

clumsy effort to keep the record straight. "And one morning, down there in the opium joint, Charlie's place—the House with the Red-lacquered Balcony, on the Foochow Road—he climbed out of his horrid hunk, and he left us. But, before he left, he talked to us. He said anybody who wanted to go to ruin on opium could do it, but he was through with it. He said he would drink whisky. He said he knew what whisky would do to him, but nobody could tell what opium would do! And he begged us to come back to America. He said he was going to work and get enough money to come back. And he did—he did!"

Her voice broke shrilly. Somehow, they all knew that, when she had said that, she had put words on the great tragedy, the poignant grief, of all her life.

"What's the use of putting on all this stuff?" Simpson spoke uneasily. "All three of us were——"

"Be quiet!" Smith silenced him sternly.

The agitator had stood leaning slightly forward, his lips a little parted, his eyes always on the Leslie woman. Little heads of moisture stood out on his forehead. He was making a terrific effort to remember—a conscious, directed, systematic effort into which he threw all his strength. If a real curtain had hung behind him, he could have put out his hand and torn it apart. He wondered in a dizzy, whirling way why he could not make his brain obey him in