

JAVA HEAD

purely worldly and mental and personal charm than those of Gerrit's wife.

His mind grew more philosophical and a perception, yet without base in facts, convinced him that Taou Yuen had been killed by America. It was a fantastic thought, and he attempted to dismiss it, waiting for more secure knowledge, but it persisted. She had been killed by unfamiliar circumstances, tradition, emotions. In some manner, but how he was unable to disentangle from the pressures of mere curiosity and conjecture, Nettie Vollar — or rather Gerrit's old passing affair with Nettie — had entered into the unhappy occurrence. After an hour's vain search he gave up all effort to pierce the darkness until he had actual knowledge — if he ever had, he was forced to add silently. It was possible that the secret might be entirely guarded from the public, even from the closer part he had played and his familiarity with the Ammidon family.

He was an inmate of their inner garden with its lilac trees and hedged roses in season, the pungent beds of flowers and box, the moonshade of the poplars. Roger Brevard turned from the consideration of Taou Yuen to the even more insistent claim of his increasing affection for Sidsall. He stopped again both to lament and delight in her youth — another year and he would have unhesitatingly announced his feeling as love to them all. It was that, he admitted to himself almost shyly. The obvious thing was for him to wait through the year or more until the Ammidons would hear of a proposal and then urge his desire. . . . He could see her quite often meanwhile.