary degree of alertness it would make things much easier, and it was quite true that to tamper with a lady of such high rank was not very safe

At this point visitors began to arrive 'Please put this somewhere out of sight,' said Genji pointing to the jacket, 'could one have believed that it was possible to be presented with such an object?' and he groaned 'Oh, why ever did I show it to him?' thought Myobu The only result is that now he will be angry with me as well as with the princess,' and in very low spirits she slipped out of his apartments

Next day she was in attendance upon the Emperor and while she was waiting with other gentlewomen in the ladies' common-room Genji came up saying 'Here you are The answer to yesterday's letter I am afraid it is rather far-fetched,' and he flung a note to her The curiosity of the other gentlewomen was violently aroused Genji left the room humming, 'The Lady of Mikasa Hill,'[3] which naturally amused Myobu very much The other ladies wanted to know why the Prince was laughing to himself Was there some joke ? 'Oh, no,' said Myobu, I think it was only that he had noticed someone whose nose was a little red with the morning cold The song he hummed was surely very appropriate ' 'I think it was very silly,' said one of the ladies 'There is no one here today with a red nose He must be thinking of Lady Sakon or Higo no Uneme ' They were completely mystified When Myobu presented Genji's reply, the ladies of the Hitachi Palace gathered round her to admire it It was written negligently on plain white paper but was none the less very elegant Does your gift of a garment mean that you wish a greater distance than ever to be kept between us?'[4]

[1] *Suyetsumuhana* by which name the princess is subsequently alluded to in the story

[2] I e. the redness of the princess's nose.

[3] A popular song about a lady who suffered from the same defect as the princess.

[4] Genji's poem is an allusion to a well-known *uta* which runs 'Must we who once would not allow even the thickness of a garment to part us be now far from each other for whole nights on end?'

On the evening of the last day of the year he sent back the box which had contained his jacket, putting into it a court dress which had formerly been presented to him, a dress of woven stuff dyed grape-colour and various stuffs of yellow-rose colour and the like The box was brought by Myobu The princess's ancient gentlewomen realized that Genji did not approve of their mistress's taste in colours and wished to give her a lesson 'Yes,' they said grudgingly, 'that's a fine deep red while it's new, but just think how it will fade And in Madam's poem too, I am sure, there was much more good sense In his answer he only tries to be smart' The princess shared their good opinion of her poem It had cost her a great deal of effort and before she sent it she had been careful to copy it into her notebook

Then came the New Year s Day celebrations, and this year there was also to be the New Year's mumming, a band of young noblemen going round dancing and singing in various parts of the Palace After the festival of the White Horse on the seventh day Genji left the Emperor's presence at nightfall and went to his own apartments in the Palace as though intending to stay the night there But later he adjourned to the Hitachi Palace which had on this occasion a less forbidding appearance than usual Even the princess was rather more ordinary and amenable He was hoping that like the season she too had begun anew, when he saw that sunlight was coming into the room After hesitating for a while, he got up and went out into the front room The double doors at the end of the eastern wing were wide open, and the roof of the verandah having fallen in, the sunshine poured straight into the house A little snow was still falling and its brightness made the morning light yet more exquisitely brilliant and sparkling She watched a servant helping him into his cloak She was lying half out of the bed, her head hanging a little downwards and her hair falling in great waves to the floor Pleased with the sight he began to wonder whether she would not one day outgrow her plainness He began to close the door of the women s apartments, but suddenly feeling that he owed her amends for the harsh opinion of her appearance which he had formed before, he did not quite shut the door, but bringing a low stool towards it sat there putting his disordered headdress to rights One of the maids brought him an incredibly battered mirror-stand, Chinese combs, a box of toilet articles and other things It amused him to discover that in this household of women a little male gear still survived, even in so decrepit a state

He noticed that the princess, who was now up and dressed, was looking quite fashionable She was in fact wearing the clothes which he had sent her before the New Year, but he did not at first recognize them He began however to have a vague idea that her mantle, with its rather conspicuous pattern, was very like one of the things he had given her I do hope,' he said presently, that this year you will be a little more con-

versational I await the day when you will unbend a little towards me more eagerly than the poet longs for the first nightingale If only like the year that has changed you too would begin anew!' Her face brightened She had thought of a remark and trembling from head to foot with a tremendous effort she brought out the quotation, 'When plovers chirp and all things grow anew ' 'Splendid,' said Genji, this is a sign that the new year has indeed begun' and smiling encouragingly at her he left the house, she following him with her eyes from the couch on which she lay Her face as usual was half-covered by her arm, but the unfortunate flower still bloomed conspicuously 'Poor thing, she really *is* very ugly,' thought Genji in despair

When he returned to the Nijo-in he found Murasaki waiting for him She was growing up as handsome a girl as one could wish, and promised well for the future She was wearing a plain close-fitting dress of cherry colour, above all, the unstudied grace and ease of her movements charmed and delighted him as he watched her come to meet him In accordance with the wishes of her old-fashioned grandmother her teeth were not blackened, but her eyebrows were delicately touched with stain 'Why, when I might be playing with a beautiful child, do I spend my time with an ugly woman?' Genji kept on asking himself in bewilderment while they sat together playing with her dolls Next she began to draw pictures and colour them After she had painted all sorts of queer and amusing things, Now I am going to do a picture for you,' said Genji and drawing a lady with very long hair he put a dab of red on her nose Even in a picture, he thought pausing to look at the effect, it gave one a most uncomfortable feeling He went and looked at himself in the mirror and as though dissatisfied with his own fresh complexion, he suddenly put on his own nose a dab of red such as he had given to the lady in the picture He looked at himself in the mirror His handsome face had in an instant become ridiculous and repulsive At first the child laughed 'Should you go on liking me if I were always as ugly as this?' he asked Suddenly she began to be afraid that the paint would not come off 'Oh, why did you do it?' she cried 'How horrible!' He pretended to rub it without effect No,' he said ruefully, 'it will not come off What a sad end to our game! I wonder what the Emperor will say when I go back to the Palace?' He said it so seriously that she became very unhappy, and longing to cure him, dipped a piece of thick soft paper in the water-jug which stood by his writing-things, and began scrubbing at his nose 'Take care,' he cried laughing, that you do not serve me as Heichu [1] was treated by his lady I would rather have a red nose than a black one ' So they passed their time, making the prettiest couple

[1] He used to splash his cheeks with water from a little bottle in order that she might think he was weeping at her unkindness. She exposed this device by mixing ink with the water

In the gentle spring sunshine the trees were already shimmering with a haze of new-grown buds Among them it was the plum-trees that gave the surest promise, for already their blossoms were uncurling, like lips parted in a faint smile Earliest of them all was a red plum that grew beside the covered steps It was in full colour 'Though fair the tree on which it blooms, this red flower fills me with a strange misgiving,' [1] sang Genji with a deep sigh

We shall see in the next chapter what happened in the end to all these people

[1] The reference of course is to the princess. 'Though fair the tree' refers to her high birth.

CHAPTER VII

The Festival of Red Leaves

THE imperial visit to the Red Sparrow Court was to take place on the tenth day of the Godless Month It was to be a more magnificent sight this year than it had ever been before and the ladies of the Palace were very disappointed that they could not be present [1] The Emperor too could not bear that Fujitsubo should miss the spectacle, and he decided to hold a grand rehearsal in the Palace Prince Genji danced the 'Waves of the Blue Sea' To no Chujo was his partner, but though both in skill and beauty he far surpassed the common run of performers, yet beside Genji he seemed like a mountain fir growing beside a cherry-tree in bloom There was a wonderful moment when the rays of the setting sun fell upon him and the music grew suddenly louder Never had the onlookers seen feet tread so delicately nor head so exquisitely poised, and in the song which follows the first movement of the dance his voice was sweet as that of Kalavinka [2] whose music is Buddha's Law So moving and beautiful was this dance that at the end of it the Emperor's eyes were wet, and all the princes and great gentlemen wept aloud When the song was over and, straightening his long dancer's sleeves, he stood waiting for the music to begin again and at last the more lively tune of the second movement struck up — then indeed, with his flushed and eager face, he merited more than ever his name of Genji the Shining One The Princess Kokiden [3] did not at all like to see her stepson's beauty arousing so much enthusiasm and she said sarcastically 'He is altogether too beautiful Presently we shall have a god coming down from the sky to fetch him away' [4] Her young waiting-ladies noticed the spiteful tone in which the remark was made and felt somewhat embarrassed As for Fujitsubo, she kept on telling herself that were it not for the guilty secret which was shared between them the dance she was now witnessing would be filling her with wonder and delight As it was, she sat as though in a dream, hardly knowing what went on around her

Now she was back in her own room The Emperor was with her 'At today's rehearsal,' he said, the "Waves of the Blue Sea" went perfectly' Then, noticing that she made no response, 'What did you think of it?' 'Yes, it was very good,' she managed to say at last 'The partner did not seem to me bad either,' he went on, there is always something about the

[1] They were not allowed to leave the palace.

[2] The bird that sings in Paradise. [3] See above, p 8

[4] In allusion to a boy-prince of seven years old whom the jealous gods carried off to the sky See the *Okagami*

seemed quite unaware He was convinced however that her nature was not at bottom narrow and vindictive, and this gave him some hope that she would one day relent

Meanwhile as he got to know little Murasaki better he became the more content both with her appearance and her character. She at least gave him her whole heart. For the present he did not intend to reveal her identity even to the servants in his own palace. She continued to use the somewhat outlying western wing which had now been put into excellent order, and here Genji constantly came to see her He gave her all kinds of lessons, writing exercises for her to copy and treating her in every way as though she were a little daughter who had been brought up by foster-parents, but had now come to live with him He chose her servants with great care and gave orders that they should do everything in their power to make her comfortable; but no one except Koremitsu knew who the child was or how she came to be living there. Nor had her father discovered what had become of her

The little girl still sometimes thought of the past and then she would feel for a while very lonely without her grandmother. When Genji was there she forgot her sorrow, but in the evening he was very seldom at home She was sorry that he was so busy and when he hurried every evening to some strange place or other she missed him terribly; but she was never angry with him. Sometimes for two or three days on end he would be at the Palace or the Great Hall and when he returned he would find her very tearful and depressed. Then he felt just as though he were neglecting some child of his own, whose mother had died and left it in his keeping, and for a while he grew uneasy about his night excursions.

The priest was puzzled when he heard that Genji had taken Murasaki to live with him, but saw no harm in it and was delighted that she should be so well cared for. He was gratified too when Genji begged that the services in the dead nun's memory should be celebrated with special pomp and magnificence.

When he went to Fujitsubo's palace, anxious to see for himself whether she was keeping her health, he was met by a posse of waiting-women (Myobus, Chunagons, Nakatsukasas and the like) and Fujitsubo herself showed, to his great disappointment, no sign of appearing. They gave a good account of her, which somewhat allayed his anxiety, and had passed on to general gossip when it was announced that Prince Hyobukyo [1] had arrived Genji at once went out to speak to him This time Genji thought him extremely handsome and there was a softness, a caressing quality in his manner (Genji was watching him more closely than he knew) which was feminine enough to make his connection with Fujitsubo and Murasaki at once uppermost in the mind of his observer. It was, then, as the brother of the one and the father of the other that the

[1] Fujitsubo's brother, Murasaki's father

newcomer at once created a feeling of intimacy, and they had a long conversation Hyobukyo could not fail to notice that Genji was suddenly treating him with an affection which he had never displayed before He was naturally very much gratified, not realizing that Genji had now, in a sense, become his son-in-law It was getting late and Hyobukyo was about to join his sister in another room It was with bitterness that Genji remembered how long ago the Emperor had brought her to play with him In those days he ran in and out of her room just as he chose, now he could not address her save in precarious messages She was as inaccessible, as remote as one person conceivably could be from another, and finding the situation intolerable, he said politely to Prince Hyobukyo 'I wish I saw you more often, unless there is some special reason for seeing people, I am lazy about it But if you ever felt inclined to send for me, I should be delighted ' and he hurried away.

Omyobu, the gentlewoman who had contrived Genji's meeting with Fujitsubo, seeing her mistress relapse into a steady gloom and vexed at her belated caution, was all the time doing her best to bring the lovers together again, but days and months went by and still all her efforts were in vain, while they, poor souls, strove desperately to put away from them this love that was a perpetual disaster

At Genji's palace Shonagon, the little girl's nurse, finding herself in a world of unimagined luxuries and amenities, could only attribute this good fortune to the success of the late nun's prayers The Lord Buddha to whose protection the dying lady had so fervently recommended her granddaughter had indeed made handsome provision for her There were of course certain disa.'vantages The haughtiness of Aoi was not only in itself to be feared, but it seemed to have the consequence of driving Prince Genji to seek distractions right and left, which would be very unpleasant for the little princess so soon as she was old enough to realize it Yet so strong a preference did he show for the child's company that Shonagon did not altogether lose heart

It being then three months since her grandmother died Murasaki came out of mourning at the end of the Godless Month But it was thought proper since she was to be brought up as an orphan that she should still avoid patterned stuffs, and she wore a little tunic of plain red, brown or yellow, in which she nevertheless looked very smart and gay

He came to have a look at her before going off to the New Year's Day reception at Court 'From today onwards you are a grown-up lady,' he said, and as he stood smiling at her he looked so charming and friendly that she could not bear him to go, and hoping that he would stay and play with her a little while longer, she got out her toys There was a doll's kitchen only three feet high but fitted out with all the proper utensils, and a whole collection of little houses which Genji had made for her Now she had got them all spread out over the floor so that it was difficult

to move without treading on them 'Little Inu broke them yesterday,' she explained, 'when he was pretending to drive out the Old Year's demons, and I am mending them' She was evidently in great trouble 'What a tiresome child he is,' said Genji 'I will get them mended for you Come, you must not cry on New Year's Day,' and he went out Many of the servants had collected at the end of the corridor to see him starting out for the Court in all his splendour Murasaki too went out and watched him When she came back she put a grand dress on one of her dolls and did a performance with it which she called 'Prince Genji visiting the Emperor' 'This year,' said Shonagon, looking on with disapproval, 'you must really try not to be such a baby It is time little girls stopped playing with dolls when they are ten years old, and now that you have got a kind gentleman wanting to be your husband you ought to try and show him that you can behave like a nice little grown-up lady or he will get tired of waiting' She said this because she thought that it must be painful for Genji to see the child still so intent upon her games and be thus reminded that she was a mere baby Her admonishment had the effect of making Murasaki for the first time aware that Genji was to be her husband She knew all about husbands Many of the maid-servants had them, but such ugly ones! She was very glad that hers was so much younger and handsomer Nevertheless the mere fact that she thought about the matter at all showed that she was beginning to grow up a little Her childish ways and appearance were by no means so great a misfortune as Shonagon supposed, for they went a long way towards allaying the suspicions which the child's presence might otherwise have aroused in Genji's somewhat puzzled household

When he returned from Court he went straight to the Great Hall Aoi was as perfect as ever, and just as unfriendly This never failed to wound Genji 'If only you had changed with the New Year, had become a little less cold and forbidding, how happy I should be!' he exclaimed But she had heard that someone was living with him and had at once made up her mind that she herself had been utterly supplanted and put aside Hence she was more sullen than ever, but he pretended not to notice it and by his gaiety and gentleness at last induced her to answer when he spoke Was it her being four years older than he that made her seem so unapproachable, so exasperatingly well-regulated? But that was not fair What fault could he possibly find in her? She was perfect in every respect and he realized that if she was sometimes out of humour this was solely the result of his own irregularities She was after all the daughter of a Minister, and of the Minister who above all others enjoyed the greatest influence and esteem She was the only child of the Emperor's sister and had been brought up with a full sense of her own dignity and importance The least slight, the merest hint of disrespect came to her as a complete surprise To Genji all these pretensions naturally seemed somewhat ex-

aggerated and his failure to make allowances for them increased her hostility

Aoi's father was vexed by Genji's seeming fickleness, but so soon as he was with him he forgot all his grievances and was always extremely nice to him When Genji was leaving next day his father-in-law came to his room and helped him to dress, bringing in his own hands a belt which was an heirloom famous far and wide He pulled straight the back of Genji s robe which had become a little crumpled, and indeed short of bringing him his shoes performed in the friendliest way every possible small service 'This,' said Genji handing back the belt, 'is for Imperial banquets or other great occasions of that kind ' 'I have others much more valuable, said the Minister, 'which I will give you for the Imperial banquets This one is not of much account save that the workmanship of it is rather unusual,' and despite Genji's protests he insisted upon buckling it round him The performance of such services was his principal interest in life What did it matter if Genji was rather irregular in his visits? To have so agreeable a young man going in and out of one's house at all was the greatest pleasure he could imagine

Genji did not pay many New Year's visits First he went to the Emperor, then the Heir Apparent and the ex-Emperor, and after that to Princess Fujitsubo's house in the Third Ward As they saw him enter, the servants of the house noticed how much he had grown and altered in the last year 'Look how he has filled out,' they said, 'even since his last visit!' Of the Princess herself he was only allowed a distant glimpse It gave him many forebodings. Her child had been expected in the twelfth month and her condition was now causing some anxiety That it would at any rate be born sometime during the first weeks of the New Year was confidently assumed by her own people and had been stated at Court But the first month went by and still nothing happened It began to be rumoured that she was suffering from some kind of possession or delusion She herself grew very depressed, she felt certain that when the event at last happened she would not survive it and she worried so much about herself that she became seriously ill The delay made Genji more certain than ever of his own responsibility and he arranged secretly for prayers on her behalf to be said in all the great temples He had already become firmly convinced that whatever might happen concerning the child, Fujitsubo was herself utterly doomed when he heard that about the tenth day of the second month she had successfully given birth to a boy The news brought great satisfaction both to the Emperor and the whole court

The Emperor's fervent prayers for her life and for that of a child which she knew was not his distressed and embarrassed her, whereas, when the maliciously gloomy prognostications of Kokiden and the rest were brought to her notice, she was at once filled with a perverse desire to disappoint their hopes and make them look ridiculous in the eyes of those to whom

they had confided their forebodings By a great effort of will she threw off the despair which had been weighing down upon her and began little by little to recover her usual vigour

The Emperor was impatient to see Fujitsubo's child and so too (though he was forced to conceal his interest in the matter) was Genji himself Accordingly he went to her palace when there were not many people about and sent in a note, offering as the Emperor was in such a state of impatience to see the child and etiquette forbad him to do so for several weeks, to look at the child himself and report upon its appearance to the Emperor She replied that she would rather he saw it on a day when it was less peevish, but in reality her refusal had nothing to do with the state of the child's temper, she could not bear the idea of his seeing it at all Already it bore an astonishing resemblance to him, of that she was convinced Always there lurked in her heart the torturing demon of fear Soon others would see the child and instantly know with absolute certainty the secret of her swift transgression What charity towards such a crime as this would a world have that gossips if a single hair is awry? Such thoughts continually tormented her and she again became weary of her life

From time to time he saw Omyobu, but though he still implored her to arrange a meeting, none of his many arguments availed him He also pestered her with so many questions about the child that she exclaimed at last. 'Why do you go on plaguing me like this? You will be seeing him for yourself soon, when he is shown at Court' But though she spoke impatiently she knew quite well what he was suffering and felt for him deeply The matter was not one which he could discuss except with Fujitsubo herself, and it was impossible to see her Would he indeed ever again see her alone or communicate with her save through notes and messengers? And half-weeping with despair he recited the verse 'What guilty intercourse must ours have been in some life long ago, that now so cruel a barrier should be set between us?' Omyobu, seeing that it cost her mistress a great struggle to do without him, was at pains not to dismiss him too unkindly and answered with the verse 'Should you see the child, my lady would be in torment, and because you have not seen it you are full of lamentations Truly have children been called a black darkness that leads the parents' heart astray!' And coming closer she whispered to him, 'Poor souls, it is a hard fate that has overtaken you both' Thus many times and again he returned to his house desperate Fujitsubo meanwhile, fearing lest Genji's continual visits should attract notice, began to suspect that Omyobu was secretly encouraging him and no longer felt the same affection for her She did not want this to be noticed and tried to treat her just as usual, but her irritation was bound sometimes to betray itself and Omyobu, feeling that her mistress was estranged from her and at a loss to find any reason for it, was very miserable

It was not till its fourth month that the child was brought to the Palace It was large for its age and had already begun to take a great interest in what went on around it Its extraordinary resemblance to Genji was not remarked upon by the Emperor who had an idea that handsome children were all very much alike at that age He became intensely devoted to the child and lavished every kind of care and attention upon it For Genji himself he had always had so great a partiality that, had it not been for popular opposition, he would certainly have installed him as Heir Apparent. That he had not been able to do so constantly distressed him To have produced so magnificent a son and be obliged to watch him growing up a mere nobleman had always been galling to him Now in his old age a son had been born to him who promised to be equally handsome and had not the tiresome disadvantage of a plebeian mother, and upon this flawless pearl he expended his whole affection The mother saw little chance of this rapture continuing and was all this while in a state of agonized apprehension

One day, when as he had been wont to do before, Genji was making music for her at the Emperor's command, His Majesty took the child in his arms, saying to Genji. 'I have had many children, but you were the only other one that I ever behaved about in this fashion It may be my fancy, but it seems to me this child is exactly like what you were at the same age However, I suppose all babies are very much alike while they are as small as this,' and he looked at the fine child with admiration A succession of violent emotions — terror, shame, pride and love — passed through Genji's breast while these words were being spoken, and were reflected in his rapidly changing colour He was almost in tears The child looked so exquisitely beautiful as it lay crowing to itself and smiling that, hideous as the situation was, Genji could not help feeling glad it was thought to be like him Fujitsubo meanwhile was in a state of embarrassment and agitation so painful that a cold sweat broke out upon her while she sat by For Genji this jarring of opposite emotions was too much to be borne and he went home Here he lay tossing on his bed and, unable to distract himself, he determined after a while to go to the Great Hall As he passed by the flower-beds in front of his house, he noticed that a faint tinge of green was already filming the bushes and under them the *tokonatsu* [1] were already in bloom He plucked one and sent it to Omyobu with a long letter and an acrostic poem in which he said that he was touched by the likeness of this flower to the child, but also hinted that he was perturbed by the child's likeness to himself 'In this flower,' he continued despondently, 'I had hoped to see your beauty enshrined But now I know that being mine yet not mine it can bring me no comfort to look upon it' After waiting a little while till a favourable moment should arise Omyobu showed her mistress the letter, saying with a sigh,

[1] Another name for the *nadeshiko*, 'Child-of-my-heart,' see p 33

'I fear that your answer will be but dust to the petals of this thirsting flower' But Fujitsubo, in whose heart also the new spring was awakening a host of tender thoughts, wrote in answer the poem 'Though it alone be the cause that these poor sleeves are wet with dew, yet goes my heart still with it, this child-flower of Yamato Land' This was all and it was roughly scribbled in a faint hand, but it was a comfort to Omyobu to have even such a message as this to bring back Genji knew quite well that it could lead to nothing How many times had she sent him such messages before! Yet as he lay dejectedly gazing at the note, the mere sight of her handwriting soon stirred in him a frenzy of unreasoning excitement and delight For a while he lay restlessly tossing on his bed At last unable to remain any longer inactive he sprang up and went, as he had so often done before, to the western wing to seek distraction from the agitated thoughts which pursued him He came towards the women's apartments with his hair loose upon his shoulders, wearing a queer dressing-gown and, in order to amuse Murasaki, playing a tune on his flute as he walked He peeped in at the door She looked as she lay there for all the world like the fresh dewy flower that he had so recently plucked She was growing a little bit spoilt and having heard some while ago that he had returned from Court she was rather cross with him for not coming to see her at once She did not run to meet him as she usually did, but lay with her head turned away He called to her from the far side of the room to get up and come to him, but she did not stir Suddenly he heard that she was murmuring to herself the lines 'Like a sea-flower that the waters have covered when a great tide mounts the shore' They were from an old poem [1] that he had taught her, in which a lady complains that she is neglected by her lover She looked bewitching as she lay with her face half-sullenly, half-coquettishly buried in her sleeve 'How naughty,' he cried 'Really you are becoming too witty But if you saw me more often perhaps you would grow tired of me' Then he sent for his zithern and asked her to play to him But it was a big Chinese instrument [2] with thirteen strings, the five slender strings in the middle embarrassed her and she could not get the full sound out of them Taking it from her he shifted the bridge, and tuning it to a lower pitch played a few chords upon it and bade her try again Her sullen mood was over She began to play very prettily, sometimes, when there was a gap too long for one small hand to stretch, helping herself out so adroitly with the other hand that Genji was completely captivated and taking up his flute taught her a number of new tunes She was very quick and grasped the most complicated rhythms at a single hearing She had indeed in music as in all else just those talents with which it most delighted him that she should be endowed When he played the Hosoroguseri (which in spite of its absurd name is an excellent tune) she accompanied him though with a childish touch, yet in perfect time

[1] *Shu* 1 *Shu* 967 [2] A so no koto

The great lamp was brought in and they began looking at pictures together But Genji was going out that night Already his attendants were assembled in the courtyard outside One of them was saying that a storm was coming on He ought not to wait any longer Again Murasaki was unhappy She was not looking at the pictures, but sat with her head on her hands staring despondently at the floor Stroking the lovely hair that had fallen forward across her lap, Genji asked her if she missed him when he was away She nodded I am just the same,' he said 'If I miss seeing you for a single day I am terribly unhappy But you are only a little girl and I know that whatever I do you will not think harsh thoughts about me, while the lady that I go to see is very jealous and angry so that it would break her heart if I were to stay with you too long But I do not at all like being there and that is why I just go for a little while like this When you are grown up of course I shall never go away at all I only go now because if I did not she would be so terribly angry with me that I might very likely die [1] and then there would be no one to love you and take care of you at all ' He had told her all he could, but still she was offended and would not answer a word At last he took her on his knee and here to his great embarrassment she fell asleep 'It is too late to go out now,' he said after a while, turning to the gentlewomen who were in attendance They rose and went to fetch his supper He roused the child 'Look,' he said, I did not go out after all ' She was happy once more and they went to supper together She liked the queer, irregular meal, but when it was over she began again to watch him uneasily 'If you are really not going out,' she said, 'why do you not go to sleep at once?' Leaving her at such a moment to go back to his room, he felt all the reluctance of one who is setting out upon a long and perilous journey

It constantly happened that at the last minute he thus decided to stay with her It was natural that some report of his new preoccupation should leak out into the world and be passed on to the Great Hall 'Who can it be?' said one of Aoi's ladies 'It is really the most inexplicable business How can he have suddenly become entirely wrapped up in someone whom we had never heard the existence of before? It cannot in any case be a person of much breeding or self-respect It is probably some girl employed at the Palace whom he has taken to live with him in order that the affair may be hushed up No doubt he is circulating the story that she is a child merely in order to put us off the scent ' And this opinion was shared by the rest

The Emperor too had heard that there was someone living with Genji and thought it a great pity 'You are treating the Minister very badly, he said He has shown the greatest possible devotion to you ever since you were a mere baby and now that you are old enough to know better you behave like this towards him and his family! It is really most ungrateful '

[1] That hate kills is a fundamental thesis of the book

Genji listened respectfully, but made no reply The Emperor began to fear that his marriage with Aoi had proved a very unhappy one and was sorry that he had arranged it 'I do not understand you,' he said. 'You seem to have no taste for gallantry and do not, so far as I can see, take the slightest interest in any of the ladies-in-waiting whom one might expect you to find attractive, nor do you bother yourself about the various beauties who in one part of the town or another are now in request, but instead you must needs pick up some creature from no one knows where and wound the feelings of others by keeping her as your mistress!'

Though he was now getting on in years the Emperor had himself by no means ceased to be interested in such matters He had always seen to it that his ladies-in-waiting and palace-servants should be remarkable both for their looks and their intelligence, and it was a time when the Court was full of interesting women There were few among them whom Genji could not by the slightest word or gesture have made his own But, perhaps because he saw too much of them, he did not find them in the least attractive Suspecting this, they would occasionally experiment upon him with some frivolous remark He answered so staidly that they saw a flirtation would be impossible and some of them came to the conclusion that he was rather a dull, prudish young man

There was an elderly lady-of-the-bedchamber who, though she was an excellent creature in every other way and was very much liked and respected, was an outrageous flirt It astonished Genji that despite her advancing years she showed no sign of reforming her reckless and fantastic behaviour Curious to see how she would take it, he one day came up and began joking with her She appeared to be quite unconscious of the disparity between their ages and at once counted him as an admirer Slightly alarmed, he nevertheless found her company rather agreeable and often talked with her But, chiefly because he was frightened of being laughed at if anyone found out, he refused to become her lover, and this she very much resented One day she was dressing the Emperor's hair When this was over His Majesty sent for his valets and went with them into another room Genji and the elderly lady were left alone together She was fuller than ever of languishing airs and poses, and her costume was to the last degree stylish and elaborate 'Poor creature,' he thought, how little difference it all makes!' and he was passing her on his way out of the room when suddenly the temptation to give a tug at her dress became irresistible She glanced swiftly round, eyeing him above the rim of a marvellously painted summer-fan The eyelids beneath which she ogled at him were blackened and sunken, wisps of hair projected untidily around her forehead There was something singularly inappropriate about this gawdy, coquettish fan Handing her his own instead, he took it from her and examined it On paper coated with a red so thick and lustrous that you could see yourself reflected in it a forest of tall trees was painted

in gold At the side of this design, in a hand which though out-of-date was not lacking in distinction was written the poem about the Forest of Oaraki [1] He made no doubt that the owner of the fan had written it in allusion to her own advancing years and was expecting him to make a gallant reply Turning over in his mind how best to divert the extravagant ardour of this strange creature, he could, to his own amusement, think only of another poem [2] about the same forest, but to this it would have been ill-bred to allude He was feeling very uncomfortable lest someone should come in and see them together She however was quite at her ease and seeing that he remained silent she recited with many arch looks the poem 'Come to me in the forest and I will cut pasture for your horse, though it be but of the under leaf whose season is past' 'Should I seek your woodland,' he answered, 'my fair name would be gone, for down its glades at all times the pattering of hoofs is heard,' and he tried to get away, but she held him back saying 'How odious you are! That is not what I mean at all No one has ever insulted me like this before,' and she burst into tears 'Let us talk about it some other time,' said Genji, 'I did not mean ' and freeing himself from her grasp he rushed out of the room, leaving her in great dudgeon She felt indeed after his repulse prodigiously old and tottering All this was seen by His Majesty who, his toilet long ago completed, had watched the ill-assorted pair with great amusement from behind his Imperial screen 'I am always being told,' he said, 'that the boy takes no interest in the members of my household But I cannot say that he seems to me unduly shy,' and he laughed For a moment she was slightly embarrassed, but she felt that any relationship with Genji, even if it consisted of being rebuffed by him in public, was distinctly a feather in her cap, and she made no attempt to defend herself against the Emperor's raillery The story soon went the round of the Court It astonished no one more than To no Chujo who, though he knew that Genji was given to odd experiments, could not believe that his friend was really launched upon the fantastic courtship which rumour was attributing to him There seemed no better way of discovering whether it was conceivably possible to regard the lady in such a light than to make love to her himself

The attentions of so distinguished a suitor went a long way towards consoling her for her late discomfiture Her new intrigue was of course carried on with absolute secrecy and Genji knew nothing about it When he next met her she seemed to be very cross with him, and feeling sorry for her because she was so old he made up his mind that he must try to console her But for a long while he was completely occupied by tiresome

[1] 'So withered is the grass beneath its trees that the young colt will not graze there and the reapers do not come.'

[2] 'So sweet is its shade that all the summer through its leafy avenues are thronged,' alluding to the lady's many lovers.

business of one kind and another At last one very dismal rainy evening when he was strolling in the neighbourhood of the Ummeiden [1] he heard this lady playing most agreeably on her lute She was so good a performer that she was often called upon to play with the professional male musicians in the Imperial orchestra It happened that at this moment she was somewhat downcast and discontented, and in such a mood she played with even greater feeling and verve She was singing the 'Melon-grower's Song', [2] admirably, he thought, despite its inappropriateness to her age So must the voice of the mysterious lady at O-chou have sounded in Po Chu-i's ears when he heard her singing on her boat at night, [3] and he stood listening At the end of the song the player sighed heavily as though quite worn out by the passionate vehemence of her serenade Genji approached softly humming the 'Azumaya' 'Here in the portico of the eastern house rain splashes on me while I wait Come, my beloved, open the door and let me in' Immediately, indeed with an unseemly haste, she answered as does the lady in the song, 'Open the door and come in,' [4] adding the verse 'In the wide shelter of that portico no man yet was ever splashed with rain,' and again she sighed so portentously that although he did not at all suppose that he alone was the cause of this demonstration, he felt it in any case to be somewhat exaggerated and answered with the poem 'Your sighs show clearly that, despite the song, you are another's bride, and I for my part have no mind to haunt the loggias of your eastern house' He would gladly have passed on, but he felt that this would be too unkind, and seeing that someone else was coming towards her room, he stepped inside and began talking lightly of indifferent subjects, in a style which though it was in reality somewhat forced she found very entertaining

It was intolerable, thought To no Chujo, that Genji should be praised as a quiet and serious young man and should constantly rebuke him for his frivolity, while all the time he was carrying on a multiplicity of interesting intrigues which out of mere churlishness he kept entirely hidden from all his friends For a long while Chujo had been waiting for an opportunity to expose this sanctimonious imposture, and when he saw Genji enter the gentlewoman's apartment you may be sure he was delighted To scare him a little at such a moment would be an excellent way to punish him for his unfriendliness He slackened his pace and watched The wind sighed in the trees It was getting very late Surely Genji would soon begin to doze? And indeed he did now look as though he had fallen

[1] The headquarters of the Ladies of the Bedchamber

[2] An old folk-song the refrain of which is 'At the melon-hoeing he said he loved me and what am I to do, what am I to do?'

[3] The poem referred to is not the famous *Lute Girl's Song*, but a much shorter one (*Works* x. 8) on a similar theme O-chou is the modern Wu-ch'ang in Hupeh

[4] In the song the lady says 'The door is not bolted or barred Come quickly and talk to me Am I another's bride, that you should be so careful and shy?'

asleep Chujo stole on tiptoe into the room, but Genji who was only half-dreaming instantly heard him, and not knowing that Chujo had followed him, got it into his head that it was a certain Commissioner of Works who years ago had been supposed to be an admirer of the lady The idea of being discovered in such a situation by this important old gentleman filled him with horror Furious with his companion for having exposed him to the chance of such a predicament 'This is too bad,' he whispered, 'I am going home What possessed you to let me in on a night when you knew that someone else was coming?' He had only time to snatch up his cloak and hide behind a long folding-screen before Chujo entered the room and going straight up to the screen began in a business-like manner to fold it up Though she was no longer young, the lady did not lose her head in this alarming crisis Being a woman of fashion, she had on more than one occasion found herself in an equally agitating position, and now despite her astonishment, after considering for a moment what had best be done with the intruder, she seized him by the back of his coat and with a practised though trembling hand pulled him away from the screen Genji had still no idea that it was Chujo He had half a mind to show himself, but quickly remembered that he was oddly and inadequately clad, with his headdress all awry He felt that if he ran for it he would cut much too strange a figure as he left the room, and for a moment he hesitated Wondering how much longer Genji would take to recognize him, Chujo did not say a word but putting on the most ferocious air imaginable, drew his sword from the scabbard Whereupon the lady crying 'Gentlemen! Gentlemen!' flung herself between them in an attitude of romantic supplication They could hardly refrain from bursting into laughter It was only by day when very carefully painted and bedizened that she still retained a certain superficial air of youth and charm But now this woman of fifty-seven or eight, disturbed by a sudden brawl in the midst of her amours, created the most astonishing spectacle as she knelt at the feet of two young men in their 'teens beseeching them not to die for her Chujo however refrained from showing the slightest sign of amusement and continued to look as alarming and ferocious as he could But he was now in full view and Genji realized in a moment that Chujo had all the while known who he was and had been amusing himself at his expense Much relieved at this discovery, he grabbed at the scabbard from which Chujo had drawn the sword and held it fast lest his friend should attempt to escape and then, despite his annoyance at having been followed, burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter 'Are you in your right mind?' said Genji at last 'This is really a very poor sort of joke Do you mind letting me get into my cloak?' Whereupon Chujo snatched the cloak from him and would not give it back 'Very well then,' said Genji, if you are to have my cloak I must have yours,' and so saying he pulled open the clasp of Chujo's belt and began tugging his cloak from his

shoulders. Chujo resisted and a long tussle followed in which the cloak was torn to shreds 'Should you now get it in exchange for yours, this tattered cloak will but reveal the secrets it is meant to hide,' recited To no Chujo, to which Genji replied with an acrostic poem in which he complained that Chujo with whom he shared so many secrets should have thought it necessary to spy upon him in this fashion But neither was really angry with the other and setting their disordered costumes to rights they both took their departure Genji discovered when he was alone that it had indeed upset him very much to find his movements had been watched, and he could not sleep The lady felt utterly bewildered On the floor she found a belt and a buckle which she sent to Genji next day with a complicated acrostic poem in which she compared these stranded properties to the weeds which after their straining and tugging the waves leave upon the shore She added an allusion to the crystal river of her tears He was irritated by her persistency but distressed at the shock to which she had been subjected by Chujo's foolish joke, and he answered with the poem 'At the antics of the prancing wave you have good cause to be angry, but blameless indeed is the shore on whose sands it lashed' The belt was Chujo's, that was plain for it was darker in colour than his own cloak And as he examined his cloak he noticed that the lower half of one sleeve was torn away. What a mess everything was in! He told himself with disgust that he was becoming a rowdy, a vulgar night-brawler Such people, he knew, were always tearing their clothes and making themselves ridiculous It was time to reform

The missing sleeve soon arrived from Chujo's apartments with the message 'Had you not better have this sewn on before you wear your cloak?' How had he managed to get hold of it? Such tricks were very tiresome and silly But he supposed he must now give back the belt, and wrapping it in paper of the same colour he sent it with a riddling poem in which he said that he would not keep it lest he should make trouble between Chujo and the lady 'You have dragged her away from me as in the scuffle you snatched from me this belt,' said Chujo in his answering poem, and added 'Have I not good reason to be angry with you?'

Later in the morning they met in the Presence Room Genji wore a solemn and abstracted air Chujo could not help recollecting the absurd scene of their last meeting, but it was a day upon which there was a great deal of public business to despatch and he was soon absorbed in his duties But from time to time each would catch sight of the other's serious face and heavy official bearing, and then they could not help smiling In an interval Chujo came up to Genji and asked him in a low voice whether he had decided in future to be a little more communicative about his affairs 'No, indeed,' said Genji, 'but I feel I owe you an apology for preventing you from spending a happy hour with the lady whom you had come to

Heir Apparent should be passed over in favour of a concubine aged little more than twenty The public tended to take Kokiden's side and there was a good deal of discontent On the night when the new Empress was installed Genji, as a Councillor, was among those who accompanied her to the Middle Palace As daughter of a previous Empress and mother of an exquisite prince she enjoyed a consideration at Court beyond that which her new rank would have alone procured for her. But if it was with admiring devotion that the other great lords of her train attended her that day, it may be imagined with what fond yet agonized thoughts Prince Genji followed the litter in which she rode She seemed at last to have been raised so far beyond his reach that scarce knowing what he did he murmured to himself the lines 'Now upon love's dark path has the last shadow closed, for I have seen you carried to a cloud-land whither none may climb'

As the days and months went by the child grew more and more like Genji The new Empress was greatly distressed, but no one else seemed to notice the resemblance He was not of course so handsome, how indeed should he have been? But both were beautiful, and the world was content to accept their beauty without troubling to compare them, just as it accepts both moon and sun as lovely occupants of the sky

CHAPTER VIII

The Flower Feast

ABOUT the twentieth day of the second month the Emperor gave a Chinese banquet under the great cherry-tree of the Southern Court Both Fujitsubo and the Heir Apparent were to be there Kokiden, although she knew that the mere presence of the Empress was sufficient to spoil her pleasure, could not bring herself to forego so delightful an entertainment After some promise of rain the day turned out magnificent, and in full sunshine, with the birds singing in every tree, the guests (royal princes, noblemen and professional poets alike) were handed the rhyme words which the Emperor had drawn by lot, and set to work to compose their poems It was with a clear and ringing voice that Genji read out the word 'Spring' which he had received as the rhyme-sound of his poem Next came To no Chujo who, feeling that all eyes were upon him and determined to impress himself favourably on his audience, moved with the greatest possible elegance and grace, and when on receiving his rhyme he announced his name, rank, and titles, he took great pains to speak pleasantly as well as audibly Many of the other gentlemen were rather nervous and looked quite pale as they came forward, yet they acquitted themselves well enough But the professional poets, particularly owing to the high standard of accomplishment which the Emperor s and Heir Apparent's lively interest in Chinese poetry had at that time diffused through the Court, were very ill at ease, as they crossed the long space of the garden on their way to receive their rhymes they felt utterly helpless A simple Chinese verse is surely not much to ask of a professional poet, but they all wore an expression of the deepest gloom One expects elderly scholars to be somewhat odd in their movements and behaviour, and it was amusing to see the lively concern with which the Emperor watched their various but always uncouth and erratic methods of approaching the Throne Needless to say a great deal of music had been arranged for Towards dusk the delightful dance known as the Warbling of Spring Nightingales was performed, and when it was over the Heir Apparent, remembering the Festival of Red Leaves, placed a wreath on Genji's head and pressed him so urgently that it was impossible for him to refuse Rising to his feet he danced very quietly a fragment of the sleeve-turning passage in the Wave Dance In a few moments he was seated again, but even into this brief extract from a long dance he managed to import an unrivalled charm and grace Even his father-in-law who was not in the best of humour with him was deeply moved and found himself wiping away a tear

And why have we not seen To no Chujo?' said the Heir Apparent. Whereupon Chujo danced the Park of Willow Flowers, giving a far more complete performance than Genji, for no doubt he knew that he would be called upon and had taken trouble to prepare his dance It was a great success and the Emperor presented him with a cloak, which everyone said was a most unusual honour. After this the other young noblemen who were present danced in no particular order, but it was now so dark that it was impossible to discriminate between their performances

Then the poems were opened and read aloud The reading of Genji's verses was continually interrupted by loud murmurs of applause Even the professional poets were deeply impressed, and it may well be imagined with what pride the Emperor, to whom at times Genji was a source of consolation and delight, watched him upon such an occasion as this Fujitsubo, when she allowed herself to glance in his direction, marvelled that even Kokiden could find it in her heart to hate him 'It is because he is fond of me, there can be no other reason,' she decided at last, and the verse, 'Were I but a common mortal who now am gazing at the beauty of this flower, from its sweet petals not long should I withhold the dew of love,' framed itself on her lips, though she dared not utter it aloud

It was now very late and the banquet was over The guests had scattered The Empress and the Heir Apparent had both returned to the Palace — all was still The moon had risen very bright and clear, and Genji, heated with wine, could not bear to quit so lovely a scene The people at the Palace were probably all plunged in a heavy sleep On such a night it was not impossible that some careless person might have left some door unfastened, some shutter unbarred Cautiously and stealthily he crept towards Fujitsubo's apartments and inspected them Every bolt was fast He sighed, here there was evidently nothing to be done He was passing the loggia of Kokiden's palace when he noticed that the shutters of the third arch were not drawn After the banquet Kokiden herself had gone straight to the Emperor's rooms. There did not seem to be anyone about A door leading from the loggia into the house was standing open, but he could hear no sound within 'It is under just such circumstances as this that one is apt to drift into compromising situations,' thought Genji Nevertheless he climbed quietly on to the balustrade and peeped Everyone must be asleep But no, a very agreeable young voice with an intonation which was certainly not that of any waiting-woman or common person was softly humming the last two lines of the *Oborozuki-yo* [1] Was not the voice coming towards him? It seemed so, and stretching out his hand he suddenly found that he was grasping a lady's sleeve Oh, how you frightened me!' she cried 'Who is it?' 'Do not be alarmed,' he whispered 'That both of us were not content to miss the beauty of this

[1] A famous poem by Oye no Chisato (ninth century) 'What so lovely as a night when the moon though dimly clouded is never wholly lost to sight!'

departing night is proof more clear than the half-clouded moon that we were meant to meet,' and as he recited the words he took her gently by the hand and led her into the house, closing the door behind them Her surprised and puzzled air fascinated him 'There is someone there,' she whispered tremulously, pointing to the inner room 'Child,' he answered, 'I am allowed to go wherever I please and if you send for your friends they will only tell you that I have every right to be here But if you will stay quietly here ' It was Genji She knew his voice and the discovery somewhat reassured her She thought his conduct rather strange, but she was determined that he should not think her prudish or stiff And so because he on his side was still somewhat excited after the doings of the evening, while she was far too young and pliant to offer any serious resistance, he soon got his own way with her

Suddenly they saw to their discomfiture that dawn was creeping into the sky She looked, thought Genji, as though many disquieting reflections were crowding into her mind 'Tell me your name' he said 'How can I write to you unless you do? Surely this is not going to be our only meeting?' She answered with a poem in which she said that names are of this world only and he would not care to know hers if he were resolved that their love should last till worlds to come It was a mere quip and Genji, amused at her quickness, answered, 'You are quite right It was a mistake on my part to ask ' And he recited the poem 'While still I seek to find on which blade dwells the dew, a great wind shakes the grasses of the level land ' 'If you did not repent of this meeting,' he continued, 'you would surely tell me who you are I do not believe that you want

' But here he was interrupted by the noise of people stirring in the next room There was a great bustle and it was clear that they would soon be starting out to fetch Princess Kokiden back from the Palace There was just time to exchange fans in token of their new friendship before Genji was forced to fly precipitately from the room In his own apartments he found many of his gentlemen waiting for him Some were awake, and these nudged one another when he entered the room as though to say, 'Will he never cease these disreputable excursions?' But discretion forbad them to show that they had seen him and they all pretended to be fast asleep Genji too lay down, but he could not rest He tried to recall the features of the lady with whom he had just spent so agreeable a time Certainly she must be one of Kokiden's sisters Perhaps the fifth or sixth daughter, both of whom were still unmarried The handsomest of them (or so he had always heard) were Prince Sochi s wife and the fourth daughter, the one with whom To no Chujo got on so badly It would really be rather amusing if it did turn out to be Chujo's wife The sixth was shortly to be married to the Heir Apparent How tiresome if it were she! But at present he could think of no way to make sure She had not behaved at all as though she did not want to see him again Why then had

she refused to give him any chance of communicating with her In fact he worried about the matter so much and turned it over in his mind with such endless persistency that it soon became evident he had fallen deeply in love with her Nevertheless no sooner did the recollection of Fujitsubo's serious and reticent demeanour come back to his mind than he realized how incomparably more she meant to him than this light-hearted lady

That day the after-banquet kept him occupied till late at night At the Emperor's command he performed on the thirteen-stringed zithern and had an even greater success than with his dancing on the day before At dawn Fujitsubo retired to the Emperor's rooms Disappointed in his hope that the lady of last night would somewhere or somehow make her appearance on the scene, he sent for Yoshikiyo and Koremitsu with whom all his secrets were shared and bade them keep watch upon the lady's family When he returned next day from duty at the Palace they reported that they had just witnessed the departure of several coaches which had been drawn up under shelter in the Courtyard of the Watch 'Among a group of persons who seemed to be the domestic attendants of those for whom the coaches were waiting two gentlemen came threading their way in a great hurry These we recognized as Shii no Shosho and Uchuben,[1] so there is little doubt that the carriages belonged to Princess Kokiden For the rest we noted that the ladies were by no means ill-looking and that the whole party drove away in three carriages ' Genji's heart beat fast But he was no nearer than before to finding out which of the sisters it had been Supposing her father, the Minister of the Right, should hear anything of this, what a to-do there would be! It would indeed mean his absolute ruin It was a pity that while he was about it he did not stay with her till it was a little lighter But there it was! He did not know her face, but yet he was determined to recognize her How? He lay on his bed devising and rejecting endless schemes Murasaki too must be growing impatient Days had passed since he had visited her and he remembered with tenderness how low-spirited she became when he was not able to be with her But in a moment his thoughts had returned to the unknown lady He still had her fan It was a folding fan with ribs of hinoki-wood and tassels tied in a splice-knot One side was covered with silverleaf on which was painted a dim moon, giving the impression of a moon reflected in water It was a device which he had seen many times before, but it had agreeable associations for him, and continuing the metaphor of the 'grass on the moor' which she had used in her poem, he wrote on the fan — 'Has mortal man ever puzzled his head with such a question before as to ask where the moon goes to when she leaves the sky at dawn?' And he put the fan safely away It was on his conscience that he had not for a long while been to the

[1] Kokiden's brothers

Great Hall, but fearing that Murasaki too might be feeling very unhappy, he first went home to give her her lessons Every day she was improving not only in looks, but also in amiability of character The beauty of her disposition was indeed quite out of the common The idea that so perfect a nature was in his hands, to train and cultivate as he thought best, was very attractive to Genji It might however have been objected that to receive all her education from a young man is likely to make a girl somewhat forward in her manner

First there was a great deal to tell her about what had happened at the Court entertainments of the last few days Then followed her music lesson, and already it was time to go Oh, why must he always go away so soon?' she wondered sadly, but by now she was so used to it that she no longer fretted as she had done a little while ago

At the Great Hall he could, as usual, scarcely get a word out of Aoi The moment that he sat idle a thousand doubts and puzzles began to revolve in his mind He took up his zithern and began to sing

Not softlier pillowed is my head
That rests by thine, unloving bride,
Than were those jagged stones my bed
Through which the falls of Nuki stride

At this moment Aoi's father came by and began to discuss the unusual success of the recent festivities Old as I am, he said — 'and I may say that I have lived to see four illustrious sovereigns occupy the Throne, I have never taken part in a banquet which produced verses so spirited or dancing and music so admirably performed Talent of every description seems at present to exist in abundance, but it is creditable to those in authority that they knew how to make good use of it For my part I enjoyed myself so much that had I but been a few years younger I would positively have joined in the dancing!' 'No special steps were taken to discover the musicians,' answered Genji 'We merely used those who were known to the government in one part of the country and another as capable performers If I may say so, it was Chujo's Willow Dance that made the deepest impression and is likely always to be remembered as a remarkable performance But if you, Sir, had indeed honoured us, a new lustre would have been added to my Father's reign ' Aoi's brothers now arrived and leaning against the balustrade gave a little concert, their various instruments blending delightfully

Fugitive as their meeting had been, it had sufficed to plunge the lady whose identity Prince Genji was now seeking to establish into the depths of despair, for in the fourth month she was to become the Heir Apparent's wife Turmoil filled her brain Why had not Genji visited her again? He must surely know whose daughter she was But how should he know which daughter? Besides, her sister Kokiden's house was not

a place where, save under very strange circumstances, he was likely to feel at all at his ease And so she waited in great impatience and distress, but of Genji there was no news

About the twentieth day of the third month her father, the Minister of the Right, held an archery meeting at which most of the young noblemen and princes were present It was followed by a wistaria feast The cherry blossom was for the most part over, but two trees, which the Minister seemed somehow to have persuaded to flower later than all the rest, were still an enchanting sight He had had his house rebuilt only a short time ago when celebrating the initiation of his granddaughters, the children of Kokiden It was now a magnificent building and not a thing in it but was of the very latest fashion He had invited Genji when he had met him at the Palace only a few days before and was extremely annoyed when he did not appear. Feeling that the party would be a failure if Genji did not come, he sent his son Shii no Shosho to fetch him, with the poem 'Were my flowers as those of other gardens never should I have ventured to summon you' Genji was in attendance upon the Emperor and at once showed him the message 'He seems very pleased with himself and his flowers,' said His Majesty with a smile; adding, 'as he has sent for you like this, I think you had better go After all your half-sisters are being brought up at his house, and you ought not to treat him quite as a stranger' He went to his apartments and dressed It was very late indeed when at last he made his appearance at the party He was dressed in a cloak of thin Chinese fabric, white outside but lined with yellow His robe was of a deep wine-red colour with a very long train The dignity and grace with which he carried this fancifully regal [1] attire in a company where all were dressed in plain official robes were indeed remarkable, and in the end his presence perhaps contributed more to the success of the party than did the fragrance of the Minister's boasted flowers His entry was followed by some very agreeable music It was already fairly late when Genji, on the plea that the wine had given him a headache, left his seat and went for a walk He knew that his two stepsisters, the daughters of Kokiden, were in the inner apartments of the palace He went to the eastern portico and rested there It was on this side of the house that the wistaria grew The wooden blinds were raised and a number of ladies were leaning out of the window to enjoy the blossoms They had hung bright-coloured robes and shawls over the window-sill just as is done at the time of the New Year dancing and other gala days and were behaving with a freedom of allure which contrasted very oddly with the sober decorum of Fujitsubo's household 'I am feeling rather overpowered by all the noise and bustle of the flower-

[1] He had no right to such a costume, for though a son of the Emperor, he had been affiliated to the Minamoto clan and no longer counted as a member of the Imperial family

party,' Genji explained 'I am very sorry to disturb my sisters, but I can think of nowhere else to seek refuge ' and advancing towards the main door of the women's apartments, he pushed back the curtain with his shoulder 'Refuge indeed!' cried one of the ladies, laughing at him 'You ought to know by now that it is only poor relations who come to seek refuge with the more successful members of their family What pray have you come to bother us for?' 'Impertinent creatures! he thought, but nevertheless there was something in their manner which convinced him they were persons of some consequence in the house and not, as he at first supposed, mere waiting-women A scent of costly perfumes pervaded the room, silken skirts rustled in the darkness There could be little doubt that these were Kokiden's sisters and their friends Deeply absorbed, as indeed was the whole of this family, in the fashionable gaieties of the moment, they had flouted decorum and posted themselves at the window that they might see what little they could of the banquet which was proceeding outside Little thinking that his plan could succeed, yet led on by delightful recollections of his previous encounter, he advanced towards them chanting in a careless undertone the song

At Ishikawa, Ishikawa
A man from Koma [1] took my belt away

But for 'belt' he substituted 'fan' and by this means he sought to discover which of the ladies was his friend 'Why, you have got it wrong! I never heard of *that* Korean,' one of them cried Certainly it was not she But there was another who though she remained silent seemed to him to be sighing softly to herself He stole towards the curtain-of-state behind which she was sitting and taking her hand in his at a venture he whispered the poem 'If on this day of shooting my arrow went astray, 'twas that in dim morning twilight only the mark had glimmered in my view ' And she, unable any longer to hide that she knew him, answered with the verse 'Had it been with the arrows of the heart that you had shot, though from the moon's slim bow no brightness came would you have missed your mark?' Yes, it was her voice He was delighted, and yet

[1] Korea.

CHAPTER IX

Aoi

THE accession of the new Emperor was in many ways unfavourable to Genji's position His recent promotion [1] too brought with it heavy responsibilities which sadly interrupted the course of his hidden friendships, so that complaints of desertion or neglect were soon heaped upon him from more than one quarter, while, as though Fate wished to turn the tables upon him, the one being on earth for whose love he longed in vain had now utterly abandoned him Now that the Emperor was free to live as he chose, she was more constantly than ever at his side, nor was her peace any longer disturbed by the presence of a rival, for Kokiden, resenting the old Emperor's neglect, now seldom left her son's Palace A constant succession of banquets and entertainments, the magnificence of which became the talk of the whole country, helped to enliven the ex-Emperor's retirement and he was on the whole very well content with his new condition His only regret concerned the Heir Apparent [2] whose position, unsupported by any powerful influence outside the Palace, he regarded as extremely insecure He constantly discussed the matter with Genji, begging him to enlist the support of the Minamoto clan Such conversations tended to be somewhat embarrassing, but they gave Genji pleasure in so far as they enabled him to take measures for the boy's welfare

An unexpected event now occurred Lady Rokujo's daughter by her late husband Prince Zembo was chosen to be the new Vestal Virgin at Ise [3] Her mother, who at the time when the appointment was first announced happened to be particularly aggrieved at Genji's treatment of her, at once determined to make her daughter's extreme youth a pretext for leaving the Capital and settling permanently at Ise Being at the moment, as I have said, very much out of humour, she discussed the matter openly, making no secret of her real reasons for wishing to leave the City The story soon reached the ex-Emperor's ears, and sending for Genji he said to him The late Prince my brother was, as you probably know, regarded with the utmost affection and esteem and I am profoundly grieved to hear that your reckless and inconsiderate conduct

[1] We learn in Chapter XXXIV that he was made Commander of the Bodyguard at the age of twenty-one He is now twenty-two

[2] Genji's son by Fujitsubo (supposed by the world to be the Emperor's child) had been made Heir Apparent.

[3] An Emperor upon his succession was obliged to send one unmarried daughter or granddaughter to the Shinto Temple at Ise, another to the Shinto Temple at Kamo See Appendix II.

has cast a slur upon his family For his daughter indeed I feel as much responsible as if she were one of my own children I must trouble you in future to safeguard to the utmost of your power the reputation of these unfortunate ladies If you do not learn to keep better control over your frivolous inclinations, you will soon find yourself becoming extremely unpopular' Why should his father be so much upset over the matter? And Genji, smarting under the rebuke, was about to defend himself when it occurred to him that the warning was not at all ill-merited and he maintained a respectful silence

'Affairs of this kind,' the ex-Emperor continued, 'must be managed so that the woman, no matter who she is, need not feel that she has been brought into a humiliating position or treated in a cynical and offhand way Forget this rule, and she will soon make you feel the unpleasant consequences of her resentment' 'Wicked as he thinks me already,' said Genji to himself while this lecture was going on, 'there is a much worse enormity of which he as yet knows nothing' And stupefied with horror at the thought of what would ensue should his father ever discover this hideous secret, he bowed and left the room

What the ex-Emperor had said about ruining other people's reputations cut him to the quick He realized that Rokujo's rank and widowed position entitled her to the utmost consideration But after all it was not he who had made public property of the affair; on the contrary he had done everything in his power to prevent its becoming known There had always been a certain condescension in her treatment of him, arising perhaps from the inequality of their ages,[1] and his estrangement from her was solely due to the coldness with which she had for a long time received him That their private affairs were now known not only to the ex-Emperor but also presumably to the whole Court showed a lack of reticence which seemed to him deplorable

Among others who heard of the business was Princess Asagao[2] Determined that she at least would not submit herself to such treatment, she ceased to answer his letters even with the short and guarded replies that she had been in the habit of sending to him Nevertheless he found it hard to believe that so gentle-mannered a creature was thinking unkindly of him and continued to regard her with devoted admiration

Princess Aoi when the story reached her ears was of course distressed by this new instance of his fickleness, but she felt that it was useless, now that his infidelity was open and unabashed, to protest against one particular injury, and to his surprise she seemed to take the matter rather lightly She was suffering much inconvenience from her condition and her spirits were very low Her parents were delighted and at the same time surprised to hear of what was to come But their pleasure and that of

[1] She was seven years older than Genji.

[2] Daughter of Prince Momozono See above, p 39

all her friends was marred by grave forebodings, and it was arranged that prayers for her health and special services of intercession should be recited in all the temples At such a time it was impossible for Genji to leave her and there were many who, though his feelings had not in reality cooled towards them, felt that they were being neglected

The Vestal Virgin of Kamo still remained to be selected The choice fell upon Kokiden's daughter, San no Miya She was a great favourite both with her brother the new Emperor and with the Empress Mother Her retirement from the world was a bitter blow to them, but there was no help for it since she alone of all the royal princesses fulfilled the prescribed conditions

The actual ritual of investiture could not be altered, but the Emperor saw to it that the proceedings should be attended with the utmost pomp and splendour, while to the customary ritual of the Kamo Festival he added so many touches that it became a spectacle of unparalleled magnificence All this was due to his partiality for the Virgin Elect

On the day of her purification the Virgin is attended by a fixed number of noblemen and princes For this retinue the Emperor was at pains to choose the best built and handsomest of the young men at Court, he settled what coloured gowns they were to wear, what pattern was to be on their breeches, and even on what saddles they should ride By a special decree he ordered that Prince Genji should join this retinue, and so great was everyone's desire to get a good view of the procession that long beforehand people were getting ready special carriages with which to line the route The scene along the highroad of the First Ward was one of indescribable excitement Dense crowds surged along the narrow space allotted to them, while the stands which with a wealth of ingenious fancy had been constructed all along the route of the procession, with gay cloaks and shawls hung over the balustrades, were in themselves a spectacle of astonishing beauty

It had never been Aoi's practice to be present at such occasions as this and in her present state of health she would not have dreamt of doing so had not her gentlewomen pressed round her saying, Come, Madam! It will be no fun for us to go by ourselves and be hidden away in some corner. It is to see Prince Genji that all these people have come today Why, all sorts of queer wild men from the mountains are here, and people have brought their wives and children from provinces ever so far away If all these people who are nothing to do with him have taken the trouble to come so far, it will be too bad if you, his own lady, are not there!' Overhearing this, Aoi's mother joined in 'You are feeling much better just now,' she said, 'I think you ought to make the effort It will be so disappointing for your gentlewomen ' At the last minute Aoi changed her mind and announced that she was going It was now so late that there was no time to put on gala clothes The whole of the enclosure allotted

for this purpose was already lined with coaches which were packed so close that it was quite impossible to find space for the large and numerous carriages of Aoi and her train A number of grand ladies began to make room for her, backing their coaches away from a suitable space in the reserved enclosure Conspicuous among the rest were two basket-work carriages of a rather old-fashioned pattern but with curtains such as are used by persons of quality, very discreetly decked with draperies that barely showed beneath the curtains, yet these draperies (whether sleeve-favour, skirt or scarf) all of the handsomest colours They seemed to belong to some exalted personage who did not wish to be recognized When it was their turn to move, the coachmen in charge of them would not lift a finger 'It is not for such as we to make way,' they said stiffly and did not stir Among the attendants on both sides there was a number of young grooms who were already the worse for liquor They were longing for a scuffle and it was impossible to keep them in hand The staid and elderly outriders tried to call them back, but they took no notice

The two carriages belonged to Princess Rokujo who had come secretly to the festival hoping for a while to find distraction from her troubles Despite the steps which she had taken to conceal her identity, it was at once suspected by some of Aoi's gentlemen, and they cried to the grooms that this was not an equipage which could be dealt with so high-handedly, or it would be said that their lady was abusing her position as wife of the Lord Commander But at this moment a number of Genji's servants mingled in the fray They knew Rokujo's men by sight, but after a moment's embarrassment they decided not to give assistance to the enemy by betraying his identity

Thus reinforced Aoi's side won the day and at length her coach and those of all her ladies were drawn up along the front row, while Rokujo's was pushed back among a miscellaneous collection of carts and gigs where she could see nothing at all She was vexed beyond measure not only at missing what she had come to see but also that despite all her precautions she had been recognized and (as she was convinced) deliberately insulted Her shaft-rest and other parts of her coach as well were damaged and she was obliged to prop it up against some common person's carriage wheels Why, she vainly asked herself, had she come among these hateful crowds? She would go home at once What sense was there in waiting for the procession to come? But when she tried to go, she found that it was impossible to force a way through the dense crowds She was still struggling to escape when the cry went up that the procession was in sight Her resolution weakened She would wait till Genji had passed by He did not see her How should he, for the crowds flashed by him like the hurrying images that a stream catches and breaks She realized this, yet her disappointment was none the less

The carriages that lined the route, decked and garlanded for this great

day, were crammed to overflowing with excited ladies who though there was no room for them would not consent to be left behind Peeping out under the blinds of their coaches they smiled at the great personages who were passing quite regardless of whether their greetings were acknowledged But every now and then a smile would be rewarded by a quick glance or the backward turn of a head Aoi's party was large and conspicuous Genji wheeled round as he passed and saluted its members attentively Rider after rider again as the procession went by would pause in front of Aoi's coach and salute her with the deepest respect The humiliation of witnessing all this from an obscure corner was more than Rokujo could bear, and murmuring the lines, 'Though I saw him but as a shadow that falls on hurrying waters yet knew I that at last my hour of utmost misery was come,' she burst into tears It was hideous that her servants should see her in this state Yet even while she struggled with her tears she could not find it in her heart to regret that she had seen him *in all his glory*

The riders in the procession were indeed all magnificently apparelled, each according to his own rank, in particular the young noblemen chosen by the Emperor cut so brilliant a figure that only the lustre of Genji's beauty could have eclipsed their splendour The Commander of this Bodyguard is not generally allotted a Palace-Officer as his special attendant, but as the occasion was of such importance the Imperial Treasurer [1] rode at Genji's side. It seemed to those who saw so many public honours showered upon him that no flower of fortune could resist the favouring gale which blew towards his side There were among the crowd women of quite good birth who had dressed in walking-skirts and come a long way on foot There were nuns and other female recluses who, though in order to see anything of the procession they were obliged to endure being constantly pushed off their feet, and though they commonly regarded all such spectacles with contempt and aversion, were today declaring that they would not have missed it for anything There were old men grinning through toothless gums, strange-looking girls with their hair poked away under ragged hoods and stolid peasant boys standing with hands raised as though in prayer, whose uncouth faces were suddenly transfigured with wonder and joy as the procession burst into sight Even the daughters of remote provincial magistrates and governors who had no acquaintances whatever in the City had expended as much coquetry upon the decoration of their persons and coaches as if they were about to submit themselves to a lover's inspection, and their equipages made a bright and varied show If even these strangers were in such a taking, it may be imagined with what excitement, scattered here and there among the crowd, those with whom Genji was in secret communication watched the procession go by and with how many hidden sighs their bosoms heaved

[1] We learn later that he was a son of Iyo no Kami

Prince Momozono [1] had a seat in one of the stands He was amazed to see his nephew grown up into such a prodigiously handsome young man and was alarmed lest soon the gods should cast an envious eye upon him Princess Asagao could not but be touched by the rare persistency with which year after year Genji had pressed his suit Even had he been positively ugly she would have found it hard to resist such importunity, so small wonder if seeing him ride by in all his splendour she marvelled that she had held out so long But she was determined to know him much better before she committed herself The young waiting-women who were with her were careful to belaud him in extravagant terms To the festival itself [2] Aoi did not go The affray between her servants and those of Rokujo was soon reported to Genji It vexed him beyond measure that such a thing should have occurred That the exquisitely well-bred Aoi should have been in any way responsible for this outburst of insolent ruffianism he did not for a moment believe, it must be the work of rough under-servants who, though they had no actual instructions, had imbibed the notion that all was not well between the two houses and imagined that they would get credit for espousing their mistress's cause He knew well enough the unusual vanity and susceptibility of the affronted lady Distressed to think of the pain which this incident must have caused her, he hastened to her house But her daughter, the Virgin Elect of Ise, was still in the house, and she made this a plea for turning him away after the exchange of a few formal words He had the greatest possible sympathy for her, but he was feeling rather tired of coping with injured susceptibilities

He could not face the idea of going straight back to the Great Hall It was the day of the Kamo festival and going to his own palace he ordered Koremitsu to get his coach ready 'Look at her!' he cried, smiling fondly at Murasaki when she appeared in all her finery surrounded by the little children whom he had given her for playmates 'She must needs bring her dames to wait upon her!' and he stroked her lovely hair which today Shonagon had dressed with more than usual care It is getting rather long,' he said, 'today would not be a bad [3] time to have it cut' and sending for his astrologer he bade him consult his books 'The maids-of-honour first!' he cried, nodding at the pretty troupe of babes, and their dainty tresses were trimmed so as to hang neatly over their diapered holiday gowns 'I am going to cut yours myself,' he said to Murasaki What a lot of it there is! I wonder how much longer it would have grown ' Really it was quite hard work 'People with very long hair

[1] Father of Princess Asagao, brother of the ex-Emperor and therefore Genji's paternal uncle.

[2] The clash of coaches took place at the Purification. The actual *matsuri* (Festival) took place some days later

[3] I.e. astrologically.

ought to wear it cut rather short over the temples,' he said at last, 'but I have not the heart to crop you any closer,' and he laid the knife down Shonagon's gratification knew no bounds when she heard him reciting the prayer with which the ceremony of hair-cutting should conclude There is a seaweed called *miru* which is used in the dressing of ladies' hair and playing upon this word (which also means 'to see') he recited a poem in which he said that the miru-weed which had been used in the washing of her hair was a token that he would for ever fondly watch it grow She answered that like the sea-tides which visit the *miru* in its cleft he came but went away, and often her tresses unwatched by him would like the hidden seaweed grow This she wrote very prettily on a slip of paper and though the verse had no merit in it but the charm of a childish mind it gave him great delight Today the crowds were as thick as ever With great difficulty he managed to wedge in his carriage close to the Royal Stables But here they were surrounded by somewhat turbulent young noblemen and he was looking for a quieter place when a smart carriage crammed full of ladies drew up near by and someone in it beckoned with a fan to Genji's servants 'Will you not come over where we are?' said one of the ladies 'We will gladly make room for you' Such an offer was perhaps somewhat forward, but the place she had indicated was such a good one that Genji at once accepted the invitation 'I am afraid it is very unfair that we should take your place like this' Genji was beginning to say politely, when one of the ladies handed him a fan with the corner bent down Here he found the poem 'This flower-decked day of meeting when the great god unfolds his portents in vain have I waited, for alas another is at thy side' Surely the handwriting was familiar Yes, it was that of the ancient lady-of-the-bedchamber He felt that it was time she should give up such pranks as this and answered discouragingly 'Not ours this day of tryst when garlanded and passionate the Eighty Tribes converge' This put the lady out of countenance and she replied. 'Now bitterly do I repent that for this cheating day my head is decked with flowers, for in name only is it a day of meeting'

Their carriages remained side by side, but Genji did not even draw up the side-curtains, which was a disappointment to more persons than one The magnificence of his public appearance a few days ago was contrasted by everyone with the unobtrusive manner in which he now mingled with the crowd It was agreed that his companion, whoever she might be, must certainly be some very great lady Genji was afraid that his neighbour was going to prove troublesome But fortunately some of her companions had more discretion than their mistress, and out of consideration for the unknown sharer of Genji's coach persuaded the voluble lady to restrain herself

Lady Rokujo's sufferings were now far worse than in previous years

Though she could no longer endure to be treated as Genji was treating her, yet the thought of separating from him altogether and going so far away agitated her so much that she constantly deferred her journey She felt too that she would become a laughing-stock if it was thought that she had been spurred to flight by Genji's scorn yet if at the last moment she changed her plans and stayed behind everyone would think her conduct extremely ill-balanced and unaccountable Thus her days and nights were spent in an agony of indecision and often she repeated to herself the lines,

My heart like the fishers' float on Ise shore is danced from wave to wave '[1] She felt herself indeed swirled this way and that by paroxysms that sickened her but were utterly beyond her control

Genji, though it pained him that she should feel it necessary to go so far away, did not attempt to dissuade her from the journey 'It is quite natural,' he wrote, 'that tiresome creature as I am you should want to put me altogether out of your head I only beg that even though you see no use in it, you will let me see you once more before you go Were we to meet, you would soon realize that I care for your happiness far more than you suppose ' But she could not forget how when at the River of Cleansing she sought a respite from the torture of her own doubt and indecision, rough waves had dashed her against the rocks,[2] and she brooded more and more upon this wrong till there was room for no other thought in all her heart

Meanwhile Princess Aoi became strangely distraught, and it seemed at times as though some hostile spirit had entered into her The whole household was plunged into such a state of anxiety and gloom that Genji had not the heart to absent himself for more than a few hours It was only very occasionally that he got even as far as his own palace After all, she was his wife, moreover, despite all the difficulties that had risen between them he cared for her very much indeed He could no longer disguise from himself that there was something wrong with her in addition to the discomfort which naturally accompanied her condition, and he was in a state of great distress Constant rituals of exorcism and divination were performed under his direction, and it was generally agreed that all the signs indicated possession by the spirit of some living person Many names were tried but to none of them did the spirit respond, and it seemed as though it would be impossible to shift it Aoi herself felt that some alien thing had entered into her, and though she was not conscious of any one definite pain or dread, the sense that the thing was there never for a moment left her The greatest healers of the day were powerless to eject it and it became apparent that this was no ordinary case of 'possession' some tremendous accumulation of malice was discharging itself upon her It was natural that her friends should turn over in their minds the names

[1] *Kokinshu* 509

[2] The clash of the chariots at the Festival of Purification. Probably a quotation.

of those whom Genji had most favoured It was whispered that only with Lady Rokujo and the girl at the Nijo-in was he on terms of such intimacy that their jealousy would be at all likely to produce a fatal effect. But when the doctors attempted to conjure the spirit by the use of these names, there was no visible response She had not in all the world any enemy who might be practising conscious [1] witchcraft against her Such indispositions were sometimes attributed to possession by the spirit of some dead retainer or old family-nurse, or again the malice of someone whom the Minister, Aoi's father, had offended might, owing to her delicate condition, have fastened upon her instead of him Conjecture after conjecture was accepted and then falsified Meanwhile she lay perpetually weeping Constantly, indeed, she would break out into fits of sobbing so violent that her breath was stopped, while those about her, in great alarm for her safety, stood by in misery not knowing what to do

The ex-Emperor enquired after her continually. He even ordered special services to be said on her behalf, and these attentions served to remind her parents in what high estimation she was held at the Court Not among her friends only but throughout the whole country the news of her illness caused great distress Rokujo heard of her sufferings with deep concern For years they had been in open rivalry for Genji's favours, but even after that wretched affair of the coaches (though it must be admitted that this had greatly incensed her) she had never gone so far as to wish evil against the Princess She herself was very unwell She began to feel that the violent and distracting emotions which continually assailed her had in some subtle way unhinged her mind and she determined to seek spiritual assistance at a place some miles distant from her home Genji heard of this and in great anxiety concerning her at once set out for the house where she was reported to be staying It lay beyond the City precincts and he was obliged to go with the greatest secrecy [2] He begged her to forgive him for not having come to see her for so long 'I have not been having a very cheerful time,' he said and gave her some account of Aoi's condition He wanted to make her feel that if he had stayed away it had been from a melancholy necessity and not because he had found more amusing company elsewhere 'It is not so much my own anxiety that unnerves me as the spectacle of the appalling helplessness and misery into which her illness has plunged her wretched parents, and it was in the hope of forgetting for a little while all these sickroom horrors that I came to see you here today If only just for this once you could overlook all my offences and be kind to me '

His pleading had no effect Her attitude was more hostile than before He was not angry with her, nor indeed was he surprised Day was al-

[1] The jealous person is unconscious of the fatal effects which his jealousy is producing

[2] Members of the Imperial family were not allowed to leave the Capital without the consent of the Emperor

ready breaking when, unsolaced, he set out for home But as she watched him go his beauty suddenly made havoc of all her resolutions and again she felt that it was madness to leave him Yet what had she to stay for? Aoi was with child and this could only be a sign that he had made his peace with her Henceforward he could lead a life of irreproachable rectitude and if once in a way he came to make his excuse as he had come today, what purpose would that serve, save to keep ever fresh the torment of her desires? Thus when his letter came next day it found her more distraught than before. 'The sick woman who for a few days past had shown some improvement is again suffering acutely and it is at present impossible for me to leave her' Certain that this was a mere excuse, she sent in reply the poem 'The fault is mine and the regret, if careless as the peasant girl who stoops too low amid the sprouting rice I soiled my sleeve in love's dark road' At the end of her letter she reminded him of the old song 'Now bitterly do I repent that ever I brought my pitcher to the mountain well where waters were but deep enough to soil my sleeve' He looked at the delicate handwriting Who was there, even among women of her high lineage and breeding, that could rival the ineffable grace and elegance with which this small note was penned? That one whose mind and person alike so strongly attracted him must now by his own act be lost to him for ever, was a bitter thought Though it was almost dark, he sat down and wrote to her 'Do not say that the waters have but wetted your sleeve For the shallowness is in your comparison only, not in my affections!' And to this he added the poem ''Tis you, you only who have loitered among the shallow pools while I till all my limbs were drenched have battled through the thickets of love's dark track' And he ended with the words 'Had but a ray of comfort lighted the troubles of this house, I should myself have been the bearer of this note'

Meanwhile Aoi's possession had returned in full force, she was in a state of pitiable torment It reached Lady Rokujo's ears that the illness had been attributed by some to the operation of her 'living spirit' Others, she was told, believed that her father's ghost was avenging the betrayal of his daughter She brooded constantly upon the nature of her own feelings towards Aoi, but could discover in herself nothing but intense unhappiness Of hostility towards Aoi she could find no trace at all Yet she could not be sure whether somewhere in the depths of a soul consumed by anguish some spark of malice had not lurked Through all the long years during which she had loved and suffered, though it had often seemed to her that greater torment could not anywhere in the world exist, her whole being had never once been so utterly bruised and shattered as in these last days It had begun with that hateful episode of the coaches She had been scorned, treated as though she had no right to exist Yes, it was true that since the Festival of Purification her mind had

been buffeted by such a tempest of conflicting resolutions that sometimes it seemed as though she had lost all control over her own thoughts She remembered how one night she had suddenly, in the midst of agonizing doubts and indecisions, found that she had been dreaming It seemed to her that she had been in a large magnificent room where lay a girl whom she knew to be the Princess Aoi Snatching her by the arm, she had dragged and mauled the prostrate figure with an outburst of brutal fury such as in her waking life would have been utterly foreign to her Since then she had had the same dream several times How terrible! It seemed then that it was really possible for one's spirit to leave the body and break out into emotions which the waking mind would not countenance Even where someone's actions are all but irreproachable (she reflected) people take a malicious delight in saying nothing about the good he has done and everything about the evil With what joy would they seize upon such a story as this! That after his death a man's ghost should pursue his enemies is a thing which seems to be of constant occurrence, yet even this is taken as a sign that the dead man was of a fiendishly venomous and malignant character and his reputation is utterly destroyed 'What then will become of me if it is thought that while still alive I have been guilty of so hideous a crime?' She must face her fate She had lost Genji for ever If she were to keep any control at all over her own thoughts she must first of all find some way of putting him wholly out of mind She kept on reminding herself not to think of him, so that this very resolve led her in the end to think of him but the more

The Virgin of Ise should by rights have entered upon her duties before the end of the year, but difficulties of various kinds arose and it was not till the autumn of the next year that she could at last be received She was to enter the Palace-in-the-Fields [1] in the ninth month, but this was decided so late that the arrangements for her second Purification had to be made in great haste It was very inconvenient that at this crisis her mother, so far from superintending the preparations, spent hour after hour lying dazed and helpless upon her bed At last the priests arrived to fetch the girl away They took a grave view of the mother's condition and gave her the benefit of their presence by offering up many prayers and incantations But week after week she remained in the same condition, showing no symptom which seemed actually dangerous, yet all the time (in some vague and indefinite way) obviously very ill Genji sent constantly to enquire after her, but she saw clearly that his attention was occupied by quite other matters Aoi's delivery was not yet due and no preparations for it had been made, when suddenly there were signs that it was close at hand She was in great distress, but though the healers recited prayer upon prayer their utmost efforts could not shift by one jot

[1] A temporary building erected afresh for each new Virgin a few miles outside Kyoto. She spent several years there before proceeding to Ise.

the spiteful power which possessed her All the greatest miracle-workers of the land were there, the utter failure of their ministrations irritated and perplexed them At last, daunted by the potency of their incantations, the spirit that possessed her found voice and, weeping bitterly, she was heard to say· 'Give me a little respite, there is a matter of which Prince Genji and I must speak.' The healers nodded at one another as though to say, 'Now we shall learn something worth knowing,' for they were convinced that the 'possession' was speaking through the mouth of the possessed, and they hurried Genji to her bedside Her parents, thinking that, her end being near, she desired to give some last secret injunction to Genji, retired to the back of the room The priests too ceased their incantations and began to recite the *Hokkekyo* [1] in low impressive tones He raised the bed-curtain She looked lovely as ever as she lay there, very big with child, and any man who saw her even now would have found himself strangely troubled by her beauty How much the more then Prince Genji, whose heart was already overflowing with tenderness and remorse! The plaited tresses of her long hair stood out in sharp contrast to her white jacket [2] Even to this loose, sickroom garb her natural grace imparted the air of a fashionable gown! He took her hand 'It is terrible,' he began, 'to see you looking so unhappy ' He could say no more Still she gazed at him, but through his tears he saw that there was no longer in her eyes the wounded scorn that he had come to know so well, but a look of forbearance and tender concern, and while she watched him weep her own eyes brimmed with tears It would not do for him to go on crying like this Her father and mother would be alarmed, besides, it was upsetting Aoi herself, and meaning to cheer her he said 'Come, things are not so bad as that! You will soon be much better But even if anything should happen, it is certain that we shall meet again in worlds to come Your father and mother too, and many others, love you so dearly that between your fate and theirs must be some sure bond that will bring you back to them in many, many lives that are to be ' Suddenly she interrupted him 'No, no That is not it But stop these prayers a while They do me great harm, and drawing him nearer to her she went on, 'I did not think that you would come I have waited for you till all my soul is burnt with longing ' She spoke wistfully, tenderly, and still in the same tone recited the verse, 'Bind thou, as the seam of a skirt is braided, this shred, that from my soul despair and loneliness have sundered ' The voice in which these words were said was not Aoi's, nor was the manner hers He knew someone whose voice was very like that Who was it? Why, yes, surely only she — the Lady Rokujo Once or twice he had heard people suggest that something of this kind might be happening, but he had always re-

[1] The Chinese version of the Sanskrit *Saddharma Pundarika Sutra*, see *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol 21

[2] The lying-in jacket.

jected the idea as hideous and unthinkable, believing it to be the malicious invention of some unprincipled scandalmonger, and had even denied that such 'possession' ever took place Now he had seen one with his own eyes Ghastly, unbelievable as they were, such things did happen in real life Controlling himself at last he said in a low voice 'I am not sure who is speaking to me Do not leave me in doubt. . ' Her answer proved only too conclusively that he had guessed aright To his horror her parents now came back to the bed, but she had ceased to speak, and seeing her now lying quietly her mother thought the attack was over, and was coming towards the bed carrying a basin of hot water when Aoi suddenly started up and bore a child For the moment all was gladness and rejoicing, but it seemed only too likely that the spirit which possessed her had but been temporarily dislodged, for a fierce fit of terror was soon upon her, as though the thing (whatever it was) were angry at having been put to the trouble of shifting, so that there was still grave anxiety about the future The Abbot of Tendai and the other great ecclesiastics who were gathered together in the room attributed her easy delivery to the persistency of their own incantations and prayers, and as they hastily withdrew to seek refreshment and repose they wiped the sweat from their brows with an expression of considerable self-satisfaction Her friends who had for days been plunged in the deepest gloom now began to take heart a little, believing that although there was no apparent improvement yet now that the child was safely born she could not fail to mend The prayers and incantations began once more, but throughout the house there was a new feeling of confidence, for the amusement of looking after the baby at least gave them some relief from the strain under which they had been living for so many days Handsome presents were sent by the ex-Emperor, the Royal Princes and all the Court, forming an array which grew more dazzling each night [1] The fact that the child was a boy made the celebrations connected with his birth all the more sumptuous and elaborate

The news of this event took Lady Rokujo somewhat aback The last report she had heard from the Great Hall was that the confinement was bound to be very dangerous And now they said that there had not been the slightest difficulty She thought this very peculiar She had herself for a long while been suffering from the most disconcerting sensations Often she felt as though her whole personality had in some way suddenly altered It was as though she were a stranger to herself Recently she had noticed that a smell of mustard-seed incense for which she was at a loss to account was pervading her clothes and hair She took a hot bath and put on other clothes, but still the same odour of incense pursued her It was bad enough even in private to have this sensation of being as it were estranged from oneself But now her body was playing tricks upon her which her attendants must have noticed and were no doubt discussing

[1] These presents (*ubuyashinai*) were given on the third, fifth and ninth nights.

behind her back Yet there was not one person among those about her with whom she could bring herself to discuss such things and all this pent-up misery seemed only to increase the strange process of dissolution which had begun to attack her mind

Now that Genji was somewhat less anxious about Aoi's condition the recollection of his extraordinary conversation with her at the crisis of her attack kept on recurring in his mind, and it made so painful an impression upon him that though it was now a long time since he had communicated with Rokujo and he knew that she must be deeply offended, he felt that no kind of intimacy with her would ever again be possible Yet in the end pity prevailed and he sent her a letter It seemed indeed that it would at present be heartless to absent himself at all from one who had just passed through days of such terrible suffering and from her friends who were still in a state of the gravest anxiety, and all his secret excursions were abandoned Aoi still remained in a condition so serious that he was not allowed to see her The child was as handsome an infant as you could wish to see The great interest which Genji took in it and the zest with which he entered into all the arrangements which were made for its welfare delighted Aoi's father, inasmuch as they seemed signs of a better understanding between his daughter and Genji, and though her slow recovery caused him great anxiety, he realized that an illness such as that through which she had just passed must inevitably leave considerable traces behind it and he persuaded himself that her condition was less dangerous than one might have supposed The child reminded Genji of the Heir Apparent and made him long to see Fujitsubo's little son again The desire took such strong hold upon him that at last he sent Aoi a message in which he said It is a very long time since I have been to the Palace or indeed have paid any visits at all I am beginning to feel the need of a little distraction, so today I am going out for a short while and should like to see you before I go I do not want to feel that we are completely cut off from one another ' So he pleaded, and he was supported by her ladies who told her that Prince Genji was her own dear Lord and that she ought not to be so proud and stiff with him She feared that her illness had told upon her looks and was for speaking to him with a curtain between, but this too her gentlewomen would not allow He brought a stool close to where she was lying and began speaking to her of one thing or another Occasionally she put in a word or two, but it was evident that she was still very weak Nevertheless it was difficult to believe that she had so recently seemed almost at the point of death They were talking quietly together about those worst days of her illness and how they now seemed like an evil dream when suddenly he recollected the extraordinary conversation he had had with her when she was lying apparently at her last gasp and filled with a sudden bitterness, he said to her 'There are many other things that I must one day talk to you about But you seem very

tired and perhaps I had better leave you ' So saying he arranged her pillows, brought her warm water to wash in and in fact played the sick-nurse so well that those about her wondered where he had acquired the art Still peerlessly beautiful but weak and listless, she seemed as she lay motionless on the bed at times almost to fade out of existence. He gazed at her with fond concern Her hair, every ringlet still in its right place, was spread out over the pillow Never before had her marvellous beauty so strangely impressed him Was it conceivable that year after year he should have allowed such a woman to continue in estrangement from him? Still he stood gazing at her 'I must start for the Palace,' he said at last, 'but I shall not be away long Now that you are better you must try to make your mother feel less anxious about you when she comes presently, for though she tries hard not to show it, she is still terribly distressed about you. You must begin now to make an effort and sit up for a little while each day I think it is partly because she spoils you so much that you are taking so long to get well.' As he left the room, robed in all the magnificence of his court attire, she followed him with her eyes more fixedly than ever in her life before. The attendance of the officers who took part in the autumn session was required, and Aoi's father accompanied Genji to the Palace, as did also her brother who needed the Minister's assistance in making their arrangements for the coming political year Many of their servants went too and the Great Hall wore a deserted and melancholy aspect Suddenly Aoi was seized with the same choking-fit as before and was soon in a desperate condition This news was brought to Genji in the Palace and breaking off his Audience he at once made for home. The rest followed in hot haste and though it was Appointment Evening [1] they gave up all thought of attending the proceedings, knowing that the tragic turn of affairs at the Great Hall would be considered a sufficient excuse It was too late to get hold of the abbot from Mount Tendai or any of the dignitaries who had given their assistance before It was appalling that just when she seemed to have taken a turn for the better she should so suddenly again be at the point of death, and the people at the Great Hall felt utterly helpless and bewildered Soon the house was full of lackeys who were arriving from every side with messages of sympathy and enquiry, but from the inhabitants of that stricken house they could obtain no information, for they seemed to do nothing but rush about from one room to another in a state of frenzy which it was terrifying to behold

Remembering that several times already her 'possession' had reduced her to a trance-like state, they did not for some time attempt to lay out the body or even touch her pillows, but left her lying just as she was After two or three days however it became clear that life was extinct

Amid the general lamentations which ensued Genji's spirit sank with

[1] The ceremony of investing the newly elected officials.

the apathy of utter despair Sorrow had followed too fast upon sorrow, life as he saw it now was but a succession of futile miseries The messages of condolence which poured in from all the most exalted quarters in the Court and City merely fatigued and exasperated him

The warmth of the old ex-Emperor's messages and his evident personal distress at Aoi's death were indeed very flattering and mingled a certain feeling of gratification with her father's perpetual weeping At the suggestion of a friend various drastic means were resorted to in the hope that it might yet be possible to kindle some spark of life in the body But it soon became evident, even to their reluctant eyes, that all this was too late, and heavy at heart they took the body to Toribeno Here, in the great flat cremation-ground beyond the town, the horrors that they had dreaded were only too swiftly begun Even in this huge open space there was scarcely room for the crowds of mourners who had come from all the great palaces of the City to follow behind the bier and for the concourses of priests who, chanting their liturgies, flocked from the neighbouring temples The ex-Emperor was of course represented, so were the Princess Kokiden and the Heir Apparent, while many other important people came in person and mingled with the crowd Never had any funeral aroused so universal a demonstration of interest and sympathy Her father was not present 'Now in my declining years to have lost one who was so young and strong is a blow too staggering ' he said and he could no longer check the tears which he was striving to conceal His grief was heart-rending All night long the mournful ceremonies proceeded, but at last only a few pitiful ashes remained upon the pyre and in the morning the mourners returned to their homes It was in fact, save for its grandeurs, much like any other funeral, but it so happened that save in one case only death had not yet come Genji's way and the scenes of that day haunted him long afterwards with hideous persistency

The ceremony took place in the last week of the eighth month Seeing that from Aoi's father all the soft brightness of this autumn morning was hid in the twilight of despair and well knowing what thoughts must be passing through his mind, Genji came to him and pointing to the sky whispered the following verse 'Because of all the mists that wreathe the autumn sky I know not which ascended from my lady's bier, henceforth upon the country of the clouds from pole to pole I gaze with love '

At last he was back in his room He lay down, but could not sleep His thoughts went back over the years that he had known her Why had he been content lazily to assume that in the end all would go right and meanwhile amused himself regardless of her resentment? Why had he let year after year go by without managing even at the very end to establish any real intimacy, any sympathy between them? The bitterest remorse now filled his heart, but what use was it? His servants brought him his light grey mourner's dress and the strange thought floated into his mind,

'turned my thoughts more than ever towards you and your sorrow, that is why I could not choose but answer you' It was written even more elegantly than usual, but he tossed it aside Her condolences wounded him, for after what he had seen he knew that they could not be sincere Nevertheless he felt that it would be too harsh to break off all communication with her, that he should do so would in fact tend to incriminate her, and this was the last thing he desired After all, it was probably not *that* at all which had brought about the disaster, maybe Aoi's fate was sealed in any case If only he had chanced never to see or hear the fatal operation of her spirit! As it was, argue with himself as he might, he doubted whether he would ever be able to efface the impression of what had been revealed to him at that hideous scene

He had the excuse that he was still in deep mourning and that to receive a letter from him would inconvenience her at this stage of her daughter's Purification But after turning the matter over in his mind for a long while, he decided that it would be unfeeling not to answer a letter which had evidently been written with the sole object of giving him pleasure and on a paper lightly tinted with brown he wrote 'Though I have let so many days slip by, believe me that you have not been absent from my thoughts If I was reluctant to answer your letter, it was because, as a mourner, I was loath to trespass upon the sanctity which now surrounds your home, and this I trusted that you would understand Do not brood overmuch upon what has happened, for "go we late or soon, more frail our lives than dewdrops hanging in the morning light" For the present, think of it no more I say this now, because it is not possible for us to meet'

She received the letter at her daughter's place of preparation, but did not read it till she was back in her own house At a glance she knew at what he was hinting So he too accused her! And at last the hideous conviction of her own guilt forced itself upon her acceptance Her misery increased tenfold

If even Genji had reason to believe in her guilt, her brother-in-law, the ex-Emperor, must already have been informed What was he thinking of her? Her dead husband, Prince Zembo, had been the brother whom he had loved best He had accepted the guardianship of the little girl who was now about to be consecrated and at his brother's earnest entreaty had promised to undertake her education and indeed treat her as though she were his own child The old Emperor had constantly invited the widowed lady and her daughter to live with him in the Palace, but she was reluctant to accept this offer, which indeed was somewhat impracticable Meanwhile she allowed herself to listen to Genji's youthful addresses and was soon living in constant torment and agitation lest her indiscretion should be discovered During the whole period of this escapade she was in such a state of mingled excitement and apprehension that she scarcely knew what

she was doing In the world at large she had the reputation of being a great beauty and this, combined with her exalted lineage, brought to the Palace-in-the-Fields, so soon as it was known that she had repaired thither with her daughter, a host of frivolous dandies from the Court, who made it their business to force upon her their fashionable attentions morning, noon and night Genji heard of this and did not blame them He could only think it was a thousand pities that a woman endowed with every talent and charm should take it into her head that she had done with the world and prepare to remove herself to so remote a place He could not help thinking that she would find Ise extremely dull when she got there

Though the masses for Aoi's soul were now over, he remained in retirement till the end of the seven weeks He was not used to doing nothing and the time hung heavy on his hands Often he sent for To no Chujo to tell him all that was going on in the world, and among much serious information Chujo would often seek to distract him by discussing the strange escapades in which they had sometimes shared

On one of these occasions he indulged in some jokes at the expense of the ancient lady-of-the-bedchamber with whom Genji had so indiscreetly become involved 'Poor old lady!' Genji protested, 'it is too bad to make fun of her in this way Please do not do it' But all the same he had to admit to himself that he could never think of her without smiling Then Chujo told him the whole story of how he had followed and watched him on that autumn night, the first after the full moon,[1] and many other stories besides of his own adventures and other people's But in the end they fell to talking of their common loss, and agreeing that taken all in all life was but a sad business they parted in tears

Some weeks afterwards on a gloomy wet evening Chujo strode into the room looking somewhat self-conscious in the light grey winter cloak and breeches which he was today wearing for the first time.[2] Genji was leaning against the balustrade of the balcony above the main western door For a long while he had been gazing at the frost-clad gardens which surrounded the house A high wind was blowing and swift showers dashed against the trees Near to tears he murmured to himself the line 'Tell me whether her soul be in the rain or whether in the clouds above!'[3] And as Chujo watched him sitting there, his chin resting upon his hand, he thought the soul of one who had been wedded to so lovely a youth would

I saw you first standing at the window of Yü Liang's tower,
Your waist was slender as the willow-trees that grow at Wu-ch'ang
My finding you and losing you were both like a dream,
Oh tell me if your soul dwells in the rain, or whether in the clouds above!

[1] See p 110
[2] Winter clothes are begun on the first day of the tenth month.
[3] From a poem to a dead lady, by Liu Yü-hsi (A.D 772–842)

not indeed have borne quite to renounce the scene of her earthly life and must surely be hovering very near him Still gazing with eager admiration, Chujo came to Genji's side He noticed now that though his friend had not in any other way abated the plainness of his dress, he had today put on a coloured sash This streak of deep red showed up against his grey cloak (which though still a summer one [1] was of darker colour than that which he had lately been wearing) in so attractive a way that though the effect was very different from that of the magnificent attires which Genji had affected in happier days, yet Chujo could not for a long while take his eyes off him At last he too gazed up at the stormy sky, and remembering the Chinese verse which he had heard Genji repeat he recited the poem 'Though to rain her soul be turned, yet where in the clouded vault of heaven is that one mist-wreath which is she?' And Genji answered 'Since she whom once we knew beyond the country of the clouds is fled, two months of storm and darkness now have seared the wintry earth below'

The depth of Genji's feeling was evident Sometimes Chujo had thought it was merely dread of the old Emperor's rebukes — coupled with a sense of obligation towards Aoi's father whose kindness had always been so marked and also towards the Princess her mother, who had cherished him with an unfailing patience and fondness — that had made it difficult for him to break off a relationship which was in fact becoming very irksome Often indeed Genji's apparent indifference to Aoi had been very painful to him Now it was evident to him that she had never ceased to hold an important place in his affections, and this made him deplore more bitterly than ever the tragedy of her early death Whatever he did and wherever he went he felt that a light was gone out of his life and he was very despondent

Among the withered undergrowth in the garden Genji found to his delight a few gentians still blossoming and after Chujo was gone he plucked some and bade the wet-nurse Saiso give them to the child s grandmother. together with the verse 'This gentian flower that lingered amid the withered grasses of the hedge I send you in remembrance of the autumn that is passed' 'To you,' he added, 'it will seem a poor thing in contrast to the flowers that are gone' The Princess looked at her grandson's innocent smiling face and thought that in beauty he was not far behind the child she had lost Already her tears were pouring faster than a stormy wind shakes down the dry leaves from a tree, and when she read Genji's message they flowed faster still This was her answer 'New tears, but tears of joy it brings — this blossom from a meadow that is now laid waste'

Still in need of some small employment to distract his thoughts, though it was already getting dark he began a letter to Princess Asagao who, he

[1] A husband in mourning may not wear winter clothes. The mourning lasts for three months.

felt sure, must long ago have been told of his bereavement. Although it was a long time since he had heard from her he made no reference to their former friendship, his letter was indeed so formal that he allowed the messenger to read it before he started It was written on Chinese paper tinted sky-blue With it was the poem 'When I look back upon an autumn fraught with diverse sorrows I find no dusk dimmed with such tears as I tonight have shed ' He took great pains with his handwriting and her ladies thought it a shame that so elegant a note should remain unanswered In the end she reached the same conclusion 'Though my heart goes out towards you in your affliction,' she answered, 'I see no cause to abandon my distrust.' And to this she added the poem 'Since I heard that the mists of autumn had vanished and left desolate winter in your house, I have thought often of you as I watched the streaming sky.' This was all, and it was written hastily, but to Genji, who for so long had received no news from her, it gave as much pleasure as the longest and most ingenious epistle

It is in general the unexplored that attracts us, and Genji tended to fall most deeply in love with those who gave him least encouragement The ideal condition for the continuance of his affection was that the beloved, much occupied elsewhere, should grant him no more than an occasional favour There was one [1] who admirably fulfilled these conditions, but unfortunately her high rank and conspicuous position in society brought with them too many material difficulties But little Murasaki was different There was no need to bring her up on this principle He had not during the long days of his mourning ever forgotten her and he knew that she must be feeling very dull without him But he regarded her merely as an orphan child whose care he had undertaken and it was a comfort to him to think that here at least was someone he could leave for a little while without anxiously wondering all the time whether he would get into trouble

It was now quite dark, and gathering the people of the house round the great lamp, he got them to tell him stories There was among them a gentlewoman named Chunagon with whom he had for years been secretly in love He still felt drawn towards her, but at such a time there could of course be no thought of any closer tie Seeing now that he was looking despondent she came over to him and when they had talked for a while of various matters at large, Genji said to her 'During these last weeks, when all has been quiet in the house, I have grown so used to the company of you gentlewomen that if a time comes when we can no longer meet so frequently, I shall miss you very much That was why I was feeling particularly depressed, though indeed whichever way I turn my thoughts I find small matter for consolation!' Here he paused and some of the ladies shed a few tears At last one of them said 'I know,

[1] Fujitsubo.

my Lord, how dark a cloud has fallen upon your life and would not venture to compare our sorrow with yours But I would have you remember what it must mean to us that henceforward you will never. ''Do not say never,' answered Genji kindly 'I do not forget my friends so easily as that If there are any among you who, mindful of the past, wish still to serve in this house, they may count upon it that so long as I live I shall never desert them ' And as he sat gazing into the lamplight, with tears aglitter in his eyes, they felt they were fortunate indeed in having such a protector

There was among these gentlewomen a little orphan girl who had been Aoi's favourite among all her maids Well knowing how desolate the child must now be feeling he said to her kindly. 'Whose business is it now but mine to look after little Miss Até?' The girl burst into tears In her short tunic, darker than the dresses the others were wearing, with black neckerchief and dark blue breeches she was a charming figure 'I hope,' continued Genji, 'that there are some who despite the dull times they are likely to have in this house will choose, in memory of the past, to devote themselves to the care of the little prince whom I am leaving behind If all who knew his mother are now to be dispersed, his plight will be more wretched than before ' Again he promised never to forget them, but they knew well enough that his visits would be few and far between, and felt very despondent

That night he distributed among these waiting-ladies and among all the servants at the Great Hall according to their rank and condition various keepsakes and trifles that had belonged to their young mistress, giving to each whatever he thought most likely to keep her memory alive, without regard to his own preferences and dislikes in the household.

He had determined that he could not much longer continue this mode of life and must soon return to his own palace While his servants were dragging out his coach and his gentlemen assembling in front of his rooms, as though on purpose to delay him a violent rainstorm began, with a wind that tore the last leaves from the trees and swept them over the earth with wild rapidity The gentlemen who had assembled in front of the house were soon drenched to the skin He had meant to go to the Palace, then to the Nijo-in and return to sleep at the Great Hall But on such a night this was impossible, and he ordered his gentlemen to proceed straight to the Nijo-in where he would join them subsequently As they trooped off each of them felt (though none of them was likely to be seeing the Great Hall for by any means the last time) that today a chapter in his life was closed Both the Minister and his wife, when they heard that Genji was not returning that night, also felt that they had reached a new and bitter stage in the progress of their affliction To Aoi's mother he sent this letter 'The ex-Emperor has expressed a strong desire to see me and I feel bound to go to the Palace Though I shall not be absent for

many days, yet it is now so long a time since I left this house that I feel dazed at the prospect of facing the great world once more I could not go without informing you of my departure, but am in no condition to pay you a visit' The Princess was still lying with closed eyes, her thoughts buried in the profoundest gloom She did not send a reply. Presently Aoi's father came to Genji's apartments He found it very hard to bear up, and during the interview clung fast to his son-in-law's sleeve with an air of dependence which was pathetic to witness After much hesitation he began at last to say 'We old men are prone to tears even when small matters are amiss, you must not wonder then that under the weight of so terrible a sorrow I sometimes find myself breaking into fits of weeping which I am at a loss to control At such moments of weakness and disarray I had rather be where none can see me, and that is why I have not as yet ventured even to pay my respects to His Majesty your good father If opportunity offers, I beg you to explain this to him To be left thus desolate in the last years of life is a sore trial, a very sore trial indeed' The effort which it cost him to say these words was distressing for Genji to watch and he hastened to assure the old Minister that he would make matters right at the Court 'Though I do not doubt,' he added, 'that my father has already guessed the reason of your absence' As it was still raining heavily the Minister urged him to start before it grew quite dark But Genji would not leave the house till he had taken a last look at the inner rooms His father-in-law followed him In the space beyond Aoi's curtained seat, packed away behind a screen, some thirty gentlewomen all clad in dark grey weeds were huddled together, forlorn and tearful 'These hapless ladies,' said the Minister, turning to Genji, 'though they take some comfort in the thought that you are leaving behind you one whose presence will sometimes draw you to this house, well know that it will never again be your rightful home, and this distresses them no less than the loss of their dear mistress For years they had hoped against hope that you and she would at last be reconciled Consider then how bitter for them must be the day of this, your final departure' 'Let them take heart,' said Genji, 'for whereas while my lady was alive I would often of set purpose absent myself from her in the vain hope that upon my return I should find her less harshly disposed towards me, now that she is dead I have no longer any cause to shun this house, as soon you shall discover'

When he had watched Genji drive away, Aoi's father went to her bedroom All her things were just as she had left them On a stand in front of the bed writing materials lay scattered about There were some papers covered with Genji's handwriting, and these the old man clasped with an eagerness that made some of the gentlewomen who had followed him smile even in the midst of their grief The works that Genji had written out were all masterpieces of the past, some Chinese, some Japa-

nese, some written in cursive, some in full script, they constituted indeed an astonishing display of versatile penmanship The Minister gazed with an almost religious awe at these specimens of Genji's skill, and the thought that he must henceforth regard the young man whom he adored as no longer a member of his household and family must at that moment have been very painful to him

Among these manuscripts was a copy of Po Chu-i's 'Everlasting Wrong'[1] and beside the words 'The old pillow, the old coverlet with whom shall he now share?' Genji had written the poem 'Mournful her ghost that journeying now to unfamiliar realms must flee the couch where we were wont to rest' While beside the words 'The white petals of the frost' he had written 'The dust shall cover this bed, for no longer can I bear to brush from it the nightly dew of my tears'

Aoi's ladies were gathered together in groups of two or three in each of which some gentlewoman was pouring out her private griefs and vexations 'No doubt, as his Excellency the Minister told us, Prince Genji will come to us sometimes, if only to see the child But for my part I doubt whether he will find much comfort in such visits' So one of them was saying to her friends And soon there were many affecting scenes of farewell between them, for it had been decided that for the present they were all of them to go back to their homes

Meanwhile Genji was with his father in the Palace 'You are very thin in the face,' said the ex-Emperor as soon as he saw him 'I am afraid you have overtaxed your strength by too much prayer and fasting,' and in a state of the deepest concern he at once began pressing all kinds of viands and cordials upon him, showing with regard to his health and indeed his affairs in general a solicitude by which Genji could not help feeling touched

Late that night he at last arrived at the Nijo-in Here he found everything garnished and swept, his men-servants and maids were waiting for him at the door All the gentlewomen of the household at once presented themselves in his apartments They seemed to have vied with one another which should look the gayest and smartest, and their finery contrasted pleasantly with the sombre and dispiriting attire of the unfortunate ladies whom he had left behind him at the Great Hall

Having changed out of his court dress, he went at once to the western wing Not only was Murasaki's winter costume most daintily designed, but her pretty waiting-maids and little companions were so handsomely equipped as to reflect the greatest credit on Shonagon's management, and he saw with satisfaction that such matters might with perfect safety be left in her hands Murasaki herself was indeed exquisitely dressed

[1] Murasaki quotes the line in the form in which it occurs in Japanese MSS of Po Chü-i's poem The Chinese editions have a slightly different text. Cf Giles's translation, *History of Chinese Literature*, p 172

'How tall you have grown since last I saw you!' he said and pulled up her little curtain-of-honour. He had been away so long that she felt shy with him and turned her head aside But he would not for the world have had her look otherwise than she looked at that moment, for as she sat in profile with the lamplight falling upon her face, he realized with delight that she was becoming the very image of her whom from the beginning he had loved best Coming closer to her side he whispered to her 'Sometime or other I want to tell you about all that has been happening to me since I went away But it has all been very terrible and I am too tired to speak of it now, so I am going away to rest for a little while in my own room From tomorrow onwards you will have me to yourself all day long, in fact, I expect you will soon grow quite tired of me'

'So far, so good,' thought Shonagon when she heard this speech But she was still very far from easy in her mind She knew that there were several ladies of very great influence with whom Genji was on terms of friendship and she feared that when it came to choosing a second wife, he would be far more likely to take one of these than to remember her own little mistress, and she was not at all satisfied

When Genji had retired to the eastern wing, he sent for a certain Lady Chujo to rub his limbs and then went to bed Next morning he wrote to the nurses of Aoi's child and received from them in reply a touching account of its beauty and progress, but the letter served only to awaken in him useless memories and regrets Towards the end of the day he felt very restless and the time hung heavily on his hands, but he was in no mood to resume his secret roving and such an idea did not even occur to him In Murasaki none of his hopes had been disappointed, she had indeed grown up into as handsome a girl as you could wish to see, nor was she any longer at an age when it was impossible for him to become her lover He constantly hinted at this, but she did not seem to understand what he meant

He still had plenty of time on his hands, and the whole of it was now spent in her society All day long they played together at draughts or word-picking, and even in the course of these trivial pursuits she showed a quickness of mind and beauty of disposition which continually delighted him, but she had been brought up in such rigid seclusion from the world that it never once occurred to her to exploit her charms in any more adult way

Soon the situation became unendurable, and though he knew that she would be very much upset he determined somehow or another to get his own way

There came a morning when the gentleman was already up and about, but the young lady was still lying abed Her attendants had no means of knowing that anything out of the ordinary had happened, for it had always been Genji's habit to go in and out of her room just as he chose

They naturally assumed that she was not feeling well and were glancing at her with sympathy when Genji arrived carrying a writing-box which he slipped behind the bed curtains He at once retired, and the ladies also left the room Seeing that she was alone Murasaki slowly raised her head There by her pillow was the writing-box and tied to it with ribbon, a slender note Listlessly she detached the note and unfolding it read the hastily scribbled poem 'Too long have we deferred this new emprise, who night by night till now have lain but with a shift between'

That *this* was what Genji had so long been wanting came to her as a complete surprise and she could not think why he should regard the unpleasant thing that had happened last night as in some way the beginning of a new and more intimate friendship between them Later in the morning he came again 'Is something the matter with you?' he asked 'I shall be very dull today if you cannot play draughts with me' But when he came close to her she only buried herself more deeply than ever under the bedclothes He waited till the room was empty and then bending over her he said, 'Why are you treating me in this surly way? I little expected to find you in so bad a humour this morning The others will think it very strange if you lie here all day,' and he pulled aside the scarlet coverlet beneath which she had dived To his astonishment he found that she was bathed in sweat, even the hair that hung across her cheeks was dripping wet 'No! This is too much,' he said, 'what a state you have worked yourself up into!' But try as he would to coax her back to reason he could not get a word out of her, for she was really feeling very vexed with him indeed 'Very well then,' he said at last, 'if that is how you feel I will never come to see you again,' and he pretended to be very much mortified and humiliated Turning away, he opened the writing-box to see whether she had written any answer to his poem, but of course found none He understood perfectly that her distress was due merely to extreme youth and inexperience, and was not at all put out All day long he sat near her trying to win back her confidence, and though he had small success he found even her rebuffs in a curious way very endearing

At nightfall, it being the Day of the Wild Boar, the festival cakes[1] were served Owing to Genji's bereavement no great display was made, but a few were brought round to Murasaki's quarters in an elegant picnic-basket Seeing that the different kinds were all mixed up together, Genji came out into the front part of the house and calling for Koremitsu said to him 'I want you to take these cakes away and bring me some more tomorrow evening, only not nearly so many as this, and all of one kind'[2]

[1] On the Day of the Boar in the tenth month it was the custom to serve little cakes of seven different kinds, to wit Large bean, mungo, dolicho, sesamun, chestnut, persimmon, sugar-starch.

[2] On the third night after the first cohabitation it was the custom to offer up small cake (all of one kind and colour) to the god Izanagi and his sister Iranami.

This is not the right evening for them ' He smiled as he said these words and Koremitsu was quick-witted enough at once to guess what had happened He did not however think that it would be discreet to congratulate his master in so many words, and merely said 'It is true enough that if you want to make a good beginning you must eat your cakes on the proper day The day of the Rat is certainly very much to the purpose[1] Pray how many am I to bring?' When Genji answered, 'Divide by three[2] and you will get the answer,' Koremitsu was no longer in any doubt, and hastily retired, leaving Genji amused at the practised air with which he invariably handled matters of this kind He said nothing to anyone, but returning to his private house made the cakes there with his own hands

Genji was beginning to despair of ever restoring her confidence and good humour But even now, when she seemed as shy of him as on the night when he first stole her from her home, her beauty fascinated him and he knew that his love for her in past days had been but a particle compared with what he had felt since yesterday

How strange a thing is the heart of man! For now it would have seemed to him a calamity if even for a single night he had been taken fro n Murasaki's side, and only a little while ago

Koremitsu brought the cakes which Genji had ordered very late on the following night He was careful not to entrust them to Shonagon, for he thought that such a commission might embarrass a grown woman Instead, he sent for her daughter Miss Ben and putting all the cakes into one large perfume-box he bade her take them secretly to her mistress 'Be sure to put them close by her pillow, for they are lucky cakes and must not be left about the house Promise me not to do anything silly with them ' Miss Ben thought all this very odd, but tossing her head she answered, 'When, pray, did you ever know me to be silly?' and she walked off with the box Being quite a young girl and completely innocent as regards matters of this kind, she marched straight up to her mistress's bed and, remembering Koremitsu's instructions, pushed the box through the curtains and lodged it safely by the pillow It seemed to her that there was someone else there as well as Murasaki 'No doubt,' thought she, 'Prince Genji has come as usual to hear her repeat her lessons '

As yet no one in the household save Koremitsu had any knowledge of the betrothal But when next day the box was found by the bed and brought into the servants' quarters, some of those who were in closest touch with their master's affairs at once guessed the secret Where did these little dishes come from, each set on its own little carved stand?

[1] First, because the Rat comes at the beginning of the series of twelve animal signs, secondly, because 'Rat' is written with a character that also means 'baby '

[2] The phrase which I have translated 'Divide by three' also means 'One of three,' i e of the Three Mysteries (Birth, *Marriage*, Death) That is why Koremitsu was 'no longer in any doubt.' But many other explanations of the passage have been given It is indeed one of the three major difficulties enumerated by the old-fashioned Genji teachers

and who had been at such pains to make these dainty and ingenious cakes? Shonagon, though she was shocked at this casual way of slipping into matrimony, was overjoyed to learn that Genji's strange patronage of her young mistress had at last culminated in a definite act of betrothal, and her eyes brimmed with tears of thankfulness and delight All the same, she thought he might at least have taken the trouble to inform her old nurse, and there was a good deal of grumbling in the household generally at an outside retainer such as Koremitsu having got wind of the matter first

During the days that followed he grudged even the short hours of attendance which he was obliged to put in at the Palace and in his father's rooms, discovering (much to his own surprise) that save in her presence he could no longer enjoy a moment's peace The friends whom he had been wont to visit showed themselves both surprised and offended by this unexplained neglect, but though he had no wish to stand ill with them, he now found that even a remote prospect of having to absent himself from his palace for a single night was enough to throw him quite out of gear, and all the time he was away his spirits were at the very lowest ebb and he looked for all the world as though he were sickening from some strange illness To all invitations or greetings he invariably replied that he was at present in no fit mood for company (which was naturally taken as an allusion to his recent loss) or that he must now be gone, for someone with whom he had business was already awaiting him

The Minister of the Right was aware that his youngest daughter [1] was still pining for Prince Genji and he said one day to Princess Kokiden 'While his wife was alive we were bound of course to discourage her friendship with him in every way we could But the position is now quite changed and I feel that as things are there would be much to be said for such a match ' But Kokiden had always hated Genji and having herself arranged that her sister should enter the Palace,[2] she saw no reason why this plan should suddenly be abandoned Indeed from this moment onwards she became obstinately determined that the girl should be given to the Emperor and to no one else Genji indeed still retained a certain partiality towards her, but though it grieved him to hear that he had made her unhappy, he had not at present any spare affection to offer her Life, he had come to the conclusion, was not long enough for diversions and experiments, henceforward he would concentrate He had moreover received a terrible warning of the dangers which might accrue from such jealousies and resentments as his former way of life had involved He thought with great tenderness and concern of Lady Rokujo s distress, but it was clear to him that he must beware of ever again allowing her to regard him as her true haven of refuge If however she would renew their

[1] Oborozukiyo See above, p 148
[2] I e. become a concubine of the Emperor.

friendship in quite new terms, permitting him to enjoy her company and conversation at such times as he could conveniently arrange to do so, he saw no reason why they should not sometimes meet.

Society at large knew that someone was living with him, but her identity was quite unknown This was of no consequence, but Genji felt that sooner or later he ought to let her father Prince Hyobukyo know what had become of her and decided that before he did so it would be best to celebrate her Initiation This was done privately, but he was at pains that every detail of the ceremony should be performed with due splendour and solemnity, and though the outside world was not invited it was as magnificent an affair as it well could be But ever since their betrothal Murasaki had shown a certain shyness and diffidence in his presence She could not help feeling sorry that after all the years during which they had got on so well together and been such close friends he should suddenly take this strange idea into his head, and whenever her eyes met his she hastily averted them He tried to make a joke of the matter, but to her it was very serious indeed and weighed heavily upon her mind. Her changed attitude towards him was indeed somewhat comic, but it was also very distressing, and one day he said 'Sometimes it seems as though you had forgotten all the long years of our friendship and I had suddenly become as new to you as at the start', and while thus he scolded her the year drew to a close On New Year's Day he paid the usual visits of ceremony to his father, to the Emperor and to the Heir Apparent Next he visited the Great Hall. The old Minister made no reference to the new year, but at once began to speak of the past In the midst of his loneliness and sorrow he was so deeply moved even by this hasty and long-deferred visit that though he strove hard to keep his composure it was more than he could compass to do Looking fondly at his son-in-law he thought that the passage of each fresh year did but add new beauty to this fair face They went together into the inner rooms, where his entry surprised and delighted beyond measure the disconsolate ladies who had remained behind Next they visited the little prince who was growing into a fine

ild, his merry face was indeed a pleasure to see His resemblance to the Heir Apparent was certainly very striking and Genji wondered whether it had been noticed

Aoi's things were still as she had left them His New Year clothes had as in former years been hung out for him on the clothes-frame Aoi's clothes-frame which stood empty beside it wore a strangely desolate air A letter from the Princess her mother was now brought to him 'Today,' she said, 'our bereavement was more than ever present to my mind, and though touched at the news of your visit, I fear that to see you would but awaken unhappy recollections ' 'You will remember,' she continued,

my custom to present you with a suit of clothes on each New

y But in these last months my sight has been so dimmed with

tears that I fear you will think I have matched the colours very ill Nevertheless I beg that though it be for today only you will suffer yourself to be disfigured by this unfashionable garb ' and a servant held out before him a second [1] suit, which was evidently the one he was expected to wear today. The under-stuff was of a most unusual pattern and mixture of colours and did not at all please him, but he could not allow her to feel that she had laboured in vain, and at once put the suit on It was indeed fortunate that he had come to the Great Hall that day, for he could see that she had counted on it In his reply he said 'Though I came with the hope that you would be the first friend I should greet at this new springtide, yet now that I am here too many bitter memories assail me and I think it wiser that we should not meet ' To this he added an acrostic poem in which he said that with the mourning dress which he had just discarded so many years of friendship were cast aside that were he to come to her [2] he could but weep To this she sent in answer an acrostic poem in which she said that in this new season when all things else on earth put on altered hue, one thing alone remained as in the months gone by — her longing for the child who like the passing year had vanished from their sight

But though hers may have been the greater grief we must not think that there was not at that moment very deep emotion on both sides

[1] In addition to the one hanging on the frame.

[2] *Kiteba*, 'were he to come,' also means 'should he wear it.'

Part Two

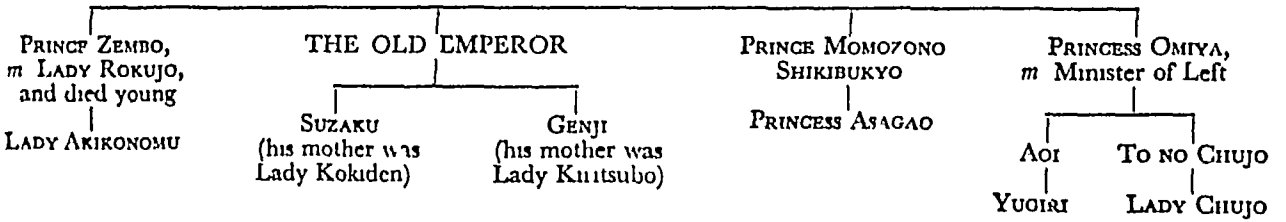
THE SACRED TREE

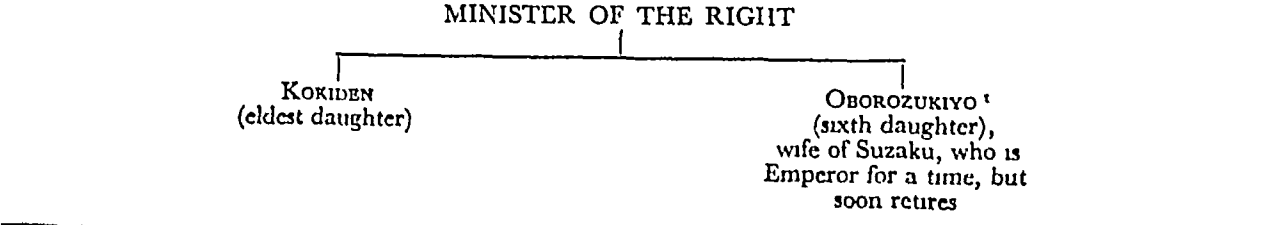
LIST OF MOST IMPORTANT PERSONS

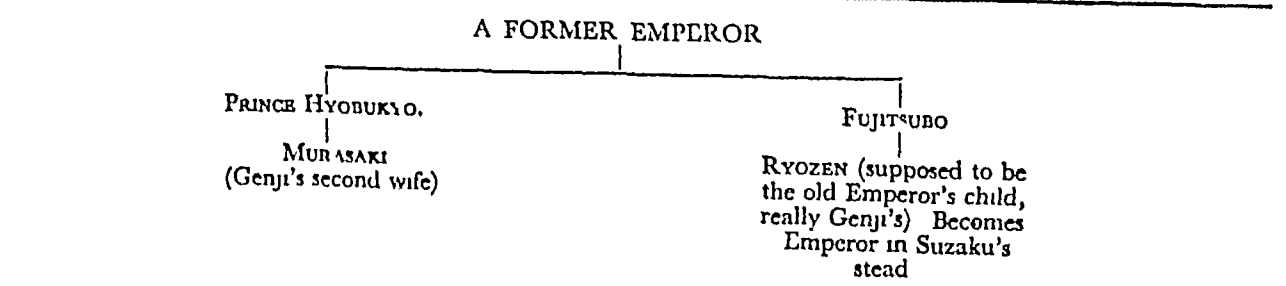
(ALPHABETICAL)

AKASHI, LADY OF	Daughter of the old recluse of Akashi
AKIKONOMU, LADY	Vestal Virgin at Ise, daughter of Rokujo
AOI, PRINCESS	Genji's first wife.
ASAGAO, PRINCESS	Genji's first-cousin, courted by him in vain.
CHUJO	Short for 'To no Chujo'
CHUJO, LADY	To no Chujo's daughter by his legitimate wife
CHUNAGON	Maid to Oborozuki
EMPEROR, THE OLD	Genji's father
FUJITSUBO	The Old Emperor's consort, loved by Genji
GENJI, PRINCE	The Old Emperor's son by a concubine.
GOSECHI, LADY	Dancer at the winter festival, admired by Genji
HYOBUKYO, PRINCE	Fujitsubo's brother, Murasaki's father
IYO NO SUKE	Husband of Utsusemi
JIJU	Maid to Suyetsumu
JOKYODEN, LADY	Consort of Suzaku
KI NO KAMI	Son of Iyo no Suke by his first wife
KOKIDEN	Original consort of the Old Emperor, supplanted first by Genji's mother, then by Fujitsubo
KOREMITSU	Retainer to Genji
MURASAKI	Genji's second wife
OBOROZUKIYO, PRINCESS	Younger sister of Kokiden
OMYOBU	Maid to Fujitsubo
REIKEIDEN	Lady-in-waiting at the Old Emperor's Court
REIKEIDEN, PRINCESS	Niece of Kokiden
ROKUJO, PRINCESS	Widow of the Old Emperor's brother
RYOZEN, EMPEROR	Son of Genji and Fujitsubo, successor to Suzaku
SHONAGON	Murasaki's old nurse
SOCHI NO MIYA, PRINCE	Genji's half-brother.
SUYETSUMU, LADY (Suyetsumuhana)	Daughter of Prince Hitachi, the red-nosed lady
SUZAKU, EMPEROR	Genji's half-brother, successor to the Old Emperor
TO NO CHUJO	Brother of Genji's first wife, Lady Aoi
UKON NO JO (Okon)	Faithful retainer to Genji, brother of Ki no Kami
UTSUSEMI	Wife of Iyo no Suke Courted by Genji
VILLAGE OF FALLING FLOWERS, LADY FROM THE	Sister of Reikeiden, protected by Genji

GENEALOGICAL TABLES







[1] Whom in this volume I call Oborozuki for short

but he wrote again and again begging her to see him even if it were only at the moment of her departure, and at last, despite the fluster into which her whole household was plunged, and feeling all the while that she was acting very imprudently, she could no longer fight against her longing once more to see him and sent word secretly that, if he came, she would contrive to speak to him for a moment from behind her screen-of-state As he made his way through the open country that stretched out endlessly on every side, his heart was strangely stirred The autumn flowers were fading, along the reeds by the river the shrill voices of many insects blended with the mournful fluting of the wind in the pines Scarcely distinguishable from these somewhere in the distance rose and fell a faint, enticing sound of human music He had with him only a handful of outriders, and his attendants were by his orders dressed so as to attract as little notice as possible They noted that this lack of show contrasted strangely with the elaborate pains which their master had bestowed upon his own equipment, and as they looked with admiration at the fine figure he cut, the more romantically disposed among them were thrilled at the thought that it had befallen them to accompany him upon a journey, every circumstance of which was calculated to stir to the depth such sensitive hearts as theirs So delighted was Genji with the scene before him that he continually asked himself why it was that he had deferred this visit for so long, and he regretted that while Rokujo was at the Palace-in-the-Fields he had not made a constant practice of visiting her They came at last to a group of very temporary-looking wooden huts surrounded by a flimsy brushwood fence The archways,[1] built of unstripped wood, stood out black and solemn against the sky Within the enclosure a number of priests were walking up and down with a preoccupied air There was something portentous in their manner of addressing one another and in their way of loudly clearing their throats before they spoke In the Hill of Offering there was a dim flicker of firelight, but elsewhere no single sign of life So this was the place where he had left one who was from the start in great distress of mind, to shift for herself week after week, month after month! Suddenly he realized with a terrible force all that she must have suffered He hurried to the place where she had told him he would find her (a room in the northern outbuilding) and sent in a long message contrasting his present quiet and serious existence with his now discarded frivolities She in return replied with a message, but did not suggest that they should meet This angered him 'You do not seem to realize,' he said, 'that such excursions as this are now no part of my ordinary existence and can only be arranged with the greatest difficulty I had hoped that instead of keeping me beyond the pale, you would hasten to relieve all the anxiety that I have had concerning you in the long months since we met' To

[1] Torii.

this appeal were added the protests of her waiting-ladies who were scandalized at the idea of Prince Genji being left waiting outside the house. At first she pleaded the impossibility of receiving a guest in surroundings so cramped and wretched, her duty towards her daughter at this critical hour, the undesirability of such an interview just on the eve of her permanent departure But though the prospect of facing him filled her with unspeakable depression, she had not the heart to treat him unkindly, and at last, looking very grave, with sighs and hesitation at every step she came forward to meet him 'I presume that here one is allowed no further than the verandah,' he said, and mounting the narrow bamboo platform that surrounded the building he took his seat there An evening moon had risen and as she saw him moving in its gentle light she knew that all this while she had not been wrong, he was indeed more lovely, more enticing than anyone in the world beside He began trying to explain why it was that for so many months on end he had not been able to visit her, but he soon got into a tangle, and feeling suddenly embarrassed he plucked a spray from the Sacred Tree[1] which grew outside her room and handing it to her through her blinds-of-state he said Take this evergreen bough in token that my love can never change Were it not so, why should I have set foot within the boundaries of this hallowed plot? You use me very ill' But she answered with the verse Thought you perchance that the Holy Tree from whose boughs you plucked a spray was as the cedar by the gate"[2] To this he replied 'Well knew I what priestess dwelt in this shrine, and for her sake came to pluck this offering of fragrant leaves'

Though the position was not likely to be a very comfortable one, he now thrust his head under the reed blinds and sat with his legs dangling over the wooden framework of the bamboo platform During all the years when he could see her as often and as intimately as he chose and she on her side withheld nothing from him, he had gone on serenely assuming that it would be always so, and never once in all that time had he felt so deeply moved as at this moment Suddenly he realized with astonishment that though after that unhappy incident he had imagined it to be impossible for them to meet and had so avoided all risk of his former affection being roused to new life, yet from the first moment of this strange confrontation he had immediately found himself feeling towards her precisely as he had before their estrangement Violently agitated he began to cast his mind rapidly over the long years of their friendship Now all this was over It was too horrible He burst into tears She had determined not to let him see what she was suffering, but now she could restrain herself no longer and he was soon

[1] The *sakaki*, a species of evergreen oak is planted at Shinto shrines.

[2] In allusion to the old song, "My home is at the foot of Mwa Hill. If you like me come some day to visit me. You will know the house by the cedar which grows at the gate."

passionately entreating her not to go down to Ise after all The moon had set, but the starlit sky was calm and lovely. Pausing often to gaze up into the night he began at last to speak to her of what had lain so heavily on his heart. But no sooner was it openly mentioned between them than all the pent-up bitterness of so many weeks was suddenly released and vanished utterly away Little by little, in preparation for her final departure, she had at last accustomed herself to think of him almost with indifference Now in a moment all this was undone, and when she heard Genji himself entreating her to abandon the journey her heart beat violently, and the wildest thoughts agitated her brain The garden which surrounded her apartments was laid out in so enchanting a manner that the troops of young courtiers, who in the early days of the retreat had sought in vain to press their attentions upon her, used, even when she had sent them about their business, to linger there regretfully, and on this marvellous night the place seemed consciously to be deploying all its charm In the hours which followed, no secret was withheld on her side or on his, but what passed between them I shall not attempt to tell

At last the night ended in such a dawn as seemed to have been fashioned for their especial delight 'Sad is any parting at the red of dawn, but never since the world began, gleamed day so tragically in the autumn sky,' and as he recited these verses, aghast to leave her, he stood hesitating and laid her hand tenderly in his

A cold wind was blowing The pine-crickets in neighbouring trees were whispering in harsh despairing tones, as though they knew well enough what was toward Their dismal voices would have struck a chill to the heart of any casual passer-by, and it may well be imagined what cheer they gave to lovers already at the height of distraction and anguish She recited the verse, 'Sad enough already is this autumn parting, add not your dismal song, O pine-crickets of the moor' He knew that it was his neglect that had forced this parting upon them But now it was too late to make amends Full of useless regrets, while the grey light of morning spread over the sky, he journeyed back disconsolately to the town, through meadows deep in dew As she watched him go she could no longer restrain herself, and at the thought that she had lost him for ever broke into a fit of reckless weeping Her gentlewomen, who on the evening before caught a fleeting glimpse of him in the moonlight, enjoyed next morning the excitement of detecting in their mistress's room a lingering fragrance of the princely scent which he had carried [1] It may well be imagined that they at any rate were far from condemning the crime to which she had been accessory 'It would have to be a marvellous journey indeed that I was going to take, before I could bring myself to part from such a one as this young prince!' So one of the ladies

[1] Princes used rich scents forbidden to commoners

the Many Isles, to your judgment will I hearken, must needs this parting sever a love insatiable as ours?' [1] Though the letter arrived just when the procession was forming and all was bustle and confusion, an answer came It was not from Rokujo but from the Virgin herself, and had been dictated by her to her aunt who was acting as Lady Intendant. 'Call not upon the Gods of Heaven to sit in judgment upon this case, lest first they charge you with fickleness and pitiless deceit' He longed to witness the presentation of the Virgin and her mother at the Palace,[2] but he had a feeling that since it was to avoid him that Rokujo was leaving the City, it would be embarrassing for both of them if he took part in the ceremonies of farewell, and overcoming his desire to see her once more, he stayed in his own palace sunk in idle thoughts The reply of the Virgin showed a quite astonishing precocity, and he smiled as he read it through again The girl had begun to interest him No doubt she was precocious in charm as well as intelligence, and since it was his foible invariably to set his heart upon possessing, even at the cost of endless difficulties, whatever custom and circumstance seemed to have placed beyond his utmost reach, he now began thinking what a misfortune it was that he had in earlier days never once availed himself of his position in the house to make her acquaintance, which would indeed at any time have been perfectly easy But after all, life is full of uncertainties, perhaps one day some unforeseen circumstance would bring her into his life once more

The fame of Lady Rokujo brought many spectators to view the procession and the streets were thronged with coaches The Palace Gates were entered at the hour of the monkey [3] Lady Rokujo, sitting in the sacred palanquin by her daughter's side, remembered how her father, the late Minister of State, had brought her years ago to these same gates, fondly imagining that he would make her the greatest lady in the land [4] Thus to revisit the Palace now that so many changes had come both to her life and to the Court, filled her with immeasurable depression At sixteen she had been married, at twenty she had been left a widow and now at thirty again she had set foot within the Ninefold Palisade She murmured to herself the lines 'Though on this sacred day 'twere profanation to recall a time gone by, yet in my inmost heart a tinge of sadness lurks'

The Virgin was now fourteen She was extremely handsome and her appearance at the presentation-ceremony, decked in the full robes of her office, made a profound impression The Emperor, when he came to setting the Comb of Parting in her hair, was deeply moved and it was observed that he shed tears

[1] In reality an appeal to the Virgin (representative of the Gods) to dissuade her mother from accompanying her

[2] Before departing for Ise the Virgin was presented to the Emperor and formally invested

[3] 4 P.M.

[4] Prince Zembo, her father, was at that time Heir Apparent.

Outside the Hall of the Eight Departments a number of gala-coaches were drawn up to witness the departure of the Virgin from the Palace The windows of those coaches were hung with an exquisitely contrived display of coloured scarves and cloaks, and among the courtiers who were to go down to Ise there were many who thought with an especial pang of one who in his honour had added some gay touch of her own to the magnificence of this unprecedented show It was already dark when the procession left the Palace When after traversing the Second Wood they turned into the Doi Highway the travellers passed close by Genji's palace Deeply moved, he sent the following poem tied to a spray of the Holy Tree—'Though today you cast me off and lightly set upon your way, yet surely when at last you ferry the Eighty Rapids of Suzuka Stream [1] your sleeve will not be dry' When this message was brought to her it was already quite dark This and the noisy bustle of her journey prevented her from answering till the next day When her reply came it was sent back from beyond the Barrier 'Whether at the Eighty Rapids of Suzuka Stream my sleeve be wet or no, all men will have forgotten me long ere I come to Ise's Land' It was hastily written, yet with all the grace and distinction that habitually marked her hand, but his pleasure in it was marred by the strange bitterness of her tone A heavy mist had risen, and gazing at the dimly-veiled semblances that were belatedly unfolding in the dawn he whispered to himself the lines O mist, I long to follow with my eyes the road that she passed, hide not from me in these autumn days the slopes of Meeting Hill' [2] That night he did not go to the western wing,[3] but lay sleepless till dawn, brooding disconsolately upon a turn of affairs for which, as he well knew, he alone was responsible What *she* suffered, as day by day she travelled on through unknown lands, may well be guessed

By the tenth month the ex-Emperor's condition had become very grave indeed Throughout the country much concern was felt The young Emperor was in great distress and hastened to pay him a visit-of-state Weak though he was the sick man first gave minute instructions as to the upbringing of the Heir Apparent and then passed on to a discussion of Genji s future 'I desire you,' he said, still to look upon him as your guardian and to seek his advice in all matters, whether small or great, as indeed I have accustomed you to do during my lifetime In the handling of public business he shows a competence beyond his years There is no doubt that his natural vocation is to administer the affairs of a people rather than to lead the secluded life of a Royal Prince, and when I attached him to a clan devoid of Royal Blood it was that he might the better keep watch for us over the public affairs of our kingdom I there-

[1] A river in the Province of Ise.
[2] 'Osaka' means Hill of Meeting, a gentle slope on the road from Kyoto to Otsu.
[3] I e. to Murasaki.

fore entreat you never to act contrary to his advice' He gave many other parting instructions to his successor, but such matters are not for a woman's pen and I feel I must apologize for having said even so much as this

The young Emperor, deeply moved, repeatedly signified that he would obey all these instructions in every particular It gave his father great comfort and pleasure to note that he was already growing up into a fine handsome young fellow But after a short while Court affairs necessitated the Emperor's immediate presence, and his father, who longed to keep him by his side, was in the end more distressed than comforted by this brief visit The Heir Apparent was to have come at the same time as the Emperor, but it was thought that this arrangement would be too tiring and the little boy [1] was brought on another day. He was big for his age and very pretty The old man looked fondly at him and the child, unconscious of the purpose for which he had been summoned, stood watching him with laughter in his face Fujitsubo, who sat near by, was weeping bitterly, and, suddenly catching sight of her, the ex-Emperor for a while lost his composure To this little prince also he gave a variety of instructions, but it was evident that he was too young to understand what was being said, and remembering the uncertainties of his future the ex-Emperor gazed at the child with pity and distress In his final instructions to Genji concerning the management of public affairs he recurred again and again to the question of the Heir Apparent and the importance of giving him due protection and advice It was now late at night and the Heir Apparent was taken off to bed A vast number of Courtiers followed in his train, so that his visit created almost as much bustle and confusion as that of the Emperor himself But this visit had seemed to the sick man only too short and it was with great distress that he watched the procession depart The Empress Mother, Lady Kokiden, had also intended to come, but hearing that Fujitsubo was at his side she felt somewhat disinclined, and while she was trying to decide whether to go or not, his Majesty passed quietly and painlessly away

The ex-Emperor's death caused profound consternation in many quarters Though it was some while since he resigned the Throne, he had continued to control the policy of the government just as in former days The present Emperor was a mere child, his grandfather, the Minister of the Right, was known to be a man of hasty temper and treacherous disposition Courtiers and noblemen alike regarded with the greatest apprehension a government subjected to his arbitrary power But among them all none had better reason than Fujitsubo and Prince Genji to dread the coming reign It was indeed natural that this prince should take a foremost part in the ceremonies of mourning which were performed by

[1] Genji's son by Fujitsubo, supposed to be the Emperor's child He was now four years old

the family on each seventh day, and in the Filial Masses for the dead man's soul, but his piety was generally noted and admired Despite the unbecoming dress which custom required, his beauty made everywhere a deep impression, and this, combined with his evident distress, procured him a great share of sympathy

He had lost in one year his wife and in the next his father The scenes of affliction through which he had passed weighed heavily upon his spirits and for a while deprived him of all zest for life He thought much of retiring from the world, and would have done so had he not been restrained by many earthly ties During the forty-nine days of mourning the ladies of the late ex-Emperor's household remained together in his apartments But at the expiration of this period they retired to their respective homes It was the twentieth day of the twelfth month The dull sky marked (thought Fujitsubo) not only the gloom of the departing year, but the end of all fair prospects She knew with what feelings Kokiden regarded her and was aware that her existence at a Court dominated by this woman's arbitrary power could not be otherwise than unhappy Above all it was impossible for her to go on living in a place where, having for so many years enjoyed the old Emperor's company, she found his image continually appearing to her mind The departure of all his former ladies-in-waiting and ladies-of-the-household rendered her situation unendurable and she determined to move to her mansion in the Third Ward Her brother Prince Hyobukyo came to fetch her away Snow was falling, blown by a fierce wind The old Emperor's quarters, now rapidly becoming denuded of their inhabitants, wore a desolate air Genji happened to be there when Hyobukyo arrived and they fell to talking of old times The great pine-tree in front of the Palace was weighed down with snow and its lower boughs were withered Seeing this, Hyobukyo recited the verses 'Because the great pine-tree is withered that once with wide-spread branches sheltered us from the storm, lo! we the underboughs droop earthward in these last moments of the year' No very wonderful poem, but at that moment it moved Genji deeply, and noticing that the lake was frozen all over he in his turn recited the poem 'Now like a mirror shines the frozen surface of the lake Alas that it reflects not the form and face we knew so well!' Such was the thought that came to him at the moment, and he gave it utterance well knowing that the prince would think it forced and crude Omyobu, Fujitsubo s gentlewoman, now interposed with the verse 'The year draws in, even the water of the rock-hewn well is sealed with ice, and faded from those waters is the face that once I saw' Many other poems were exchanged, but I have other things to tell

Fujitsubo s return to her mansion was carried out with no less ceremony than on former occasions, but to her mind the transit seemed this time a distressing affair and more like a journey to some strange place than a

the late princess his daughter to Genji instead of giving her, as had originally been intended, to her son the present Emperor Moreover there had always been a certain amount of ill-feeling between the families of the two Ministers During the late Emperor's reign the Minister of the Left had managed things pretty much as he chose, and it was but natural that he now had no desire to take part in the triumph of his rival Genji continued to visit him as before and was assiduous in his attention to Aoi's maids-of-honour, as also in providing for the education of the little prince her son This delighted the old Minister and he continued to treat his son-in-law with the same affectionate deference as in old days

The high position to which Genji had been raised two years ago had entailed much tiresome business and made considerable inroads upon his leisure He found himself in consequence obliged to discontinue many of the intimacies in which he had been previously engaged Of his lighter distractions he was now thoroughly ashamed and was glad to abandon them, so that for a while his life became altogether quiet, regular and exemplary The announcement of his marriage with Murasaki was very well received by the world at large Shonagon and her companions naturally attributed their little mistress's success to the prayers of her pious grandmother the late nun, and in secret conclave congratulated themselves on the turn which events had taken Her father Prince Hyobukyo asked for nothing better than such a match But his wife, who had not managed to do half as well for her own children on whom she doted, was extremely jealous of her step-child's triumph, and this marriage continued to be a very sore point with her Indeed, Murasaki's career had been more like that of some step-child in fiction [1] than of a real young person

The Vestal Virgin of Kamo, third daughter of the late Emperor by Lady Kokiden, was now in mourning and had to resign her charge Her successor was the Princess Asagao [2] It had not very often happened that a collateral descendant of the Emperor was chosen for this post, but on this occasion no other princess of suitable age and lineage was available Genji's admiration for this lady had not, in all the years that had passed since he first courted her, in any degree abated, and it was painful to him to learn that she was now to embark upon so different a way of life She still sent him an occasional message and he had never ceased to write to her He had known her as a Lady of the Court Now he must try to picture her to himself as a priestess This he could not manage to do, and his repeated failure to evoke any image which corresponded to her as she now was bitterly tormented him

The young Emperor punctiliously obeyed his father's last injunctions

[1] The neglected step-child who in the end triumphs over her pampered rivals is a favourite theme in Japanese stories. Cf the *Sumiyoshi Monogatari* and the *Ochikubo*

[2] See Part I, pp 39 and 155

and treated Genji with great consideration But he was still very young, and being somewhat weak and yielding in character he was easily influenced by those about him Again and again, under pressure from Kokiden or the Minister of the Right, he allowed public measures to be taken of which he did not really in the least approve Meanwhile Kokiden's sister the Lady Oborozukiyo, though her new position rendered the carrying on of a secret intrigue in the highest degree difficult and perilous, was becoming more and more unhappy, and at last found a means of informing Genji of her unaltered attachment He would have been glad enough if she had felt otherwise, but after what had passed between them he could not disregard such a message Accordingly he waited till the Court was immersed in the Celebration at the Five Altars [1] and went secretly to her apartments The encounter was brief and dream-like as on that first occasion, on the night of the Flower-feast [2] Her maid Chunagon smuggled him in by the little side door which had before caught his attention There happened to be a good many people about at the time, and it was with great trepidation that this lady conducted him through the exposed and frequented ante-chambers which led to her mistress's apartments To look upon Prince Genji was a ceaseless delight even to those who daily served him It can be imagined then what rapture his visit brought to one who had waited so long for his return Nor was Genji on his side by any means indifferent to her charms She was at the height of her youth and good-looks, lively, graceful, confiding Indeed, save for a certain light-heartedness and inconsequence, there was nothing in her which he would wish to change Suddenly he heard people stirring in the corridor outside and for a moment thought that it must already be morning He soon realized however that these were not the people of the house, but members of the Imperial Guard come to report themselves No doubt some officer of the Guard was known to be spending the night in this part of the Palace, but for a moment Genji had the wild idea that some malicious person had revealed to the soldiers of the Guard the unexpected presence of their Commander [3] He was amused at his mistake, but at the same time horrified at the realization of the risks which he was running Outside in the corridor they could still hear the soldiers tramping up and down looking for their officer and calling out as they went, First hour of the Tiger Watch, first hour of the Tiger Watch !' [4] Then Oborozukiyo whispered the

[1] A ritual in honour of the Five Mysterious Buddhas of the Tantric Sect, to wit Gosanze, Gundari, Dai-itoku, Kongo-yasha and Fudo

[2] See Part I, pp 148 *seq*

[3] Genji was Commander of the Imperial Guard. The soldiers of the Guard had to report at 4 A.M to the senior officer of the Guard who happened on that night to be in the Palace They had really come to report to some subordinate officer who happened to be lodging close by

[4] I e. 4 A M They had to go on calling the hour till their officer replied 'So be it' to show that he had heard them.

verse 'Though the watch-man of the night cries out "Enough!" yet seems it from your tears and mine we are not of his mind '[1] Her plaintive tone touched his heart and he answered with the verse 'Must we, because they say the time is spent, in tears relinquish what our own hearts' reluctance bids us still enjoy?' So saying he left her Though daylight had not yet come and the setting moon was heavily veiled in mist, he felt very uneasy And in fact, despite his disguise, his bearing and figure were so notable that he was at once recognized by a brother of Lady Jokyoden[2] who happened, at the moment when Genji passed unsuspecting on his way, to have just left Fujitsubo's old quarters and was now standing in the shadow of a trellis-gate This gentleman was vastly amused and did not fail to make good use of the episode in his conversation

So great were the risks he had run that for some time afterwards Genji found himself wishing Fujitsubo's prudence and reserve were more commonly practised, and at such times he almost applauded her unkindness At any rate it saved him from these nerve-racking experiences But such moods did not last long With the Lady of the Bedchamber his deeper feelings were not involved, whereas he was drawn towards Fujitsubo as though by some secret power, and except at rare moments her coldness caused him nothing but torment and despair

This princess, though she no longer felt at ease in the Palace and could not bring herself to visit it, was distressed that she was now unable to see her son It was very awkward that there was no one to advise her about the child except Prince Genji, who unfortunately still persisted in regarding her with the same strange adoration She was in a continual panic lest he should take advantage of her dependence upon him True the Emperor had died without betraying the least suspicion concerning the child's parentage But she shuddered to think of the predicament in which this deception had involved her Any renewal of their relationship, quite apart from the effect it might have upon her own fortunes, would react disastrously upon her son So heavily did this matter weigh upon her that when she was supposed to be at her prayers she did nothing but turn over in her mind, a hundred times this way and that, how best she might persuade him to feel differently towards her

Yet despite all her precautions he managed one night to enter the house and get very near indeed to the room where she was sitting Not a soul in the house had conspired with him or expected his coming He seemed to have risen mysteriously up among them like a figure in a dream He sent her many passionate messages, such as I cannot here transcribe, but she would not let him come to her At last, worn out

[1] There is a play of words on *aku* 'enough' and *aku* 'dawn', in the next poem between *aku* 'enough' and *aku* 'open.'

[2] Wife of the young Emperor Suzaku

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[1] There is a play of words on *aku* 'enough' and *aku* 'dawn', in the next poem between *aku* 'enough' and *aku* 'open.'

[2] Wife of the young Emperor Suzaku

by his persistency, she began to feel so faint that Omyobu, Myobu no Ben and the rest of her favourite waiting-women took fright and were soon busily employed in attending to her Meanwhile Genji, in a frenzy of irritation and disappointment, scarce knew how he came to be in her ante-chamber nor thought how he was going to retire from it So completely had he lost all sense of real things that though broad daylight was come he did not stir from where he stood The news of her indisposition quickly spread through the house There was a sound of footsteps, and Genji, still but half conscious, groped his way into a large lumber-room or clothes-cupboard that happened to be near by An embarrassed lady-in-waiting hastily stowed away a cloak and other effects which she saw lying about

Fujitsubo herself remained in much distress both of body and mind throughout the night As she was feeling very giddy, her brothers, who had now arrived upon the scene, sent out for a priest All this Genji heard from his hiding-place with great grief and alarm The day was far advanced when she began at last to mend She had not of course the least idea that he was still in the house and her ladies feared that if they were to tell her of his presence the news might cause a recurrence of last night's attack At last she dragged herself from her bed to the chair in which she generally sat, and her brothers, thinking that the worst was now over, withdrew and she was left alone Even her intimate and personal attendants had retired from her daïs and could be heard moving away to and fro behind the screens at the other end of the room The sole preoccupation of Omyobu and the few other ladies who shared the secret of Genji's presence was now how best to get him out of the house They were certain that if he stayed where he was the same scene would be repeated that night, with the same unhappy effects, and they were whispering together in a tone of great concern when Genji, first cautiously pushing the door a little ajar and then gently slipping out, darted from his hiding-place to the shelter of one of the screens which surrounded her daïs From this point of vantage he was able at last to gaze upon her to his heart's content, and as he did so tears of joy and wonder filled his eyes 'I am wretched, wretched,' she was murmuring, 'but soon my misery will end, soon all will be over ' She was looking out towards the centre of the room and he caught a profile view of her face which he found inexpressibly charming Presently Omyobu came with fruit for her breakfast Though the cover of the fruit-box was of rare and beautiful workmanship she did not so much as glance at it, but sat rigidly staring in front of her, like one for whom life has lost all interest and meaning

How beautiful she was! And, now that it was possible to compare them on equal terms, how like in every minutest detail of pose and expression to the girl at home! Particularly in the carriage of her head and

the way her hair grew there was the same singular charm For years Murasaki had served to keep Lady Fujitsubo, to some extent at any rate, out of his thoughts But now that he saw how astonishingly the one resembled the other he fancied that all the while Murasaki had but served as a substitute or eidolon of the lady who denied him her love Both had the same pride, the same reticence For a moment he wondered whether, if they were side by side, he should be able to tell them apart How absurd! Probably indeed, he said to himself, the whole idea of their resemblance was a mere fancy, Fujitsubo had for so many years filled all his thoughts It was natural that such an idea should come to him Unable to contain himself any longer, he slipped out of his hiding-place and gently crept between her curtains-of-state, till he was near enough to touch the train of her cloak By the royal scent which he carried she knew at once that it was he, and overcome by astonishment and terror she fell face downwards upon her couch 'Can you not bear to set eyes upon me?' he cried, and in despair clutched at the skirt of her cloak She in panic slipped the cloak from her shoulders and would have fled, leaving it in his hands, but by ill luck her hair caught in the buckle and she was held fast With horror she realized that a fate too strong for her was planning to put her at his mercy He for his part suddenly lost all dignity and self-restraint Sobbing violently he poured out to her, scarce knowing what he said, the whole tale of his passion and despair She was horrified, both the visit and the outburst seemed to her unpardonable, and she did not even reply At last, hard-pressed, she pleaded illness and promised to see him some other time But he would not be put off and continued to pour out his tale of love In the midst of all this talk that so much displeased her and to which she paid no heed at all, there came some phrase which caught her attention and for some reason touched her, and though she was still determined that what had happened on that one unhappy occasion should never, never be repeated, she began to answer him kindly Thus by skilful parryings and evasions she kept him talking till this night too was safely over By her gentleness she had shamed him into submission and he now said 'There cannot surely be any harm in my coming occasionally to see you in this way It would be a great relief to me if I could do so' This and much else he said, now in a far less desperate mood Even in quite commonplace people such situations produce strange flights of tenderness and fancy How much the more then in such lovers as Genji and the queen!

But it was now broad daylight Omyobu and her daughter arrived and soon took possession of their mistress Genji, retiring from the room, sent her many tender messages But now she sat staring vacantly in front of her as though she were but half alive Exasperated by her martyred attitude, he cried out at last 'Answer me, answer me! I cannot live

without you. And yet, what use to die? For I know that in every life to come I am doomed to suffer the torment of this same heinous passion' Still, to the alarm of those who waited upon her, she sat staring fixedly in front of her He recited the verse 'If indeed the foeman fate that parts us works not for today alone, then must I spend Eternity in woe' When she heard him saying that the bonds of her love would hold him back from Paradise, she began to weep and answered with the verse 'If to all time this bond debars you from felicity, not hostile fate but your own heart you should with bitterness condemn.' The words were spoken with a tenderness that was infinitely precious to him, yet he knew that a prolongation of the interview could not but be painful to both of them, and he rushed from the room

He felt that he made himself odious to her He would never be able to face her again, and contrary to custom he wrote no morning letter For a long while he paid no visit either to the Emperor or to the Heir Apparent, but lay in his room brooding upon Fujitsubo's unkindness Misery and longing brought him at last to so pitiable a plight that it was as though with agonizing pain his inmost soul were dissolving within him Often there ran in his head the lines Soon upon causeways of resounding stone my footsteps shall beat out their song!' [1] And indeed the world again seemed to him so cheerless that his decision would soon have been taken had he not remembered that there was one over whose happiness he was pledged to watch So exquisite, so trustful a creature he could not abandon, and the project was soon put aside

Fujitsubo too reflected upon what had taken place with great uneasiness of mind She had now learnt how he had concealed himself for a whole day in her house without giving her the slightest intimation of his presence This fact Omyobu and the rest had not, in their indignation at his plight, managed to restrain themselves from revealing to her Such conduct she could not tolerate Yet she well knew that if she showed her displeasure Genji would feel a disinclination towards the Heir Apparent, and this she was above all things anxious to avoid In a fit of despair he might even take some step which could not be rectified, and that thought, despite the torment of his importunity, filled her even now with horror If such an occurrence as that of last night were often to be repeated it was certain that both their reputations would soon be irrecoverably destroyed She felt that it would in a way disarm the censures of the world if she were to give up the rank of Empress, the bestowal of which had been received with such caustic comments by Lady Kokiden She remembered with what intention and with what explicit injunctions this title had been granted her by the late Emperor But she felt herself no longer bound by his instructions, for since his death the whole position at Court had utterly changed She had no fear of suffering the fate

[1] I e. in a monastery

of Lady Chi,[1] but she had every reason to suppose that her position as Empress would henceforth be both ludicrous and humiliating She felt no inclination to struggle against ridicule and opposition Soon her mind was made up She must renounce the world But first she must visit her son. She could not bear that he should never again see her as he had known her in days of old She drove to the Palace without public escort On many occasions when she had travelled in even less state than this, Genji had attended her and arranged every detail of her progress This time he pleaded sickness and was not present Previously he had been in the habit of sending constantly to enquire after her health The fact that he had discontinued this practice was cited by the sympathetic Omyobu as a proof that he must be now plunged in the utmost misery

The little prince[2] had grown into a handsome boy His mother's visit surprised and delighted him and he was soon telling her all his secrets She looked at him sadly The step that she contemplated seemed unendurably hard to take Yet a glance at the Palace reminded her how great were the changes and upheavals that had taken place, how insecure had now become her own position at the Court The Lady Kokiden still showed the same unrelenting hostility, finding at every turn some means to inconvenience or humiliate her Her high rank, so far from protecting her, now imperilled both herself and her son For a long while she hesitated, torn by many conflicting feelings At last she succeeded in saying to the child 'What would you think if I were to go away for a long while and, when at last I came back to see you, were to look quite different, almost as though it were another person?' She watched his face while she spoke 'What would happen to you?' he said, very much interested 'Would you become like old Lady Shikibu? Why do you want to be like that?' and he laughed It was very difficult to tell him She began again 'Shikibu is ugly because she is so old That is not what I mean I shall have even less hair than Shikibu and I shall wear a black dress, like the chaplain whom you have seen coming to say prayers here in the evenings, but it will be a long while before they let me come here to see you' He saw that she was crying and at once said very decidedly 'If you do not come for a long while, I shall miss you terribly' He too began to cry, and ashamed of his tears, turned his head away As he did so his long hair fell rippling across his cheek The eyes, the brow—all was as though a cast had been taken from the face she knew so well He had not yet lost his baby-teeth One or two of them were a little decayed, their blackness amid a row of white giving to his smile a peculiar piquancy and charm As she watched him standing there in his half-girlish beauty and suddenly realized how like he was to his father,

[1] Who, after the death of her lover, the Chinese Emperor Kao Tsu, was tortured and mutilated (c B C. 200) by his wife.

[2] Genji's child by Fujitsubo supposed by the world to be the late Emperor's son.

she became more than ever unhappy But if the resemblance was painful to her and seemed to her at that moment almost to spoil his beauty, it was only because she dreaded the gossip to which this likeness would give rise

Genji too was longing to see his son, but while Princess Fujitsubo was at Court he was resolved to keep away Perhaps this would make her realize how completely he had been frustrated by her harshness, for she would certainly be expecting to meet him in the young prince's apartments

He was in very ill humour and the time hung heavily on his hands It was now autumn and it seemed a pity not to be in the country He decided to spend a little while at the Temple in the Cloudy Woods [1] Here in the cell of his mother's elder brother, a master of the Vinaya,[2] he spent several days reading the sacred texts and practising various austerities During this time much happened both to move and delight him The maple leaves in the surrounding forests were just turning and he remembered Sojo s song written in the same place 'Proud autumn fields .. ' In a little while he had almost forgotten that this quiet place was not his home He gathered about him a number of doctors famous for their understanding of the Holy Law and made them dispute in his presence Yet even in the midst of scenes such as these, calculated to impress him in the highest degree with the futility of all earthly desires, one figure from the fleeting world of men still rose up importunately before him and haunted every prayer One day at dawn by the light of a sinking moon the priests of the temple were making the morning offering of fresh leaves and flowers before an image that stood near by He could hear the clink of the silver flower-trays as they scattered chrysanthemum and maple leaves of many hues around the Buddha's feet It seemed to him then that the life these people led was worth while, not merely as a means to salvation but for its own pleasantness and beauty Again and again he marvelled that he could have for so long endured his own aimless existence His uncle, the Vinaya-master, had an extremely impressive voice and when he came to the passage, 'None shall be cast out, but take unto him all living things that call upon his name,' Genji envied him the assurance with which he uttered the Buddha's promise Why should not he too avail himself of this promise, why should not he too lead this sanctified existence? Suddenly he remembered Murasaki and his home What must she be thinking of him? It was many days since he had seen her, and he hastened to repair this neglect 'I came here as an experiment,' he wrote, 'that I might decide whether it would not be better for me to withdraw for ever from the world Since I have been here it has been gradually becoming clearer

[1] The Unrinin, near Kyoto

[2] Books on monastic discipline, and morality in general

to me that my present way of life can bring me nothing but misery, and today I heard something read out loud which made a deep impression upon me and convinced me that I ought not any longer to delay '
The letter was written on sandalwood paper of Michinoku, informally but with great elegance With it he sent the poem 'Because I left you in a home deep-girt with dewy sedge, with troubled mind I hear the wild winds blow from every side' This he said and much else beside She cried when she read it Her answer was written on a white slip 'First, when the wild wind blows, flutters the dewy web that hangs upon the wilting sedge-row in the fields' He smiled to himself with pleasure as he read it, noting how swiftly her hand had improved He had written her so many letters that her writing had grown to be very like his, save that to his style she had added some touches of girlish delicacy and grace In this as in all else she at least had not disappointed him

It occurred to him that Kamo was not so very far off and he thought he would send a message to the Vestal Virgin [1] To Chujo her maid he sent the letter 'That here among strangers in deep affliction I languish unconsoled, your mistress cannot know' To this he added a long tale of his present woes and to the Virgin herself addressed the poem 'Goddess Immaculate, the memory of other days has made me bold to hang this token at thy shrine!' And to this, quoting an old song, he added the words 'Would that like a ring upon the hand I might turn Time around till "then" was "now"' He wrote on light green paper, and with the letter was a twig of the Sacred Tree festooned with fluttering tassels of white as befitted the holy place to which it was addressed In answer the maid Chujo wrote 'There is so little here to break the sameness of the long empty days that sometimes an idle memory of the past will for a moment visit the Virgin's heavenly thoughts Of you she has spoken now and again, but only to say that now all thought of you is profitless
The gentlewoman's letter was long and written with great care On a small strip tied to a white ritual tassel the Virgin herself had written the poem 'Full well you know that in those other days no secret was between us for you to hang as ritual-token at your heart' It was not written with much pains, but there was an easy flow in the cursive passages which delighted his eye and he realized that the Court had lost one who would in time have grown to be a woman of no ordinary accomplishments

He shuddered How pitiless is God! Suddenly he remembered that only last autumn the melancholy gateway of the Palace-in-the-Fields had filled him with just such an indignation and dismay. Why should these Powers be suffered to pursue their hideous exactions?

That strange trait of perversity, so often noted, was indeed at work again under the most absurd circumstances For in all the years when Asagao was within reach he had not made one serious effort to win her,

[1] Princess Asagao

but had contented himself with vague protestations and appeals. But now that she was utterly unattainable he suddenly imagined that he had never really cared for anyone else! Believing him to be the victim of an inconsolable passion, the Virgin had not the heart to leave his letters unanswered, and a correspondence of a rather strange and unreal kind was for some while carried on between them.

Before he left the Temple in the Cloudy Woods he read the whole of the Sixty Chapters,[1] consulting his uncle on many obscure points The delight of the priests, down to the humblest servitor, may well be imagined *It seemed as though the Lord Amida must hold their* poor country temple in especial favour, or he would not have vouchsafed that such a radiance should shine among them

But soon Genji began to grow restless His mind strayed constantly to mundane affairs, and though he dreaded the return, there was one whom it was not in his heart any longer to neglect Before his departure he ordered a grand chanting of the Scripture to be held and gave suitable presents to all the resident priests both high and low, and even to the peasants of the surrounding country Then, after many other rituals and benefactions, he drove away The country people from far and near crowded round the gates to see him go, uncouth figures strangely gnarled and bent His carriage was draped with black and he himself was still dressed in the drab unbecoming robes of mourning Yet even the momentary glimpse of him that they caught as he entered his carriage sufficed to convince them that a prince of no ordinary beauty had been dwelling near to them and many were moved to tears

It seemed to him when he was back in his palace that Murasaki had in these last months become far less childish She spoke very seriously of the changes at Court and showed great concern for his future That in these last weeks his affections had been much occupied elsewhere could hardly have escaped her notice He remembered with a pang that in the last poem she had sent him there was some reference to 'the wilting sedge-row,' and full of remorse he treated her with more than ordinary kindness He had brought her a branch of autumn leaves from the country temple where he had been staying Together they compared it with the trees in his palace garden, and found when they set them side by side that the country leaves were dyed to a yet deeper red There was one who was at all times paramount in his thoughts, and the sight of these leaves, tinged with so strong a hue that they eclipsed whatever colours were set beside them, reminded him that to her alone he had given no token of his return The desire to have news of her so tormented him that at last he wrote a letter to Omyobu announcing that he had left the temple 'I heard with surprise and joy of your Lady's visit to the Court I longed for news both of her and of the young prince, but though I was uneasy on

[1] The canonical book of the Tendai Sect.

their account, I could not interrupt my appointed course of penance and study Thus many days have passed since last I gave you any news Here are some sprays of autumn leaf Bid your Lady look at them when she feels so disposed, lest unregarded they should waste their beauty "like silken stuffs spread out by night"'

They were huge, leaf-laden boughs, and when she looked closer, Fujitsubo saw that the usual tiny strip of paper, such as he always used in writing to her, was tied to one of them Her gentlewomen were watching her, and as she examined the offering she felt herself blushing So he was still in the same deplorable state of mind! Surely he must realize that it was very embarrassing for her to receive offerings of this kind from one who was known to be her admirer! Wishing that he would show more regard for her feelings and reputation she bade a servant put the boughs in a vase and stand it against one of the pillows on the verandah, as far out of the way as possible

In her reply she confined herself to matters of business upon which she needed his advice Her cold and impersonal tone deeply wounded him But as it was his usual practice to assist her in every difficulty, he felt that his absence on the day of her departure from Court would give rise to unwelcome speculations, and hearing that the day had been fixed he hastened to the Palace. He went first to the apartments of the young Emperor and finding him at leisure settled down to a long conversation In person His Majesty much resembled the late Emperor, but he was of a quicker and livelier disposition He was very easy to get on with and they were soon exchanging recollections of their late father The Emperor had heard that Genji was still on intimate terms with his aunt the Princess Oborozuki, and had on his own account observed many signs of such an attachment If the affair had begun since the Princess's arrival at Court he would have felt bound to take cognizance of it But he knew that the friendship between them was of very old standing and felt that under these circumstances there was no great impropriety in it

They discussed all manner of affairs together, including their Chinese studies, and the Emperor consulted him about the interpretation of various difficult passages They then repeated to one another such poems of gallantry as they had lately addressed to ladies of the Court, and it was in the course of this conversation that the Emperor mentioned his admiration of the Lady Rokujo's daughter and his distress on the occasion of her departure for Ise This emboldened Genji, and soon he was telling the Emperor about his own visit to the Palace-in-the-Fields and all the sad circumstances attending it The waning moon had begun at last to rise 'It is at such moments as this,' said the Emperor sadly, 'that one longs for music'[1]

[1] The Court was still in mourning and music was not allowed

Genji now took his leave, explaining that he must wait upon the ex-Empress before she retired again to her own home 'You will remember,' he said, 'that the late Emperor our father committed the Heir Apparent to my guardianship and protection There happens unfortunately to be no one else to watch over his interests, and as I am very uneasy concerning his future I am obliged to take counsel fairly frequently with his mother' 'Our father certainly asked me to retain him as Heir Apparent,' replied the Emperor, 'and I have always tried to help him in any way I could But there is really nothing much that I can do for him I hear he has made astonishing progress with his handwriting and is in every way satisfactory I am afraid he is more likely to be a credit to me than I a help to him' 'He does indeed seem to be in most ways very forward and intelligent,' said Genji, 'but his character is still quite unformed' And after some further description of the child's attainments he proceeded to the Heir Apparent's apartments

There was a certain To no Ben, a son of Kokiden's elder brother To Dainagon Being young, good-looking and popular he had grown somewhat out of hand This young man was now on his way to the rooms of his sister Princess Reikeiden For a moment Genji's servants who were preceding him to the Heir Apparent's rooms blocked his path and forced him to stand waiting till they had passed In a low voice, but quite distinctly enough for Genji to hear every word, the young courtier chanted the lines, 'When a white rainbow crossed the sun the Crown Prince[1] trembled' Genji flushed, but it was obviously best to let the matter pass

That Kokiden should have succeeded in infecting her whole clan with her venomous hostility towards him was both vexatious and alarming Genji was indeed much disquieted, but he contrived on all such occasions to conceal his discomfiture.

In arriving at Fujitsubo's rooms he sent in a message to explain that he had been detained in the Presence It was a moonlit night of unusual beauty It was at such times as this that the old Emperor would call for music Fujitsubo remembered those dazzling midnight parties Here were the old courtyards, the old gardens and rooms, and yet this was not the Palace after all! Through Omyobu her maid she sent to him the poem 'Though now dark exhalations hide from sight the Palace of the Ninefold Wall, yet goes my heart to the bright moon[2] that far above the cloud-bank dwells' She did not in this message give any hint that she wished to see him, yet her tone was not unkind, and forgetting all his rancour he wrote with tears in his eyes 'Though lovely still as in past

[1] The Crown Prince sent an assassin to murder the King of Ch'in, whereupon the above phenomenon was observed and the Crown Prince felt convinced that the plot would fail The young courtier vaguely hints that Genji is meditating treason.

[2] I e. the late Emperor

years the moonbeams of this night, for me in vain their beauty, since now in shadows of unkindness they are wrapped '

She was to leave the Palace at dawn and was much preoccupied with the young prince her son In her anxiety for his future she overwhelmed him with warnings and instructions The child understood but little of what she was saying, and seeing that his attention had wandered, she felt more than ever that he was of no age to shift for himself He usually went to bed very early, but on this occasion he had asked to sit up till his mother started It was evident that he was very much upset by her departure, but he was very brave about it, and this made her feel more than ever remorseful at leaving him

Genji could not banish from his mind the thought of To no Ben's insolent behaviour It spoilt all his enjoyment in life and for a long while he wrote to no one, not even to Oborozuki The autumn rains set in and still no word came from him She began to wonder what could be amiss, and at last sent him the poem 'While leaf by leaf autumn has stripped the trees, all this long windy while have I in sadness waited for the news that did not come ' Doubtless it had cost her some trouble to communicate with him in secret, moreover the poem itself was not at all displeasing Genji detained the messenger, and going to his desk opened the drawer where he kept his Chinese writing-paper and chose the prettiest piece he could find Mending his pen with the greatest care, he indited a n so elegant even in its outside appearance that on its arrival there w quite a stir among the ladies who were at her side Who could be t sender of such a missive? Significant glances were exchanged 'I h for some while, for reasons about which it would be useless to speak, b in the last depths of depression ' So he wrote and to this he added poem 'Why, think you, fell the rains of autumn yet faster than of yo It was my tears that swelled them, my tears because we could not me He told her too that if the path of their friendship were but clear, should soon forget the rain and his depression and all that was a in the world He took much pains with this letter There were seve other people who had written to complain of his neglect, but though sent them all encouraging replies there were some of them about wh he did not feel very strongly one way or the other

On the anniversary of the Emperor's death, in addition to the us ceremonies, he caused the Service of the Eight Recitals [1] to be celebra with particular magnificence The day of national mourning was first of the eleventh month A heavy snow was falling He sent to Fu subo the poem 'Though once again the time of his departure has c back, not yet dare hope we for the day when we shall meet ' [2] It h

[1] Of the Hokkekyo

[2] Ostensibly the poem refers to the late Emperor, but it has a hidden reference to meeting of Fujitsubo and Genji There is a pun on *yuki*, 'snow,' and *yuki*, 'go '

pened that on that day she felt in utter despair, seeing no hope of happiness on any side She answered 'Though sad to have outlived him for so long, yet in this day's return found I some peace, it was as though the world again were in his rule'

It was not written with very great display of penmanship, but there was (or Genji fancied that there was) a peculiar distinction and refinement in the writing It was not quite in the fashion of the moment, but that did not matter, for she had a style that was completely of her own invention

But this, he remembered, was the day of the great masses for his father's soul He must put Fujitsubo out of his thoughts, and wet through by the perpetual downpour of rainy snow, he played his part in the elaborate rituals and processions

The Service of the Eight Recitals was to be celebrated in Fujitsubo's house on the tenth of the twelfth month and the four succeeding days She was at great pains to render the ceremony as impressive as possible The tents to be used on each of the five days were wound on rods of ivory, they were backed with thin silk and laid in cases of woven bamboo All was ordered with a splendour such as had seldom been seen before But under her management even the most trivial daily arrangements became invested with a singular beauty and completeness It did not therefore surprise Genji that the Recitals were carried out with unequalled impressiveness and dignity. The adornments of the Buddha, the coverings of the flower-altars, all were of a beauty that made him dream he was indeed a dweller in Amida's Land of Bliss

The first day's Recital was dedicated to the memory of her father,[1] the next was on behalf of her mother, the deceased Empress, the third day was in memory of her husband, the late ex-Emperor It is on this day that the fifth book is read, despite the disapproval of Kokiden and her flatterers, the ceremony was attended by the greater part of those about the Court. The readers of this third day had been chosen with especial care, and when they came to the passage 'Then he gathered sticks for firewood and plucked wild berries and the fruit of the mountains and trees,' the words that all had heard so many times before took on a strange significance It fell to the lot of the dead man's sons to officiate at the altar, circling it with gold and silver dishes held aloft in their hands, and these dishes piled high with offerings of many kinds This rite was performed by Genji with a grace and deftness that was not equalled by any of his companions You will say that I have noted this superiority many times before, that is true, and I can only plead in excuse that people were actually struck by it afresh each time they saw him

The last day's Recital was on behalf of her own salvation To the astonishment of all present it was announced that she herself wished to

[1] Of whom we are vaguely told that he was 'a former Emperor'

take this opportunity of abandoning the world, and had desired the clergy to intimate her renunciation to the Lord Buddha It may well be imagined with what consternation both Prince Hyobukyo her brother and Genji himself received this utterly unexpected announcement It was made in the middle of the service, and Hyobukyo, without waiting for the Recital to end, left his seat and went at once to her side But all his pleading was in vain At the end of the service she sent for the Head of the Tendai Sect [1] and told him that she was ready to receive the Rules forthwith. Her uncle the High Priest of Yogawa thereupon ascended the daïs and shaved her head A murmur of horror ran through the hall, there was a sound of sobbing There is something strangely moving in the spectacle of such a renunciation, even when some decrepit old woman decides at last that it is time to take her vows But here a lady in the prime of her beauty, who till now had given the world no inkling of her intention, was suddenly casting herself away. Her brother found himself weeping with the rest, and even strangers who had come merely for the sake of the service felt, under the spell of the reader's solemn voice and of this sudden declaration, that a personal calamity had befallen them The sons of the late Emperor who remembered her proud bearing at their Father's Court were particularly distressed, and all of them intimated their regret at the step which she had taken Only Genji stood rooted to the spot in speechless horror and dismay. At last he realized that his behaviour must be attracting attention, and when all the princes had left her he made his way to her daïs

Most of the people had cleared off and only a few ladies-in-waiting, all of them on the verge of tears, sat here and there in small disconsolate groups An unclouded moon heightened the sparkling radiance of the fresh snow which lay around the house Old memories crowded to his mind and for a moment he feared that he would break down But at last controlling himself he said very quietly, 'What made you suddenly decide to do this?' 'I have been meaning to for a long while, but so many things were happening and I had not time to think about it quietly

He was standing outside her curtains-of-state This answer was not spoken directly to him, but was brought by Omyobu, her maid Within the curtains he knew that her favourites were gathered round her He could hear a faint, reiterated rustling, as though a company of silent mourners were swaying in inconsolable grief How well he understood their utter despair! From the hanging incense-burner behind her curtain-of-state there rose a heavy perfume of *kurobo*,[2] carried through the room by the fierce snow-wind which had blown since dusk, and with it mingled a faint remnant of the holy incense which the priests had that day been burning in the house Add to this the princely scent which

[1] The bishop of the Enryakuji on Mount Hie.

[2] An incense made of sandal-wood, cloves, etc.

Genji wore and you may well imagine that the night air was fragrant as the winds of Paradise

A messenger came from the Heir Apparent's household There rose before her mind the memory of the child's pretty speeches and ways, that last morning in the Palace It was more than she could bear, and lest she should break down altogether she left the message unanswered Seeing the messenger go away empty-handed, Genji wrote a few words on her behalf It was now time for him to take his leave, but both he and she were in a state of agitation which they could barely control, and he dared not utter the thoughts that were at that moment passing through his mind Through Omyobu he sent her this poem 'Though fain I too would seek that stainless tract whither the moon has climbed, yet how unguided in the darkness should those small feet not go astray?'[1] He spoke of his regret at the step she had taken, but only in formal terms, for he knew that she was not alone Of the tumultuous thoughts which surged through his brain there was not one to which he could at such a time give vent And answer came 'Though now upon life and all its sorrow I have looked my last, yet are there certain earthly things I shall not soon forget' 'The stain of the world clings fast to me' This and much else was in the answer, but he guessed that a great part of it had been supplied by those who were about her

There was no more to be done, and heavy at heart he left the house At the Nijo-in he lay alone upon his bed, never once closing his eyes He was now firmly convinced that if it were not for his duty to Fujitsubo's son he would certainly retire from the world The late Emperor had hoped that by investing Lady Fujitsubo with definite public rank he would assure the boy's future But now, by becoming a nun, she had upset all his calculations, for it was almost certain that she would not continue to hold her present position in the State Were Genji also now to desert the child, what would become of him? These were the thoughts that still perplexed him when morning came He remembered that Fujitsubo would now have to provide herself with such articles as appertain to a nun's life In this matter at least he could assist her, and he hastened to send to her palace before the end of the year a suitable provision of rosaries, prayer-desks and the like He heard that Omyobu also had renounced the world that she might keep her mistress company, and to this gentlewoman he sent a message of affectionate condolence In this letter he touched on many incidents of their common past, and a correspondence ensued, of such length that it would not be possible to record it As was natural on so affecting an occasion many poems were

[1] I should like to become a priest, but I must stay and look after the child There is an allusion to the famous poem on the death of a child 'Because in Death's dark land he will not know the way, I will make offerings to the Guardian of Souls that on his shoulders he may carry him'

exchanged between them, and as these were of considerable merit I regret that they must be omitted

Now that Fujitsubo had definitely embraced the religious life she felt that there was less impropriety in her receiving him, and on several occasions she no longer conversed through an intermediary, but actually admitted him to her presence His feelings towards her were absolutely unchanged, but now that there could be no question of intimacy between them he could face her with some degree of tranquillity

The close of that year ended the period of Court mourning, and the New Year was celebrated at the Palace with the usual festivities, including the Imperial Banquet and the Dance Songs [1] But of these things no echo reached Fujitsubo's house Day after day was spent in prayers, penances and meditations on the life to come, and he who had been at once her comfort and despair no longer found any place in her thoughts She continued to use the old palace-chapel for her daily observances, but for the celebration of more elaborate rites she built a new chapel in front of the west wing, but at some distance from the house

He visited her on New Year's Day Nowhere was there a sign of renewal or rejoicing The house was very quiet and seemed almost deserted Here and there stood a few of her most devoted retainers, looking (or was it only his fancy?) very downcast and depressed Of the usual New Year offerings from the Palace only the white horse [2] had this year arrived The gentlewomen of the house could not but remember how at this season in former years princes and courtiers had thronged these halls Now they drove straight past, making one and all for the great palace in the next Ward [3]

This was under the circumstances perfectly natural and Fujitsubo had fully expected it Yet when it happened she became very depressed But now the arrival of one whom she would not have exchanged for a thousand visitors put all this chagrin out of her head

So great were the changes that had taken place since he was last in her room that for a while he could do nothing but stare about him in bewilderment

The canopy of her daïs and the hangings of her screen-of-state were now of dark blue, here and there behind the curtains he caught a glimpse of light grey and jasmine-coloured sleeves The effect was not displeasing and he would gladly have studied it more closely

The ice on the lake was just beginning to break up The willows on the banks showed a faint tinge of green, they at least remembered

[1] Performed by girls on the 16th day and by young men on the 14th and 15th days of the first month.

[2] Twenty-one white horses were offered to the Emperor on the 7th day, and afterwards distributed by him among members of his family

[3] The residence of the Minister of the Right, Kokiden's father

that a new season had begun These and other portents of the approaching spring he watched till it grew dark From behind the curtains Fujitsubo gazed at him as he sat singing softly to himself the song 'Happy the fisher-folk [1] that dwell . .', she thought that in all the world there could be no one so beautiful

She remained all the while behind her curtains, but a great part of the room was taken up by images and altars, so that she was obliged to let him sit very near the daïs and he did not feel wholly cut off from her

A number of elderly nuns were installed at her side, and fearing lest in their presence his parting words might betray too great an emotion he stole in silence from the room. 'What a fine gentleman he has grown up to be!' they exclaimed after Genji's departure 'One might have thought that it would have spoiled him always having things his own way as he did in his Father's time, and being first in everything How little can he then have guessed that he would ever come to know the world's ingratitude! But you can see that he bears his troubles manfully, though there is a graver look in his face now than there was in the old days Poor gentleman, it makes one's heart bleed to see him so sad!' So the old ladies whispered together, shaking their heads and calling blessings upon him, while to Fujitsubo herself came many painful recollections

It was the time when the yearly distribution of honours took place Fujitsubo's kinsmen and retainers were entirely passed over This was quite natural and she did not resent it, but she noticed that even the usual bounties were withheld, and promotions which had always been taken as a matter of course were in many cases not granted There was a great deal of disappointment and annoyance Moreover on the ground that she would shortly have to give up her official rank and would not then be able to maintain so large an establishment,[2] many other changes and readjustments were made

All this she had expected It was indeed the inevitable consequence of her retirement from secular life, but when she saw her former pensioners and retainers going about with dismal faces and in many instances left without proper support, she was very much upset But above all her thoughts were centered on one persistent desire, that, even though she herself should come to utter ruin, the Heir Apparent might in due course come peacefully to the Throne, and it was to this end that she caused perpetual services to be celebrated in the chapel attached to her house

To what secret peril was the young prince's life exposed? Those who were called upon to officiate at these incessant litanies could themselves form no conjecture But her own prayers were more explicit Again and again she called upon the Buddha to save the young prince from the ruin which would immediately overtake him should the true story of

[1] *Ama*, 'fishermen,' also means 'nun'

[2] The State grant allowed to an ex-Empress was sufficient to maintain 2,000 dependants

his birth be known, and she prayed with all her heart that, if retribution must needs come, it might fall upon herself rather than upon the child These prayers had at least the effect of bringing her to a calmer state of mind Genji, for his part, regarded them as by no means superfluous

His own servants and retainers had in the recent distribution of honours fared little better than hers and were in very ill humour Thoroughly discontented with the march of public affairs both they and their master henceforward appeared but seldom at Court About this time the Minister of the Left decided to send in his resignation The changes in his home as well as the decline of his own political influence had recently told very much upon his spirit and he no longer felt equal to his charge The Emperor remembered the unbounded confidence which his father had placed in this Minister s sagacity, and how in his last hours the old Emperor had said that to dispense with such a man s counsel must needs endanger the security of the Throne He was therefore very reluctant to give this resignation effect and for a while attempted to ignore it But the Minister stuck to his point and, though his retirement had not been formally accepted, no longer appeared at Court

Henceforward the whole government of the country fell into the hands of a single family, that of Kokiden s father, the Minister of the Right The powerful influence of the retired Minister had indeed been the last check upon the complete dominance of this ascendant faction, and his withdrawal from public affairs was regarded with grave apprehension both by the young Emperor himself and by all right-thinking people

The late Minister's sons, who had hitherto enjoyed a consideration in the world somewhat beyond that to which their own abilities would have entitled them, were mortified to discover that they could no longer have everything their own way The most crestfallen of them all was To no Chujo, who through his connection[1] with the family which was now dominant, might have been expected to fare rather better than the rest Unfortunately he was still on very bad terms with his wife, and his neglect of her had deeply offended the Minister, who no longer received Chujo as a son-in-law No doubt as a punishment for his misdemeanour, his name had been altogether omitted from the list of New Year honours and promotions Such things however did not much interest him and he was not nearly so disappointed as the Minister had hoped He could indeed hardly expect to enjoy much influence when even Genji's fortunes were so obviously on the decline, and leaving public business to look after itself he would go off to Genji's palace, where the two of them spent the time in the study of music and letters Often they would remind one another of the many absurd exploits in which they had once been rivals, and even in their present quiet pursuits the old rivalry continued Genji was much occupied with the readings of Holy Scripture

[1] His wife was the fourth daughter of the Minister of the Right

which are appointed for spring and autumn, and with the performance of various other annual observances [1] He also gathered round him a number of scholars who seemed, no doubt owing to the present state of public affairs, to be out of employment, and put them to writing Chinese poems and essays He also spent many hours in playing literary games such as rhyme-covering and the like He soon became so interested in these trivial pursuits that for a month on end he never once set foot in the palace This incivility, together with his enthusiasm for what were considered frivolous and undignified occupations, was commented upon very unfavourably in many quarters

The summer rains had set in, and one day when a steady downpour made other amusements impossible Chujo arrived at the palace with a great pile of books Genji too opened his library, and after exploring several cases which had not been unlocked for a long time he produced some very remarkable collections of ancient Chinese poetry There happened to be with him that day several friends who, though they were not scholars by profession, had a very considerable knowledge of such matters From among these gentlemen and the learned doctors who were present Genji picked sides, and ranging them to left and right of the room instituted a grand competition with very handsome prizes In the course of the rhyme-covering contests they came across some most unusual and puzzling rhyme-words, and even well-known scholars were occasionally at a loss More than once Genji was able to come to their rescue They were astonished at his knowledge How, they wondered, did he find time to pick up so many accomplishments? There seemed to be no art or pastime in which he did not show the same marvellous proficiency The 'right' won easily and it fell to Chujo's lot to provide the winners with a feast This took place on the following day It was not an elaborate affair, but consisted of a collation served in elegant luncheon boxes

Various prizes were also given and when this was over the doctors of literature were again called upon to divert the company with essays The rose-trees at the foot of the steps were in full bloom and coming as they did in a somewhat dull season, when the brightness of spring is over and the riot of autumn colours has not yet begun, these flowers gave Genji an especial pleasure

Chujo's son, a little boy of eight or nine who had only that year been introduced at Court, was present that day He sang well and could play the *sho* Genji was very fond of him and they used often to practise together He was Chujo's second son by his wife, the sister of Kokiden, and as grandson of the all-powerful Minister of the Right he was treated by everyone at Court with great deference But he was also not only handsome but extremely intelligent, and in the present company his

[1] Such as Buddha's birthday, Maya's birthday, Buddha's Nirvana day, etc.

performance received so much encouragement that he was soon singing that rather noisy song the *Ballad of Takasago*, which he got through with great credit and applause As a reward for this song Genji laid his own cloak on the boy s shoulders, and as he sat flushed with the excitement of the party and wearing only an unlined shirt of thin gauze that showed the delicate texture of his skin beneath, the old doctors of literature stared at him with delight and amazement from the distant part of the room where they had respectfully taken up their stand, and many of them shed tears of wonder and delight At the close of the stanza May I be there where lilies bloom, Chujo picked up the wine-bowl and handed it to Genji, reciting as he did so the poem 'Not the first rose, that but this morning opened on the tree, with thy fair face would I compare' Laughing, Genji took the cup and whispered the poem 'Their time they knew not, the rose-buds that today unclosed For all their fragrance and their freshness the summer rains have washed away' Then Chujo, who had become somewhat excited, accused Genji of toying with the wine-bowl and forced him to drink what he considered a proper draught

Much else happened before the banquet closed But to describe in detail all that was said and done on an occasion such as this would, I think, be very unfair to the persons concerned I will therefore observe Tsurayuki s warning and refrain from tiring you with any further particulars Suffice it to say that the company made a great many poems both in Chinese and Japanese, all of them containing flattering references to their host, and Genji soon began to feel in very good humour with himself He could not help thinking of the passage in Chinese history where the Duke of Chou boasts that he is the son of King Wen and the brother of King Wu' These were very good names and fitted his case exactly 'Son of King Wen, brother of King Wu' Suddenly, as he murmured these words, he remembered that the Chinese duke had added and uncle of King Ch'eng' But here he was on difficult ground, something seemed to have gone wrong with the parallel The King Ch eng [1] of his case, though something more than a nephew, was still a very long way from being a king!

Prince Sochi no Miya [2] frequently joined these gatherings, and as he was not only a man of taste and fashion but also an excellent performer on various instruments, his presence added greatly to the pleasure of the company

About this time Princess Oborozuki left the Court for a while and went to stay at her father s house She had for some time been suffering from slight attacks of malaria and it was thought that she could be treated for this illness more conveniently at her home than amid the bustle of the Court Priests were summoned and their incantations were at once

[1] The Heir Apparent, Genji's son by Fujitsubo, supposed to be the old Emperor's child

[2] One of Genji's stepbrothers

effective Among the many people who wrote to congratulate her upon her recovery Genji was naturally one, and as both of them happened for the moment to have a good deal of time on their hands, a correspondence ensued which led in the end to his paying her a somewhat reluctant visit This was followed by others and he was soon seeing her every night She was well made, tending even to plumpness, so that the slight pallor and thinness which had ensued from her recent indisposition only enhanced her charm It happened that at the time Kokiden was also staying in the house This made Genji's visits particularly imprudent, but it was just this added risk which attracted him and induced him to repeat them It was not of course long before several inmates of the house became aware that something of this kind was going on, but they were too frightened of Kokiden to say anything to her about it, nor had the Minister of the Right any suspicion whatever

One night when Genji was with her a violent storm suddenly came on The rain fell in such torrential floods as to be quite alarming and just after midnight tremendous crashes of thunder began Soon the whole place was astir The young princes and Kokiden's gentlemen-in-attendance seemed to be wandering all over the house, while the ladies-in-waiting, terrified by the thunderstorm, were clinging to one another hysterically in the passage just outside There were people everywhere and Genji began to wonder how he was ever going to escape

It was now broad daylight Oborozuki's maids had entered the room and seemed to be crowding round the great curtained bed Genji was appalled by the situation Among these ladies there were two who knew the secret, but they quite lost their heads in this emergency and were unable to be of any use The thunderstorm was over and the rain was now less violent The Minister was now up and about He first paid his elder daughter a visit, and then, just at a moment when the rain was falling rather heavily, stepped lightly and briskly into Oborozuki's room The rain was making such a noise that they did not hear him and it was not till a hand was thrust through the bed-curtains that they realized what had happened 'We have had a very bad thunderstorm,' he said, pulling the curtain slightly aside as he spoke 'I thought of you in the night and had half a mind to come round and see how you were getting on, but somehow or other I didn't Your brothers were on duty at the Palace last night Just fancy ' So he went on, speaking in an excited inconsequent manner which, even in his present quandary, Genji could not help contrasting with the gravity and good sense of that other Minister, Aoi's father, and he smiled to himself Really if he had so much to say he had better come right inside and have done with it Oborozuki, determined to screen her lover if she could, now crept to the edge of the bed and issued cautiously from between the curtains Her face was so flushed and she looked so very ill at ease that her father was quite alarmed

What have you been doing?' he said, 'you are not looking at all well I am afraid we stopped the treatment too soon These attacks are very troublesome to get rid of ' As he spoke his eye suddenly fell upon a man's pale violet-coloured belt that had got mixed up with her clothes, and at the same time he noticed a piece of paper with writing upon it lying near the bed How did these things come to be in his daughter's room? Whose is this?' he asked, pointing at the paper 'I think you had better give it to me, it may be something important I shall probably know the writing ' She looked where he was pointing Yes, there was Genji's paper lying conspicuously upon the floor Were there no means of heading her father away from it? She could think of none and did not attempt to answer his question It was evident that she was acutely embarrassed, and even though she was his own child he ought to have remembered that she was now a lady of some consequence, whose feelings, however reprehensible might be her conduct, he was bound in some measure to respect Unfortunately there was not in his nature a particle either of moderation or restraint He stooped to pick up the paper, and as he did so, without the slightest hesitation or compunction he opened the bed-curtains and peered right in There full length upon the bed and apparently quite at his ease lolled a charming young man, who when the curtain stirred merely rolled quietly over and hid his face in the pillows Enraged, astonished as the Minister was, even he had not quite the courage to press the discovery home Blind with fury he thrust the paper into his pocket and rushed out of the room

Genji was indeed extremely concerned about the consequences of this incident, coming as it did in the wake of so many other indiscretions But his first care was to comfort his companion, which he did as best he could

Self-restraint had never been a characteristic of the lady's father and now that he was getting old he found it more than ever impossible to keep anything to himself It was therefore only to be expected that without considering the consequences or turning the matter over in his mind for a single moment, he went and told the whole story to his daughter Kokiden

'Well, there it is,' he wound up, 'and you will not be surprised to hear that the handwriting was that of no less a person than Prince Genji! Of course I know quite well that this affair has been going on for a long time A good deal of licence is allowed to people in his position and unfortunately I was weak-minded enough to let the matter pass Then came the death of his wife, and it seemed certain that he would now legitimize his relations with your sister Instead of doing so he suddenly abandoned her in the most heartless and disgraceful fashion I was very uneasy about what had happened, but there was nothing to do except to make the best of a bad business, and I sent her to Court, fully trusting that His Majesty

would not regard this one escapade as a fatal objection Unfortunately he looked upon her as still more or less betrothed to Genji and left her severely alone One would have thought she had suffered enough already! It is really disgusting, after what has happened, that he should have the face to start the thing all over again You may say that a young man is bound to have his fling, but this Prince Genji goes a great deal too far I hear that he has been behaving very badly with the Vestal Virgin of Kamo, carrying on a secret correspondence with her, and according to some people going a good deal further than that If he has no respect for her holy calling he might at least realize that this kind of thing does his own reputation no good How anyone holding an important and responsible position in the State can bring himself to behave in this way I simply cannot imagine ' Kokiden had always detested Genji and she now burst out angrily 'They call him their Emperor, but from the very beginning they have gone out of their way to heap every sort of indignity upon him Even before he came to the Throne they had already begun to treat him abominably Remember how the Minister of the Left behaved about the marriage of his cherished only daughter! He insisted forsooth in giving her to this wretched Prince Genji instead of to my son, though my boy was older and had already been proclaimed Heir Apparent, while Genji did not count as a member of the royal family at all and was so young that the wedding took place on the same day as his Initiation! We too, you may remember, were planning to give my sister to Genji when we were outwitted by this hasty wedding, of which till the last minute no one was given the slightest intimation Everyone was indeed astonished that we should allow ourselves to be tricked in this unscrupulous fashion We should all much have preferred to see her married to this young man, but when that fell through there was nothing for it but to do the best we could for her at Court It is really extraordinary that after all the painful experiences she has had with this wretch she should still imagine she can make a permanent conquest of him I have no doubt he is treating the Vestal Virgin in just the same way, and his behaviour in this matter, as indeed in many others, is causing His Majesty the greatest anxiety, which is not to be wondered at, seeing that the heir to the Throne is entirely in this Prince Genji's hands '

She went on in this strain for so long and with so much rancour that her father, who never remained angry for more than a short time, soon began to sympathize with Genji rather than with her and was sorry that he had mentioned the matter at all I think that for the present,' he said, 'you had better not speak of this to anyone, not even to His Majesty your son Prince Genji s conduct is certainly outrageous, but you are very fond of your sister and you cannot denounce him without getting her too into trouble Leave the matter to me I intend to speak to her very seriously, and if this has no effect, then we shall have done our

best and she must take the consequences ' But it was too late to mend matters, she was indeed only further exasperated by his attempt to conciliate her That Genji should have been carrying on this intrigue in her own house, and that too at a time when he knew she was in residence, showed an impudent contempt for her authority which deeply wounded her, and all that she now thought of was how best she might use this discovery to his undoing

CHAPTER II

The Village of Falling Flowers

THE outlook was very black Not only were his private affairs in a state of grievous entanglement, but also his position at Court was being made every day more difficult So despondent did he become that he had serious thoughts of giving everything up and quitting the Capital But this was by no means easy now that so many persons were dependent upon him For example there was Lady Reikeiden, a lady of his father's Court She had no children to look after her and had, since the old Emperor's death, been living in very bad circumstances But for Genji's assistance she would never have pulled through With her lived a sister much younger than herself with whom he had once had a fugitive affair when both of them were living at the Palace He never forgot anyone to whom he had stood, even for the briefest period, in such a relation as this Their friendship had never been resumed, but he had reason to suppose that on her side the attachment was still as strong as ever During the period of emotional tumult through which he had just passed he had many times brooded upon his relations with this lady At last he felt that he could neglect her no longer, and the rains of the fifth month having given place to an enchanting spell of fine warm weather, he set out for her sister s house He went without any outriders and took care that there should be nothing to distinguish his coach from that of an ordinary individual As he was nearing the Middle River he noticed a small house standing amid clumps of trees There came from it the sound of someone playing the zithern, a well-made instrument, so it seemed, and tuned to the eastern mode [1] It was being excellently played The house was quite near the highway and Genji, alighting for a moment from the carriage, stood near the gate to listen Peeping inside he saw a great laurel-tree quavering in the wind It reminded him of that Kamo festival long ago, when the dancers had nodded their garlands of laurel and sun-flower [2] Something about the place interested him, seemed even to be vaguely familiar Suddenly he remembered that this was a house which he had once visited a long while before His heart beat fast But it had all happened too long ago He felt shy of announcing himself All the same, it seemed a pity to pass the house without a word, and for a while he stood hesitating Just when he was about to drive away, a cuckoo flew by Somehow its note seemed to be an invitation to him to stay, and turning his chariot

[1] I e. as a *wagon* or Japanese zithern, not in the Chinese style

[2] See Part I, p 158

he composed the following poem, which he gave into Koremitsu's hands 'Hark to the cuckoo's song! Who could not but revisit the hedge-row of this house where once he sung before?' There seemed to be several people sitting together in a room on the left This must be the lady's own apartment Several of the voices Koremitsu thought he could remember having heard before He made a slight noise to attract attention and delivered the poem He could hear it being discussed within by a number of young women who seemed somewhat puzzled by it Presently a reply was brought 'That to my garden Cuckoo has returned, his song proclaims But how, pray, should I see him, caged behind the summer rain?' Koremitsu made sure that they were only pretending not to know who their visitor was The lady indeed, though she hid her feelings from the rest, was very loath to send Koremitsu away with this hollow message But so long a time had elapsed since her adventure with Genji that she may very well have had good reasons for doing so Suddenly, as he drove away, there came into his mind a picture of this lady dancing with four others at the Palace Yes, that was who she was She had been one of the Gosechi dancers one winter long ago How much he had admired her! And for a moment he felt about her exactly as he had felt before It was this strange capacity of his for re-creating in its full intensity an emotion suspended for months or even years and overlaid by a thousand intervening distractions, that gained for him, faithless though he was, so large a number of persistent admirers

At last he arrived at Lady Reikeiden's house Noting that it wore an aspect fully as cheerless and deserted as he had feared, he hastened at once to the elder lady's room They talked much of old times and the night was soon far advanced It was the twentieth day and the moon had now risen, but so tall were the surrounding trees that the garden still looked dark and gloomy as before The lady herself sat in a room pervaded by the fragrance of orange-trees She was no longer young, but still preserved much dignity and charm Though she had never been singled out as a particular favourite with the late Emperor, they had been on very familiar terms and she was able to entertain Genji with many intimate recollections of his father s life and habits Indeed so vivid a picture of those old days soon rose before his mind that the tears came into his eyes A cuckoo was suddenly heard in the garden outside, perhaps the very same that had sung when he was waiting at the gate of the little house, its note at any rate seemed strangely similar Had it followed him? Pleased with this idea he sang softly to himself the old song, Knows the cuckoo when he sings?' Presently he handed to her this poem

' It is the scent of orange-trees that draws the cuckoo to the village of falling flowers " I knew you would remind me of many things that I would not gladly forget, that is why I made my way straight to your room Though life at Court gives me much both to think of and to feel,

there are often times when I should like to have about me people who would talk of the past, and now that the world has given its allegiance to new powers such people are hard to find But if I, amid the bustle of the town, feel this deprivation, how much the more must you in your long hours of tedious inactivity!'

His prospects had indeed changed very much for the worse since she had first known him, and he certainly seemed to feel those changes deeply But if her heart went out to him it was perhaps rather because of his youth and beauty than because she regarded his position in the world as calling for any particular commiseration She answered him with the poem To these wild gardens and abandoned halls only the scent of orange-trees could draw the traveller's steps!' She said no more and he took his leave Yes, despite the fact that greater beauties had overshadowed her at his father's Court, this lady had a singular charm and distinction of her own

Her sister was living in the western wing He did not hide from her that he was only calling upon her on his way from Lady Reikeiden's rooms But in her delight at his sudden arrival and her surprise at seeing him under circumstances so different she forgot to take offence either at his having visited her sister first or having taken so long in making up his mind to come at all. The time that they spent together was in every way successful and agreeable, and she can scarcely have thought that he did not care for her

It was often thus with those whom he met only in this casual way Being women of character and position they had no false pride and saw that it was worth while to take what they could get Thus without any ill will on either side concerning the future or the past they would enjoy the pleasure of each other's company, and so part However, if by chance anyone resented this kind of treatment and cooled towards him, *Genji* was never in the least surprised, for though, as far as feelings went, perfectly constant himself, he had long ago learnt that such constancy was very unusual The lady in the little house by the road-side was clearly an example of the latter class, she had resented the infrequence of his visits and no longer felt disposed to receive him

CHAPTER III

Exile at Suma

THE intrigue against him was becoming every day more formidable It was evident that he could not in any case go on living much longer where he was, and by a voluntary withdrawal he might well get off more lightly than if he merely allowed events to take their course

There was Suma It might not be such a bad place to choose There had indeed once been some houses there, but it was now a long way to the nearest village and the coast wore a very deserted aspect Apart from a few fishermen s huts there was not anywhere a sign of life This did not matter, for a thickly populated, noisy place was not at all what he wanted, but even Suma was a terribly long way from the Capital, and the prospect of being separated from all those whose society he liked best was not at all inviting His life hitherto had been one long series of disasters As for the future, it did not bear thinking of! Clearly the world held in store for him nothing but disappointment and vexation But no sooner had he proved to himself convincingly that he was glad to leave the Capital than he began to recollect a thousand reasons for remaining in it Above all, he could not imagine what would become of Murasaki if he were to leave her Even when for one reason or another he was obliged to pass a few days away from his palace, he spent so much of the time wondering how she was getting on without him that he never really enjoyed himself and in the end dreaded even these short absences almost as much as she did Now he was going away not for a fixed number of days or even years, but for a huge, incalculable period of time, perhaps (for who knew what might not happen either to him or her?) for ever The thought that he might never see her again was unendurable and he began to devise a scheme for hiding her in his retinue and secretly taking her with him He soon saw however that this was quite impracticable First there was the difficult sea-journey, and then, at Suma, the total lack of amusements and society The waves and winds of that desolate shore would make poor companions for one used to the gaieties of a fashionable house It would moreover be utterly impossible in such a place to make adequate provision for the comfort of a fastidious and delicately-nurtured lady Her presence would soon involve him in all sorts of difficulties and anxieties She herself felt that she would rather face every danger, every hardship, than be left behind at the Nijo-in, and that he should doubt her courage wounded her deeply

The ladies at the 'village of falling flowers,' though in any case they

saw him but seldom, were dismayed at the news of his departure, not for personal reasons only, but also because they had come to depend in numerous ways on his patronage and support Many others whose acquaintance with him was very slight, were, though they would not have confessed it, shattered at the prospect of his disappearance from the Court The abbess [1] herself feared that if she showed him any open mark of sympathy at this turn in his fortunes she would give new life to rumours which had already been used against him by his enemies But from the time when his decision was first announced she contrived to send him constant secret messages He could not help reflecting with some bitterness that she might sometimes have shown an equal concern while it was still possible for her to console him in more concrete ways But it seemed to be fated that throughout all this long relationship each, however well disposed, should only cause torment to the other He left the City about the twentieth day of the third month The date of his departure had not been previously disclosed and he left his palace very quietly, accompanied only by some seven or eight intimate retainers He did not even send formal letters of farewell but only hasty and secret messages to a few of those whom he loved best, telling them in such words as came to him at the moment what pain it cost him to leave them Those notes were written under the stress of deep emotion and would doubtless interest the reader, but though some of them were read to me at the time, I was myself in so distracted a state of mind that I cannot accurately recall them Two or three days before his departure he paid a secret visit to Aoi's father He came in a rattan-coach such as women use, and heavily disguised When they saw that it was indeed Prince Genji who had stepped out of this humble equipage the people at the Great Hall could hardly believe that this was not some strange dream Aoi's old room wore a dismal and deserted air, but the nurses of his little boy and such of Aoi's servants as were still in the house soon heard the news of his unexpected arrival and came bustling from the women's quarters to gaze at him and pay him their respects Even the new young servants who had not seen him before and had no reason to take his affairs particularly to heart were deeply moved at this farewell visit, which brought home to them so vividly the evanescence of human grandeurs The little prince recognized him and at once ran up to him in the prettiest and most confiding way This delighted Genji, taking the child on his knee he played with it so charmingly that the ladies could hardly contain their emotion Presently the old Minister arrived 'I have often meant,' he said, 'during these last months when you have been living so much at home, to come round and talk over with you various small matters connected with the past, but first I was ill and for a long time could not attend to my duties, and then at last my resignation was definitely accepted Now I am merely

[1] Fujitsubo

a private person, and I have been afraid that if I came to see you it would be said that it must be to promote some personal intrigue that I was bestirring my aged bones As far as I am concerned I am out of it all, and have really nothing to be afraid of But these new people are very suspicious and one cannot be too careful I am distressed beyond measure that you should be obliged to take the course which you are now contemplating, I would gladly not have lived to witness such a day These are bad times, and I fully expected to see a great deal of mischief done to the country But I confess I did not foresee that you would find yourself in such a situation as this, and I am heart-broken about it, utterly heart-broken ' 'We are told,' answered Genji, that everything which happens to us in this life is the result of our conduct in some previous existence If this is to be taken literally I suppose I must now accept the fact that in a previous incarnation I must have misbehaved myself in some way It is clear, at any rate, that I am in bad odour at Court, though, seeing that they have not thought it necessary to deprive me of my various offices and titles, they cannot have very much against me But when the Government has shown that it mistrusts a man, he is generally considered much to blame if he continues to flaunt himself at Court as though nothing were amiss I could cite many instances in the history both of our own and other countries But distant banishment, the penalty which I hear is contemplated in my case, has never been decreed except as the penalty of scandalous and open misdemeanour My conscience is of course perfectly clear, but I see that it would be very dangerous to sit down and await events I have therefore decided to withdraw from the Capital, lest some worse humiliation should befall me ' He gave the Minister many further details of his proposed flight The old man replied with a multitude of reminiscences, particularly of the late Emperor, with anecdotes illustrating his opinions and policies Each time that Genji tried to go his father-in-law gripped his sleeve and began a new story He was indeed himself deeply moved by these stories of old days, as also by the pretty behaviour of his little son, who while they were talking of policies and grave affairs constantly ran up to one or the other with his absurd, confiding prattle The Minister continued Though the loss of my dear daughter is a sorrow from which to my dying day I shall not recover, I find myself now quite thankful that she did not live to see these dreadful days Poor girl, she would have suffered terribly What a nightmare it all is! More than anything else I am distressed that my grandson here should be left with us elderly people and that for months or even years to come you will be quite cut off from him

'As you say, exile has hitherto been reserved as a punishment for particularly grave offences There have indeed been many cases both here and in China of innocent persons being condemned to banishment, but always in consequence of some false charge being made against them But against

you a threat of exile seems to have been made without any cause being alleged I cannot understand it '

To no Chujo now joined them and wine was served It was very late, but Genji showed no signs of going, and presently all the gentlewomen of the household collected round him and made him tell them stories There was one among them, Chunagon by name, who, though she never spoke of it, had always cared for Genji far more deeply than did any of her companions She now sat sad and thoughtful waiting to say something to him but unable to think of anything to say He noticed this and was very sorry for her When all the rest had gone to their rooms he kept her by him and talked to her for a long while It may perhaps have been for her sake that he stayed so long Dawn was beginning to come into the sky and the moon, which had not long risen, darted its light among the blossoms of the garden trees, now just beyond their prime In the courtyard leafy branches cast delicate half-shadows upon the floor, and thin wreaths of cloud sank through the air till they met the first flicker of the white grass-mists which, scarcely perceptible, now quivered in the growing light

He hung over the balustrade outside the corner room and for a while gazed in silence at this scene, which transcended even the beauty of an autumn night Chunagon, that she might watch him go, had opened the main door and stood holding it back I shall return,' Genji said, 'and we shall surely meet again Though indeed, when I think about it, I can find no reason to suppose that I shall ever be recalled Oh, why did I not make haste to know you in better days, when it would have been so easy for us to meet?' She wept but made no answer

Presently Aoi's mother sent a message by Saisho, the little prince's nurse 'There are many things that I want to talk over with you, but my mind is nowadays so clouded and confused that I hesitate to send for you It is kind of you to have paid us so long a visit and I would ask you to come to me, but I fear that to talk with you would remind me too much of all that is now so changed However, pray do not leave the house till your poor little son is awake ' He answered with the poem 'To a shore I go where the tapering smoke of salt-kilns shall remind me of the smoke that loitered by her pyre ' He wrote no letter to go with the poem, but turning to the nurse he said It is sad at all times to leave one's friends at dawn How much the more for one such as I, who goes never to return!' 'Indeed,' she answered, '' farewell'' is a monster among words, and never yet sounded kindly in any ear. But seldom can this word have had so sinister an import as to all of us on this unhappy morning '

Touched by her concern at his departure he felt that he must give her what she evidently expected — some further message for her mistress, and he wrote 'There is much that I should like to say, but after all you will have little difficulty in imagining for yourself the perplexity and

despair into which my present situation has plunged me I should indeed dearly like to see the little prince before I go But I fear that the sight of him might weaken my resolution to forsake the fleeting world, and therefore I must force myself to leave this house without further delay '

The whole household was now awake and everyone was on the watch to see him start The moon shone red at the edge of the sky, and in its strange light he looked so lovely, yet so sad and thoughtful, that the hearts of wolves and tigers, nay of very demons, would have melted at the sight of him It may be imagined then with what feelings those gentlewomen watched him drive away, many of whom had known and loved him since he was a child But I had forgotten to say that Aoi's mother replied with the poem 'Seek not another sky, but if you love her,[1] stay beneath these clouds with which her soul is blent ' When he reached his own palace he found that none of the gentlewomen there had slept a wink They were sitting a few here, a few there, in frightened groups, looking as though they would never lift their heads again Those officers of his household and personal retainers who had been chosen to go with him to Suma were busy preparing for their departure or saying good-bye to their friends, so that the retainers' hall was absolutely deserted, nor had the gentlewomen whom he was leaving behind dared to present themselves on the occasion of his departure, for they knew that any demonstration of good will towards an enemy of those in power would be remembered against them by the Government So that instead of his doors being thronged, as once they had been, by a continual multitude of horsemen and carriages, he found them that morning utterly deserted and realized with bitterness how frail is the fabric of worldly power Already his great guest-tables, pushed against the wall, were looking tarnished and dusty, the guest-mats were rolled up and stowed away in corners. If the house looked like this now, what sort of spectacle he wondered would it present when he had been absent for a few months?

On reaching the western wing he found the partition door still open Murasaki had sat there watching till dawn Some of the little boys who waited upon her were sleeping on the verandah Hearing him coming they now shook themselves and rose with a clatter It was a pleasant sight to see them pattering about in their little pages' costumes, but now he watched them with a pang at his heart, for he could not help remembering that while he was away they would grow up into men and in the end have to seek service elsewhere And indeed during those days he looked with interest and regret on many things which had never engaged his attention before I am so sorry about last night,' he said 'One thing happened after another, and by the time I was free to come back it would not have been worth while. You must have thought it horrid of me Now that there is so little time left, I hate to be away from you at

[1] The dead Aoi, Genji's first wife

all But my departure from the Court naturally involves me in many painful duties, and it would be quite impossible for me to remain shut up here all the time There are other people, some of whom I may very likely never see again, who would think it unkind of me if I did not even bid them good-bye ' 'It is your going away that matters,' she answered, 'nothing else is of any consequence now ' She said no more, but sat staring before her in an attitude of the profoundest despair And indeed, as Genji realized, she had every possible reason to dread his departure Her father Prince Hyobukyo had never put himself out for her, and since Genji's disgrace he stopped writing and no longer even enquired about her She was ashamed of his worldly caution and dreaded lest others should notice it For her part she was resolved that, since he showed no interest in her, she would be the last to remind him of her existence Someone told her that her stepmother [1] went about saying 'This is what comes of trying to get on too quickly in the world Look how she has been punished! All her relatives expire and now her lover takes flight!' She was deeply distressed and felt that she could not ever communicate with her stepmother again There was indeed no one to whom she could turn for help, and her position was likely to be in every way unhappy and difficult 'I promise,' said Genji to comfort her, 'that if my exile seems likely to last for a considerable time, I will send for you to join me, even if I can offer you nothing better to live in than a hole in the rocks But it would be considered most improper for me to take you with me now People who are disapproved of by the Government are expected to creep about miserably in the dark, and if they try to make themselves happy and comfortable it is considered very wicked I have not of course done anything wrong, but my misfortune must certainly be due to some sin in a previous life, and I am sure that if I did anything so unusual as to take my lady into exile with me, fate would find some yet more cruel way to punish me for the presumption '

He then lay down and slept till noon Later in the day his half-brother Prince Sochi no Miya and To no Chujo called and offered to help him dress He reminded them that he had resigned his rank and they brought him a cloak of plain silk without any crest or badge This costume had an informal air which became him better than they had expected When he went to the mirror that his servants might do his hair he could not help noticing how thin his face had lately grown, and he said, 'What a fright I look! Can I really be such a skeleton as this? It is indeed a bad business if I am ' Murasaki, her eyes full of tears, came and peeped at the mirror To distract her he recited the poem 'Though I wander in strange lands and far away, in this mirror let me leave my image, that it may never quit your side ' That, yes, even so little as that, would comfort me, if indeed this mirror might hold the image of your distant face ' So she

[1] Hyobukyo's wife Murasaki was his illegitimate daughter

answered, and without another word sank into a seat behind the roof-pillar, that her tears might not be seen His heart went out to her, and he felt at this moment that among all the women he had known she was indeed the most adorable

His stepbrother now fell to reminding him of scenes in their common childhood, and it was already growing dark when he left Genji's room The lady at the 'village of falling flowers' had written to him constantly since she heard the news of his approaching departure He knew that she had many reasons for dreading his absence and it seemed unfeeling not to pay her one more visit before he left But if he spent another evening away from his palace Murasaki would be very disappointed, and he therefore did not start till late in the night He went first to the room of Princess Reikeiden, who was flattered and delighted beyond measure that hers should be the only house to which he paid the honour of a farewell visit But what passed between them was not of sufficient interest to be recorded He remembered that it was only through his help and protection that she had managed to overcome the difficulties and anxieties of the last few years Now matters would go from bad to worse In the house nothing stirred The moon had risen and now shimmered faintly through the clouds The lake in front of the building was large and wild, and dense thickets of mountain-trees surrounded it He was just thinking that there could hardly in all the world be a lovelier, stranger place, when he remembered the rocky shore of Suma — a thousand times more forbidding, more inaccessible!

The younger sister had quite made up her mind that Genji was going to leave the house without visiting her, and she was all the more surprised and delighted when at last, more lovely than ever by moonlight and in the grave simplicity of his exile's dress, he stole into her room At once she crept towards the window and they stood together gazing at the moonlight They talked for a while, and found to their astonishment that it was nearly day How short the night has been, said Genji 'Yet even such a hasty meeting as this may never be ours again Why did I not know you better in all those years when it would have been so easy to meet? Never have such misfortunes befallen an innocent man before, nor ever will they again I go from torment to torment Listen' and he was beginning to recount to her the disasters and miscalculations of the past when the cock crowed, and fearing detection he hastened away

The moon was like last night, just on the point of setting, it seemed to him a symbol of his own declining fortunes Shining through the dark purple of her dress the moonlight had indeed, as in the old poem, the leaden look of those who weep,' and she recited the poem Though to the moonlight my sleeve but narrow lodging can afford, yet might it dwell there for ever and for ever, this radiance [1] of which my eyes can

[1] Genji

never tire' He saw that she was deeply moved by this parting and in pity sought to comfort her with the poem 'In its long journeying the moon at last shall meet a clearer sky, then heed not if for a while its light be dimmed' 'It is foolish,' he added, 'to spoil the present with tears for sorrows that are still to come,' and with that he hurried away, that he might be out of the house while it was still dark

At home he had a great many things to arrange before his departure First of all he had to give instructions concerning the upkeep of his palace to the few faithful retainers who had taken the risk of remaining in his service When these had at last all been assigned their functions, difficulties arose about some of the attendants who were to have gone with him into exile, and a fresh choice had to be made Then there was the business of deciding how much luggage he should take with him to his mountain fastness Some things were obviously indispensable, but even when he cut down his equipment to the barest possible necessities there were still all kinds of odds and ends, such as writing-materials, poems, Chinese books, which all had to be fitted into the right sort of boxes And then there was his zithern, he could not leave that behind But he took no large objects of furniture nor any of his more elaborate costumes, having resigned himself to the prospect of a completely bucolic existence Finally he had to explain to Murasaki all the arrangements he had made about the servants who were to stay behind, and a hundred other matters Into her charge too he put all the documents concerning his various estates and grazing-lands in different parts of the country. His granaries and storehouses he put into the keeping of the nurse Shonagon whose vigilance and reliability he had often noted, giving her the help of one or two trusted household officers And here again there were numerous arrangements to be made

With the gentlewomen of his palace he had never been on intimate terms But he kept them in a good humour by sending for them occasionally to talk with him, and he now summoned them all, saying to them 'I am afraid it will be rather dull here while I am away But if any of you care to stay in my service on the chance that I may one day return to the Court, which if I live long enough is indeed certain to happen sooner or later — please consider yourselves at the disposition of the Lady in the western wing' So saying he sent for all the other servants, high and low, and distributed suitable keepsakes among them

No one was forgotten, to the nurse of Aoi's little son and even to the servants at the 'village of falling flowers' he sent tokens of his appreciation, chosen, you may be sure, with the greatest taste and care

To Oborozuki, despite a certain reluctance, he wrote at last 'That after what happened between us you should have ceased to communicate with me was both natural and prudent But I would now have you know that the unparalleled ferocity of my enemies has at last driven me

from the Court "The rising torrent of your reproachful tears has carried me at last to the flood-mark of exile and disgrace" I cannot forget that this folly alone was the instrument of my undoing' There was some danger that the letter might fall into wrong hands before it reached its destination, and for that reason he made it brief and vague

The lady was heart-stricken, and though she strove to hide her tears, they flowed in a torrent that her sleeve was not broad enough to dam She sent him the poem Long ere I reach the tide of your return shall I, poor scum upon the river of tears, be vanished out of sight' She was weeping violently when she wrote it, and there were many blotches and mistakes, but her writing was at all times elegant and pleasing He would very much have liked to see her once more before his departure, and he many times thought of arranging it But she was too intimately connected with just those people who had been chiefly responsible for his undoing, and somewhat regretfully he put the idea aside

On the evening of the day before his departure he went to worship at his father's tomb on the Northern Hills As the moon did not rise till after midnight he found himself with time on his hands, and went first to visit the Abbess Fujitsubo She allowed him to stand close up to her curtain, and on this occasion spoke to him with her own mouth She naturally had many questions to talk over concerning the future of her son, which was now more than ever uncertain But apart from this, two people who had once lived on such terms as this prince and princess, could not now fail to have much to say to one another of a far more intimate and tender character He thought her every bit as charming and graceful as in old days, and this made him allude with bitterness to her heartless treatment of him But he remembered in time that her present state made any such complaints in the highest degree unseemly and inappropriate He was allowing his feelings to get out of hand, and withdrawing for a while into his own thoughts, he said at last 'This punishment has come upon me quite unexpectedly, and when I try to account for it, one possible explanation of a most alarming character presents itself to my mind I am not thinking of the danger to myself should a certain fact be known, but of the disastrous consequences of such a disclosure upon the career of the young prince, your son' The same possibility had of course occurred to her Her heart beat wildly, but she did not answer The many painful scenes in which he had recently taken part had broken his spirit and he now wept unrestrainedly I am going to the Royal Tombs,' he said at last 'Have you any message?' She answered with the poem He that was, is not, and he that is, now hides from the afflictions of the world What increase but of tears did my renunciation bring?'

At last the moon rose, and he set out Only five or six attendants were with him, men of low rank, but all of them deeply attached to him.

Genji himself rode on horseback like the rest This was quite natural on such an occasion, but his companions could not help contrasting this melancholy cavalcade with the splendours of his retinue in former days Among them the most downcast was Ukon,[1] who had formed part of his special escort on the occasion of the Kamo festival a few years ago This gentleman had since that time seen himself repeatedly passed over at the annual distribution of honours, and finally his name disappeared altogether from the lists Being without employment he had been obliged to go into service, and was now acting as Genji's groom As they rode along Ukon's eye lighted on the Lower Shrine of Kamo which lay quite near their road, and remembering that wonderful day of the festival he leapt from his horse and holding Genji's bridle he recited the verse. 'Well I remember how, crowned with golden flowers, we rode together on that glorious day! Little, alas, they heed their worshippers, the churlish gods that in the Shrine of Kamo dwell '

Genji well knew what was passing through the man's mind He remembered with indignation and pity how Ukon had been the gayest, the most resplendent figure among those who had ridden with him on that day Genji too alighted from his horse and turning his face towards the Shrine repeated this parting poem 'Thou who art called the Righter of Wrongs, to Thee I leave it to clear the name that stays behind me, now that I am driven from the fleeting haunts of men ' Ukon was a very impressionable youth, and this small episode thrilled and delighted him beyond measure

At last they reached the Tombs Genji's mind was full of long-forgotten images He saw his father seated on the throne in the days of his prime, the pattern of a kindly yet magnificent king Who could then have guessed that death would in an instant deface all memory of that good and glorious reign? Who could have foreseen that the wise policies which, with tears in his eyes, he had time and again commended to those about him, would in an instant be reversed, and even his dying wishes contemptuously cast aside? The path to the Royal Tomb was already overgrown with tall thick grass, so that in pressing his way along it he became soaked with dew The moon was hidden behind clouds, dank woods closed about him on either hand, such woods as give one the feeling one will never return through them alive When at last he knelt at the tomb, his father's face appeared so vividly before him that he turned cold with fear Then murmuring the verse How comes it that thy vanished image looms before me, though the bright moon, symbol of thy high fortunes, is hidden from my sight?' he set out towards the town, for it was now broad daylight On his return he sent a message to the Heir Apparent Omyobu had taken charge of the child since Fujitsubo's retirement and it was through her that Genji now addressed

[1] See Part I, pp 156 seq

his son 'I leave the City today That I have been unable to visit you once more is the greatest of my many vexations You indeed know better than I can tell what thoughts are mine in this extremity, and I beg you to commend me to your little master in such terms as you deem best' With this letter he enclosed a spray of withered cherry-blossoms to which was tied the poem 'When again shall I see the flowers of the City blossoming in Spring, I whom fortune has cast out upon the barren mountains of the shore?' This she passed on to the boy who, young though he was, quite well understood the import of the message, and when Omyobu added, 'It is hard at present to say when he will return .!' the young prince said sadly, 'Even when he stays away for a little while I miss him very much, and now that he is going a long way off I do not know how I shall get on. Please say this to him for me'

She was touched by the simplicity of his message Omyobu often called to mind all the misery which in past days had grown out of her mistress's disastrous attachment Scene after scene rose before her How happy they might both have been, if only And then she would remember that she and she alone had been the promoter of their ruin She had pleaded for Genji, arranged those fatal meetings! And a bitter remorse filled her soul She now sent the following reply 'His Highness dictated no formal answer. When I informed him of your departure, his distress was very evident' This and more she wrote, somewhat incoherently, for her thoughts were in great confusion With the letter was the poem Though sad it is to mark how swift the flowers fall, yet to the City Spring will come again and with it, who can tell' 'Oh, if that time were come!' she added, and spent the hours which followed in recounting such moving tales of Genji's wisdom and kindness that everyone in the Palace was soon dissolved in tears If these people who but seldom caught sight of him were distressed at the prospect of his departure, it may be imagined what were the feelings of those whose duties brought them constantly into his presence At the Nijo-in everyone down to the mere scullery-maids and outdoor servants, who could never hope to exchange a single word with him and had thought themselves very lucky if they obtained an occasional glance or smile, had always been in despair when it was known that he would be absent from the palace even for a few days Nor was his downfall by any means welcome in the country at large Since his seventh year he had enjoyed the privilege of running in and out of the old Emperor s rooms just as he felt inclined Everything he asked for had been granted without question, and there were few who had not at one time or another found themselves beholden to his boundless good-nature and generosity Even among the great nobles and Ministers of the Crown there were some who owed their first promotion to Genji s good offices, and countless persons of less importance knew quite well that they owed everything to him But such was their dread of the present Govern-

ment, with its ruthless methods of persecution and suppression, that not one of them now came near him Expressions of regret were everywhere heard, but it was only in the secrecy of their own hearts that these sympathizers dared blame the Government for happenings which they universally deplored After all, what was the good of risking their own positions by showing to the exiled prince civilities which could be of no real use to him? There was some sense in this, but on Genji their prudence made a most painful and dispiriting impression He suddenly felt the world was inhabited by a set of mean and despicable creatures, none of whom were worth putting oneself out for in any way at all

He spent the whole of that day quietly with Murasaki at his palace He was to start soon after midnight She hardly knew him as he stood before her dressed in his queer travelling clothes 'The moon has risen,' he said at last Come out to the door and see me start I know that at the last minute I shall think of all kinds of things I meant to say to you today Even when I am only going away for a few nights, there are always so many things to remember ' He raised the curtain-of-state behind which she was sitting and drew her with him towards the portico She was weeping bitterly Her feet would not obey her and she stumbled haltingly at his side The moonlight fell straight upon her face He looked down at her tenderly The thought came to him that he might die at Suma Who would look after her? What would become of her? He was indeed no less heart-broken than she, but he knew that if he gave way to his feelings her misery would only be increased and he recited the verse 'We who so long have sworn that death alone should part us, must suffer life for once to cancel all our vows ' He tried to speak lightly, but when she answered 'Could my death pay to hold you back, how gladly would I purchase a single moment of delay,' he knew that she was not speaking idly It was terrible to leave her, but he knew that by daylight it would be harder still, and he fled from the house All the way down to the river her image haunted him and it was with a heart full to bursting that he went aboard the ship It was a season when the days are long, and meeting with a favourable wind they found themselves at Suma between three and four o'clock in the afternoon [1] It was indeed a trifling journey, but to Genji, who had never crossed the sea before, the experience was somewhat alarming, though his fears were mingled with wonder and delight As they came in sight of that wild and lonely headland where stands the Hall of Oye [2] marked by its solitary pine, he recited the verse 'A life more outcast shall be mine among these hills than all those exiles

[1] The distance is about 60 miles. It could, says Moto-ori, in no circumstances have been covered in one day He therefore concludes that the travellers spent a night at Naniwa (the modern Osaka) on the way A much more probable solution is that Murasaki was herself rather vague about the time which such a journey would take

[2] Near Naniwa It was here that the returning Vestals of Ise lodged on their way back to the Capital

led whose sufferings the books of Kara [1] have rehearsed ' He watched the waves lapping up over the sands and then creeping back again It put him in mind of the ancient song 'Oh would that like the tides I went but to return!' Those who were with him knew the song well enough, but never before had it moved them as now when Genji murmured to himself the long-familiar words Looking back he saw that the mountains behind them were already melting into the hazy distance, and it seemed to him that he had indeed travelled the classical 'three thousand leagues' of which the Chinese poets so often speak The monotonous dripping of the oars now became almost unendurable Now is my home hid from me by the mist-clad hills, and even the sky above me seems not the lovely cloud-land that I knew ' So he sang, being for the moment utterly down-cast and dispirited

His new home was quite close to the place where in ancient days Ariwara no Yukihira [2] once lived in exile, 'trailing his water-buckets along the lonely shore ' At this point the sea bends back, forming a shallow inlet, encompassed by desolate hills

He proceeded to inspect the hut which had been prepared for his reception Never had he seen such a place before Even the hedge was built in quite a different way from what he was used to, and the hut itself, with its thatched roof and wide-spreading gables covered with wattled bull-rushes, seemed to him the most extraordinary place to live in But he could not help admiring the ingenuity with which it was constructed, and he knew that if he had come there under different circumstances the prospect of staying in such a cottage would have fascinated and delighted him How, in the old days, he had longed for such an experience!

Many repairs and alterations were necessary, and Genji sent at once for the bailiffs of some of his estates which lay in the neighbourhood They and their workmen, directed by the faithful Yoshikiyo, soon carried out Genji's plans, and the place began to assume a much more habitable air The pond was dredged and deepened, plantations were laid out Soon he settled down to his new life in a way that he would never have dreamed to be possible The Governor of the province had formerly been attached to his household, and though he did not dare to give him a public welcome, he made it clear in private that his sympathies were on Genji's side Thus even in this remote spot he was not entirely deprived of society, but there was no one with whom he was really intimate and such conversation as he could get was of the most superficial and uninteresting kind He felt almost as isolated as if he had been cast up on a desert island, and the prospect of spending months, nay years, buried away amid these uncivilized surroundings still appalled him He was just beginning to reconcile himself a little to his rustic employments when the summer

[1] China.

[2] For the story of his exile, see the No play *Matsukaze* in my *No Plays of Japan*, p 268

rains set in During this tedious period of inactivity he thought much of his friends at the Capital Often he called to mind the picture of Murasaki's misery in those last hours, of the Heir Apparent's infant beauty or the heedless antics of Aoi's little son He determined to send a courier to the City, and began writing letters to everybody While he wrote to the Lady of his palace and again while he wrote to Fujitsubo in her cloister he wept so bitterly that the letters had many times to be put aside To Oborozuki he dared not write direct, but as he had sometimes done before enclosed a message to her in a letter to Lady Chunagon, with the acrostic poem 'That I, though cast like weed upon the barren margin of the sea, am unrepentant still, how should they guess — these fisherfolk that tend their salt-kilns on the shore?' To the retired Minister and to Nurse Saisho he sent many instructions concerning the upbringing of the child. It may well be imagined that the arrival of his post-bag in the City set many hearts a-flutter

The condition of Murasaki after his departure had gravely alarmed her attendants She lay for many days utterly overcome by the shock of his departure Every effort to cheer her was in vain The sight or mention of things which she connected with him, a zithern which he had once played, the perfume of a dress which he had left behind, threw her at once into a new paroxysm of grief She behaved indeed for all the world as though he were not merely exiled but already in his grave At last Shonagon, becoming seriously alarmed, sent for her uncle the priest and begged his aid The liturgy of intercession which he conducted had for its aim both the recovery of Lady Murasaki from her present prostration and the early recall of Genji himself For a while she was somewhat calmer and began to go about the house again She spent much time at her devotions, praying fervently that he might soon return and live with her as before She sent him sleeping-clothes and many other comforts which she feared he might not otherwise be able to secure Among the garments which she packed were a cloak and breeches of plain homespun She folded them with a sigh, remembering his Court apparel with its figured silks and glittering badges And there was his mirror! He had left it behind as in his poem he had jestingly promised to do, but his image he had taken with him, and much good was a mirror that reflected another face than his! The places where he used to walk, the pinewood pillar against which he used to lean — on these she could still never look without a bitter pang Her situation might well have dismayed even a woman long inured to the world, for an inexperienced girl the sudden departure of one who had taken the place of both father and mother, to whom she had confided everything, to whom she had looked on every occasion for comfort and advice, was a blow from which it could hardly be expected that she would quickly recover Deep down in her heart there was the haunting fear that he might die before his recall But apart from this

dread (which did not bear thinking of), there was the possibility that gradually, at such a distance as this, his affection for her would cease True, she could write to him, and had his absence been fixed at a few weeks or months she would have had no great anxiety But as it was, year might follow year without the slightest change in his prospects, and when he found that this was so who knew what might not come .?

The Lady Abbess too was at this time in great distress The sin of the Heir Apparent's birth was a constant weight upon her heart She felt that she had up to the present escaped more lightly than her *karma* in any degree warranted and that a day of disastrous reckoning might still be at hand For years she had been so terrified lest her secret should become known that she had treated Genji with exaggerated indifference, convinced that if by any sign or look she betrayed her partiality for him their attachment would at once become common knowledge at Court She called to mind countless occasions when, longing for his sympathy and love, she had turned coldly away The result of all her precautions did indeed seem to be that, in a world where everything that anyone knows sooner or later gets repeated, this particular secret had, so far as she could judge by the demeanour of those with whom she came in contact, remained absolutely undivulged But the effort had cost her very dear, and she now remembered with pity and remorse the harshness which this successful policy had involved Her answer to the letter which he sent from Suma was long and tender, she sought indeed to explain and expiate her seeming heartlessness in former days

An answer also came from Oborozuki 'Not even to fishers that on the shore of Suma their faggots burn must we reveal the smouldering ashes of our love' More I have no heart to write,' she added in the margin of this poem, which was on a tiny strip of paper discreetly hidden between the pages of a note from Lady Chunagon In her own letter this lady gave a most melancholy account of her mistress's condition All these tales of woe made the arrival of Genji's return post-bag a somewhat depressing event

Murasaki's letter was full of the tenderest allusions and messages With it was the poem Look at the sleeves of the fisherfolk who trail salt-water tubs along the shore you will not find them wetter than mine were on the night you put out to sea' The clothes and other odds and ends which she sent him were all of the most delicate make and colour She had evidently taken immense trouble, and he reflected that she could now have little indeed to employ her No doubt she had in her loneliness deliberately prolonged this task Day and night her image floated before him and at last, unable to endure any longer the idea of her remaining by herself in that dull lonely palace, he began to make fresh plans for bringing her out to join him But after further reflection he changed his mind Such a step would at once bring down upon him the full retribu-

tion of his offences, and putting the idea out of his head he took to prayer and fasting, in the hope that Buddha would have pity on him and bring his exile to a speedy end He was also somewhat distressed at being separated from Aoi's son But here the case was different from that of older people There was every probability that he would eventually see the child again, and meanwhile he had the comfort of knowing that it was in excellent hands

But stay! There has been so much to tell that one important matter had quite escaped me I ought to have told you that before his departure he sent a message to Ise with a letter informing Lady Rokujo of the place at which she must in future address him An envoy now arrived at Suma with her reply It was long and intimate Both the handwriting and mode of expression showed just that extraordinary distinction and fineness of breeding which he had always admired in her 'I find it impossible,' she wrote, 'to conceive of you in such a place as that at which you bid me to address you Surely this must be some long, fantastic dream! I cannot but believe that I shall soon hear of you as again at the Capital, alas, even so it will be far longer before *my* fault is expiated and we can meet face to face "Forget not those who for salvation dredge their misery by Ise's shore, while you with fisherfolk drag dripping buckets to the kiln "' This and much more was written, not as it seemed at one time, but bit by bit as fresh waves of feeling prompted her There were altogether four or five large sheets of white Chinese paper, and there were many passages which in the handling of the ink were quite masterly This woman, whom he once so passionately admired, had, after the fatal outcome of her jealousy, become utterly distasteful to him He knew well enough that she was not to blame for what had occurred and that his own feelings towards her were utterly unreasonable, and now that he was himself suffering the penalty of exile he felt more than ever ashamed of having driven her away by his sudden coldness Her present letter moved him so deeply that he detained the messenger for several days, questioning him upon every detail of the life at Ise The man was a young courtier of good family and was enchanted at the opportunity of living in the company of this famous prince at such close quarters as the limited accommodation of the cottage made necessary In his reply Genji said 'Had I known that I was to be driven from the Court, I might have done well to join you in your journey 'Were I but in the little boat that the men of Ise push along the wave-tops of the shore, some converse would at least be mine "

. Now, alas, there is less prospect even than before that we shall ever meet again '

He had now acquitted himself of all his epistolary duties, and no one had any right to complain Meanwhile a letter arrived from the lady in the 'village of falling flowers,' or rather a journal in which she had from time to time noted down her impressions since his departure The manner

in which she recorded her despondency at his absence was both entertaining and original The letter was a great distraction and aroused in him a quite new interest in this lady It had come to his ears that the summer rains had done considerable damage to the foundations of her house and he sent word to his people at the Capital to get materials from such of his farms as were nearest to the ladies' home and do whatever was necessary in the way of repairs

The Emperor still showed no signs of summoning Princess Oborozuki to his side Her father imagined that she felt her position and, since she was his favourite daughter, was most anxious to get matters put right He spoke about it to Kokiden, begging her to use all her influence, and indeed went so far as to mention his daughter's disappointment to the Emperor himself It was hoped that he might be prevailed upon to install her, if not as a regular mistress, at any rate in some dignified capacity in his immediate entourage The Emperor had hitherto neglected her solely because of her supposed attachment in another direction When at last, yielding to the persuasion of her relatives, he summoned her to him, she was as a matter of fact more than ever absorbed in her unlucky passion She moved into the Inner Palace during the seventh month As it was known that the Emperor had previously been very much in love with her, no surprise was felt when he began immediately to treat her as a full lady-in-waiting From the first he showered upon her a multitude both of endearments and reproaches He was by no means distasteful to her either in person or character, but a thousand recollections crowded to her mind and continuously held her back He did not fail to notice this, and once when they were at music together he said to her suddenly I know why you are unhappy It is because that man has gone away Well, you are not the only one who misses him, my whole Court seems to be plunged in the darkest gloom I see what it is, I ought never to have let him go The old Emperor on his death-bed warned me of all this, but I took no notice, and now I shall suffer for it ' He had become quite tearful She made no comment, and after a while he continued I get very little pleasure out of my life I am fast realizing that there is no point in any of the things I do I have the feeling that I shall probably not be with you much longer I know quite well that you will not be much upset, certainly much less than you were recently That poet was a fool who prayed that he might know what happened to his mistress after he was gone He cannot have cared much about her, or he would certainly rather not have known ' He really seemed to set such store by her affection and spoke in so bitter and despondent a tone that she could bear it no longer and burst into tears 'It is no good your crying like that,' he said peevishly, I know well enough that your tears are not in any way connected with me ' For a while he was silent Then he began again· 'It is so depressing not to have had any children Of course I shall keep

Lady Fujitsubo's son as my Heir Apparent, since the old Emperor desired it. But there is sure to be a great deal of opposition, and it is very inconvenient

In reality, the government of the country was not in his hands at all, at every turn he saw his own wishes being violated and a quite contrary policy pursued by men who knew how to take advantage of his inexperience and weakness of character All this he deplored but was powerless to alter

At Suma autumn had set in with a vengeance The little house stood some way back from the sea, but when in sudden gusts the wind came 'blowing through the gap' (the very wind of Yukihira's poem [1]) it seemed as though the waves were at Genji's door Night after night he lay listening to that melancholy sound and wondering whether in all the world there could be any place where the sadness of autumn was more overwhelming The few attendants who shared the house with him had all gone to rest Only Genji lay awake, propped high on his pillow, listening to the storm-winds which burst upon the house from every side Louder and louder came the noise of the waves, till it seemed to him they must have mounted the fore-shore and be surging round the very bed on which he lay Then he would take up his zithern and strike a few notes But his tune echoed so forlornly through the house that he had not the heart to continue and, putting the zithern aside, he sang to himself the song

'The wind that waked you,
Came it from where my Lady lies,
Waves of the shore, whose sighs
Echo my sobbing?'

At this his followers awoke with a start and listened to his singing with wonder and delight But the words filled them with an unendurable sadness, and there were some whose lips trembled while they rose and dressed

What (Genji asked himself) must they think of him? For his sake they had given up their homes, parents, brothers, friends from whom they had never been absent for a day, abandoned everything in life which they had held dear The thought that these unfortunate gentlemen should be involved in the consequences of his indiscretion was very painful to him He knew that his own moodiness and ill humour had greatly contributed to their depression Next day he tried to cheer them with jokes and amusing stories, and to make the time pass less tediously he set them to work to join strips of variegated paper into a long roll and did some writing practice, while on a piece of very fine Chinese silk he made a number of rough ink sketches which when pasted on to a screen looked very well indeed Here before his eyes were all those hills and shores of which he

[1] See *No Plays of Japan*, p 268

had so often dreamed since the day long ago when they had been shown to him from a far-off height [1] He now made good use of his opportunities and soon got together a collection of views which admirably illustrated the scenery of this beautiful coast-line So delighted were his companions that they were anxious he should send for Chiyeda and Tsunenori [2] and make them use his sketches as models for proper-coloured paintings His new affability soon made them forget all their troubles, and the four or five retainers who habitually served him felt that the discomforts of exile were quite outweighed by the pleasure of waiting upon such a master

The flowers which had been planted in front of the cottage were blooming with a wild profusion of colour One particularly calm and delightful evening Genji came out on to the verandah which looked towards the bay He was dressed in a soft coat of fine white silk with breeches of aster-colour A cloak of some dark material hung loosely over his shoulders After reciting the formula of submission (Such a one, being a disciple of the Buddha Śakyamuni, does obeisance to him and craves that in the moonlit shelter of the Tree of Knowledge he may seek refuge from the clouds of sorrow and death') he began in a low voice to read a passage from the Scriptures The sunset, the light from the sea, the towering hills cast so strange a radiance upon him as he stood reading from the book, that to those who watched he seemed like some visitant from another world Out beyond the bay a line of boats was passing, the fishermen singing as they rowed So far off were these boats that they looked like a convoy of small birds afloat upon the high seas With the sound of oars was subtly blended the crying of wild-geese, each wanderer s lament swiftly matched by the voice of his close-following mate How different his lot to theirs! And Genji raised his sleeve to brush away the tears that had begun to flow As he did so the whiteness of his hand flashed against the black wooden beads of his rosary Here indeed, thought those who were with him, was beauty enough to console them for the absence of the women whom they had left behind

Among his followers was that same Ukon who had gone with him to the old Emperor s tomb Ukon s father had become Governor of Hitachi and was anxious that he should join him in his province He had chosen instead to go with Genji to Suma The decision cost him a bitter struggle, but from Genji he hid all this, and appeared to be quite eager for the journey This man, pointing to the wild-geese above, now recited the poem 'Like flocks that unafraid explore the shifting highways of the air, I have no fear but that my leader should outwing me in the empty sky'

About this time the Secretary to the Viceroy came back to Court As he was travelling with his wife, daughters and a very large staff of attend-

[1] See Part I, pp 82 seq

[2] Tsunenori was a famous painter, c. 950 A D So presumably was Chiyeda. Some people say Chiyeda was a name used by Tsunenori.

ants he preferred to make the whole journey by water They were proceeding in a leisurely fashion along the coast and had intended to stop at Suma which was said to be the most beautiful bay of all, when they heard that Genji was living there The giddy young persons in the boat were immediately in the wildest state of excitement, though their father showed no signs of putting them ashore If the other sisters, who did not know Genji, were in a flutter, it may be imagined what a commotion was going on in the breast of Lady Gosechi [1] She could indeed hardly restrain herself from cutting the tow-cord, and when the boat put in so near the shore that a faint sound of string-music could be heard floating down from Genji's cottage, the beauty of the shore, the proximity of so interesting a personage and the interrupted strains of the tune combined to make a powerful impression upon the imaginations of these young people, and the tears came into their eyes The Secretary sent the following letter ashore 'I had hoped that after my long absence it would be from your lips that I should first hear all the gossip of the Capital I now learn to my intense surprise and, if you will allow me to say so, to my deep regret, that you are at present living in retirement in this remote place As we are a large and mixed party, I must excuse myself from troubling you, but I hope to have the pleasure of your society upon some other occasion ' This letter was brought by his son the Governor of Echizen, a nobleman who had been one of Genji s equerries and had been treated by him with particular kindness He was distressed at his former master's ill fortune and did not wish to seem ungrateful, but he knew that there were persons in his father's train who had their eye upon him and would, if he lingered in Genji s company, denounce him to the authorities He therefore handed in the letter and at once hurried away 'You are the first of my friends to visit me since I left the Capital,' said Genji 'I cannot sufficiently thank you for sparing me so much of your time ' His reply to the Viceroy's letter was couched in much the same terms The young Governor returned in very low spirits, and his account of what he had seen and heard provoked loud expressions of sympathy not only from the ladies of the party but also from the Viceroy himself Lady Gosechi contrived to send a short message on her own account, together with the poem

Little you guessed that at the sound of your distant lute one hand was near indeed to severing the tow-cord of the boat '

Do not think me forward if under these strange circumstances I have ventured once more to address you,' she added He smiled as he read the letter She seemed to have become very demure Had you in truth been minded to visit me, what easier than to cut the cable that drags you past this shore?' So he wrote and again You are a little taken aback, I think, to find me 'among the fishers at their toil " ' So much did he long for some distraction that he would indeed have been delighted if she had found courage to come

[1] See above, p 227.

ashore, nor is this strange when we remember how not far away from this same place a mighty exile [1] found solace in the company of an ostler

In the Capital Genji's absence was still universally deplored His step-brothers and some of the noblemen with whom he was most intimate had in the early days of his exile sent sometimes to enquire about him and had composed elegies in his honour, to which he had replied This soon reached Kokiden s ears She was furious at this proof of his continued popularity 'It is unheard of,' she burst out angrily, 'that a man condemned of offences against the Government of his country should be allowed to live as he pleases and even share in the literary pastimes of the Court There he sits (by the way I hear he has got a very pretty house!) railing all day at the Government, and no doubt experimenting on loyal servants of the Crown for all the world like that man in the History Book who declared that a stag was a horse' [2] Henceforward Genji received no letters from Court

The lady at the Nijo-in remained inconsolable The servants in the eastern wing had at first been somewhat reluctant to transfer their services to her, but after a while her charming manners and amiable disposition completely won their hearts, and none of them showed any signs of seeking service elsewhere Their employment had given them opportunity of observing, albeit at a distance, most of the great ladies of the Court They were soon willing to allow that in beauty of character Murasaki far excelled them all, and they well understood why Genji had singled her out to be his pupil

He, meanwhile, longed more and more to have her with him But apart from the fact that the roughness of life at Suma would be utterly unsuited to her, he knew that his sending for her would be regarded as an impudent challenge to those who had achieved his downfall

They were within easy distance of Akashi, and Yoshikiyo naturally thought of the strange lady whom he had once courted there, daughter of the eccentric recluse [3] who had made his home near the Bay He wrote to her several times, but received no reply Finally a note came not from her but from her father, saying that he had something to tell Yoshikiyo and would be glad if he could find time to call It was quite clear what this meant The old man merely wanted to tell him that his suit was unwelcome Yoshikiyo saw no point in going to the house on purpose to be snubbed, and left the letter unanswered As a rule provincial governors seem to think that there are no reputable families in the land except those

[1] The great statesman Sugawara no Michizane, 845–903

[2] Chao Kao was plotting to overthrow the Second Emperor (3rd cent. B C) He brought his majesty a stag, telling him it was a horse The Emperor laughed, but some of the Courtiers were so much afraid of Chao Kao that they sided with him and insisted that it was indeed a horse Then Kao knew that they feared him more than the Emperor and definitely decided to revolt.

[3] See Part I, p 83

of other provincial governors, and it would never occur to them to marry their daughters into any other class But this ex-Governor was a man who not only had ideas of his own but clung to them with passionate obstinacy For years past, the sons of provincial officials had been courting his daughter, and one and all he had sent them about their business His own notion of a husband was very different Then came Genji's arrival at Suma So soon as he heard of it, the ex-Governor said to his wife 'I hear that Lady Kiritsubo's boy, Prince Hikaru Genji, has got into some sort of trouble with the authorities and has come to live at Suma I confess I am delighted to hear it What a splendid opportunity for our girl '

'You must be mad!' broke in the mother 'I have been told by people at Court, that he already keeps several ladies of the highest rank as his mistresses, and not content with that, it appears that he has now got into trouble about some lady in the Imperial Household I cannot imagine why you suppose that a coxcomb of this kind is likely to take any interest in a simple, country girl ' 'You know nothing whatever about it,' interrupted the father testily 'I have very good reasons for thinking as I do, and I must trouble you to fall in with my plans I intend to invite Prince Genji over here at the earliest possible opportunity ' He now spoke in a gentler tone, but it was evident that he meant to have his own way, and to his wife's consternation he began to make the most lavish preparations for Genji's entertainment 'I cannot imagine,' she said, 'why you are so set upon marrying our daughter to this man However exalted his position may once have been, that does not alter the fact that he has now been expelled from the City as a criminal Even if by any chance he did take a fancy to her, the idea of accepting such a person as our son-in-law is one which you cannot surely entertain even as a joke

' 'What is all this about criminals?' he growled Surely you know that some of the most distinguished men in history both here and in China have been forced at one time or another to retire from Court There is nothing disgraceful about it Just consider for a moment who this prince is His mother was the daughter of my own uncle, the late Inspector of Provinces, who having made a name for himself by his public services was able to obtain for her a position in the Imperial Palace Here she at once became the idol of our beloved Monarch, and although the very exceptional favour with which she was treated aroused a good deal of jealousy and in the end brought about her undoing, her career cannot be considered unsuccessful, since she became the mother of His Majesty's most cherished son In short, the family with which his august father was not ashamed to ally himself is surely good enough for this young prince, and though our daughter is a country-bred girl, I do not think you will find he turns up his nose at her '

The young woman in question was not remarkably handsome, but she

had considerable distinction and charm. Indeed many of the greatest ladies at Court had, so far as good looks went, far less to boast of She was painfully conscious of her own deficiencies and had made up her mind that no one of good position would ever take any notice of her Men of her own rank in life she knew that she had no opportunity of meeting Sooner or later her parents would die, and then she would either become a nun or else drown herself in the sea, she was not sure which Her father brought her up with extreme strictness, and her only outings were pilgrimages to the Shrine of Sumiyoshi, whither he brought her regularly twice a year, secretly hoping that the God would be moved to assist his ambitious designs

The New Year had begun The days were growing longer and already there was a faint show of blossom on the cherry-trees which Genji had planted in his garden at Suma The weather was delightful, and sitting idly in the sunshine he recalled a thousand incidents that were linked in his mind with former springs The twentieth day of the second month! It was just a year ago that he left the Capital All those painful scenes of farewell came back vividly to his mind, bringing with them a new access of longing The cherry-trees of the Southern Hall must now be in full bloom He remembered the wonderful Flower Feast of six years ago, saw his father s face, the elegant figure of the young Crown Prince, and verses from the poems which he had himself made on that occasion floated back into his mind

All this while To no Chujo had been living at the Great Hall, with very little indeed to amuse him He had been put down again into the Fourth Rank and was very much discouraged It was essential to his prospects that he should not come under any further suspicion, but he was an affectionate creature and finding himself longing more and more for Genji s society, he determined, even at the cost of offending the Government, to set out at once for Suma The complete unexpectedness of his visit made it all the more cheering and delightful He was soon admiring Genji s rustic house, which seemed to him the most extraordinary place to be living in He thought it more like some legendary hermit s hut in a Chinese book than a real cottage Indeed the whole place might have come straight out of a picture, with its hedge of wattled bamboo, the steps of unhewn stone, the stout pine-wood pillars and general air of improvisation Chujo was enchanted by the strangeness of it all Genji was dressed in peasant style with a grey hunting-cloak and outer breeches over a suit of russet-brown The way in which he played up to this rustic costume struck Chujo as highly absurd and at the same time delighted him The furniture was all of the simplest kind and even Genji's seat was not divided off in any way from the rest of the room Near it lay boards for the games of *go* and *sugoroku*, and chessmen, with other such gear as is met with in country houses The meals, which were necessarily of a somewhat make-

shift character, seemed to Chujo positively exciting One day some fishermen arrived with cockles to sell Genji sent for them and inspected their catch He questioned them about their trade and learned something of the life led year in and year out by those whose homes were on this shore It was a story of painful unremitting toil, and though they told it in a jargon which he could only half understand, he realized with compassion that their feelings were, after all, very much like his own He made them handsome presents from his wardrobe and they felt that these shells had indeed been life-giving [1]

The stable was quite close by and in full view of the cottage It amused Chujo to watch the labourers fetching rice-husks from a queer building which seemed to be a sort of store-house or granary and using them as provender for the horses, and he would sing the ballad Sweet is the shade ' [2]

He had of course a great deal to tell to his friend, and it was sometimes with laughter, sometimes with tears that they went step by step over all that had happened in the long months of their separation There were many stories of Aoi's little son, happily still too young to understand what was going on in the world around him, of the old Minister, who now was sunk into a state of unremitting melancholy, and of a thousand other happenings at the Great Hall and Court, which could not possibly be recounted in full and would lose all interest if told incompletely Neither of them had any inclination to sleep, and at dawn they were still exchanging Chinese odes

Though Chujo had said that he no longer cared what the authorities thought of him, he was reluctant to aggravate his offence by lingering on this forbidden shore, and he now announced that he must start for home again immediately This was a terrible blow to Genji who knew that so short a visit would leave him even more wretched than before Wine was brought and as they drank the farewell cup they murmured in unison the words of Po Chu-i s parting poem

'Chin on hand by the candle we lay at dawn
Chanting songs of sadness, till the tears had splashed
Our cup of new-made wine '

Chujo had brought with him some delightful presents from the Capital With many apologies Genji offered him in return a black colt, saying as he did so 'I fear that it may be embarrassing for you to receive even so poor a gift as this from one in my position But I beg of you to accept it as a symbol of my longing to return, for in the *Old Poem* it is written

"The Tartar horse neighs into the northern wind,
The bird of Yüch nests on the southern bough "'

[1] There is here a play on words The other meaning is 'That life was indeed worth living '

[2] 'Sweet is the shade, the lapping waters cool, and good the pasture for our weary steeds. By the well of Asuka, here let us stay ' See Part I, p 25

It was in fact a magnificent horse and could hardly have been matched in all the kingdom Among the presents brought by Chujo was a celebrated flute which had long been in his possession, and many other small but beautiful objects such as could easily be secreted and would serve as tokens of his affection without exciting troublesome comment

The morning was well advanced before Chujo set out He could hardly believe that the long-dreamed-of meeting was already over and looked back again and again to where his friend was standing The sight of Genji gazing after him as the boat drew away made it more difficult than ever to endure so speedy a parting, and he cried out, When, when shall we meet again? I cannot think that they will let you go on much longer

'At which Genji answered him with the poem O crane, who travellest at will even to the very margin of the Land on High, look well upon me, whether in intent I be not cloudless as this new day of Spring' [1] 'Sometimes for a while I have hope,' he added, but of those who before have been in my case even the most grave and virtuous have seldom managed to repair their fortunes I fear I shall not see the precincts of the Capital again' Hapless in cloudland shall your crane's solitary voice re-echo till with his lost friend, wing to wing again, he can renew his flight' This was the poem that Chujo now recited as his boat left the shore

The third month was now beginning and someone who was supposed to be well up in these matters reminded Genji that one in his circumstances would do well to perform the ceremony of Purification on the coming Festival Day [2] He loved exploring the coast and readily consented It happened that a certain itinerant magician was then touring the province of Harima with no other apparatus than the crude backscene [3] before which he performed his incantations Genji now sent for him and bade him perform the ceremony of Purification Part of the ritual consisted in the loading of a little boat with a number of doll-like figures and letting it float out to sea While he watched this, Genji recited the poem How like these puppets am I too cast out to dwell amid the unportioned fallows of the mighty sea' These verses he recited standing out in the open with nothing but the wind and sky around him, and the magician, pausing to watch him, thought that he had never in his life encountered a creature of such beauty Till now there had not been the least ripple on the face of the sea Genji, wondering what would in the end become of him, began to review the whole course of his past life and the chances of better fortune in the future He gazed on the quiet aspects of both sky and sea The Gods at least, the

[1] I e You have access to the Emperor, put in a word on my behalf

[2] The third day of the third month

[3] *Zesho*, a screen or in some cases curtain with a pine-tree painted on it, used as a background to sacred performances.

myriad Gods look kindly on my fate, knowing that sinful though I be, no penalty have I deserved such as I suffer in this desolate place' As he recited these words, the wind suddenly rose, the sky grew dark and without waiting to finish the ceremony everyone began hastily preparing to make for home Just when they had decided to return as quickly as possible, a squall of rain commenced, beginning so unexpectedly that there was no time even to put up umbrellas The wind was now blowing with unparalleled violence and things which the calmness of the morning had tempted them to leave carelessly lying about the shore were soon scattered in every direction The sea too was rapidly advancing and they were obliged to run for their lives Looking back they saw that the whole surface of the bay was now covered with a blanket of gleaming white foam Soon the thunder was rolling and great flashes of lightning fell across the sky It was all they could do to make their way home The peasants had never witnessed such a gale before 'It blows pretty stormy sometimes,' they said, 'but you can generally see it coming up a long while before' Of such a storm as this, coming on without a moment's warning, they could make nothing at all Still the thunder crashed, and the rain fell with such violence that each shaft struck deep into the earth It seemed indeed as though the end of the world were come Some of Genji's servants became very restless and uneasy, but he himself settled quietly in his chair and read out loud from the Scriptures Towards evening the thunder became less violent, but the wind remained very high all night. It was soon apparent that if the wind did not change, the waves would carry away their house Sudden high tides had often before done great damage on the coast, but it was agreed that such a sea as this had never been seen before Towards dawn everyone went off to get a little rest Genji too began to doze a little There appeared to him in his dream a vague and shadowy figure who said 'I have come from the Palace to fetch you Why do you not follow me?' He tried to obey the command, but suddenly awoke He realized that the Palace' of his dream did not mean, as he had at first supposed, the Palace of the Emperor, but rather the dwelling of the Sea God The whole import of the dream was that the Dragon King[1] had taken a fancy to him and wished to detain him yet longer on the shore of his domains He became very depressed and from this time onwards took a dislike to the particular part of the coast in which he had chosen to reside

[1] Sovereign of the Ocean.

CHAPTER IV

Akashi

THE bad weather continued, day after day nothing but rain, wind and repeated thunderstorms, bringing with them countless troubles and inconveniences So depressing was the past to look back upon and so little hope did the future hold out for him that, try as he might, Genji could no longer keep up even the appearance of cheerfulness His prospects were indeed dark It was just possible that he might some day be permitted to return to the Capital But with the dominant faction at Court still working against him he would be subject to unendurable slights and vexations He thought more than once of withdrawing from the coast and seeking shelter at some point well back among the inland hills But he knew that if he did so it would be said he had been scared away by a few days of foul weather The smallest actions of people in his position are recorded, and he did not care to figure in the history-books as the Prince who ran away from a storm Night after night he had the same dream of a messenger summoning him to the realms below the sea It seemed as though the Dragon of the Ocean had indeed set his heart upon him

Day followed day without the least break showing in the sky It was now a long time since he had heard any news from the Capital, and he was becoming very anxious To be immured for weeks on end in his small house was to the last degree enervating and depressing, but in this villainous weather there was no question of so much as even sticking one's head out of doors for two minutes Needless to say no one came to visit him At last a pitifully bedraggled figure hove into view, fighting its way through the storm A messenger from the Nijo-in So he announced himself, but the journey had reduced him to such a plight that Genji would scarce have known that this tattered, dripping mass was a human being at all He was indeed a common peasant, such a one as in old days would have been unceremoniously bundled out of Genji's path Now Genji found himself (not without some surprise at the degree of condescension to which his misfortunes had brought him) welcoming the fellow as an equal, and commiserating with him upon his plight

In her letter Murasaki said In these odious days when never for a single instant has the least gleam or break pierced our sodden sky, the clouds have seemed to shut you off from me and I know not behind which part of this dark curtain to look for you How fiercely must the tempests be blowing on your shore, when even here my sleeves are drenched with ceaseless spray!...

The letter was full of sad and tender messages He had no sooner opened it than a darkness spread before his eyes and tears fell in floods, 'belike to swell the margin of the sea'

He learnt from the messenger that at Kyoto too the storm had raged with such violence and persistency that it had been proclaimed a national Visitation, and it was said that the great Service of Intercession [1] had been held in the Palace So great were the floods that the officers of the Court were unable to reach the Inner City, and all business was at a standstill He told his story confusedly and in a broken jargon that was very hard to follow But what matter? Such as it was, his news came from Kyoto, from the City, and that in itself was enough to make Genji catch eagerly at every word He had the messenger brought to his own room and was soon plying him with questions It seemed that the same continuous downpour had gone on day after day without a moment's break, varied only by occasional hurricanes of wind Thunder they had not had, nor the alarming hailstorms which along the coast were of such violence that the hailstones had penetrated far down into the earth Such horror came into the man's face as he recalled the scenes through which he had passed, and so lamentable was his present condition that even those who had taken the storm somewhat lightly now began to feel seriously alarmed It seemed indeed as though a continuance of the present deluge must speedily wash the world away, but worse was to come, for next day, from dawn onwards, an even more violent wind raged, causing a tremendous flood-tide along all the shore Soon the breakers were crashing with a din so stupendous that you would have thought the rocks, nay the very hills, could not long resist them Suddenly a blaze of lightning, inexpressibly fierce and dazzling, rushed earthward They realized that something must have been struck, and there was now no longer anyone who even pretended to take the situation lightly Each of Genji's servants was wondering in his heart what he had done to deserve at the hand of Fate so hideous an experience Here, it seemed, they were all to die, never again to meet mother or father, far from the pitying faces of wife, of children, or of friends Genji himself had no desire to end his existence on this inhospitable shore, but he managed to control his feelings and did his best to introduce some order among his followers This proved to be by no means easy At last he set them to offering up prayer-strips and ribbons to the God of Sumiyoshi and himself called upon the God to save from calamity a shore that was so near his own Holy Abode and, if indeed he were a Present Deity, to prove it now by his aid So he prayed, with many other vows and supplications And his servants, as they heard him, forgot for a while the peril that threatened their own

[1] Instituted in China in the 6th century It centred round the reading of the *Jen Wang Ching* (Nanjio No 17) in which Buddha instructs the great kings of the earth how to preserve their countries from calamity

lives, and could think only of the calamity which would befall their country should such a prince be lost amid the waters of this deserted shore Then one, who was of greater courage than the rest and had now somewhat regained the use of his faculties and better feelings, began to call upon the God to take his life and welcome, so be it Genji were saved And after this, all began in chorus to invoke both Buddhas and Gods of their own land, and presently one said 'Though nurtured in a palace of princes and inured from infancy to softness and delights, our master has not hidden his face from common men, for in every corner of the Eight Islands his patience and kindness are known How many that were down-cast and obscure has he not helped upward to greatness? Tell us now, Heaven, tell us, Earth, of what crime has he been guilty, that he should be cast away, a victim to the winds and seas? Guiltless he has been pun-ished, has been robbed of rank and office, has been torn from home and country, nor has been suffered to be at peace either by day or night' Genji himself prayed again to the gods, saying 'With such sights and sounds about us we cannot but wonder whether the end of our days is come Do ye now, O Powers, put an end to this grievous visitation, whether it be the fruit of *karma* or the punishment of present crimes, lest we should doubt if Gods and Buddhas can indeed make manifest their will Then turning in the direction of the Sumiyoshi Shrine he uttered many further prayers to that God, to the Dragon King of the Ocean and to a thousand and one other Gods and Spirits Suddenly, however, while he was in the midst of these prayers, there was a louder thunderclap than ever, and at the same time lightning struck a pent-house which actually adjoined Genji's room Flames shot up and that part of the building was soon in ashes His men were now without exception in such a state of panic that they could do nothing Finally Genji got them to move his things into a sort of shed at the back of the house, which had sometimes been used as a kitchen Here, huddled with all his followers and grooms, he spent the rest of the day, wearied by their ceaseless lamentations, which indeed bid fair to out-din the thunder The sky was still black as ink when night fell However, the wind began to subside and presently the rain grew a little less heavy, and at last an occasional star began to twinkle The thought of their master spending the night in so strange and undignified a situation was very perturbing to his attendants and they began trying to make his proper bedroom habitable again This, however, did not prove to be feasible, for although a great part of it had not been actually touched by the fire, 'the Storm God in his boisterous passage had left a terrible havoc behind him and the room was strewn with the tattered wreckage of furniture, screens and bedding It was agreed that nothing could be done till next day

Genji said his prayers and began to consider the situation It was indeed sufficiently alarming So high had the tide risen that, now the moon

was up, the line of the incoming waves was plainly visible from his house, and standing at the open wicker door he watched the fierce breakers plunge and recoil Such conditions of storm and tide had not occurred in recent times and no one was prepared to say how far matters were likely to go This being the only gentleman's house in the neighbourhood many of the fishing people and peasants who lived along the shore had now collected in front of it Their queer, clipped dialect and the rustic topics of their conversation were alike very strange to him, but he would not suffer them to be driven out of earshot 'If this wind does not go down,' one of them was saying, 'we shall have the sea right on top of us before the tide turns God's help alone can save us ' It may be imagined that these predictions were far from disposing the townsmen towards a quiet night's rest A brisk sea wind was again driving onward the swollen tide, and though he tried to reassure his men Genji was himself in considerable anxiety, when suddenly and quite unexpectedly he fell into a doze and dreamed that his father, looking exactly as in the old days when he was on the throne, stood beside the crazy bed which had been improvised for him in this disordered place 'How comes it that you are sleeping in such a place as this?' the vision asked, and taking his hand made as though to drag him from the bed And again, 'Put your trust in the God of Sumiyoshi Leave this place, take to your ship and He will show you where to go ' What joy it was to hear that voice once more! 'Father,' Genji answered, 'since your protection was taken from me nothing but sorrow and ill-fortune have befallen me, and now I am fully expecting to perish miserably upon this forsaken shore ' 'It is not to be thought of,' answered the Emperor Your offence was not so great that you must needs be driven to such a place as this Unfortunately I myself am at present expiating a few small offences (such as it is indeed impossible to avoid, for the Judges of the Dead have not managed to prove that during my whole reign I did serious harm to anyone) However, for the present this expiation keeps me very busy, and I have not been able to keep an eye upon what is happening here But your late misfortunes have been such as I could not bear to think of, and though it cost me great labour, I have made my way through the depths of ocean and up again on to the shore, that I might be with you in your suffering Yet this time I must not stay longer, but will go straight to the Palace and tell these things to him who is now Ruler there ' So he spoke, and turned to fly away 'Let me go with you Do not leave me!' cried Genji in his dream But looking up he found that there was no one there at all The full-faced moon stared down at him, cold and undreamlike, a cloud trailed across the sky, shaped to the dim semblance of a figure in flight

It was many years since he had dreamed of his father, though in his waking hours he had never ceased to mourn for him and long for his company This sudden vision which, though so brief, had all the vivid-

ness of a real encounter, brought him great comfort The thought that at the hour of his greatest despair, nay when death itself seemed close at hand, his father's spirit had hastened through the air to succour him, made him almost glad that Fate had brought him to the extremity which had moved his father's compassion So full was he of new hope and comfort that in his exultation he utterly forgot the perils that encompassed him, and lay trying to recall stray fragments of his father's dream-speech which had faded from his waking mind Thinking that the dream might be repeated, he tried to sleep again, but this time all his efforts were in vain, and at daylight he was still awake

Next morning there landed at a point in the bay opposite to Genji's house a little boat with two or three persons aboard her It proved on enquiry that they had come from the Bay of Akashi and that the boat belonged to the ex-Governor of the province, now turned lay-priest The messenger explained that his master was himself aboard and desired to have a word in private with the Genshonagon [1] Yoshikiyo, if he were at present to be found at Suma Yoshikiyo thought this very peculiar The ex-Governor was perfectly well aware of all that went on in the district, but though he had been acquainted with Yoshikiyo for years, he had not during all the while they had been at Suma paid the slightest attention to him It seemed indeed (thought Yoshikiyo) as if he were definitely in the old man's bad books And now, in the middle of an atrocious storm, he took it into his head to pay a call It was all very queer But Genji, who saw in this new happening a possible fulfilment of his dream, said at once, 'You had better go,' and Yoshikiyo accordingly accompanied the messenger back to the boat How they had ever managed to launch it at all, under the conditions which must have prevailed at the time they left Akashi, was a complete mystery to him On the first day of this month,' the old man began, 'I had a most singular and interesting dream What it portended seemed to me at the time very improbable, but part of the dream was that if I wished to see the promise fulfilled, I must get ready a boat and on the thirteenth day, so soon as there was the slightest lull in the storm, make straight for this coast As this injunction was several times repeated I had the boat manned and at the appointed time waited for a chance of getting to sea There was a fearful gale blowing, rain was falling in torrents and a thunderstorm was in progress It certainly did not seem a very good moment to start But there are many instances in foreign history of people saving a whole country from peril by obeying an apparently senseless dream I feared that if I delayed my departure beyond the day which had been named my journey would be of no service to anyone And so, determined that you

[1] A Court title Yoshikiyo was son of the Governor of Harima and had courted the Lady of Akashi. See Part I, p 82, where, following another text, I have called him Yoshizane

should know of the divine indication which had been vouchsafed to me, I launched my boat What was my surprise to discover that we had a quite moderate wind blowing nicely in our wake! We had this wind behind us all the way, and I cannot but regard the whole affair as a clear instance of divine intervention It is possible that on your side too there has been some warning or message which fits into the revelations which I have received I am very sorry to disturb His Highness, but I should be obliged if you would tell him of what has passed' Yoshikiyo accordingly went back to Genji and told him the whole story The matter needed some consideration Here was a chance which it would not be wise to let pass Both actual events, such as the destruction of his bedroom, and a general restlessness induced by his own singular dream, with its warning to quit this place, inclined him to make use of the ex-Governor's visit No doubt that if he retired to Akashi his move would become the subject of a great many scurrilous jokes,[1] but on the other hand he would look even more foolish if it turned out that he had not availed himself of a genuine warning from the Gods And this must be a very dangerous thing to do, for even human beings are extremely annoyed if one disregards their advice His situation could hardly be worse than it was already The old Governor was many years his senior, was even, as things went now, his superior in rank, and was certainly viewed by the authorities in a very different light from that in which Genji was regarded In fact it would be most unwise not to take advantage of his visitor's evident friendliness and desire to be connected with him To go to Akashi would be to beat a retreat But a wise man[2] of ancient times has told us that 'to retreat is no disgrace' And then there was his own dream, in which his father had begged him to leave this place He had made up his mind about it He would ask if he might go back with them to Akashi He therefore sent a message to his visitor saying 'Though I am living in a strange land, under circumstances in the highest degree painful and depressing, from the direction of my own home there does not come a single message of enquiry or condolence Here all is unfamiliar to me, save the stars and sun there is not one being or thing that recalls to me the life I used to know You can imagine then with what joy I saw your fishing-boat draw near Tell me, is there not on your shore some corner where I could hide myself and be at peace?'

This was just what the old gentleman wanted, and in high delight he hastened to welcome Genji's suggestion A great bustle commenced, but before daybreak all Genji's effects had been stowed away in the boat and, with his usual band of chosen retainers, he at last set sail The wind had veered and was behind them on the return journey too, so that the little

[1] It would be said that he was running after the Lady of Akashi, the old recluse's daughter

[2] Lao Tzu, say the commentators, but this saying does not occur in the *Tao Te Ching*

ship flew to Akashi like a bird The distance is of course not great and the voyage does not in any case take more than a few hours But so assiduously did the wind follow them on this occasion that it really seemed as though it were doing it on purpose

Akashi was evidently a very different sort of place Indeed his first impression was that, if anything, it would be difficult here to find seclusion enough The ex-Governor s estate comprised not only the foreshore, but also a considerable extent of mountain-land behind And everywhere, in creeks and hill-folds and on river-shores, were felt-roofed huts so situated that the old recluse might not lack an agreeable place of retirement at any season of the year

On all sides there rose groups of substantial granaries and barns, which looked as though they must contain rice and corn enough to last for the rest of his present existence But though so careful to provide for his earthly needs, he had by no means forgotten the life to come On a site which, commanding as it did a magnificent panorama, was calculated to inspire him with the sublimest thoughts, he had built a handsome temple, where part of his time was spent in the performance of penances and mystic meditations

During the recent storms he had moved his wife and daughter to a lodge on the hillside and was therefore able to place his seaside residence entirely at Genji s disposal It was still dark when they left the boat, but as they drove along the shore, the growing daylight at last gave him an opportunity of taking a good look at his guest So delighted was he by the young man s appearance and by the rapid success of his expedition that his usually severe and formidable countenance relaxed into a perfect efflorescence of smiles and affability But even in this state of preoccupation and excitement he did not forget to offer up a prayer of thankfulness to the God of Sumiyoshi To the old man it was as though the sun and moon had been taken down from the sky and entrusted to his keeping It may easily be imagined that he left no stone unturned to make Genji comfortable and contented Not only was the place one of great natural beauty, but it had been laid out with unusual taste and skill Copses had been planted, rock-gardens constructed and flower-beds made — all this around the mouth of a little creek that ran in from the sea The charms of the place were such as a very skilful landscape-painter might possibly manage to convey, to describe them in words would, I fear, be quite useless The contrast with the uncomfortable quarters where he had been cooped up for months was immense The house was equipped with every possible elegance and convenience, it scarcely fell short of the great mansions which he had been used to frequent at the Capital, and indeed in many respects surpassed them Thus admirably served and lodged Genji began to regain some of his equanimity and was soon engaged in writing letters to his friends at the Capital

The messenger who had brought Murasaki's letter was far too much shaken by his previous experiences to be sent back immediately to the City and Genji had left him behind at Suma He now sent for him and entrusted to him a letter in which he described all that he had recently been through and with many tender messages explained the reasons which had led him to his new abode He also sent private intimation of his whereabouts and present condition to various holy men who were charged to pray for his welfare To Fujitsubo he sent an account of the thunderstorm and his own almost miraculous escape from harm He had tried to write an answer to Murasaki's letter during the melancholy period when he was still at Suma, but had never managed to finish it, for his tears fell so fast that he was for ever putting the letter aside And it was indeed a piteous sight to see him stop again and again to wipe away the tears that soiled his page In this letter he said 'More than once my misery has become so intense that I was fully determined to give up my career and end my days in some cloister cell But then I always remembered your little poem,[1] and felt that it was impossible to leave the world, at least till I had seen you once again.

"Swift as before
My thoughts fly back to thee,
Though now from unknown shore
To stranger and more distant shores I flee "

Forgive this letter which, written as in a dream, may well say much which a waking mind can scarcely apprehend ' It was written distractedly and with a shaking hand but those who were with him could not forbear from peeping a little as he wrote, such was their curiosity to know what he would say to one who held so great a sway over his affections And presently, having seen what they could, his servants too began their own letter-writing, each of them having some dear one at the City from whom he was anxious to obtain news

The bad weather in which for so many weeks there had not been a single break, had now completely vanished Out came all the fishing-boats, eager to make up for lost time The complete desertedness of Suma, which apart from a few fishermen who lived in caves under the cliff, had no inhabitants at all, was very depressing Akashi could certainly not be complained of on that score, indeed, he feared at first that it might prove somewhat too populous But the beauty of the place was so great and afforded him so many surprises that he was soon perfectly contented His host seemed to be exclusively absorbed in religious exercises Only one other matter occupied his thoughts, it was clear from stray allusions in his conversation that he lived in a state of continual agitation about his only daughter, to whom he was evidently attached with an almost morbid degree of concentration Genji had not forgotten the favourable account

[1] The mirror-poem, p 234.

of this lady which had been given him some years ago Her presence had of course been no part of his reason for coming to this place, but the fact that accident had finally brought him so near her was in a way intriguing However, his misfortunes were still weighing heavily upon his mind and he was in a mood for prayer and fasting rather than for any gallant diversions Moreover his thoughts were, for the time being, more than ever turned towards the City, and he would not have dreamed of doing anything that the girl whom he had left in his palace might feel to be a betrayal of his promises He was therefore careful not to show the slightest interest in the topic to which his host so often returned But various indications had already convinced him that the lady in question was a person of very unusual and attractive qualities, and despite this assumed indifference he could not help feeling a certain curiosity with regard to her The ex-Governor showed himself to be an ideal host He stationed himself at the far end of the house, in a wing which was completely cut off from Genji's quarters Here he was always to be found when wanted, but never obtruded himself The self-effacement was the more remarkable seeing that he was all the time longing to be in Genji's company, and he was continually praying Gods and Buddhas for guidance as to how he might best win the confidence of his exalted guest Although he was not much over sixty a constant habit of watching and fasting had told much upon him, so that in appearance he was wizened and almost decrepit But he was by no means a dull companion, for owing to the influential circles in which his youth had been passed he was extremely well-informed concerning all the principal events of a period which had hitherto lain outside Genji s ken, and his anecdotes were a considerable source of distraction Genji found indeed that he had started a veritable landslide of information about a generation which his own distractions, both social and political, had never left him time to study So pleased was he both with his host and with his new place of residence that he thought with horror how easily it might never have occurred to him to pay this visit

Though he had now become so intimate with his guest, the old man was still daunted by a certain reserve and distance in Genji's manner towards him, and whereas in the first few days of their acquaintance he had sometimes mentioned his daughter, he now hardly ever referred to her But all the while he was trying to discover some way of unfolding his project and his complete failure to do so distressed him beyond measure He was obliged at last to confess to his wife that he had made no progress, but she was not able to offer him any useful advice The girl herself had been brought up in a neighbourhood where there was not a single male of any description whom she could possibly think of as a lover At last she had a chance of convincing herself that such creatures as men of her own class did actually exist But this particular one was such an exalted person that he seemed to her in his way quite as remote as any of the local people

She knew of her parents' project, which indeed distressed her greatly, for she was convinced they were merely making themselves ridiculous

It was now the fourth month A dazzling summer outfit was supplied for Genji's use, magnificent fresh hangings and decorations were put up in all his apartments The attentions of his host were indeed so lavishly bestowed that they would have proved embarrassing, had not Genji remembered that he was in the hands of an eccentric, whose exalted notions were notorious and must, in a man of such distinction, be regarded with indulgence About this time he began to have a fresh distraction, for messengers again began to arrive from the Capital, and came indeed in a pretty constant stream One quiet moonlit night, when a cloudless sky stretched over the wide sea, Genji stood looking out across the bay He thought of the lakes and rivers of his native land This featureless expanse of sea awakened in him only a vague and general yearning There was no intimate mark round which his associations might gather, no bourne to which his eyes instinctively turned In all the empty space before him only the island of Awaji stood out solidly and invited attention 'Awaji, from afar a speck of foam,' he quoted, and recited the acrostic verse 'Oh, foam-flecked island that wast nothing to me, even such sorrow as mine is, on this night of flawless beauty thou hast power to heal!'

It was so long since he had touched his zithern that there was a considerable stir among his followers when they saw him draw it out of its bag and strike a few random notes Presently he began trying that piece which they call the 'Koryo' [1] and played the greater part of it straight through The sound of his zithern reached the house on the hillside near by, mingled with the sighing of pine-woods and the rustling of summer waves The effect of all this upon the imagination of the impressionable young lady in the house above may well be guessed Even gnarled old peasants, whom one would not have expected to make head or tail of this Chinese music, poked their noses out of their cottage-doors and presently came to take an airing along the shore The Governor could not contain himself, and breaking off in the middle of his prayers, hastened to Genji's rooms 'How this brings back to me the old days at Court, before I turned my back on all the pleasures of the world,' he exclaimed 'But surely the enchantment of such music as this is not all earthly! Does it not turn our thoughts towards those celestial strains which will greet us when we come at last to the place of our desires?' To Genji too the sound of the zithern brought recollections of many music-makings at the Capital He remembered with just what turns and graces such a one had played the zithern at a particular banquet or another had played the flute The very intonations of some singer's voice came back to him from years ago He remembered many an occasion of his own triumph or that

[1] Evidently a Chinese tune Attempts to identify it have hitherto been very unconvincing

of his friends, the acclamations, the compliments and congratulations of the Court, nay, the homage of everyone from the Emperor downwards; and these shadowy memories imparted to his playing a peculiar tinge of melancholy and regret The old recluse was deeply moved and sent to his house on the hill for his own lute and large zithern Then, looking for all the world like a *biwa* priest,[1] he played several very admirable and charming pieces Presently he handed the large zithern to Genji, who struck a few chords, but was soon overcome by the tender memories which this instrument [2] evoked The poorest music may gain a certain interest and beauty from the circumstances in which it is performed It may be imagined then how enchanting was the effect of Genji's touch as the notes sped across the bay Nor indeed could any flowering groves of spring nor russet winter woods have made a better setting for his music than this huge space of open sea Somewhere in the region of soft, vague shadows along the shore, shrike were making that strange tapping sound with their bills It sounded as though someone had been locked out and were rapping, rapping, rapping in the desperate hope that those within might at last relent of their unkindness The old recluse then played so delightfully on both instruments that Genji was fascinated This large zithern,' he said to the old man presently, is usually supposed to be a woman's instrument and requires a very delicate, fluttering touch ' He meant this quite generally, and not as an apology for his own playing, but the old man answered with a deprecatory smile 'I cannot imagine a touch more suitable to this instrument than yours This zithern was originally a present from the Emperor Engi [3] and has been in my family for three generations Since my misfortunes and retirement I have had little taste for such distractions as this, and have lost what small skill I ever possessed But in times of great spiritual stress or deep depression I have occasionally turned to this instrument for solace and support And indeed there is in my household one who from watching me at such times has herself developed a strange proficiency, and already plays in a manner which would not, I venture to think, displease those departed princes to whom the zithern once belonged But perhaps by now, like the mountain-hermit in the old story, I have an ear that is better attuned to the rushing of wind through the tree-tops than to the music of human hands Nevertheless I wish that, yourself unseen, you might one day hear this person's playing', and his eyes moistened in fond paternal recollection I had no idea,' answered Genji, 'that I was in the neighbourhood of genius such as you describe I fear my playing will have sounded to you indeed as a mere rushing of wind through the tree-tops,"' and he hastened

[1] Priests who collected money for their community by going round playing the *biwa* at street-corners

[2] Which he had taught to Murasaki

[3] 898-930 Sixtieth Emperor of Japan.

to put back the zithern in the old priest's hands 'It is indeed a curious fact,' Genji continued, 'that all the best players of this instrument have been women You will remember that the Fifth Princess became, under the instruction of her father the Emperor Saga,[1] the most famous performer of her whole generation But none of her descendants seems to have inherited her talent Of all the players who in our own time have achieved a certain reputation in this line, there is not one who is more than an intelligent amateur That in this remote place there should be someone who is really a skilled performer excites me beyond measure Do please lose no time in arranging ' 'As for that,' the priest answered, 'I do not see why there should be any great difficulty about it, even if it meant bringing the player down here to meet you Was not one 'that had sunk into ignominy and made herself a merchant's drudge once summoned to a great man's[2] side, because she could still play upon her lute the music that long ago he had loved? And speaking of the lute, I should tell you that the person to whom I refer is also a remarkable lute-player, though this instrument too is one which is very rarely mastered completely. Such absolute fluency, such delicacy of touch, I assure you! And such certainty, such distinction of style! Shut away for so long on this shore, where one hears no sound but the roaring of the sea, I sometimes fall a prey to dark and depressing thoughts, but I have only to listen for a while to this delightful performer and all my sorrows disappear' He spoke with so much enthusiasm and discernment that Genji was charmed with him and insisted upon his playing something on the large zithern The old man's skill was astonishing True, his handling of the instrument was such as is now considered very old-fashioned, and his fingering was all entirely in the discarded 'Chinese' style, with the left-hand notes heavily accentuated But when (though this was not the sea of Ise) he played the song Let us gather shells along the clean seashore,' getting one of his servants, who had an excellent voice, to sing the words, Genji enjoyed the performance so much that he could not refrain from beating the measure and sometimes even joining in the words. Whereupon the priest would pause in his playing and listen with an expression of respectful rapture

Fruit and other refreshments were then served, all with the greatest taste and elegance The old priest insisted upon everyone present drinking endless cups of wine, though the night itself was of a beauty so intoxicating that the dull realities of life had long ago faded from their minds As the night wore on a cool wind began to blow among the trees, and the moon, who in her higher course had been somewhat overcast, now at her setting shone out of a cloudless sky When the company was grown a little quieter, the priest began gradually to tell the whole

[1] 810-823 Fifty-second Emperor of Japan

[2] Po Chü-i The reference is to his poem *The Lute Girl's Song*

story of his life on this shore, together with his reasons for settling there and a voluminous account of his vows and religious observances, when without difficulty he led the conversation towards the topic of his daughter She certainly sounded very interesting, and despite the old man's volubility Genji found himself listening with pleasure at any rate to this part of the discourse 'It seems a strange thing to say,' his host went on, 'but I sometimes wonder whether, humble old cleric though I be, my own prayers are not really responsible for your Highness's excursion to these remote parts! You will say that if this is so I have done you a very bad turn But let me explain what I mean For the last eighteen years I have put myself under the special protection of the God of Sumiyoshi From my daughter's earliest childhood I have been very much exercised in mind regarding her future, and every year in the spring and autumn I have taken her with me to the shrine of that deity, where praying day and night I have performed the offices of the Six Divisions,[1] with no other desire at heart save that, whether I myself should be reborn upon a Lotus Throne or no, to her at least all might be given that I asked My father, as you know, was a Minister of State, while I, no doubt owing to some folly committed in a former life, am become a simple countryman, a mere yokel, dwelling obscurely among the hills If the process continued unchecked and my daughter was to fall as far below me in estate as I am now below my illustrious father, what a wretched fate, thought I, must be in store for her! Since the day of her birth my whole object has been to save her from such a catastrophe, and I have always been determined that in the end she should marry some gentleman of good birth from the Capital This has compelled me to discourage many local suitors, and in doing so I have earned a great deal of unpopularity I am indeed, in consequence of my efforts on her behalf, obliged to put up with many cold looks from the neighbouring gentry, but these do not upset me at all So long as I am alive to do it, I am determined to afford her what little protection my narrow sleeve can give When I am no longer there to watch over her, she will no doubt do as she thinks best But I confess I would rather hear she were drowned in the sea than that she had settled herself in the sphere of life to which my folly has for the time reduced her' He went on thus for a long while, pausing now and again to shed a few tears, but most of what he said would not be worth repeating Genji was for various reasons also in a very emotional and discursive mood, and presently he interrupted I could never make out why I had suddenly fallen into disgrace and been compelled to live in these remote regions, for I have certainly done nothing in my whole life to deserve so stern a punishment as this But at last you have furnished me with the explanation, and I am perfectly well satisfied No doubt it was, as you suggest, entirely in answer to your prayers that all this has happened to

[1] A service performed at dawn, sunrise, midday, sunset, dusk and nightfall.

me I only regret that, since you must all the time have been aware of this, you did not think fit to tell me about it a little sooner Since I left the City I have been so much obsessed by the uncertainty of human life that I have felt no inclination towards any save religious employments I am now so worn out by months of penance and fasting that no worldly impulse or desire is left in any corner of my being I had indeed been told long ago that a grown-up daughter lived here with you, but I knew nothing more, and assumed that the society of a disgraced and exiled man could only be distasteful to one of her birth and breeding But since you thus encourage me, I ask for nothing better than to make her acquaintance as soon as possible I do not doubt that her company will prove a solace to my loneliness ' His prompt acceptance was more than the old man had dared to expect and in high delight he answered with the verse 'You too have learnt to know it, the loneliness of night upon Akashi shore, when hour and listless hour must yet be filled before the dawn can come ' 'And when you consider the anxiety in which I have for all these years been living ,' the old man added and though he trembled somewhat affectedly at the recollection of what he had been through, Genji was willing to concede that to have lived all one's life in such a place must indeed have been very disagreeable However he would not be too sympathetic and answered· 'You at any rate have the advantage of being used to the coast. ,' and he recited the poem 'What know you of sorrow, who wear not the traveller's cloak, nor on an unaccustomed pillow rest, groping for dreams till dawn?' For the first time Genji was treating him without the slightest formality or reserve In his gratitude and admiration the old man poured out an endless stream of inconsequent but flattering remarks, which would be wearisome to read I am conscious indeed that the whole of this section is rather a bundle of absurdities But how else could I display the vanity and eccentricity of the old recluse?

At last everything seemed to be turning out just as he desired He was already beginning to breathe more freely when, to crown his satisfaction, very early on the morning of the next day a messenger from Prince Genji arrived at the house on the hill The letter which he carried was written with a certain embarrassment, for the lady had grown up in very different surroundings from those whom he was used to address But the very fact of discovering such talent and charm hidden away in a place where one would least have expected it was enough to kindle his fancy He took unusual pains with the letter, writing it on a *kurumi-iro*[1] paper from Korea In it was the poem Long wandered my lonely gaze with nought to rest on save the drifting pathways of the clouds, till the mists divided and I saw the tree-tops by your house ' 'Love has vanquished discretion . ,' he ended, quoting from the old song

Anxious to be on the spot in case such a letter arrived, the old priest

[1] A double paper, light blue on a white ground.

had already installed himself in the mansion on the hill before the messenger started He imagined that his presence in the house was entirely unsuspected But Genji's man, had he not already been perfectly well aware that the old recluse had preceded him, would certainly have guessed it by the almost embarrassing attentions which were paid to him when he reached the house Despite the distracting refreshments with which he was being regaled the messenger could not but wonder why the lady was taking such an immense while in composing her reply The truth was that though her father had gone through into the women's apartments and was giving her all the assistance in his power, she found herself utterly at a loss to frame a reply Despite the trouble that Genji had taken with his letter, there was an uneasiness about it which made her feel that it was not spontaneous, and even had she known in what terms to reply there was still the question of handwriting She guessed that in this matter he would be a severe critic and felt utterly incapable of pleasing him No! The gulf between them was too great Pretending that she was unwell she sank helplessly upon a couch There was nothing for it but to reply in her stead, and the old priest wrote as follows 'You will think it very peculiar that I should answer your letter in my daughter's stead Pray attribute her inability to frame a reply not to any want of gratitude or respect, but rather to the bashfulness engendered by country breeding, pray reflect also that she has never yet had the privilege of finding herself in your company She has however ventured to compose the following poem, which she bids me communicate to you 'That I too for long years have gazed upon these selfsame pathways of the sky is token of some strange kinship in the course of our desires " She is, as you will observe, deeply affected by the arrival of your message Pray do not think her answering poem impertinently bold '

This was written on Michinoku paper, and although the style of the writing was quite out of fashion it had a certain dignity and elegance of its own The poem did strike Genji as somewhat forward in tone, and this surprised him

He sent back the messenger loaded with handsome stuffs for dresses Next day he wrote to her again protesting that he was not used to receive, in reply to a private letter, an answer dictated as though to a Palace Secretary And he added the verse 'This surely is a dismal and outrageous thing, to greet a passerby and get no friendly nod nor 'Say, how goes the world with you?"' This time he wrote on a very soft thin paper, with great delicacy and care The appearance of the letter was such that a young girl who did not admire it must needs have been rustic, nay brutish indeed The lady to whom it was addressed was by no means insensible, but she felt that the writer of it was too far removed from her in rank and influence for any interchange of affection to be thinkable The discovery that a world existed which was populated by such dazzling

creatures, so far from giving her pleasure, merely left her more unhappy and discontented than before Again she found herself utterly at a loss how to reply, and it was only the persistence of her father which forced her at last to indite the poem "'How goes the world?' is said to friends That one whom you have never seen should greet more stiffly, can do small outrage to the feelings of your heart' It was written in sharply contrasted light and heavy strokes on a deep-brown paper, in a masterly style which would not have disgraced a lady of the Court Genji was naturally very pleased, but he did not want it to be reported at the Capital that he had committed himself to a fresh entanglement He was therefore careful henceforward always to leave several days' interval between his letters to her He wrote in fact only when it chanced that the evening hours hung heavy on his hands, or upon the pretext of some particularly beautiful sunrise or other natural effect, at such times in short as he guessed that she might be under the influence of the same impressions as himself In such a correspondence it seemed to him that there could not be any impropriety He had heard so much about her pride that he felt sorely tempted to put it to the test But he remembered that his retainer Yoshikiyo had spoken of her very much as though she were his own property Should Genji now by any chance succeed where the devotion of years had brought no reward, he would certainly feel that he had treated his gentleman very badly and suffer the discomfort of remorse But on reflection he decided that as she had been so reluctantly thrust upon his notice, there could be no harm in pursuing a guarded correspondence with her She did indeed turn out in the course of this correspondence to be possessed of a pride and aloofness which rivalled that of the greatest princesses whom he had known and, on such occasions as he pitted his own pride against hers, it was generally she who came out on top

Though now yet another range of hills separated him from the Capital, his mind was more constantly than ever occupied with thoughts of his friends at home His longing for Murasaki often became unendurable What was there to be done? In such moments he could not resist making plans for bringing her secretly from the Capital But quiet reflection would show him that it was unlikely he would go on living for more than a year or two longer at Akashi and no step was worth while which might merely provoke a fresh outburst on the part of his adversaries

That year the Court was troubled by a succession of disquieting portents and apparitions On the thirteenth day of the third month, during a night marked by violent thunderstorms and a fierce wind with torrents of rain, the Emperor dreamed that he saw His Majesty the late Emperor standing at the foot of the step before his throne, wearing an expression of extreme displeasure, indeed glaring at him, as it seemed, with an angry and astonished eye The Emperor having assumed an attitude of respectful

attention, the apparition proceeded to deliver a long discourse, part of which was concerned with Genji's present plight The Emperor was very much frightened, and being in any case somewhat uneasy at Genji's prolonged absence, he hastened to communicate his dream to Kokiden She was not at all sympathetic 'These stormy nights are very disturbing,' she said 'It is quite natural that you should have had bad dreams, the rain alone would have accounted for it You must not allow such trifles to upset you' About this time the Emperor began to suffer from a pain in his eyes Remembering his dream, he could not get out of his head the idea that this pain was in some way caused by the wrathful glance of the apparition which had rebuked him His sufferings became more and more acute, despite the fact that continual services of intercession were held both in the Palace and at Kokiden's house

Next came the death of Kokiden's father, the Grand Minister of the Right There was nothing unexpected in this, for he had reached a very great age But coming as it did on top of various other public calamities it caused widespread consternation Kokiden herself, though she had no definite malady, was also very far from well As time went on she seemed gradually to lose strength A general gloom spread over the Court It was felt that if, as was alleged by his friends, Prince Genji had indeed been banished without any sufficient cause, the present misfortunes of the nation might well have been sent as punishment for this injustice Again and again the Emperor thought of restoring Genji to his previous rank and appointments, but whenever he mentioned this project to Kokiden, that lady would answer To do so would be to incur the public charge of inconsequence and frivolity He was banished and if, when less than three years have elapsed, he is suddenly recalled to the Capital, a pretty figure you and I shall cut in history!' She spoke with such fierce conviction that the Emperor was completely overawed So the months went by, and meantime both he and Kokiden were gradually sinking under the burden of their respective maladies

At Akashi, as frequently happens in autumn, heavy winds were blowing in the bay Genji began to find the long evenings very monotonous and depressing Sometimes he would allow the priest to come and talk to him, and in the course of one of these conversations Genji said 'I am longing for a little diversion Could you not manage, without attracting too much attention, to bring your daughter here one day to see me?' It seemed somehow to be accepted that for Genji to pay a visit to the house on the hill was entirely out of the question Unfortunately the lady herself was equally averse to making any move She knew that gentlemen who visited the provinces on Government business would often take up with some wretched peasant girl and, for so long as they happened to be in the district, carry on a purely frivolous affair with her The Lady of Akashi was convinced that Genji regarded her in just such a light To

accept his advances could only render her in the end more wretched than before Her parents, she knew, were still clinging to the idea that all those long years of watchfulness and isolation had at last borne fruit To them the inevitable disillusion would be a crushing blow Her mind was quite made up, so long as this prince remained at Akashi she would continue to correspond with him, but further than that she would not go

His name had been known to her for years past, and she had sometimes wondered whether it would ever fall to her lot to meet, even in the most superficial way, some such magnificent personage as he Now, astonishing though it seemed, he was actually living a stone's throw away She could not be said exactly to have met him, but she constantly caught glimpses of him, heard his inimitable zithern-playing, and knew, one way and another, all that there was to know about his daily comings and goings That such a person should even be aware of her existence was more than, as an inhabitant of this remote fishing-town, she had any right to expect As time went on it seemed to her less than ever possible that any closer relationship should be established between them Meanwhile her parents were far less confident about the situation than she supposed They felt that in their anxiety to see the prayers of half a lifetime at last fulfilled they had perhaps acted somewhat precipitately If Genji did not after all seem to regard their daughter as 'counting,' her feelings would have been upset for nothing True he was a great catch and was worth certain risks, but that only made it harder to lose him They had an uneasy feeling that while they had been placing all their trust in 'Gods whom no eye seeth' they had paid too little attention to the dispositions of the human beings for whose future they had schemed

'A little music,' said Genji to the old priest one evening, 'would mingle pleasantly with the sound of these autumn waves It is only as a background to music that the sound of the sea is tolerable'

The time for action had come The old priest looked in his calendar, chose a lucky day, and despite the misgivings of his wife began to prepare the house on the hill for Genji's visit Not even to his most intimate acolytes and disciples did he explain the object of these elaborate preparations The visit was to take place on the thirteenth day of the month It turned out to be a resplendent moonlit night The old man came to Genji s room and recited the line 'Is this a night to lose?' Genji at once understood that this was an invitation to the house on the hill Suddenly what had seemed impossible became perfectly simple He set his cloak to rights and left the house His host had provided him with a magnificent coach, but the narrow lanes would have made its use inconvenient and Genji preferred to go on horseback He was accompanied only by Koremitsu and one or two of his other trusted servants The house stood a little way back from the shore and while he climbed to it he was all the time looking down over the bays that spread out on every side He

remembered the verse 'Would that to one who loves what I love I now might show it, this moon that lies foundered at the bottom of the bay!' For the first time since he had agreed to set out upon this excursion he remembered the lady at his palace far away, and at that moment he could hardly resist turning his horse s head and riding straight to the Capital O thou, my milk-white pony, whose coat is as the moon-beams of this autumn night, carry me like a bird through the air that though it be but for a moment I may look upon the lady whom I love!' So he murmured as he approached the house, which was thickly girt with an abundance of fine timber It was indeed a house impressively situated and in many ways remarkable, but it had not the conveniences nor the cheerful aspect of the house on the shore So dark and shut-in an appearance did it present as he drew near, that Genji soon began to imagine all its inhabitants as necessarily a prey to the deepest melancholy and felt quite concerned at the thought of what they must suffer through living in so cheerless a place The Hall of Meditation stood close by and the sound of its bell blent mournfully with the whispering of the pine-trees that on the steep uneven ground grew precariously out of a ledge of rock, their roots clutching at it like some desperate hand From the plantations in front of the house came a confused wailing of insect voices

He looked about him That part of the house which he knew to be occupied by the lady and her servants wore an air of festive preparation Full in the moonlight a door stood significantly ajar He opened it 'I wish to rest for a few minutes,' he said, 'I hope you have no objection to my coming in?' She had in fact the greatest objection, for it was against just such a meeting as this that she had resolutely set her face She could not actually turn him away, but she showed no signs of making him welcome He thought her in fact the most disagreeable young person whom he had ever met He was accustomed to see women of very much greater consequence than this girl show at any rate a certain gratification at being thought worthy of his attentions She would not, he felt, have dared to treat him so rudely but for the present eclipse of his fortunes He was not used to being regarded so lightly, and it upset him The nature of the circumstances was obviously not such that he could carry off the situation with a high hand But though violence was out of the question, he would certainly cut a very ridiculous figure in the eyes of the girl's parents if he had to admit that she showed no signs of wanting to be acquainted with him He felt embarrassed and angry Suddenly one of the cords of the screen-of-state behind which she was sitting fell across her zithern, making as it did so a kind of casual tune As she bent over the instrument he saw her for an instant just as she must have looked before his entry had made her stiffen, just as she must look when carelessly and at ease she swept an idle plectrum over the strings He was captivated

Will you not even play me something upon this zithern of which I

have heard so much?' he added, and he recited the poem 'Were it but from your zithern that those soft words came which your lips refuse, half should I awaken from the wretched dream wherein I am bemused' And she 'A night of endless dreams, inconsequent and wild, is this my life, none more worth telling than the rest' Seen dimly behind her curtains she recalled to him in a certain measure the princess [1] who was now in Ise It was soon evident that though she had answered his poem she was no nearer than before to treating his visit as otherwise than an impertinence She had been sitting there so comfortable and happy, when suddenly this tiresome person burst in upon her without apology or warning However, the remedy lay in her own hands, and rising to her feet she fled into a neighbouring closet, fastening the door behind her with ostentatious care You might have supposed that this was the end of the matter, for she had evidently no mind to return, nor he any intention of forcing bolts and bars Curiously enough, however, this was not the end of the matter The difficulties that ensued may well be imagined if we remember the lady's unusual shyness and pride Suffice it to say that from this night's meeting, which seemed at first to have been forced upon him by chance and other people's intrigues, sprang an intimacy which was grounded in the deepest feeling The night, generally so long and tedious at Akashi, passed on this occasion all too quickly It was essential that he should leave unobserved, and at the first streak of dawn, with many last endearments and injunctions, he crept stealthily from the room His next day's letter was sent very secretly, for he was haunted by the fear that some story of this adventure might find its way back to the Capital The lady for her part was anxious to show that she was to be trusted, and deliberately treated Genji's messenger without ceremony of any kind, as though he were bound on some errand of merely domestic import He paid many subsequent visits to the house on the hill, always with the greatest secrecy Unfortunately the way there led nowhere else, and knowing that fisher-folk are notorious gossips he began to fear that his addiction to this particular road would be noticed and commented upon His visits now became far less frequent, and the lady began to think that her early fears were soon to be fulfilled The old priest's thoughts were, if the truth must be told, for the time being much more frequently occupied with the coming of Genji than with the coming of Amida [2] He could not make out what had gone wrong, and was in a terrible state of agitation To make matters worse he knew that such earthly considerations ought to leave him quite unmoved and he was ashamed to discover how little his pious observances had availed to render him indifferent to the blows of fortune

Genji would not for all the world have had the news of his latest adventure reach Murasaki as a piece of current gossip, even though it

[1] Rokujo [2] Buddha

were represented in the most harmless light Her hold upon him was indeed still strong as ever, and the mere idea of such a story reaching her, of her feeling that she had been superseded, of a possible quarrel or estrangement, filled him with shame and dismay. She was not indeed given to jealousy, but more than once she had shown plainly that his irregularities, so far from passing unobserved, were indeed extremely distressing to her How bitterly he now regretted those trivial gallantries, so profitless to him, yet to her so miserably disquieting! And even while he was still visiting the lady of the hillside, since there was no other way of quieting his conscience concerning Murasaki, he wrote to the Nijo-in more frequently and more affectionately than ever before At the end of one of these letters he added How it grieves me to remember the many occasions when I have spoilt our friendship for the sake of some passing whim or fancy in which (though you could not believe it) my deeper feelings were not at all engaged And now I have another matter of this kind to confess, a passing dream, the insignificance of which you can guess by the fact that I tell you of it thus unasked ' Though with the shining seaweed of the shore the fisherman a moment toys, yet seeks he but assuagement of a sorrow that long ere this has filled his eye with burning tears ''

Her answer showed no resentment and was couched in the tenderest terms But at the end, in reference to his disclosure, she wrote As regards the dream'' which you could not forbear telling me, I have experience enough in that direction to enable me to draw several conclusions ''Too downrightly, it seems, have I obeyed it, our vow that sooner would the Isle of Pines by the sea-waves be crossed ' But though her tone was good-humoured, there was in all her letter an undercurrent of irony, which disturbed him He carried it about with him for a long while and constantly re-read it During this time his secret nocturnal excursions were entirely abandoned, and the Lady of Akashi naturally imagined that all her fears had now come true He had amused himself to his fill and had no longer any interest in what became of her With no support, save that of parents whose advanced age made it improbable that they could much longer be of any assistance, she had long ago given up hope of taking her place in the world with those of equal rank and attainments But she did now bitterly regret the waste of all those empty months and years during which she had been so conscientiously guarded and kept — for what? At last she had some experience of the usages which prevailed in the 'grand world outside, and she found them even less to her liking than she had anticipated She indulged however in no outburst of spleen or disappointment, nor in her letters did she ever reproach him for his long absence He had indeed as time went on become more and more attached to her, and it was only his desire to be able to allay the anxiety of one who had after all a prior claim upon

him that induced him to suspend his visits to the lady on the hill Henceforward his nights at Akashi were again spent in solitude

He amused himself by making sketches upon which he afterwards scribbled whatever thoughts happened to be passing through his mind These he sent to Murasaki, inviting her comments No method of correspondence could have been better calculated to move and interest her The distance between them seemed in some sort to have been annihilated She too, at times when she was feeling out of spirits or at a loss for employment, would also make sketches of the scenes around her, and at the same time she jotted down all that was happening to her day by day in the form of a commonplace book or diary

What, she wondered, would she have to write in her diary?' And he in his?

The New Year had come At the Palace nothing was now talked of save the Emperor's illness, and the Court was full of restless speculation The only child of the present Emperor was a boy born to him by Princess Jokyoden, daughter of the new Minister of the Right But he was only two years old and therefore of no particular account The Heir Apparent, Fujitsubo's son, was also a minor The Emperor was fully determined to resign the Throne to him at the earliest opportunity, but should he do so it would be necessary to appoint a regent There were so few people to whom it would be in any way possible to entrust the affairs of government that it seemed a pity Genji should be out of the running His presence was indeed becoming in every way more and more imperative, and at last the Emperor decided to recall him, whether Kokiden approved or not Since the end of the year her illness had taken a more serious turn [1] The Emperor too — although for a time thanks to the immense efforts made on his behalf in consequence of certain disastrous omens which had engendered something in the nature of a natural panic, although for a time his eyes showed some improvement — was soon in as bad a way as ever, and feeling very uncertain of the future, he dictated an edict in which Genji was commanded to return to the Capital by the end of the seventh month That sooner or later there would be a turn in his fortunes Genji had always been convinced But the shortness and uncertainty of life made him little inclined to settle down quietly and wait for events to take their course This swift recall came therefore as an intense relief And yet, for one reason at any rate, he was by no means anxious to leave the coast so soon The priest too had never expected that Genji would be with him very long, but the news of his immediate departure came as something of a shock However, it was a consolation to feel that Genji was now definitely re-embarking upon the path of prosperity, and that his partiality, should it continue, would be in the future even more valuable than before Genji now began again to visit the upper house

[1] There is some doubt about the punctuation of this and the following sentence.

almost every evening Since the beginning of the sixth month the Lady of Akashi had been slightly indisposed and it was now certain that she was with child No sooner had a definite term been put to their friendship than Genji's feeling for her redoubled surely in those last days she was more charming than she had ever been before! Here indeed, rash though his courtship had been, was one whom under no circumstances he would ever feel that he had loved and cherished beyond her deserts! She for her part sat in absolute silence before him, lost in her own thoughts Poor soul, he could not blame her

When three years ago he had set out so reluctantly upon that miserable journey to Suma, his only consolation had been to imagine the joy and excitement with which on some far distant yet inevitable day he would retrace his steps to the City Now that day had come, and to be returning was indeed very pleasant But all the while, mingled with delightful anticipations, was the strange fear that he might never be able to revisit the place of his banishment! His servants however were all in high spirits, and this, combined with the bustle of numerous friendly deputations from the Capital, created an atmosphere of general liveliness and excitement, despite the obvious depression that all these signs of departure brought to the host under whose roof the numerous visitors were lodged The seventh month had begun, and the summer weather was even more delightful than usual Why, wondered Genji, was he, who took such pleasure in quiet and harmless pursuits, doomed on every occasion to find himself involved in the most harrowing and disastrous situations? It had not indeed escaped the notice of those who knew him best that a fresh complication, of the kind they already knew only too well, had arisen in his life For several months on end he had never once mentioned the lady s name, and they began to hope that the affair had run its course But the curiously subdued state of his spirits on the very eve of departure told them only too plainly that this hope was premature It was whispered that all this trouble had arisen from Yoshikiyo s indiscreet eloquence upon the occasion when after Genji's cure they had climbed the mountain summit and looked down towards the western seas [1] Yoshikiyo himself, as indeed he had every reason to be, was very much irritated by the whole affair

Two days before his departure Genji visited the house on the hill some hours earlier than was his wont He had never before seen the lady by full daylight, and her beauty astonished him Such dignity of bearing, such an air of proud decision he had not in the least expected This fresh discovery of her, this last-hour revelation filled him with new longings and regrets Must he lose her? Could not some excuse be formed for bringing her to the Capital, for installing her at Court? And to ease

[1] See Part I, pp 82 seq Some texts call Yoshikiyo 'Yoshizane,' as I have done in Part I See above, p 237

his feelings he began to discuss with her the wildest plans as though they had been perfectly simple and practicable

The austerities which he had practised during the earlier days of his exile had left him still looking somewhat worn and thin Yet such was his beauty that while, touched by her misery, he sat beside her and with tears in his eyes whispered the tenderest words of pity and endearment, for a moment she felt that even if there had been but one such night as that and after it he had disappeared forever, she would still feel his love for her to have been the greatest happiness of her life

But for all his kindness he was a prince — the inhabitant of a world peopled not by creatures like herself, but by a remote and superior order of beings Such was the thought that even at moments like this would obtrude itself with painful persistency Oddly enough, though the promise that she would play to him had been the excuse for his first visit, she had never once touched her zithern since he had known her For this he had often scolded her, and now he determined to make a last attempt 'Will you not play one small tune, so that I may carry it away in my head to remember you by,' he said, and sent to the lower house for the zithern which he had brought with him from the Capital He tuned it with special care, and the few chords that he struck while he did so floated with a strange distinctness through the still midnight air The old priest heard these sounds, and unable to contain himself came bustling round to the women's quarters with his Chinese zithern in his arms and deposited it in the room where his daughter was receiving her guest Then he discreetly withdrew Genji now renewed his entreaties and at last she could resist no longer He guessed at once, by the way that she handled and tuned the instrument, that she would prove to be a remarkable performer Lady Fujitsubo used generally to be considered the best zithern-player of the day, and though the applause of the fashionable world was in part a tribute to her rank and beauty, she was without question a very fine musician But the Lady of Akashi, in addition to a complete command of her instrument, played with an intensity of feeling and a power of expression utterly unknown to the princess Such indeed was her playing that even he, who could now so seldom get from music a pleasure that he had not experienced many times before, was utterly taken aback He could have listened for ever, and his only regret was that he had not forced her to play to him months ago Of course he must not lose her! And handing to her his own zithern he begged her to keep it for him till they should play together again She answered with an acrostic poem in which she prophesied that this loan was likely to remain for ever on her hands And he, in indignation — 'Steadfast am I as the middle strings [1] of this my zithern that I leave with you until we meet' 'Who knows that it may not be soon,' he added, 'Perhaps before these very strings have fallen

[1] Which remained unaltered whatever tuning was adopted.

out of tune ' Thus he sought to comfort her, but to her mind one thought only was present — that he was going away She began to sob bitterly

On the day of his departure he was up long before sunrise The setting out of so large a party (for the house was now full of friends who had come to escort him back to the City) occasioned a tremendous bustle Genji too was much preoccupied, but in the midst of these distractions he found time to send her a message 'Because they have left the sea behind them, the rising waves creep listlessly across the sand But I, a sinking wave, cast back disconsolate thoughts towards the shore whence I retreat ' And she 'My cabin by the shore the winds have sheltered, and gladly now amid the receding wreckage of the storm would I drift out to sea ' His friends from the Capital noticed that he was in great distress, and could only suppose that, despite the untoward circumstances which had brought him to this place, he had in the course of years become so attached to it that the actual moment of parting was somewhat of a wrench But they could not help thinking that such a display of emotion was very excessive On the other hand Yoshikiyo and the rest saw their worst fears confirmed This was evidently a serious business, and they foresaw all kinds of complications that might arise from it These gentlemen were delighted to be going home, but when it came to the actual moment of departure they felt a certain regret at leaving this extremely agreeable coast, and there were naturally many among them who had on their own account to face somewhat painful scenes of farewell Many affecting poems were written and tearful speeches made, but what use would it be to record them all?

In his preparations for the departure of the travellers the old priest had surpassed himself For every single person connected with the expedition, down to the humblest carriers and menials, the most sumptuous equipment was provided It was indeed hard to imagine how in these few weeks such elaborate preparations could possibly have been made The arrangements for Genji s own comfort were of the most extraordinary ingenuity, in fact the luxuries forced upon him filled so many boxes that it required quite an army of porters to carry all his luggage Genji was indeed equipped more like a traveller setting out from the Capital than like one returning from the provinces There seemed to be no imaginable contingency which the old priest had not thought of To the travelling cloak which had been specially designed for that day's journey the Lady of Akashi attached the poem That this cloak of travel, cut and folded by the salt seashore, should bear a stain or two of spray, you will not take amiss!' Despite the noise and confusion of departure, he found a moment in which to write the answer Though for a while I must wear it in remembrance, yet soon as certain days and months are safely passed, once more no garment shall divide us ' This message he sent privately, and when he put on the new cloak he was at pains to tell those about him

that it was a present from the old priest and worn at his especial desire The cloak which he had previously been wearing he sent to the house on the hill, where for long afterwards the sight of it and the smell of the rare scent with which it was perfumed awakened tantalizing memories in those from whose thoughts he would in any case seldom have been absent

The priest excused himself from accompanying the expedition even so far as the frontier of the province, saying that in his present state of grief and agitation he did not feel equal to so great an exertion 'Pray do not think me impertinent, he added, but I ought perhaps to remind you . in fact, we none of us doubt for an instant But quite at your own time and convenience, of course!' He did not dare go beyond these brief, disjointed hints, but Genji, so far from taking offence, was extremely sorry for the old man, who, it was evident, had taken the business to heart in the most unfortunate way 'There is now a particular reason why I should cherish and remember her,' said Genji presently, 'you may be sure that in a very little while I shall see to it that she has her due To leave you all at such a moment grieves me more than I can say But what would you have me do?' The lady herself was in a strange state of mind She was still convinced that the difference in rank between them precluded any lasting union and was certain that in the long run she had no more chance of happiness at the City than she had if left behind here in the wilds But when it came to his actually starting, she could not bear to be left behind Try as she might, she could not control herself His image perpetually haunted her and every effort to banish it ended in a wild fit of sobbing 'It would have saved the poor girl untold misery,' said the mother, having in vain tried every means to distract her, if this wretched business had never begun And how unnecessary it all is! Nothing of the kind need ever have entered the child s head, but for the odious and perverse advice which certain people Hold your tongue, the old priest said angrily This will all come right in the end, he has told me so himself He knows about her condition and will do all that he can for her ' Come, child, he said, bringing her a basin of hot water in his own hands, you must get up at once and let yourself be dressed You really must not go on like this It is terrible, you know, terrible,' and he stood at the corner of the bed looking at her encouragingly Not only the mother, but the girl s old nurse and most of the confidential servants were in a state of indignation against their master and went about saying that his misguided promptings had brought them all into this terrible trouble But the old man s evident misery soon dismissed their anger He went about muttering to himself To think that I should have waited all these years for a chance to do something that would help her! And just when I thought everything was going so well, I find I have only made the poor thing unhappy ...'

So much did his mistake (for such he was now convinced that it was) afflict the old man that he became a little queer in the head During the day he did little but doze, but at night he would suddenly get up and seated in an attitude of prayer would fumble with his hands as though he had forgotten even how to use his rosary One night his disciples managed to persuade him to go for a walk in the moonlight Mumbling prayers as he went and quite unaware of his surroundings he stumbled and fell headlong into the moat He was soon fished out, but in falling he had caught his leg against a large stone and done himself considerable injury During the illness which followed, his mind, strangely enough, seemed to be somewhat easier and he appeared to be worrying less about the unfortunate situation of his daughter

Meanwhile Genji was on his homeward way At Naniwa he halted to perform the customary ceremony of Purification He did not on this occasion go to the Shrine of Sumiyoshi himself but sent a messenger to inform the authorities that he was intending to perform his devotions there quietly on some future occasion He was now travelling so hurriedly and with so large a retinue that a personal visit was impossible Apart from the halt at Naniwa he made no unnecessary discursions or digressions, but pressed on with all possible speed to the Capital

Upon his arrival the Nijo-in presented an extraordinary spectacle The friends who had accompanied him on the journey were here joined by numerous others who had awaited him in the City All of them now surged in wild excitement through the Palace, some hurraying lustily, some weeping with joy, and the scene soon became one of indescribable noise and disorder

And now Murasaki, who at the moment of his departure had vowed in her poem that 'could it but purchase an hour of respite, life itself was a price she would not grudge to pay,' was glad that the gift which in her despair she had bartered so lightly had not indeed been taken from her!

In these three years she had grown even handsomer than before At first he could not make out in what way it was that her appearance was altered But when they were alone together he noticed that her hair, which even before he went away had begun to be almost too thick, had been cleverly thinned out He had to confess that this new way of wearing it became her very well But suddenly, while he watched her with fond satisfaction, the pleasant thought that she would always be near him was interrupted by a very different image There rose before his mind the figure of the lady whom he had left behind in that sad mansion above the bay Plainly as though she were with him he saw her loneliness, her misery, her despair Why was it that time after time he of all people should find himself in this odious position? Lest Murasaki should feel that things were passing through his mind which he must hide from her, he began telling her about the lady of the shore But he took such evident pleasure in dilating upon

this subject that his frankness had the effect of convincing her that the matter was a far more serious one than she had before supposed 'It is not for myself I mind,' [1] she quoted, only half meaning him to understand How terrible that he had lost three whole years of her company, and lost them, too, in punishment for those very infidelities which he would now have given so much to undo!

Soon after his return all his original titles were restored and he was accorded the rank of supernumerary President of Council, while his supporters were re-established in offices equivalent to those of which they had been deprived Indeed so wide an amnesty was proclaimed that the Court soon wore the aspect of a withered tree that one spring morning suddenly begins to sprout again

A message came summoning Genji to the Palace Great excitement prevailed among the Court attendants. It seemed to them that he looked more handsome and flourishing than ever Had he really spent the last three years under such harrowing conditions as rumour had reported? Among the gentlewomen present were some who had served the old Emperor his father and these old ladies, who had always taken his side, now pressed round him chattering and weeping The Emperor had been somewhat nervous about this interview Anxious to make a good impression, he had spent an immense while over his toilet On this particular day he was feeling somewhat stronger, but for a long while he had been seriously out of health and he was looking sadly altered They talked quietly till nightfall It was the fifteenth day of the month The weather was calm and fine and, as he sat in the moonlight, such a host of memories crowded to the young Emperor's mind that he shed a few tears He was indeed at that time full of the darkest forebodings 'Nothing entertaining has happened here,' he said at last 'I used to like it when you played to me, but of course it is a long time since you did that

'Genji answered with the poem 'For as many years as the leech-baby [2] could not stand upon its feet have I been set adrift upon the wide plains of the sea' The Emperor, who felt the sting of this allusion, skilfully parried the thrust with the verse 'Round the Palace Pillar [3] long enough have we played hide-and-seek, let us forget the rancour of wasted springtimes that we in amity might better have employed'

After this visit Genji's first care was to perform the ceremonial Eight Readings of the Lotus Sutra in memory of his father the late Emperor He next visited the Crown Prince and found him grown almost beyond

[1] 'It is not for myself I mind, but since the Gods are just, for him who is forsworn I am indeed afraid' No 38 of the *Hundred Poems*, it is by Lady Ukon, 10th century

[2] The Royal Gods Izanagi and Isanami bore a leech-child, as at the age of three it could not stand they cast it adrift in a boat.

[3] After a sort of game of hide-and-seek round the Pillar of the Palace of Heaven these Gods met face to face and Izanagi exclaimed 'I have met a lovely maiden', whereupon they became husband and wife and bore the leech-child.

recognition The child was surprised and delighted to recover his old playmate, whom he perfectly well remembered Genji was relieved to discover that the boy was unusually quick at his studies and promised, so far as could at present be judged, to make a very satisfactory successor to the Throne

His agitation upon being admitted to Fujitsubo was not indeed such as it would have been some years ago, but the meeting was an affecting one and they had much to discuss together One thing I had almost forgotten. by one of the priest s servants who had come with them all the way to the Capital he sent a number of letters to Akashi, among them a long one to the priest's daughter, in which, as he was able to convey it to her secretly, he did his best, by dint of tender messages and allusions, to comfort and console her In it was the poem 'At Akashi is all night spent[1] in weeping? And do the mists of morning hide the long-looked-for light of day?'

At last Lady Gosechi,[2] who silently and unknown to all the world had been grieving bitterly at Genji's exile, was able to relieve her feelings by taking action It was natural and proper that she should write to congratulate him upon his recall She did so, but left him to guess from whom the letter came With it was the poem 'A seafarer that with reluctant heart floated past Suma's shore would fain you saw her sleeve that since that day has never once grown dry' Her fine handwriting at once betrayed her and he replied 'With better cause might I make tearful plaint, to whom you steered so close, yet would not stay your course' Brief as their meeting had been, he still preserved the happiest recollections of it and this sudden reminder of her made him for a moment hope that their friendship might one day be renewed But what was he thinking of! Now and henceforward there were to be no more frivolities of that kind Thus he cautioned himself, and the result was that even the Lady at the Village of Falling Flowers received only a formal intimation of his return To know that he was to be seen and not to see him was worse than his being utterly out of reach, and the poor lady was unhappier than ever now that he was again at the Nijo-in

[1] *Akashi* means 'spending the whole night.' [2] See p 247

CHAPTER V

The Flood Gauge

SINCE the night of his so vivid and disquieting dream, the late Emperor had been constantly in Genji's thoughts He longed to succour his father's soul, weighed down as it was (if the words of that nightly apparition were indeed to be trusted) by a load of earthly sin Now that he was back in the City he was anxious to lose no time, and the great ceremony of the Eight Readings, for which he had begun to make arrangements soon after his return, was duly carried out in the Godless Month [1] The manner in which this function was attended showed that Genji had fully regained his former ascendancy.

Ill though she was, Kokiden still had sufficient interest in what went on about her to be furious at this recrudescence of a force which she confidently supposed herself to have annihilated But the Emperor, much as he stood in awe of her, was now obsessed by the idea that if he again disobeyed the late Emperor's injunction some terrible calamity would overtake him The feeling that he had successfully insisted upon Genji's recall quite braced him and the pain in his eyes, which had till recently been very troublesome, now began to show signs of improvement But he did not somehow feel that he was likely to be very much longer on the Throne There were many matters which he desired to see satisfactorily settled while he was still capable of attending to them, and he constantly summoned Genji to the Palace to consult him upon the most confidential affairs of policy and state In doing so he was but following his real inclination, this was very well understood in the country and the public at large was delighted to see the Emperor once more asserting himself

As the time drew near when he intended to renounce the Throne, the Emperor became increasingly concerned with regard to the effect that this step would have upon Lady Oborozuki's career My poor grandfather, the late Chief Minister, is gone, he said to her one day, 'and it does not look as though my mother [2] would be with us much longer I myself have no intention of remaining on the Throne I am afraid you will be left in a most tiresome position I know that there is someone whom you have always liked better than me But I do not think anyone could possibly be more attached to you than I am, and it distresses me continually to think what will become of you when I am gone Even if your

[1] Tenth month The Shinto gods become inaccessible during this month, but the Buddhas are, apparently, still available

[2] Lady Kokiden

former friend is willing to look after you again, however kind he is to you, I am quite certain he will take far less trouble about you than I do ' The colour rushed to her cheeks and her eyes filled with tears He saw that he had wounded her and, moved to sudden pity by the spectacle of her humiliation and remorse, he forgot all her misdeeds and continued in a gentler tone What a pity that we have never had any children! I am sure you and he will have some later on, and it will be a pity that they are his and not mine, because they will only be commoners, you know ' He went on for some while discussing what would happen after he was dead, her distress and remorse increasing at every word Her charm was such that, despite his jealousy, the Emperor had grown steadily more attached to her in the years that had passed But though his partiality had raised her to a position of undisputed pre-eminence at Court, she had not at any time been happy At first she brooded incessantly upon Genji's comparative indifference towards her, but later, as her sense of responsibility increased, she marvelled more and more at the childish recklessness which had led her into that miserable adventure and, besides destroying her own good name, had reacted so disastrously upon her seducer

In the second month of the new year the Initiation Ceremony of the Crown Prince was performed He was only eleven years old but was big for his age, and it was already apparent that he was developing an extraordinary resemblance to his guardian, Prince Genji In this the world saw nothing to complain of, their future monarch could not, they felt, have chosen a better model But the Lady Abbess, his mother, watched the growing resemblance with very different feelings and could not but imagine that it was arousing the blackest suspicions

The Emperor himself was greatly relieved to see that the boy was shaping so well, and he now began to prepare Lady Kokiden for the news that he intended to vacate the Throne His actual resignation came suddenly, indeed before the end of the second month, and Kokiden was very much upset To put matters right he assured her that his abdication had but one motive namely, that he might be free to devote his poor abilities to looking after her At this she was naturally somewhat mollified

Fujitsubo s son accordingly became Emperor under the title Ryozen, and Lady Jokyoden s little son became Crown Prince The new regime bore somewhat the character of a Restoration and was marked by a return to all the gaieties and festivities of the old Emperor s reign From being President of Council, Genji became Palace Counsellor, it was intended that he should fulfil the functions of Chief Minister, and it was only because the two ministerial posts were already filled that this less imposing title was given him Genji however professed himself quite unable to cope with the duties of so arduous a function, and proposed that Aoi s father, the Minister of the Left, should be asked to assume

control But the old man pointed out that illness had long ago obliged him to forgo the executive part of his duties Since then he had not grown any younger, and feared that his head was no longer clear enough to deal with complicated affairs Genji replied that in the Other Land,[1] at times of change and uncertainty, even those who had retreated far away among the hills had sometimes been prevailed upon to return and lend their aid to a government that showed itself to be well-disposed Nor had such men ever considered that their white hairs constituted a bar, but had come forward gladly to take office under the new regime And indeed for doing so they had always been deemed true paladins of wisdom 'It is my desire,' Genji concluded, 'and that of the Council that you should resume the position which you held before your health obliged you to withdraw, and we feel that in doing so you may be sure of incurring no hostile criticism from any quarter ' It was quite true that retired Ministers had sometimes been known to resume their functions The old man withdrew his opposition and allowed them to make him Grand Minister with Plenary Powers He was now sixty-three Since the decline of his public influence, his whole family had lived very much under a cloud But now that he was again in the ascendant they began to resume their old place in society His sons were soon once more entrusted with positions of great importance, in particular, To no Chujo became Privy Counsellor of the Second Class Chujo's daughter, who was now twelve years old, was being trained for the Court, whither she was to be sent as soon as she was old enough The boy who had sung the Ballad of Takasago so prettily some years ago, was already installed as one of the Emperor's pages and was thought to be doing very well Besides these he had a number of other children, all of them very promising, and Genji, whose exiguous progeny was of small comfort to him, quite envied Chujo the size and prosperity of his young family

Yugiri, Genji's son by Aoi, was a fine little fellow He was already attached to the suite of the new Crown Prince The princess, Aoi's mother, remained entirely unmoved by the renewed good fortunes of her husband and family Indeed, this return to happier days only served to awaken fresh memories of the daughter whose loss had marked the beginning of all their troubles Her one consolation had been that by her death Aoi had been spared the torture which Genji's disgrace and banishment would have inflicted upon her proud and fastidious nature Now that he was restored to his former glories not even this consideration remained valid Genji continued to show her the same attentions as before his exile and lost no opportunity of going over to the Great Hall Yugiri's old nurse and other members of the household had during all these years remained faithfully at their posts, and Genji contrived, in one way and another, to show each of them how much he appreciated her patience

[1] China.

and fidelity The recipients of these small favours were in a state of rapturous gratitude and delight

He was also deeply touched by the conduct of the gentlewomen at the Nijo-in, in whom he had formerly shown so little interest He determined henceforward to take more pains about them He soon found himself so much occupied in paying small attentions to Miss Chujo, Madam Nakatsukasa and other good ladies of his household, that he scarcely ever had time to leave the house He was also much taken up with the rebuilding of a lodge which stood to the east of his palace, on an estate which had belonged to his father He took great trouble over the work and had the place put in splendid order, for it was his intention to lend it to unfortunate or unprotected persons, such as the lady at 'the village of falling flowers,' whom he could best assist if he had them near at hand

Meanwhile he often wondered how the Lady of Akashi was faring, but he was at this time so much occupied both with private and national affairs that he could not get news of her as often as he would have liked to do He reckoned that her delivery was likely to take place early in the third month, and about that time he contrived to send a secret courier to Akashi and learnt that the event had already taken place sixteen days ago It was a girl, and everything had gone well This was Genji's first daughter, and he felt quite excited But how callous he had been to let her go through all this alone! Why had he not brought her with him to the City and looked after her while this was happening? He felt, indeed, a sudden outburst of tenderness towards her and of remorse at his own hardness of heart

Astromers had once told him that he would have three children, of whom the eldest and youngest would eventually ascend the Throne, while the middle one would rise to be Chief Minister They had further said it would be the lowest-born of the three mothers who would give birth to the future Empress All that had happened so far fitted in very well with their prognostications The prophecy that his children would attain Imperial rank and lead the Government of the country had been repeatedly made by sign-readers of all kinds, but during the difficult times from which Genji had just emerged it appeared to be wildly improbable that any of these hopes would be fulfilled But now the safe accession of Ryozen to the Throne made him feel that everything would happen as the soothsayers had foretold That he himself was not destined to achieve such honours had been generally recognized and he had long ago given up regarding such a thing as within the bounds of possibility So well had this been recognized by his father, the old Emperor, that although Genji was his favourite son he had given special instructions that he was to remain a commoner As regards Ryozen, it was not of course recognized in the world that His Majesty was Genji's son, but that, after all, did not in any way invalidate the truth of the sign-readers' prognostications

But if this new child were really going to be empress it seemed almost disrespectful to have allowed her to be born at so strange a place He must make amends to this future sovereign, and that he might soon be able to lodge both mother and child in proper comfort, he ordered his bailiffs to push through the rebuilding of the eastern lodge as rapidly as possible

It occurred to him that it would be very difficult for her to secure a suitable wet-nurse at Akashi He chanced to hear of a young woman, a child of the old Emperor's Lady-in-Attendance, who had recently, under distressing circumstances, been left with an infant on her hands Both the Lady-in-Attendance and her husband, who had been one of the Royal Chamberlains, were dead, and the girl had been left entirely to her own devices, with the result which I have mentioned above His informant undertook to interview the girl and, if possible, persuade her to take service at Akashi She did not in point of fact need very much persuasion She was young and thoughtless and thoroughly tired of sitting all day in a large tumble-down house with nothing to do but stare in front of her She could not imagine any service which she would better like to enter than his, and at once agreed to go Genji was of course delighted, though he felt somewhat uncomfortable at sending away a young girl to a place where she would enjoy so few distractions There were certain matters which it was necessary to talk over with her, and in complete secrecy, with many precautions against his absence being noticed at home, he contrived to visit the young woman's house She did not actually withdraw her consent, but she was now feeling very nervous about the whole business Genji, however, took so much trouble in explaining to her what she had to do and in removing all her doubts and apprehensions that in the end she put herself entirely at his disposal It happened to be a lucky day, and with many apologies for giving her so little time he asked her to get ready for the journey 'It seems very hard,' Genji said, 'that you should be packed off to the country like this to look after someone else's child But I am particularly anxious that someone should be there I know by experience that it will be rather dull, but you must make up your mind to put up with it for a time, just as I did ' Having thus encouraged her, he gave a detailed description of the place and all that belonged to it

She had sometimes done service at the Palace and this was not the first time Genji had seen her But her misfortunes had brought her very low and she looked years older than when he saw her last The house was in a hopeless state of disrepair and its vast size, together with the carefully planned copses and avenues which surrounded it, made the place only the more depressing How had she contrived to hold out there so long? His sympathy was aroused The charm of youth had not after all entirely deserted her, and she was intelligent He felt inclined to prolong the interview and said laughing 'Now that it is all arranged I feel quite sorry that you have agreed to go What do you feel about it?' She felt

indeed that if she were destined to enter Genji's service at all, it would have been agreeable to find herself consigned to a rather less remote part of his household He now recited the verse Can this one moment of farewell indeed have been the sum of all our friendship, whose separation seems now like the parting of familiar friends?' Smiling she answered him 'Your chagrin, I suspect, is not that I must leave you, but springs from envy that *I* not *you* should go whither your heart is set ' Her quickness delighted him and, whatever truth there may have been in her ironic exposure of his feelings, he was really sorry that she was going.

He sent her as far as the boundary of the City in a wheeled carriage,[1] under the care of his most trusted personal servants, upon whom he had enjoined absolute silence concerning this affair Among the baggage was a vast number of presents, from the Guardian Sword [2] down to the most trifling articles such as might possibly be useful to the Lady of Akashi at this crisis, upon the young nurse too he lavished every small attention which his ingenuity could devise, determined to mitigate so far as was possible the discomfort of her long journey. It amused him to picture to himself the extravagant fuss which the old priest, at all times so comically preoccupied with his daughter's fortunes, must be making in this latest crisis Not but what he was himself filled with the tenderest concern for the Lady's welfare Above all, he must not let her feel at such a minute that there was now or ever could be any obstacle to his fulfilling the promises concerning which she herself had always been so sceptical, and in the letter which he now sent he spoke in the most definite manner of his intentions towards the child and his plans for her future life at the Capital

The travellers proceeded as far as the borders of Settsu by boat, and thence on horseback to Akashi with all possible speed, where their arrival was welcomed by the old recluse with boundless gratitude and delight With raised hands he solemnly made obeisance in the direction of the Capital, and the mother and child, marked henceforward with this new and unhoped-for sign of princely favour, became invested in his eyes with an almost alarming degree of sanctity The child was indeed a most exquisite creature, and the young nurse felt, from the moment it was presented to her, that Genji s care and anxiety on its behalf were by no means ill-bestowed In an instant the discomforts and perils of her long journey seemed like an evil dream, from which she had suddenly awaked to find this pretty and enticing infant lying in her arms Henceforward she had no thought but how best to tend and succour it

The mother, it seemed, had for many months past been in very low spirits Her confinement had left her in a condition of extreme weakness,

[1] As opposed to a Sedan-chair A carriage drawn by oxen is meant, this was a great luxury

[2] Used at the birth-ceremonies of a Princess

and she was herself convinced that she would not recover These fresh tokens of Genji's affection and concern could not fail somewhat to revive her For the first time she raised her head from the pillows and received the messengers with every sign of interest and delight They informed her that they had been ordered to return to the Capital without a moment's delay She contrived to write a few hasty lines, in which little indeed could appear of all that at that moment she was thinking and feeling Yet these few words made an impression upon their recipient the violence of which surprised and disquieted him

He had not himself told Murasaki about the birth of his child at Akashi, nor was it likely that anyone else would in so many words have done so But he feared that some inkling of the matter might reach her, and he finally made up his mind that it would be better for her to know all about it 'I had far rather that this had not happened It is all the more irritating because I have for so long been hoping that you would have a child, and that, now the child has come, it should be someone else's instead is very provoking It is only a girl, you know, which really makes it rather a different matter It would perhaps have been better from every point of view if I had left things as they were, but this new complication makes that quite impossible I think, indeed, of sending for the child I hope that when it arrives you will not feel ill-disposed towards it' She flushed 'That is just the sort of thing you always used to say,' she answered 'It seems to me to show a very strange state of mind Of course I ought to put up with it, but there are certain things which I do not see how I can be expected to get used to ' 'Softly, softly,' he answered, laughing at her unwonted asperity, 'who is asking you to get used to anything? I will tell you what you are doing You are inventing all sorts of feelings for me such as I have never really had at all, and then getting cross with me for having them That is not a very amiable proceeding, is it?' And having gone on in this strain for some while, he became quite cheerful

She thought of how they had longed for one another during the years of his exile, of his constant letters and messages This whole affair at Akashi — what had it been but a pastime, a momentary distraction in the midst of his disappointments and troubles? 'You will understand then,' Genji continued, 'that I was anxious to hear how things were going on I sent to enquire and have just heard that everything is still as well as one can hope for But if I start telling you about it now I know we shall soon be at cross purposes again ' 'She is of course very charming,' he added presently, 'but I think my feeling for her had a good deal to do with the place and the circumstances ' He began to describe how exquisitely the smoke from the salt-kilns had tapered across the evening sky, he spoke of the poems which they had exchanged, of his first glimpse of her by night, of her delightful playing on the zithern Upon all these

themes he enlarged with evident satisfaction Murasaki while she listened could not but remember how particularly unhappy she had been just at the very time when the episodes which Genji was now recalling with such relish were taking place at Akashi Even if this affair were, as he represented it to be, a mere pastime of the moment, it was clear that he had been singularly successful in his search for distraction 'Come,' he said at last, 'I am doing my best to show you that I am fond of you You had best be quick, if you are ever going to forgive me at all, life does not last for ever Here am I trying so hard just now not to give you the slightest cause for one speck of jealousy or suspicion And now just because of this unfortunate affair ' So saying he sent for his large zithern and tried to persuade her to play it with him as they were used to do But Murasaki could not help remembering his enthusiasm for the playing of the Lady at Akashi With such virtuosity she did not care to compete, and say what he would he could not persuade her to play a note

It sometimes happened that her usual good temper and gentleness would thus all at once desert her, giving place to a fit of wild jealousy and resentment To Genji these outbursts were by no means unattractive

It occurred to him that the fifth day of the fifth month would be the fiftieth day of the child's life, and he knew that his absence from the Prayers which would be held on that day would be extremely painful to the mother If only he had them with him in the Capital, what a delightful affair he could make of this Fiftieth Day Ceremony! It was really too bad that a daughter of his should have come into existence in such an outlandish place as this He ought never to have allowed it And this was his first daughter If it had been a boy he did not think he would have minded nearly so much But this girl seemed very important, for he felt that in a sense all his misfortunes had come to him as a preliminary to her birth, and had, if one could put it so, no other goal or object He lost no time in sending a messenger to Akashi with strict injunctions to arrive there on the fifth day without fail The messenger duly arrived, bearing with him the most touching and gratifying tokens of Genji's anxiety for the welfare of his friends To the Lady of Akashi he sent an acrostic poem, lamenting that he should have left her to dwell, like the pine-tree that grows beneath the northern cliff, in a place of shadows, to which not even the rejoicings of the Fiftieth Day would bring an altering gleam My anxiety for you both,' his letter continued, is becoming too great a torment for me to bear Things cannot go on like this and I have quite decided to bring you to the Capital Do not however think that my care for you will end merely with that ' She told her father of Genji's decision, and this time at any rate the old man had good cause for that mixture of joy and weeping to which he was at all times prone Looking round at Genji's Fiftieth Day presents which lay about in astonishing profusion she realized how dark a day this would have been for her but

for the coming of this messenger from the City As a second consolation she had for the first time, in the nurse whom Genji had sent to her, someone to whom she could confide the affairs of her heart, and this changed her whole life Her father had gathered about her, picking them up one by one as opportunity offered, a collection of dames who, as regards birth and upbringing, were quite the equals of the new nurse But the mountain solitudes of Akashi did not offer much scope for choice and the poor ladies were one and all the most tottering and antiquated relics of bygone Courts Among them the new arrival felt incredibly brisk and smart and in this gloomy company her opinion of herself went up by leaps and bounds She had endless stories about life at the Capital, and when these failed, she had only to describe some occasion at which Genji had figured or some incident showing the affection in which he was held or the extent of the power which he now wielded (subjects to which she continually returned with remarkable zest) at once the Lady of Akashi's cheeks would glow with pride She ought indeed to be happy that such a Prince as this should deign even to undo and abandon her, leaving nothing to show for their love save the child that had been begotten of it The nurse was allowed to read Genji's letters, and though she did so with passionate interest, she could not but feel somewhat jealous of her mistress's strange and unforeseen good fortune At such times it would seem to the nurse that to her alone of all mankind nothing good ever happened, till suddenly in Genji's letter she would come across some reference to herself 'What about the nurse? How is she turning out?' and so forth, or sometimes even more personal enquiry about her health and spirits Then for a long while the girl, usually so despondent, would feel perfectly happy and contented

To Genji's Fiftieth Day letter the Lady of Akashi sent the following reply 'Alas that to the little crane who calls to you from among the numberless islands of the deep, you do not come, though the Fiftieth Day [1] be come ' 'I am for a thousand reasons,' she continued, 'in great despondency concerning our future, and for that very reason occasional kindnesses such as you have today shown to me are all the more precious As for myself I do not rightly know what will become of me But I earnestly hope that our daughter at any rate may live to be a consolation to you rather than an embarrassment and anxiety '

Genji carried this letter about with him and constantly re-read it half aloud to himself, pausing over every sentence with fond deliberation, Murasaki could not fail to notice his preoccupation and once, hearing him thus employed, she murmured the song 'Far from me have you drifted as those boats that, starting from Mikuma shore, now row far out at sea ' She had not meant him to hear But he looked up and said sharply 'Do you really think that it is so bad as that! I should have thought you

[1] *Ika* — Fiftieth Day, but also 'Why do you not come?'

would understand exactly what such a letter as this must mean to me It is perfectly natural that I should be interested, deeply interested in an occasional budget of news from a place where I spent so long a time, and if in reading it I come across references which remind me suddenly of some interesting event or experience of those days, I think it is quite natural that I should occasionally break out into an exclamation, or something of that sort It would be much better if you simply pretended not to hear But here is the letter ' He held it out to her, but in such a way that she could only see the outer fold upon which the address was written Examining the writing she saw at once that it was a flawless hand, such as the greatest lady in the land would have had no cause to disown From that moment she knew what was in store for her, this would assuredly prove no fleeting fancy

In spite of these preoccupations his thoughts sometimes turned towards the Lady in the Village of Falling Flowers and he realized with dismay that he had not once been near her since his return to the Capital For one thing, his new position in the Government had given him so much business to look after and was attended by formalities and restrictions which made it more than ever difficult for him to go about as he chose Part of the fault however was certainly hers, for, inured to a life that offered few novelties or distractions, she was willing to accept without ill-temper or complaint such treatment as others would have found insufferable But the fifth month at last brought him a little leisure Once more he thought of his obligation, and this time he actually managed to slip away and make the long-deferred visit It was a comfort that here at least he was certain of not being treated to any exhibition of fashionable tantrums, coquettishly withering glances or well-calculated resentment, for he knew that, seldom as she saw him, his interest in her was by far the most important fact in her life, and a visit from him was not lightly to be sacrificed to some useless outburst of jealousy or irritation

The house had in these last years grown rapidly more and more dilapidated and had indeed become a most melancholy-looking place After paying his respects to the elder sister he hastened to the main entrance of the western wing and stood in the porch It was near midnight, the moon had sunk behind a bank of light clouds It was with feelings of inexpressible joy and agitation that she suddenly saw his figure dimly outlined in the darkness She had been sitting at the lattice and, in her shyness, did not rise when she saw him They continued to converse thus, he in the porch and she at her window, but there was in her manner no hint of unfriendliness or reprobation What a relief to encounter at last a disposition so grateful and unexacting! Some water-fowl were clamouring quite close to the house She recited the verse Dare I admit you to a house so desolate that even the shy water-birds regard it as their home? Her voice died away to a whisper as she reached the last words in a way

which he found strangely alluring What a lot of nice people there seemed to be in the world, thought Genji And the odd part of it was that it was just this very fact which made life so difficult and fatiguing He answered with the verse 'If the cry of the water-fowl brings you always so promptly to your door, *some* visitor there must be whom it is your pleasure to admit' This was of course mere word-play He did not for a moment suppose that any such agreeable adventures ever fell to her lot, nor indeed that she would welcome them For though she had had to wait years for this visit, he felt confident that her fidelity had never once wavered She reminded him of his poem 'Gaze not into the sky' and of all that had befallen at that farewell scene on the eve of his departure for Suma 'It seems strange,' she said at last, 'that I of all people should so much have minded your being away, considering how seldom I see you when you are here!' But even this was said with perfect gentleness and good humour His reply to this charge was, you may be sure, both prompt and conciliatory, and it was not long before he had managed, by kindness of one sort or another, to make her, for the moment at any rate, as happy as it is possible for any woman to be

He often thought during these days of Lady Gosechi, and would very much have liked to see her again, but the difficulties seemed too great and he did not attempt it Her parents saw plainly enough that she had not got over her unfortunate attachment and did their best to settle her future in some other way But she for her part declared she had given up all thought of lovers or marriage 'If only I had some large convenient building,' thought Genji, 'where I could house these friends of mine and be able to keep an eye not only on them, but on any babies that might chance to get born, how much simpler life would be!' The new eastern wing was indeed promising to prove a very handsome affair and thoroughly in the style of the moment He was impatient to get it finished, and now appointed special foremen to superintend the different branches of the work and get it put through as quickly as possible

Not infrequently something would happen to remind him of the Lady Oborozuki and despite all that had happened a fresh wave of longing would beset him She for her part had not only suffered but learnt her lesson and utterly refused to have any dealings with him, which made him feel very irritated and depressed Now that the ex-Emperor Suzaku was relieved of the cares of Government, he became somewhat more animated and showed a certain amount of interest in music and other Court diversions It was curious that among all his Ladies-in-Waiting and Ladies-of-the-Wardrobe it was to Lady Jokyoden, the mother of the Crown Prince, that he paid the least attention Not even the singular chance which made her mother of the Heir Apparent seemed able to restore to her any particle of the ascendancy which she had lost when Lady Oborozuki was taken into favour She had indeed left the Emperor's Palace and now

Shrine either last autumn or during the spring of this year She determined to renew the practice, and it so happened that she arrived by boat at Sumiyoshi just as Genji's magnificent procession was passing along the shore She saw throngs of servitors, laden with costly offerings, she saw the Eastern Dancers,[1] in companies of ten, riding by on horseback, men of picked stature, conspicuous in their strange blue-striped dress. Not a word concerning Genji's visit to Sumiyoshi had reached her, and turning to someone who was standing near she asked what procession this might be 'What procession?' the man exclaimed in astonishment 'Why, the Chief Minister's!' and a shout of laughter went up at the notion that there could possibly exist anybody in the world who had not heard of this all-important event, laughter in which a number of rough scallawags who were standing by joined as heartily as the rest

She was confounded That after all these long months of waiting it should be thus she met him showed indeed to what a different world he really belonged! Yet after all they were not quite strangers, he and she She was at least of more account in his eyes than these wretches who had scoffed at her ignorance, than all this rabble who cared nothing for him and had come here only that they might boast of having shared in his triumph How cruel an irony that she who thought of him and him only, who painfully gathered together every scrap of intelligence concerning his health and movements, should all unwittingly have chosen this disastrous day for her journey, while all the rest of the world resounded with the news of his coming, she hid her face and wept The procession moved on its way — innumerable green cloaks, with here and there a scarlet one among them, bright as an autumn maple-tree amid a grove of pines In cavalcade after cavalcade the varying colours flashed by, now dark, now light[2] Among the officers of the Sixth Grade there was one whose sheriff's coat of gold and green made him conspicuous, this was Ukon, the gentleman who upon the occasion of Genji s visit to the Imperial Tombs had recited the verse 'Little, alas, they heed their worshippers '[3] He had become captain of the Quiver Bearers, and as such was attended by more numerous officers than any other of the sheriffs Among these attendants was Yoshikiyo, who in a resplendent crimson cloak, worn with an air of the utmost nonchalance, was perhaps the handsomest figure in all the throng

Here, prosperous and happy, were all the knights and gentlemen whom she had seen at Akashi, then a pitiable band, now scattered amongst a vast cohort of partisans and retainers The young princes and courtiers

[1] These men accompanied a Minister of State on pilgrimages to the great Shinto shrines, danced in front of the shrine and afterwards took part in horse-races round it

[2] The higher officers wore cloaks of deeper hue, i e dipped more often in the dye and therefore more costly

[3] See above, p 238

who rode with the procession had vied with one another in the magnificence of their accoutrement. Such gorgeous saddles and trappings had rarely been seen, and it may be imagined how they dazzled the eye of a country girl, fresh from her hillside retreat. At last came Genji's coach. She could catch but a momentary glimpse of it, and of the face for which she yearned with so ardent a longing she could see nothing at all. Imitating the example of the great Toru [1] he was attended by boy outriders. They were charmingly dressed, their hair looped at the sides and tied with purple ribbons. The ten of them were arranged according to their height, and a very pretty sight they were as they filed past in their dainty costumes. A boy rode by, clad in the dress of a Court page, a person of some consequence evidently, for he was obsequiously watched over and assisted, while a posse of boy grooms, each differently dressed, yet forming between them a carefully designed pattern, rode in his train. She was told that this was Prince Yugiri, Genji's son by Lady Aoi. She thought of her own daughter for whom so different a fate seemed to be reserved, and in sad submission bowed her head towards the Shrine. The Governor of the Province had now appeared, his arrival being attended by greater pomp than had ever before marked his intercourse with a Minister on pilgrimage. The Lady of Akashi saw clearly that even should she succeed in forcing her way through the crowd, there was little chance that in the midst of all these excitements the God would pay any attention to her insignificant offering. She was on the point of going home again, since there seemed to be no object in staying any longer, when it occurred to her that she might at any rate row over to Naniwa and perform the ceremony of Purification. This she did, while Genji, still unaware that she had been so near him, spent the rest of the evening performing his vows within the Shrine. At last, thinking that by now the God ought to be thoroughly content, Genji determined to enjoy himself a little into the bargain, and the rest of the night was spent by the whole company in the most lively fashion imaginable. Koremitsu and the rest made a mental note that for certain kinds of religious observance there was much to be said. It happened that Genji went outside for a little while and Koremitsu, who was with him, recited an acrostic verse in which he hinted that beneath the pine-trees of Sumiyoshi a less solemn stillness now prevailed than when the Gods first ruled on earth. This could not be denied, and indeed to Genji too a joyful time had succeeded to an age of sadness. He therefore answered with the verse 'That from wild waves whose onslaught drove me from my course this God delivered me, I shall not soon forget.' Koremitsu then went on to tell him how the boat from Akashi, dismayed by the crowds that flocked the Shrine, had put out again to sea. He hated to think that she had been there without his knowing it, besides, he felt now that it was this very God of Sumiyoshi who had given her to

[1] For the extravagances of this statesman, see *No Plays of Japan*, p. 293.

him for a bride He could not let her go back without a word from him to cheer her To think that she had come and gone without his even hearing that she was at hand would certainly grieve her worst of all But for the moment she had gone further up the coast and there was nothing to be done

After leaving Sumiyoshi he visited several places in the neighbourhood At Naniwa he too underwent the ceremony of Purification, together with other ceremonies, particularly the Ablution of the Seven Streams As he passed the estuary of Horiye he murmured, 'Like the Tide-gauge at Naniwa ,'[1] hardly knowing why the lines had come into his head Koremitsu, who was near his coach, overheard these words, and regarding them as a command to him to produce writing materials (a duty for which he was often in request) he whipped out a short-handled pen from the folds of his dress and as soon as Genji's coach came to a standstill handed it in to him Genji was amused by his promptness and on a folded paper wrote the lines 'That once again our love to its flood-mark shall rise, what better presage than this chance meeting by the tide-gauge of the shore?' This he sent across to Naniwa by the hand of an underling who, from conversation with her servants, knew at what address she was to be found Much as she had suffered at seeing him pass her by, it needed only this trifling message to allay all her agitation In a flutter of gratitude and pride she indited the answer 'How comes it[2] that to the least of those who bide as pilgrims in this town you bear a love that mounts so high upon the flood-gauge of your heart?' She had that day been bathing in the Holy Waters at the Shrine of Rain-coat Island, and she sent him her poem tied to a prayer-strip which she had brought from the Shrine When the message reached Genji it was already growing dark, the tide was full, and the cranes along the river-mouth had with one accord set up their strange and moving cry Touched by the beauty of the place and hour, he suddenly lost all patience with the crowds that surged around him Could he but banish them all from his sight and find himself with only the writer of this diffident poem at his side!

The journey back to the City was enlivened by many excursions and entertainments, but all the while his thoughts continually returned to the strange coincidence of that unhappy meeting Quantities of dancing-girls had attached themselves to his retinue Despite their total lack of sense or breeding, their company appeared to afford a vast deal of satisfaction to the hot-blood young gentlemen who formed Genji's escort This seemed to him very strange One cannot enjoy beautiful scenery or works

[1] 'As to the tide-gauge at Naniwa that now lies bare, so to our love the flood tide shall at last return '

[2] Pun on Naniwa, name of town and *nani wa* 'How comes it?' Here and in the preceding poem there is also a play on *miozukushi* = tide-gauge, and *mi wo tsukushi* = 'with all one's heart and soul '

of art in the company of any but the right person, and surely if, in such matters as that, one is so easily put off by commonness or stupidity, it must make some difference *whom* one chooses as partner in these far more intimate associations He could not indeed contrive to take the slightest interest in these creatures They on their side quickly perceived that they were not being a success, and at once redoubled their efforts, with the consequence that he found them only the more repulsive

Next day was marked a 'good day' in the calendar, and Genji's party being safely on its way back to the Capital, the Lady of Akashi was able to return to Sumiyoshi and pursue her devotions in peace, now at last finding occasion to fulfil the many vows that had accumulated since her last visit to the Shrine Her recent glimpse of Genji in all his glory had but increased the misgivings which day and night beset her amid such surroundings as that it was impossible that so insignificant a person as herself should not rapidly sink into obscurity and contempt She did not expect to hear from him again till he was back at Court She was counting the days, when to her surprise a messenger appeared In a letter, which had evidently been written during the journey, he named the actual date at which he should send for her to the City Once more he sought to dispel all her doubts and anxieties, she could rely upon him implicitly, her position in his household would, he besought her to believe, be neither equivocal nor insecure Nevertheless, she felt that she was embarking upon a perilous voyage under skies which, however promising an aspect they might now be wearing, might at any moment change to the threat of a hideous disaster Her father too, when it came to the prospect of actually releasing her from his care, was exceedingly perturbed, indeed he dreaded her departure for the Capital even more than he had feared the prospect of her remaining for ever buried in her rustic home Her answer to Genji was full of reservations and misgivings concerning her fitness for the position which he promised her

The retirement of the Emperor Suzaku had necessitated the appointment of a new Vestal at Ise, and Lady Rokujo had brought her daughter back again to the City Genji had written the usual congratulations and this had given her immense pleasure, but she had no desire to give him the opportunity of once more distracting her as he had done in those old days, and she had answered only in the most formal terms Consequently he had not, since her return, made any attempt to visit her He did indeed make some vague suggestion of a meeting, but these hints were very half-hearted and it was a relief to him that they were not taken He had recently decided not to complicate his life by outside relationships even of the most harmless kind he simply had not time And particularly in a case of this sort he saw no object in forcing his society upon someone who did not desire it He was however extremely curious to see how the Vestal Virgin, now known as Lady Akikonomu, had grown up Rokujo's old

palace in the Sixth Ward had been admirably repaired and redecorated, and life there was in these days by no means intolerable Rokujo herself had gifts of character and intelligence which the passage of years had not obliterated Her own personality and the unusual beauty of many of her gentlewomen combined to make her house a meeting place for men of fashion, and though she was herself at times very lonely, she was leading a life with which she was on the whole by no means ill-contented, when her health gave way She felt at once that there was no hope for her, and oppressed by the thought that she had for so long been living in a sinful place,[1] she resolved to become a nun This news was a great blow to Genji That he would ever again meet her as a lover, he had long felt to be impossible But he thought of her as a friend whose company and conversation would always be among his greatest pleasures That she should have felt it necessary to take this solemn and irrevocable step was a terrible shock, and on hearing what had happened he at once hastened to her palace It proved to be a most harrowing visit He found her in a state of complete collapse Screens surrounded her bed, his chair was placed outside them, as near as possible to her pillow, and in this manner they conversed It was evident that her strength was rapidly failing How bitterly he now repented that he had not come to her sooner, had not proved, while yet there was time, that his passion for her had never expired! He wept bitterly, and Rokujo on her side, amazed to realize from the very intensity of his grief that during all the years when she had imagined herself to be forgotten, she had never been wholly absent from his thoughts, in a moment discarded all her bitterness, and seeing that his distress was unendurable began with the utmost tenderness to lead his thoughts to other matters She spoke after a while about her daughter, Lady Akikonomu, the former Virgin of Ise, begging him to help her on in the world in any way he could 'I had hoped,' she said, 'having cast the cares of the world aside, to live on quietly at any rate until this child of mine should have reached an age when she could take her life into her own hands ' Her voice died away 'Even if you had not mentioned it, I should always have done what I could to help her,' answered Genji, but now that you have made this formal request to me, you may be sure that I shall make it my business to look after her and protect her in every way that lies in my power You need have no further anxiety on that score .' 'It will not be so easy,' she answered 'Even a girl whose welfare has been the sole object of devoted parents often finds herself in a very difficult position if her mother dies and she has only her father to rely upon But your task will, I fear, be far harder than that of a widowed father Any kindness that you show the girl will at once be misinterpreted, she will be mixed up in all sorts of unpleasant bickerings and all your own friends will be set against her And this brings me to a matter

[1] A Shinto shrine, offensive to Buddha

which is really very difficult to speak about I wish I were so sure in my own mind that you would *not* make love to her Had she my experience, I should have no fear for her But unfortunately she is utterly ignorant and indeed is just the sort of person who might easily suffer unspeakable torment through finding herself in such a position I cannot help wishing that I could provide for her future in some way that was not fraught with this particular danger ' What an extraordinary notion, thought Genji How could she have got such a thing into her head? 'You are thinking of me as I was years ago,' he answered quickly 'I have changed a great deal since then, as you would soon discover if you knew more about me '

Out of doors it was now quite dark The room where he was sitting was lit only by the dim glow that, interrupted by many partitions, filtered through from the great lamp in the hall Someone had entered the room He peeped cautiously through a tear in one of the screens which surrounded the bed In the very uncertain light he could just distinguish Rokujo's form Her hair was cropped, as is customary with novices before the final tonsure, but elegantly and with taste, so that her head, outlined against the pillows, made a delicate and charming picture On the far side of the bed he could distinguish a second figure This surely must be Lady Akikonomu There was a point at which the screens had been carelessly joined, and looking through this gap he saw a young girl sitting in an attitude of deep dejection with her chin resting on her hand So far as he could judge from this very imperfect view she was exceedingly good-looking Her hair that hung loose to the ground, the carriage of her head, her movements and expression — all had a singular dignity and grace, yet despite this proud air there was something about her affectionate, almost appealing But was he not already beginning to take just that interest in her person against which her mother had a few moments ago been warning him? He hastily corrected his thoughts Lady Rokujo now spoke again 'I am in great pain,' she said, 'and fear that at any moment my end may come I would not have you witness my last agonies Pray leave me at once ' This she said with great difficulty, her women supporting her on either side How glad I should have been,' said Genji, if my visit had made you better I am afraid it has only made you worse I cannot bear to leave you in such pain Tell me what it is that hurts so much?' And so saying he made as though to come to her side 'Do not come to me!' she cried out in terror, 'I am grown hideous, you would not know me Does what I say seem to you very strange and disjointed? It may be that my thoughts wander a little, for I am dying Thank you for bearing patiently with me at such a time I am much easier in my mind now that I have had this talk with you I had meant to for a long time

' 'I am touched,' replied Genji, 'that you should have thought of me as a person to whom you could confide these requests As you know,

my father the late Emperor had a very large number of sons and daughters, for my part, I am not very intimate with any of them But, when his brother died, he also regarded Lady Akikonomu here as though she were his own child and for that reason I have every right to regard her as my sister and help her in just those ways which a brother might It is true that I am a great deal older than she is, but my own family is sadly small,[1] and I could well afford to have someone else to look after '

After his return he sent incessantly to enquire after her progress and constantly wrote to her She died some eight days later He was deeply distressed, for a long while took no interest in anything that happened and had not the heart to go even so far as the Emperor's Palace The arrangements concerning her funeral and many other matters about which she had left behind instructions fell entirely upon him, for there was no one else to whom her people could apply Fortunately the officers who had been attached to Lady Akikonomu's suite while she was at Ise still remained in her service and they were able to give her a certain amount of assistance Before the funeral Genji called in person and sent in a note to the bereaved lady of the house A housekeeper (one of the people from Ise) brought back word that her mistress was completely overwhelmed by her loss and could not reply to him He sent in a second message reminding Lady Akikonomu that her mother had solemnly committed her to his care and begging her not to regard him as an alien intruder into her affairs He then sent for the various members of the household and gave them their instructions He did so with an air of confidence and authority which surprised those who remembered for how long he had absented himself from that house The funeral was carried out with the utmost pomp, the bier being attended not only by her servants, but by all Genji's servants and retainers

For a long while afterwards he was immersed in prayers and penances and but seldom emerged from the seclusion of a thickly curtained recess To Lady Akikonomu he sent many messages of enquiry, to which she now answered in her own hand She had at first been too shy to do so, much to the dismay of her old nurse, who explained to her that not to answer letters is considered very uncivil One day as he sat watching the wild storms of sleet and snow that were sweeping in a confused blizzard across the land, he could not help wondering how Lady Akikonomu was faring in this rough weather and sent a messenger to her palace I wonder how you like this storm,' he wrote, and added the poem 'I see a house of mourning, dark tempests threaten it, and high amid the clouds hovers a ghost with anxious wing ' It was written on light blue paper tinged with grey, the penmanship and make-up of the note were indeed purposely intended to be such as would impress a young girl So much did this elegant missive dazzle her inexperienced eye that she again felt utterly

[1] Aoi's son Yugiri was his only acknowledged child

unable to reply, and it was only when one member of her household after another reproached her for such rudeness and ingratitude that she at last took up a sheet of heavily scented dark grey paper and in brush-strokes so faint as to be scarcely distinguishable wrote the poem 'Would that like the snowflakes when they are weary of falling I might sink down upon the earth and end my days' There was nothing very remarkable about the writing, but it was an agreeable hand and one which bore unmistakable traces of the writer's lineage He had formed a high opinion of her at the time when she first went to Ise and had very much regretted her withdrawal from the world Now she was an ordinary person again, and, if he wished to cultivate her acquaintance, entirely at his disposal, but this very fact (as was usual with him) caused a revulsion of feeling To go forward in the direction where fewest obstacles existed seemed to him to be taking a mean advantage Although he was, in his attentions to Lady Akikonomu, merely fulfilling her mother's request, he knew quite well how everyone at Court was expecting the story to end Well, for once in a way their expectations would be disappointed He was fully determined to bring her up with the utmost propriety and, so soon as the Emperor reached years of discretion, to present her at Court, in fact, to adopt her as his daughter — a thing which, considering the smallness of his family, it was natural for him to do He constantly wrote her letters full of kindness and encouragement, and occasionally called at her palace 'What I should really like,' he said one day, 'would be for you to look upon me, if you will forgive my putting it in that way, as a substitute for your dear mother Can you not sometimes treat me as though I were an old friend? Can you not trust me with some of the secrets you used to confide to her?' Such appeals merely embarrassed her She had lived so secluded a life that to open her mouth at all in a stranger's presence seemed to her a terrible ordeal, and her gentlewomen were in the end obliged to make such amends as they could It was a comfort that many of her officers and gentlewomen were closely connected with the Imperial Family and would, if his project for installing her in the Palace did not come to naught, be able to help her to assert herself He would have been glad to know more about her appearance, but she always received him from behind her curtains, and he neither felt justified in taking the liberties that are accorded to a parent nor did he feel quite sure enough of himself to wish to put his parental feelings to the test He was indeed very uncertain with regard to his own intentions, and for the present mentioned his plans about her to nobody He saw to it that the Memorial Service was carried out with great splendour, devoting to the arrangement of it a care that deeply gratified the bereaved household Life there was becoming more and more featureless and depressing as the weeks went by One by one Lady Akikonomu's servants and retainers were finding other employment The Palace stood at the extreme outer edge of the Sixth

Ward, in a district which was very little frequented, and the melancholy bells which went on tolling and tolling in innumerable adjacent temples reduced her every evening to a state of abject misery She had always been used to spend a great deal of time in her mother's company, and even when she was sent to Ise, though no parent had ever before accompanied the Vestal Virgin, they still remained unseparated It can be imagined then that her mother's loss left her peculiarly helpless and desolate, and the thought that Rokujo, who had travelled so far for her sake, should now set out upon this last journey all alone, caused her unspeakable pain Many suitors both high and low, under cover of paying attentions to one or other of her gentlewomen, now began to frequent the house Genji however had in his best fatherly style exacted a promise from the lady's old nurse that she would allow no matchmaking to go on in the house Above all he feared that some of her women might wish for their own ends to keep these gentlemen hanging about the premises It soon however became apparent that there was no danger of this The ladies concerned knew that their doings would probably reach Genji's ears, and they were far too anxious to stand well with him to dream of abusing their position The suitors soon found that their advances were not met with the slightest encouragement

It will be remembered that at the time of Lady Akikonomu's departure for Ise the retired Emperor Suzaku had, when presiding at the magnificent farewell ceremony in the Daigoku Hall, been greatly struck with her beauty This impression had remained with him, and on her return to the Capital he begged Rokujo to let her daughter come to him, promising that she should take her place as the equal of his sister, the former Vestal of Kamo, and the other princesses, his sisters and kinswomen whom he sheltered under his roof This proposal did not please her She feared that where so many exalted personages were gathered together her daughter would be likely to receive but scant attention Moreover Suzaku was at the time in very bad health, and if he should fail to recover, his dependants might be left in a precarious position Now that her mother was dead it was all the more desirable to establish her in a manner which offered some prospect of security When therefore Suzaku repeated his invitation, this time in somewhat insistent terms, Lady Akikonomu's friends were placed in an awkward position Genji's private plan of affiancing her to the boy-Emperor would, now that Suzaku had displayed so marked an inclination towards her, be difficult to pursue without too deeply offending his brother Another consideration weighed with him he was becoming more and more fascinated by the girl's beauty and he was in no hurry to commit her to other hands Under the circumstances he thought the best thing he could do was to talk the matter over with Lady Fujitsubo 'I am in great difficulties over this business,' he said 'As you know, the girl's mother was a woman of singularly proud and

sensitive temperament I am ashamed to say that, following my own wanton and selfish inclinations, I behaved in such a way as to do great injury to her reputation, with the consequence that henceforward she on her side harboured against me a passionate resentment, while I on mine found myself branded not only by her but also by the world at large as a profligate and scamp Till the very last I was never able to recover her confidence, but on her death-bed she spoke to me of Akikonomu's future in a way which she would never have done had she not wholly regained her good opinion of me This was a great weight off my mind Even had these peculiar relations not existed between us, her request was one which even to a stranger I could hardly have refused And as it was, you may imagine how gladly I welcomed this chance of repairing, even at this late hour, the grievous wrong which my light-mindedness had inflicted upon her during her lifetime His Majesty is of course many years younger than Akikonomu,[1] but I do not think it would be a bad thing if he had some older and more experienced person in his entourage However, it is for you to decide ' 'I am of the same opinion,' Fujitsubo replied 'It would of course be very imprudent to offend the retired Emperor But surely the mother's wishes are a sufficient excuse If I were you I should pretend you know nothing about the retired Emperor's inclination towards her and present her at the Palace without more ado As a matter of fact, Suzaku now cares very little about such matters What energy he still possesses is spent on prayers and meditation I do not think you will find that he minds very much one way or the other

' 'All the same, I think it will be best under the circumstances if the request for Akikonomu's Presentation came from you,' said Genji 'I could then seem merely to be adding my solicitations to yours You will think that in weighing the pros and cons of the matter with such care I am over-scrupulous, and indeed I fear that you have found me rather tedious It is simply that I am extremely anxious people should not think me lacking in respect towards my brother ' It soon became apparent that, in accordance with Fujitsubo's advice, he had decided to disregard the retired Emperor's wishes But it was in Genji's own palace and not, for the moment at any rate, in the Emperor's household that Lady Akikonomu was to be installed He explained the circumstances to Murasaki

She is just about your age,' he said, 'and you will find her a very agreeable companion I think you will get on famously together ' Murasaki at once took to the idea and was soon busy with preparations for the reception of the visitor

Fujitsubo was all this while extremely exercised in mind concerning the future of her niece, the youngest daughter of Prince Hyobukyo, for Genji's estrangement from the father seemed to block every avenue of advancement To no Chujo's daughter, as the grandchild of the Senior

[1] Akikonomu was now nineteen, the boy-Emperor Ryozen, seven

Minister, was treated on all sides with the utmost deference and consideration, and she had now become the Emperor's favourite playmate. 'My brother's little girl is just the same age as the Emperor,' said Fujitsubo one day, 'he would enjoy having her to play at dolls with him sometimes, and it would be a help to the older people who are looking after him.' But quite apart from affairs of state, Genji had (as Fujitsubo knew) such a multiplicity of private matters to attend to and was plagued from morning till night by such a variety of irritating applications and requests that she had not the heart to keep on bothering him. It was something that a person like Lady Akikonomu would soon be at the Emperor's side, for Fujitsubo herself was in very poor health and, though she sometimes visited the Palace, she could not look after her son's education as she would have liked to do. It was necessary that there should be someone grown-up to keep an eye on him, and though she would dearly like to have seen her niece installed as his playmate, she was extremely glad of the arrangement whereby a sensible creature like Lady Akikonomu was to have him in her constant care.

not that he meant very much by it, but she, poor lady, could never get over the surprise of his noticing her at all — and then for him to disappear without a word! She knows of course that it is not from her that he has run away to Suma, it all comes of this new government! But still, one cannot help being very sorry for the poor young creature ' She had indeed during the time after her father's death become gradually inured to a life of extreme monotony and isolation, but Genji's visits had awakened in her quite new ambitions, for the first time in her life she began to feel herself drawn towards the world of taste and fashion This made her renewed state of poverty and isolation all the more difficult to bear The fact that Genji frequented the house had for the time being induced a certain number of other visitors to present themselves But since his departure one visitor after another, having grown more and more remiss in his attentions, finally ceased to come at all Her father's ladies-in-waiting were all very advanced in years and every now and then one of them would die, the other servants, both indoors and out, were continually seeking better service, and hardly a month passed but some member of her staff either died or drifted away The palace grounds, which had for long years past been allowed to sink into a sad state of neglect, had now become a mere jungle Foxes had made their lairs in the garden walks, while from the ornamental plantations, now grown into dank and forbidding woods, the voice of the screech-owl sounded day and night alike, so little was there now any sign of human habitation in that place, so dim was the daylight that pierced those tangled thickets The few servants who still lingered on in the midst of all this desolation began to declare that tree-spirits and other fearsome monsters had established themselves in the palace grounds and were every day becoming more open and venturesome in their habits 'There is no sense in continuing to live like this,' one of these ladies said 'Nowadays all the government officials are building themselves handsome houses Several of them have for a long time past had their eye on all your timber and have been making enquiries in the neighbourhood whether you might not be prevailed upon to part with it If only you would consent to do so, you might with the proceeds easily buy some newer place that would be less depressing to live in You are really asking too much of the few servants that remain with you ' 'Hush, how can you suggest such a thing!' answered the princess What would people think if they heard you? So long as I am alive no such disrespect to my poor Father s memory shall ever be committed I know quite well that the grounds have become rather wild and dismal, but this was his home, his dear spirit haunts the place, and I feel that so long as I am here I am never far off from him That has become my only comfort ' She broke off in tears, and it was impossible to allude to the subject again Her furniture too, though entirely out of fashion, was much of it very beautiful in an old-world way, and enquiries were

constantly coming from those who made it their business to understand such matters and had heard that she possessed a work by such and such a master of some particular time and school Such proposals she regarded merely as an ill-bred comment upon her poverty and indeed complained of them bitterly to the aforementioned gentlewoman 'But, Madam,' the lady protested, 'it is not at all an unusual thing ' And to convince her mistress that funds must somehow or other be procured she began to call her attention to various dilapidations, the repair of which could not safely be deferred for a single day But it made no difference The idea of selling any of her possessions seemed to the princess utterly untenable 'If he had not meant me to keep them, he would not have put them here,' she said, 'I cannot bear to think of them becoming ornaments in ordinary, worldly people's houses I do not think he would wish me to ,' and that was all that could be got out of her

Visitors and even letters were now absolutely unknown at the Hitachi Palace True, her elder brother the Zen priest on the rare occasions when he came up to the Capital, usually visited the palace But he did little more than poke his head in and go away He was a particularly vague and unpractical sort of man, who even among his fellow clerics ranked as unusually detached from all worldly considerations In fact he was a saint, and consequently very unlikely to notice that the whole place was overgrown with weeds and bushes, still less to suggest any means of clearing them away

Meanwhile, the state of affairs was becoming very acute The once elegant courtyard was thickly overgrown with weeds, the lusty hemlock clumps were fast destroying the gables and eaves of the roof The main eastern and western gates of the park were barricaded by huge masses of mugwort and it was impossible to open them This might have given the inhabitants of the palace a certain comforting sense of security, had it not been for the fact that the walls which surrounded the estate were everywhere either broken down or upon the point of falling Horse and oxen from the neighbouring pastures soon found their way through these gaps, and when the summer came they began to make free with the palace lawns in a way which scandalized the little herd-boys who were in charge of them At the time of the autumn equinox there were very heavy gales, and one day the main roof of the servants' wing was blown right away, leaving only a ceiling of thin match-boarding, a mere shell, which would not have withstood the mildest shower of rain At this the underservants left in a body Henceforward the few inhabitants of the palace led a pitiable existence, not even getting enough to eat, for there was no one to make up the fires or prepare their food Thieves and vagabonds had the place completely at their mercy, but fortunately it never occurred to them to go near it How could so desolate a ruin contain anything worth meddling with? They shook their heads and trudged on But strangely

enough, had he penetrated those savage thickets, an enterprising burglar would have found, amid a tangled mass of wreckage, a drawing-room[1] perfectly appointed in every detail, each ornament, each screen and article of furniture still standing exactly where the late prince had left it True, there was no longer anyone to dust this last-surviving room, and it needed dusting badly Never mind, it was a real room, not just a living-place, but a noble apartment with everything in it handsome and dignified just as it ought to be And here, year in and year out, her whole life was spent

Solitary people with a great deal of time on their hands seem usually to turn to old ballads and romances for amusement and distraction, but for such employments the princess showed little inclination Even in the lives of those who have no particular interest in poetry there are usually periods of inactivity during which they take to exchanging verses with some sympathetic correspondent — verses which, if they are young, generally contain affecting references to various kinds of plant and tree But the princess's father had imbued her with the belief that all outward display of emotion is undignified and ill-bred, she felt that what he would really have liked best would have been for her to communicate with no one at all, and she had long given up writing even to the few relations with whom she might have been expected occasionally to correspond

At rare intervals she would open an old-fashioned chest and fiddle for a while with a number of ancient picture-scrolls, illustrations of such stories as *The Chinese Prefect*, *The Mistress of Hakoya*, *Princess Kaguya*[2] and the like Then there were some poems which, though all of very ancient date, were excellently chosen, with the names of the poets and the titles of the poems written in a nice clear hand at the side, so that one could really tell what one was reading They were written on the best Kanya and Michinoku papers, now grown somewhat puffy with age,[3] and though it cannot be supposed that she could derive much pleasure from reading the same familiar pages over and over again, yet it was noticed that in her hours of deepest depression she would often sit with the books spread open before her As for reading the Sutras or performing those Buddhist ceremonies which have now become so indispensable an element in fashionable life, she would have shuddered at the thought, and would not have dreamed of so much as touching a rosary, even though no one was there to see Such was the arduous standard of conduct which this lady imposed upon herself

[1] Such a term must only be taken as a rough equivalent

[2] Of these three romances the first is quite unknown, the second must have been a Taoist fairy story, for 'Hakoya' is the 'Miao-ku-she' of Chuang Tzu, Chapter I — a divine mountain inhabited by mysterious sages The third is either identical with the *Taketori Monogatari* ('The Bamboo-cutter's Story') or at any rate treated the same theme.

[3] Kanya River ('Paper-makers' River') is between Hirano and Kitano, near Kyoto Michinoku paper, from the province of that name, was made of spindle-wood These stout Japanese papers become thick and fluffy with age.

Of her old servants only Jiju, the daughter of her foster-nurse, had survived the general exodus of the last few years Jiju s friend, the former Vestal of Kamo, whose company had been one of her distractions, was dead, and the poor lady's existence had become such as no one could reasonably be expected to endure A sister of the princess's mother had fallen on evil days and ended by marrying a provincial official She now lived at the Capital, and as she had daughters, together with a bevy of unusually agreeable young waiting-women, Jiju occasionally visited the house, where indeed she was quite at home, for both her parents had been friends of the family But the princess herself, with her usual unsociability, absolutely refused to hold any communication with her aunt's household I am afraid the princess looks upon me as a very vulgar person,' the aunt said to Jiju one day She still thinks, despite the wretched manner in which she now lives, that to have such relations as we is a disgrace to her At any rate I suppose that is why she is so careful never to come near us ' It was in this somewhat malicious tone that she always discussed her niece's behaviour

I have noticed that people of quite common origin who have risen in the world can in a very short time achieve a perfect imitation of aristocratic importance And similarly, if through some accident an aristocrat falls into low company, he generally exhibits a meanness so thoroughgoing that it is hard to believe he has been at any pains to acquire it Of this second tendency the princess s aunt was a good example She knew that after her unfortunate marriage the people at the Hitachi Palace had regarded her as a disgrace to the family Now that the prince was dead and Suyetsumu herself was in circumstances of such difficulty, there seemed to be quite a good chance that the princess might eventually have to take shelter under her aunt s roof This was what the aunt herself was looking forward to It was her revenge She saw the princess installed as a dependant, fetching and carrying for her daughters And what an ideal drudge she would make, being so priggish and strait-laced that it would never be necessary to keep an eye upon her! 'You ought to bring her round to see us sometimes,' the aunt would say to Jiju, 'and if you could get her to bring her zithern, so much the better, we have heard so much about her playing ' Jiju did her best, and the princess, docile as usual, admitted that there was everything to be said in favour of paying an occasional visit But when it came to the point, panic overwhelmed her She would do anything, anything that Jiju asked, but she would not make friends And so, greatly to the aunt s discomfiture, the matter was dropped

About this time her uncle was appointed treasurer to a provincial district He intended to take his family with him, and was anxious to equip his daughters with attendants whom it would be pleasant to name in the ears of provincial visitors The chance of being able to exhibit a real

princess as a member of their staff was not to be thrown away and the aunt returned once more to the attack 'I am very worried at having to go so far away from you,' she sent word by Jiju 'We have not had the pleasure of seeing you much lately, but it was a great comfort to me to feel that I was near at hand and could help you if anything went wrong I am most anxious that, if possible, we should not be separated ' All this had no effect whatever 'The conceited little fool! I have no patience with her,' the aunt cried out at last 'She may have these grand ideas about herself if she chooses, but no one else is going to take much notice of a creature that goes on year after year living in the hole-and-corner way that she does, least of all this famous Prince Genji, with whom she pretends to be so intimate '

At last came Genji's pardon and recall, celebrated in every part of the kingdom by riotous holiday-making and rejoicing His friends of either sex were soon vying with one another in demonstrations of good will and affection These testimonies to his popularity, pouring in from persons of every rank and condition in life, naturally touched him deeply, and in these stirring days it would have been strange indeed if many minor affairs had not escaped his memory But for her the time of his restoration was far harder to bear than that of his exile For whereas she had before confidently looked forward to his return, counting upon it as we count upon the winter trees to bud again in spring, this glorious home-coming and restoration, when at last they came, brought joy to every hut and hovel in the land, but to her only a hundredfold increase of her former misery For of what comfort to her were his triumphs, if she must hear of them from other lips?

The aunt had the satisfaction of seeing her prophecies fulfilled It was of course out of the question that anyone would own to an acquaintance with a person living in such miserable squalor as now surrounded the princess There are those, says the *Hokkekyo*,[1] whom even Buddha and his saints would have hard work to redeem, and certainly this lady had allowed her affairs to drift into a disorder which the most generous patron would shrink from attempting to set straight This contempt for all the rest of the world, this almost savage unsociability, was of course no invention of her own, it was merely an attempt to perpetuate the haughty demeanour of the late prince and princess, her parents But this did not make the young princess's attitude any less irritating and ridiculous 'There is still time to change your mind,' said her aunt one day A change of scene — a journey through the mountains, for example, is often very beneficial to people who have some trouble on their minds I am sure you think that life in the provinces is very uncomfortable and disagreeable, but I can assure you that while you are with us you will never have to stay anywhere quite so higgledy-piggledy .' The wretched old

[1] *The Saddharmapundarika Sutra*

women who still dragged on their existence in the palace eagerly watched the princess's face while their fate was being decided Surely she would not throw away this opportunity of escape! To their consternation they soon saw that her aunt's appeal was not making the slightest impression upon her Jiju, for her part, had recently become engaged to a young cousin of the provincial treasurer's, who was to accompany him to his province, and she was therefore pledged to go down to Tsukushi, whether the princess joined the party or not She was however deeply attached to her mistress and very loath indeed to leave her in her present condition She therefore discussed the matter with her again, and did everything in her power to persuade the princess to accompany them, only to make the extraordinary discovery that Suyetsumu was still from day to day living in the hope that the visitor from whom she had for all those years had no word would suddenly reappear and put everything to rights again 'He was very fond of me,' she said 'It is only because he has been unhappy himself that he has not remembered to write to me If he had the slightest idea of what is happening to us here, he would come at once ' So she had been thinking for years, and though the general structure of the house fell every day into a more fantastic state of dilapidation, she still persisted as obstinately as ever in retaining every trifling article of furniture and decoration in exactly the place where it had always been She spent so much of her time in tears that a certain part of her face had now become as red as the flower which the hillman carries over his ear, so that her appearance, particularly when she showed her face in profile, would have struck a casual visitor as somewhat forbidding But of this I will say no more, it is perhaps always a mistake to enter into matters of that kind

As the cold weather came on, existence at the Hitachi Palace rapidly became more and more difficult The princess sat staring in front of her, plunged in unbroken gloom Meanwhile Genji celebrated the ritual of the Eight Readings, in memory of his father, the old Emperor He took great trouble in choosing the priests for this ceremony and succeeded finally in assembling a notable band of dignitaries Among them none was more renowned for the sanctity of his life and the wide range of his studies than Princess Suyetsumu's brother, the Abbot of Daigoji On his way back from the ceremony, he looked in for a moment at the Hitachi Palace 'I have just been celebrating the Eight Readings in Prince Genji's palace,' he said, a magnificent ceremony! It is a pleasure to take part in such a service as that! I cannot imagine anything more beautiful and impressive A veritable paradise — I say it in all reverence — a veritable paradise on earth, and the prince himself, so calm and dignified, you might have thought him an incarnation of some holy Buddha or Bodhisat How came so bright a being to be born into this dim world of ours?' So saying, he hurried off to his temple Unlike ordinary, worldly men and

women he never wasted time in discussing sordid everyday affairs or gossiping about other people's business Consequently he made no allusion to the embarrassed circumstances in which his sister was living. She sometimes wondered whether even the Saints whom he worshipped would, if they had found someone in a like situation, really have succeeded in behaving with so splendid an indifference

She was indeed beginning to feel that she could hold out no longer, when one day her aunt suddenly arrived at the palace. This lady was quite prepared to meet with the usual rebuffs, but having on this occasion come in a comfortable travelling coach stored with everything that the princess could need during a journey she did not for an instant doubt that she would gain her point With an air of complete self-confidence she bustled towards the front gate. No sooner had the porter begun trying to open it than she realized into what a pitch of decay her niece's property had fallen The doors were off their hinges, and as soon as they were moved tottered over sideways, and it was not till her own men-servants came to the rescue that, after a tremendous shouldering and hoisting, a passage was cleared through which she could enter the grounds What did one do next? Even such a heap of gimcrack ruins as this presumably had some apertures which were conventionally recognized as doors and windows A lattice door on the southern side of the house was half open and here the visitors halted It did not seem possible that any human being was within hail, but to their astonishment, from behind a smoke-stained, tattered screen-of-state the maid Jiju suddenly appeared She was looking very haggard, but though age and suffering had greatly changed her, she was still a well-made, pleasing woman, 'at any rate far more presentable than her mistress,' thought the visitors 'We are just starting,' cried out the aunt to the lady of the house, who, as she guessed, was seated behind this sooty screen 'I have come to take Jiju away. I am afraid you will find it very difficult to get on without her, but even if you will not deign to have any dealings with us yourself, I am sure you will not be so inconsiderate as to stand in this poor creature's way' She put in so moving a plea on behalf of Jiju that there ought by rights to have been tears in her eyes But she was in such high spirits at the prospect of travelling as a provincial governor's wife that a smile of pleasant anticipation played upon her lips all the while 'I know quite well,' she continued, 'that the late prince was not at all proud of his connection with us, and I am sure it was quite natural that when you were a child you should pick up his way of thinking and feeling But that is a long time ago now You may say that it was my fault we did not meet But really while celebrities such as Prince Genji were frequenting the house I was not at all sure that humble people like ourselves would be welcome However, one of the advantages of being of no importance is that we humdrum creatures are not subject to the same violent ups and downs as

you exalted people I for my part was very sorry to see your fortunes declining so rapidly as they have done of late, but so long as I was near at hand I was quite happy about you and did not consider it my duty to interfere But now that I am going away to another part of the country, I confess I feel very uneasy ' It would be delightful to go with you Most people would be very glad indeed But I think that as long as the place holds together at all I had better go on as I am ' That was all that could be got out of her Well, that is for you to decide,' said the aunt at last, 'but I should not think that anyone has ever before buried himself alive in such a god-forsaken place I am sure that if you had asked him in time Prince Genji would have been delighted to put things straight for you, indeed, with a touch here and there no doubt he would soon have made the place more sumptuous than the Jade Emperor's[1] Palace But unfortunately he is now entirely preoccupied with this young daughter of Prince Hyobukyo, and will do nothing for anyone else He used to lead a roving life, distributing his favours in all sorts of directions But now that has all stopped, and under these circumstances it is very unlikely to occur to him that a person living buried away in the middle of such a jungle as this, is all the time expecting him to rush round and take her affairs in hand ' The princess knew that this was only too true and she now began to weep bitterly Yet she showed no signs of changing her mind, and the Chancellor's wife, after wasting the whole afternoon in tormenting her, exclaimed at last Well then, I shall take Jiju Make haste, please, please, it is getting late!' Weeping and flustered Jiju drew her mistress back into the alcove I never meant to go,' she whispered, but this lady seems so very anxious to take me I think perhaps I will travel with them part of the way and then come back again There is a great deal of truth in all that she has been saying But then, on the other hand, I do not like to upset you by leaving It is terrible to have to decide so quickly ' So she whispered, but though the princess loved her dearly and was stung to the quick that even this last friend should be making ready to desert her, she said not a word to encourage Jiju to stay, but only sobbed more bitterly than before She was wondering what she could give to her maid to keep in remembrance of her long service in the family Perhaps some cloak or dress? Unfortunately all her clothes were far too worn and soiled to give away She remembered that somewhere in the house was a rather pretty box containing some plaited strands of her own hair, her fine glossy hair that grew seven feet long This would be her present, and along with it she would give one of those boxes of delicious clothes-scent that still survived from the old days when her parents were alive These she handed to Jiju together with an acrostic poem in which she compared her departure to the severing of this plaited tress of hair Your Mama told me always to look after

[1] The sovereign divinity of the Chinese Taoists.

you,' she said, 'and whatever happened to me I should never dream of sending you away I think however that you are probably right to go, and only wish that someone nicer were taking charge of you ' 'I know Mama wished me to stay with you,' said Jiju at last through her tears 'But quite apart from that, we have been through such terrible times together in these last years that I cannot bear to go off heaven knows where and leave you here to shift for yourself But, Madam, "By the Gods of Travel to whom I shall make offering upon my way, I swear that never can *I* be shorn from you like this tress of severed hair "' Suddenly the voice of the aunt broke in upon them shouting impatiently 'What has become of Jiju? Be quick, now, it is getting quite dark!' Hardly knowing what she did, Jiju climbed into the coach and as it drove away stared helplessly at the dilapidated house

So at last Jiju had left her, Jiju who for years past, though in sore need of a little pleasure and distraction, had never once asked for a single day's holiday! But this was not the end of the princess's troubles, for now even the few old charwomen who still remained in the house — poor doddering creatures who could never have persuaded anyone else to employ them — began threatening to leave Do you think I blame her?' said one of them, speaking of Jiju's departure 'Not I! What had she to stay for, I ask you And come to that, I should like to know why we go on putting up with it all ' And they began with one accord remembering influential patrons who had at one time or another promised to employ them No, decidedly they would not stay in the place any longer

These conversations, which took place in the princess's hearing, had the most disquieting effect upon her The Frosty Month[1] had now come In the open country around, though snow and hail frequently fell, they tended to melt between-whiles But in the wilderness that surrounded the Hitachi Palace vast drifts of snow, protected by the tangled overgrowth from any ray of sunlight, piled higher and higher, till one might have fancied oneself in some valley among the Alps of Koshi Through these arctic wastes not even the peasants would consent to press their way and the palace was for weeks on end entirely cut off from the outer world

The princess sat staring at the snow Life had been dull enough before, but at any rate she had someone at hand whose chatter at times broke in upon her gloom But now Jiju's laughter, Jiju's tears were gone, and as she lay day and night alike behind her crumbling curtains-of-state the princess was consumed by a loneliness and misery such as she had never known before

Meanwhile, at the Nijo Palace, Genji remained wholly absorbed in the girl from whom he had so long been separated, and it was only a few very particular friends who heard any news of him at all He did sometimes think of the Hitachi Palace and wondered whether the princess

[1] Eleventh month

could still be living there all alone But he was in no great hurry to discover, and the New Year passed without his having taken any steps about her In the fourth month he decided to call upon the ladies in the Village of Falling Flowers, and having obtained Murasaki s permission he set out one evening, clad in his usual disguise For days it had rained unceasingly But now, just at the moment when the heavy rain stopped and only a few scattered drops were falling, the moon rose, and soon it was one of those exquisite late spring nights through whose moonlight stillness he had in earlier years so often ridden out on errands of adventure Busy with memories of such excursions he had not noticed where he was driving, when suddenly looking up he saw a pile of ruined buildings surrounded by plantations so tangled and overgrown that they wore the aspect of a primeval jungle Over a tall pine-tree a trail of wisteria blossoms was hanging, it quivered in the moonlight, shaken by a sudden puff of wind that carried with it when it reached him a faint and almost imperceptible odour of flowers It was for orange-blossom that he had set out that night, but here too was a flower that had a fragrance worth enjoying He leaned out of the carriage window They were passing by a willow whose branches swept the ground, with the crumbling away of the wall which had once supported it the tree had fallen forward till its trunk was almost prostrate Surely he had seen these grounds before? Why, yes, this must be — suddenly it all came back to him Of course it was that strange lady's house He was driving past the Hitachi Palace Poor creature, he must discover at once what had become of her, and stopping his carriage and calling to Koremitsu, who as usual on occasions of the kind was in attendance upon him, he asked him whether this was not indeed Princess Suyetsumu's place 'Why certainly!' said Koremitsu 'In that case,' said Genji, 'I should like to find out whether the same people are still living there I have not time to pay a personal visit now, but I should like you to go in and enquire Make sure that you discover exactly how things stand It looks so silly if one calls on the wrong people'

After a particularly dismal morning spent in staring blankly in front of her the princess had fallen asleep and dreamed that her father, the late prince, was still alive and well After such a dream as that she woke up more miserable than ever The window side of the room had been flooded in the recent rains, but taking a cloth she began mopping up the water and trying to find a place where she could put her chair While she did so the stress of her sufferings stirred her to a point of mental alertness which she did not often reach She had composed a poem, and suddenly she recited the lines To the tears I shed in longing for him that is no more, are added the ceaseless drippings that patter from my broken roof!'

Meanwhile Koremitsu had made his way into the house and was wandering this way and that looking for some sign of life He spent a long while in poking into all sorts of corners and at last concluded that the

place had been abandoned as uninhabited He was just setting out to report this to Genji when the moon came out from behind a cloud, lighting up the front of the house He then noticed a trellis roll-door which was half pulled up A curtain behind it moved It almost seemed as though someone were there Koremitsu, feeling oddly enough quite nervous, turned back and approached this door, clearing his throat loudly as he did so In answer to this signal a very aged, decrepit voice answered from within the room 'Well, what is it? Who are you?' 'It is Koremitsu,' he answered, 'could you tell Jiju that I should like to speak to her?' Jiju?' the aged voice answered, 'you cannot speak to her, she has gone away But would not I do just as well?' The voice was incredibly ancient and croaking, but he recognized it as that of one of the gentlewomen whom he used to meet here in former days To those within, inured as they were to years of absolute isolation, the sudden apparition of this figure wrapped in a great hunting cloak, was a mystery so startling and inexplicable that for a while it did not occur to them that their visitor could be other than some fox-spirit or will-o'-the-wisp masquerading in human form But the apparition behaved with reassuring gentility and coming right up to the doorway now addressed them as follows 'I must make it my business to find out exactly how matters stand If you can assure me that, on your mistress's side, nothing has changed since the time when we used to come here, then I think you will find His Highness my master no less ready to help you than he was in days gone by Can I trust you to let her know that we halted here tonight? I must be able to report to my master that his message is in safe hands The old lady and her companions burst out laughing 'Listen to him!' they cried, 'asking whether Madam has altered her way of life, whether she has taken to new friends! Do you suppose, young man, that if she were not waiting day and night for this famous prince of yours, she would still be living in this wilderness? Why, if there had been a soul in the world to help us, we should have shifted from these tumble-down quarters a long while ago Just let Prince Genji have a look at the place for himself, he'll soon know how things stand! Yes, and we have been living like this for years, I shouldn't think anyone in the world has ever been through such times as we have in this house I tell you it's a wonder we've been able to bear it for so long, such a life as we and our poor young lady have been leading ' They soon got launched upon a recital of their sufferings and misfortunes, which wandered so far from the purpose in hand that Koremitsu, growing impatient, at last interrupted them 'Enough, enough,' he cried, 'that will do to go on with I will go to Prince Genji at once and tell him of this '

What a long time you have been! exclaimed Genji, when Koremitsu finally reappeared 'Are things in the palace much as they used to be? The whole place is so overgrown with creepers and bushes that I hardly

recognize it ' Koremitsu described how he at last discovered signs of life in the house and finally recognized the voice of Shosho, Jiju's old aunt, who had told him the lamentable tale which he now repeated

Genji was horror-stricken at what he heard How she must have suffered, buried away month after month amid all this disorder and decay! He was appalled at his own cruelty How was it conceivable that he should have left her all this while to her own devices? 'Now then, what am I to do?' he said at last 'If I am to visit the poor lady I had much rather it was not at this time of night, but if I do not go in now, I may not get another chance for a long while I am afraid that what the old ladies said is only too true, if she were not counting upon my return, she would scarcely have gone on living such a life as you have just heard described ' He was about to go straight into the house, but suddenly he hesitated Would it not be better first of all to send in a very nice friendly note and discover whether she really insisted upon seeing him? But then he remembered the extraordinary difficulty with which she penned an answer If she had not very much improved in this respect since his last dealings with her, he might easily spend the rest of the night waiting for his messenger to return with her reply He had just dismissed that idea as impracticable when Koremitsu broke in Pardon me, you have no notion how difficult it is to force a way through the brambles Let me go first and shake the dew off the long branches Then you will not get quite so wet '

Accordingly Koremitsu went in front lashing the bushes with his riding-whip But when they got under the trees such showers shook down on them from the branches (for the woods were still wet with the recent rains) that Koremitsu was obliged to go and fetch his master s umbrella, quoting as he held it aloft the old song about the dense forests of Miyagi-no, where the drippings from wet boughs are worse than rain ' Even so, the ends of Genji s trousers became dripping wet before he reached the house It was by no means easy even in old days to distinguish which was supposed to be the front door By now such architectural features as doors and lobbies had long ago become merged in the general dilapidation Genji's entry, though effected by a somewhat undignified scramble, had at any rate the advantage of being completely private and unobserved At last, just as she had always predicted, Genji had come back! But in the midst of her elation a sudden panic seized her How could she meet him in the miserable dress that she was wearing? All seemed lost, when she remembered the clothes that her aunt had brought for her to travel in She had thought at the time that her father would have considered them very unsuitable and had put them aside after a mere hasty glance The servants had packed them in a scented Chinese trunk and now brought them out, smelling deliciously fragrant She could not receive him in what she was wearing and she had nothing else to change into Much

as she disapproved of her aunt's taste, what could she do but let them dress her in these new-fangled clothes? Thus equipped she took her seat behind the smoky curtains-of-state and waited Presently Genji entered the room It is a long time since we have held any communication, is it not?' he said, 'but on my side at any rate that does not mean that there has been any change of feeling I was all the while expecting to hear from you and was determined that I would not be the first to give a sign of life At last however the sight of the familiar tree-groups by your gate overcame this resolution and I could not forbear ' So saying he lifted one corner of the curtains that surrounded her daïs and peeped in As in old days she was utterly overcome by confusion, and sat for some while unable to make any kind of rejoinder At last, almost inaudibly, she murmured something about its being 'kind of him to have found his way through all those wet bushes such a scramble!'

I am afraid you have been having a very dull time,' he went on, 'but pray give me credit for tonight's persistence It showed some devotion, did it not, that I should have forced my way into the heart of this tangled, dripping maze, without a word of invitation or encouragement? I am sure you will forgive me for neglecting you for so long when I tell you that for some while past I have seen absolutely no one Not having received a word of any kind from you, I could not suppose that you were particularly anxious to see me But henceforward I am going to assume, whether you write to me or no, that I shall not be unwelcome There now! After that, if I ever behave badly again you will really have some cause to complain ' So unhappy was he at the thought of all that she must have suffered during those years of penury and isolation that, in his desire to make amends, he soon began saying things which he did not quite mean He even had thoughts of giving up his intended excursion and staying here for the night But the princess seemed to be so painfully conscious of the deficiencies in her domestic arrangements and in general so completely overwhelmed by the presence of a visitor, that after passing some time in rather unsuccessful efforts to make further conversation, he began looking for an opportunity to slip quietly away There came into his mind the old song 'The tree I planted spreads its boughs so high '[1] He had not indeed planted those great pine-trees that closed about the ruined palace on every side, but it seemed to him that they had shot up surprisingly since he first visited the place How quickly the years had sped! And from the thought of what she must have been through during all this time he passed naturally to the recollection of his own misfortunes and adventures 'Yes, when one comes to think of it, it is indeed a long time,' he said at last 'At Court there have been great changes, many of them for the worse Some day when I have plenty of time I must tell

[1] 'I knew it not, but an old man must I be indeed, the pine-tree that with my hands I planted spreads its boughs so high'

you of my exile and the strange outcast life we led on those deserted shores You too, no doubt, have much to tell of all that has befallen you in these last dull and dreary days I could wish indeed that you had many friends to whom you could confide your sorrows But if for the moment I am the only one, make what use of me you can You will find that, whatever my faults may be, as a listener I have much to recommend me'

The moon was now sinking The main western door stood wide open, and as the covered gallery which had formerly run along that side of the house had now completely crumbled away, the moonlight streamed unimpeded into the room where they were sitting Looking about him he recognized one after another the familiar fittings and ornaments Not a thing was missing from its place It was strange indeed to contrast the absolutely unchanged aspect of this corner of the house with the surrounding wreckage and desolation He remembered the old story of the unfilial son who so much enjoyed pulling down the pagoda which his poor father had erected The princess could not indeed prevent the outward fabric of her father's palace from falling into decay, but it was astonishing how little trace the passage of time had left upon the inner room in which he had once taken such pride

Genji's thoughts returned to the princess herself She was the shyest, the most awkward creature he had ever met, and yet there was something extraordinarily distinguished about her movements and bearing She interested him, as indeed she had always done, so much so that he had fully intended not to lose sight of her How should he ever forgive himself for allowing her affairs to drift into this deplorable condition? The truth was, he had been entirely absorbed in his own troubles and projects But that was no excuse

Had his ultimate destination that night been some scene of lively modern entertainment, the contrast would have been fatal But the Village of Falling Flowers struck him on this occasion as particularly staid and dreary, and he left with the impression that the latter hours of the night had been by no means more agreeably spent than the former

The time of the Kamo Festival had come On the eve of the festival-day Genji was to undergo the ritual of Purification and the presents which are customary in connection with this occasion began pouring in thick and fast Much of his time was spent in acknowledging them, but he did not forget his promise to the lady at Hitachi The first thing to do was to make her palace habitable, and sending for his most reliable bailiffs he explained to them what he wanted done Soon a host of workmen were clearing away the undergrowth, while carpenters went round with planks and stays, here patching a hole, there shoring up a tottering wall or replacing some rotten beam, till at last all was tolerably weather-tight and secure The mere fact that Genji's men were at work upon the building at once set the gossips talking and the most absurd stories were cir-

culated Somewhat embarrassed by all this Genji himself remained at a distance, but he wrote a long letter to the princess, telling her of the new rooms which he was now adding to his palace and offering her accommodation in them, so soon as the place was ready You had better be looking round for a few nice young maids and pages to bring with you,' he told her Nor did he forget to enquire individually after each of the queer old waiting-ladies, an attention which put them into such high spirits that the old palace had hardly room enough to hold them, as now gazing up at the sky, now staring in the direction from which the messenger had come, they gave unbridled vent to their gratitude and admiration It was well known in society that Genji took little interest in the common run of women Even the mildest flirtation with such persons seemed to hold no attraction for him, their conversation would have bored him and indeed he scarcely seemed to notice their existence Those few favoured persons with whom he was generally known to have been on terms of intimacy were in every case women of entirely exceptional qualities That one who in general showed such discrimination should single out as the recipient of his attentions a creature who could not lay claim to a single merit either of person or intellect, caused universal astonishment This much at any rate was agreed, that though no one had heard anything about it, the affair must in reality be of very long standing

The retainers and dependants who, thinking that the Hitachi Palace would never see better days, had a short while ago been in such a hurry to seek other employment, now one after another came begging to re-enter the princess's service She at any rate knew how to behave towards those who waited upon her — treated them even with perhaps an exaggerated consideration Whereas in the houses to which they had betaken themselves, belonging for the most part to wholly uncultured and undistinguished members of the petty bureaucracy, their experiences had been such as they would never have imagined to be possible, and they made no secret of the fact that they heartily repented of their recent experiment

Prince Genji's influence was now greater than it had ever been in the days before his disaster The mere fact that he was known to take an interest in the Hitachi Palace was enough to invest the place with a certain glamour Visitors began to make their appearance, and soon the once deserted hills presented quite a busy and animated scene One thing which had made the house so depressing was the fact that it was wholly shut in by bushes and trees This jungle Genji now ordered to be reduced to tolerable dimensions, he had the ponds cleared and pleasant streams were made to run in and out among the flower-beds All this work was performed with remarkable despatch, for even the lowest labourers and serfs knew that it was in their interest to please a lady who, for whatever reason it might be, evidently stood high in Genji's esteem

She lived for two years more in the old palace, at the end of which time

she moved into the new Eastern Wing that Prince Genji had been building He did not spend much time in her company, but she was well content merely to feel that they inhabited the same domain, and whenever he had occasion to visit that part of the house he would look in upon her for a few minutes, that she might not feel she was wholly neglected Her aunt's astonishment when in due time she returned to the Capital — Jiju's delight at her mistress's good fortune and shame at the thought that she had not held out a little longer in the princess's service — all this remains yet to be told I would indeed have been glad to carry my story a little further, but at this moment my head is aching and I am feeling very tired and depressed Provided a favourable opportunity presents itself and I do not forget to, I promise I will tell you all about it on some future occasion

CHAPTER VII

A Meeting at the Frontier

IT will be remembered that the year after the old Emperor's death Iyo no Suke [1] was sent as governor to a distant province and that his wife, the lady of the Broom-tree episode, was prevailed upon to accompany him Vague rumours reached her concerning Genji's banishment, it was said that he was in disgrace and was living somewhere along the shores of Suma Though obliged to feign indifference, she was indeed naturally very much distressed and longed to write to him But though 'the wind sometimes blew across the Tsukubane hills' [2] she dared not trust her secret to so fickle a breeze, and while she waited for some securer messenger the months and years went swiftly by It had at one time seemed as though Genji's banishment might last indefinitely, far longer in any case than Iyo no Suke's short term of office But in the end it so turned out that Genji had already been back in the Capital for a year when Iyo's governorship expired By an odd chance it happened that on the very day when the ex-governor and his party were to enter the Barrier at Osaka, Genji was to pass through this same barrier on his way to Ishiyama where he was to attend a service in the Temple of Kwannon Ki no Kami and various other friends and relations of the ex-governor had come out from the City to meet him, and from them the returning provincials learnt that Genji with a vast ceremonial procession would shortly be passing along their road Iyo no Suke, wishing to reach the Barrier while things were still quiet, set out with his party long before daylight But his wagons crowded with women and their luggage jolted along so slowly that when daylight came they were still trailing along the coast-road at Uchi-ide News now came that Genji's procession had crossed the Awata Road Already his first outriders were in sight So dense was even this vanguard of the great procession that to press past it was out of the question Accordingly, at the foot of the Frontier Hill Iyo called a halt The wagons were drawn up along the wayside, and the oxen released from the yoke were soon browsing here and there among the fir-trees Meanwhile the travellers sat in the shelter of a neighbouring copse, waiting for the procession to pass

Although this was but a portion of Iyo no Suke's train, for he had sent some wagons on in advance while others were still to follow, it seemed a very large party, no less than ten coaches, with such a blaze of shawls,

[1] Utsusemi's husband See Part I, chapters 2 and 3

[2] 'The wind that blows across the ridge, that blows across the hills would that it might carry a message to him that I love'

scarves and gaily coloured favours protruding from their windows that they looked more like the coaches from which ladies of fashion view the departure of Vestals to Ise or Kamo than the workaday vehicles in which rustic persons are usually conveyed to the Capital

In honour of Genji's return to public life the pilgrimage to Ishiyama was on this occasion carried out with unusual solemnity, and at the head of the procession rode vast throngs of noblemen and courtiers, most of whom stared with considerable curiosity at this cluster of gay equipages drawn up along the roadside

It was the last day of the ninth month, and autumn leaves in many tints of red and brown stood out against a dull background of colourless winter grass Suddenly from behind the frontier guardhouse there burst forth a blaze of many-coloured travelling cloaks, some richly embroidered, some batik-dyed, of every pattern and hue Genji's coach was passing He too scanned the party by the roadside, but instantly lowered the carriage blind He had recognized, among those who had come out to meet the travellers, his page and message-carrier, Utsusemi's brother — a child in those old days but now Captain of the Guard He bade one of his equerries call this young man to his side and when he arrived said to him laughingly 'I hope your sister notices how attentive I am to her It is not often that I go all the way to the Barrier to meet my friends!' He spoke lightly, but his heart beat fast and there rose up in his mind a host of tender memories to which in this hasty message it would have been useless to allude

It was years since Utsusemi had spoken of Genji, yet she had never forgotten what had passed between them and it needed only these few words from him to renew all the misery in which her yearning for him had plunged her long ago

When Genji returned from Ishiyama, Utsusemi's brother, the Captain of the Guard, came out towards the Barrier to meet him and made his excuses for having taken a day's leave in honour of his sister s return As a boy he had been very good-looking and Genji had taken a great fancy to him But despite the fact that he owed everything to Genji, without whose patronage he would never have been able to enter the Imperial Guard at all, still less to obtain promotion, no sooner had his master's fortunes begun to decline than this young man, fearing to offend those in power, entered the service of his brother-in-law, the provincial governor Genji, though he showed no resentment at the time, found this dereliction very hard to forgive Their old relations were never resumed, but the Captain was still numbered among the favourite gentlemen of his household Iyo no Suke's son, Ki no Kami, had become governor of Kawachi and was consequently no longer on the spot The younger son, Ukon no Jo, had, as will be remembered, followed Genji into exile and now stood very high in his favour His position was envied not only by

this young Captain of the Guard but by many another who in the days of Genji's adversity had thought it wiser to leave him to his fate.

Soon after this Genji sent for the Captain [1] and gave him a letter to be taken to his sister 'So was this affair, which he thought had come to an end long ago, still dragging on after all these years?' the young man asked himself as he carried the letter to Iyo no Suke's house 'Did not our meeting of the other day seem almost as though it had been arranged by Fate? Surely you too must have felt so' With the letter was the acrostic poem 'Though on this lake-side Fate willed that we should meet, upon its tideless shore no love-shell [2] can we hope to find' 'How bitterly I envied the Guardian of the Pass,' [3] he added

'I hope you will send an answer,' said the Captain 'He has got it into his head that I behaved badly to him some time ago I should be very glad if I could get back on to the old terms with him I do not myself see much point in correspondences of this kind, but when anyone writes to me such a letter as I suppose this to be, I take care to write a civil answer No one blames me for that, and still less is a woman thought the worse of for showing that a little harmless flattery does not altogether displease her'

She was still the same shy, inexperienced girl of years ago, her brother's tone profoundly shocked her and she had no intention of carrying on a flirtation for his benefit But naturally enough she *did* feel flattered at the reception of such a note and in the end consented to reply With her letter was an acrostic poem in which she said that the Barrier of Osaka had been no barrier to her tears, nor the Hill of Osaka a true hill of meeting [4]

She was connected in his mind with the most delightful and also perhaps the most painful moment in his life Hence his thoughts tended frequently to recur to her, and he continued to write to her from time to time

Meanwhile Iyo no Suke, who was now a very old man, began to decline in health, and feeling that his end was near, he called his sons to him and discussed with them the disposition of his worldly affairs But what evidently concerned him above all was the future of his young wife They must promise him to yield to her wishes in everything and to treat her exactly as they had done during his lifetime Still unsatisfied by their assurances he sent for them over and over again at every hour of the night and day and exacted fresh promises But Utsusemi, after all that she had suffered already, could not believe that happiness of any kind could ever be in her fate She saw herself, so soon as her husband was dead, bandied about unwanted from one relation's house to another, and the prospect

[1] Utsusemi's brother, the 'boy' of Part I, ch 3

[2] *Kai-nashi* = 'no shell', but also 'no profit' [3] I e Iyo no Suke.

[4] O-saka means 'Hill of Meeting', *seki* means a barrier, but also a flood-dam

CHAPTER VIII

The Picture Competition

IT will be remembered that after Rokujo's death Genji decided that her daughter, Princess Akikonomu, had best come and live with him till the time came for her Presentation at Court. At the last minute, however, he altered his mind, for such a step seemed too direct a provocation to Princess Akikonomu's admirer, the young ex-Emperor Suzaku But though he did not remove her from her palace in the Sixth Ward he felt his responsibilities towards this unfortunate orphan very keenly and paid her many lengthy visits He had now definitely arranged with Fujitsubo that Akikonomu was soon to enter the Emperor's Palace, but he was careful not to betray in public any knowledge of this plan, and to the world at large he seemed merely to be giving the girl such general guidance and support as might be expected from a guardian and family friend

Suzaku was indeed bitterly disappointed at the intelligence that the Princess had been handed over to a mere infant such as the present Emperor He often thought of writing to her but at the same time dreaded the scandal which would ensue if his attachment became known When however the day of Presentation at last arrived his caution suddenly deserted him, and he sent to Akikonomu's palace an assortment of the most costly and magnificent gifts which his treasury could supply — comb-boxes, scrap-boxes, cases for incense-jars, all of the most exquisite workmanship and material, with these was a supply of the most precious perfumes both for burning and for the scenting of clothes, so that the bales in which these gifts arrived scented the air for a full league on every side This extravagant magnificence, besides relieving Suzaku's feelings, had another very definite object It was particularly intended to annoy the lady's guardian, to whom, as Suzaku very well knew, the contents of these packages would immediately be shown It so happened that Genji was actually at Akikonomu's palace when the scented bales arrived, her servants at once showed them to him and told him whence they came He picked up at random one of a pair of comb-boxes, it was a work of fascinating elegance and delicacy Near it was a box for combs such as are worn in the hair, decorated with a pattern of flowers In the very centre of one petal was an inscription Looking closer he read the poem

'Come not again!' [1] Because it fell to me,
Who least would have it so,
At Heaven's command your exile to ordain;
To others, not to me who bade you go,
You come again!

[1] The formula with which the Emperor despatches the Vestal of Ise.

Somehow or other, in cases of this kind, Genji could never help imagining what he himself would feel if he were in the same position Supposing that he had fallen in love with someone all those years ago and that the beloved person had gone away immediately to some far-off place, and suppose that he, instead of forgetting all about her as might have been expected, had waited patiently year after year and, when at last she returned, had been told that she was to be handed over to someone else — he saw on reflection that the situation was really very painful Judging from his own experience he knew that Suzaku s complete lack of employment, now that he had resigned all his official duties, would gravely aggravate the case Yes, he must indeed be passing through a period of terrible agitation! He was now extremely sorry that he had ever suggested the Presentation of the young Princess He had indeed in the past good reason to resent his brother's conduct towards him But lately Suzaku had shown nothing but affability He stood for a long while lost in thought It was all very perplexing Turning at last to Akikonomu's gentlewomen who were inspecting these magnificent presents, he asked whether their mistress had already composed her answering poem 'And surely a letter must also have come with these things?' he added There was indeed a letter and the gentlewomen had read it, but they very much doubted whether it was fit for Genji s eyes and made no offer to produce it The Princess herself was distressed by this exhibition of devotion on the part of one with whom she could no longer have any dealings What answer could she possibly contrive? But her maids were pressing round her, insisting that it would be intolerably rude to allow the messengers to depart without handing to them a word of thanks, and Genji was telling her that not to reply was out of the question, a few words would suffice No doubt they were right She felt very much embarrassed by Suzaku's attentions, but she remembered distinctly how handsome, how distinguished he had seemed to her on that day of the farewell ceremony There had been tears in his eyes, and though it all happened so many years ago she could recall as distinctly as if it were yesterday the vague feelings of childish sympathy and admiration which her meeting with the young Emperor had aroused in her on that last morning when she went to the Palace for her Crowning With these memories were blended others, thoughts, for example, of her mother Lady Rokujo and of the long exile which they had shared She wrote no letter, but only the poem

'Come not again!' I wept to hear those words,
Thinking you willed it so,
When Heaven's command my exile did ordain,
Now hearing that it grieved you I should go,
I weep again

The messengers who had brought the presents were richly rewarded

all his dealings with her tended only to confirm his conviction that underneath all this reserve was concealed an interesting and admirable character

Now that all the Emperor's time was divided between the two princesses of his retinue, Prince Hyobukyo had given up all idea of presenting his second daughter at Court Perhaps an opportunity would occur later on when the Emperor was of an age to perceive for himself that such a match was by no means to be despised Meanwhile his favour seemed to be pretty equally divided between the two existing claimants He was particularly interested in pictures and had as a result of this taste himself acquired considerable skill It happened that Lady Akikonomu painted very charmingly, and so soon as he discovered this the Emperor began constantly sending for her to paint pictures with him Among the serving-women in the Palace he had always taken an interest in any who were said to be fond of pictures, and it was natural that when he discovered painting to be the favourite occupation of the pretty princess he should become very much attached to her Hers were not solemn pictures, but such clever, quick sketches, so that just to watch her do them was an exciting game And when, sitting so charmingly beside him on the divan, she paused and held her brush in the air for a moment wondering where to put the next stroke, she looked so daring that the little Emperor's heart was completely captivated Soon he was going to her rooms at all hours, and To no Chujo became seriously alarmed lest his own daughter should lose her primacy But he was determined not to be outdone, and being of an extremely ingenious and resourceful nature he soon had a plan for putting an end to this menacing situation He sent for all the most skilful painters in the land and under strict bond of secrecy set them to work upon a collection of pictures which was to be like nothing that had ever been seen before They were to be illustrations to romances, which would be preferable to purely ingenious subjects, the significance being more easily grasped by a young mind and all the most interesting and exciting stories were chosen In addition to these illustrations there was to be a set of 'Months,' a very attractive subject, with texts specially written for the occasion In due time Princess Chujo[1] showed them to the Emperor, who was naturally very much interested and soon afterwards asked for them again, saying that he thought Princess Akikonomu would like to see them At this Princess Chujo began to make difficulties, and though His Majesty promised to show them to no one else and carry them with the greatest care straight to the other princess's apartments, she refused to part with them Genji heard of this and was amused to see that To no Chujo could still throw him-

[1] Chujo's daughter Actually she is called Kokiden, but this is a name of another character in the book, and as the use of it would lead to confusion, I have given her a name which links her to her father

self into these absurd conspiracies with the same childish excitement as in their young days 'I am very sorry,' he said to the Emperor, 'to hear that Princess Chujo hides her pictures from you and will not let you take them away and study them at your ease It seems, too, that she was quite cross and quarrelsome about it, which was most reprehensible But I have some very nice pictures, painted a long while ago I will send them to you'

At the Nijo-in there were whole cupboards full of pictures both old and new Taking Murasaki with him he now inspected their contents and together they went through the whole collection, putting on one side those which were most likely to appeal to modern taste There were naturally many illustrations of the *Everlasting Wrong*[1] and the story of Wang Chao-chün,[2] both of them very interesting and moving subjects, but unfortunately quite inappropriate to the present occasion These therefore had to be excluded But it occurred to Genji that his own sketches made during his sojourn at Suma and Akashi might be of interest, and sending for the box in which they were kept he took advantage of this occasion to go through them with Murasaki Even someone seeing them without any knowledge of the circumstances under which they were painted would, if possessed of the slightest understanding of such matters, have at once been profoundly moved by these drawings It may be imagined then with what emotion they were examined by one to whom each scene came as an answer to the questionings and anxieties of some evil dream from which it seemed there could be no awakening She told him more of what she had suffered in those unforgettable days than she had ever done before Why had he not sometimes sent such pictures as these? How they would have comforted and reassured her! And she recited the verse 'Better had it been for me when I was alone to look at pictures of the realms where fishers dwell, than stare at nothing, as I did all day long!' Genji was deeply moved and with tears in his eyes he answered with the verse 'It was an evil time, yet never once in all those days was my heart sore as now when, hand in hand, we view the pictured past'

To one other person only had he shown them — the ex-Empress Fujitsubo Going through the whole collection sketch by sketch, in order to choose out the best and also to give as good an idea as possible of the different estuaries and bays, he could not help wondering all the time how things were faring in the house of his host at Akashi

On hearing of the preparations that were taking place at the Nijo-in, To no Chujo went through his pictures again and had them all fitted out with the most elegant ivory-rollers, backings and ribbons[3] It was

[1] The story of Ming Huang and Yang Kuei-fei, a long poem by Po Chü-i.

[2] A Chinese princess given to a Tartar king in marriage and carried away into the north.

[3] For tying up the rolls.

far beyond the reach of your frivolous feminine comprehensions' To this the other side replied 'The Sky Land to which Lady Kaguya was removed is indeed beyond our comprehensions, and we venture to doubt whether any such place exists But if we regard merely the mundane part of your story, we find that the heroine emanated from a bamboo joint This gives to the story from the start an atmosphere of low life which we for our part consider very disagreeable We are told that from the lady's person there emanated a radiance which lit up every corner of her foster-father's house But these fireworks, if we remember aright, cut a very poor figure when submitted to the august light of His Majesty's palace Moreover the episode of the fireproof ratskin ends very tamely, for after Abe no Oshi [1] had spent thousands of gold pieces in order to obtain it, no sooner was it put to the test than it disappeared in a blaze of flame Still more lamentable was the failure of Prince Kuramochi [1] who, knowing that the journey to Fairyland was somewhat difficult, did not attempt to go there but had a branch of the Jewel Tree fabricated by his goldsmith, a deception which was exposed at the first scratch'

The picture was painted by Kose no Omi [2] and the text was in the hand of Ki no Tsurayki [3] It was on Kanya paper backed with Chinese silk The cover was of a reddish violet tinge, the rollers being of sandalwood — by no means an extraordinary get-up The moderns then proceeded to defend their own exhibit, 'Toshikage,' [4] they said, 'though buffeted by wind and wave, pitched headlong into a stormy sea and in the end cast up upon an unknown shore, pursued, undaunted by suffering and disaster, the purpose which he had set before him, and succeeded at last in displaying, both at the foreign court [5] and in our own country, the marvellous talent which it had cost him so much to acquire The adventures of so dauntless a character, affording as they do a comparison between the manners of the Land Beyond the Sea and of our own Land of Sunrise, cannot fail to be of interest, moreover the same contrast has been maintained in the style of the pictures as in the matter of the text'

It was painted on thick white paper such as poem-slips are made of, the outer cover was of blue paper and the roller of yellow jade The artist was Tsunenori, [6] the scribe, Ono no Michikaze [7] — a combination that could hardly have been more dazzling in its fashionableness and

[1] One of the suitors

[2] Also called Aimi. Successor of Kose no Kanaoka, who founded the Kose school in the 9th century

[3] 883–946 A.D Editor of the *Kokinshu*, the first official anthology of poetry

[4] Having set out from Japan to China he was wrecked on the coast of Persia, where he acquired a magic zithern and the knowledge of unearthly tunes, armed with which he won great fame as a musician in China and Japan. See Aston's *History of Japanese Literature*, p 76

[5] China.

[6] Asukabe Tsunenori, flourished about 964 A.D

[7] Also called Ono no Dofu, the most celebrated calligraphist of Japan.

modernity Against such claims as these the partisans of the antique were quite unable to prevail and Lady Chujo's side scored the overwhelming victory

In the next contest the *Tales of Ise* [1] were pitted against the story of Sho Sammi [2] A long discussion ensued, but here again the fact that *Sho Sammi* deals with persons in a comfortable and prosperous situation, presents scenes of court life and shows the world as we know it today could not fail to render this work far more attractive to the majority of these young critics An opposite opinion was voiced by Heinaishi, who recited the verse 'Shall we leave the deep heart of Ise's waters unexplored till time shall have effaced their secret, like a footprint that the tide washes from the shore?' 'Shall the fame of Narihira,' [3] she added, 'be eclipsed by modern tittle-tattle dressed up in the finery of a specious style?' To this Daini no Naishi no Suke replied with the verse 'Upon the topmost regions of the sky [4] our hero's heart is set; with scorn he views your shoals, upon which, heavy as a thousand watery fathoms, the ages rest'

'Well,' said Fujitsubo, 'ambition such as that of Prince Hyoye [5] is no doubt a very valuable quality, but I sincerely hope that admiration for him and his like will never cause us to let the fame of Captain Laigo [6] sink into decay!' And she recited the verse 'Has the old fisherman of Ise shore, like seaweed that the ebbing tide reveals, so long been flattered by the public eye, only to sink at last beneath the rising sea of scorn?'

These feminine discussions are capable of continuing, more or less at cross-purposes for an indefinite length of time It would indeed be impossible to record all the arguments and counter-arguments that were expended over even one of these pictures Moreover the younger and less considered of the gentlewomen present, though any one of them would have given her eyes not to miss any of the paintings that were being unrolled, were hustled into the background, even though they belonged to the Emperor's own or to Lady Fujitsubo's household, and were scarcely able to see anything at all This occasioned much jealousy and heart-burning

Presently Genji arrived at the Palace and was greatly diverted by the spectacle of this disorderly and embittered combat 'If you will get up another competition,' he said, 'I will arrange for the Emperor to be present and will myself make the awards' In preparation for this event, which he had indeed been contemplating for some time, he made

[1] A collection of short love-episodes, each centring round a poem or poems See Aston's *History of Japanese Literature*, p 80

[2] Already lost in the 15th century

[3] Hero of the *Tales of Ise*

[4] I e. upon promotion at Court. Courtiers were called 'men above the clouds.'

[5] Presumably the hero of the tale of Sho Sammi.

[6] Narihira, hero of the *Tales of Ise*

a further selection from the pictures which he had recently put aside, and having done so he could not resist inserting among them the two scrolls of his sketches made at Suma and Akashi To no Chujo meanwhile, determined not to be outdone, was straining every nerve in preparation for the new contest It was indeed a moment in the history of our country when the whole energy of the nation seemed to be concentrated upon the search for the prettiest method of mounting paper-scrolls In arranging the conditions of the contest Genji had said 'My idea is that it should be confined to paintings already in existence, we do not want a lot of new work hurriedly executed for this special purpose ' But To no Chujo could not resist the temptation to set some of his favourite masters to work, and improvising a little studio with a secret door he strove to steal a march on his rivals The secrecy was not however as well maintained as he could have desired, even Suzaku, in his secluded apartments, heard the story and determined to put his own collection at the service of Princess Akikonomu He had a series of 'Festivals All the Year Round,' painted by various famous old masters, texts explaining these pictures had been added by no less a hand than that of the Emperor Daigo [1] Why should he not order a series of paintings illustrating the principal events of his own reign? Among these subjects one would naturally be the crowning of the Vestal at the Daigoku Hall upon the day of her departure for Ise He entrusted this scene to Kose no Kimmochi [2] and it may be imagined with what care and insistence he discussed every detail of a work so dear to his heart It was encased in a delicately fretted box of aloeswood The pattern on the wrappings and decorations of the roll was a heart-shaped crest formed by leaves of the same tree Nothing could have been more delightfully up-to-date He sent it by the hand of the Captain of the Senior Bodyguard, who was one of his retainers There was no message, save for a poem written on the picture just by where the Vestal was shown arriving in her litter at the Daigoku Hall Though I no longer within the Circle of the Gods a place may take, yet unforgotten is the concourse which in those hours with bright Divinities I held '

To return no answer would show too great a disrespect towards one who had once occupied the Throne, and though these attentions distressed her she broke off a piece of the ritual comb which he had fastened in her hair on that day long ago, and tying to it the verse, Not yet forgotten is that high converse, and once again within the Precinct of the Gods oh were it but my lot to stray!' she wrapped the broken comb in Chinese paper of deep colour and gave it to the messenger, whom she rewarded with many handsome presents The ex-Emperor when he opened the packet was deeply moved, and for the first time regretted that he had so

[1] 898–930, a great patron of literature, and himself an important poet and calligrapher
[2] Grandson of the great Kose no Kanaoka. Flourished about 960 A D

soon resigned the Throne Not unnaturally he was feeling somewhat bitterly against Prince Genji, but he realized that he had himself, in past days, deserved none too well at his brother's hands Most of the ex-Emperor's pictures had belonged to his mother, the Empress Kokiden, unfortunately a considerable part of her collection had however come into the possession of Lady Chujo, who was her granddaughter

The ex-Emperor's wife, Lady Oborozuki, was also extremely interested in painting and had shown the utmost discrimination in forming her collection

When the great day came, though there had not been much time for preparation everything was arranged in the most striking and effective manner The ladies-in-waiting belonging to the two sides stood drawn up in line on either side of the Imperial Throne, the courtiers, very much on the alert, were ranged up in the verandah of the small back room Lady Chujo's party (the left) exhibited their pictures in boxes of purple sandalwood mounted on sapanwood stands, over which was thrown a cover of Chinese brocade worked on a mauve ground The carpet on which the boxes stood was of Chinese fine-silk, dyed to the colour of grape-juice Six little girls were in attendance to assist in handling the boxes and scrolls, they were dressed in mantles with white scarves lined with pink, their tunics were of scarlet, worn with facings blue outside and light green within

Akikonomu's boxes were of aloeswood arranged on a low table of similar wood, but lighter in colour The carpet was of Korean brocade on a blue-green ground The festoons hanging round the table and the design of the table-legs were carefully thought out and in the best taste The little girls in attendance wore blue mantles, with willow-coloured scarves, their tunics, brown outside and yellow within When all the boxes were duly arranged on their stands, the Emperor's own ladies took up their places, some with Lady Chujo's supporters, some with the opposing side At the summons of the herald Genji and To no Chujo now appeared and with them Genji's half-brother, Prince Sochi no Miya, who among the various arts which he cultivated was particularly fond of painting He had received no official summons on this particular occasion, but had in the end yielded to Genji's entreaties that he would come and help him in his difficult task Prince Sochi was at once called to the Emperor's side and appointed part-umpire in the coming contest An amazing collection of paintings had been assembled and assuredly the task of the judges was no light one A great impression was made when Akikonomu s side produced the famous series of 'Four Seasons by noted masters of antiquity Both the charming fancy displayed in the choice of episodes for illustration and the easy, flowing character of the brush-strokes rendered these works highly attractive, and the modern paintings on paper, being necessarily limited in size, sometimes, es-

pecially in landscape, made a certain impression of incompleteness Yet the far greater richness both of brushwork and invention gave even to the more trivial of these modern works a liveliness which made them compare not unfavourably with the masterpieces of the past Thus it was very difficult indeed to reach any decision, save that today, as on the previous occasion, both sides had produced many works of absorbing interest

The sliding-screen of the breakfast-room was now pushed aside and Lady Fujitsubo entered Remembering how learned she was in these matters Genji felt somewhat shy, and contented himself henceforward as exhibit after exhibit was produced with an occasional comment or suggestion, discreetly thrown in only when some point of especial difficulty threatened an indefinite delay The contest was still undecided when night fell

At last the moment arrived when there was only one more picture to show on each side Amid intense excitement Princess Akikonomu's side produced the roll containing Genji's sketches at Suma To no Chujo was aghast His daughter's side too had reserved for their last stroke one of the most important works at their disposition, but against the prospect of so masterly a hand working at complete leisure and far from the distracting influences which beset an artist in town, Lady Chujo's supporters at once knew that they could not hope to prevail An additional advantage was given to Genji's paintings by the pathos of the subject That during those years of exile he had endured a cheerless and monotonous existence those present could well conjecture But when they saw, so vividly presented, both the stern manner of his life and in some sort even the feelings which this rustic life had aroused in one used to every luxury and indulgence, they could not but be deeply moved, and there were many (Prince Sochi no Miya among them) who could scarcely refrain from tears Here were presented in the most vivid manner famous bays and shores of the Suma coast, so renowned in story yet to these city folk so utterly unknown and unimagined The text was written in cursive Chinese characters, helped out here and there with a little native script, and unlike the business day-to-day journals that men generally keep it was varied by the insertion of an occasional poem or song The spectators now clamoured only for more specimens of Genji s handiwork, and it would have been impossible at that moment to interest them in anything else It seemed to them as though all the interest and beauty of the many pictures which they had been examining had in some strange manner accumulated and attached themselves to this one scroll By universal and ungrudging consent Princess Akikonomu's side was awarded the victory

It was already nearing the dawn when Genji, feeling somewhat discursive, sent round the great tankard and presently began telling stories

to the company 'From my earliest childhood,' he said at last, 'I have always been fond of books, and my father the late Emperor, fearing that I might become wholly absorbed in my studies, used to say to me "Perhaps learning carries with it inevitably so great a share of the world's esteem that, to redress the balance, the scholar, once he advances beyond a certain stage of learning, is doomed to pay for his enviable attainments either by ill health or poverty Those who are born to greatness may be certain that, whether they exert their minds or not, the advantages of noble birth will suffice to distinguish them from their fellows, and for you of all men the acquisition of such ill-starred accomplishments would be entirely superfluous I sincerely hope that you will not allow them to occupy too much of your time' He arranged that most of my lessons should be in practical subjects connected with national administration and economy I got on fairly well, but there was no branch in which I showed any particular aptitude It was only in painting, which my preceptors considered a very trivial and unbecoming pastime, that I displayed any unusual talent Often I used to wonder whether I should ever get the chance of using this gift to the full, for the time allotted to these lighter distractions was very short At last, with my unexpected retirement to a remote shore, the longed-for opportunity arrived On every side the great sea spread about me, I began to learn its secrets, became so intimate with its every mood and aspect that where these sketches fail it is not for lack of understanding, but because there came at last a point where my brush could no longer keep pace with the visions that beset my brain Not having previously had any opportunity of showing these sketches to His Majesty, I took advantage of this occasion to display them But I fear that my action in using them for this competition will when reflected upon provoke very unfavorable comments' The conversation was carried on by Prince Sochi no Miya 'I know, of course,' he said, 'that mere industry will not carry one far in any art, his heart must be in the matter But all the same there is a great deal which can simply be learnt from masters, so that a man, without any understanding of what is really important, will often easily succeed in imitating the outward forms and procedures of an art But painting and draughts demand an extraordinary degree of natural equipment and also furnish us with the strangest surprises, for some apparently half-witted fellow, who does not seem capable of any useful activity, will turn out to be a genius at draughts or painting! On the other hand I have occasionally come across instances where intelligent children of good family have possessed what I may term a general superiority, showing an unusual capacity in every form of art and learning

My father the late Emperor gave personal attention to the training of all his children, both girls and boys, in every imaginable art and accomplishment But it was in your education, Genji, that he took by

far the greatest interest, and it was to you, whom he considered most likely to profit by it, that he was at pains to hand on the great store of information which in the course of his long life he had here and there acquired In literature of course you were far ahead of any of us, just as you were in other less important matters, such as playing upon the zithern, which was indeed perhaps your principal accomplishment But I remember that, in addition to this, you played reasonably well on the flute, guitar, and great zithern, as indeed your father often mentioned with wonder These talents of yours were well known at Court, and I for my part had heard that you occasionally amused yourself with brushes and paints But I had always supposed that this was a mere pastime, and I confess that the masterpieces which you have exhibited before us today took me completely by surprise I assure you that even the great ink-painters of antiquity would feel no small uneasiness should their works be set beside these sketches of yours You are indeed a prodigy!' He spoke rather thickly and indistinctly, for he was already a little bit fuddled with wine, and being for the same reason somewhat lachrymose, when mentioning his late father's name he suddenly burst into tears

It was towards the end of the month and the late moon had at last risen The rooms where they were assembled were still dark, but the sky outside was already aglow with dawn The Keeper of Books and Instruments was asked to bring out the zitherns To no Chujo took the *wagon*,[1] which he played, if not so well as Genji, at any rate in a very distinguished manner Sochi no Miya took the great zithern and Genji the *kin*.[2] The lute was played by Akikonomu's gentlewoman Shosho no Myobu There was a certain courtier who had a genius for beating time, he was now sent for and a most agreeable concert ensued Dawn was spreading fast Colour began to come into the flowers, and the features of those sitting by became dimly discernible in the growing light The birds were singing lustily, a pleasant morning had begun

Presents were now distributed to the guests by Lady Fujitsubo on behalf of the Emperor, Prince Sochi no Miya received in addition the special tribute of a cloak from the wardrobe, in recognition of his services as umpire

Genji gave instructions that the Suma scroll should be left with Fujitsubo Hearing that it was only one of a series, she begged to be shown the rest 'You shall see them all in good time,' Genji said, 'there are far too many of them to go through at one sitting' The little Emperor, too, seemed to have thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings, which was a great comfort to those who had engineered them

When To no Chujo saw with what zest Genji supported his ward Princess Akikonomu even in such trifling matters as this contest he again became a little uneasy about Lady Chujo's position But observing

[1] Japanese zithern [2] Chinese zithern

the situation closely, he noted that the young Emperor, who certainly began by being very deeply attached to his little playmate, after the first excitement of recognizing this new companion with her interesting grown-up accomplishments had passed away, settled down again quite happily to his old love For the present at any rate there was no need for anxiety

Genji had a strong presentiment the Court ceremony and festivals of the reign were destined to be taken as a model in future times It was for this reason that even in the matter of private pastimes and receptions he took great pains that everything should be carried out in the most perfectly appropriate and pleasurable manner Hence life at Court during this period became one long series of exquisitely adjusted pomps and festivities

Genji was still haunted by the impermanence of worldly things, and now that the Emperor was beginning to reach years of discretion he often thought quite seriously of embracing a monastic life It seemed to him that in history one so often reads of men who at an immature age rose to high position and became conspicuous figures in the world only to fall, after a very short time, into disaster and ignominy With regard to himself he had felt since his exile that if the position in which he now found himself was beyond that to which he was properly entitled, this was only fate's kind compensation for the indignities to which in his early life he had suddenly been exposed But now the debt which fortune owed him was fully discharged and he could not believe that he was far from the brink of some fresh disaster He would have liked to shut himself away in some retired corner and devote himself to meditations upon the life to come, he did indeed choose a quiet site on a hill near the City and build a hermitage there, which he even went so far as to furnish with images and holy books But so many questions arose concerning the education of his children and their future at Court that there could be no question of his actually taking his vows, at any rate for some considerable time, and what exactly he had in mind when he began building this hermitage it would be hard to say

CHAPTER IX

The Wind in the Pine-Trees

THE new quarters which Genji had built to the east of his palace were now ready and the lady from the Village of Falling Flowers was duly installed there The western wing and connecting galleries of the Nijo-in had been arranged in offices for the clerks whom he employed in his capacity as Grand Minister In the eastern wing he intended to establish the Lady of Akashi The women's quarters at the back of the palace he enlarged considerably, making several sets of very agreeable and comfortable apartments, these he destined for those ladies who having in the past received some mark of favor which, though fleeting, had generally been coupled with handsome promises, now looked to him for recognition and support He kept the Grand Bedchamber of the Palace open, and though he lived chiefly in the new building, he continued to use the other from time to time and none of the necessary furniture was removed

He wrote frequently to Akashi and many times begged her to come up to the Capital But she had heard so many stories of how others had suffered at his hands — how he had again and again toyed with the affections not only of humble creatures such as herself, but of the greatest ladies in the land, only to cast them aside a few months later with the most callous indifference Surely it would be foolish not to take warning If this was his conduct towards person of rank and influence, what sort of treatment could she, a friendless girl, expect? What part could she hope to play save the humiliating one of a foil to the young princess who was Genji s lawful bride? Suppose she accepted his offer, suppose she let him install her in this new house, how often would he come near her? Sometimes perhaps on his way to Murasaki's room he might look in casually for a moment, more she could not expect She saw herself the butt of every lewd wit in his palace No, she would never consent

But there were other considerations Should she continue to bring up her baby daughter in this sequestered spot, how could the child ever hope to take its place among the princes and princesses of the Blood? Little as she trusted Genji, she must not cut off her child from all possibility of an ultimate transference to the Capital Her parents too realized with dismay that her prospect at the City was none too bright, but on the whole they inclined towards a move

There was a certain estate near the Oi River [1] which her mother had

[1] Also called the Katsura River Runs near Saga (to the east of Kyoto) where Genji was building his hermitage.

inherited (it had belonged to Nakatsukasa no Miya, the mother's paternal grandfather) Successive heirs failed to claim it and for two years the place had been falling into decay. A fresh plan had occurred to the old recluse and his wife They summoned the caretaker of the place, a descendant of the man whom Nakatsukasa had originally left in charge and said to him 'We had intended to quit the world for ever and end our earthly days in this inaccessible retreat But certain unexpected events in our family have made it necessary that we should again seek a residence within easy reach of the Capital After our long absence from the Court we should feel utterly lost and bewildered were we to plunge straight into the bustle of the town, and it occurred to us that while we are looking for some quiet, old house to live in permanently, it might be a good thing to use this place at Oi which you have been looking after for us!' 'I am afraid you will be very disappointed when you see it,' said the man 'For years past no one has been in possession and everything is tumbling to pieces I have been making shift myself to live in a room which has indeed a kind of ceiling, but no roof! And since the spring they have been building this new hermitage for Prince Genji close by, and this has changed the whole character of the district The place is crowded with workmen, for the hermitage, by what I can make out, is going to be a very grand affair If what you are looking for is a quiet, unfrequented spot you will certainly be badly disappointed' His remarks had the opposite effect to that which he had intended To learn that at Oi they would be living as it were under Genji's very wing was an astonishing piece of news He ordered the man to put the large repairs in hand at once, what wanted setting to rights indoors they could see to at leisure later on This did not at all suit the caretaker 'If you want to know,' he said sulkily, 'I reckon this place belongs to me as much as to anyone I have been living there quietly all these years and this is the first I have heard of anybody putting in a claim to it When I first took things in hand the pastures and rice-fields were all running to waste, and his lordship Mimbu no Tayu told me before he died that I could have them for my very own and do what I could with them as payment of certain sums which he then owed me' What he was really frightened of was that, if the family came into residence, they would lay claim to some of the live stock and grain that their land had produced He had suddenly grown very red in the face, his voice quivered with anger and his whole aspect was so grim and even menacing that the old recluse hastened to reassure him 'I am not in any way interested in the farm or its produce,' he said, 'with regard to them please go on just as before As a matter of fact I *have* got the title-deeds somewhere here, but it is a long time since I attended to business matters of any kind and it might take me a long while to find these papers I will remember to look into the question and see how it stands' The steward soon cooled

down He noted that the old priest was evidently on friendly terms with Genji This decided him to be civil And after all, even if the presence of his masters might for the moment be rather inconvenient, he would later on have plenty of opportunities for reimbursing himself Mollified by these reflections he set the repairs in hand at once

Genji meanwhile had no notion of what was afoot and could not understand why, after all his entreaties, the Lady of Akashi still hung back He did not at all like the idea of their child being brought up amid such uncivilized surroundings Moreover, if the story afterwards became known, it would certainly seem as though he had been reluctant to acknowledge the child and had behaved with great heartlessness in making no proper provision for it or for the mother

But at last the house of Oi was ready and a letter came from Akashi describing how, with no idea that he was building in the district, they had suddenly remembered the existence of the place and were making plans for living there He understood quite well the object of this move The lady of Akashi was determined that if their intercourse was to be resumed it must be in a place where she would not be subjected to a humiliating contact with her rivals To avoid this she was evidently prepared to make every conceivable sacrifice He was curious to know more about her future plan of retreat and sent Koremitsu, who was always employed in confidential missions of this kind, to investigate the place a little and let him know if there was anything he could do to assist the newcomers at Oi Koremitsu reported that the house was in a very agreeable situation which somehow reminded one of the seaside 'It sounds just the place for her,' said Genji The hermitage which he was building was to the south of Daikakuji, which temple, in the beauty of its groves and cascades, it even bid fair to rival The house where the family from Akashi was coming to live was right on the river, among the most delightful pine-woods, and the unpretentious way in which it was planned, in one long building without galleries or side-wings, gave it rather the air of a farmhouse than of a gentleman s mansion As regards furniture Koremitsu told him what was most needed and he saw to it that these wants were supplied

A number of Genji's personal servants now arrived at Akashi to assist the family in their removal When she found herself actually faced with the prospect of leaving these shores and inlets, near which so great a part of her life had been spent, the Lady of Akashi was filled with consternation The present plan was that her father should stay on at Akashi alone, and the idea of leaving him made her very unhappy Looking back over the whole affair, with all its consequences, she was amazed to think that she had ever drifted into this miserable union, which had brought nothing but trouble and confusion upon herself and those for whom she cared She found herself envying those whose fortune it had

been never to cross this prince's path Her father, seeing the house full of the servants and retainers whom Genji had sent from the Capital, could not deny to himself that here indeed was the fulfilment of his every dream and prayer He had secured his daughter's future But what about his own? How would his life be endurable without her? He brooded on this night and day, but never showed what was passing in his mind, save for saying once or twice to his wife 'Do you think even if I went with you I should see much of the little girl?' [1] The mother was also much distressed For years past her husband had slept in his little hermitage and had lived an entirely separate life, engrossed in his meditations and devotions There was little reason to suppose that, even should she stay behind, he would give her very much of his society, and virtually she would be living without any companionship or support But though he was a spectator of their lives rather than a participator in them, his casual exits and entrances had become the rock in which her whole existence was rooted, the prospect of separation appalled her He was a strange creature, but she had long ago given up expecting him to play in any sense a husband's part His odd appearance, his eccentric opinions, their lonely life — all these she had learnt to tolerate in the belief that this at any rate was the last stage of her disillusionment, the final and unalterable ordeal which death alone would end Suddenly she found herself face to face with this undreamed-of parting, and her heart shrank The wet-nurse and other young persons whom at the time of the child's birth Genji had sent from the Capital were beginning to become very restive and the prospect of the coming journey delighted them Yet even the most frivolous among them could not leave these creeks and sandy bays without a pang, and there were some who, knowing that it might never be their lot to visit such scenes again, came near to adding the salt of tears to sleeves already splashed by the breakers of the rising tide

Autumn had begun and the country was at its loveliest At dawn upon the day fixed for their departure a chill wind was blowing and insects filled the air with their interminable cry The Lady of Akashi, already awake, kept going to her window and looking out across the sea Her father had returned early from celebrating the night service in his chapel, it was with trembling lips that he had performed the familiar ceremonies But now that the day of parting had come no words of sorrow or ill-omen must be spoken So each was determined, but it was no easy matter to keep things going The child was brought in, its infant beauty shining like a jewel in the greyness of the dawn The grandfather never wearied of holding it in his arms and, young as it was, an understanding seemed to have grown up between them He was indeed astonished by the readiness with which the child accepted a companion whose appear-

[1] The Lady of Akashi's child.

ance and manners, so different from those of its regular attendants, might have been expected to have alarmed it in the highest degree Moreover there seemed something inappropriate, almost sinister in their alliance Yet for long he had scarcely let it be a minute out of his sight How should he live without it? He did not want to spoil the journey by an outburst of unrestrained grief, yet utterly silent he could not remain, and reciting the verse 'While for good speed upon their road and happiness to come I pray, one thing the travellers will not deny me, an old man's right to shed a foolish tear or two,' he tried to hide his tears with his sleeve, exclaiming No, I ought not to, I should not do it!'

His wife stood weeping at his side, there was one thing that she could not disguise from herself, after long years both of his life and her own that had been spent in an unceasing protest against the pleasures and frivolities of the world, it was to those same frivolities and in pursuit of the most worldly ambitions that her husband was sending her away from him 'Together we left the City,' she cried, 'how all alone shall I refind the paths down which you led me over heath and hill?' The Lady of Akashi also recited a poem in which she said that even to those who seem to have parted for ever, life with its turns and chances brings strange reunions to pass She besought her father to come at least part of the way with them, but he seemed to regard it as utterly impossible that he should venture away from his seaside retreat, and it was evident that he regarded the negotiation even of the short road down to the sea as the most venturesome and nerve-racking business

'When I first put worldly ambitions aside,' said the old man, 'and contented myself with a mere provincial post, I made up my mind that, come what might, you, my dear daughter, should not suffer from my having sacrificed my own prospects, and how best, despite the remoteness of our home, to fit you for the station of life to which you properly belonged became my one thought and care But my experience as Governor taught me much, I realized my incapacity for public affairs, and knew that if I returned to the City it would only be to play the wretched part of ex-Governor My resources were much diminished and were I to set up house again at the Capital it would be on a very different scale from before I knew that I should be regarded as a failure both in my private and public life, a disgrace to the memory of my father who occupied the highest station in the State, moreover my acceptance of a provincial governorship had everywhere been regarded as the end of my career, and as for myself, I could not but think that it was indeed best it should be so But you were now growing up and your future had to be thought of How could I allow you to waste your beauty in this far corner of the earth like a brocade that is never taken from the drawer? But no better prospect seemed to present itself, and in my despair I called upon Buddha and all the gods to help me That, living as we did, any fresh acquaint-

ances should ever be formed by us seemed out of the question Yet all the time I believed that some strange chance would one day befall us And what indeed could have been more utterly unforeseen than the circumstance which at last brought so distinguished a guest to our home? In this I could not but see the hand of Heaven, and my only anxiety was lest too great an inequality of rank should divide you But since the birth of this child, that fear has not so much troubled me, for I feel that your union is fated to be a lasting one A child of Royal Blood cannot, we must allow, pass all its days in a village by the sea, and though this parting costs me dear I am determined never again to tamper with the world that I have renounced Princes are the lamps that light this world, and though they may for a time be destined to cast confusion upon the quiet of rusticity, soon they must perforce return to their true firmament, while those whom they have left smile back, as I do now, into the lowly Sphere [1] from whence they sprang Should you hear that I am dead, do not tease yourselves concerning the welfare of my soul, and above all, while less than death divides us, do not worry over what may be befalling me' Thus he poured out all that was passing through his mind and at last he added in conclusion 'You may be sure that each of the six times of Prayer, till the day when the smoke rises from my pyre, I shall pray with all my heart for the happiness of the little princess

Hitherto he had spoken with great self-possession, but now his face began to pucker

There was so much baggage to be transported that a vast quantity of wagons would have been required had the whole party proceeded by road To send some of the stuff by road and the rest by sea was in many ways inconvenient, moreover Genji's retainers did not wish to be recognized on the journey, and for all these reasons it seemed best that the whole party should proceed by water They set sail at the hour of the Dragon, and soon their ship, like that of the old poet's story,[2] was lost amid the morning mists far out across the bay The old priest stood gazing after it lost in a bewildered trance of grief from which it seemed as though he would never awake The wind was fresh and favourable, and they arrived at the City punctually at the hour they had announced Wishing to attract no notice they left their large baggage on board and travelled inland as quickly as possible The house at Oi at once took their fancy and was, as Koremitsu had noticed, in some curious way very reminiscent of the seaside, so that they soon felt quite at home The mother had known this place as a girl and moving recollections crowded to her mind at every turn By Genji s orders a covered gallery had been added to the house, which was a great improvement, and the course of the stream had also been very successfully altered Much still remained to

[1] The metaphor is of souls sinking back into lower incarnations

[2] See Waley, *Japanese Poetry* (Oxford, 1920), p. 56

be done, but for the most part only such small jobs as could easily be finished off later on, when they had got things straight and settled in On their arrival they found that entertainment had been prepared for them at Genji's command by one of his confidential servants He intended to come himself at the earliest opportunity, but many days passed before he could contrive an excuse for slipping away The Lady of Akashi had made sure that he would be there to welcome her She therefore spent the first days at Oi in the deepest depression, regretting her old home and quite at a loss how to occupy her time At last she took out the zithern which Genji had given to her at Akashi She was feeling at the moment particularly desperate, and as she had the part of the house where she was sitting entirely to herself she gave vent to her feelings in a somewhat wild improvisation, which soon startled her mother from the couch where she was lying and brought her to the player's side With the music of the zithern was blended the sighing of the wind in the great pine-woods that lay behind the house 'An altered and a lonely woman to this my native village I return But still unchanged the wind blows music through the trees' So the mother sang, and the daughter 'Far off now is the dear companion of my happier days, and none is here who comprehends the broken language of my lute'

While things were going thus dismally at Oi, Genji was feeling very uneasy To have established the people from Akashi so close to the Capital and then neglect them entirely was indeed a monstrous way to behave, but circumstances made it very difficult for him to escape unobserved He had not said anything to Murasaki about the move to Oi, but such things have a way of getting round, and he decided that it would be better not to explain his absence in a note He therefore wrote to her one morning as follows There are various matters at Katsura[1] which I ought to have looked into a long while ago, but I did not at all want the bother of going there and have kept on putting it off Some people whom I promised to visit have settled near by and I am afraid I shall have to go and see them too Then I ought to go over to my hermitage at Saga and see the Buddha there before it is painted So I am afraid I shall have to be away for two or three days'

Some faint echo of the business at Oi had reached her, but in a very garbled form She heard that Genji was hurriedly building a large new mansion on his estate at Katsura This was of course quite untrue Murasaki at once concluded that the mansion at Katsura was intended for the Lady of Akashi and depressed by this she wrote in answer 'Do you know the story of the woodman[2] who waited so long that leaves

[1] Where Genji had an estate

[2] A Chinese named Wang Chih He watched a couple of hermits playing chess in a cave The game absorbed his attention so completely that it seemed to him to last only a few minutes, but when it was over he found that years had elapsed and leaves had actually sprouted from the wood of his axe

sprouted from the handle of his axe? Do not imagine that I shall be quite so patient as that.' It was evident that she was out of humour with him! 'How crotchety you are!' he said 'In the past you did indeed have some excuse, but now I have entirely changed my habits Anyone who knows me would tell you as much' It took the whole morning to coax her back into a reasonable frame of mind At last very secretly, with no outriders of any kind save for a few intimate personal attendants, and taking every precaution lest he should be spied on or followed, he set out for Oi and arrived there just as it was growing dark Even when dressed in the plain hunting clothes that he wore at Akashi he had seemed to the Lady of the Shore a figure of unimaginable brilliance, and now when he appeared in full Court dress (he had indeed made himself as splendid as possible for the occasion) she was completely overwhelmed by his magnificence and soon, in contemplating this dazzling spectacle, the whole household recovered from the gloom into which they had been plunged The little princess had of course to be fetched and it was naturally with considerable emotion that he now saw his child for the first time It was indeed a pity that he should make its acquaintance in this belated manner What nonsense people talk about children, he thought Everyone used to make such a fuss about Yugiri, Princess Aoi's child, and pretend it was so remarkably handsome Such people were mere time-servers and flatterers If it had not been the Prime Minister's grandchild no one would have seen anything remarkable about it at all But here was a very different story If this little creature did not grow up into a woman of quite exceptional beauty, he was indeed very much mistaken The child smiled at him with such innocent surprise and had such a perfect little face and air that he at once took an immense fancy to it The nurse who when he had first sent her to Akashi was already losing her looks, had now grown quite middle-aged He asked her many questions about her experiences in these last months, to which she replied frankly and without any shyness He felt sorry that he had sent her to waste the last hours of her vanishing youth in so dull a place and now said sympathetically 'Here too you are a long way from everything and it is not at all easy for me to come over I wish you would persuade your mistress to make use of the apartments I originally offered her' 'We must see how we get on,' the Lady of Akashi interposed

That night at least she had no reason to complain of neglect and day came only too swiftly During the morning he gave fresh instructions to the retainers who were responsible for the redecoration of the house, and presently a number of people who farmed on and around his Katsura estate came to pay their respects, having heard beforehand that he was about to visit his properties in this neighbourhood As they were there, he thought he had better make them useful and set them to work repairing some places in the Lodge where the shrubs had been trodden down

'I see,' he said, 'that some of the artificial rocks have rolled over and almost disappeared under the grass I must get my people to hoist them up again into some position in which they will not look quite so pointless However this is not the kind of garden that looks the better for too much trouble being taken with it, and you may not be staying here very long It will not do to make everything here too nice or it will soon be as hard to go away from here as it was to leave Akashi' Soon they fell to talking of those old days, now laughing, now weeping, but all the time divinely happy Once her mother came and peeped at them as they sat talking and the sight of their happiness made her forget that she herself was old, was wretched Wreathed in smiles she hobbled away from the room A little later she was watching him standing in his shirt-sleeves instructing the workmen how to utilize the little spring of water that issued near the gallery of the eastern wing He had no idea that he was being watched, till happening to come across a tray for flower-offerings and other religious gear lying about the house, he suddenly thought of the pious old lady and said to his companion 'By the way, did your mother come with you? I had quite forgotten she might be here or I should not be going about the house dressed in this fashion' He sent for his cloak and going up to the curtain-of-state behind which he was told the old lady would probably be sitting, he said in a gentle tone 'Madam, I have come to thank you, for it is your doing that the little girl thrives so well Your prayers and devotions it is that have lightened the load of her *karma* and caused her to grow up so fine and healthy a child I know well enough what it must have cost you to leave the house which had become your sanctuary and mingle once more with the follies of this transitory world I know too what anxiety you must be in concerning the husband whom you have left For this and much else, Madam, I have come to thank you' 'That you should guess how dear it cost me to come back to the turmoil of the world, and that in these kind words you should tell me my exertions have not been made in vain, is in itself sufficient reward for all that I have endured, and justifies a life drawn out beyond the allotted span' So the pious old lady spoke and then continued, weeping 'I have been in great anxiety concerning this "twin-leaved pine,"[1] and while we dwelt under the shadow of those wild cliffs I scarce dared hope that it would at last find room to spread and grow But now I pray more confidently — though still afraid that from roots[2] so lowly no valiant stem can ever spring'

There was in her speech and bearing a courtly dignity which pleased him, and he led her on to talk of the time when her grandfather, the old Prince, was living at the house While she spoke the sound of running water reached them It came from the buried spring near the eastern wall

[1] Two-year-old child.

[2] Referring to the Lady of Akashi's comparatively humble birth.

of the house, the workmen had just finished clearing it It seemed like the voice of one suddenly aroused from lethargy by the mention of old familiar names 'I, that was mistress here, scarce know the way from room to room, only this crystal spring remembers still and meditates the ancient secrets of the house' She murmured this poem softly to herself and did not know that he had heard what she said But it had not escaped him, indeed, he thought it by no means lacking in beauty and power of expression

As he stood looking down at her, full of interest and compassion, the aged lady thought him more beautiful than anything she could have ever dreamed would exist in the world. He now drove over to his hermitage at Saga and arranged for the Reading of the *Samantabhadra Sutra* and the meditations on Amitabha and Shakyamuni to take place every month on the fourteenth, fifteenth and last days respectively, together with other rituals for which he now made the final arrangements The decoration of the Buddha Hall and the provision of the necessary altars and furniture were then discussed and various duties assigned to those in charge of the place He returned to Oi by moonlight It was strangely like those nights of old when he used to visit her at the house on the hill It seemed natural enough that, as in those days, she should bring out a zithern (it was indeed his own, which he had given her), and soon, stirred by his presence and the beauty of the night, she began to finger the instrument He noticed at once that true to her promise she had not altered the tuning since that last night at Akashi, and it seemed as though all that had happened since were obliterated and he were still listening to that farewell tune.

He was conscious of no inequality between herself and him Despite her mixed descent and rustic upbringing there was about her an air of personal distinction which made ample amends for her lack of breeding and worldly experience Her looks had indeed greatly improved since he knew her, and as he gazed, now at her, now at the lovely child, he felt that both of them were destined to occupy henceforward a very large share of his attention But what was he to do? It would indeed be a great pity that the child should grow up in an obscure country-house Most people would no doubt think him perfectly justified in taking it away with him to the Nijo-in and bringing it up in whatever way he chose But he knew that this would be a terrible blow to the mother and could not bring himself to suggest it He sat watching the two of them with tears in his eyes The little creature had at first been rather shy with him But now it was quite at its ease, prattled and laughed in his face and in fact showed every sign of wanting to make friends with him The infant in this expansive mood seemed to him more entrancing than ever He took it up in his arms, and watching the tenderness with which he held it the mother felt that its fortunes were indeed secure Next day he was to re-

turn to the Capital He therefore returned to rest for a while, but the news that he was shortly to leave this house spread with disconcerting rapidity to his tenants at Katsura and the ante-rooms were soon full of visitors waiting to escort him on his journey A number of courtiers had also discovered his whereabouts and were waiting to pay their respects While he was being dressed, Genji said petulantly 'This is intolerable If I am being tracked down even to such a place as this, where can I ever hope to hide my head?' And with a mob of visitors pressing round him he was swept away to his carriage At a window by which they had to pass, stationed there as though by accident, was the child's nurse with the infant in her arms Stroking its face tenderly as he passed, Genji said to her 'I should have been sorry not to see this child But it has all been so hurried . Better than nothing perhaps But "your village is so far away "'[1] We shall expect rather more from Your Highness than we did in the old days when we really were a long way off,' the nurse replied The little princess stretched out her hand as though trying to hold him back Pausing for a while he turned and said 'It is terrible to have such a sentimental disposition as mine I cannot bear to part from those I am fond of even if it be only for a single day But where is your mistress? Why did not she too come to bid me good-bye? Tell her that it is barbarous ' The nurse smiled and withdrawing into the house delivered the message But so far from being unconcerned at his departure, the Lady of Akashi was so much agitated that she had sunk helpless upon her bed, and it was some while before she could muster enough strength to rise At last, after Genji, not knowing what was amiss, had in his heart passed severe censure upon her coyness, she arrived in the front-room supported by her ladies and sank into a seat where, though she was partly hidden by a curtain, he got a fair view of her face Such delicacy of feature, such distinction, such grace would not he thought have done discredit to an Emperor's daughter He went up to the window, pulled aside the curtain and whispered a few words of farewell Then he hastened to rejoin his companions, but looking back for an instant over his shoulder he saw that, though all this time she had remained motionless and silent, she was following him intently with her eyes He had in old days been somewhat too slender for his height, now he had filled out a little and she found this slightly robuster air very becoming He must indeed have expended considerable thought upon his appearance, every detail down to the elegantly adjusted billowing of his wide, puffy trousers being calculated with the nicest eye for effect Such at any rate was her impression as he passed out of sight that morning — a view perhaps somewhat coloured by partiality

[1] Quoting the old song 'Your village is so far away that I must go back almost as soon as I come. Yet short as our meetings are perhaps we should be still unhappier without them'

Ukon, the brother of Ki no Kami, had relinquished his office of Treasurer, and having been appointed Quiver-bearer to His Majesty had this year been formally invested as an officer of the fifth rank He now came to relieve Genji of his sword, and looking in the direction from which his master had come saw the Lady of Akashi's form dimly outlined at the window He had himself formed some slight acquaintance with her during the period of Genji's exile and wished to discover whether she still had a liking for him He therefore drew one of her maids-of-honour aside and said 'I have not forgotten those hours of pleasant intercourse, but fear to give offence Sometimes when, waking before the dawn, I hear the rustling of the wind among the trees, I think for a moment that I am back at Akashi, or listening again to the waves that beat upon the shore At such moments I long to break the silence with some message or token, but till now no proper means has come to hand ' He purposely spoke in such a way that she might not understand him unless she were already aware of his feelings towards her mistress 'The clouds that hang eightfold about this lonely hillside screen us from the world no less securely than the mist-wreaths of that sequestered bay. I for my part thought that of my friends in those days "none save the ancient pine-tree" [1] remembered me, and it is good news indeed to hear that by you at least . ' She could not have been wider of the mark! [2] He was now very sorry that he had in old days so scrupulously avoided all reference to this attachment He would have explained himself further, but Genji was waiting, and calling out with an assumed cheerfulness, 'Let us talk of this another time,' he hastened to rejoin his master Already the outriders were clearing intruders from the road and amid great clatter and bustle the procession started on its way Two officious gentlemen, the Captain of the Guard and a certain Hyoye no Kami, rode at the back of Genji's coach 'I object to being tracked down like this,' said Genji wearily, 'when I go to pay a quiet visit to private friends.' 'The moonlight was so exquisite last night,' they said in self-defence, 'that we could not bear having been left behind, and this morning we groped our way through the early mist to find you The maple-leaves in the Capital are not yet quite at their best, but in the open country the colours are marvellous We should have been here sooner, had we not become involved in a hawking party that one of the chamberlains has got up ' 'I must go back to Katsura first,' said Genji, and accordingly the party set out in that direction It was no easy matter on the spur of the moment to provide entertainment for so large a number of persons However, the cormorant-fishers who ply their trade on the Katsura river were hastily sent for, and promised to secure food enough for the whole party Their strange, clipped talk

[1] Allusion to an old poem.

[2] The lady was unaware that he had been in love with her mistress and imagined it was of his feelings for herself that Ukon was speaking

reminded Genji of the fishermen at Suma and greatly diverted him The falconers, who had decided to camp in the open country, sent a present of small snipe, each bird tied to a bunch of sedge-leaves They played at the game [1] of floating wine-cups down the stream So many times were the cups set afloat and so steep were the banks of the stream that the game proved somewhat dangerous But the wine made them reckless and they were still shouting out their couplets long after it grew dark At last the moon rose and it was time for the music to begin The most skilful performers on zithern, lute, *wagon*, and various wind instruments were called upon and were soon playing such tunes as were best suited to the place and hour A gentle breeze blew down the stream blending its whisperings with the music of pipe and string Higher and higher the moon rose above them, never had night been so radiant and still It was already very late when a band of four or five courtiers made their appearance They had come straight from the Palace where the Emperor had been giving a concert 'This is the first of the Six Fast Days,' His Majesty had suddenly exclaimed 'I expected that Genji would be here What has become of him?' Someone then informed His Majesty of Genji's present whereabouts and messengers were at once despatched to Katsura bearing a letter in which the Emperor declared himself envious of the pleasant excursion in which his Minister had found time to indulge With this letter was the poem 'How pleasantly the shadow of the laurel-tree must fall upon the waters in the village beyond the stream!' [2] Genji answered with due humility and respect The messengers found this moonlight concert even more agreeable than the one which they had left and had soon settled down to drink and listen for the second time that night When at last they rose it was proper that they should not be sent away empty-handed As there was nothing here to give to them Genji sent a note to Oi 'Have you anything that would do to give to some messengers from the Court?' After looking round for a little they sent such objects as they could lay hands on There were two boxes full of clothes For the chief messenger, who was now anxious to return to the Palace, he selected a lady's dress of very handsome stuff

The company now became extremely animated Poem followed poem in a swift exchange, and even Genji's conversation, usually equable and restrained, began to take so extravagant a turn that his hearers would gladly have kept him talking thus till the end of the time As for things at home, he reflected — the harm was already done The rishi's axe must by now have blossomed, aye, and withered too Why not one more day? But no, that would never do, and the party broke up hastily.

They set out for the Capital, each wearing on his head the bright-

[1] Each competitor had to improvise a verse before the cup reached him

[2] Many puns. *Katsura* = 'laurel' Also, a *katsura*-tree was supposed to grow in the moon.

coloured scarf with which, according to his rank and station, he had been presented the night before and with these gay patches that bobbed up here and there in the morning mist blended the colours of the flowers in the gardens through which they passed

There was with them a certain member of the Night Watch famous for his singing of ancient ballads, and to cheer the company he now sang with great spirit the ballad 'Ho, my pony', whereupon his companions doffed their scarves and wound them round the singer's head The wind fluttered through the many-coloured ends that dangled about his shoulders, weaving as gay a brocade as that with which the storms of autumn carpet a forest floor

The news of his swift return or at least some faint echo of it reached the Lady of Akashi in her chamber, making her feel more than ever desolate To Genji it suddenly occurred that he had never written the customary [1] letter Other things had indeed been occupying his attention, but he wished he had remembered

On his return to the Nijo-in he rested for a little while and then went to tell Murasaki about his country visit 'I am very sorry that I was away longer than I led you to expect,' he said, 'those wretched fellows hounded me down and, try as I might, I could not get rid of them. I am very tired this morning I think, if you will excuse me, I must get some more sleep,' and so saying he retired to his own room When they met later he saw that things were not going well, but for a time pretended not to notice At last she became so tiresome that he said somewhat sharply 'This is ridiculous You know quite well that there can never be any comparison between her position and yours Surely you had better drop this absurd affectation and make the best of me now I am here'

He had promised to be at the Palace before nightfall, and now rose to go But before he left the room she saw him go into a corner and scribble a hasty note She guessed at once to whom it was addressed What a long time it was taking! He seemed to have a great deal to say Her women saw him giving it to a messenger with many whispered instructions and they were duly indignant

He was supposed to be on duty all night at the Palace But he was impatient to put matters right, and though it was very late indeed before he could get away he hurried back to Murasaki at the first opportunity of escape While he was with her, the messenger returned from Oi with an answer in his hand Genji read it without any attempt at concealment, and finding it to be of the most harmless description, he handed it to her saying 'Please tear it up when you have read it, and do not leave the pieces lying about, pieces make such a bad impression! In my position one has to be so careful'

He came and sat by her couch, but he was thinking all the time of the

[1] The 'next morning' letter

Lady at Oi and wishing he could be with her For a long while he sat gazing into the lamp and did not speak a word

The letter which he had handed to Murasaki was spread open before her, but she was not reading it 'I am sure you have been peeping,' he said at last 'That way of reading letters is very tiring,' and he smiled at her with such evident affection that the tears welled to her eyes 'There is something I want to talk to you about,' he said, bending over her, 'I have seen the little girl and, as a matter of fact, taken a great fancy to her I naturally want to do as well for her as I can, but under the circumstances that is far from easy, and I am rather worried about it I want you to think about the matter a little, and see if you cannot help me What can be done? For example, would you be willing to have her here and bring her up as your own child? She is almost three years old, and at that age they are so pretty and innocent that it is very hard indeed to harden one's heart against them It is getting to be time that she came out of her long clothes Would you be very much upset if I asked you to take charge of the ceremony?' [1] 'I was cross just now,' she said, 'but I knew you were thinking all the while about other things, and there seemed to be no use in pretending we were friends if we were not I should love to look after the little girl She is just the age I like best ' She laughed with joy at the thought of having such a creature in her arms, for she was passionately fond of children Should he try to secure the child? Genji was still very doubtful Visits to Oi were very difficult to arrange, and he seldom contrived to get there except on the two days in each month when he went over to hear the service at his chapel near Saga

Thus though the Lady of Akashi fared considerably better than the Weaving Lady [2] in the story and though her expectations were of the most modern description, it would have been strange had these hurried visits contented her

[1] The *mogi* or 'First Putting On of the Skirt'

[2] The two stars, Weaving Lady and Plough Boy, meet only on the seventh day of the seventh month.

Part Three

A WREATH OF CLOUD

LIST OF MOST IMPORTANT PERSONS

(ALPHABETICAL)

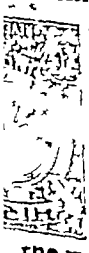
AKASHI, LADY OF	Whom Genji courted during his exile
AKASHI, PRINCESS FROM	Daughter of the above by Genji
AKIKONOMU, EMPRESS	Daughter of Rokujo
AOI	Genji's first wife.
ASAGAO, PRINCESS.	Daughter of Prince Momozono Shikibukyo, courted by Genji since his boyhood, without success
ATEKI	Daughter of Tamakatsura's old nurse
BUGO NO SUKE	Brother of the above
CHUJO, LADY	To no Chujo's eldest daughter (called Kokiden in the original, but this renders her liable to confusion with Genji's stepmother)
EMPEROR, THE OLD	Genji's father
FALLING FLOWERS, LADY FROM THE VILLAGE OF	Sister of one of the Old Emperor's Court-ladies under Genji's protection.
FUJITSUBO	Consort of the Old Emperor, loved by Genji
GENJI	
HIGEKURO	Son of the Old Emperor by a lady-in-waiting
HYOBUKYO, PRINCE	Brother of Suzaku's consort Lady Jokyoden
KASHIWAGI	Murasaki's father
KOBAI	Eldest son of To no Chujo
KOKIDEN	Brother of the above.
KOREMITSU	Consort of the Old Emperor, Genji's wicked 'stepmother'
KOREMITSU'S DAUGHTER	Genji's retainer
KUMOI	Gosechi dancer, admired by Yugiri
MOMOZONO, PRINCE	Younger daughter of To no Chujo
MURASAKI	Brother of the Old Emperor Father of Asagao
NYOGO, PRINCESS	Second 'wife' of Genji (never, technically speaking, his *kita no kata* or formal wife)
OBOROZUKI	Younger sister of the Old Emperor
OMI, LADY OF	Consort of the ex-Emperor Suzaku Loved by Genji
	Bastard of To no Chujo, reclaimed by him in error while searching for Tamakatsura

forward devote all her time to its care Of that there is no doubt at all ' and he proceeded to a general eulogy upon Murasaki's docility and charm But while he was speaking the Lady of Akashi recalled the stories of Genji's adventurous past, and of numerous other attachments with which rumour credited him It seemed on the one hand very unlikely that Lady Murasaki would not ultimately suffer the fate of her predecessors, and why should her child be entrusted to a favourite who might soon be forgotten or thrust aside? If on the other hand Murasaki were indeed endowed with such pre-eminent qualities that she alone of all her rivals and predecessors was destined to enjoy permanent favour, then as long as mother and child remained in their present obscurity there was little danger that this magnificent lady would regard them as worth a moment's thought But as soon as one or both should make an appearance in the Nijo palace, Murasaki's pride would be affronted and her jealousy aroused Her mother, however, was a woman who looked beyond the difficulties of the moment, and she now said with some severity You are behaving very foolishly It is natural enough that you should dislike parting with the child, but you must make up your mind to do what will be best for it I feel certain that His Highness is perfectly serious in his intentions concerning its future, and I advise you to entrust it to him at once You need have no misgivings After all, even Royal Princes are of very varying stock on the mother's side I seem to remember that Prince Genji himself, who is reckoned the greatest gentleman in the land, could not be put forward as a successor to the Throne because his mother was so far inferior to the other ladies of the Court, and indeed, judged from that point of view, he is a mere waiting-woman's son If such disadvantages are not fatal even in the most exalted spheres, we lesser folk certainly need not trouble ourselves about them

' The Lady of Akashi took the advice of several other persons who had a reputation for sagacity in such matters, and also consulted various soothsayers and astrologers In every case the answer was the same the child must go to the Capital In face of such unanimity she began to waver Genji, for his part, was still as anxious as ever that his plan should be carried out But the subject was evidently so painful to her that he no longer attempted to broach it, and in the course of his next letter merely asked what were her wishes concerning the Initiation ceremony She answered 'I see now that, being what I am, I cannot keep the child with me without injuring its prospects I am ready to part with it, but I still fear that amid such surroundings ' He was very sorry for her, but all the same he ordered his clerks to search the calendar for a suitable day, and began secretly to make preparations for the child s arrival

To hand over her own child to another woman s keeping was indeed a bitter trial, but she kept on repeating to herself that, for its own sake, this sacrifice must sooner or later be made The nurse whom Genji had orig-

inally sent to Akashi would of course go to take charge of it at the palace, and the prospect of losing this lady, to whom she had long confided all her sorrows, finding in her society the one solace of her monotonous and unhappy existence, added greatly to her present distress 'Madam,' the nurse would say to her, 'I shall never forget your kindness to me ever since the day when, so unexpectedly, yet as I think not without the intervention of some kind fate, it fell to my lot to serve you You may be sure that I shall all the while be longing to have you with me But I shall never regard our separation as more than an expedient of the moment In the end I am convinced that all will come right Meanwhile, do not think that I look forward with any pleasant anticipations to a life that will take me so far from your side' She wept, and thus day after day was spent in sad forebodings and preparations till the twelfth month was already come

Storms of snow and hail now made the situation at Oi more than ever depressing and uncomfortable It appalled the Lady of Akashi to discover what manifold varieties of suffering one can be called upon to endure at one and the same time She now spent every moment of the day in tending and caressing her little girl One morning when the fast-falling  was piling up high on every side she sat with the child in her arms, and again going back in her mind over all the miseries of the past, turing to herself the yet more desolate days that were to come It ug since she had gone into the front of the house But this morn- e was ice on the moat, and she went to the window to look She d in many wraps of some soft, white, fluttering stuff, and as she gazing before her with hands clasped behind her head, those within the room thought that, prince's daughter though her rival was, she could scarce be more lovely in poise and gesture than their lady in her snowy dress Raising her sleeve to catch the tears that had now begun to fall, the Lady of Akashi turned to the nurse and said If it were upon a day such as this,[1] I do not think that I could bear it' And she recited the poem

If country roads be deep in snow, and clouds return, tread thou the written path, and though thyself thou comest not, vouchsafe a sign'[2] To comfort her the nurse answered through her tears Though the snow-drifts of Yoshino were heaped across his path, doubt not that whither his heart is set, his footsteps shall tread out their way' The snow was now falling a little less fast Suddenly Genji appeared at the door The moments during which she waited to receive him put her always into a state of painful agitation Today guessing as she did the purpose of his visit, his arrival threw her immediately into an agonizing conflict Why had she consented? There was still time If she refused to part with the child,

[1] That Genji fetched the child.

[2] There is a play on words *fumi* = letter also 'treading *Ato* = 'the tracks of feet,' but also 'tracks of the pen,' σημαια

OMIYA, PRINCESS	Mother of Aoi and To no Chujo Sister of the Old Emperor
ROKUJO	Widow of a brother of the Old Emperor
RYOZEN, THE EMPEROR	Reputed son of the Old Emperor, but really son of Genji and Fujitsubo
SANJO	Yugao's maid
SHONI	Husband of Tamakatsura's nurse Father of Ateki and Bugo no Suke
SOCHI, PRINCE	Genji's stepbrother
SUYETSUMU	Fantastic lady with red nose, daughter of Prince Hitachi
SUZAKU, THE EX-EMPEROR	Genji's stepbrother, son of Kokiden
TAMAKATSURA	Child of To no Chujo by Yugao
TAYU	Swashbuckler in Tsukushi
UTSUSEMI	Wife of a provincial governor, loved by Genji
YOSHIKIYO	Faithful retainer of Genji, followed him into exile
YUGAO	Loved first by To no Chujo, then by Genji Dies in a deserted mansion
YUGIRI	Genji's son by Aoi

CHAPTER I

A Wreath of Cloud

AS winter drew on, the Lady of Akashi in her house by the Oi river became very dispirited. Formerly the prospect of a visit from Genji was sufficient to rouse her from her melancholy, but now he found her always in the same dejected posture morning, noon and night. 'How much longer is this to go on?' he cried impatiently. 'Do, I beg of you, make up your mind to come to my palace and use the quarters I have reserved for you.' But he could never persuade her that she would not be thus exposing herself to a hundred indignities and affronts. It was of course impossible to be quite sure how things would go, and if, after all his assurances, the move did not turn out well, her vague resentment against him would henceforth be transformed into a definite and justified grievance. 'Do you not feel,' he said, 'that it would be unfair to your child to keep it here with you much longer? Indeed, knowing as you do what plans[1] I have made for its future, you must surely see that you are behaving towards it with a lack of proper respect. I have constantly discussed this matter with my wife and she has always shown great interest in the child's future. If it is put for a while under her care, she will no doubt be willing to stand sponsor to it, so that it will be possible to carry out the Initiation ceremony and other rituals of induction[2] with full publicity.' So far from being convinced by his arguments, she saw herself now being inveigled into doing precisely what she had always suspected with horror that he would one day ask of her. 'Take the child away from me if you like,' she said at last, 'and give her to these grand people to bring up as though she were their own. But just when you think you have repaired the accident of her birth, someone will let out the secret, and where will you be then?' 'Yes, we must be careful about that,' answered Genji. But you need have no fear that the child will not be properly looked after. As you know, though we have been married for many years, Lady Murasaki has no children of her own, and this very much distresses her. She badly needs companionship, and when at one time there was some question of her adopting Lady Akikonomu, the former Vestal Virgin, she was obviously delighted at the prospect, though this lady was already a grown-up person. But when it comes to a child — at an age, too, when such creatures have an irresistible charm — it is quite certain that she will welcome it with alacrity and hence-

[1] Genji had promised in due course to marry the child to the Heir Apparent, son of the Emperor Ryozen.

[2] Buddhist ceremonies corresponding to the Christian 'Confirmation.'

would he snatch it from her? No, indeed, that was unthinkable But stay! She had consented, and should she now change her mind, she would lose his confidence for ever At one moment she was ready to obey, a moment afterwards, she had decided to resist by every means in her power

She sat by the window, holding the little girl in her arms He thought the child very beautiful, and felt at once that her birth was one of the most important things that had happened in his life Since last spring her hair had been allowed to grow [1] and it was now an inch or two long, falling in delicate waves about her ears like that of a little novice at a convent Her skin too was of exquisite whiteness and purity, and she had the most delightful eyes To part with such a creature, to send her away into strange hands — he understood well enough what this must mean, and suddenly it seemed to him that it was impossible even to suggest such a sacrifice The whole matter was reopened, and a discussion followed which lasted the better part of the day 'Whether it is worth while depends on you,' she said at last 'It is in your power to make amends to the child for the disadvantages of its birth And if I thought that you meant to do so .' he was worn out by the long discussion, and now burst into tears It was terrible to witness such distress But the child, heedless of what was going on about it, was lustily demanding 'a ride in the nice carriage' The mother picked it up and carried it in her own arms to the end of the drive When she had set it down, it caught at her sleeve and in the prettiest, baby voice imaginable begged her to 'come for a ride too' There framed themselves in the lady's heart the lines 'Were all my prayers in vain, or shall I live to see the two-leaved pine from which today I part spread mighty shadows on the earth?' but she could scarce speak the words, and seeing her now weeping wildly Genji strove to comfort her with the verse Like the little pine-tree that at Takekuma from the big one grows, grafted to my deep roots long shall this stripling thrive secure' 'Wait patiently, he added She strove hard to persuade herself that he was right, that all was for the best But now the carriages were moving away

With the child rode the nurse and also a gentlewoman of good family called Shosho, holding on their knees the Sword, the Heavenly Children [2] and other emblems of royalty In the next carriage followed a band of youths and little girls whom he had brought to form the child's escort on the homeward way. All the time they were driving to the Capital Genji was haunted by the image of the sorrow-stricken figure that had watched their departure Small blame to her if at the moment she was feeling bitterly towards him!

It was quite dark when they arrived So soon as the carriages had been

[1] Babies' heads were shaved, save for two tufts

[2] The sword was the emblem of the child's royal blood. The Heavenly Children were dolls which were intended to attract evil influences and so save the child from harm.

drawn in, Shosho and the nurse began looking about them at the splendours amid which they were now destined to reside They felt indeed (coming as they did from rural and quite unpretentious surroundings) somewhat awestruck and ill at ease But when they were shown the apartments which had been set aside for the new arrival, with a tiny bed, screens-of-state, and everything which a little lady could require, all beautifully set out and arranged, they began to take heart The nurse's own room was in the corridor leading to the western wing, on the north side of the passage

The child had fallen asleep during the journey and while she was carried into the house had not cried or seemed at all put out She was taken straight to Murasaki's room and there given her supper. After a while she began to look round her

She evidently wondered why her mother was nowhere to be seen, and after a further search her little lips began to tremble The nurse was sent for and soon succeeded in distracting her attention If only, thought Genji, who had witnessed this scene — if only the mother in that slow country home could be as easily comforted! But now there was no way to make amends to her, save to see to it that never in one jot should the child's care and upbringing fall short of what its mother might in her wildest dream have craved for it For the moment indeed he accounted it a blessing that Murasaki had not borne him a child of her own, and was thus free to devote herself to the reparation of the wrong which he had inflicted upon this little newcomer by the circumstances of its birth For some days the child continued occasionally to ask for its mother or some other person whom it had been used to see daily at Oi, and when they could not be produced it would have a fit of screaming or of tears But it was by nature a contented, happy little thing, and soon struck up a friendship with its new mother, who for her part was delighted to take charge of a creature so graceful and confiding She insisted on carrying it about in her own arms, attended herself to all its wants and joined in all its games Gradually the nurse became a personal attendant upon Lady Murasaki rather than the under-servant she had been before Meanwhile a lady of irreproachable birth happened to become available as a wet-nurse and was accordingly added to the establishment The ceremony of her Initiation did not involve any very elaborate preparations, but the child's little companions were naturally aware that something was afoot Her outfit, so tiny that it looked as though it came out of a doll's-house, was a charming sight So many people came in and out of the house all day even at ordinary times that they hardly noticed the guests who had assembled in their little mistress's honour It was only when she raised her arms for the Binding of the Sleeves that the unwonted gesture caught their attention, they had never seen her in so pretty a pose before

round and sit with her He did not however visit her by previous appointment or stay at all late at night in her apartments Happily she was by nature extremely unexacting If what she wanted did not come her way, she at once assumed that this particular thing was not 'in her destiny,' and ceased to worry about it This habit of mind made her quite unusually easy to handle, and he for his part lost no opportunity of publicly showing by his manner towards her that he regarded her as of scarcely less consequence than Murasaki, with the result that those who came to the house felt they would be displeasing him if they did not pay their respects to her as well as to his wife, while stewards and servants saw that she was a person whom it would not be advisable to neglect Thus everything seemed to be working very smoothly, and Genji felt that the arrangement was going to be a great success

He thought constantly of the country house at Oi and of the dull hours which the Lady of Akashi must be passing there at this season of festivity So soon as the New Year celebrations both at his own house and in the Palace were drawing to a close, he determined to pay her another visit, and with this object in view he put on his finest clothes, wearing under his cherry-coloured cloak a matchless vesture of deep saffron hue, steeped in the perfumes of the scented box where it had lain Thus clad he went to take his leave of Murasaki, and as he stood in the full rays of the setting sun, his appearance was so magnificent that she gazed at him with even greater admiration than was her wont The little princess grabbed at the ends of his long wide trousers with her baby hands, as though she did not want him to go When he reached the door of the women's apartments she was still clinging to him and he was obliged to halt for a moment in order to disentangle himself Having at last coaxed her into releasing him, he hurried down the corridor humming to himself as he did so the peasant-song, 'Tomorrow I will come again'[1] At the door he met one of Murasaki's ladies and by her he sent back just that message, 'Tomorrow I will come again' She instantly recognized whence the words came and answered with the poem 'Were there on the far shore no person to detain your boat, then might I indeed believe that tomorrow you will come again This was brought to him before he drove away, and smiling at her readiness of wit he answered 'In truth I will but look to my business and come back again, come back tomorrow, though she across the waters chide me as she will' The little girl did not of course understand a word of all this, but she saw that there was a joke, and was cutting the strangest capers As usual the sight of her antics disarmed all Murasaki's resentment, and though she would much rather

[1] 'Stop your boat, oh cherry-man! I must sow the ten-rood island field. Then I will come again. Tomorrow I will come again!' The lady answers 'Tomorrow, forsooth! Those are but words You keep a girl upon the other side, and tomorrow you will not come, no, not tomorrow will you come'

Meanwhile the mother at Oi was all the more wretched because she now felt that her misery was self-inflicted Had she been firm, the child might still be with her and life in some measure endurable She could not believe that so extreme a course could really have been indispensable to its interests and bitterly repented of her docility Even the grandmother, who had been foremost in urging the sacrifice, missed the baby sadly and went about the house with tears in her eyes But news had reached them of the pains which Genji was bestowing upon its upbringing, and she felt no doubt that she had advised for the best

A peculiar compunction prevented the Lady of Akashi from sending any gift or message to the child which was no longer hers, but she took immense pains in contriving presents for all its companions and attendants from the nurse downwards, and would spend hours in the matching of colours and the choosing of stuffs

Genji did not at all want her to think that, now she had parted with the child, his visits were going to become any the less frequent, and though it was very difficult to arrange, he made a point of going out to Oi before the turn of the year. It must at the best of times, he thought, be an uninteresting place to live in, but at any rate she had had the child to look after, and (what with getting it up and putting it to bed) that seemed to occupy a good deal of time How she managed to get through the day now he could not imagine, and coming away from this visit with a heavy heart he henceforward wrote to her almost daily Fortunately Murasaki no longer showed any jealousy on this score, feeling, as it seemed, that the surrender of so exquisite a child needed whatever recompense Genji found it in his heart to bestow

The New Year[1] was ushered in by a spell of bright, clear weather At the Nijo-in everything seemed to be going particularly well and, now that all the improvements were completed, an unusually large number of guests was entertained during the period of festivities The older, married visitors came, as is customary, on the seventh day, bringing with them their children to assist in the ceremonies of congratulation, and these young visitors all seemed to be in excellent health and spirits Even the lesser gentlemen and retainers who came to pay their respects, though no doubt many of them had worries and troubles enough of their own, managed to keep up, during these few days at any rate, an outward appearance of jollity

The lady from the Village of Falling Flowers, who was now installed in the new eastern wing, seemed completely satisfied by her new surroundings She had her work cut out for her in keeping up to the mark all the waiting-women and young girls whom Genji had allotted to her service Nor could she feel that she had gained nothing by her present proximity, for whenever he had a few moments to spare, he would come

[1] Genji must now have been thirty

round and sit with her He did not however visit her by previous appointment or stay at all late at night in her apartments Happily she was by nature extremely unexacting If what she wanted did not come her way, she at once assumed that this particular thing was not in her destiny,' and ceased to worry about it This habit of mind made her quite unusually easy to handle, and he for his part lost no opportunity of publicly showing by his manner towards her that he regarded her as of scarcely less consequence than Murasaki, with the result that those who came to the house felt they would be displeasing him if they did not pay their respects to her as well as to his wife, while stewards and servants saw that she was a person whom it would not be advisable to neglect Thus everything seemed to be working very smoothly, and Genji felt that the arrangement was going to be a great success

He thought constantly of the country house at Oi and of the dull hours which the Lady of Akashi must be passing there at this season of festivity So soon as the New Year celebrations both at his own house and in the Palace were drawing to a close, he determined to pay her another visit, and with this object in view he put on his finest clothes, wearing under his cherry-coloured cloak a matchless vesture of deep saffron hue, steeped in the perfumes of the scented box where it had lain Thus clad he went to take his leave of Murasaki, and as he stood in the full rays of the setting sun, his appearance was so magnificent that she gazed at him with even greater admiration than was her wont The little princess grabbed at the ends of his long wide trousers with her baby hands, as though she did not want him to go When he reached the door of the women's apartments she was still clinging to him and he was obliged to halt for a moment in order to disentangle himself Having at last coaxed her into releasing him, he hurried down the corridor humming to himself as he did so the peasant-song, 'Tomorrow I will come again '[1] At the door he met one of Murasaki's ladies and by her he sent back just that message, Tomorrow I will come again ' She instantly recognized whence the words came and answered with the poem 'Were there on the far shore no person to detain your boat, then might I indeed believe that tomorrow you will come again ' This was brought to him before he drove away, and smiling at her readiness of wit he answered 'In truth I will but look to my business and come back again, come back tomorrow, though she across the waters chide me as she will ' The little girl did not of course understand a word of all this, but she saw that there was a joke, and was cutting the strangest capers As usual the sight of her antics disarmed all Murasaki's resentment, and though she would much rather

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there had been no 'lady on the far shore,' she no longer felt any hostility towards her Through what misery the mother must be passing, Murasaki was now in a position to judge for herself She continually imagined what her own feelings would be if the child were taken from her, never for an instant let it go out of her sight, and again and again pressed it to her bosom, putting her lovely teats to its mouth, and caressing it for hours together

'What a pity that she has never had one of her own!' her ladies whispered 'To be sure if this were hers, she could not wish it different '

Meanwhile the Lady of Akashi was setting herself to face with resolute calm the dulness and monotony of country life The house had a curious charm of its own, which appealed very much to Genji during his visits, and as for its occupant — he was astonished at the continual improvement in her looks Indeed, had not that queer father of hers taken such extraordinary pains to prevent her ever mixing with the world, he believed there was no reason why she should not have done extremely well for herself Yes, all she had needed was an ordinary father, even a rather shabby one would not have mattered For such beauty and intelligence as hers, if once given the chance, could not have failed to pull her through Each visit left him restless and unsatisfied, and he found himself spending his time in continual goings and comings, his life 'a tremulous causeway linking dream to dream '

Sometimes he would send for a zithern and remembering the exquisite music with which she had beguiled those nights at Akashi, he begged her to play to him upon her lute She would not now play alone, but she sometimes consented to accompany him, doing so with a mastery he could not imagine how she had contrived to acquire The rest of the time was generally spent in minute recital of the little princess's sayings and doings Often he had come over on business connected with his new oratory at Saga or his estate at Katsura, and then there would perhaps be only time enough to eat a little fruit and dried rice with her at Oi before he hurried back to town On such occasions there was not time for intimacies of any kind, but the mere fact that he snatched at every chance of seeing her and that he did so without any attempt at concealment, marked her as one who held a not inconsiderable place in his affections She was quite aware of this, but she never presumed upon it, and without any tiresome display of humility she obeyed his orders and in general gave him as little trouble as possible By all that she could hear, there was not one of the great ladies at Court with whom he was on so intimate a footing as with herself, indeed, he was said to be somewhat stand-offish and difficult of approach Were she to live closer at hand he would perhaps grow weary of her, and in any case there would certainly be unpleasant rivalries and jealousies Thus or in some such way may we suppose the Lady of Akashi to have reconciled herself to these brief and accidental visits Her father,

despite his disavowal of all worldly interests, was extremely anxious to hear how Genji was behaving towards his daughter and constantly sent messengers to Oi to pick up what news they could Much of what he heard distressed and disappointed him, but frequently too there were signs and indications of a more encouraging kind, and he would grow quite elated

About this time Lady Aoi's father died His name had carried great weight in the country and his death was a heavy loss to the present government It so happened that the period during which he took part in public life had been marked by much disorder and unrest A renewal of these upheavals was now expected and general depression prevailed Genji too was much distressed, both for personal reasons and because he had been in the habit of delegating to the old Minister most of the public business which fell to his lot He had thus managed to secure a reasonable amount of leisure He saw himself henceforward perpetually immersed in a multiplicity of tiresome affairs, and the prospect greatly depressed him The Emperor, though still only twelve years old, was extremely forward for his age both in body and mind, and although it was not to be expected that he should act alone, the task of supervising his work was not a difficult one But for some years such supervision would still be needed, and unfortunately there was no one else to whom Genji could possibly entrust such a task Thus the prospect of being able to lead the retired life which alone appealed to him was still remote, and he frequently became very discontented '

For some while he was occupied with the celebration of rituals and services on behalf of the dead man's soul, these he carried out even more elaborately than did the sons and grandsons of the deceased This year, as had been predicted, was marked by a number of disorders and calamities The Palace was frequently visited by the most disagreeable and alarming apparitions, the motions of the planets, sun and moon were irregular and unaccountable, and clouds of baleful and significant shape were repeatedly observed Learned men of every school sent in elaborate addresses to the Throne, in which they attempted to account for these strange manifestations But they were obliged to confess that many of the reported happenings were unique, and of a very baffling character While speculation thus reigned on every side, Genji held in his heart a guilty secret [1] which might well be the key to these distressing portents

Lady Fujitsubo had fallen ill at the beginning of the year and since the third month her malady had taken a serious turn The August visit of the Emperor to her bedside and other unusual ceremonies had already taken

[1] The secret that the Emperor was his son. The safety of the State depended upon the cult of ancestors This could only be performed by their true descendants. Moreover the occupation of the throne by one who was not by birth entitled to it would arouse the wrath of the Sun, from whom the Emperor of Japan claims descent.

place He was a mere child when she relinquished the care of him, and he had grown up without any very strong feelings towards her But he now looked so solemn as he stood by the bedside that she herself began to feel quite sad 'I have for some while felt certain,' she said to him calmly, 'that this would be the last year of my life But as long as my illness did not prevent me from going about as usual, I gave no hint to those around me that I knew my end was near, for I dreaded the fuss and outcry that such a confession would have produced Nor did I alter in any way my daily prayers and observances I longed to visit you at the Palace and talk with you quietly about old days But I seldom felt equal to so great an exertion And now it is too late'

She spoke in a very low, feeble voice She was thirty-seven years old, but seemed much younger The Emperor, as he looked at her, was overwhelmed by pity and regret That just as she was reaching an age when she would need his care, she should, unknown to him, have passed through months of continual suffering without once having recourse to those sacred expedients which alone might have saved her — this thought made the most painful impression upon him, and now, in a last attempt to rescue her from death, he set in motion every conceivable sort of ritual and spell Genji too was dismayed at the discovery that for months past she had been worn out by constant pain, and now sought desperately to find some remedy for her condition But it was apparent that the end was at hand, the Emperor's visits became more and more frequent and many affecting scenes were witnessed Fujitsubo was in great pain and seldom attempted to speak at any length But lying there and looking back over the whole course of her career, she thought that while in the outward circumstances of life few women could have been more fortunate than herself, inwardly scarce one in all history had been more continually apprehensive and wretched The young Emperor was of course still wholly ignorant of the secret of his birth In not acquainting him with it she felt that she had failed in the discharge of an essential duty, and the one matter after her death in which she felt any interest was the repair of this omission

Merely in his position as head of the government it was natural that Genji should be gravely concerned by the approaching loss to his faction of so distinguished a supporter, coming, as it seemed likely to, not many months after the death of the old Grand Minister This public concern could indeed be openly displayed But concealed from all those about him there was in his inmost heart a measureless sorrow, to which he dared give vent only in perpetual supplication and prayer That it was no longer possible to renew even such casual and colourless intercourse as had been theirs in recent years was very painful to him He hurried to her bedside at the first news of the serious turn which her condition had taken

To his surprise she did, in a faint and halting manner, contrive to speak a few words to him when she realized that he was near First she thanked

ing bitterly till it began to grow dark Issuing at last, he found a flaming sun about to sink beneath the horizon Against this vivid glow the trees upon the hill stood out with marvellous clearness, every branch, nay every twig distinct But across the hill there presently drifted a thin filament of cloud, draping the summit with a band of grey He was in no mood that day to notice sunsets or pretty cloud-effects, but in this half-curtained sky there seemed to him to be a strange significance, and none being by to hear him he recited the verse 'Across the sunset hill there hangs a wreath of cloud that garbs the evening as with the dark folds of a mourner's dress'

There was a certain priest who had for generations served as chaplain in Lady Fujitsubo's family Her mother had placed extraordinary confidence in him, and she herself had instilled the young Emperor Ryozen with deep veneration for this old man, who was indeed known throughout the land for the sanctity of his life and the unfailing efficacy of his prayers He was now over seventy and had for some time been living in retirement, intent upon his final devotions But recently the occasion of Lady Fujitsubo's death had called him back to the Court, and the Emperor had more than once summoned him to his side An urgent message, conveyed by Prince Genji, now reached him The night was already far advanced, and the old man at first protested that these nocturnal errands were no longer within his capacity But in the end he promised, out of respect for His Majesty, to make a great effort to appear, and at the calm of dawn, at a moment when, as it so happened, many of the courtiers were absent and those on duty had all withdrawn from the Presence, the old man stepped into Ryozen's room After talking for a while in his aged, croaking voice about various matters of public interest, he said at last 'There is one very difficult matter which I wish to discuss with you I fear I may not have the courage to embark upon it, and I am still more afraid that if I succeed in broaching this topic I may give you great offence But it concerns something which it would be very wrong to conceal, a secret indeed such as makes me fear the eye of Heaven What use is there, now that I am so near my end, in locking it up so tightly in my heart? I fear that Buddha himself might cast me out should I approach him defiled by this unholy concealment' He began trying to tell the Emperor something, but he seemed unable to come to the point It was strange that there should be any worldly matter concerning which the old priest retained such violent emotions Perhaps, despite his reputation, he had once secretly pursued some hideous vendetta, had caused an innocent person to be entrapped, done away with a thousand monstrous possibilities crowded to the Emperor's mind Reverend Father,' he said at last, 'you have known me since I was a baby, and I have never once hidden anything from you And now I learn that there is something which you have for a long time past been concealing from me I confess, I am surprised'

There is nothing that I have kept from you,' the old man cried indignantly 'Have I not made you master of my most secret spells, of the inner doctrines that Buddha forbids us to reveal? Do you think that I, who in these holy matters reposed so great a confidence in Your Majesty, would have concealed from you any dealing of my own?

'The matter of which I speak is one that has had grave results already and may possibly in the future entail worse consequences still The reputations concerned are those of your late august mother and of someone who now holds a prominent place in the government of our country it is to Prince Genji that I refer It is for their sake, and lest some distorted account of the affair should ultimately reach you from other sources, that I have undertaken this painful task I am an old man and a priest, I therefore have little to lose and, even should this revelation win me your displeasure, I shall never repent of having made it, for Buddha and the Gods of Heaven showed me by unmistakable signs that it was my duty to speak

'You must know, then, that from the time of Your Majesty's conception the late Empress your mother was in evident distress concerning the prospect of your birth She told me indeed that there were reasons which made the expected child particularly in need of my prayers, but what these reasons were she did not say, and I, being without experience in such matters, could form no conjecture Soon after your birth there followed a species of convulsion in the State, Prince Genji was in disgrace and later in exile Meanwhile your august mother seemed to grow every day more uneasy about your future, and again and again I was asked to offer fresh prayers on your behalf Strangest of all, so long as Prince Genji was at the Capital he too seemed to be acquainted with the instructions I had received, for on every occasion he at once sent round a message bidding me add by so much to the prayers that had been ordered and make this or that fresh expenditure on some service or ritual .'

The disclosure [1] was astonishing, thrilling, terrifying Indeed so many conflicting emotions struggled for the upper hand that he was unable to make any comment or reply The old priest misunderstood this silence and, grieved that he should have incurred Ryozen's displeasure by a revelation which had been made in His Majesty s own interest, he bowed and withdrew from the Presence The Emperor immediately ordered him to return I am glad that you have told me of this,' said Ryozen 'Had I gone on living in ignorance of it I see that a kind of contempt would have been attached for ever to my name, for in the end such things are bound to be known I am only sorry that you should have concealed this from me for so long, and tremble to think of the things that in my ignorance I may have said or done [2] . Tell me, does anyone besides yourself know

[1] That Ryozen was in reality Genji's son.

[2] See above, note on p 371, and below, note on p 378.

of this, anyone who is likely to have let out the secret?' 'Besides myself and your mother's maid Omyobu there is no one who has an inkling of the matter,' the priest hastened to assure him Nevertheless the existence of such a secret causes me grave misgivings Upheavals of nature, earthquakes, drought and storm, have become alarmingly frequent, and in the State, we have had constant disorder and unrest All these things may be due to the existence of this secret So long as Your Majesty was a helpless infant Heaven took pity on your innocence, but now that you are grown to your full stature and have reached years of understanding and discretion, the Powers Above are manifesting their displeasure, for, as you have been taught, it frequently happens that the sins of one generation are visited upon the next. I saw plainly that you did not know to what cause our present troubles and disorders are due, and that is why I at last determined to reveal a secret which I hoped need never pass my lips ' The old man spoke with difficulty, tears frequently interrupted his discourse, and it was already broad daylight when he finally left the Palace

No sooner had he realized the full significance of this astonishing revelation than a medley of conflicting thoughts began to harass Ryozen's mind First and foremost, he felt indignant on behalf of the old Emperor, whom he had always been taught to regard as his father, but he also felt strangely uncomfortable at the idea that Genji, who had a much better right to the Throne than he, should have been cast out of the Imperial family, to become a Minister, a mere servant of the State Viewed from whatever standpoint, the new situation was extremely painful to him, and overcome by shock and bewilderment he lay in his room long after the sun was high Learning that His Majesty had not risen, Genji assumed that he was indisposed and at once called to enquire The Emperor was in tears, and utterly unable to control himself even in the presence of a visitor But this was after all perhaps not so very surprising The young man had only a few weeks ago lost his mother, and it was natural that he should still be somewhat upset Unfortunately it was Genji's duty that morning to announce to His Majesty the decease of Prince Momozono [1] It seemed to Ryozen as though the whole world, with all its familiar landmarks and connections, were crumbling about him During the first weeks of mourning Genji spent all his time at the Palace and paid an early visit to the Emperor every day They had many long, uninterrupted conversations, during the course of which Ryozen on one occasion said 'I do not think that my reign is going to last much longer Never have I had so strong a foreboding that calamity of some stupendous kind was at hand, and quite apart from this presentiment, the unrest which is now troubling the whole land is already enough to keep

[1] Prince Momozono Shikibukyo, brother of the old Emperor and father of Princess Asagao

me in a continual state of agitation and alarm Ever since this began I have had great thoughts of withdrawing from the Throne, but while my mother was alive I did not wish to distress her by doing so Now, however, I consider that I am free to do as I choose, and I intend before long to seek some quieter mode of life ' 'I sincerely hope you will do nothing of the kind,' said Genji 'The present unrest casts no reflection upon you or your government Difficulties of this kind sometimes arise during the rule of the most enlightened government, as is proved by the history of China as well as by that of our own country Nor must you allow yourself to be unduly depressed by the demise of persons such as your respected uncle, who had, after all, reached a time of life when we could not reasonably expect 'Thus Genji managed, by arguments which for fear of wearying you I will not repeat, to coax the Emperor into a slightly less desperate state of mind Both were dressed in the simplest style and in the same sombre hue For years past it had struck the Emperor, on looking at himself in the mirror, that he was extraordinarily like Prince Genji Since the revelation of his true parentage, he had more frequently than ever examined his own features Why, of course! There was no mistaking such a likeness! But if he was Genji's son, Genji too must be aware of the fact, and it was absurd that the relationship should not be acknowledged between them Again and again he tried to find some way of introducing the subject But to Genji, he supposed, the whole matter must be a very painful one He often felt that it was impossible to refer to such a thing at all, and conversation after conversation went by without any but the most general topics being discussed, though it was noticeable that Ryozen's manner was even more friendly and charming than usual Genji who was extremely sensitive to such changes did not fail to notice that there was something new in the young Emperor's attitude towards him — an air of added respect, almost of deference But it never occurred to him that Ryozen could by any possibility be in possession of the whole terrible secret At first the Emperor had thought of discussing the matter with the maid Omyobu and asking her for a fuller account of his birth and all that had led up to it But at the last moment he felt that it was better she should continue to think herself the only inheritor of the secret, and he decided not to discuss the matter with anyone But he longed, without actually letting out that he knew, to get some further information from Genji himself Among other things he wanted to know whether what had happened with regard to his birth was wholly unexampled, or whether it was in point of fact far more common than one would suppose But he could never find the right way to introduce such a subject It was clear that he must get his knowledge from other sources, and he threw himself with fresh ardour into the study of history, reading every book with the sole object of discovering other cases like his own In China, he soon found, irregularities of descent have not only in many

cases been successfully concealed till long afterwards, but have often been known and tolerated from the beginning In Japan he could discover no such instance, but he knew that if things of this kind occurred, they would probably not be recorded, so that their absence from native history might only mean that in our country such matters are hushed up more successfully than elsewhere

The more he thought about it, the more Genji regretted that Ryozen should have discovered (as from His Majesty's repeated offers of abdication he now felt certain to be the case) the real facts concerning his birth Fujitsubo, Genji was sure, would have given anything rather than that the boy should know, it could not have been by her instructions that the secret had been divulged Who then had betrayed him? Naturally his thoughts turned towards Omyobu She had moved into the apartments which had been made out of the old offices of the Lady-of-the-Bedchamber Here she had been given official quarters and was to reside permanently in the Palace Discussing the matter with her one day, Genji said 'Are you sure that you yourself, in the course of some conversation with His Majesty, may not by accident have put this idea into his head?' 'It is out of the question,' she replied 'I know too well how determined my lady was that he should never discover indeed, the fear that he might one day stumble upon the facts for himself was her constant torment And this despite the dangers into which she knew that ignorance might lead him' [1] And they fell to talking of Lady Fujitsubo's scrupulous respect for propriety, and how the fear of scandals and exposures which another woman would in the long run have grown to regard with indifference, had embittered her whole life

For Lady Akikonomu he had done all and more than all that he led her to expect, and she had already become a prominent figure at Court During the autumn, having been granted leave of absence from the Palace, she came to stay for a while at the Nijo-in She was given the Main Hall, and found everything decked with the gayest colours in honour of her arrival She assumed in the household the place of a favourite elder daughter, and it was entirely in this spirit that Genji entertained and amused her One day when the autumn rain was falling steadily and the dripping flowers in the garden seemed to be washed to one dull tinge of grey, memories of long-forgotten things came crowding one after another to Genji's mind, and with eyes full of tears he betook himself to Lady Akikonomu's rooms Not a touch of colour relieved the dark of his mourner's dress, and on pretext of doing penance for the sins of the nation during the recent disorders he carried a rosary under his cloak, yet he contrived to wear even this dour, penitential garb with perfect elegance and grace, and it was with a fine sweep of the cloak that he now entered

[1] Into performing ceremonies at the grave of his supposed father which unless performed by a true son, were sacrilegious and criminal.

the curtained alcove where she sat He came straight to her side and, with only a thin latticed screen between them, began to address her without waiting to be announced 'What an unfortunate year this is! It is too bad that we should get weather like this just when everything in the garden is at its best Look at the flowers Are not you sorry for them? They came when it was their turn, and this is the way they are welcomed' He leant upon the pillar of her seat, the evening light falling upon him as he turned towards her They had many memories in common, did she still recall, he asked, that terrible morning when he came to visit her mother at the Palace-in-the-Fields? 'Too much my thoughts frequent those vanished days,' she quoted,[1] and her eyes filled with tears Already he was thinking her handsome and interesting, when for some reason she rose and shifted her position, using her limbs with a subtle grace that made him long to see her show them to better advantage But stay! Ought such thoughts to be occurring to him? 'Years ago,' she said, 'at a time when I might have been far more happily employed, I became involved, entirely through my own fault, in a number of attachments, all of the most unfortunate kind, with the result that I never knew an instant's peace of mind Among these affairs there were two which were not only, while they lasted, far more distressing than the rest, but also both ended under a dark cloud of uncharitableness and obstinacy The first was with Lady Rokujo, your mother The fact that she died still harbouring against me feelings of the intensest bitterness will cast a shadow over my whole life, and my one consolation is that in accordance with her wishes, I have been able to do something towards helping *you* in the world But that by any act of mine the flame of her love should thus for ever have been stifled will remain the greatest sorrow of my life' He had mentioned two affairs, but he decided to leave the other part of his tale untold and continued 'During the period when my fortunes were in eclipse I had plenty of time to think over all these things and worked out a new plan which I hoped would make everyone satisfied and happy It was in pursuance of this plan that I induced the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers to take up residence in the new eastern wing Her own resources are quite inadequate, and I used to feel very uncomfortable about her, it is a great relief to know that she is getting all she needs Fortunately she is very easy to deal with, we understand each other perfectly and there is (or at any rate I hope so) complete satisfaction on both sides Soon after I came back a great deal of my time began to be taken up in looking after the young Emperor and helping him to conduct the business of the State I am not particularly interested in that sort of thing, but I was glad to be of use It was only when it came to filling his household that I found myself confronted with a task that was definitely uncon-

[1] From a poem by Ono no Komachi's sister, say the commentaries, but such a poem is not to be found in her surviving works.

genial I wonder whether you realize what very strong impulses of my own I had to overcome before I surrendered you to the Palace? You might at least tell me that you feel for me and are grateful, then I should no longer think that this sacrifice was made quite in vain She was vexed Why must he needs start talking in that strain? She made no reply 'Forgive me,' he said, 'I see that I have displeased you , and he began hastily to talk of other matters 'How much I should like to retire to some quiet place — to know that for the rest of my life on earth I should have no more anxieties or cares and could devote myself for as long as I liked each day to preparation for the life to come But of course all this would be very dull if one had nothing interesting to look back upon There are many things to be thought of first For example, I have young children, whose place in the world is very insecure, it will be a long time before I can establish them satisfactorily And here you can be of great use to me, for should you — forgive me for speaking of such a thing — one day bring increase to His Majesty's house, it would be in your power to render considerable services to my children, even though I should chance no longer to be with you ' It was evident that this sort of conversation was far more to her liking She did not indeed say more than a word or two at a time, but her manner was friendly and encouraging, and they were still immersed in these domestic projects when darkness began to fall 'And when all these weighty matters are off my hands, said Genji at last, 'I hope I shall have a little time left for things which I really enjoy — flowers, autumn leaves, the sky, all those day-to-day changes and wonders that a single year brings forth, that is what I look forward to Forests of flowering trees in spring, the open country in autumn Which do you prefer? It is of course useless to argue on such a subject, as has so often been done It is a question of temperament Each person is born with "his season" and is bound to prefer it. No one, you may be sure, has ever yet succeeded in convincing anyone else on such a subject In China it has always been the springtime with its 'broidery of flowers" that has won the highest praise, here however the brooding melancholy of autumn seems always to have moved our poets more deeply For my own part I find it impossible to reach a decision, for much as I enjoy the music of birds and the beauty of flowers, I confess I seldom remember at what season I have seen a particular flower, heard this or that bird sing But in this I am to blame, for even within the narrow compass of my own walls, I might well have learnt what sights and sounds distinguish each season of the year, having as you see not only provided for the springtime by a profusion of flowering trees, but also planted in my garden many varieties of autumn grass and shrub, brought in, root and all, from the countryside Why, I have even carried hither whole tribes of insects that were wasting their shrill song in the solitude of lanes and fields All this I did that I might be able to enjoy these things

in the company of my friends, among whom you are one Pray tell me then, to which season do you find that your preference inclines?' She thought this a very difficult form of conversation, but politeness demanded some sort of reply and she said timidly 'But you have just said you can never yourself remember when it was you saw or heard the thing that pleased you most How can you expect me to have a better memory? However, difficult as it is to decide, I think I agree with the poet [1] who found the dusk of an autumn evening "strangest and loveliest thing of all" Perhaps I am more easily moved at such moments because, you know, it was at just such a time' Her voice died away, and knowing well indeed what was in her mind Genji answered tenderly with the verse The world knows it not, but to you, oh Autumn, I confess it your wind at night-fall stabs deep into my heart' [2] 'Sometimes I am near to thinking that I can hold out no longer,' he added To such words as these she was by no means bound to reply and even thought it best to pretend that she had not understood This however had the effect of leading him on to be a little more explicit, and matters would surely have come a good deal further had she not at once shown in the most unmistakable manner her horror at the sentiments which he was beginning to profess Suddenly he pulled himself up He had been behaving with a childish lack of restraint How fortunate that she at least had shown some sense! He felt very much cast down, but neither his sighs nor his languishing airs had any effect upon her He saw that she was making as though to steal quietly and unobtrusively from the room, and holding her back, he said 'I see that you are terribly offended, well, I do not deny that you have good cause I ought not to be so impetuous, I know that it is wrong But, granted I spoke far too suddenly — it is all over now Do not, I beg of you, go on being angry with me, for if you are unkind' [3] And with that he retired to his own quarters Even the scent of his richly perfumed garments had become unendurable to her, she summoned her maids and bade them open the window and door Just come over here and smell the cushion that His Highness was sitting on! one of them called to another What an exquisite fragrance! How he contrives to get hold of such scents I simply cannot imagine If the willow-tree had but the fragrance of the plum and the petals of the cherry! So the old poet wished, and surely Prince Genji must be the answer to his prayer, for it seems that in him every perfection is combined

sitting with her ladies, one of whom was reading her a story He began to think about what had just occurred It was a sad disappointment to discover that he was still by no means immune from a tendency which had already played such havoc with his own and other people's happiness Upon what more inappropriate object could his affections possibly have lighted? True, his chief offence in old days had been of far greater magnitude But then he had the excuse of youth and ignorance, and it was possible that, taking this into consideration, Heaven might by this time have forgiven the offence But on this occasion he could hardly plead inexperience, indeed, as he ruefully admitted to himself, he ought by now to have learnt every lesson which repeated failure can teach

Lady Akikonomu now bitterly repented of having confessed her partiality for the autumn It would have been so easy not to reply at all, and this one answer of hers seemed somehow to have opened up the way for the distressing incident that followed She told no one of what had occurred, but was for a time very much scared and distressed Soon however the extreme stiffness and formality of address which Genji henceforth adopted began somewhat to restore her confidence

On entering Murasaki's room at a later hour in the day of the incident, he said to her 'Lady Akikonomu has been telling me that she likes autumn best It is a taste which I can quite understand, but all the same, I am not surprised that you should prefer, as you have often told me that you do, the early morning in spring How I wish that I were able to spend more time with you! We would pass many hours in the gardens at all seasons of the year, deciding which trees and flowers we liked the best There is nothing which I more detest than having all my time taken up by this endless succession of business You know indeed that if I had only myself to consider I should long ago have thrown up everything and retired to some temple in the hills'

But there was the Lady of Akashi, she too must be considered He wondered constantly how she was faring, but it seemed to become every day more impossible for him to go beyond the walls of his palace What a pity she had got it into her head that she would be miserable at Court! If only she would put a little more confidence in him and trust herself under his roof as anyone else would do, he would prove to her that she had no reason for all these reservations and precautions Presently one of his accustomed excursions to the oratory at Saga gave him an excuse for a visit to Oi 'What a lonely place to live in always!' he thought as he approached the house, and even if the people living there had been quite unknown to him he would have felt a certain concern on their behalf But when he thought how she must wait for him day after day and how seldom her hopes could ever be fulfilled, he suddenly felt and showed an overwhelming compassion towards her This however had only the effect of making her more than ever inconsolable Seeking for some

means of distracting her mind, he noticed that behind a tangle of close-set trees points of flame were gleaming — the flares of the cormorant-fishers at work on Oi River, and with these lights, sometimes hardly distinguishable from them, blended the fireflies that hovered above the moat. 'It is wonderful here,' said Genji, 'you too would feel so, were not one's pleasure always spoiled by familiarity' 'Those lights on the water!' she murmured 'Often I think that I am still at Akashi "As the fisher's flare that follows close astern, so in those days and in these has misery clung to my tossing bark, and followed me from home to home "' 'My love,' he answered, 'is like the secret flame that burns brightly because it is hidden from sight, yours is like the fisherman's torch, that flares up in the wind and presently is spent No, no, you are right,' he said after a pause, life (yours and mine alike) is indeed a wretched business' It happened to be a time at which he was somewhat less tied and harassed than of late, and he was able to devote himself more wholeheartedly than usual to the proceedings at his oratory This kept him in the district for several days on end, a circumstance which did not often occur and which he hoped would, for the moment at any rate, make her feel a little less neglected

CHAPTER II

Asagao

THE death of Prince Momozono meant, of course, the return to Court of the Kamo Vestal, Lady Asagao, and Genji followed up his letter of welcome by numerous other notes and messages For it was, as I have said before, a peculiarity of his character that if he had once become fond of anyone, neither separation nor lapse of time could ever obliterate his affection But Asagao remembered only too well the difficulty that she had before experienced in keeping him at arm s length, and she was careful to answer in the most formal and guarded terms He found these decorous replies exceedingly irritating In the ninth month he heard that she had moved into her father's old residence, the Momozono Palace, which was at that time occupied by Princess Nyogo, a younger sister of the old Emperor [1] Here was an opening, for it was perfectly natural and proper that Genji should visit this princess, who had been his father's favourite sister and with whom he had himself always remained on excellent terms He found that the two ladies were living in opposite wings of the Palace, separated by the great central hall Though old Prince Momozono had so recently passed away the place had already assumed a rather decayed and depressing air Princess Nyogo received him immediately He noticed at once that she had aged very rapidly since he last saw her She was indeed quite decrepit, and it was difficult to believe that she was really younger than Aoi's mother, who seemed to him never to have changed since he had known her, whereas in the quavering accents and palsied gait of the aged lady who now greeted him it was well nigh impossible to recognize the princess of former days

Everything has been in a wretched way since the old Emperor, your poor father, was taken from us, and as the years go by the outlook seems to grow blacker and blacker, I confess, I never have an easy moment And now even my brother Prince Momozono has left me! I go on, I go on, but it hardly seems like being alive, except when I get a visit like yours today, and then I forget all my troubles ' 'Poor thing, thought Genji, 'how terribly she has gone to pieces!' But he answered very politely 'For me too the world has been in many ways a different place since my father died First, as you know, came this unexpected attack upon me, followed by my exile to a remote district Then came my restoration to rank and privilege, bringing with it all manner of ties and dis-

[1] Consequently an aunt both of Asagao and Genji who were first cousins, Prince Momozono, Asagao's father, being a brother of Genji s father, the old Emperor Asagao was the one lady whom Genji had courted in vain See Part 1, p 39

tractions All this time I have been longing to have a talk with you, and regret immensely that there has never before been an opportunity Oh, the changes, the changes,' she broke in; 'such terrible destruction I have seen on every side Nothing seems safe from it, and often I feel as though I would give anything to have died before all this began But I do assure you I am glad I have lived long enough to witness your return To die while you were still in such trouble, not knowing how it was all going to end — that would indeed have been a melancholy business ' She paused for a while and then went on in her quavering, thin voice 'You know, you have grown to be a very handsome man But I remember that the first time I saw you, when you were only a little boy, I was astonished at you, really I was I could never have believed that such loveliness would be seen shining in the face of any mortal child! And every time I see you I always feel just as I did then They say that his present Majesty, the Emperor Ryozen, is the image of you, but I don t believe a word of it He may be just a little like, but no one is going to persuade me that he is half as handsome as you ' So she rambled on Coming from anyone else such flattery would have very much embarrassed him But at this strange old lady s outpourings one could only be amused

Since my exile I have quite lost whatever good looks I may once have possessed,' he said, 'one cannot live for years on end under those depressing conditions without its changing one very much As for the Emperor, I assure you that his is a beauty of an altogether different order I should doubt if a better-looking young man has ever existed, and to assert that he is less handsome than I is, if you will forgive my saying so, quite ridiculous ' 'If only you came to see me every day I believe I should go on living for ever,' she burst out 'I am suddenly beginning to feel quite young, and I am not at all sure that the world is half so bad a place as I made out just now ' Nevertheless it was not long before she was again wailing and weeping 'How I envy my sister Princess Omiya,' [1] she cried, no doubt, being your mother-in-law, she sees a great deal of you I only wish I were in that position You know, I expect, that my poor brother often talked of affiancing his daughter to you and was very sorry afterwards that he did not do so ' At this Genji pricked up his ears 'I desired nothing better,' said he, 'than to be connected on close terms with your family, and it would still give me great pleasure to be on a more intimate footing in this house But I cannot say that I have hitherto received much encouragement ' He was vexed that he had not discovered this at the time He looked towards the other wing of the house The garden under the younger princess's windows was carefully tended He scanned those borders of late autumn flowers, and then the rooms behind, he pictured her sitting not far from the window, her eyes fixed upon these same swiftly-fading petals Yes, he must certainly contrive to see her, and

[1] Aoi's mother

bowing to Princess Nyogo he said 'I naturally intend to pay my respects to your niece today, indeed, I should not like her to regard my visit as a mere afterthought, and for that reason I shall, with your permission, approach her apartments by way of the garden instead of going along the corridor and through the hall' Skirting the side of the house he came at length to her window Although it was now almost dark, he could see, behind grey curtains, the outline of a black screen-of-state He was soon observed, and Asagao's servants, scandalized that he should have been left standing even for a moment in the verandah, hurried him into the guest-room at the back of the house Here a gentlewoman came to enquire what was his pleasure, and he handed to her the following note. 'How this carries me back to the days of our youth — this sending in of notes and waiting in ante-chambers! I had hoped, I confess, that my reticence during the years of your sacred calling would have won for me, still your ardent admirer, the right to a somewhat less formal reception' It would be hard indeed if she gave him no more encouragement than this! Her answer was brought by word of mouth 'To come back to this house and find my father no longer here, is so strange an experience that it is difficult to believe those old days were not a mere dream from which I now awake to a fleeting prospect of the most comfortless realities But in a world where all is changed, it would, I confess, be ungracious not to cherish and encourage a devotion so undeviating as that which you have described'

She need not, he thought, remind him of life's uncertainties For who had in every circumstance great and small more grievously experienced them than he? In reply he sent the poem 'Have I not manfully held back and kept cold silence year on year, till the Gods gave me leave?' 'Madam,' he added, 'you are a Vestal no longer and cannot plead that any sanctity now hedges you about Since last we met I have experienced many strange vicissitudes If you would but let me tell you a little part of all that I have seen and suffered' The gentlewoman who took his answer noticed that his badges and decorations were somewhat more dazzling than in old days, but though he was now a good deal older, his honours still far outstripped his years

'Though it were but to tell me of your trials and sorrows that you have made this visit, yet even such tidings the Gods, my masters till of late, forbid me to receive' This was too bad! 'Tell your lady,' he cried peevishly, 'that I have long ago cast my offence[1] of old days to the winds of Shinado, or does she think perhaps that the Gods did not accept my vows?'[2] The messenger saw that though he sought to turn off the matter with these allusions and jests he was in reality very much put about, and she was vexed on his behalf She had for years past been watching her

[1] I e. making love to her

[2] Allusion to the poem 'By the River of Cleansing I tied prayer-strips inscribed "I will love no more", but it seems that the Gods would not accept my vow'

mistress become more and more aloof from the common interests and distractions of life, and it had long distressed her to see Prince Genji's letters so often left unanswered 'I did ill to call at so late an hour,' he said, 'I can see that the purpose of my visit has been wholly misunderstood' And sighing heavily he turned to go, saying as he did so 'This is the way one is treated when one begins to grow old It is useless, I know, after what has passed, even to suggest that Her Highness should come to the window for a moment to see me start' and with that he left the house, watched by a bevy of ladies who made all the usual comments and appraisements Not only was it delightful weather, but at this moment the wind was making a most agreeable music in the neighbouring trees, and these ladies soon fell to talking of the old days when Prince Momozono was alive, particularly of Genji's visits long ago and the many signs he had given of a deep and unaltering attachment to their mistress

After his return from this unsuccessful expedition, Genji felt in no mood for sleep, and soon he jumped up and threw open his casement The morning mist lay thick over the garden of flowers, which, at the season's close, looked very battered and wan Among them, its blossoms shimmering vaguely, was here and there a Morning Glory,[1] growing mixed in among the other flowers Choosing one that was even more wilted and autumnal than the rest, he sent it to the Momozono Palace, with the note 'The poor reception which you gave me last night has left a most humiliating and painful impression upon me Indeed, I can only imagine it was with feelings of relief that you so soon saw my back turned upon your house, though I am loath to think that things can even now have come to such a pass 'Can it be that the Morning Glory, once seen by me and ever since remembered in its beauty, is now a dry and withered flower?'' Does it count with you for nothing that I have admired you unrequited, year in year out, for so great a stretch of time? That at least might be put to my credit' She could not leave so mannerly an appeal quite unheeded, and when her people pressed round her with ink-stone and brush, she yielded to their persuasion so far as to write the poem 'Autumn is over, and now with ghostly flower the Morning Glory withers on the mist-bound hedge' 'Your comparison,' she added, 'is so just that the arrival of your note has brought fresh dewdrops to the petals of the flower to whom this reminder was addressed' That was all, and it was in truth not very interesting or ingenious But for some reason he read the poem many times over, and during the course of the day found himself continually looking at it Perhaps what fascinated him was the effect of her faint, sinuous ink-strokes on the blue-grey writing-paper which her mourning dictated For it often happens that a letter, its value enhanced to us either by the quality of the writer or by the beauty of the penmanship, appears at the time to be faultless But when it is copied out and put into a book some

[1] *Asagao*

thing seems to have gone wrong Efforts are made to improve the sense or style, and in the end the original effect is altogether lost

He realized the impropriety of the letters with which he had in old days assailed her and did not intend to return to so unrestrained a method of address His new style had indeed met with a certain measure of success, for whereas she had formerly seldom vouchsafed any answer at all, he had now received a not unfriendly reply But even this reply was far from being such as to satisfy him, and he was unable to resist the temptation of trying to improve upon so meagre a success He wrote again, this time in much less cautious terms, and posting himself in the eastern wing [1] of his palace he sent a carriage to fetch one of Asagao's ladies, and presently sent her back again with the letter Her gentlewomen would themselves never have dreamed of discouraging far less distinguished attentions, let alone those of such a personage as Prince Genji, and they now urged his claims upon their mistress as one 'for whose sake a little virtue was surely worth sacrificing' But after all her efforts in the past to keep free of such an entanglement, this was hardly the moment to give in, for she felt that both he and she had now reached an age when such things are best put aside She feared that even her inevitable allusions to the flowers and trees of the season might easily be misinterpreted, and even if Genji himself was under no misapprehension, there are always those who made a business of getting hold of such things and turning them to mischief, and in consequence she was careful to avoid the slightest hint of anything intimate or sentimental About this time a rumour ran through the Court to the effect that Genji was in active correspondence with the former Vestal, abetted and encouraged by Princess Nyogo and the lady's other relatives The pair seemed very well suited to one another and no one expressed any surprise at the existence of such an attachment The story eventually reached Murasaki's ears At first she refused to credit it, making sure that if he were indeed carrying on any such intrigue it would be scarcely possible for him to conceal it from her But observing him with this tale in her mind she thought that he seemed unusually abstracted and depressed What if this affair, which he had always passed off as a mere joke between himself and his cousin, were to turn out after all to be something important — the beginning of what she dreaded day and night? In rank and in accomplishments perhaps there was little to choose between Asagao and herself But he had begun to admire and court this princess long, long ago, and if an affection grounded so far back in the past were now to resume its sway over him, Murasaki knew that she must be prepared for the worst It was not easy to face what she now believed to threaten her For years past she had held, beyond challenge or doubt, the first place in Genji's affections — had been the centre of all his plans and contrivings To see herself ousted by a stranger from a place

[1] Where Murasaki would not be likely to come.

which long use had taught her to regard as her own by inalienable right — such was the ordeal for which she now began silently to prepare herself He would not, of course, abandon her altogether, of that she was sure But the very fact that they had for so many years lived together on terms of daily intimacy and shared so many trifling experiences made her, she felt, in a way less interesting to him So she speculated, sometimes thinking that all was indeed lost, sometimes that the whole thing was her fancy and nothing whatever was amiss In his general conduct towards her there was not anything of which she could reasonably complain But there were from time to time certain vague indications that he was not in the best of tempers, and these were enough whenever they occurred to convince her that she was undone for good and all — though she showed no outward sign of the despair which had now settled upon her Genji, meanwhile, spent much of his time in the front [1] of the house and was also frequently at the Emperor's Palace His leisure was employed in writing endless letters Murasaki wondered how she could have ever doubted the rumours that were now rampant throughout the Court If only he would tell, give even the slightest hint of what was in these days passing through his mind!

Winter drew on, and at last the eleventh month came round But this year there were none of the usual religious festivals and processions [2] to distract him, and Genji became more and more restless One evening when the delicate twilight was sprinkled with a few thin flakes of snow, he determined to set out for the Momozono Palace All day he had been more than usually preoccupied with thoughts of its occupant, and somehow he could not help feeling that she too would on this occasion prove less unyielding Before starting, he came to take leave of Murasaki in the western wing 'I am sorry to say Princess Nyogo is very unwell,' he said, 'I must go and offer her my sympathy' She did not even look round, but went on playing with her little foster-child as though determined not to be interrupted Evidently there was going to be trouble 'There has been something very strange in your manner lately,' he said 'I am not conscious of having done anything to offend you I thought we understood one another well enough for me to be able to spend a day or two now and then at the Emperor's Palace without your taking offence But perhaps it is something else?' 'I certainly understand you well enough,' she answered, to know that I must expect to put up with a great deal of suffering' and she sank back upon the divan, her face turned away from him He could never bear to leave her thus, and knew he would be wretched every step of the way to Princess Nyogo's house But

[1] In the men's quarters.

[2] During the tenth month the Gods withdraw themselves and cannot hear our prayers, their return in the eleventh month is celebrated with rejoicing, but this year, owing to the National Mourning for Fujitsubo's death, these ceremonies were omitted.

the hour was already late, and as he had promised beforehand that he would call there that evening, it was impossible to defer his departure

Murasaki meanwhile lay on her couch, continually debating within herself whether this affair might not really have been going on for years past — perhaps ever since his return — without her having any suspicion of it She went to the window He was still dressed chiefly in grey, but the few touches of colour which his mourning permitted showed up all the more brightly, and as she watched his handsome figure moving against a background of glittering snow, the thought that she might be losing him, that soon, very soon perhaps, he would vanish never to return, was more than she could endure. His cortège consisted only of a few favourite outriders, to whom he said 'I am not feeling inclined just now to go about paying calls, indeed, you will have noticed that apart from a few necessary visits to Court, I have hardly left home at all But my friends at the Momozono Palace are passing through a very trying time Her Highness has for years relied upon her brother's aid and, now that he is taken from her, the least I can do is to help her occasionally with a little encouragement and advice ' But his gentlemen were not so easily deceived and whispered among themselves as they rode along 'Come, come, that will not do Unless he has very much changed his ways it is not to chatter with old ladies that His Highness sets out at this hour of a winter night There is more here than meets the eye,' and they shook their heads over his incurable frivolity

The main gate of the palace was on the north side, but here there was usually a great deal of traffic, and not wishing to attract attention he drove up to a side-entrance, the one which Prince Momozono himself commonly used, and sent in a servant to announce his arrival As he had promised to appear at a much earlier hour Princess Nyogo had by now quite given up expecting him, and, much put about by this untimely visit, she bade her people send the porter to the western gate The man made his appearance a moment later, looking wretchedly pinched and cold as he hastened through the snow with the key in his hand Unfortunately the lock would not work, and when he went back to look for help no other manservant could anywhere be found It's very rusty,' said the old porter dolefully, fumbling all the while with the lock that grated with an unpleasant sound but would not turn 'There's nothing else wrong with it, but it's terribly rusty No one uses this gate now '

The words, ordinary enough in themselves, filled Genji with an unaccountable depression How swiftly the locks rust, the hinges grow stiff on doors that close behind us! I am more than thirty,' he thought, and it seemed to him impossible to go on doing things just as though they would last as though people would remember 'And yet,' he said to himself, 'I know that even at this moment the sight of something very beautiful, were it only some common flower or tree, might in an instant make life again seem full of meaning and reality '

At last the key turned and with a great deal of pushing and pulling the gate was gradually forced open Soon he was in the Princess's room, listening to her usual discourses and lamentations She began telling a series of very involved and rambling stories about things all of which seemed to have happened a great while ago His attention began to wander, it was all he could do to keep awake Before very long the Princess herself broke off and said with a yawn 'It's no good, I can't tell things properly at this time of night, it all gets mixed up .'

Then suddenly he heard a loud and peculiar noise Where did it come from? What could it be? His eye fell upon the Princess Yes, it was from her that these strange sounds proceeded, for she was now fast asleep and snoring with a resonance such as he would never have conceived to be possible

Delighted at this opportunity of escape he was just about to slip out of the room when he heard a loud 'Ahem,' also uttered in a very aged and husky voice, and perceived that someone had just entered the room 'There! What a shame! I've startled you And I made sure you heard me come in But I see you don't know who in the world I am Well, your poor father, the old Emperor, who loved his joke, used to call me the Grandam Perhaps that will help you to remember ' Could this be Yes, surely it was that same elderly Lady-of-the-Bedchamber who had flirted with him so outrageously years ago, at the time of the Feast of Red Leaves [1] He seemed to remember hearing that she had joined some lay order and become a pensioner in the late prince's household But it had not occurred to him that she could possibly still be in existence, and this sudden encounter was something of a shock 'I am distressed to find,' he answered, 'that those old days are becoming very dim in my mind, and anything that recalls them to me is therefore very precious I am delighted to hear your voice again Pray remember that, like the traveller whom Prince Shotoku [2] found lying at the wayside, I have "no parent to succour me" and must therefore look to old friends such as you for shelter from the world's unkindness ' It was extraordinary how little she had changed in appearance, and her manner was certainly as arch and coquettish as ever Her utterance, indeed, suggested that she now had very few teeth left in her head, but she still managed to impart to her words the same insinuating and caressing tone as of old It amused him that she spoke of herself as though she had been a mere girl when they first met and that she continually apologized for the changes which he must now be noticing in her He was amused, but also saddened For he could not help thinking that of all the gentlewomen who had been this lady s rivals scarce one was now left at Court Most were dead, others had fallen into disgrace and were eking out a miserable existence no one knew where

[1] See Part I, p 140

[2] 572–621 A.D

Or again, that a creature such as Lady Fujitsubo should vanish so soon, while this absurd grandam, even in her younger days totally devoid of charm or intelligence, should be left behind! And judging by her appearance, there was every prospect that she would go on happily pottering about and telling her rosary for another twenty years. No, there was no sense, no purpose in all this.

She saw that thoughts which moved him deeply were passing through his mind and at once assumed that he was recalling the details of what she was pleased to think of as their 'love affair', and now in her most playful voice she recited the poem 'Though your father called me Granny, I am not so old but that you and I were sweethearts long ago.' He felt somewhat embarrassed but he answered kindly 'Such motherly care as yours not in this life only but in all lives to come none save a scapegrace would forget.' 'We must meet again at a more convenient time and have a good talk,' he said, and with that he hastened towards the western wing. The blinds were drawn and everything was shut up for the night, save that at one window she [1] had left a lattice half-unclosed, feeling that to show no light at all on the evening of his visit would be too pointedly uncivil. The moon had risen and its rays blended with the glitter of the newly fallen snow. It was indeed a most charming night. 'An old woman in love and the moon at midwinter' he remembered the saying that these are the two most dismal things in the world, but tonight he felt this collocation to be very unjust. He sent in an urgent letter. If despite her scruples she intended ever to admit him for a few moments to her presence, why not take advantage of this excellent opportunity and not subject him to the irritation of purposeless delays?

She did not doubt the reality of his feelings, but if at a time when they were both young enough to be forgiven a few indiscretions, when moreover her father was actually seeking to promote an alliance between them, she had without a moment's hesitation refused to yield herself to him — what sense could there be, now that they were both past the age to which such irresponsible gallantries by right belong, what sense (she asked herself) could there be in parleying with him, indeed, in admitting him into her presence at all? He saw that she was absolutely unmoved by his appeal, and was both astonished and hurt. She meanwhile disliked intensely this frigid interchange of messages and notes, but for the moment saw no way of bringing it to a close. It was now getting late, a fierce wind had begun to blow and Genji, feeling a very real disappointment and distress, was about to make his way homeward, flinging out as he did so the parting verse

'No penance can your hard heart find save such as you long since have taught me to endure.' As usual her gentlewomen insisted that she must send a reply, and reluctantly she wrote the verse 'Is it for me to change,

[1] Asagao

for me who hear on every wind some tale that proves you, though the years go by, not other than you were?'

He burst into a great rage when he received her note, but a moment afterwards felt that he was behaving very childishly, and said to the gentlewoman who had brought it I would not for the world have anyone know how I have been treated tonight Promise me, I beg of you, that you will speak of it to no one, stay, you had best even deny that I was here at all ' He whispered this in a very low voice, but some servants who were hanging about near by noticed the aside, and one of them said to another 'Look at that now! Poor gentleman! You can see she has sent him a very stinging reply Even if she does not fancy him, she might at least treat him with common civility For he does not look at all the kind of gentleman who would take advantage of a little kindness '

As a matter of fact, she had no distaste for him whatever His beauty delighted her and she was sure that she would have found him a most charming companion But she was convinced that from the moment she betrayed this liking he would class her among the common ruck of his admirers and imagine that she would put up with such treatment as they were apparently content to endure A position so humiliating she knew that she could never tolerate She was resolute, therefore, in her determination never to allow the slightest intimacy to grow up between them But at the same time she was now careful always to answer his letters fully and courteously, and she allowed him to converse with her at second hand whenever he felt inclined It was hardly conceivable that, submitted to this treatment, he would not soon grow weary of the whole affair For her part she wished to devote herself to the expiation of the many offences against her own religion [1] that her residence at Kamo had involved Ultimately she meant to take orders; but any sudden step of that kind would certainly be attributed to an unfortunate love-affair and so give colour to the rumours which already connected her name with his Indeed, she had seen enough of the world to know that in few people is discretion stronger than the desire to tell a good story, and she therefore took no one into her confidence, not even the gentlewomen who waited daily upon her Meanwhile she devoted herself more and more ardently to preparation for the mode of life which she hoped soon to embrace

She had several brothers, but they were the children of Prince Zembo's first wife [2] and she knew very little of them Other visitors at the Momozono Palace became increasingly rare, but the fact that no less a person than Genji was known to be Princess Asagao's admirer aroused a widespread curiosity concerning her

[1] Buddhism. She had been Vestal in the Shinto temple at Kamo, where no Buddhist prayers or observances were allowed

[2] Rokujo was his second

As a matter of fact, he was not very desperately in love with her, but her apparent indifference had piqued him and he was determined to go on till he had gained his point. He had recently gathered from several sources of information, including persons of every rank in society, but all of them in a position to know what they were talking about, that his own reputation now stood very high in the country He felt indeed that his insight into affairs had very greatly improved since old days, and it would certainly be a pity if a scandal once more deprived him of popular confidence Nevertheless, if gossip were to concern itself with the matter at all, he could not help feeling he should prefer to figure in the story as having succeeded than as having been ignominiously repulsed

Meanwhile his frequent absences from the Nijo-in had already convinced Murasaki that the affair was as serious as it could possibly be She tried to conceal her agitation, but there were times when it was evident that she had been secretly weeping, and Genji said to her one day 'What has come over you lately? I cannot imagine any reason why you should be so depressed', and as he gently stroked the hair back from her forehead they looked such a pair as you might put straight into a picture

'Since his mother's death,' Genji went on presently, 'the Emperor Ryozen has been in very low spirits and I have felt bound to spend a good deal of time at the Palace But that is not the only thing which takes up my time in these days, you must remember that I have now to attend personally to a mass of business which the old Minister of the Left used formerly to take off my hands I am as sorry as you are that we see so much less of one another, but I do my best, and you must really try henceforward to bear with me more patiently You are no longer a child, yet you make as little effort to enter into my feelings and see my point of view as if you were still in the nursery ' And with that, just as though she were indeed a small child, he put back in its place a lock of her hair that had become disordered while she was weeping

But still she turned away from him and would not speak a word 'This is quite new,' he said, 'who has been teaching you these pettish airs and graces?' He spoke lightly, but how long, he wondered, was this going to last, how much time were they going to spend in this dismal fashion, while at any moment one of those countless horrors that life perpetually holds over us might suddenly descend upon them and reconciliation be no longer possible? Determined to bring the matter to a head, he said at last 'I think you have perhaps been misled by very foolish rumours concerning my friendship with the former Vestal As a matter of fact, it is of the most distant kind, as in the end you will yourself probably realize She has always, since I first got to know her years ago, treated me with an exaggerated coldness This hurts me, and I have more than once remonstrated with her on the subject As very little now goes on at the Momozono Palace, she has a good deal of time on her hands and it amuses her

to keep up a desultory correspondence This is all that has happened between us, and even you will surely admit that is not worth crying about! If it is really this affair that has been on your mind, I assure you that there is no cause whatever for anxiety ' He spent the whole day in trying to win back her confidence, and his patience was at last rewarded

By this time the snow was lying very deep, and it was still falling, though now very lightly So far from obliterating the shapes of pine-tree and bamboo, the heavy covering of snow seemed only to accentuate their varying forms, which stood out with strange distinctness in the evening light We decided the other day,' said Genji to Murasaki, 'that Lady Akikonomu's season is autumn, and yours spring This evening I am more sure than ever that mine is winter What could be more lovely than a winter night such as this, when the moon shines out of a cloudless sky upon the glittering, fresh-fallen snow? Beauty without colour seems somehow to belong to another world At any rate, I find such a scene as this infinitely more lovely and moving than any other in the whole year How little do I agree with the proverb that calls the moon in winter a dismal sight!' So saying he raised the window-blind, and they looked out The moon was now fully risen, covering the whole garden with its steady, even light The withered flower-beds showed, in these cold rays, with painful clearness the ravages of wind and frost And look, the river was half-choked with ice, while the pond, frozen all over, was unutterably strange and lonesome under its coat of snow Near it some children had been allowed to make a monster snowball They looked very pretty as they tripped about in the moonlight Several of the older girls had taken off their coats and set to in a very business-like way, showing all sorts of strange under-garments, while their brothers, coming straight from their tasks as page-boys and what not, had merely loosened their belts, and there was now a sight of smart coat-tails flapping and long hair falling forward till its ends brushed the white garden floor — an effect both singular and delightful Some of the very little ones were quite wild with joy and rushed about dropping all their fans and other belongings in their mad excitement The glee imprinted on these small faces was charming to behold The children made so big a snowball that when it came to rolling it along the ground they could not make it budge an inch, and the sight of their frantic endeavours to get it moving provoked much jeering and laughter from another party of children which had just made its appearance at the eastern door

'I remember,' said Genji, 'that one year Lady Fujitsubo had a snow-mountain built in front of her palace It is a common enough amusement in winter time, but she had the art of making the most ordinary things striking and interesting What countless reasons I have to regret her at every moment! I was during the greater part of her life not at all intimate with her and had little opportunity of studying her at close quarters

But during her residence at the Palace, she often allowed me to be of service to her in various small ways, and I frequently had occasion to use her good offices In this way we were constantly discussing one piece of business or another, and I discovered that though she had no obvious or showy talents, she had the most extraordinary capacity for carrying through even quite unimportant and trivial affairs with a perfection of taste and management that has surely never been equalled. At the same time she was of a rather timid disposition and often took things too much to heart Though you and she both spring from the same stem and necessarily have much in common, I have noticed that you are a good deal less even in temperament than she

'Lady Asagao, now, has a quite different nature If in an idle moment I address to her some trifling fancy she replies with such spirit that I have hard work not to be left lagging I know no one else at Court to compare with her in this respect'

'I have always heard,' said Murasaki, 'that Lady Oborozuki is extremely accomplished and quick-witted I should have thought, too, from all I know of her that she was very sensible and discreet, and that makes me all the more surprised at certain stories that I have heard repeated'

'You are quite right,' said Genji 'Among all the ladies now at Court she is the one I should pick out both for liveliness and beauty As to the rumours you speak of — I know quite well what you are referring to I bitterly regret what happened, as indeed I regret much else that belongs to that part of my life And what quantities of things most people must begin to repent of, as the years go by! For compared with almost any of my friends, I have led a very quiet and decorous life' He paused for a moment, the mention of Oborozuki seemed to have moved him deeply Presently he continued 'I have a feeling that you look down upon country people such as the Lady of Akashi I assure you that, unlike most women in that station of life, she is extremely cultivated and intelligent, though of course people of her class are bound in many ways to be very different from us, and I admit she has certain strained and exaggerated ideas of which I cannot approve

About women of the common sort I know nothing, but among our own people it has always seemed to me that few indeed were in any way remarkable or interesting An exception however is our guest in the new wing,[1] she remains charming as ever But though such beauty and intelligence are very rare, she has never cared to parade them, and since the time when I first realized her gifts and hastened to make her acquaintance, she has always continued to show the same indifference to the worldly conquests which she might so easily have secured We have now been friends for so long that I do not think we are ever likely to part, I at any

[1] The lady from the Village of Falling Flowers

rate should be very sorry if she were to leave my house' While he thus talked of one thing and another, it grew very late The moon shone brighter and brighter, and a stillness now reigned that, after the recent wintry storms, was very agreeable Murasaki recited the verse 'The frozen waters are at rest, but now with waves of light the moonbeam ebbs and flows' She was looking out at the window, her head a little to one side, and both the expression of her face and the way her hair fell reminded him, as so often before, of her whom he had lost. Suddenly his affections, which for many weeks past had to some small extent been divided, were once more hers, and hers alone

Just then a love-bird [1] cried, and he recited the verse. 'Does it not move you strangely, the love-bird's cry, tonight when, like the drifting snow, memory piles up on memory?' Long after he and Murasaki had retired to rest, recollections of Lady Fujitsubo continued to crowd into his mind, and when at last he fell asleep, a vision of her at once appeared to him, saying in tones of deep reproach 'It may be that you on earth have kept our secret, but in the land of the dead shame cannot be hid, and I am paying dearly for what you made me do' He tried to answer, but fear choked his voice, and Murasaki, hearing him suddenly give a strange muffled cry, said rather peevishly 'What are you doing that for? You frightened me!' The sound of her voice roused him He woke in a terrible state of grief and agitation, his eyes full of tears which he at once made violent efforts to control But soon he was weeping bitterly, to the bewilderment of Murasaki, who nevertheless lay all the time stock-still at his side He was now too miserable and distracted to think of sleep, and slipping out of bed presently began writing notes to various temples in the district, directing that certain texts and spells should be recited, he did not however dare to state on whose behalf these things were to be done

Small wonder that in the dream she turned upon him so bitter and reproachful a gaze, feeling (as by her words he judged she did) that this one sin had robbed her of salvation He remembered her constant devotions, never since that fatal day had she omitted one single prayer, penance or charity that might serve as atonement for her guilt Yet all had been in vain, and even in the world beyond, this one crime clung to her like a stain that could not be washed away In the past he had never thought clearly about such things, but now they lived in his mind with a terrible vividness and certainty Were there but some spell, some magic that could enable him to seek her out in the obscure region where her soul was dwelling, and suffer in her stead the penalties of his own offence! Yet the truth was that he could not so much as have a few poor Masses said for her soul, for, had he named her, the suspicions of the Court would at once have been aroused

[1] Generally called by the ugly name 'Mandarin Duck.'

Concerning the Emperor, too, Genji's conscience was very uneasy, for had Ryozen indeed discovered the true story of his birth, he must now be living in a state of continual apprehension It was at about this time that Genji put himself under the especial protection of Amida, Buddha of Boundless Light, beseeching the Blessed One that in due time his soul and that of the lady whom he had undone might spring from the same lotus in His holy Paradise But of such an issue he had little hope, and often he would disconsolately recite the verse 'Fain would I follow her, could I but hope to thread my way among the sunless Rivers of the World Below' [1]

[1] Through each of the Three Evil Realms (of Animals, Hungry Ghosts and Demons) runs a meandering river

CHAPTER III

The Maiden

IN THE spring of the next year [1] the National Mourning for Lady Fujitsubo came to an end Gay colours began to appear once more at Court, and when the time for summer dresses came round it was seen that the fashions were smarter than ever, moreover, the weather was unusually agreeable and there was every prospect of a fine spell for the Kamo Festival [2] Lady Asagao gave no outward sign of what reflections passed through her mind while she witnessed the ceremonies in which she herself had a few years ago taken the leading part But she gazed fixedly at the laurel tree [3] in front of her window, and though there was much beauty in those lank branches, swept to and fro by the roving winds, yet it seemed as if it must be for some other cause that again and again her eyes returned to it In her ladies, at any rate, the sight of this tree aroused a host of reminiscences and suitable reflections

From Genji came a note in which he said 'Does it not give you a strange feeling to witness a Day of Cleansing in which you take no part?' And remembering that she was still in mourning for her father, he added the poem 'Little thought I that, like a wave in the swirl of the flood, you would come back so soon, a dark-robed mourner swept along time's hurrying stream'

It was written on purple paper in a bold script, and a spray of wistaria [4] was attached to it Moved by all that was going on around her she replied 'It seems but yesterday that I first wore my sombre dress, but now the pool of days has grown into a flood wherein I soon shall wash my grief away' [5] The poem was sent without explanation or comment and constituted, indeed, a meagre reply, but, as usual, he found himself constantly holding it in front of him and gazing at it as though it had been much more than a few poor lines of verse

When the end of the mourning actually came, the lady who acted as messenger and intermediary in general was overwhelmed by the number of packages [6] from the Nijo-in which now began to arrive Lady Asagao expressed great displeasure at this lavishness and, if the presents had been

[1] Genji is now thirty-three.

[2] In the fourth month

[3] The laurel and the hollyhock form the garlands worn by worshippers at this festival

[4] Her mourning was of dark blue wistaria colour

[5] Her period of mourning is almost over There is a play of words, *fuji* = wistaria, and *fuchi* = pool.

[6] The presents of gay clothing which are customarily made to a person who has just emerged from a period of mourning

accompanied by letters or poems of at all a familiar or impertinent kind, she would at once have put a stop to these attentions But for a year past there had been nothing in his conduct to complain of From time to time he came to the house and enquired after her, but always quite openly His letters were frequent and affectionate, but he took no liberties, and what nowadays troubled her chiefly was the difficulty of inventing anything to say in reply

To Princess Nyogo, too, Genji sent good wishes on the occasion of her coming out of mourning This delighted her, and the old lady observed to her maids, whilst reading the letter 'How strange it is to get this very nice letter from Prince Genji! Why, it seems only yesterday that he was a baby-in-arms, and here he is, writing such a sensible, manly letter! I had heard that he had grown up very good-looking, but what pleases me is that he evidently has a quite exceptionally nice disposition' These outbursts of praise were always greeted with laughter by the younger ladies-in-waiting, among whom Princess Nyogo's weakness for Genji was a standing joke

The old lady next bustled off to her niece's rooms 'What do you say to this?' she asked, holding out the letter, 'could anything be more friendly and considerate? But he has always regarded this house as a second home I have often told you that your poor father was bitterly disappointed that the circumstances of your birth made it impossible for him to offer your hand to this Prince - It was indeed definitely arranged that he should do so, and it was with the greatest reluctance that he consented to your departure He talked to me about this constantly in after years, and it was obvious that he bitterly regretted not having arranged the marriage at a much earlier period in your life What held him back from doing so was that my sister Princess Omiya had already arranged for the marriage of her daughter, Lady Aoi, to Prince Genji and, frightened of giving offence, he let time slip by without doing anything towards the accomplishment of this favourite project But Lady Aoi's death has removed the one insurmountable obstacle which before made it out of the question that any person of consequence should offer to this Prince his daughter's hand For though there are now several ladies in his household, none of them is of the highest rank Such a person as yourself, for example, would necessarily assume the foremost place, and I confess I cannot see why, if an offer came your way, it would be such a bad thing for you to accept it At any rate, that is how I feel He must be very fond of you, or he certainly would not have started writing again directly you came back from Kamo'

Princess Asagao thought her aunt's way of looking at things very old-fashioned and mistaken 'Having held out for so long against the reproaches of my father, who was, as you will remember, by no means used to being gainsaid, it would be a strange thing if I were now to yield,

after all that has happened since, to your or anyone else's friendly persuasions ' She looked so reluctant to discuss the subject further that her aunt did not proceed The whole staff of the Palace, from dames-of-honour down to kitchen-maids, being all of them more or less in love with Genji themselves, watched with great interest to see how he would fare at Princess Asagao's hands, the majority prophesying for him a heavy discomfiture But Genji himself firmly believed that if only he went on quietly displaying his devotion, sooner or later there would come some sign that she was ready to yield He had long ago realized that she was not a person who could ever be hustled into acting against her own better judgment and inclination

It was high time to be thinking about the Initiation of Yugiri, Aoi's son, who was now twelve years old It would in many ways have been better that the ceremony should be performed in Genji's palace But it was natural that the boy's grandmother should be anxious to witness it, and in the end it was decided that it should be performed at the Great Hall Here the boy had the support of his uncle To no Chujo and of Aoi's other brothers, all of whom were now in influential positions, and as the function was to take place under their own roof they were additionally ready to do whatever they could to help in making the occasion a success It was an event which aroused very wide interest throughout the country, and what with visitors pouring in from all sides and a mass of preparations to be made for the actual ceremony, there was hardly room to turn round for days beforehand

He had thought at first of placing Yugiri in the Fourth Rank, but he was afraid that this would be considered an abuse of power, and there was indeed no hurry, for the boy was still very immature, and affairs being now entirely in Genji's hands he could easily promote him by small steps, till within a comparatively short time it would be possible to put him in the Fourth Rank without attracting an undue amount of attention When, however, Yugiri made his appearance at the Great Hall in the light blue decorations of the Sixth Rank, this was more than his grandmother Princess Omiya could bear Genji fortunately realized that she would very likely be somewhat upset When he went to call upon her she at once began voicing her grievance 'You must remember,' replied Genji, that he is far too young to begin his public career I would not indeed have performed his Initiation so early save that I designed to make a scholar of him This will give him profitable employment during two or three years which might otherwise have been completely thrown away As soon as he is old enough to take public office, he is certain to come quickly to the fore

I myself was brought up at the Palace in complete ignorance of the outside world Living as I did continually at my father the Emperor's side I could not but pick up a certain vague familiarity with writing and books,

t was, however, of the most meagre kind For I could not at the best earn more than he chanced himself to have picked up in the same casual way, so that in every subject I only knew disconnected scraps and had no notion of how they ought to be fitted together This was the case particularly as regards literature, but even in music my knowledge was hopelessly incomplete, and I acquired no real command over either zithern or flute It may turn out that he is quicker than I, but on the whole it seems far commoner for children to have less natural aptitude than their parents, and I determined that this child of mine should be educated in a far more thorough way For if I merely handed on to him the scraps of information which I in my day had picked up from the old Emperor I feared that knowledge might reach him in so attenuated a form as would stand him in very poor stead for the future

'I have noticed that children of good families, assured of such titles and emoluments as they desire, and used to receive the homage of the world however little they do to deserve it, see no advantage in fatiguing themselves by arduous and exacting studies Having then in due time been raised to offices for which they have qualified themselves only by a long course of frolics and indiscretions, they are helped out of all their difficulties by a set of time-servers (who are all the while laughing at them behind their backs), and they soon imagine themselves to be the most accomplished statesmen on earth But however influential such a one may be, the death of some relative or a change in the government may easily work his undoing, and he will soon discover with surprise how poor an opinion of him the world really has It is *then* that he feels the disadvantages of the desultory education which I have described For the truth is, that without a solid foundation of book-learning this "Japanese spirit" of which one hears so much is not of any great use in the world

'So you see that, though at the present moment I may seem to be doing less for him than I ought, it is my wish that he may one day be fit to bear the highest charges in the State, and be capable of so doing even if I am no longer here to direct him For the moment, though you think that I do not adequately use my influence on his behalf, I will at any rate see to it that he is not looked down upon as a mere starveling aspirant of the Schools' But the Princess would not part with her grievance 'I am sure you have thought it all out very carefully,' she said, 'but his uncles and most other people will not understand a word of this, and will merely think he is being badly treated, and I am sure the poor boy himself is very disappointed He has always been brought up with the idea that To no Chujo's children and his other little cousins are in some way inferior to him, and now he sees them all going steadily upwards in rank, while he is treated like this I assure you he found it very painful wearing that ' ght blue dress. and my heart went out to him ' Genji could not help ' ' g 'You must not take these things so seriously,' he said What

does it all matter? Please remember that you are talking about a child of twelve years old You may be sure he understands nothing whatever of all this business When he has been at his studies for a little while, you will see how much improved he is and be angry with me no longer'

The ceremony of bestowing the School-name took place in the new part of the Nijo-in palace, a portion of the eastern wing being set aside for the purpose As such a function seldom takes place in the houses of the great, the occasion was one of great interest, and Princes and Courtiers of every degree vied with one another for the best seats, the professors who had come to conduct the proceedings were not expecting so large and distinguished an audience, and they were evidently very much put out 'Gentlemen,' said Genji, addressing them, 'I want you to perform this ceremony in all its rigour, omitting no detail, and above all not in any way altering the prescribed usages either in deference to the company here assembled or out of consideration for the pupil whom you are about to admit into your craft' The professors did their best to look business-like and unconcerned Many of them were dressed in gowns which they had hired for the occasion, but fortunately they had no idea how absurd they looked in these old-fashioned and ill-fitting clothes, which saved them from a great deal of embarrassment Their grimaces and odd turns of speech, both combined with a certain mincing affability which they thought suitable to the occasion — even the strange forms and ceremonies that had to be gone through before any one of them could so much as sit down in his seat — all this was so queer that Yugiri's cousins, who had never seen anything of the sort in their lives before, could not refrain from smiling It was therefore as well that, as actual participators in the ceremony, only the older and steadier among the princes of the Great Hall had been selected They at least could be relied upon to control their laughter, and all was going smoothly, when it fell to the lot of To no Chujo and his friend Prince Mimbuyko to fill goblets out of the great wine-flagon and present them to their learned guests Being both of them entirely unversed in these academic rites they paused for a moment, as though not quite certain whether they were really expected to perform this task with their own hands So at any rate the professors interpreted their hesitation, and at once broke out into indignant expostulations 'The whole proceeding is in the highest degree irregular,'[1] they cried 'These gentlemen possess no academic qualifications and ought not to be here at all They must be made to understand that we know nothing of the distinctions and privileges which prevail at Court They must be told to mend their manners .' At this someone in the audience ventured to titter, and the professors again expostulated 'These proceedings cannot continue,' they said, 'unless absolute silence is preserved Interruptions

[1] The professors speak in a mixture of antiquated Japanese and classical Chinese the effect of which I do not attempt to reproduce.

are in the highest degree irregular, and if they occur again we shall be obliged to leave our seats.' Several more testy speeches followed, and the audience was vastly entertained, for those who had never witnessed such performances before were naturally carried away by so diverting a novelty, while the few who were familiar with the proceedings had now the satisfaction of smiling indulgently at the crude amazement of their companions. It was long indeed since Learning had received so signal a mark of encouragement, and for the first time its partisans felt themselves to be people of real weight and consequence. Not a single word might anyone in the audience so much as whisper to his neighbour without calling down upon himself an angry expostulation, and excited cries of 'disgraceful behaviour!' were provoked by the mildest signs of restlessness in the crowd. For some time the ceremony had been proceeding in darkness, and now when the torches were suddenly lit, revealing those aged faces contorted with censoriousness and self-importance, Genji could not help thinking of the Sarugaku[1] mountebanks with their burlesque postures and grimaces. 'Truly,' he thought, looking at the professors, 'truly in more ways than one an extraordinary and unaccountable profession!' 'I think it is rather fun,' he said, to see everyone being kept in order by these crabbed old people,' and hid himself well behind his curtains-of-state, lest his comments too should be heard and rebuked.

Not nearly enough accommodation had been provided, and many of the young students from the College had been turned away for lack of room. Hearing this, Genji sent after them with apologies and had them brought back to the Summer House where they were entertained with food and drink. Some of the professors and doctors whose own part in the ceremony was over had also left the palace, and Genji now brought them back and made them compose poem after poem. He also detained such of the courtiers and princes as he knew to care most for poetry, the professors were called upon to compose complete poems[2] while the company, from Genji downwards, tried their hands at quatrains, Teachers of Literature being asked to choose the themes. The summer night was so short that before the time came to read out the poems it was already broad daylight. The reading was done by the Under-secretary to the Council, who, besides being a man of fine appearance, had a remarkably strong and impressive voice, so that his recitations gave everyone great pleasure.

That mere enthusiasm should lead young men of high birth, who might so easily have contented themselves with the life of brilliant gaieties to which their position entitled them, to study 'by the light of the glow-worm at the window or the glimmer of snow on the bough,'[3]

[1] See my *No Plays*, p. 15 seq.

[2] In eight lines.

[3] Like Ch'e Yün and Sun K'ang, two Chinese scholars who had not money enough to buy candles (4th century A.D.)

was highly gratifying; and such a number of ingenious fancies and comparisons pervaded the minds of the competitors that any one of these compositions might well have been carried to the Land Beyond the Sea without fear of bringing our country into contempt But women are not supposed to know anything about Chinese literature, and I will not shock your sense of propriety by quoting any of the poems — even that by which Genji so deeply moved his hearers

Hard upon the ceremony of giving the School-name came that of actual admittance to the College, and finally Yugiri took up residence in the rooms which had been prepared for him at the Nijo-in Here he was put in charge of the most learned masters that could be procured, and his education began in earnest At first he was not allowed to visit his grandmother at all, for Genji had noticed that she spoiled him shockingly, treating him, indeed, as though he were still a little child, and there seemed a much better chance that he would settle down to his new life if it were not interrupted by constant treats and cossetings at the Great Hall But Princess Omiya took the boy's absence so much to heart that in the end three visits a month were allowed

Yugiri found this sudden restriction of liberty very depressing, and he thought it unkind of his father to inflict these labours upon him, when he might so easily have allowed him to amuse himself for a little while longer and then go straight into some high post Did Genji think him so very stupid as to need, before he could work for the Government, a training with which everyone else seemed able to dispense? But he was a sensible, good-natured boy, who took life rather seriously, and seeing that he was not going to be allowed to mix in the world or start upon his career till he had read his books, he determined to get through the business as quickly as possible The consequence was that in the space of four or five months he had read not only the whole of the *Historical Records*,[1] but many other books as well When the time came for his Examinations, Genji determined to put him to the test privately a little while beforehand He was assisted by To no Chujo, by the Chief Secretary of Council, the Clerk of the Board of Rites and a few other friends The chief tutor was now sent for, and asked to select passages from the *Historical Records* He went through every chapter, picking out the most difficult paragraphs — just such parts indeed as the College Examiners were likely to hit upon — and made his pupil read them out loud Yugiri not only read without the slightest stumbling or hesitation but showed clearly in every doubtful or misleading passage that he understood the sense of what he was reading Everyone present was astonished at his proficiency and it was generally agreed that he had the makings of a first-rate scholar If only his poor grandfather could see him! said To no Chujo with a sigh,

[1] By Ssu-ma Ch'ien, 1st century B.C., a book somewhat longer than Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, by far the most distinguished Chinese historical work.

and Genji, unable to restrain his feelings, exclaimed with tears in his eyes 'All this makes me feel very old! Before it has always been other people over whom one shook one's head, saying that they were "getting on in life" or "not so active as they were." But now that I have a grown-up child of my own, I feel (though I am still fortunately some way off my second childhood) that henceforward he will every day grow more intelligent, and I more stupid' The tutor listened attentively to this speech and felt much comforted by it. To no Chujo had been helping him liberally to wine, and the learned man's gaunt, rugged features were now suffused with smiles of joy and pride He was a very unpractical man and his worldly success had never been proportionate to his great attainments At the time when Genji first came across him he was without patronage or any means of subsistence Then came this sudden stroke of good fortune, he of all people was singled out and summoned to this all-important task Ever since his arrival he had enjoyed a degree of consideration far in excess of what, in his capacity of tutor, he had any right to expect, and now that the diligence of his pupil had procured for him this fresh ground for Genji's esteem, he looked forward at last to a distinguished and prosperous career

On the day of the actual examination the College courtyards were crammed to overflowing with fashionable equipages, it seemed indeed as though the whole world had turned out to witness the ceremony, and the princely candidate's entry at the College gates wore the air of a triumphal procession He looked very unfit to mingle with the crowd (shabby and uncouth as such lads generally are) among whom he now had to take his place, sitting right at the end of the bench, for he was the youngest scholar present, and it was small wonder that he came near to wincing as he took his place amid his uncouth classmates

On this occasion also the presence of so large and profane an audience sorely tried the nerves of the academic authorities, and it was to the accompaniment of constant appeals for silence and good manners that Yugiri read his portion But he did not feel in the least put out and performed his task with complete success

This occasion had an important effect upon the fortunes of the College It began to recover much of its old prestige, and henceforward the students were drawn not only from the lower and middle, but also to a considerable degree from the upper classes, and it became more and more frequent for the holders of high office to have received a certain amount of education It was found that the possession of Degrees, such as that of Doctor of Letters or even Bachelor, was now an advantage in after life and frequently led to more rapid promotion This incited both masters and pupils to unprecedented efforts At Genji's palace too the making of Chinese poems became frequent, both scholars and professors were often his guests, and learning of every kind was encouraged and esteemed in a manner seldom before witnessed at Court

The question of appointing an Empress now became urgent The claims of Akikonomu were considerable, since it was the dying wish of Fujitsubo, the Emperor's mother, that her son should be guided by this lady's counsel, and in urging her claims Genji was able to plead this excuse The great disadvantage of such a choice was that Akikonomu, like Fujitsubo before her, was closely connected with the reigning family, and such alliances are very unpopular in the country Lady Chujo [1] had the merit of priority, and to her partisans it appeared that there could be no question of anyone else being called upon to share the Throne But there were many supporters of Lady Akikonomu who were equally indignant that her claims should for an instant be questioned

Prince Hyobukyo [2] had now succeeded to the post of President of the Board of Rites, previously held by Asagao s father, he had become a figure of considerable importance at Court and it was no longer deemed politic that his daughter should be refused admittance to the Imperial Household

This lady, like Akikonomu, had the disadvantage of a close connection with the ruling House, but on the other hand her elevation to the Throne was just as likely to have been supported by the Emperor's late mother as that of Akikonomu, for the newcomer was her brother's child, and it was thought by many people not to be unreasonable that this elder cousin should be called upon to take Fujitsubo's place, as far as watching over the health and happiness of the young Emperor was concerned The claims, then, were pretty equally divided, and after some hesitation Genji followed his own inclinations by appointing Akikonomu to share the Throne How strange that in the end this lady should have risen to an even higher position than her celebrated mother! Such was the comment of the world, and in the country at large some surprise was felt at the announcement of her good fortune, for little was known of her outside the Court

About this time To no Chujo became Palace Minister and Genji began to hand over to him most of the business of state Chujo had a vigorous and rapid mind, his judgment tended to be very sound, and his natural intelligence was backed by considerable learning Thus, though it will be remembered that at the game of 'covering rhymes' [3] he was badly defeated, in public affairs he carried all before him By his various wives [4] he had some ten children, who were now all grown-up and taking their places very creditably in the world Besides the daughter whom he had given in marriage to the Emperor there was another, Lady Kumoi by name, who was a child of a certain princess with whom he had at one

[1] The eldest daughter of To no Chujo

[2] Murasaki's father, who was anxious to place his younger daughter at Court.

[3] See Part II, p 220 The rhyme-words at the end of the verses were covered and the competitors had to guess them

[4] His first wife was a daughter of the Minister of the Right.

time carried on an intrigue This lady then was not, as far as birth went, in any way her sister's inferior, but the mother had subsequently married a Provincial Inspector who already had a large number of children It seemed a pity to allow the girl to be brought up by a stepfather among this promiscuous herd of youngsters, and To no Chujo had obtained leave to have her at the Great Hall and put her under his mother Princess Omiya's keeping He took far less interest in her, it is true, than he did in Lady Chujo, but both in beauty and intelligence she was generally considered to be at least her sister's equal She had during her childhood naturally been brought much into contact with Yugiri When each of them was about ten years old they began to live in separate quarters of the house She was still very much attached to him, but one day her father told her that he did not like her to make great friends with little boys, and the next time they met she was careful to be very distant towards him He was old enough to feel puzzled and hurt, and often when she was in the garden admiring the flowers or autumn leaves or giving her dolls an airing he would follow her about, entreating to be allowed to play with her At such times she could not bring herself to drive him away, for the truth was that she cared for him quite as much as he for her Her nurses noticed her changed manner towards him, and could not understand how it was that two children who for years had seemed to be inseparable companions should suddenly begin to behave as though they were almost strangers to one another The girl was so young that the relationship certainly had no particular meaning for her, but Yugiri was a couple of years older, and it was quite possible (they thought) that he had tried to give too grown-up a turn to the friendship Meanwhile the boy's studies began, and opportunities for meeting were rarer than ever They exchanged letters written in an odd childish scrawl which nevertheless in both cases showed great promise for the future As was natural with such juvenile correspondents they were continually losing these letters and leaving them about, so that among the servants in both houses there was soon a pretty shrewd idea of what was going on But there was nothing to be gained by giving information and, having read these notes, the finders hastened to put them somewhere out of sight

After the various feasts of congratulation were over things became very quiet at Court Rain set in, and one night when a dank wind was blowing through the tips of the sedges, To no Chujo, finding himself quite at leisure, went to call upon his mother, and sending for Lady Kumoi asked her to play to them on her zithern Princess Omiya herself performed excellently on several instruments and had taught all she knew to her granddaughter The lute, said To no Chujo, 'seems to be the one instrument which women can never master successfully, yet it is the very one that I long to hear properly played It seems as though the real art of playing were now entirely lost True, there is Prince So-and-so, and Genji

And he began to enumerate the few living persons whom he considered to have any inkling of this art 'Among women-players I believe the best is that girl whom Prince Genji has settled in the country near Oi They say that she inherits her method of playing straight from the Emperor Engi, from whom it was handed on to her father But considering that she has lived by herself in the depths of the country for years on end, it is indeed extraordinary that she should have attained to any great degree of skill Genji has constantly spoken to me of her playing and, according to him, it is absolutely unsurpassed Progress in music more than in any other subject depends upon securing a variety of companions with whom to study and rehearse For anyone living in isolation to obtain mastery over an instrument is most unusual and must imply a prodigious talent He then tried to persuade the old princess to play a little 'I am terribly stiff in the fingers,' she said, I can t manage the 'stopping'' at all ' But she played very nicely The Lady of Akashi,' said To no Chujo presently, must, as I have said, be exceptionally gifted, but she has also had great luck To have given my cousin Genji a daughter when he had waited for one so long was a singular stroke of good fortune She seems moreover to be a curiously self-effacing and obliging person, for I hear that she has resigned all claim to the child and allows her betters to bring it up as though it were their own ' And he told the whole story, so far as the facts were known to him 'Women,' he went on, 'are odd creatures, it is no use trying to advance them in the world unless they have exactly the right temperament ' After naming several examples, he referred to the failure of his own daughter, Lady Chujo She is by no means bad-looking,' he said, 'and she has had every possible advantage Yet now she has managed things so badly that she is thrust aside in favour of someone [1] who seemed to have no chance at all I sometimes feel that it is quite useless to make these family plans I hope indeed that I shall be able to do better for this little lady, [2] and there did at one time seem to be a chance that so soon as the Crown Prince [3] was almost old enough for his Initiation I might be able to do something for her in that direction But now I hear that the little girl from Akashi is being spoken of as the future Empress Presumptive, and if that is so I fear that no one else has any chance ' 'How can you say such a thing?' asked the Princess indignantly 'You have far too low an opinion of your own family The late Minister, your father, always believed firmly that we should one day have the credit of supplying a partner to the Throne, and he took immense pains to get this child of yours accepted in the Imperial Household at the earliest possible moment If only he were alive, things would never

[1] Akikonomu
[2] Kumoi
[3] The ex Emperor Suzaku's little son.

have gone wrong like this' It was evident, from what she went on to say, that she felt very indignant at Genji's conduct in the matter

It was a very pretty sight to see little Lady Kumoi playing her mother's great thirteen-stringed zithern Her hair fell forward across her face with a charming effect as she bent over her instrument Chujo was just thinking how graceful and distinguished the child's appearance was when, feeling that she was being watched, Lady Kumoi shyly turned away, showing for a moment as she did so a profile of particular beauty The poise of her left hand, as with small fingers she depressed the heavy strings, was such as one sees in Buddhist carvings Even her grandmother, who had watched her at her lessons day by day, could not hold back a murmur of admiration

When they had played several duets the big zithern was removed, and To no Chujo played a few pieces on his six-stringed Japanese zithern, using the harsh 'major'[1] tuning which was appropriate to the season Played not too solemnly and by so skilful a hand as Chujo's, this somewhat strident mode was very agreeable On the boughs outside the window only a few ragged leaves were left, while within several groups of aged gentlewomen clustering with their heads together behind this or that curtain-of-state, moved by Chujo's playing were shedding the tears that people at that time of life are only too ready to let fall upon any provocation 'It needs but a light wind to strip the autumn boughs,' quoted Chujo, and continuing the quotation, he added '' It cannot be the music of my zithern that has moved them Though they know it not, it is the sad beauty of this autumn evening that has provoked their sudden tears '' But come, let us have more music before we part' Upon this Princess Omiya and her daughter played *The Autumn Wind* and To no Chujo sang the words with so delightful an effect that everyone present was just thinking how much his presence added to the amenity of any gathering, when yet another visitor arrived Yugiri, thinking that such an evening was wasted if not spent in agreeable company, had come over from Genji's palace to the Great Hall Here she is,' said To no Chujo, leading the boy towards the curtain-of-state behind which Kumoi was now sitting 'You see she is a little shy of you and has taken refuge behind her curtains' And then looking at Yugiri I don't believe all this reading is suiting you Your father himself agrees with me, I know that learning easily becomes a useless and tedious thing if pushed beyond a reasonable point However, in your case he must have had some particular reason for supposing that academic honours would be useful I do not know what was in his mind, but be that as it may, I am sure it is bad for you to be bending all day over your books!' And again 'I am sure that you ought sometimes to have a change Come now, play a tune

[1] Using 'major' and 'minor' as translations of *Yo* and *In*. The six strings were tuned to the 1st, 5th, 9th, and 3rd, 7th, 11th, semitones of the diatonic scale.

on my flute Your masters can have no objection to that, for is not the flute itself the subject of a hundred antique and learned stories?' Yugiri took the flute and played a tune or two with a certain boyish faltering, but with very agreeable effect The zitherns were laid aside and while Chujo beat the measure softly with his hands, Yugiri sang to them the old ballad Shall I wear my flowered dress? This is just the sort of concert that Genji so much enjoys,' said To no Chujo, and that is why he is always trying to get free from the ties of business Nor do I blame him, for the world is an unpleasant place at best, and surely one might as well spend one's time doing what one likes, instead of toiling day after day at things that do not interest one in the least '

He passed round the wine-flagon, and as it was now getting dark, the great lamp was brought in, soon followed by supper When the meal was over, To no Chujo sent Lady Kumoi back to her room It did not escape the notice of Princess Omiya's gentlewomen that Chujo was anxious to keep Yugiri and his little daughter as far as possible apart 'Why, he has sent her away,' they whispered, 'because he does not want her to hear the little gentleman play on the zithern There will be a sad awakening for him one day, if he goes on treating them like that When To no Chujo at length withdrew, he remembered that he had not given certain instructions to one of the Princess s ladies, and stealing back into the room he delivered his message as quietly as possible and was on his way out of the room again, when he caught the sound of his own name A group of ancient gentlewomen at the far end of the apartment had not noticed his return and their whispering had gone on uninterrupted He stood still and, listening intently, heard the words He is supposed to be a very clever man But people are always fools when it comes to dealing with their own children I could never see any sense at all in that proverb — you know the one I mean — 'No one knows a child but its parents ' All nonsense, I say,' and she nudged her neighbour expressively This was a shock to Chujo It meant, he realized as he hurried from the room, that the friendship between these two children, which he had hoped to keep within bounds, had already, in the eyes of the household, taken on a romantic tinge The old ladies within suddenly heard the sharp cry of Chujo s outriders Well! What do you think of that?' they said He s only just starting! Where has he been hiding all this time? I ll tell you what He's up to some of his old tricks again, you mark my words!' And another 'I thought a fresh puff of scent blew this way, but little Prince Yugiri has got some just like it, and I fancied it was his Do you think His Excellency was anywhere round here? It would be a terrible thing for all of us if he heard what we said after we thought he had gone away He s got a hasty temper ' Well, after all, there is really nothing to worry about,' thought To no Chujo, as he drove to the Palace It is perfectly natural that they should have made friends ' But it really would be

very galling if after the failure of Lady Chujo to get herself made Empress, Lady Kumoi should through this boy-and-girl affair lose her chance of becoming Empress Presumptive

Now as always, he was really on very good terms with Genji, but, just as in old days, their interests sometimes clashed, and Chujo lay awake a long while calling to mind their boyish rivalry and later jealousies The old princess saw all that was going on, but Yugiri was her favourite grandchild, and whatever he did she accepted as perfectly justified But she too was very much irritated by various conversations that she overheard, and henceforward watched over the situation with all the concentration of which her vigorous and somewhat acrid nature was capable

Only two days later To no Chujo came to his mother's rooms again The princess was extremely flattered and pleased, it was seldom that he honoured her with two visits in such rapid succession Before receiving him she had her hair set to rights and sent for her best gown; for though he was her own child he had become so important that she never felt quite sure of herself in his presence, and was as anxious to make a good impression as if he had been a complete stranger It was soon evident on this occasion that he was in a very bad temper. 'I hesitated to come again so soon,' he said, 'I am afraid your servants must think it very strange I know I am not so competent as my father and cannot look after you as he did, but we have always seen a great deal of one another and, I hope, always shall Look back over all that time, and I do not think you will be able to recall one occasion upon which there has been any sort of breach or misunderstanding between us It never occurred to me as possible that I should ever come here with the express purpose of scolding you, least of all about an affair of this particular sort, but that is why I am here'

The old princess opened her eyes very wide and, under all the powder and paint that she had hurriedly applied when she heard of his coming, she visibly changed colour 'To what are you alluding?' she asked 'It would indeed be surprising if you suddenly insisted upon picking a quarrel with a woman of my age I should like to hear what it is all about.' He quite agreed, it would be lamentable if after so many years of unbroken affection a difference should arise between them Nevertheless he proceeded 'The matter is quite simple I entrusted to your care a child from whom I myself had unfortunately been separated during her early years I was at the time very much occupied with the future of my other daughter and was much exercised in mind to discover that, despite all my efforts, I could not do for her all that I had planned But I had absolute confidence that this other child at any rate could be coming to no harm I now find that quite the opposite is the case, and I think I have every right to complain You will tell me, I know, that the young gentleman in question is a very fine scholar He may for all I know be on his way to becoming the most learned man in the world, but that does not alter the fact that these two

are first-cousins and have been brought up together Should it become known that they are carrying on an intrigue, it would look as though very lax standards prevailed in your house Such a thing would be considered scandalous even in any ordinary family I am thinking of Yugiri's future quite as much as that of my own child What both of them need is a connection with quite new people, they would in the end find such an alliance as this too obvious and uninteresting And if I on my side object to the match on these grounds, you may be sure that Genji, when he hears of it, will insist upon the boy looking further afield If you could yourself do nothing to forestall this attachment, you might at least have informed me of its existence I could then have had a chance of arranging the match, despite all its disadvantages, before the matter became the talk of the whole town You could not have done worse than to leave these young people to their own devices '

That the matter was so serious as this had never occurred to Princess Omiya at all, and she was horrified 'I entirely agree with you', she said 'But how could I possibly know what was going on all the while in the minds of these two children? I am sure I am very sorry it has happened, indeed I have quite as much reason to lament over it as you have But I think it is the young pair themselves, and not I, who ought to bear the blame for what has happened You have no idea of all that I have done for this girl since you first sent her to me She has had advantages such as it would never have occurred to you to suggest, and if, through a blindness very natural in a grandmother, I have too long regarded the boy's friendship for her as a matter of no particular consequence, what reason is there to think that any harm has as yet been done? All your information on the subject is founded on the chatter of good-for-nothings who take a pleasure in damaging the reputations of everyone round them If you were to look into these stories you would probably find they were pure inventions, and stupid inventions at that!' 'Not at all!' said To no Chujo hotly 'It is not a question of slanders or lies The way in which these two carry on together is a common matter for jest among your own ladies-in-waiting It is a most disagreeable situation and I am worried about it', and with that he left the room

The news of all this rumpus soon went the round of the aged servants at the Great Hall and there was much wringing of hands In particular the ladies whose conversation had been overheard felt that, without meaning any harm, they had done irreparable damage, and could not imagine how they could have been so rash as to begin discussing such a subject directly His Excellency left the room

To no Chujo next looked in upon the young lady herself, and could not help being somewhat melted by her innocent and appealing air He therefore passed on and went to look for her nurse 'I understood when I engaged you,' he said, 'that you were young, but one can be young with-

out being infantile, and I supposed you had your wits about you like other people I seem to have made a great mistake. ' To these sarcastic remarks it was impossible to make any reply, but the nurse said afterwards to one of her assistants 'How is one expected to prevent these things? Just the same might have happened if she had been the Emperor's favourite daughter! In old stories the lovers are generally brought together by some go-between, but we certainly cannot be accused of having played any such part as that, for these two have been allowed to be together as much as they chose for years past, and if my lady thought they were so young that there was no harm in it, what reason was there for us to interfere? But they have been seeing much less of each other for some while past, and the last thing in the world I should have suspected was that anything wrong could possibly have been going on Why, the little gentleman looks quite a child, I can't believe such things have ever entered his head '

So the nurse afterwards declared But while she was actually being scolded she merely hung her head, and To no Chujo said at last 'That will do I am not going to mention this business to anyone else at present I am afraid a good many people must have heard about it, but you might at least contradict any rumours that you hear going about As for the young lady, I intend to have her moved to my palace as soon as I can arrange it I think my mother has acted very imprudently, but she could not possibly have foreseen that you nurses would behave with such imbecility '

So they were all going to move to the Prime Minister's palace! Such was the young nurse's first thought, and she found this prospect so attractive that, though she knew the loss of Lady Kumoi would be a sad blow to the old princess, she could not feel otherwise than elated 'There now, only think of it!' she said, harping back to To no Chujo's injunction to secrecy 'And I had half a mind to go round to the Inspector s house and tell the little lady s mama! I should have thought this Prince Yugiri was good enough for anyone, but of course he does not count as a member of the Royal Family, and they say Lady Kumoi s mama has very grand ideas indeed ' It was clearly no use saying any more to such a featherhead as this, and Kumoi herself was so young that it would be mere waste of breath to lecture her

The old princess was upset by the affair, but she was fond of both her grandchildren, perhaps especially of Yugiri, and at the bottom of her heart she was extremely gratified at their having taken such a fancy to each other On reflection it seemed to her that To no Chujo had been very heartless about the matter and had also treated it far more seriously than it deserved After all he had taken very little trouble about this girl himself, and had never once indicated that he had any ambitious plans for the future Indeed, it really seemed as though the idea of offering her

to the Imperial Household never occurred to him till this trouble arose, and had been invented, thought the old princess indignantly, merely in order to furnish To no Chujo with a colourable grievance He had certainly never really counted on this Palace plan, and granted that it was only an afterthought, he must often have contemplated the possibility of the child marrying a commoner If so, where could a better match be found? Yugiri was certainly, as regards birth and general advantages, more than the equal of Kumoi, indeed, she could not conceive that any lady would not feel proud to have him as her husband This no doubt was due to a certain grandmotherly partiality on Omiya's part, but be that as it may, she felt very cross with To no Chujo She was however determined not to let him know it, lest he should become even further incensed against the young people

Quite unconscious of all the fuss that had been going on at the Great Hall, Yugiri a few days afterwards again presented himself at his grandmother's apartments On the last occasion there had been so many people about that he had not managed to get a word in private with Lady Kumoi, and he now arrived very late in the evening, hoping that things would be quieter at such an hour Old Lady Omiya was usually delighted to see him, and full of jokes and nonsense But today she was terribly grave I am very much upset,' she said at last, after talking stiffly of various indifferent matters, 'because your uncle is displeased with you It is unkind of you to take advantage of us all like this, because naturally I get the blame just as much as you But that is not why I am talking about it I mention the matter because you might not otherwise discover that you are in disgrace ' The affair was so much on his mind already that after she had spoken two words he guessed all that was coming The colour mounted to his cheeks 'I don t know what he means,' he said 'Since I began my lessons I have been shut up all the time and have scarcely seen anyone Certainly nothing has happened that my uncle could possibly object to ' It went to her heart to see what pain it cost him to discuss the subject with her 'There, there,' she said kindly 'Be careful for the future that is all I ask,' and she turned the conversation on to other matters

Since in the last month he had done little more than exchange notes with his sweetheart, Yugiri supposed that even this was considered improper and was very depressed Supper was served, but he would not eat, and presently it seemed that he had fallen asleep But in truth he was very wide awake indeed, listening with all his ears till the last sounds of people retiring and settling down for the night had everywhere ceased Then he stole softly to the door of Lady Kumoi s room, which was usually fastened on a latch, but not bolted or barred Tonight it would not yield an inch No sound was audible within With beating heart he leant close up against the door Despite his care, he had made a certain amount of noise, and this woke her But now, as she lay listening, she could hear

no other sound save that of the wind rustling among the bamboos, and very faint and far away, the mournful cry of wild geese overhead Perhaps because, young though she was, the events of the last few weeks had left her far more unhappy than her elders knew, there now came into her head the lines [1] 'The wild geese that with sorrowful cry . .,' and thinking that no one could hear her, she repeated the poem to herself aloud, causing Yugiri's heart to beat yet more wildly than before By what stratagem could he prevail upon her to open the door? 'I am Kojiju,' he said in a feigned childish voice 'Do let me in!' This Kojiju was the child of Kumoi's old wet-nurse, so desperate was he that any ruse seemed justifiable if he could but bring her to the door But now all was silent, for Kumoi, ashamed that he should have heard her speaking to herself, lay with her face pressed deep into the pillows His ruse had not deceived her, and it was misery to picture him standing behind the bolted door Presently some of the servants in an adjoining room began moving about, and for a moment both he, standing without, and she on her bed within remained rigidly motionless Soon however all was quiet again and he made his way back to his own bedroom As he passed by Princess Omiya's apartments he heard the noise of someone sighing heavily Evidently she was still awake, most likely indeed she had heard all that had happened! He crept past the door with the utmost caution and it was with feelings of intense shame and guilt that he at last reached his room He rose early and wrote a letter to Kumoi which he hoped to convey to her by the hand of that same Kojiju whose voice he had counterfeited in the night But the child was nowhere to be seen, and Yugiri left the house in great distress

What Kumoi on her side could not endure was being scolded by her father and grandmother, and she did all she could to avoid it But she had not the least idea what they meant when they talked about her 'future' or her 'reputation' To be whispered about by nurses and servants flattered her vanity and was in itself far from acting as a deterrent One thing about which her guardians made terrible scenes seemed to her most harmless of all, this was the writing of letters and poems But though she had no idea why they forbad it, she saw that it led to scoldings, and henceforward Yugiri did not receive a single line from her Had she been a little older she would have found out some way of circumventing these restrictions, and Yugiri, who already possessed far more capacity to shift for himself, was bitterly disappointed by her tame surrender

To Princess Omiya's great distress To no Chujo no longer paid his customary visits to the Great Hall Nor did he ever discuss the matter with his wife,[2] who was only able to guess, from his general ill-humour and

[1] 'Some such sorrow as mine they too must know, the wild geese that with sorrowful cry trail through the country of the clouds'

[2] A sister of Kokiden.

irritability, that something had gone amiss He did however one day allude to his disappointment concerning their own daughter, Lady Chujo 'I think,' he said, 'that during the ceremonies of Investiture[1] it would be better that our daughter should not be at Court A quiet time at home would not do her any harm, and although she has been passed over on this occasion she really stands very well with the Emperor Indeed, she is in such constant attendance upon him that it is a great strain on her gentlewomen who are kept running about at every hour of the day and night ', and he applied for her release The Emperor Ryozen was extremely loath to part with her and at first refused But To no Chujo seemed to attach such extreme importance to the matter that in the end he agreed to let her spend a short holiday at home 'I am afraid it will be rather dull for you,' he said to his daughter when she arrived, 'but I have arranged for Kumoi to visit us, so you will have someone to play with. They have been very good to her at her grandmother's, but I find that the house is frequented by a certain rather undesirably precocious child, with whom, as was inevitable, she has struck up a great friendship She is far too young for that kind of thing ' And he began at once to arrange for Lady Kumoi's removal from the Great Hall

Princess Omiya whose one consolation, since the death of her daughter Aoi, had been the arrival of Lady Kumoi, was appalled at this sudden loss No hint had been given to her that it was not final, and she saw herself deprived at a stroke of the one happiness which promised to alleviate the miseries of old age and decay And added to all this was the fact that her own son had taken sides against her and become quite indifferent to her sufferings She charged him with this, but he hotly denied it 'No, no,' he said, 'it is nonsense to say that I have turned against you I think that you have behaved foolishly in one particular matter, and shall continue to think so Lady Chujo is going through rather a difficult time at Court just now and I have thought it best to withdraw her for a little while It is very dull at my house and it is a great comfort for her to have a young companion This is only a temporary measure ' and he added 'Do not think that I am ungrateful for all your kindness to the child I know that I can never thank you enough '

Such speeches did little to reassure her But it was evident that he was determined to part the two children and it was no use arguing about that 'How heartless men are!' she said Whatever may have been your reasons for acting like this, the chief result has been that I have lost the confidence of both these children Perhaps that has not occurred to you? Besides, even if Kumoi is no longer here, Prince Genji, though he is far from being an unreasonable man, is certain to feel that my house is no safe place for young people, and now that he has got Yugiri at the Nijo-in, he will keep him there permanently '

[1] Of Akikonomu as Empress.

Soon afterwards Yugiri called again at the Great Hall He was far exceeding the number of visits for which his grandmother had stipulated, but he still hoped that by some accident he might get the chance of speaking a word or two to the playmate who had been so cruelly wrested from him To his disgust the first thing he saw when he approached the Great Hall was To no Chujo's carriage He stole away to his old room, which was still kept in readiness for him, and remained in hiding for some while Not only To no Chujo but all his sons were there — Kashiwagi, Kobai, and the rest, but Princess Omiya would not receive any of them behind her curtains-of-state Sayemon no Kami and Gon Chunagon, who were not her own children but had been born to the late Minister of the Left by another wife, were also in the habit of calling, out of respect to their father's memory, and on this occasion, thinking to please and interest their stepmother, they had brought their little sons with them But the only result was that, comparing them in her mind with her favourite Yugiri, she thought them very ugly, unattractive little boys Yugiri and Kumoi, these were the only grandchildren for whom she really cared And now the little girl who had been her delight, upon whom she had lavished so much tenderness and care — Kumoi, who for all these years had never left her side, was to be taken from her and put into a stranger's hands

'I have to go to the Palace now,' said To no Chujo quickly I will come back towards nightfall and fetch Kumoi away'

He had thought the matter out very carefully and decided that even if it should afterwards prove necessary for him to consent to this match, it was not one which he would ever be able to regard with any satisfaction However, when Yugiri had begun his career it would be possible to see of what stuff he was made and also to judge the strength of his feeling for Kumoi If the boy still remained anxious to marry her the betrothal could be announced in a proper way and the whole affair be carried through without discredit to anybody But so long as they were allowed to frequent the same house, however much they were scolded and watched, it was, considering their age, only to be expected that they would get into a scrape He could not put it like this to his mother, because to do so would have hurt her feelings, and wishing to avoid any suggestion that Princess Omiya had been to blame, he used both at the Great Hall and at his own house the convenient excuse that Lady Chujo was at home and needed a companion

Soon after To no Chujo left, Kumoi received a note from Princess Omiya. 'Your father is going to take you home with him this evening I hope you understand that this is entirely his doing Nothing that happens will ever change my feelings towards you Come and see me at once'

The child presented herself immediately She was dressed in her smart-

est clothes and, though only eleven and still undeveloped, she had quite the gracious air of a little lady paying a farewell call She felt very uncomfortable while Princess Omiya told her how lonely she would be without anyone to play with, and how (though the houses were not far apart) it would seem as though she had gone to live a long, long way off All this trouble, the child felt dimly, as she listened to the recital of Omiya's woe, came from having made friends with that little boy, and hanging her head, she began to weep bitterly At this moment Yugiri's old nurse happened to come in 'Well, I *am* sorry you are going away from us!' she said to Kumoi 'I always thought of you as *my* lady, just as much as Prince Yugiri was *my* little gentleman We all know what His Excellency means by taking you away like this, but don't you let him down you!' The girl felt all the more wretched and ashamed, but did not know how to reply 'Don't say such things to the child!' cried Princess Omiya It may all come right in the end, without any need to upset the poor little thing like that!' 'The truth is,' answered the nurse indignantly, 'that all of you think my young gentleman is not good enough for her You and His Excellency may take it from me that Yugiri is going to be the finest gentleman in the land ' Just as the outraged nurse was voicing this opinion Yugiri entered the room He at once recognized the figure of Kumoi behind her curtains-of-state, but there seemed only a very remote chance of getting any conversation with her, and he stood upon the threshold looking so disconsolate that his old nurse could not bear it A long, whispered consultation took place At last Omiya yielded and under cover of a fading light, at a moment when the movements of the other guests created a useful diversion, Yugiri was smuggled behind the little princess s curtains-of-state They sat looking at one another with nothing to say, they felt very shy and the eyes of both of them began to fill with tears 'Listen,' said Yugiri at last 'Your father thinks that by taking you away from me he can make me stop caring for you But by all his cruelty he has only made me love you far more than before Why have I not seen you for so many weeks? Surely we could have found some way ' He spoke childishly, but there was a passion in his voice that strangely stirred her 'Darling, I wanted to see you,' was all she could say in reply 'Then you still love me?' She answered with a quick, childish nod

But now the great lamp was brought in, and a moment afterwards there was a shouting and clatter of hoofs in the courtyard outside 'There are the outriders, he'll be here in a minute!' cried one of the maids in great alarm, and Kumoi shuddered from head to foot She attempted indeed to rush from the room, but Yugiri held her fast The nurse, who was to go with her to the Prime Minister's Palace, now came to fetch her and to her dismay saw the outline of a boy's figure behind the curtains-of-state What folly to allow this kind of thing at the last moment! The old prin-

cess must suddenly have taken leave of her wits! 'Well, you ought to be ashamed of yourself,' she muttered to Yugiri as she dived behind the curtains to fetch her charge away. 'I don't know what your uncle would say if he knew this I have half a mind in any case to tell Madam Inspector,[1] and you'll catch it then You may be Prince Genji's boy and I don't know what else, but you are only in the Sixth Rank, and have no right to meddle with such a little lady as this!' It was true enough He had been kept back, while everyone else was promoted, and awakening suddenly to an intense indignation against the powers which had put this affront upon him, he recited the lines 'Pale was the robe they made me wear, but tears of blood long since have stained it to a hue no tongue should dare deride' 'Hard driven as we are and thwarted at every hour, how can our love spring upward and put on a deeper hue?' So Kumoi answered, but she had scarcely said the lines when someone announced that His Excellency was waiting, and the nurse bustled her out of the room There were three coaches altogether to carry away To no Chujo, the little girl and her belongings Yugiri heard them start one after another Princess Omiya presently sent for him to come to her, but he pretended to be asleep All night he lay sobbing bitterly, and very early next morning, through a world white with frost, he hurried back to the Nijo-in His eyes were swollen with weeping and he feared that if he stayed longer at the Great Hall his grandmother would insist upon seeing him All the way home the most melancholy ideas came one after another into his mind Thick clouds covered the sky and it was still quite dark 'Unbroken is my misery as this dull sky that day on day has bound the waters of the earth in ice and snow'

It fell to Genji's lot to supply a dancer for the Gosechi Festival, and though he was merely supposed to choose the girl from among the children of his retainers and leave the rest to her parents, he went much further than this, taking a great interest even in the costumes of the little girls who were to wait upon the dancer and hurrying on the seamstresses when he found that they were leaving things to the last moment The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers was put in charge of the dresses of those who were to be present at the Early Levee before the ceremony Genji determined that the dancer supplied by his household should make a brave show, and he equipped her with a body of pages and attendants such as the Empress herself might well have been proud of Last year, owing to the National Mourning for Fujitsubo, there had been no public festivals or amusements of any kind, so that people looked forward to the coming occasion with an unusual zest, and the families whose turn it was to supply a dancer vied with one another in the pains they took over her training and equipment One came from the household of the Inspector, one from that of To no Chujo's stepbrother Sayemon no Kami, and

[1] Kumoi's mother

There she lay or rather crouched in her corner, looking very miserable She seemed about the same age as Kumoi but rather taller, and was indeed far more obviously good-looking It was growing dark and he could not see her features very clearly, but there was certainly something about her which reminded him of the girl he loved The resemblance was not enough to make him feel in any way drawn towards her, but his curiosity was aroused, and to attract her attention he rustled the train of her skirt She looked up startled and on the spur of the moment he recited the lines 'Though you become a servant of Princess Hill-Eternal [1] who dwells above the skies, forget not that tonight I waited at your door' She heard that he had a pleasant voice, and evidently he was young But she had not the least idea who he was, and was beginning to feel somewhat nervous when her attendants came bustling along with her dancing-clothes, and as there were now several other people in the room, Yugiri was obliged to slip away as unobtrusively as he could He did not like to show himself at the Festival in that wretched blue dress and was feeling very disconsolate at the prospect of being left all alone, when he heard that by Imperial permission cloaks of any colour might be worn at today's ceremony, and set off to the Palace He had no need to hide, for he had a charming young figure upon which, slender though he was, his man's dress sat very well indeed, and everyone from the Emperor downwards noticed him on this occasion with particular pleasure and admiration

At the ceremony of Presentation the dancers all acquitted themselves very creditably and there was little to choose between the children in any way, though Koremitsu's and the Inspector's were generally voted to have the best of it as regards good looks But pretty as they all were, none of the others was handsome to anything like the same degree as the girl from Genji's household [2] She had been brought up in a far humbler way than the others and at any ordinary gathering would have been quite eclipsed by them But now, when all were dressed for the same part, her real superiority became evident They were all a little older than the Gosechi dancers usually are, which gave to this year's ceremony a character of its own Genji was present at the ceremony of Introduction, and the spectacle at once recalled to his mind that occasion, years ago, when he had so much admired one of the Gosechi maidens — the daughter of the Provincial Secretary [3] And now on the evening of the Festival Day he sent a messenger to her house with the poem Be thankful that upon the maidens of the Sky time leaves no mark, for upon me, to whom long since you waved your dancing-sleeve, age and its evils creep apace'

She began to count the years What a long time ago it had all hap-

[1] There is a legend which tells how certain dancing-maidens took the fancy of the gods and were snatched up to the sky

[2] Koremitsu's daughter

[3] See Part II, pp 227 and 247

pened! She knew that this letter did but betoken a brief moment of reminiscent tenderness, but it gave her pleasure that he had succumbed to this feeling, and she answered 'It needed but your word to bring them back, those winter days, though long since faded is the wreath that crowned them with delight' Her answer was written on a blue diapered paper in a boldly varied hand, heavy and light strokes being dashed in with an almost cursive sweep — a somewhat mixed style but, considering the writer's position in life, highly creditable, thought Genji as he examined the note

Meanwhile with *his* Gosechi dancer Yugiri made no further progress, though he thought a good deal about her and would have cultivated her acquaintance, had it been possible to do so without attracting attention Unfortunately she seemed as a rule to be under extremely close surveillance and he was as yet wholly inexperienced in the art of circumventing such precautions But he had certainly taken a great fancy to her, and though no one could replace Kumoi, a friendship with this girl might, he felt, do something towards distracting him from his misery

All four dancers were to be retained at the Palace, but for the moment they had to retire from Court in order to perform the ceremony of Purification Yoshikiyo's daughter was taken off to Karasaki, Koremitsu's to Naniwa, and soon the dancers had all left Court A post in the Lady-of-the-Bedchamber's office was vacant, and when the Emperor suggested that Koremitsu's daughter might care to take it Genji naturally accepted for her with alacrity This was bad news for Yugiri Young and unimportant as he was, he could not possibly try to restrain her from accepting such a post, but it would be too bad if she never even found out who it was that had made friends with her that evening at the Nijo-in, and though Kumoi still occupied the chief place in his thoughts, there were times when this subsidiary failure weighed heavily upon him The girl had a brother who was a page at Court and had also often waited upon Yugiri at Genji's palace When is your sister going into residence at Court?' he asked the page one day, after making conversation with him for some time 'I do not know, some time this year, I suppose, the boy answered 'She has an extraordinarily beautiful face,' said Yugiri I envy you for seeing her so constantly I wish you would arrange for me to meet her again' 'How can I?' said the boy 'I am much younger than she We have not been brought up together, and I do not myself see her except on special occasions I have no chance of introducing her to gentlemen such as you' But a letter, surely you could manage a letter?' and Yugiri handed him a note The boy had been brought up to consider this kind of thing very underhand, but Yugiri was so insistent that, much against his will, he at last consented The girl had more taste in such matters than is usual at her age, and the appearance of the note greatly delighted her It was on a greenish paper, very thin and fine, laid down

on a stout backing The hand was naturally still somewhat unformed, but it did not promise ill for the future With the letter was a poem 'Hidden though I was, surely the Maid of Heaven perceived with what enthralment I witnessed the waving of her feathery sleeves?'

Brother and sister were reading the note together when Koremitsu suddenly entered the room and snatched it out of their hands The girl sat motionless, while the blood rushed to her cheeks But her brother, indignant at Koremitsu's high-handed manner of dealing with the situation, strode angrily out of the room 'Who sent this?' Koremitsu called after him 'Prince Genji's son,' the boy answered, turning back, 'the one who is studying for the College At any rate it was he who gave me the note and asked me to bring it here' Koremitsu, who regarded Yugiri as a mere child, burst into a hearty laugh 'Well, you have chosen a pretty little prince for your sweetheart,' he said, 'I thought this letter came from some grown-up person Of course there can be no harm in fun of that sort ,' and showing the letter to his wife he proceeded to tell her what a nice child Yugiri was 'If it ever should happen,' he said to her in an aside, that one of these young princes took a fancy to our daughter, we should do much better for her that way than by keeping her at the Palace, where she can never play more than a very humble part There's this comfort about it, that if Prince Yugiri is anything like his father he will continue to show an interest in her when he grows up You know I have always told you that once Prince Genji takes a fancy to people, he never forgets them, come what may Look at what he has done for that girl from Akashi' Nevertheless they hurried on the preparations for their daughter's departure to Court

After this brief diversion Yugiri became more than ever preoccupied with his main misfortune To Kumoi it was impossible even to send a letter, and all his time was now spent in endless speculations as to where and how he should ever see her again He no longer visited the Great Hall, for the sight of the rooms where they used to play together evoked memories that he could not endure But he was almost equally miserable at home, and shut himself up for days on end in his own room Genji now put him under the care of the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers

His grandmother is not likely to live very long,' Genji said to her 'You have known him since he was quite small and will be much the best person to look after him' She always accepted with docility whatever duties he put upon her, and now did her best to look after the boy, of whom she was indeed very fond Yugiri liked her, but he did not think she was at all pretty It seemed to him that Genji, who had gone on being fond of this uninteresting lady for so many years, would surely be able to understand that if one fell in love with a handsome creature like Kumoi one was not likely to give her up all in a minute No doubt the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers had quite other qualities to recommend

her She was docile and equable, and Yugiri saw that it would be very convenient only to fall in love with people of that sort However, if they were as plain as the lady who had been commissioned to look after him, love would be a painful business But perhaps his father thought her beautiful or intelligent? The question was hard to answer, but one thing was certain Genji managed not to spend muc.. time alone with her 'No,' said Yugiri to himself, 'I cannot remember his doing more than bring her some little present or chat with her for a few moments from outside her screen ever since I have been in the house '

About this time old Princess Omiya took her vows, and though this necessitated a change of costume, it did not prevent her being as anxious as ever to make a good impression, and she continued to take the greatest possible pains with her appearance Yugiri had indeed always known people with whom appearances counted for a great deal, while the lady who had been put in charge of him, having never been particularly handsome, had, now that she was no longer quite young, grown somewhat angular, and her hair was becoming scanty These things made a disagreeable impression upon him

As the year drew towards a close, Princess Omiya's whole attention became occupied with the delightful task of making ready the young scholar's New Year clothes It was a splendid costume, *that* he could not deny But it did not seem to interest him very much 'I don't know why you have ordered all these clothes,' he said at last, 'I have no intention of going to Court at all on New Year's day Why did you suppose I meant to?' 'What a way to talk!' she said in bitter disappointment 'One would think you were already an old gentleman hardly able to drag yourself about!' 'One can have the feeling that one's life is over, without being old,' he muttered, his eyes filling with tears She knew quite well what was on his mind, and felt very sorry for him But she thought it better not to discuss the matter and said gently 'A man ought to bear himself with pride even if he knows that he deserves a higher rank than that which for the moment has been accorded to him You must not let it depress you so much Why do you go about looking so wretched nowadays? It really becomes quite insufferable ' I don't know what you are talking about,' answered Yugiri 'Why should I go to Court if I do not choose to? As a matter of fact, it is very unpleasant to be only in the Sixth Rank People notice it and make remarks I know it is only for the present, but all the same I had rather stay at home I am sure that if my grandfather were alive, he would never allow me to be treated like this One would think my father might do something about it, but he does not seem to care what becomes of me I saw little enough of him before, but now he has put me to live right away in the new eastern wing, and never comes near me at all The only person who takes any trouble about me is this Falling Flowers" whom he keeps there ..' 'Poor child,' said

Princess Omiya, 'it is a terrible misfortune to have no mother, in whatever rank of life one may be But before long you will be old enough to go out into the world and shift for yourself Then people will soon learn to respect you Meanwhile you must try to be patient and not take these things so much to heart Your grandfather would indeed have done more for you if he were here For though your father holds the same position, he does not seem to have the same influence over people as your poor grandfather did They still tell me that your uncle To no Chujo is a man of very remarkable talents, and I used to think so myself But I have noticed a change in him lately, and it becomes greater every day However, things must indeed be in a bad way if a young boy like you, with all his life before him, can talk so gloomily about the future

On New Year's day Genji, being Grand Minister Extraordinary, did not go to Court, but following the precedent set by Fujiwara no Yoshifusa[1] celebrated the rites of the season at his own palace On the seventh day a White Horse was presented to the Grand Minister with exactly the same ceremonies as to the Emperor at Court, indeed, in many respects the festivities arranged by Genji exceeded in their magnificence anything that had ever been seen on such occasions save at the Palace itself Towards the end of the second month came the Imperial Visit to the ex-Emperor Suzaku It was too early for the blossoms to be quite at their best, but immediately afterwards came the month of fasting' in memory of the Emperor's mother, so the Visit could not be postponed Fortunately the cherry blossom was unusually early this year and in Suzaku's gardens it already made a delightful show A tremendous cleaning and polishing was set afoot at his palace in preparation for the Emperor's arrival, and meanwhile the noblemen and princes who were to accompany His Majesty thought of nothing but their new clothes They had been ordered to wear dove-grey lined with pale green, the Emperor himself was to be dressed all in crimson By special command Genji was also in attendance on the day of the Visit, and he too wore red, so that frequently during the day the figure of the Emperor seemed to merge into that of his Minister, and it was as though the two of them formed but one crimson giant Everyone present had taken unusual pains with his appearance, and their host, the ex-Emperor, who had grown into a far better-looking man than at one time seemed possible, evidently took much more interest in such matters than before, and was himself magnificently apparelled

Professional poets had not been summoned for the occasion, but only some ten scholars from the College who had the reputation of being able to turn out good verses

The subjects chosen were modelled on those given out to the competitors for posts in the Board of Rites It was thought that it would be a good thing to give Yugiri some idea of the themes given out at Palace

[1] 804–872 A.D

examinations That his mind might not be disturbed, each poet was set adrift on the lake all by himself, and it was with considerable alarm that these timid scholars, few of whom had ever set foot in a boat before, saw their moorings loosed and felt themselves gliding further and further away from the shore As dusk drew on, boats with musicians on board began to circle the lake, and their tunes mingled agreeably with the sighing of the mountain wind Here, thought Yugiri, was a profession which brought one into pleasant contact with the world and at the same time entailed studies far less arduous than those to which he had been so heartlessly condemned, and he wandered about feeling very discontented

Later on, the dance called Warbling of the Spring Nightingales, was performed, and Suzaku, remembering that famous Feast of Flowers [1] years ago said to Genji with a sigh 'What wonderful days those were! We shall not see their like again' There were indeed many incidents belonging to that time which even now Genji looked back upon with considerable emotion, and when the dance was over, he handed the wine bowl to Suzaku, reciting as he did so Spring comes, and still the sweet birds warble as of old, but altered and bereft [2] are they that sit beneath the blossoming tree' To this Suzaku replied 'Today the nightingales have come to tell me of the spring Else had no sunshine pierced the mists that hide my hermit's-dwelling from the world s pomp and pride' It was now the turn of Prince Sochi no Miya, who had recently become President of the Board of War, to present the bowl He did so, reciting the verse Speak not of change, unaltered through all ages [3] shall the flute preserve their song, the nightingales that in the springtime warble on the swaying bough' This was said with a glance towards the Emperor, and in loud clear voice, that the compliment might not be missed Ryozen was indeed gratified by the graceful allusion, but as he took the bowl he answered modestly 'If birds still sing and a few faded blossoms deck the tree, it is but in remembrance of those happier days when Virtue ruled the world' This was said with great earnestness and humility All the above poems were exchanged privately and only overheard by a few privileged persons, and there were others which did not get recorded at all The pavilion of the musicians was some way off, and Suzaku suggested that those about him should send for their instruments and make a little music of their own Sochi no Miya accordingly played on the lute, To no Chujo on the Japanese zithern, while Suzaku himself played to the Emperor on the thirteen-stringed zithern The Chinese zithern was as usual played by Genji It was seldom that so gifted a band of performers chanced to meet in one place, and the concert that followed was of unforgettable

[1] See Part I, p 147 seq

[2] Allusion to the death of the old Emperor, Genji's and Suzaku's father

[3] The song and dance 'Warbling of the Spring Nightingales' are attributed to the mythical Chinese Emperor Yao, third millennium B C.

beauty Several of the courtiers present had good voices, and the songs 'Was ever such a day!' and the 'Cherry Man'[1] were now performed Finally torches were lit all round the edge of the island in the lake, and so the feast at last came to an end. But late as it was, Ryozen felt that it would be uncivil on his part if he went away without paying his respects to Suzaku's mother, Lady Kokiden, who was living in the same house with him Genji was naturally obliged to accompany him The old lady received them in person and was evidently very much gratified by the visit She had aged immensely since he last saw her, but here she still was, and it irritated him to think that she should hang on to life in this way, when a much younger woman like Fujitsubo was already in her grave 'My memory is not so good as it was,' said Kokiden, 'but this visit of yours has brought back the old days to my mind more clearly than anything that has happened to me for a long time past' 'Those upon whom I leaned have now been taken from me one after another,' the Emperor replied, 'and hitherto the year has had no springtime for me But my visit to your house today has at last dispelled my grief, I hope you will permit me to come here often' Genji too had to make a suitable speech, and had even to ask if he also might venture to call again The procession left the house amid great scenes of popular enthusiasm, which painfully reminded the old lady of her complete failure to injure Prince Genji's career To govern he was born, and govern he would despite all her scheming 'Well, such is fate,' she thought, and was almost sorry that she had wasted time contending against it

It was natural that this visit should bring Oborozuki to his mind Not that he had altogether ceased corresponding with her, for lately whenever an opportunity occurred, he had sent her a word or two of greeting And now there rose before him on his way home many delightful recollections of the hours they had spent together

As for Kokiden, despite her professions of good will she did as a matter of fact intensely dislike all contact with the present Emperor and his government But it was sometimes necessary to communicate with them concerning her own salary, or the preferment of her friends, and on such occasions she often wished that she had not lived to see an age which was in all respects the reversal of what she herself had striven for Old age had not improved her temper, and even Suzaku found her very difficult to get on with, and sometimes wondered how much longer he would be able to endure so trying a partnership

So greatly had Yugiri distinguished himself in the literary competitions which marked that day's festivity, that upon the strength of them alone he was awarded the Doctor's degree Among those who had competed were many who were far older than he and some who were thought to possess remarkable ability But besides Yugiri only two others were

[1] See above, p 369

passed When the time of the autumn appointments came round he received the rank of Chamberlain He longed as much as ever to see Lady Kumoi But he knew that To no Chujo had his eye upon him, and to force his way into her presence under such circumstances would have been so very disagreeable that he contented himself with an occasional letter She, meanwhile, was fully as wretched as her young lover

Genji had long had it in his mind, if only he could find a site sufficiently extensive and with the same natural advantages as the Nijo-in, to build himself a new palace where he could house under one roof the various friends whose present inaccessibility, installed as they were in remote country places, was very inconvenient to him He now managed to secure a site of four *machi* [1] in the Sixth Ward close to where Lady Rokujo had lived and at once began to build

The fiftieth birthday of Murasaki's father Prince Hyobukyo was in the autumn of the following year The preparations for this event were of course chiefly in her hands, but Genji too, seeing that on this occasion at any rate he must appear to have overcome his dislike of the Prince, determined to give the affair an additional magnificence by holding the celebrations in his new house, and with this end in view he hurried on the work of construction as fast as he could The New Year came, and still the place was far from finished What with spurring on architects and builders, arranging for the Birthday Service, choosing the musicians, the dancers and the like, he had plenty to keep him busy Murasaki herself had undertaken the decking of the scripture-rolls and images that would be used at the Service, as well as the customary distribution of presents and mementos In these tasks she was aided by the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers, and it was at this time that an intimacy sprang up between them such as had never existed before

The rumour of these preparations soon reached Prince Hyobukyo's ears After the general amnesty which succeeded his return from Suma, Genji in general made no difference between those who had remained loyal to his cause and those who had stood aloof from him But from the first Hyobukyo felt that in his case an exception was made Over and over again he found himself treated with marked coldness, and the refusal to accept his younger daughter as a candidate for the Emperor's hand, together with a number of other small but vexatious incidents, finally convinced him that he must at some time have given Genji particular offence How this had occurred he was at a loss to conjecture, it was indeed the last thing in the world which he would have wished to happen The fact that, among the many women upon whom Genji had bestowed his favours, it was Murasaki who had been chosen to be the mistress of his house, gave to Hyobukyo, as her father, a certain worldly prestige But it could by no means be said that he had hitherto taken a personal share in any of his

[1] A *machi* is 119 yards.

and a little further off, tall-stemmed forest-trees whose thick leaves roofed airy tunnels of shade, pleasant as those of the most lovely upland wood This garden was fenced with hedges of the white deutzia flower, the orange tree 'whose scent rewakes forgotten love,' the briar-rose, and the giant peony, with many other sorts of bush and tall flower so skilfully spread about among them that neither spring nor autumn would ever lack in bravery.

On the east a great space was walled off, behind which rose the Racing Lodge,[1] in front of it the race-course was marked off with ozier hurdles, and as he would be resident here during the sports of the fifth month, all along the stream at this point he planted the appropriate purple irises [2] Opposite were the stables with stalls for his race-horses, and quarters for the jockeys and grooms Here were gathered together the most daring riders from every province in the kingdom To the north of Lady Akashi s rooms rose a high embankment, behind which lay the storehouses and granaries, screened also by a close-set wall of pine-trees, planted there on purpose that she might have the pleasure of seeing them when their boughs were laden with snow, and for her delight in the earlier days of the winter there was a great bed of chrysanthemums, which he pictured her enjoying on some morning when all the garden was white with frost Then there was the mother-oak [3] (for was not she a mother?) and, brought hither from wild and inaccessible places, a hundred other bushes and trees, so seldom seen that no one knew what names to call them by

The move was to take place about the time of the Festival of the Further Shore [4] He had at first intended to transfer all the occupants at one time But it soon became apparent that this would be too vast an undertaking, and it was arranged that Lady Akikonomu should not arrive till somewhat later than the rest With her usual amiability and good sense the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers readily fell in with the suggestion that she and her party should not form a separate cortège, but should join with Murasaki in the ceremony of removal Genji regretted that the latter was not going to see her new domain at the season for which it had been principally designed, but still, the move itself was a diverting experience There were fifteen coaches in the procession and almost all the outriders were gentlemen of the fourth or fifth rank The ordering of the procession was not so elaborate as might have been expected, for it seemed likely at the moment that too lavish a display might try the temper of the common people, and some of the more ostentatious forms and ceremonies were either omitted or abridged

[1] Used for residence during the Kamo Festival

[2] Plucked on the fifth day of the fifth month

[3] *Quercus dentata*

[4] Lasts for a week, centring round the autumnal equinox. The Further Shore is Nirvana, to which Buddha carries us in the Ship of Salvation The festival is peculiar to Japan.

But Genji was careful not to let it seem that any of these restrictions had been carried out to the detriment of one lady rather than another. The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers had indeed nothing to complain of, for Yugiri had been told off to wait upon her exclusively during the whole ceremony The gentlewomen and maids found their quarters in the new house admirably fitted out with every comfort and convenience, and they were louder than ever in Genji's praises About six days later the Empress Akikonomu arrived from the Palace The ceremony of her arrival, though it had been intended that the whole move should be as little ostentatious as possible, was necessarily a very sumptuous and imposing affair Not only had she risen from obscurity to the highest place which a woman can hold in the land, but she had herself advanced so much in beauty and acquired so great a dignity of carriage and mien that she now figured very large in the popular imagination, and crowds flocked the road wherever she was to pass

The various quarters of which the New Palace was composed were joined by numerous alleys and covered ways, so that access from one to another was easy, and no one felt that she had been bundled away into a corner When the ninth month came and the autumn leaves began to be at their best, the splendours of Akikonomu's new garden were at last revealed, and indeed the sights upon which her windows looked were indescribably lovely One evening when the crimson carpet was ruffled by a gusty wind, she filled a little box with red leaves from different trees and sent it to Murasaki As messenger she chose one of the little girls who waited upon her The child, a well-grown, confident little thing, came tripping across the humped wooden bridge that led from the Empress's apartments with the utmost unconcern Pleased though Murasaki was to receive this prompt mark of friendship, she could for a while do nothing but gaze with delight at the messenger's appearance, and she quite forgot to be resentful, as some in her place would have been, that an older and more dignified messenger had not been entrusted with the Empress's gift The child wore a silk shirt, yellow outside and lined with green Her mantle was of brown gauze She was used to running about on messages in the Palace, had that absolute faultlessness of turn-out and bearing which seems never to be found elsewhere, and was far from being overawed at finding herself in the presence of such a person as Lady Murasaki Attached to the box was the poem 'Though yours be a garden where only springtime is of price, suffer it that from my house autumn should blow a crimson leaf into your hand It was amusing to see how while Murasaki read the missive, her ladies crowded round the little messenger and plied her with refreshments and caresses For answer, Murasaki placed in the lid of the box a carpet of moss and on it laid a very little toy rock Then she wrote on a strip of paper tied to a sprig of five-pointed pine 'The light leaf scatters in the wind, and of the vaunted spring no

tinge is left us, save where the pine-tree grips its ledge of stone'

The Empress thought at first that it was a real pine-branch But when she looked closer she saw that, like the rock, it was a work of art — as delicate and ingenious a piece of craftsmanship as she had ever encountered The readiness of Murasaki's answer and the tact with which, while not exalting her own favourite season above that of Akikonomu's choice, she had yet found a symbol to save her from tame surrender, pleased the Empress and was greeted as a happy stroke by all the ladies who were with her But Genji when she showed it to him pretended to think the reply very impertinent, and to tease Murasaki he said to her afterwards 'I think you received these leaves most ungraciously At another season one might venture perhaps upon such disparagement, but to do so now that the Goddess of Tatsuta [1] holds us all in sway seems almost seditious You should have bided your time, for only from behind the shelter of blossoming boughs could such a judgment be uttered with impunity' So he spoke, but he was in reality delighted to find these marks of interest and good will being exchanged between the various occupants of his house, and he felt that the new arrangement was certain to prove a great success

When the Lady of Akashi heard of the removal to the New Palace and was told that only her own quarters, as spacious and handsome as any of the rest, now remained untenanted, she determined at last to hold aloof no longer It was the Godless month when she arrived She looked around her and, mistrustful though she was, she certainly could see no sign here that as regards either elegance or comfort she would be expected to put up with less than her neighbours And indeed Genji saw to it that on all occasions she should rank in the eyes of the household rather as mother of the little princess for whom so brilliant a future was in store, than as the scion of a poor and undistinguished provincial family

[1] Goddess of the autumn, here compared to Akikonomu. The secondary meaning is 'You must be more civil to Akikonomu now that she is Empress'

CHAPTER IV

Tamakatsura

THOUGH seventeen years had now passed since Yugao's death,[1] Genji had not by any means forgotten her. He had indeed since those early days seen much of the world and encountered the most divers temperaments. But he had yet to find a disposition such as hers, and it was with feelings of longing and contrition that he looked back upon their intimacy.

Though Ukon was not a creature of much account, she was the one person to whom he could speak of the dead lady. He felt a considerable degree of affection towards her, and during the years after Yugao's death Ukon had practically lived at the Nijo-in, being allowed to spend most of her time with the older servants in the housekeeper's room. Then came the exile, and with Genji's other servants she went across to the western wing and entered Murasaki's service. She gave the impression of being a harmless, self-effacing creature, and it would have surprised everyone very much to know what was all the while going on in her mind. For Ukon, particularly after the move to the New Palace, was constantly appraising the relative positions of the great ladies who ruled the house, and deciding what place her own dear mistress would now be occupying, were she still alive. 'Certainly,' said Ukon to herself, looking critically at the Lady of Akashi, 'my poor lady would not have been eclipsed by such as you!' And indeed Ukon had seen for herself that even where his feelings were far less strong than in Yugao's case, there never came a time when Genji turned aside from those who had opened their hearts to him, or behaved as though his obligations towards them were at an end. However full might be the cup of his affections, he did not allow a drop to spill, and though Yugao might not perhaps have been able to vie with so great a personage as Murasaki, yet it was certain that were she alive she would now be occupying one of the main apartments in the newly finished house.

Such were the sad reflections that dwelt constantly in this solitary lady's heart. She had never attempted to get into communication with the family of her late mistress, nor even to discover the present whereabouts of the child [2] whom Yugao had left behind at the house in the Fifth Ward, partly through fear of being questioned concerning her own part in the unhappy affair, partly because there seemed to be no object in doing so. Moreover, Genji had strictly forbidden her to mention the story to any-

[1] See Part I, Chapter IV.

[2] To no Chujo's child by Yugao. Her name was Tamakatsura.

body, and though she had sometimes thought of writing to the people at the house, she felt that it would be disloyal to him to do so, and was entirely without news She did, however, hear long afterwards a report that the husband of the nurse in whose care the child had been left was now working in a provincial Treasury and that his wife was with him. It seemed probable that they had also taken the child

This was indeed the case Tamakatsura was four years old when she made the journey to Tsukushi The nurse, after months of vain endeavour to discover Yugao's whereabouts, during which she had trudged weary and weeping from quarter to quarter and house to house without finding the least glimmer of news, had at last given up all hope She would have been glad enough for her own sake to keep the child, to whom she had become fondly attached, as a remembrance of the mistress whom she must now regard as for ever lost But there were also the little girl's own interests to consider 'We are humble people,' thought the nurse, 'and Tsukushi [1] is a long way off Perhaps it is my duty to tell her father [2] of what has happened and give him the chance of making some more suitable provision for her future But it was difficult for such people to communicate with a young gentleman of To no Chujo's quality. 'If I mention the child to its father, she said to her husband one day, he is certain to ask at once how I could have been so foolish as to let our poor young lady out of my sight And indeed, I don't know how I should answer him Then again, it isn't as if he had ever seen much of the little creature It would be like handing her over to strangers, and I do not think that, when the time came, I should ever find it in my heart to let her go He may of course refuse to do anything for her himself, but one thing is certain if he hears we are going off to Tsukushi, he will never give me leave to take her with us!' So the nurse declared to her husband and companions Though Tamakatsura was not much over three years old when her mother disappeared, she had acquired all the airs and graces of a little lady, she was remarkably good-looking and it was apparent that she already had a strong will of her own But now she was bundled on to a common trading-ship in which no provision whatever had been made for the comfort of the passengers, and as they rowed out into the bay, she began to look very disconsolate She still thought a great deal about her mother, and, to reassure herself, she said out loud 'I know why we are travelling on this ship, we are going to see mother!' She returned to this idea again and again, but it received no confirmation on any side, and at last she burst into tears Two young women sitting near by were also weeping, though they suddenly ceased to do so when one of the sailors reminded them that 'tears bring bad luck at sea'

Skirting along the coast they passed much lovely scenery, and the nurse,

[1] The large southern island upon which the modern town of Nagasaki stands

[2] To no Chujo

remembering what delight her young mistress had taken in such sights as these, wished for a moment that she were here to see them But then she remembered that but for Yugao's disappearance she and her husband would never have been driven to accept this wretched post in the provinces, and she gazed regretfully in the direction of the City, envying even the waves that stole back so peacefully towards shores 'that she, perhaps, would never tread again' Soon the rowers began chanting in their rough, wild voices the song 'Over the distant waves,' and the two young women, who were sitting face to face, again began to weep bitterly At last the ship rounded the Golden Cape, and knowing that the coast which now came into view belonged not to the mainland, but to the island of Tsukushi, the travellers felt that exile had indeed begun The old nurse's heart sank, but she had her little charge to see to and was most of the time far too busy to think of anything else Now and again she would drop off to sleep and then, as for some time past, she would at once dream that her mistress appeared before her But always at Yugao's side there stood the figure of another woman, who seemed to follow her wherever she went The nurse woke from these dreams sickened and afraid, and she felt, after each such occasion, more certain than ever that Yugao was no longer alive

Shoni, the nurse's husband, had only been appointed to his post in Tsukushi for a term of five years. But the position he held was a very humble one and when the time came, he found it difficult to meet the expenses of a long journey. Thus their departure for the capital had to be postponed again and again At last, after many months of disappointment and delay, Shoni fell seriously ill Tamakatsura was now ten years old and was growing handsomer every day Shoni, who knew that his end was near, kept asking himself what would become of her in this desolate place He had always felt that in bringing her with them they had acted somewhat unfairly to the child For after all she was To no Chujo's daughter, and her birth entitled her to better surroundings than the cramped and dingy home of a provincial clerk But five years is not a very long time, and he had always confidently expected that when his term of office ran out he would be able to take her with him to Kyoto and put her into touch with her father True, it was possible that Chujo would refuse to acknowledge her But the City is a big place, and Shoni made no doubt that, once he had settled her there, a girl such as this would not have to wait very long before a satisfactory opening occurred For this reason he had done everything in his power to raise funds for the journey. But now the last expedient had failed and he knew that for his part he was fated never to leave Tsukushi During his last days he worried much over the injustice which had been done to the child in detaining her so long away from the Capital, and sending for his sons he said to them As soon as this is over I want you to take Tamakatsura back to the City The same day Don't wait for the funeral '

It was only known to the members of Shoni's family that the little girl was To no Chujo's daughter To the other government clerks and to the world in general she was a granddaughter of Shoni's whose parents were in trouble of some kind and had left her in his charge But in the family she continued to be treated as 'the young lady,' and every sacrifice was made that she might have, so far as possible, the upbringing to which her birth entitled her Shoni's sudden illness and death naturally threw his wife into a piteous state of distraction, but in the midst of her grief, one thought obsessed her, would they ever be able to secure a passage back to the City and restore the little girl to her relations? Unfortunately Shoni had been unpopular with the local people and none of them would give any assistance Thus the time dragged on, wretched years full of anxiety and discouragement, and still there seemed no prospect of return

Meanwhile Tamakatsura grew to womanhood. She had all her mother's beauty, and something more besides, for she seemed to have inherited from her father's side a singular air of high breeding, an aristocratic fineness of limb and gesture, that in Yugao, whose beauty was that of the by-street rather than of the palace, had been entirely lacking She was of a very generous disposition, and in every way a most delightful companion Her fame soon spread through the island, and hardly a day passed but some local squire or farmer attempted to get into correspondence with her These letters, written for the most part in a rustic sprawling hand and very crudely expressed, were thrust upon every member of the household in turn in the hope that he or she would consent to act as a go-between Clumsy documents of this kind were calculated to arouse nothing but disgust in the breast of anyone save an islander, and no attention whatever was paid to them At last the persistence of her suitors became a nuisance, and the nurse put it about that though the girl looked just like other people, she suffered from a secret deformity which made it impossible for her ever to marry It had indeed (so the story ran) already been decided that she was to live quietly with her 'grandmother' till the old lady died, and after that was to enter a nunnery But it soon became so irritating to hear everyone saying 'Isn't it sad about poor Shoni's granddaughter? They say she has got some terrible deformity,' that the old nurse could bear it no longer and again began racking her brains to discover some way of getting the girl back to her father Was it conceivable that he would refuse to look after her? After all, he had made quite a fuss over her when she was a baby The old lady prayed fervently to every Buddha and God that some way might present itself of taking Tamakatsura to Kyoto But the chance of any member of her family getting away from Tsukushi was now remoter than ever Her daughters had married local people and her sons were employed in the neighbourhood In her heart of hearts she still cherished all sorts of schemes for compassing the return of the whole family, but every day it became more and more im-

possible that anything of the kind would ever happen Thus Tamakatsura grew up amid continual lamentations and repinings and learnt to look upon life as one long succession of troubles and disappointments, varied only by three great bouts of penance and fasting, each January, May and September The years went by She was now twenty, her beauty was at its height, and still it was being wasted in this barbarous and sequestered land

Some while after Shoni's death the family had moved along the coast from Chikuzen to Hizen, hoping for a more peaceful existence in a place where they were not known But Tamakatsura's reputation had preceded her and, little inclined to credit the stories about her deformity, the notabilities of the neighbouring countryside began pestering her guardians with such assiduity that life soon became as harassing as before

Among these suitors there was a certain Tayu no Gen who held a small position under the Lord-Lieutenant of Tsukushi He came of a family that was very influential in Higo and the surrounding country, and on this side of the island he ranked as a person of considerable importance He had, moreover, greatly distinguished himself in a campaign against the insurgents To a singular degree of hardihood and endurance there was added in his nature more than a fair share of sensuality Women were his hobby, he kept a prodigious quantity of them always about him, and was continually on the lookout for opportunities of adding to the collection The story of the beautiful Tamakatsura and of the secret deformity which prevented her marriage soon reached Tayu's ears Misshapen, is she? he cried 'Frightened that people will stare? She need not worry about that if she comes to me I'll keep her locked up all right!' and he wrote at once to Shoni's wife The old lady, who knew his reputation, was sadly put about She replied that her granddaughter was destined for the convent and that no proposals of this kind could be entertained on her behalf Tayu was not used to be put off like this and, determined at all costs to get his way, he came galloping over to Hizen at full speed He immediately summoned Shoni's three sons to his lodging and said to them Let me have that girl, and you may count on me as a friend for life My name goes for something on the Higo side ' Two of the sons were easily won over and promised to do as Tayu asked They had, it is true, a moment's qualm at the thought of handing over To no Chujo's child to this lawless provincial swashbuckler But they had their own way to make in the world, and they knew that Tayu had by no means exaggerated the value of his own friendship and protection On the other hand, life on this part of the island with Tayu against one was a prospect not to be faced with equanimity If the girl had failed to take in the world the place to which her rank entitled her, that was her father's fault, not theirs She ought to be grateful that such a man as this (after all, he was the principal person in the neighbourhood) should have taken such a fancy

to her In Tsukushi at any rate there was no prospect of doing better for her, and Tayu, angered by the refusal of his proffered patronage, would certainly stick at nothing So they argued, doing their best to scare their mother into assent by stories of Tayu s violence and implacability Only the second brother, Bugo no Suke, stood out I know a good deal about this fellow,' he said 'It's too much of a shame We simply cannot hand her over to him Somehow or other one of us ought to do what our father asked us to — take her back to Kyoto There must be some way of managing it ' Shoni's two daughters stood by weeping Their mother was utterly heartbroken What had become now of all her plans for the girl's happy future? Of what use had been all these years of isolation and subterfuge, if at the end Tamakatsura must be handed over to this coarse and unscrupulous barbarian?

It would indeed have astonished Tayu to know that anyone in Hizen considered him in such a light as this He had always regarded his attentions to women as favours bestowed, he flattered himself, moreover, that he knew as well as any man how to conduct a gallant correspondence, and his letters began to arrive thick and fast They were written in a clean, bold hand on thick Chinese paper, heavily scented It was evident indeed that he regarded himself as no mean calligrapher His style of composition was not an agreeable one, being very tortuous and affected Soon he made up his mind that the time had come for him to call in person, and he arranged with the brothers to meet him at their mother s house Tayu was a man of about thirty, tall and solidly built He was far from ill-looking, but he had the power (which he frequently exercised) of assuming the most repulsively ferocious expression This, however, was reserved for his followers and opponents When in a good temper and engaged upon errands of love he adopted an entirely different voice and manner You would have thought indeed that some little bird was chirruping, so dexterously did he reduce his rough bass to a small silvery fluting 'As a lover, I ought to have come after dark, ought I not? Isn't that what courting means — coming at night? So I was always told What extraordinary weather for a spring evening! In autumn of course one expects it

Upon a strict undertaking that she would not provoke Tayu in any way, the old lady's sons had allowed her to see him He now turned to her saying Madam, though I never had the pleasure of meeting your late husband, I knew him to be a kind-hearted and upright gentleman I always hoped that I might one day have an opportunity of showing him how much I appreciated his excellent qualities, and it was with deep regret that I heard of his untimely decease But though I can no longer do him any service, I hope that you will allow me to show my regard for him in some practical way There is, I think, a young lady here (I am right, am I not?) a ward of yours, or relative of some sort? If I venture to speak of

her, it is with the greatest deference and respect, for I understand that she is of extremely high birth I assure you that, were I ever privileged to make the acquaintance of such a person, I should kneel before her like a slave, dedicate my life to her service, humbly petition her But I see that you are looking at me somewhat askance You have heard stories no doubt Believe me, there is no truth in them. I have in the past admired one or two of our simple country girls, but surely you can understand that *this* would be a very different matter Should you admit me to the friendship of your exalted kinswoman, I would set her up as my paragon, my empress, my all-in-all 'He made many fair speeches of this kind At last the old nurse answered 'I should indeed consider my granddaughter singularly fortunate to have aroused the interest of so distinguished a gentleman as yourself, were it not for the fact that nature has played upon her a cruel trick at birth Sir, I have seldom spoken of this to anyone before, but I must assure you that the poor girl s unhappy condition has for years past been a sore trouble to me As for offering her hand in marriage to anyone — that is entirely out of the question '

'Pray don't make so many apologies,' cried Tayu ' 'Were she the most blear-eyed, broken-legged creature under Heaven, I'd have her put right for you in a very short while The truth of the matter is, the Gods and Buddhas in the temples round here owe a good deal to me, and I can make them do pretty much whatever I choose 'So he bragged, but when, assuming that his offer had already been accepted, he began pressing the old lady to name a day, she hastily changed the subject, saying that summer would soon be coming, that the farmers were needing rain, plying him in fact with all the usual topics of the countryside He felt that before he left he ought to recite a few verses of poetry, and after a long period of silent meditation, he produced the following

If she does not want to be married,
I shall go to the pine-tree Bay
And complain to the God of the Mirror, [1]
Then I need hardly say
That I shall get my way

'I don't think that's such a bad poem,' he said smiling awkwardly The nurse was in far too agitated a condition to indulge in literary pastimes Utterly unable to produce any sort of reply, she begged her daughters to answer in her stead 'But mother darling,' the young ladies protested, 'if *you* cannot think of anything to say, still less can we ' At last after much painful cogitation, the old lady recited the following poem, speaking as though she were addressing herself as much as him 'Unkind were it indeed should the Guardian of the Mirror frustrate the prayers of one [2] who year on year hath been his and his alone ' What's

[1] The God of the Sacred Mirror, at Matsura, in Hizen.
[2] Herself

that?' cried Tayu rushing towards her 'How dare you say such a thing?' So sudden was his onrush that Shoni's wife jumped almost out of her skin, and she turned pale with fright Fortunately her daughters were not so easily scared, and one of them, laughing as though an absurd misunderstanding had occurred, at once said to Tayu 'What mother meant was this she hopes that after all the trouble she has taken praying to the Gods of Matsura on our little niece's behalf, they will not allow the poor girl's deformity to turn you against her But dear mother is getting old and it is not always easy to make out what she is saying ' 'Oho! Yes, yes, I see,' he said, nodding his head reflectively 'I don't know how I came to misunderstand it Ha! ha! Very neatly expressed I expect you look upon me as a very uncultivated, provincial person And so I should be, if I were at all like the other people round here But I've been very fortunate, you would not find many men even at the City who have had a better education than I You'd be making a great mistake if you set me down as a plain, countrified sort of man As a matter of fact, there's nothing I have not studied ' He would very much have liked to try his hand at a second poem, but his stock of ideas was exhausted and he was obliged to take leave

The fact that two of her sons had openly sided with Tayu increased the old lady's terror and despair All she could now think of was to spirit the girl away from Tsukushi as rapidly and secretly as possible She besought the other son, Bugo no Suke, to devise some means of conducting the girl to Kyoto, but Bugo no Suke answered 'I wish I could, but I do not see how it is to be done There is not a soul on the island who will help me We three used to hang together in old times, but now they say I am Tayu's enemy and will have nothing to do with me And with Tayu against one it is a difficult thing in these parts to stir hand or foot, let alone take passage for several persons in an outgoing ship I might find I was doing Lady Tamakatsura a very ill turn '

But though no one had told the girl of what was going on, she somehow or other seemed to know all about it She was in a state of the wildest agitation, and Bugo no Suke heard her declare in tones of the utmost horror that she intended to take her own life rather than accept the fate which was in store for her Bugo was certain that this was no empty threat, and by a tremendous effort he managed to collect a sum sufficient to cover the expenses of the journey His mother, now getting on in years, was determined not to end her days in Tsukushi But she was growing very infirm, and it would be impossible for her to accompany them did not one of her daughters consent to come and look after her. The younger sister, Ateki, had been married for several years, but Bugo no Suke prevailed upon her at last to abandon her home and take charge of their mother on the journey The elder sister had been married much longer, her family was already large and it was obviously impossible

for her to get away The travellers were obliged to leave home hastily late one night and embark at once, for they had suddenly heard that Tayu, who had gone home to Higo, was expected back in Hizen early next day (the twelfth of the fourth month), and he would doubtless lose no time in claiming his bride

There were distressing scenes of farewell It seemed unlikely that the elder sister would ever see her mother again But Ateki took the parting much more calmly, for though Tsukushi had been her home for so long, she was by no means sorry to leave the place, and it was only when someone pointed back to the Matsura temple and Ateki scanning the quay-side recognized the very spot where she had said goodbye to her sister, that she felt at all downcast at the thought of the journey before her 'Swiftly we row,' she sang, 'the Floating Islands vanish in the mist and, pilotless as they, I quit life's anchorage to drift amid the tempests of a world unknown ' 'No longer men but playthings of the wind are they who in their misery must needs take ship upon the uncertain pathways of the deep ' So Tamakatsura replied, and in utter despair she flung herself face downward upon her seat, where she lay motionless for many hours

The news of her flight soon leaked out, and eventually reached Tayu's ears He was not the man to let his prey slip from him in this manner, and though for an instant he was so angry and surprised that he could do nothing at all, he soon pulled himself together, hired a light skiff and set out in pursuit It was a vessel specially constructed for swift launching, and the wind was blowing hard from shore He shot across the harbour at an immense speed, with every inch of sail spread, and a moment later was through the Clanging Breakers Launched upon the calmer waters of the open sea his craft scudded along more swiftly than ever Seeing a small boat chasing after them at reckless speed the captain of the pursued vessel imagined that pirates were on his track and pressed on towards the nearest port Only Tamakatsura and her companions knew that in that rapidly approaching craft there was one who, by them at any rate, was far more to be dreaded than the most ruthless pirate Louder and louder beat the poor girl's heart, so loud indeed that the noise of the breakers seemed to her to have stopped At last they entered the bay of Kawajiri Tayu's vessel was no longer in sight, and as their ship approached the harbour, the fugitives began to breathe again One of the sailors was singing a snatch of the song

> So I pressed on from China Port to Kawajiri Bay
> With never a thought for my own sad love or the babe
> that wept on her knee

He sang in an expressionless, monotonous voice, but the melancholy tune caught Bugo no Suke's fancy and he found himself joining in With

never a thought ' Yes, he too had left behind those who were dearest to him, with little thought indeed of what was to become of them Even the two or three sturdy youths who worked for him in the house would have been some comfort to his wife and babes But these young fellows had clamoured to go with him and he weakly consented He pictured to himself how Tayu, maddened by the failure of his pursuit, would rush back to Hizen and wreak his vengeance upon the defenceless families of those who had worked against him How far would he go? What exactly would he do? Bugo no Suke now realized that in planning this flight he had behaved with the wildest lack of forethought, all his self-confidence vanished, and so hideous were the scenes which his imagination conjured up before him that he broke down altogether and sat weeping with his head on his knees Like the ransomed prisoner in Po Chü-i's poem,[1] though returning to his native place, he had left wife and child to shift for themselves amid the Tartar hordes His sister Ateki heard him sobbing and could well understand his dismay The plight of those who had remained at Hizen was indeed a wretched one Most of all she pitied the few old followers and servants who had consented to come with them from the Capital long ago, believing that in five years they would be back again in their homes To leave these faithful old people in the lurch seemed the basest of treacheries They had always (she and her brother) been used to speaking of the City as their home', but now that they were drawing near to it they realized that though it was indeed their native place, there was not within it one house where they were known, one friend or acquaintance to whom they could turn For this lady's sake they had left what for most of their lives had been their world, their only true home — had committed their lives to the hazard of wind and wave, all this without a moment s reflection or misgiving And now that their precious cargo was within hail of port, what were they to do with her? How were they to approach her family, make known her presence, prove her identity? Endlessly though they had discussed these points during the journey, they could arrive at no conclusion, and it was with a sense of helplessness and bewilderment that they hurried into the City

In the Ninth Ward they chanced to hear of an old acquaintance of their mother s who was still living in the neighbourhood, and here they managed to procure temporary lodgings The Ninth Ward does indeed count as part of Kyoto, but it is an immense distance from the centre, and no one of any consequence lives there Thus in their effort to find some influential person who would help them to fulfil their mission, the brother and sister encountered only the strangest types of market-women and higglers Autumn was coming on, they had achieved nothing and there seemed no reason to suppose that the

[1] See my *170 Chinese Poems*, p 130

ensuing months would be any more profitable than those which they had just wasted Ateki who had relied entirely upon her brother and imagined him capable of dealing with any situation that arose, was dismayed to discover that in the City he was like a waterbird on shore He hung about the house, had no notion how to make enquiries or cultivate fresh acquaintances, and was no better able to look after himself than the youths he had brought with him from Tsukushi These young fellows, after much grumbling, had indeed mostly either found employment in the neighbourhood or gone back to their native province It grieved Ateki beyond measure that her brother should be thus stranded in the Capital without occupation or resource, and she bewailed his lot day and night 'Come, come, Sister,' he would say to her, 'on my account you have no cause to be uneasy I would gladly come a good deal further than we have travelled and put up with many another month of hardship and waiting, if only I could get our young lady back among the friends who ought to be looking after her We may have spoilt our own prospects, you and I, but what should we be feeling like today, if we consented to let that monster carry her off to his infamous den? But it is my opinion that the Gods alone can help us in our present pass Not far from here is the great temple of Yawata where the same God is worshipped as in our own Yawata Temples at Hakozaki and Matsura, where mother used to take the young lady to do her penances Those two temples may be a long way off, but the same God inhabits all three, and I believe that her many visits to Hakozaki and Matsura would now stand her in good stead What if she were to go to the Temple here and perform a service of thanksgiving for her safe journey to the Capital? Bugo no Suke made enquiries in the neighbourhood and found out that one of the Five Abbots, a very holy man with whom Shoni had been well acquainted, was still alive He obtained an interview with the old priest and arranged that Tamakatsura should be allowed to visit the Temple

After this they visited a succession of holy places At last Bugo no Suke suggested a pilgrimage to the Temple of the Hasegawa Kwannon 'There is no deity in Japan,' he said, 'who has in recent times worked so many miracles as this Goddess of Hatsuse I am told that the fame of her shrine has spread even to China,[1] and far off though Tsukushi is, I know that Lady Tamakatsura has for years past been deeply interested in the achievements of this Divinity and shown an exemplary piety towards her I believe that a visit to Hatsuse would do more for our young lady than anything else' It was decided that, to give it a greater significance, the pilgrimage should be made on foot and, despite her great

[1] There is a story in Japan that the wife of the Chinese Emperor Hsi Tsung (874–888 A D) was so ugly that she was nicknamed 'Horse-head.' In obedience to a dream she turned to the East and prayed to the Kwannon of Hasegawa in Japan Instantly there appeared before her a figure carrying Kwannon's sacred water-vessel He dashed the water over her face and she became the most beautiful woman in China

age and infirmity, the old nurse would not be left behind Tamakatsura, wholly unused to such experiences, felt scared and wretched as, pilgrims in front and behind, she tramped wearily on, turning to right or left when she was bid, but otherwise too deeply buried in her own thoughts to notice what went on around her What had she done, she asked herself over and over again, to deserve this downtrodden existence? And as she dragged foot after foot along the dusty road she prayed earnestly to Buddha, saying 'O Much-Honoured One, if my mother is indeed no longer in this world, grant that, wherever it be, her soul may look upon me with compassion and her prayers bring me quick release, that I may take refuge in the place where her spirit dwells And if she is still alive, grant, O Buddha, that I may one day meet her face to face' So she prayed, and while she did so suddenly remembered that it was a useless prayer For she was very young when Yugao disappeared, had only the haziest recollection of her appearance, and even if the prayer were answered, would certainly pass her mother unrecognized! Dismal as these reflections would at any time have been, they were doubly so now, worn out as she was by the fatigue of the journey The party had indeed travelled at a very leisurely pace and it was not till the hour of the Snake, on the fourth day, that they at last reached Tsuba Market [1] Tamakatsura was by this time more dead than alive, they attempted to improvise a carrying-chair, but the pain in her legs was so great that she could not bear to be moved, and there was nothing for it but to let her rest at the inn

. The party consisted of Bugo no Suke, two bowmen and three or four very rough-looking boys to carry the luggage The three ladies had their skirts tucked in at the belt like country-women, and were attended only by two aged crones who looked like broken-down charwomen It would indeed have been impossible to guess that any person of quality was among them

They spent the time till dusk in trimming their holy lamps and preparing such other emblems and offerings as are brought by pilgrims to the Hasegawa Shrine

Going his rounds at nightfall the priest who owned the inn came upon the two decrepit old serving-women calmly making a bed for Tamakatsura in a corner of the best room of the house 'These quarters have been engaged for the night by a gentlewoman who may arrive at any minute,' he said in consternation 'Be off with you at once! Just fancy, without so much as a 'by your leave'! They were still staring at him helplessly, when there was a noise at the door and it became evident that the expected guests had actually arrived They too seemed to have come on foot There were two gentlewomen, very well-conditioned, and quite a number of attendants both male and female Their baggage was on the

[1] A short distance from the Hasegawa Temple.

It seemed like a dream Who was the lady whom they were accompanying? She strained her eyes, but the bed in the room behind the partition was surrounded by screens and there was no possibility of seeing its occupant She had made up her mind to accost the maid Sanjo and question her when part of her doubt resolved itself spontaneously the man must be that boy of Shoni s , the one they used to call Hyotoda, and the lady towards whom they showed such deference could be no other than Tamakatsura, Yugao's child by To no Chujo In wild excitement she called to Sanjo by name, but the old woman was busy serving the supper and for the moment she took no notice She was very cross at being called away from her work like this, but whoever it was that wanted her seemed to be in a great hurry, and presently she arrived, exclaiming 'I can't make it out I've spent the last twenty years in service on the island of Tsukushi, and here's a lady from Kyoto calling for me by my own name, as though she knew all about me Well, Madam, I am called Sanjo But I think it must be another Sanjo that you are wanting' As she drew near Ukon noticed that the old woman was wearing the most extraordinary narrow-sleeved overall on top of her frumpy old dress She had grown enormously stout The sight of her brought a sudden flush of humiliation to Ukon s cheeks, for she realized that she herself was an old woman, and as Sanjo now looked to her, so must she, Ukon, for years past have appeared to all eyes save her own 'Look again! Do you not know me?' she said at last looking straight into Sanjo's face Why, to be sure I do!' cried the old lady, clapping her hands, 'you were in service with my lady I was never so glad in my life Where have you been hiding our dear mistress all this while? Of course she is with you now?' and in the midst of her excitement Sanjo began to weep, for the encounter had brought back to her mind the days when she was young What times those had been! And how long, how cruelly long ago it all was! First, answered Ukon gravely, you must give me a little of your news Is nurse with you? And what has happened to the baby girl and Ateki, where is she? For the moment Ukon could not bear to dash Sanjo's hope to the ground, moreover it was so painful to her to speak of Yugao's death that she now listened in silence to Sanjo's tale mother, brother and sister were all there Tamakatsura was grown to be a fine young lady and was with them too But here I am talking,' said Sanjo at last, when I ought to have run straight in to tell nurse ,' and with this she disappeared After their first surprise the chief feeling of Ateki and her mother, upon the reception of this news, was one of indignation against Ukon, whom they supposed to have left their mistress in hiding all these years, callously indifferent to the suspense and misery of all her friends I don t feel that I want to see her,' said the old nurse at last, nodding in the direction of Ukon's room, but I suppose I ought to go ' No sooner, however, was she sitting by Ukon s couch, with all the curtains drawn aside, than both of them burst into

backs of some four or five horses, and though they wore plain liveries it was evident that the grooms were in good service The landlord was determined that the newcomers should have the quarters which he had intended for them, but the intruders showed no signs of moving, and he stood scratching his head in great perplexity It did indeed go to the hearts of Tamakatsura's old servants to turn her out of the corner where she was so comfortably established and pack her away into the back room But it was soon apparent that the only alternative was to seek quarters in a different inn, and as this would have been both humiliating and troublesome they made the best of a bad job and carried their mistress to the inner room, while others of the party either took shelter in the outhouses or squeezed themselves and their belongings into stray angles and corners of the main house

The new arrivals did not after all seem to be of such rank and consequence as the priest had made out But it was hard to guess what manner of people they might be, for they concealed themselves scrupulously from the gaze of their fellow-guests and hardly spoke to one another at all

In point of fact, the person to whom Lady Tamakatsura had been thus unceremoniously compelled to give place was none other than her mother's faithful maid, Ukon! For years past it had been the one comfort of the solitary and grief-stricken old lady s existence to make this pilgrimage, and Genji had always assisted her to do so with as much comfort as possible So familiar was the journey that it no longer seemed to her in any way formidable, but having come on foot she was quite ready for a rest, and immediately lay down upon the nearest couch Beside her was a thin partition of plaited reeds Behind it she could hear people moving about, and presently someone entered who seemed to be carrying a tray of food Then she heard a man's voice saying 'Please take this to my lady Tell her I am very sorry it is so badly served, but I have done the best I can From the tone in which he spoke it was evident that the lady to whom these apologies were to be conveyed was a person far above him in social position Ukon's curiosity was aroused She peeped through a crack in the partition, and at once had the impression that she had seen the young man before Who could it be? She racked her brains, but could not imagine It would indeed have been strange had she been able to identify Bugo no Suke, who was a mere child when she last saw him, while now he was a full-grown man, much bronzed from exposure to the sun and winds of Tsukushi, and dressed in the poorest clothes 'Sanjo, my lady is asking for you ' So Bugo no Suke now cried, and to her astonishment Ukon saw that the old woman who answered to this name was also certainly someone whom she had once known But here there could be no mistake This Sanjo was the one who had been in service with Ukon in Yugao's house, and had afterwards (like Ukon herself) been one of the few servants whom Yugao took with her to the house in the Fifth Ward

It seemed like a dream Who was the lady whom they were accompanying? She strained her eyes, but the bed in the room behind the partition was surrounded by screens and there was no possibility of seeing its occupant She had made up her mind to accost the maid Sanjo and question her when part of her doubt resolved itself spontaneously the man must be that boy of Shoni's , the one they used to call Hyotoda, and the lady towards whom they showed such deference could be no other than Tamakatsura, Yugao's child by To no Chujo In wild excitement she called to Sanjo by name, but the old woman was busy serving the supper and for the moment she took no notice She was very cross at being called away from her work like this, but whoever it was that wanted her seemed to be in a great hurry, and presently she arrived, exclaiming 'I can't make it out I've spent the last twenty years in service on the island of Tsukushi, and here's a lady from Kyoto calling for me by my own name, as though she knew all about me Well, Madam, I am called Sanjo But I think it must be another Sanjo that you are wanting ' As she drew near Ukon noticed that the old woman was wearing the most extraordinary narrow-sleeved overall on top of her frumpy old dress She had grown enormously stout The sight of her brought a sudden flush of humiliation to Ukon s cheeks, for she realized that she herself was an old woman, and as Sanjo now looked to her, so must she, Ukon, for years past have appeared to all eyes save her own 'Look again! Do you not know me?' she said at last looking straight into Sanjo's face 'Why, to be sure I do!' cried the old lady, clapping her hands, you were in service with my lady I was never so glad in my life Where have you been hiding our dear mistress all this while? Of course she is with you now?' and in the midst of her excitement Sanjo began to weep, for the encounter had brought back to her mind the days when she was young What times those had been! And how long, how cruelly long ago it all was! First,' answered Ukon gravely, you must give me a little of your news Is nurse with you? And what has happened to the baby girl and Ateki, where is she?' For the moment Ukon could not bear to dash Sanjo s hope to the ground, moreover it was so painful to her to speak of Yugao's death that she now listened in silence to Sanjo's tale mother, brother and sister were all there Tamakatsura was grown to be a fine young lady and was with them too But here I am talking,' said Sanjo at last, when I ought to have run straight in to tell nurse ,' and with this she disappeared After their first surprise the chief feeling of Ateki and her mother, upon the reception of this news, was one of indignation against Ukon, whom they supposed to have left their mistress in hiding all these years, callously indifferent to the suspense and misery of all her friends I don't feel that I want to see her, said the old nurse at last, nodding in the direction of Ukon's room, but I suppose I ought to go ' No sooner, however, was she sitting by Ukon's couch, with all the curtains drawn aside, than both of them burst into

tears 'What has become of her, where is my lady?' the nurse sobbed. 'You cannot imagine what I have been through in all these years I have prayed again and again that some sign, some chance word, some dream might tell me where she was hiding But not one breath of news came to us, and at last I thought terrible things — that she must be very far away indeed Yes, I have even imagined that she must be dead, and fallen then into such despair that I hated my own life and would have ended it too, had not my love for the little girl whom she left with me held my feet from the Paths of Night And even so, you see for yourself what I am . . It is but a faint flicker of life '

In this strain the nurse spoke on, supposing all the while that Lady Yugao herself was somewhere not far away 'How shall I tell her? What am I to say?' The same questions that tormented Ukon's brain during those first days after the funeral returned to her now with redoubled urgency But this could not go on, it was impossible not to speak, and Ukon suddenly broke in upon the old nurse's outpourings 'Listen!' she said 'It is no use my telling you how it happened But Lady Yugao died a long while ago '

After this there was silence, broken at last by the agonized and convulsive sobbing of these three old women '

It was growing dark, and now with lamps lit and offerings in their hands the pilgrims were about to start for the temple The women clung to one another till the last moment and, still scarce knowing what they did, were about to set out upon the road together, when Ukon suddenly bethought herself of the astonishment which her attendants must be feeling at this strange addition to the party, moreover Bugo no Suke had as yet heard nothing of the meeting, and for the moment the old nurse had not the heart to enter into a long explanation of what had occurred The two parties accordingly separated, Ukon scanning with curiosity the pilgrims who filed past her into the street Among them was a girl, very poorly dressed, her hair was caught up in a thin summer scarf, which held it tight but did not conceal it In the procession she walked some way ahead, but even the momentary back view which Ukon was thus able to obtain convinced her that the girl was not only of exceptional beauty, but also of a rank in life very different from that of the shabby pilgrims who tramped beside her When at last they arrived the service was already in full swing and the temple crowded to overflowing, for most of the pilgrims in whose company the party from Tsukushi had set out from the city were sturdy-legged peasants and working people who had pressed on through Tsuba without a moment's rest and long ago secured their places in the holy building Ukon, being an habitual visitor to the temple, was at once conducted to a place which had been reserved for her immediately to the right of the Main Altar But Tamakatsura and her party, who had never been there before and had, moreover, the misfortune to fall into the

her mother's sake, would do anything for her, has come into his own again, do you suppose there is any gentleman in the land who would be too good for her? It would be a sad come-down indeed if she were to become some paltry Governor's wife!' But Sanjo was not thus to be put out of countenance 'Pardon me,' she said hotly, 'I don't know much about your Prince Genjis or such-like But I do know that I've seen the Lord-Lieutenant's wife and all her train on their way to the temple of Our Lady Kwannon at Kiyomizu, and I can tell you the Emperor himself never rode out in such state! So don't try to put *me* in my place!' and unabashed the old woman resumed her attitude of prayer

The party from Tsukushi had arranged to stay three days within the precincts of the temple, and Ukon, though she had not at first intended to stay for so long, now sent for her favourite priest and asked him to procure her a lodging, for she hoped that these days of Retreat would afford her a chance of talking things over quietly with the old nurse The priest knew by long experience just what she wanted written on the prayer-strips which he was to place in the holy lamps, and at once began scribbling 'On behalf of Lady Fujiwara no Ruri I make these offerings and burn .'

'That is quite right,' said Ukon (for Fujiwara no Ruri was the false name by which she had always referred to Tamakatsura in discussing the matter with her spiritual adviser), 'all the usual texts will do, but I want you to pray harder than ever today For I have at last been fortunate enough to meet the young lady and am more anxious than ever that my prayer for her happiness may be fulfilled'

'There!' said the priest triumphantly 'Was there ever a clearer case? Met her? Dear Madam, of course you have That is just what I have been praying for night and day ever since you were here last' And much encouraged by this success he set to work once more and was hard at it till daylight came Then the whole party, at Ukon's invitation, moved to the lodgings that her *dattoko*[1] had reserved for her Here if anywhere she felt that she would be able to embark upon the story which she found so difficult to tell

At last she was able to have a good look at the child for whose happiness she had prayed during so many years Tamakatsura was undeniably ill-dressed and somewhat embarrassed in the presence of strangers whom she felt to be taking stock of her appearance, but Ukon was unfeignedly delighted with her, and burst out 'Though I am sure I never had any right to expect it, it so happens that I have had the good luck to see as much of fine ladies and gentlemen as any serving-woman in the City There's Prince Genji's own lady, Madam Murasaki — I see her nearly every day What a handsome young thing! I thought there could be no one to compare with her But now there's this little daughter from Akashi[2] Of

[1] I hesitate to use the word 'Confessor'

[2] Now about six years old

course she is only a child at present But she grows prettier every day, and it would not surprise me if in the end she put all our other young ladies to shame Of course they dress that child in such fine clothes and make such a fuss of her that it is hard to compare her with other children Whereas our young lady (she whispered to the nurse), dressed as she is at this very minute, would hold her own against any of them, I dare swear she would. I have sometimes heard Prince Genji himself say that of the many beauties whom he has known, whether at Court or elsewhere since his father's time, the present Emperor's mother[1] and the little girl born at Akashi stand apart from all the rest Not one other has he known of whom you could say without fear of contradiction from any living soul that she was perfection itself from tip to toe. Those were his words, but for my own part I never knew Lady Fujitsubo; and charming though the little princess from Akashi may be, she is still little more than a baby, and when Prince Genji speaks of her in these terms, he is but guessing at the future He did not mention Lady Murasaki at all in this conversation, but I know quite well that in his heart of hearts he puts her above all the rest — so far indeed that he would never dream of mentioning her in such a reckoning as this, and, great gentleman though he is, I have heard him tell her again and again that she deserves a husband a thousand times better than he I have often thought that having had about him at the start such peerless ladies as those whom I have mentioned, he might well chance to end his days without once finding their like But now I see that I was wrong, for Madam here is fully their match Trust me, I shall not say anything high-flown, nor would he listen to fine phrases such as The light that shines from her countenance is brighter than Buddha's golden rays' I shall just say See her, and you will not be disappointed'' So said Ukon, smiling benevolently at the company. But the nurse, who knew nothing, it must be remembered, of Genji's connection with Yugao nor of any reason why he should interest himself in Tamakatsura, was somewhat disconcerted I am sure I thank you very heartily for suggesting this,' she said, and indeed you will believe that no one cares more for this young lady's future than I do, when I tell you that I gave up house and hearth, quitted sons, daughters and friends, and came back to the City which is now as strange to me as some foreign town — all this only for Lady Tamakatsura's sake, for I hated to see her wasting her youth in a dismal place where there was not a soul for her to speak to . No indeed! I should be the last person to interfere with any plan that promises to bring her to her own again, and I am sure that among the grand people whom you have mentioned she would have a much better chance of doing something for herself in the world But I must say that, with her father at Court all the while, it seems to me a queer thing to quarter her on a perfect stranger. Perhaps I do not

[1] Fujitsubo

quite understand what you propose but wouldn't it be more natural to tell her father that she is here and give him a chance of acknowledging her? That is what we have been trying to do, and we shall be very glad if you would help us.' The conversation was overheard by Tamakatsura, she felt very uncomfortable at being thus publicly discussed and, shifting impatiently in her seat, sat with her back to the talkers. 'I see you think I am taking too much upon myself,' said Ukon. 'I know quite well that I am no one at all. But all the same Prince Genji often sends for me to wait upon him and likes me sometimes to tell him about anything interesting that I have seen or heard. On one occasion I told him the story of Madam here — how she had been left motherless and carried off to some distant province (for so much I had heard). His Highness was much moved by the story, begged me to make further enquiries and at once let him know all that I could discover.' 'I do not doubt,' said the nurse, 'that Prince Genji is a very fine gentleman. But it seems from what you tell me that he has a wife of whom he is fond and several other ladies living with him as well. He may for the moment have been interested in your story, but I cannot imagine why you should suppose he wants to adopt her, when her own father is so close at hand. It would oblige me if you would first help us to inform To no Chujo of Madam's arrival. If nothing comes of that.'

Ukon could keep up her end no longer. Unless she told the nurse of Genji's connection with Yugao, further conversation would be impossible. And having got so far as to confess that Genji had known Yugao, Ukon plunging desperately on finally managed to tell the whole terrible story. 'Do not think,' she said at last, 'that Genji has forgotten all this, or will ever do so. It has been his one desire since that day to find some means of expiating, in however small a degree, the guilt which brought my lady to her unhappy end, and often I have heard him long that he might one day be able to bring such happiness to Lady Yugao's child as would in some sort make amends for all that she had lost. Indeed, having few children, he has always planned, if she could but be found, to adopt her as his own, and he begged me to speak of her always as a child of his, whom he had placed with countryfolk to be nursed.

'But in those days I had seen very little of the world and was so much scared by all that had happened that I dared not go about making enquiries. At last I chanced one day to see your husband's name in a list of provincial clerks. I even saw him, though at some distance, the day he went to the Prime Minister's palace to receive confirmation of his new appointment. I suppose I ought to have spoken to him then, but somehow or other I could not bring myself to do so. Sometimes I imagined that you had left Lady Tamakatsura behind, at the house in the Fifth Ward, for the thought of her being brought up as a little peasant girl on the island was more than I could endure.'

So they spent the day, now talking, now praying, or again amusing themselves by watching the hordes of pilgrims who were constantly arriving at the temple gate Under their windows ran a river called the Hatsuse, and Ukon now recited the acrostic poem 'Had I not entered the gate that the Twin Fir-Trees guard, would the old river of our days e'er have resumed its flow?' To this Tamakatsura answered 'Little knew I of those early days as this river knows of the hill from whence it sprang' She sat gently weeping But Ukon made no effort to comfort her, feeling that now all was on the right path Considering Tamakatsura's upbringing no one would have blamed her if there had been a little country roughness, a shade of over-simplicity in her manner Ukon could not imagine how the old nurse had achieved so remarkable a feat of education, and thanked her again and again for what she had done Yugao's ways had till the last been timid, docile, almost child-like, but about her daughter there was not a trace of all this Tamakatsura, despite her shyness, had an air of self-assurance, even of authority 'Perhaps,' thought Ukon to herself, 'Tsukushi is not by any means so barbarous a place as one is led to suppose' She began thinking of all the Tsukushi people she had known, each individual she could recall was more coarse-mannered and uneducated than the rest No, nurse's achievement remained a mystery

At dusk they all went back to the temple, where they stayed that night and most of the following day, absorbed in various spiritual exercises A cold autumn wind was blowing from the valley, and at its cruel touch the miseries of the past rose up one by one before Shoni's widow as she knelt shivering at the Main Altar But all these sad memories vanished instantly at the thought that the child upon whom she had lavished her care would now take the place that was her birth-due Ukon had told her about the careers of To no Chujo's other children They seemed all of them to be remarkably prosperous, irrespective of the rank of their various mothers, and this filled the old lady with an additional sense of security

At last the moment came to part The two women exchanged addresses and set out upon their different ways Ukon to a little house Genji had given her, not far away from his new palace, the others to their lodgings in the Ninth Ward No sooner had they parted than Ukon was suddenly seized with a panic lest Tamakatsura should attempt to evade her, as Yugao had fled from Chujo in days of old, and constantly running between her house and theirs, she had not a moment's peace of mind It was soon time for Ukon to be back at the new palace, and she was not loath to end her holiday, for she was in a hurry to obtain an interview with Genji and inform him of her success She could not get used to this new mansion, and from the moment she entered the gates she was always astonished by the vastness of the place Yet so great was nowadays the number of coaches driving [1] in and out, that the crush was appalling and Ukon began to wonder if she would ever get to the house

[1] Pulled by servants, the oxen being unyoked at the Gate.

She was not sent for that night, and lay tossing about on her bed, thinking how best to make known her discovery Next day, though it so happened that a large number of ladies-in-waiting and other young people had just returned from their holidays, Murasaki sent specially for old Ukon, who was delighted by this compliment. 'What a long holiday you have been having!' cried Genji to her when she entered 'When you were last here you looked like some dismal old widow-lady, and here you are looking quite skittish! Something very nice must have happened to you, what was it?' 'Sir,' she answered, 'it is quite true that I have been away from the City for a whole week, but I don't know whether anything has happened that you would call nice I have been over the hills to Hatsuse (on foot too!) and came across someone whom I was glad to meet again ' 'Who was that? asked Genji quickly, and she was about to tell him when it occurred to her that it would be much better to tell him separately, on some occasion when Murasaki was not present But then perhaps the whole thing would come round to Murasaki's ears and her mistress would be offended that Ukon had not told her first It was a difficult situation Well then if you must know ' Ukon was beginning, when suddenly there was a fresh incursion of visitors, and she was obliged to withdraw But later in the day, when the great lamp had been brought in and Genji was sitting quietly with Murasaki, he said that he would soon be ready for bed, and sent for Ukon to give him his evening massage

Lady Murasaki was now almost twenty-eight, but never (thought the old woman when she arrived) had she looked so handsome It seemed indeed as though her full charm had only just matured Ukon had not seen her mistress at close quarters for some months past, and could now have sworn that even in that short space of time Lady Murasaki had grown twice as handsome And yet Ukon had no fears for Yugao's daughter There was indeed an undeniable difference between this splendid princess and the shy girl from Tsukushi But it was only the difference between obscurity and success, a single turn of fortune would quickly redress the balance

I do not like being massaged by the new young maids,' Genji said to Ukon when she arrived 'They let me see so plainly how much it bores them to do it I much prefer someone I have known for a long time you, for example ' No such preference had ever been noticed by those about him, and smiles were secretly exchanged They realized that Genji had only said this in order to please and flatter the old lady But it was far from true that any of them had ever been otherwise than delighted at the reception of such a command, and they thought the joke rather a tiresome one 'Would you be angry with me if I took to consorting with elderly ladies?' he whispered to Murasaki Yes,' she nodded, I think I should With you one never knows where one is I should be very much

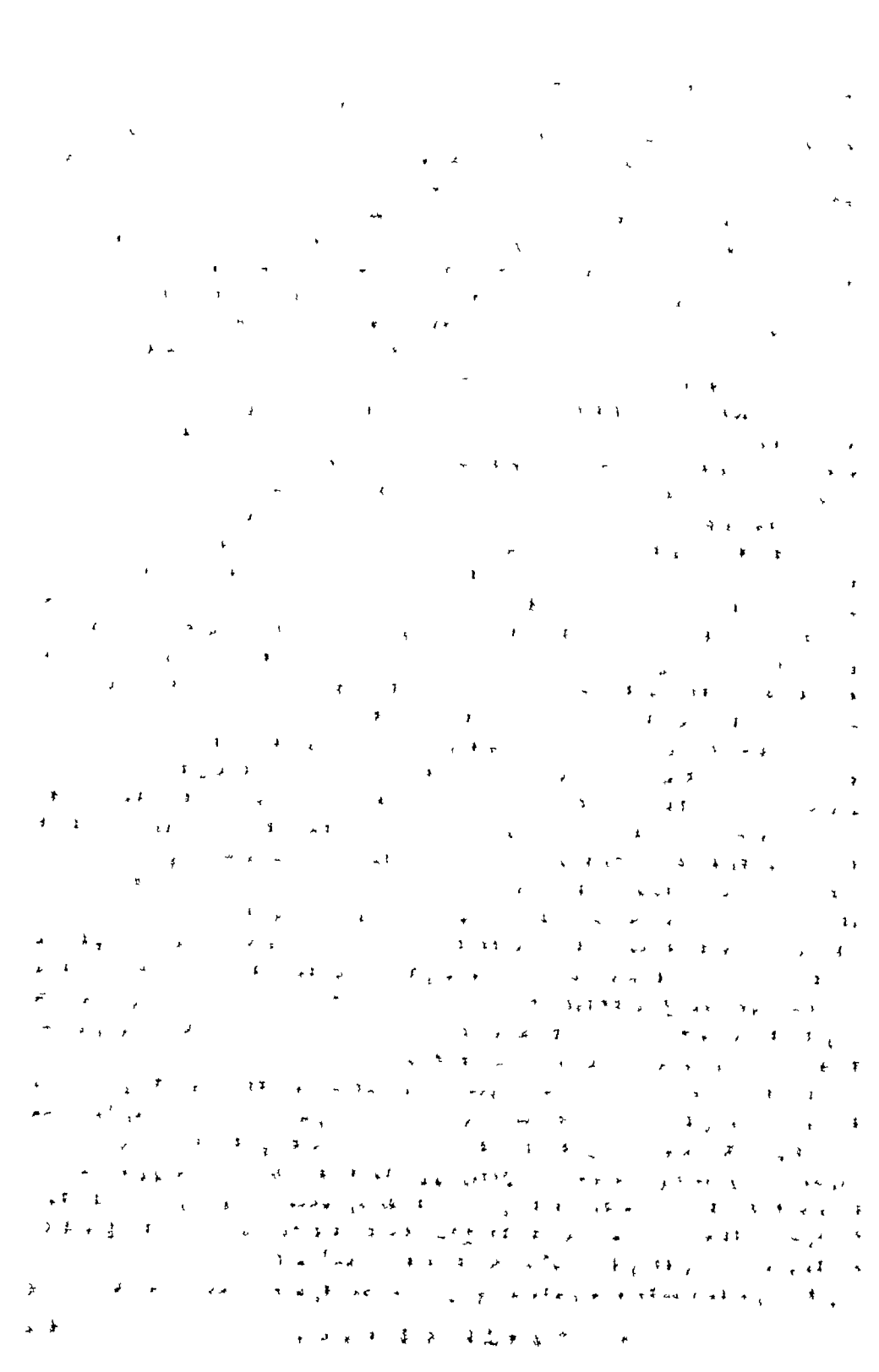
perturbed ' All the while she was at work Genji amused the old lady with his talk Never had Ukon seen him so lively and amiable He had now placed the whole direction of public affairs in To no Chujo's hands, the experiment was working well, and such was Genji's relief at escaping from the burden which had so long oppressed him that he found it impossible to be serious for a minute To joke with Ukon, a very matter-of-fact old lady, was found by most people to be out of the question But Genji had a peculiar gift of sympathy, which enabled him to penetrate the most obstinate gloom, the most imperturbable gravity

Tell me about the interesting person whom you have discovered,' he went on 'I believe it is another of your holy men You have brought him back here, and now I am to let him pray for me Have I not guessed right?' 'No, indeed,' Ukon answered indignantly, 'I should never dream of doing such a thing! And then, lowering her voice 'I have become acquainted with the daughter of a lady whom I served long ago The mother came to a miserable end You will know of whom it is I am speaking ' 'Yes,' said Genji 'I know well enough, and your news is indeed very different from anything I had imagined Where has the child been during all these years?' In the country,' answered Ukon vaguely, this did not seem a good moment for going into the whole story 'Some of the old servants took charge of the child,' she continued, 'and are still in her service now that she has grown up They of course knew nothing of the circumstances under which their former mistress It was torture to speak of it, but I managed at last to tell them ' 'I think we had better talk about this some other time,' Genji interrupted, drawing Ukon aside But Murasaki had overheard them 'Pray do not trouble about me,' she said with a yawn 'I am half-asleep in any case, and if it is something I am not to hear ' So saying she covered her ears with her sleeves

'Is she as handsome as her mother?' Genji then asked 'I did not at all expect that she would be, answered Ukon But I must say that I have seldom seen ' 'I am sure she is *pretty*, he said 'I wonder whether you mean anything more than that Compared with my lady ? and he nodded towards Lady Murasaki 'No, indeed, said Ukon hastily, 'that would be going too far Come,' he said, it would not be going much farther than you go yourself I can see that by your face For my part, I must own to the usual vanity of parents I hope that I shall be able to see in her some slight resemblance to myself ' He said this because he intended to pass off the girl as his own child, and was afraid that part of the conversation had been overheard Having learnt so much, he could not resist the temptation to hear the whole of Ukon s story, and presently he took her into a side-room, where they could discuss the matter undisturbed Well,' he said, when Ukon had satisfied his curiosity, 'I have quite made up my mind what to do with her She shall come and live with me here For years past I have constantly wondered what had become of

her, and dreaded lest she should be throwing away her youth in some dismal, unfrequented place I am delighted indeed that you have rediscovered her My only misgiving concerns her father I suppose I ought at once to tell him of her return But I do not quite see how to set about it, for he knows nothing of my connection with Lady Yugao, and I have never been able to see that there was any use in enlightening him He has already more children than he knows what to do with, and the arrival in his house of a fully-grown girl, whom he has not set eyes on since she was a child-in-arms, would merely be a nuisance to him It seems much simpler that I, who have so small a family, should take charge of her, and it is easy enough to give out that she is a daughter of mine, whom I have been educating in the quiet of the country If what you say of her is true, it is certain that she will be a great deal run after The charge of such a girl needs immense tact and care, I do not think it would be fair to saddle To no Chujo with so great a responsibility ' 'That shall be as Your Highness decides,' answered Ukon 'I am sure, at any rate, that if *you* do not tell To no Chujo, no one else will And for my part I had rather she should go to you than to anyone else For I am certain you are anxious to make what amends you can for your part in leading Yugao to her miserable fate, and what better way could there be to do this, than by promoting her daughter's happiness by every means in your power?' 'The fact that I ruined the mother might to some people seem a strange reason for claiming custody of the child,' said Genji smiling, but his eyes were filled with tears 'My love for her still fills a great part of my thoughts,' he said after a pause 'You must think that a strange thing for me to say, considering how my household is now arranged And it is true that in the years since her death I have formed many deep attachments But, believe it or not as you will, by no one has my heart ever been stirred as it was by your dear mistress in those far-off days You have known me long enough to see for yourself that I am not one in whom such feelings lightly come and go It has been an unspeakable comfort to me during all these years that to you at least I could sometimes talk of your mistress, sometimes ease my longing But that was not enough I yearned for some object dear to her upon which I could lavish ceaseless pains and care What could be more to my purpose than that this orphaned child of hers should thus be entrusted to my protection?'

His next step must be a letter to Tamakatsura herself He remembered Suyetsumu's extreme incapacity in this direction, and feared that Tamakatsura, after her strange upbringing, might prove to be a hundred times more hesitating and inefficient It was therefore in order to know the worst as soon as possible that he now lost no time in addressing her His letter was full of the friendliest assurances, in the margin was written the poem It shows not from afar, but seek and you shall find it, the marsh-flower of the Island For from the ancient stem new shoots for ever spring '



the most part been handed over to To no Chujo, and what was still left could easily be housed elsewhere The advantage of those quarters was that Tamakatsura would here be the close neighbour of the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers, whose sensible and affectionate nature would, he was sure, prove a great comfort to the new arrival And now that all was ready, it seemed to him impossible to install Tamakatsura in his household without revealing to Murasaki the whole truth about the girl's identity and his own dealings with her mother No sooner had he begun the story than he saw plainly enough that she was vexed with him for having made a mystery of the matter for so long I see that you are vexed,' he said, that I did not tell you about all this before But you have always known quite well that I had many such attachments as this in the days before I knew you, and I have never seen that there was any point in mentioning them, unless some special circumstance made it necessary to do so In the present case, it is essential that someone should be acquainted with all the facts, and I chose you rather than another merely because you are a thousand times dearer to me than any of the rest ' Then he told her the whole story of his dealings with Yugao It was apparent to her that he was deeply moved, and at the same time that he took great pleasure in recalling every detail of their relationship

Conversation turns often upon such matters,' he said at last, 'and I have heard innumerable stories of women's blind devotion, even in cases where their love was in no degree reciprocated Passion such as this is indeed rarely long withstood even by those who have gravely determined to rule out of their lives every species of romance, and I have seen many who have instantly succumbed But such love as Yugao's, such utter self-forgetfulness, so complete a surrender of the whole being to one single and ever-present emotion — I have never seen or heard of, and were she alive she would certainly be occupying no less important a place in my palace than, for example, the Lady of Akashi is occupying today In many ways, of course, she fell short of perfection, as indeed is bound to be the case She was not of great intelligence, nor was her beauty flawless But she was a singularly lovable creature ' 'Were she as much in your good graces as the Lady of Akashi, she would have nothing to complain of ' broke in Murasaki suddenly, for the Akashi episode still rankled sore The little princess,[1] who constantly visited Murasaki's rooms, was playing with her toys not far away, and Murasaki seeing her look so innocent and pretty, in her childlessness forgave Genji the infidelity which had brought to her so charming a little playmate and companion

These things happened in the ninth month, but Tamakatsura's actual arrival could not take place for some while afterwards, for though her quarters had been chosen she still lacked attendants The first thing was to find her some pretty pages and serving-girls Even in Tsukushi the old

[1] The Lady of Akashi's daughter

nurse had managed to procure some very passable children to wait upon her, for it sometimes happened that someone from the City, having fallen upon evil days, would get stranded on the Island and be glad to place his boy or girl in a respectable home But in the sudden flight from Tsukushi all these young people had been left behind Orders were given to market-women and trades-people to keep their eyes open and report upon any suitable children whom they came across, and in this way, as could scarcely fail to happen in so vast a town, a fine batch of attendants was quickly brought together Nothing was said to them about Tamakatsura's rank, and they were mustered in Ukon's own house, whither Tamakatsura herself now repaired, that her wardrobe might be finally inspected, her staff fitted out with proper costumes and instructed in their duties The move to Genji's Palace took place in the tenth month He had already visited the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers and prepared her for the arrival of her new neighbours 'A lady to whom I was much attached, being seized with a sudden melancholy, fled from the Court and soon afterwards ended her days in a remote country place She left behind a daughter, of whom I could for years obtain no news All this happened many years ago and this daughter is now of course a full-grown woman, but though I have been making enquiries ever since, it was only quite recently (and in the most accidental way) that I at last obtained a clue I at once determined to invite her to my palace, and I am going to give her quarters close to yours, in the unused Record Office To one motherless child of mine you have already shown infinite kindness, and have not, I think, found the care of him unduly irksome If you will do for this newcomer what you have been doing for Prince Yugiri, I shall be deeply thankful to you She has been brought up in very humble and rustic surroundings In many ways she must be ill-prepared for the life which she will lead in such a place as this I hope that you will instruct her ' and he made many suggestions for Tamakatsura's polite education I had no idea,' the Lady replied, that you had more than one daughter However, I am extremely glad, if only for the Akashi child's sake I am sure she will be delighted to find that she has a sister 'The mother,' said Genji, 'was the most gentle and confiding creature I have ever encountered This girl, Lady Tamakatsura, doubtless resembles her, and since you yourself are the easiest person to get on with ' I have so much time on my hands, she answered quickly Someone of my own sort to look after and advise a little That is just what I long for '

Genji s own servants and retainers had been told nothing save that a strange lady was shortly to arrive I wonder whom he has picked up this time?' one of them said 'I don t believe this is a fresh affair,' said another In all probability she is only some discarded mistress who needs looking after for a time

The party arrived in three carriages As Ukon had superintended every detail, the whole turn-out was quite adequately stylish, or at any rate did not betray such rusticity as to attract attention On their arrival they found their quarters stacked with all sorts of presents from Genji He gave them time to settle in, and did not call till late the same night Long, long ago Tamakatsura used often to hear him spoken of in terms of extravagant admiration, 'Genji the Shining One,' that was what people had called him All the rest she had forgotten, for hers had been a life from which tales of Courts and palaces seemed so remote that she had scarcely heeded them And now when through a chink in her curtains-of-state she caught a glimpse of him — vague enough, for the room was lit only by the far distant rays of the great lamp beyond the partition — her feeling was one of admiration, but (could it be so, she asked herself) of downright terror

Ukon had flung open both halves of the heavy maindoor and was now obsequiously ushering him into the room 'You should not have done that,' he protested 'You are making too much of my entry No such ceremonies are necessary when one inmate of this house takes it into his head to visit another,' and he seated himself alongside her curtained chair This dim light too,' he continued, addressing Ukon, 'may seem to you very romantic But Lady Tamakatsura has consented to make believe that she is my daughter, and family meetings such as this require a better illumination Do you not agree?' And with this he slightly raised one corner of her curtain She looked extremely shy and was sitting, as he now discovered, with face half-turned away But he knew at once that as far as looks were concerned she was not going to cause him any anxiety 'Could we not have a little more light? he said, turning again to Ukon It is so irritating ' Ukon lit a candle and came towards them holding it aloft in her hand 'It is rather heavy work to get started!' he whispered, smiling 'Things will go better presently ' Even the way she hung her head, as though frightened of meeting his eyes, reminded him so vividly of Yugao that it was impossible for him to treat her as a stranger, instinctively indeed he began to speak to her in a tone of complete familiarity as though they had shared the same house all their lives 'I have been hunting high and low for you ever since you were a baby,' he said, 'and now that I have found you, and see you sitting there with a look that I know so well, it is more than I can bear I wanted so much to talk to you, but now ' and he paused to wipe the tears from his eyes, whilst there rushed to his mind a thousand tender recollections of Yugao and her incomparable ways 'I doubt,' he said at last, reckoning up the years since her death, 'whether true parent has ever reclaimed a child after so long a search as I have made for you Indeed so long a time has passed that you are already a woman of judgment and experience, and can tell me a far more interesting story of all that has befallen you on that island

of yours than could be told by a mere child I have that compensation at least for having met you so late '

What would she tell him? For a long while she hung her head in silence At last she said shyly 'Pray remember that like the leech-child,[1] at three years old I was set adrift upon the ocean Since then I have been stranded in a place where only such things could befall me as to you would seem nothing at all.' Her voice died away at the end of the sentence with a half-childish murmur, exactly as her mother's had done long ago 'I was "sorry for you" indeed,' he said, 'when I heard whither you had drifted But I am going to see to it now that no one shall ever be sorry for you again ' She said no more that night, but her one short reply had convinced him that she was by no means a nonentity, and he went back to his own quarters feeling confident that there could be no difficulty in launching her upon a suitable career 'Poor Tamakasura has lived in the country for so long,' he said to Murasaki later, 'that it would not at all have surprised me to find her very boorish, and I was prepared to make every allowance But on the contrary she seems very well able to hold her own It will be amusing to watch the effect upon our friends when it becomes known that this girl is living in the house I can well imagine the flutter into which she will put some of them — my half-brother Prince Sochi no Miya for example The reason that quite lively and amusing people often look so gloomy when they come here is that there have been no attractions of this kind We must make as much play with her as possible, it will be such fun to see which of our acquaintances become brisker, and which remain as solemn as ever ' 'You are certainly the strangest "father" !' exclaimed Murasaki The first thing you think of is how to use her as a bait to the more unprincipled among your friends It is monstrous!' If only I had thought of it in time,' he laughed, 'I see now how splendidly you would have served for the same purpose It was silly of me not to think of it, but, somehow or other, I preferred to keep you all to myself ' She flushed slightly as he said this, looking younger and more charming than ever Sending for his ink-stone Genji now wrote on a practising-slip the poem 'Save that both she and I have common cause to mourn, my own is she no more than a false lock worn upon an aged head '[2] Seeing him sigh heavily and go about muttering to himself, Murasaki knew that his love for Yugao had been no mere boyish fancy, but an affair that had stirred his nature to its depths

Yugiri, having been told that a half-sister (of whose existence he had never heard) was come to live with them in the palace, and that he ought

[1] The Royal Gods Izanagi and Izanami bore a leech-child, as at the age of three it could not stand, they cast it adrift in a boat. It made a song which said 'I should have thought my daddy and mammy would have been sorry for me, seeing that at three years old I could not stand ' See Part II, p 282

[2] *Tamukazura* = jewelled wig

to make friends with her and make her feel at home, at once rushed round to her rooms, saying I do not count for very much, I know, but since we are brother and sister, I think you might have sent for me before If only I had known who you were, I would have been so glad to help you to unpack your things I do think you might have told me

Poor young gentleman,' thought Ukon, who was close at hand, 'this is really too bad How long will they let him go on in this style, thinking all the while she is his sister? I don't think it's fair

The contrast between her present way of life and the days at Tsukushi was staggering Here every elegance, every convenience appeared as though by magic, there the simplest articles could be procured only by endless contriving, and when found were soiled, dilapidated, out-of-date Here Prince Genji claimed her as his daughter, Prince Yugiri as his sister

Now these,' thought old Sanjo, 'really are fine gentlemen However I came to have such a high opinion of that Lord-Lieutenant I do not know! And when she remembered what airs a miserable creature like Tayu had given himself on the Island, she almost expired with indignation

That Bugo no Suke had acted with rare courage and wisdom in planning the sudden flight from Tsukushi was readily admitted by Genji when Ukon had laid all the circumstances before him It was unlikely that any stranger would serve Tamakatsura with such devotion as this foster-brother had shown, and in drawing up for her a list of gentlemen-in-attendance, Genji saw to it that Bugo no Suke's name should figure among them

Never in his wildest dreams had it occurred to Bugo no Suke that he, a plain Tsukushi yeoman, would ever set foot in a Minister's palace, nay, would in all his living days so much as set eyes on such a place And here he was, not merely walking in and out just as he chose, but going with the lords and ladies wherever they went, and even arranging their affairs for them and ordering about their underlings as though they were his own And to crown his content, no day passed but brought to his mistress some ingenious intention, some well-devised if trifling act of kindness from their host himself

At the end of the year there took place the usual distribution of stuff for spring clothes, and Genji was determined that the newcomer should not feel that she had come off worse than the greatest ladies in the house But he feared that, graceful and charming though she was, her taste in dress must necessarily be somewhat rustic, and among the silks which he gave her he determined also to send a certain number of woven dresses, that she might be gently guided towards the fashions of the day The gentlewomen of the palace, each anxious to prove that there was nothing she did not know about the latest shapes of bodice and kirtle, set to work with such a will that when they brought their wares for Genji's inspection, he exclaimed I fear your zeal has been excessive If all my presents

are to be on this scale (and I have no desire to excite jealousy), I shall indeed be hard put to it' So saying he had his storerooms ransacked for fine stuffs, and Murasaki came to the rescue with many of the costly robes which he had from time to time given her for her own wardrobe All these were now laid out and inspected Murasaki had a peculiar talent in such matters, and there was not a woman in all the world who chose her dyes with a subtler feeling for colour, as Genji very well knew Dress after dress was now brought in fresh from the beating-room, and Genji would choose some robe now for its marvellous dark red, now for some curious and exciting pattern or colour-blend, and have it laid aside 'This one in the box at the end,' he would say, handing some dress to one of the waiting-women who were standing beside the long narrow clothes-boxes, or 'Try this one in your box You seem to be making a very just division, and I am sure no one ought to feel aggrieved But, if I may make a suggestion, would it not be better to think whether the stuffs will suit the complexions of their recipient rather than whether they look nice in the box?' I know just why you said that,' Genji laughed 'You want me to launch out into a discussion of each lady's personal charms, in order that you may know in what light she appears to me I am going to turn the tables You shall have for your own which-ever of my stuffs you like, and by your choice I shall know how *you* regard *yourself* 'I have not the least idea what I look like,' she answered, blushing slightly, 'after all, I am the last person in the world to consult upon the subject One never sees oneself except in the mirror ' After much debating, the presents were distributed as follows to Murasaki herself, a kirtle yellow without and flowered within, lightly diapered with the red plum-blossom crest — a marvel of modern dyeing To the Akashi child, a long close-fitting dress, white without, yellow within, the whole seen through an outer facing of shimmering red gauze To the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers he gave a light blue robe with a pattern of sea-shells woven into it Lovely though the dress was as an example of complicated weaving, it would have been too light in tone had it not been covered with a somewhat heavy russet floss

To Tamakatsura he sent, among other gifts, a close-fitting dress with a pattern of mountain-kerria woven upon a plain red background Murasaki seemed scarcely to have glanced at it, but all the while, true to Genji's surmise, she was guessing the meaning of this choice Like her father To no Chujo, Tamakatsura (she conjectured) was doubtless good-looking, but certainly lacked his liveliness and love of adventure Murasaki had no idea that she had in any way betrayed what was going on in her mind and was surprised when Genji suddenly said 'In the end this matching of dresses and complexions breaks down entirely and one gives almost at hazard I can never find anything that does justice to my handsome friends, or anything that it does not seem a shame to waste on the ugly

ones and so saying he glanced with a smile at the present which was about to be despatched to Suyetsumu, a dress white without and green within, what is called a 'willow-weaving,' with an elegant Chinese vine-scroll worked upon it

To the Lady of Akashi he sent a white kirtle with a spray of plum-blossom on it, and birds and butterflies fluttering hither and thither, cut somewhat in the Chinese fashion, with a very handsome dark purple lining This also caught Murasaki's observant eye and she augured from it that the rival of whom Genji spoke to her so lightly was in reality occupying a considerable place in his thoughts

To Utsusemi, now turned nun, he sent a grey cloak, and, in addition, a coat of his own which he knew she would remember — jasmine-sprinkled, faced with Courtier's crimson and lined with russet In each box was a note in which the recipient was begged to favour him by wearing these garments during the Festival of the New Year He had taken a great deal of trouble over the business and could not imagine that any of the presents was likely to meet with a very bad reception And indeed the satisfaction which he had given was soon evidenced not only by the delighted letters which came pouring in, but also by the handsome gratuities given to the bearers of these gifts Suyetsumu was still living at the old Nijo-in palace, and the messenger who brought her present, having a quite considerable distance to travel, expected something rather out of the ordinary in the way of a reward But to Suyetsumu these things were matters not of commerce, but of etiquette A present such as this was, she had been taught long ago, a species of formal address which must be answered in the same language, and fetching an orange-coloured gown, very much frayed at the cuffs, she hung it over the messenger's shoulders, attaching to it a letter written on heavily scented Michinoku paper, which age had not only considerably yellowed, but also bloated to twice its proper thickness 'Alas,' she wrote, 'your present serves but to remind me of your absence What pleasure can I take in a dress that you will never see me wear?' With this was the poem 'Was ever gift more heartless? Behold, I send it back to you, your Chinese dress — worn but an instant, yet discoloured with the brine of tears' The handwriting, with its antique flourishes, was admirably suited to the stilted sentiment of the poem Genji laughed afresh each time he read it and finally, seeing that Murasaki was regarding him with astonishment, he handed her the missive Meanwhile he examined the bedraggled old frock with which the discomfited messenger had been entrusted, with so rueful an expression that the fellow edged behind the bystanders and finally slipped out of the room, fearing that he had committed a grave breach of etiquette in introducing so pitiful an object into the presence of the Exalted Ones His plight was the occasion of much whispering and laughter among his fellow servants But laugh as one might at the absurd scenes which the

princess's archaic behaviour invariably provoked, the very fact that adherence to bygone fashions could produce so ludicrous a result suggested the most disquieting reflections 'It is no laughing matter,' said Genji 'Her 'Chinese dress'' and ''discoloured with the brine of tears'' made me feel thoroughly uncomfortable With the writers of a generation or two ago every dress was ''Chinese,'' and, no matter what the occasion of the poem, its sleeves were invariably soaked with tears But what about your poems and mine? Are they not every bit as bad? Our tags may be different from those of the princess, but we use them just as hard and when we come to write a poem are as impervious as she is to the speech of our own day And this is true not only of amateurs such as ourselves, but of those whose whole reputation depends on their supposed poetical gifts Think of them at Court festivals, with their eternal *madoi, madoi* [1] It is a wonder they do not grow tired of the word A little while ago *adabito* ''Faithless one'' was used by well-bred lovers in every poem which they exchanged They declined it (''of the faithless one,'' ''from the faithless one'' and so on) in the third line, thus gaining time to think out their final couplet And so we all go on, poring over nicely stitched *Aids to Song*, and when we have committed a sufficient number of phrases to memory, producing them on the next occasion when they are required It is not a method which leads to very much variety

'But if we need a change, how much more does this unfortunate princess whose scruples forbid her to open any book except these old-fashioned collections of standard verse, written on dingy, native paper, to which her father Prince Hitachi introduced her long ago? Apart from these the only other reading which he seems to have permitted her was the *Marrow of Native Song* Unfortunately this book consists almost entirely of ''Faults to be avoided'', its comminations and restrictions have but served to aggravate her natural lack of facility After such an education as this it is no wonder that her compositions have a well-worn and familiar air'

'You are too severe,' said Murasaki, pleading for the princess 'Whatever you may say, she managed this time to send an answer, and promptly too Pray let me have a copy of her poem that I may show it to the Akashi child I too used to have such books as the *Marrow of Poesy*, but I do not know what has become of them Probably book-worms got into them and they were thrown away I believe that to anyone unfamiliar with the old phrase-books Suyetsumu s poem would seem delightfully fanciful and original Let us try ' 'Do nothing of the kind,' said Genji 'Her education would be ruined if she began to take an interest in poetry It is an accepted principle that however great the aptitude which a girl may show for some branch of science or art, she must beware of using it, for there is always a risk that her mind may be unduly diverted from

[1] ''I go astray'

ordinary duties and pursuits She must know just so much of each subject that it cannot be said she has entirely neglected it Further than this, she can only go at the risk of undermining the fortress of chastity or diminishing that softness of manner without which no woman can be expected to please.'

But all this while he had forgotten that Suetsumu's letter itself required a reply, indeed, as was pointed out by Murasaki, the princess's poem contained a hidden meaning which might be construed as a direct plea for further consolation It would have been very unlike him not to have heeded such an appeal, and feeling that the standard she had set was not a very exacting one, he dashed off the following reply 'If heartlessness there be, not mine it is but yours, who speak of sending back the coat that, rightly worn, brings dreams of love' [1]

[1] A coat worn inside out brings dreams of one's lover

CHAPTER V

The First Song of The Year

WITH the morning of the New Year's[1] Day began a spell of the most delightful weather Soft air, bright sunshine, and not a cloud to be seen in the whole sky In every garden, on the humblest piece of waste ground, young shoots that formed each day a clearer patch of green were pushing up amid the snow, while over the trees hung a mist, stretched there, so it seemed, on purpose that the wonders it was hiding might later come as a surprise Nor was this pleasant change confined to garden and wood, for men and women also, without knowing why, suddenly felt good-humoured and hopeful It may be imagined then what an enchantment these first spring days, everywhere so delightful, cast upon the gardens of Genji's palace, with their paths of jade-dust, their groves and lakes It would be impossible here to describe in any way that would not be both tedious and inadequate the beauties of the four domains which Genji had allotted to his favourites But this I may say, that the Spring Garden,[2] with its great orchards of fruit trees at this moment far excelled the rest, and even behind her screens-of-state Murasaki breathed an atmosphere that was heavily laden with the scent of plum-blossom Indeed the place was a Heaven upon earth, but a Heaven adapted to human requirements by the addition of numerous comforts and amenities The Princess[3] from Akashi was still living in Murasaki's apartments The younger among the gentlewomen-in-waiting had been placed at her disposal, while the older among them, and such as had distinguished themselves in any way, were retained by Murasaki On the third day they were already gathered together in front of the Mirror Cake[4] reciting 'for a thousand years may we dwell under thy shadow' and other New Year verses, with a good deal of laughter and scuffling, when Genji's unexpected entry suddenly caused many pairs of hands to fly back into an attitude of prayer The ladies looked so uncomfortable at having been caught treating the ceremonies of the day with undue levity, that Genji said to them laughing 'Come now, there is no need to take the prayers on our behalf so seriously I am sure each of you has plenty of things she would like to pray for on her own account Tell me, all of you, what you most desire in the coming year, and I will add my prayers to yours Among these ladies was a certain Chujo,[5] one of his own gentlewomen,

[1] The year began in the spring Genji was now thirty-six.
[2] Murasaki's
[3] The child born at Akashi.
[4] Served on the evening of the third day of the year, with radish and oranges.
[5] She had always been in love with Genji

whom he had transferred to Murasaki's service at the time of his exile She knew well enough, poor lady, what thing *she* most desired But she only said 'I tried just now to think of something to pray for on my own account, but it ended by my saying the prayer 'May he endure long as the Mountain of Kagami in the country of Omi "' [1]

The morning had been occupied in receiving a host of New Year visitors, but now Genji thought he would call upon the various inhabitants of his palace, to give them his good wishes and see how they looked in their New Year clothes 'Your ladies,' he said to Murasaki, 'do not seem to take these proceedings seriously I found them romping together, instead of saying their prayers You and I will have to hold a service of our own ' So saying he recited the prayer, not without certain additions which showed that he took the business only a trifle more seriously than the ladies whom he had just criticized He then handed her the poem 'May the course of our love be clear as the waters of yonder lake, from which, in the spring sunshine, the last clot of ice has melted away ' To this she answered 'On the bright mirror of these waters I see stretched out the cloudless years love holds for us in store ' Then (as how many times before!) Genji began telling her that, whatever was reported of him or whatever she herself observed, she need never have any anxiety And he protested, in the most violent and impressive terms, that his passion for her underlay all that he felt or did, and could not be altered by any passing interest or fancy She was for the moment convinced, and accepted his protestations ungrudgingly

Besides being the third of the year it was also the Day of the Rat [2] and therefore as fine an occasion for prayers and resolutions as could possibly have been found

His next visit was to the little girl from Akashi He found her maids and page-boys playing New Year games on the mound in front of her windows, and pulling up the dwarf pine-trees, an occupation in which they seemed to take a boundless delight The little princess's rooms were full of sweetmeat boxes and hampers, all of them presents from her mother To one toy, a little nightingale perched upon a sprig of the five-leaved pine, was fastened a plaintive message 'In *my* home the nightingale's voice I never hear, ' [3] and with it the poem —

O nightingale, to one that many months,
While strangers heard you sing,
Has waited for your voice, grudge not today
The first song of the year!

Genji read the poem and was touched by it, for he knew that only under the stress of great emotion would she have allowed this note of sadness

[1] Kagami = 'Mirror'
[2] The first of the cyclical signs.
[3] You are silent as this toy bird and send me no New Year greetings

to tinge a New Year poem 'Come, little nightingale!' he said to the child, 'you must make haste with your answer, it would be heartless indeed if in the quarter whence these pretty things come you were ungenerous with your springtime notes!' and taking his own ink-stone from a servant who was standing by, he prepared it for her and made her write She looked so charming while she did this that he found himself envying those who spent all day in attendance upon her, and he felt that to have deprived the Lady of Akashi year after year of so great a joy was a crime for which he would never be able to forgive himself He looked to see what she had written 'Though years be spent asunder, not lightly can the nightingale forget the tree where first it nested and was taught to sing' The flatness of the verse had at least this much to recommend it — the mother would know for certain that the poem had been written without grown-up assistance!

The Summer Quarters[1] were not looking their best, indeed at this time of year they could hardly be expected not to wear a somewhat uninteresting air As he looked about him he could see no object that was evidence of any very pronounced taste or proclivity, the arrangements betokened, rather, a general discrimination and good breeding For many years past his affection for her had remained at exactly the same pitch, never flagging in the slightest degree, and at the same time never tempting him to the extremer forms of intimacy In this way there had long ago grown up between them a relationship far more steady and harmonious than can ever exist between those who are lovers in the stricter sense of the term This morning he spoke to her for a while from behind her curtains-of-state But presently he cautiously raised a corner of one curtain, and he looked in How little she had changed! But he was sorry to see that the New Year's dress he had given her was not a great success Her hair had of late years grown much less abundant, and in order to maintain the same style of coiffure, she had been obliged to supplement it by false locks To these Genji had long ago grown accustomed But he now began trying to imagine how she appeared to other people, and saw at once that to them she must seem a very homely, middle-aged person indeed So much the better, then, that he who loved her had this strange power of seeing her as she used to be, rather than as she was now And she on her side — what if she should one day grow weary of him, as women often did of those who gave them so little as he had done!

Such were the reflections that passed through Genji's mind while he sat with her 'We are both singularly fortunate,' he concluded to himself 'I, in my capacity for self-delusion, she in hers for good-tempered acceptance of whatever comes her way' They talked for a long while, chiefly of old times, till at last he found that he ought to be on his way to the western wing

[1] Allotted to the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers.

Considering the short time that Tamakatsura had been in residence she had made things look uncommonly nice The number and smartness of her maids gave the place an air of great animation The large and indispensable articles of furniture had all arrived, but many of the smaller fittings were not yet complete This was in a way an advantage, for it gave to her rooms a look of spaciousness and simplicity which had a peculiar charm But it was the mistress of these apartments who, when she suddenly appeared upon the scene, positively confounded him by her beauty How perfectly she wore that long, close-fitting robe, with its pattern of mountain-kerria! Here, he thought, contrasting her inevitably with the lady to whom he had just said farewell, here was nothing that it might be dangerous to scrutinize, nothing that kindness bade him condone, but radiance, freshness, dazzling youth from tip to toe Her hair was somewhat thinned out at the ends, in pursuance, perhaps, of some vow made during the days of her tribulation, and this gave to her movements an ease and freedom which strangely accorded with the bareness of her quarters Had he chosen any but his present rôle,[1] he would not now be watching her flit unconstrainedly hither and thither across her room She, however, having by this time grown used to his informal visits, enjoyed his company to the full and would even have had him treat her with a shade less deference when suddenly she remembered that he was only a make-believe father after all, and then it seemed to her that she had already countenanced far greater liberties than their situation demanded 'For my part,' said Genji at last, 'I feel as though you had been living with us for years, and am certain that I shall never have cause to repent your coming But you have not progressed so fast in friendship with the other inmates of my household as I have done in mine with you I notice you do not visit Lady Murasaki I am sorry for this, and hope that in future you will make use of her apartments without formality of any sort whenever you feel inclined You could be of great help to the little girl who lives with her For example, if you would take charge of her music-lessons You would find everyone in that quarter most affable and forthcoming Do promise me to try!' 'If you wish it,' was all she said, but in a voice which indicated that she really meant to obey

It was already becoming dark when he arrived at the Lady of Akashi's rooms Through an open door a sudden puff of wind carried straight towards him from her dais a blend of perfumes as exquisite as it was unfamiliar But where was the Lady herself? For a while he scanned the room in vain He noticed a writing-case, and near it a great litter of books and papers On a long flat cushion bordered with Chinese brocade from Lo-yang lay a handsome zithern, while in a brazier which, even in the dim light, he could see to be an object of value and importance, there burned

[1] That of father

some of that incense which is known as 'The Courtier's Favourite' This was the scent which pervaded the whole room and, blending with a strong odour of musk, created the delicious perfume which Genji had noticed when he first turned into the corridor. Coming close enough to examine the papers which lay scattered about the dais, he saw that though there were many experiments in different styles, some of them quite interesting, there were no efforts towards the more extravagant and pretentious forms of cursive Her child's letter of thanks for the toy bird and tree had already arrived, and it was evident that, in her delight, she had just been copying out a number of classic poems appropriate to such an occasion But among these was written a poem of her own Oh joy untold! The nightingale that, lured by the spring flowers, to distant woods was gone, now to its valley nest again repairs' She had also copied out the old poems 'I waited for thy song' and 'Because my house is where the plum-tree blooms,' and many other snatches and fragments such as were likely to run in the head of one to whom a sudden consolation had come He took up the papers one by one, sometimes smiling, yet ashamed of himself for doing so Then he wetted the pen and was just about to write a message of his own, when the Lady of Akashi suddenly appeared from a back room Despite the splendours by which she was now surrounded she still maintained a certain deference of manner and anxiety to please which marked her as belonging to a different class Yet there was something about the way her very dark hair stood out against the white of her dress, hanging rather flat against it, that strangely attracted him It was New Year's night He could not very well absent himself from his own apartments, for there were visitors coming and Murasaki was expecting him .

Yet it was in the Lady of Akashi's rooms that he spent the night, thus causing considerable disappointment in many quarters, but above all in the southern wing, where Murasaki's gentlewomen made bitter comments upon this ill-timed defection

It was still almost dark when Genji returned, and he persuaded himself that, though he had stayed out late, it could not be said that he had been absent for a night To the Lady of Akashi, on her side, it seemed that he was suddenly rising to leave her just as the night was beginning Nevertheless, she was enraptured by his visit Murasaki would no doubt have sat up waiting for him, and he was quite prepared to find her in rather a bad humour But one never knows, and in order to find out he said I have just had the most uncomfortable doze It was too childish I fell asleep in my chair I wish someone had woken me It was the most mistaken kindness' But no! She did not reply, and seeing that for the moment there was no more to be done, he lay back and pretended to be asleep, but as soon as it was broad daylight got up and left the room

Next day there was a great deal of New Year s entertaining to be done,

which was fortunate, for it enabled him to save his face As usual, almost the whole Court was there — princes, ministers and noblemen There was a concert and on Genji's part a grand distribution of trinkets and New Year presents This party was an occasion of great excitement for the more elderly and undistinguished of the guests, and it may be imagined with what eagerness it was this year awaited by the younger princes and noblemen, who were perpetually on the lookout for adventure and flattered themselves that the new inmate[1] of Genji's palace was by no means beyond their reach A gentle evening breeze carried the scent of fruit-blossom into every corner of the house, in particular, most fragrant of all, the plum-trees in Murasaki's garden were now in full bloom It was at that nameless hour which is neither day nor night The concert had begun, delicate harmonies of flute and string filled the air, and at last came the swinging measure of 'Well may this Hall grow rich and thrive,'[2] with its animated refrain 'Oh, the saki-grass so sweet,' in which Genji joined with excellent effect This indeed was one of his peculiar gifts, that whatever was afoot, whether music, dancing or what not, he had only to join in and everyone else was at once inspired to efforts of which they would not have imagined themselves capable

Meanwhile the ladies of the household, in the seclusion of their rooms, heard little more than a confused din of horse-hoofs and carriage-wheels, their plight being indeed much like that of the least deserving among the Blest, who though they are reborn in Paradise, receive an unopened lotus-bud as their lodging[3] But still worse was the position of those who inhabited the old eastern wing, for having once lived at any rate within earshot of such festivities as this, they now saw themselves condemned to an isolation and lack of employment which every year would increase Yet though they might almost as well have renounced the Court and ensconced themselves 'by mountain paths where Sorrow is unknown,' they did nothing of the kind nor, real though their grievances were, did the slightest complaint ever cross their lips Indeed, save that they were left pretty much to their own devices, they had little else to complain of They were housed in the utmost comfort and security Those of them who were religious had at least the certainty that their pious practices would not be interrupted, while those who cared for study had plenty of time to fill a thousand copybooks with native characters As regards their lodging and equipment, they had only to express a desire for it to be immediately gratified And sometimes their benefactor actually called upon them, as indeed happened this spring, so soon as the busy days of the New Festival were over

[1] Tamakatsura.

[2] 'Well may this house grow rich and thrive —
Oh, the saki-grass, the saki-grass so sweet —
Of the saki-grass, three leaves, four leaves, so trim
Are the walls of this house made.'

[3] And consequently cannot see the Buddha nor hear his Word

Suyetsumu was after all the daughter of Prince Hitachi, and as such was entitled to keep up a considerable degree of state Genji had accordingly provided her with a very ample staff of attendants Her surroundings indeed were all that could be desired She herself had changed greatly in recent years Her hair was now quite grey, and seeing that she was embarrassed by this and was evidently wondering what impression it would make upon him, he at first kept his eyes averted while he spoke to her His gaze naturally fell upon her dress He recognized it as that which he had given her for New Year, but it looked very odd, and he was wondering how he had come to give her so unsuitable a garment when he discovered that the fault was entirely that of the wearer Over it she had put a thin mantle of dull black crepe, unlined, and so stiff that it crackled when she moved The woven dress which he had given her was meant to wear under a heavy cloak, and naturally in her present garb she was, as he could see, suffering terribly from the cold He had given her an ample supply of stuff for winter cloaks What could she have done with it all? But with Suyetsumu nothing seemed to thrive, every stuff became threadbare, every colour turned dingy, save that of one bright flower [1] But one must keep such things out of one's head, and he firmly replaced the open flap of her curtain

She was not offended It was quite enough that year after year he should preserve the same unmistakable signs of affection, for did he not always treat her as an intimate and equal, taking her completely into his confidence and addressing her always in the most informal manner imaginable? If this were not affection, what else could it be?

He meanwhile was thinking what a uniquely depressing and wearisome creature she was, and deciding that he must really make up his mind to be a little kinder to her, since it was certain that no one else intended to take the business off his hands

He noticed that while she talked her teeth positively chattered with cold He looked at her with consternation 'Is there no one,' he asked, 'whose business it is to take charge of your wardrobe? It does not seem to me that stiff clumsy over-garments are very well suited to your present surroundings This cloak of yours, for example If you cannot do without it, then at any rate be consistent and wear it over a dress of the same description You cannot get yourself up in one style on top and another underneath' He had never spoken to her so bluntly before, but she only tittered slightly 'My brother Daigo no Azari,' she said at last, 'promised to look after those warm stuffs for me, and he carried them all off before I had time to make them into dresses He even took away my sables [2] I am so cold without them' Her brother evidently felt the cold even more than she did, and Genji imagined him with a very red

[1] *Hana* = 'nose' and 'flower'

[2] See Part I, p 121

nose indeed Simplicity was no doubt an engaging quality, but really this lady carried it a little too far However, with her it was certainly no affectation, and he answered good-humouredly 'As far as those sables are concerned, I am delighted to hear what has become of them I always thought they were really meant to keep out the rain and snow Next time your brother goes on a mountain pilgrimage But there is no need for *you* to shiver You can have as much of this white material as you like, and there is nothing to prevent your wearing it sevenfold thick, if you find you cannot keep warm Please always remind me of such promises If I do not do things at once, I am apt to forget about them My memory was never very good and I have always needed keeping up to the mark But now that there are so many conflicting claims upon my time and attention, nothing gets done at all unless I am constantly reminded' And thinking it safest to act while the matter was still in his mind, he sent a messenger across to the New Palace for a fresh supply of silks and brocades

The Nijo-in was kept in perfect order and repair, but the fact that it was no longer the main residence somehow or other gave it an air of abandonment and desolation The gardens, however, were as delightful as ever The red plum-blossom was at its best, and it seemed a pity that so much beauty and fragrance should be, one might almost say, wasted He murmured to himself the lines 'To see the springtide to my old home I came, and found within it a rarer flower than any that on orchard twigs was hung!'

She heard the words, but luckily did not grasp the unflattering allusion [1]

He also paid a brief visit to Utsusemi, now turned nun She had installed herself in apartments so utterly devoid of ornament or personal touches of any kind that they had the character of official waiting-rooms The only conspicuous object which they contained was a large statue of Buddha, and Genji was lamenting to himself that sombre piety, to the exclusion of all other interest, should have possessed so gracious and gentle a spirit, when he noticed that the decoration of her prayer-books, the laying of her altar with its dishes of floating petals — these and many another small sign of elegance seemed to betray a heart that was not yet utterly crushed by the severities of religion Her blue-grey curtains-of-state showed much taste and care She sat so far back as scarcely to be seen But one touch of colour stood out amid the gloom, the long sleeves of the gay coat he had sent her showed beneath her mantle of grey, and moved by her acceptance of this token he said with tears in his eyes 'I know that I ought not now even to remember how once I felt towards you But from the beginning our love brought to us only irritation and misery It is as well that, if we are to be friends at all, it must now be in a very different way' She too was deeply moved and said at last 'How can I

[1] *Hana* = 'flower' and 'nose' See above.

been somewhat uncertain, but at dusk the clouds cleared away, and bright moonlight shone upon those exquisite gardens, now clad in a thin covering of snow Many of the young courtiers who had recently come into notice showed unusual proficiency on instruments of one kind and another There were flute-players in abundance, and nowhere that night did they give a more admirable display than when they welcomed the arrival of the mummers in front of Genji's palace The ladies of the household had been apprised of the ceremony, and they were now assembled in stands which had been set up in the cross-galleries between the central hall and its two wings The lady of the western side[1] was invited to witness the proceedings in company with the little princess from Akashi, whose windows looked out onto the courtyard where the dancing was to take place Murasaki was their neighbour, being separated from them only by a curtain After performing before the ex-Emperor the dancers had been summoned to give a second display in front of Kokiden's apartments It was consequently even later than had been anticipated when they at last arrived Before they danced, they had to be served with their mummers'' portions It was expected that, considering the lateness of the hour, this part of the proceedings, with its curious rites and observances, would be somewhat curtailed But on the contrary Genji insisted upon its being carried out with even more than the prescribed elaboration A faint light was showing in the east, the moon was still shining, but it had begun to snow again, this time harder than ever. The wind, too, had risen, already the tree-tops were swaying, and it became clear that a violent storm was at hand There was, in the scene that followed, a strange discrepancy, the delicate pale green cloaks of the mummers, lined with pure white, fluttered lightly, elegantly to the movements of the dance, while around them gathered the gloom and menace of the rising storm Only the cotton plumes of their headgear, stiff and in a way graceless as they were, seemed to concord with the place and hour These, as they swayed and nodded in the dance, had a strangely vivid and satisfying beauty

Among those who sang and played for the dancers Yugiri and To no Chujo's sons took the lead As daylight came the snow began to clear, and only a few scattered flakes were falling when through the cold air there rose the strains of *Bamboo River*[2] I should like to describe the movements of this dance — how the dancers suddenly rise on tiptoe and spread their sleeves like wings — and with how delightful an effect voice after voice joins in the lively tune But it has truly been said that such things are beyond the painter's art, and still less, I suppose, can any depiction of them be expected of a mere storyteller

[1] Tamakatsura

[2] 'In the garden of flowers at the end of the bridge that crosses Bamboo River — in the garden of flowers set me free, with youths and maidens round me'

The ladies of the household vied with one another in the decoration of their stalls Gay scarves and favours hung out on every side, while shimmering New Year dresses now dimly discovered behind drawn curtains-of-state, now flashing for a moment into the open as some lady-in-waiting reached forward to adjust a mat or rescue a fan, looked in the dawning light like a meadow of bright flowers 'half-curtained by the trailing mists of Spring' Seldom can there have been seen so strange and lovely a sight There was, too, a remote, barbaric beauty in the high turbans of the dancers, with their stiff festoons of artificial flowers, and when at last they entoned the final prayer, despite the fact that the words were nonsense and the tune apparently a mere jangle of discordant sounds, there was in the whole setting of the performance something so tense, so stirring that these savage cries seemed at the moment more moving than the deliberate harmonies by which the skilled musician coldly seeks to charm our ear

After the usual distribution of presents, the mummers at last withdrew It was now broad daylight, and all the guests retired to get a little belated sleep Genji rose again towards midday 'I believe that Yugiri is going to make every bit as good a musician as Kobai,'[1] he said, while discussing the scenes of the night before I am astonished by the talent of the generation which is now growing to manhood The ancients no doubt far excelled us in the solid virtues, but our sensibilities are, I venture to assert, far keener than theirs I thought at one time that Yugiri was quite different from his companions and counted upon turning him into a good, steady-going man of affairs My own nature is, I fear, inherently frivolous, and not wishing him to take after me I have been at great pains to implant in him a more serious view of life But signs are not wanting that under a very correct and solemn exterior he hides a disposition towards just those foibles which have proved my own undoing If it turns out that his wonderful air of good sense and moderation are mere superficial poses, it will indeed be annoying for us all' So he spoke, but he was in reality feeling extremely pleased with his son Then, humming the tune[2] that the mummers sing at the moment when they rise to depart, Genji said 'Seeing all the ladies of the household gathered together here last night has made me think how amazing it would be if we could one day persuade them to give us a concert It might be a sort of private After Feast'[3] The rumour of this project soon spread through the palace On every hand lutes and zitherns were being pulled from out the handsome brocade bags into which they had been so carefully stowed away, and there was such a sprucing, polishing and tuning as you can scarcely imagine, followed by unremitting practice and the wildest day-dreams

[1] To no Chujo's son famous for the beauty of his voice. See Part II, p 221
[2] The *Bansuraku* or 'Joy of Ten Thousand Springs'
[3] The After Feast is held in the Emperor's palace.

CHAPTER VI

The Butterflies

TOWARDS the end of the third month, when out in the country the orchards were no longer at their best and the song of the wild birds had lost its first freshness, Murasaki's Spring Garden seemed only to become every day more enchanting The little wood on the hill beyond the lake, the bridge that joined the two islands, the mossy banks that seemed to grow greener not every day but every hour — could anything have looked more tempting? 'If only one could get there!' sighed the young people of the household, and at last Genji decided that there must be boats on the lake They were built in the Chinese style Everyone was in such a hurry to get on board that very little time was spent in decorating them, and they were put into use almost as soon as they would float On the day when they were launched the Water Music was played by musicians summoned from the Imperial Board of Song The spectacle was witnessed by a large assembly of princes, noblemen and courtiers, and also by the Empress Akikonomu, who was spending her holidays at the New Palace

Akikonomu remembered Murasaki s response to her present [1] it had been tantamount to saying 'Do not visit me now, but in the springtime when my garden will be at its best ' Genji too was always saying that he wanted to show her the Spring Garden How simple it would all have been if she could merely have walked across to Murasaki's domain when the fancy seized her, enjoyed herself among the flowers and gone away! But she was now an Empress, an August Being hedged round by sacred statutes and conventions However, if such liberties were hers no longer, there were in her service many who could enjoy them in her stead, and sending for one of the new boats she filled it with some of the younger and more adventurous of her gentlewomen It was possible to go by water all the way to the Spring Garden, first rowing along the Southern Lake, then passing through a narrow channel straight towards a toy mountain which seemed to bar all further progress But in reality there was a way round, and eventually the party found itself at the Fishing Pavilion Here they picked up Murasaki's ladies, who were waiting at the Pavilion by appointment The boats were carved with a dragon's head at the prow and painted with the image of an osprey at the stern, completely in the Chinese style, and the boys who manned them were all in Chinese costume, with their hair tied up with bright ribbons behind The lake, as they now put out towards the middle of it, seemed

[1] The box of autumn leaves. See above, p 432

immensely large, and those on board, to whom the whole experience was new and deliciously exciting, could hardly believe that they were not heading for some undiscovered land At last however the rowers brought them close in under the rocky bank of the channel between the two large islands, and on closer examination they discovered to their delight that the shape of every little ledge and crag of stone had been as carefully devised as if a painter had traced them with his brush Here and there in the distance the topmost boughs of an orchard showed above the mist, so heavily laden with blossom that it looked as though a bright carpet were spread in mid-air Far away they could just catch sight of Murasaki's apartments, marked by the deeper green of the willow boughs that swept her courtyards, and by the shimmer of her flowering orchards, which even at this distance seemed to shed their fragrance amid the isles and rocks In the world outside, the cherry-blossom was almost over, but here it seemed to laugh at decay, and round the Palace even the wistaria that ran along the covered alleys and porticos was all in bloom, but not a flower past its best, while here, where the boats were tied, mountain-kerria poured its yellow blossom over the rocky cliffs in a torrent of colour that was mirrored in the waters of the lake below Water-birds of many kinds played in and out among the boats or fluttered hither and thither with tiny twigs or flower sprays in their beaks, and love-birds roamed in pairs, their delicate markings blending, in reflection, with the frilled pattern of the waves Here, like figures in a picture of fairyland, they spent the day gazing in rapture, and envied the woodman [1] on whose axe green leaves at last appeared

Many trifling poems were interchanged, such as 'When the wind blows, even the wave-petals, that are no blossoms at all, put on strange colours, for this is the vaunted cape, the Cliff of Kerria-Flowers' [2] And To the Rapids of Idé [3] surely the channels of our spring lake must bend, for where else hang the kerria-flowers so thick across the rocks?' Or this 'Never again will I dream of the Mountain [4] on the Tortoise s Back, for here in this boat have I found a magic that shall preserve both me and my name for ever from the onset of mortality' And again In the soft spring sunshine even the spray that falls from the rower's oars sinks soft as scattered petals onto the waveless waters of the lake'

So captivated were they by this novel experience that they had soon lost all sense of whither they were faring or whence they had come It was indeed as though the waters had cast a spell of forgetfulness upon their hearts, and when evening came they were still, as it seemed to them, gliding away and away across the lake, to the pleasant strains of the tune

[1] See Part II, p 349
[2] Yamabuki no Saki, a place in Omi, referred to in the *Gossamer Diary*
[3] A place in Yamashiro, also famous for its kerria-flowers
[4] Horai, fairyland, the Immortal Island

called *The Royal Deer*. Suddenly the boats halted, the ladies were invited to go ashore, and to their complete surprise found that they were back again at the Fishing Pavilion

This place was finished in a manner which combined elegance with extreme simplicity The rooms were indeed almost bare, and as now the rival parties pressed into them, spreading along the empty galleries and across the wide, deserted floors, there was such an interweaving of gay colours as would have been hard to outdo The musicians were again called upon, and this time played a sequence of little-known airs which won universal applause Soon they were joined by a troupe of dancers whom Genji had himself selected, drawing up at the same time a list of pieces which he thought would interest such an audience

It seemed a pity that darkness should be allowed to interfere with these pleasures, and when night came on, a move was made to the courtyard in front of the Palace Here flares were lit, and on the mossy lawn at the foot of the Great Steps not only professional musicians, but also various visitors from Court and friends of the family performed on wind and string, while picked teachers of the flute gave a display in the 'double mode'[1] Then all the zitherns and lutes belonging to different members of the household were brought out onto the steps and carefully tuned to the same pitch A grand concert followed, the piece *Was ever such a day?* being performed with admirable effect Even the grooms and labourers who were loitering amid the serried ranks of coaches drawn up outside the great gates, little as they usually cared for such things, on this occasion pricked up their ears and were soon listening with lips parted in wonder and delight For it was indeed impossible that the strange shrill descants of the Spring Mode, enhanced as they were by the unusual beauty of the night, should not move the most imperceptive of human creatures

The concert continued till dawn As a return-tune[2] *Gay Springtide Pleasures* was added to the programme, and Prince Sochi no Miya carried the vocal music back very pleasantly to the common mode by singing *Green Willows*[3] in the words of which Genji also joined

Already the morning birds were clamouring in a lusty chorus to which, from behind the curtains, the Empress Akikonomu listened with irritation

It would have been hard in these days to find a mote in the perfect sunshine of Genji's prosperity and contentment But it was noticed with regret by his friends, as a circumstance which must of necessity be pain-

[1] The mode of the second, beginning on alto A. Being so high it was very difficult to play It symbolized Spring

[2] The tune which marked the return from the unusual 'Spring' tuning to the ordinary mode.

[3] 'With a thread of green from the willow-tree — Ohé!
The nightingale has stitched himself a hat — Ohé!
A hat of plum-blossom, they say — Ohé!'

ful to him, that Murasaki still bore him no child It was felt, however, that this misfortune was to some extent remedied by the arrival of his handsome natural daughter (for so Tamakatsura was regarded by the world at large) The evident store which Genji himself set by this lady, becoming a matter of common report, together with the tales of her almost unbelievable beauty, soon induced a large number of suitors to seek her hand, which was precisely what he had anticipated Those of them whose position in life entitled them to confidence had, through suitable channels, already gone so far as to make hints in this direction, while there were doubtless many petty courtiers the flame of whose love burned secretly as a campfire buried under a pile of stones [1]

To no Chujo's sons were, of course, like everyone else, under the delusion that she was Genji's child and took a considerable interest in her But the principal suitor was Genji's half-brother Prince Sochi no Miya It so happened that he had been a widower for three years, he was tired of this comfortless state of life and had made it clear not only that he considered himself a suitable match for Lady Tamakatsura, but also that he should like the wedding to take place immediately This morning he was still in a very emotional condition, with a wreath of wistaria flowers about his head, he was indulging in languorous airs which confirmed Genji's previous suspicion that this prince had lately fallen seriously in love Till now, however, Genji had deliberately pretended not to notice that anything was wrong When the great tankard was handed round, Prince Sochi said in a doleful voice to Genji 'You know, if I were not so fond of you, I should long ago have left this entertainment It has been a terrible night for me ' and he recited the poem Because my heart is steeped in a dye too near to its own blood,[2] life do I prize no longer and in the surging stream shall shortly cast myself away ' So saying he took the wreath of wistaria from his own head and laid it on Genji's, quoting the poem 'My wreath shall be thine ' Genji laughingly accepted it and replied Watch by the flowers of spring till the last petal be unfolded, then will be time enough to talk of whirlpools and despair ' So saying he caught hold of his brother and held him fast in his seat, promising that if he would but stay, he should today witness a performance far more entertaining than what had gone before

It so happened that this day marked the opening of the Empress Akikonomu's Spring Devotions Most of the visitors not wishing to miss the ceremonies connected with this occasion, asked leave to stay on, and retiring to the guest-rooms, changed into their morning clothes A few who had urgent business at home reluctantly withdrew from the Palace,

[1] Lest the enemy should see it

[2] He thinks that Tamakatsura is Genji's daughter, and therefore his own niece Union with a brother's child was ill-viewed. There are numerous puns, which it would be tedious to explain.

but on returning later they found that they had missed nothing, for it was close upon noon before the actual ceremony began The visitors reached the Empress's apartments in a long procession, headed by Genji himself The whole Court was there, and though the magnificence of the occasion was partly due to Akikonomu's own position, it was in large measure a tribute to Genji's influence and popularity At Murasaki's request an offering of flowers was to be made to the presiding Buddha They were brought by eight little boys disguised some as birds, some as butterflies The Birds carried cherry-blossom in silver bowls, the Butterflies, mountain-kerria in golden bowls They were in reality quite ordinary flowers such as you might find in any country place, but in this setting they seemed to acquire an unearthly glint and splendour The boys arrived by water, having embarked at the landing-stage in front of Murasaki's rooms As they landed at the Autumn domain a sudden gust of wind caught the cherry-blossom in the silver bowls and some of it scattered along the bank The day was cloudless and it was a pretty sight indeed to see the little messengers come out into the sunshine from behind a trailing patch of mist

It had not been found convenient to set up the regular Musicians' Tent, but a platform had been constructed under the portico that ran in front of the Empress's apartments, and chairs had been borrowed that the musicians might be seated in foreign fashion [1] The little boys advanced as far as the foot of the steps, their offerings held aloft in their hands Here they were met by incense-bearers who conveyed the bowls to the grand altar and adding their contents to that of the holy flower-vessels, pronounced the ritual of dedication At this point Yugiri arrived, bearing a poem from Murasaki Lover of Autumn, whom best it pleases that pine-crickets should chirp amid the withered grass, forgive the butterflies that trespass from my garden of flowers ' The Empress smiled To her own gift of autumn leaves these fictive birds and butterflies were the belated response

Her ladies, who were at first loyal to the season with which their mistress was identified, had been somewhat shaken in their allegiance by yesterday's astonishing excursion and came back assuring the Empress that her preference would not survive a visit to the rival park

After the acceptance of their offerings, the Birds performed the Kalyavinka [2] Dance The accompanying music was backed by the warbling of real nightingales, while afar off, with strangely happy effect, there sounded the faint and occasional cry of some crane or heron on the lake All too soon came the wild and rapid passage which marks the close

Now it was the turn of the Butterflies, who after fluttering hither and

[1] The Japanese, as is well known, squat cross-legged on the ground But the use of chairs had spread with Buddhism from Central Asia.

[2] One of the magical birds in Amida Buddha's Paradise.

thither for a while, settled at the foot of a tangled thorn-hedge, over which the yellow kerria streamed down in splendid profusion, and here executed their dance

The Comptroller of the Empress's household, assisted by several courtiers, now distributed largesse to the boy-dancers on her behalf To the Birds, cherry-coloured jackets, to the Butterflies, cloaks lined with silk of kerria hue These were so appropriate that they could hardly have been produced on the spur of the moment, and it almost seemed as though some hint of Murasaki's intention had reached the Empress's quarters beforehand To the musicians were given white, unlined dresses, and presents of silk and cloth according to their rank Yugiri received a blue jacket for himself and a lady s costume for his store-cupboards He was also charged to carry a reply from the Empress 'I could have cried yesterday at missing it all But what can I do? I am not my own mistress "If anything could tempt me to batter down the flowery, eightfold wall of precedent, it would be the visit of those butterflies who fluttered from your garden into mine" '

You may think that many of the poems which I here repeat are not worthy of the talented characters to whom they are attributed I can only reply that they were in every case composed upon the spur of the moment, and the makers were no better pleased with them than you are

On looking back, I see that I have forgotten to mention the presents which Murasaki distributed among her visitors after the ceremonies of the day before They were, as you may well imagine, very handsome indeed, but to describe all such matters in detail would be very tiresome Henceforward communication between the Spring and Autumn quarters was of daily occurrence, joint concerts and excursions were constantly planned, and the two parties of gentlewomen began to feel as much at home in one domain as in the other

Tamakatsura, after that first encounter on the night when the mummers danced in front of the Palace, had continued her friendship with Murasaki The newcomer's evident desire for cordial relations would in any case have been hard to withstand But it was also apparent that she was extremely intelligent and at the same time very easy to get on with, so that she was soon a general favourite in the Palace

As has been said, her suitors were numerous, but Genji had not as yet shown any sign of encouraging one rather than another His feelings upon the subject were indeed very fluctuating To begin with, he had no confidence in his own capacity to go on playing his present fatherly part with success Something must be done soon, and he often thought that the first step must be to enlighten To no Chujo as to the girl s identity So long as he hesitated to do so, the situation was very embarrassing For whereas Yugiri had formed the habit of going constantly in and out of her room in a manner which very much embarrassed her, but which

it was impossible to criticize, since all the world believed him to be her brother (and it must be confessed that he never attempted to behave with anything else than brotherly affection), To no Chujo's sons whose intimacy with Yugiri brought them frequently to the house, pressed upon her attentions of an unmistakable sort, which she, knowing her true relationship to these young men, was at a loss how to receive She would very much have liked her real father at any rate to know of her present position, but she made no attempt to get into communication with him, for she had complete confidence that Genji, who would not do so much for her unless he wished her well, must know far better than she what policy it was best to pursue Her docility touched and delighted him, for though it did not by any means equal Yugao's, it served constantly to remind him of her But Tamakatsura was, as he soon discovered, a person of very much stronger character than he had supposed

The summer came round, bringing with it the distraction of new clothes and an uncertain yet on the whole extremely agreeable weather Genji had very little business at this season, and there was a great deal of music and entertaining at the New Palace He heard that love-letters were pouring into the western wing [1] and with the pleasure that one always feels at discovering that one's anticipations are being fulfilled he hastened thither to examine these missives He took upon himself not only to read all her correspondence, but also to advise her which letters ought to be neglected and which acknowledged with civility To this advice she listened somewhat coldly By far the most passionate and profuse of her correspondents seemed to be Prince Sochi no Miya, and Genji smiled as he looked through the thick packet into which that prince's letters had been collected 'Sochi and I,' he said, 'have always been great friends With none of the royal princes have I ever been so intimate, and I know that he has always been devoted to me The only subject upon which we have ever had any difference of opinion is just this matter of love-making He allowed it to play far too important a part in his life I am amused and at the same time, in a way, distressed to find him after all these years behaving exactly as he did when we were both boys However, I should like you to answer him I know of no other person about the Court with whom it would so well become a lady of consequence to correspond He is a remarkable man in many ways His appearance alone would entitle him ' and more to this effect, designed of course not to blacken Sochi's character, but to portray him in just such a light as would interest an inexperienced girl These remarks had, however, an exactly opposite effect to that which Genji intended

Then there was Prince Higekuro He had always seemed to be a steady-going, capable fellow, successful in everything he undertook But glancing at his letters Genji feared that upon the hill of Love, where,

[1] Tamakatsura's quarters

let it be remembered, even Confucius stumbled,[1] this wise prince too might easily find his undoing By far the most elegant letter in the whole collection was one written on very dark blue Chinese paper, heavily perfumed with some delicious scent It was folded up very small, and Genji, whose curiosity would have been aroused by this fact alone, now spread it out, displaying the poem 'Of my love perchance you know not, for like a stream that is buried under the ground, a moment it springs into the sunlight, then sinks into the cavern whence it sprang'

It was very well written, in a hand which combined fanciful originality with adherence to the latest fashions 'Who wrote this?' he asked, but he received only the vaguest replies Ukon had now joined them and addressing her, Genji said 'I want you to give your mistress some guidance in the answering of such letters of this kind as may in future arrive For the unfortunate situations which sometimes result from our present freedom of manners we men are not always to blame It often happens that a little timely severity on the lady's part would avert the quandaries into which we are led by our determination to treat love as our principal pastime and distraction At the time (who should know it better than I?) such severity is of course resented by the gentleman, who will rail in the accepted style at his lady's "cruelty" and 'insensibility" But in the end he will be grateful that the matter was not allowed to go further

On the other hand it may happen that some suitor, whose rank is not such that he can be considered as a possible husband, may entertain very serious feelings indeed, yet through fear of giving offence may go no further in his communications than to make a few conventional remarks about the weather or the garden In such a case, if the lady, insisting upon seeing in such epistles more than is actually expressed, administers a rebuff, the result will only be that the affair is henceforward on a footing of passion, not (as hitherto) of formality A civil answer, couched in the same conventional terms as the original letter, may instead dispel the lover's romantic notions and lead him to abandon the quest But whatever happens the lady has done all that ought to be expected of her

On the other hand to mistake the idle compliments and attentions which it is now fashionable to scatter in such profusion, and to treat these courtly formalities as signs of genuine feeling, is even more dangerous than to ignore them altogether, and though such a course may lead to a little momentary excitement, it is bound in the long run to produce a disagreeable situation

'It often happens that a young girl will cast aside all reserve and pursue without thought of the consequences some quite trivial inclination, merely in order to convince the world that she is a woman of feeling At first the discovery of a new pleasure is in itself sufficient to carry her through, but repetition palls, and after a few months excitement gives place to tedium or even disgust

[1] The married life of Confucius, like that of Socrates, was very unhappy

'I have, however, reason to believe that both my stepbrother and Prince Higekuro are in this case completely sincere, and whatever her own feelings may be it is improper that anyone in your mistress's position should deal too curtly with offers such as these As for the rest, I assume that their rank is not such as to make acceptance conceivable, and there can therefore be no objection to your mistress meting out among them such varying degrees of kindness or severity as her fancy dictates'

While this exposition was in progress at the far end of the room, Tamakatsura sat with her back towards the speakers, occasionally glancing across her shoulder with a turn of the head that showed off her delicate profile to great advantage She was wearing a long close-fitting robe, pink plum-blossom colour without, and green within, her short mantle matched the flower of the white deutzia, then in full bloom There was in her style of dress something which made it seem homely without being dowdy or unfashionable If in her manners any trace of rusticity could still be found, it lay perhaps in a certain lack of self-assurance which she seemed to have retained as a last remnant of her country breeding But in every other respect she had made ample use of the opportunities afforded her by life at the New Palace The way she dressed her hair and her use of make-up showed that she observed those around her with an acute and intelligent eye She had, in fact, since her arrival at Court, grown into a perfectly well turned-out and fashionable beauty, all ready to become, alas, not his own (reflected Genji with chagrin) but some fortunate young man's immaculate bride Ukon, too, was thinking, as she watched them, that Genji looked much more fit to be her lover than her father Yes, they were surely made for one another, and Ukon doubted whether, however long he searched, Genji would find her a partner whose looks matched her so well 'Most of the letters that come,' said the old lady, 'I do not pass on at all The three or four that you have been looking at, you will agree I could not possibly have returned But though I delivered them to my mistress, she has not answered them, and though of course she will do so if you insist upon it' 'Perhaps you can tell me,' broke in Genji, who sent this curious note Despite its minute size there seems to be a great deal of writing in it' 'Ah, that one' said Ukon, 'if I returned it once I returned it a hundred times! But there was no getting rid of the messenger It comes from Captain Kashiwagi, His Excellency To no Chujo's eldest son This gentleman knows little Miruko, my lady's chambermaid, and it was through her that the messenger was first admitted I assure you no one else but this child Miruko knows anything about the matter at all' 'But how delightful!' said Genji, much relieved 'Kashiwagi of course holds a rather low rank, and that is a disadvantage But no child of such a man as To no Chujo is to be scorned, and there are, in point of fact, a great many important officials who in public esteem occupy a far lower place than these young

men Moreover, Kashiwagi is generally considered to be the most serious and competent of the brothers To receive compliments from such a man is very gratifying, and though he must of course sooner or later learn of his close relationship to you, for the present I see no need to enlighten him ' And still examining the letter, he added, 'There are touches in his handwriting, too, which are by no means to be despised ' 'You agree with everything I say,' he continued 'but I feel that inwardly you are raising objections all the while I am very sorry not to please you, but if you are thinking that I ought to hand you over to your father without more ado, I simply do not agree with you. You are very young and inexperienced If you were suddenly to find yourself in the midst of brothers and sisters whom you have never known, I am certain you would be miserable Whereas if you will only wait till I have settled your future (in such a way as your father, upon whom there are so many claims, could not possibly manage), there will be time enough afterwards to disclose the story of your birth '

Though he did not say in so many words that he would far rather have kept her for himself, he more than once came perilously near to hinting something of the kind Such indiscretions she either misunderstood or ignored This piqued him, but he enjoyed the visit and was quite unhappy when he discovered that it was high time for him to go back to his own quarters Before he left she reminded him, in guarded language, of his promise to tell her real father what had become of her He felt at this more conscience-stricken than he need have done For in her heart of hearts Tamakatsura was by no means in a hurry to leave the New Palace She would have been glad to have the inevitable introduction to her real parent safely behind her, chiefly because the prospect of it destroyed her peace of mind However kind her father might be, it was impossible that he should take more trouble about her than Prince Genji was doing, indeed, To no Chujo, not having once set eyes on her since she was a mere infant, might well have ceased to take any interest in her whatever She had lately been reading a number of old romances and had come across many accounts of cases very similar to her own She began to see that it was a delicate matter for a child to force itself upon the attention of a parent who had done his best to forget that it existed, and she abandoned all idea of taking the business into her own hands

Genji arrived at Murasaki s rooms full of enthusiasm for the lady whom he had just been visiting 'What a surprising and delightful creature this Tamakatsura is!' he exclaimed 'Her mother, with whom I was so intimate years ago, had almost too grave and earnest a character This girl will, I can see, be more a "woman of the world", but she is at the same time evidently very affectionate I am sure she has a brilliant future before her ' From his manner Murasaki instantly saw that his interest in Tamakatsura had assumed a new character 'I am very sorry for the

girl,' she said 'She evidently has complete confidence in you But I happen to know what you mean by that phrase 'a woman of the world,'' and if I chose to do so, could tell the unfortunate creature what to expect

''But you surely cannot mean that I shall *betray* her confidence?' asked Genji indignantly 'You forget,' she replied, 'that I was once in very much the same position myself You had made up your mind to treat me as a daughter, but, unless I am much mistaken, there were times when you did not carry out this resolution very successfully ''How clever everyone is!' thought Genji, much put out at the facility with which his inmost thoughts were read But he hastened to rejoin 'If I were in love with Tamakatsura, she would presumably become aware of the fact quite as quickly as you would ' He was too much annoyed to continue the conversation, however, he admitted to himself in private that when people come to a conclusion of this kind, it is hardly ever far from the mark But surely, after all, he could judge better than she And Murasaki, he reflected, was not judging this case on its merits, but merely assuming, in the light of past experience, that events were about to take a certain course

To convince himself that Murasaki had no ground for her suspicions he frequently went across to the side wing and spent some hours in Tamakatsura's company.

During the fourth month the weather was rather depressing But one evening, when it had been raining heavily all day, he looked out and saw to his relief that at last the sky was clearing The young maples and oak-trees in the garden blent their leafage in a marvellous curtain of green Genji remembered the lines 'In the fourth month the weather grew clearer and still '[1] and thence his thoughts wandered to the girl in the western wing He felt a sudden longing, on this early summer evening, for the sight of something fresh, something fragrant, and without a word to anyone he slipped away to her rooms He found her practising at her desk in an easy attitude and attire She was in no way prepared to receive such a visit, and upon his arrival rose to her feet with a blush Caught thus unawares and informally dressed, she was more like her mother than he had ever seen her before, and he could not help exclaiming 'I could not have believed it possible! Tonight you are simply Yugao herself Of course, I have always noticed the resemblance, but never before has it reached such a point as this It so happens that Yugiri is not at all like his mother, and consequently I am apt to forget how complete such resemblances can sometimes be '

A sprig of orange-blossom was stuck among some fruit that was lying

[1] From a poem written by Po Chü-i in 821, describing the pleasure of returning to his own house after a spell of duty in the Palace 'I sit at the window and listen to the wind rustling among the bamboo, I walk on the terrace and watch the moon rising between the trees.'

on a tray near by 'As the orange-blossom gives its scent unaltered to the sleeve that brushes it, so have you taken on your mother's beauty, till you and she are one' So he recited, adding 'Nothing has ever consoled me for her loss, and indeed, though so many years have passed I shall die regretting her as bitterly as at the start But tonight, when I first caught sight of you, it seemed to me for an instant that she had come back to me again — that the past was only a dream Bear with me, you cannot conceive what happiness was brought me by one moment of illusion But now it is over' and so saying he took her hand in his She was somewhat taken aback, for he had never attempted to do such a thing before, but she answered quietly 'Wretched will be my lot indeed, should the flower's perfume prove hapless as the flower that was destroyed'

She felt that things were not going well, and sat staring at the floor, her chin propped on her fist This was just the attitude in which she most attracted him He noticed the plumpness of her hand, the softness of her skin, the delicacy of her whole figure Such beauty could not, at these close quarters, in any case have failed to move him, coupled with the memories which every feature inspired, it proved irresistible, and today his discretion broke down as never before True, he did no more than make a somewhat vague avowal of his feelings towards her But Tamakatsura was instantly terror-stricken, of this there could be no doubt, for she was trembling from head to foot 'Come!' he said, 'you need not look so horrified There is no harm in my having such feelings, so long as only you and I are aware of them You have known for some time past that I was very fond of you, and now you have learnt that I care for you even more than you supposed But were I drawn towards you by the blindest passion that has ever darkened the heart of man, this would not damage your chances with Sochi no Miya, Higekuro and the rest For in their eyes you are my daughter, and it would never occur to them that my affection for you could in any way hinder their courtship My only fear is that you will never find a husband who cares for you half as much as I do. Such feelings as mine for you are not as common in the world as you perhaps imagine them to be'

He spoke all the while as though what he had said to her implied nothing more than an unusual access of paternal feeling It had now quite stopped raining, the wind was rustling in the bamboos,[1] and the moon was shining brightly It was a lovely and solemn night Tamakatsura's ladies, seeing that the conversation was beginning to take a somewhat intimate turn, had tactfully withdrawn from her presence

His visits had for some while been very frequent, but circumstances seldom favoured him as they did tonight Moreover, now that he had, quite without premeditation, confessed to these feelings, they seemed suddenly to have taken a far stronger hold upon him Unobtrusively,

[1] See note on p 488.

indeed almost without her being aware of what was happening, he slipped from her shoulders the light cloak which she had been wearing since summer came in, and lay down beside her She was horrified, but chiefly through the fear that someone might discover them in this posture Her own father, she ruefully reflected, might refuse to admit his responsibilities towards her and even order her out of his sight, but she could be certain that he would not submit her to such ordeals as she was here undergoing . She did her best to hide her tears, but before long they burst forth in an uncontrollable flood Genji was dismayed 'If that is what you feel about it,' he said, 'you must really dislike me very much indeed I have not attempted to do anything that the world would consider in the least reprehensible, even were I in no way connected with you But as it is, we have been friends for almost a year Surely there is nothing very strange in the way I have behaved? You know quite well that I should never force you to do anything you would be sorry for afterwards Do not, please, be angry with me Now that you have grown so like your mother, it is an immense comfort to me simply to be with you ' He spoke then for a long while, tenderly, caressingly For now that she was lying beside him the resemblance to Yugao was more than ever complete But happy though he would have been to remain far longer at her side, he was still able to see that his behaviour had been in the highest degree rash and inconsiderate It was growing late, at any moment someone might return to the room and discover them 'Do not think the worse of me for what has happened this evening,' he said at last, rising from the couch, 'it would distress me very much if you did I know quite well that there are people who never allow their feelings to get the better of them I can only say that I am differently made But of this at least I can assure you whatever you may think of me, such outbursts are not due in my case merely to some frivolous impulse of the moment Once my affections are aroused they are boundless both in time and extent You need not fear that I shall ever act in such a way as to harm your good name All I ask is that I may sometimes be allowed to talk as I have talked tonight, and perhaps I may even hope that you will occasionally answer me in the same spirit '

He spoke gently, reasonably, but she was now beside herself with agitation, and made no intelligible reply

'I see that I have made a great mistake,' he said at last 'I always thought that we got on unusually well together, but it is now clear that the friendship was all on my side For I cannot think that my showing a little affection would so much perturb you unless you definitely dislike me ' He broke off, and left the room with a final entreaty that she would speak to no one of what had occurred

Though Tamakatsura was no longer very young, she was still entirely innocent, and this made her judge Genji's conduct more harshly than

she would otherwise have done He had indeed merely lain down on the same couch, but she, in her inexperience, imagined that in so doing he had taken advantage of her to the utmost possible extent On returning to the room her gentlewomen at once noticed that she was looking very distraught, and pestered her with tiresome enquiries about her health No sooner had they withdrawn than Ateki,[1] the daughter of her old nurse, began (irritatingly enough) to congratulate her upon her guardian's extraordinary kindness 'How gratifying it is,' she said, 'that His Excellence is so admirably attentive to you! With all respect to your own father, I very much doubt whether he would put himself to half as much trouble on your account Prince Genji seems to take a positive pleasure in looking after you ' But Tamakatsura had been too much surprised and shocked by Genji's conduct to feel, for the moment, any gratitude for the more than parental solicitude by which Ateki was so deeply impressed She had no desire whatever to see him again, and yet in his absence felt strangely lonely and depressed

[1] See above, p 441 Ateki of course knew the secret of Tamakatsura's birth.

CHAPTER VII

The Glow-Worm

GENJI was now in a singularly fortunate position The government of the country lay wholly in his hands, but though his power was supreme, he was now seldom troubled by the uninteresting details of public business, for he had some while ago delegated all such minor decisions to To no Chujo, and the arrangement continued to work very successfully In varying ways and degrees his dependants naturally benefited by his increased leisure and security Not only was he able to devote far more time to looking after their affairs, but they could also feel that, such as it was, their position was now something permanent and dependable, whereas in the old days, when the powers arrayed against him were still unshaken, they knew quite well that he might at any moment find himself far more in need of patronage than able any longer to dispense it Most of them, even those who received a very small share of his attentions, were nowadays fairly well content with their lot, but the Princess [1] in the western wing continued to view with great apprehension the imprudent turn which her guardian had lately given to their relationship, and different as were his manners from those of her persecutor [2] on the Island, she was now scarcely less alarmed than in the weeks which preceded her flight She felt that in first insisting on their playing the part of father and daughter, and then suddenly revealing himself in another character, he had taken advantage of her in a very mean way, and despite his protestations it seemed vain to suppose that, out of consideration for her at any rate, he would restrain himself sufficiently to avoid an open scandal She had no one to whom she could turn, and now that she was face to face with the actual difficulties of life she realized far more acutely than she had even done as a child the irreparable loss which she had sustained in her mother's death

Genji, on his side, was exceedingly vexed with himself for having acted so imprudently He had not breathed a word about the matter to anyone, and being anxious to convince himself that his behaviour on that unlucky night had been altogether exceptional, he visited her frequently and, apart from a few rather ambiguous remarks (which however he was careful never to let fall in the presence of her gentlewomen and attendants) he behaved in a manner to which exception could not be taken Each time that he began to venture on dangerous ground she felt her heart beat violently and, if he had been anyone else, would have cut him

[1] Tamakatsura.
[2] Tayu.

short and sent him about his business But as it was she merely pretended not to notice what he was saying

She was naturally of a very cheerful and lively disposition, so that she made friends easily Prince Sochi and her other suitors, though they themselves had obtained so little encouragement from her, continued to hear on all sides nothing but praises of her good looks and general charm They therefore redoubled their efforts, but to their chagrin the rains of the fifth month [1] had already set in without any sign that their industry was likely to be rewarded

Among some letters which Tamakatsura was showing to him Genji found one from Prince Sochi 'If you could but find it in your heart to admit me for one single moment to your presence, you would earn my undying gratitude, even though I should never see you again For I should thus enjoy a respite, the first for many months, from the tortures which I now endure ' 'I have never seen Prince Sochi making love,' said Genji as he read the letter 'It would be a sight worth seeing Please tell him he may come,' and he began suggesting the terms in which she should reply But the idea did not at all appeal to her, and alleging that she was feeling giddy and could not, at the moment, possibly handle a pen, she attempted to lead the conversation into other channels 'But there is no need that you should write yourself,' said Genji, returning to his project, 'we will dictate a letter between us '

Among Tamakatsura's gentlewomen there was none in whom she placed any great confidence The only exception was a certain Saisho no Kimi, a daughter of her mother's younger brother, who seemed to have far more sense than most young women Hearing that this girl was in difficult circumstances Tamakatsura had sent for her to see what could be done, and finding that Saisho was not only the sort of person whom it would be useful in a general way to have about her, but was also an unusually good penwoman, she retained this young cousin in her service Genji, who knew that Tamakatsura often used the girl as her amanuensis, now sent for Saisho and proceeded to dictate a letter For he was consumed by an overwhelming curiosity to see how his half-brother, with whose conduct in all other situations he was so familiar, would conduct himself at such an interview as this As for Tamakatsura, she had, since the occasion of Genji s unpardonable indiscretion, begun to pay a good deal more attention to the communications of her suitors She had no reason to give any preference to Prince Sochi, but he, as much as any other husband, represented a way of escape from the embarrassment in which she found herself She was, however, far from having ever thought of him seriously in this connection

Little knowing that his success was due to a whim of Prince Genji's rather than to any favourable impression that his own suit had made,

[1] It is unlucky to marry in the fifth month.

Sochi no Miya in great elation rushed round to the New Palace and presented himself at Tamakatsura's door He could not complain of his treatment, for he was at once accommodated with a divan which was only a few paces from her curtains-of-state He looked about him On every side he recognized such presents and appurtenances as far more commonly emanate from a lover than from a parent The air was laden with costly perfumes There were hangings, brocades, a thousand trifles any one of which would have been enough to arouse in Sochi's heart the suspicion that Genji, from whom he was convinced that those bounties flowed, was not her father And if he was not her father, then inevitably, as Sochi ruefully recognized, he must be reckoned with as a serious rival Tamakatsura herself made no effort to converse with him or even answer his questions Her maids seemed quite incapable of replying on her behalf, and when even Saisho, reputed to be so capable in every emergency, continued to sit in awkward silence, Genji whispered 'What is the matter with you all? Have you become rooted to your seats? Get up, do something Be civil!' But all this had no effect They merely stared helplessly in front of them

The evening was now drawing in, and as the sky was very much overcast the room was almost dark Beyond her curtains Tamakatsura could just discern the motionless form of her suitor, gracefully outlined against the gloom, while from her side a stirring of the evening air would occasionally carry towards him a fragrance enhanced by a strange perfume[1] which, though it was familiar to him, he could not then identify The room seemed full of diverse and exquisite scents that inflamed his imagination, and though he had previously pictured her to himself as handsome, he now (as these perfumes floated round him) thought of her as a hundred times more beautiful than he had ever done before Her curtains were thick and it was now quite dark He could not see her and could only guess that she was still near him, but so vividly did she now appear before his mind's eye that it was as though no barrier were between them, and he began to address her in the most passionate terms There was now in his style no longer anything of the professional courtier or hardened man-of-the-world The long outpouring to which Genji, ensconced in his corner of her curtained dais, now listened with considerable emotion, was natural, direct — almost boyish When it was over, Prince Sochi was rewarded by a note from Saisho, informing him that her mistress had some time ago retired to the inner room![2] 'This is too bad!' whispered Genji, creeping to the door of her refuge (he had himself been so intent upon his brother's eloquence that he had not seen her slip away) 'You

[1] The rare perfume which Genji wore.

[2] Sochi had been addressing her through her curtains-of-state. She crept away in the darkness as an animal at the Zoo might slink into its back cage. Genji was, of course, all the time with her behind her curtains.

cannot simply disappear while people are talking to you You are governed by absurd preconceived notions, and never stop to consider the merits of the case in question To treat any visitor, and above all a person of Prince Sochi's standing, in the manner I have just witnessed would not be tolerated in a child, and in your case, seeing that you are a grown woman not without some experience of Court life, such behaviour is insufferable Even if you are too shy to converse with him, you might at least sit within reasonable distance ' Genji had never yet pursued her into the inner room, but she had no doubt that on the present occasion, in his eagerness to reform her manners, he would have no scruple in doing so, and reluctantly she left her place of retreat and once more seated herself near the edge of her curtained dais Sochi now attempted to begin a more general conversation, but no topic seemed to arouse her interest Suddenly her attention was distracted by a light which had begun to glimmer quite close to where she sat It seemed to move when Genji moved She now saw him go to her curtains-of-state and, at a certain point, hook back the inner curtain, leaving only a single thickness of light transparent stuff Here he suspended something bright that looked like a paper candle What was he doing? She was dumbfounded

The fact was that on his way to her apartments earlier in the evening Genji had encountered an unusual number of glow-worms Collecting them in a thin paper bag he had concealed this improvised lantern under the folds of his cloak and, on his arrival, disposed of it in a safe corner Startled by the sudden glow of light, Tamakatsura snatched up her fan and buried her face behind it, not before Sochi had caught an enchanting glimpse of her beauty This was just what Genji had intended The attentions which his brother had hitherto paid to Tamakatsura were, he suspected, due solely to the fact that Sochi had accepted the current story and imagined her indeed to be Genji's daughter He knew that, despite her fame as a delightful accession to the Court, Prince Sochi could have but a vague conception of her charm, and in order that he might the sooner escape from his own dilemma he was determined that Sochi should no longer merely pay formal court to the girl, but should really lose his head about her He imagined that he was now at any rate indisputably playing the part of a fond and disinterested parent A strange delusion! For had he reflected for a moment he would have seen that nothing would ever have induced him so crudely to thrust his own daughter, the Princess of Akashi, upon a suitor's notice He now stole away by a back door and returned to his own apartments

Sochi was feeling much encouraged He now discredited Saisho's note and imagined that the lady had been sitting during the whole time of his discourse in the position where the light of the glow-worms revealed her 'After all,' he thought to himself, I have interested her She listens patiently and apparently even likes to be near me ' And with that he

pulled back the light gauze flap at the part of her curtains where Genji had removed the thick inner hanging She was now but a few feet away from him, and though a bag of glow-worms makes no very famous [1] illumination, he saw enough by this fitful and glimmering light to confirm his impression that she was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen In another moment Tamakatsura's maids, summoned hastily to the scene, had detached the strange lantern and carried it somewhere out of sight

Genji's stratagem was indeed abundantly successful This momentary vision of Tamakatsura huddled disconsolately upon her couch had profoundly disturbed him 'Does the harsh world decree that even the flickering glow-worm, too shy for common speech, must quench the timid torchlight of its love!' So he now recited, and she, thinking that if she appeared to be taking much trouble about her reply, he would suppose she attached more importance to the matter than was actually the case, answered instantly 'Far deeper is the glow-worm's love that speaks in silent points of flame, than all the passions idle courtiers prate with facile tongue' She spoke coldly, moreover she had now withdrawn to the far side of her dais For some while he pleaded in vain against this inhospitable treatment But he soon saw that he would gain nothing, even should he stay where he was till dawn, and though he could hear by the water dripping from the eaves that it was a most disagreeable night, he rose and took his leave Despite the rain the nightingales were singing lustily, but he was in no mood to enjoy their song and did not pause an instant to hear them

On the fifth day of the fifth month, business at the Stables brought Genji in the direction of her apartments, and he availed himself of this opportunity to discover what had happened on the night of Sochi's visit 'Did the prince stay very late?' he asked 'I hope you did not let him go too far. He is the sort of man who might very easily lose control of himself not that he is worse than others It is really very unusual indeed to meet with anyone who is capable of acting with self-restraint under such circumstances' And this was the match-maker who on the very occasion to which he was now referring, had driven her into Prince Sochi's arms! She could not help being amused at his unblushing inconsistency But all the while he was warning her against the very man for whose visit he had himself been responsible Tamakatsura scanning him in his holiday clothes thought that he could not, by any imaginable touch of art or nature, have looked more beautiful That thin cloak — what a marvellous blend of colours! Did fairies preside over his dyeing-vats? Even the familiar and traditional patterns, she thought, on such days as this take on a new significance and beauty And then looking again at Genji 'If only we were not on this tiresome footing,' she said to herself, 'I believe I should long ago have fallen very much in love with him'

[1] *Obaye-naki* 'fame-less' I retain this idiom as it corresponds curiously with ours.

A letter arrived It was from Prince Sochi, written on thin white paper in a competent hand, and couched in terms which at the time seemed very spirited and apposite I fear, however, that were I to reproduce it here, this admired letter would seem in no way remarkable, and I will only record the poem which accompanied it 'Shall I, like the flower that grows unnoticed by the stream though holiday-makers in their dozens pass that way, find myself still, when this day closes, unwanted and passed-by?' The letter was attached to the tallest and handsomest flag-iris [1] she had ever seen He is quite right,' said Genji, 'today there is no escape for you ' And when one after another of her gentlewomen had pleaded with her that this once at any rate she should answer him with her own hand, she produced the following reply, which had, however, very little to do with what was going on in her mind 'Better had the flower remained amid the waters, content to be ignored, than prove, thus swiftly plucked, how feeble were the roots on which it stood '

It was an idle repartee, and even the handwriting seemed to Prince Sochi s expectant eye somewhat vague and purposeless He was, indeed, not at all sure, when he saw it, that he had not made a great mistake

Tamakatsura, on the other hand, was disposed to be in rather a good humour with herself She had this morning received Magic Balls [2] of the utmost variety and splendour from an unprecedented number of admirers A more complete contrast than that between her poverty-stricken years on the island and her present pampered existence could hardly be imagined Her ideas on a variety of subjects were becoming far less rigid than when she first arrived at the New Palace, and she began to see that provided her relationship with Genji could be maintained upon its present harmless footing she had everything to gain from its continuance

Later in the day Genji called upon the lady in the eastern quarter [3] 'The young men in the Royal Bodyguard are holding their sports here today,' he said 'Yugiri will be bringing them back with him to his rooms and is counting on you to prepare for their entertainment They will arrive just before sunset There will also probably be a great deal of company besides, for ever since a rumour spread round the Court that we were secretly harbouring in the New Palace some fabulous prodigy of wit and beauty, an overwhelming interest has been taken in us, and we have not had a moment's peace So be prepared for the worst!'

Part of the race-course was not far away from this side of the Palace and a good view could be obtained from the porticos and outer galleries 'You had better throw open all the garden-doors along the passage between this wing and the main house,' he said 'The young people will see very

[1] Irises were plucked on the fifth day of the fifth month

[2] Balls made of coloured stuffs, with scent-bags in the middle Supposed to ward off disease.

[3] The Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers

I was able recently to observe him on an occasion when he had no reason to believe that he was being watched, and came to the conclusion that those who so loudly praise his wit and ingenuity have no idea what constitutes his real charm ' 'I know that he is your younger brother,' she answered, 'but he certainly looks considerably older than you I am told that he has visited here very frequently during the last few months But as a matter of fact I had not till today once set eyes on him since I saw him years ago when my sister was at Court I confess I then had no idea that he would turn out so well as he has done In those days it was his younger brother, the Viceroy of Tsukushi, whom I used to admire But I see now that he had not the same princeliness of air and carriage which you rightly attribute to Prince Sochi ' He saw that, brief as was the time she had spent in Prince Sochi's company that day, she had already completely succumbed to his charms He smiled, but did not draw her on into a general discussion of his guests and their merits or defects He had always had a great dislike of those who cannot mention an acquaintance without immediately beginning to pick his character to pieces and make him seem utterly contemptible When he heard the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers going into raptures over Prince Higekuro, he did indeed find it hard not to disillusion her, particularly as he was just then beginning to be somewhat alarmed lest this prince, whom he regarded as rather unsuitable, should in the end turn out to be the strongest candidate for Tamakatsura's favour

He and the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers had for years past been on terms merely of ordinary confidence and friendliness It was assumed on this occasion as on others that they would presently retreat each to a separate resting-place How and why had this assumption first begun? He could not remember, and felt that tonight he would very gladly have broken the rule But she seemed to take for granted that he would presently wish to retire, and so far from resenting this or seeming to be at all depressed, she evidently felt highly gratified that her own quarters had been selected as the scene of a festivity the like of which she had not witnessed in person for a very great number of years 'The withered grass that even the woodland pony left untouched, today with the wild iris of the pool-side has been twisted in one wreath ' Thus she expressed her gratitude and pride He was touched that so small an event should mean so much to her, and answered with the verse The colt whose shadow falls upon the waters close where the wild-swan's wing is mirrored in the lake, from iris and sweet marsh-marigold shall ne'er be far away ' How easily was she now contented, and how vague had his own compliments become! 'Though I so seldom manage to see you,' he said, I assure you I am never happier than when I am here ' It would have been unlike her to take him to task for the insincerity of this last speech She merely accepted it quietly and they parted for the night He

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well from there The Bodyguard of the Right is exceptionally strong this year In my opinion they are a far more interesting lot than most of the present high officers at Court.' This whetted, as it was intended to do, the curiosity of the young people in that part of the house, and the galleries were soon thronged The pages and younger waiting-women from Tamakatsura's wing also came to see the sights and were accommodated at the open doors along the passage, the persons of quality being ensconced behind green shutters or curtains dyed in this new-fashioned way according to which the colour is allowed to run down into the fringe Among the dresses of the visitors were many elaborate Chinese costumes, specially designed for the day's festivity, the colour of the young dianthus leaf tending to prevail The ladies who belonged to this wing had not been encouraged to make any special effort for the occasion and were for the most part in thin summer gowns, green without and peach-blossom colour within There was a great deal of rivalry and harmless self-display, which was rewarded from time to time by a glance from one of the young courtiers who were assembled on the course

Genji arrived on the scene at the hour of the Sheep,[1] and found just such a concourse of distinguished visitors as he had predicted It was interesting to see the competitors, whom he knew only in their official uniforms, so differently arrayed, each with his following of smartly dressed squires and assistants The sports continued till evening The ladies, although they had a very imperfect understanding of what was going on, were at least capable of deriving a great deal of pleasure from the sight of so many young men in elegant riding-jackets hurling themselves with desperate recklessness into the fray The finish of the course was not so very far from Murasaki's rooms, so that her gentlewomen too were able to get some idea of what was going on The races were followed by a game of polo played to the tune of Tagyuraku [2] Then came a competition of rival pairs in the Nasori [3] All this was accompanied by a great din of bells and drums, sounded to announce the gaining of points on one side and another It was now getting quite dark and the spectators could barely see what was going on The first part of the indoor entertainment which came next consisted in the distribution of prizes among the successful riders Then followed a great banquet and it was very late indeed when the guests began to withdraw Genji had arranged to sleep that night in the eastern wing He sat up a long while talking to the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers 'Did you not think today,' he said, 'that Prince Sochi was immeasurably superior to any of the other visitors? His appearance is of course not particularly in his favour But there is something in his manners and mode of address which I at any rate find very attractive

[1] 1 PM
[2] 'Hitting the Ball Tune.'
[3] A Korean dance.

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found that she had given up her own bed to him, and had all her things carried to another place Had she not seemed so convinced that anything in the way of greatest intimacy was out of the question, he might have felt inclined on this occasion to suggest a different arrangement

This year the rainy season lasted much longer than usual, and whereas the monotony of the downpour is usually relieved by an occasional day of sunshine, this time there was nothing but one continuous drizzle for weeks on end The inhabitants of the New Palace found it very hard to get through the day and tried one amusement after another In the end they mostly betook themselves to reading illustrated romances The Lady of Akashi had, among her other accomplishments, a talent for copying out and finely decorating such books as these, and being told that everyone was clamouring for some occupation which would help them to get through the day, she now sent over a large supply to the Princess, her daughter But the greatest enthusiast of all was Lady Tamakatsura, who would rise at daybreak and spend the whole day absorbed in reading or copying out romances Many of her younger ladies-in-waiting had a vast stock of stories, some legendary, some about real people, which they told with considerable skill But Tamakatsura could not help feeling that the history of her own life, should it ever come to be told, was really far more interesting than any of the tales with which her ladies sought to entertain her True, the sufferings of the princess in the *Sumiyoshi Tale*[1] had at certain points a resemblance to her own experiences But she could see no reason why for generations past so many tears of indignation and pity should have been shed over the fate of this princess at the hands of her unscrupulous lover[2] Judged as an episode, thought Tamakatsura, her own escape from the violence of Tayu was quite as exciting

One day Genji, going the round with a number of romances which he had promised to lend, came to Tamakatsura's room and found her, as usual, hardly able to lift her eyes from the book in front of her 'Really, you are incurable,' he said, laughing 'I sometimes think that young ladies exist for no other purpose than to provide purveyors of the absurd and improbable with a market for their wares I am sure that the book you are now so intent upon is full of the wildest nonsense Yet knowing this all the time, you are completely captivated by its extravagances and follow them with the utmost excitement why, here you are on this hot day, so hard at work that, though I am sure you have not the least idea of it, your hair is in the most extraordinary tangle But there, I know quite well that these old tales are indispensable during such weather as this How else would you all manage to get through the day? Now for a confession I too have lately been studying these books and have,

[1] The story of a misused stepchild It is no longer extant, the text which bears this name being merely a 15th-century adaptation of the *Room Below Stairs*

[2] A disagreeable old man to whom her stepmother tried to marry her

I must tell you, been amazed by the delight which they have given me There is, it seems, an art of so fitting each part of the narrative into the next that, though all is mere invention, the reader is persuaded that such things might easily have happened and is as deeply moved as though they were actually going on around him We may know with one part of our minds that every incident has been invented for the express purpose of impressing us, but (if the plot is constructed with the requisite skill) we may all the while in another part of our minds be burning with indignation at the wrongs endured by some wholly imaginary princess Or again we may be persuaded by a writer's eloquence into accepting the crudest absurdities, our judgment being as it were dazzled by sheer splendour of language

'I have lately sometimes stopped and listened to one of our young people reading out loud to her companions and have been amazed at the advances which this art of fiction is now making How do you suppose that our new writers come by this talent? It used to be thought that the authors of successful romances were merely particularly untruthful people whose imaginations had been stimulated by constantly inventing plausible lies But that is clearly unfair ' 'Perhaps,' she said, 'only people who are themselves much occupied in practising deception have the habit of thus dipping below the surface I can assure you that for my part, when I read a story, I always accept it as an account of something that has really and actually happened '

So saying she pushed away from her the book which she had been copying Genji continued So you see as a matter of fact I think far better of this art than I have led you to suppose Even its practical value is immense Without it what should we know of how people lived in the past, from the Age of the Gods down to the present day? For history-books such as the Chronicles of Japan show us only one small corner of life, whereas these diaries and romances which I see piled around you contain, I am sure, the most minute information about all sorts of people's private affairs ' He smiled, and went on 'But I have a theory of my own about what this art of the novel is, and how it came into being To begin with, it does not simply consist in the author's telling a story about the adventures of some other person On the contrary, it happens because the storyteller's own experience of men and things, whether for good or ill — not only what he has passed through himself, but even events which he has only witnessed or been told of — has moved him to an emotion so passionate that he can no longer keep it shut up in his heart Again and again something in his own life or in that around him will seem to the writer so important that he cannot bear to let it pass into oblivion There must never come a time, he feels, when men do not know about it That is my view of how this art arose

'Clearly then, it is no part of the storyteller s craft to describe only

what is good or beautiful Sometimes, of course, virtue will be his theme, and he may then make such play with it as he will But he is just as likely to have been struck by numerous examples of vice and folly in the world around him, and about them he has exactly the same feelings as about the pre-eminently good deeds which he encounters they are important and must all be garnered in Thus anything whatsoever may become the subject of a novel, provided only that it happens in this mundane life and not in some fairyland beyond our human ken

'The outward forms of this art will not of course be everywhere the same At the Court of China and in other foreign lands both the genius of the writers and their actual methods of composition are necessarily very different from ours, and even here in Japan the art of storytelling has in course of time undergone great changes There will, too, always be a distinction between the lighter and the more serious forms of fiction Well, I have said enough to show that when at the beginning of our conversation I spoke of romances as though they were mere frivolous fabrications, I was only teasing you Some people have taken exception on moral grounds to an art in which the perfect and imperfect are set side by side But even in the discourses which Buddha in his bounty allowed to be recorded, certain passages contain what the learned call Upaya or "Adapted Truth" — a fact that has led some superficial persons to doubt whether a doctrine so inconsistent with itself could possibly command our credence Even in the scriptures of the Greater Vehicle[1] there are, I confess, many such instances We may indeed go so far as to say that there is an actual mixture of Truth and Error But the purpose of these holy writings, namely the compassing of our Salvation, remains always the same So too, I think, may it be said that the art of fiction must not lose our allegiance because, in the pursuit of the main purpose to which I have alluded above, it sets virtue by the side of vice, or mingles wisdom with folly Viewed in this light the novel is seen to be not, as is usually supposed, a mixture of useful truth with idle invention, but something which at every stage and in every part has a definite and serious purpose'

Thus did he vindicate the storyteller's profession as an art of real importance

Murasaki, who had first taken to reading romances in order to see whether they were suitable for her adopted daughter, the Princess from Akashi, was now deeply immersed in them She was particularly fond of the *Tale of Komano*[2] and showing to Genji an illustrated copy of it she said one day 'Do you not think that these pictures are very well painted?' The reason that she liked the illustrations so much was that one of them

[1] The Mahayana, the later development of Buddhism which prevailed in Tibet, China and Japan

[2] Now lost.

'Overpraise,' he added, 'does a great deal of harm to the young Servants are very dangerous in this respect .' Nevertheless he did not object, as Murasaki had often noticed, to the little Princess from Akashi being praised by anyone who came along, and he often put himself to immense trouble in order that she might escape a scolding which he knew she thoroughly deserved

Stepmothers in books usually behave very spitefully towards the children entrusted to them But he was now learning by his own experience that in real life this does not always happen In choosing books for Murasaki and her charge he was therefore careful to eliminate those that depict stepmothers in the traditional light, for he feared she might otherwise think he was trying to give her a quite unnecessary warning

Yugiri, as has been said before, saw very little of Murasaki, but it was natural that he should sometimes visit his little sister, the Princess from Akashi, and Genji did not discourage this On the contrary he was anxious to establish an affectionate relationship between them For Genji, young though he still was, often thought of what would happen after his death, and he could imagine circumstances in which the princess might stand sorely in need of her brother's help He therefore gave the boy permission to visit her and even go behind her curtains-of-state as often as he chose, though he still forbad him to enter into conversation with Lady Murasaki's gentlewomen So few were the children of the house that a great deal more trouble was taken about them than is usually the case Yugiri certainly seemed to have repaid this care In the ordinary affairs of life he showed great judgment and good sense, and Genji had the comfortable feeling that whatever went amiss, Yugiri at least could always be relied upon

The little girl was only seven years old and dolls were still her principal interest Yugiri, who a year or two ago used so often to play just such games with his little companion at the Great Hall, made an excellent major-domo of the doll's-house, though the part, bringing as it did a host of recollections to his mind, was often a painful one Indeed more than once he was obliged to turn away for an instant, his eyes full of tears During these visits he naturally met many of the princess's other playmates, and a great deal of chattering took place on every conceivable subject He took his share in these conversations, but he did not get to know any of the little girls at all well, nor did they, so far as he could see, take any particular interest in him 'Was all that side of life for ever to be closed to him?' Yugiri asked himself But though this was the thought which instantly recurred to him during these meetings, his outward behaviour seemed only to betoken complete indifference His green badge![1] Yes, it was that which lay at the bottom not only of these

[1] The mark of the sixth rank. Genji, it will be remembered, had refused to promote him

smaller troubles but also of the great disaster [1] which had wrecked all his chances of happiness

Sometimes the idea came to him that if he simply went straight to Kumoi's father and tackled him about the matter — insisted, shouted, made a great scene — To no Chujo would suddenly give in But he had suffered enough already in private, there was nothing to be gained by also making himself publicly ridiculous No, the better way was to convince Kumoi herself by his behaviour, above all by a complete and obvious indifference to the rest of the world, that so far as his own feelings were concerned nothing was altered by one jot or tittle since the day when he first told her of his love

Between him and her brothers slight difficulties were always arising which resulted, for the time being, in a certain coldness For example, Kashiwagi, Kumoi's eldest brother, in ignorance of the fact that Lady Tamakatsura was his sister, continued to pay his addresses to her, and finding that his letters often failed to reach their destination, naturally turned to Yugiri for assistance Never once did he offer to perform a similar service in return, though it was presumably as easy for him to see Kumoi as it was for Yugiri to see Tamakatsura The request irritated him and he firmly refused Not that they ceased to be friends, for their relationship, like that of their fathers, had always been built up of small rivalries and feuds

To no Chujo had an unusually large number of children, most of whom had amply fulfilled, as regards both popularity and attainments, the high promise of their early years His position in the State had enabled him to do extremely well for all his sons As regards his daughters (who were, however, not so numerous) he had been less fortunate His plans for the future of the eldest girl had entirely miscarried, [2] he had signified his desire to present Lady Kumoi at Court, but had hitherto received no command to do so He had not in all these years ever forgotten the little girl who, along with her mother, had so mysteriously disappeared, and sometimes spoke of her to those who had at the time been aware of his attachment to that unhappy lady What had become of them both? He imagined that her strange timidity had driven the mother to take flight with that exquisite child into some lonely and undiscoverable place He fell into the habit of staring hard into the face of every girl whom he met, and the commoner, the more ill-clad and wretched the creature was, the surer he became that this was his lost child For the lower she had sunk, the less likely it was that she would be able to persuade anyone that she was indeed his daughter It was impossible, he felt, that sooner or later one or other of his agents should not get news of her, and then what reparation he would make for the down-trodden existence that she must now be

[1] His failure to win To no Chujo's daughter, Lady Kumoi.

[2] He had hoped to get Lady Chujo made Empress.

leading! He told his sons her child-name and begged them to report to him immediately if they should ever come across anyone who bore it 'In my early days,' he said, 'I am afraid I became involved in a great many rather purposeless intrigues But this was quite a different matter I cared for the mother very deeply indeed, and it distresses me intensely that I should not only have lost the confidence of the lady herself, but also have been able to do nothing at all for the one child that bore witness to our love '

For long periods, especially if nothing happened to remind him of the matter, he succeeded in putting it out of his head But whenever he heard of anyone adopting a stray girl or taking some supposed poor relation into their house, he at once became very suspicious, made innumerable enquiries and was bitterly disappointed when it was finally proved to him that his supposition was entirely unfounded

About this time he had a curious dream, and sending for the best interpreters of the day asked them what it meant 'It seems to mean,' they said, 'that you have at last heard what has become of a child that you had lost sight of for many years, the reason that you have failed to discover her being that she is thought by the world at large to be someone else's child '

Heard what has become ' he faltered 'No, on the contrary, I have heard no such thing I cannot imagine what you are talking about '

CHAPTER VIII

A Bed of Carnations

ONE very hot day Genji, finding the air at the New Palace intolerably close, decided to picnic at the fishing-hut on the lake He invited Yugiri to come with him, and they were joined by most of the courtiers with whom Genji was on friendly terms From the Western River on his estate at Katsura *ayu* had been brought, and from the nearer streams *ishibushi* and other fresh-water fish, and these formed the staple of their repast Several of To no Chujo's sons had called to see Yugiri, and hearing where he was to be found, joined the picnic 'How heavy and sleepy one has felt lately!' exclaimed Genji 'This is certainly a great improvement' Wine was brought, but he sent for iced water as well A delicious cold soup was served, and many other delicacies Here by the lake there was a certain amount of movement in the air, but the sun blazed down out of a cloudless sky, and even when the shadows began to lengthen there was a continual buzzing of insects which was very oppressive 'I have never known such a day,' said Genji 'It does not after all seem any better here than it was indoors You must excuse me if I am too limp to do much in the way of entertaining you,' and he lay back against his cushions One does not feel much inclined for music or games of any kind in such weather, and yet one badly needs something to occupy the mind I have sometimes wondered lately whether the sun was ever going to set All the same, the young people on duty at the Emperor's Palace are in a much worse position than we Imagine not being able to loosen one's belt and ribbons on a day like this! Here at any rate we can loll about just as we please The only difficulty is to avoid going to sleep Has not any of you got some startling piece of news to tell us? You need have no fear that I may have heard it already, for I am becoming quite senile, I never hear about anything till everyone else has forgotten about it' They all began wracking their brains to think of some exciting piece of intelligence or entertaining anecdote, but without success, and presently, since their host had invited them to be at their ease, one after another of the visitors somewhat timidly took up a position with his back planted against the cool metal railings of the verandah 'Well,' said Genji at last, 'as a matter of fact, rarely though this now happens, I myself have picked up a small piece of information It seems that His Excellency To no Chujo has lately rediscovered and taken to live with him a natural daughter of whom he had lost sight for many years Come, Kobai,' addressing Kashiwagi's younger brother, you will be able to tell me if there is any truth in this' 'Something of the kind has happened,' an-

swered the young man, 'though there is a good deal of exaggeration in many of the stories which are being put about The facts are that last spring, in consequence of a dream, my father asked us to enquire carefully into every case we could discover of a child claiming paternity by him My brother Kashiwagi did finally hear of a girl who seemed to possess absolute proof that she was an illegitimate child of our father's, and we were told to call upon her and verify this, which we accordingly did That is all I know about it, and I am sure that there is no one present who has not something a great deal more interesting than that to talk about I am afraid what I have just told you cannot possibly be of interest to anyone but the people actually concerned ' 'So it is true!' thought Genji, wondering whether To no Chujo could have been so misled as to suppose that it was Yugao's child whom he had rediscovered 'There are so many of you in the family already,' he said to Kobai, 'that I wonder your father should search the sky for one stray swallow that has not managed to keep pace with the flock I, who nurture so small a brood, might be pardoned for such conduct, but in your father it seems somewhat grasping Unfortunately, though I should feel proud to acknowledge my children, no one shows the slightest inclination to claim me as a father However, it is no mere accident that To no Chujo is more in request than I am The moon's image shows dimly in waters that are troubled at the bottom Your father's early adventures were of a most indiscriminate character, and if you know all your brothers and sisters, you would probably realize that, taken as a whole, you are a very queer family ' Yugiri, who knew a mass of stories which amply confirmed Genji's last statement, could not help showing his amusement to an extent which Kobai and his brothers thought to be in exceedingly bad taste 'It is all very well for you to laugh, Yugiri,' continued Genji, 'but you would be much better employed in picking up some of those stray leaves than in making trouble for yourself by pressing in where you are not wanted In so large a garland you might surely find some other flower with which to console yourself!' All Genji's remarks about To no Chujo wore superficially the aspect of such friendly banter as one old friend commonly indulges in concerning another But as a matter of fact there had for some while past been a real coolness between them, which was increased by Chujo's scornful refusal to accept Yugiri as his son-in-law He realized that he had just been somewhat spiteful, but so far from being uncomfortable lest these remarks should reach his old friend's ears, he found himself actually hoping that the boys would repeat them

This conversation about the waif whom To no Chujo had recently acknowledged and adopted reminded Genji that it was becoming high time he should himself make a certain long-intended revelation Tamakatsura had now lived for over a year at the New Palace, she was definitely accepted as a member of the Court circle, and there was now no fear

that her father would be in any way ashamed of her But the views of To no Chujo were in some ways peculiar He made an absolutely hard and fast distinction between the 'right' and the 'wrong' people To those who satisfied his very exacting standards he was extraordinarily helpful and agreeable As for the others, he ignored them with a sublime completeness that no other Grand Minister had ever equalled Was it quite certain in which class he would place his own daughter? Then a brilliant idea occurred to Genji He would introduce To no Chujo to Tamakatsura immediately, but not reveal her identity until Chujo had once and for all classed her as 'possible'

The evening wind was by this time delightfully fresh, and it was with great regret that the young guests prepared to take their leave 'I should be perfectly contented to go on sitting here quietly in the cool, but I know that at your age there are many far more interesting things to be done,' and with that he set out for the western wing, his guests accompanying him to the door

Knowing that in an uncertain evening light all people in Court cloaks look very much alike, Genji at once summoned Tamakatsura to him and explained in a low voice why he had arrived with so large an escort 'I have been entertaining To no Chujo's sons,' he said, 'Kashiwagi, Kobai and the rest It was obvious that they were very anxious to come on here with me, and Yuguri is such an honest soul, it would have been unkind not to let him come too Those poor young men, To no Chujo's sons, must really soon be told you are their sister I am afraid they are all more or less in love with you But even in the case of quite ordinary families the sudden arrival of some unknown young lady causes endless speculation among those who frequent the house, and though there is intense curiosity to see her, it is apparent that everyone has long beforehand made up his mind to fall in love Unfortunately, even before your arrival, my palace had an undeserved reputation for harbouring bevies of incomparable creatures Every visitor who comes here seems to arrive primed up with compliments and fine speeches, only to discover that there is no quarter in which they could be employed without impertinence [1] But you have often asked me about those particular young men and lamented that you never get an opportunity yourself of judging whether they are as intelligent as everyone makes out So I thought you would not mind me bringing them here, and would perhaps like to have a word with one or the other of them'

While this whispered conversation was going on, the young men were standing in the garden outside It was not planted in formal borders, but there was a great clump of carnations and a tangled hedge of tall flowering plants, both Chinese and Japanese, with great masses of blossom that stood out vividly in the fading light True, they had come that

[1] Akikonomu, for example, had become Empress.

evening hoping to pluck a very different flower, but as they sat resting in front of the house they could scarcely restrain themselves from stretching out a hand and filling their laps with these resplendent blossoms

'They are really very remarkable young men,' Genji went on 'There is not one of them but in his way shows unmistakable signs of genius, and this is true even of Kashiwagi, who in outward manner is particularly quiet and diffident By the way, has he written to you again? I remember we read his poem together You cannot, of course, under the circumstances risk giving him any definite encouragement, but do not be too hard upon him'

Even amid these very exceptional young men Yugiri looked surprisingly handsome and distinguished, and Genji, pointing to him, said to Tamakatsura in a whisper 'I am terribly disappointed that To no Chujo should take up his present attitude about that boy It has come to this nowadays, that those people will not look at anyone who is not part and parcel of their own gang[1] A drop of other blood, even if it be that of the Royal House, seems to them a painful blemish .' 'That was not the way Royal Princes were regarded once upon a time,' said Tamakatsura, and quoted the old folk-song *Come to my house*[2] 'They certainly seem in no hurry to make ready a banquet for poor Yugiri,' admitted Genji 'I am extremely sorry for those two They took a fancy to each other when they were mere children and have never got over it I know quite well that they have suffered a great deal through this long separation If it is merely because of Yugiri's low rank that To no Chujo refuses his consent, he might on this occasion be content to disregard the comments of the world and leave the matter in my hands He surely does not suppose that I intend the boy to remain in the Sixth Rank for ever' Again he was speaking of To no Chujo with asperity and, like her brothers a few hours ago, Tamakatsura was perturbed to discover that the breach between them was widening, partly because such a state of affairs made it all the less probable that Genji would in the near future reveal her identity to To no Chujo

As there was no moon that night, the great lamp was presently brought in It is now just comfortably warm,' said Genji, 'and the only thing we need is a little more light' He sent for a servant and said to him One tray of bamboo flares! In here, please' When they were brought he noticed a very beautiful native zithern and drawing it towards him struck a few chords It was tuned to the difficult *ritsu* mode, but with remarkable accuracy It seemed indeed to be an exceptionally fine instrument, and when he had played on it for a little while he said to her. 'I have all these

[1] I e. the Fujiwaras, the clan to which the writer herself belonged

[2] 'In my house the awnings are at the doors and curtains are hanging about the bed. Come, my Prince! you shall have my daughter for your bride, and at the wedding-feast you shall have the fish you like best, be it *awabi*, oyster or what you will.'

months been doing you the injustice of supposing that you were not interested in these things What I like is to play such an instrument as yours on a cool autumn evening, when the moon is up, sitting quite close to the window One then plays in concert with the cicadas, purposely using their chirruping as part of the accompaniment The result is a kind of music which is intimate, but at the same time thoroughly modern There is, of course, a go-as-you-please, informal quality about the Japanese zithern which makes it unsuitable for use on ceremonial occasions But when one remembers that almost all our native airs and measures originated on this instrument, one cannot help regarding it with respect There are stray references which show that its history stretches back into the dimmest past, but to hear people talk nowadays one would think it had been specially invented for the benefit of young ladies, in whom an acquaintance with foreign arts and usages is considered unbecoming Above all, do make a practice of playing it in concert with other instruments whenever you get the chance This will immensely improve your command over it For though the Japanese zithern is a far less complicated instrument than its rivals, it is by no means so easy to play as most people imagine At the present time there is no better performer than your father, To no Chujo You would be astonished at the variety of tone he can get out of a mere succession of open strings, it is as though by some magic he were able in an instant to change his zithern into whatever instrument he pleases And the volume of sound which he obtains from those few slender strings is unbelievable!'

Tamakatsura had reached a certain point of proficiency herself But she knew that she had much to learn, and longed to meet with a first-rate performer Do you think I might one day be allowed to hear him?' she asked, not very hopefully 'I suppose he sometimes plays when he comes here to entertainments Even among those outlandish people on the Island there were several teachers, and I always supposed that they knew all about it But from what you have just said I see that such playing as my father s must be something quite different

'It is indeed,' he said, 'and you shall certainly hear him play You know, I expect, that though it is called the Eastern zithern and is said to have come from the other side of the country, it is always played at the beginning of every Imperial concert, being solemnly carried in by the Mistress of the Rolls As far as our country is concerned (about the history of music in other lands I know very little) it is certainly the parent of all other instruments, and that perhaps the best performer upon it who has ever lived should be your own father is certainly a great stroke of luck for you He does, as you suggested, play here and at other people's houses from time to time, when there is music afoot, but chiefly on other instruments It is really very difficult to make him play on the Japanese zithern Often he begins a tune and then, for some reason, will not go on

It is the same with all great artists They cannot perform unless they are in the right mood, and the right mood seldom comes But later on you will, of course, certainly be hearing him ' So saying, he began trying over a few usual chords and runs Already she wondered how she had managed to tolerate the clumsy twanging of the island-professors. How exciting it would be to live with a father, who, according to Genji's own showing, played far, far better even than this! It was intolerable to feel that all the while she might have been hearing him day after day, in his own home, with nothing to disturb or interrupt him When, oh when, would this new life begin?

Among other old ballads Genji now sang 'Not softlier pillowed is my head,' and when he came to the line 'O lady parted from thy kin' he could not help catching her eye and smiling Not only did she find his voice very agreeable, but his improvisations between verse and verse delighted her beyond measure Suddenly he broke off, saying 'Now it is your turn Do not tell me you are shy, for I am certain that you have talent, and if that is so you will forget that there is anyone here, once you have become interested in what you are playing The lady [1] who was "too shy to do anything but go over the tune in her head" wanted all the time to sing the *Sofuren*,[2] and that is a very different matter You must get into the habit of playing with anyone who comes along, without minding what he thinks of you ' But try as he might, he could not persuade her to begin She was certain that her teacher on the Island, an old lady of whom it was reported that she had once been in some vague way connected with the Capital and even that she was distantly related to the Imperial Family, had got everything wrong from beginning to end If only she could persuade Genji to go on playing a little while longer, she felt sure she could pick up enough of the right method to prevent a complete catastrophe, and she sat as near as possible to the zithern, watching his fingers and listening intently 'Why does it not always produce such lovely sounds as that?' she said laughing 'Perhaps it depends which way the wind is blowing ' She looked very lovely as she sat leaning towards him, with the lamplight full upon her face 'I have sometimes known you by no means so ready to listen,' he said, and to her disappointment pushed the zithern from him But her gentlewomen were passing in and out of the room Whether for this or other reasons his behaviour tonight continued to be very serious and correct 'I see no sign of those young men I brought with me,' he said at last 'I am afraid they grew tired of gazing at every flower save the one they came to see, and went away in disgust But it is their father's visit to this flower-garden that I ought all the while to be arranging I must not be dilatory, for life is full of uncertainties How well I remember

[1] In some story now lost.

[2] Literally 'Thinking of a man, and yearning'

the conversation in the course of which your father first told me how your mother had carried you away, and of his long search for you both It does not seem long ago ' And he told her more than he had ever done before about the rainy night's conversation and his own first meeting with Yugao

'Gladly would I show the world this Child-flower's beauty, did I not fear that men would ask me where stands the hedge on which it grew '[1]

'The truth is, he loved your mother so dearly that I cannot bear the thought of telling him the whole miserable story That is why I have kept you hidden away like a chrysalis in a cocoon I know I ought not to have delayed ' He paused, and she answered with the verse 'Who cares to question whence was first transplanted a Child-flower that from the peasant's tattered hedge was hither brought?' Her eyes filled with tears as in a scarcely audible voice she whispered this reply

There were times when he himself took fright at the frequency of his visits to this part of the house, and in order to make a good impression stayed away for days on end But he always contrived to think of some point in connection with her servants or household affairs which required an endless going and coming of messengers, so that even during these brief periods of absence she was in continual communication with him The truth is that at this period she was the only subject to which he ever gave a thought Day and night he asked himself how he could have been so insensate as to embark upon this fatal course If the affair was maintained upon its present footing he was faced with the prospect of such torture as he felt he could not possibly endure If on the other hand his resolution broke down and she on her side was willing to accept him as a lover, the affair would cause a scandal which his own prestige might in time enable him to live down, but which for her would mean irreparable disaster He cared for her very deeply, but not, as he well knew, to such an extent that he would ever dream of putting her on an equality with Murasaki, while to thrust her into a position of inferiority would do violence to his own feelings and be most unfair to her Exceptional as was the position that he now occupied in the State, this did not mean that it was any great distinction to figure merely as a belated appendage to his household Far better, he very well knew, to reign supreme in the affections of some wholly unremarkable Deputy Councillor! Then again there was the question whether he ought to hand her over to his stepbrother Prince Sochi or to Prince Higekuro Even were this course in every way desirable, he gravely doubted his own capacity to pursue it Such self-sacrifices, he knew, are easier to plan than to effect Nevertheless, there were times when he regarded this as the plan which he had definitely adopted, and for a while he could really believe that he was on the point of carrying it out But then would come one of his visits

[1] A reference to To no Chujo's poem, Part I, p. 33

to her She would be looking even more charming than usual, and lately there were these zithern lessons, which, involving as they did a great deal of leaning across and sitting shoulder to shoulder, had increased their intimacy with disquieting rapidity All his good resolutions began to break down, while she on her side no longer regarded him with anything like the same distrust as before He had indeed behaved with model propriety for so long that she made sure his undue tenderness towards her was a thing of the past Gradually she became used to having him constantly about her, allowed him to say what he pleased, and answered in a manner which though discreet was by no means discouraging Whatever resolutions he may have made before his visit, he would go away feeling that, at this point in their relations, simply to hand her over to a husband was more than the most severe moralist could expect of him Surely there could be no harm in keeping her here a little longer, that he might enjoy the innocent pleasure of sometimes visiting her, sometimes arranging her affairs? Certainly, he could assure himself, his presence was by no means distasteful to her Her uneasiness at the beginning was due not to hostility but to mere lack of experience Though 'strong the watchman at the gate,' she was beginning to take a very different view of life Soon she would be struggling with her own as well as his desires, and then all her defences would rapidly give way

To no Chujo was somewhat uneasy about his newly-discovered daughter[1] The members of his own household seemed to have a very poor opinion of her, and at Court he had overheard people whispering that she was not quite right in the head His son Kobai told him, of course, about Genji's questions, and To no Chujo laughed, saying. 'I can quite understand his interest in the matter A year or two ago he himself took over a daughter whom he had by some peasant woman or other, and now makes an absurd fuss over her It is very odd Genji says nothing but nice things about everyone else But about me and everyone connected with me he is careful to be as disagreeable as possible But I suppose I ought to regard it as a sort of distinction even to be run down by him ' 'Father, if you mean the girl who lives in the western wing,' said Kobai, 'I can assure you she is the most beautiful creature you can possibly imagine Prince Sochi and many of the others have completely lost their hearts to her Indeed, everyone agrees that she is probably one of the handsomest women at Court ' 'You surely do not yourself believe such stories?' said To no Chujo 'The same thing is always said about the daughters of men in such a position as Genji's, and so oddly is the world made that those who spread such reports really believe in them I do not for a moment suppose she is anything out of the ordinary Now that Genji is Grand Minister, faced by an opposition that has dwindled to a mere speck and esteemed as few Ministers before, I fancy the one flaw in his

[1] The rustic creature unearthed by Kobai in his search for Tamakatsura.

happiness must be the lack of a daughter to lavish his care upon and bring up to be the envy and admiration of the whole Court I can well imagine what a delight the education of such a child would be to him But in this matter Fate seems to be against him Of course, there is the little girl who was born at Akashi Unfortunately her mother's parents are quite humble people and she can never play the part that would naturally have been taken by a child of my sister Lady Aoi or of his present wife, Lady Murasaki All the same, I have reason to believe that his schemes for her subsequent career are of the most ambitious nature

'As for this newly-imported princess, it would not surprise me to discover that she is not his child at all You know as well as I do what Genji's failings are . It is far more probable that she is merely some girl whom he is keeping' After other somewhat damaging remarks about Genji's habits and character, he continued 'However, if he continues to give out that she is his daughter, it will soon be incumbent upon him to find her a husband I imagine his choice will fall upon Prince Sochi, with whom he has always been on particularly good terms She would certainly be fortunate in securing such a husband, he is a most distinguished character'

Nothing more exasperated To no Chujo at the present moment than the endless speculations concerning Lady Tamakatsura's future which were now the staple of every conversation at Court He was sick of hearing people ask, 'What are Prince Genji's intentions?' 'Why has he changed his mind?' and so on, while the future of his own daughter, Lady Kumoi, seemed for some reason not to arouse the slightest curiosity Why should not a little of the energy which Genji expended in dangling this supposed daughter of his before the eyes of an expectant Court be used on Lady Kumoi's behalf? A word whispered by Genji in the Emperor's ear would suffice to secure her future, but that word, it was very evident, had never been spoken

If Genji (and this seemed hardly credible) were waiting to secure Kumoi for his own son Yugiri, let him raise the boy to a decent rank Then, provided suitable overtures were made on Genji's side, he was quite willing to consider the possibility of such a match As to what the young man's feelings in the matter might be — he did not give the question a moment's thought, having always regarded Yugiri merely as a nuisance

One day when he had been reflecting upon this problem more earnestly than usual, To no Chujo determined to thresh the matter out with the girl herself, and taking Kobai with him he went straight to her room It so happened that Kumoi had fallen asleep She was lying, a small and fragile figure, with only a single wrap of thin diaphanous stuff thrown carelessly across her It was certainly a pleasure on such a day to see anyone looking so delightfully cool! The delicate outline of her bare limbs showed plainly beneath the light wrap which covered her She

lay pillowed on one outstretched arm, her fan still in her hand. Her loosened hair fell all about her, and though it was not remarkably thick or long, there was something particularly agreeable in its texture and in the lines it made as it hung across her face Her gentlewomen were also reposing, but at some distance away, in the room which opened out behind her curtained dais, so that they did not wake in time, and it was only when To no Chujo himself rustled impatiently with his fan that she slowly raised her head and turned upon him a bewildered gaze Her beauty, enhanced by the flush of sleep, could not but impress a father's heart, and To no Chujo looked at her with a pride which his subsequent words by no means betrayed 'I have told you often before,' he said, 'that even to be caught dozing in your seat is a thing a girl of your age ought to be ashamed of, and here I find you going to bed in broad daylight . you really must be a little more careful I cannot imagine how you could be so foolish as to allow all your gentlewomen to desert you in this way It is extremely unsafe for a young girl to expose herself, and quite unnecessary in your case, since I have provided you with a sufficient number of attendants to mount guard on all occasions To behave in this reckless manner is, to say the least of it, very bad form Not that I want you to sit all day with your hands folded in front of you as though you were reciting the Spells of Fudo [1] I am not one of those people who think it a mark of refinement in a girl to stand on ceremony even with her everyday acquaintances and never to address a word to anyone except through a barricade of curtains and screens So far from being dignified, such a method of behaviour seems to me merely peevish and unsociable I cannot help admiring the way in which Prince Genji is bringing up this future Empress[2] of his He takes no exaggerated precautions of any kind, nor does he force her talent in this direction or that, but at the same time he sees to it that there is no subject in which she remains wholly uninitiated Thus she is able to choose intelligently for herself where other girls would be obliged merely to do as they were told For the time it may seem that the energies of the mind have been somewhat diffused and extenuated, but in later life, given the best balanced and broadest system of education in the world, idiosyncrasies both of character and behaviour will inevitably reappear At the present moment the Princess from Akashi is in the first and less interesting stage I am very curious to see how she will develop when she arrives at Court ' After these preliminaries he embarked at last upon the subject which he had really come to discuss 'You know,' he said, 'that I have not been very successful in my plans for your own future But I still hope that we may be able to

[1] Of these there are several, the shortest of which runs (in Sanskrit) Namas samanta-vajranam ham 'Praise be to all the Thunderbolt-bearers Ay verily ' Its impressiveness was partly due to the fact that very few Japanese knew what it meant.

[2] The Princess from Akashi

arrange something not too contemptible I promise you at any rate that you shall not be made ridiculous I am keeping my ears open and have one or two projects in mind, but for the moment it is exceedingly difficult to arrive at a decision Meanwhile, do not be deceived by the tears and protestations of young men who have nothing better to do than amuse themselves at the expense of confiding creatures such as you I know what I am talking about' and so on, speaking more and more kindly as he went along

In old days the scoldings which she had received on account of her intimacy with Yugiri had been the more distressing to her because she had not at that time the least idea what all this fuss was about But now that she was a little better acquainted with such matters, she recalled with burning shame time after time when she had mentioned to her elders things which she now saw it was the wildest folly ever to have repeated The old Princess[1] frequently complained that Kumoi never came to see her This put the child in great embarrassment, for the truth was that she dared not go, for To no Chujo would be sure to think that she was using her duty towards the old lady as a pretext for clandestine meeting with her lover

But another question was at this time occupying a good deal of To no Chujo's attention What was to be done with this new daughter of his, the Lady from Omi? If, after going out of his way to track her down, he were now to send her home again merely because certain people had said disobliging things about her, he would himself figure as intolerably capricious and eccentric To let her mix in general society was, judging by what he had heard and seen of her already, quite out of the question But if he continued to keep her, as he had hitherto done, in the seclusion of her own rooms, it would soon be rumoured at Court that she was some paragon who, just at the right moment, would be produced with dazzling effect and carry all before her This, too, would be very irritating Perhaps the best that could be done under the circumstances was to put her into touch with his daughter Lady Chujo,[2] who happened at the moment to be home from Court It would then be possible to discover whether, when one got to know her better, this Lady from Omi were really such a monster as some people made out He therefore said to Lady Chujo one day I am going to send this new sister of yours to see you It seems that her manners are rather odd, and I should be very much obliged if you would ask one of your older gentlewomen to take her in hand Young girls are useless in such a case They would merely lead her on to greater absurdities in order to amuse themselves Her manner is at present, I gather, somewhat too boisterous', and he smiled as he recollected some of the anecdotes which had already reached him 'I will gladly do all

[1] To no Chujo's mother, Kumoi's grandmother

[2] On leave from the Palace, she was one of the Emperor's consorts.

I can,' answered Lady Chujo 'I see no reason to suppose that the poor creature is anything like so outrageous as people are making out It is only that Kobai, wishing to gain credit for his discovery, tended to exaggerate her charms, and people are a little disappointed I do not think there is any need for you to take alarm I can quite understand that coming for the first time among surroundings such as these, she feels somewhat lost, and does not always quite do herself justice ' She spoke very demurely This Lady Chujo was no great beauty, but there was about her a serene air of conscious superiority which, combined with considerable charm of manner, led most people to accept her as handsome, an impression shared at this moment by her father as he watched her lips part in a smile that reminded him of the red plum-blossom in the morning when its petals first begin to unfold 'I daresay you are right,' he replied, 'but all the same I think that Kobai showed a lack of judgment such as I should have thought he had long ago outgrown ' He was himself inclined to think that the Lady from Omi's defects had probably been much exaggerated, and as he in any case must pass her rooms on his way back he now thought he had better go and have another look at her Crossing the garden he noticed at once that her blinds were rolled back almost to the top of the windows Clearly visible within were the figures of the Lady herself and of a lively young person called Gosechi, one of last year's Winter Dancers The two were playing Double Sixes,[1] and the Lady of Omi, perpetually clasping and unclasping her hands in her excitement, was crying out 'Low, low! Oh, how I hope it will be low!' at the top of her voice, which rose at every moment to a shriller and shriller scream 'What a creature!' thought To no Chujo, already in despair, and signalling to his attendants, who were about to enter the apartments and announce him, that for a moment he intended to watch unobserved, he stood near the double door and looked through the passage window at a point where the paper[2] did not quite meet the frame The young dancer was also entirely absorbed in the game Shouting out 'A twelve, a twelve This time I know it is going to be a twelve!' she continually twirled the dice cup in her hand, but could not bring herself to make the throw Somewhere there, inside that bamboo tube, the right number lurked, she saw the two little stones with six pips on each But how was one to know when to throw? Never were excitement and suspense more clearly marked on two young faces The Lady of Omi was somewhat homely in appearance, but nobody (thought To no Chujo) could possibly call her downright ugly. Indeed, she had several very good points Her hair, for example, could alone have sufficed to make up for many shortcomings Two serious defects, however, she certainly had, her forehead was far too narrow, and her voice was appallingly loud

[1] Sugoroku, a kind of backgammon

[2] Japanese windows are made of translucent paper, not of glass

and harsh In a word, she was nothing to be particularly proud of, but at the same time (and he called up before him the image of his own face as he knew it in the mirror) it would be useless to deny that there was a strong resemblance

'How are you getting on?' he asked on being admitted to the room 'I am afraid it will take you some time to get the hang of things here I wish I could see you more often, but, as you know, my time is not my own ' 'Don't you worry about that,' she answered, screaming as usual at the top of her voice 'I'm here, a'nt I? And that's quite enough for me I haven't had the pleasure of setting eyes on you at all for all these years But I ll own that when I came here and found I shouldn't be with you all the time, like what I'd expected, I was as vexed as though I had thrown a "double-one" at dice ' 'As a matter of fact,' said To no Chujo, 'I have not anyone at present to run my messages and look after me generally, I had it in mind that, when you were a little more used to things here, I might train you to help me in that way But I am not at all sure that such a post would suit you I do not mean that as a lady-in-waiting in some other family you would not get on very nicely But that would be different There would be a lot of other young women People would not notice so much I am afraid I am not expressing myself very happily I only mean that a daughter or sister is bound to attract attention People who come to the house ask, "Now which of them is the daughter?" ' Show me which of them is your sister!" and so on That sort of thing sometimes makes a girl feel awkward, and it may even be rather embarrassing for the parents Of course, in your case ' He broke off

Despite all his ingenuity he was in the end saying just what he had determined on no account to say He was merely telling her that he was ashamed of her But fortunately she did not take it in bad part 'That's quite right,' she said 'If you was to put me down among all the fine ladies and gentlemen, I shouldn't know which way to look I'd far rather you asked me to empty their chamber-pots, I think I might be able to manage that 'What odd ideas do come into your head!' laughed To no Chujo 'But before we go any further, I have a small request to make if you have any filial feeling whatever towards a father whom you see so seldom, try to moderate your voice a little when you address him Seriously, you will take years off my life if you persist in screaming at me in this way ' How delightful to find that even a Minister could make jokes! 'It's no good,' she said 'I've always been like that I suppose I was born so Mother was always going on at me about it ever since I can remember, and she used to say it all came of her letting an old priest from the Myoho Temple into her bedroom when she was lying-in He had a terrible loud voice, and all the while he was reading prayers with her, poor mother was wondering whether, when I was born, I

shouldn't take after him And sure enough I did But I wish for your sake I didn't speak so loud ' It was evident that she was sorry to distress him, and touched by this exhibition of filial affection he said to her kindly 'The fault, then, is evidently not yours but your mother's for choosing her associates among the pious at so critical a moment in her existence For it is written "The tongue of the blasphemer shall tremble, his voice shall be silenced," and it seems that, conversely, the voices of the pious generally tend to become more and more resonant '

He himself stood somewhat in awe of his daughter Lady Chujo He knew that she would wonder what had induced him to import, without further enquiries, so incongruous a resident into his household He imagined, too, the pleasantries at his expense which would be exchanged among her people and soon repeated broadcast over the whole Court He was on the verge of abandoning the plan, when he suddenly decided that it was too late to withdraw 'I wish you would sometimes go out and see your sister Lady Chujo while she is staying here,' he said 'I fancy she could give you one or two useful hints It is, after all, only by mixing in the society of those who have had greater advantages than themselves, that ordinary people can hope to make any progress I want you to bear that in mind when you are with her . ' 'Well, that will be a treat!' she cried delightedly 'I never thought in my wildest dreams that, even if you one day sent for me, you would ever make me into a great lady like my sister The best I hoped for was that I might wheedle you into letting me carry pitchers from the well ' The last words were spoken in a tiny, squeaky voice like that of a new-fledged sparrow, for she had suddenly remembered her father's injunctions The effect was very absurd, but there was no use in scolding her any more, and he said good-humouredly 'I see no reason why you should draw water, or hew wood either But if I send you to Lady Chujo, you must promise me that you have made up your mind never again to model yourself on that pious personage from the Myoho Temple She took this very seriously 'I'll do my best,' she said 'When may I go and see her?' To no Chujo was now an important person, indeed, he was reckoned to be the most formidable enemy to the then Minister of State But the Lady from Omi appeared quite unconscious of the subduing effect which his presence had upon everyone else, and for her part spoke to him with the utmost confidence and composure 'I will enquire which day will be the best,' he said 'But come to think of it, probably one day is quite as good as another Yes, by all means go today ' and with that he hastened from the room

She gazed after him He was attended by officers of the fourth and fifth ranks, who made a brave show as they escorted him towards the main building But why were they all nudging one another and laughing? 'Well,' she said at last, 'I have got a fine gentleman for my papa, and no mistake. It does seem queer to think what a funny little house I was brought up

in, when by rights I ought to have been in this palace all the while.'
'If you ask my opinion,' said her friend the dancer, 'I think he is far too grand for you. You'd be a great deal better off if you had been claimed by some decent hard-working sort of man, who wouldn't be ashamed of you . . .' This was too bad! 'There you go again,' the Lady from Omi cried, 'trying to put a body down whenever she opens her mouth. But you shan't do it any more, indeed you shan't, for they've made me into a lady now, and you'll have to wait till I choose to let you speak. So there!'

Her face was flushed with anger. Seen thus, showing off in the presence of one whom she now regarded as an inferior, she became suddenly handsome and almost dignified. Only her manner of speech, picked up from the absolute riff-raff among whom she had been educated, remained irredeemably vulgar.

It is indeed a strange thing that a perfectly ordinary remark, if made in a quiet, colourless voice, may seem original and interesting, for instance, in conversations about poetry, some quite commonplace piece of criticism will be accepted as very profound merely because it is made in a particular tone of voice. Or again, half a verse from the middle of some little-known poem can make, if produced in the right tone of voice, a deep impression even among people who have no notion what the words imply. Whereas if someone speaks in a disagreeable voice or uses vulgar language, no matter how important or profound are the thoughts which he expresses, nobody will believe that it can possibly be worth while to pay any attention to him. So it was with the Lady from Omi. She had a loud rasping voice and in general behaved with no more regard for the impression she was making on those around her than a child screaming in its nurse's lap. She thus seemed far sillier than she really was. Indeed, her facility in stringing together poems of thirty-one syllables, of the kind in which the beginning of any one poem might just as well be the end of any other, was quite prodigious.

'But I must be getting ready,' she now exclaimed. 'My father told me I was to call on Lady Chujo, and if I don't go at once, Her Ladyship will think I don't want to meet her. Do you know what? I think I'll go this very night, for though I can see that my papa thinks the world of me, I shall never get on in this palace unless the ladies are on my side.' Which again shows that she had more good sense than one would have supposed.

She now sat down at once and addressed the following letter to Lady Chujo. 'Honoured Madam, though we have been living these many days past with (as the saying goes) scarce so much as a hurdle between us, I have not hitherto, as they say, ventured to tread upon your shadow, for to tell the honest truth I was in two minds whether I should not find "No Admittance" in large letters on your door. But though I hardly like to

mention it, we are (in the words of the poet) both "tinged with the purple of Musashi Moor" If I am being too bold, pray tell me so and do not take offence' All this was written in a rather speckly hand On the back was the postscript 'By the way, I have some thoughts of inflicting myself upon you this very same evening And please forgive these blots, which (as the saying goes) all the waters of Minasé River would not wash away, so what is the use of trying?' In the margin was the following extraordinary poem 'I wonder with as big a query as How Cape on the Sea of Hitachi where the grasses are so young and green, when, oh when, like the waves on the shore of Tago, shall we meet face to face?'

'I'll write no more,' she added at the side of the poem, 'for I declare I feel as flustered as the foam on the great River at Yoshino... '

It was written on a single sheet of blue poetry-paper, in a very cursive style, copiously adorned with hooks and flourishes which seemed to wander about at their own will and stand for nothing at all The tails of her '*shi's*' were protracted to an inordinate length, and the lines slanted more and more as the letter went on, till in the end they seemed in danger of falling over sideways But so delighted was she with her own composition that she could hardly bear to part with it At last, however, she gave it a final look of admiration, folded it up very small and attaching it to a carnation-blossom, handed it to her favourite messenger, a little peasant-boy who did the dirty work in her part of the Palace He was a good-looking child, and though he had only been in service for a very short while, he had made himself quite at home Sauntering into Lady Chujo's apartments, he found his way to the servants' sitting-room and demanded that the note should at once be taken to Her Ladyship For a moment they surveyed him with astonishment, but presently one of the under-servants exclaimed 'Why, it's the little boy from the northern wing!' and took the letter, which ultimately reached the hands of a certain gentlewoman named Tayu no Kimi This lady actually carried it into Lady Chujo's presence, unfolded it at her bidding and then held it in front of her. The great lady glanced at it, smiled, and indicated that it might now be removed It happened that a certain Lady Chunagon was at the moment in attendance She caught a side view of the letter where it lay, and hoping to be allowed to read it properly, she remarked 'At a distance, Madam, that looks an uncommonly fashionable note' Lady Chujo motioned her to take the letter 'I cannot make head or tail of it,' she said, 'you will be doing me a service if you can tell me what it is about Perhaps I am being stupid over these cursive characters . ' And a few minutes later 'How are you getting on? If my answer has no connection with the contents of her letter, she will think me very discourteous I wish you would write an answer for me, I am sure you would do it very nicely ' The young ladies-in-waiting, though they dared not openly show their amusement, were now all tittering behind their sleeves

Someone came to say that the boy was still waiting for an answer 'But the letter is just one mass of stock phrases that none of them seem to have anything to do with what she is trying to say,' exclaimed Chunagon in despair 'How can I possibly answer it? Besides, I must make it seem to come from you, Madam, not from a third person, or the poor creature's feelings will be terribly hurt'

'It vexes me,' wrote Chunagon in her mistress's name, 'to think that we should have been at close quarters for so long without arranging to meet By all means come ..' And at the side she wrote the poem 'Upon the shore of Suma, that is on the sea of Suruga in the land of Hitachi, mount, O ye waves, to where the Headland of Hako with pine-woods is clad.' [1]

'I think you have gone too far,' said Lady Chujo when she saw the letter 'I certainly hope she will not think it was I who wrote this ridiculous nonsense ''I assure you, Madam,' replied Chunagon, 'there is more sense in it than you think, quite enough at any rate to satisfy the person to whom it is addressed' And with that she folded the note and sent it on its way 'How quickly these great ladies take one's meaning!' exclaimed Omi, as she scanned the reply. 'Look, too, how subtly she expresses herself! Merely by mentioning those pine-trees she lets me know, as plain as could be, that she is waiting for me at this minute .' There was no time to be lost She scented herself by repeated exposure to the fumes of an incense which seemed to contain far too generous an admixture of honey, daubed her cheeks with a heavy rouge, and finally combed out her hair, which being, as I have said, unusually fine and abundant, really looked very nice when she took sufficient trouble about it

The subsequent interview can hardly have been otherwise than extremely diverting.

[1] The Lady of Omi's poem contained three irrelevant place-names. This one contains four, and is intentionally senseless, for Chunagon had not been able to make out what Omi's rigmarole was about.

CHAPTER IX

The Flares

IT was now the turn of Lady Omi's eccentricities to become the sole topic of conversation at Court 'All this is very puzzling,' said Genji 'Her father gave orders that she was to be kept in close confinement, how comes it, then, that everyone seems to know so much about her? One hears nothing but stories of her ridiculous behaviour So far from keeping the poor half-witted creature out of harm's way he seems to be positively making an exhibition of her Here again I think I see the consequences of his obstinate belief in the impeccability of his own family He sent for her without making the slightest enquiry, convinced that since his blood ran in her veins she must necessarily be beyond reproach Finding her an exception to this rule he has taken his revenge by deliberately exposing her to derision However, I can hardly believe that after all the trouble he has taken, it can really give him much satisfaction that the mere mention of her name should evoke peals of laughter '

The fate of Omi seemed, incidentally, to afford some justification for Genji's reluctance to part with Tamakatsura, a fact which she herself recognized It was by no means safe to assume that To no Chujo would treat a second long-lost daughter any better than the first The old nurse Ukon, who daily collected for her mistress's benefit some fresh anecdote of Omi's discomfiture, vigorously supported the view that To no Chujo was not a father to be lightly adopted 'True,' thought Tamakatsura, 'Genji's attitude towards me is not quite such as I could wish But I am bound to confess that hitherto he has never tried to go further than I intend he should, and in practical ways no one could possibly be more kind and considerate ' Thus gratitude was slowly replaced by friendship and even by a certain semblance of intimacy.

Autumn had now come, and with it a bitterly cold wind — the 'first wind' whose chill breath 'only a lover's cloak can nullify ' He made great efforts to keep away from the western wing, but all to no purpose, and soon, on the pretext of music-lessons or what not, he was spending the greater part of every day at Tamakatsura's side

One evening when the moon was some five or six days old he came suddenly to her room The weather was chilly and overcast, and the wind rustled with a melancholy note through the reeds outside the window She sat with her head resting against her zithern Tonight, too, as on so many previous occasions, he would make his timorous advances, and at the end of it all be just where he started So Genji grumbled to himself,

and continued to behave in a somewhat plaintive and peevish manner during his whole visit It was however already very late when the fear of giving offence in other quarters drove him from the room Just as he was leaving he noticed that the flares outside her window were burning very low, and sending for one of his men, he had them kindled anew, but this time at a little distance from the house, under a strangely leaning spindle-tree which spread its branches in the form of a broad canopy, near to the banks of a deep, chilly stream The thin flares of split pine-wood were placed at wide intervals, casting pale shadows that flickered remotely upon the walls of the unlighted room where she and Genji sat He caught a glimpse of her hand, showing frail and ghostly against the dark background of her hair Her face, suddenly illumined by the cold glare of the distant torches, wore an uneasy and distrustful air He had risen to go, but still lingered 'You should tell your people never to let the flares go out,' he said Even in summer, except when there is a moon, it is not wise to leave the garden unlighted And in autumn I shall feel very uneasy if you do not promise to remember about this "Did but the torches flickering at your door burn brightly as the fire within my breast, you should not want for light!" ' And he reminded her of the old song in which the lover asks 'How long, like the smouldering watch-fire at the gate, must my desire burn only with an inward flame?'

'Would that, like the smoke of the watch-fires that mounts and vanishes at random in the empty sky, the smouldering flame of passion could burn itself away!' So she recited, adding 'I do not know what has come over you Please leave me at once or people will think ' 'As you wish,' he answered, and was stepping into the courtyard, when he heard a sound of music in the wing occupied by the Lady from the Village of Falling Flowers Someone seemed to be playing the flute to the accompaniment of a Chinese zithern No doubt Yugiri was giving a small party The flute-player could be none other than To no Chujo's eldest son Kashiwagi, for who else at Court performed with such marvellous delicacy and finish? How pleasant would be the effect, thought Genji, if they would consent to come and give a serenade by the streamside, in the subdued light of those flickering torches! 'I long to join you,' he wrote, 'but, could you see the pale, watery shadows that the watch-flares are casting here in the garden of the western wing, you would know why I am slow to come ' He sent this note to Yugiri, and presently three figures appeared out of the darkness 'I should not have sent for you,' he called to them, 'had you not played ' The Wind's voice tells me " It is a tune that I can never resist ' So saying he brought out his own zithern When he had played for a while, Yugiri began to improvise on his flute in the Banshiki mode [1] Kashiwagi attempted to join in, but his thoughts were evidently employed elsewhere,[2] for again and again he entered at the wrong beat

[1] Corresponding roughly with the white notes from D to D

[2] He was in love with Tamakatsura.

'Too late,' cried Genji, and at last Kobai was obliged to keep his brother in measure by humming the air in a low monotone like the chirping of a meditative grasshopper Genji made them go through the piece twice, and then handed his zithern to Kashiwagi It was some while since he had heard the boy play and he now observed with delight that his talent was not by any means confined to wind-instruments 'You could have given me no greater pleasure,' he said, when the piece was over 'Your father is reckoned a fine performer on the zithern, but you have certainly more than overtaken him By the way, I should have cautioned you that there is someone seated just within who can probably hear all that is going on out in this portico So tonight there had better not be too much drinking Do not be offended, for I was really thinking more of myself than of you Now that I am getting on in years I find wine far more dangerous than I used to I am apt to say the most indiscreet things '

Tamakatsura did, as a matter of fact, overhear every word of this, as indeed she was intended to, and was thankful that he at any rate saw the necessity of keeping himself in hand The near presence of the two visitors could not fail to interest her extremely, if for no other reason than merely because they were, after all, though themselves entirely unaware of the fact, so very closely related to her, and for long past she had surreptitiously collected all possible information concerning their characters and pursuits Kashiwagi was, as to her distress she had frequently ascertained, very deeply in love with her Again and again during the course of the evening, he was on the verge of collapsing altogether, but never was the state of agitation through which he was passing for a moment reflected in his playing

CHAPTER X

The Typhoon

THIS year great pains had been taken to improve the Empress Akikonomu's domain, and by now her gardens were aglow with the varied tints of innumerable frost-stained leaves and autumn flowers Above all, the new pergolas made an admirable show, now that their timber, here stripped of bark, there used in its natural state, was thickly interwoven with blossoming boughs And when at morning and evening the sun slanted across the dewy gardens, it was as though every flower and tree were decked with strings of glittering pearls Those who but a few months back had been carried away by the springtime loveliness of the Southern Garden, could not fail, as they gazed upon the colder beauty of this autumnal scene, with one accord to resume their earlier preference The lovers of autumn have, I am persuaded, at all times embraced the larger part of mankind, and in thus returning to their allegiance the Empress's companions were but following their natural bent

So delighted was Akikonomu with the scene I have described that she asked for leave of absence from the Emperor and settled for a while in her own establishment Unfortunately the anniversary of the late Prince Zembo's [1] death fell in the eighth month, and it was with great anxiety that she watched autumn's almost hourly advance, for she feared that the best month would be over before she came out of mourning Meanwhile she was confined to the house and all amusements were suspended

The equinoctial gales were this year particularly violent Then came a day when the whole sky grew black, and an appalling typhoon began It would have been bad enough wherever one had been to see every tree stripped of its leaves just when they were at their loveliest, every flower stricken to the earth, but to witness such havoc in an exquisite garden, planned from corner to corner with endless foresight and care, to see those dew-pearls unthreaded in an instant and scattered upon the ground, was a sight calculated to drive the onlooker well nigh to madness As time went on the hurricane became more and more alarming, till all was lost to view in a blinding swirl of fog and dust But while she sat behind tightly closed shutters in a room that rocked with every fresh blast, it was with thoughts of autumn splendours irrevocably lost rather than with terror of the storm that the Empress's heart was shaken

The Southern Gardens were just being laid out with wild plants from the countryside when the high winds began, and that impatient longing

[1] Her father, Rokujo's husband, who died early

which the poet attributes to the young lespidezas [1] was indeed fulfilled in all too ample measure Morning after morning Murasaki too saw the dew roughly snatched from leaf and flower She was sitting thus one day on watch at her window while Genji played with the little princess in a neighbouring room It happened that Yugiri had occasion to come across from the eastern wing When he reached the door at the end of the passage he noticed that the great double-doors leading into Murasaki's room were half-open Without thinking what he was doing, he paused and looked in Numerous ladies-in-waiting were passing to and fro just inside, and had he made any sound they would have looked up, seen him and necessarily supposed that he had stationed himself there on purpose to spy upon those within He saw nothing for it but to stand dead still Even indoors the wind was so violent that screens would not stand up Those which usually surrounded the high dais were folded and stacked against the wall There, in full view of anyone who came along the corridor, reclined a lady whose notable dignity of mien and bearing would alone have sufficed to betray her identity This could be none other than Murasaki Her beauty flashed upon him as at dawn the blossom of the red flowering cherry flames out of the mist upon the traveller's still sleepy eye It was wafted towards him, suddenly imbued him, as though a strong perfume had been dashed against his face She was more beautiful than any woman he had ever seen The hangings of her dais had broken away from the poles and now fluttered in the wind like huge flags Her ladies made vain attempts to recapture these flapping curtain-ends, and in the course of the struggle (only half-visible to Yugiri) something very amusing evidently occurred, for Murasaki suddenly burst into peals of laughter Soon however she became serious again For here, too, though in a lesser degree, the wind was working irreparable havoc, and at each fresh blast he saw her turn a despairing gaze towards her newly-planted beds Several of her gentlewomen, thought Yugiri, as his eye accustomed itself to the scene, were noticeably good-looking, but there was not one whose appearance could for more than an instant have distracted his attention from the astonishing creature at whose command they served Now he understood why it was that Genji had always taken such pains to keep him away from her His father was wise enough to know that no one could possibly see her thus without losing all control of himself Genji had indeed, in forbidding him all access to her rooms, foreseen just such a contingency as had at this moment occurred The boy, suddenly realizing the extreme insecurity of his hiding-place and at the same time overwhelmed with shame at the mere thought of being discovered in such a situation, was about to dart into safety, when a door on the left opened and Genji himself entered the room 'What a wind!'

[1] 'I await your coming eagerly as waits the young lespideza, so heavy with dew, for the wind that shall disburden it.'

he said as he surveyed the exposed condition of her dais 'It would really be better just now if you left all the shutters closed You probably do not realize that you and your ladies are at this moment exposing yourselves completely to the view of any gentleman who may happen to come this way .' Yugiri had already withdrawn his eye from the crack, but the sound of Genji's voice aroused in him an invincible curiosity, and he returned to his former position. His father was bending over Murasaki and whispering something in her ear, now he was laughing It seemed to Yugiri very odd that this high-spirited, handsome, quite young-looking man should really be his father As for Genji s companion — he could not imagine that she could ever have been more beautiful than at this moment He gazed spellbound, and would certainly have crouched at his chink for hours to come, had not the door on the opposite side of the passage suddenly blown wide open, thus leaving his hiding-place embarrassingly exposed Reluctantly he withdrew (as was now possible, for Murasaki's attendants had all retired to the far end of the room), and working his way round to the verandah, he called to Genji as though he had just arrived from the eastern wing His father answered the greeting and presently joined him, saying to Murasaki as he left the room something which evidently referred to the imperfectly fastened passage-door 'Look there!' Genji was saying crossly, is not that just what I told you? You must really be more careful ' 'This,' thought Yugiri, 'is indeed a tribute to the devotion of her guards during all these years! Only a tempest capable of hurling rocks through the air and uprooting whole forests can so far disarm their vigilance that for a few seconds she is exposed to the curiosity of the passerby ' He was bound to confess that towards him at any rate the dreaded hurricane had done its best to act a benevolent part

Several retainers now arrived, reporting that the typhoon was assuming a very serious aspect 'It is from the northeast,' they said, so that here you are comparatively protected and have no notion of its real violence Both the racing-lodge and the fishing-pavilion are in great danger ' While those people were busy making fast various doors and shutters, and repairing the damage of the previous night, Genji turned to Yugiri and said 'Where did you arrive from just now?' 'I spent the night at my grandmother's, he replied But everyone says that we are in for a very bad storm, and I felt I ought to come back here and see if I could be of any use But as a matter of fact it is far worse in the Third Ward than here in the Sixth The mere noise of the wind, quite apart from everything else, is terrifying at my grandmother s, and if you do not mind I think it would be a good thing if I went back there at once She is as frightened as though she were a child of two, and it seems unkind to leave her ' 'Yes, by all means go back at once,' answered Genji hastily 'One sometimes thinks that the notion of old people slipping back into a second childhood is a mere fable, but I have learnt lately from instances

in my own family that it does really happen Tell her, please, that I have heard how bad things are in the Third Ward and should certainly come myself, were I not satisfied that you will be able to do quite as much for her as I could '

Yugiri had a high sense of duty It was his practice at this time to visit his grandmother at least once a day, and it would have been a ferocious wind indeed that could deter him either from setting out for the Third Ward or returning thence at the hour when his father usually asked for him There were of course 'times of observance' when he was obliged to remain shut up in the Emperor's Palace for several days on end But otherwise neither pressure of public business nor attendance at state ceremonies and festivals, however much they might impinge upon his leisure, ever prevented him from calling first at the New Palace and the upon the old Princess, before he dreamt of embarking upon any amusement of his own Still less upon such a day as this, when, bad as the storm was already, there seemed every prospect that it would soon develop into something more alarming still, could he have brought himself to leave the old lady in solitude.

She was, indeed, delighted that he had not failed her 'This is the worst typhoon there has ever been in my lifetime,' she said, 'and I can assure you I have seen a good many ' She was trembling from head to foot Now and again came a strange and terrifying sound, some huge bough that a single breath of the hurricane had twisted from its trunk, crashed in splinters to the ground Apart from all other dangers, showers of tiles were falling from every roof To go into the streets at all on such a day was indeed no very safe undertaking, and for a while she listened with mingled gratitude and alarm to the recital of his perils and escapes

The old Princess's lonely and monotonous existence contrasted strangely with the brilliant scenes amid which she had moved during the days of her husband's remarkable ascendancy Indeed, that the visits of this staid young grandson should mean so much to her showed only too plainly how far she had fallen from the days when her ante-chambers were thronged by the fashionable world True, her name was still widely known and even reverenced in the country at large, but this was small consolation for the fact that her own son, To no Chujo, had for some time past been far from cordial in his manner towards her It was very good of Yugiri to come on such an evening But why was it that he looked so thoughtful? Perhaps the noise of the hurricane distracted him It was certainly very alarming

If Yugiri fell into a meditative mood in this house, it was generally with memories of his little playmate [1] that his mind was employed But tonight he had not, as a matter of fact, thought of her once, nor did the

[1] Kumoi.

member that it was something distressing, shameful Why, it was hideous! Yesterday morning.. That was it, of course. He was mad, nothing more nor less than a raving lunatic He had fallen in love with Murasaki!

He did indeed find his neighbour in the eastern wing sadly in need of a little support and encouragement He managed however to convince her that the worst danger was over, and sending for some of his own carpenters had everything put to rights He felt that he ought now to greet his father. But in the central hall everything was still locked and barred He went to the end of the passage and leaning on the balustrade looked out into the Southern Garden Even such trees as still stood were heeling over in the wind so that their tops almost touched the ground Broken branches were scattered in every direction and what once had been flowerbeds were now mere rubbish heaps, strewn with a promiscuous litter of thatch and tiles, with here and there a fragment of trellis-work or the top of a fence There was now a little pale sunshine, that slanting through a break in the sky gleamed fitfully upon the garden's woe-begone face, but sullen clouds packed the horizon, and as Yugiri gazed on the desolate scene his eyes filled with tears How came it, he asked himself, that he should be doomed time and again to long precisely for what it was impossible for him to obtain He wiped away his tears, came close to Genji's door and called 'That sounds like Yugiri's voice,' he heard Genji say 'I had no notion it was so late ' He heard his father rise There was a pause, and then Genji laughed, perhaps at some remark that had been inaudible 'No indeed,' he said 'You and I have fared better than most lovers We have never known what it was to be torn from each other at the first streak of dawn, and I do not think that after all these years we should easily reconcile ourselves to such a fate ' Even to overhear such a conversation as this gave Yugiri a certain kind of pleasure He could not make out a word of what Murasaki said in reply and judging from the laughter with which the conversation was constantly interrupted it was not of a very serious description But he felt he could say to himself, 'That is what happens when they are alone together,' and he went on listening Now, however, there was a noise of swift footsteps Evidently Genji was about to unbolt the door with his own hands Conscious that he was standing far closer to it than was natural Yugiri stepped back guiltily into the corridor 'Well,' asked Genji, 'was the Princess pleased to see you last night?' 'Yes, I think she was,' answered Yugiri 'She seems to be very much upset about something that has happened between her and my uncle To no Chujo She cried a great deal and I was very sorry for her ' Genji smiled Oh, I know all about that business,' he said 'She will soon get over it You must persuade her not to brood upon such matters He thinks she has been indiscreet, and is doing his best to make her feel uncomfortable about it He cares immensely about the impression

which his conduct makes on other people, and as regards his mother — he has always gone out of his way to convince the world that he is a paragon of filial devotion So far as outward show is concerned, this is true enough But I fancy that it is all done chiefly for the sake of appearances The truth of the matter is that he has no very deep feelings towards anybody This may seem a hard thing to say, but, on the other hand, I freely admit his good qualities He is extremely well-informed and intelligent, he is musical to an extent which has become very rare in these days In addition to all that, he is good-looking. As I have said, I think his feelings somewhat superficial But we all have defects of one sort or another . By the way, I ought to find out how the Empress has been getting on during this appalling hurricane I wish you would find out if there is anything I can do for her ' and he gave Yugiri a note in which he said 'I am afraid the wind prevented you from getting much sleep I myself find it a great strain and am feeling rather shaky; otherwise I should have come round to see you long ago '

On approaching the Empress's apartments he saw a little girl with a cage in her hand trip lightly into the garden, she had come to give the tame cicadas their morning sip of dew. Further off several ladies were wandering among the flower-beds with baskets over their arms, searching for such stray blossoms as might chance to have survived the tempest Now and again they were hidden by great wreaths of storm-cloud that trailed across the garden with strange and lovely effect Yugiri called to the flower-gatherers They did not start or betray the least sign of discomposure, but in an instant they had all disappeared into the house.

Being still a mere boy at the time when Akikonomu came to Genji's house, he had been allowed to run in and out of her rooms just as he chose, and had thus become very intimate with several of her gentlewomen While he was waiting for the Empress's reply, two of these old acquaintances, a certain Saisho no Kimi, and a lady called Naishi, came into view at the end of the passage He hailed them and had a long conversation He used to think Lady Akikonomu a very splendid person, and he was still obliged to confess, as he now looked about him, that she lived in very good style and had shown excellent taste in the furnishing of her quarters But since those days he had learnt to judge by very different standards, and a visit to this part of the Palace no longer interested him in the slightest degree

On his return to Murasaki's rooms, he found all the shutters unbarred Everything had resumed its normal course He delivered the Empress's reply, in which she said 'It may be very childish, but I own I have been much upset by the storm I made sure that you would come and see to things here . It would still be a great help to me if you could spare a moment ...' 'I remember, said Genji, that she was always very easily

upset by anything of this kind I can imagine what a panic she and her ladies must have worked themselves up into during the course of the night! It was wrong of me not to see after her . ' and he started off towards the Empress's apartments But he found he had forgotten his cloak, and turning back to the high dais he raised a corner of the curtain and disappeared within For a moment Yugiri caught sight of a light-coloured sleeve, his heart began to beat so loud that it seemed to him everyone else in the room must be able to hear it, and he quickly averted his eyes from the dais There was an interval during which Genji was presumably adjusting his cloak at the mirror Then Yugiri heard his father's voice saying 'I cannot help thinking that Yugiri is really looking quite handsome this morning No doubt I am partial, and to everyone else he looks a mere hobbledehoy, for I know that at the between-stage he has now reached young men are usually far from prepossessing in appearance ' After this there was a pause during which he was perhaps looking at his own countenance in the mirror, well content that the passage of time had as yet done so little to impair it Presently Yugiri heard him say very thoughtfully 'It is strange, whenever I am going to see Akikonomu I suddenly begin to feel that I am looking terribly shabby and unpresentable I cannot think why she should have that effect on one There is really nothing very remarkable about her, either in intellect or appearance But one feels, I think, that she is all the while making judgments, which if they ever came to the surface, would seem oddly at variance with the mild femininity of her outward manner ' With these words Genji reappeared from behind the curtains The look of complete detachment with which Yugiri imagined he met his father's gaze was perhaps not so successfully assumed as the boy supposed, for Genji suddenly halted and returning to the dais whispered to Murasaki something about the door which had been left unfastened yesterday morning 'No, I am sure he didn't,' answered Murasaki indignantly 'If he had come along the corridor my people would have noticed They never heard a sound ' 'Very queer, all the same,' murmured Genji to himself as he left the room Yugiri now noticed that a group of gentlemen was waiting for him at the end of the cross-gallery, and he hastened to meet them He tried to join in their conversation and even in their laughter, but he was feeling in no mood for society, and little as his friends expected of him in the way of gaiety, they found him on this occasion more obdurately low-spirited than ever before

Soon however his father returned and carried him off to the eastern wing They found the gentlewomen of this quarter engaged in making preparations to meet the sudden cold A number of grey-haired old ladies were cutting out and stitching, while the young girls were busy hanging out quilts and winter cloaks over lacquered clothes-frames They had just beaten and pulled a very handsome dark-red under-robe, a garment of

magnificent colour, certainly unsurpassed as an example of modern dyeing — and were spreading it out to air 'Why, Yugiri,' said Genji, 'that is your coat, is it not? I suppose you would have been wearing it at the Emperor's Chrysanthemum Feast, but of course this odious hurricane has put a stop to everything of that sort What a depressing autumn it is going to be!'

But Yugiri could not summon up much interest in the round of visits upon which his father had embarked, and slipped away to the rooms of his little sister, the Princess from Akashi The child was not there 'She is still with Madam,' her nurse said 'She went later than usual today She was so frightened of the storm that it was a long time before she got to sleep, and we had a job to get her out of bed at all this morning' 'When things began to be so bad,' said Yugiri, 'I intended to come round here and sit up with her, but then I heard that my grandmother was very much upset, and thought that I had better go to her instead What about the doll's house? Has that come to any harm?' The nurse and her companions laughed 'Oh, that doll's house!' one of them exclaimed 'Why, if I so much as fanned myself the little lady would always cry out to me that I was blowing her dolls to bits You can imagine, then, what a time we had of it when the whole house was being blown topsy-turvy, and every minute something came down with a crash You'd better take charge of that doll's house I don't mind telling you I'm sick to death of it!'

Yugiri had several letters to write, and as the little girl was still with her stepmother he said to the nurse 'Might I have some ordinary paper Perhaps from the writing-case in your own room' The nurse however went straight to the little Princess's own desk and taking the cover off her lacquered writing-case laid upon it a whole roll of the most elegant paper she could find Yugiri at first protested But after all, was not a rather absurd fuss made about this young lady and her future? There was nothing sacrosanct about her possessions, and accepting the paper, which was of a thin, purple variety, he mixed his ink very carefully and, continually inspecting the point of his brush, began writing slowly and cautiously The air of serious concentration with which he settled down to his task was very impressive, more so, indeed, than the composition itself, for his education had been chiefly upon other lines

The poem was as follows Not even on this distracted night when howling winds drive serried hosts of cloud across the sky, do I for an instant forget thee, thou Unforgettable One' He tied this to a tattered spray of miscanthus that he had picked up in the porch At this there was general laughter 'It's clear you haven't read your Katano no Shosho'[1] said one of the nurses, 'or you would at least choose a flower that matched

[1] A tale of the 'perfect lover,' very popular in Murasaki's day, but now lost. Cf. Part I, p 21

your paper ' 'You are quite right,' he answered rather sulkily, 'I have never bothered my head about such matters No doubt one ought to go tramping about the countryside looking for an appropriate flower, but I have no intention of doing so ' He had always seemed to the nurses and other such ladies of the household very difficult to get anything out of Apparently he did not care what impression he made upon them, and as a matter of fact they were beginning to think him rather priggish and stuck-up

He wrote a second letter, and sending for his retainer Uma no Suké put this and the original note into the man's hand But evidently the two letters were to go in quite different directions [1] For Uma no Suké, having scanned the addresses, entrusted one to a page boy and the other to a discreet, responsible-looking body-servant These proceedings were accompanied by a great many whispered warnings and injunctions The curiosity of the young nurses knew no bounds, but it remained wholly unsatisfied, for hard though they strained their ears, they could not catch a word

Yugiri was now tired of waiting and made his way to his grandmother's house He found her quietly pursuing her devotions, surrounded by gentlewomen not all of whom were either old or ill-looking But in dress and bearing they formed a strange contrast to the chattering, frivolous young creatures from whom he had just parted The nuns, too, who had come to take part in the service, were by no means decrepit or disagreeable in person, a fact which gave an additional pathos to their assumption of this sombre and unbecoming guise

Later in the day To no Chujo called, and when the great lamp had been brought in, he and the old Princess had a long, quiet talk At last she screwed up her courage to say 'It is a very long time since I saw Kumoi ' and she burst into tears 'I was just going to suggest sending her round here in a day or two,' said To no Chujo 'I am not very happy about her She is certainly thinner than she used to be, and there is sometimes a peculiar expression in her face . It is almost as though she had something on her mind I do not understand how it is that, while I have never had a moment's anxiety over my boys, with these daughters of mine something goes wrong at every turn And never through any fault of mine ' He said this with an intonation that clearly showed he had not entirely forgiven her She was sorely wounded by this obstinate injustice, but did not attempt to defend herself

'Talking of daughters,' he went on, 'you have probably heard that I have lately made a very unsuccessful addition to my household You have no idea what worries I am going through ' He spoke in a doleful tone, but no sooner were the words uttered than he burst out laughing 'I cannot bear to hear you talking in that way,' said the old Princess 'Of

[1] One to Kumoi, one to Koremitsu's daughter

one thing I am quite sure if she is really your daughter she cannot be so bad as people are making out ' 'I think, all the same,' said To no Chujo, 'that it might be possible to put too great a strain upon your habitual indulgence towards everything connected with me That being so, I have no intention whatever of introducing her to you '