

## CHAPTER 23

"YOUR extraordinary proposal fills me with horror, Mr. Smith!"

The sleek little man in the dress suit, who looked like a head waiter (but was the trusted legal adviser of the house of Southery) puffed at his cigar indignantly. Nayland Smith, whose restless pacing had led him to the far end of the library, turned, a remote but virile figure, and looked back to where I stood by the open hearth with the solicitor.

"I am in your hands, Mr. Henderson," he said, and advanced upon the latter, his gray eyes ablaze. "Save for the heir, who is abroad on foreign service, you say there is no kin of Lord Southery to consider. The word rests with you. If I am wrong, and you agree to my proposal, there is none whose susceptibilities will suffer--"

"My own, sir!"

"If I am right, and you prevent me from acting, you become a murderer, Mr. Henderson."

The lawyer started, staring nervously up at Smith, who now towered over him menacingly.

"Lord Southery was a lonely man," continued my friend. "If I could have placed my proposition before one of his blood, I do not doubt what my answer had been. Why do you hesitate? Why do you experience this feeling of horror?"

Mr. Henderson stared down into the fire. His constitutionally ruddy face was pale.

"It is entirely irregular, Mr. Smith. We have not the necessary powers--"

Smith snapped his teeth together impatiently, snatching his watch from his pocket and glancing at it.

"I am vested with the necessary powers. I will give you a written order, sir."

"The proceeding savors of paganism. Such a course might be admissible in China, in Burma--"

"Do you weigh a life against such quibbles? Do you suppose that, granting MY irresponsibility, Dr. Petrie would countenance such a thing if be doubted the necessity?"

Mr. Henderson looked at me with pathetic hesitance.

"There are guests in the house--mourners who attended the ceremony to-day. They--"

"Will never know, if we are in error," interrupted Smith. "Good God! why do you delay?"

"You wish it to be kept secret?"

"You and I, Mr. Henderson, and Dr. Petrie will go now. We require no other witnesses. We are answerable only to our consciences."

The lawyer passed his hand across his damp brow.

"I have never in my life been called upon to come to so momentous a decision in so short a time," he confessed. But, aided by Smith's indomitable will, he made his decision. As its result, we three, looking and feeling like conspirators, hurried across the park beneath a moon whose placidity was a rebuke to the turbulent passions which reared their strangle-growth in the garden of England. Not a breath of wind stirred amid the leaves. The calm of perfect night soothed everything to slumber. Yet, if Smith were right (and I did not doubt him), the green eyes of Dr. Fu-Manchu had looked upon the scene; and I found myself marveling that its beauty had not wilted up. Even now the dread Chinaman must be near to us.

As Mr. Henderson unlocked the ancient iron gates he turned to Nayland Smith. His face twitched oddly.

"Witness that I do this unwillingly," he said--"most unwillingly."

"Mine be the responsibility," was the reply.

Smith's voice quivered, responsive to the nervous vitality pent up within that lean frame. He stood motionless, listening--and I knew for whom he listened. He peered about him to right and left-- and I knew whom he expected but dreaded to see.

Above us now the trees looked down with a solemnity different from the aspect of the monarchs of the park, and the nearer we came to our journey's end the more somber and lowering bent the verdant arch-- or so it seemed.

By that path, patched now with pools of moonlight, Lord Southery had passed upon his bier, with the sun to light his going; by that path several generations of Stradwicks had gone to their last resting-place.

To the doors of the vault the moon rays found free access. No branch, no leaf, intervened. Mr. Henderson's face looked ghastly. The keys which he carried rattled in his hand.

"Light the lantern," he said unsteadily.

Nayland Smith, who again had been peering suspiciously about into the shadows, struck a match and lighted the lantern which he carried. He turned to the solicitor.

"Be calm, Mr. Henderson," he said sternly. "It is your plain duty to your client."

"God be my witness that I doubt it," replied Henderson, and opened the door.

We descended the steps. The air beneath was damp and chill. It touched us as with clammy fingers; and the sensation was not wholly physical.

Before the narrow mansion which now sufficed Lord Southery, the great engineer whom kings had honored, Henderson reeled and clutched at me for support. Smith and I had looked to him for no aid in our uncanny task, and rightly.

With averted eyes he stood over by the steps of the tomb, whilst my friend and myself set to work. In the pursuit of my profession I had undertaken labors as unpleasant, but never amid an environment such as this. It seemed that generations of Stradwicks listened to each turn of every screw.

At last it was done, and the pallid face of Lord Southery questioned the intruding light. Nayland Smith's hand was as steady as a rigid bar when he raised the lantern. Later, I knew, there would be a sudden releasing of the tension of will--a reaction physical and mental-- but not until his work was finished.

That my own hand was steady I ascribed to one thing solely-- professional zeal. For, under conditions which, in the event of failure and exposure, must have led to an unpleasant inquiry by the British Medical Association, I was about to attempt an experiment never before essayed by a physician of the white races.

Though I failed, though I succeeded, that it ever came before the B.M.A., or any other council, was improbable; in the former event, all but impossible. But the knowledge that I was about to practice charlatanry, or what any one of my fellow-practitioners must have designated as such, was with me. Yet so profound had my belief become in the extraordinary being whose existence was a danger to the world that I reveled in my immunity from official censure. I was glad that it had fallen to my lot to take at least one step-- though blindly--into the FUTURE of medical science.

So far as my skill bore me, Lord Southery was dead. Unhesitatingly, I would have given a death certificate, save for two considerations. The first, although his latest scheme ran contrary from the interests of Dr. Fu-Manchu, his genius, diverted into other channels, would serve the yellow group better than his death. The second, I had seen the boy Aziz raised from a state as like death as this.

From the phial of amber-hued liquid which I had with me, I charged the needle syringe. I made the injection, and waited.

"If he is really dead!" whispered Smith. "It seems incredible that he can have survived for three days without food. Yet I have known a fakir to go for a week."

Mr. Henderson groaned.

Watch in hand, I stood observing the gray face.

A second passed; another; a third. In the fourth the miracle began. Over the seemingly cold clay crept the hue of pulsing life. It came in waves--in waves which corresponded with the throbbing of the awakened heart; which swept fuller and stronger; which filled and quickened the chilled body.

As we rapidly freed the living man from the trappings of the dead one, Southery, uttering a stifled scream, sat up, looked about him with half-glazed eyes, and fell back. "My God!" cried Smith.

"It is all right," I said, and had time to note how my voice had assumed a professional tone. "A little brandy from my flask is all that is necessary now."

"You have two patients, Doctor," rapped my friend.

Mr. Henderson had fallen in a swoon to the floor of the vault.

"Quiet," whispered Smith; "HE is here."

He extinguished the light.

I supported Lord Southery. "What has happened?" he kept moaning. "Where am I? Oh, God! what has happened?"

I strove to reassure him in a whisper, and placed my traveling coat about him. The door at the top of the mausoleum steps we had reclosed but not relocked. Now, as I upheld the man whom literally we had rescued from the grave, I heard the door reopen. To aid Henderson I could make no move. Smith was breathing hard beside me. I dared not think what was about to happen, nor what its effects might be upon Lord Southery in his exhausted condition.

Through the Memphian dark of the tomb cut a spear of light, touching the last stone of the stairway.

A guttural voice spoke some words rapidly, and I knew that Dr. Fu-Manchu stood at the head of the stairs. Although I could not see my friend, I became aware that Nayland Smith had his revolver in his hand, and I reached into my pocket for mine.

At last the cunning Chinaman was about to fall into a trap. It would require all his genius, I thought, to save him to-night. Unless his suspicions were aroused by the unlocked door, his capture was imminent.

Someone was descending the steps.

In my right hand I held my revolver, and with my left arm about Lord Southery, I waited through ten such seconds of suspense as I have rarely known.

The spear of light plunged into the well of darkness again.

Lord Southery, Smith and myself were hidden by the angle of the wall; but full upon the purplish face of Mr. Henderson the beam shone. In some way it penetrated to the murk in his mind; and he awakened from his swoon with a hoarse cry, struggled to his feet, and stood looking up the stair in a sort of frozen horror.

Smith was past him at a bound. Something flashed towards him as the light was extinguished. I saw him duck, and heard the knife ring upon the floor.

I managed to move sufficiently to see at the top, as I fired up the stairs, the yellow face of Dr. Fu-Manchu, to see the gleaming, chatoyant eyes, greenly terrible, as they sought to pierce the gloom. A flying figure was racing up, three steps at a time (that of a brown man scantily clad). He stumbled and fell, by which I knew that he was hit; but went on again, Smith hard on his heels.

"Mr. Henderson!" I cried, "relight the lantern and take charge of Lord Southery. Here is my flask on the floor. I rely upon you."

Smith's revolver spoke again as I went bounding up the stair. Black against the square of moonlight I saw him stagger, I saw him fall. As he fell, for the third time, I heard the crack of his revolver.

Instantly I was at his side. Somewhere along the black aisle beneath the trees receding footsteps pattered.

"Are you hurt, Smith?" I cried anxiously.

He got upon his feet.

"He has a dacoit with him," he replied, and showed me the long curved knife which he held in his hand, a full inch of the blade bloodstained. "A near thing for me, Petrie."

I heard the whir of a restarted motor.

"We have lost him," said Smith.

"But we have saved Lord Southery," I said. "Fu-Manchu will credit us with a skill as great as his own."

"We must get to the car," Smith muttered, "and try to overtake them. Ugh! my left arm is useless."

"It would be mere waste of time to attempt to overtake them," I argued, "for we have no idea in which direction they will proceed."

"I have a very good idea," snapped Smith. "Stradwick Hall is less than ten miles from the coast. There is only one practicable means of conveying an unconscious man secretly from here to London."

"You think he meant to take him from here to London?"

"Prior to shipping him to China; I think so. His clearing-house is probably on the Thames."

"A boat?"

"A yacht, presumably, is lying off the coast in readiness. Fu-Manchu may even have designed to ship him direct to China."

Lord Southery, a bizarre figure, my traveling coat wrapped about him, and supported by his solicitor, who was almost as pale as himself, emerged from the vault into the moonlight.

"This is a triumph for you, Smith," I said.

The throb of Fu-Manchu's car died into faintness and was lost in the night's silence.

"Only half a triumph," he replied. "But we still have another chance-- the raid on his house. When will the word come from Karamaneh?"

Southery spoke in a weak voice.

"Gentlemen," he said, "it seems I am raised from the dead."

It was the weirdest moment of the night wherein we heard that newly buried man speak from the mold of his tomb.

"Yes," replied Smith slowly, "and spared from the fate of Heaven alone knows how many men of genius. The yellow society lacks a Southery, but that Dr. Fu-Manchu was in Germany three years ago I have reason to believe; so that, even without visiting the grave of your great Teutonic rival, who suddenly died at about that time, I venture to predict that they have a Von Homber. And the futurist group in China knows how to MAKE men work!"

## CHAPTER 24

FROM the rescue of Lord Southery my story bears me mercilessly on to other things. I may not tarry, as more leisurely penmen, to round my incidents; they were not of my choosing. I may not pause to make you better acquainted with the figure of my drama; its scheme is none of mine. Often enough, in those days, I found a fitness in the lines of Omar:

*We are no other than a moving show  
Of Magic Shadow-shapes that come and go  
Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held  
In Midnight by the Master of the Show.*

But "the Master of the Show," in this case, was Dr. Fu-Manchu!

I have been asked many times since the days with which these records deal: Who WAS Dr. Fu-Manchu? Let me confess here that my final answer must be postponed. I can only indicate, at this place, the trend of my reasoning, and leave my reader to form whatever conclusion he pleases.

What group can we isolate and label as responsible for the overthrow of the Manchus? The casual student of modern Chinese history will reply: "Young China." This is unsatisfactory. What do we mean by Young China? In my own hearing Fu-Manchu had disclaimed, with scorn, association with the whole of that movement; and assuming that the name were not an assumed one, he clearly can have been no anti-Manchu, no Republican.

The Chinese Republican is of the mandarin class, but of a new generation which veneers its Confucianism with Western polish. These youthful and unbalanced reformers, in conjunction with older but no less ill-balanced provincial politicians, may be said to represent Young China. Amid such turmoils as this we invariably look for, and invariably find, a Third Party. In my opinion, Dr. Fu-Manchu was one of the leaders of such a party.

Another question often put to me was: Where did the Doctor hide during the time that he pursued his operations in London? This is more susceptible of explanation. For a time Nayland Smith supposed, as I did myself, that the opium den adjacent to the old Ratcliff Highway was the Chinaman's base of operations; later we came to believe that the mansion near Windsor was his hiding-place, and later still, the hulk lying off the downstream flats. But I think I can state with confidence that the spot which he had chosen for his home was neither of these, but the East End riverside building which I was the first to enter. Of this I am all but sure; for the reason that it not only was the home of Fu-Manchu, of Karamaneh, and of her brother, Aziz, but the home of something else-- of something which I shall speak of later.

The dreadful tragedy (or series of tragedies) which attended the raid upon the place will always mark in my memory the supreme horror of a horrible case. Let me endeavor to explain what occurred.

By the aid of Karamaneh, you have seen how we had located the whilom warehouse, which, from the exterior, was so drab and dreary, but which within was a place of wondrous luxury. At the moment selected by our beautiful accomplice, Inspector Weymouth and a body of detectives entirely surrounded it; a river police launch lay off the wharf which opened from it on

the river-side; and this upon a singularly black night, than which a better could not have been chosen.

"You will fulfill your promise to me?" said Karamaneh, and looked up into my face.

She was enveloped in a big, loose cloak, and from the shadow of the hood her wonderful eyes gleamed out like stars.

"What do you wish us to do?" asked Nayland Smith.

"You--and Dr. Petrie," she replied swiftly, "must enter first, and bring out Aziz. Until he is safe--until he is out of that place-- you are to make no attempt upon--"

"Upon Dr. Fu-Manchu?" interrupted Weymouth; for Karamaneh hesitated to pronounce the dreaded name, as she always did. "But how can we be sure that there is no trap laid for us?"

The Scotland Yard man did not entirely share my confidence in the integrity of this Eastern girl whom he knew to have been a creature of the Chinaman's.

"Aziz lies in the private room," she explained eagerly, her old accent more noticeable than usual. "There is only one of the Burmese men in the house, and he--he dare not enter without orders!"

"But Fu-Manchu?"

"We have nothing to fear from him. He will be your prisoner within ten minutes from now! I have no time for words-- you must believe!" She stamped her foot impatiently. "And the dacoit?" snapped Smith.

"He also."

"I think perhaps I'd better come in, too," said Weymouth slowly.

Karamaneh shrugged her shoulders with quick impatience, and unlocked the door in the high brick wall which divided the gloomy, evil-smelling court from the luxurious apartments of Dr. Fu-Manchu.

"Make no noise," she warned. And Smith and myself followed her along the uncarpeted passage beyond.

Inspector Weymouth, with a final word of instruction to his second in command, brought up the rear. The door was reclosed; a few paces farther on a second was unlocked. Passing through a small room, unfurnished, a farther passage led us to a balcony. The transition was startling.

Darkness was about us now, and silence: a perfumed, slumberous darkness-- a silence full of mystery. For, beyond the walls of the apartment whereon we looked down waged the unceasing battle of sounds that is the hymn of the great industrial river. About the scented confines which bounded us now floated the smoke-laden vapors of the Lower Thames.

From the metallic but infinitely human clangor of dock-side life, from the unpleasant but homely odors which prevail where ships swallow in and belch out the concrete evidences of commercial prosperity, we had come into this incensed stillness, where one shaded lamp painted dim enlargements of its Chinese silk upon the nearer walls, and left the greater part of the room the darker for its contrast.

Nothing of the Thames-side activity--of the riveting and scraping-- the bumping of bales-- the bawling of orders--the hiss of steam-- penetrated to this perfumed place. In the pool of tinted light lay the deathlike figure of a dark-haired boy, Karamaneh's muffled form bending over him.

"At last I stand in the house of Dr. Fu-Manchu!" whispered Smith.

Despite the girl's assurance, we knew that proximity to the sinister Chinaman must be fraught with danger. We stood, not in the lion's den, but in the serpent's lair.

From the time when Nayland Smith had come from Burma in pursuit of this advance-guard of a cogent Yellow Peril, the face of Dr. Fu-Manchu rarely had been absent from my dreams day or night. The millions might sleep in peace--the millions in whose cause we labored!--but we who knew the reality of the danger knew that a veritable octopus had fastened upon England-- a yellow octopus whose head was that of Dr. Fu-Manchu, whose tentacles were dacoity, thuggee, modes of death, secret and swift, which in the darkness plucked men from life and left no clew behind.

"Karamaneh!" I called softly.

The muffled form beneath the lamp turned so that the soft light fell upon the lovely face of the slave girl. She who had been a pliant instrument in the hands of Fu-Manchu now was to be the means whereby society should be rid of him.

She raised her finger warningly; then beckoned me to approach.

My feet sinking in the rich pile of the carpet, I came through the gloom of the great apartment in to the patch of light, and, Karamaneh beside me, stood looking down upon the boy. It was Aziz, her brother; dead so far as Western lore had power to judge, but kept alive in that deathlike trance by the uncanny power of the Chinese doctor.

"Be quick," she said; "be quick! Awaken him! I am afraid."

From the case which I carried I took out a needle-syringe and a phial containing a small quantity of amber-hued liquid. It was a drug not to be found in the British Pharmacopoeia. Of its constitution I knew nothing. Although I had had the phial in my possession for some days I had not dared to devote any of its precious contents to analytical purposes. The amber drops spelled life for the boy Aziz, spelled success for the mission of Nayland Smith, spelled ruin for the fiendish Chinaman.

I raised the white coverlet. The boy, fully dressed, lay with his arms crossed upon his breast. I discerned the mark of previous injections as, charging the syringe from the phial, I made what I hoped would be the last of such experiments upon him. I would have given half of my small worldly possessions to have known the real nature of the drug which was now coursing through the veins of Aziz--which was tinting the grayed face with the olive tone of life; which, so far as my medical training bore me, was restoring the dead to life.

But such was not the purpose of my visit. I was come to remove from the house of Dr. Fu-Manchu the living chain which bound Karamaneh to him. The boy alive and free, the Doctor's hold upon the slave girl would be broken.

My lovely companion, her hands convulsively clasped, knelt and devoured with her eyes the face of the boy who was passing through the most amazing physiological change in the history of therapeutics. The peculiar perfume which she wore--which seemed to be a part of her-- which always I associated with her--was faintly perceptible. Karamaneh was breathing rapidly.

"You have nothing to fear," I whispered; "see, he is reviving. In a few moments all will be well with him."

The hanging lamp with its garishly colored shade swung gently above us, wafted, it seemed, by some draught which passed through the apartment. The boy's heavy lids began to quiver, and Karamaneh nervously clutched my arm, and held me so whilst we watched for the long-lashed eyes to open. The stillness of the place was positively unnatural; it seemed

inconceivable that all about us was the discordant activity of the commercial East End. Indeed, this eerie silence was becoming oppressive; it began positively to appall me.

Inspector Weymouth's wondering face peeped over my shoulder.

"Where is Dr. Fu-Manchu?" I whispered, as Nayland Smith in turn appeared beside me. "I cannot understand the silence of the house--"

"Look about," replied Karamaneh, never taking her eyes from the face of Aziz.

I peered around the shadowy walls. Tall glass cases there were, shelves and niches: where once, from the gallery above, I had seen the tubes and retorts, the jars of unfamiliar organisms, the books of unfamiliar lore, the impedimenta of the occult student and man of science--the visible evidences of Fu-Manchu's presence. Shelves--cases--niches--were bare. Of the complicated appliances unknown to civilized laboratories, wherewith he pursued his strange experiments, of the tubes wherein he isolated the bacilli of unclassified diseases, of the yellow-bound volumes for a glimpse at which (had they known of their contents) the great men of Harley Street would have given a fortune--no trace remained. The silken cushions; the inlaid tables; all were gone.

The room was stripped, dismantled. Had Fu-Manchu fled? The silence assumed a new significance. His dacoits and kindred ministers of death all must have fled, too.

"You have let him escape us!" I said rapidly. "You promised to aid us to capture him--to send us a message-- and you have delayed until--"

"No," she said; "no!" and clutched at my arm again. "Oh! is he not reviving slowly? Are you sure you have made no mistake?"

Her thoughts were all for the boy; and her solicitude touched me. I again examined Aziz, the most remarkable patient of my busy professional career.

As I counted the strengthening pulse, he opened his dark eyes-- which were so like the eyes of Karamaneh--and, with the girl's eager arms tightly about him, sat up, looking wonderingly around.

Karamaneh pressed her cheek to his, whispering loving words in that softly spoken Arabic which had first betrayed her nationality to Nayland Smith. I handed her my flask, which I had filled with wine.

"My promise is fulfilled!" I said. "You are free! Now for Fu-Manchu! But first let us admit the police to this house; there is something uncanny in its stillness."

"No," she replied. "First let my brother be taken out and placed in safety. Will you carry him?"

She raised her face to that of Inspector Weymouth, upon which was written awe and wonder.

The burly detective lifted the boy as tenderly as a woman, passed through the shadows to the stairway, ascended, and was swallowed up in the gloom. Nayland Smith's eyes gleamed feverishly. He turned to Karamaneh.

"You are not playing with us?" he said harshly. "We have done our part; it remains for you to do yours."

"Do not speak so loudly," the girl begged. "HE is near us-- and, oh, God, I fear him so!"

"Where is he?" persisted my friend.

Karamaneh's eyes were glassy with fear now.

"You must not touch him until the police are here," she said-- but from the direction of her quick, agitated glances I knew that, her brother safe now, she feared for me, and for me alone. Those glances sent my blood dancing; for Karamaneh was an Eastern jewel which any man of flesh and blood must have coveted had he known it to lie within his reach. Her eyes were twin lakes of mystery which, more than once, I had known the desire to explore.

"Look--beyond that curtain"--her voice was barely audible--"but do not enter. Even as he is, I fear him."

Her voice, her palpable agitation, prepared us for something extraordinary. Tragedy and Fu-Manchu were never far apart. Though we were two, and help was so near, we were in the abode of the most cunning murderer who ever came out of the East.

It was with strangely mingled emotions that I crossed the thick carpet, Nayland Smith beside me, and drew aside the draperies concealing a door, to which Karamaneh had pointed. Then, upon looking into the dim place beyond, all else save what it held was forgotten.

We looked upon a small, square room, the walls draped with fantastic Chinese tapestry, the floor strewn with cushions; and reclining in a corner, where the faint, blue light from a lamp, placed upon a low table, painted grotesque shadows about the cavernous face-- was Dr. Fu-Manchu!

At sight of him my heart leaped--and seemed to suspend its functions, so intense was the horror which this man's presence inspired in me. My hand clutching the curtain, I stood watching him. The lids veiled the malignant green eyes, but the thin lips seemed to smile. Then Smith silently pointed to the hand which held a little pipe. A sickly perfume assailed my nostrils, and the explanation of the hushed silence, and the ease with which we had thus far executed our plan, came to me. The cunning mind was torpid-- lost in a brutish world of dreams.

Fu-Manchu was in an opium sleep!

The dim light traced out a network of tiny lines, which covered the yellow face from the pointed chin to the top of the great domed brow, and formed deep shadow pools in the hollows beneath his eyes. At last we had triumphed.

I could not determine the depth of his obscene trance; and mastering some of my repugnance, and forgetful of Karamaneh's warning, I was about to step forward into the room, loaded with its nauseating opium fumes, when a soft breath fanned my cheek.

"Do not go in!" came Karamaneh's warning voice--hushed--trembling.

Her little hand grasped my arm. She drew Smith and myself back from the door.

"There is danger there!" she whispered.

"Do not enter that room! The police must reach him in some way-- and drag him out! Do not enter that room!"

The girl's voice quivered hysterically; her eyes blazed into savage flame. The fierce resentment born of dreadful wrongs was consuming her now; but fear of Fu-Manchu held her yet. Inspector Weymouth came down the stairs and joined us.

"I have sent the boy to Ryman's room at the station," he said. "The divisional surgeon will look after him until you arrive, Dr. Petrie. All is ready now. The launch is just off the wharf and every side of the place under observation. Where's our man?"

He drew a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and raised his eyebrows interrogatively. The absence of sound-- of any demonstration from the uncanny Chinaman whom he was there to arrest--puzzled him.

Nayland Smith jerked his thumb toward the curtain.

At that, and before we could utter a word, Weymouth stepped to the draped door. He was a man who drove straight at his goal and saved reflections for subsequent leisure. I think, moreover, that the atmosphere of the place (stripped as it was it retained its heavy, voluptuous perfume) had begun to get a hold upon him. He was anxious to shake it off; to be up and doing.

He pulled the curtain aside and stepped into the room. Smith and I perforce followed him. Just within the door the three of us stood looking across at the limp thing which had spread terror throughout the Eastern and Western world. Helpless as Fu-Manchu was, he inspired terror now, though the giant intellect was inert--stupefied.

In the dimly lit apartment we had quitted I heard Karamaneh utter a stifled scream. But it came too late.

As though cast up by a volcano, the silken cushions, the inlaid table with its blue-shaded lamp, the garish walls, the sprawling figure with the ghastly light playing upon its features--quivered, and shot upward!

So it seemed to me; though, in the ensuing instant I remembered, too late, a previous experience of the floors of Fu-Manchu's private apartments; I knew what had indeed befallen us. A trap had been released beneath our feet.

I recall falling--but have no recollection of the end of my fall-- of the shock marking the drop. I only remember fighting for my life against a stifling something which had me by the throat. I knew that I was being suffocated, but my hands met only the deathly emptiness.

Into a poisonous well of darkness I sank. I could not cry out. I was helpless. Of the fate of my companions I knew nothing-- could surmise nothing. Then...all consciousness ended.