

and seeing the sheen of a swordblade in the fellow's hand, before he could recover seized his wrist, twisted it savagely, and wrenched the weapon away.

It hung with a strange balance in hands more used to the Continental rapier and broadsword, but it was far better than nothing, and he made shift to employ it effectually, if at haphazard. . . .

The finale came a moment later, signalled by a blinding flash of light more bright than that of day, which fell athwart the deck and illuminated instantaneously every inch of the fighting ground. Ferribly he blessed the near-by vessel that had turned its searchlight on the junk. The scene it revealed beggared the experience of a man whose trade was fighting; it fell upon decks slippery with blood and littered with the bodies of dead and wounded; it silenced a confusion indescribable. Upon that insane turmoil the light fell with the effect of a thunderbolt from a clear sky.

Screaming shrilly in their panic, the Chinese scattered and fell away, leaving O'Rourke beside Couch, Wheeler being down and buried beneath three Chinese corpses. And instantaneously something grated harshly against the starboard side of the junk, and a man, his figure stark black against the cold white glare, leaped upon the rail and tumbled inboard. Others to the number of a dozen followed him, swarming over the decks. Couch reeled towards them, babbling orders and instructions.