

THE MESSAGE FROM THE EAST 325

and congratulating themselves that the day on the river they had planned for a week past would prove a pleasant break after several weeks of hard work, when Aston entered and handed Somerville Yumoto's cablegram.

Jefferson glanced up as his friend turned the envelope over, as though seeking to discover the sender and contents without opening it. At last, when Aston had left the room, he tore it open.

The message was very brief, for Yumoto was a business man, and had learned to economise words when they cost him nearly two dollars each.

"Not bad news, I hope?" Jefferson queried slowly, as he saw Somerville's face blanch.

"Yes," replied the latter huskily, pushing the flimsy slip of paper across the table. "Read."

Jefferson took it and read the message—"She died with her people at Ureshino ten days ago.—YUMOTO." That was all.

The sender had hesitated at first whilst he was writing out the message in the busy office whether the last few words were necessary, but had decided to cable them out of consideration for Somerville's feelings, thinking that it would be a satisfaction to him to know that the woman he had abandoned had not died away from the solace of her own people.

Through Somerville's mind rushed a flood of vain and vague regrets. And then, although he would have had it otherwise, came the overmastering thought and the joy of it that he was free—free to see the woman he desired with such overpower-