

The silence was eloquent with appeal. Life, life! and she was on the brink of oblivion!

"Christ!" she cried, springing to her feet and wildly holding out her arms to the vision. "O Christ, save me!"

But at the sound of her own voice she shuddered back. No, no! this, too, would be dishonour. Was *H* not the God of the West which had rejected her!—the God of her father who had given her life only to cast her off! Not the fear of oblivion itself could make her forget that!

With a low broken moan, she dropped her arms and let herself fall again on the prayer rug. . . . A M T'o Fo . . . A Mi T'o Fo. . . .

When she arose at last her features were as passionless as the Buddha's on the high altar. For there on her face before the great image of Passivity the long fierce duel of her life had ended. The East had claimed her child.

Slowly, almost stiffly, as if keeping step to some solemn processional music, Mahlee passed out of the oratory and down the stairs. But as she paused in the Imperial sitting room to take the jade cup from its place something broke the fixity of her gaze. It was the vision of the little Manchu handmaid still sleeping like a child. She went to the divan, and bending over it, touched with her lips the smooth cheek of the girl.

"Poor little Purple Bamboo!" she whispered and a film of tears clouded her sight.

Then, with the cup in her hand, she passed into the vast hall beyond. Its chill struck her mortally as the satin portières closed behind her back. She shivered and with a last blind instinct of flight, put her arm out as if to part them again and escape, when a closer sharper barking of the guns echoed and re-echoed through the hall. Instantly, Mahlee stiffened and set