

he punched him, and taking him by his bootles feet, dragged him on to the floor and doubled him up. The sleeper came to in slow and uneasy stages, and sat, gloomy and fretful, for half an hour on the bed, disconsolately sundering the links of the golden chain by which he had fettered his fancy. When thoroughly awake he thawed into conversation. The best dressed man in the room he might have passed for a foreign correspondence clerk in the City. He held a good position on some ship, was a native of Canton, and had been sailing round and round the world ever since his father put him to work in the galley of a ship's cook.

"Did we interrupt pleasant dreams?" I asked.

"No," he said hesitatingly. "Me no like smoke velly much."

The mocking laughter of his compatriots discounted his disavowal.

As I would not smoke he poured for me tea into the common cup—a handleless vessel about half the size of those from which our fathers drank when the spoke of a "dish" of tea. To refuse this proffered hospitality was impossible; albeit, inasmuch as I had seen half a dozen men drain the steaming liquid from the one unwashed cup, a feeling of repugnance was inevitable. The tea was innocent of milk or sugar, but—dare I confess it?—was exquisite in flavour; made from green China tea, of leaves which to me looked like curled sage, and twice as large as any I had previously seen.

By this time one's eyes had become accustomed to the clouds of smoke by which the room was filled, and it was possible to take a mental photograph. Upon the walls were certain regulations in English; by their side hung a card with a legend in Chinese, which was interpreted for me. It enjoined upon persons from dropping matches or pieces of opium upon the floor; from expectorating; and, most important of all, to conceal pipes in case of the entry of a stranger. A print or two hung upon the walls, and Chinese mottoes and greetings on long narrow slips of pink paper. Men's collars with fronts attaching—very English items, these, hung side by side with an implement inevitably Chinese. This was the one tooth brush which the host furnishes for the use of all his guests. For the most part two men occupied each bed. Several of them wore the caps beneath which, in London, they keep their pigtails secretly coiled. They were fully clad, and lay, one on his left side, the other on his right side so that both might face the all important lamp.

We came away with heads throbbing almost to bursting point, and feeling sick from the effects of the fumes which, with more less fortitude we had endured for the preceding two hours. I still have the pungent acrid-sweet of the opium in my nostrils and the whole fantastic horror of the nightmare room is ineffaceably fixed upon my memory.