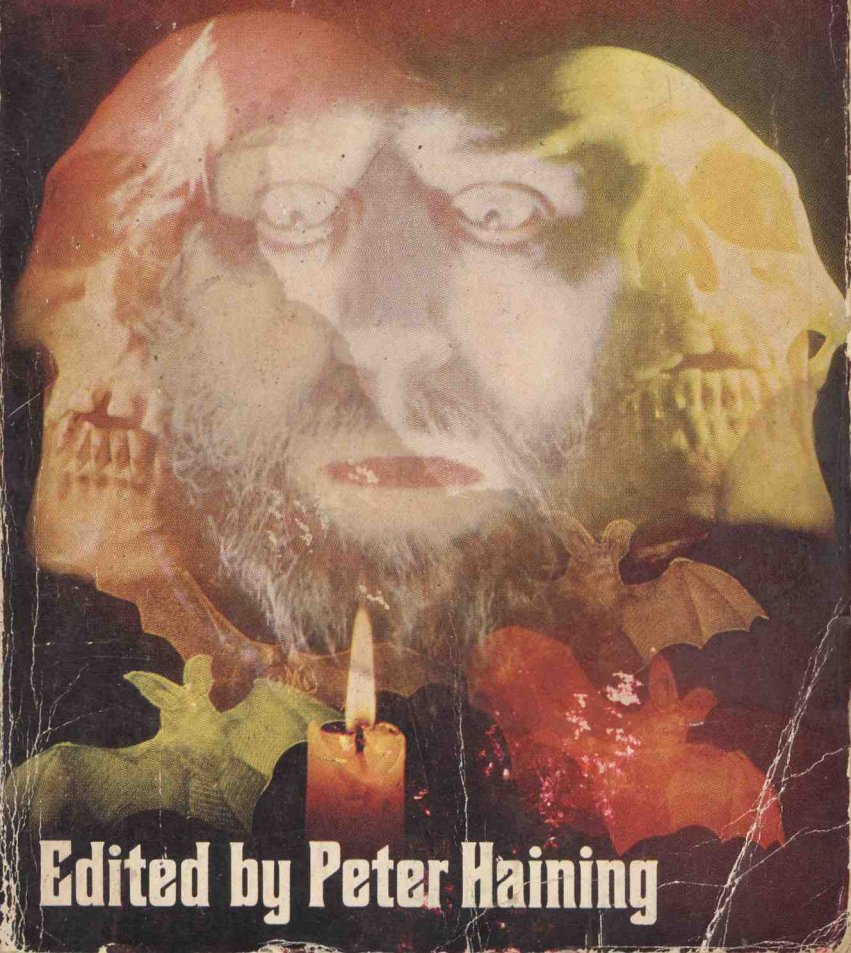


EVERYMAN'S BOOK OF CLASSIC HORROR STORIES



Edited by Peter Haining

EVERYMAN, I will go with thee,

and be thy guide,

In thy most need to go by thy side

Everyman's Book of Classic Horror Stories

EDITED BY
PETER HAINING



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For Horrorphiles everywhere . . .

“See mirrored in their eyes the
chill dew of Hell.”

Matthew Lewis

The Monk

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INTRODUCTION

The weird, the macabre and the mysterious have fascinated the imagination of man for many generations. The reason for this fascination has, however, never really been fully explained – except that we are all a little frightened of the unknown . . . and yet attracted to it at the same time.

Although the tradition of the supernatural story goes back into the mists of time, it is only in the last two hundred or so years that the specific genre of the horror story, the story written to excite or frighten, has developed. The birth of this kind of tale – as against those which merely reported a ghostly occurrence or some out-world experience – can fairly be said to have occurred with the emergence of the ‘Gothic’ tale in the closing years of the eighteenth century. At this time writers like Matthew Lewis (*The Monk*), William Beckford (*Vathek*), Charles Maturin (*Melmoth the Wanderer*) and Mary Shelley (*Frankenstein*) took all the old traditions of haunted castles, evil deeds and maidens wronged, and turned them into a style of storytelling aimed at really exciting, if not actually frightening, the reader.

It was from their literary beginnings that the horror story genre evolved into the universally popular tales we know today.

Perhaps the most important single influence on this

tradition, however, was the American, Edgar Allan Poe, the "Father of the Modern Horror Story" as he had been called, who took all the diverse approaches to these writers and moulded them, liberally embellished with his own traumas and uncertainties, into a blue-print which has since been utilised by virtually every author in the genre.

In the intervening years, each generation has thrown up a major horror story writer or two, and this collection has been assembled simply to represent these men and some of the best of their stories. The tales which, in fact, subsequent generations have come to consider as true 'classics' of their kind.

The stories in *The Hell of Mirrors* are, then, an illustration of a story form changing and developing, not only in Poe's America, but in Britain, France, Germany and even farther afield in the mysterious East, where the inventive Japanese are making their own special kind of contribution. It is a reflection, too – if the reader will excuse the pun – of the very best in horror fiction from nearly two centuries of endeavour, and a demonstration of how many writers have drawn on their own circumstances and fears for their stories. It will also serve, hopefully, as both an introduction to the horror story for the newcomer and as a reminder of all that is best in the genre for the afficianado.

The collection begins, as is only fitting, with a story by Edgar Allan Poe, *Ligeia*, which apart from being considered one of his finest, also clearly shows his obsessive loneliness and resource to drugs for escape from the cares of his everyday life. Nathaniel Hawthorne, his fellow countryman, who follows, was also a solitary figure, much concerned with evil forces, as he demonstrates in *Young Goodman Brown*, one of the earliest and best of all witchcraft stories.

It was across the Atlantic in Ireland that the ghost story was to find its great master in the person of Joseph

Sheridan Le Fanu, the grand-nephew of the immortal playwright, Richard Brinsley Sheridan. He took his native land's long tradition of wraiths and spectres and moulded them into a unique and spellbinding series of tales. Few critics or readers will deny that *Shalken the Painter*, re-published here, ranks beside his most accomplished works.

Moving to Europe we find the major influences on the horror story are the Frenchman, Guy de Maupassant, whose work is wonderfully diverse and suffused with a real knowledge of the workings of human evil (as in *The Drowned Man* included here), and the German, E. T. A. Hoffmann, whose stories have since provided such a rich source of material for all the mediums of entertainment.

The turn of the eighteenth century saw the emergence of the mysterious American writer Ambrose Bierce who, at the height of his fame, suddenly quit his usual haunts and disappeared into oblivion. In England, a one-time actors' manager, Bram Stoker, gave the horror genre its most famous character since Mary Shelley's 'Frankenstein'

Count Dracula, the vampire nobleman from Transylvania. Hard on his steps was M. R. James, the quiet, dignified Provost of Eton, whose ghost stories – and in particular "*Oh, Whistle, and I'll Come to You, My Lad*" – are among the most cunningly contrived and brilliant in the English language. His contemporary, Algernon Blackwood, similarly added further dimensions to the scope of the horror story when he successfully utilized both personal experience (he was a renowned traveller) and deep knowledge of ancient legends. *The Old Man of Visions*, which is included here, is founded on several encounters with the most remarkable and bizarre figure anyone might hope to meet in his lifetime . . .

In the nineteen-twenties, the horror story pendulum swung back to America again and the dominance of the Poe-like recluse, H. P. Lovecraft. He created a new style of tale with his accounts of a mythical race of beings, the

Cthulu Mythos, lurking just beneath the surface of everyday life and ready to come amongst us if only a few foolhardy citizens would release them. His contribution here, *The Nameless City*, is the very first tale of the Mythos – and the inspiration for not only much of his own later work but that of many other admirers.

Among Lovecraft's "disciples" could certainly be numbered Robert Bloch, who himself achieved international recognition with his novel, *Psycho*, which Alfred Hitchcock filmed so brilliantly. *That Hell-Bound Train* which appears in these pages remains, though, one of his best short stories and indeed won the highly coveted Hugo Award in 1958. Ray Bradbury, who follows Bloch, is a similarly acclaimed writer in the film world, although he moves just as easily in the realms of science fiction as horror. His best work invariably features the most delightful children with the most sinister motives – as you will find in *The Emissary*. (It is interesting to note, incidentally, how both the stories by Bloch and by Bradbury deal with a little boy called Martin – thankfully not one and the same child!)

The last three tales in this book bring the horror story tradition right up to date, and to underline the international appeal of the genre I have ranged for examples from Europe to America and – perhaps surprisingly at first sight – Japan. In fact, the Japanese have had a keen interest in this kind of story for many years and their supreme exponent is a man who, out of admiration for the great Edgar Allan Poe, has taken the pseudonym of Edogawa Rampo, a Japanese corruption of the original. With *The Hell of Mirrors* I am pleased to introduce him to Western readers for the first time – I suspect it will not be the last! (I am also grateful to him for supplying the phrase which serves as the title of this book.)

Mervyn Peake, of course, needs little introduction to readers of fantasy, for his *Titus Groan* trilogy is, in my opinion, a creation at least the equal of Tolkien's *Lord of*

the Rings, the work now so highly vaunted among the younger generation. Nor, indeed, does one need to say much about the enormously popular American, Arthur Porges, perhaps the leading writer in the best modern horror story magazine, *Fantastic*, and a consistent contributor to *Alfred Hitchcock's Magazine* of crime and mystery stories.

So there you have it: fifteen tales which reflect the many and the best aspects of the horror story. Draw up your chair, turn down the light, the demons await you!

Peter Haining
1965

Editor's Note: In preparing this book for a second edition, I think there is little that I can add to the above notes. There is certainly more that one could say about the contributors, but as I have done this at length in my later collections I do not think it would serve any purpose here. May I only add, then, that in re-reading these stories nearly a decade after I first picked them, I have discovered once again all the superb storytelling and chilling drama that has so deservedly earned them the reputation of enduring classics – just as I hope all my new readers will discover now.

Peter Haining
Spring 1974

LIGEIA

by Edgar Allan Poe

"And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigour? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield himself to angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will." – JOSEPH GLANVILL.

I CANNOT, for my soul, remember how, when, or even precisely where, I first became acquainted with the Lady Ligeia. Long years have since elapsed, and my memory is feeble through much suffering. Or, perhaps, I cannot *now* bring these points to mind, because, in truth, the character of my beloved, her rare learning, her singular yet placid cast of beauty, and the thrilling and enthralling eloquence of her low musical language, made their way into my heart by paces so steadily and stealthily progressive, that they have been unnoticed and unknown. Yet I believe that I met her first and most frequently in some large, old, decaying city near the Rhine. Of her family – I have surely heard her speak. That it is of a remotely ancient date cannot be doubted. Ligeia! Ligeia! Buried in studies of a nature more than all else adapted to deaden impressions of the outward world, it is by that sweet word alone – by Ligeia – that I bring before mine eyes in fancy the image

of her who is no more. And now, while I write, a recollection flashes upon me that I have *never known* the paternal name of her who was my friend and my betrothed, and who became the partner of my studies, and finally the wife of my bosom. Was it a playful charge on the part of my Ligeia? or was it a test of my strength of affection, that I should institute no inquiries upon this point? or was it rather a caprice of my own – a wildly romantic offering on the shrine of the most passionate devotion? I but indistinctly recall the fact itself – what wonder that I have utterly forgotten the circumstances which originated or attended it? And, indeed, if ever that spirit which is entitled *Romance* – if ever she, the wan and the misty-winged *Ashtophet* of idolatrous Egypt, presided, as they tell, over marriages ill-omened, then most surely she presided over mine.

There is one dear topic, however, on which my memory fails me not. It is the *person* of Ligeia. In stature she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease, of her demeanour, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study, save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium-dream – an airy and spirit-lifting vision more wildly divine than the fantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos. Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labours of the heathen. “There is no exquisite beauty,” says Bacon, Lord Verulam, speaking truly of all the forms and genera of beauty, “without some *strangeness* in the proportion.” Yet, although I saw that the features of Ligeia were not of a classic regularity – although I perceived that her loveliness was indeed “exquisite”, and felt that there was much of “strangeness”

pervading it, yet I have tried in vain to detect the irregularity and to trace home my own perception of "the strange". I examined the contour of the lofty and pale forehead – it was faultless – how cold indeed that word when applied to a majesty so divine ! – the skin rivalling the purest ivory, the commanding extent and repose, the gentle prominence of the regions above the temples; and then the raven-black, the glossy, the luxuriant and naturally-curling tresses, setting forth the full force of the Homeric epithet, "hyacinthe" ! I looked at the delicate outlines of the nose – and nowhere but in the graceful medallions of the Hebrews had I beheld a similar perfection. There were the same luxurious smoothness of surface, the same scarcely perceptible tendency to the aquiline, the same harmoniously curved nostrils speaking the free spirit. I regarded the sweet mouth. Here was indeed the triumph of all things heavenly – the magnificent turn of the short upper lip – the soft, voluptuous slumber of the under – the dimples which sported, and the colour which spoke – the teeth glancing back, with a brilliancy almost startling, every ray of the holy light which fell upon them in her serene and placid, yet most exultingly radiant of all smiles. I scrutinized the formation of the chin – and here, too, I found the gentleness of breadth, the softness and the majesty, the fullness and the spirituality, of the Greek – the contour which the god Apollo revealed but in a dream, to Cleomenes, the son of the Athenian. And then I peered into the large eyes of Ligeia.

For eyes we have no models in the remotely antique. It might have been, too, that in these eyes of my beloved lay the secret to which Lord Verulam alludes. They were, I must believe, far larger than the ordinary eyes of our own race. They were even fuller than the fullest of the gazelle eyes of the tribe of the valley of Nourjahad. Yet it was only at intervals – in moments of intense excitement – that this peculiarity became more than slightly noticeable in Ligeia.

And at such moments was her beauty – in my heated fancy thus it appeared, perhaps – the beauty of beings either above or apart from the earth – the beauty of the fabulous Houri of the Turk. The hue of the orbs was the most brilliant of black, and, far over them, hung jetty lashes of great length. The brows, slightly irregular in outline, had the same tint. The “strangeness”, however, which I found in the eyes, was of a nature distinct from the formation, or the colour, or the brilliancy of the features, and must, after all, be referred to the *expression*. Ah, word of no meaning! behind whose vast latitude of mere sound we intrench our ignorance of so much of the spiritual. The expression of the eyes of Ligeia – how for long hours have I pondered upon it! How have I, through the whole of a midsummer night, struggled to fathom it! What was it – that something more profound than the well of Democritus – which lay far within the pupils of my beloved? What *was* it? I was possessed with a passion to discover. Those eyes, those large, those shining, those divine orbs, they became to me twin stars of Leda, and I to them devoutest of astrologers.

There is no point, among the many incomprehensible anomalies of the science of mind, more thrillingly exciting than the fact – never, I believe, noticed in the schools – that in our endeavours to recall to memory something long forgotten, we often find ourselves *upon the very verge* of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. And thus how frequently, in my intense scrutiny of Ligeia’s eyes, have I felt approaching the full knowledge of their expression – felt it approaching – yet not quite be mine – and so at length entirely depart! And (strange – oh, strangest mystery of all!) I found, in the commonest objects of the universe, a circle of analogies to that expression. I mean to say that, subsequently to the period when Ligeia’s beauty passed into my spirit, there dwelling as in a shrine, I derived, from many existences in the material world, a sentiment such as I felt always aroused within me by her large and

luminous orbs. Yet not the more could I define that sentiment, or analyse, or even steadily view it. I recognized it, let me repeat, sometimes in the survey of a rapidly growing vine – in the contemplation of a moth, a butterfly, a chrysalis, a stream of running water. I have felt it in the ocean; in the falling of a meteor. I have felt it in the glances of unusually aged people. And there are one or two stars in heaven (one especially, a star of the sixth magnitude, double and changeable, to be found near the large star in Lyra), in a telescopic scrutiny of which I have been made aware of the feeling. I have been filled with it by certain sounds from stringed instruments, and not unfrequently by passages from books. Among innumerable other instances, I well remember something in a volume of Joseph Glanvill, which (perhaps merely from its quaintness – who shall say?) never failed to inspire me with the sentiment: “And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. Who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigour? For God is but a great will pervading all things by nature of its intentness. Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.”

Length of years and subsequent reflection have enabled me to trace, indeed, some remote connection between this passage in the English moralist and a portion of the character of Ligeia. An *intensity* in thought, action, or speech, was possibly, in her, a result, or at least an index, of that gigantic volition which, during our long intercourse, failed to give other and more immediate evidence of its existence. Of all the women whom I have ever known, she, the outwardly calm, the ever-placid Ligeia, was the most violently a prey to the tumultuous vultures of stern passion. And of such passion I could form no estimate, save by the miraculous expansion of those eyes which at once so delighted and appalled me – by the almost magical melody, modulation, distinctness, and placidity of her very low voice – and by the fierce energy (rendered doubly effective by contrast with

her manner of utterance) of the wild words which she habitually uttered.

I have spoken of the learning of Ligeia : it was immense – such as I have never known in woman. In the classical tongues was she deeply proficient, and, as far as my own acquaintance extended in regard to the modern dialects of Europe, I have never known her at fault. Indeed upon any theme of the most admired, because simply the most abstruse of the boasted erudition of the academy, have I *ever* found Ligeia at fault? How singularly – how thrillingly, this one point in the nature of my wife has forced itself, at this late period only, upon my attention! I said her knowledge was such as I have never known in woman – but where breathes the man who has traversed, and successfully, *all* the wide areas of moral, physical, and mathematical science? I saw not then what I now clearly perceive, that the acquisitions of Ligeia were gigantic, were astounding; yet I was sufficiently aware of her infinite supremacy to resign myself, with a childlike confidence, to her guidance through the chaotic world of metaphysical investigation at which I was most busily occupied during the earlier years of our marriage. With how vast a triumph – with how vivid a delight – and how much of all that is ethereal in hope – did I *feel*, as she bent over me in studies but little sought – but less known – that delicious vista by slow degrees expanding before me, down whose long, gorgeous, and all untrodden path, I might at length pass onward to the goal of a wisdom too divinely precious not to be forbidden!

How poignant, then, must have been the grief with which, after some years, I beheld my well-grounded expectations take wings to themselves and fly away! Without Ligeia I was but as a child groping benighted. Her presence, her readings alone, rendered vividly luminous the many mysteries of the transcendentalism in which we were immersed. Wanting the radiant lustre of her eyes, letters, lambent and golden, grew duller than Saturnian lead. And

now those eyes shone less and less frequently upon the pages over which I pored. Ligeia grew ill. The wild eyes blazed with a too-too glorious effulgence; the pale fingers became of the transparent waxen hue of the grave; and the blue veins upon the lofty forehead swelled and sank impetuously with the tides of the most gentle emotion. I saw that she must die – and I struggled desperately in spirit with the grim Azrael. And the struggles of the passionate wife were, to my astonishment, even more energetic than my own. There had been much in her stern nature to impress me with the belief that, to her, death would have come without its terrors; but not so. Words are impotent to convey any just idea of the fierceness of resistance with which she wrestled with the Shadow. I groaned in anguish at the pitiable spectacle. I would have soothed – I would have reasoned; but, in the intensity of her wild desire for life – for life – *but* for life – solace and reason were alike the uttermost of folly. Yet not until the last instance, amid the most convulsive writhings of her fierce spirit, was shaken the external placidity of her demeanour. Her voice grew more gentle – grew more low – yet I would not wish to dwell upon the wild meaning of the quietly uttered words. My brain reeled as I hearkened, entranced, to a melody more than mortal – to assumptions and aspirations which mortality had never before known.

That she loved me I should not have doubted; and I might have been easily aware that, in a bosom such as hers, love would have reigned no ordinary passion. But in death only was I fully impressed with the strength of her affection. For long hours, detaining my hands, would she pour out before me the overflowing of a heart whose more than passionate devotion amounted to idolatry. How had I deserved to be so blessed by such confessions? – how had I deserved to be so cursed with the removal of my beloved in the hour of her making them? But upon this subject I cannot bear to dilate. Let me say only, that in Ligeia's

more than womanly abandonment to a love, alas! all unmerited, all unworthily bestowed, I at length recognized the principle of her longing, with so wildly earnest a desire, for the life which was now fleeing so rapidly away. It is this wild longing – it is this eager vehemence of desire for life – *but* for life – that I have no power to portray – no utterance capable of expressing.

At high noon of the day in which she departed, beckoning me, peremptorily, to her side, she bade me repeat certain verses composed by herself not many days before. I obeyed her. They were these :

*Lo! 'tis a gala night
Within the lonesome latter years!
An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
In veils, and drowned in tears,
Sit in a theatre, to see
A play of hopes and fears,
While the orchestra breathes fitfully
The music of the spheres.
Mimes, in the form of God on high,
Mutter and mumble low,
And hither and thither fly;
Mere puppets they, who come and go
At bidding of vast formless things
That shift the scenery to and fro,
Flapping from out their condor wings
Invisible Woe!
That motley drama! oh, be sure
It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore,
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot;
And much of Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror, the soul of the plot!*

*But see, amid the mimic rout
A crawling shape intrude!
A blood-red thing that writhes from out
The scenic solitude!
It writhes! it writhes! – with mortal pangs
The mimes become its food,
And the seraphs sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.*

*Out – out are the lights – out all!
And over each quivering form,
The curtain, a funeral pall,
Comes down with the rush of a storm –
And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, “Man”,
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.*

“O God!” half-shrieked Ligeia, leaping to her feet and extending her arms aloft with a spasmodic movement, as I made an end of these lines – “O God! O Divine Father! – shall these things be undeviatingly so? – shall this conqueror be not once conquered? Are we not part and parcel in Thee? Who – who knoweth the mysteries of the will, with its vigour? Man doth not yield him to the angels *nor unto death utterly*, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.”

And now, as if exhausted with emotion, she suffered her white arms to fall, and returned solemnly to her bed of death. And as she breathed her last sighs, there came mingled with them a low murmur from her lips. I bent to them my ear, and distinguished again the concluding words of the passage in Glanvill: “*Man doth not yield him to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will.*”

She died; and I, crushed into the very dust with sorrow,

could no longer endure the lonely desolation of my dwelling in the dim and decaying city by the Rhine. I had no lack of what the world calls wealth. Ligeia had brought me far more, very far more than ordinarily falls to the lot of mortals. After a few months, therefore, of weary and aimless wandering, I purchased, and put in some repair, an abbey, which I shall not name, in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England. The gloomy and dreary grandeur of the building, the almost savage aspect of the domain, the many melancholy and time-honoured memories connected with both, had much in unison with the feelings of utter abandonment which had driven me into that remote and unsocial region of the country. Yet, although the external abbey, with its verdant decay hanging about it, suffered but little alteration, I gave way, with a childlike perversity, and perchance with a faint hope of alleviating my sorrows, to a display of more than regal magnificence within. For such follies, even in childhood, I had imbibed a taste, and now they came back to me as if in the dotage of grief. Alas, I feel how much even of incipient madness might have been discovered in the gorgeous and fantastic draperies, in the solemn carvings of Egypt, in the wild cornices and furniture, in the Bedlam patterns of the carpets of tufted gold! I had become a bounden slave in the trammels of opium, and my labours and my orders had taken a colouring from my dreams. But these absurdities I must not pause to detail. Let me speak only of that one chamber, ever accursed, whither in a moment of mental alienation, I led from the altar as my bride – as the successor of the unforgotten Ligeia – the fair-haired and blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine.

There is no individual portion of the architecture and decoration of that bridal chamber which is not now visibly before me. Where were the souls of the haughty family of the bride, when, through thirst of gold, they permitted to pass the threshold of an apartment so bedecked, a maiden

and a daughter so beloved? I have said that I minutely remember the details of the chamber – yet I am sadly forgetful on topics of deep moment – and here there was no system, no keeping, in the fantastic display, to take hold upon the memory. The room lay in a high turret of the castellated abbey, was pentagonal in shape, and of capacious size. Occupying the whole southern face of the pentagon was the sole window – an immense sheet of unbroken glass from Venice – a single pane, and tinted of a leaden hue, so that the rays of either the sun or moon passing through it, fell with a ghastly lustre on the objects within. Over the upper portion of this huge window extended the trellis-work of an aged vine, which clambered up the mossy walls of the turret. The ceiling, of gloomy-looking oak, was excessively lofty, vaulted, and elaborately fretted with the wildest and most grotesque specimens of a semi-Gothic, semi-Druidical device. From out the most central recess of this melancholy vaulting, depending, by a single chain of gold with long links, a huge censer of the same metal, Saracenic in pattern, and with many perforations so contrived that there writhed in and out of them, as if endued with a serpent vitality, a continual succession of parti-coloured fires.

Some few ottomans and golden candelabra, of Eastern figure, were in various stations about; and there was the couch, too – the bridal couch – of an Indian model, and low, and sculptured of solid ebony, with a pall-like canopy above. In each of the angles of the chamber stood on end a gigantic sarcophagus of black granite, from the tombs of the kings over against Luxor, with their aged lids full of immemorial sculpture. But in the draping of the apartment lay, alas! the chief fantasy of all. The lofty walls, gigantic in height – even unproportionably so – were hung from summit to foot, in vast folds, with a heavy and massive-looking tapestry – tapestry of a material which was found alike as a carpet on the floor, as a covering for the ottomans and the ebony bed, as a canopy for the bed, and as the

gorgeous volutes of the curtains which partially shaded the window. The material was the richest cloth of gold. It was spotted all over, at irregular intervals, with arabesque figures, about a foot in diameter, and wrought upon the cloth in patterns of the most jetty black. But these figures partook of the true character of the arabesque only when regarded from a single point of view. By a contrivance now common, and indeed traceable to a very remote period of antiquity, they were made changeable in aspect. To one entering the room, they bore the appearance of simple monstrosities; but upon a farther advance, this appearance gradually departed; and, step by step, as the visitor moved his station in the chamber, he saw himself surrounded by an endless succession of the ghastly forms which belong to the superstition of the Norman, or arise in the guilty slumbers of the monk. The phantasmagoric effect was vastly heightened by the artificial introduction of a strong continual current of wind behind the draperies – giving a hideous and uneasy animation to the whole.

In halls such as these – in a bridal chamber such as this – I passed, with the Lady of Tremaine, the unhallowed hours of the first month of our marriage – passed them with but little disquietude. That my wife dreaded the fierce moodiness of my temper – that she shunned me, and loved me but little – I could not help perceiving; but it gave me rather pleasure than otherwise. I loathed her with a hatred belonging more to demon than to man. My memory flew back (oh, with what intensity of regret!) to Ligeia, the beloved, the august, the beautiful, the entombed. I revelled in recollections of her purity; of her wisdom; of her lofty, her ethereal nature; of her passionate, her idolatrous love. Now, then, did my spirit fully and freely burn with more than all the fires of her own. In the excitement of my opium dreams (for I was habitually fettered in the shackles of the drug) I would call aloud upon her name, during the silence of the night, or among the sheltered recesses of the glens by

day, as if, through the wild eagerness, the solemn passion, the consuming ardour of my longing for the departed, I could restore her to the pathway she had abandoned – ah, *could* it be for ever? – upon the earth.

About the commencement of the second month of the marriage, the Lady Rowena was attacked with sudden illness, from which her recovery was slow. The fever which consumed her rendered her nights uneasy; and in her perturbed state of half-slumber, she spoke of sounds, and of motions, in and about the chamber of the turret, which I concluded had no origin save in the distemper of her fancy, or perhaps in the phantasmagoric influences of the chamber itself. She became at length convalescent – finally, well. Yet but a brief period elapsed ere a second more violent disorder again threw her upon a bed of suffering; and from this attack her frame, at all times feeble, never altogether recovered. Her illnesses were, after this epoch, of alarming character, and of more alarming recurrence, defying alike the knowledge and the great exertions of her physicians. With the increase of the chronic disease, which had thus, apparently, taken too sure hold upon her constitution to be eradicated by human means, I could not fail to observe a similar increase in the nervous irritation of her temperament, and in her excitability by trivial causes of fear. She spoke again, and now more frequently and pertinaciously, of the sounds – of the slight sounds – and of the unusual motions among the tapestries, to which she had formerly alluded.

One night, near the closing in of September, she pressed this distressing subject with more than usual emphasis upon my attention. She had just awakened from an unquiet slumber, and I had been watching, with feelings half of anxiety, half of vague terror, the workings of her emaciated countenance. I sat by the side of her ebony bed, upon one of the ottomans of India. She partly arose, and spoke, in an earnest low whisper, of sounds which she *then* heard, but

which I could not hear – of motions which she *then* saw, but which I could not perceive. The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her (what, let me confess it, I could not *all* believe) that those almost inarticulate breathings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind. But a deadly pallor, overspreading her face, had proved to me that my exertions to reassure her would be fruitless. She appeared to be fainting, and no attendants were within call. I remembered where was deposited a decanter of light wine which had been ordered by her physicians, and hastened across the chamber to procure it. But, as I stepped beneath the light of the censer, two circumstances of a startling nature attracted my attention. I had felt that some palpable although invisible object had passed lightly by my person; and I saw that there lay upon the golden carpet, in the very middle of the rich lustre thrown from the censer, a shadow – a faint, indefinite shadow of angelic aspect – such as might be fancied for the shadow of a shade. But I was wild with the excitement of an immoderate dose of opium, and heeded these things but little, nor spoke of them to Rowena. Having found the wine, I recrossed the chamber, and poured out a gobletful, which I held to the lips of the fainting lady. She had now partially recovered, and took the vessel herself, while I sank upon an ottoman near me, with my eyes fastened upon her person. It was then that I became distinctly aware of a gentle footfall upon the carpet, and near the couch; and in a second thereafter, as Rowena was in the act of raising the wine to her lips, I saw, or may have dreamed that I saw, fall within the goblet, as if from some invisible spring in the atmosphere of the room, three or four large drops of a brilliant and ruby-coloured fluid. If this I saw – not so Rowena. She swallowed the wine unhesitatingly, and I forbore to speak to her of a circumstance which must, after all, I considered, have been but the suggestion

of a vivid imagination, rendered morbidly active by the terror of the lady, by the opium, and by the hour.

Yet I cannot conceal it from my own perception that, immediately subsequent to the fall of the ruby drops, a rapid change for the worse took place in the disorder of my wife; so that, on the third subsequent night, the hands of her menials prepared her for the tomb, and on the fourth, I sat alone, with her shrouded body, in that fantastic chamber which had received her as my bride. Wild visions, opium-engendered, flitted, shadow-like, before me. I gazed with unquiet eye upon the sarcophagi in the angles of the room, upon the varying figures of the drapery, and upon the writhing of the parti-coloured fires in the censer overhead. My eyes then fell, as I called to mind the circumstances of a former night, to the spot beneath the glare of the censer where I had seen the faint traces of the shadow. It was there, however, no longer; and breathing with greater freedom, I turned my glances to the pallid and rigid figure upon the bed. Then rushed upon me a thousand memories of Ligeia – and then came back upon my heart, with the turbulent violence of a flood, the whole of that unutterable woe with which I had regarded *her* thus enshrouded. The night waned; and still, with a bosom full of bitter thoughts of the one only and supremely beloved, I remained gazing upon the body of Rowena.

It might have been midnight, or perhaps earlier, or later, for I had taken no note of time, when a sob, low, gentle, but very distinct, startled me from my reverie. I *felt* that it came from the bed of ebony – the bed of death. I listened in an agony of superstitious terror – but there was no repetition of the sound. I strained my vision to detect any motion in the corpse – but there was not the slightest perceptible. Yet I could not have been deceived. I *had* heard the noise, however faint, and my soul was awakened within me. I resolutely and perseveringly kept my attention riveted upon the body. Many minutes elapsed before any circumstance

occurred tending to throw light upon the mystery. At length it became evident that a slight, a very feeble, and barely noticeable tinge of colour had flushed up within the cheeks, and along the sunken small veins of the eyelids. Through a species of unutterable horror and awe, for which the language of mortality has no sufficient energetic expression, I felt my heart cease to beat, my limbs grow rigid where I sat. Yet a sense of duty finally operated to restore my self-possession. I could no longer doubt that we had been precipitate in our preparations – that Rowena still lived. It was necessary that some immediate exertion be made; yet the turret was altogether apart from the portion of the abbey tenanted by the servants – there were none within call – I had no means of summoning them to my aid without leaving the room for many minutes – and this I could not venture to do. I therefore struggled alone in my endeavours to call back the spirit still hovering. In a short period it was certain, however, that a relapse had taken place; the colour disappeared from both eyelid and cheek, leaving a wanness even more than that of marble; the lips became doubly shrivelled and pinched up in the ghastly expression of death; a repulsive clamminess and coldness overspread rapidly the surface of the body; and all the usual rigorous stiffness immediately supervened. I fell back with a shudder upon the couch from which I had been so startlingly aroused, and again gave myself up to passionately waking visions of Ligeia.

An hour thus elapsed, when (could it be possible?) I was a second time aware of some vague sound issuing from the region of the bed. I listened – in extremity of horror. The sound came again – it was a sigh. Rushing to the corpse, I saw – distinctly saw – a tremor upon the lips. In a minute afterwards they relaxed, disclosing a bright line of the pearly teeth. Amazement now struggled in my bosom with the profound awe which had hitherto reigned there alone. I felt that my visions grew dim, that my reason wandered; and it was only by a violent effort that I at length succeeded in

nerving myself to the task which duty thus once more had pointed out. There was now a partial glow upon the forehead and upon the cheek and throat; a perceptible warmth pervaded the whole frame; there was even a slight pulsation at the heart. The lady *lived*; and with redoubled ardour I betook myself to the task of restoration. I chafed and bathed the temple and the hands, and used every exertion which experience, and no little medical reading, could suggest. But in vain. Suddenly, the colour fled, the pulsation ceased, the lips resumed the expression of the dead, and, in an instant afterward, the whole body took upon itself the icy chilliness, the livid hue, the intense rigidity, the sunken outline, and all the loathsome peculiarities of that which has been, for many days, a tenant of the tomb.

And again I sunk into visions of Ligeia – and again (what marvel that I shudder while I write?) *again* there reached my ears a low sob from the region of the ebony bed. But why shall I minutely detail the unspeakable horrors of that night? Why shall I pause to relate how, time after time, until near the period of the grey dawn, this hideous drama of revivification was repeated; how each terrific relapse was only into a sterner and apparently more irredeemable death; how each agony wore the aspect of a struggle with some invisible foe; and how each struggle was succeeded by I know not what of wild change in the personal appearance of the corpse? Let me hurry to a conclusion.

The greater part of the fearful night had worn away, and she who had been dead, once again stirred – and now more vigorously than hitherto, although arousing from a dissolution more appalling in its utter hopelessness than any. I had long ceased to struggle or to move, and remained sitting rigidly upon the ottoman, a helpless prey to a whirl of violent emotions, of which extreme awe was perhaps the least terrible, the least consuming. The corpse, I repeat, stirred, and now more vigorously than before. The hues of life flushed up with unwonted energy into the countenance

– the limbs relaxed – and, save that the eyelids were yet pressed heavily together and that the bandages and draperies of the grave still imparted their charnel character to the figure, I might have dreamed that Rowena had indeed shaken off, utterly, the fetters of death. But if this idea was not, even then, altogether adopted, I could at least doubt no longer, when arising from the bed, tottering, with feeble steps, with closed eyes, and with the manner of one bewildered in a dream, the thing that was enshrouded advanced boldly and palpably into the middle of the apartment.

I trembled not – I stirred not – for a crowd of unutterable fancies connected with the air, the stature, the demeanour of the figure, rushing hurriedly through my brain, had paralysed – had chilled me into stone. I stirred not – but gazed upon the apparition. There was a mad disorder in my thoughts – a tumult unappeasable. Could it, indeed, be the *living* Rowena who confronted me? Could it indeed be Rowena *at all* – the fair-haired, the blue-eyed Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine? Why, *why* should I doubt it? The bandage lay heavily about the mouth – but then might it not be the mouth of the breathing Lady of Tremaine? And the cheeks – there were the roses as in her noon of life – yes, these might indeed be the fair cheeks of the living Lady of Tremaine. And the chin, with its dimples, as in health, might it not be hers? – but *had she then grown taller since her malady*? What inexpressible madness seized me with that thought? One bound, and I had reached her feet! Shrinking from my touch, she let fall from her head, unloosened, the ghastly cerements which had confined it, and there streamed forth, into the rushing atmosphere of the chamber, huge masses of long and dishevelled hair; *it was blacker than the raven wings of midnight!* And now slowly opened *the eyes* of the figure which stood before me. “Here then, at least,” I shrieked aloud, “can I never – can I never be mistaken – these are the full, and the black, and the wild eyes – of my lost love – of the Lady – of the **LADY LIGELA.**”

YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

YOUNG Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street of Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear, "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed tonight. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afeared of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until,

being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke, there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; 'twould kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the Devil himself should be at my very elbow!"

His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

"You are late, Goodman Brown," said he. "The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston; and that is full fifteen minutes ago."

"Faith kept me back awhile," replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that

part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner-table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was his staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

"Come, Goodman Brown," cried his fellow-traveller, "this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary."

"Friend," said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, "having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of."

"Sayest thou so?" replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. "Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not, thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet."

"Too far! Too far!" exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. "My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first by the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept —"

"Such company, thou wouldn't say," observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. "Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever

a one among the Puritans; and that's no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip's war. They were my good friends both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake."

"If it be as thou sayest," replied Goodman Brown, "I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumour of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness."

"Wickedness or not," said the traveller with the twisted staff, "I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the select men of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interests. The governor and I, too — these are state secrets."

"Can this be so?" cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. "Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day!"

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted he again and again; then com-

posing himself, "Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don't kill me with laughing."

"Well, then, to end the matter at once," said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, "there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart, and I'd rather break my own."

"Nay, if that be the case," answered the other, "e'en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm."

As he spoke, he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

"A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall," said he. "But, with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going."

"Be it so," said his fellow-traveller. "Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path."

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff's length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words – a prayer, doubtless – as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent's tail.

"The Devil!" screamed the pious old lady.

"Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?" observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

"Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?" cried the

good old dame. "Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But – would your worship believe it? – my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen as I suspect, by that unhangd witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf's-bane – "

"Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe," said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

"Ah, your worship knows the recipe," cried the old lady, cackling aloud. "So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion tonight. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling."

"That can hardly be," answered her friend. "I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will."

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

"That old woman taught me my catechism," said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking-stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening

dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week's sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

"Friend," said he, stubbornly, "my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the Devil when I thought she was going to heaven : is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?"

"You will think better of this by and by," said his acquaintance, composedly. "Sit here and rest yourself awhile; and when you feel like moving again, there's my staff to help you along."

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple-stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith ! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof-tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near. These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man's hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a

moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst, without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

"Of the two, reverend sir," said the voice like the deacon's, "I had rather miss an ordination dinner than tonight's meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian pow-wows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much devilry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion."

"Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!" replied the solemn old tones of the minister. "Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the ground."

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air, passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

"With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the Devil!" cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith and hid the

brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible except directly overhead, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voices. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of townspeople of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met at the communion-table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next moment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice, of a young woman, uttering lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favour, which, perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitudes, both saints and sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

"Faith!" shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, "Faith! Faith!" as if bewildered wretches were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something fluttered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon.

"My Faith is gone!" cried he, after one stupefied moment. "There is no good on earth; and sin is but a name. Come, Devil; for to thee is this world given."

And, maddened with despair, so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along the forest

path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil. The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds – the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church-bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

“Ha! ha! ha!” roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him. “Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your devilry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian pow-wow, come Devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fears you.”

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful har-

mony together. Goodman Brown cried out; and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an altar or a pulpit and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

"A grave and dark-clad company," quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendour, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward, and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirmed that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honoured husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church-members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there

were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or pow-wows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

"But where is Faith?" thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the unconverted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke-wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

"Bring forth the converts!" cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have wellnigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to

advance, looking downward from a smoke-wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair, threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha Carrier, who had received the Devil's promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

"Welcome, my children," said the dark figure, "to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!"

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

"There," resumed the sable form, "are all whom ye have revered from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenwards. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds; how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widow's weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their father's wealth; and how fair damsels—blush not, sweet ones—have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest, to an infant's funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places—whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest—where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood-spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in

every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power – than my power at its utmost – can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other.”

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

“Lo, there ye stand, my children,” said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. “Depending upon one another’s hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race.”

“Welcome,” repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair, as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shuddering alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

“Faith! Faith!” cried the husband, “look up to Heaven, and resist the wicked one.”

Whether Faith obeyed, he knew not. Hardly had he spoken, when he found himself amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily

away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp; while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the coldest dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was talking a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his sermon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window. "What God doth the wizard pray to?" quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a little girl who had brought her a pint of morning's milk. Goodman Brown snatched away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest, and only dreamed a wild dream of a witch-meeting?

Be it so, if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate, man did he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the congregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen, because the anthem of sin rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister spoke from the pulpit, with power and fervid eloquence, and with his hand on the open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and triumphant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did

Goodman Brown turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the grey blasphemer and his hearers. Often, awakening suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family kelt down to prayer, he scowled, and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when he had lived long, and was borne to his grave, a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neighbours not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone; for his dying hour was gloom.

SCHALKEN THE PAINTER

by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu

You will no doubt be surprised, my dear friend, at the subject of the following narrative. What had I to do with Schalken, or Schalken with me? He had returned to his native land, and was probably dead and buried before I was born; I never visited Holland nor spoke with a native of that country. So much I believe you already know. I must, then, give you my authority, and state to you frankly the ground upon which rests the credibility of the strange story which I am about to lay before you. I was acquainted, in my early days, with a Captain Vandael, whose father had served King William in the Low Countries, and also in my own unhappy land during the Irish campaigns. I know not how it happened that I liked this man's society in spite of his politics and religion: but so it was; and it was by means of the free intercourse to which our intimacy gave rise that I became possessed of the curious tale which you are about to hear. I had often been struck, while visiting Vandael, by a remarkable picture, in which, though no *connoisseur* myself, I could not fail to discern some very strong peculiarities, particularly in the distribution of light and shade, as also a certain oddity in the design itself, which interested my curiosity. It represented the interior of what might be a chamber in some antique religious building – the foreground was occupied by a female figure, arrayed in a

species of white robe, part of which is arranged so as to form a veil. The dress, however, is not strictly that of any religious order. In its hand the figure bears a lamp, by whose light alone the form and face are illuminated; the features are marked by an arch smile, such as pretty women wear when engaged in successfully practising some roguish trick; in the background, and, excepting where the dim red light of an expiring fire serves to define the form, totally in the shade, stands the figure of a man equipped in the old fashion, with doublet and so forth, in an attitude of alarm, his hand being placed upon the hilt of his sword, which he appears to be in the act of drawing.

"There are some pictures," said I to my friend, "which impress one, I know not how, with a conviction that they represent not the mere ideal shapes and combinations which have floated through the imagination of the artist, but scenes, faces, and situations which have actually existed. When I look upon that picture, something assures me that I behold the representation of a reality."

Vandael smiled, and fixing his eyes upon the painting musingly, he said :

"Your fancy has not deceived you, my good friend, for that picture is the record, and I believe a faithful one, of a remarkable and mysterious occurrence. It was painted by Schalken, and contains, in the face of the female figure, which occupies the most prominent place in the design, an accurate portrait of Rose Velderkaust, the niece of Gerard Douw, the first, and, I believe, the only love of Godfrey Schalken. My father knew the painter well and from Schalken himself he learned the story of the mysterious drama, one scene of which the picture has embodied. This painting, which is accounted a fine specimen of Schalken's style, was bequeathed to my father by the artist's will, and, as you have observed, is a very striking and interesting production."

I had only to request Vandael to tell the story of the

painting to be gratified; and thus it is that I am enabled to submit to you a faithful recital of what I heard myself, leaving you to reject or allow the evidence upon which the truth of the tradition depends, with this one assurance, that Schalken was an honest, blunt Dutchman, and, I believe, wholly incapable of committing a flight of imagination; and further, that Vandaël, from whom I heard the story, appeared firmly convinced of its truth.

There are few forms upon which the mantle of mystery and romance could seem to hang more ungracefully than upon that of the uncouth and clownish Schalken—the Dutch boor—the rude and dogged, but most cunning worker of oils, whose pieces delight the initiated of the present day almost as much as his manners disgusted the refined of his own; and yet this man, so rude, so dogged, so slovenly, I had almost said so savage, in mien and manner, during his after successes, had been selected by the capricious goddess, in his early life, to figure as the hero of a romance by no means devoid of interest or of mystery. Who can tell how meet he may have been in his young days to play the part of the lover or of the hero—who can say that in early life he had been the same harsh, *unlicked*, and rugged boor which, in his maturer age, he proved—or how far the neglected rudeness which afterwards marked his air and garb, and manners, may not have been the growth of that reckless apathy not unfrequently produced by bitter misfortunes and disappointments in early life? These questions can never now be answered. We must content ourselves, then, with a plain statement of facts, or what have been received and transmitted as such, leaving matters of speculation to those who like them.

When Schalken studied under the immortal Gerard Douw, he was a young man; and in spite of the phlegmatic constitution and unexcitable manner which he shared (we believe) with his countrymen, he was not incapable of deep and vivid impressions, for it is an established fact that the

young painter looked with considerable interest upon the beautiful niece of his wealthy master. Rose Velderkaust was very young, having, at the period of which we speak, not yet attained her seventeenth year, and, if tradition speaks truth, possessed all the soft dimpling charms of the fair, light-haired Flemish maidens. Schalken had not studied long in the school of Gerard Douw, when he felt this interest deepening into something of a keener and intenser feeling that was quite consistent with the tranquillity of his honest Dutch heart; and at the same time he perceived, or thought he perceived, flattering symptoms of a reciprocity of liking, and this was quite sufficient to determine whatever indecision he might have heretofore experienced, and to lead him to devote exclusively to her every hope and feeling of his heart. In short, he was as much in love as a Dutchman could be. He was not long in making his passion known to the pretty maiden herself, and his declaration was followed by a corresponding confession upon her part. Schalken, however, was a poor man, and he possessed no counterbalancing advantages of birth or otherwise to induce the old man to consent to a union which must involve his niece and ward in the struggles and difficulties of a young and nearly friendless artist. He was, therefore, to wait until time had furnished him with opportunity and accident with success; and then, if his labours were found sufficiently lucrative, it was to be hoped that his proposals might at least be listened to by her jealous guardian. Months passed away, and, cheered by the smiles of the little Rose, Schalken's labours were redoubled, and with such effect and improvement as reasonably to promise the realization of his hopes, and no contemptible eminence in his art, before many years should have elapsed.

The even course of this cheering prosperity was, however, destined to experience a sudden and formidable interruption, and that, too, in a manner so strange and mysterious as to

baffle all investigation, and throw upon the events themselves a shadow of almost supernatural horror.

Schalken had one evening remained in the master's studio considerably longer than his more volatile companions, who had gladly availed themselves of the excuse which the dusk of evening afforded, to withdraw from their several tasks, in order to finish a day of labour in the jollity and conviviality of the tavern. But Schalken worked for improvement, or rather for love. Besides, he was now engaged merely in sketching a design, an operation which, unlike that of colouring, might be continued as long as there was light sufficient to distinguish between canvas and charcoal. He had not then, nor, indeed, until long after, discovered the peculiar powers of his pencil, and he was engaged in composing a group of extremely roguish-looking and grotesque imps and demons, who were inflicting various ingenious torments upon a perspiring and pot-bellied St. Anthony, who reclined in the midst of them, apparently in the last stage of drunkenness. The young artist, however, though incapable of executing, or even of appreciating, anything of true sublimity, had, nevertheless, discernment enough to prevent his being by any means satisfied with his work; and many were the patient erasures and corrections which the limbs and features of saint and devil underwent, yet all without producing in their new arrangement anything of improvement or increased effect. The large, old-fashioned room was silent, and, with the exception of himself, quite deserted by its usual inmates. An hour had passed – nearly two – without any improved result. Daylight had already declined, and twilight was fast giving way to the darkness of night. The patience of the young man was exhausted, and he stood before his unfinished production, absorbed in no very pleasing ruminations, one hand buried in the folds of his long dark hair, and the other holding the piece of charcoal which had so ill executed its office, and which he now rubbed, without much regard to the sable streaks which

it produced, with irritable pressure upon his ample Flemish inexpressibles.

"Pshaw!" said the young man aloud, "would that picture, devils, saint, and all, were where they should be – in hell!" A short, sudden laugh, uttered startlingly close to his ear, instantly responded to the ejaculation. The artist turned sharply round, and now for the first time became aware that his labours had been overlooked by a stranger. Within about a yard and a half, and rather behind him, there stood what was, or appeared to be, the figure of an elderly man: he wore a short cloak, and broad-brimmed hat, with a conical crown, and in his hand, which was protected with a heavy, gauntlet-shaped glove, he carried a long ebony walking-stick, surmounted with what appeared, as it glittered dimly in the twilight, to be a massive head of gold, and upon the breast, through the folds of the cloak, there shone what appeared to be the links of a rich chain of the same metal. The room was so obscure that nothing further of the appearance of the figure could be ascertained, and the face was altogether overshadowed by the heavy flap of the beaver which overhung it, so that not a feature could be discerned. A quantity of dark hair escaped from beneath this sombre hat, a circumstance which, connected with the firm, upright carriage of the intruder, proved that his years could not yet exceed threescore or thereabouts. There was an air of gravity and importance about the garb of this person, and something indescribably odd, I might say awful, in the perfect stone-like movelessness of the figure, that effectually checked the testy comment which had at once risen to the lips of the irritated artist. He, therefore, as soon as he had sufficiently recovered the surprise, asked the stranger, civilly, to be seated, and desired to know if he had any message to leave for his master.

"Tell Gerard Douw," said the unknown, without altering his attitude in the smallest degree, "that Minheer Vanderhausen, of Rotterdam, desires to speak with him on

tomorrow evening at this hour, and, if he please, in this room, upon matters of weight – that is all – goodnight.”

The stranger, having finished this message, turned abruptly, and with a quick but silent step quitted the room, before Schalken had time to say a word in reply. The young man felt a curiosity to see in what direction the burgher of Rotterdam would turn on quitting the studio, and for that purpose he went directly to the window which commanded the door. A lobby of considerable extent intervened between the inner door of the painter's room and the street entrance, so that Schalken occupied the post of observation before the old man could possibly have reached the street. He watched in vain, however. There was no other mode of exit. Had the old man vanished, or was he lurking about the recesses of the lobby for some bad purpose? This last suggestion filled the mind of Schalken with a vague horror, which was so unaccountably intense as to make him alike afraid to remain in the room alone and reluctant to pass through the lobby. However, with an effort which appeared very disproportioned to the occasion, he summoned resolution to leave the room, and, having double-locked the door and thrust the key in his pocket, without looking to the right or left, he traversed the passage which had so recently, perhaps still, contained the person of his mysterious visitant, scarcely venturing to breathe till he had arrived in the open street.

“Minheer Vanderhausen,” said Gerard Douw within himself, as the appointed hour approached, “Minheer Vanderhausen of Rotterdam! I never heard of the man till yesterday. What can he want of me? A portrait, perhaps, to be painted; or a younger son or a poor relation to be apprenticed; or a collection to be valued; or – pshaw, there's no one in Rotterdam to leave me a legacy. Well, whatever the business may be, we shall soon know it all.”

It was now the close of day, and every easel, except that of Schalken, was deserted. Gerald Douw was pacing the

apartment with the restless step of impatient expectation, every now and then humming a passage from a piece of music which he was himself composing; for, though no great proficient, he admired the art: sometimes pausing to glance over the work of one of his absent pupils, but more frequently placing himself at the window, from whence he might observe the passengers who threaded the obscure by-street, in which his studio was placed.

"Said you not, Godfrey," exclaimed Douw, after a long and fruitless gaze from his post of observation, and turning to Schalken – "said you not the hour of appointment was at about seven by the clock of the Stadhouse?"

"It had just tolled seven when I first saw him, sir," answered the student.

"The hour is close at hand, then," said the master, consulting a horologe as large and as round as a full-grown orange. "Minheer Vanderhausen from Rotterdam – is it not so?"

"Such was the name."

"And an elderly man, richly clad?" continued Douw.

"As well as I might see," replied his pupil; "he could not be young, nor yet very old neither, and his dress was rich and grave, as might become a citizen of wealth and consideration."

At this moment the sonorous boom of the Stadhouse clock tolled, stroke after stroke, the hour of seven; the eyes of both master and student were directed to the door; and it was not until the last peal of the old bell had ceased to vibrate, that Douw exclaimed:

"So, so; we shall have his worship presently – that is, if he means to keep his hour; if not, thou may'st wait for him, Godfrey, if you court the acquaintance of a capricious burgomaster; as for me, I think our old Leyden contains a sufficiency of such commodities, without an importation from Rotterdam."

Schalken laughed, as in duty bound; and after a pause of some minutes, Douw suddenly exclaimed :

"What if it should all prove a jest, a piece of mummery got up by Vankarp, or some such worthy? I wish you had run all risks, and cudgelled the old burgomaster, stadholder, or whatever else he may be, soundly. I would wager a dozen of Rhenish, his worship would have pleaded old acquaintance before the third application."

"Here he comes, sir," said Schalken, in a low admonitory tone; and instantly upon turning towards the door, Gerard Douw observed the same figure which had, on the day before, so unexpectedly greeted the vision of his pupil Schalken.

There was something in the air and mein of the figure which at once satisfied the painter that there was no *mummery* in the case, and that he really stood in the presence of a man of worship; and so, without hesitation, he doffed his cap, and, courteously saluting the stranger, requested him to be seated. The visitor waved his hand slightly, as if in acknowledgement of the courtesy, but remained standing.

"I have the honour to see Minheer Vanderhausen of Rotterdam?" said Gerard Douw.

"The same," was the laconic reply of his visitant.

"I understand your worship desires to speak with me," continued Douw, "and I am here by appointment to wait your commands."

"Is that a man of trust?" said Vanderhausen, turning towards Schalken, who stood at a little distance behind his master.

"Certainly," replied Gerard.

"Then let him take this box and get the nearest jeweller or goldsmith to value its contents, and let him return hither with a certificate of the valuation."

At the same time, he placed a small case about nine inches square in the hands of Gerard Douw, who was as much

amazed at its weight as at the strange abruptness with which it was handed to him. In accordance with the wishes of the stranger, he delivered it into the hands of Schalken, and repeating *his* directions, despatched him upon the mission.

Schalken disposed his precious charge securely beneath the folds of his cloak, and rapidly traversing two or three narrow streets, he stopped at a corner house, the lower part of which was then occupied by the shop of a Jewish goldsmith. Schalken entered the shop, and calling the little Hebrew into the obscurity of its back recesses, he proceeded to lay before him Vanderhausen's packet. On being examined by the light of a lamp, it appeared entirely cased with lead, the outer surface of which was much scraped and soiled, and nearly white with age. This was with difficulty partially removed and disclosed beneath a box of some dark and singularly hard wood; this too was forced, and after the removal of two or three folds of linen, its contents proved to be a mass of golden ingots, closely packed, and, as the Jew declared, of the most perfect quality. Every ingot underwent the scrutiny of the little Jew, who seemed to feel an epicurean delight in touching and testing these morsels of the glorious metal; and each one of them was replaced in its berth with the exclamation: "Mein Gott, how very perfect! Not one grain of alloy – *béautifol, beautiful.*" The task was at length finished, and the Jew certified under his hand the value of the ingots submitted to his examination, to amount to many thousand rix-dollars. With the desired document in his bosom, and the rich box of gold carefully pressed under his arm, and concealed by his cloak, he retraced his way, and entering the studio, found his master and the stranger in close conference.

Schalken had no sooner left the room, in order to execute the commission he had taken in charge, than Vanderhausen addressed Gerard Douw in the following terms:

"I may not tarry with you tonight more than a few minutes, and so I shall briefly tell you the matter upon

which I come. You visited the town of Rotterdam some four months ago, and then I saw in the church of St. Lawrence your niece, Rose Velderkaust. I desire to marry her, and if I satisfy you as to the fact that I am very wealthy, more wealthy than any husband you could dream of for her, I expect that you will forward my views to the utmost of your authority. If you approve my proposals, you must close with it at once, for I cannot command time enough to wait for calculations and delays."

Gerard Douw was, perhaps, as much astonished as any one could be, by the very unexpected nature of Minheer Vanderhausen's communication, but he did not give vent to any unseemly expression of surprise, for besides the motives supplied by prudence and politeness, the painter experienced a kind of chill and oppressive sensation, something like that which is supposed to affect a man who is placed unconsciously in immediate contact with something to which he has a natural antipathy – an undefined horror and dread while standing in the presence of the eccentric stranger, which made him very unwilling to say anything which might reasonably prove offensive.

"I have no doubt," said Gerard, after two or three prefatory hems, "that the connexion which you propose would prove alike advantageous and honourable to my niece; but you must be aware that she has a will of her own, and may not acquiesce in what *we* may desire for her advantage."

"Do not seek to deceive me, sir painter," said Vanderhausen; "you are her guardian – she is your ward – she is mine if *you* like to make her so."

The man of Rotterdam moved forward a little as he spoke, and Gerard Douw, he scarce knew why, inwardly prayed for the speedy return of Schalken.

"I desire," said the mysterious gentleman, "to place in your hands at once an evidence of my wealth, and a security for my liberal dealing with your niece. The lad will return

in a minute or two with a sum in value five times the fortune which she has a right to expect from a husband. This shall lie in your hands, together with her dowry, and you may apply the united sum as suits her interest best; it shall be all exclusively hers while she lives – is that liberal?”

Douw assented, and inwardly thought that fortune had been extraordinarily kind to his niece; the stranger, he thought, must be both wealthy and generous, and such an offer was not to be despised, though made by a humorist, and one of no very prepossessing presence. Rose had no very high pretensions, for she was almost without dowry; indeed, altogether so, excepting so far as the deficiency had been supplied by the generosity of her uncle; neither had she any right to raise any scruples against the match on the score of birth, for her own origin was by no means elevated, and as to other objections, Gerard resolved, and, indeed, by the usages of the time, was warranted in resolving not to listen to them for a moment.

“Sir,” said he, addressing the stranger, “your offer is most liberal, and whatever hesitation I may feel in closing with it immediately, arises solely from my not having the honour of knowing anything of your family or station. Upon these points you can, of course, satisfy me without difficulty?”

“As to my respectability,” said the stranger, drily, “you must take that for granted at present; pester me with no inquiries; you can discover nothing more about me than I choose to make known. You shall have sufficient security for my respectability – my word, if you are honourable: if you are sordid, my gold.”

“A testy old gentleman,” thought Douw, “he must have his own way; but, all things considered, I am justified in giving my niece to him; were she my own daughter, I would do the like by her. I will not pledge myself unnecessarily however.”

“You will not pledge yourself unnecessarily,” said Vanderhausen, strangely uttering the very words which had

just floated through the mind of his companion; "but you will do so if it is necessary, I presume; and I will show you that I consider it indispensable. If the gold I mean to leave in your hands satisfies you, and if you desire that my proposal shall not be at once withdrawn, you must, before I leave this room, write your name to this engagement."

Having thus spoken, he placed a paper in the hands of Gerard, the contents of which expressed an engagement entered into by Gerard Douw, to give to Wilken Vanderhausen of Rotterdam, in marriage, Rose Velderkaust, and so forth, within one week of the date thereof. While the painter was employed in reading this covenant, Schalken, as we have stated, entered the studio, and having delivered the box and the valuation of the Jew, into the hands of the stranger, he was about to retire, when Vanderhausen called to him to wait; and, presenting the case and the certificate to Gerard Douw, he waited in silence until he had satisfied himself by an inspection of both as to the value of the pledge left in his hands. At length he said :

"Are you content?"

The painter said he would fain have another day to consider.

"Not an hour," said the suitor coolly.

"Well then," said Douw, "I am content – it is a bargain."

"Then sign at once," said Vanderhausen, "I am weary."

At the same time he produced a small case of writing materials, and Gerard signed the important document.

"Let this youth sign the covenant," said the old man; and Godfrey Schalken unconsciously signed the instrument which bestowed upon another that hand which he had so long regarded as the object and reward of all his labours. The compact being thus completed, the strange visitor folded up the paper, and stowed it safely in an inner pocket.

"I will visit you tomorrow night at nine of the clock, at your house, Gerard Douw, and will see the subject of our

contract – farewell”; and so saying, Wilken Vanderhausen moved stiffly but rapidly out of the room.

Schalken, eager to resolve his doubts, had placed himself by the window, in order to watch the street entrance; but the experiment served only to support his suspicions, for the old man did not issue from the door. This was very strange, very odd, very fearful; he and his master returned together, and talked but little on the way, for each had his own subjects for reflection, of anxiety, and of hope. Schalken, however, did not know the ruin which threatened his cherished schemes.

Gerard Douw knew nothing of the attachment which had sprung up between his pupil and his niece; and even if he had, it is doubtful whether he would have regarded its existence as any serious obstruction to the wishes of Minheer Vanderhausen. Marriages were then and there matters of traffic and calculation; and it would have appeared as absurd in the eyes of the guardian to make a mutual attachment an essential element in a contract of marriage, as it would have been to draw up his bonds and receipts in the language of chivalrous romance. The painter, however, did not communicate to his niece the important step which he had taken in her behalf, and his resolution arose not from any anticipation of opposition on her part, but solely from a ludicrous consciousness that if his ward were, as she very naturally might do, to ask him to describe the appearance of the bridegroom whom he destined for her, he would be forced to confess that he had not seen his face, and if called upon, would find it impossible to identify him. Upon the next day, Gerard Douw, having dined, called his niece to him and having scanned her person with an air of satisfaction, he took her hand, and looking upon her pretty, innocent face with a smile of kindness, he said :

“Rose, my girl, that face of yours will make your fortune.” Rose blushed and smiled. “Such faces and such tempers seldom go together, and, when they do, the compound is a

love potion, which few heads or hearts can resist; trust me, thou wilt soon be a bride, girl; but this is trifling, and I am pressed for time, so make ready the large room by eight o'clock tonight, and give directions for supper at nine. I expect a friend tonight; and observe me, child, do thou trick thyself out handsomely. I would not have him think us poor or sluttish."

With these words he left the chamber, and took his way to the room to which we have already had occasion to introduce our readers – that in which his pupils worked.

When the evening closed in, Gerard called Schalken, who was about to take his departure to his obscure and comfortless lodgings, and asked him to come home and sup with Rose and Vanderhausen. The invitation was, of course, accepted, and Gerard Douw and his pupil soon found themselves in the handsome and somewhat antique-looking room which had been prepared for the reception of the stranger. A cheerful wood fire blazed in the capacious hearth; a little at one side an old-fashioned table, with richly carved legs, was placed – destined, no doubt, to receive the supper, for which preparations were going forward; and ranged with exact regularity, stood the tall-backed chairs, whose ungracefulness was more than counterbalanced by their comfort. The little party, consisting of Rose, her uncle, and the artist, awaited the arrival of the expected visitor with considerable impatience. Nine o'clock at length came, and with it a summons at the street door, which being speedily answered, was followed by a slow and emphatic tread upon the staircase; the steps moved heavily across the lobby, the door of the room in which the party which we have described were assembled slowly opened, and there entered a figure which startled, almost appalled, the phlegmatic Dutchman, and nearly made Rose scream with affright; it was the form, and arrayed in the garb of Minheer Vanderhausen; the air, the gait, the height were the same, but the features had never been seen by any of the party before. The

stranger stopped at the door of the room, and displayed his form and face completely. He wore a dark-coloured cloth cloak, which was short and full, not falling quite to the knees; his legs were cased in dark purple silk stockings, and his shoes were adorned with roses of the same colour. The opening of the cloak in front showed the under-suit to consist of some very dark, perhaps sable material, and his hands were enclosed in a pair of heavy leather gloves, which ran up considerably above the wrist, in the manner of a gauntlet. In one hand he carried his walking-stick and his hat, which he had removed, and the other hung heavily by his side. A quantity of grizzled hair descended in long tresses from his head, and its folds rested upon the plaits of a stiff ruff, which effectually concealed his neck. So far all was well; but the face! – all the flesh of the face was coloured with the bluish leaden hue which is sometimes produced by the operation of metallic medicines, administered in excessive quantities; the eyes were enormous, and the white appeared both above and below the iris, which gave to them an expression of insanity, which was heightened by their glassy fixedness; the nose was well enough, but the mouth was writhed considerably to one side, where it opened in order to give egress to two long, discoloured fangs, which projected from the upper jaw, far below the lower lip – the hue of the lips themselves bore the usual relation to that of the face, and was, consequently, nearly black; the character of the face was malignant, even satanic, to the last degree; and, indeed, such a combination of horror could hardly be accounted for, except by supposing the corpse of some atrocious malefactor which had long hung blackening upon the gibbet to have at length become the habitation of a demon – the frightful sport of satanic possession. It was remarkable that the worshipful stranger suffered as little as possible of his flesh to appear, and that during his visit he did not once remove his gloves. Having stood for some moments at the door, Gerard Douw at length found breath and collectedness

to bid him welcome, and with a mute inclination of the head, the stranger stepped forward into the room. There was something indescribably odd, even horrible, about all his motions, something indefinable, that was unnatural, un-human – it was as if the limbs were guided and directed by a spirit unused to the management of bodily machinery. The stranger said hardly anything during his visit, which did not exceed half an hour; and the host himself could scarcely muster courage enough to utter the few necessary salutations and courtesies; and, indeed, such was the nervous terror which the presence of Vanderhausen inspired, that very little would have made all his entertainers fly bellowing from the room. They had not so far lost all self-possession, however, as to fail to observe two strange peculiarities of their visitor. During his stay he did not once suffer his eyelids to close, nor even to move in the slightest degree; and farther, there was a death-like stillness in his whole person, owing to the total absence of the heaving motion of the chest, caused by the process of respiration. These two peculiarities, though when told they may appear trifling, produced a very striking and unpleasant effect when seen and observed. Vanderhausen at length relieved the painter of Leyden of his inauspicious presence; and with no small gratification the little party heard the street door close after him.

“Dear uncle,” said Rose, “what a frightful man! I would not see him again for the wealth of the States.”

“Tush, foolish girl,” said Douw, whose sensations were anything but comfortable. “A man may be as ugly as the devil, and yet if his heart and actions are good, he is worth all the pretty-faced, perfumed puppies that walk the Mall. Rose, my girl, it is very true he has not thy pretty face, but I know him to be wealthy and liberal; and were he ten times more ugly” – (“which is inconceivable,” observed Rose) – “these two virtues would be sufficient,” continued her uncle, “to counter-balance all his deformity, and if not of power

sufficient actually to alter the shape of the features, at least of efficacy enough to prevent one thinking them amiss."

"Do you know, uncle," said Rose, "when I saw him standing at the door, I could not get it out of my head that I saw the old, painted, wooden figure that used to frighten me so much in the church of St. Lawrence of Rotterdam."

Gerard laughed, though he could not help inwardly acknowledging the justness of the comparison. He was resolved, however, as far as he could, to check his niece's inclination to ridicule the ugliness of her intended bridegroom, although he was not a little pleased to observe that she appeared totally exempt from that mysterious dread of the stranger which, he could not disguise it from himself, considerably affected him, as also his pupil Godfrey Schalken.

Early on the next day there arrived from various quarters of the town, rich presents of silks, velvets, jewellery, and so forth, for Rose; and also a packet directed to Gerard Douw, which on being opened, was found to contain a contract of marriage, formally drawn up, between Wilken Vanderhausen of the Boom-quay, in Rotterdam, and Rose Velderkaust, of Leyden, niece to Gerard Douw, master in the art of painting, also of the same city; and containing engagements on the part of Vanderhausen to make settlements upon his bride, far more splendid than he had before led her guardian to believe likely, and which were to be secured to her use in the most unexceptionable manner possible – the money being placed in the hands of Gerard Douw himself.

I have no sentimental scenes to describe, no cruelty of guardians, or magnanimity of wards, or agonies of lovers. The record I have to make is one of sordidness, levity, and interest. In less than a week after the first interview which we have just described, the contract of marriage was fulfilled, and Schalken saw the prize which he would have risked anything to secure, carried off triumphantly by his

unattractive rival. For two or three days he absented himself from the school; he then returned and worked, if with less cheerfulness, with far more dogged resolution than before – the stimulus of love had given place to that of ambition. Months passed away, and, contrary to his expectation, and, indeed, to the direct promise of the parties, Gerard Douw heard nothing of his niece or her worshipful spouse. The interest of the money which was to have been demanded in quarterly sums, lay unclaimed in his hands. He began to grow extremely uneasy. Minheer Vanderhausen's direction in Rotterdam he was fully possessed of; after some irresolution he finally determined to journey thither – a trifling undertaking, and easily accomplished – and thus to satisfy himself of the safety and comfort of his ward, for whom he entertained an honest and strong affection. His search was in vain, however; no one in Rotterdam had ever heard of Minheer Vanderhausen. Gerard Douw left not a house in the Boom-quay untried; but all in vain – no one could give him any information whatever touching the object of his inquiry; and he was obliged to return to Leyden nothing wiser than when he had left it. On his arrival he hastened to the establishment from which Vanderhausen had hired the lumbering, though, considering the times, most luxurious vehicle, which the bridal party had employed to convey them to Rotterdam. From the driver of this machine he learned, that having proceeded by slow stages, they had late in the evening approached Rotterdam; but that before they entered the city, and while yet nearly a mile from it, a small party of men, soberly clad, and after the old fashion, with peaked beards and moustaches, standing in the centre of the road, obstructed the further progress of the carriage. The driver reined in his horses, much fearing, from the obscurity of the hour, and the loneliness of the road, that some mischief was intended. His fears were, however, somewhat allayed by his observing that these strange men carried a large litter, of an antique shape, and which they im-

mediately set down upon the pavement, whereupon the bridegroom, having opened the coach-door from within, descended, and having assisted his bride to do likewise, led her, weeping bitterly and wringing her hands, to the litter, which they both entered. It was then raised by the men who surrounded it, and speedily carried towards the city, and before it had proceeded many yards, the darkness concealed it from the view of the Dutch charioteer. In the inside of the vehicle he found a purse, whose contents more than thrice paid the hire of the carriage and man. He saw and could tell nothing more of Minheer Vandehausen and his beautiful lady. This mystery was a source of deep anxiety and almost of grief to Gerard Douw. There was evidently fraud in the dealing of Vanderhausen with him, though for what purpose committed he could not imagine. He greatly doubted how far it was possible for a man possessing in his countenance so strong an evidence of the presence of the most demoniac feelings, to be in reality anything but a villain, and every day that passed without his hearing from or of his niece, instead of inducing him to forget his fears, on the contrary tended more and more to exasperate them. The loss of his niece's cheerful society tended also to depress his spirits; and in order to dispel this despondency, which often crept upon his mind after his daily employment was over, he was wont frequently to prevail upon Schalken to accompany him home, and by his presence to dispel, in some degree, the gloom of his otherwise solitary supper. One evening, the painter and his pupil were sitting by the fire, having accomplished a comfortable supper, and had yielded to that silent pensiveness sometimes induced by the process of digestion, when their reflections were disturbed by a loud sound at the street door, as if occasioned by some person rushing forcibly and repeatedly against it. A domestic had run without delay to ascertain the cause of the disturbance, and they heard him twice or thrice interrogate the applicant for admission, but without producing an answer or any

cessation of the sounds. They heard him then open the hall door, and immediately there followed a light and rapid tread upon the staircase. Schalken laid his hand on his sword, and advanced towards the door. It opened before he reached it, and Rose rushed into the room. She looked wild and haggard, and pale with exhaustion and terror, but her dress surprised them as much as even her unexpected appearance. It consisted of a kind of white woollen wrapper, made close about the neck, and descending to the very ground. It was much deranged and travel-soiled. The poor creature had hardly entered the chamber when she fell senseless on the floor. With some difficulty they succeeded in reviving her, and on recovering her senses, she instantly exclaimed, in a tone of eager, terrified impatience :

“Wine, wine, quickly, or I’m lost.”

Much alarmed at the strange agitation in which the call was made, they at once administered to her wishes, and she drank some wine with a haste and eagerness which surprised them. She had hardly swallowed it, when she exclaimed, with the same urgency :

“Food, food, at once, or I perish.”

A considerable fragment of a roast joint was upon the table, and Schalken immediately proceeded to cut some, but he was anticipated, for no sooner had she become aware of its presence, than she darted at it with the rapacity of a vulture, and, seizing it in her hands, she tore off the flesh with her teeth, and swallowed it. When the paroxysm of hunger had been a little appeased, she appeared suddenly to become aware how strange her conduct had been, or it may have been that other more agitating thoughts recurred to her mind, for she began to weep bitterly and to wring her hands.

“Oh, send for a minister of God,” said she; “I am not safe till he comes; send for him speedily.”

Gerard Douw despatched a messenger instantly, and prevailed on his niece to allow him to surrender his bedchamber

to her use; he also persuaded her to retire to it at once and to rest; her consent was extorted upon the condition that they would not leave her for a moment.

"Oh that the holy man were here," she said; "he can deliver me – the dead and the living can never be one – God has forbidden it."

With these mysterious words she surrendered herself to their guidance, and they proceeded to the chamber which Gerard Douw had assigned to her use.

"Do not, do not leave me for a moment," said she; "I am lost for ever if you do."

Gerard Douw's chamber was approached through a spacious apartment, which they were now about to enter. Gerard Douw and Schalken each carried a wax candle, so that a sufficient degree of light was cast upon all surrounding objects. They were now entering the large chamber, which, as I have said, communicated with Douw's apartment, when Rose suddenly stopped, and, in a whisper which seemed to thrill with horror, she said :

"Oh, God ! he is here, he is here; see, see, there he goes."

She pointed towards the door of the inner room, and Schalken thought he saw a shadowy and ill-defined form gliding into that apartment. He drew his sword, and, raising the candle so as to throw its light with increased distinctness upon the objects in the room, he entered the chamber into which the shadow had glided. No figure was there – nothing but the furniture which belonged to the room, and yet he could not be deceived as to the fact that something had moved before them into the chamber. A sickening dread came upon him, and the cold perspiration broke out in heavy drops upon his forehead; nor was he more composed, when he heard the increased urgency, the agony of entreaty, with which Rose implored them not to leave her for a moment.

"I saw him," said she; "he's here. I cannot be deceived – I know him – he's by me – he is with me – he's in the room;

then, for God's sake, as you would save me, do not stir from beside me."

They at length prevailed upon her to lie down upon the bed, where she continued to urge them to stay by her. She frequently uttered incoherent sentences, repeating, again and again, "the dead and the living cannot be one – God has forbidden it"; and then again, "rest to the wakeful – sleep to the sleep-walkers". These and such mysterious and broken sentences, she continued to utter until the clergyman arrived. Gerard Douw began to fear, naturally enough, that the poor girl, owing to terror or ill-treatment, had become deranged, and he half-suspected, by the suddenness of her appearance, and the unseasonableness of the hour, and, above all, from the wildness and terror of her manner, that she had made her escape from some place of confinement for lunatics, and was in immediate fear of pursuit. He resolved to summon medical advice, as soon as the mind of his niece had been in some measure set at rest by the offices of the clergyman whose attendance she had so earnestly desired; and until this object had been attained, he did not venture to put any questions to her which might possibly, by reviving painful or horrible recollections, increase her agitation. The clergyman soon arrived – a man of ascetic countenance and venerable age – one whom Gerard Douw respected much, forasmuch as he was a veteran polemic; though one, perhaps, more dreaded as a combatant than beloved as a Christian – of pure morality, subtle brain, and frozen heart. He entered the chamber which communicated with that in which Rose reclined, and immediately on his arrival, she requested him to pray for her, as for one who lay in the hands of Satan, and who could hope for deliverance – only from heaven.

That our readers may distinctly understand all the circumstances of the event which we are about imperfectly to describe, it is necessary to state the relative positions of the parties who were engaged in it. The old clergyman and

Schalken were in the ante-room of which we have already spoken; Rose lay in the inner chamber, the door of which was open; and by the side of the bed, at her urgent desire, stood her guardian; a candle burned in the bedchamber, and three were lighted in the outer apartment. The old man now cleared his voice as if about to commence, but before he had time to begin, a sudden gust of air blew out the candle which served to illuminate the room in which the poor girl lay, and she, with hurried alarm, exclaimed :

“Godfrey, bring in another candle; the darkness is unsafe.”

Gerard Douw, forgetting for the moment her repeated injunctions, in the immediate impulse, stepped from the bedchamber into the other, in order to supply what she desired.

“Oh God ! do not go, dear uncle,” shrieked the unhappy girl – and at the same time she sprang from the bed, and darted after him, in order, by her grasp, to detain him. But the warning came too late, for scarcely had he passed the threshold, and hardly had his niece had time to utter the startling exclamation, when the door which divided the two rooms closed violently after him, as if swung to by a strong blast of wind. Schalken and he both rushed to the door, but their united and desperate efforts could not avail so much as to shake it. Shriek after shriek burst from the inner chamber, with all the piercing loudness of despairing terror. Schalken and Douw applied every energy and strained every nerve to force open the door; but all in vain. There was no sound of struggling from within, but the screams seemed to increase in loudness, and at the same time they heard the bolts of the latticed window withdrawn, and the window itself grated upon the sill as if thrown open. One *last* shriek, so long and piercing and agonized as to be scarcely human, swelled from the room, and suddenly there followed a death-like silence. A light step was heard crossing the floor, as if from the bed to the window; and almost at

the same instant the door gave way, and, yielding to the pressure of the external applicants, they were nearly precipitated into the room. It was empty. The window was open, and Schalken sprang to a chair and gazed out upon the street and canal below. He saw no form, but he beheld, or thought he beheld, the waters of the broad canal beneath settling ring after ring in heavy circular ripples, as if a moment before disturbed by the immersion of some large and heavy mass.

No trace of Rose was ever after discovered, nor was anything certain respecting her mysterious wooer detected or even suspected – no clue whereby to trace the intricacies of the labyrinth and to arrive at a distinct conclusion was to be found. But an incident occurred which, though it will not be received by our rational readers as at all approaching to evidence upon the matter, nevertheless produced a strong and a lasting impression upon the mind of Schalken. Many years after the events which we have detailed, Schalken, then remotely situated, received an intimation of his father's death, and of his intended burial upon a fixed day in the church of Rotterdam. It was necessary that a very considerable journey should be performed by the funeral procession, which, as it will be readily believed, was not very numerously attended. Schalken with difficulty arrived in Rotterdam late in the day upon which the funeral was appointed to take place. It had not then arrived. Evening closed in, and still it did not appear.

Schalken strolled down to the church – he found it open – notice of the arrival of the funeral had been given, and the vault in which the body was to be laid had been opened. The officer, who is analogous to our sexton, on seeing a well-dressed gentleman, whose object was to attend the expected funeral, pacing the aisle of the church, hospitably invited him to share with him the comforts of a blazing wood fire, which, as was his custom in winter time upon such occasions, he had kindled in the hearth of a chamber which communi-

cated, by a flight of steps, with the vault below. In this chamber Schalken and his entertainer seated themselves, and the sexton, after some fruitless attempts to engage his guest in conversation, was obliged to apply himself to his tobacco-pipe and can, to solace his solitude. In spite of his grief and cares, the fatigues of a rapid journey of nearly forty hours gradually overcame the mind and body of Godfrey Schalken and he sank into a deep sleep, from which he was awakened by someone's shaking him gently by the shoulder. He first thought that the old sexton had called him, but *he* was no longer in the room. He roused himself, and as soon as he could clearly see what was around him, he perceived a female form, clothed in a kind of light robe of muslin, part of which was so disposed as to act as a veil, and in her hand she carried a lamp. She was moving rather away from him and towards the flight of steps which conducted towards the vaults. Schalken felt a vague alarm at the sight of this figure, and at the same time an irresistible impulse to follow its guidance. He followed it towards the vaults, but when it reached the head of the stairs, he paused – the figure paused also, and, turning gently round, displayed, by the light of the lamp it carried, the face and features of his first love, Rose Velderkaust. There was nothing horrible, or even sad, in the countenance. On the contrary, it wore the same arch smile which used to enchant the artist long before in his happy days. A feeling of awe and of interest, too intense to be resisted, prompted him to follow the spectre, if spectre it were. She descended the stairs – he followed – and, turning to the left, through a narrow passage, she led him, to his infinite surprise, into what appeared to be an old-fashioned Dutch apartment, such as the pictures of Gerard Douw have served to immortalize. Abundance of costly antique furniture was disposed about the room, and in one corner stood a four-post bed, with heavy black cloth curtains around it; the figure frequently turned towards him with the same arch

smile; and when she came to the side of the bed, she drew the curtains, and, by the light of the lamp, which she held towards its contents, she disclosed to the horror-stricken painter, sitting bolt upright in bed, the livid and demoniac form of Vanderhausen. Schalken had hardly seen him, when he fell senseless upon the floor, where he lay until discovered, on the next morning, by persons employed in closing the passages into the vaults. He was lying in a cell of considerable size, which had not been disturbed for a long time, and he had fallen beside a large coffin, which was supported upon small stone pillars, a security against the attacks of vermin.

To his dying day Schalken was satisfied of the reality of the vision which he had witnessed, and he has left behind him a curious evidence of the impression which it wrought upon his fancy, in a painting executed shortly after the event we have narrated, and which is valuable as exhibiting not only the peculiarities which have made Schalken's pictures sought after, but even more so as presenting a portrait as close and faithful as one taken from memory can be, of his early love, Rose Velderkaust, whose mysterious fate must ever remain a matter of speculation. The picture represents a chamber of antique masonry, such as might be found in most old cathedrals, and is lighted faintly by a lamp carried in the hand of a female figure, such as we have above attempted to describe; and in the background, and to the left of him who examines the painting, there stands the form of a man apparently aroused from sleep, and by his attitude, his hand being laid upon his sword, exhibiting considerable alarm; this last figure is illuminated only by the expiring glare of a wood or charcoal fire. The whole production exhibits a beautiful specimen of that artful and singular distribution of light and shade which has rendered the name of Schalken immortal among the artists of his country. This tale is traditionary, and the reader will easily perceive by our studiously omitting to heighten many points of the

narrative, when a little additional colouring might have added effect to the recital, that we have desired to lay before him, not a figment of the brain, but a curious tradition connected with, and belonging to, the biography of a famous artist.

THE DROWNED MAN

by Guy de Maupassant

I

EVERYONE in Fécamp knew the story of old Mother Patin. She had undoubtedly been unhappy with her man, had old Mother Patin; for her man had beaten her during his lifetime, as a man threshes wheat in his barns.

He was owner of a fishing-smack, and had married her long ago because she was nice, although she was poor.

Patin, a good seaman, but a brute, frequented old Auban's tavern, where, on ordinary days, he drank four or five brandies, and on days when he had made a good catch, eight or ten, and even more, according how he felt, as he said.

The brandy was served to customers by old Auban's daughter, a pleasant-faced, dark-haired girl, who drew custom to the house merely by her good looks, for no one had ever wagged a tongue against her.

When Patin entered the tavern, he was content to look at her and talk civilly to her, quiet, decent conversation. When he had drunk the first brandy, already he found her nicer; at the second, he was winking at her; at the third, he was saying: "Miss Désirée, if you would only . . ." without ever finishing the sentence; at the fourth, he was trying to hold her by her petticoat to embrace her; and when he had reached the tenth, it was old Auban who served him with the rest.

The old wine-seller, who knew every trick of the trade, used to send Désirée round between the tables to liven up the orders for drinks; and Désirée, who was not old Auban's daughter for nothing, paraded her petticoat among the drinkers and bandied jests, with a smile on her lips, and a twinkle in her eye.

By dint of drinking brandies, Patin grew so familiar with Désirée's face that he thought of it even at sea, when he threw his nets into the water, out on the open sea, on windy nights and calm nights, on moonlit nights and black nights. He thought of it as he held the helm in the stern of his boat while his four companions slept with their heads on their arms. He saw her always smiling at him, pouring out the yellow brandy with a lift of her shoulders, then coming towards him, saying :

"There! Is this what you want?"

And by dint of treasuring her so in eye and mind, he reached such a pitch of longing to marry her that, unable to restrain himself longer, he asked her in marriage.

He was rich, owner of his boat, his nets and a house at the foot of the cliff, on the Retenue; while old Auban had nothing. He was, therefore, accepted eagerly, and the wedding took place as quickly as possible, both parties being, for different reasons, anxious to make it an accomplished fact.

But three days after the marriage was over, Patin was no longer able to imagine in the least how he had come to think Désirée different from other women. He must have been a rare fool to hamper himself with a penniless girl who had wheedled him with her cognac, so she had, with the cognac into which she had put some filthy drug for him.

And he went cursing along the shore, breaking his pipe between his teeth, swearing at his tackle; and having cursed heartily, with every term he could think of, everything he knew, he spat out the anger still left in his stomach on the fish and crabs that he drew one by one out of his nets, throw-

ing them into the baskets to an accompaniment of oaths and foul words.

Then, returning to his house, where he had his wife, old Auban's daughter, within reach of his tongue and his hand, he soon began to treat her as the lowest of the low. Then, as she listened resignedly, being used to the paternal violence, he became exasperated by her calm, and one evening he beat her. After this, his home became a place of terror.

For ten years, nothing was talked of on the Retenue but the beatings Patin inflicted on his wife, and his habit of cursing when he spoke to her, whatever the occasion. He cursed, in fact, in a unique way, with a wealth of vocabulary and a forceful vigour of delivery possessed by no other man in Fécamp. As soon as his boat reached the harbour mouth, back from fishing, they waited expectantly for the first broadside he would discharge on the pier, from his deck, the moment he saw the white bonnet of his other half.

Standing in the stern, he tacked, his glance fixed ahead and on the sheets when the sea was running high, and in spite of the close attention required by the narrow, difficult passage, in spite of the great waves running mountain-high in the narrow gully, he endeavoured to pick out – from the midst of the women waiting in the spray of the breakers for the sailors – his woman, old Auban's daughter, the pauper wench.

Then, as soon as he saw her, in spite of the clamour of waves and wind, he poured on her a volley of abuse with such vocal energy that every one laughed at it, although they pitied her deeply. Then, when his boat reached the quay, he had a way of discharging his ballast of civilities, as he said, while he unloaded his fish, which attracted round him all the rascals and idlers of the harbour.

It issued from his mouth, now like cannon-shots, terrible and short, now like thunderclaps that rolled for five minutes, such a tempest of oaths that he seemed to have in his lungs all the storms of the Eternal Father.

Then, when he had left his boat, and met among the curious spectators and fishwives, he fished up again from the bottom of the hold a fresh cargo of insults and hard words, and escorted her in such fashion to their home, she in front, he behind, she weeping, he shouting.

Then, alone with her, doors shut, he beat her on the least pretext. Anything was enough to make him lift his hand, and once he had begun, he never stopped, spitting in her face, all the time, the real causes of his hate. At each blow, at each thump, he yelled : "Oh, you penniless slut, oh, you gutter-snipe, oh, you miserable starveling, I did a fine thing the day I washed my mouth out with the firewater of your scoundrel of a father."

She passed her days now, poor woman, in a state of incessant terror, in a continuous trembling of soul and of body, in stunned expectation of insults and thrashings.

And this lasted for ten years. She was so broken that she turned pale when she talked to anyone, no matter who, and no longer thought of anything but the beatings that threatened her, and she had grown as skinny, yellow and dried up as a smoked fish.

II

ONE night when her man was at sea she was awakened by the noise like the growling of a beast which the wind makes when it gets up, like an unleashed hound. She sat up in bed, uneasy, then, hearing nothing more, lay down again; but almost at once, there was a moaning in the chimney that shook the whole house and ran across the whole sky as if a pack of furious animals had crossed the empty spaces panting and bellowing.

Then she got up and ran to the harbour. Other women were running from all sides with lanterns. Men ran up and every one watched the foam flashing white in the darkness on the crest of the waves out at sea.

The storm lasted fifteen hours. Eleven sailors returned no more, and Patin was among them.

The wreckage of his boat, the *Jeune-Amélie*, was recovered off Dieppe. Near Saint-Valéry, they picked up the bodies of his sailors, but his body was never found. As the hull of the small craft had been cut in two, his wife for a long time expected and dreaded his return; for if there had been a collision, it might have happened that the colliding vessel had taken him on board, and carried him to a distant country.

Then, slowly, she grew used to the thought that she was a widow, even though she trembled every time that a neighbour or a beggar or a tramping pedlar entered her house abruptly.

One afternoon, almost four years after the disappearance of her man, she stopped, on her way along the Rue aux Juifs, before the house of an old captain who had died recently, and whose belongings were being sold.

Just at that moment, they were auctioning a parrot, a green parrot with a blue head, which was regarding the crowd with a discontented and uneasy air.

"Three francs," cried the auctioneer, "a bird that talks like a lawyer, three francs."

A friend of Widow Patin jogged her elbow.

"You ought to buy that, you're rich," she said. "It would be company for you; he is worth more than thirty francs, that bird. You can always sell him again for twenty to twenty-five easy."

"Four francs, ladies, four francs," the man repeated. "He sings vespers and preaches like the priest. He's a phenomenon . . . a miracle!"

Widow Patin raised the bid by fifty centimes, and they handed her the hook-nosed creature in a little cage and she carried him off.

Then she installed him in her house, and as she was opening the iron-wire door to give the creature a drink, she

got a bite on the finger that broke the skin and drew blood.

"Oh, the wicked bird," said she.

However, she presented him with hemp-seed and maize, then left him smoothing his feathers while he peered with a malicious air at his new home and his new mistress.

Next morning day was beginning to break, when Widow Patin heard, with great distinctness, a loud, resonant, rolling voice. Patin's voice, shouting : "Get up, slut."

Her terror was such that she hid her head under the bedclothes, for every morning, in the old days, as soon as he had opened his eyes, her dead husband shouted in her ears those three familiar words.

Trembling, huddled into a ball, her back turned to the thrashing that she was momentarily expecting, she murmured, her face hidden in the bed :

"God Almighty, he's here ! God Almighty, he's here ! He's come back, God Almighty !"

Minutes passed ; no other sound broke the silence of her room. Then, shuddering, she lifted her head from the bed, sure that he was there, spying on her, ready to strike.

She saw nothing, nothing but a ray of sun falling across the window-pane, and she thought :

"He's hiding, for sure."

She waited a long time, then, a little reassured, thought :

"I must have been dreaming, seeing he doesn't show himself."

She was shutting her eyes again, a little reassured, when right in her ears the furious voice burst out, the thunderous voice of her drowned man, shouting :

"Damn and blast it, get up, you bitch."

She leaped out of bed, jerked out by her instinctive obedience, the passive obedience of a woman broken in by blows, who still remembers, after four years, and will always remember, and always obey that voice. And she said :

"Here I am, Patin. What do you want?"

But Patin did not answer.

Then, bewildered, she looked round her, and searched everywhere, in the cupboards, in the chimney, under the bed, still finding no one, and at last let herself fall into a chair, distracted with misery, convinced that the spirit of Patin itself was there, near her, come back to torture her.

Suddenly, she remembered the loft, which could be reached from outside by a ladder. He had certainly hidden himself there to take her by surprise. He must have been kept by savages on some shore, unable to escape sooner, and he had come back, more wicked than ever. She could not doubt it; the mere tone of his voice convinced her.

She asked, her head turned towards the ceiling :

“Are you up there, Patin?”

Patin did not answer.

Then she went out, and in an utterable terror that set her heart beating madly, she climbed the ladder, opened the garret window, looked in, saw nothing, entered, searched, and found nothing.

Seated on a truss of hay, she began to cry; but while she was sobbing, shaken by an acute and supernatural terror, she heard, in the room below her, Patin telling his story. He seemed less angry, calmer, and he was saying :

“Filthy weather . . . high wind . . . filthy weather. I’ve had no breakfast, damn it.”

She called through the ceiling :

“I’m here, Patin; I’ll make you some soup. Don’t be angry. I’m coming.”

She climbed down at a run.

There was no one in her house.

She felt her body giving way as if Death had his hand on her, and she was going to run out to ask help from the neighbours, when just in her ear the voice cried :

“I’ve had no breakfast, damn it.”

The parrot, in his cage, was watching her with his round, malicious, wicked eye.

She stared back at him in amazement, murmuring :

“Oh, it’s you.”

He answered, shaking his head :

“Wait, wait, wait, I’ll teach you to idle.”

What were her thoughts? She felt, she realized that this was none other than the dead man, who had returned and hidden himself in the feathers of this creature, to begin tormenting her again, that he was going to swear, as of old, all day, and find fault with her, and shout insults to attract their neighbours’ attention and make them laugh. Then she flung herself across the room, opened the cage, seized the bird, who defended himself and tore her skin with his beak and his claws. But she held him with all her might, in both hands, and throwing herself on the ground, rolled on top of him with mad frenzy, crushed him, made of him a mere rag of flesh, a little, soft, green thing that no longer moved or spoke, and hung limp. Then, wrapping him in a dish-cloth as a shroud, she went out, in her shift, bare-footed, crossed the quay, against which the sea was breaking in small waves, and shaking the cloth, let fall this small, green thing that looked like a handful of grass. Then she returned, threw herself on her knees before the empty cage, and utterly overcome by what she had done, she asked pardon of the good God, sobbing, as if she had just committed a horrible crime.

THE SANDMAN

by E. T. A. Hoffmann

Nathanael to Lothar

You must all be very worried because I haven't written for so long. I expect Mother is angry with me and Klara may imagine I am spending my time in riotous living and have entirely forgotten my lovely angel, whose image is so deeply imprinted in my heart. But it isn't like that; I think of you all every day and every hour, and my pretty Klärchen is ever-present to my inward eye, smiling radiantly as she always did. But how could I write to you in the distracted frame of mind that has been throwing all my thoughts into disorder? Horror has entered my life. Dark premonitions of an atrocious fate loom over me like the shadows of black clouds, impervious to every ray of sunshine. I shall tell you what has happened to me. I must tell you, I can see that; but the mere thought of it sets me laughing insanely. Oh, my dearest Lothar, how can I begin to make you feel that what befell me a few days ago is capable of reducing my life to ruins? If only you were here you could judge for yourself; but as it is, I'm sure you will think that I am mad and seeing ghosts. In a word, the frightful thing which happened to me, the mortal effects of which I am trying in vain to shake off, was merely that a few days ago, on 20 October at twelve o'clock noon, a barometer-seller came into my room and offered me his wares. I bought nothing and threatened to throw him down the stairs, whereupon he left of his own accord.

You will guess that only events from my own past that deeply affected my life could have made this incident seem important and the person of this unfortunate pedlar appear to be a threat. Such is, in fact, the case. I shall do all I can to get a grip on myself and tell you calmly about my early youth so that everything appears clearly and vividly to your lively mind. As I try to begin, I can hear you laugh and Klara say: "This is all childish nonsense!" Laugh, by all means, laugh as loud as you like. My hair is standing on end and I feel like imploring you to laugh me out of my terror. Here is my story.

Apart from the midday meal, my sisters and I saw little of our father. He must have been kept very busy by his work. After supper, which was served at seven in the old-fashioned way, we all, including Mother, used to go into Father's study and sit at a round table. Father used to smoke tobacco and drink a large glass of beer. He often used to tell us marvellous stories, getting so carried away that his pipe kept going out and I had to relight it for him by holding a piece of burning paper to it, in which I took great pleasure. There were other times, however, when he put picture books in our hands and sat mute and stiff in his armchair blowing out clouds of smoke, till we were all enveloped in a thick fog. On such evenings my mother was very dejected, and no sooner had the clock struck nine than she would say: "Now, children, off you go to bed. The Sandman is coming, I can hear him already."

At such times I really did hear someone clumping up the stairs with a rather heavy, slow step. "That must be the Sandman," I thought. One day this muffled clumping and bumping sounded particularly horrible. I asked my mother, as she led us away: "I say, Mama, who is this naughty Sandman who always drives us away from Papa? What does he look like?"

"There isn't any Sandman, my dear child," replied my mother. "When I say the Sandman is coming, it only means

you are sleepy and can't keep your eyes open, as though someone had thrown sand into them."

Mother's answer didn't satisfy me, because in my childish mind I was convinced that she was only denying the existence of the Sandman to save us from being frightened – after all, I could hear him coming up the stairs. Full of curiosity to know more about this Sandman and his connection with us children, I finally asked the old woman who looked after my youngest sister what kind of man the Sandman was.

"Oh, Thanelchen," she replied, "don't you know that yet? He is a wicked man who comes to children when they won't go to bed and throws handfuls of sand in their eyes, so that they pop all bloody out of their heads; then he throws them into a sack and carries them to the half-moon as food for his children; the children sit there in a nest and have crooked beaks like owls with which they gobble up the eyes of human children who have been naughty."

A hideous picture of the cruel Sandman now formed within me; when he came clumping up the stairs in the evening I trembled with fear and horror. My mother could get nothing from me but the stammered, tearful cry: "The Sandman! The Sandman!" Then I ran into my bedroom and was tormented all night long by visions of the atrocious Sandman.

A time came when I was old enough to know that the story of the Sandman and his children's nest in the half-moon told by my sister's nurse couldn't be entirely true; but the Sandman was still a frightful phantom to me, and I was seized with terror and horror when I heard him not merely mounting the stairs, but tearing the door of my father's room violently open and going in. He frequently stayed away for long periods; then he would come on several nights in succession. This went on for years, and I couldn't get used to the eerie spectre; my mental image of the cruel Sandman grew no paler. His dealings with my father began to exercise

my imagination more and more. An insurmountable reluctance prevented me from asking my mother about it; but with the passing of the years the desire to probe the mystery myself, to see the fabulous Sandman with my own eyes, was born and continually grew. The Sandman had directed my interest towards the supernatural and fantastic, which so easily takes root in the mind of a child. I liked nothing better than to hear or read gruesome tales of hobgoblins, witches, Tom Thumbs, and the like; but over everything loomed the Sandman, of whom I kept drawing strange, repulsive pictures all over the place – on tables, cupboards, and walls – in charcoal and chalk.

When I was ten my mother moved me from the nursery into a little bedroom in the corridor close to my father's room. We still had to hurry away on the stroke of nine, when the footsteps of the unknown man echoed through the house. From my room I could hear him go into my father's, and it seemed to me that soon afterwards a thin, strange-smelling vapour spread through the house. As my curiosity about the Sandman grew, so did my courage. I often used to creep quickly out of my room into the corridor after my mother had passed; but I could never see anything, for the Sandman had always gone in through the door by the time I reached the spot from which he would have been visible. Finally, impelled by an irresistible urge, I resolved to hide inside my father's room and there lie in wait for the Sandman.

One evening I observed from my father's silence and my mother's dejection that the Sandman was coming. I therefore pretended to be very tired, left the room before nine o'clock, and hid in a corner close to the door. The front door grated; slow, heavy, creaking footsteps crossed the hall to the stairs. My mother hurried past me with my sisters. As quietly as I could, I opened the door of my father's room. He was sitting, as usual, silent and stiff with his back to the door; he didn't notice me; in an instant I was inside and

hiding behind the curtain drawn across an open cupboard by the door, in which my father's clothes hung. Closer, ever closer creaked the footsteps; there was a strange coughing, scraping, and growling outside. My heart was pounding with fear and expectancy. There was a sharp step just outside the door; a violent blow on the latch; the door clattered open. Summoning all my courage, I peeped out. The Sandman was standing in the middle of my father's room, the bright light from the lamp full on his face. The Sandman, the terrible Sandman, was the old lawyer Coppelius, who often used to have lunch with us!

But the most hideous figure could not have inspired greater horror in me than this Coppelius. Picture to yourself a big, broad-shouldered man with a fat, shapeless head, earthy-yellow face, bushy grey eyebrows beneath which a pair of greenish cat's eyes flashed piercingly, and a large nose that curved down over the upper lip. The crooked mouth was often twisted in malicious laughter; at such moments two red patches appeared on his cheeks and a strange hissing sound came out through his clenched teeth. Coppelius always used to appear in an ash-grey coat of old-fashioned cut and a waistcoat and trousers to match, but accompanied by black stockings and shoes with small buckles set with ornamental stones. His little wig hardly reached beyond the crown of his head, his pomaded curls stood high over his big red ears, and a broad bag-wig stood out stiffly from the back of his neck, disclosing the silver buckle that joined his folded cravat. His whole appearance was odious and repulsive; but we children were repelled above all by his big, gnarled, hairy hands, which left us with a lasting aversion to anything they had touched. He noticed this, and thereafter he delighted in touching, under some pretext or other, any piece of cake or sweet fruit which our mother had slipped on to our plates, so that our eyes filled with tears, and disgust and loathing prevented us from enjoying the titbit put there for our enjoyment. It was the

same when our father poured out a small glass of sweet wine for us on feast days. Coppelius would quickly pass his hand over it or even bring the glass to his blue lips, and he laughed demoniacally at the low sobs that were the only expression we could give to our anger. He always called us the little beasts; when he was present we were not allowed to make a sound, and we execrated the hateful man who went out of his way to spoil our slightest pleasure. My mother seemed to detest him just as much as we did; for the moment he appeared her natural gaiety and lightheartedness gave way to dejected brooding. My father treated him like a superior being whose boorishness had to be endured and who must at all costs be humoured. He had only to drop a hint and his favourite dishes were cooked and rare wines served.

Seeing Coppelius now, the horrible conviction shot through me that he, and he alone, was the Sandman; but the Sandman was no longer the boggy of the nurse's tale, the monster who fetched children's eyes to feed his brood in the owl's nest in the half-moon; no, he was a horrible, spectral monster who spread grief and misery, temporal and eternal perdition wherever he set foot.

I was spellbound with horror. At the risk of being discovered and severely punished, as I clearly anticipated, I stayed where I was with my head stretched out through the curtains, watching. My father received Coppelius ceremoniously. "To work!" cried the latter in a hoarse, grating voice, throwing off his coat. My father gloomily removed his dressing-gown and both of them put on black overalls. I didn't see where they got them from. My father opened the folding-door of what I had always believed to be a cupboard, but which proved to be a dark recess housing a stove. Coppelius approached the stove and a blue flame flickered up. There were all sorts of strange utensils standing round. God above! — as my old father now bent down to the fire he looked quite different. His gentle, honest features

seemed to have been twisted into an ugly, repulsive grimace by some gripping agony. He looked like Coppelius. The latter was wielding a pair of red-hot tongs and drawing masses of sparkling metal out of the thick smoke, which he then hammered industriously. It seemed to me that human faces were appearing on all sides, but without eyes – instead they had horrible, deep black cavities.

“Eyes, we must have eyes!” cried Coppelius in a deep, booming voice.

Overcome by uncontrollable horror, I screamed and fell out of my hiding-place on to the floor.

Coppelius seized hold of me. “Little beast, little beast!” he screeched, grinding his teeth, dragged me to my feet and threw me on to the stove, so that the flame began to scorch my hair. “Now we have eyes,” he whispered, “a fine pair of child’s eyes.” And he pulled glowing coal dust out of the fire with his bare hands and made as though to sprinkle it in my eyes.

At this my father raised his hands beseechingly and cried :

“Master, master, leave my Nathanael his eyes, leave him his eyes!”

Coppelius laughed shrilly and exclaimed : “All right, let the boy keep his eyes and weep his way through the world; but now we will carefully observe the mechanism of the hands and feet.” With this, he gripped me so that my joints cracked, unscrewed my hands and feet and put them back on again, now in one place, now in another. “They’re not right anywhere else! It’s best the way they were! The Old Man knew what he was doing!” hissed Coppelius. But everything around me went black, a sudden convulsion ran through my nerves and bones – and I felt no more.

A warm, gentle breath passed across my face; I woke as though from death; my mother was bending over me. “Is the Sandman still there?” I stammered. “No, my dear child, he went long ago; he will do you no harm,” said my mother,

kissing and cuddling her darling whom she had now won back.

I don't want to bore you, my dearest Lothar. There is no point in my going into details, when so much must in any case remain unsaid. Suffice it to say that I had been caught eavesdropping and manhandled by Coppelius. Terror had put me into a high fever, from which I lay ill for many weeks. "Is the Sandman still there?" This was my first sentence spoken in health, the first sign of my recovery, my salvation.

There only remains for me to tell you of the most terrible moment in the years of my youth; then you will be convinced that my eyes do not deceive me when everything seems drained of colour, you will agree that a sombre destiny really has hung a murky veil over my life, a veil which I shall perhaps not tear apart until I die.

Nothing more was seen of Coppelius, he was said to have left the town.

One evening, about a year later, we were all sitting at the round table as we always used to. Father was very gay and was telling us all sorts of amusing tales about his youthful travels. Then suddenly, as the clock struck nine, we heard the front door creak on its hinges and slow, leaden footsteps stumped across the hall and up the stairs.

"It's Coppelius," said my mother, turning pale.

"Yes, it's Coppelius," repeated my father in a dull, broken voice.

The tears started from my mother's eyes. "But Father, Father," she cried, "must it be like this?"

"He is coming to see me for the last time," replied my father. "I promise you that. Now go, and take the children with you. Go to bed, all of you. Good night."

I felt as though I were being crushed between two heavy, cold masses of stone. I had difficulty in breathing. As I stood motionless, Mother took me by the arm. "Come, Nathanael, come along!" I let myself be dragged away. "Calm yourself,

calm yourself, go to bed ! Sleep, sleep !” my mother cried to me ; but I was tortured by indescribable anxiety and couldn’t close my eyes. The detestable, repulsive Coppelius stood before me with glittering eyes, laughing at me malevolently ; in vain I tried to rid myself of this vision. It must have been around midnight when there was a terrible bang, like the firing of a gun. The detonation echoed through the whole house and the blast whistled past my room ; doors throughout the house were slammed shut with a clatter.

“That’s Coppelius !” I cried in horror, jumping out of bed.

Then the air was rent by a series of despairing wails and screams. I rushed to my father’s room ; the door was open, suffocating smoke billowed out at me ; the servant girl screamed : “Oh, the master, oh, the master !” On the floor in front of the reeking stove, my father lay dead, his face burnt black and horribly contorted ; my sisters were howling and whimpering around him and my mother lay unconscious beside him.

“Coppelius, abominable Satan, you have murdered my father !” I cried, then fell senseless to the ground.

Two days later, when he was put into his coffin, my father’s features had become mild and gentle again, as they had been in life. I was consoled by the sudden conviction that his pact with the devilish Coppelius could not have thrust him into everlasting perdition.

The explosion had woken the neighbours ; the incident was talked about and came to the ears of the authorities, who wished to proceed against Coppelius. But he had vanished from the town without a trace.

When I now tell you, my dearest friend, that the barometer-seller was the villainous Coppelius, you will not blame me for interpreting this apparition as heralding some terrible disaster. He was differently dressed, but Coppelius’s face and figure are too deeply imprinted upon my mind for any mistake to be possible. Moreover, Coppelius has barely

changed his name. I am told that he is passing himself off as a Piedmontese mechanic called Giuseppe Coppola.

I am resolved to have it out with him and to avenge my father's death, come what may.

Don't tell Mother anything about the arrival of the loathsome monster.

Give my love to my dear, sweet Klara. I shall write to her when I am in a calmer frame of mind.

Best wishes, etc., etc.

Klara to Nathanael

It is true that you haven't written for a long time, but nevertheless I believe that I am in your thoughts. You must have been thinking of me very vividly when you addressed your last letter to Lothar, because you wrote my name on the envelope instead of his. I joyfully opened the letter and didn't realize my mistake until I came to the words "Oh, my dearest Lothar". I ought to have stopped there and immediately given the letter to my brother. But even though in your childhood you used to tease me by saying that I was so calm and reflective that if the house were about to collapse and I saw a crease in the curtain, I should quickly smooth it out before fleeing the doomed building, nevertheless I need hardly assure you that the beginning of your letter distressed me profoundly. I could scarcely breathe, and everything swam before my eyes. "Oh, my beloved Nathanael," I thought, "what terrible thing can have entered your life? Are we perhaps to part and never see one another again?" The thought pierced my breast like a stab with a red-hot dagger. I read on and on. From your description Coppelius sounds horrible. I never knew before that your good old father died such a dreadful death. When I passed the letter on to its rightful owner my brother Lothar tried to pacify me, but he wasn't very successful. The baleful barometer-seller Giuseppe Coppola dogged my every

step, and I am almost ashamed to confess that he succeeded in disturbing my normally sound and peaceful sleep with all kinds of fantastic dream images. But by next morning I saw everything differently. Don't be angry with me, my dearly beloved, if Lothar tells you that, in spite of your strange presentiment that Coppelius will do you some harm, I am still just as gay and light-hearted as ever.

I will admit straight out that in my opinion all the terrible things you speak of happened only within your own mind and that the outer world had very little part in them. Old Coppelius may well have been a repulsive character, but it was because he hated children that you children developed such an aversion towards him.

Of course the dreadful Sandman of the nurse's tale became linked in your child's mind with old Coppelius, whom, even when you no longer believed in the Sandman, you still regarded as a monster especially dangerous to children. The sinister nocturnal activities in which he had your father engaged were nothing but clandestine alchemistic experiments, which were bound to displease your mother because they are sure to have resulted in a great deal of money being wasted; moreover, as always happens in such cases, your father's mind must have become filled with the illusory desire to acquire higher wisdom and thereby diverted from his family. Your father's death was undoubtedly due to his own carelessness and not Coppelius's fault. Yesterday I asked the experienced apothecary who lives next door whether such instantly lethal explosions could occur during chemical experiments. He replied, "Most certainly," and went on to explain at length and in detail how this might happen, mentioning so many strange-sounding names that I can't remember any of them.

Now you will probably be annoyed with your Klara; you will say: "No ray of the mysterious forces that often clasp men in their invisible arms can penetrate that cold spirit; she sees only the colourful surface of life and rejoices over

it, like the thoughtless child over the bright and shining fruit within which poison lurks."

Oh, my dearly beloved Nathanael, don't you believe that gay, light-hearted, care-free spirits may also sense the presence of dark powers within ourselves that are bent upon our destruction? But forgive me if, simple girl that I am, I try to show you what I really think about such inner conflicts. In the end, I shan't be able to find the right words and you will laugh not at what I say, but at the clumsy way in which I say it.

If there is a malignant power that treacherously introduces a thread into our hearts, by means of which it then drags us along a dangerous, a ruinous path which we should never have trodden of our own accord, then it must become part of us, part of our own self; for only thus shall we believe it and give it the freedom of action it needs in order to carry out its secret purpose. But if our minds are firm enough and sufficiently strengthened by a happy life always to recognize alien, hostile influences and to proceed with calm steps along the path chosen by our own inclinations, the sinister power perishes in the vain attempt to create the shape that is to serve as a reflection of ourselves.

"There can also be no doubt," adds Lothar to this, "that once we have surrendered ourselves to the dark physical power, it frequently draws inside us external figures thrown in our path by the world; then it is we ourselves who endow these figures with the life with which, in wild delusion, we credit them."

You see, my dearly beloved Nathanael, that my brother Lothar and I have discussed the question of malignant powers at length, and now that I have, not without difficulty, written down the main points in our argument it all seems very profound. I don't entirely understand Lothar's last words, I have only an inkling of what he means, and yet it all seems to me very true. Cast the horrible lawyer Coppelius and the barometer man Giuseppe Coppola

entirely out of your mind, I beg of you. Be sure that these external figures cannot harm you; only your belief in their baneful power can make them baneful to you in reality. If the profound agitation of your mind was not apparent from every line of your letter, if your suffering did not cut me to the quick, I assure you I could laugh about the lawyer, Sandman, and barometer-seller Coppelius. Be cheerful, cheerful! I have made up my mind to come to you like a guardian angel, and, if he let me near him, to scare nasty old Coppola away with loud laughter. I am not in the very least afraid of him and his horrid hands; he isn't going to spoil my titbits as a lawyer nor my eyes as the Sandman

For ever, my best beloved Nathanael, etc., etc., etc.

Nathanael to Lothar

I'm very sorry that, as a result of my slip, Klara accidentally opened and read my recent letter to you. She wrote me a very profound and philosophical letter in reply, in which she sets out to prove that Coppelius and Coppola exist only within me and are phantoms of my own ego, which would instantly fall to dust if I recognized them as such. It is hard to believe that the mind which shines forth from her bright and smiling child's eyes, that are like a vision in a dream, is capable of such a sagacious and masterly interpretation. She quotes you. The two of you have been talking about me. You must have been lecturing her, teaching her to see and analyse things clearly. Stop it! Anyhow, it is now quite certain that the barometer-seller Giuseppe Coppola is not the old lawyer Coppelius. I am attending lectures by the new professor of physics, who, like the famous natural philosopher, is called Spallanzani and is of Italian origin. He has known Coppola for many years, and apart from this you can tell that Coppola really is a Piedmontese from his accent. Coppelius was a German, though, I suspect, not a true German. I am entirely re-

assured. You and Klara may continue to think me a gloomy dreamer, but I cannot get Coppelius's accursed face out of my mind. I'm glad he has left the city, as Spallanzani tells me.

This professor is an extraordinary fellow. A tubby little man with protruding cheek-bones, a slender nose, thick lips, and small piercing eyes. But if you look at an engraving of Cagliostro by Chodowiecki in some Berlin calendar it will give you a far more accurate idea of his appearance than any description of mine. That's what Spallanzani looks like. As I went up the stairs in his house the other day I noticed a narrow gap on one side of the curtain that is generally drawn across a particular glass door. I don't know myself how I came to do such a thing, but I inquisitively peeped through. There was a tall, very slim, beautifully proportioned, magnificently dressed woman sitting in the room at a small table, on which both arms were resting with folded hands. She was facing the door, so that I could see the whole of her angelically lovely face. She didn't seem to notice me, and there was a curiously fixed look in her eyes, almost as though they lacked the power of vision, as though she were asleep with her eyes open. It gave me an uncanny sensation and I quickly slipped away into the lecture-room, which is next door. Later I learnt that the figure I had seen was Spallanzani's daughter Olympia, whom for some strange reason he wickedly keeps shut up, never allowing anyone near her. Perhaps there is something the matter with her; perhaps she is a half-wit or something.

I don't know why I am writing you all this : I could have told you everything better and at greater length by word of mouth. The fact is, I am coming to stay with you for a fortnight. I must see my sweet angel, my Klara, again. That will blow away all the ill-humour which, I must admit, took possession of me after her terribly sensible letter. That's why I'm not writing to her as well today.

A thousand greetings, etc., etc.

Here I must add a word about the background to the extraordinary events which befell the student Nathanael, and which are introduced by the foregoing letters. Soon after his father died, Klara and Lothar, the children of a distant relative who had likewise died and left them orphans, were taken in by Nathanael's mother. Klara and Nathanael quickly conceived a passionate affection for one another, to which no one in the world had any objection to raise. They therefore became engaged when Nathanael left the town to pursue his studies at G——. His letters were written from G——, where he was attending lectures by the famous professor of physics, Spallanzani.

Klara was considered by many people cold, unfeeling, prosaic, because of her clarity of vision and impatience with hocus-pocus; but others, better able to distinguish the true from the false, dearly loved the spirited, sympathetic, and unsophisticated girl; none loved her so deeply as Nathanael, a man well versed in the arts and sciences. Klara was wholeheartedly devoted to her beloved, and the first shadow fell across her life the day he parted from her. With what delight she flew into his arms when now, as he had announced in his last letter to Lothar, he returned to his native town and entered his mother's room. As Nathanael had foreseen, the moment he saw Klara he thought neither of the lawyer Coppelius nor of Klara's over-sensible letter; all his ill humour vanished.

Yet Nathanael was quite right when he wrote to his friend Lothar that the entry of the repulsive barometer-seller Coppolo into his life had been fraught with disastrous consequences. This was evident to everyone in the first few days of his visit, for Nathanael's whole nature had changed. He sank into gloomy brooding and behaved in an extraordinary way quite unlike his normal self. Life seemed to have become for him nothing but dream and foreboding; he kept on saying that everyone who imagined himself free was really the plaything of dark and cruel powers; it was useless

to rebel, we all had to bow humbly to our destiny. He went so far as to assert that it was foolish to suppose that man's creative activities in the fields of art and science were the outcome of free will, claiming that the inspiration which enables us to create does not come from within us, but is imposed upon us by some higher power outside ourselves.

The clear-headed Klara found all this mystical nonsense in the highest degree objectionable, but it seemed pointless to contradict. She said nothing until Nathanael stated that Coppelius was an evil spirit, as he had realized when he eavesdropped upon him from behind the curtain, and that this abominable demon would wreak havoc with their happiness. Then Klara replied very seriously : "Yes, Nathanael, you are right : Coppelius is an evil, malignant spirit ; he can exercise the terrible powers of a demon incarnate ; but only if you do not banish him from your mind. So long as you believe in him, he will exist and interfere with you ; it is only your belief that gives him power."

Angered by Klara's refusal to credit the demon's existence outside his own mind, Nathanael was about to launch into a disquisition on the whole mystical doctrine of devils and sinister powers, when to his annoyance Klara brought the conversation to a close with some casual interruption. He thought to himself that people with cold, insensitive natures render themselves inaccessible to profound mysteries of this kind. But since he was not fully aware of numbering Klara among people of inferior sensibility, he continued his efforts to initiate her into these mysteries. While Klara was getting breakfast in the morning, he stood beside her, reading aloud from all sorts of mystical books, till Klara commented : "You know, you are the evil spirit that is threatening to spoil my coffee. If I were to drop everything, as you want me to, and look into your eyes while you read, the coffee would boil over and none of you would get any breakfast." Nathanael slammed the book shut and made off to his room, much put out.

In the ordinary way, he had a notable gift for making up delightful and amusing stories, to which Klara listened with the greatest pleasure; now his tales were gloomy, unintelligible, formless, and although Klara refrained from saying so to spare his feelings, he could feel how little she liked them. Klara found nothing more deadly than boredom, and her uncontrollable drowsiness was expressed in her eyes and voice. Nathanael's tales were indeed very tedious. His resentment at Klara's cold, prosaic mind increased; Klara could not overcome her dislike of Nathanael's dark, gloomy, dreary mysticism; and so the two of them drifted farther and farther apart without realizing it. Nathanael himself had to admit that the image of the atrocious Coppelius had paled within him, and it often cost him an effort to give life to this figure when he introduced him into his writings in the role of a sinister boggy-man. Eventually he made a poem out of his dark foreboding that Coppelius would destroy his happiness in love. He portrayed himself and Klara as bound in true love but plagued by a black hand that thrust itself between them and snatched away their joy. In the end, when they were already at the altar, the abominable Coppelius appeared and touched Klara's lovely eyes, which sprang into Nathanael's breast, searing him like blood-red sparks. Coppelius seized hold of him and flung him into a circle of flames that spun round and round with the speed and noise of a whirlwind and dragged him away. There was a roaring sound like a hurricane whipping up the waves of the sea so that they reared up in revolt like black giants with heads of white foam. But through this fierce roaring he heard Klara's voice: "Can't you see me? Coppelius has tricked you. Those weren't my eyes that burnt into your breast, they were red-hot drops of your own heart's blood. I still have my eyes – just look at me!" Nathanael thought: "That is Klara, I am hers for ever." Then it was as though this thought had taken a grip upon the circle of flame, which came to a stop, while the roaring sound died away in the

black abyss. Nathanael gazed into Klara's eyes; but it was death that looked at him with Klara's friendly eyes.

While Nathanael was composing this poem he was very calm and serene; he worked and polished each line, and since he had assumed the yoke of metre he did not rest until the whole poem was flawless and euphonious. But when at last he had finished and read it aloud to himself, he was seized with horror and cried out: "Whose hideous voice is that?" Soon, however, the whole thing once more seemed nothing but a very successful poem, and he felt convinced that Klara's cold temperament would be set afire by it; though he had no very clear idea why Klara should be set afire or what purpose would be served by frightening her with these horrifying visions which predicted a terrible fate and the destruction of their love.

Nathanael and Klara were sitting in his mother's little garden; Klara was very cheerful because during the three days he had spent writing the poem Nathanael had ceased bothering her with his dreams and premonitions. Instead he talked gaily of things that amused her, as in the past, which led Klara to remark: "Now I've really got you back entirely. You see how we have driven out old Coppelius?"

At this, Nathanael remembered that he was carrying in his pocket the poem he had intended to read aloud. He immediately pulled out the sheets of paper and started reading. Klara, expecting something boring as usual and making the best of the situation, quietly started knitting. But as the threatening cloud of the poem grew blacker and blacker, she let the stocking she was knitting sink down and gazed fixedly into Nathanael's eyes. The latter was carried away by his own poem; emotion had coloured his cheeks bright red; tears poured from his eyes. Finally, he came to a stop, gave a groan of utter exhaustion, took Klara's hand, and sighed as though dissolving in hopeless grief: "Oh - Klara - Klara!"

Klara pressed him tenderly to her bosom and said in a

low voice, but very slowly and gravely : "Nathanael, my dearly beloved Nathanael, throw the mad, senseless, insane fairy tale into the fire."

Thereupon, Nathanael sprang to his feet indignantly, pushed Klara away from him and cried : "You lifeless damned automaton !" Then he hurried away.

Deeply hurt, Klara wept bitterly and sobbed loudly : "He can never have loved me, since he doesn't understand me."

Lothar came into the harbour and made Klara tell him what had happened. He loved his sister with all his soul, and every word of her complaint fell into his heart like a spark, so that the hostility he had long felt for the visionary Nathanael flared up into furious rage. He ran to Nathanael and reproached him for his senseless behaviour towards his beloved sister in harsh words, which the irascible Nathanael answered in kind. "Crazy, addle-brained dreamer" was answered by "Miserable, dull-witted oaf". A duel was inevitable. They agreed to fight next morning outside the garden with sharpened rapiers, in accordance with the custom at the local university. They stalked about mute and scowling; Klara had heard the violent argument and saw the fencing master bring the rapiers after dusk. She guessed what was afoot.

Having arrived at the duelling ground and cast off their coats in grim silence, bloodthirsty battle-lust in their blazing eyes, Lothar and Nathanael were on the point of falling upon one another when Klara rushed out of the garden gate. Sobbing, she cried out : "You ferocious beasts! Strike me down before you set upon each other; for how can I go on living if my lover has murdered my brother, or my brother my lover?"

Lothar lowered his weapon and stared in silence at the ground; but in Nathanael's heart all the love he had felt for sweet Klara in the finest days of his youth came to life again accompanied by an agonizing nostalgia. The murderous weapon fell from his hand and he flung himself at

Klara's feet. "Can you ever forgive me, my one and only, my beloved Klara? Can you forgive me, my dearest brother Lothar?"

Lothar was moved by his friend's profound anguish; all three embraced in tearful reconciliation and swore everlasting love and friendship.

Nathanael felt as though a heavy burden had been lifted from him, as if, by resisting the dark power that had held him in thrall, he had saved his whole being from annihilation. He spent another three days with his dear friends and then went back to G——, where he had to remain for another year before returning home for good.

Not a word about Coppelius was said to Nathanael's mother; they all knew she could not think of him without horror, since, like Nathanael, she blamed him for her husband's death.

On returning to his lodgings Nathanael was astounded to find that the whole house had been burnt down, leaving nothing standing but the bare chimney shafts. The fire had broken out in the apothecary's laboratory on the ground floor and spread upwards; consequently there had been time for Nathanael's courageous and active friends to force their way into his room on the top floor and save his books, manuscripts, and instruments. They had transported everything undamaged to a room they had rented for him in another house, into which he at once moved. He did not pay any particular attention to the fact that he was now living opposite Professor Spallanzani; nor did he attach any special significance to the discovery that he could see out of his window straight into the room in which Olympia often sat alone, so that he could clearly distinguish her figure even though her features remained blurred. It did finally strike him that Olympia frequently sat for hours on end at a small table in the same position in which he had seen her when he looked through the glass door, doing nothing and staring across at him with an unwavering gaze. He had to admit

that he had never seen a lovelier figure; at the same time, with Klara in his heart, he remained totally indifferent to the stiff and rigid Olympia, and only every now and then did he glance up from his textbook at the beautiful statue for a fleeting instant.

He was just writing to Klara when there was a soft knock at the door. It opened at his invitation and Coppola's repulsive face looked in. Nathanael quivered inwardly; but after what Spallanzani had told him about his countryman Coppola, and what he had solemnly promised his sweetheart regarding the Sandman Coppelius, he felt ashamed of his childish fear of ghosts, forcibly pulled himself together, and said as gently and calmly as he could: "I don't want a barometer, go away, please."

At this, however, Coppola came right into the room and exclaimed in a hoarse voice, his wide mouth twisted in a horrible laugh and his small eyes gleaming piercingly under their long, grey lashes: "All righta, no barometer! But I've gotta lovely eyes, lovely eyes!"

Horrified, Nathanael cried: "Eyes, you madman? How can you have eyes?"

Coppola instantly put away his barometers, thrust his hand into his capacious coat pockets, took out lorgnettes and spectacles and laid them down on the table. "See - see - spectacles to put on your nose, those are my eyes, my lovely eyes!"

So saying, he pulled out more and more spectacles, till the whole table began to glitter and sparkle. A myriad eyes glanced and winked and stared up at Nathanael; he could not look away from the table; Coppola laid down more and more spectacles, and the blood-red beams of their intersecting gaze flared in ever-wilder confusion and pierced Nathanael's breast. Overcome by uncontrollable horror, he seized Coppola's arm and cried out: "Stop, stop, you terrible man!"

Coppola, who had just been reaching into his pocket for

more spectacles, although the table was already covered, gently freed himself with the words: "Nothing there you lika? Well, here are fina glasses." So saying, he swept up the spectacles, put them back in his pocket, and drew a number of binoculars of all sizes from the side pocket of his coat. As soon as the spectacles had gone Nathanael became quite calm and, thinking of Klara, he could see that the terrifying spectre was solely the product of his own mind and that Coppola was a perfectly honest mechanic and optician and could not possibly be the double or ghost of the accursed Coppelius. Moreover, there was nothing out of the way about the binoculars which Coppola now put on the table, certainly nothing weird and ghostly as there had been about the spectacles. To make up for his previous behaviour, Nathanael decided to buy something. He picked up a small, very neatly made pair of pocket binoculars and looked out of the window to test them. Never in his life had he come across binoculars which brought objects so clear and close before his eyes. Involuntarily, he looked into Spallanzani's room; Olympia was sitting at the small table as usual, her arms resting on it and her hands folded.

Now, for the first time, Nathanael caught sight of Olympia's beautifully formed face. Only her eyes appeared to him curiously fixed and dead. But as he stared more and more intently through the glasses it seemed as though humid moonbeams were beginning to shine in Olympia's eyes. It was as though the power of sight were only now awakening, the flame of life flickering more and more brightly. Nathanael leaned out of the window as though bound to the spot by a spell, staring unceasingly at Olympia's heavenly beauty.

The sound of a throat being cleared woke him as though out of a deep sleep. Coppola was standing behind him. "*Tre zechini* - three ducats," he said. Nathanael, who had completely forgotten the optician, quickly paid him what

he asked. "A fine pair of glasses, eh?" asked Coppola with his repulsive hoarse voice and malevolent laugh.

"Yes, yes," replied Nathanael irritably. "Goodbye, my friend."

Coppola left the room, but not without casting many strange sidelong glances at Nathanael. He heard the optician laughing loudly as he went down the stairs. "Aha," thought Nathanael, "I suppose he is laughing at me because I paid too dearly for the binoculars – I paid too dearly!" As he muttered these words softly to himself, he seemed to hear a deep sigh, like a dying man's, echo terrifyingly round the room, and fear stopped his breath. But it was he himself who had sighed, he realized that. "Klara is quite right to consider me a preposterous ghost-seer," he told himself; "it is stupid, more than stupid to be so strangely frightened by the foolish thought that I paid too dearly for Coppola's binoculars; I can see absolutely no reason for it."

Then he sat down to finish his letter to Klara; but a glance out of the window showed him that Olympia was still sitting where she had been, and instantly, as though impelled by an irresistible force, he jumped up, seized Coppola's glasses, and could not tear himself away from the seductive vision of Olympia until his friend Siegmund called him to Professor Spallanzani's lecture. The curtain was pulled right across the fateful door and he could catch no glimpse of Olympia. Nor did he see her during the next two days, although he hardly left his window and kept on looking across through Coppola's binoculars. On the third day her window was actually covered with a curtain. In utter despair and driven by longing and hot desire, he hurried out beyond the city gates. Olympia's figure floated before him in the air, emerged from the undergrowth, and stared at him with big, shining eyes out of the sparkling stream. Klara's image had completely faded from his mind; he thought of nothing but Olympia and lamented in a loud and tearful voice: "O my lofty, noble star of love, did you rise only

to vanish again and leave me in a gloomy, hopeless darkness?"

On his return home, he became aware of a great deal of noise and activity in Spallanzani's house. The doors were open, all sorts of gear was being carried in, the first-floor windows had been taken off their hinges, maids were busily sweeping and dusting, running to and fro with big hair-brooms, while inside the house carpenters and upholsterers were banging and hammering. Nathanael stood stock still in the street with amazement. Siegmund came up to him and asked with a laugh: "Well, what do you say about old Spallanzani?" Nathanael replied that he couldn't say anything, because he knew absolutely nothing about the Professor; on the contrary, he observed to his astonishment that the silent, gloomy house had become the scene of feverish activity. Siegmund told him that tomorrow Spallanzani was giving a big party, concert, and ball, to which half the university was invited. Rumour had it that Spallanzani was going to show his daughter in public for the first time, after for so long anxiously concealing her from human eyes.

Nathanael received an invitation card and went to the Professor's house at the appointed hour, when carriages were already driving up and lights shining in the decorated rooms. The gathering was large and brilliant. Olympia made her appearance very richly and tastefully dressed. Everyone admired her beautifully modelled face and figure. Her rather strange hollow back and wasp waist seemed the result of excessively tight clothing. There was something measured and stiff about her gait and posture that struck many people as unpleasant, but it was attributed to a feeling of constraint due to the social occasion. The concert began. Olympia played the harpsichord with great proficiency and also sang a *bravura aria* in a high-pitched, almost shrill, bell-like voice. Nathanael was quite enchanted; he was standing in the back row and could not fully distinguish

Olympia's features in the dazzling candlelight. Surreptitiously, therefore, he pulled out Coppola's binoculars and looked at her.

He discovered to his astonishment that she was gazing at him full of longing, that every note she sang was reflected in the amorous glances which pierced and set fire to his heart. Her skilful roulades seemed to Nathanael the heavenly exultations of a spirit transfigured by love, and when finally the *cadenza* of the long trill echoed shrilly through the room, he felt as though he were being clasped by her hot arms and, unable to restrain his anguish and delight, he shouted loudly : "Olympia." Everyone looked round at him and many laughed. The organist from the cathedral merely pulled an even sourer face than before, however, and said : "Now, now !" The concert was at an end, the ball began.

"Now to dance - with her !" This was Nathanael's one wish and purpose; but how was he to find the courage to ask the queen of the festivities to dance with him? And yet, after the dance had started, he found himself to his own surprise standing close by Olympia, who had not yet been asked to dance. Barely able to stammer a few words, he seized her hand. It was like ice; a cold shudder passed through him; he gazed into Olympia's eyes, which beamed back at him full of love and longing; and at the same instant a pulse seemed to start beating in the cold hand and the warm life-blood started flowing. Simultaneously the fires of love in Nathanael's breast began to burn more brightly; he put his arm round the lovely Olympia and whirled with her through the lines of dancers.

He imagined that he had been dancing in very good time to the music, but he soon observed from the peculiar, fixed rhythm in which Olympia danced, and which often confused him, that he was badly out of step. Nevertheless, he did not want to dance with any other woman and would have felt like murdering anyone else who asked Olympia to dance. To his astonishment this happened only twice, however;

thereafter Olympia was left sitting at every dance and he partnered her again and again. Had Nathanael had eyes for anything but the lovely Olympia, any number of unpleasant quarrels would have been inevitable; for the half-suppressed laughter that broke out in this corner or in that among the young men was obviously directed towards the lovely Olympia, whom for some unknown reason the students continually watched.

Heated by the dancing and the plentiful wine he had drunk, Nathanael had cast aside all his usual shyness. He sat beside Olympia, her hand in his, and spoke with burning fervour of his love in words that no one understood, neither he nor Olympia. But perhaps the latter did, for she gazed steadfastly into his eyes and sighed time after time: "Oh - oh - oh!" Whereupon Nathanael exclaimed: "O magnificent, heavenly woman - ray shining from love's land of promise beyond this earthly realm - deep soul in which my whole being is mirrored," and more of the same kind; but Olympia merely went on sighing: "Oh, oh!"

Professor Spallanzani walked past the happy couple and gave them a curiously satisfied smile. It seemed to Nathanael that, although he himself was in a totally different and higher world, it was getting noticeably dark down here in Professor Spallanzani's house; he looked round and saw with no little dismay that the last two lights in the room were burning low and on the point of going out. Music and dancing had long since come to an end. "We must part, we must part," he shouted in wild despair; he kissed Olympia's hand, then he bent down to her mouth; ice-cold lips met his burning hot ones! Just as when he touched Olympia's cold hand, he felt a shudder run through him; the legend of the dead bride flashed across his mind; but Olympia had pressed him to her, and in the kiss her lips seemed to warm to life.

Professor Spallanzani walked slowly through the empty room; his steps echoed hollowly and his figure looked

sinister and ghostly as the shadows cast by the guttering candles played over it.

"Do you love me? Do you love me, Olympia? Just say one word! Do you love me?" Nathanael whispered, but all Olympia sighed as she stood up was, "Oh, oh, oh!"

"My lovely, splendid star of love," said Nathanael, "now that you have appeared to me you will illumine my soul for evermore!"

"Oh, oh!" replied Olympia as she strode away.

Nathanael followed her; they came to a stop in front of the Professor. "You had an extraordinarily animated conversation with my daughter," said the latter with a smile. "If you like talking to the stupid girl, my dear Nathanael, you are welcome to visit us at any time."

Nathanael left with all heaven ablaze in his breast. Spallanzani's party was the talk of the town for the next few days. Despite the fact that the Professor had done everything to create an impression of magnificence, wits found plenty of *gaucheries* and oddities to comment upon. A particular target of criticism was the rigid, mute, Olympia, who, notwithstanding her beautiful outward appearance, was credited with total idiocy, which was assumed to be the reason why Spallanzani had kept her hidden for so long. Nathanael felt inwardly enraged as he listened to all this, but he said nothing. "What would be the use of pointing out to these fellows that it is their own idiocy that prevents them from recognizing Olympia's profound and splendid mind?" he thought to himself.

"Will you please tell me, friend," Siegmund said to him one day, "how an intelligent fellow like you can possibly have fallen for that waxen-faced wooden doll across the road?"

Nathanael was about to fly into a rage, but he quickly gained control of himself and answered: "Tell me, Siegmund, how Olympia's heavenly charms have escaped your eye, normally so quick to discern beauty, and your alert

mind? And yet on that account, thanks be to fate, I do not have you as a rival; for if we were rivals one of us would die a violent death."

Siegmund saw how things stood with his friend, adroitly gave way, and after stating that there was never any point in arguing about the object of a person's love, added: "But it is strange that many of us are of very much the same opinion about Olympia. She seems to us — forgive me for saying so, friend — curiously stiff and inert. Her figure is symmetrical and so is her face, that's true. She might be considered beautiful, if her eyes were not so completely devoid of life, I would almost say of vision. Her walk is strangely measured, every movement seems to be controlled by clockwork. She plays and sings with the unpleasantly accurate but lifeless rhythm of a singing machine, and her dancing is the same. We found Olympia thoroughly uncanny, we didn't want to have anything to do with her, we felt she was only acting the part of a living being and that there was something odd about her."

Nathanael did not yield to the feeling of bitterness that assailed him as he listened to Siegmund's words; mastering his resentment, he merely said very gravely: "Olympia may well appear uncanny to you cold, prosaic people. A poetic nature is accessible only to the poet. Her loving gaze reached me alone and irradiated by thoughts and feelings; only in Olympia's love do I find myself. You may not like the fact that she does not chatter away and make dull conversation like most shallow-minded people. She utters few words, it's true; but those few words are true hieroglyphs that express the inner world filled with love and higher knowledge of the spiritual life as seen from the viewpoint of the world beyond. But you have no understanding for all this and I am wasting my words."

"May God preserve you, friend," said Siegmund very gently, almost sadly. "It seems to me that you are on an

evil path. You can rely on me if everything – no, I will say no more!”

Nathanael suddenly had the feeling that the cold, prosaic Siegmund meant very well by him; he therefore shook the proffered hand with great warmth.

Nathanael had totally forgotten that there was in the world a girl called Klara, whom he used to love. His mother, . . . Lothar . . . they had all vanished from his memory; he lived only for Olympia, with whom he sat for hours on end every day talking wildly of love, sympathy, and the affinity of souls, to all of which Olympia listened with great reverence. From the depths of his desk, Nathanael dug up everything he had ever written. There were poems, fantasies, novels, stories, and the number was increasing daily by a multitude of high-flown sonnets, stanzas, canzonets. All this he read to Olympia for hours at a time without tiring. Never had he found such a wonderful listener. She didn't embroider or knit, she didn't stare out of the window, she didn't play with a lap-dog or cat, she didn't twist scraps of paper or anything else between her fingers, she had no need to force a cough to cover up a yawn; she gazed steadfastly into her lover's eyes for hours on end without moving, and her own eyes became continually more ardent, more alive. Only when Nathanael stood up and kissed her hand and her lips, did she murmur, “Oh, oh!” and then, “Good night, dearest!”

“O glorious, profound soul,” cried Nathanael when he was back in his room, “you, and you alone, understand me utterly.” He trembled with inward delight when he thought of the wonderful harmony that was growing daily between his mind and Olympia's; it seemed to him that Olympia had spoken about his works, about his whole poetic talent, from the depths of his own soul, as though the voice had come from within himself. This must indeed have been the case, for Olympia never uttered a word more than those already recorded, but even at moments of lucidity, for

example on first waking up in the morning, when Nathanael became aware of Olympia's passivity and taciturnity, he said to himself : "What are mere words? A single look from her heavenly eyes expresses more than any earthly language. Can a child of heaven confine herself within the narrow circle drawn by wretched earthly needs?"

Professor Spallanzani seemed highly delighted over his daughter's relations with Nathanael, giving the latter all sorts of unequivocal signs of his benevolence; and when Nathanael ventured to drop a few oblique hints about a possible union with his daughter, the Professor smiled all over his face and commented that he would leave his daughter a completely free choice.

Encouraged by these words, and with burning desire in his heart, Nathanael resolved to beseech Olympia the very next day to put clearly into words what her loving glances had long since told him : that she wished to be his for evermore. He looked for the ring his mother had given him when he left, intending to bestow it upon Olympia as a symbol of his devotion and of the new life upon which they were about to embark together. As he looked he came across the letters from Klara and Lothar; he cast them indifferently aside, found the ring, put it in his pocket, and hurried across to Olympia.

While still on the stairs and landing he heard an extraordinary hubbub that seemed to be coming from Spallanzani's study : stamping, clattering, thudding, banging on the door, interspersed with curses and imprecations. "Let go, let go, you rogue, you villain ! . . . Did I give everything I had for that? . . . Ha ha ha ha, that wasn't our wager. . . . I made the eyes. . . . And I the clockwork. . . . To hell with you and your wretched clockwork, you paltry mechanic ! . . . Satan. . . . Stop. . . . Miserable wise-twister. . . . Fiendish beast ! . . . Stop. . . . Get out. . . . Let go !" The voices that thus raved in indistinguishable confusion were those of Spallanzani and the abominable Coppelius.

Nathanael rushed in, seized by a nameless fear. The Professor was holding a female figure by the shoulders, Coppola the Italian had her by the feet, and they were twisting and tugging her this way and that, fighting for her with unbridled rage. Nathanael recoiled in horror when he recognized the figure as Olympia. Bursting with fury, he was about to tear his beloved away from the frantic pair when Coppola, twisting the figure with a giant's strength, wrenched it from the Professor's hands and struck him such a blow with it that he toppled backwards over the table – on which stood phials, retorts, bottles, and glass cylinders – staggered and fell; all the vessels crashed to the ground in fragments. Then Coppola threw the figure over his shoulder and ran down the stairs with a terrible, screeching laugh, the figure's dangling feet bumping and rapping woodenly on the stairs as he ran.

Nathanael stood transfixed – he had seen all too clearly that Olympia's deathly pale waxen face had no eyes, but only black cavities: she was a lifeless doll. Spallanzani was writhing on the floor; his head, chest, and arm had been cut by broken glass, and the blood was pouring out like water from a spring. But he summoned his strength and cried: "After him, after him, what are you waiting for? Coppelius has stolen my best automaton. I worked on it for twenty years, I put everything into it. The mechanism, the walk, the power of speech are mine; the eyes he stole from you. The villain, the rogue, after him, bring back my Olympia. There are your eyes!"

Now Nathanael saw a pair of blood-flecked eyes staring up at him from the floor; Spallanzani seized them in his uninjured hand and flung them at his breast. Then madness gripped him with red-hot claws and entered into him, disrupting his mind and senses. "Hoa – hoa – hoa! Circle of flames, circle of flames, spin circle of flames – merrily – merrily! Wooden doll – hoa – spin, wooden doll. . . ." With these words he hurled himself upon the Professor and

squeezed his throat. He would have throttled him, but the din had attracted a number of people, who forced their way in and pulled off the frenzied Nathanael, thus saving the life of the Professor, whose wounds were then bandaged. Strong as he was, Siegmund was unable to hold his raging friend, who kept screaming, "Wooden doll, spin," at the top of his voice and striking about him with his fists. He was finally overcome by the united efforts of several men, who threw him to the ground and tied him up. His words degenerated into a hideous animal bellowing. Frenziedly struggling, he was taken away to the madhouse.

Before continuing my account of what happened to the unfortunate Nathanael I should like to assure any reader who may feel some sympathy with the skilful mechanic and automata-maker Spallanzani that he completely recovered from his wounds. He had to leave the university, however, because Nathanael's story had attracted a great deal of attention, and people considered it unpardonable deceit to have smuggled a wooden doll into well-conducted tea parties (which Olympia had, in fact, successfully attended) in the guise of a living person. Jurists called it a fraudulent imposture and considered it worthy of all the more severe punishment because it was directed against the public and undetected by anyone (apart from a few highly intelligent students) – although everyone, wise after the event, now pointed to all sorts of facts which they claimed had struck them as suspicious. There was very little sense in these claims, however. Why, for example, should anyone's suspicions have been aroused by the fact that, according to an elegant gentleman given to attending tea parties, Olympia had contradicted the normal custom by sneezing more often than she yawned? This gentleman claimed that the sneezing automatically wound up Olympia's hidden mechanism, which had audibly creaked as she sneezed, and so on. The professor of poetry and rhetoric took a pinch of snuff, snapped his snuff-box shut, cleared his throat, and solemnly

declared : "Ladies and gentlemen, do you not see the point of it all? The whole thing is an allegory—an extended metaphor! You understand what I mean! *Sapienti sat!*"

But many gentlemen were not reassured; the story of the automaton had made a deep impression, and a horrible distrust of human figures insinuated itself into people's minds. To make sure they were not in love with a wooden doll, many lovers insisted upon their mistresses singing and dancing out of time, embroidering, knitting, or playing with a lap-dog while being read to, and, above all, not merely listening but also speaking from time to time in such a way as to prove that they really thought and felt. Many lovers became more firmly and joyfully allied than ever, but others gradually drifted apart. "You really can't be sure," commented a few. At tea parties people yawned with tremendous frequency and never sneezed, to avert all possible suspicion.

Spallanzani, as I have said, had to leave the city to escape criminal proceedings for fraudulently introducing an automaton into human society. Coppola had also disappeared.

Nathanael awoke as though out of a frightful dream, opened his eyes, and felt an indescribable bliss permeate him with a gentle, heavenly warmth. He was lying on the bed in his room at home; Klara was bending over him, and his mother and Lothar were standing close by.

"At last, at last, my dearly beloved Nathanael. Now you are cured of your terrible illness, now you are mine again!" cried Klara from the depths of her heart, taking Nathanael into her arms.

Bright, hot tears of longing and delight welled from his eyes, and he groaned : "Klara, my Klara!"

Siegmund, who had stood loyally by his friend in his hour of need, came in. Nathanael held out his hand to him, saying : "Faithful friend, you did not forsake me."

All trace of madness had vanished, and Nathanael soon

regained his strength in the loving care of his mother, sweetheart, and friends. Good fortune had meanwhile entered the house; a miserly old uncle, of whom no one had had any hopes, had died and left Nathanael's mother not merely a tidy fortune but also a small farm in a pleasant district not far from the town. Nathanael, his mother, Klara, whom he now intended to marry, and Lothar planned to move into the farm. Nathanael had grown gentler and more childlike than ever before, and now fully appreciated the heavenly purity of Klara's noble spirit. Only as Siegmund was saying goodbye to him did he remark: "By God, friend, I was on an evil road, but an angel led me to the path of sanity in time! It was Klara! . . ." Siegmund would let him say no more for fear that deeply wounding memories might return to him too vividly.

The time came for the four happy people to move into the little farm. They were walking at midday through the streets of the town, where they had made a number of purchases. The high tower of the Town Hall cast its gigantic shadow over the market-place. "Oh, let us climb it once more and look across at the distant mountains," suggested Klara. No sooner said than done. Nathanael and Klara ascended the tower; Nathanael's mother went home with the servant; while Lothar, feeling disinclined to mount so many steps, stayed down below. The two lovers were standing arm in arm on the topmost gallery of the tower, looking down into the fragrant woods beyond which the blue mountains rose like a giant city.

"Just look at that strange little grey bush that really seems to be striding out towards us," exclaimed Klara. Nathanael automatically put his hand in his side pocket, found Coppola's binoculars, and looked slightly to one side. Klara was standing in the way of the glasses. There was a convulsive twitching in his pulse and arteries. He stared at Klara, his face deathly pale; but soon streams of fire glowed and spouted from his eyes, he began to roar horribly like a

hunted beast; then he bounded into the air and, interspersing his words with ghastly laughter, yelled: "Wooden doll, spin! Wooden doll, spin!" He seized Klara with tremendous force and tried to hurl her down from the tower; but Klara, with the strength of desperation, clung to the parapet. Lothar heard the madman raving, he heard Klara's cry of terror; a terrible foreboding took possession of him, he raced up the stairs; the door to the second flight was shut. Klara's cries of distress were growing louder. Frantic with rage and fear, Lothar hurled himself against the door, which finally gave way. Klara's cries were now becoming fainter and fainter. "Help - save me - save me. . . ." Her voice died away. "She is dead, murdered by the madman," cried Lothar. The door to the gallery was also shut. Despair gave him the strength of a giant; he burst the door from its hinges. Merciful God - Klara, in the grip of the raving Nathanael, was hanging from the gallery in mid-air; only one hand still clung to the iron railing. Quick as lightning, Lothar seized his sister, pulled her back and smashed his fist into the face of the madman, who stumbled backwards and let go of his prey.

Lothar raced down the stairs with his unconscious sister in his arms. She was saved. Nathanael was now rampaging round the gallery, bounding into the air and shouting: "Circle of flames, spin - circle of flames, spin!" Attracted by his yelling, a crowd gathered; in the midst of it was the gigantic figure of the lawyer Coppelius, who had just arrived in the town and had come straight to the market-place. People wanted to go up and overpower the madman. Coppelius laughed and said: "Just wait, he'll come down of his own accord." Then he stared aloft with the rest. Nathanael suddenly stopped in his tracks, leaned forward, caught sight of Coppelius and with an ear-splitting shriek of "Ha, lovely eyes, lovely eyes," leapt over the parapet.

By the time Nathanael lay on the pavement with his skull smashed, Coppelius had vanished.

Many years later, Klara was reported to have been seen in a place far from her home town, sitting hand-in-hand with a friendly looking man outside the door of a beautiful country house, with two merry little boys playing in front of her. From this we may infer that Klara eventually found the calm domestic bliss which her serene and cheerful nature demanded and which Nathanael with his perpetual inner strife could never have given her.

THE MIDDLE TOE OF THE RIGHT FOOT

by Ambrose Bierce

IT is well known that the old Manton house is haunted. In all the rural district near about, and even in the town of Marshall, a mile away, not one person of unbiased mind entertains a doubt of it; incredulity is confined to those opinionated people who will be called "cranks" as soon as the useful word shall have penetrated the intellectual demesne of the *Marshall Advance*. The evidence that the house is haunted is of two kinds: the testimony of disinterested witnesses who have had ocular proof, and that of the house itself. The former may be disregarded and ruled out on any of the various grounds of objection which may be urged against it by the ingenious; but facts within the observation of all are fundamental and controlling.

In the first place, the Manton house has been unoccupied by mortals for more than ten years, and with its outbuildings is slowly falling into decay – a circumstance which in itself the judicious will hardly venture to ignore. It stands a little way off the loneliest reach of the Marshall and Harriston road, in an opening which was once a farm and is still disfigured with strips of rotting fence and half covered with brambles overrunning a stony and sterile soil long unacquainted with the plough. The house itself is in tolerably good condition, though badly weather-stained and in dire need of attention from the glazier, the smaller male popu-

lation of the region having attested in the manner of its kind its disapproval of dwellings without dwellers. The house is two stories in height, nearly square, its front pierced by a single doorway flanked on each side by a window boarded up to the very top. Corresponding windows above, not protected, serve to admit light and rain to the rooms of the upper floor. Grass and weeds grow pretty rankly all about, and a few shade trees, somewhat the worse for wind and leaning all in one direction, seem to be making a concerted effort to run away. In short, as the Marshall town humorist explained in the columns of the *Advance*, "the proposition that the Manton house is badly haunted is the only logical conclusion from the premises." The fact that in this dwelling Mr. Manton thought it expedient one night some ten years ago to rise and cut the throats of his wife and two small children, removing at once to another part of the country, has no doubt done its share in directing public attention to the fitness of the place for 'supernatural phenomena.

To this house, one summer evening, came four men in a waggon. Three of them promptly alighted, and the one who had been driving hitched the team to the only remaining post of what had been a fence. The fourth remained seated in the waggon. "Come," said one of his companions, approaching him, while the others moved away in the direction of the dwelling - "this is the place."

The man addressed was deathly pale and trembled visibly. "Good God!" he said harshly, "this is a trick, and it looks to me as if you were in it."

"Perhaps I am," the other said, looking him straight in the face and speaking in a tone which had something of contempt in it. "You will remember, however, that the choice of place was, with your own assent, left to the other side. Of course, if you are afraid of spooks -"

"I am afraid of nothing," the man interrupted with another oath, and sprang to the ground. The two then

joined the others at the door, which one of them had already opened with some difficulty, caused by rust of lock and hinge. All entered. Inside it was dark, but the man who had unlocked the door produced a candle and matches and made a light. He then unlocked a door on their right as they stood in the passage. This gave them entrance to a large, square room, which the candle but dimly lighted. The floor had a thick carpeting of dust, which partly muffled their footfalls. Cobwebs were in the angles of the walls and depended from the ceiling like strips of rotting lace, making undulatory movements in the disturbed air. The room had two windows in adjoining sides, but from neither could anything be seen except the rough inner surfaces of boards a few inches from the glass. There was no fireplace, no furniture; there was nothing. Besides the cobwebs and the dust, the four men were the only objects there which were not a part of the architecture. Strange enough they looked in the yellow light of the candle. The one who had so reluctantly alighted was especially "spectacular" – he might have been called sensational. He was of middle age, heavily built, deep-chested and broad-shouldered. Looking at his figure, one would have said that he had a giant's strength; at his face, that he would use it like a giant. He was clean shaven, his hair rather closely cropped and grey. His low forehead was seamed with wrinkles above the eyes, and over the nose these became vertical. The heavy black brows followed the same law, saved from meeting only by an upward turn at what would otherwise have been the point of contact. Deeply sunken beneath these, glowed in the obscure light a pair of eyes of uncertain colour, but, obviously enough, too small. There was something forbidding in their expression, which was not bettered by the cruel mouth and wide jaw. The nose was well enough, as noses go; one does not expect much of noses. All that was sinister in the man's face seemed accentuated by an unnatural pallor – he appeared altogether bloodless.

The appearance of the other men was sufficiently commonplace : they were such persons as one meets and forgets that he met. All were younger than the man described, between whom and the eldest of the others, who stood apart, there was apparently no kindly feeling. They avoided looking at one another.

"Gentlemen," said the man holding the candle and keys, "I believe everything is right. Are you ready, Mr. Rosser?"

The man standing apart from the group bowed and smiled.

"And you, Mr. Grossmith?"

The heavy man bowed and scowled.

"You will please remove your outer clothing."

Their hats, coats, waistcoats, and neckwear were soon removed and thrown outside the door, in the passage. The man with the candle now nodded, and the fourth man – he who had urged Mr. Grossmith to leave the waggon – produced from the pocket of his overcoat two long, murderous-looking bowie knives, which he drew from the scabbards.

"They are exactly alike," he said, presenting one to each of the two principals – for by this time the dullest observer would have understood the nature of this meeting. It was to be a duel to the death.

Each combatant took a knife, examined it critically near the candle and tested the strength of blade and handle across his lifted knee. Their persons were then searched in turn, each by the second of the other.

"If it is agreeable to you, Mr. Grossmith," said the man holding the light, "you will place yourself in that corner."

He indicated the angle of the room farthest from the door, to which Grossmith retired, his second parting from him with a grasp of the hand which had nothing of cordiality in it. In the angle nearest the door, Mr. Rosser stationed himself, and, after a whispered consultation, his second left him, joining the other near the door. At that moment the

candle was suddenly extinguished, leaving all in profound darkness. This may have been done by a draught from the open door; whatever the cause, the effect was appalling!

"Gentlemen," said a voice which sounded strangely unfamiliar in the altered condition affecting the relations of the senses, "gentlemen, you will not move until you hear the closing of the outer door."

A sound of trampling ensued, the closing of the inner door, and finally the outer one closed with a concussion which shook the entire building.

A few minutes later a belated farmer's boy met a waggon which was being driven furiously towards the town of Marshall. He declared that behind the two figures on the front seat stood a third with its hands upon the bowed shoulders of the others, who appeared to struggle vainly to free themselves from its grasp. This figure, unlike the others, was clad in white, and had undoubtedly boarded the waggon as it passed the haunted house. As the lad could boast a considerable former experience with the supernatural thereabout, his word had the weight justly due to the testimony of an expert. The story eventually appeared in the *Advance*, with some slight literary embellishments and a concluding intimation that the gentlemen referred to would be allowed the use of the paper's columns for their version of the night's adventure. But the privilege remained without a claimant.

II

The events which led up to this "duel in the dark" were simple enough. One evening three young men of the town of Marshall were sitting in a quiet corner of the porch of the village hotel, smoking and discussing such matters as three educated young men of a Southern village would naturally find interesting. Their names were King, Sancher, and Rosser. At a little distance, within easy hearing but taking no part in the conversation, sat a fourth. He was a stranger

to the others. They merely knew that on his arrival by the stage coach that afternoon he had written in the hotel register the name Robert Grossmith. He had not been observed to speak to anyone except the hotel clerk. He seemed, indeed, singularly fond of his own company – or, as the *personnel* of the *Advance* expressed it, “grossly addicted to evil associations”. But then it should be said in justice to the stranger that the *personnel* was himself of a too convivial disposition fairly to judge one differently gifted, and had, moreover, experienced a slight rebuff in an effort at an “interview”.

“I hate any kind of deformity in a woman,” said King, “whether natural or – or acquired. I have a theory that any physical defect has its correlative mental and moral defect.”

“I infer, then,” said Rosser, gravely, “that a lady lacking the advantage of a nose would find the struggle to become Mrs. King an arduous enterprise.”

“Of course you may put it that way,” was the reply; “but, seriously, I once threw over a most charming girl on learning, quite accidentally, that she had suffered amputation of a toe. My conduct was brutal, if you like, but if I had married that girl I should have been miserable and should have made her so.”

“Whereas,” said Sancher, with a slight laugh, “by marrying a gentleman of more liberal views she escaped with a cut throat.”

“Ah, you know to whom I refer! Yes, she married Manton, but I don’t know about his liberality; I’m not sure but he cut her throat because he discovered that she lacked that excellent thing in woman, the middle toe of the right foot.”

“Look at that chap!” said Rosser in a low voice, his eyes fixed upon the stranger.

That person was obviously listening intently to the conversation.

“That’s an easy one,” Rosser replied, rising. “Sir,” he

continued, addressing the stranger, "I think it would be better if you would remove your chair to the other end of the verandah. The presence of gentlemen is evidently an unfamiliar situation to you."

The man sprang to his feet and strode forward with clenched hands, his face white with rage. All were now standing. Sancher stepped between the belligerents.

"You are hasty and unjust," he said to Rosser; "this gentleman has done nothing to deserve such language."

But Rosser would not withdraw a word. By the custom of the country and the time, there could be but one outcome to the quarrel.

"I demand the satisfaction due to a gentleman," said the stranger, who had become more calm. "I have not an acquaintance in this region. Perhaps you, sir," bowing to Sancher, "will be kind enough to represent me in this matter."

Sancher accepted the trust—somewhat reluctantly, it must be confessed, for the man's appearance and manner were not at all to his liking. King, who during the colloquy had hardly removed his eyes from the stranger's face, and had not spoken a word, consented with a nod to act for Rosser, and the upshot of it was that, the principals having retired, a meeting was arranged for the next evening. The nature of the arrangements has been already disclosed. The duel with knives in a dark room was once a commoner feature of South-western life than it is likely to be again. How thin a veneering of "chivalry" covered the essential brutality of the code under which such encounters were possible, we shall see.

III

In the blaze of a midsummer noonday, the old Manton house was hardly true to its traditions. It was of the earth, earthy. The sunshine caressed it warmly and affectionately,

with evident unconsciousness of its bad reputation. The grass greening all the expanse in its front seemed to grow, not rankly, but with a natural and joyous exuberance, and the weeds blossomed quite like plants. Full of charming lights and shadows, and populous with pleasant-voiced birds, the neglected shade trees no longer struggled to run away, but bent reverently beneath their burdens of sun and song. Even in the glassless upper windows was an expression of peace and contentment, due to the light within. Over the stony fields the visible heat danced with a lively tremor incompatible with the gravity which is an attribute of the supernatural.

Such was the aspect under which the place presented itself to Sheriff Adams and the two other men who had come out from Marshall to look at it. One of these men was Mr. King, the sheriff's deputy; the other, whose name was Brewer, was a brother of the late Mrs. Manton. Under a beneficent law of the State relating to property which has been for a certain period abandoned by its owner, whose residence cannot be ascertained, the sheriff was the legal custodian of the Manton farm and the appurtenances thereunto belonging. His present visit was in mere perfunctory compliance with some order of a court in which Mr. Brewer had an action to get possession of the property as heir to his deceased sister. By a mere coincidence the visit was made on the day after the night that Deputy King had unlocked the house for another and very different purpose. His presence now was not of his own choosing: he had been ordered to accompany his superior, and at the moment could think of nothing more prudent than simulated alacrity in obedience. He had intended going anyhow, but in other company.

Carelessly opening the front door, which to his surprise was not locked, the sheriff was amazed to see, lying on the floor of the passage into which it opened, a confused heap of men's apparel. Examination showed it to consist of two

hats, and the same number of coats, waistcoats, and scarves, all in a remarkably good state of preservation, albeit somewhat defiled by the dust in which they lay. Mr. Brewer was equally astonished, but Mr. King's emotion is not on record. With a new and lively interest in his own actions, the sheriff now unlatched and pushed open a door on the right, and the three entered. The room was apparently vacant – no; as their eyes became accustomed to the dimmer light, something was visible in the farthest angle of the wall. It was a human figure – that of a man crouching close in the corner. Something in the attitude made the intruders halt when they had barely passed the threshold. The figure more and more clearly defined itself. The man was upon one knee, his back in the angle of the wall, his shoulders elevated to the level of his ears, his hands before his face, palms outward, the fingers spread and crooked like claws; the white face turned upward on the retracted neck had an expression of unutterable fright, the mouth half-open, the eyes incredibly expanded. He was stone dead – dead of terror! Yet, with the exception of a knife, which had evidently fallen from his own hand, not another object was in the room.

In the thick dust which covered the floor were some confused footprints near the door and along the wall through which it opened. Along one of the adjoining walls, too, past the boarded-up windows, was the trail made by the man himself in reaching his corner. Instinctively in approaching the body the three men now followed that trail. The sheriff grasped one of the out-thrown arms; it was as rigid as iron, and the application of a gentle force rocked the entire body without altering the relation of its parts. Brewer, pale with terror, gazed intently into the distorted face. "God of mercy!" he suddenly cried, "it is Manton!"

"You are right," said King, with an evident attempt at calmness: "I knew Manton. He then wore a full beard and his hair long, but this is he."

He might have added: "I recognized him when he

challenged Rosser. I told Rosser and Sancher who he was before we played him this horrible trick. When Rosser left this dark room at our heels, forgetting his clothes in the excitement, and driving away with us in his shirt – all through the discreditable proceedings we knew whom we were dealing with, murderer and coward that he was!”

But nothing of this did Mr. King say. With his better light he was trying to penetrate the mystery of the man's death. That he had not once moved from the corner where he had been stationed, that his posture was that of neither attack nor defence, that he had dropped his weapon, that he had obviously perished of sheer terror of something that he *saw* – these were circumstances which Mr. King's disturbed intelligence could not rightly comprehend.

Groping in intellectual darkness for a clue to his maze of doubt, his gaze directed mechanically downward, as is the way of one who ponders momentous matters, fell upon something which, there, in the light of day, and in the presence of living companions, struck him with an invincible terror. In the dust of years that lay thick upon the floor – leading from the door by which they had entered, straight across the room to within a yard of Manton's crouching corpse – were three parallel lines of footprints – light but definite impressions of bare feet, the outer ones those of small children, the inner a woman's. From the point at which they ended they did not return; they pointed all one way. Brewer, who had observed them at the same moment, was leaning forward in an attitude of rapt attention, horribly pale.

“Look at that!” he cried, pointing with both hands at the nearest print of the woman's right foot, where she had apparently stopped and stood. “The middle toe is missing – it was Gertrude!”

Gertrude was the late Mrs. Manton, sister to Mr. Brewer.

THE SQUAW

by Bram Stoker

NURNBERG at the time was not so much exploited as it has been since then. Irving had not been playing *Faust*, and the very name of the old town was hardly known to the great bulk of the travelling public. My wife and I being in the second week of our honeymoon, naturally wanted someone else to join our party, so that when the cheerful stranger, Elias P. Hutcheson, hailing from Isthmain City, Bleeding Gulch, Maple Tree County, Neb., turned up at the station at Frankfort, and casually remarked that he was going on to see the most all-fired old Methuselah of a town in Yurup, and that he guessed that so much travelling alone was enough to send an intelligent, active citizen into the melancholy ward of a daft house, we took the pretty broad hint and suggested that we should join forces. We found, on comparing notes afterwards, that we had each intended to speak with some diffidence or hesitation so as not to appear too eager, such not being a good compliment to the success of our married life; but the effect was entirely marred by our both beginning to speak at the same instant – stopping simultaneously and then going on together again. Anyhow, no matter how, it was done; and Elias P. Hutcheson became one of our party. Straightaway Amelia and I found the pleasant benefit; instead of quarrelling, as we had been doing, we found that the restraining influence

of a third party was such that we now took every opportunity of spooning in odd corners. Amelia declares that ever since she has, as a result of that experience, advised all her friends to take a friend on the honeymoon. Well, we "did" Nurnberg together, and much enjoyed the racy remarks of our Transatlantic friend, who, from his quaint speech and his wonderful stock of adventures, might have stepped out of a novel. We kept for the last object of interest in the city to be visited the Burg, and on the day appointed for the visit strolled round the outer wall of the city by the eastern side.

The Burg is seated on a rock dominating the town, and an immensely deep fosse guards it on the northern side. Nurnberg has been happy in that it was never sacked; had it been it would certainly not be so spick-and-span perfect as it is at present. The ditch has not been used for centuries, and now its base is spread with tea-gardens and orchards, of which some of the trees are of quite respectable growth. As we wandered round the wall, dawdling in the hot July sunshine, we often paused to admire the views spread before us, and in especial the great plain covered with towns and villages and bounded with a blue line of hills, like a landscape of Claude Lorraine. From this we always turned with new delight to the city itself, with its myriad of quaint old gables and acre-wide red roofs dotted with dormer widows, tier upon tier. A little to our right rose the towers of the Burg, and nearer still, standing grim, the Torture Tower, which was, and is, perhaps the most interesting place in the city. For centuries the tradition of the Iron Virgin of Nurnberg has been handed down as an instance of the horrors of cruelty of which man is capable; we had long looked forward to seeing it; and here at last was its home.

In one of our pauses we leaned over the wall of the moat and looked down. The garden seemed quite fifty or sixty feet below us, and the sun pouring into it with an intense, moveless heat like that of an oven. Beyond rose the grey, grim wall seemingly of endless height, and losing itself right

and left in the angles of bastion and counterscarp. Trees and bushes crowned the wall, and above again towered the lofty houses on whose massive beauty Time has only set the hand of approval. The sun was hot and we were lazy; time was our own, and we lingered, leaning on the wall. Just below us was a pretty sight – a great black cat lying stretched in the sun, whilst round her gambolled prettily a tiny black kitten. The mother would wave her tail for the kitten to play with, or would raise her feet and push away the little one as an encouragement to further play. They were just at the foot of the wall, and Elias P. Hutcheson, in order to help the play, stooped and took from the walk a moderate-sized pebble.

"See!" he said, "I will drop it near the kitten, and they will both wonder where it came from."

"Oh, be careful," said my wife; "you might hit the dear little thing!"

"Not me, ma'am," said Elias P. "Why, I'm as tender as a Maine cherry-tree. Lor, bless ye, I wouldn't hurt the poor pooty little critter more'n I'd scalp a baby. An' you may bet your variegated socks on that! See, I'll drop it fur away on the outside so's not to go near her!" Thus saying, he leaned over and held his arm out at full length and dropped the stone. It may be that there is some attractive force which draws lesser matters to greater; or more probably that the wall was not plumb but sloped to its base – we not noticing the inclination from above; but the stone fell with a sickening thud that came up to us through the hot air, right on the kitten's head, and shattered out its little brains then and there. The black cat cast a swift upward glance, and we saw her eyes like green fire fixed an instant on Elias P. Hutcheson; and then her attention was given to the kitten, which lay still with just a quiver of her tiny limbs, whilst a thin red stream trickled from a gaping wound. With a muffled cry, such as a human being might give, she bent over the kitten, licking its wound and moaning. Suddenly

she seemed to realize that it was dead, and again threw her eyes up at us. I shall never forget the sight, for she looked the perfect incarnation of hate. Her green eyes blazed with lurid fire, and the white, sharp teeth seemed to almost shine through the blood which dabbled her mouth and whiskers. She gnashed her teeth, and her claws stood out stark and at full length of every paw. Then she made a wild rush up the wall as if to reach us, but when the momentum ended fell back, and further added to her horrible appearance for she fell on the kitten, and rose with her back fur smeared with its brains and blood. Amelia turned quite faint, and I had to lift her back from the wall. There was a seat close by in shade of a spreading plane-tree, and here I placed her whilst she composed herself. Then I went back to Hutcheson, who stood without moving, looking down on the angry cat below.

As I joined him, he said :

"Wall, I guess that air the savagest beast I ever see – 'cept once when an Apache squaw had an edge on a half-breed what they nicknamed 'Splinters' 'cos of the way he fixed up her papoose which he stole on a raid just to show that he appreciated the way they had given his mother the fire torture. She got that kinder look so set on her face that it just seemed to grow there. She followed Splinters more'n three year till at last the braves got him and handed him over to her. They did say that no man, white or Injun, had ever been so long a-dying under the tortures of the Apaches. The only time I ever see her smile was when I wiped her out. I kem on the camp just in time to see Splinters pass in his checks, and he wasn't sorry to go either. He was a hard citizen, and though I never could shake with him after that papoose business – for it was bitter bad, and he should have been a white man, for he looked like one – I see he had got paid out in full. Durn me, but I took a piece of his hide from one of his skinnin' posts an' had it made into a pocket-

book. It's here now!" and he slapped the breast pocket of his coat.

Whilst he was speaking the cat was continuing her frantic efforts to get up the wall. She would take a run back and then charge up, sometimes reaching an incredible height. She did not seem to mind the heavy fall which she got each time but started with renewed vigour; and at every tumble her appearance became more horrible. Hutcheson was a kind-hearted man – my wife and I had both noticed little acts of kindness to animals as well as to persons – and he seemed concerned at the state of fury to which the cat had wrought herself.

"Wall now!" he said, "I du declare that the poor critter seems quite desperate. There! there! poor thing, it was all an accident – though that won't bring back your little one to you. Say! I wouldn't have had such a thing happen for a thousand! Just shows what a clumsy fool of a man can do when he tries to play! Seems I'm too darned slipperhanded to even play with a cat. Say, Colonel!" – it was a pleasant way he had to bestow titles freely – "I hope your wife don't hold no grudge against me on account of this unpleasantness? Why, I wouldn't have had it occur on no account."

He came over to Amelia and apologized profusely, and she with her usual kindness of heart hastened to assure him that she quite understood that it was an accident. Then we all went again to the wall and looked over.

The cat, missing Hutcheson's face, had drawn back across the moat, and was sitting on her haunches as though ready to spring. Indeed, the very instant she saw him she did spring, and with a blind unreasoning fury, which would have been grotesque, only that it was so frightfully real. She did not try to run up the wall, but simply launched herself at him as though hate and fury could lend her wings to pass straight through the great distance between them. Amelia, womanlike, got quite concerned, and said to Elias P. in a warning voice :

"Oh! you must be very careful. That animal would try to kill you if she were here; her eyes look like positive murder."

He laughed out jovially. "Excuse me, ma'am," he said, "but I can't help laughin'. Fancy a man that has fought grizzlies an' Injuns bein' careful of bein' murdered by a cat!"

When the cat heard him laugh, her whole demeanour seemed to change. She no longer tried to jump or run up the wall, but went quietly over, and sitting again beside the dead kitten began to lick and fondle it as though it were alive.

"See!" said I, "the effect of a really strong man. Even that animal in the midst of her fury recognizes the voice of a master, and bows to him!"

"Like a squaw!" was the only comment of Elias P. Hutcheson, as we moved on our way round the city fosse. Every now and then we looked over the wall and each time saw the cat following us. At first she had kept going back to the dead kitten, and then as the distance grew greater took it in her mouth and so followed. After a while, however, she abandoned this, for we saw her following all alone; she had evidently hidden the body somewhere. Amelia's alarm grew at the cat's persistence, and more than once she repeated her warning; but the American always laughed with amusement, till finally, seeing that she was beginning to be worried, he said:

"I say, ma'am, you needn't be skeered over that cat. I go heeled, I du!" Here he slapped his pistol pocket at the back of his lumber region. "Why, sooner'n have you worried, I'll shoot the critter, right here, an' risk the police interferin' with a citizen of the United States for carryin' arms contrary to reg'lations!" As he spoke he looked over the wall, but the cat, on seeing him, retreated, with a growl, into a bed of tall flowers, and was hidden. He went on: "Blest if that ar critter ain't got more sense of what's good for her than most Christians. I guess we've seen the last of her!"

You bet, she'll go back now to that busted kitten and have a private funeral of it, all to herself!"

Amelia did not like to say more, lest he might, in mistaken kindness to her, fulfil his threat of shooting the cat : and so we went on and crossed the little wooden bridge leading to the gateway whence ran the steep paved roadway between the Burg and the pentagonal Torture Tower. As we crossed the bridge we saw the cat again down below us. When she saw us her fury seemed to return, and she made frantic efforts to get up the steep wall. Hutcheson laughed as he looked down at her, and said :

"Goodbye, old girl. Sorry I in-jured your feelin's, but you'll get over it in time! So long!" And then we passed through the long, dim archway and came to the gate of the Burg.

When we came out again after our survey of this most beautiful old place which not even the well-intended efforts of the Gothic restorers of forty years ago have been able to spoil – though their restoration was then glaring white – we seemed to have quite forgotten the unpleasant episode of the morning. The old lime tree with its great trunk gnarled with the passing of nearly nine centuries, the deep well cut through the heart of the rock by those captives of old, and the lovely view from the city wall whence we heard, spread over almost a full quarter of an hour, the multitudinous chimes of the city, had all helped to wipe out from our minds the incident of the slain kitten.

We were the only visitors who had entered the Torture Tower that morning – so at least said the old custodian – and as we had the place all to ourselves were able to make a minute and more satisfactory survey than would have otherwise been possible. The custodian, looking to us as the sole source of his gains for the day, was willing to meet our wishes in any way. The Torture Tower is truly a grim place, even now when many thousands of visitors have sent a stream of life, and the joy that follows life, into the place;

but at the time I mention it wore its grimmest and most gruesome aspect. The dust of ages seemed to have settled on it, and the darkness and the horror of its memories seem to have become sentient in a way that would have satisfied the Pantheistic souls of Philo or Spinoza. The lower chamber where we entered was seemingly, in its normal state, filled with incarnate darkness; even the hot sunlight streaming in through the door seemed to be lost in the vast thickness of the walls, and only showed the masonry rough as when the builder's scaffolding had come down, but coated with dust and marked here and there with patches of dark stain which, if walls could speak, could have given their own dread memories of fear and pain. We were glad to pass up the dusty wooden staircase, the custodian leaving the outer door open to light us somewhat on our way; for to our eyes the one long-wick'd, evil-smelling candle stuck in a sconce on the wall gave an inadequate light. When we came up through the open trap in the corner of the chamber overhead, Amelia held on to me so tightly that I could actually feel her heart beat. I must say for my own part that I was not surprised at her fear, for this room was even more gruesome than that below. Here there was certainly more light, but only just sufficient to realize the horrible surroundings of the place. The builders of the tower had evidently intended that only they who should gain the top should have any of the joys of light and prospect. There, as we had noticed from below, were ranges of windows, albeit of mediaeval smallness, but elsewhere in the tower were only a very few narrow slits such as were habitual in places of mediaeval defence. A few of these only lit the chamber, and these so high up in the wall that from no part could the sky be seen through the thickness of the walls. In racks, and leaning in disorder against the walls, were a number of headsmen's swords, great double-handed weapons with broad blade and keen edge. Hard by were several blocks whereon the necks of the victims had lain, with here and

there deep notches where the steel had bitten through the guard of flesh and shored into the wood. Round the chamber, placed in all sorts of irregular ways, were many implements of torture which made one's heart ache to see – chairs fulls of spikes which gave instant and excruciating pain; chairs and couches with dull knobs whose torture was seemingly less, but which, though slower, were equally efficacious; racks, belts, boots, gloves, collars, all made for compressing at will; steel baskets in which the head could be slowly crushed into a pulp if necessary; watchmen's hooks with long handle and knife that cut at resistance – this a speciality of the old Nurnberg police system; and many, many other devices for man's injury to man. Amelia grew quite pale with the horror of the things, but fortunately did not faint, for being a little overcome she sat down on a torture chair, but jumped up again with a shriek, all tendency to faint gone. We both pretended that it was the injury done to her dress by the dust of the chair, and the rusty spikes, which had upset her, and Mr. Hutcheson acquiesced in accepting the explanation with a kind-hearted laugh.

But the central object in the whole of this chamber of horrors was the engine known as the Iron Virgin, which stood near the centre of the room. It was a rudely shaped figure of a woman, something of the bell order, or, to make a closer comparison, of the figure of Mrs. Noah in the children's Ark, but without the slimness of waist and perfect *rondeur* of hip which marks the æsthetic type of the Noah family. One would hardly have recognized it as intended for a human figure at all had not the founder shaped on the forehead a rude semblance of a woman's face. This machine was coated with rust without, and covered with dust; a rope was fastened to a ring in the front of the figure, about where the waist should have been, and was drawn through a pulley, fastened on the wooden pillar which sustained the flooring above. The custodian, pulling this

rope, showed that a section of the front was hinged like a door at one side; we then saw that the engine was of considerable thickness, leaving just room enough inside for a man to be placed. The door was of equal thickness and of great weight, for it took the custodian all his strength, aided though he was by the contrivance of the pulley, to open it. This weight was partly due to the fact that the door was of manifest purpose hung so as to throw its weight downwards, so that it might shut of its own accord when the strain was released. The inside was honeycombed with rust – nay more, the rust alone that comes through time would hardly have eaten so deep into the iron walls; the rust of the cruel stains was deep indeed! It was only, however, when we came to look at the inside of the door that the diabolical intention was manifest to the full. Here were several long spikes, square and massive, broad at the base and sharp at the points, placed in such a position that when the door should close the upper ones would pierce the eyes of the victim, and the lower ones his heart and vitals. The sight was too much for poor Amelia, and this time she fainted dead off, and I had to carry her down the stairs, and place her on a bench outside till she recovered. That she felt it to the quick was afterwards shown by the fact that my eldest son bears to this day a rude birthmark on his breast, which has, by family consent, been accepted as representing the Nurnberg Virgin.

When we got back to the chamber we found Hutcheson still opposite the Iron Virgin; he had been evidently philosophizing, and now gave us the benefit of his thought in the shape of a sort of exordium.

"Wall, I guess I've been learnin' somethin' here while madam has been gettin' over her faint. 'Pears to me that we're a long way behind the times on our side of the big drink. We uster think out on the plains that the Injun could give us points in tryin' to make a man oncomfortable; but I guess your old mediaeval law-and-order party could raise

him every time. Splinters was pretty good in his bluff on the squaw, but this here young miss held a straight flush all high on him. The points of them spikes air sharp enough still, though even the edges air eaten out by what uster be on them. It'd be a good thing for our Indian section to get some specimens of this here play-toy to send round to the Reservations jest to knock the stuffin' out of the bucks, and the squaws too, by showing them as how old civilization lays over them at their best. Guess but I'll get in that box a minute jest to see how it feels!"

"Oh, no! no!" said Amelia. "It is too terrible!"

"Guess, ma'am, nothin's too terrible to the explorin' mind. I've been in some queer places in my time. Spent a night inside a dead horse while a prairie fire swept over me in Montana Territory – an' another time slept inside a dead buffler when the Comanches was on the war path an' I didn't keer to leave my kyard on them. I've been two days in a caved-in tunnel in the Billy Broncho gold mine in New Mexico, an' was one of the four shut up for three parts of a day in the caisson what slid over on her side when we was settin' the foundations of the Buffalo Bridge. I've not funk'd an odd experience yet, an' I don't propose to begin now!"

We saw that he was set on the experiment, so I said: "Well, hurry up, old man, and get through it quick!"

"All right, General," said he, "but I calculate we ain't quite ready yet. The gentlemen, my predessors, what stood in that thar canister, didn't volunteer for the office – not much! And I guess there was some ornamental tyin' up before the big stroke was made. I want to go into this thing fair and square, so I must get fixed up proper first. I dare say this old galoot can rise some string and tie me up accordin' to sample?"

This was said interrogatively to the old custodian, but the latter, who understood the drift of his speech, though perhaps not appreciating to the full the niceties of dialect and imagery, shook his head. His protest was, however, only

formal and made to be overcome. The American thrust a gold piece into his hand, saying, "Take it, pard! it's your pot; and don't be skeer'd. This ain't no necktie party that you're asked to assist in!" He produced some thin, frayed rope and proceeded to bind our companion, with sufficient strictness for the purpose. When the upper part of his body was bound, Hutcheson said:

"Hold on a moment, Judge. Guess I'm too heavy for you to tote into the canister. You jest let me walk in, and then you can wash up regardin' my legs!"

Whilst speaking he had backed himself into the opening which was just wide enough to hold him. It was a close fit and no mistake. Amelia looked on with fear in her eyes, but she evidently did not like to say anything. Then the custodian completed his task by tying the American's feet together so that he was now absolutely helpless and fixed in his voluntary prison. He seemed to really enjoy it, and the incipient smile which was habitual to his face blossomed into actuality as he said:

"Guess this here Eve was made out of the rib of a dwarf! There ain't much room for a full-grown citizen of the United States to hustle. We uster make our coffins more roomier in Idaho territory. Now, Judge, you just begin to let this door down, slow, on to me. I want to feel the same pleasure as the other jays had when those spikes began to move towards their eyes!"

"Oh no! no! no!" broke in Amelia hysterically. "It is too terrible! I can't bear to see it! - I can't! I can't!"

But the American was obdurate. "Say, Colonel," said he, "Why not take Madame for a little promenade? I wouldn't hurt her feelin's for the world; but now that I am here, havin' kem eight thousand miles, wouldn't it be too hard to give up the very experience I've been pinin' an' pantin' fur? A man can't get to feel like canned goods every time! Me and the Judge here'll fix up this thing in no time, an' then you'll come back, an' we'll all laugh together!"

Once more the resolution that is born of curiosity triumphed, and Amelia stayed holding tight to my arm and shivering whilst the custodian began to slacken slowly, inch by inch, the rope that held back the iron door. Hutcheson's face was positively radiant as his eyes followed the first movement of the spikes.

"Wall!" he said, "I guess I've not had enjoyment like this since I left Noo York. Bar a scrap with a French sailor at Wapping – an' that warn't much of a picnic neither – I've not had a show fur real pleasure in this dod-rotted Continent, where there ain't no b'ars nor no Injuns, an' wheer nary man goes heeled. Slow there, Judge! Don't you rush this business! I want a show for my money this game – I du!"

The custodian must have had in him some of the blood of his predecessors in that ghastly tower, for he worked the engine with a deliberate and excruciating slowness which after five minutes, in which the outer edge of the door had not moved half as many inches, began to overcome Amelia. I saw her lips whiten, and I felt her hold upon my arm relax. I looked around an instant for a place whereon to lay her, and when I looked at her again found that her eye had become fixed on the side of the Virgin. Following its direction, I saw the black cat crouching out of sight. Her green eyes shone like danger lamps in the gloom of the place, and their colour was heightened by the blood which still smeared her coat and reddened her mouth. I cried out:

"The cat! look out for the cat!" for even then she sprang out before the engine. At this moment she looked like a triumphant demon. Her eyes blazed with ferocity, her hair bristled out till she seemed twice her normal size, and her tail lashed about as does a tiger's when the quarry is before it. Elias P. Hutcheson when he saw her was amused, and his eyes positively sparkled with fun as he said:

"Darned if the squaw hain't got on all her war paint! Jest give her a shove off if she comes any of her tricks on

me, for I'm so fixed everlastingly by the boss, that durn my skin if I can keep my eyes from her if she wants them! Easy there, Judge! Don't you slack that ar rope or I'm euchred!"

At this moment Amelia completed her faint, and I had to clutch hold of her round the waist or she would have fallen to the floor. Whilst attending to her I saw the black cat crouching for a spring, and jumped up to turn the creature out.

But at that instant, with a sort of hellish scream, she hurled herself, not as we expected at Hutcheson, but straight at the face of the custodian. Her claws seemed to be tearing wildly as one sees in the Chinese drawings of the dragon rampant, and as I looked I saw one of them light on the poor man's eye, and actually tear through it and down his cheek, leaving a wide band of red where the blood seemed to spurt from every vein.

With a yell of sheer terror which came quicker than even his sense of pain, the man leaped back, dropping as he did so the rope which held back the iron door. I jumped for it, but was too late, for the cord ran like lightning through the pulley block, and the heavy mass fell forward from its own weight.

As the door closed I caught a glimpse of our poor companion's face. He seemed frozen with terror. His eyes stared with a horrible anguish as if dazed, and no sound came from his lips.

And then the spikes did their work. Happily the end was quick, for when I wrenched open the door they had pierced so deep that they had locked in the bones of the skull through which they had crushed, and actually tore him – it – out of his iron prison till, bound as he was, he fell at full length with a sickly thud upon the floor, the face turning upwards as he fell.

I rushed to my wife, lifted her up and carried her out, for I feared for her very reason if she should wake from her faint to such a scene. I laid her on the bench outside and

ran back. Leaning against the wooden column was the custodian, moaning in pain whilst he held his reddening handkerchief to his eyes. And sitting on the head of the poor American was the cat, purring loudly as she licked the blood which trickled through the gashed sockets of his eyes.

I think no one will call me cruel because I seized one of the old executioners' swords and shore her in two as she sat.

“OH, WHISTLE, AND I’LL COME TO YOU, MY LAD”

by M. R. James

“I SUPPOSE you will be getting away pretty soon, now Full term is over, Professor,” said a person not in the story to the Professor of Ontography, soon after they had sat down next to each other at a feast in the hospitable hall of St. James’s College.

The Professor was young, neat, and precise in speech.

“Yes,” he said; “my friends have been making me take up golf this term, and I mean to go to the East Coast – in point of fact to Burnstow (I dare say you know it) – for a week or ten days, to improve my game. I hope to get off tomorrow.”

“Oh, Parkins,” said his neighbour on the other side, “if you are going to Burnstow, I wish you would look at the site of the Templars’ preceptory, and let me know if you think it would be any good to have a dig there in the summer.”

It was, as you might suppose, a person of antiquarian pursuits who said this, but, since he merely appears in this prologue, there is no need to give his entitlements.

“Certainly,” said Parkins, the Professor: “if you will describe to me whereabouts the site is, I will do my best to give you an idea of the lie of the land when I get back, or I could write to you about it, if you would tell me where you are likely to be.”

"Don't trouble to do that, thanks. It's only that I'm thinking of taking my family in that direction in the Long, and it occurred to me that, as very few of the English preceptories have ever been properly planned, I might have an opportunity of doing something useful on off-days."

The Professor rather sniffed at the idea that planning out a preceptory could be described as useful. His neighbour continued :

"The site – I doubt if there is anything showing above ground – must be down quite close to the beach now. The sea has encroached tremendously, as you know, all along that bit of coast. I should think, from the map, that it must be about three-quarters of a mile from the Globe Inn, at the north end of the town. Where are you going to stay?"

"Well, *at* the Globe Inn, as a matter of fact," said Parkins. "I have engaged a room there. I couldn't get in anywhere else; most of the lodging-houses are shut up in winter, it seems; and, as it is, they tell me that the only room of any size I can have is really a double-bedded one, and that they haven't a corner in which to store the other bed, and so on. But I must have a fairly large room, for I am taking some books down, and mean to do a bit of work; and though I don't quite fancy having an empty bed – not to speak of two – in what I may call for the time being my study, I suppose I can manage to rough it for the short time I shall be there."

"Do you call having an extra bed in your room roughing it, Parkins?" said a bluff person opposite. "Look here, I shall come down and occupy it for a bit; it'll be company for you."

The Professor quivered, but managed to laugh in a courteous manner.

"By all means, Rogers; there's nothing I should like better. But I'm afraid you would find it rather dull; you don't play golf, do you?"

"No, thank Heaven!" said rude Mr. Rogers.

"Well, you see, when I'm not writing I shall most likely be out on the links, and that, as I say, would be rather dull for you, I'm afraid."

"Oh, I don't know! There's certain to be somebody I know in the place; but, of course, if you don't want me, speak the word, Parkins; I shan't be offended. Truth, as you always tell us, is never offensive."

Parkins was, indeed, scrupulously polite and strictly truthful. It is to be feared that Mr. Rogers sometimes practised upon his knowledge of these characteristics. In Parkins's breast there was a conflict now raging, which for a moment or two did not allow him to answer. That interval being over, he said :

"Well, if you want the exact truth, Rogers, I was considering whether the room I speak of would really be large enough to accommodate us both comfortably; and also whether (mind, I shouldn't have said this if you hadn't pressed me) you would not constitute something in the nature of a hindrance to my work."

Rogers laughed loudly.

"Well done, Parkins!" he said. "It's all right. I promise not to interrupt your work; don't you disturb yourself about that. No, I won't come if you don't want me; but I thought I should do so nicely to keep the ghosts off." Here he might have been seen to wink and to nudge his next neighbour. Parkins might also have been seen to become pink. "I beg pardon, Parkins," Rogers continued; "I oughtn't to have said that. I forgot you didn't like levity on these topics."

"Well," Parkins said, "as you have mentioned the matter, I freely own that I do *not* like careless talk about what you call ghosts. A man in my position," he went on, raising his voice a little, "cannot, I find, be too careful about appearing to sanction the current beliefs on such subjects. As you know, Rogers, or as you ought to know; for I think I have never concealed my views -"

"No, you certainly have not, old man," put in Rogers *sotto voce*.

"— I hold that any semblance, any appearance of concession to the view that such things might exist is equivalent to a renunciation of all that I hold most sacred. But I'm afraid I have not succeeded in securing your attention."

"Your *undivided* attention, was what Dr. Blimber actually *said*,"¹ Rogers interrupted, with every appearance of an earnest desire for accuracy. "But I beg your pardon, Parkins: I'm stopping you."

"No, not at all," said Parkins. "I don't remember Blimber; perhaps he was before my time. But I needn't go on. I'm sure you know what I mean."

"Yes, yes," said Rogers, rather hastily — "just so. We'll go into it fully at Burnstow, or somewhere."

In repeating the above dialogue I have tried to give the impression which it made on me, that Parkins was something of an old woman — rather hen-like, perhaps, in his little ways; totally destitute, alas! of the sense of humour, but at the same time dauntless and sincere in his convictions, and a man deserving of the greatest respect. Whether or not the reader has gathered so much, that was the character which Parkins had.

On the following day Parkins did, as he had hoped, succeed in getting away from his college, and in arriving at Burnstow. He was made welcome at the Globe Inn, was safely installed in the large double-bedded room of which we have heard, and was able before retiring to rest to arrange his material for work in apple-pie order upon a commodious table which occupied the outer end of the room, and was surrounded on three sides by windows looking out seaward; that is to say, the central window looked straight out to sea, and those on the left and right com-

¹ Mr. Rogers was wrong, *vide Dombey and Son*, chapter xii.

manded prospects along the shore to the north and south respectively. On the south you saw the village of Burnstow. On the north no houses were to be seen, but only the beach and the low cliff backing it. Immediately in front was a strip – not considerable – of rough grass, dotted with old anchors, capstans, and so forth; then a broad path; then the beach. Whatever may have been the original distance between the Globe Inn and the sea, not more than sixty yards now separated them.

The rest of the population of the inn was, of course, a golfing one, and included few elements that call for a special description. The most conspicuous figure was, perhaps, that of an *ancien militaire*, secretary of a London club, and possessed of a voice of incredible strength, and of view of a pronouncedly Protestant type. These were apt to find utterance after his attendance upon the ministrations of the Vicar, an estimable man with inclinations towards a picturesque ritual, which he gallantly kept down as far as he could out of deference to East Anglian tradition.

Professor Parkins, one of whose principal characteristics was pluck, spent the greater part of the day following his arrival at Burnstow in what he had called improving his game, in company with this Colonel Wilson: and during the afternoon – whether the process of improvement were to blame or not, I am not sure – the Colonel's demeanour assumed a colouring so lurid that even Parkins jibbed at the thought of walking home with him from the links. He determined, after a short and furtive look at that bristling moustache and those incarnadined features, that it would be wiser to allow the influence of tea and tobacco to do what they could with the Colonel before the dinner-hour should render a meeting inevitable.

"I might walk home tonight along the beach," he reflected – "yes, and take a look – there will be light enough for that – at the ruins of which Disney was talking. I don't exactly

know where they are, by the way; but I expect I can hardly help stumbling on them."

This he accomplished, I may say, in the most literal sense, for in picking his way from the links to the shingle beach his foot caught, partly in a gorse-root and partly in a biggish stone, and over he went. When he got up and surveyed his surroundings, he found himself in a patch of somewhat broken ground covered with small depressions and mounds. These latter, when he came to examine them, proved to be simply masses of flints embedded in mortar and grown over with turf. He must, he quite rightly concluded, be on the site of the preceptory he had promised to look at. It seemed not unlikely to reward the spade of the explorer; enough of the foundations was probably left at no great depth to throw a good deal of light on the general plan. He remembered vaguely that the Templars, to whom this site had belonged, were in the habit of building round churches, and he thought a particular series of the humps or mounds near him did appear to be arranged in something of a circular form. Few people can resist the temptation to try a little amateur research in a department quite outside their own, if only for the satisfaction of showing how successful they would have been had they only taken it up seriously. Our Professor, however, if he felt something of this mean desire, was also truly anxious to oblige Mr. Disney. So he paced with care the circular area he had noticed, and wrote down its rough dimensions in his pocket-book. Then he proceeded to examine an oblong eminence which lay east of the centre of the circle, and seemed to his thinking likely to be the base of a platform or altar. At one end of it, the northern, a patch of the turf was gone – removed by some boy or other creature *feræ naturæ*. It might, he thought, be as well to probe the soil here for evidences of masonry, and he took out his knife and began scraping away the earth. And now followed another little discovery : a portion of soil fell inward as he scraped, and disclosed a small cavity. He

lighted one match after another to help him to see of what nature the hole was, but the wind was too strong for them all. By tapping and scratching the sides with his knife, however, he was able to make out that it must be an artificial hole in masonry. It was rectangular, and the sides, top, and bottom, if not actually plastered, were smooth and regular. Of course it was empty. No! As he withdrew the knife he heard a metallic clink, and when he introduced his hand it met with a cylindrical object lying on the floor of the hole. Naturally enough, he picked it up, and when he brought it into the light, now fast fading, he could see that it, too, was of man's making – a metal tube about four inches long and evidently of some considerable age.

By the time Parkins had made sure that there was nothing else in this odd receptacle, it was too late and too dark for him to think of undertaking any further search. What he had done had proved so unexpectedly interesting that he determined to sacrifice a little more of the daylight on the morrow to archæology. The object which he now had safe in his pocket was bound to be of some slight value at least, he felt sure.

Bleak and solemn was the view on which he took a last look before starting homeward. A faint yellow light in the west showed the links, on which a few figures moving towards the club-house were still visible, the squat martello tower, the lights of Aldsey village, the pale ribbon of sands intersected at intervals by black wooden groynes, the dim and murmuring sea. The wind was bitter from the north, but was at his back when he set out for the Globe. He quickly rattled and clashed through the shingle and gained the sand, upon which, but for the groynes which had to be got over every few yards, the going was both good and quiet. One last look behind, to measure the distance he had made since leaving the ruined Templars' church, showed him a prospect of company on his walk, in the shape of a rather indistinct personage, who seemed to be making great

efforts to catch up with him, but made little, if any, progress. I mean that there was an appearance of running about his movements, but that the distance between him and Parkins did not seem materially to lessen. So, at least, Parkins thought, and decided that he almost certainly did not know him, and that it would be absurd to wait until he came up. For all that, company, he began to think, would really be very welcome on that lonely shore, if only you could choose your companion. In his unenlightened days he had read of meetings in such places which even now would hardly bear thinking of. He went on thinking of them, however, until he reached home, and particularly of one which catches most people's fancy at some time of their childhood. "Now I saw in my dream that Christian had gone but a very little way when he saw a foul fiend coming over the field to meet him." "What should I do now," he thought, "if I looked back and caught sight of a black figure sharply defined against the yellow sky, and saw that it had horns and wings? I wonder whether I should stand or run for it. Luckily, the gentleman behind is not of that kind, and he seems to be about as far off now as when I saw him first. Well, at this rate he won't get his dinner as soon as I shall; and, dear me! it's within a quarter of an hour of the time now. I must run!"

Parkins had, in fact, very little time for dressing. When he met the Colonel at dinner, Peace – or as much of her as that gentleman could manage – reigned once more in the military bosom; nor was she put to flight in the hours of bridge that followed dinner, for Parkins was a more than respectable player. When, therefore, he retired towards twelve o'clock, he felt that he had spent his evening in quite a satisfactory way, and that, even for so long as a fortnight or three weeks, life at the Globe would be supportable under similar conditions – "especially," thought he, "if I go on improving my game."

As he went along the passages he met the boots of the Globe, who stopped and said :

"Beg your pardon, sir, but as I was a-brushing your coat just now there was somethink fell out of the pocket. I put it on your chest of drawers, sir, in your room, sir – a piece of a pipe or somethink of that, sir. Thank you, sir. You'll find it on your chest of drawers, sir – yes, sir. Good night, sir."

The speech served to remind Parkins of his little discovery of that afternoon. It was with some considerable curiosity that he turned it over by the light of his candles. It was of bronze, he now saw, and was shaped very much after the manner of the modern dog-whistle; in fact it was – yes, certainly it was – actually no more nor less than a whistle. He put it to his lips, but it was quite full of a fine, caked-up sand or earth, which would not yield to knocking, but must be loosened with a knife. Tidy as ever in his habits, Parkins cleared out the earth on to a piece of paper, and took the latter to the window to empty it out. The night was clear and bright, as he saw when he had opened the casement, and he stopped for an instant to look at the sea and note a belated wanderer stationed on the shore in front of the inn. Then he shut the window, a little surprised at the late hours people kept at Burnstow, and took his whistle to the light again. Why, surely there were marks on it, and not merely marks, but letters! A very little rubbing rendered the deeply-cut inscription quite legible, but the Professor had to confess, after some earnest thought, that the meaning of it was as obscure to him as the writing on the wall to Belshazzar. There were legends both on the front and on the back of the whistle. The one read thus :

FUR FLA BIS
 FLE

The other :

❧ QUIS EST ISTE QUI VENIT ❧

"I ought to be able to make it out," he thought; "but I suppose I am a little rusty in my Latin. When I come to think of it, I don't believe I even know the word for a whistle. The long one does seem simple enough. It ought to mean, 'Who is this who is coming?' Well, the best way to find out is evidently to whistle for him."

He blew tentatively and stopped suddenly, startled and yet pleased at the note he had elicited. It had a quality of infinite distance in it, and, soft as it was, he somehow felt it must be audible for miles round. It was sound, too, that seemed to have the power (which many scents possess) of forming pictures in the brain. He saw quite clearly for a moment a vision of a wide, dark expanse at night, with a fresh wind blowing, and in the midst a lonely figure – how employed, he could not tell. Perhaps he would have seen more had not the picture been broken by the sudden surge of a gust of wind against his casement, so sudden that it made him look up, just in time to see the white glint of a sea-bird's wing somewhere outside the dark panes.

The sound of the whistle had so fascinated him that he could not help trying it once more, this time more boldly. The note was little, if at all, louder than before, and repetition broke the illusion – no picture followed, as he had half hoped it might. "But what is this? Goodness! what force the wind can get up in a few minutes! What a tremendous gust! There! I knew that window-fastening was no use! Ah! I thought so – both candles out. It's enough to tear the room to pieces."

The first thing was to get the window shut. While you might count twenty Parkins was struggling with the small casement, and felt almost as if he were pushing back a sturdy burglar, so strong was the pressure. It slackened all at once, and the window banged to and latched itself. Now to relight the candles and see what damage, if any, had been done. No, nothing seemed amiss; no glass even was broken in the casement. But the noise had evidently roused

at least one member of the household : the Colonel was to be heard stumping in his stockinged feet on the floor above, and growling.

Quickly as it had risen, the wind did not fall at once. On it went, moaning and rushing past the house, at times rising to a cry so desolate that, as Parkins disinterestedly said, it might have made fanciful people feel quite uncomfortable; even the unimaginative, he thought after a quarter of an hour, might be happier without it.

Whether it was the wind, or the excitement of golf, or of the researches in the preceptory that kept Parkins awake, he was not sure. Awake he remained, in any case, long enough to fancy (as I am afraid I often do myself under such conditions), that he was the victim of all manner of fatal disorders : he would lie counting the beats of his heart, convinced that it was going to stop work every moment, and would entertain grave suspicions of his lungs, brain, liver, etc. – suspicions which he was sure would be dispelled by the return of daylight, but which until then refused to be put aside. He found a little vicarious comfort in the idea that someone else was in the same boat. A near neighbour (in the darkness it was not easy to tell his direction) was tossing and rustling in his bed, too.

The next stage was that Parkins shut his eyes and determined to give sleep every chance. Here again over-excitement asserted itself in another form – that of making pictures. *Experto crede*, pictures do come to the closed eyes of one trying to sleep, and are often so little to his taste that he must open his eyes and disperse them.

Parkins's experience on this occasion was a very distressing one. He found that the picture which presented itself to him was continuous. When he opened his eyes, of course, it went; but when he shut them once more it framed itself afresh, and acted itself out again, neither quicker nor slower than before. What he saw was this :

A long stretch of shore – shingle edged by sand, and

intersected at short intervals with black groynes running down to the water – a scene, in fact, so like that of his afternoon's walk that, in the absence of any landmark, it could not be distinguished therefrom. The light was obscure, conveying an impression of gathering storm, late winter evening, and slight cold rain. On this bleak stage at first no actor was visible. Then, in the distance, a bobbing black object appeared; a moment more, and it was a man running, jumping, clambering over the groynes, and every few seconds looking eagerly back. The nearer he came the more obvious it was that he was not only anxious, but even terribly frightened, though his face was not to be distinguished. He was, moreover, almost at the end of his strength. On he came; each successive obstacle seemed to cause him more difficulty than the last. "Will he get over this next one?" thought Parkins; "it seems a little higher than the others." Yes; half climbing, half throwing himself, he did get over, and fell all in a heap on the other side (the side nearest to the spectator). There, as if really unable to get up again, he remained crouching under the groyne, looking up in an attitude of painful anxiety.

So far no cause whatever for the fear of the runner had been shown; but now there began to be seen, far up the shore, a little flicker of something light-coloured moving to and fro with great swiftness and irregularity. Rapidly growing larger, it, too, declared itself as a figure in pale, fluttering draperies, ill-defined. There was something about its motion which made Parkins very unwilling to see it at close quarters. It would stop, raise arms, bow itself towards the sand, then run stooping across the beach to the water-edge and back again; and then, rising upright, once more continue its course forward at a speed that was startling and terrifying. The moment came when the pursuer was hovering about from left to right only a few yards beyond the groyne where the runner lay in hiding. After two or three ineffectual castings hither and thither it came to a stop, stood upright,

with arms raised high, and then darted straight forward towards the groyne.

It was at this point that Parkins always failed in his resolution to keep his eyes shut. With many misgivings as to incipient failure of eyesight, over-worked brain, excessive smoking, and so on, he finally resigned himself to light his candle, get out a book, and pass the night waking, rather than be tormented by this persistent panorama, which he saw clearly enough could only be a morbid reflection of his walk and his thoughts on that very day.

The scraping of match on box and the glare of light must have startled some creatures of the night – rats or what not – which he heard scurry across the floor from the side of his bed with much rustling. Dear, dear! the match is out! Fool that it is! But the second one burnt better, and a candle and book were duly procured, over which Parkins pored till sleep of a wholesome kind came upon him, and that in no long space. For about the first time in his orderly and prudent life he forgot to blow out the candle, and when he was called next morning at eight there was still a flicker in the socket and a sad mess of guttered grease on the top of the little table.

After breakfast he was in his room, putting the finishing touches to his golfing costume – fortune had again allotted the Colonel to him for a partner – when one of the maids came in.

“Oh, if you please,” she said, “would you like any extra blankets on your bed, sir?”

“Ah! thank you,” said Parkins. “Yes, I think I should like one. It seems likely to turn rather colder.”

In a very short time the maid was back with the blanket.

“Which bed should I put it on, sir?” she asked.

“What? Why, that one – the one I slept in last night,” he said, pointing to it.

“Oh yes! I beg your pardon, sir, but you seemed to have

tried both of 'em; leastways, we had to make 'em both up this morning."

"Really? How very absurd!" said Parkins. "I certainly never touched the other, except to lay some things on it. Did it actually seem to have been slept in?"

"Oh yes, sir!" said the maid. "Why, all the things was crumpled and throwed about all ways, if you'll excuse me, sir - quite as if anyone 'adn't passed but a very poor night, sir."

"Dear me," said Parkins. "Well, I may have disordered it more than I thought when I unpacked my things. I'm very sorry to have given you the extra trouble, I'm sure. I expect a friend of mine soon, by the way - a gentleman from Cambridge - to come and occupy it for a night or two. That will be all right, I suppose, won't it?"

"Oh yes, to be sure, sir. Thank you, sir. It's no trouble, I'm sure," said the maid, and departed to giggle with her colleagues.

Parkins set forth, with a stern determination to improve his game.

I am glad to be able to report that he succeeded so far in this enterprise that the Colonel, who had been rather repining at the prospect of a second day's play in his company, became quite chatty as the morning advanced; and his voice boomed out over the flats, as certainly also of our own minor poets have said, "like some great bourdon in a minster tower".

"Extraordinary wind, that, we had last night," he said. "In my old home we should have said someone had been whistling for it."

"Should you, indeed!" said Parkins. "Is there a superstition of that kind still current in your part of the country?"

"I don't know about superstition," said the Colonel. "They believe in it all over Denmark and Norway, as well as on the Yorkshire coast; and my experience is, mind you, that there's generally something at the bottom of what these

country-folk hold to, and have held to for generations. But it's your drive" (or whatever it might have been : the golfing reader will have to imagine appropriate digressions at the proper intervals).

When conversation was resumed, Parkins said, with a slight hesitancy :

"Apropos of what you were saying just now, Colonel, I think I ought to tell you that my own views on such subjects are very strong. I am, in fact, a convinced disbeliever in what is called the 'supernatural'."

"What!" said the Colonel, "do you mean to tell me you don't believe in second-sight, or ghosts, or anything of that kind?"

"In nothing whatever of that kind," returned Parkins firmly.

"Well," said the Colonel, "but it appears to me at that rate, sir, that you must be little better than a Sadducee."

Parkins was on the point of answering that, in his opinion, the Sadducees were the most sensible persons he had ever read of in the Old Testament; but, feeling some doubt as to whether much mention of them was to be found in that work, he preferred to laugh the accusation off.

"Perhaps I am," he said; "but - Here, give me my cleek, boy! - Excuse me one moment, Colonel." A short interval. "Now, as to whistling for the wind, let me give you my theory about it. The laws which govern winds are really not at all perfectly known - to fisher-folk and such, of course, not known at all. A man or woman of eccentric habits, perhaps, or a stranger, is seen repeatedly on the beach at some unusual hour, and is heard whistling. Soon afterwards a violent wind rises; a man who could read the sky perfectly or who possessed a barometer could have foretold that it would. The simple people of a fishing-village have no barometers, and only a few rough rules for prophesying weather. What more natural than that the eccentric personage I postulated should be regarded as having raised the

wind, or that he or she should clutch eagerly at the reputation of being able to do so? Now, take last night's wind : as it happens, I myself was whistling. I blew a whistle twice, and the wind seemed to come absolutely in answer to my call. If anyone had seen me – ”

The audience had been a little restive under this harangue, and Parkins had, I fear, fallen somewhat into the tone of a lecturer; but at the last sentence the Colonel stopped.

“Whistling, were you?” he said. “And what sort of whistle did you use? Play this stroke first.” Interval.

“About that whistle you were asking, Colonel. It's rather a curious one. I have it in my – No; I see I've left it in my room. As a matter of fact, I found it yesterday.”

And then Parkins narrated the manner of his discovery of the whistle, upon hearing which the Colonel grunted, and opined that, in Parkins's place, he should himself be careful about using a thing that had belonged to a set of Papists, of whom, speaking generally, it might be affirmed that you never knew what they might not have been up to. From this topic he diverged to the enormities of the Vicar, who had given notice on the previous Sunday that Friday would be the Feast of St. Thomas the Apostle, and that there would be service at eleven o'clock in the church. This and other similar proceedings constituted in the Colonel's view a strong presumption that the Vicar was a concealed Papist, if not a Jesuit; and Parkins, who could not very readily follow the Colonel in this region, did not disagree with him. In fact, they got on so well together in the morning that there was no talk on either side of their separating after lunch.

Both continued to play well during the afternoon, or, at least, well enough to make them forget everything else until the light began to fail them. Not until then did Parkins remember that he had meant to do some more investigating at the preceptory; but it was of no great

importance, he reflected. One day was as good as another; he might as well go home with the Colonel.

As they turned the corner of the house, the Colonel was almost knocked down by a boy who rushed into him at the very top of his speed, and then, instead of running away, remained hanging on to him and panting. The first words of the warrior were naturally those of reproof and objugation, but he very quickly discerned that the boy was almost speechless with fright. Inquiries were useless at first. When the boy got his breath he began to howl, and still clung to the Colonel's legs. He was at last detached, but continued to howl.

"What in the world is the matter with you? What have you been up to? What have you seen?" said the two men.

"Ow, I seen it wive at me out of the winder," wailed the boy, "and I don't like it."

"What window?" said the irritated Colonel. "Come, pull yourself together, my boy."

"The front winder it was, at the 'otel," said the boy.

At this point Parkins was in favour of sending the boy home, but the Colonel refused; he wanted to get to the bottom of it, he said; it was most dangerous to give a boy such a fright as this one had had, and if it turned out that people had been playing jokes, they should suffer for it in some way. And by a series of questions he made out this story: The boy had been playing about on the grass in front of the Globe with some others; then they had gone home to their teas, and he was just going, when he happened to look up at the front winder and see it a-wiving at him. *It* seemed to be a figure of some sort, in white as far as he knew – couldn't see its face; but it wived at him, and it warn't a right thing – not to say not a right person. Was there a light in the room? No, he didn't think to look if there was a light. Which was the window? Was it the top one or the second one? The seckind one it was – the big winder what got two little uns at the sides.

"Very well, my boy," said the Colonel, after a few more questions. "You run away home now. I expect it was some person trying to give you a start. Another time, like a brave English boy, you just throw a stone – well, no, not that exactly, but you go and speak to the waiter, or to Mr. Simpson, the landlord, and – yes – and say that I advised you to do so."

The boy's face expressed some of the doubt he felt as to the likelihood of Mr. Simpson's lending a favourable ear to his complaint, but the Colonel did not appear to perceive this, and went on :

"And here's a sixpence – no, I see it's a shilling – and you be off home, and don't think any more about it."

The youth hurried off with agitated thanks, and the Colonel and Parkins went round to the front of the Globe and reconnoitred. There was only one window answering to the description they had been hearing.

"Well, that's curious," said Parkins; "it's evidently my window the lad was talking about. Will you come up for a moment, Colonel Wilson? We ought to be able to see if anyone has been taking liberties in my room."

They were soon in the passage, and Parkins made as if to open the door. Then he stopped and felt in his pockets.

"This is more serious than I thought," was his next remark. "I remember now that before I started this morning I locked the door. It is locked now, and, what is more, here is the key." And he held it up. "Now," he went on, "if the servants are in the habit of going into one's room during the day when one is away, I can only say that – well, that I don't approve of it at all." Conscious of a somewhat weak climax, he busied himself in opening the door (which was indeed locked) and in lighting candles. "No," he said, "nothing seems disturbed."

"Except your bed," put in the Colonel.

"Excuse me, that isn't my bed," said Parkins. "I don't

use that one. But it does look as if someone had been playing tricks with it."

It certainly did : the clothes were bundled up and twisted together in a most tortuous confusion. Parkins pondered.

"That must be it," he said at last : "I disordered the clothes last night in unpacking, and they haven't made it since. Perhaps they came in to make it, and that boy saw them through the window; and then they were called away and locked the door after them. Yes, I think that must be it."

"Well, ring and ask," said the Colonel, and this appealed to Parkins as practical.

The maid appeared, and, to make a long story short, deposed that she had made the bed in the morning when the gentleman was in the room, and hadn't been there since. No, she hadn't no other key. Mr. Simpson he kep' the keys; he'd be able to tell the gentleman if anyone had been up.

This was a puzzle. Investigation showed that nothing of value had been taken, and Parkins remembered the disposition of the small objects on tables and so forth well enough to be pretty sure that no pranks had been played with them. Mr. and Mrs. Simpson furthermore agreed that neither of them had given the duplicate key of the room to any person whatever during the day. Nor could Parkins, fairminded man as he was, detect anything in the demeanour of master, mistress, or maid that indicated guilt. He was much more inclined to think that the boy had been imposing on the Colonel.

The latter was unwontedly silent and pensive at dinner and throughout the evening. When he bade good night to Parkins, he murmured in a gruff undertone :

"You know where I am if you want me during the night."

"Why, yes, thank you, Colonel Wilson, I think I do; but there isn't much prospect of my disturbing you, I hope. By

the way," he added, "did I show you that old whistle I spoke of? I think not. Well, here it is."

The Colonel turned it over gingerly in the light of the candle.

"Can you make anything of the inscription?" asked Parkins, as he took it back.

"No, not in this light. What do you mean to do with it?"

"Oh, well, when I get back to Cambridge I shall submit it to some of the archæologists there, and see what they think of it; and very likely, if they consider it worth having, I may present it to one of the museums."

"'M!" said the Colonel. "Well, you may be right. All I know is that, if it were mine, I should chuck it straight into the sea. It's no use talking, I'm well aware, but I expect that with you it's a case of live and learn. I hope so, I'm sure, and I wish you a good night."

He turned away, leaving Parkins in act to speak at the bottom of the stair, and soon each was in his own bedroom.

By some unfortunate accident, there were neither blinds nor curtains to the windows of the Professor's room. The previous night he had thought little of this, but tonight there seemed every prospect of a bright moon rising to shine directly on his bed, and probably wake him later on. When he noticed this he was a good deal annoyed, but, with an ingenuity which I can only envy, he succeeded in rigging up, with the help of a railway-rug, some safety-pins, and a stick and umbrella, a screen which, if it only held together, would completely keep the moonlight off his bed. And shortly afterwards he was comfortably in that bed. When he had read a somewhat solid work long enough to produce a decided wish for sleep, he cast a drowsy glance round the room, blew out the candle, and fell back upon the pillow.

He must have slept soundly for an hour or more, when a sudden clatter shook him up in a most unwelcome manner. In a moment he realized what had happened: his carefully-constructed screen had given way, and a very bright frosty

moon was shining directly on his face. This was highly annoying. Could he possibly get up and reconstruct the screen? or could he manage to sleep if he did not?

For some minutes he lay and pondered over the possibilities; then he turned over sharply, and with all his eyes open lay breathlessly listening. There had been a movement, he was sure, in the empty bed on the opposite side of the room. Tomorrow he would have it moved, for there must be rats or something playing about in it. It was quiet now. No! the commotion began again. There was a rustling and shaking: surely more than any rat could cause.

I can figure to myself something of the Professor's bewilderment and horror, for I have in a dream thirty years back seen the same thing happen; but the reader will hardly, perhaps, imagine how dreadful it was to him to see a figure suddenly sit up in what he had known was an empty bed. He was out of his own bed in one bound, and made a dash towards the window, where lay his only weapon, the stick with which he had propped his screen. This was, as it turned out, the worst thing he could have done, because the personage in the empty bed, with a sudden smooth motion, slipped from the bed and took up a position, with outspread arms, between the two beds, and in front of the door. Parkins watched it in a horrid perplexity. Somehow, the idea of getting past it and escaping through the door was intolerable to him; he could not have borne – he didn't know why – to touch it; and as for its touching him, he would sooner dash himself through the window than have that happen. It stood for the moment in a band of dark shadow, and he had not seen what its face was like. Now it began to move, in a stooping posture, and all at once the spectator realized, with some horror and some relief, that it must be blind, for it seemed to feel about it with its muffled arms in a groping and random fashion. Turning half away from him, it became suddenly conscious of the bed he had just left, and darted towards it, and bent over and felt the

pillows in a way which made Parkins shudder as he had never in his life thought it possible. In a very few moments it seemed to know that the bed was empty, and then, moving forward into the area of light and facing the window, it showed for the first time what manner of thing it was.

Parkins, who very much dislikes being questioned about it, did once describe something of it in my hearing, and I gathered that what he chiefly remembers about it is a horrible, an intensely horrible, face of *crumpled linen*. What expression he read upon it he could not or would not tell, but that the fear of it went nigh to maddening him is certain.

But he was not at leisure to watch it for long. With formidable quickness it moved into the middle of the room, and, as it groped and waved, one corner of its draperies swept across Parkins's face. He could not – though he knew how perilous a sound was – he could not keep back a cry of disgust, and this gave the searcher an instant clue. It leapt towards him upon the instant, and the next moment he was half-way through the window backwards, uttering cry upon cry at the utmost pitch of his voice, and the linen face was thrust close into his own. At this, almost the last possible second, deliverance came, as you will have guessed: the Colonel burst the door open, and was just in time to see the dreadful group at the window. When he reached the figures only one was left. Parkins sank forward into the room in a faint, and before him on the floor lay a tumbled heap of bedclothes.

Colonel Wilson asked no questions, but busied himself in keeping everyone else out of the room and in getting Parkins back to his bed; and himself, wrapped in a rug, occupied the other bed for the rest of the night. Early on the next day Rogers arrived, more welcome than he would have been a day before, and the three of them held a very long consultation in the Professor's room. At the end of it the Colonel left the hotel door carrying a small object between

his finger and thumb, which he cast as far into the sea as a very brawny arm could send it. Later on the smoke of a burning ascended from the back premises of the Globe.

Exactly what explanation was patched up for the staff and visitors at the hotel I must confess I do not recollect. The Professor was somehow cleared of the ready suspicion of delirium tremens, and the hotel of the reputation of a troubled house.

There is not much question as to what would have happened to Parkins if the Colonel had not intervened when he did. He would either have fallen out of the window or else lost his wits. But it is not so evident what more the creature that came in answer to the whistle could have done than frighten. There seemed to be absolutely nothing material about it save the bedclothes of which it had made itself a body. The Colonel, who remembered a not very dissimilar occurrence in India, was of opinion that if Parkins had closed with it it could really have done very little, and that its one power was that of frightening. The whole thing, he said, served to confirm his opinion of the Church of Rome.

There is really nothing more to tell, but, as you may imagine, the Professor's views on certain points are less clear cut than they used to be. His nerves, too, have suffered: he cannot even now see a surplice hanging on a door quite unmoved, and the spectacle of a scarecrow in a field late on a winter afternoon has cost him more than one sleepless night.

THE OLD MAN OF VISIONS

by Algernon Blackwood

I

THE image of Teufelsdröckh, sitting in his watch-tower "alone with the stars", leaped into my mind the moment I saw him; and the curious expression of his eyes proclaimed at once that here was a being who allowed the world of small effects to pass him by, while he himself dwelt among the eternal verities. It was only necessary to catch a glimpse of the bent grey figure, so slight yet so tremendous, to realize that he carried staff and wallet, and was travelling alone in a spiritual region, uncharted, and full of wonder, difficulty, and fearful joy.

The inner eye perceived this quite as clearly as the outer was aware of his Hebraic ancestry; but along what winding rivers, through what haunted woods, by the shores of what singing seas he pressed forward towards the mountains of his goal, no one could guess from a mere inspection of that wonderful old face.

To have stumbled upon such a figure in the casual way I did seemed incredible to me even at the time, yet I at once caught something of the uplifting airs that followed this inhabitant of a finer world, and I spent days – and considered them well spent – trying to get into conversation with him, so that I might know something more than the thin disguise of his holding a reader's ticket for the Museum Library.

To reach the stage of intimacy where actual speech is a hindrance to close understanding, one need not in some cases have spoken at all. Thus by merely setting my mind, and above all, my imagination, into tune with his, and by steeping myself so much in his atmosphere that I absorbed and then gave back to him with my own stamp the forces he exhaled, it was at length possible to persuade those vast-seeing eyes to turn in my direction; and our glances having once met, I simply rose when he rose, and followed him out of the little smoky restaurant so closely up the street that our clothes brushed, and I thought I could even catch the sound of his breathing.

Whether, having already weighed me, he accepted the office, or whether he was grateful for the arm to lean upon, with his many years' burden, I do not know; but the sympathy between us was such that, without a single word, we walked up that foggy London street to the door of his lodging in Bloomsbury, while I noticed that at the touch of his arm the noise of the town seemed to turn into deep singing, and even the hurrying passers-by seemed bent upon noble purposes; and though he barely reached to my shoulder, and his grey beard almost touched my glove as I bent my arm to hold his own, there was something immense about his figure that sent him with towering stature above me and filled my thoughts with enchanting dreams of grandeur and high beauty.

But it was only when the door had closed on him with a little rush of wind, and I was walking home alone, that I fully realized the shock of my return to earth; and on reaching my own rooms I shook with laughter to think I had walked a mile and a half with a complete stranger without uttering a single syllable. Then the laughter suddenly hushed as I caught my face in the glass with the expression of the soul still lingering about the eyes and forehead, and for a brief moment my heart leaped to a sort of noble fever in the blood, leaving me with the smart of the soul's wings

stirring beneath the body's crushing weight. And when it passed I found myself dwelling upon the words he had spoken when I left him at the door :

"I am the Old Man of Visions, and I am *at your service*."

I think he never had a name – at least, it never passed his lips, and perhaps lay buried with so much else of the past that he clearly deemed unimportant. To me, at any rate, he became simply the Old Man of Visions, and to the little waiting-maid and the old landlady he was known simply as "Mister" – Mister, neither more nor less. The impenetrable veil that hung over his past never lifted for any vital revelations of his personal history, though he evidently knew all the countries of the world, and had absorbed into his heart and brain the experience of all possible types of human nature; and there was an air about him not so much of "Ask me no questions", as "Do not ask me, for I cannot answer you *in words*".

He could satisfy, but not in mere language; he would reveal, but by the wonderful words of silence only; for he was the Old Man of Visions, and visions need no words, being swift and of the spirit.

Moreover, the landlady – poor, dusty, faded woman – the landlady stood in awe, and disliked being probed for information in a passage-way down which he might any moment tread, for she could only tell me, "He just came in one night, years ago, and he's been here ever since!" And more than that I never knew. "Just came in – one night – years ago." This adequately explained him, for where he came *from*, or was journeying *to*, was something quite beyond the scope of ordinary limited language.

I pictured him suddenly turning aside from the stream of unimportant events, quietly stepping out of the world of straining, fighting, and shouting, and moving to take his rightful place among the forces of the still, spiritual region where he belonged by virtue of long pain and difficult attainment. For he was unconnected with any conceivable

network of relations, friends, or family, and his terrible aloofness could not be disturbed by anyone unless with his permission and by his express wish. Nor could he be imagined as "belonging" to any definite set of souls. He was apart from the world – and above it.

But it was only when I began to creep a little nearer to him, and our strange, silent intimacy passed from mental to spiritual, that I began really to understand more of this wonderful Old Man of Visions.

Steeped in the tragedy, and convulsed with laughter at the comedy, of life, he yet lived there in his high attic wrapped in silence as in a golden cloud; and so seldom did he actually speak to me that each time the sound of his voice, that had something elemental in it – something of winds and waters – thrilled me with the power of the first time. He lived, like Teufelsdröckh, "alone with the stars", and it seemed impossible, more and more, to link him on anywhere into practical dealings with ordinary men and women. Life somehow seemed to pass *below* him. Yet the small, selfish spirit of the recluse was far from him, and he was tenderly and deeply responsive to pain and suffering, and more particularly to genuine yearning for the far things of beauty. The unsatisfied longings of others could move him at once to tears.

"My relations with men are perfect," he said one night as we neared his dwelling. "I give them all sympathy out of my stores of knowledge and experience, and they give to me what kindness I need. My outer shell lies within impenetrable solitude, for only so can my inner life move freely along the paths and terraces that are thronged with the being to whom I belong." And when I asked him how he maintained such deep sympathy with humanity, and had yet absolved himself apparently from action as from speech, he stopped against an area railing and turned his great eyes on to my face, as though their fires could communicate his thought without the husk of words :

"I have peered too profoundly into life and beyond it," he murmured, "to wish to express in language what I *know*. Action is not for all, always; and I am in touch with the cisterns of thought that lie behind action. I ponder the mysteries. What I may solve is not lost for lack either of speech or action, for the true mystic is ever the true man of action, and my thought will reach others as soon as they are ready for it in the same way that it reached you. All who strongly yearn must, sooner or later, find me and be comforted."

His eyes shifted from my face towards the stars, softly shining above the dark Museum roof, and a moment later he had disappeared into the hallway of his house.

"An old poet who has strayed afield and lost his way," I mused; but through the door where he had just vanished the words came back to me as from a great distance: "A priest, rather, who has begun to find his way."

For a space I stood, pondering on his face and words: that mercilessly intelligent look of the Hebrew woven in with the expression of the sadness of a whole race, yet touched with the glory of the spirit; and his utterance – that he had passed through all the traditions and no longer needed a formal, limited creed to hold to. I forget how I reached my own door several miles away, but it seemed to me that I flew.

In this way, and by unregistered degrees, we came to know each other better, and he accepted me and took me into his life. Always wrapped in the great calm of his delightful silence, he taught me more, and told me more, than could ever lie within the confines of mere words; and in moments of need, no matter when or where, I always knew exactly how to find him, reaching him in a few seconds by some swift way that disdained the means of ordinary locomotion.

Then at last one day he gave me the key of his house. And the first time I found my way into his aery, and realized that it was a haven I could always fly to when the yearnings

of the heart and soul struggled vainly for recompense, the full meaning and importance of the Old Man of Visions became finally clear to me.

II

The room, high up creaky, darkened stairs in the ancient house, was bare and fireless, looking through a single patched window across a tumbled sea of roofs and chimneys; yet there was that in it which instantly proclaimed it a little holy place out of the world, a temple in which someone with spiritual vitality had worshipped, prayed, wept, and sung.

It was dusty and unswept, yet it was utterly *unsoiled*; and the Old Man of Visions who lived there, for all his shabby and stained garments, his uncombed beard and broken shoes, stood within its door revealed in his real self, moving in a sort of divine whiteness, iridescent, shining. And here, in this attic (lampless and unswept), high up under the old roofs of Bloomsbury, the window scarred with rain and the corners dropping cobwebs, I heard his silver whisper issue from the shadows :

"Here you may satisfy your soul's desire and may commune with the Invisibles; only, to find the Invisibles, you must first be able to lose yourself."

Ah! through that stained window-pane, the sight leaping at a single bound from black roofs up to the stars, what pictures, dreams, and visions the Old Man has summoned to my eyes! Distances, measureless and impossible hitherto, became easy, and from the oppression of dead bricks and the market-place he transported me in a moment to the slopes of the Mountains of Dream; leading me to little places near the summits where the pines grew thinly and the stars were visible through their branches, fading into the rose of dawn; where the winds tasted of the desert, and the voices of the wilderness fled upward with a sound of wings and falling streams. At his word houses melted away, and

the green waves of all the seas flowed into their places; forests waved themselves into the coastline of dull streets; and the power of the old earth, with all her smells and flowers and wild life, thrilled down among the dead roofs and caught me away into freedom among the sunshine of meadows and the music of sweet pipings. And with the divine deliverance came the crying of seagulls, the glimmer of reedy tarns, the whispering of mind among grasses, and the healing scorch of a real sun upon the skin.

And poetry such as was never known or heard before clothed all he uttered, yet even then took no form in actual words, for it was of the substance of aspiration and yearning, voicing adequately all the busy, high-born dreams that haunt the soul yet never live in the uttered line. He breathed it about him in the air so that it filled my being. It was part of him – beyond words; and it sang my own longings, and sang them perfectly so that I was satisfied; for my own mood never failed to touch him instantly and to waken the right response. In its essence it was spiritual – the mystic poetry of heaven; still, the love of humanity informed it, for star-fire and heart's blood were about equally mingled there, while the mystery of unattainable beauty moved through it like a white flame.

With other dreams and longings, too, it was the same; and all the most beautiful ideas that ever haunted a soul undowered with expression here floated with satisfied eyes and smiling lips before one – floated in silence, unencumbered, unlimited, unrestrained by words.

In this dim room, never made ugly by artificial light, but always shadowy in a kind of gentle dusk, the Old Man of Visions had only to lead me to the window to bring peace. Music, that rendered the soul fluid, as it poured across the old roofs into the room, was summoned by him at need; and when one's wings beat sometimes against the prison walls and the yearning for escape oppressed the heart, I have heard the little room rush and fill with the sound of

trees, wind among grasses, whispering branches, and lapping waters. The very odours of space and mountainside came too, and the looming of noble hills seemed visible overhead against the stars, as though the ceiling had suddenly become transparent.

For the Old Man of Visions had the power of instantly satisfying an ideal when once that ideal created a yearning that could tear and burn its way out with sufficient force to set the will a-moving.

III

But as the time passed and I came to depend more and more upon the intimacy with my strange old friend, new light fell upon the nature and possibilities of our connection. I discovered, for instance, that though I held the key to his dwelling, and was familiar with the way, he was nevertheless not always available. Two things, in different fashion, rendered him inaccessible, or mute; and, for the first, I gradually learned that when life was prosperous, and the body singing loud, I could not find my way to his house. No amount of wandering, calculation, or persevering effort enabled me even to find the street again. With any burst of worldly success, however fleeting, the Old Man of Visions somehow slipped away into remote shadows and became unreal and misty. A merely passing desire to be with him, to seek his inspiration by a glimpse through that magic window-pane, resulted only in vain and tiresome pacing to and fro along ugly streets that produced weariness and depression; and after these periods it became, I noticed, less and less easy to discover the house, to fit the key in the door, or, having gained access to the temple, to realize the visions I *thought* I craved for.

Often, in this way, have I searched in vain for days, but only succeeded in losing myself in the murky purlieus of a quite strange Bloomsbury; stopping outside numberless

counterfeit doors, and struggling vainly with locks that knew nothing of my little shining key.

But, on the other hand, pain, loneliness, sorrow – the merest whisper of spiritual affliction – and, lo, in a single moment the difficult geography became plain, and without hesitation, when I was unhappy or distressed, I found the way to his house as by a bird's instinctive flight, and the key slipped into the lock as though it loved it and was returning home.

The other cause to render him inaccessible, though not so determined – since it never concealed the way to the house – was even more distressing, for it depended wholly on myself; and I came to know how the least ugly action, involving a depreciation of ideals, so confused my mind that, when I got into the house, with difficulty, and found him in the little room after much searching, he was able to do or say scarcely anything at all for me. The mirror facing the door then gave back, I saw, no proper reflection of his person, but only a faded and wavering shadow with dim eyes and stooping, indistinct outline, and I even fancied I could see the pattern of the wall and shape of the furniture *through* his body, as though he had grown semi-transparent.

"You must not expect yearnings to weigh," came his whisper, like wind far overhead, "unless you lend to them *your own* substance; and your own substance you cannot both keep and lend. If you would know the Invisibles, forget yourself."

And later, as the years slipped away one after another into the mists, and the frontier between the real and the unreal began to shift amazingly with his teachings, it became more and more clear to me that he belonged to a permanent region that, with all the changes in the world's history, has itself never altered in any essential particular. This immemorial Old Man of Visions, as I grew to think of him, had existed always; he was old as the sea and coeval with the stars; and he dwelt beyond time and space, reaching out

a hand to all those who, weary of the shadows and illusions of practical life, really call to him with their heart of hearts. To me, indeed, the touch of sorrow was always near enough to prevent his becoming often inaccessible, and after a while even his voice became so *living* that I sometimes heard it calling to me in the street and in the fields.

Oh, wonderful Old Man of Visions! Happy the days of disaster, since they taught me how to know you, the Unraveller of Problems, the Destroyer of Doubts, who bore me ever away with soft flight down the long, long vistas of the heart and soul!

And his loneliness in that temple attic under the stars, his loneliness, too, had a meaning I did not fail to understand later, and why he was always available for me and seemed to belong to no other.

"To everyone who finds me," he said, with the strange smile that wrapped his whole being and not his face alone, "to everyone I am the same, and yet different. I am not really ever alone. The whole world, nay" – his voice rose to a singing cry – "the whole universe lies in this room, or just beyond that window-pane; for here past and future meet and all real dreams find completeness. But remember," he added – and there was a sound as of soft wind and rain in the room with his voice – "no true dream can ever be shared, and should you seek to explain me to another you must lose me beyond recall. You have never asked my name, nor must you ever tell it. Each must find me in his own way."

Yet one day, for all my knowledge and his warnings, I felt so sure of my intimacy with this immemorial being, that I spoke of him to a friend who was, I had thought, so much a part of myself that it seemed no betrayal. And my friend, who went to search and found nothing, returned with the fool's laughter on his face, and swore that no street or number existed, for he had looked in vain, and had repeatedly *asked the way*.

And, from that day to this, the Old Man of Visions has neither called to me nor let his place be found; the streets are strange and empty, and I have even lost the little shining key.

THE NAMELESS CITY

by H. P. Lovecraft

WHEN I drew nigh the nameless city I knew it was accursed. I was travelling in a parched and terrible valley under the moon, and afar I saw it protruding uncannily above the sands as parts of a corpse may protrude from an ill-made grave. Fear spoke from the age-worn stones of this hoary survivor of the deluge, this great-grandmother of the oldest pyramid; and a viewless aura repelled me and bade me retreat from antique and sinister secrets that no man should see, and no man else had ever dared to see.

Remote in the desert of Araby lies the nameless city, crumbling and inarticulate, its low walls nearly hidden by the sands of uncounted ages. It must have been thus before the first stones of Memphis were laid, and while the bricks of Babylon were yet unbaked. There is no legend so old as to give it a name, or to recall that it was ever alive; but it is told of in whispers around campfires and muttered about by grandmas in the tents of sheiks so that all the tribes shun it without wholly knowing why. It was of this place that Abdul Alhazred, the mad poet, dreamed on the night before he sang his unexplainable couplet :

“That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die.”

I should have known that the Arabs had good reason for

shunning the nameless city, the city told of in strange tales but seen by no living man, yet I defied them and went into the untrodden waste with my camel. I alone have seen it, and that is why no other face bears such hideous lines of fear as mine; why no other man shivers so horribly when the night wind rattles the windows. When I came upon it in the ghastly stillness of unending sleep it looked at me, chilly from the rays of a cold moon amidst the desert's heat. And as I returned its look I forgot my triumph at finding it, and stopped still with my camel to wait for the dawn.

For hours I waited, till the east grew grey and the stars faded, and the grey turned to roseate light edged with gold. I heard a moaning and saw a storm of sand stirring among the antique stones though the sky was clear and the vast reaches of the desert still. Then suddenly above the desert's far rim came the blazing edge of the sun, seen through the tiny sandstorm which was passing away, and in my fevered state I fancied that from some remote depth there came a crash of musical metal to hail the fiery disc as Memnon hails it from the banks of the Nile. My ears rang and my imagination seethed as I led my camel slowly across the sand to that unvocal stone place; that place too old for Egypt and Meroe to remember; that place which I alone of living men had seen.

In and out amongst the shapeless foundations of houses and places I wandered, finding never a carving or inscription to tell of these men, if men they were, who built this city and dwelt therein so long ago. The antiquity of the spot was unwholesome, and I longed to encounter some sign or device to prove that the city was indeed fashioned by mankind. There were certain *proportions* and *dimensions* in the ruins which I did not like. I had with me many tools, and dug much within the walls of the obliterated edifices; but progress was slow, and nothing significant was revealed. When night and the moon returned I felt a chill wind which brought new fear, so that I did not dare to remain in the

city. And as I went outside the antique walls to sleep, a small sighing sandstorm gathered behind me, blowing over the grey stones though the moon was bright and most of the desert still.

I awakened just at dawn from a pageant of horrible dreams, my ears ringing as from some metallic peal. I saw the sun peering redly through the last gusts of a little sandstorm that hovered over the nameless city, and marked the quietness of the rest of the landscape. Once more I ventured within those brooding ruins that swelled beneath the sand like an ogre under a coverlet, and again dug vainly for relics of the forgotten race. At noon I rested, and in the afternoon I spent much time tracing the walls and bygone streets, and the outlines of the nearly vanished buildings. I saw that the city had been mighty indeed, and wondered at the sources of its greatness. To myself I pictured all the splendours of an age so distant that Chaldaea could not recall it, and thought of Sarnath the Doomed, that stood in the land Mnar when mankind was young, and of Ib, that was carven of grey stone before mankind existed.

All at once I came upon a place where the bed rock rose stark through the sand and formed a low cliff; and here I saw with joy what seemed to promise further traces of the antediluvian people. Hewn rudely on the face of the cliff were the unmistakable façades of several small, squat rock houses or temples; whose interiors may preserve many secrets of ages too remote for calculation, though sandstorms had long since effaced any carvings which may have been outside.

Very low and sand-choked were all of the dark apertures near me, but I cleared one with my spade and crawled through it, carrying a torch to reveal whatever mysteries it might hold. When I was inside I saw that the cavern was indeed a temple, and beheld plain signs of the race that had lived and worshipped before the desert was a desert. Primitive altars, pillars, and niches, all curiously low, were not

absent; and though I saw no sculptures nor frescoes, there were many singular stones clearly shaped into symbols by artificial means. The lowness of the chiselled chamber was very strange, for I could hardly kneel upright; but the area was so great that my torch showed only part of it at a time. I shuddered oddly in some of the far corners; for certain altars and stones suggested forgotten rites of terrible, revolting, and inexplicable nature and made me wonder what manner of men could have made and frequented such a temple. When I had seen all that the place contained, I crawled out again, avid to find what the other temples might yield.

Night had now approached, yet the tangible things I had seen made curiosity stronger than fear, so that I did not flee from the long moon-cast shadows that had daunted me when first I saw the nameless city. In the twilight I cleared another aperture and with a new torch crawled into it, finding more vague stones and symbols, though nothing more definite than the other temple had contained. The room was just as low, but much less broad, ending in a very narrow passage crowded with obscure and cryptical shrines. About these shrines I was prying when the noise of a wind and my camel outside broke through the stillness and drew me forth to see what could have frightened the beast.

The moon was gleaming vividly over the primitive ruins, lighting a dense cloud of sand that seemed blown by a strong but decreasing wind from some point along the cliff ahead of me. I knew it was this chilly, sandy wind which had disturbed the camel, and was about to lead him to a place of better shelter when I chanced to glance up and saw that there was no wind atop the cliff. This astonished me and made me fearful again, but I immediately recalled the sudden local winds that I had seen and heard before at sunrise and sunset, and judged it was a normal thing. I decided it came from some rock fissure leading to a cave, and watched the troubled sand to trace it to its source; soon

perceiving that it came from the black orifice of a temple a long distance south of me, almost out of sight. Against the choking sand-cloud I plodded towards this temple, which as I neared it loomed larger than the rest, and showed a doorway far less clogged with caked sand. I would have entered had not the terrific force of the icy wind almost quenched my torch. It poured madly out of the dark door, sighing uncannily as it ruffled the sand and spread among the weird ruins. Soon it grew fainter and the sand grew more and more still, till finally all was at rest again; but a presence seemed stalking among the spectral stones of the city, and when I glanced at the moon it seemed to quiver as though mirrored in unquiet water. I was more afraid than I could explain, but not enough to dull my thirst for wonder; so as soon as the wind was quite gone I crossed into the dark chamber from which it had come.

This temple, as I had fancied from the outside, was larger than either of those I had visited before; and was presumably a natural cavern since it bore winds from some region beyond. Here I could stand quite upright, but saw that the stones and altars were as low as those in the other temples. On the walls and roof I beheld for the first time some traces of the pictorial art of the ancient race, curious curling streaks of paint that had almost faded or crumbled away; and on two of the altars I saw with rising excitement a maze of well-fashioned curvilinear carvings. As I held my torch aloft it seemed to me that the shape of the roof was too regular to be natural, and I wondered what the prehistoric cutters of stone had first worked upon. Their engineering skill must have been vast.

Then a brighter flare of the fantastic flame showed that for which I had been seeking, the opening to those remoter abysses whence the sudden wind had blown; and I grew faint when I saw that it was a small and plainly artificial door chiselled in the solid rock. I thrust my torch within, beholding a black tunnel with the roof arching low over

a rough flight of very small, numerous and steeply descending steps. I shall always see those steps in my dreams, for I came to learn what they meant. At the time I hardly knew whether to call them steps or mere footholds in a precipitous descent. My mind was whirling with mad thoughts, and the words and warnings of Arab prophets seemed to float across the desert from the land that men know to the nameless city that men dare not know. Yet I hesitated only a moment before advancing through the portal and commencing to climb cautiously down the steep passage, feet first, as though on a ladder.

It is only in the terrible phantasms of drugs of delirium that any other man can have such a descent as mine. The narrow passage led infinitely down like some hideous haunted well, and the torch I held about my head could not light the unknown depths towards which I was crawling. I lost track of the hours and forgot to consult my watch, thought I was frightened when I thought of the distance I must be traversing. There were changes of direction and of steepness; and once I came to a long, low, level passage where I had to wriggle feet first along the rocky floor, holding the torch at arm's length beyond my head. The place was not high enough for kneeling. After that were more of the steep steps, and I was still scrambling down interminably when my failing torch died out. I do not think I noticed it at the time, for when I did notice it I was still holding it above me as if it were ablaze. I was quite unbalanced with that instinct for the strange and the unknown which had made me a wanderer upon earth and a haunter of far, ancient, and forbidden places.

In the darkness there flashed before my mind fragments of my cherished treasury of daemonic lore; sentences from Alhazred the mad Arab, paragraphs from the apocryphal nightmares of Damascius, and infamous lines from the delirious "Image du Monde" of Gauthier de Metz. I repeated queer extracts, and muttered of Afrasiab and the daemons

that floated with him down the Oxus; later chanting over and over again a phrase from one of Lord Dunsany's tales – "The unreverberate blackness of the abyss." Once when the descent grew amazingly steep I recited something in sing-song from Thomas Moore until I feared to recite more :

"A reservoir of darkness, black
As witches' cauldrons are, when fill'd
With moon-drugs in th' eclipse distill'd.
Leaning to look if foot might pass
Down thro' that chasm, I saw, beneath,
As far as vision could explore,
The jetty sides as smooth as glass,
Looking as if just varnished o'er
With that dark pitch the Seat of Death
Throws out upon its slimy shore."

Time had quite ceased to exist when my feet again felt a level floor, and I found myself in a place slightly higher than the rooms in the two smaller temples now so incalculably far above my head. I could not quite stand, but could kneel upright, and in the dark I shuffled and crept hither and thither at random. I soon knew that I was in a narrow passage whose walls were lined with cases of wood having glass fronts. As in that Palaeozoic and abysmal place I felt of such things as polished wood and glass I shuddered at the possible implications. The cases were apparently ranged along each side of the passage at regular intervals, and were oblong and horizontal, hideously like coffins in shape and size. When I tried to move two or three for further examination, I found that they were firmly fastened.

I saw that the passage was a long one, so floundered ahead rapidly in a creeping run that would have seemed horrible had any eye watched me in the blackness; crossing from side to side occasionally to feel of my surroundings and be sure the walls and rows of cases still stretched on. Man is so used

to thinking visually that I almost forgot the darkness and pictured the endless corridor of wood and glass in its low-studded monotony as though I saw it. And then in a moment of indescribable emotion I did see it.

Just when my fancy merged into real sight I cannot tell : but there came a gradual glow ahead, and all at once I knew that I saw the dim outlines of the corridor and the cases, revealed by some unknown subterranean phosphorescence. For a little while all was exactly as I had imagined it, since the glow was very faint; but as I mechanically kept stumbling ahead into the stronger light I realized that my fancy had been but feeble. This hall was no relic of crudity like the temples in the city above, but a monument of the most magnificent and exotic art. Rich, vivid, and daringly fantastic designs and pictures formed a continuous scheme of mural painting whose lines and colours were beyond description. The cases were of a strange golden wood, with fronts of exquisite glass, and containing the mummified forms of creatures outreaching in grotesqueness the most chaotic dreams of man.

To convey any idea of these monstrosities is impossible. They were of the reptile kind, with body lines suggesting sometimes the crocodile, sometimes the seal, but more often nothing of which either the naturalist or the palaeontologist ever heard. In size they approximated a small man, and their fore-legs bore delicate and evident feet curiously like human hands and fingers. But strangest of all were their heads, which presented a contour violating all known biological principles. To nothing can such things be well compared – in one flash I thought of comparisons as varied as the cat, the bulldog, the mythic Satyr, and the human being. Not Jove himself had had so colossal and protuberant a forehead, yet the horns and the noselessness and the alligator-like jaw placed the things outside all established categories. I debated for a time on the reality of the mummies, half-suspecting they were artificial idols; but soon

decided they were indeed some palaeogean species which had lived when the nameless city was alive. To crown their grotesqueness, most of them were gorgeously enrobed in the costliest of fabrics, and lavishly laden with ornaments of gold, jewels, and unknown shining metals.

The importance of these crawling creatures must have been vast, for they held first place among the wild designs on the frescoed walls and ceiling. With matchless skill had the artist drawn them in a world of their own; wherein they had cities and gardens fashioned to suit their dimensions; and I could not help but think that their pictured history was allegorical, perhaps showing the progress of the race that worshipped them. These creatures, I said to myself, were to the men of the nameless city what the she-wolf was to Rome, or some totem-beast is to a tribe of Indians.

Holding this view, I could trace roughly a wonderful epic of the nameless city; the tale of a mighty sea-coast metropolis that ruled the world before Africa rose out of the waves, and of its struggles as the sea shrank away, and the desert crept into the fertile valley that held it. I saw its wars and triumphs, its troubles and defeats, and afterwards its terrible fight against the desert when thousands of its people – here represented in allegory by the grotesque reptiles – were driven to chisel their way down through the rocks in some marvellous manner to another world whereof their prophets had told them. It was all vividly weird and realistic, and its connection with the awesome descent I had made was unmistakable. I even recognized the passages.

As I crept along the corridor toward the brighter light I saw later stages of the painted epic – the leave-taking of the race that had dwelt in the nameless city and the valley around for ten million years; the race whose souls shrank from quitting scenes their bodies had known so long where they had settled as nomads in the earth's youth, hewing in the virgin rock those primal shrines at which they had never ceased to worship. Now that the light was better I studied

the pictures more closely and, remembering that the strange reptiles must represent the unknown men, pondered upon the customs of the nameless city. Many things were peculiar and inexplicable. The civilization, which included a written alphabet, had seemingly risen to a higher order than those immeasurably later civilizations of Egypt and Chaldea, yet there were curious omissions. I could, for example, find no pictures to represent deaths or funeral customs, save such as were related to wars, violence, and plagues; and I wondered at the reticence shown concerning natural death. It was as though an ideal of immortality had been fostered as a cheering illusion.

Still nearer the end of the passage were painted scenes of the utmost picturesqueness and extravagance : contrasted views of the nameless city in its desertion and growing ruin, and of the strange new realm of paradise to which the race had hewed its way through the stone. In these views the city and the desert valley were shown always by moonlight, a golden nimbus hovering over the fallen walls and half-revealing the splendid perfection of former times, shown spectrally and elusively by the artist. The paradisal scenes were almost too extravagant to be believed; portraying a hidden world of eternal day filled with glorious cities and ethereal hills and valleys. At the very last I thought I saw signs of an artistic anticlimax. The paintings were less skilful, and much more bizarre than even the wildest of the earlier scenes. They seemed to record a slow decadence of the ancient stock, coupled with a growing ferocity towards the outside world from which it was driven by the desert. The forms of the people – always represented by the sacred reptiles – appeared to be gradually wasting away, though their spirit was shewn hovering about the ruins by moonlight gained in proportion. Emaciated priests, displayed as reptiles in ornate robes, cursed the upper air and all who breathed it; and one terrible final scene showed a primitive-looking man, perhaps a pioneer of ancient Irem, the City

of Pillars, torn to pieces by members of the elder race. I remember how the Arabs fear the nameless city, and was glad that beyond this place the grey walls and ceiling were bare.

As I viewed the pageant of mural history I had approached very closely the end of the low-ceilinged hall, and was aware of a gate through which came all of the illuminating phosphorescence. Creeping up to it, I cried aloud in transcendent amazement at what lay beyond; for instead of other and brighter chambers there was only an illimitable void of uniform radiance, such as one might fancy when gazing down from the peak of Mount Everest upon a sea of sunlit mist. Behind me was a passage so cramped that I could not stand upright in it; before me was an infinity of subterranean effulgence.

Reaching down from the passage into the abyss was the head of a steep flight of steps – small numerous steps like those of the black passages I had traversed – but after a few feet the glowing vapours concealed everything. Swung back open against the left-hand wall of the passage was a massive door of brass, incredibly thick and decorated with fantastic bas-reliefs, which could if closed shut the whole inner world of light away from the vaults and passages of rock. I looked at the steps, and for the nonce dared not try them. I touched the open brass door, and could not move it. Then I sank prone to the stone floor, my mind aflame with prodigious reflections which not even a death-like exhaustion could banish.

As I lay still with closed eyes, free to ponder, many things I had lightly noted in the frescoes came back to me with new and terrible significance – scenes representing the nameless city in its heyday – the vegetation of the valley around it, and the distant lands with which its merchants traded. The allegory of the crawling creatures puzzled me by its universal prominence, and I wondered that it would be so closely followed in a pictured history of such importance.

In the frescoes the nameless city had been shown in proportions fitted to the reptiles. I wondered what its real proportions and magnificence had been, and reflected a moment on certain oddities I had noticed in the ruins. I thought curiously of the lowness of the primal temples and of the underground corridor, which were doubtless hewn thus out of deference to the reptile deities there honoured; though it perforce reduced the worshippers to crawling. Perhaps the very rites here involved a crawling in imitation of the creatures. No religious theory, however, could easily explain why the level passages in that awesome descent should be as low as the temples – or lower, since one could not even kneel in it. As I thought of the crawling creatures, whose hideous mummified forms were so close to me, I felt a new throb of fear. Mental associations are curious, and I shrank from the idea that except for the poor primitive man torn to pieces in the last painting, mine was the only human form amidst the many relics and symbols of primordial life.

But as always in my strange and roving existence, wonder soon drove out fear; for the luminous abyss and what it might contain presented a problem worthy of the greatest explorer. That a weird world of mystery lay far down that flight of peculiarly small steps I could not doubt, and I hoped to find there those human memorials which the painted corridor had failed to give. The frescoes had pictured unbelievable cities, and valleys in this lower realm, and my fancy dwelt on the rich and colossal ruins that awaited me.

My fears, indeed, concerned the past rather than the future. Not even the physical horror of my position in that cramped corridor of dead reptiles and antediluvian frescoes, miles below the world I knew and faced by another world of eerie light and mist, could match the lethal dread I felt at the abysmal antiquity of the scene and its soul. An ancientness so vast that measurement is feeble seemed to leer down from the primal stones and rock-hewn temples of the nameless city, while the very latest of the astounding

maps in the frescoes showed oceans and continents that man has forgotten, with only here and there some vaguely familiar outline. Of what could have happened in the geological ages since the paintings ceased and the death-hating race resentfully succumbed to decay, no man might say. Life had once teemed in these caverns and in the luminous realm beyond; now I was alone with vivid relics, and I trembled to think of the countless ages through which these relics had kept a silent deserted vigil.

Suddenly there came another burst of that acute fear which had intermittently seized me ever since I first saw the terrible valley and the nameless city under a cold moon, and despite my exhaustion I found myself starting frantically to a sitting posture and gazing back along the black corridor toward the tunnels that rose to the outer world. My sensations were like those which had made me shun the nameless city at night, and were as inexplicable as they were poignant. In another moment, however, I received a still greater shock in the form of a definite sound – the first which had broken the utter silence of these tomb-like depths. It was a deep, low moaning, as of a distant throng of condemned spirits, and came from the direction in which I was staring. Its volume rapidly grew, till soon it reverberated frightfully through the low passage, and at the same time I became conscious of an increasing draught of cold air, likewise flowing from the tunnels and the city above. The touch of this air seemed to restore my balance, for I instantly recalled the sudden gusts which had risen around the mouth of the abyss each sunset and sunrise, one of which had indeed revealed the hidden tunnels to me. I looked at my watch and saw that sunrise was near, so braced myself to resist the gale that was sweeping down to its cavern home as it had swept forth at evening. My fear again waned low, since a natural phenomenon tends to dispel broodings over the unknown.

More and more madly poured the shrieking, moaning

night wind into that gulf of the inner earth. I dropped prone again and clutched vainly at the floor for fear of being swept bodily through the open gate into the phosphorescent abyss. Such fury I had not expected, and as I grew aware of an actual slipping of my form toward the abyss I was beset by a thousand new terrors of apprehension and imagination. The malignancy of the blast awakened incredible fancies; once more I compared myself shudderingly to the only human image in that frightful corridor, the man who was torn to pieces by the nameless race, for in the fiendish clawing of the swirling currents there seemed to abide a vindictive rage all the stronger because it was largely impotent. I think I screamed frantically near the last – I was almost mad – but if I did so my cries were lost in the hell-born babel of the howling wind-wraiths. I tried to crawl against the murderous invisible torrent, but I could not even hold my own as I was pushed slowly and inexorably towards the unknown world. Finally reason must have wholly snapped; for I fell to babbling over and over that unexplainable couplet of the mad Arab Alhazred, who dreamed of the nameless city :

“That is not dead which can eternal lie,
And with strange aeons even death may die.”

Only the grim brooding desert gods know what really took place – what indescribable struggles and scrambles in the dark I endured or what Abaddon guided me back to life, where I must always remember and shiver in the night wind till oblivion – or worse – claims me. Monstrous, unnatural, colossal, was the thing – too far beyond all the ideas of man to be believed except in the silent damnable small hours of the morning when one cannot sleep.

I have said that the fury of the rushing blast was infernal – cacodaemoniacal – and that its voices were hideous with the pent-up viciousness of desolate eternities. Presently these voices, while still chaotic before me, seemed to my beating

brain to take articulate form behind me; and down there in the grave of unnumbered aeon-dead antiquities, leagues below the dawn-lit world of men, I heard the ghastly cursing and snarling of strange-tongued fiends. Turning, I saw outlined against the luminous aether of the abyss that could not be seen against the dusk of the corridor – a nightmare horde of rushing devils; hate-distorted, grotesquely panoplied, half-transparent devils of a race no man might mistake – the crawling reptiles of the nameless city.

And as the wind died away I was plunged into the ghoulpooled darkness of earth's bowels; for behind the last of the creatures the great brazen door clanged shut with a deafening peal of metallic music whose reverberations swelled out to the distant world to hail the rising sun as Memnon hails it from the banks of the Nile.

THAT HELL-BOUND TRAIN

by Robert Bloch

WHEN Martin was a little boy, his Daddy was a Railroad Man. He never rode the high iron, but he walked the tracks for the CB&Q, and he was proud of his job. And when he got drunk (which was every night) he sang this old song about *That Hell-Bound Train*.

Martin didn't quite remember any of the words, but he couldn't forget the way his Daddy sang them out. And when Daddy made the mistake of getting drunk in the afternoon and got squeezed between a Pennsy tank-car and an AT&SF gondola, Martin sort of wondered why the Brotherhood didn't sing the song at his funeral.

After that, things didn't go so good for Martin, but somehow he always recalled Daddy's song. When Mom up and ran off with a travelling salesman from Keokuk (Daddy must have turned over in his grave, knowing she'd done such a thing, and with a *passenger*, too!) Martin hummed the tune to himself every night in the Orphan Home. And after Martin himself ran away, he used to whistle the song at night in the jungles, after the other bindlestiffs were asleep.

Martin was on the road for four-five years before he realized he wasn't getting anyplace. Of course, he'd tried his hand at a lot of things – picking fruit in Oregon, washing dishes in a Montana hash-house – but he just wasn't cut out

for seasonal labour or pearl-diving, either. Then he graduated to stealing hub-caps in Denver, and for a while he did pretty well with tyres in Oklahoma City, but by the time he'd put in six months on the chain-gang down in Alabama he knew he had no future drifting around this way on his own.

So he tried to get on the railroad like his Daddy had, but they told him times were bad; and between the truckers and the airlines and those fancy new fintails General Motors was making, it looked as if the days of the highballers were just about over.

But Martin couldn't keep away from the railroads. Wherever he travelled, he rode the rods; he'd rather hop a freight heading north in sub-zero weather than lift his thumb to hitch a ride with a Cadillac headed for Florida. Because Martin was loyal to the memory of his Daddy, and he wanted to be as much like him as possible, come what may. Of course, he couldn't get drunk every night, but whenever he did manage to get hold of a can of Sterno, he'd sit there under a nice warm culvert and think about the old days.

Often as not, he'd hum the song about *That Hell-Bound Train*. That was the train the drunks and sinners rode; the gambling men and the grifters, the big-time spenders, the skirt chasers, and all the jolly crew. It would be fun to take a trip in such good company, but Martin didn't like to think of what happened when that train finally pulled into the Depot Way Down Yonder. He didn't figure on spending eternity stoking boilers in Hell, without even a company union to protect him. Still, it would be a lovely ride. If there *was* such a thing as a Hell-Bound Train. Which, of course, there wasn't.

At least, Martin didn't *think* there was, until that evening when he found himself walking the tracks heading south, just outside of Appleton Junction. The night was cold and dark, the way November nights are in the Fox River Valley,

and he knew he'd have to work his way down to New Orleans for the winter, or maybe even Texas. Somehow he didn't much feel like going, even though he'd heard tell that a lot of those Texans' automobiles had solid gold hub-caps.

No, sir, he just wasn't cut out for petty larceny. It was worse than a sin – it was unprofitable, too. Bad enough to do the Devil's work, but then to get such miserable pay on top of it! Maybe he'd better let the Salvation Army convert him.

Martin trudged along, humming Daddy's song, waiting for a rattler to pull out of the Junction behind him. He'd have to catch it – there was nothing else for him to do.

Too bad there wasn't a chance to make a better deal for himself, somewhere. Might as well be a rich sinner as a poor sinner. Besides, he had a notion that he could strike a pretty shrewd bargain. He'd thought about it a lot, these past few years, particularly when the Sterno was working. Then his ideas would come on strong, and he could figure a way to rig the setup. But that was all nonsense, of course. He might as well join the gospel-shouters and turn into a working-stiff like all the rest of the world. No use dreaming dreams; a song was only a song and there was no Hell-Bound Train.

There was only *this* train, rumbling out of the night, roaring towards him along the track from the south.

Martin peered ahead, but his eyes couldn't match his ears, and so far all he could recognize was the sound. It *was* a train, though; he felt the steel shudder and sing beneath his feet.

And yet, how could it be? The next station south was Neenah-Menasha, and there was nothing due out of there for hours.

The clouds were thick overhead, and the field-mists roll like a cold fog in a November midnight. Even so, Martin should have been able to see the headlights as the train rushed on. But there were no lights.

There was only the whistle, screaming out of the black throat of the night. Martin could recognize the equipment of just about any locomotive ever built, but he'd never heard a whistle that sounded like this one. It wasn't signalling; it was screaming like a lost soul.

He stepped to one side, for the train was almost on top of him now, and suddenly there it was, looming along the tracks and grinding to a stop in less time than he'd ever believed possible. The wheels hadn't been oiled, because they screamed, too, screamed like the damned. But the train slid to a halt and the screams died away into a series of low, groaning sounds, and Martin looked up and saw that this was a passenger train. It was big and black, without a single light shining in the engine cab or any of the long string of cars, and Martin couldn't read any lettering on the sides, but he was pretty sure this train didn't belong on the Northwestern Road.

He was even more sure when he saw the man clamber down out of the forward car. There was something wrong about the way he walked, as though one of his feet dragged. And there was something even more disturbing about the lantern he carried, and what he did with it. The lantern was dark, and when the man alighted, he held it up to his mouth and blew. Instantly the lantern glowed redly. You don't have to be a member of the Railway Brotherhood to know that this is a mighty peculiar way of lighting a lantern.

As the figure approached, Martin recognized the conductor's cap perched on his head, and this made him feel a little better for a moment – until he noticed that it was worn a bit too high, as though there might be something sticking up on the forehead underneath it.

Still, Martin knew his manners, and when the man smiled at him, he said, "Good evening, Mr. Conductor."

"Good evening, Martin."

"How did you know my name?"

The man shrugged. "How did you know I was the conductor?"

"You *are*, aren't you?"

"To you, yes. Although other people, in other walks of life, may recognize me in different roles. For instance, you ought to see what I look like to the folks out in Hollywood." The man grinned. "I travel a great deal," he explained.

"What brings you here?" Martin asked.

"Why, you ought to know the answer to that, Martin. I came because you needed me."

"I did?"

"Don't play the innocent. Ordinarily, I seldom bother with single individuals any more. The way the world is going, I can expect to carry a full load of passengers without soliciting business. Your name has been down on the list for several years already - I reserved a seat for you as a matter of course. But then, tonight, I suddenly realized you were backsliding. Thinking of joining the Salvation Army, weren't you?"

"Well - " Martin hesitated.

"Don't be ashamed. To err is human, as somebody-or-other once said. *Reader's Digest*, wasn't it? Never mind. The point is, I felt you needed me. So I switched over and came your way."

"What for?"

"Why, to offer you a ride, of course. Isn't it better to travel comfortably by train than to march along the cold streets behind a Salvation Army band? Hard on the feet, they tell me, and even harder on the eardrums."

"I'm not sure I'd care to ride your train, sir," Martin said. "Considering where I'm likely to end up."

"Ah, yes. The old argument." The conductor sighed. "I suppose you'd prefer some sort of bargain, is that it?"

"Exactly," Martin answered.

"Well, I'm afraid I'm all through with that sort of thing. As I mentioned before, times have changed. There's no

shortage of prospective passengers any more. Why should I offer you any special inducements?"

"You must want me, or else you wouldn't have bothered to go out of your way to find me."

The conductor sighed again. "There you have a point. Pride was always my besetting weakness, I admit. And somehow I'd hate to lose you to the competition, after thinking of you as my own all these years." He hesitated. "Yes, I'm prepared to deal with you on your own terms, if you insist."

"The terms?" Martin asked.

"Standard proposition. Anything you want."

"Ah," said Martin.

"But I warn you in advance, there'll be no tricks. I'll grant you any wish you can name – but in return you must promise to ride the train when the time comes."

"Suppose it never comes?"

"It will."

"Suppose I've got the kind of a wish that will keep me off for ever?"

"There is no such wish."

"Don't be too sure."

"Let me worry about that," the conductor told him. "No matter what you have in mind, I warn you that I'll collect in the end. And there'll be none of this last-minute hocus-pocus, either. No last-hour repentances, no blonde *frauleins* or fancy lawyers showing up to get you off. I offer a clean deal. That is to say, you'll get what you want, and I'll get what I want."

"I've heard you trick people. They say you're worse than a used-car salesman."

"Now wait a minute –"

"I apologize," Martin said, hastily. "But it is supposed to be a fact that you can't be trusted."

"I admit it. On the other hand, you seem to think you have found a way out."

"A sure-fire proposition."

"Sure-fire? Very funny!" The man began to chuckle, then halted. "But we waste valuable time, Martin. Let's get down to cases. What do you want from me?"

"A single wish."

"Name it and I shall grant it."

"Anything, you said?"

"Anything at all."

"Very well, then." Martin took a deep breath. "I want to be able to stop Time."

"Right now?"

"No. Not yet. And not for everybody. I realize that would be impossible, of course. But I want to be able to stop Time for myself. Just once, in the future. Whenever I get to a point where I know I'm happy and contented, that's where I'd like to stop. So I can just keep on being happy for ever."

"That's quite a proposition," the conductor mused. "I've got to admit I've never heard anything just like it before – and, believe me, I've listened to some lulus in my day." He grinned at Martin. "You've really been thinking about this, haven't you?"

"For years," Martin admitted. Then he coughed. "Well, what do you say?"

"It's not impossible in terms of your own *subjective* time-sense," the conductor murmured. "Yes, I think it could be arranged."

"But I mean *really* to stop. Not for me just to *imagine* it."

"I understand. And it can be done."

"Then you'll agree?"

"Why not? I promised you, didn't I? Give me your hand."

Martin hesitated. "Will it hurt very much? I mean, I don't like the sight of blood, and –"

"Nonsense! You've been listening to a lot of poppycock. We already have made our bargain, my boy. No need for a lot of childish rigmarole. I merely intend to put something into your hand. The ways and means of fulfilling your wish.

After all, there's no telling at just what moment you may decide to exercise the agreement, and I can't drop everything and come running. So it's better to regulate matters for yourself."

"You're going to give me a time-stopper?"

"That's the general idea. As soon as I can decide what would be practical." The conductor hesitated. "Ah, the very thing! Here, take my watch."

He pulled it out of his vest-pocket; a railroad watch in a silver case. He opened the back and made a delicate adjustment; Martin tried to see just exactly what he was doing, but the fingers moved in a blinding blur.

"There we are," the conductor smiled. "It's all set, now. When you finally decide where you'd like to call a halt, merely turn the stem in reverse and unwind the watch until it stops. When it stops, Time stops, for you. Simple enough?"

"Sure thing."

"Then, here, take it." And the conductor dropped the watch into Martin's hand.

The young man closed his fingers tightly around the case. "That's all there is to it, eh?"

"Absolutely. But remember - you can stop the watch only once. So you'd better make sure that you're satisfied with the moment you choose to prolong. I caution you in all fairness; make very certain of your choice."

"I will." Martin grinned. "And since you've been so fair about it, I'll be fair, too. There's one thing you seem to have forgotten. It doesn't really matter *what* moment I choose. Because once I stop Time for myself, that means I stay where I am for ever. I'll never have to get any older. And if I don't get any older, I'll never die. And if I never die, then I'll never have to take a ride on your train."

The conductor turned away. His shoulders shook convulsively, and he may have been crying. "And you said *I* was worse than a used-car salesman," he gasped, in a strangled voice.

Then he wandered off into the fog, and the train-whistle gave an impatient shriek, and all at once it was moving swiftly down the track, rumbling out of sight in the darkness.

Martin stood there, blinking down at the silver watch in his hand. If it wasn't that he could actually see it and feel it there, and if he couldn't smell that peculiar odour, he might have thought he'd imagined the whole thing from start to finish – train, conductor, bargain, and all.

But he had the watch, and he could recognize the scent left by the train as it departed, even though there aren't many locomotives around that use sulphur and brimstone as fuel.

And he had no doubts about his bargain. Better still, he had no doubts as to the advantages of the fact he'd made. That's what came of thinking things through to a logical conclusion. Some fools would have settled for wealth, or power, or Kim Novak. Daddy might have sold out for a fifth of whisky.

Martin knew that he'd made a better deal. Better? It was foolproof. All he needed to do now was choose his moment. And when the right time came, it was his – for ever.

He put the watch in his pocket and started back down the railroad track. He hadn't really had a destination in mind before, but he did now. He was going to find a moment of happiness . . .

Now young Martin wasn't altogether a ninny. He realized perfectly well that happiness is a relative thing; there are conditions and degrees of contentment, and they vary with one's lot in life. As a hobo, he was often satisfied with a warm handout, a double-length bench in the park, or a can of Sterno made in 1957 (a vintage year). Many a time he had reached a state of momentary bliss through such simple agencies, but he was aware that there were better things. Martin determined to seek them out.

Within two days he was in the great city of Chicago.

Quite naturally, he drifted over to West Madison Street, and there he took steps to elevate his role in life. He became a city bum, a panhandler, a moocher. Within a week he had risen to the point where happiness was a meal in a regular one-arm luncheon joint, a two-bit flop on a real army cot in a real flophouse, and a full fifth of muscatel.

There was a night, after enjoying all three of these luxuries to the full, when Martin was tempted to unwind his watch at the pinnacle of intoxication. Then he remembered the faces of the honest johns he'd braced for a hand-out today. Sure, they were squares, but they were prosperous. They wore good clothes, held good jobs, drove nice cars. And for them, happiness was even more ecstatic; they ate dinner in fine hotels, they slept on innerspring mattresses, they drank blended whisky.

Squares or no, they had something there. Martin fingered his watch, put aside the temptation to hock it for another bottle of muscatel, and went to sleep determining to get himself a job and improve his happiness-quotient.

When he awoke he had a hangover, but the determination was still with him. It stayed long after the hangover disappeared, and before the month was out Martin found himself working for a general contractor over on the South Side, at one of the big rehabilitation projects. He hated the grind, but the pay was good, and pretty soon he got himself a one-room apartment out on Blue Island Avenue. He was accustomed to eating in decent restaurants now, and he bought himself a comfortable bed, and every Saturday night he went down to the corner tavern. It was all very pleasant, but —

The foreman liked his work and promised him a raise in a month. If he waited around, the raise would mean that he could afford a second-hand car. With a car, he could even start picking up a girl for a date now and then. Lots of the other fellows on the job did, and they seemed pretty happy

So Martin kept on working, and the raise came through and the car came through and pretty soon a couple of girls came through.

The first time it happened, he wanted to unwind his watch immediately. Until he got to thinking about what some of the older men always said. There was a guy named Charlie, for example, who worked alongside him on the hoist. "When you're young and don't know the score, maybe you get a kick out of running around with those pigs. But after a while, you want something better. A nice girl of your own. That's the ticket."

Well, he might have something there. At least, Martin owed it to himself to find out. If he didn't like it better, he could always go back to what he had.

It was worth a try. Of course, nice girls don't grow on trees (if they did, a lot more men would become forest rangers) and almost six months went by before Martin met Lillian Gillis. By that time he'd had another promotion and was working inside, in the office. They made him go to night school to learn how to do simple book-keeping, but it meant another fifteen bucks extra a week, and it was nicer working indoors.

And Lillian *was* a lot of fun. When she told him she'd marry him, Martin was almost sure that the time was now. Except that she was sort of – well, she was a *nice* girl, and she said they'd have to wait until they were married. Of course, Martin couldn't expect to marry her until he had a little money saved up, and another raise would help, too.

That took a year. Martin was patient, because he knew it was going to be worth it. Every time he had any doubts, he took out his watch and looked at it. But he never showed it to Lillian, or anybody else. Most of the other men wore expensive wristwatches and the old silver railroad watch looked just a little cheap.

Martin smiled as he gazed at the stem. Just a few twists and he'd have something none of these other poor working

slobs would ever have. Permanent satisfaction, with his blushing bride –

Only getting married turned out to be just the beginning. Sure, it was wonderful, but Lillian told him how much better things would be if they could move into a new place and fix it up. Martin wanted decent furniture, a TV set, a nice car.

So he started taking night courses and got a promotion to the front office. With the baby coming, he wanted to stick around and see his son arrive. And when it came, he realized he'd have to wait until it got a little older, started to walk and talk and develop a personality of its own.

About this time the company sent him out on the road as a troubleshooter on some of those other jobs, and now *he* was eating at those good hotels, living high on the hog and the expense-account. More than once he was tempted to unwind his watch. This was the good life. And he realized it could be even better if he just didn't have to *work*. Sooner or later, if he could cut in on one of the company deals, he could make a pile and retire. Then everything would be ideal.

It happened, but it took time. Martin's son was going to high school before he really got up there into the chips. Martin got the feeling that it was now or never, because he wasn't exactly a kid any more.

But right about then he met Sherry Westcott, and she didn't seem to think he was middle-aged at all, in spite of the way he was losing hair and adding stomach. She taught him that a *toupe* could cover the bald spot and a cummerbund could cover the potgut. In fact, she taught him quite a number of things, and he so enjoyed learning that he actually took out his watch and prepared to unwind it.

Unfortunately, he chose the very moment that the private detectives broke down the door of the hotel room, and then there was a long stretch of time when Martin was so busy

fighting the divorce action that he couldn't honestly say he was enjoying any given moment.

When he made the final settlement with Lil he was broke again, and Sherry didn't seem to think he was so young, after all. So he squared his shoulders and went back to work.

He made his pile, eventually, but it took longer this time, and there wasn't much chance to have fun along the way. The fancy dames in the fancy cocktail lounges didn't seem to interest him any more, and neither did the liquor. Besides, the Doc had warned him about that.

But there were other pleasures for a rich man to investigate. Travel, for instance – and not riding the rods from one hick burg to another, either. Martin went around the world *via* plane and luxury liner. For a while it seemed as though he would find his moment, after all. Visiting the Taj Mahal by moonlight, the moon's radiance was reflected from the back of the battered old watch-case, and Martin got ready to unwind it. Nobody else was there to watch him –

And that's why he hesitated. Sure, this was an enjoyable moment, but he was alone. Lil and the kid were gone, Sherry was gone, and somehow he'd never had time to make any friends. Maybe if he found a few congenial people, he'd have the ultimate happiness. That must be the answer – it wasn't just money or power or sex or seeing beautiful things. The real satisfaction lay in friendship.

So on the boat trip home, Martin tried to strike up a few acquaintances at the ship's bar. But all these people were so much younger, and Martin had nothing in common with them. Also, they wanted to dance and drink, and Martin wasn't in condition to appreciate such pastimes. Nevertheless, he tried.

Perhaps that's why he had the little accident the day before they docked in San Francisco. "Little accident" was the ship's doctor's way of describing it, but Martin noticed he looked very grave when he told him to stay in bed, and

he'd called an ambulance to meet the liner at the dock and take the patient right to the hospital.

At the hospital, all the expensive treatment and expensive smiles and the expensive words didn't fool Martin any. He was an old man with a bad heart, and they thought he was going to die.

But he could fool them. He still had the watch. He found it in his coat when he put on his clothes and sneaked out of the hospital before dawn.

He didn't have to die. He could cheat death with a single gesture – and he intended to do it as a free man, out there under a free sky.

That was the real secret of happiness. He understood it now. Not even friendship meant as much as freedom. This was the best thing of all – to be free of friends or family or the furies of the flesh.

Martin walked slowly beside the embankment under the night sky. Come to think of it, he was just about back where he'd started, so many years ago. But the moment was good, good enough to prolong for ever. Once a bum, always a bum.

He smiled as he thought about it, and then the smile twisted sharply and suddenly, like the pain twisting sharply and suddenly in his chest. The world began to spin and he fell down on the side of the embankment.

He couldn't see very well, but he was still conscious, and he knew what had happened. Another stroke, and a bad one. Maybe this was it. Except that he wouldn't be a fool any longer. He wouldn't wait to see what was still around the corner.

Right now was his chance to use his power and save his life. And he was going to do it. He could still move, nothing could stop him.

He groped in his pocket and pulled out the old silver watch, fumbling with the stem. A few twists and he'd cheat death, he'd never have to ride that Hell-Bound Train. He could go on for ever.

For ever.

Martin had never really considered the words before. To go on for ever – but *how*? Did he *want* to go on for ever, like this; a sick old man, lying helplessly here in the grass?

No. He couldn't do it. He wouldn't do it. And suddenly he wanted very much to cry, because he knew that somewhere along the line he'd outsmarted himself. And now it was too late. His eyes dimmed, there was this roaring in his ears . . .

He recognized the roaring, of course, and he wasn't at all surprised to see the train come rushing out of the fog up there on the embankment. He wasn't surprised when it stopped, either, or when the conductor climbed off and walked slowly towards him.

The conductor hadn't changed a bit. Even his grin was still the same.

"Hello, Martin," he said. "All aboard."

"I know," Martin whispered. "But you'll have to carry me. I can't walk. I'm not even really talking any more, am I?"

"Yes you are," the conductor said. "I can hear you fine. And you can walk, too." He leaned down and placed his hand on Martin's chest. There was a moment of icy numbness, and then, sure enough, Martin could walk after all.

He got up and followed the conductor along the slope, moving to the side of the train.

"In here?" he asked.

"No, the next car," the conductor murmured. "I guess you're entitled to ride Pullman. After all, you're quite a successful man. You've tasted the joys of wealth and position and prestige. You've known the pleasures of marriage and fatherhood. You've sampled the delights of dining and drinking and debauchery, too, and you travelled high, wide and handsome. So let's not have any last-minute recriminations."

"All right," Martin sighed. "I guess I can't blame you

for my mistakes. On the other hand, you can't take credit for what happened, either. I worked for everything I got. I did it all on my own. I didn't even need your watch."

"So you didn't," the conductor said, smiling. "But would you mind giving it back to me now?"

"Need it for the next sucker, eh?" Martin muttered.

"Perhaps."

Something about the way he said it made Martin look up. He tried to see the conductor's eyes, but the brim of his cap cast a shadow. So Martin looked down at the watch instead, as if seeking an answer there.

"Tell me something," he said, softly. "If I give you the watch, what will you do with it?"

"Why, throw it into the ditch," the conductor told him. "That's all I'll do with it." And he held out his hand.

"What if somebody comes along and finds it? And twists the stem backwards, and stops Time?"

"Nobody would do that," the conductor murmured. "Even if they knew."

"You mean, it was all a trick? This is only an ordinary, cheap watch?"

"I didn't say that," whispered the conductor. "I only said that no one has ever twisted the stem backwards. They've all been like you, Martin - looking ahead to find that perfect happiness. Waiting for the moment that never comes."

The conductor held out his hand again.

Martin sighed and shook his head. "You cheated me, after all."

"You cheated yourself, Martin. And now you're going to ride that Hell-Bound Train."

He pushed Martin up the steps and into the car ahead. As he entered, the train began to move and the whistle screamed. And Martin stood there in the swaying Pullman, gazing down the aisle at the other passengers. He could see them sitting there, and somehow it didn't seem strange at all.

Here they were; the drunks and the sinners, the gambling men and the grifters, the big-time spenders, the skirt-chasers, and all the jolly crew. They knew where they were going, of course, but they didn't seem to be particularly concerned at the moment. The blinds were drawn on the windows, yet it was light inside, and they were all sitting around and singing and passing the bottle and laughing it up, telling their jokes and bragging their brags, just the way Daddy used to sing about them in the old song.

"Mighty nice travelling companions," Martin said. "Why, I've never seen such a pleasant bunch of people. I mean, they seem to be really enjoying themselves!"

"Sorry," the conductor told him. "I'm afraid things may not be quite so enjoyable, once we pull into that Depot Way Down Yonder."

For the third time, he held out his hand. "Now, before you sit down, if you'll just give me that watch. I mean, a bargain's a bargain -"

Martin smiled. "A bargain's a bargain," he echoed. "I agreed to ride your train if I could stop Time when I found the right moment of happiness. So, if you don't mind, I think I'll just make certain adjustments."

Very slowly, Martin twisted the silver watch-stem.

"No!" gasped the conductor. "No!"

But the watch-stem turned.

"Do you realize what you've done?" the conductor panted. "Now we'll never reach the Depot. We'll just go on riding, all of us, for ever and ever!"

Martin grinned. "I know," he said. "But the fun is in the trip, not the destination. You taught me that. And I'm looking forward to a wonderful trip."

The conductor groaned. "All right," he sighed, at last. "You got the best of me, after all, but when I think of spending eternity trapped here riding this train -"

"Cheer up!" Martin told him. "It won't be that bad. Looks

like we have plenty to eat and drink. And after all, these are *your* kind of folks.”

“But I’m the conductor! Think of the endless work this means for me!”

“Don’t let it worry you,” Martin said. “Look, maybe I can even help. If you were to find me another one of those caps, now, and let me keep this watch – ”

And that’s the way it finally worked out. Wearing his cap and silver watch, there’s no happier person in or out of this world – now or for ever – than Martin. Martin, the new brakeman on That Hell-Bound Train.

THE EMISSARY

by Ray Bradbury

MARTIN knew it was autumn again, for Dog ran into the house bringing wind and frost and a smell of apples turned to cider under trees. In dark clock-springs of hair, Dog fetched goldenrod, dust of farewell-summer, acorn-husk, hair of squirrel, feather of departed robin, sawdust from fresh-cut cordwood, and leaves like charcoals shaken from a blaze of maple trees. Dog jumped. Showers of brittle fern, blackberry vine, marsh-grass sprang over the bed where Martin shouted. No doubt, no doubt of it at all, this incredible beast was October!

"Here, boy, here!"

And Dog settled to warm Martin's body with all the bonfires and subtle burnings of the season, to fill the room with soft or heavy, wet or dry odours of far-travelling. In spring, he smelled of lilac, iris, lawn-mowed grass; in summer, ice-cream-moustached, he came pungent with fire-cracker, Roman candle, pinwheel, baked by the sun. But autumn! Autumn!

"Dog, what's it like outside?"

And lying there, Dog told as he always told. Lying there, Martin found autumn as in the old days before sickness bleached him white on his bed. Here was his contact, his carry-all, the quick-moving part of himself he sent with a yell to run and return, circle and scent, collect and deliver

the time and texture of worlds in town, country, by creek, river, lake, down-cellar, up-attic, in closet or coal-bin. Ten dozen times a day he was gifted with sunflower seed, cinder-path, milkweed, horse-chestnut, or full flame-smell of pumpkin. Through the loomings of the universe Dog shuttled; the design was hid in his pelt. Put out your hand, it was there. . . .

"And where did you go this morning?"

But he knew without hearing where Dog had rattled down hills where autumn lay in cereal crispness, where children lay in funeral pyres, in rustling heaps, the leaf-buried but watchful dead, as Dog and the world blew by. Martin trembled his fingers, searched the thick fur, read the long journey. Through stubbled fields, over glitters of ravine creek, down marbled spread of cemetery yard, into woods. In the great reason of spices and rare incense, now Martin ran through his emissary, around, about, and home!

The bedroom door opened.

"That dog of yours is in trouble again."

Mother brought in a tray of fruit salad, cocoa, and toast, her blue eyes snapping.

"Mother . . ."

"Always digging places. Dug a hole in Miss Tarkin's garden this morning. She's spittin' mad. That's the fourth hole he's dug there this week."

"Maybe he's looking for something."

"Fiddlesticks, he's too darned curious. If he doesn't behave, he'll be locked up."

Martin looked at this woman as if she were a stranger.

"Oh, you wouldn't do that! How would I learn anything? How would I find things out if Dog didn't tell me?"

Mom's voice was quieter. "Is that what he does - tell you things?"

"There's nothing I don't know when he goes out and around and back, *nothing* I can't find out from him!"

They both sat looking at Dog and the dry strewings of mould and seed over the quilt.

"Well, if he'll just stop digging where he shouldn't, he can run all he wants," said Mother.

"Here, boy here!"

And Martin snapped a tin note to the dog's collar :

MY OWNER IS MARTIN SMITH - TEN YEARS OLD - SICK IN BED - VISITORS WELCOME.

Dog barked. Mother opened the downstairs door and let him out.

Martin sat listening.

Far off and away you could hear Dog in the quiet autumn rain that was falling now. You could hear the barking-jingling fade, rise, fade again as he cut down alley, over lawn, to fetch back Mr. Holloway and the oiled metallic smell of the delicate snowflake-interiored watches he repaired in his home shop. Or maybe he would bring Mr. Jacobs, the grocer, whose clothes were rich with lettuce, celery, tomatoes, and the secret tinned and hidden smell of the red demons stamped on cans of devilled ham. Mr. Jacobs and his unseen pink-meat devils waved often from the yard below. Or Dog brought Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Gillespie, Mr. Smith, Mrs. Holmes, *any* friend or near-friend, encountered, cornered, begged, worried, and at last shepherded home for lunch, or tea-and-biscuits.

Now, listening, Martin heard Dog below, with footsteps moving in a light rain behind him. The downstairs bell rang, Mom opened the door, light voices murmured. Martin sat forward, face shining. The stair treads creaked. A young woman's voice laughed quietly. Miss Haight, of course, his teacher from school!

The bedroom door sprang open.

Martin had company.

Morning, afternoon, evening, dawn and dusk, sun and moon circled with Dog, who faithfully reported temperatures of turf and air, colour of earth and tree, consistency of

mist or rain, but – most important of all – brought back again and again – Miss Haight.

On Saturday, Sunday and Monday she baked Martin orange-iced cupcakes, brought him library books about dinosaurs and cavemen. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday somehow he beat her at dominoes, somehow she lost at checkers, and soon, she cried, he'd defeat her handsomely at chess. On Friday, Saturday and Sunday they talked and never stopped talking, and she was so young and laughing and handsome and her hair was a soft, shining brown like the season outside the window, and she walked clear, clean and quick, a heartbeat warm in the bitter afternoon when he heard it. Above all, she had the secret of signs, and could read and interpret Dog and the symbols she searched out and plucked forth from his coat with her miraculous fingers. Eyes shut, softly laughing, in a gypsy's voice, she divined the world from the treasures in her hands.

And on Monday afternoon, Miss Haight was dead.

Martin sat up in bed, slowly.

"Dead?" he whispered.

Dead, said his mother, yes, dead, killed in an auto accident a mile out of town. Dead, yes, dead, which meant cold to Martin, which meant silence and whiteness and winter come long before its time. Dead, silent, cold, white. The thoughts circled round, blew down, and settled in whispers.

Martin held Dog, thinking; turned to the wall. The lady with the autumn-coloured hair. The lady with the laughter that was very gentle and never made fun and the eyes that watched your mouth to see everything you ever said. The other-half-of-autumn-lady, who told what was left untold by Dog, about the world. The heartbeat at the still centre of grey afternoon. The heartbeat fading . . .

"Mom? What do they do in the graveyard, Mom, under the ground? Just lay there?"

"*Lie* there."

"*Lie* there? Is that *all* they do? It doesn't sound like much fun."

"For goodness' sake, it's not made out to be fun."

"Why don't they jump up and run around once in a while if they get tired lying there? God's pretty silly –"

"Martin!"

"Well, you'd think He'd treat people better than to tell them to lie still for keeps. That's impossible. Nobody can do it! I tried once. Dog tries. I tell him, 'Dead, Dog!' He plays dead awhile, then gets sick and tired and wags his tail or opens one eye and looks at me, bored. Boy, I bet sometimes those graveyard people do the same, huh, Dog?"

Dog barked.

"Be still with that kind of talk!" said Mother.

Martin looked off into space.

"Bet that's exactly what they do," he said.

Autumn burnt the trees bare and ran Dog still farther around, fording creek, prowling graveyard as was his custom, and back in the dusk to fire off volleys of barking that shook windows wherever he turned.

In the late last days of October, Dog began to act as if the wind had changed and blew from a strange country. He stood quivering on the porch below. He whined, his eyes fixed at the empty land beyond town. He brought no visitors for Martin. He stood for hours each day, as if leashed, trembling, then shot away straight, as if someone had called. Each night he returned later, with no one following. Each night, Martin sank deeper and deeper in his pillow.

"Well, people are busy," said Mother. "They haven't time to notice the tag Dog carries. Or they mean to come visit, but forget."

But there was more to it than that. There was the fevered shining in Dog's eyes, and his whimpering tic late at night, in some private dream. His shivering in the dark, under the bed. The way he sometimes stood half the night, looking at Martin as if some great and impossible secret was his and

he knew no way to tell it save by savagely thumping his tail, or turning in endless circles, never to lie down, spinning and spinning again.

On October thirtieth, Dog ran out and didn't come back at all, even when after supper Martin heard his parents call and call. The hour grew late, the streets and sidewalks stood empty, the air moved cold about the house and there was nothing, nothing.

Long after midnight, Martin lay watching the world beyond the cool, clear glass windows. Now there was not even autumn, for there was no Dog to fetch it in. There would be no winter, for who could bring the snow to melt in your hands? Father, Mother? No, not the same. They couldn't play the game with its special secrets and rules, its sounds and pantomimes. No more seasons. No more time. The go-between, the emissary, was lost to the wild throngings of civilization, poisoned, stolen, hit by a car, left somewhere in a culvert. . . .

Sobbing, Martin turned his face to his pillow. The world was a picture under glass, untouchable. The world was dead.

Martin twisted in bed and in three days the last Hallowe'en pumpkins were rotting in trash cans, papier-mâché skulls and witches were burnt on bonfires, and ghosts were stacked on shelves with other linens until next year.

To Martin, Hallowe'en had been nothing more than one evening when tin horns cried off in the cold autumn stars, children blew like goblin leaves along the flinty walks, flinging their heads, or cabbages, at porches, soap-writing names or similar magic symbols on icy windows. All of it as distant, unfathomable, and nightmarish as a puppet show seen from so many miles away that there is no sound or meaning.

For three days in November, Martin watched alternate light and shadow sift across his ceiling. The fire-pageant was over for ever; autumn lay in cold ashes. Martin sank deeper, yet deeper in white marble layers of bed, motionless, listening, always listening. . . .

Friday evening, his parents kissed him good-night and walked out of the house into the hushed cathedral weather towards a motion-picture show. Miss Tarkin from next door stayed on in the parlour below until Martin called down he was sleepy, then took her knitting off home.

In silence, Martin lay following the great move of stars down a clear and moonlit sky, remembering nights such as this when he'd spanned the town with Dog ahead, behind, around about, tracking the green-plush ravine, lapping slumbrous streams gone milky with the fullness of the moon, leaping cemetery tombstones while whispering the marble names; on, quickly on, through shaved meadows where the only motion was the off-on quivering of stars, to streets where shadows would not stand aside for you but crowded all the sidewalks for mile on mile. Run now run! chasing, being chased by bitter smoke, fog, mist, wind, ghost of mind, fright of memory; home, safe, sound, snug-warm, asleep. . . .

Nine o'clock.

Chime. The drowsy clock in the deep stairwell below.
Chime.

Dog, come home, and run the world with you. Dog, bring a thistle with frost on it, or bring nothing else but the wind. Dog, where *are* you? Oh, listen, now, I'll call.

Martin held his breath.

Way off somewhere – a sound.

Martin rose up, trembling.

There, again – the sound.

So small a sound, like a sharp needle-point brushing the sky long miles and many miles away.

The dreamy echo of a dog – barking.

The sound of a dog crossing fields and farms, dirt roads and rabbit paths, running, running, letting out great barks of steam, cracking the night. The sound of a circling dog which came and went, lifted and faded, opened up, shut in, moved forward, went back, as if the animal were kept by someone on a fantastically long chain. As if the dog were

running and someone whistled under the chestnut trees, in mould-shadow, tar-shadow, moon-shadow, walking, and the dog circled back and sprang out again towards home.

Dog! Martin thought, oh, Dog, come home, boy! Listen, oh, listen, where you *been*? Come on, boy, make tracks!

Five, ten, fifteen minutes; near, very near, the bark, the sound. Martin cried out, thrust his feet from the bed, leaned to the window. Dog! Listen, boy! Dog! Dog! He said it over and over. Dog! Dog! Wicked Dog, run off and gone all these days! Bad Dog, good Dog, home, boy, hurry, and bring what you can!

Near now, near, up the street, barking, to knock clapboard housefronts with sound, whirl iron cocks on rooftops in the moon, firing off volleys – Dog! now at the door below. . . .

Martin shivered.

Should he run – let Dog in, or wait for Mom and Dad? Wait? Oh, God, wait? But what if Dog ran off again? No, he'd go down, snatch the door wide, yell, grab Dog in, and run upstairs so fast, laughing, crying, holding tight, that . . .

Dog stopped barking.

Hey! Martin almost broke the window, jerking to it.

Silence. As if someone had told Dog to hush now, hush, hush.

A full minute passed. Martin clenched his fists.

Below, a faint whimpering.

Then, slowly, the downstairs front door opened. Someone was kind enough to have opened the door for Dog. Of course! Dog had brought Mr. Jacobs or Mr. Gillespie or Miss Tarkins, or . . .

The downstairs door shut.

Dog raced upstairs, whining, flung himself on the bed.

"Dog, Dog, where've you *been*, what've you *done*! Dog, Dog!"

And he crushed Dog hard and long to himself, weeping. Dog, Dog. He laughed and shouted. Dog! But after a moment he stopped laughing and crying, suddenly.

He pulled away. He held the animal and looked at him, eyes widening.

The odour coming from Dog was different.

It was a smell of strange earth. It was a smell of night within night, the smell of digging down deep in shadow through earth that had lain cheek by jowl with things that were long hidden and decayed. A stinking and rancid soil fell away in clods of dissolution from Dog's muzzle and paws. He had dug deep. He had dug very deep indeed. That *was* it, wasn't it ? wasn't it? *wasn't* it?

What kind of message was this from Dog? What could such a message mean? The stench – the ripe and awful cemetery earth.

Dog was a bad dog, digging where he shouldn't. Dog was a good dog, always making friends. Dog loved people. Dog brought them home.

And now, moving up the dark hall stairs, at intervals, came the sound of feet, one foot dragged after the other, painfully, slowly, slowly, slowly.

Dog shivered. A rain of strange night earth fell seething on the bed.

Dog turned.

The bedroom door whispered in.

Martin had company.

THE HELL OF MIRRORS

by Edogawa Rampo

ONE of the queerest friends I ever had was Kan Tanuma. From the very start I suspected that he was mentally unbalanced. Some might have called him just eccentric, but I am convinced he was a lunatic. At any rate, he had one mania – a craze for anything capable of reflecting an image, as well as for all types of lenses. Even as a boy the only toys he would play with were magic lanterns, telescopes, magnifying glasses, kaleidoscopes, prisms, and the like.

Perhaps this strange mania of Tanuma's was hereditary, for his great-grandfather Moribe was also known to have had the same predilection. As evidence there is the collection of objects – primitive glassware and telescopes and ancient books on related subjects – which this Moribe obtained from the early Dutch merchants at Nagasaki. These were handed down to his descendants, and my friend Tanuma was the last in line to receive the heirlooms.

Although episodes concerning Tanuma's craze for mirrors and lenses in his boyhood are almost endless, those I remember most vividly took place in the latter part of his high-school days, when he was deeply involved in the study of physics, especially optics.

One day while we were in the classroom (Tanuma and I were classmates in the same school), the teacher passed around a concave mirror and invited all the students to

observe the reflection of their faces in the glass. When my turn came to look I recoiled with horror, for the numerous festering pimples on my face, so greatly magnified, looked exactly like craters on the moon seen through the gigantic telescope of an astronomical observatory. I might mention that I had always been extremely sensitive about my heavily pimpled face, so much so that the shock I received on this occasion left me with a phobia of looking into such concave mirrors. On one occasion not long after this incident I happened to visit a science exhibition, but when I spotted an extra-large concave mirror mounted in the far distance I took to my heels in holy terror.

Tanuma, however, in sharp contrast to my sensitive feelings, let out a shrill cry of joy as soon as he got his first glance at that concave mirror in the classroom. "Wonderful . . . wonderful!" he shrieked, and all the other students laughed at him.

But to Tanuma the experience was no laughing matter, for he was in dead earnest. Subsequently his love for concave mirrors grew so intense that he was for ever buying all sorts of paraphernalia – wire, cardboard, mirrors, and the like. From these he mischievously began constructing various devilish trick-boxes with the help of many books which he had procured, all devoted to the art of scientific magic.

Following Tanuma's graduation from high school, he showed no inclination to pursue his academic studies further. Instead, with the money which was generously supplied him by his easy-going parents, he built a small laboratory in one corner of his garden and devoted his full time and effort to his craze for optical instruments.

He completely isolated himself in his weird laboratory, and I was the only friend who ever visited him, the others having all given him up because of his growing eccentricity. On each visit I began to feel more and more anxious over his strange doings, for I could see clearly that his malady was going from bad to worse.

About this time both his parents died, leaving him with a handsome inheritance. Now completely free from any supervision, and with ample funds to satisfy his every whim, he began to grow more reckless than ever. At the same time, having now reached the age of twenty, he began to show a keen interest in the opposite sex. This interest intermingled with his morbid craze for optics, and the two grew into a powerful force in which he was completely enmeshed.

Immediately after receiving his inheritance he built a small observatory and equipped it with an astronomical telescope in order to explore the mysteries of the planets. As his house stood on a high elevation, it was an ideal spot for this purpose. But he was not one to be satisfied with such an innocuous occupation. Soon he began to turn his telescope earthwards and to focus the lens on the houses of the surrounding area. Fences and other barriers constituted no obstacle, because his observatory stood on very high ground.

The occupants of the neighbouring houses, utterly unaware of Tanuma's prying eyes peering through his telescope, went about their daily lives without any reserve, their sliding paper windows wide open. As a result Tanuma derived hitherto unknown pleasures from his secret explorations into the private lives of his neighbours. One evening he kindly invited me to take a look, but what I saw made my blush a deep crimson, and I refused to partake any more in his observations.

Not long after, he built a special type of periscope which enabled him to get a full view of the rooms of his many young maidservants while he was sitting in his lab. Unaware of this, the maids showed no restraint in whatever they did in the privacy of their own rooms.

Another episode, which I can never erase from my mind, concerned insects. Tanuma began studying them under a small microscope, deriving childish delight from watching both their fighting and their mating. One particular scene which I had the misfortune of seeing was that of a crushed

flea. This was a gory sight indeed, for, magnified a thousand-fold, it looked like a large wild boar struggling in a pool of blood.

Some time after this, when I called on Tanuma one afternoon and knocked on his laboratory door, there was no answer. So I casually walked in, as was my custom. Inside, it was completely dark, for all the windows were draped with black curtains. And then suddenly on the large wall ahead of me there appeared some blurred and indescribable object, so monstrous in size that it covered the entire space. I was so startled that I stood transfixed.

Gradually the "thing" on the wall began to take definite shape. The first thing that came into focus was a swamp overgrown with black weeds. Beneath it there appeared two immense eyes the size of washtubs, with brown pupils glinting horribly, while at their sides there flowed many rivers of blood on a white plateau. Next came two large caves, from which there seemed to protrude the black bushy ends of large brooms. These, of course, were the hairs growing in the cavities of a gigantic nose. Then followed two thick lips, which looked like two large, crimson cushions; and they kept moving, exposing two rows of white teeth the proportions of roof-tiles.

It was a picture of a human face. Somehow I thought I recognized the features despite their grotesque size.

Just at this point I heard someone calling: "Don't be alarmed! It's only me!" The voice gave me another shock, for the large lips moved in synchronization with the words, and the eyes seemed to smile.

Abruptly, without any warning, the room was filled with light, and the apparition on the wall vanished. Almost simultaneously Tanuma emerged from behind a curtain at the rear of the room.

Grinning mischievously, he came up to me and exclaimed with childish pride: "Wasn't that a remarkable show?" While I continued to stand motionless, still speechless with

wonder, he explained to me that what I had seen was an image of his own face, thrown on the wall by means of a stereopticon which he had had specially constructed to project the human face.

Several weeks later he started another new experiment. This time he built a small room within the laboratory, the interior of which was completely lined with mirrors. The four walls, plus floor and ceiling, were mirrors. Hence, anyone who went inside would be confronted with reflections of every portion of his body; and as the six mirrors reflected one another, the reflections multiplied and re-multiplied *ad infinitum*. Just what the purpose of the room was Tanuma never explained. But I do remember that he invited me on one occasion to enter it. I flatly refused, for I was terrified. But from what the servants told me Tanuma frequently entered the "chamber of mirrors" together with Kimiko, his favourite maid, a buxom girl of eighteen, to enjoy the hidden delights of mirrorland.

The servants also told me that at other times he would enter the chamber alone, staying for many minutes, often as long as an hour. Once he had stayed inside so long that the servants had become alarmed. One of them mustered up enough courage to knock on the door. Tanuma came leaping out, stark naked, and without even a word of explanation, fled to his own room.

I must explain at this juncture that Tanuma's health was fast deteriorating. On the other hand, his craze for optical instruments kept increasing in intensity. Continuing to spend his fortune on his insane hobby, he kept laying in bigger and bigger stocks of mirrors of all shapes and descriptions – concave, convex, corrugated, prismatic – as well as miscellaneous specimens that cast completely distorted reflections. Finally, however, he reached the stage where he could no longer find any further satisfaction unless he himself manufactured his own mirrors. So he established a glass-working plant in his spacious garden, and there, with the help of a

select staff of technicians and workmen, began turning out all kinds of fantastic mirrors. He had no relative to restrain him in his insane ventures, and the handsome wages he paid his servants assured their complete obedience. Hence I felt it was my duty to try and dissuade him from squandering any more of his fast-dwindling fortune. But Tanuma would not listen to me.

I was nevertheless determined to keep an eye on him, fearing he might lose his mind completely, and visited him frequently. And on each occasion I was a witness to some still madder example of his mirror-making orgy, each example becoming more and more difficult to describe.

One of the things he did was to cover one whole wall of his laboratory with a giant mirror. Then in the mirror he cut out five holes; he would thrust his arms, legs, and head through these holes from the back side of the mirror, creating a weird illusion of a trunkless body floating in space.

On other occasions I would find his lab cluttered up with a miscellaneous collection of mirrors of fantastic shapes and sizes – corrugated, concave and convex types predominating – and he would be dancing in their midst, completely naked, in the manner of some primitive pagan ritualist or witch doctor. Every time I beheld these scenes I got the shivers, for the reflection of his madly whirling naked body became contorted and twisted into a thousand variations. Sometimes his head would appear double, his lips swollen to immense proportions; again his belly would swell and rise, then flatten out; his swinging arms would multiply like those found on ancient Chinese Buddhist statues. Indeed, during such times the laboratory was transformed into a purgatory of freaks.

Next, Tanuma rigged up a gigantic kaleidoscope which seemed to fill the entire length of his laboratory. This was rotated by a motor, and with each rotation of the giant cylinder the mammoth flower patterns of the kaleidoscope would change in form and hue – red, pink, purple, green, vermilion, black – like the flowers of an opium addict's

dream. And Tanuma himself would crawl into the cylinder, dancing there crazily among the flowers, his stark naked body and limbs multiplying like the petals of the flowers, making it seem as if he, too, were one of the flowery features of the kaleidoscope.

Nor did his madness end here – far from it. His fantastic creations multiplied rapidly, each on a larger scale than the previous one. Until about this time I had still believed that he was partly sane; but finally even I had to admit he had completely lost his mind. And shortly thereafter came the terrible, tragic climax.

One morning I was suddenly awakened by an excited messenger from Tanuma's house.

"A terrible thing has happened! Miss Kimiko wants you to come immediately!" the messenger cried, his face white as a sheet of rice-paper.

"What's the matter?" I asked, hurriedly getting into my clothes.

"We don't know yet," exclaimed the servant. "But for God's sake, come with me at once!"

I tried to question the servant further, but he was so incoherent that I gave up and hurried as fast as I could to Tanuma's laboratory.

Entering the eerie place, the first person I saw was Kimiko, the attractive young parlourmaid whom Tanuma had made his mistress. Near her stood several of the other maids, all huddled together and gazing horror-struck at a large spherical object reposing in the centre of the room.

This sphere was about twice as large as the ball on which circus clowns often balance themselves. The exterior was completely covered with white cloth. What terrified me was the fantastic way this sphere kept rolling slowly and haphazardly, as if it were alive. Far more terrible, however, was the strange noise that echoed faintly from the interior of the ball – it was a laugh, a spine-chilling laugh that seemed to come from the throat of a creature from some other world.

"What - what's going on? What in the world is happening?" I asked the stunned group.

"We - we don't know," one of the maids replied dazedly. "We think our master's inside. But we can't do anything. We've called several times, but there's been no answer except the weird laughter you hear now."

Hearing this, I approached the sphere gingerly, trying to find out how the sounds got out of the sphere. Soon I discovered several small air holes. Pressing my eye to one of these small openings, I peered inside; but I was blinded by a brilliant light and could see nothing clearly. However, I *did* ascertain one thing - there was a creature inside!

"Tanuma! Tanuma!" I called out several times, putting my mouth against the hole. But the same weird laughter was all that I could hear.

Not knowing what to do next, I stood, uncertainly watching the ball roll about. And then suddenly I noticed the thin lines of a square partition on the smooth exterior surface. I realized at once that this was a door, allowing entry into the sphere. "But if it's a door, where's the knob?" I asked myself. Examining the door carefully, I saw a small screw-hole which must have held some kind of a handle.

At the sight of this I was struck by a terrible thought. "It's quite possible," I told myself, "that the handle has accidentally come loose, trapping inside whoever it is that entered the sphere. If so, the man must have spent the entire night inside, unable to get out."

Searching the floor of the laboratory, I soon found a T-shaped handle. I tried to fit it to the hole, but it would not work, for the stem was broken.

I could not understand why in the world the man inside - if indeed it was a man - didn't shout and scream for help instead of letting out those weird chuckles and laughs. "Maybe," I suddenly reminded myself with a start, "Tanuma is inside and has gone stark raving mad."

I quickly decided that there was but one thing to do. I

hurried to the glass works, picked up a heavy hammer, and rushed back into the lab. Aiming carefully, I brought the hammer down on the globe with all my might. Again and again I struck at the strange object, and it was soon reduced to a mass of thick fragments of glass.

The man who crawled out of the debris was indeed none other than Tanuma. But he was almost unrecognizable, for he had undergone a horrible transformation. His face was pulpy and discoloured; his eyes kept wandering aimlessly; his hair was a shaggy tangle; his mouth was agape, the saliva dripping down in thin, foamy ribbons. His entire expression was that of a raving maniac.

Even the girl Kimiko recoiled with horror after taking one glance at this monstrosity of a man. Needless to say, Tanuma had gone completely insane.

"But how did this come about?" I asked myself. "Could the mere fact of confinement inside this glass sphere have been enough to drive him mad? Moreover, what was his motive in constructing the globe in the first place?"

Although I questioned the servants still huddled close to me, I could learn nothing, for they all swore they had known nothing of the globe, not even that it had existed.

As though completely oblivious of his whereabouts, Tanuma began to wander about the room, still grinning. Kimiko overcame her initial fright with great effort and tearfully tugged at his sleeves. Just at this moment the chief engineer of the glass works arrived on the scene to report for work.

Ignoring his shock at what he saw, I started to fire questions at him relentlessly. The man was so bewildered that he could barely stammer out his replies. But this is what he told me :

A long time ago Tanuma had ordered him to construct this glass sphere. Its walls were half an inch thick and its diameter about four feet. In order to make the interior a one-unit mirror, Tanuma had the workmen and engineers

paint the exterior of the globe with quicksilver, over which they pasted several layers of cotton cloth. The interior of the globe had been built in such a way that there were small cavities here and there as receptacles for electric bulbs which would not protrude. Another feature of the globe was a door just large enough to permit the entrance of an average-sized man.

The engineers and workers had been completely unaware of the purpose of the product, but orders were orders, and so they had gone ahead with their assignment. At last, on the night before, the globe had been finished, complete with an extra-long electric cord fitted to a socket on the outer surface, and it had been carefully brought into the lab. They plugged the cord into a wall socket, and then departed at once, leaving Tanuma alone with the sphere. What happened later was, of course, beyond the realm of their knowledge.

After hearing the chief engineer's story, I asked him to leave. Then, putting Tanuma in the custody of the servants, who led him away to the house proper, I continued to stand alone in the laboratory, my eyes fixed on the glass fragments scattered about the room, desperately trying to solve the mystery of what had happened.

For a long while I stood thus, wrestling with the conundrum. Finally I reached the conclusion that Tanuma, after having completely exhausted every new idea in his mania of optics, had decided that he would construct a glass globe, completely lined with a single-unit mirror, which he would enter in order to see his own reflection.

Why would a man become crazy if he entered a glass globe lined with a mirror? What in the name of the devil had he seen there? When these thoughts passed through my mind, I felt as if I had been stabbed through the spine with a sword of ice.

Did he go mad after taking a glance at himself reflected by a completely spherical mirror? Or did he slowly lose his

sanity after suddenly discovering that he was trapped inside his horrible round glass coffin – together with “that” reflection?

What, then, I asked myself again, had he seen? It was surely something completely beyond the scope of human imagination. Assuredly, never before had anyone shut himself up within the confines of a mirror-lined sphere. Even a trained physicist could not have guessed exactly what sort of vision would be created inside that sphere. Probably it would be a thing so unthinkable as to be utterly out of this world of ours.

So strange and terrifying must have been this reflection, of whatever shape it was, as it filled Tanuma’s complete range of vision, that it would have made any mortal insane.

The only thing we know is the reflection cast by a concave mirror, which is only one section of a spherical whole. It is a monstrously huge magnification. But who could possibly imagine what the result would be when one is wrapped up in a complete succession of concave mirrors?

My hapless friend, undoubtedly, had tried to explore the regions of the unknown, violating sacred taboos, thereby incurring the wrath of the gods. By trying to pry open the secret portals of forbidden knowledge with his weird mania of optics he had destroyed himself.

DANSE MACABRE

by Mervyn Peake

WHETHER it was the full moon that woke me, I do not know. It may have been. Or it may be that the melancholy which had settled on my spirit and which coloured my dreams had become too strong for me to bear and had broken through my sleep and left me, of a sudden, aware and trembling.

It is no part of my story to tell you of the unhappy circumstances which had driven my dear wife away from me. I cannot tell you of that dreadful separation. It is sufficient to say that in spite of, or it may be *because* of, our ill-omen'd love, we were driven apart, although, as you shall hear, this desperate act brought nothing but horror in the end.

I had drawn wide the curtains when I had gone to bed, for the night was close, and now, with my eyes wide open, I found that my bedroom was filled with the light of the moon.

Facing me, as I lay upon my side, was my wardrobe, a tall piece of furniture, and my gaze wandered across the panels until they came to rest upon one of the metal door-knobs.

Uneasy as I was, I had as yet no concrete cause for alarm; and would have closed my eyes had it not been that all at once my heart stopped beating. For the metal knob on which

my gaze was fixed had begun, very slowly, very surely, to revolve, without a sound.

I cannot recall with any exactness what thoughts possessed me during the interminable turning of that brass knob. All I know is that what febrile thoughts I had were soaked in fear, so that my brain began to sweat no less than my body. But I could not turn my eyes away, nor close them. I could only watch as the cupboard door itself began to sway slowly open with hideous deliberation until it lay wide to the moon-filled room.

And then it happened . . . happened in the stillness when not so much as the call of a little owl from the nearby woods or a sigh in the leaves disturbed the small hours of that summer night, when my dress clothes, on their hanger, sailed slowly out of the depths of the wardrobe and with infinite smoothness came to rest in mid-air immediately before my dressing-table.

So unexpected, so ludicrous was this, that it was a wonder I did not lose my nerve and scream. But the terror was caught in my throat, and I made no sound but continued to watch as the trousers slid from the cross-bar of the hanger until their extremities were no more than a couple of inches from the floor, in which position they remained, loose and empty. No sooner had this happened than an agitation at the shoulders made it plain that the white waistcoat and the long black tail-coat were trying to dislodge themselves from the hanger and then, all at once they were free, and the hanger, leaving behind it in the room a headless, handless, footless spectre, floated into the depths of the cupboard and the door closed upon it.

By now the limp arms, for all their lack of hands, appeared in dumb-show to be knotting a white tie about a white collar, and then, most strange of all, the empty figure at the next moment was leaning forward in mid-air at an angle of thirty degrees from the floor, flinging the limp sleeves forwards as though about to dive, and with a whisk

of the "tails" it floated across the room and out of the window.

Before I knew what I was doing, I had reached the window and was just in time to see far away beyond the lawn, my dress clothes skimming their way towards the oak wood, where they disappeared into the darkness beneath the trees.

How long I stood staring down across the lawn to the long dense margin of the oak wood I do not know, nor yet, when at last I returned across the room, how long I stared at the knob on the wardrobe door, before I had the courage to grip it and turn it and fling it open. I only know that at last I did so and saw the naked wooden hanger suspended there.

At last I slammed the door upon it and turned my back upon the cupboard. I began to pace the room in a fever of fearful foreboding. At last I fell exhausted upon my bed. It was only when dawn broke that I fell into a clammy sleep.

When I awoke it was past midday. The countryside was alive with familiar sounds; the squabbling of sparrows in the ivy outside the window; a dog barking and the drone of a tractor several fields across, and listening, half-asleep, it was a full minute before I recollected the nightmare I had suffered. Of course it was a nightmare! What else could it have been? With a short laugh I flung the bedclothes from me and got to my feet and began to dress. It was only when I was about to open the wardrobe door that I paused for a moment. The dream had been too vivid to be entirely disregarded, even in the sane light of a summer day, but again I laughed, and the sound of my own laughter chilled me. It was like a child I once heard shouting out in his terror, "I'm not afraid of *you*. I'm not afraid of *you*."

Opening the door of the cupboard, I sighed with relief, for there, hanging demurely in the semi-darkness, were my evening clothes. Taking a tweed jacket from its hanger, I

was about to close the door when I saw, clinging to the knee of my evening trousers, a wisp of grass.

It has always been a habit of mine, almost a fixation you might say, to keep my clothes in good condition. It seemed odd to me, this being so, that, having brushed my suit a night or two previously, there should be any kind of blemish. Why had the wisp of grass not caught my attention? However, strange as it seemed, I told myself there must, of course, be some simple explanation, and I dismissed the little problem from my mind.

Why I do not quite know, but I told no one of this dream, perhaps because anything strange or bizarre is distasteful to me, and I presumed, perhaps wrongly, that such things are distasteful to others also. The memory of that horrible night lingered all day with me. Had it not been that I hate to be thought peculiar, I think I would have found release in confiding the silly dream to someone or other. You see, it was not simply frightening! it was ludicrous, too. Something more to smile about than to be afraid of. But I found I could not smile.

The next six days passed uneventfully enough. On the seventh evening, which was a Friday, I went to bed much later than is my usual practice, for some friends who had come to dinner with me had stayed talking until well after midnight and when they had gone I began to read, so that it was close upon two o'clock before I climbed to my bedroom, where I sank upon the bed still fully clothed and continued for at least twenty minutes more to read my book.

By now I was drowsy, but before I got to my feet in order to undress, I found that against my will I was directing my gaze at the cupboard. Fully believing that the dream had indeed been a dream, and nothing but a dream, the hideous habit had taken hold of me, so that the last thing I saw before I fell asleep was always – the doorknob.

And again it moved, and again as terrible to me as ever

before; it went on turning with the deliberate rotation and my heart seemed to be stuck between my ribs, hammering for release in the silence of the second ghastly night. The sweat poured out of my skin and the avid taste of terror filled my mouth.

The fact that it was happening all over again; that it was a *repetition* in no way helped me, for it appeared that what was once *unbelievable* was now an unarguable fact.

Slowly, inexorably, the knob turned and the cupboard door swung open and my evening clothes floated out as before and the trousers slid until they touched the ground, the hanger dislodged itself from the shoulders and it seemed there was no change in the absurd yet ghastly ritual, until it came to that moment when the apparition was about to turn to the window. This time it turned to me, and, though it had no face, I knew it *was* looking at me.

Then, as its entire body began to shake violently, I closed my eyes for no more than a second but during that instant the clothes had disappeared through the open window.

I leapt to my feet and rushed to the window. At first I could see nothing, for I was directing my gaze at the lawn that stretched away for about sixty yards to the outskirts of the woods. No creature, ghost or mortal, could have covered that distance in the few seconds it took me to reach the window. But then, some movement in the semi-darkness caused me to look down, and there it was, standing on the narrow gravel path immediately below me. Its back was to the house and its sleeves were raised a little on either side, empty though they were.

Being exactly above the headless creature, I found that I was forced to see down into the horrible darkness of that circular pit whose outward rim was formed by the stiff, white collar. As I stared, nauseated, it began to skim, or glide, towards the lawn; it is hard to find a word that can adequately suggest the way it propelled itself across the ground, the tail-coat unnaturally upright, and the trouser-

ends appearing almost to trail the grass, although they did not really touch the ground.

That I was dressed, I think, gave me courage, for, in spite of my inner terror, I ran down the stairs and out of the house and was just in time to see the apparition about to disappear into the woods beyond the lawn. I noted, as I ran, the spot at which it entered the forest, and fearing that I might lose the unholy thing, I raced feverishly across the widespread lawn.

It was well that I did this, for on reaching the margin of the oak wood I caught a glimpse of the high white collar and the gleam of cuffs away ahead and to the right.

Of course, I knew the forest well enough by daylight, but by night it seemed a very different place, yet I followed as best I could, stumbling at times and all but losing sight of the floating thing as it flitted through the trees ahead of me. There seemed to be no hesitancy in its progress and it occurred to me that, judging by the direction it was taking, it must very soon be coming upon the first of those long rides that ran from east to west across the forest.

And this was so, for it was only a few moments later that the foliage cleared above my head and I found myself standing on the verge of the long grassy avenue of oaks, and not a hundred paces to my left I saw my bodiless vesture.

Bodiless it may have been, but it did not appear so in spite of the lack of feet or hands or head. For it became obvious that the garments were in a high state of agitation, turning this way and that, sometimes circling an oak tree on the far side of the avenue, sometimes floating an inch above the ground with the shoulders stooping forwards, almost as though in spite of its headlessness it peered down the long dwindling perspective of the forest ride.

Then, of a sudden, my heart leapt to my mouth; for my evening dress (its cuffs and collar gleaming in the dim light) had begun to tremble violently, and turning my eyes in the

direction in which the suit was facing, I saw, gliding towards us from a great way off, an ice-blue evening dress.

Nearer and nearer it came, nearer and nearer, floating with an effortless beauty, the long skirt trailing the ground. But there were no feet, and there were no arms or hands. And there was no head and yet there was something *familiar* about it as at last it reached my black attire and as I saw the sleeve of my coat pass itself around the ice blue silken waist of the hollow lady and a dance began which chilled my blood, for although the movements were slow, almost leisurely, yet the headless thing was vibrating like the plucked string of a fiddle.

In contrast to this horrible vacillation, the evening dress of the other dancer moved in a strangely frozen manner made all the more horrible by its lack of arms. As I watched I began to feel a horrible sickness in my body and my knees began to give. In reaching for support I gripped a branch at my side and to my horror it snapped off in my hands, with a report which in the silence of the night sounded like a gun-shot. I lost my balance and fell upon my knees, but recovering at once I turned my gaze to the dancers. They were gone—gone as though they had never been. The avenue of tall trees stretched away in solemn, moonlit silence.

And then I saw what seemed to be a little heap of material jumbled untidily together on the sward. Steeling myself, I stepped out into the moonlight and made my way, step by step, towards the lifeless heap, and on reaching to within twelve feet of it I saw that it was composed of black material intertwined with a lovelier fabric the colour of blue ice.

I began to sweat where I stood, and I cannot tell how long I must have remained there, the sickness mounting in my stomach and my brain when a movement in the untidy heap led at once to a further movement, and then before my eyes the parts began to disentangle themselves and to rise, one by one, from the ground and to reassemble in the

air, and in another instant they were gone; the lovely dress skimming the grass in the direction from which it had come until it dwindled to an ice-blue speck in the distance of the ride. My suit, no less swiftly, fled in the opposite direction and was gone, and I was left alone.

How I reached my home I shall never know – more, I think, by instinct than by reason, for I was feverish and deadly tired.

When at last I stumbled up the stairs and into my room I fell upon my knees and could not rise again for several minutes. When I did regain my feet I turned my gaze to the wardrobe, and stared at the brass knob until a gust of courage filled me and I turned the handle and the door swung open.

And there, hanging as primly as ever, were my tails and trousers.

During the week that followed I lived in a state of nervous excitement; an excitement most beastly. I was frightened, but I was also fascinated. I found myself thinking of nothing else but what would happen on the following Friday. The few friends I saw in the vicinity of my house were shocked at my appearance, for my face, which was naturally a fresh and ruddy colour, had turned grey. My hands trembled and my eyes kept darting here and there as though I were at bay.

I told no one of what had happened. It was not that I was brave. It was more that I was cowardly. I have always had a distaste for the unearthly or anything remotely smacking of the supernatural, and I would never have lifted my head again in public if I knew myself to be regarded as some kind of metaphysical crank. I knew that I would rather go through this business alone, frightened as I was, than risk the raised eyebrows – the sidelong glance. When possible over the next seven days I avoided my friends. But

there was one particular engagement which I could not avoid, nor wished to avoid.

I had promised, faithfully promised, to join some friends who were giving a small dinner party on the following Friday. But it was not just that – for if that had been all I would have invented some plausible excuse. No, it was for a very different reason. It was because my wife was to be there – our mutual friends, in their ignorance, were eager to re-unite us. They had seen our illness mounting. For myself, my whole system was sick, for in truth I was but half a creature without her. And *she*? She who left me, seeing no hope for us but only a strengthening of that perverse and hideous *thing* that drives men to their own destruction, the more the love, the more the wish to hurt. What of her? Like me, they told me, those friends of mine, she also was sickening fast.

We were too proud to meet of our own will. Too proud, or too selfish. And so this dinner had been cunningly arranged, and the time came when I arrived and was greeted by my hostess and my host and began to mix with the guests.

There was dinner and there was a little dancing, and, were I not to have been possessed, I might have enjoyed the evening, but my face kept turning to a little gold clock on the mantelpiece, and from the clock to the door beyond the curtains that led to the hall.

As the evening wore on I began to suffer an absolute darkness of the spirit when suddenly she appeared and my heart gave a great bound and I trembled desperately, for though she was completely beautiful, it was not her face I noticed first but the ice-blue of her dress.

We came together as though we had never parted and though we knew that our meeting had been engineered, yet there was suddenly too much joy in us for any thought of resentment to darken our thoughts.

But underneath our mounting joy was terror, for we

could see in one another's eyes that we had suffered the same nightmare. We knew that, as we danced, our clothes were only waiting for the moment, two hours ahead, when some kind of dreaded thing would arrive and invest them with another life.

What were we to do? One thing we knew at once and that was that we must get away from the music and the gathering – a gathering which felt pleased with itself, no doubt, for we must have looked like lovers as we left the room trembling and hand in hand.

We knew we must keep together. But I also knew, as she knew, that if we were to break the spell at all we must attack; and end our role. But how? What could we do? Firstly, we must stay together; secondly, we must remain in our evening clothes.

The last hours before three o'clock were as long as all the days of our lives. I had driven her back to my house, or *our* house again, and we had rested there for the most part in silence. At first we talked of what it could mean, but it was beyond us. We had been chosen, so it seemed to be the play-things of some demon.

We had all but fallen asleep when the first tremor swarmed my spine. Her head had been on my shoulder and she awoke in an instant to find me rising to my feet, my body quaking and the material of my back and across my shoulders beginning to flap gently like a sail. Even in my horror I turned to her and she was rising also from the divan, rising as though drawn upwards with no effort and, most horrible of all, there was a kind of blur across her lovely face, as though her features were less real than before.

"Oh, Harry," she cried, "Harry, where are you?" and she flung out her hand to me, and, oh, how precious was the touch of one another's fingers, for they had seemed to be no longer *there*, and by now our faces had *fled* also and our

feet and our hands, yet we could *feel* the ground with our feet and the pressure of our cold palms.

Then there came to us the long shudder and the beginning of the *malevolence*. All I could see of her now was her ice-blue dress, but an evil of some kind, a malevolent evil, seemed to be entering our clothes – a vile restlessness, and we were torn apart, and from that moment I was never able to touch her again, or receive the blessing of her fingertips. And then, against our wills, we began to move, and as we moved together towards the windows I heard her voice again, "Harry! Harry," very faint and far away, although we were quite close to one another, "Harry! Harry, don't leave me."

I could do nothing, for we were swept together out of the wide windows and without touching the lawn with our feet were flung to and fro in the air as though our clothes had but one object – to shake themselves free of us. There was no way of knowing how long this silent tumult went on. I only knew it was fraught with evil.

But, as the moments passed, there seemed to come a slackening in the violence, and though the sense of evil was in essence as vile as ever, yet it seemed that the clothes were tiring. By the time they entered the wood, they appeared to rest themselves on our bodies and, though we heard nothing, it was as though they were gasping for breath, or gasping for strength. It was as though there was the *will* to kill us, but the means of doing so eluded them. By the time we reached the ride we were moving laboriously, and a little later we collapsed together beneath the oak tree.

It was almost dawn when I recovered my consciousness. I was drenched with an icy dew.

For a moment I had no idea where I was, but then the whole thing rose in my mind, and turning my head to right and left I found I was alone. My wife had gone.

In an agony of mind I stumbled home and up the stairs and into my bedroom. It was dark and I struck a match. I

hardly knew which way I was facing as I struck it, but I was not long left in doubt, for before me was the long mirror of the wardrobe. There facing me by the light of the match was a headless man; his shirt front, his cuffs, and his collar were gleaming.

Turning away in horror, not only at the sight, but at the idea that the apparition was even now at large and that our struggle with the demons had been of no avail, I struck another match and turned to the bed.

Two people were lying there side by side, and peering closer I could see that they were smiling peacefully. My wife lay nearest to the window and I lay in my accustomed place, in the shadow of the wardrobe.

We were both dead.

THE FANATIC

by Arthur Porges

THEY were lying on the knoll, a most incongruous couple in appearance – he so short, shaggy; untidy, and dark, with the hot intolerant eyes of a fanatic; and she, immaculate in her light summer frock, the ultimate in a cool, Nordic blonde.

The sun dipped below the horizon, allowing purple dusk to smoke up from the earth.

"Now you'll see," he muttered.

"If I didn't know you better, I'd think you were serious."

"I am – damned serious. Serious enough to take steps, and soon." He gave her a puzzled scrutiny. "I thought you understood; that you weren't like those clods in the bar."

"But I was sure you were just seeing how much they'd swallow. I never dreamed – Jerry, you can't *mean* you really believe the things you said."

His pale eyes flared more hotly under their heavy brows.

"I might've known," he rasped. "What made me think a girl you pick up in a bar might have a few brains. Look, Eunice –"

"Men in bars can have brains, no matter how much they guzzle," she interrupted him. "But women are different, huh? It's not my brains that are in question, but yours, if you truly believe –"

"Skip it," he said. "Here they come now. Watch and learn something – if that one is still in there."

The bats were pouring out of the cave, millions of them it seemed, although an experienced observer would place the total under ten thousand. Still, as they came like dark smoke from the narrow opening, the sheer bulk of their flow was overwhelming in its effect on the eye, recalling the vast flights of passenger pigeons a hundred years earlier.

Jerry had his binoculars raised, and was studying the fringes of the horde. Suddenly he grasped the girl's arm, abstractedly aware of the firmness of her flesh; she's certainly quite a physical specimen, some inner part of his brain told him. Healthy as a horse – maybe a little dumber, which was disappointing, since he'd hoped there would be an ally at last . . .

"Look!" he cried. "On the right of the main crowd – that bunch of eight – no, nine. What do you see?"

He passed her the binoculars, but she waved them aside.

"I can see," she said calmly, her large blue eyes narrowing for a moment.

"Well?" he demanded impatiently. "Yes or no?"

"They're just bats, I suppose."

"Hell!" he snapped. "Why do I waste my time. I *told* you what to look for. Now they're out of range." He eyed her in a kind of disgust. "You mean to tell me you couldn't see the difference?"

"For heaven's sake, Jerry, I'm no expert! What do I know about bats? They were all flying up and down –"

"Like hell they were. One was soaring – like a hawk. This is the third time I've spotted it. Just a hair bigger; maybe a bit off-colour; that doesn't matter. But bats don't soar – ever. Maybe that's because at night there aren't the up-draughts day birds use; or maybe because they catch flying insects on the wing. But bats don't soar." He took out a fat, maroon-covered notebook, and checked something off. Then he closed it with an air of finality. "That's it. I have enough data. It's time to *do* something."

"What is this data – not those little things –"

"These data – the word is plural," he said irritably, only half-listening. Then, angrily: "Little things! You weren't listening last night. Animals are very rigid in certain aspects of their behaviour. When you see a dog that never circles before lying down; a pigeon that forgets to bob its head; a bat that soars, instead of flitting –"

"You're too wrapped up in this wild idea," she said. Then she put one hand on his arm in a rubbing, caressing motion, and added: "Don't you ever want to have any fun? Just enjoy yourself?"

He moodily pushed her fingers free, and said almost to himself: "Women are just like cats. When a guy has the time and the strongest urge, they have to wash their hair or visit their mother. But the minute he's up to his neck in something really important, then they begin to feel amorous. Once I clear up this business, Baby, you'll see –"

"I don't know why I waste so much time on you," she said plaintively. Then, in a coaxing voice: "Jerry, did you ever think of seeing a doctor?"

He grinned sourly.

"Why don't you say it? Psychiatrist; head-shrinker." He laughed in a harsh voice, without mirth. "And I don't know why I bother to wake people up. Any culture, no matter how alien, would be an improvement on what we've got. Maybe I don't like being suckered. Even if nobody else is wise to Them –"

"Oh, brother!" she exclaimed. "The old story. 'Them.'"

"I went at it wrong last time," he said, ignoring the remark. "I tried dissection, looking for different organs and things like that. But I'm not enough of a pathologist. And I couldn't get any help, damn it. I even tried sending rabbit's blood to a Public Health Office, asking for a tularemia check; I hoped they might spot something funny in the sample. But the clowns just reported negative on the tularemia. If there was something, they missed it, naturally;

you have to be prepared, and not just doing a routine job, I suppose."

"Isn't it possible," she demanded, "that lower animals have their morons and misfits, too?"

"Some, sure. But I've seen too many aberrations. And this time I've a better angle."

"What is it?"

"If I tell you, you'll want to go running to the cops or something," he said. There was a wistful tone in his voice. She sensed instantly that he still yearned for a confidant.

"I won't - I promise. Tell me."

"Well, let's assume some of these animals are not animals at all, as I've been saying, but spies of a sort. Don't ask me from where, but very intelligent. This way they can go anywhere, and study us; wild and domestic - both. I know it's like something from the corniest old science-fiction magazines; but truth is always essentially corny. All right; they're dedicated and clever; some - maybe most - will die rather than talk. But no society is free of weaklings. With enough stress - the right threat - some will break. The minute I get a cat or dog or squirrel - or a bat - to talk - in English, their little plan is blown sky-high, that's beyond question."

She gaped at him with those great blue eyes wide.

"You mean you're going to torture animals? Trying to make them *speak*?"

"I said you'd raise a fuss."

"Jerry, don't you see - this is a sickness, really."

"Sure, like Pasteur's, when he talked about germs; or Einstein's, when he said space was curved; or -"

"Those other animals - the ones you - you cut up. Where did you get them?"

"I told you I live in Redwood Canyon - in a shack, to be brutally frank. I haven't had time to make a decent living and still save the stupid human race. Anyhow, there are plenty of animals there: rabbits, gophers, deer, raccoons,

ground squirrels, lizards, foxes, weasels – you name 'em. When I saw one that didn't seem normal – and I don't mean just a sick or off-coloured specimen – I tried to trap or shoot it. I didn't get too far that way, and anyhow I was careless. Some nosy neighbours reported me, and I got fined and warned. It's the old story," he added bitterly. "The very people you're trying to help are the ones who crucify you every damned time. But now I know how to go about it, and when I'm through, I'll have evidence on tape and film that would convince anybody."

"And you honestly feel, now, that if you torture enough of these – these different little animals, you'll make one speak in English. And you'll get the words on tape, with pictures."

"Yes, I do," he said defiantly. He patted the notebook in his shirt pocket. "This tells me I'm right. Hundreds of cases. Cats that don't wash some parts of their bodies, because they can't manage the tricky stance a real cat knows from kittenhood. Cocks that fight but never peck the ground at intervals. A mole that didn't bite off the heads of the worms it caught. I could go on for hours. Some were just different, I know; but you develop an instinct after a while – or a flair. Hundred of biologists saw what Darwin did in his travels, but he was the only one to see the vital patterns. I see a vital pattern hidden in natural aberrations. I may be wrong, but I don't think so, and the stakes are very high. Unless the world is warned, this reconnaissance could be followed by a take-over in force. But if we're ready . . ."

She looked at him in silence, then shook her head in a pitying gesture.

"Doesn't it occur to you," she said, "that first of all such spies wouldn't let you trap them?"

"On the contrary. Not knowing my motives, they might hope for it – deliberately walk into the traps, in order to make inside observations on a human."

She was taken aback for a moment, then said: "On the other hand, if they are spies, invaders, won't they kill you if you're getting at their secret?"

"They might," he said coolly. "But I'm hoping that as spies, they won't carry arms; it would be risky if one were killed accidentally, by a car, say, and had some strange instrument on its body. They are here, I presume, primarily for information. I do run the risk that they can communicate over long distances; but I doubt if that's so, or I'd have had trouble with the ones I captured or shot before. They'd have tipped off the others by now."

"You certainly have all the answers," she said in a dry voice. "And you mean to begin torturing all kinds of little animals."

"Not all so little. I've seen deer that weren't deer; and a bear that passed up honey."

"Could I come by and watch?"

He was surprised, and showed it.

"Watch? But I thought – it's an unpleasant business; I don't deny that. I *must* do it, but you . . ." He broke off, and gave her a sharp stare. "Oh, no. Is the sadism coming out? After all those pious protests, you'd enjoy some blood and squeals. Get lost, lady; you and I don't speak the same language. Beat it – remember, I didn't pick you up; it was the other way around. Go away; you make me sick!"

She stood up, so tall, slim, and lovely, with that perfect Ice-Queen profile.

"You're very stupid and unfair; I hate you."

She strode off, walking like an empress.

"The people you run into," he said darkly. "Are these the characters I'm trying to save? And she so clean-looking and all – ah, t'hell with her. It's a sickness, I suppose. She can't help it; but not in my lab; bad enough I have to do the dirty work, without making a free show of it."

It was now quite dark. He got up stiffly, and walked to the jalopy. He half-expected her to be sitting in it; the town

was a long hike away. But she was gone. He called her name a few times, being unwilling to abandon her out here; but there was no reply. Finally he shrugged, and drove off.

The next morning, Jerry steeled himself to begin what might turn out to be a long and rather revolting investigation. But just as another fanatic, John Brown, was able to slaughter innocent and guilty alike in his crusade against slavery, which to him was sufficient justification, so this one felt that the high stakes were proper enough grounds for the abuse of helpless animals.

There was just enough doubt in his own mind to make him begin with the most promising of his five captives. The mouse, somehow, however un-rodentlike its behaviour, seemed less promising as a spy, although Jerry told himself this was foolish prejudice and the power of preconceived ideas. Similarly, the rabbit, with its tradition of Disney-cuteness, was almost too endearing a creature to torment. It would be unfair, however, to suggest that the one he chose to begin on – a young raccoon – was to be sacrificed because of its bandit-like apperance, complete with black mask. In a matter like this, Jerry knew very well, it was quite preposterous to judge by look; the villainous and sly raccoon might be only a wayward member of its tribe, and the cute, bright-eyed mouse a spy-chief. Still, one had to begin somewhere.

With thick gloves, Jerry pulled the raccoon from the wire cage, and, not without considerable difficulty, tied the struggling beast to a heavy table, well fitted for the purpose with screw-eyes. It was not necessary, in the circumstances, to make the animal completely immobile as for a delicate operation, in which case an anaesthetic would be used, anyhow. It was only necessary that the raccoon be unable to escape and so frustrate the experimenter.

Then he lit the little butane welding torch, and approached the captive.

"I know you understand what I'm saying," he told the raccoon, "so it's no use pretending. Nothing will stop me from burning you alive, right on the table, unless you tell me, in English, just what you are, who sent you, and why – in detail. Now we understand each other, right?"

At the sound of his voice, the raccoon stopped its frantic lunges against the tough cords, and looked at him, eyes brightly feral. Then it resumed its struggles, breathing hoarsely and muttering deep in its throat.

"All right; it's your choice. We'll have to do it the hard way," Jerry said tonelessly, his forehead suddenly damp. "Maybe you don't know what fire feels like. Maybe on your planet accidents don't happen where people get burned badly. Maybe, even, in your real shape you don't feel pain – or can't feel it now. Maybe you'll pretend it hurts, but I have a way of knowing – which I don't intend to tell you. If you can't feel pain, I'll *know* I'm right, and push all the harder to break things wide open . . . But first things first."

He adjusted the flame to a blue cone, and debtly flicked it across the raccoon's left ear. The animal snarled, and then gave a whimpering little cry. It shook its head several times; the ear wiggled feverishly.

"Hurts, doesn't it?" Jerry asked. "That was just a tiny sample. When I hold the flame right against your body, it will be quite unbearable – if you really feel anything."

I must remember, he told himself; don't get too excited out of pity. While burning keep feeling for increased heart-beat and pulse; he won't know about hiding those, even if he pretends to be in agony. And if they show up, I'll know he's hurting badly, and may talk.

He was about to apply the flame to the raccoon's left fore-leg, when the door opened behind him. He whirled, his heart sinking. If some damned nosy neighbour even caught him at this . . .!

"You!" he said. "I told you –"

"I had to come," Eunice said. She looked at the tied raccoon, her blue eyes flaming with indignation. "Oh, the poor little thing; it's just a cub!" She glared at Jerry. "Why that one?"

"If it matters to you, or you know the difference," he said, "this raccoon didn't wash its food – except when it knew I was watching. It's my number one suspect as of now. Better get out of here; you won't like the beginning; but when he talks, you'll owe me a fat apology."

"I won't go," she said.

"I could throw you out."

"The door doesn't even have a lock," she said, giving the shack a contemptuous scrutiny.

"Stay if you like, but if you interfere, I warn you, I'll forget you're a girl, and knock you down if I have to."

He stepped up to the raccoon, and held the flame against the animal's leg. A shrill, almost human scream burst from the tortured beast.

"Did that sound like a raccoon to you?" he asked the girl. "By God, it was like nothing I've ever heard. What'll you bet –"

"How could it be normal, burning alive?" she demanded. "You must stop this, Jerry."

"No," he said flatly. "This should be the big breakthrough." And he advanced the torch again.

Then the raccoon spoke. Its voice, in contrast with its rascally appearance, was oddly soft and well modulated, but brightly and resonantly non-human.

"It's no use," the creature said. "I can't bear it. And anyhow, he's bound to be a problem."

"I agree," Eunice said, and, gulping, Jerry spun on his heel to face the little automatic directed at his face.

"Not all of us are disguised as *lower* animals," the girl said. "You just had to keep pushing." Then she fired three shots into Jerry's head.

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