

"We thought you were drowned or bogged in the marsh. What sort of a rumpus is this?"

"The Painted Joss," murmured O'Shea. "I found it. Don't bother with me. Go to it and clean out the place."

The adventurers, at last earning their wages, proceeded to make things most unpleasant for the household of Chung. The resistance was brief, and those who were not penned within the temple fled in panic and sought cover in the marsh. They were taken by surprise, for the community had found the visit of Captain O'Shea sufficient to engage its attention. To him returned Major Bannister, hot and dusty, his cheek bleeding from the cut of a Chinese sword, and smilingly announced:

"Bully good fun while it lasted. What shall I do with the devils we cornered? Take them out and shoot them?"

"No. The boss of the works is dead. And I have a notion that *The Sect of the Fatal Obligation* died with him. Lug me to the temple, if ye please. I'm all in, but 'tis my wish to see the whole wicked business go up in smoke."

Before the torch was applied, that experienced man of war, Major Bannister, suggested that he had never seen a more promising place in which to poke about for loot. The search amounted to nothing until it occurred to the major to pull the Painted Joss from off its pedestal. After much heaving and prying the great image fell crashing to the pavement of the temple. Investigation revealed that underneath it were