

The Wily of Wistaria

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CHAPTER XXVI—Continued

WHEN Keiki had been greeted by his fellow-imperialists, and he had described to them the state of his southern resources, they in turn gave him such information as they had concerning the foreigners, whose arrival had obscured the future of their operations against the shogunate. The Prince of Echizen, temporarily in charge of the headquarters, reported in detail his military superior the events which he had not yet described in his regular dispatches to the head of the Mori family.

"I was unable, my lord, to send you further news," he said, "beyond the mere verbal report communicated by the Lord of Nagato before your departure."

"The foreigners, he went on to say, had been on the coast some days now. They had first appeared in the bay of Yedo.

"Why were they not sent to Nagasaki?" demanded Keiki. "They should have been told that all foreign affairs are administered from that port."

"Ah," returned Echizen, "they are dealing with the bakufu, not the Emperor."

"Proceed, I beg you."

"When first they came upon the coast they announced to the Governor of Niigata that they bore letters and presents from the President of the United States of America; that they must deliver them to the Emperor in person, or to a high official appointed for that purpose. They were told by the shogunate, which took upon itself the right of dealing with matters intended for our Emperor, to go to Nagasaki. They replied by moving nearer up the bay to Yedo, which they took to be the Emperor's capital."

"They have sent out parties in boats to take soundings in the bay, despite the Governor's protests, and each hour brings them nearer to Yedo. This frightened the shogunate, which finally set a day for landing. To-morrow, near the fishing village of Yokohama, they are to land and present their letters to commissioners appointed by the Shogun to receive them. They will await a reply."

"What is their nature and strength?" demanded Keiki.

"They are four ships-of-war. They are Americans, and in command of a high Lord Perry."

"But why do they deal with the Shogun?"

"The Prince of Echizen replied: "They are ignorant of our true internal condition. They do not know that we have one true Emperor, a shadow of power, and a war lord, a Shogun, who rules for himself. These Americans are of the opinion that they are treating with the Mikado, with the Emperor of Japan. Their letters and credentials are inscribed to the Emperor of Japan."

Keiki reflected upon what Echizen had told him. The national situation was rapidly becoming strained. If the foreigners should be driven from the country, well and good; but it was now no time to attack the shogunate, which must be as embarrassed as its opponent, even the advent of the Americans. In all events, the only present policy was delay. The shogunate might be destroyed by the foreigners, yet—

A sudden determination came to Keiki. He must know the attitude of the Shogun, even at risk to himself. He turned to the future Premier.

"Your highness," he asked, "can you procure for me a uniform of the household of Iyesada?"

"What the Shogun?"

"Certainly. In fact, one of our clan, who is secretly in sympathy with us, is a member of the Shogun's household and stands close to his august person. You may pass for the Lord Sakura."

ing the city concerning the movements of mere individuals, be they of the court of the Shogun or the court of thieves. In the story-tellers' halls and the theatres, on the street corner and in all public places, groups speculated upon the presence of the foreigners in Japan. There was abroad a subtle, indefinable fear that in some way the coming of the foreigners was to change the destiny of the empire. The more ignorant could not see clearly in what way this was to come about, but there was present in their consciousness fear of an impending evil.

Nobles of both parties were unsettled. The foreign visitation might mean annihilation to either party. Ruin it did mean to one, but which? The shogunate seemed in the ascendant, since it had been recognized, blindly, but still recognized, by the foreigners. Thus among all classes there was manifest a great unrest, none the less threatening and fearful because its import was hidden. Plainly the shadow of events to come had darkened the nation's mind.

The tradesman in his shop, showing his wares to a purchaser, stated their price uncertainly. "Just now, honorable sir, the price is three yen, but the gods alone know what it will be tomorrow, whether more, less, priceless beyond measure, or smaller than nothing at all. The barbarians—"

"Ah, yes, these barbarians." His purchaser went on, not understanding.

"At a street corner a woman approached a strolling samurai in the Shogun's uniform. "Honorable samurai," she said, "what of the foreigners who have come?"

The samurai shrugged his shoulders. "I'll tell you all I know of them," he murmured, without enthusiasm.

"What do you know of them?" pressed one. "Tell us all, said another.

"Of a certainty I'll tell you all."

"Yes?"

"Of a truth they have come," he answered, as with a movement of disclaimer he passed up the street.

In the story-tellers' halls the reciter was besieged with requests for stories and information concerning the Americans. In some cases he frankly avowed his ignorance, and in others regarded his hearers with the weirdest tales of a resourceful imagination.

Witnessing incidents of this kind upon every side, Keiki continued on his way to the palace. Of one thing he was now fully assured. Whatever policy for the future might be decided on by him and his associates could not be put into immediate effect. The popular impulse, the popular mind was dazed, and was not ready for action. Meanwhile he would learn all he could of the intentions of both foreigners and Shogun.

Keiki was now quite near the palace of the Shogun. His cloak he threw carelessly about him in such wise that while his uniform was exposed his features were muffled. The gate before which stood the samurai on guard at the outer post was open. Without a word Keiki strode haughtily past the guards. They gave no challenge.

Within the grounds inclosed by the stone walls there was no reflection of the disquiet manifest throughout the city. From the broad, elevated balconies of the palace, shining in the soft light diffused through the fusuma, there floated down to the strained ears of Keiki the sound of women's laughter and the harsher tone of men's voices. Music mingled with other sounds that indicated the quiet enjoyment of the night. The very guards at the doors were careless in the performance of their duties, looking with the eyes of artistic appreciation upon the night's gentle festivities.

Still undisturbed, Keiki passed through the palace entrances. An officer of the guard stared curiously for a moment after him once, then turned in forgetfulness to answer a woman's jest. Keiki ascended a stairway. In an upper ante-room he met an under-memial.

"The chamber of the Shogun," he said, coldly. "Honorable lord, began the memial.

Prince Mori thrust a parchment before his eyes. "The chamber of the Shogun at once," he said, sternly; "these dispatches admit of no delay."

"His august excellency is very ill and has retired," said the servant.

"To know your intentions towards the foreigners,"

"Are you aware," returned the Shogun, "that a single sign from me would bring down a thousand guards upon your head?"

Mori smiled coldly, grimly. "Ah, but your highness will not make that sign," he said.

"Why will I not?"

"Because your highness loves life."

"You would murder me?"

"I would cut off your head and show it to the people as the head of a traitor and an enemy to the Son of Heaven."

The Shogun appeared rather amused than alarmed. He regarded Mori with a peculiar and penetrating glance. Then he sighed.

"I was young and venturesome once," he said. "I, too, at one time, secretly believed as you do. Now—" He shrugged his shoulders.

"What are your intentions regarding these foreigners?"

"Are you here to treat with me, young Mori?"

"If you wish, yes. I represent a considerable party in the empire. I ask with right, for one day I shall unthroned your excellency."

Iyesada turned himself quickly upon his elbow, while his eyes continued to scrutinize the other keenly.

"What would you do in my place?" he asked. "Refuse their every demand and drive them into the sea," returned Mori, as the blood tinged his cheek.

"No, you would not; that is, not if you are as far-sighted as I take you to be. Japan has been sealed to the foreigners for two hundred years, during which time she has grown strong in the development of her resources and her civilization. That period is at an end. It can never return. Foreign nations will demand trade with us. They will not depart at our refusal. They will use force, if necessary, holding that every nation must share in the comity of nations. If a nation refuse, they will divide her."

"I will treat with them. I will yield, but combating every step."

"I could declare a truce with you," said Mori, "and I possess the power to enforce it, if you will assume your rightful function of war lord and expel the foreigners."

Iyesada looked him through. There was in his glance the patient scorn of the man who sees beyond his life.

uses it for the good of all. I am strong—he is weak. The strong—"

The Shogun ceased. Across his face there shot a spasm of acute pain. His breath came in gasps. Mori helped him to regain his couch. He smiled gently, sorrowfully.

"I said I was strong, yet I am indeed weak. I cannot live to see the new Japan. You may; but go, go! I have tried to save you from the folly of blind enthusiasm. You disappoint me—"

"My lord!"

"I will allow you to go in peace. Until now I have thought well of you. Now I give you up to your fate. Your life is in danger."

Mori's hands clutched his sword-hilt. The Shogun shook his head weakly.

"Not now. You may leave the place safely, but I warn you that henceforth you will be hunted. You will be killed the moment you show yourself. I give you twelve hours!"

Keiki bowed profoundly but coldly. "As you please, my lord," he said, in leaving.

As Mori retraced his steps through cross-streets he heard hesitating footsteps behind him. His sword flashed out. Running around an angle in the street, he came upon a slight figure.

"Who goes there?" he shouted.

"It is I, my lord," said a strangely sweet voice. "Jiro! Well, my boy, so you followed me?"

"To protect you, my lord."

Mori's amused eyes scanned the slim figure of the stripling. He laughed tenderly.

"There was no need. I have twelve hours yet," he said, reflectively.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AS Jiro followed closely behind his master on their return to the little house by the water-front, he noticed signs of intense preoccupation and irritation in Mori. The boy attempted to walk beside him, gazing into his face with that wistful

appeal of the eye which Mori had been unable to fathom whenever his attention was caught by it. Now he was too much occupied with his thoughts to be more than disturbed by it. With a gesture of impatience he exclaimed, abruptly: "Thou, Jiro, walk a space behind me."

Jiro fell back. In this wise he proceeded for some minutes until Jiro perceived that Mori was making signals to him. Jiro, quickening his step, came nearer to the Prince.

up the beach by the drive of the water. The darkness seemed a thing alive, which, taking on fiendish, malign personality, sought to blind the mind, the heart, the emotions, as it did the eyes.

There was an all-pervading suggestion of fate, of adversity, of other-propagated influences through the night. Subtle spirits hovered, circled through the air, met, clashed their wings, turned, trembled down, down. Jiro could have shrieked aloud, could he have found voice.

Gradually, faintly, as the monotony of the natural sounds numbed his physical sense of hearing, Jiro found that a new source of appeal to his ear was being made, off in the darkness. As they reached his consciousness, with their unmistakable human origin strongly impressed, his fright gave way. In its place came the calm of nerves raised to a higher tension. It was now the creaking of chains, the wooden friction of oars, the movements of men on board ship. All at once lights gleamed forth. They defined by their frequency and position the outlines of a vessel not unlike the smaller native boats plying in the bay. Other lights appeared in quick succession. Soon the forms of four giant vessels were indicated rather than revealed.

"The foreigners!" said Jiro, under his breath. Then high up in the air, above the leading of the four defined vessels, flashed a variety of colored lights. These were instantly answered from the others. There was the rhythmic sound of men at work upon some machine, the clatter of chains at the bows, and the vessels moved nearer to the shore.

These maneuvers were partially understood by Keiki. The lord of that fleet, hitherto unseen by any Japanese, was getting up his anchors and drawing nearer to the shore, having sent out his boats first to take proper soundings.

Every light below the deck line revealed an open port, and every open, lighted port showed a gun slung shoreward. The squatters' people were to land the next day, but they were all vigilance in the mean time.

One by one the vessels moved to their new position. After an interval, the noise and movement seemed to cease about them. A light was hoisted aloft on board the leading vessel. Instantly every light disappeared from the ports, and the blackness of the night again enveloped their movements.

Mori turned towards the boy, noting curiously the spasmodic working of his features.

"What is it, Jiro?" he asked, kindly.

"It is a strange civilization," said Jiro, in a choking voice.

"Civilization!" repeated Keiki—"civilization! I seem to hear that word everywhere to-night."

CHAPTER XXIX

ALL through the night, while Mori and other imperialists looked interrogatively to the force within and without the country, and while the dreaded foreigners kept careful watch upon their ships, native artisans reared the structure afterwards known in the memories of the strangers as the "Treaty House."

Simple as was the building, its erection was attended with certain outward signs which would have led the observer to identify in them the same spirit pervading the market-place, the open public gathering space, the theatres, the shops.

Those who labored under torch-light, an unusual proceeding in itself, were impressed with a mishap, grotesque, wholly undefined fear. Artisans as they were, they realized, if subconsciously that their act had in it the germs of a future-dark and ominous, their instincts asserted. The Japanese officials—of a minor grade—who directed the work, being higher in the scale of intelligence, were by no means so vague in their minds. They believed firmly that the raising of this simple building meant the downfall of their country, its government, its institutions. Rapacious foreigners for two centuries had insulted them and flouted at Japan, had returned to accept no duty or penalty.

Indeed, certain sub-rosa expressions of opinion and declarations of purpose among officers of the fleet, translated to them by visitors to the foreign ships of that alien nation alone tolerated in Japan at this period—the Dutch—had deepened the alarm. The strangers had said in effect: "No nation has a right to withdraw itself from the comity and commerce of other nations. Japan must come to this view; amicably if possible, but through cannon arguments if not otherwise."

Every act of the strangers thus far had been in accord with this secret expression of policy. The reserve and punctilious etiquette of the Japanese had been met with a bold advance by Commodore Perry's squadron. At each pretext for delay advanced by the Japanese the ships had moved nearer to Yedo, believed by the officers of the squadron, knowing nothing of the Shogun-Emperor relationship, to be the capital of the Emperor of Japan.

When Perry had been told that he might deliver his letters and credentials to minor officials, he had replied that first they must send to him commissioners second in rank only to the Emperor. Perry himself, imitating the seclusion of those whom he sought to reach, took care to be seen or approached by no Japanese, delegating inferior officers to the task. Now for the first time he was to show himself to the people, and the nobles, the princes Aizda and Catzu, in their capacity of high commissioners were to meet him.

"We—insignificant and unworthy brained men that we are cannot understand that honorable language that you speak. It is not Japanese, nor yet Dutch, which alone we know."

Enough of this speech was understood by the lieutenant. Plainly, they pretended not to understand his Japanese.

"Wherefore these hidings of the light of the honorable sun from our insignificant eyes?" he continued in Japanese, changing his idiom.

Again, came the answer of the Japanese official. "Your excellency, we cannot understand."

The lieutenant uttered an oath. These heathens were trying, he told himself.

"Any one here speak English?" he demanded. Instantly a figure sprang forward out of the crowd of sightseers beyond the military lines. Having advanced boldly, the volunteer hesitated an instant, as if he had acted upon an impulse, regretted a moment too late. It was Mori, but Mori still in disguise.

The American lieutenant saw his hesitation. "Do you speak English?"

Keiki summoned such knowledge of the language as Satsuma had taught him. He answered briefly: "Yes."

"Then ask what these screens have been put up for."

Keiki repeated the question to the Japanese officer, who, angered at his penetration of their evasion, cast scornful glances upon him. They answered readily, however. Mori translated their reply into English a moment later.

"They say," he reported, "that in Nippon all great gatherings are private. These screens keep off the common, low people."

"Tell them these things must come down," ordered the officer, in what the Japanese considered an impolite, not to say insolent, tone.

Mori translated. "What do they say?" asked the lieutenant. "Nothing yet," said Mori, stiffly.

While the officials still stared, the officer turned to the offending screens. With his own hands he began their demolition. Slowly, one by one, the Japanese joined him. Soon the space once inclosed by the screens was bare to the view of all on the American vessels. The officer moved towards his boat.

"I wish to speak some more words with you," said Mori, following him.

"Oh, certainly. What is it?"

"Not here, if you please. Down by the boat."

"Come."

Hidden Wealth of India

IT WOULD be an immense benefit to all mankind if the stores of gold now held by individuals in India could be made available for general use. Ever since the dawn of history that country has been gathering gold and hiding it away. Treasures of almost incalculable value are possessed by many Indian princes.

When the Maharajah of Burdwan died the stock of gold and silver left by him was so large that no member of the family could make an accurate estimate of it. A report made to the British Government by a secret agent stated that on one estate of the defunct potentate were a number of treasure houses, one of them containing three rooms. The largest of these three rooms was 48 feet long, and was filled with ornaments of gold and silver, plates and cups, washing bowls, jugs and so forth—all of precious metals.

The other two rooms were full of bags and boxes of gold molars and silver rupees. The door of this and other treasure houses had been locked up for nobody knows how long.

These valuables, according to an ancient custom, were in the custody of the Maharajah's wife, the vaults being attached to her apartments, but none of them was allowed to be of use in the presence of the master. One vault was filled with ornaments belonging to different gods of the family. The natives of India commonly bury their hoards, and among the poorer classes a favorite hiding place is a hole dug beneath the bed. Disused wells are sometimes employed for the same purpose.

It is undoubtedly a fact that many hoards thus deposited are lost forever. Gold is also valued on religious grounds. The gods take up great quantities of gold, silver and precious stones. The temples contain vast amounts of the yellow and white metals. The habit of hoarding seems to have been induced by ages of misgovernment, during which oppression and violence were rife. No feeling of safety existing, it was natural that the natives should adopt the practice of reducing their wealth to a concentrated shape and hiding it.

CHAPTER XXVII

FOR a moment Keiki was blinded by the profusion of light that blazed near the door of entrance, leaving the rest of the chamber in shadow. It was a large room, its walls tapestried in silk, wrought with embossed figures telling the history of the early Tokugawa wars. At irregular intervals about the room were set screens bearing the same gold-embroidered, symbolic figures. There were a few low tables, against which were thrown the implements and paraphernalia of war—swords, helmets, cuirasses, armor, all richly wrought.

"Who are you?"

Keiki became conscious of a presence in the room. Stretched upon a low divan in a shadowed recess lay an indistinct figure, at whose elbow a low table, piled high with parchment and writing materials, stood.

"Who are you?" repeated the voice.

Keiki approached nearer, bowing courteously, though somewhat stiffly.

"Sakura," he said, to gain time, while he held out a roll of paper in his hand. He drew nearer to the figure on the divan. The cold eyes of the other scanned him without fear.

ONE DAY I SHALL UNTHRONE YOUR EXCELLENCY.

"Pah!" said Mori, impatiently. "Is the policy, then, of our imperial realm to be dictated by a hoard of barbarous peoples concerning whom we know naught, save what our history in the past has taught us? When in the years long past they were admitted to our lands and we opened our arms in hospitality towards them, what was our reward? Foreign disease, insolent demands, a fanatical religion, intolerant and exacting. Finally, we came to be treated as dogs by these our inferiors until we were forced to expel them, since which time has not our land been the happier for our seclusion?"

"It would seem," said Iyesada, "that you are not, in spite of the reports I have heard concerning you, keeping abreast of the times. You are not a son of the dawning new Japan; you would retard the progression which is pressing upon us from all sides."

"I would not have this progression come from the outside. I would have my country advance from within. That is the reason I am an Imperialist. You are right, my lord; a new Japan is about to dawn, but not through the invasion of yonder barbarians, but because the rightful ruler of our country will be restored to his throne."

Iyesada frowned.

"Again I ask," continued Mori, flushed with his feeling, "do you intend to treat with these foreigners?"

"I will treat with them. I will yield, but combating every step."

"I could declare a truce with you," said Mori, "and I possess the power to enforce it, if you will assume your rightful function of war lord and expel the foreigners."

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To Be Continued Next Sunday

Pigs as Draught Animals

IN many countries and even so near as Scotland the pig has served the purpose of a beast of draught, and has actually been harnessed to the plough in company with cows and horses. In Scotland also early in the last century pigs were sometimes made to serve as chargers and proved most docile mounts.

The homing instinct is strongly developed in the pig. Instances not infrequently occur of pigs finding their way back to farms whence they have been conveyed. There is a record of two pigs homing nine miles, and crossing the Thames to boot, to their old farm, whence they had been driven to Reading market and bought by a gentleman on the previous day. At one point on their homeward journey where two roads met the train was observed "putting their noses together as if in deep consultation."

About 1815 a London gentleman created a sensation by driving a four-hand of pigs through the streets; and 30 years later an old farmer caused amusement to a great crowd in the market place at St. Albans by entering it in a chaise drawn by four trotting hogs.

There have also been sporting pigs. An old account of a black sow which Richard Toomer, one of the royal keepers in the New Forest, broke to find game and to back and stand says: "Within a fortnight she would find and point partridges or rabbits, and her training was much forwarded by the abundance of both. . . . She daily improved, and in a few weeks would retrieve birds that had run as well as the best pointer; and her nose was superior to the best pointer."

According to Linnaeus, "the hog is more nice in the selection of his vegetable diet than any of our other domesticated herbivorous animals." Thus in one respect the pig may be said to be an epicure. Linnaeus states that the animal will eat only 72 plants, as against the goat's 440, the sheep's 387, the cow's 276 and the horse's 262.