

THE WOOING OF WISTARIA

"I do not agree with you, your highness," Toro replied. Then he added, with a cheery laugh:

"But there will be some satisfaction, truly, in administering my province, and mine ancient, rebellious sire."

Before the officers departed, Toro, as their spokesman, had presented to their old commander two swords, richly wrought, the usual token of the samurai as their parting tribute.

"I do assure you," Mori had responded, "that in giving me these swords you have not merely given me a reminder, as your spokesman has said, of our services for the New Japan, but you have given me as well the conquest of a newer, higher, more happy universe. As a citizen of a greater universe, I thank you."

In these words, and in every act of the former Prince that day, the officers, save the delight-blinded Toro, had observed a touch of finality, the savoring grace of a farewell to earthly things, that, samurai as they were, had not failed to move them. Plainly their lord contemplated something that their order called honorable; yet they shuddered at the thought.

Now they were all gone out of Mori's life, into the new life he and they had created together. The Shining Prince was left alone—alone with two swords that lay upon a low table at his side.

The moment long waited by Mori had come.