

II

THE room was so large that even with the seven lighted andon and the three ancient takahiras glimmering dully where they hung from the raftered ceiling overhead, it was chiefly in shadow. Set at intervals against the sliding walls were a few large pieces of heavy black-walnut furniture, grotesque objects in the otherwise completely empty chamber. The room itself was cold, but a ko-tatsu in the centre of the room had been filled with live coals, and over this the Tojin-san crouched. He sat upon the floor, close to the fire-frame, his knees drawn up, his hands encircling them.