

The second launch had arrived.

Sick and faint, O'Rourke slouched back against the rail, watching with lack-lustre eyes the end of the chapter. It was simple to the point of seeming farcical in comparison with that which preceded it. The dazed and now outnumbered Chinese offered no further resistance. Disarmed and put under guard, they disappeared from his consciousness, while he watched the men from the second launch, spurred by Couch, scatter in search of the abducted women.

Loss of blood was beginning to tell upon him; his strength seemed altogether gone; his wits buzzed in his head like a swarm of gnats. He grasped his support convulsively, beginning to appreciate how seriously he was hurt. He heard as from a great distance thin, faint cries of men shouting in triumph; saw Couch, a pygmy shape, holding in his arms a doll who wore the face of Miss Pynsent. Then of a sudden he was conscious of a woman hastening toward him, a fantastic and incongruous figure in a dinner-gown, her skirts trailing in the slime of the sham-bles, her arms outheld to him; and knew her for his wife.

He essayed to speak, but could not. He felt her arms close about him. In the face of the search-light's penetrating and undeviating glare, night closed down upon him.