

# MONTAGUE SUMMERS



A Classic of the Occult

## THE SUPERNATURAL OMNIBUS

Volume 2: Diabolism, Witchcraft, and Evil Lore



PENGUIN BOOKS

THE SUPERNATURAL OMNIBUS

*Volume 2: Diabolism, Witchcraft, and Evil Lore*

# THE SUPERNATURAL OMNIBUS

*Being  
a Collection of Stories  
of*

APPARITIONS, WITCHCRAFT, WEREWOLVES,  
DIABOLISM, NECROMANCY, SATANISM,  
DIVINATION, SORCERY, GOETY,  
VOODOO, POSSESSION, OCCULT  
DOOM AND DESTINY

VOLUME 2: DIABOLISM, WITCHCRAFT,  
and EVIL LORE

*Edited, with an Introduction, by  
Montague Summers*



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## INTRODUCTION TO THE SUPERNATURAL OMNIBUS VOLS. 1 & 2

In the full flush of success during its first London run, Tom Sheridan, who was playing the hero of 'wax-work' Brooke's *The Earl of Essex*, was wont to be loud up and down the Town in his praises of the poetry and exalted sentiments of this truly mediocre tragedy. In his fine stage voice *ore rotundo* he would declaim some half a dozen wilting lines and demand applause. On one occasion, in some crowded drawing-room, Sheridan spouts the conclusion of the first Act, ending up with a tremendous –

Who rules o'er freemen should himself be free!

O happy sentiment! Enraptured silence; and then enthusiastic applause. The company vastly commend and admire. After a moment or two, all eyes are turned towards where Dr Johnson sits. They await a polished panegyric, a swelling eulogy. The great man opens his mouth and looks sternly enough at Sheridan from beneath his frowning brow. 'Nay, sir,' quoth he, 'I cannot agree with you. It might as well be said:

'Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat.'

Should the writer of the ghost story himself believe in ghosts? Dr M. R. James, who is among the greatest – perhaps, indeed, if we except Vernon Lee, the greatest – of modern exponents of the supernatural in fiction, tells us that it is all a question of evidence. 'Do I believe in ghosts?' he writes. 'To which I answer that I am prepared to consider evidence and accept it if it satisfies me.' This leaves us, I venture to think, very much in the same position as we were before the question was asked and the reply returned. Can an author 'call spirits from the vasty deep' if he is very well satisfied that there are, in fact, no spirits to obey his conjurations? I grant that by some literary *tour de force* he may succeed in duping his readers, but not for long. Presently his wand will snap short, his charms will lose their potency and mystic worth; he will soon have turned the last page of his grimoire; he steps all involuntarily out of the circle, the glamour dissipates, and the spell is broken! This has been the fate of more

than one writer who began zestfully and fair, but whose muttered abracadabras have puled and thinned, who has clean forgot the word of power if, indeed, he ever knew it and not merely guessed at those occult syllables.

Dr James quite admirably lays down that the reader must be put 'into the position of saying to himself, "If I'm not very careful, something of this kind may happen to me!"' Surely to convey this impression the writer is at least bound to admit the possibility of such happenings. He should believe in a phantom world if he is convincingly, at any rate, to draw the denizens of that state, for let it be granted that locality in the sense we understand it may not have. Yet there will be some kind of laws; unknown to us and as yet unknowable, but such as should be in part surmised; such as are reasonable and fitting. A well-reputed writer, whose name I will by your favour omit, gave us some excellent stories at first, but in his eagerness to create horror, to thrill and curdle our blood, latterly he trowels on the paint so thick, he creates such fantastic figures, such outrageous run-riot incidents at noon and in the sunlight, that it is all as topsy-turvy as Münchhausen. In contradiction to the postulate of Dr James we say: 'Nothing of this kind could ever happen to anyone!'

There must be preserved a decorum. Even in imagination such wild flights only serve to defeat their own end.

I conceive that in the ghost stories told by one who believes in and is assured of the reality of apparitions and hauntings, such incidents as do and may occur – all other things, by which I imply literary quality and skill, being equal – will be found to have a sap and savour that the narrative of the writer who is using the supernatural as a mere circumstance to garnish his fiction must inevitably lack and cannot attain, although, as I have pointed out, some extraordinary talent in spinning a yarn may go far to mask the deficiency. Thus, and for this very reason, it seems to me that there are few better stories of this kind than those the late Monsignor Benson has given us in *The Mirror of Shalott* and other of his work. Especially might one instance *Father Meuron's Tale*, *Father Bianchi's Story* and *Father Madox's Tale*. But indeed the whole symposium bears amplest evidence. Very fine tales have, no doubt, been written by authors



who regard the supernatural as just a fantasy and a flam. They topple, however, either on the one side into nightmare indigestion or on the other into vague aridities that are in fine meaningless.

Were I not myself convinced of the sensible reality of apparitions, had I not myself seen a ghost, I could hardly have undertaken to collect and introduce *The Supernatural Omnibus*.

A further important point is made by Dr James. 'Another requisite, in my opinion, is that the ghost should be malevolent or odious: amiable and helpful apparitions are all very well in fairy tales or in local legends, but I have no use for them in a fictitious ghost story.' To this I would allow exceptions: I would add the unhappy ghost seeking rest who manifests itself for some purpose, generally that an old wrong may be righted at last, or else the ghost returns to discover a secret necessary for the happiness of descendants or others; I would include the spectre who is a messenger of calamity, a harbinger of ill. There are also the phantoms who seek a just retribution; and

There are spirits that are created for vengeance, and in their fury they lay on grievous torments. — ECCLESIASTICUS xxxix, 33.

In fiction I concede that the good and kindly ghost has little or no place. And this is because in real life, as it seems to me, we should hardly term such appearances ghosts. When I read that the 'ghost' of Sir Thomas More appeared at Baynards, in Surrey, I know that there was a vision of the Beato vouchsafed. There is a striking instance in the life of the mystic Teresa Higginson, who died in 1905. When she was living at the little village of Neston, in Cheshire, the local priest was away and the keys of the church were in her charge. Early one morning a strange priest came to her, and, although he did not speak, intimated he wished to say Mass. She prepared the altar and lighted the candles, noting with some surprise that he seemed strangely familiar with the place. She answered his Mass and received Communion at his hands. When it was finished and she went into the sacristy shortly after him, the vestments were all neatly folded, but the visitant had gone. She made inquiries in the village, yet nobody appeared to have seen him. Upon his return, she reported the

matter to the resident priest, who in due course informed the bishop. His Lordship remarked that the description of the stranger was exactly that of a priest who used to serve the church many years before and who lay buried in the graveyard. It is, if I mistake not, on this event that Miss Grace Christmas founded her story *Faithful unto Death in What Father Cuthbert Knew*.

But this incident is not fiction, and it is with fiction that we are now concerned. I quote such an example to point out that the ghost story should follow upon the same lines as the veridical accounts. Of course, all kinds of trappings and ceremonies are not merely allowable, but much to be recommended. This sort of thing must not be overdone, however, and I fear that today there is a tendency to be too lavish with the pargeting, too curious with the inlay.

The ghost story should be short, simple and direct. Who told the first ghost story? I do not know, but I am sure that it was simple enough and that it sufficiently thrilled the hearers. Some son of Adam, I suppose, far back in dimmest antiquity, housed in a cave, as he looked up at the vast endless spaces of heaven powdered with nightly stars, as he wondered at the mysterious darkness, the depths of shadow, the remoteness of shapes familiar by day but which took on strange forms at the approach of evening: marvelled and told his children how he seemed to see the shadow of their grandsire who had gone from them so short a while, who had lain stark and motionless and cold. The old hunter had returned, yet he brought terror in his train, for now he had something of the night and the wind, of the great untrammelled forces of Nature with which man contended daily for his right to live. And his brood listened with awe; they trembled, they scarce knew why, and were afraid.

The Assyrians dreaded those ghosts who were unable to sleep in their graves, but who came forth and perpetually roamed up and down the face of the earth. Especially did these spectres lurk in remote and secret places. Elaborate rituals and magical incantations are preserved to guard the home from pale spectres who peer in through the windows, who mop and mow at the lattice, who lurk behind the lintel of the door.

Egypt the ancient, the mysterious, the wonderful, is the very

womb of wizardry, of ghost lore, of ensorcellment, of scarabed spells and runes which (as many believe) have not lost their fearful powers nor abated one jot of their doom and winged weird today, as witness the mummy of the Memphian priestess and the fate of those who rifle Royal tombs.

Greek literature is shadowed by the supernatural; ever in the background man is conscious of those mighty forces who weave his destiny for weal and woe, who rend the veil and send him crazed with some glimpse of apparitions before whom reason reels and life is shaken in its inmost places.

The Nekyia, the ghost scenes, of Homer and the great tragedians are famous throughout the ages. The weary wanderer Odysseus has been counselled by Circe the witch-woman to evoke the shade of Tiresias, the seer of olden Thebes. He makes his way to the shores of eternal darkness, the home of the Cimmerii who dwell amid noisome fog and the dark scud of heavy cloud, and here he lands where the poplar groves hem the house of Hades. Betwixt earth and gloomy Acheron is a twilight land of ghosts, Erebus. In this haunted spot Odysseus digs deep his ditch wherein must flow the hot reeking blood of black rams whom he sacrifices to Dis and to mystic Proserpine. At the foul stench of the new stream pale shadows swarm forth, a silent company, athirst to quaff the gore; but with drawn sword he keeps at bay the gibbering crowd, for the prophet and none other must first drink if he is to tell sooth and rede the wanderer well. The phantoms cannot speak to the living man until they have tasted blood, and even then, when he talks with his mother's wraith and would clasp her in his arms, the empty air but mocks his grasp in vain.

No ghost story has ever been better told than this.

There are several first-rate stories of the supernatural in Latin prose writers, two at least of which are so curiously modern in their method that they may well be heard again. One was told at that splendid banquet to which – in spite of our host's plutocratic vulgarity – we have all so often wished we had been invited guests; the other is written by Pliny in a letter to Sura.

At Trimalchio's table Niceros relates that one evening, planning to visit his mistress Melissa – 'and a lovely bit to kiss she

was! (*pulcherrimum bacciballum!*)' – he persuades a young soldier who happens to be staying in the house to bear him company to the farm which lay some five miles out of town. Off they go, jogging along the country road merrily enough, for in the silver moonlight all is as clear as day. In highest fettle, thinking of his dear, Niceros, his head well thrown back, trolls lustily a snatch of comic song, and tries to count the host of stars above. Suddenly he notices his companion is no longer at his side. He looks back, and there, a few yards away by the hedgerow, is the lad stark naked in the moon, his clothes thrown in a muss. His lithe white limbs gleam ivory clear, but his teeth shine whiter than his limbs. There is a fierce, long-drawn howl, and a huge gaunt wolf leaps into the forest depths. Trembling and sweating with fear, Niceros somehow stumbles along until he reaches the lonely grange. Then Melissa greets him with a story of a wolf which had attacked the folds and bawns, broken through the wattles and killed several sheep; 'but he did not get off scot free,' she says, 'for our man gave him a good jab with a pike to remember us by for a bit.' At earliest dawn Niceros, faint and ill, hurries back home, and as he passes by the spot where the soldier had cast off his clothes he notices shudderingly a pool of fresh blood. On reaching the house, he finds the youth is abed sick, whilst the doctor is busy dressing a deep gash in his neck. This werewolf story must necessarily lose not a little in the translation, since the Latin of Petronius, with its racy swing, is admirably adapted for a good yarn.

Pliny's tale (*Epistles*, vii, 27) runs :

There was formerly at Athens a large and handsome house which none the less had acquired the reputation of being badly haunted. The folk told how at the dead of night horrid noises were heard: the clanking of chains which grew louder and louder until there suddenly appeared the hideous phantom of an old, old man, who seemed the very picture of abject filth and misery. His beard was long and matted, his white hairs dishevelled and unkempt. His thin legs were loaded with a weight of galling fetters that he dragged wearily along with a painful moaning; his wrists were shackled by long cruel links, whilst ever and anon he raised his arms and shook his gyves amain in a kind of impotent fury. Some few mocking sceptics, who

once were bold enough to watch all night in the house, had been well-nigh scared from their senses at a sight of the apparition; and, what was worse, disease and even death itself proved the fate of those who after dusk had ventured within those accursed walls. The place was shunned. A placard 'To Let' was posted, but year succeeded year and the house fell almost to ruin and decay. It so happened that the philosopher Athenodorus, whilst on a visit to Athens, passed by the deserted overgrown garden, and seeing the bill, inquired the rent of the house, which was just such as he was seeking. Being not a little surprised at the low figure asked, he put more questions, and then there came out the whole story. None the less, he signed the lease and ordered that one room should be furnished for him with a bed, chairs and a table. At night he took his writing-tablet, style, books and a good lamp and set himself, as was his wont, to study in the quiet hours. He had determined to concentrate upon some difficult problems lest if he sat idle and expectant his imagination should play tricks, and he might see what was in reality not there. He was soon absorbed in philosophical calculations, but presently the noise of a rattling chain, at first distant and then growing nearer, broke on his ear. However, Athenodorus, being particularly occupied with his notes, was too intent to interrupt his writing until, as the clanking became more and more continuous, he looked up, and there before him stood the phantom exactly as had been described. The ghastly figure seemed to beckon with its finger, but the philosopher signed with his hand that he was busy, and again bent to his writing. The chains were shaken angrily and with persistence, upon which Athenodorus quietly arose from his seat, and, taking the lamp, motioned the spectre to lead before. With low groans the figure passed heavily through the spacious corridors and empty rooms until they came out into the garden, when it led the philosopher to a distant shrubbery and, with a deep sigh, mingled with the night. Athenodorus, having marked the spot with stones and a broken bough, returned to the house, where he slept soundly until morning. He then repaired to the nearest magistrates, related what he had seen, and advised that the spot where the ghost disappeared should be investigated. This was done, and in digging they found a few feet below the surface a human skeleton, carious, enchained and fettered in gyves of a pattern many centuries old – now rusty and eroded, so that they fell asunder in flakes of desquamating verdigris. The mouldering bones were collected with reverend care and given a decent and seemly burial. The house was purged and cleansed with ritual lustrations, and never afterwards was it troubled by spectre or ill luck.

Pliny vouches for the truth of his narrative. Ludwig Lavater, at any rate, than whom there is no more serious-minded author, reproduced it entire in his *De Spectris, lemuribus, et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus* (*Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght*), and the little duodecimo edition of Lavater, published at Gorkum in 1687, give us an illustration of the haggard spectre confronting the philosopher.

In Latin literature the supernatural informs at least one masterpiece of the world's romance, the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, a book to which that sadly overworked word 'decadent' may be most fittingly and justly applied. From the first sentences to the last these pages are heavy with the mystic and the macabre, as some ornate cortège is palled with velvet trappings and the pomp of solemn habiliments of sacred dignity and reverend awe. Lucius is travelling in Thessaly, earth's very cauldron, where voodoo and unclean sciences seethe and stew amain. At the outset he falls in with Aristomenes, who tells how, as it seemed to him, his fellow-companion had been slain by foul hags in the midnight inn, and yet he counted it but some evil dream, and travelled through those early morning hours with a dead man at his side. But when they came to running water the spell was broken, the corpse fell rigid and stiffening fast upon the river's bank with staring eyes long glazed and slackened, gaping jaw. It may be that this suggested Richard Middleton's *On the Brighton Road*, where the tramp plods along and two miles beyond Reigate meets the boy who asks to walk with him a bit, who died in the Crawley hospital twelve hours before.

It has not been possible to give any selection from Apuleius. It were difficult and it were profane to attempt any excerpt from his chapters, which must be read in the fullness of their beauty – a beauty which is that of some still night when the cypress point to heaven like burned-out torches against the dusky sky and the yews darkly splotch the landscape, when the sickle of the harvest moon rides high in heaven, and nightingales are singing amorously, and the owl hoots dully ever and anon to remind us that there is death as well as love.

'*Aut indicavit, aut finxit,*' wrote the supreme wisdom of S. Augustine as he pondered the tale that Apuleius told.

Throughout the Middle Ages the supernatural played as large a part in literature as in life. Those were the days of the sabbat and the witch. The old chronicles narrate deeds more horrible and facts more grim than any writer of fiction could weave. In the sixteenth century, too, the ghost story had no place when the *Malleus Maleficarum* lay open upon every judge's bench, when Guazzo and later Sinistrari penned their narratives of demon lovers, and Remy wrote his *Demonolatry* 'Drawn from the Capital Trials of 900 Persons' executed for sorcery within the space of fifteen years.

There is a little interlude of sheer horror it may not be amiss to quote, *The Three Queens and the Three Dead Men* :

1st Queen: I am afeard.

2nd Queen: Lol what I see?

3rd Queen: Me thinketh it be devils three!

1st Dead Body: I was well fair.

2nd Dead Body: Such shalt thou be.

3rd Dead Body: For Gode's love, beware by me!

Boccaccio in the *Decameron*, giornata quinta, novella ottava, relates the story of Nastagio degli Onesti, who one day whilst walking lonely in a wood near Ravenna, sees flying down the glades a wretched woman,

Her Face, her Hands, her naked Limbs were torn,  
With passing through the Brakes, and prickly Thorn;  
Two Mastiffs, gaunt and grim, her Flight pursu'd,  
And oft their fasten'd Fangs in Blood embu'd.

Mounted on a black charger there follows a grisly knight, and he looes on the two swift hounds of hell. Nastagio already had his hand upon the pommel of his sword, when, as the rider faces him, he realizes that he is gazing at a damned soul. The knight reveals that he is no distant ancestor of the Onesti line, who during his life, loved, but loved in vain. In despair at the lady's wanton cruelty, he stabbed himself, and now, after death, for her pride she is condemned to be hunted down by her spectre lover.

Renew'd to Life, that she might daily die,  
I daily doom'd to follow, she to fly;  
No more a Lover but a mortal Foe,  
I seek her Life (for Love is none below :)

As often as my Dogs with better speed  
 Arrest her Flight, is she to Death decreed :  
 Then with this fatal Sword on which I dy'd,  
 I pierce her open'd Back or tender Side,  
 And tear that harden'd Heart from out her Breast,  
 Which, with her Entrails, makes my hungry Hounds a Feast.  
 Nor lies she long, but as her Fates ordain,  
 Springs up to Life, and fresh to second Pain,  
 Is sav'd to Day, to Morrow to be slain.  
 This, vers'd in Death, th' infernal Knight relates,  
 And then for Proof fulfill'd their common Fates;  
 Her Heart and Bowels through her Back he drew,  
 And fed the Hounds that help'd him to pursue.

The horrid details of the ghostly chase in the haunted forest are admirably related by Boccaccio, and are even better told by our great poet John Dryden in *Theodore and Honoria* (*Fables*, folio 1700), which he has taken from the Italian.

In Chaucer the expression runs quite naturally :

He was not pale as a for-pyned goost;

and in the *Nonne Preestes Tale* Chanticleer most appositely relates an excellent ghost story of the two travellers. They sleep at separate inns, and during the night one vainly endeavours, as in a dream, twice to wake his friend and call him to his assistance. A third time he appears covered with wounds and bleeding sore, and reveals that his corpse will be conveyed out of the town gates that morning in a tumbril of filth. The second traveller early hurries to his comrade's hostelry, to learn he has left ere daybreak. Ill content, he makes his way to the western gates; a cart is jolting through; at his cries the people come running up; they search amid the manure, and there they find

The dede man, that mordred was al newe.

At the Reformation, divines and common folk attempted to revise their ideas of the supernatural. And then it was, as Pierre Le Loyer says in his *III Livres de Spectres* (1586), which was translated into English by Z. Jones (1605):

Of all the common and familiar subjects of conversation that are entered upon in company of things remote from Nature and cut off from the senses, there is none so ready to hand, none so usual, as that



of visions of Spirits, and whether that said of them is true. It is the topic that people most readily discuss and on which they linger the longest because of the abundance of examples, the subject being fine and pleasing and the discussion the least tedious that can be found.

Words that are as true today as they were when written three centuries and a half ago.

Ludwig Lavater of Zurich, who has been already mentioned, published his treatise *De Spectris, lemuribus, et magnis atque insolitis fragoribus* at Geneva in 1570. This was translated into English in 1572 as *Of Ghostes and Spirites Walking by Nyght and of strange Noyses, Crackes, and Sundry Forewarnynges*, and a year before it had been turned into French as *Trois Livres des Apparitions des Spectres, Esprits, Fantasmes*. Lavater, however, was unorthodox and often at fault, and so Pierre Le Loyer in 1586 issued a learned and, it must be confessed, salutary corrective in his *Discours et histoire des spectres, visions et apparitions des esprits ... en VIII livres ... esquels ... est manifestée la certitude des spectres et visions des esprits*. Le Loyer's book is far more important than that of Lavater, and equally valuable in ghost lore is the *De Apparitionibus ... et terrificationibus nocturnis* (*Of Ghosts and of Midnight Terrors*), by Peter Thyraeus, a famous Jesuit professor of Würzburg, which was first published in 1594 and several times reprinted, although it has now become an exceedingly scarce book, the more so inasmuch as it was never translated from the original.

It is not out of place to devote a little attention to these serious and learned treatises of ghosts and apparitions, since they form the background, as it were, to the fiction of the subject, the ghost story. Indeed, a few more well-known English books of this kind may here be mentioned, although it must be always remembered that of very many it is possible only to name some half a dozen, which yet, at any rate, will serve to show how deeply the whole philosophy of ghosts was studied and treated in literature.

*The Terrors of the Night, or, A Discourse of Apparitions*, 4to, 1594, by Thomas Nashe, is important as an indication of popular interest, for none so quick as Nashe to catch the topics of the hour. In itself this piece is of little value.

In 1681 was published Joseph Glanvil's *Saducismus Triumph-*

*atus, or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions*, a work which caused no small sensation in its day. It is Glanvil who tells of the Drummer of Tedworth, of a Hollander who was strangely psychic, of the ghost of Major George Sydenham, and many more.

It was long thought, and amongst others even Sir Walter Scott gave currency to the error, that Defoe's 'A True Relation of the Apparition of one Mrs *Veal*, the next day after her Death, to one Mrs *Bargrave*, at *Canterbury*, the 8th of *September*, 1705,' which was published for threepence by Bragg of Paternoster Row, and which is often printed with Charles Drelincourt's *The Christian's Defence against the Fears of Death*, translated into English by D'Assigny, was specifically written to help off a number of copies of the Huguenot pastor's treatise which lay heavy on the booksellers' hands. Such is far from the case. Recent research has shown that Mrs *Veal* and Mrs *Bargrave* were not fictitious characters, but real persons, well known in their proper circles. Mrs *Veal* was buried at *Canterbury* on 10 September 1705. Mrs *Bargrave* was Barbara Smith, a widow, whom Mr Richard *Bargrave*, a maltster, married at St. *Alphege*, *Canterbury*, on 11 January 1700. The narrative relates facts, and Defoe is merely a reporter. It is true that in an interview, 21 May 1714, Mrs *Bargrave* stated that a few trifling details were not strictly accurate; 'all things contained in it, however, were true as regards the event itself on matters of importance.' Mrs *Bargrave* told her story in 1705, and at the time it caused a tremendous sensation.

It is possible but barely to mention Increase Mather's *Remarkable Providences*, and Cotton Mather's *Wonders of the Invisible World*. Andrew Moreton's *The Secrets of the Invisible World Disclos'd: or, An Universal History of Apparitions*, which had run to a third edition in 1738, is a useful and ably argued book.

To come down to the nineteenth century, a very famous work is Mrs *Crowe's The Night Side of Nature*, 1848, which has been called 'one of the best collections of supernatural stories in the English language', and of which I cherish a real yellow-back copy of about 1885. In 1850 the Rev. Henry Christmas, Librarian of *Sion College*, issued a translation of Dom Augustine Calmet's great work under the title *The Phantom World*. Thomas Brevior,

in *The Two Worlds*, has a chapter on apparitions which should not be neglected. That fine scholar and – may I say it? – romantic ritualist, Dr F. G. Lee, sometime Vicar of All Saints', Lambeth, left a whole library of ghost lore: *The Other World, or Glimpses of the Supernatural*, 2 vols., 1875; *More Glimpses of the World Unseen*, 1878; *Glimpses in the Twilight*, 1885; and *Sights and Shadows*, 1894. The Christmas and New Year's Numbers of the *Review of Reviews*, 1891–2, supplied a large number of *Real Ghost Stories*, under which title, indeed, they were reprinted in October 1897. Many of us will remember how people at the time spoke of the review with bated breath: how it was hurried out of the sight of children, and read almost in secret by their elders with blanching cheeks and tingling nerves. I fear we may have become very sophisticated since those happy days. In *True Irish Ghost Stories* (1926), by St John D. Seymour and Harry L. Nelligan, we have an admirable book. The tales are fascinating and most excellently told. From Ingram's *Haunted Homes of Great Britain*, third edition, 1886, I can always be sure of a shudder. True, the book has been largely superseded by Mr Charles G. Harper's *Haunted Houses*, first published in 1907 and re-issued in 1924, with some first-rate drawings of haunted mansions by the author. It is a veritable encyclopedia, but I wish Mr Harper would not try to strip us of our last vestige of Victorian romanticism. He does not succeed – at any rate, in my case – but the bad intent is there. None the less he has, and well deserves, my hearty thanks. In *The White Ghost Book* and *The Grey Ghost Book*, Miss Jessie Adelaide Middleton has given us a series of excellently told accounts of apparitions. Her reports of these hauntings are quite simple and sober; there is no bravura, there are no artificial situations and long planned climaxes. The result is that *The House of Horror* in *The White Ghost Book* is one of the most terrible, as it is one of the best authenticated, narratives I know.

To go back a little, in 1859 that ardent 'old Conservative' Edward Tracy Turnerelli (1813–96) published *A Night in a Haunted House, A Tale of Facts*, describing his own experiences in an ancient mansion at Kilkenny. It is a narrative of extraordinary interest; and publicly related, as it originally was told,

at a meeting in aid of various charities at Ryde, it created an immense sensation.

Perhaps even more notice was attracted by the same author's *Two Nights in a Haunted House in Russia*, 1873, which ran through many editions, and was very widely discussed during the next decade and longer.

Here should be mentioned *News from the Invisible World*, a little known and older collection, which was (I believe) first published in Manchester, 1835, as by John Tregortha. This name, however, is variously given, and the author is more usually called George Charlton, but of him nothing seems actually to be recorded. Whoever he may have been, he had a wide knowledge of his subject and, in addition to the more familiar, one might say the historical matter, he has drawn on a number of new sources. At least they are new to me, and I have not found them mentioned in similar repertoires.

Mr Elliot O'Donnell has given us a long series of ghost tales and of studies in phantom lore which will be familiar to all who are interested in that misty borderland. Such are his *Ghostly Phenomena*; *Ghostland*; *Twenty Years' Experiences as a Ghost Hunter* (in which there is a most creepy chapter: 'A Haunted Mine in Wales'); *Animal Ghosts*; *Scottish Ghosts*; *Byways of Ghostland*. Personally I am inclined to rate his *Some Haunted Houses of England and Wales* (1908); *Haunted Houses of London*; and *More Haunted Houses of London* as among the best of his work. This latter has a horrible tale, *The Door that Would Never Keep Shut*; and the first relates some fully authenticated narratives of the West Country.

*The Ghost of Broughton Hall* in Miss Violet Tweedale's *Ghosts I Have Seen*, second edition, 1920, is well within the good old-fashioned, but none the less matter-of-fact, tradition; whilst the account of the hideous satyr, Prince Valori's familiar, is so incontestably attested, that it should 'furiously give to think' those, if any there be, who cling to what Stead justly termed the outworn superstition of a denial of supernatural agencies.

Very many more collections might be cited; many admirable, some few a little weak, perhaps; but it is high time we passed from fact to fiction. It must not be thought that this review,

'gat-tothed', insufficient and scanty to the last degree as it is, of books relating to the actuality of the supernatural, is in any way impertinent, since it is these veridical narratives which supply the background to romance and fiction self-confessed.

Even although we are to be entirely concerned with prose fiction, the extraordinary popularity of the 'Drama of Blood and Horror' evoking whole crowded cemeteries of ghosts upon the Elizabethan stage must not be passed over without a word. The earlier Elizabethan ghosts were copied from the formal phantoms of Seneca and his Italian imitators. The Umbra Tantali and the fury Megæra commence the *Thyestes* with a declamatory duologue of one hundred and twenty lines. Nor did these spectres lose one whit of their loquaciousness when they crossed to English shores. They are, one and all, extremely voluble. Thus Jonson's *Catiline His Conspiracy*, acted in 1611, opens with a monologue of over seventy lines delivered by Sylla's ghost. It must be acknowledged that this is a magnificent speech, but not all spectres in tragedy had such splendid periods. In fact, many of the phantoms were unmercifully parodied, and Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* in particular (which, it is interesting to note, was attracting audiences as late as 1668) became a very nayword for mockery and burlesque. In that curious yet striking drama, *A Warning for Fair Women*, quarto, 1599, at the very outset are introduced Tragedy and Comedy, and the latter jeers her august sister in this wise:

A Chorus too comes howling in,  
And tels us of the worrying of a cat,  
Then of a filthie whining ghost,  
Lapt in some fowle sheete, or a leather pelch,  
Comes skreaming like a pigge halfe stickt,  
And cries *Vindicta*, revenge, revenge:  
With that a little Rosen flasheth forth,  
Like smoke out of a Tabacco pipe, or a boyes squib.

It may be remarked that the ghost upon the Elizabethan stage was plainly visible to the audience. He presented himself very materially, all blotched with blood, with chalked face and linen shroud. When Kemble at Drury Lane in 1794 let Macbeth gaze upon an empty seat in the scene of royal revelry and apostrophize

the vacant air, all this was absolutely alien to Shakespeare's intention and practice. The spectre of Banquo must be to vision clear, 'with twenty trenched gashes on his head'.

Thus in Webster's great play *The White Devil* we see 'Brachiano's *Ghost in his leather cassock and breeches, boots, a cowl; a pot of lily-flowers, with a skull in't*'. The minute details of the stage direction, if nothing else, are proof that the ghost was no shadow seen in the mind's eye alone. Moreover, when Flaminio addresses it, '*the Ghost throws earth upon him, and shows him the skull*'.

It has been observed that 'tragedy was the main channel of romanticism' in England during the seventeenth century and the earlier part of the eighteenth. Accordingly when Horace Walpole, who if not actually the very first was certainly the most important pioneer of prose romanticism, brought out in 1764 his *Castle of Otranto*, we are not surprised to find that the corridors and chambers of his Castle are haunted indeed, so much so in fact that eventually, like Manfred, we become 'inured to the supernatural', and when we enter the chapel and see a figure 'in a long woollen weed' are hardly the least surprised as it turns towards us to behold 'the fleshless jaws and empty sockets of a skeleton, wrapt in a hermit's cowl'.

Nevertheless, with all its faults and furbelows, *The Castle of Otranto* is a romance of extraordinary fascination. It may seem to us nowadays that the raptures – they were no less – with which Walpole's rococo was received cannot have been other than monstrously unreal, a tribute to the author rather than to his work. Yet such assuredly was not the case. The *Critical Review* was certainly unfriendly at the time, and Hazlitt later damned *Otranto* as 'dry, meagre, and without effect'. But Byron, writing in 1820, spoke of Walpole as 'the father of the first romance and of the last tragedy in our language, and surely worthy of a higher place than any living writer, be he who he may'. Sir Walter Scott, too, was lavish in his eulogy of *Otranto*: 'This romance has been justly considered not only as the original and model of a peculiar species of composition, attempted and successfully executed by a man of great genius, but as one of the standard works of our lighter literature.'

*Otranto*, at any rate, primarily inspired that notable revival – we might say creation – of romantic fiction which may conveniently be termed the Gothic Novel, and which drinks deep of two springs: the sentimental and the supernatural. The genius of Ann Radcliffe stands out pre-eminent far above all her contemporaries and disciples, but two at least, Matthew Gregory Lewis and Charles Maturin, had something of her quality, and were both writers of fearful if fantastic power. The villains may talk ever and anon in the richest vein of Surrey-side and Coburg melodrama; their heroines are all peerless, fleckless, graceful, lovelier than nymphs who trip the lawn; their dungeons may be murmurous with sepulchral groans; their corridors labyrinthine beyond aught that Dædalus could ever contrive, and a shudder at every turn; but in spite of crudities, of absurdities if you will, at the very moment when bathos seems irretrievably to have wrecked the situation, genius kindles to a flame and carries them through triumphant to the end.

Lewis and Maturin never shrank before the supernatural. Ghosts, the grislier the better, throng their pages.

Mrs Radcliffe, however – and this is her one and only fault – could not bring herself frankly to engage the supernatural. At least, only her last and posthumous work, *Gaston de Blondville*, admits the genuine supernatural, and even here the treatment is almost timid in its reticence. At the close of her romance it is explained that the marvels of the story are due to some natural agency, that we have shuddered all in vain and idly trembled in the shadowed halls of Udolpho, or amid the Black Penitents, what time we paced the cloisters of Paluzzi.

This is a blemish, and the critic of the *Quarterly Review* for May 1810, was just, if severe, when he wrote that he heartily disapproved ‘of the mode introduced by Mrs Radcliffe, and followed by Mr Murphy and her other imitators, of winding up their story with a solution, by which all the incidents appearing to partake of the mystic and marvellous are resolved by very simple and natural causes’. So we find that even in an ultra-Gothic tale rejoicing in so delightful a title as *The Phantom, or Mysteries of the Castle*, when Mowbray cries: ‘My Matilda, blest shade!’ a moment later Mrs Mathews dashes us with ‘Matilda

was still mortal', and we have been duly awed by her ghost for a couple of hundred pages! In *The Spirit of Turretville* two youths are attracted by the sound of mysterious music to a distant room, where they see a veiled figure softly touching the strings of a harp. As they advance, the apparition turns towards them 'a grinning mouldering skull'. Eventually it is discovered she is the living wife who thus endeavours to frighten the villain into a confession. Even in *Vesuvia*, where the mysterious incidents are puzzling but hardly supernatural, a very careful and rational explanation is provided.

None the less, I would hasten to add that there are ghosts who haunt Gothic novels. T. J. Horsley-Curtis scorned to tamper with the supernatural. *Ancient Records, or, The Abbey of St Oswyth*, which is generally esteemed his best work, has spectres who shriek and moan and threaten the guilty to great effect. In the Preface to *Ethelwina; or, The House of Fitz-Auburne* he makes confession of his literary creed, and writes: 'The Author of this work . . . in one circumstance . . . has stepped beyond the modern writers of Romance, by introducing a *Real Ghost* - to many, such a circumstance will not appear unnatural or improbable; but he neither apologizes, nor justifies on that ground - he only pleads the example of the immortal Bard of Avon, who found a spectre necessary for his purpose to heighten his story, or to "harrow up the soul", but never thought it necessary to account for the "unreal mockery".' In *The Accusing Spirit* a headless and mangled figure glides through the haunted convent, the tortured shade of the sinful Benedicta. The spirit of the old marquis appears in W. C. Proby's *The Spirit of the Castle*; in *The Priory of St Clair, or, The Spectre of the Murdered Nun*, the dead Julietta is nightly seen. There are literally dozens of romances in which ghosts play a great part. Thus we have *Phantoms of the Cloyster*; *The Vindictive Spirit*; *The Spectre of Lamnere Abbey*; *The Spectre Mother*; *Eleanor, or The Spectre of St Michel's*; *The Haunted Tavern*; *The Haunted Palace*; *The Haunted Priory*; *The Haunted Tower*; and very many more. In fact, Mrs Rachel Hunter felt constrained to name one of her novels *Letitia: A Castle Without a Spectre*, whilst the author of *The Ghost and More Ghosts* merrily dubbed himself Felix Phantom.



Again, we have such popular romances as *The Midnight Groan; or, The Spectre of the Chapel* (1808), which 'presents to view . . . a man spectre' and 'a perfect skeleton'; *The Convent Spectre*, published in the same year; *The Forest Phantom, or, The Golden Crucifix*, in which a ghost in armour stands 'visible on the top of a coffin' and exhibits 'features blanched by the hand of death'; and Isaac Crookenden's *Spectre of the Turret; or, Guolto Castle*. There is also an amazing collection, *Tales of Terror! or More Ghosts. Forming a Complete Phantasmagoria*, which has the appropriate motto :

Twelve o'clock's the Time of Night  
That the Graves, all gaping wide,  
Quick send forth the airy Sprite  
In the Churchway Path to glide.

There was even published in 1823 *Ghost Stories, Collected with a Particular View to Counteract the Vulgar Belief in Ghosts and Apparitions, and to Promote a Rational Estimate of the Nature of Phenomena commonly considered as Supernatural*. The book now very rare, was issued by Ackermann, and the six coloured engravings with which it is embellished possess the greatest charm. In fact, they are far too good for their setting, inasmuch as the stories themselves, *The Green Mantle of Venice*, *The Ghost of Larneville*, *The Village Apparition*, and the rest, are extremely tame. Nothing could be more disappointing, since the titles promise most palatable fare. What could be more tempting than *The Haunted Castle, or, The Ghost of Count Walkenried*, or *The Haunted Inn*? And it all fritters away into accounts of imposture, or somnambulism at the best. I protest this is not playing the game.

In James Hogg's *The Wool-Gatherer* a man of vicious life is haunted by the wraiths of those whom he has wronged, and as he lies in the throes of death he hears the sad voices of women in torment and the pitiful wailing of infants. After he is dead, the cries become so insistent that 'the corpse sits up in the bed, pawls wi' its hands and stares round wi' its dead face'. Not dissimilar is the adventure of de Montfort in Maturin's *The Albigenes*. As he is passing through the depths of a gloomy wood, there presses

round him a throng of those who have fallen in the religious wars, a hideous company with 'clattering bones, eyeless sockets, and grinning jaws'.

Unfortunately, most novelists preferred to imitate Mrs Radcliffe in her explanations, and even among her later followers the best are at some pains to throw down the whole edifice they have so adroitly constructed and with such toil. That fine romance of G. P. R. James, *The Castle of Ehrenstein, Its Lords Spiritual and Temporal, Its Inhabitants Earthly and Unearthly*, is completely spoiled for me by the last chapter, and I reject the explanation 'that the whole of this vast structure, solid as it seems, and solid as it indeed is, in reality is double', so that the phantoms were the Count and his faithful band who dwelt there secretly until such time as he should dispossess his usurping brother. It is they who appear as the Black Huntsman and his demon train. I am satisfied, none the less, that 'The Ghost' and 'The Black Huntsman' as depicted by Phiz when the first few chapters of *Ehrenstein* appeared in *Ainsworth's Magazine*, 1845, are supernatural. It is a fearsome phantom who terrifies Sickendorf and Bertha; it is the 'wild Jager' himself who careers in awful chase.

There was one professed disciple of that 'great mistress of romance' who happily disdained these subterfuges, and he has reaped his reward in that his name is remembered, his works are read, when so many another is forgotten and scarcely to be traced, nay, not even in the pages of Shobert and Watkins, or Upcott, or Allibone. It may, I think, almost undeniably be granted that his sense of the supernatural, and the truly admirable way in which he utilized awe and mystery in his romances, have at least culled one, and that not the least green, laurel in the stephane of immortality which crowns Ainsworth's brow.

William Harrison Ainsworth proudly confessed in his earliest, and by no means his least successful romance, *Rookwood* (1834), that he was bold to tread in the footsteps of Ann Radcliffe – she had died but eleven years before, and actually her posthumous romance, *Gaston de Blondville*, had only preceded *Rookwood* a twelvemonth in publication. I have not the opportunity here to appraise Ainsworth as he deserves; that has been excellently done by Mr S. M. Ellis, who well writes that in *The Lancashire*

*Witches*, for example, Ainsworth 'achieved a masterpiece . . . for this . . . is the greatest of all romances dealing with the occult and the combined influences and "atmosphere" of wild and suggestive scenery'. I had wished to include some examples of Ainsworth's work in this collection, and I had intended to give *The Legend of Owlarton Grange*, told by old Hazelrigge in *Mervyn Clitheroe*, and *The Haunted Room* from *Chetwynd Calverley*, one of the later (1876) and lesser known novels. Both stories are related with singular power and effect, but upon consideration it was plain that in both cases the incidents were so bound up with the thread of the whole romance that they would essentially lose by being read in the form of separate chapters, and any such excerpts would be unfair to the merits of Ainsworth as a writer.

Neither has it been possible to represent Mrs Shelley, whom I omit with reluctance. *Frankenstein* is a classic of the occult, but it must be read entire. It seemed equally difficult to make any extract, which by itself would not appear inadequate, from her other work; although she was deeply versed in the art of shudders and fear.

Fortunately Sir Walter Scott has left us stories which may stand apart from their setting. *Wandering Willie's Tale* in *Redgauntlet* (1824) is of consummate artistry; as also is *The Tapestried Chamber* (1829), but both are too easily accessible to be given here. I have no defence save human limitations of space if I am told that both should be included.

Few books have a greater reputation than the *Ingoldsby Legends*. There are – all power to them – Ingoldsby enthusiasts; but I question (I hope, sincerely hope, I may be wrong) whether outside this devoted band the Ingoldsby poems are appreciated and loved as they deserve. To the *Ingoldsby Legends* we may safely and literally apply the word 'unique'. There is nothing like them, not merely in degree but also in kind, in any literature I know. Perhaps the nearest rhymes are the macaronics of Folengo, which again *sui generis* have never been excelled and hardly approached. Yet Ingoldsby is altogether different, and, when one seeks to compare, any juxtaposition eludes and escapes. The witches of the *Maccaronea* are grotesque, evil, ridiculous, just as are old Goody Price and old Goody Jones; whilst Father

Francis, Father Fothergill, Mess Michael, Roger the Monk, can be amply paralleled by Fra Jacopino, the village priest, 'Master Adrianus, Constantius atque Jachettus'.

Curiously enough, even those who know the poems of the *Ingoldsby Legends* well are often somewhat indifferent to Barham's prose, which is, in my opinion at any rate, of a very high quality. Accordingly I have included two of his stories in this collection. I hesitated whether *The Spectre of Tappington* should not make a third, but it belongs to a species of ghost story of which I disapprove: the humorous; nor is it, indeed, strictly a ghost story; that is to say, it does not introduce the supernatural, and there are Radcliffian explanations to boot. However, *The Spectre of Tappington* is the exception that proves the rule. The genius of Barham has triumphed and given us a tale of the first order, although it belongs to an illegitimate genre. There is only one other humorous ghost story which justifies itself – Oscar Wilde's fantasy *The Canterville Ghost*. This ranks with *The Spectre of Tappington* among the foremost. Yet it will not escape attention that Wilde has mingled with his brilliant wit a touch of pathos, and more than a touch of beauty, that even in his liveliest passages he gives an undercurrent of something running much deeper and touching us more nearly than mere persiflage, however exquisitely wrought and pointed.

Death must be so beautiful. To lie in the soft brown earth, with the grasses waving above one's head, and listen to silence. To have no yesterday, and no tomorrow. To forget time, to forgive life, to be at peace.

Hardly a disciple, but in his day certainly a rival, and a very formidable rival of Ainsworth, was G. W. M. Reynolds, whose output is equal to, even if it does not o'ertop, those of Defoe or the prolific water-poet himself. The lengthy novels of Reynolds teem with mystery and the supernatural. To name but a few of many, *Faust*, based upon the old legend but almost infinitely varied; *Wagner, the Wehr-Wolf*; *The Necromancer*; all have as their theme diabolic contracts and the fearful retribution that results therefrom.

A contemporary of Reynolds, who was as prolific indeed as he,

but who has been almost entirely forgotten, was Thomas Preskett Prest, the author of *The Skeleton Clutch*, or, *The Goblet of Gore*; *The Black Monk*, or, *The Secret of the Grey Turret*; *The Rivals*, or, *The Spectre of the Hall*; *Varney the Vampire*, or, *The Feast of Blood*, and many more. This latter, although of inordinate length, is powerfully told, and has hardly, I think, been excelled even by the famous *Dracula*.

It is impossible to name a tithe of these writers who dealt with the supernatural in its most terrible manifestations. Lengthy bibliographies might be compiled of fiction alone which had the vampire and the werewolf as its themes. Of vampire tales we might instance Le Fanu's *Carmilla*; Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, mentioned above; E. F. Benson's *The Room in the Tower*; Mrs Amworth in *Visible and Invisible*; F. G. Loring's *The Tomb of Sarah*; F. Marion Crawford's *For the Blood is the Life* (*Uncanny Tales*); Conan Doyle's *The Parasite*; E. and H. Heron's *The Story of Baelbrow*; Victor Roman's *Four Wooden Stakes*; X. L.'s *The Kiss of Judas*; Eric Count Stenbock's *The True Story of a Vampire*; and a score beside.

The werewolf boasts an almost richer library. There is Captain Marryat's fine tale from *The Phantom Ship*; Mrs Crowe's *A Story of a Weir-Wolf*; H. Beauprand's *The Werwolves*; Saki's *Gabriel*; Ainskillas's *The Wolf's Bride*; Fred Whishaw's *The Were-wolf*; Eric Count Stenbock's *The Other Side*; Charles Severn's *Were Wolf*; Ambrose Bierce's *The Eyes of the Panther*; 'cum multis aliis quos nunc prescribere longum est,' as the old Latin Grammar has it.

Reynold's *Miscellany* contained not a few well-told tales of the supernatural, and this magazine gave rise to many more which flourished exceedingly for the last half of the nineteenth century. Edwin J. Brett was a wholesale purveyor of these ephemera, and one may remark that latterly he concentrated almost entirely upon boys' books. The history of boys' books, which is of extraordinary interest, has yet to be written. Thus running through *Boys of the Empire*, vol. ix, 1892, I find a really thrilling serial, *Doctor or Demon?*, a romance of the *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* type.

At the same time as Reynolds, Prest and others were writing,

one of the supreme masters of English fiction, Charles Dickens, was showing his keen interest in the supernatural, which lurks in the background of, and sensibly informs, some among his finest work. Moreover, as Mr S. M. Ellis has well said in his essay, *The Ghost Story and its Exponents (Mainly Victorian)* :

In *Household Words* and *All the Year Round*, both under Dickens's editorship, are to be found some of the best ghost stories ever written.

I have not, of course, failed to include in this collection tales by Amelia B. Edwards, Rosa Mulholland and Charles Collins, who were all contributors to these periodicals.

It was for *All the Year Round* that Dickens asked Bulwer-Lytton to furnish a serial, and this resulted in *A Strange Story* (1861). Andrew Lang was of opinion that 'There is no better romance of the supernatural than *A Strange Story*; and perhaps a kind of sketch for it, *The Haunted and the Haunters*, is at least as good.' The only reason I have omitted to give this latter tale, which I immensely admire, is that it has been very frequently reprinted. It is said to be founded upon the succession of noises and apparitions that so disturbed the haunted mill at Willington when the Procter family, serious and devout members of the Society of Friends, resided there. This is one of the best known veridical histories in all psychic lore. There were legends of earlier troubles at Willington in 1806, and there were poltergeist vexations in 1823, but it was not until January 1835, that the actual hauntings at the mill itself assumed serious proportions. In 1847 the Procters moved to Newcastle, but as late as 1867 and 1870 tenants who wished to reside at the mill were driven out by supernatural alarms.

Bulwer-Lytton was a serious and discriminating student of the occult, and that is why he was able to write so well and so convincingly of the supernatural. *Glenallan*, an early work, gives evidence of this; and it is made even more clear by *Zicci*, which he enlarged and completed from his *Zicci*, published in the *Monthly Chronicle* for 1838. When *A Strange Story* appeared, 'He beats one on one's own ground!' cried Wilkie Collins, a generous appraisal, which perhaps must not be pressed to the

letter, for there have been few, if any, writers to excel Collins at his best. A master of detective and 'mystery' fiction – and one may draw attention to the close connection between 'mystery' fiction and the ghost story – Collins has also left some fine tales of the eerie and the weird. He was a past master of the art of creating an atmosphere of suspense and loneliness, of awe and trembling fear. He even achieved that most difficult of feats, a full-length ghost story. It is, I think, well-nigh essential for success that the ghost story should be short. Only the adroitest skill and talent of no ordinary kind can avail to keep the reader in that state of expectancy bordering on the unpleasant yet never quite overstepping the line which is the true triumph of this *genre*. All too frequently a tale spun in many chapters is apt either, on the one hand, to fall slovenly flat, to become banal and to bore; or else on the other to swell into crude physical disgust and end as a mere mixen of horror. *The Haunted Hotel*, however, is wrought with consummate ability.

In 1847 the famous military novelist James Grant published *The Phantom Regiment*, in which, although it be confessed that the main narrative runs rather thin, the episodes – from one of which the book takes its name – are splendidly done. The story tells of a phantom regiment, accursed and banned, doomed on each anniversary of that foul butchery to march from 'hell to Culloden'. Grant also has two short stories of the macabre, *The Dead Tryst* and *A Haunted Life*, which appeared in 1866.

Other full-length ghost stories to be placed in the first class are Mrs Riddell's *The Haunted River*, whose pages are dank with a mist that is not wholly material, with shadows and doom; Lanoe Falconer's *Cecilia de Noel*, a book of real genius, in which the effect of an apparition on varying individuals is shown; Lucas Malet's *The Gateless Barrier* and *The Tall Villa*; Mrs Oliphant's *The Beleaguered City*; *The White People* by Frances Hodgson Burnett.

All these are works of great beauty, and this they owe to their apprehension of the spiritual. In other phrase, to produce a flawless piece of work the writer must believe in the motive of the tale. This indeed I have emphasized before, and I will not enlarge upon the point now. I would merely add that if a ghost story

has not the note of spirituality which may be beauty – a beauty not without awe – or may be horror, it will fail because of its insincerity and untruth. I do not know, and I do not care to know, how far Henry James believed in the possibility of *The Turn of the Screw*, but his genius succeeded in creating an atmosphere of spiritual dread because he realized that this was necessary to his art. I understand that actually *The Turn of the Screw* is a brilliant *tour de force*, but I am convinced that Henry James was less sceptic than appears.

It seems to me that it is exactly this lack of spirituality which so fatally flaws the vast majority of the tales in a series generally known as 'Not at Night', which has now attained six volumes of similar if slightly varying titles. If there is a note of spiritual horror, whether it be vampire horror, as in *Four Wooden Stakes*, or Satanism, as in *The Devil's Martyr* and *The Witch-Baiter*, the story is raised to another plane far higher than the rather nauseous sensationalism of fiendish serums, foul experiments of lunatic surgeons, half-human plants, monstrous insects and the like.

Not forgetting the admirable work that has been done in the last thirty years, the nineteenth century may be acclaimed as the heyday of the good old-fashioned ghost story, even if only in view of the fact that from 1838 to 1873 was writing one who has been justly termed '*the Master of Horror and the Mysterious*', Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu, whose place in literature has been so precisely estimated by Mr S. M. Ellis in a fine essay in *Mainly Victorian*. Dr M. R. James, who is, with the exception of Vernon Lee, of all writers of ghost stories today *facile princeps*, has also declared his admiration for Le Fanu, and has collected with a valuable preface and bibliographical notes some dozen or more of Le Fanu's stories in *Madam Crowl's Ghost*. Both Mr Ellis and Dr James are agreed that Le Fanu was the supreme master of the supernatural, and I am glad to pay my own tribute also by writing that certainly in my opinion he has seldom, if ever, been approached, and most assuredly never excelled. It should be remarked that Le Fanu had the habit of refashioning his tales, and would often develop a short story until it was of considerable length. Finally it might even attain the dimensions of a three-volume novel. I mention this inasmuch as *An Account of some*



*Strange Disturbances in Aungier Street* (1853) is the first form of *Mr Justice Harbottle*, which appeared in the volume published in 1872 under the title *In a Glass Darkly*. These stories, once difficult to procure, have of late years been reissued, but I felt that, however accessible they may be, no collection of the supernatural could go forth without the seal of Le Fanu.

It should be remarked, and I hardly think that the point has been noticed before in this connection, what gloomy yet intensive delight the mid-Victorians took in funerals, interments, and all the trappings of mortuary woe. How raven-black was the velvet pall, how solemnly nodded the hearse-plumes, how awful stood the train of mutes, how long was the deep *crape* worn by relicts of the deceased, how fruity was the old port wine, how rich the slabs of cake! Their minds loved to dwell upon sepulture and the charnel. Dickens, in *Martin Chuzzlewit* and other of his novels, has shown how prominent a part was played by the undertakers, Mr Mould, Mr Sowerby, Mr Joram, and the rest. What an event was a funeral from a house! The way to all these sadly sentimental lachrymals had been paved before by the lugubrious cortèges of the time of Anne, the funerals at night with a train of flambeaux, the mourning coaches, and all the rest of the lugubrious paraphernalia. We must not forget, too, those expressions of elegant piety such as Blair's *The Grave*, Young's *The Last Day*, Samuel Boyse's *A Deity*, and *Death* by Bishop Beilby Porteus, which for a century and a half exercised an almost universal influence in the spheres of such theology as loved to ponder upon the skull, the hour-glass, crossbones, hatchments, mournful and sorrowing cherubim.

A typically Victorian writer was Mrs Riddell, whose *The Haunted River* I have mentioned above, and who published in one volume half a dozen tales under the attractive title *Weird Stories*, 1885. Miss Braddon and Mrs Henry Wood both wrote some first-rate ghost stories. *The Cold Embrace* and *Eveline's Visitant* (which I have included here) by the former lady are particularly good, and, although it does not actually deal with the supernatural, I am constrained to mention as an example of her uncanny power *The Mystery of Fernwood*, where Laurence Wendale is horribly murdered apparently by himself, as through

the door of the billiard-room is seen his exact image bending over and slashing at the corpse. The double suddenly mops and grins furiously. It is the dead man's twin brother, an idiot, whose brain was injured owing to an accident in earliest childhood.

A large number of stories of the supernatural may be found in the magazines: in *Tinsley's Magazine*, *Temple Bar*, *Belgravia*, *London Society*, *Blackwood's*, the *Argosy*, the *English Illustrated*, as also in the forgotten *Family Herald Supplement* and *Young Ladies' Journal*. To come to a later date, there was no richer storehouse than the *Pall Mall Magazine*. In this last, in May, June and October 1893, was published a story by James Mew, *The Black Art*, which is particularly interesting as a young and unknown artist, Aubrey Beardsley, contributed a full-page illustration (June 1893, p. 177), 'Of a Neophyte And How The Black Art Was Revealed Unto Him By The Fiend Asomuel'. In July 1893, of the *Pall Mall Magazine* appeared *The Last of the Flying Dutchman*, by W. L. Alden, which cleverly ended with a query; and *A Kiss of Judas*, a vampire story by X. L., the author of a tale of Satanism, *Aut Diabolus aut Nihil*, and who in the same magazine (September to December 1898) published *With All the Powders of the Merchant*. In October 1893, appeared *The Luck of the Devil*; in May 1894, *A Cry Across the Black Water*, and in August of the same year Howard Pease's *Mine Host the Cardinal*, an excellent ghost story. In January 1895, was given *The Devil Stone*, by Beatrice Heron Maxwell; in March, *The Hands of Earl Rothes*, by E. M. Hewitt, and also *Huguenin's Wife*, by M. P. Shiel. In December of that year we welcomed one of Dr M. R. James's best stories, *Lost Hearts*. It is interesting to notice that same four years later, in April 1899, another of our leading writers of ghost fiction, Algernon Blackwood, was represented by his *The Haunted Island*. June 1896, has *The Story of a Tusk*, by H. A. Boyden, and *The Stone Chamber of Taverndale Manor House*, this latter a good spooky yarn of the real old Christmassy kind. In March 1897, a horrible tale of psychic invasion, *The Case of the Rev. Mr Toomey*, was given, as also *Doctor Armstrong*, which tells how to a leading surgeon was brought for a serious operation a man in feeblest health, who had suffered terribly all his life. In this invalid Doc-

tor Armstrong, who has never known a day's illness, recognizes by some uprush from a past life the Grand Inquisitor, who at Toledo centuries before had doomed him to the rack and the screw, to a death of agony by fire. In a moment of time, as it were, he passes through those days and months of excruciating anguish once more and is convulsed in throes of fiercest pain. Revenge, completest revenge, is in his grasp. He takes the steel instruments, and, administering no anaesthetic, in his turn becomes tormentor. He wrenches the muscles, tears the flesh and twists the nerves of the helpless writhing thing before him until the unhappy wretch draws his last moaning breath. But then a voice of infinite pity, yet infinitely just, sounds in the doctor's ear, telling him that by indulging his own bad passions and wreaking vengeance instead of showing mercy so has he forfeited his claim upon the mercy of Heaven.

August and September of the *Pall Mall Magazine*, 1897, gave *A Tribute of Souls*, by Lord Frederic Hamilton and Robert Hichens, which was afterwards reprinted in the latter writer's *Byways*. October 1900, had *A Night on the Moor*, by R. Murray Gilchrist, and one of the best vampire stories I know appropriately appeared in December of that year – *The Tomb of Sarah*, by F. G. Loring.

Even just this hasty sketch – and I have omitted a large number of stories of great merit – will serve to show the interest taken in the supernatural by many of the writers prominent before the public in those years.

Stories of the supernatural, many of a rare excellence, have been penned by R. L. Stevenson, W. W. Jacobs, Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells, Richard Middleton, Robert Hichens, Lord Dunsany, Walter de la Mare, Edith Wharton, Mrs Molesworth, Fergus Hume, Barry Pain, John Buchan, Ambrose Bierce, Oliver Onions, Arthur Machen, Mary Heaton Vorse, Elliot O'Donnell, Bram Stoker, M. H. Austin, Hugh Conway, Fred G. Smale, Fitz-James O'Brien, Robert W. Chambers, Arthur Johnson, Clark Russell, Perceval Landon, Conan Doyle, Marjorie Bowen, Howard Pease, Ingulphus (Arthur Gray), Saki, Sir T. G. Jackson, Edward H. Cooper, A. M. Burrage, Grace V. Christmas, H. R. Wakefield, Mrs Campbell Praed, Evelyn Nesbit, the Rev. E.

G. Swain, L. P. Hartley, Mrs Belloc Lowndes, Elizabeth Bowen, Baring Gould, Katherine Tynan, Vincent O'Sullivan, Vernon Lee, Amyas Northcote, E. and H. Heron, Roger Pater, John Guinan, W. J. Wintle, A. C. Benson, May Sinclair, and many others, the omission of whose names from this list, set down well-nigh at random as I glance at my shelves, must not be taken as any criticism of or judgement upon their quality, but rather because in making a terrier of ghost stories it is well-nigh impossible to aim at anything like a complete and exhaustive survey.

Although his work is widely read, I have always felt that the ghost stories of the late Monsignor Hugh Benson never receive their just meed of appreciation. Yet it would not be easy to find a better symposium than *The Mirror of Shalott*, and there are few stories more horrible than *My Own Tale*, the house which had no soul. A fine story, too, is *The Traveller*, in *The Light Invisible*, and, in spite of the fact that Monsignor Benson himself declared that this book was written 'in moods of great feverishness' and 'largely insincere', frankly I would give twenty apocalyptic romances such as *The Lord of the World* and *The Dawn of All*, and fifty novels such as *Initiation* and *Loneliness*, both of which seem to me to trench far too nearly upon a calamitous pessimism, to call it nothing worse, for another *Light Invisible*; although I am very well aware that certain points, and these not the least important, are open to criticism.

It is hardly necessary for me to speak of the most notable living exponents of the ghost story. Mr E. F. Benson has shown himself a supremely accomplished artist in *Spook Stories* and *The Room in the Tower*. *The Empty House*, by Algernon Blackwood, is worthy of Le Fanu himself, and praise can reach no higher. *Keeping his Promise* and *Smith* are also of a rare quality, whilst there is nobody fascinated by the supernatural who does not wish for further experiences of *John Silence*. Dr James uses his vast antiquarian and archaeological erudition to create an appropriate atmosphere for his malignant ghosts, and no better setting could be devised. His care for detail is admirable, and tells immensely. In fact, I know only one living writer who can be compared with him in this point. I refer to Vernon Lee (Violet Paget), from whose *Hauntings* I am privileged to give two stories, *Amour*

*Dure* and *Oke of Okehurst*. In the first the old Italian town among the hills, and in the other the English manor house, are drawn with marvellous felicity. No less cleverly done are *Venice*, *Padua*, and the Italian *podere* in *That Wicked Voice*. *Hauntings* is a masterpiece of literature, and even Le Fanu and M. R. James cannot be ranked above the genius of this lady. Unfortunately, Vernon Lee has given us no further ghost stories since 1890, save that she once refashioned a tale or so as was the wont of Sheridan Le Fanu.

Particularly happy is Dr James in his descriptions of those tall, red-brick houses, whose probable date is 1770 or thereabouts, in the eastern counties: such are Wilsthorpe, Castringham (although the Hall was mainly Elizabethan) in Suffolk, Aswarby Hall, Betton Court, Brockstone Court, and the Residence at Whitminster. I, too, like the pillared portico, the hall, the library, the pictures; and I, too, 'wish to have one of these houses and enough money to keep it together and entertain my friends in it modestly'.

Dr James tells us, as we might well guess, that for him places are prolific in suggestion.



It may be asked in what spirit should the stories in this collection be taken. With the exception of three (and these I will not specify), they are all ostensibly fiction, but I am sure that of the others, too, more than half a dozen could be very closely paralleled by real experience. I can hardly expect, although I might desire, that they should have the same effect upon the readers as *The Castle of Otranto* had upon Gray, who wrote: 'It makes some of us cry a little, and all in general afraid to go to bed o' nights.'

The best way to appreciate a ghost story is to believe in ghosts. Yet if one cannot, at least imitate the wittily truthful Madame du Deffand, who, when asked, 'Do you believe in ghosts?' replied: 'No, but I am afraid of them.'

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I am further much indebted to Mr H. Stuart-Forbes for his invaluable help in the collection of material, as also for his spirited and discerning criticisms of Ghost Stories, suggestions which have gone far to make my task easier and (if possible) more interesting.

M.S.

VOLUME 2

DIABOLISM, WITCHCRAFT,  
AND EVIL LORE

*Richard Barham*

SINGULAR PASSAGE  
IN THE LIFE OF THE LATE  
HENRY HARRIS, DOCTOR  
IN DIVINITY

*from THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS (First Series)*

Richard Bentley, 1840

In order that the extraordinary circumstance which I am about to relate may meet with the credit it deserves, I think it necessary to premise, that my reverend friend, among whose papers I find it recorded, was in his lifetime ever esteemed as a man of good plain understanding, strict veracity, and unimpeached morals – by no means of a nervous temperament, or one likely to attach undue weight to any occurrence out of the common course of events, merely because his reflections might not, at the moment, afford him a ready solution of its difficulties.

On the truth of his narrative, as far as he was personally concerned, no one who knew him would hesitate to place the most implicit reliance. His history is briefly this: – He had married early in life, and was a widower at the age of thirty-nine, with an only daughter, who had then arrived at puberty, and was just married to a near connection of our own family. The sudden death of her husband, occasioned by a fall from his horse, only three days after her confinement, was abruptly communicated to Mrs S— by a thoughtless girl, who saw her master brought lifeless into the house, and, with all that inexplicable anxiety to be the first to tell bad news, so common among the lower orders, rushed at once into the sick-room with her intelligence. The shock was too severe: and though the young widow survived the fatal event several months, yet she gradually sank under the blow, and expired, leaving a boy, not a twelvemonth old, to the care of his maternal grandfather.

My poor friend was sadly shaken by this melancholy catas-



trophe; time, however, and a strong religious feeling, succeeded at length in moderating the poignancy of his grief – a consummation much advanced by his infant charge, who now succeeded, as it were by inheritance, to the place in his affections left vacant by his daughter's decease. Frederick S— grew up to be a fine lad; his person and features were decidedly handsome; still there was, as I remember, an unpleasant expression in his countenance, and an air of reserve, attributed, by the few persons who called occasionally at the vicarage, to the retired life led by his grandfather, and the little opportunity he had, in consequence, of mixing in the society of his equals in age and intellect. Brought up entirely at home, his progress in the common branches of education was, without any great display of precocity, rather in advance of the generality of boys of his own standing; partly owing, perhaps, to the turn which even his amusements took from the first. His sole associate was the son of the village apothecary, a boy about two years older than himself, whose father being really clever in his profession, and a good operative chemist, had constructed for himself a small laboratory, in which, as he was fond of children, the two boys spent a great portion of their leisure time, witnessing many of those little experiments so attractive to youth, and in time aspiring to imitate what they admired.

In such society, it is not surprising that Frederick S— should imbibe a strong taste for the sciences which formed his principal amusement; or that, when, in process of time, it became necessary to choose his walk in life, a profession so intimately connected with his favourite pursuit as that of medicine should be eagerly selected. No opposition was offered by my friend, who, knowing that the greater part of his own income would expire with his life, and that the remainder would prove an insufficient resource to his grandchild, was only anxious that he should follow such a path as would secure him that moderate and respectable competency which is, perhaps, more conducive to real happiness than a more elevated or wealthy station. Frederick was, accordingly, at the proper age, matriculated at Oxford, with the view of studying the higher branches of medicine, a few months after his friend, John W—, had proceeded to Leyden, for the purpose of making himself acquainted with the practice of surgery in the

hospitals and lecture-rooms attached to that university. The boyish intimacy of their younger days did not, as is frequently the case, yield to separation; on the contrary, a close correspondence was kept up between them. Dr Harris was even prevailed upon to allow Frederick to take a trip to Holland to see his friend: and John returned the visit to Frederick at Oxford.

Satisfactory as, for some time, were the accounts of the general course of Frederick S—'s studies, by degrees rumours of a less pleasant nature reached the ears of some of his friends; to the vicarage, however, I have reason to believe they never penetrated. The good old Doctor was too well beloved in his parish for any one voluntarily to give him pain; and, after all, nothing beyond whispers and surmises had reached X—, when the worthy vicar was surprised on a sudden by a request from his grandchild, that he might be permitted to take his name off the books of the university, and proceed to finish his education in conjunction with his friend W— at Leyden. Such a proposal, made, too, at a time when the period for his graduating could not be far distant, both surprised and grieved the Doctor; he combated the design with more perseverance than he had ever been known to exert in opposition to any declared wish of his darling boy before, but, as usual, gave way, when, more strongly pressed, from sheer inability to persist in a refusal which seemed to give so much pain to Frederick, especially when the latter, with more energy than was quite becoming their relative situations, expressed his positive determination of not returning to Oxford, whatever might be the result of his grandfather's decision. My friend, his mind, perhaps, a little weakened by a short but severe nervous attack from which he had scarcely recovered, at length yielded a reluctant consent, and Frederick quitted England.

It was not till some months had elapsed after his departure, that I had reason to suspect that the eager desire of availing himself of opportunities for study abroad, not afforded him at home, was not the sole, or even the principal, reason which had drawn Frederick so abruptly from his Alma Mater. A chance visit to the university, and a conversation with a senior fellow belonging to his late college convinced me of this; still I found it impossible to extract from the latter the precise nature of his offence. That he

had given way to most culpable indulgences I had before heard hinted; and when I recollected how he had been at once launched, from a state of what might be well called seclusion, into a world where so many enticements were lying in wait to allure – with liberty, example, everything to tempt him from the straight road – regret, I frankly own, was more the predominant feeling in my mind than either surprise or condemnation. But here was evidently something more than mere ordinary excess – some act of profligacy, perhaps of a deeper strain, which had induced his superiors, who, at first, had been loud in his praises, to desire him to withdraw himself quietly, but for ever; and such an intimation, I found, had, in fact, been conveyed to him from an authority which it was impossible to resist. Seeing that my informant was determined not to be explicit, I did not press for a disclosure, which, if made, would, in all probability, only have given me pain, and that the rather as my old friend the Doctor had recently obtained a valuable living from Lord M—, only a few miles distant from the market town in which I resided, where he now was, amusing himself in putting his grounds into order, ornamenting his house, and getting everything ready against his grandson's expected visit in the following autumn. October came, and with it came Frederick; he rode over more than once to see me, sometimes accompanied by the Doctor, between whom and myself the recent loss of my poor daughter Louisa had drawn the cords of sympathy still closer.

More than two years had flown on in this way, in which Frederick S— had as many times made temporary visits to his native country. The time was fast approaching when he was expecting to return and finally take up his residence in England, when the sudden illness of my wife's father obliged us to take a journey into Lancashire; my old friend, who had himself a curate, kindly offered to fix his quarters at my parsonage, and superintend the concerns of my parish till my return. Alas! when I saw him next he was on the bed of death!

My absence was necessarily prolonged much beyond what I had anticipated. A letter, with a foreign postmark, had, as I afterwards found, been brought over from his own house to my venerable substitute in the interval, and barely giving himself

time to transfer the charge he had undertaken to a neighbouring clergyman, he had hurried off at once to Leyden. His arrival there was however too late. Frederick *was dead*! – killed in a duel, occasioned, it was said, by no ordinary provocation on his part, although the flight of his antagonist had added to the mystery which enveloped its origin. The long journey, its melancholy termination, and the complete overthrow of all my poor friend's earthly hopes, were too much for him. He appeared too – as I was informed by the proprietor of the house in which I found him, when his summons at length had brought me to his bedside – to have received some sudden and unaccountable shock, which even the death of his grandson was inadequate to explain. There was, indeed, a wildness in his fast-glazing eye, which mingled strangely with the glance of satisfaction thrown upon me as he pressed my hand; he endeavoured to raise himself, and would have spoken, but fell back in the effort, and closed his eyes for ever. I buried him there, by the side of the object of his more than parental affection – in a foreign land.

It is from papers that I discovered in his travelling case that I submit the following extracts, without, however, presuming to advance an opinion on the strange circumstances which they detail, or even as to the connection which some may fancy they discover between different parts of them.

The first was evidently written at my own house; and bears date 15 August 18—, about three weeks after my own departure for Preston.

It begins thus:

Tuesday 15 August – Poor girl! – I forget who it is that says, 'The real ills of life are light in comparison with fancied evils'; and certainly the scene I have just witnessed goes some way towards establishing the truth of the hypothesis. Among the afflictions which flesh is heir to, a diseased imagination is far from being the lightest, even when considered separately, and without taking into the account those bodily pains and sufferings which – so close is the connection between mind and matter – are but too frequently attendant upon any disorder of the fancy. Seldom has my interest been more powerfully excited than by poor Mary Graham. Her age, her appearance, her pale, melancholy features, the very contour of her countenance,

all conspire to remind me, but too forcibly, of one who, waking or sleeping, is never long absent from my thoughts; – but enough of this.

A fine morning had succeeded one of the most tempestuous nights I ever remember, and I was just sitting down to a substantial breakfast, which the care of my friend Ingoldsby's housekeeper, kind-hearted Mrs Wilson, had prepared for me, when I was interrupted by a summons to the sickbed of a young parishioner whom I had frequently seen in my walks, and had remarked for the regularity of her attendance at Divine worship. Mary Graham is the elder of two daughters, residing with their mother, the widow of an attorney, who, dying suddenly in the prime of life, left his family but slenderly provided for. A strict though not parsimonious economy has, however, enabled them to live with an appearance of respectability and comfort; and from the personal attractions which both the girls possess, their mother is evidently not without hopes of seeing one, at least, of them advantageously settled in life. As far as poor Mary is concerned, I fear she is doomed to inevitable disappointment, as I am much mistaken if consumption has not laid its wasting finger upon her; while this last occurrence, of what I cannot but believe to be a formidable epileptic attack, threatens to shake out, with even added velocity, the little sand that may yet remain within the hour-glass of time. Her very delusion, too, is of such a nature as, by adding to bodily illness the agitation of superstitious terror, can scarcely fail to accelerate the catastrophe, which I think I see fast approaching.

Before I was introduced into the sickroom, her sister, who had been watching my arrival from the window, took me into their little parlour, and, after the usual civilities, began to prepare me for the visit I was about to pay. Her countenance was marked at once with trouble and alarm, and in a low tone of voice, which some internal emotion, rather than the fear of disturbing the invalid in a distant room, had subdued almost to a whisper, informed me that my presence was become necessary, not more as a clergyman than a magistrate; that the disorder with which her sister had, during the night, been so suddenly and unaccountably seized, was one of no common kind, but attended with circumstances which, coupled with the declarations of the sufferer, took it out of all ordinary calculations, and, to use her own expression, that 'malice was at the bottom of it'.

Naturally supposing that these insinuations were intended to intimate the partaking of some deleterious substance on the part of the invalid, I inquired what reason she had for imagining, in the first place, that anything of a poisonous nature had been administered at all; and, secondly, what possible incitement any human being could

have for the perpetration of so foul a deed towards so innocent and unoffending an individual? Her answer considerably relieved the apprehensions I had begun to entertain lest the poor girl should, from some unknown cause, have herself been attempting to rush uncalled into the presence of her Creator; at the same time, it surprised me not a little by its apparent want of rationality and common-sense. She had no reason to believe, she said, that her sister had taken poison, or that any attempt upon her life had been made, or was, perhaps, contemplated, but that 'still malice was at work – the malice of villains or fiends, or of both combined; that no causes purely natural would suffice to account for the state in which her sister had been now twice placed, or for the dreadful sufferings she had undergone while in that state;' and that she was determined the whole affair should undergo a thorough investigation. Seeing that the poor girl was now herself labouring under a great degree of excitement, I did not think it necessary to enter at that moment into a discussion upon the absurdity of her opinion, but applied myself to the tranquillizing of her mind by assurances of a proper inquiry, and then drew her attention to the symptoms of the indisposition, and the way in which it had first made its appearance.

The violence of the storm last night had, I found, induced the whole family to sit up far beyond their usual hour, till, wearied out at length, and, as their mother observed, 'tired of burning fire and candle to no purpose', they repaired to their several chambers.

The sisters occupied the same room; Elizabeth was already at her humble toilet, and had commenced the arrangement of her hair for the night, when her attention was at once drawn from her employment by a half-smothered shriek and exclamation from her sister, who, in her delicate state of health, had found walking up two flights of stairs, perhaps a little more quickly than usual, an exertion, to recover from which she had seated herself in a large armchair.

Turning hastily at the sound, she perceived Mary deadly pale, grasping, as it were convulsively, each arm of the chair which supported her, and bending forward in the attitude of listening; her lips were trembling and bloodless, cold drops of perspiration stood upon her forehead, and in an instant after, exclaiming in a piercing tone, 'Hark! they are calling me again! it is – *it is the same voice*; – Oh no, no! – O my God! save me, Betsy – hold me – save me!' she fell forward upon the floor. Elizabeth flew to her assistance, raised her, and by her cries brought both her mother, who had not yet got into bed, and their only servant-girl, to her aid. The latter was despatched at once for medical help; but, from the appearance of the sufferer, it

was much to be feared that she would soon be beyond the reach of art. Her agonized parent and sister succeeded in bearing her between them and placing her on a bed; a faint and intermittent pulsion was for a while perceptible; but in a few moments a general shudder shook the whole body; the pulse ceased, the eyes became fixed and glassy, the jaw dropped, a cold clamminess usurped the place of the genial warmth of life. Before Mr I— arrived everything announced that dissolution had taken place, and that the freed spirit had quitted its mortal tenement.

The appearance of the surgeon confirmed their worst apprehensions; a vein was opened, but the blood refused to flow, and Mr I— pronounced that the vital spark was indeed extinguished.

The poor mother, whose attachment to her children was perhaps the most powerful, as they were the sole relatives or connections she had in the world, was overwhelmed with a grief amounting almost to frenzy; it was with difficulty that she was removed to her own room by the united strength of her daughter and medical adviser. Nearly an hour had elapsed during the endeavour at calming her transports; they had succeeded, however, to a certain extent, and Mr I— had taken his leave, when Elizabeth, re-entering the bed-chamber in which her sister lay, in order to pay the last sad duties to her corpse, was horrorstruck at seeing a crimson stream of blood running down the side of the counterpane to the floor. Her exclamation brought the girl again to her side, when it was perceived, to their astonishment, that the sanguine stream proceeded from the arm of the body, which was now manifesting signs of returning life. The half-frantic mother flew to the room, and it was with difficulty that they could prevent her, in her agitation, from so acting as to extinguish for ever the hope which had begun to rise in their bosoms. A long-drawn sigh, amounting almost to a groan, followed by several convulsive gaspings, was the prelude in the restoration of the animal functions in poor Mary: a shriek, almost preternaturally loud, considering her state of exhaustion, succeeded; but she did recover, and, with the help of restoratives, was well enough towards morning to express a strong desire that I should be sent for — a desire the more readily complied with, inasmuch as the strange expressions and declarations she had made since her restoration to consciousness, had filled her sister with the most horrible suspicions. The nature of these suspicions was such as would at any other time, perhaps, have raised a smile upon my lips; but the distress, and even agony of the poor girl, as she half hinted and half expressed them, were such as entirely to preclude every sensation at all approaching to mirth. Without en-

deavouring, therefore, to combat ideas, evidently too strongly impressed upon her mind at the moment to admit of present refutation, I merely used a few encouraging words, and requested her to precede me to the sick-chamber.

The invalid was lying on the outside of the bed, partly dressed, and wearing a white dimity wrapping-gown, the colour of which corresponded but too well with the deadly paleness of her complexion. Her cheek was wan and shrunk, giving an extraordinary prominence to her eye, which gleamed with a lustrous brilliancy not infrequently characteristic of the aberration of intellect. I took her hand; it was chill and clammy, the pulse feeble and intermittent, and the general debility of her frame was such that I would fain have persuaded her to defer any conversation which, in her present state, she might not be equal to support. Her positive assurance that, until she had disburdened herself of what she called her 'dreadful secret', she could know no rest either of mind or body, at length induced me to comply with her wish, opposition to which, in her then frame of mind, might perhaps be attended with even worse effects than its indulgence. I bowed acquiescence, and in a low and faltering voice, with frequent interruptions, occasioned by her weakness, she gave me the following singular account of the sensations which, she averred, had been experienced by her during her trance:

'This, sir,' she began, 'is not the first time that the cruelty of others has, for what purpose I am unable to conjecture, put me to a degree of torture which I can compare to no suffering, either of body or mind, which I have ever before experienced. On a former occasion I was willing to believe it the mere effect of a hideous dream, or what is vulgarly termed the nightmare; but this repetition, and the circumstances under which I was last *summoned*, at a time, too, when I had not even composed myself to rest, fatally convince me of the reality of what I have seen and suffered.

'This is no time for concealment of any kind. It is now more than a twelvemonth since I was in the habit of occasionally encountering in my walks a young man of prepossessing appearance and gentlemanly deportment. He was always alone, and generally reading; but I could not be long in doubt that these encounters, which became every week more frequent, were not the effect of accident, or that his attention, when we did meet, was less directed to his book than to my sister and myself. He even seemed to wish to address us, and I have no doubt would have taken some other opportunity of doing so, had not one been afforded him by a strange dog attacking us one Sunday morning on our way to church, which he beat off, and made



use of this little service to promote an acquaintance. His name, he said, was Francis Somers, and added that he was on a visit to a relation of the same name, resident a few miles from X—. He gave us to understand that he was himself studying surgery with the view to a medical appointment in one of the colonies. You are not to suppose, sir, that he had entered thus into his concerns at the first interview; it was not till our acquaintance had ripened, and he had visited our house more than once with my mother's sanction, that these particulars were elicited. He never disguised, from the first, that an attachment to myself was his object originally in introducing himself to our notice. As his prospects were comparatively flattering, my mother did not raise any impediment to his attentions, and I own I received them with pleasure.

'Days and weeks elapsed; and although the distance at which his relation resided prevented the possibility of an uninterrupted intercourse, yet neither was it so great as to preclude his frequent visits. The interval of a day, or at most of two, was all that intervened, and these temporary absences certainly did not decrease the pleasure of the meetings with which they terminated. At length a pensive expression began to exhibit itself upon his countenance, and I could not but remark that at every visit he became more abstracted and reserved. The eye of affection is not slow to detect any symptom of uneasiness in a quarter dear to it. I spoke to him, questioned him on the subject; his answer was evasive, and I said no more. My mother, too, however, had marked the same appearance of melancholy, and pressed him more strongly. He at length admitted that his spirits were depressed, and that their depression was caused by the necessity of an early, though but a temporary separation. His uncle, and only friend, he said, had long insisted on his spending some months on the Continent, with the view of completing his professional education, and that the time was now fast approaching when it would be necessary for him to commence his journey. A look made the inquiry which my tongue refused to utter. "Yes, dearest Mary," was his reply, "I have communicated our attachment to him, partially at least; and though I dare not say that the intimation was received as I could have wished, yet I have, perhaps, on the whole, no fair reason to be dissatisfied with his reply.

' "The completion of my studies, and my settlement in the world, must, my uncle told me, be the first consideration; when these material points were achieved, he should not interfere with any arrangement that might be found essential to my happiness: at the same time he has positively refused to sanction any engagement at

present, which may, he says, have a tendency to divert my attention from those pursuits, on the due prosecution of which my future situation in life must depend. A compromise between love and duty was eventually wrung from me, though reluctantly. I have pledged myself to proceed immediately to my destination abroad, with a full understanding that on my return, a twelvemonth hence, no obstacle shall be thrown in the way of what are, I trust, our mutual wishes."

'I will not attempt to describe the feelings with which I received this communication, nor will it be necessary to say anything of what passed at the few interviews which took place before Francis quitted X—. The evening immediately previous to that of his departure he passed in his house, and, before we separated, renewed his protestations of an unchangeable affection, requiring a similar assurance from me in return. I did not hesitate to make it. "Be satisfied, my dear Francis," said I, "that no diminution in the regard I have avowed can ever take place, and though absent in body, my heart and soul will still be with you." — "Swear this," he cried, with a suddenness and energy which surprised, and rather startled me: "promise that you will be with me *in spirit*, at least, when I am far away." I gave him my hand, but that was not sufficient. "One of these dark shining ringlets, my dear Mary," said he, "as a pledge that you will not forget your vow!" I suffered him to take the scissors from my work-box and to sever a lock of my hair, which he placed in his bosom — The next day he was pursuing his journey, and the waves were already bearing him from England.

'I had letters from him repeatedly during the first three months of his absence; they spoke of his health, his prospects, and of his love, but by degrees the intervals between each arrival became longer, and I fancied I perceived some falling off from that warmth of expression which had at first characterized his communications.

'One night I had retired to rest rather later than usual, having sat by the bedside, comparing his last brief note with some of his earlier letters, and was endeavouring to convince myself that my apprehensions of his fickleness were unfounded, when an undefinable sensation of restlessness and anxiety seized upon me. I cannot compare it to anything I had ever experienced before; my pulse fluttered, my heart beat with a quickness and violence which alarmed me, and a strange tremor shook my whole frame. I retired hastily to bed, in hopes of getting rid of so unpleasant a sensation, but in vain; a vague apprehension of I know not what occupied my mind, and vainly did I endeavour to shake it off. I can compare my feelings to nothing but those which we sometimes experience when about to undertake a

long and unpleasant journey, leaving those we love behind us. More than once did I raise myself in my bed and listen, fancying that I heard myself called, and on each of those occasions the fluttering of my heart increased. Twice I was on the point of calling to my sister, who then slept in an adjoining room, but she had gone to bed indisposed, and an unwillingness to disturb either her or my mother checked me; the large clock in the room below at this moment began to strike the hour of twelve. I distinctly heard its vibrations, but ere its sounds had ceased, a burning heat, as if a hot iron had been applied to my temple, was succeeded by a dizziness – a swoon – a total loss of consciousness as to where or in what situation I was.

‘A pain, violent, sharp, and piercing, as though my whole frame were lacerated by some keen-edged weapon, roused me from this stupor – but where was I? Everything was strange around me – a shadowy dimness rendered every object indistinct and uncertain; methought, however, that I was seated in a large, antique, high-backed chair, several of which were near, their tall black carved frames and seats interwoven with a lattice-work of cane. The apartment in which I sat was one of moderate dimensions, and, from its sloping roof, seemed to be the upper story of the edifice, a fact confirmed by the moon shining without, in full effulgence, on a huge round tower, which its light rendered plainly visible through the open casement, and the summit of which appeared but little superior in elevation to the room I occupied. Rather to the right, and in the distance, the spire of some cathedral or lofty church was visible, while sundry gable-ends, and tops of houses, told me I was in the midst of a populous but unknown city.

‘The apartment itself had something strange in its appearance, and, in the character of its furniture and appurtenances, bore little or no resemblance to any I had ever seen before. The fireplace was large and wide, with a pair of what are sometimes called andirons, betokening that wood was the principal, if not the only fuel consumed within its recess; a fierce fire was now blazing in it, the light from which rendered visible the remotest parts of the chamber. Over a lofty old-fashioned mantelpiece, carved heavily in imitation of fruit and flowers, hung the half-length portrait of a gentleman in a dark-coloured foreign habit, with a peaked beard and moustaches, one hand resting upon a table, the other supporting a sort of *bâton*, or short military staff, the summit of which was surmounted by a silver falcon. Several antique chairs, similar in appearance to those already mentioned, surrounded a massive oaken table, the length of which much exceeded its width. At the lower end of this piece of

furniture stood the chair I occupied; on the upper, was placed a small chafing-dish filled with burning coals, and darting forth occasionally long flashes of various-coloured fire, the brilliance of which made itself visible, even above the strong illumination emitted from the chimney. Two huge, black japanned cabinets, with clawed feet, reflecting from their polished surfaces the effulgence of the flame, were placed one on each side the casement-window to which I have alluded, and with a few shelves loaded with books, many of which were also strewn in disorder on the floor, completed the list of the furniture in the apartment. Some strange-looking instruments, of unknown form and purpose, lay on the table near the chafing-dish, on the other side of which a miniature portrait of myself hung, reflected by a small oval mirror in a dark-coloured frame, while a large open volume, traced with strange characters of the colour of blood, lay in front; a goblet, containing a few drops of liquid of the same ensanguined hue, was by its side.

'But of the objects which I have endeavoured to describe, none arrested my attention so forcibly as two others. These were the figures of two young men, in the prime of life, only separated from me by the table. They were dressed alike, each in a long flowing gown, made of some sad-coloured stuff, and confined at the waist by a crimson girdle; one of them, the shorter of the two, was occupied in feeding the embers of the chafing-dish with a resinous powder, which produced and maintained a brilliant but flickering blaze, to the action of which his companion was exposing a long lock of dark chestnut hair, that shrank and shivelled as it approached the flame. But, O God! – that hair! and the form of him who held it! that face! those features! – not for one instant could I entertain a doubt – it was He! Francis! – the lock he grasped was mine, the very pledge of affection I had given him, and still, as it partially encountered the fire, a burning heat seemed to scorch the temple from which it had been taken, conveying a torturing sensation that affected my very brain.

'How shall I proceed? – but no, it is impossible – not even to you, sir, can I – dare I – recount the proceedings of that unhallowed night of horror and of shame. Were my life extended to a term commensurate with that of the Patriarchs of old, never could its detestable, its damning pollutions be effaced from my remembrance; and, oh! above all, never could I forget the diabolical glee which sparked in the eyes of my fiendish tormentors, as they witnessed the worse than useless struggles of their miserable victim. Oh! why was it not permitted me to take refuge in unconsciousness – nay, in death itself, from the abominations of which I was compelled to be, not only a

witness, but a partaker? But it is enough, sir; I will not further shock your nature by dwelling longer on a scene, the full horrors of which, words, if I even dared employ any, would be inadequate to express; suffice it to say, that after being subjected to it, how long I knew not, but certainly for more than an hour, a noise from below seemed to alarm my persecutors; a pause ensued – the lights were extinguished, and, as the sound of a footstep ascending a staircase became more distinct, my forehead felt again the excruciating sensation of heat, while the embers, kindling into a momentary flame, betrayed another portion of the ringlet consuming in the blaze. Fresh agonies succeeded, not less severe, and of a similar description to those which had seized upon me at first: oblivion again followed, and on being at length restored to consciousness, I found myself as you see me now, faint and exhausted, weakened in every limb, and every fibre quivering with agitation. My groans soon brought my sister to my aid; it was long before I could summon resolution to confide, even to her, the dreadful secret, and when I had done so, her strongest efforts were not wanting to persuade me that I had been labouring under a severe attack of nightmare. I ceased to argue, but I was not convinced; the whole scene was then too present, too awfully real, to permit me to doubt the character of the transaction; and if, when a few days had elapsed, the hopelessness of imparting to others the conviction I entertained myself, produced in me an apparent acquiescence, with their opinion, I have never been the less satisfied that no cause reducible to the known laws of nature occasioned my sufferings on that hellish evening. Whether that firm belief might have eventually yielded to time, whether I might at length have been brought to consider all that had passed, and the circumstances which I could never cease to remember, as a mere phantasm, the offspring of a heated imagination, acting upon an enfeebled body, I know not – last night, however, would in any case have dispelled the flattering illusion – last night was the whole horrible scene acted over again. The place – the actors – the whole infernal apparatus were the same; the same insults, the same torments, the same brutalities – all were renewed, save that the period of my agony was not so prolonged. I became sensible to an incision in my arm, though the hand that made it was not visible; at the same moment my persecutors paused; they were manifestly disconcerted, and the companion of him, whose name shall never more pass my lips, muttered something to his abettor in evident agitation; the formula of an oath of horrible import was dictated to me in terms fearfully distinct. I refused it unhesitatingly; again and again was it proposed, with menaces I tremble to think on

— but I refused; the same sound was heard — interruption was evidently apprehended — the same ceremony was hastily repeated and I again found myself released, lying on my own bed, with my mother and my sister weeping over me. O God! O God! when and how is this to end? — When will my spirit be left in peace? — Where, or with whom, shall I find refuge?’

It is impossible to convey any adequate idea of the emotions with which this unhappy girl's narrative affected me. It must not be supposed that her story was delivered in the same continuous and uninterrupted strain in which I have transcribed its substance. On the contrary, it was not without frequent intervals, of longer or shorter duration, that her account was brought to a conclusion; indeed, many passages of her strange dream were not without the greatest difficulty and reluctance communicated at all. My task was no easy one; never, in the course of a long life spent in the active duties of my Christian calling — never had I been summoned to such a conference before.

To the half-avowed, and palliated confession of committed guilt I had often listened, and pointed out the only road to secure its forgiveness. I had succeeded in cheering the spirit of despondency, and sometimes even in calming the ravings of despair; but here I had a different enemy to combat, an ineradicable prejudice to encounter, evidently backed by no common share of superstition and confirmed by the mental weakness attendant upon severe bodily pain. To argue the sufferer out of an opinion so rooted was a hopeless attempt. I did, however, essay it; I spoke to her of the strong and mysterious connection maintained between our waking images and those which haunt us in our dreams, and more especially during that morbid oppression commonly called nightmare. I was even enabled to adduce myself as a strong and living instance of the excess to which fancy sometimes carries her freaks on those occasions; while, to an odd coincidence, the impression made upon my own mind, which I adduced as an example, bore no slight resemblance to her own. I stated to her, that on my recovery from the fit of epilepsy, which had attacked me about two years since, just before my grandson Frederick left Oxford, it was with the greatest difficulty I could persuade myself that I had not visited him, during the interval, in his rooms at Brazenose, and even conversed with himself and his friend W—, seated in his armchair, and gazing through the window full upon the statue of Cain, as it stands in the centre of the quadrangle. I told her of the pain I underwent both at the commencement and termination of my attack; of the extreme lassitude that succeeded; but my

efforts were all in vain: she listened to me, indeed, with an interest almost breathless, especially when I informed her of my having actually experienced the very burning sensation in the brain alluded to, no doubt a strong attendant symptom of this peculiar affection, and a proof of the identity of the complaint: but I could plainly perceive that I failed entirely in shaking the rooted opinion which possessed her, that her spirit had, by some nefarious and unhallowed means, been actually subtracted for a time from its earthly tenement.

The next extract which I shall give from my old friend's memoranda is dated 24 August, more than a week subsequent to his first visit at Mrs Graham's. He appears, from his papers, to have visited the poor young woman more than once during the interval, and to have afforded her those spiritual consolations which no one was more capable of communicating. His patient, for so in a religious sense she may well be termed, had been sinking under the agitation she had experienced; and the constant dread she was under of similar sufferings, operated so strongly on a frame already enervated, that life at length seemed to hang only by a thread. His papers go on to say –

I have just seen poor Mary Graham, – I fear for the last time. Nature is evidently quite worn out; she is aware that she is dying, and looks forward to the termination of her existence here, not only with resignation but with joy. It is clear that her dream, or what she persists in calling her 'subtraction', has much to do with this. For the last three days her behaviour has been altered, she has avoided conversing on the subject of her delusion, and seems to wish that I should consider her as a convert to my view of her case. This may, perhaps, be partly owing to the flippancies of her medical attendant upon the subject, for Mr I— has, somehow, or other, got an inkling that she has been much agitated by a dream, and thinks to laugh off the impression – in my opinion injudiciously; but though a skilful, and a kind-hearted, he is a young man, and of a disposition, perhaps, rather too mercurial for the chamber of a nervous invalid. Her manner has since been much more reserved to both of us: in my case, probably because she suspects me of betraying her secret.

26 August – Mary Graham is yet alive, but sinking fast; her cordiality towards me has returned since her sister confessed yesterday,

that she had herself told Mr I— that his patient's mind 'had been affected by a terrible vision'. I am evidently restored to her confidence. She asked me this morning, with much earnestness, 'What I believed to be the state of departed spirits during the interval between dissolution and the final day of account? And whether I thought they would be safe, in another world, from the influence of wicked persons employing an agency more than human?' Poor child! One cannot mistake the prevailing bias of her mind. Poor child!

27 August — It is nearly over; she is sinking rapidly, but quietly and without pain. I have just administered to her the sacred elements, of which her mother partook. Elizabeth declined doing the same: she cannot, she says, yet bring herself to forgive the villain who has destroyed her sister. It is singular that she, a young woman of good plain sense in ordinary matters, should so easily adopt, and so pertinaciously retain, a superstition so puerile and ridiculous. This must be matter of a future conversation between us; at present, with the form of the dying girl before her eyes, it were vain to argue with her. The mother, I find, has written to young Somers, stating the dangerous situation of his affianced wife; indignant as she justly is, at his long silence, it is fortunate that she had no knowledge of the suspicions entertained by her daughter. I have seen her letter; it is addressed to Mr Francis Somers, in the Hogewoert, at Leyden — a fellow-student, then, of Frederick's. I must remember to inquire if he is acquainted with this young man.

Mary Graham, it appears, died the same night. Before her departure she repeated to my friend the singular story she had before told him, without any material variation from the detail she had formerly given. To the last she persisted in believing that her unworthy lover had practised upon her by forbidden arts. She once more described the apartment with great minuteness, and even the person of Francis's alleged companion, who was, she said, about the middle height, hard-featured, with a rather remarkable scar upon his left cheek, extending in a transverse direction from below the eye to the nose. Several pages of my reverend friend's manuscript are filled with reflections upon this extraordinary confession, which, joined with its melancholy termination, seems to have produced no common effect upon him. He alludes to more than one subsequent discussion with the surviving sister, and piques himself on having made some pro-



gress in convincing her of the folly of her theory respecting the origin and nature of the illness itself.

His memoranda on this, and other subjects, are continued till about the middle of September, when a break ensues, occasioned, no doubt, by the unwelcome news of his grandson's dangerous state, which induces him to set out forthwith for Holland. His arrival at Leyden was, as I have already said, too late. Frederick S— had expired after thirty hours intense suffering, from a wound received in a duel with a brother student. The cause of quarrel was variously related; but, according to his landlord's version, it had originated in some silly dispute about a dream of his antagonist's, who had been the challenger. Such, at least, was the account given to him, as he said, by Frederick's friend and fellow-lodger, W—, who had acted as second on the occasion, thus acquitting himself of an obligation of the same kind due to the deceased, whose services he had put in requisition about a year before on a similar occasion, when he had himself been severely wounded in the face.

From the same authority I learned that my poor friend was much affected on finding that his arrival had been deferred too long. Every attention was shown him by the proprietor of the house, a respectable tradesman, and a chamber was prepared for his accommodation; the books and few effects of his deceased grandson were delivered over to him, duly inventoried, and, late as it was in the evening when he reached Leyden, he insisted on being conducted immediately to the apartments which Frederick had occupied, there to indulge the first ebullitions of his sorrows, before he retired to his own. Madame Müller accordingly led the way to an upper room, which being situated at the top of the house, had been, from its privacy and distance from the street, selected by Frederick as his study. The Doctor entered, and taking the lamp from his conductress, motioned to be left alone. His implied wish was of course complied with; and nearly two hours had elapsed before his kind-hearted hostess reascended, in the hope of prevailing upon him to return with her, and partake of that refreshment which he had in the first instance peremptorily declined. Her application for admission was unnoticed — she repeated it more than once, without success; then becoming some-

what alarmed at the continued silence, opened the door and perceived her new inmate stretched on the floor in a fainting fit. Restoratives were instantly administered, and prompt medical aid succeeded at length in restoring him to consciousness. But his mind had received a shock, from which, during the few weeks he survived, it never entirely recovered. His thoughts wandered perpetually: and though from the very slight acquaintance which his hosts had with the English language, the greater part of what fell from him remained unknown, yet enough was understood to induce them to believe that something more than the mere death of his grandson had contributed thus to paralyse his faculties.

When his situation was first discovered, a small miniature was found tightly grasped in his right hand. It had been the property of Frederick, and had more than once been seen by the Müllers in his possession. To this the patient made continued reference, and would not suffer it one moment from his sight: it was in his hand when he expired. At my request it was produced to me. The portrait was that of a young woman, in an English morning dress, whose pleasing and regular features, with their mild and somewhat pensive expression, were not, I thought, altogether unknown to me. Her age was apparently about twenty. A profusion of dark chestnut hair was arranged in the Madonna style, above a brow of unsullied whiteness, a single ringlet depending on the left side. A glossy lock of the same colour, and evidently belonging to the original, appeared beneath a small crystal, inlaid in the back of the picture, which was plainly set in gold, and bore in a cipher the letters M. G. with the date 18—. From the inspection of this portrait, I could at the time collect nothing, nor from that of the Doctor himself, which also, I found the next morning in Frederick's desk accompanied by two separate portions of hair. One of them was a lock, short and deeply tinged with grey, and had been taken, I have little doubt, from the head of my old friend himself; the other corresponded in colour and appearance with that at the back of the miniature. It was not till a few days had elapsed, and I had seen the worthy Doctor's remains quietly consigned to the narrow house, that while arranging his papers previous to my intended return upon the morrow, I encountered the narrative I have already transcribed. The name of the un-

fortunate young woman connected with it forcibly arrested my attention. I recollected it immediately as one belonging to a parishioner of my own, and at once recognized the original of the female portrait as its owner.

I rose not from the perusal of his very singular statement till I had gone through the whole of it. It was late – and the rays of the single lamp by which I was reading did but very faintly illumine the remoter parts of the room in which I sat. The brilliancy of an unclouded November moon, then some twelve nights old, and shining full into the apartment, did much towards remedying the defect. My thoughts filled with the melancholy details I had read, I rose and walked to the window. The beautiful planet rose high in the firmament, and gave to the snowy roofs of the houses, and pendent icicles, all the sparkling radiance of clustering gems. The stillness of the scene harmonized well with the state of my feelings. I threw open the casement and looked abroad. Far below me, the waters of the principal canal shone like a broad mirror in the moonlight. To the left rose the Burght, a huge round tower of remarkable appearance, pierced with embrasures at its summit; while a little to the right and in the distance, the spire and pinnacles of the Cathedral of Leyden rose in all their majesty, presenting a *coup d'œil* of surpassing though simple beauty. To a spectator of calm, unoccupied mind, the scene would have been delightful. On me it acted with an electric effect. I turned hastily to survey the apartment in which I had been sitting. It was the one designated as the study of the late Frederick S—. The sides of the room were covered with dark wainscot; the spacious fireplace opposite to me, with its polished andirons, was surmounted by a large old-fashioned mantelpiece, heavily carved in the Dutch style with fruits and flowers; above it frowned a portrait, in a Vandyke dress, with a peaked beard and moustaches; one hand of the figure rested on a table, while the other bore a marshal's staff, surmounted with a silver falcon; and – either my imagination, already heated by the scene, deceived me – or a smile as of malicious triumph curled the lip and glared in the cold leaden eye that seemed fixed upon my own. The heavy, antique, cane-backed chairs – the large oaken table – the book-shelves, the scattered volumes – all, all were there; while, to complete the picture,

to my right and left, as half breathless I leaned my back against the casement, rose, on each side, a tall, dark, ebony cabinet, in whose polished sides the single lamp upon the table shone reflected as in a mirror.

What am I to think? – Can it be that the story I have been reading was written by my poor friend here, and under the influence of delirium? – Impossible! Besides, they all assure me, that from that fatal night of his arrival he never left his bed – never put pen to paper. His very directions to have me summoned from England were verbally given, during one of those few and brief intervals in which reason seemed partially to resume her sway. Can it then be possible that – ? W—? where is he who alone may be able to throw light on this horrible mystery? No one knows. He absconded, it seems, immediately after the duel. No trace of him exists, nor, after repeated and anxious inquiries, can I find that any student has ever been known in the University of Leyden by the name of the Francis Somers.

There are more things in heaven and earth  
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy!

*Jasper John*

## THE SPIRIT OF STONEHENGE

*from SINISTER STORIES*

Henry Walker, 1930

'So you have moved from your old home; I was rather surprised to hear,' I said to Ronald Dalton.

He nodded his head.

'We were very sorry to go, but nothing would have made us stay after what had happened. I know I did not tell you, but then we have not spoken of it more than is necessary, even to old friends.'

We were sitting in the twilight of a June evening. Outside the rain dripped from the trees, from the roof, from the windows; for there had been a dreadful thunderstorm.

'I would like to tell you what happened, if you care to listen,' Ronald said abruptly.

I had been rather hoping he would, for he was a matter-of-fact man, and my curiosity had been stirred by the papers' accounts of the strange way one of their guests had committed suicide. So he started in his earnest way, which lent conviction to the story.

'My brother made great friends with Gavin Thomson in London. The first time I saw him was when he came to stay with us for a week. His great hobby was to dabble about in excavations, and, as his father had left him enough to live comfortably, he was able to indulge his taste.

'He was a good-looking boy, about twenty-nine, dark and manly. Though only young, he had made quite a name for himself already, even with the professors. There were tales of his living among the Bedouins, an unheard-of thing for a white man to do. But it was difficult to make him talk of his exploits.

'I took to him, as my brother had done; he had such a magnetic personality. He told us he had been reading up all the old books on Stonehenge which he could get hold of. The Druid

theory fascinated him, and he was anxious to study some facts first-hand.

‘He asked us if we had ever heard of elementals; then laughed, and said we were not to be afraid that *he* was possessed by them. We asked him what the things were, for beneath his light manner I saw that he was really serious about them. He told us that they were a sort of ugly evil spirits, which had never had a form. Their one object was to find a human body in which to reside. They were supposed to have a certain power over human beings in places where great evil had prevailed.

‘Quite abruptly he stopped, and began talking about the moon’s rays on the dolmen at Stonehenge, and a peculiar theory he held, of which we understood nothing. I think he meant to puzzle us and make us forget.

‘Now and then he descended to our level when he explained that the Druids were fond of conducting their ceremonies at certain times of the moon. “That is why I have to do so much of my work at night,” he said. We had given him a latchkey so that he could come in when he liked. He told us that he was on the verge of a great discovery which would make history.

‘After a fortnight’s stay he left us to do some work in Brittany, but not before he had covered many sheets with writing. In three months he was back again. He looked gaunt and ill, and his eyes were sunken and bright with fever. We begged him to rest that night, but he would not hear of it, and when he spoke of Stonehenge his eyes gleamed in a strange manner.

‘When he had gone out into the night I went up to his room to see if there was everything that he could want. There were books everywhere; one lay on the table, the place was marked with something. I opened it at the place and a knife lay snugly between the pages. It was curved, and of pure gold. I knew enough to know that it was a copy of a sacrificial knife; the edge was so sharp that I cut my finger rather badly.

‘Curiosity aroused, I looked at the page, and this is what I read:

‘“ELEMENTALS OF STONEHENGE. Though the day of the Druids is now long passed and the cries of their victims no longer haunt the night and the altar stone has ceased to drip blood, yet it is dangerous

to go there when the sacrificial moon is full. For the Druids, by the blood they shed, their vile sacrifices and fellowship with the devil, attracted forces of evil to the place. So it is said that shapeless invisible horrors haunt the vicinity and at certain times crave a resting-place in a human body. If once they enter in, it is only with difficulty that they are evicted."

"The book was many centuries old. I looked at the other books; they were all on the same subject. Gavin seemed to be quite crazy about it. I told my brother, and he said that he thought poor Gavin was overstrung.

"Perhaps he is possessed by an elemental," he said, and we both laughed.

'Next night, we resolved to follow him. When he went out as usual, the dog, to our surprise, jumped into the car. Gavin threw him out with a force that surprised us, and bade us call him back. We endeavoured to do so, but the animal seemed demented; he ran after the car like a mad thing, and both were soon lost in the distance.

'After half an hour we followed on the same road. It was a lovely night, warm, with the sky full of scudding clouds which every now and then hid the face of the moon and dimmed its light. Some little way off we left the car and started to walk across the grass. Tall and gaunt the dolmens stood out where the moonlight touched them. Somehow to me they looked unaccountably sinister, as if they longed to fall and crush one.

'We were still some way off when we saw a figure steal out from one of the great stones. In the dim light it looked like a misty wraith. I heard my brother draw in his breath sharply.

'It stopped before the altar stone, which was deeply in the shadow. Something flashed in the light – a knife! then it seemed from the stone itself came the most ear-splitting howl of agony.

'The moon went behind a cloud; we fled, stumbling over the wet grass, and in our haste missed the car. At last we found it, and, tumbling in, drove off at a great pace. When we got back again Gavin was already in bed and had to come down to open the door. He was too tired to notice anything wrong, and we just said that we had been for a drive.

'Next day, after rather a sleepless night, we were heartily

ashamed of our weakness, and firmly resolved to follow Gavin again that night. All day he seemed very absorbed and dreamy, and talked only about the discovery that he was going to make.

'An hour after he had left we were on his track. This time there was no moon, but we had an electric torch. I soon caught sight of Gavin; he was kneeling by the altar stone. It was reassuring to see his tweed-clad figure. We came up right behind, but he did not turn his head. Then I put my hand on his shoulder, but he did not move. He was unconscious. I raised his head and the light fell on glazed eyes, for he was dead. We laid him on the altar stone seeking for a spark of life, but all in vain. There was blood on his shirt and the hilt of a little knife stuck out. There he lay on the sacrificial stone with hair dishevelled, white upturned face and glassy eyes. While above towered the great stones seeming to rejoice that once again homage had been paid by a sacrifice of blood. Queer shadows danced in the light of the lamp which my brother held in shaking hands.

'We stood with bowed heads in the presence of those great monuments; tombstones that would have done honour to a king. Then we gathered courage and took the body to the car. And Stonehenge let us go, content that once again its stones were wet with blood.

'It was an unconsidering thing we'did, in that, and it might have led us into trouble; but we found a letter written by Gavin and his will which he had made, so we were freed from all blame or share in the matter.

'He said that the first few nights of his excavations at Stonehenge he had been unassailed and in a perfectly normal state of mind. Then a strange change came over him, so that at times he almost seemed to have lived there years before and to know all manner of secrets.

'Then it was that the desire to do the most dreadful things came over him. He questioned if he were mad or if it was the spirit of Stonehenge demanding a victim. The idea of elementals occurred to him, for he had been reading much about them of late.

'At last he tore himself away and went to Brittany to bury himself in work. But Stonehenge called him back, and he seemed



to lose all power over himself. At last, after many sleepless nights, he came back, as he had known that he must.

'Then, one night he had seen a dog lying on the altar stone, and an irresistible desire to kill overpowered him. After the blood was shed he felt a strange joy and deep contentment, but something told him that he was being watched, so he took the body and ran to the car. He had discovered a short cut across the grass which cut off many miles, so that was how he got home before us.

'Next morning he awoke with the blood lust strong within him; he felt that if anything would come upon him at the Stones he must kill. All day he fought it. At times he would be filled with disgust at his thoughts, then fall to devising a plot to lure us to our fate.

'When we had mentioned our coming, a cold fear had seized him, but his words died in his throat when he tried to warn us. Then all the good that was in him seemed to make one last stand. He knew there was one way out - to offer a sacrifice of blood, and the victim to be himself.

'So that night he had offered his life as a propitiation for evil in the hope that he would regain the soul that once was his. He ended by begging us to forgive and forget.

'The letter accomplished a purpose. "Suicide while of unsound mind," was brought in. Suspicion was lifted from us, but afterwards Bob and I went away from the horrible place.'

No one spoke. We sat in dead silence when he had finished. Then the gong rang, and we arose and knocked the ashes from our pipes.

*Jasper John*

## THE SEEKER OF SOULS

*from* SINISTER TALES

Henry Walker, 1930

It was in a deathly silence that we awaited the coming of the hour that would release the evil thing. I heard someone cough, and it echoed through the house. The clock ticked away the minutes with a grim satisfaction, and my neighbour breathed in a noisy fashion. But for once I was grateful for both sounds; they were something ordinary and commonplace, belonging to everyday life. The moonlight streamed in at the window, making little pools of silver here and there on the walls and floor.

A clattering whirl of machinery, and the clock in the tower commenced to strike the hour. Every stroke of the chimes reverberated through the house. Dead silence for a moment after the last note had quivered away. Then a door banged and there was the sound of shuffling footsteps out in the passage; a strange cry, half animal, half human, but of something enraged. For three nights it had aroused even the deepest sleepers from their slumbers.

The thing, whatever it was, started coming down the passage, banging at the doors as it did so. What was it – man or beast? We only knew that it was horribly evil and paralysed the bravest of us with fear. Inside was darkness save where the moonlight pierced it, and outside, beyond the door, the unknown, the feared. Not for life itself would I have dared to open the barrier which stood between us.

I looked at John. He had sat up in bed. A shaft of moonlight struck him, and I saw his eyes were fixed and staring; he shook like an aspen.

‘My God, man, what is it?’ His voice was strained and seemed torn from him in the horror of the moment.

But I had no explanation to offer, nor much taste for conversation, so remained silent.

After a time the thing outside grew tired of wandering and returned to its room. A wave of relief swept over us; we felt that since the hour had struck we had been very near to something from hell, something fiendish and very powerful.

Next morning, as usual, we gathered round the breakfast table, and the host looked round at the black-rimmed eyes. I remember everything: the silver vase on the table, filled with red roses, the shining tea-cups and the tense atmosphere.

Three nights of terror were telling on us all. Philip, as host, found our silence jarred on his nerves. Suddenly and irritably he broke out:

'Anyhow, that thing does no harm knocking on the doors, and I must beg you all to keep it from the servants. The other wing will be inhabitable in a few days, and then we will move over there. In the meantime, if anyone is afraid, he is welcome to go. I don't want to keep anyone against his will.'

We were all sorry for him, and somehow it seemed like rats leaving a sinking ship to desert now, though afterwards we wished we had possessed the courage. If anyone had spoken we others would have joined with him, but no one wished to be the first.

It was bad luck for Philip. The place had taken his fancy; a fine, rambling old castle with good fishing and shooting, it was just what he wanted. The view was superb, for it stood high in the hills.

When he had taken it Philip had heard whisperings of ghosts and strange doings; but what Englishman could believe those things? Owing to pressing circumstances of the impoverished family who owned it, the purchase money had been paid in advance.

When the castle was up for sale only one wing was ready for occupation, and none of the servants' quarters. However, we were none of us averse to roughing it with daily helps when it was a question of first-class fishing. So, when Philip had offered the invitation, it had been eagerly accepted.

At last breakfast drew to a close, and Philip made a sign to me to follow him. He took me into the shrubbery and, sitting down on a stump, took out his pipe.

'No one is likely to bother us here,' he said. 'Now, Peter, I

want you, as my greatest friend, to help me to get to the bottom of this. We are going to explore the haunted room in daylight while the others are busy with their letters.'

'I am your man,' I answered, with a laugh.

'Well, let's get to work then. I have the key of the side door.'

He got up and started fumbling about until he found a door hidden away amongst the ivy. The hinges were rusty and gave a heavy groan as we pushed it open. I followed Philip up a steep staircase until we came on to the passage, just by the haunted room. He took a big key from his pocket, and the lock turned without a sound.

'Better to keep it shut,' he said. Then, without the slightest misgiving, we stepped inside.

It was a beautiful room, with costly things, but what struck me was that everything was twisting; the legs of the furniture were carved like snakes. Then my eyes wandered to the tapestry. The same design there: serpents wrought in gold, with gleaming red and green eyes, worked on a black ground, with here and there the face of a grinning devil.

It was a beautiful, dreadful room; that was the puzzling part. There was a strong smell of damp fungus and bad, rotting things, though the sun streamed in at the window and there was no sign of mildew. It was uncanny and fascinating, the way everything twisted and writhed. There was not a breath of wind, but the bed hangings moved in a sinuous fashion, like the coils of a snake.

The actual furniture consisted of a four-poster bed, a writing-table, a few chairs and a huge cupboard. The windows were stained glass with a border of leaded panes.

It came to me suddenly, as I stood gazing, that, terror of terrors, MY SOUL WAS BEING STOLEN AWAY; the spirit of the room was tearing it from me. I knew that I must fight as I had never fought before. The devils were trying to get it from me. The knowledge of what it meant gave me strength; in my imagination I saw the whole army of Dante's inferno arrayed against me.

In silent horror I struggled to get out of that room. I had seen the war through; but that was fighting against flesh and blood;

this against spirits. Then the awful thing that happened was that one half of me wanted to stay frantically. I fought against it. I suppose that the evil in my nature joined with the evil in that room to betray me to the devils.

My feet seemed as if they had leaden weights attached, my tongue was powerless, and I felt like a helpless child in the grip of a giant. But I hoped that strength would be given me to resist, and I dared not yield to despair.

How long the agony endured I do not know, for it seemed as if the power of that room would draw me to itself as a straw in a whirlpool; but in the end I won through. It was a wonderful moment when I was out in the passage again.

Then I saw through the open door that Philip was still in the room, and experiencing the same horror. His face was white and so set that it was more like a death mask than that of a human being. I tried to call, to help him, but all power was taken from me; I was helpless. So I stood there in mortal fear, gazing and gazing. Then he was out in the passage and the door of the unholy room banged to.

The tension released, we sank down in utter exhaustion. I heard Philip's heavy breathing coupled with my own for a few minutes; then he made a sound between a sob and a groan, and I found the tears coursing down my face.

Fortunately no one came that way. It was fully lunch-time before we had recovered ourselves. There was a thick white streak in Philip's hair which had not been there before. We told them at lunch that we had been down the river together, and had to go through a good amount of chaff before returning empty-handed.

That afternoon a party had been planned, and we had to go. I expect that it was best for us, though we found it very difficult to listen to the idle chatter round us. I had a talk with Philip about moving before that night, but the only accommodation was cottages, and we lacked the courage to give the word to pack. It would only be a few days more until the other wing was ready.

After all, banging on the doors was nothing to what we had been through. As usual, the thing came that night, knocking at the doors; after it had gone I fell into a deep sleep.

Next morning, when I awoke, there was a great noise; everyone seemed to be talking outside in the passage, and someone was crying hysterically. Above all I heard Philip's calm, deep voice restoring order. A few moments afterwards he came to my room, and I saw that beneath his outward calm he was very worried.

He told me that the milkman, making his early rounds, had been attracted by somebody lying under a yew tree. It was a young boy with his throat cut. There was a blood-stained razor in his clenched hand; it looked like a clear case of suicide.

I hastily donned some clothes, while Philip sent the women away with a few stern words about behaving in a foolish manner. All of us men went with Philip to see the body. It was that of a boy of about eighteen. He must have been a handsome lad, for his features were curiously classical and looked, under the hand of death, as if they were chiselled in marble. A long strand of hair fell across his face, and on his throat was a horrible mass of gashes and cuts, evidently wrought by an inexperienced hand.

Only - such a boy! What could have impelled him to this deed? Had he, too, been enmeshed in the evil of the place? Here came to me the desolation, human and spiritual, which I know no words to describe. The wind moved the branches of the tree and a shower of drops fell, as if even Nature wept at such a tragedy.

It is only a confused memory now of what was done and said. I felt that I could have joined the women in their hysterical sobs, but there was Philip to be thought of. They told me afterwards that I kept my head and gave out orders like a robot, with an unmoved face.

The police, such as they were, took most of the responsibility. The old man in charge did not appear unduly surprised; indeed, he took it quite as a matter of course. He walked up to the house with Philip and I, and sat down in the study for a talk. Mechanically, Philip handed him a cigar, and, amid the heavy fumes of smoke, I remember hearing his voice in a rich Irish brogue.

'Well, sir,' he said, warming to his task, 'you don't know this place. There is something here which attracts them to come and die here. There have been some from the house too. 'Tis an evil place, and cursed so that none can live here, though 'tis a fine

place. But I suppose that you did not know, sir. Anyhow, if I were you, sir, I would leave and go away.' He finished with rather an air of triumph at having proved his point to a couple of prosaic Englishmen.

As for Philip, he had sat staring out of the window all this time. Now he roused himself and gave the sergeant a handsome tip for his trouble, and begged him to say as little as possible.

When he had gone we stood at the window and watched the men preparing to take the corpse away. At last the little dark-clad procession passed out of view. Philip turned to me and said: 'Ever heard of an exorcist? I have sent for one to see if he can expel the evil spirit from this place. The car left early this morning; he should be here this evening.'

Our new guest arrived in time for the evening meal. He was short and jovial and kept us all amused by his chatter, but he never made any mention of spirits or ghosts. He seemed to know most of the details when Philip tried to tell him. He warned us that the thing would make more noise that night, but he promised that no harm should come to us.

All was quiet as usual until the hour struck. Then the thing came out and raged up and down. When it came to the door of the exorcist it rattled at the handle and screamed with rage. At last it wearied of its wanderings and returned to the room. The exorcist told us that he had passed the night in prayer.

Next morning, after breakfast, the ceremony of expelling the evil spirit took place. We all waited outside in the passage while the exorcist went alone into the room, having enjoined us not to come in, whatever happened.

In a loud, clear voice he began the prayers, holding a book and a lighted candle in his hands. First thing the candle went out; then his face began to distort itself in various grimaces. When the prayer was finished candle and book fell to the ground. He appeared to be fighting for breath, and cried out that he was being throttled.

We tried to move, but were transfixed. There were strange moanings, cries and groans; then he was thrown with violence into the passage and the door banged to.

The spell being broken, we bent anxiously over the victim, but

he had gone into a dead faint and there were red marks on his throat. We carried him to his room and laid him on the bed. When he recovered consciousness it was very evident that he had been face to face with something very dreadful even for a man used to evil and sinister things.

We were debating to send for a doctor, but he overheard, and forbade us. He said these things were among the incomprehensible and beyond the sphere of man. He spoke to Philip alone, and told him that the place was evil and it was better to go, for there was a terrible power hidden in that room. When Philip came out he told us all to pack, as he had decided to leave next day.

We were all so occupied that it was only when we heard the powerful engines of a car coming up the drive that we remembered Guy Dennis was expected. He was very popular, with his good nature and cheery ways. He asked if we were not glad to see him, and why we all looked like a pack of ghosts. Then Philip started to explain in a mild way what had happened. Guy burst into fits of laughter. So Philip lost his temper and told him the bare truth, and we all bore witness to it. Guy saw that we were really serious about it.

'Dreadfully sorry,' he said, 'to be such an unbelieving sinner.' And he laughed again.

There was something very cheering to have him there laughing at our fears, with his six-foot-four of common sense.

'I suggest a drink all round now, and request that I may sleep in your haunted room,' he said.

The first part of the request was granted, but Philip was very firm in his 'No' to the other.

I must confess that, under Guy's influence, I almost thought that the whole thing was only overwrought imagination, but a sense of fear and depression soon returned. That evening passed fairly quickly. We all got into bed with a feeling of relief that it was to be our last night in that place!

I fell almost immediately into a heavy sleep, and I dreamt that I was in a prison cell and that all around me were people being tortured. They brought in a huge man, bound, and commenced to put out his eyes. His screams were dreadful to hear. Then I



woke to find myself in bed, but the cry still rang in my ears. I leapt out of bed, for it was coming from the passage. I stumbled out with a candle, and found the others there before me.

It was with a great shock that I saw Guy Dennis rolling about in the passage, alternately laughing and crying; for he was raving mad. I heard a voice say he had tried to sleep in that room just so as to be able to laugh at us in the morning, and this was what had happened!

We all stood there watching Guy laughing and showing his teeth. Then suddenly his mood changed and he rushed at us in a rage. There was a grim fight; candles fell to the ground and were trodden out, but in the end we overpowered him and bound him with sheets. Most of us were bleeding, for Guy had used teeth and nails against us.

The struggle had exhausted him. He went off into a faint, while the foam dried on his lips. We threw water on him and rubbed his temples. He opened his eyes with a groan and started moving his lips, but he was inaudible at first; then he started talking as if in a dream.

'I sorry - wanted to sleep there ... light, such a queer light. No, it was a pillar of whitish matter, near, very near. There was something green in the middle ... damp and wet. It came out. ... I can see it! It is all eyes ... no, all hands ... no, all face, all claws! It has hundreds of eyes. I must look at it! They are dreadful eyes; they scorch ... no, they freeze me, but I must look. Now it has only half a face; but the eyes! ... It laughs at me and gibbers. It is thrusting me out. I want to go back. The door is shut and the master calls me. Master, I cannot get back; it is not my fault.' He tried to rise and fell back, quieter.

For a short time he slept, but about two o'clock he woke again and started moaning and praying.

'Take me away, take me away, for Heaven's sake take me away! Have pity, have pity!' He tossed to and fro in his agony and fear. 'It is calling me; I must go back!' he moaned.

We were a weird group round the figure on the bed, all dressed in oddments of clothes.

The exorcist said that he must get him away at once, out of the house; that the power of evil was very prevalent that night.

Six of us carried Guy between us. He had gone into a trance again, so it was not difficult. Down the dark passage and the great oak staircase we went, men up against the great unknown, and very fearful.

Philip had locked and barred the door with care that night. We were obliged to put our burden down to struggle with the fastenings; as our hands were trembling, it took some time. At last the great door swung open on its hinges.

We stepped out into the warm darkness, and the procession continued down the drive, our way lit by a storm lantern. Long, dark shadows stole across the path, and every dark bush seemed to contain some lurking terror. Then, with a soft whirl of wings, an owl flew across our path.

When we reached the gates they were as welcome for us flying from evil in the dark night, as those of Paradise. The gamekeeper's cottage was quite near, Philip said; so we walked on in silence.

The little cabin was all in darkness, but it did not take very long to rouse the good man and his wife. The Irish are very quick to understand and they did not ask an undue number of questions until we were ready to tell them. Nor were they incredulous at our story.

The good woman made a bed for Guy and we laid him on it. Poor Guy, he never recovered from that night; we were obliged to leave him in an asylum in Dublin. From time to time he would break out in violent fits when the memory of what he had seen broke upon him. I often go and see him.

The next day Philip and I went back to shut up the house. It looked very pleasant in the sunlight, that haunt of evil. We did as little as possible; it was too full of awful memories to linger. At the lodge gates we looked back for the last time. The sun was blazing down and the gardens were bright with colour; then the gate shut behind us on the dreadful secret evil which reigned there.

*Roger Pater*

## THE ASTROLOGER'S LEGACY

*from* MYSTIC VOICES

Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1923

26 May, St Philip's feast, is the squire's birthday, and every year he celebrates the day by giving a little dinner party to a few very intimate friends. But, as he says, rather sadly, 'I have out-lived most of my generation;' and, for some years past, the whole number, including the host and a guest or two who may be staying at the Hall, has seldom reached as many as ten.

On the first birthday for which I was present there were only half a dozen of us in all at the dinner. These were, first, Father Bertrand, an English Dominican Friar, and one of the squire's oldest friends, who usually spent some weeks with him every summer. Second, Sir John Gervase, a local baronet and antiquarian, who, besides being an F.S.A., and one of the greatest living authorities on stained glass, was also one of the few Catholic gentry in the neighbourhood of Stanton Rivers. The third was Herr Aufrecht, a German professor, who had come to England to study some manuscripts in the British Museum, and had brought a letter of introduction from a common friend in Munich. Fourth, there was the rector of the next parish, who had been a Fellow of one of the colleges at Cambridge for most of his life, but had accepted the living, which was in the gift of his college, a few years previously, and had since become very intimate with the old squire, who, with myself, completed the number.

The mansion of Stanton Rivers is built round a little quadrangle, of which the servants' quarters and kitchen occupy the north side, the dining-room being at the north end of the west wing. When we are alone, however, the squire has all meals served in the morning-room; a small, cheerful apartment on the east side of the house, with dull, ivory-coloured walls, hung with exquisite old French pastels, and furnished entirely with Chippendale furniture, designed expressly for the squire's grandfather

by the famous cabinet-maker; the original contract and bills for which are preserved in the family archives.

The birthday dinner, however, as befits an 'institution', is always served in the dining-room proper, which is approached through the beautiful long apartment, stretching the whole length of the west wing, which the squire has made into the library. The dining-room is large and finely proportioned, and has its original Jacobean decoration, the walls being panelled in dark oak, with a carved cornice and plaster ceiling delicately moulded with a strapwork design, in which the cockle shells of the Rivers escutcheon are repeated again and again in combination with the leopards' heads of Stanton. The broad, deep fireplace has polished steel 'dogs' instead of a grate, and above it is a carved overmantel reaching to the ceiling, and emblazoned with all the quarterings the united families can boast, with their two mottoes, which combine so happily. *Sans Dieu rien* and *Garde ta Foy*.

I think the squire would prefer not to use the dining-room even for his birthday dinner, but he hasn't the heart to sadden Avison, the butler, by suggesting this. Indeed, the occasion is Avison's annual opportunity, and he glories in decking out the table with the finest things the house possesses in the way of family plate, glass, and china: while Mrs Parkin, the cook, and Saunders, the gardener, in their respective capacities, second his efforts with the utmost zeal.

The evening was an exquisite one, and we sat in the library talking and watching the changing effects of the fading lights as they played on the garden before the windows, until Avison threw open the folding doors and announced that dinner was served. Hitherto I had only seen the room in *déshabillé*, and it was quite a surprise to see how beautiful it now looked. The dark panelling, reflecting the warm sunset glow which came in through the broad mullioned windows, formed a perfect background to the dinner-table, with its shaded candles, delicate flowers, and gleams of light from glass and plate: and I felt that Avison's effort was really an artistic triumph. The same thought, I fancy, struck the rest of the guests, for no sooner had Father Bertrand said grace than Sir John burst out in admiration:

'My dear squire, what exquisite things you do possess! Some day I shall come and commit a burglary on you. Your glass and silver are a positive temptation.'

The host smiled, but I noticed that his eyes were fixed on the centre of the table, and that the eyelids were slightly drawn down, an expression I had learned to recognize as a sign of annoyance, carefully controlled. Following his gaze, I glanced at the table-centre, but before I could decide what it was, the German professor, who was sitting next me, broke out in a genial roar:

'*Mein Gott*, Herr Pater, but what is this?' and he pointed to the exquisite piece of plate in the centre of the table.

'We call it the Cellini fountain, Herr Aufrecht,' answered the squire, 'though it is certainly not a fountain, but a rose-water dish, and I can give you very little evidence that it is really Cellini's work.'

'Effidence,' exclaimed the German - 'it has its own effidence. What more want you? None but Benvenuto could broduce such a one. But how did you come to possess it?'

There was no doubt about the eyelids now, and I feared the other guests would notice their host's annoyance, but the squire controlled his voice perfectly as he answered:

'Oh, it has been in the family for more than three centuries; Sir Hubert Rivers, the ancestor whose portrait hangs at the foot of the stairs, is believed to have brought it back from Italy.'

I thought I could guess the cause of his annoyance now, for the ancestor in question had possessed a most unenviable reputation, and, by a strange trick of heredity, the squire's features were practically a reproduction of Sir Hubert's - a fact which was a source of no little secret chagrin to the saintly old priest. Fortunately, at this point, the rector turned the conversation down another channel; Herr Aufrecht did not pursue the subject further, and the squire's eyelids soon regained their normal elevation.

As the meal advanced the German came out as quite a brilliant talker, and the conversational ball was kept up so busily between Father Bertrand, the rector, and himself that the other three of us had little to do but listen and be entertained. A good deal of

the talk was above my head, however, and during these periods my attention came back to the great rose-water dish which shone and glittered in the centre of the table.

In the first place I had never seen it before, which struck me as a little odd, for Avison had discovered my enthusiasm for old silver, and so had taken me to the pantry and displayed all the plate for my benefit. However, I concluded that so valuable a piece was probably put away in the strong-room, which would account for its not appearing with the rest.

What puzzled me more was the unusual character of the design, for every curve and line of the beautiful piece seemed purposely arranged to concentrate the attention on a large globe of rock crystal, which formed the centre and summit of the whole. The actual basin, filled with rose-water, extended beneath this ball, which was supported by four exquisite silver figures, and the constant play of reflected lights between the water and the crystal was so fascinating that I wondered the idea had never been repeated; yet, so far as my knowledge went, the design was unique.

Seated as I was, at the foot of the table, I faced the squire, and after a while I noticed that he, too, had dropped out of the conversation, and had his gaze fixed on the crystal globe. All at once his eyes dilated and his lips parted quickly, as if in surprise, while his gaze became concentrated with an intensity that startled me. This lasted for fully a minute, and then Avison happened to take away his plate. The distraction evidently broke the spell, whatever it was, for he began to talk again, and, as it seemed to me, kept his eyes carefully away from the crystal during the rest of the meal.

After we had drunk the squire's health, we retired to the library, where Avison brought us coffee, and about ten o'clock Sir John's carriage was announced. He had promised to give the rector a lift home, so the two of them soon departed together, and only the professor and Father Bertrand were left with the squire and myself. I felt a little afraid lest Herr Aufrecht should return to the subject of the Cellini fountain, but to my surprise, as soon as the other two were gone, the squire himself brought up the subject, which I thought he wished to avoid.

'You seemed interested in the rose-water fountain, Herr Aufrecht,' he remarked, 'would you like to examine it now that the others are gone?'

The German beamed with delight, and accepted the proposal volubly, while the squire rang the bell for Avison, and ordered him to bring the Cellini fountain to the library for Herr Aufrecht to see. The butler looked almost as pleased as the professor, and in a minute the splendid piece of plate was placed on a small table, arranged in the full light of a big shaded lamp.

The professor's flow of talk stopped abruptly as the conversationalist gave place to the connoisseur. Seating himself beside the little table, he produced a pocket lens, and proceeded to examine every part of the fountain with minute care, turning it slowly round as he did so. For fully five minutes he sat in silence, absorbed in his examination, and I noticed that his attention returned continually to the great crystal globe, supported by the four lovely figures, which formed the summit of the whole. Then he leaned back in his chair and delivered his opinion.

'It is undoubtedly by Cellini,' he said, 'and yet the schema is not like him. I think the patron for whom he laboured did compel him thus to fashion it. That great crystal ball at top – no, it is not what Benvenuto would do of himself. Thing you not so?' and he turned to the squire with a look of interrogation.

'I will tell you all I know about it in a minute, professor,' answered the old priest, 'but first please explain to me why you think Cellini was not left free in the design.'

'*Ach* so,' replied the German, 'it is the crystal globe. He is too obvious, too assertive; how is it you say in English, he "hit you in the eye". You haf read the *Memoirs* of Benvenuto?' The squire nodded. '*Ach*, then you must see it, yourself. Do you not remember the great morse he make, the cope-clasp for Clemens *septimus*? The Pope show to him his great diamond, and demand a model for a clasp with it set therein. The other artists, all of them, did make the diamond the centre of the whole design. But Cellini? No. He put him at the feet of God the Father, so that the lustre of the great gem would set off all the work, but should not dominate the whole, for *ars est celare artem*. Now here,' and he laid his hand upon the crystal globe, 'here it is otherwise.

These statuettes, they are perfection, in every way they are worth far more than is the crystal. Yet, the great ball, he crush them, he kill them. You see him first, last, all the time. No, he is there for a purpose, but the purpose is not that of the design, not an artistic purpose, no. I am sure of it, he is there for use.'

As he finished speaking, he turned quickly towards the squire, and looked up at him with an air of conviction. I followed his example, and saw the old priest smiling quietly with an expression of admiration and agreement.

'You are perfectly right, professor,' he said quietly, 'the crystal was put there with a purpose, at least so I firmly believe; and I expect you can tell us also what the purpose was.'

'No, no, Herr Pater,' answered the other. 'If you know the reason, why make I guesses at it? Better you should tell us all about it, is it not so?'

'Very well,' replied the squire, and he seated himself beside the little table. Father Bertrand and myself did the same, and when we were all settled, he turned to the professor and began:

'I mentioned at dinner that this piece of plate was brought from Italy by Sir Hubert Rivers, and, first of all, I must tell you something about him. He was born about the year 1500, and lived to be over ninety years old, so his life practically coincides with the sixteenth century. His father died soon after Hubert came of age, and he thus became a person of some importance while still quite young. He was knighted by Henry VIII a year or two later, and soon afterwards was sent to Rome in the train of the English Ambassador.

'There his brilliant parts attracted attention, and he soon abandoned his diplomatic position to become a member of the Papal entourage, though without any official position. When the breach between Henry and the Pope took place, he attached himself to the suite of the Imperial Ambassador, thus avoiding any trouble with his own sovereign, who could not afford to quarrel still further with the Emperor, as well as any awkward questions as to his religious opinions.

'Of his life in Rome I can tell you practically nothing, but if tradition be true, he was a typical son of the Renaissance. He played with art, literature, and politics; and he more than played



with astrology and the black arts, being, in fact, a member of the famous, or infamous, Academy. You may remember how that institution, which was founded in the fifteenth century by the notorious Pomponio Leto, used to hold its meetings in one of the catacombs. Under Paul II the members were arrested and tried for heresy, but nothing could be actually proved against them, and afterwards they were supposed by their contemporaries to have reformed. We know now that in reality things went from bad to worse. The study of paganism led them on to the worship of Satan, and eventually suspicion was again aroused, and a further investigation ordered.

'Sir Hubert got wind of this in time, however, so he availed himself of his position in the household of the Imperial Ambassador, and quietly retired to Naples. There he lived till he was over eighty, and no one in England ever expected him to return. But he did so, bringing with him a great store of books and manuscripts, some pictures, and this piece of plate; and he died and was buried here in the last decade of the sixteenth century.

'His nephew, who came in for the estates on his death, was a devout Catholic, and had been educated at St Omers. He made short work with Sir Hubert's manuscripts, most of which he burned, as being heretical or worse, but he spared one volume, which contains an inventory of the things brought from Naples. Among the items mentioned is this fountain. In fact, it has a whole page to itself, with a little sketch and a note of its attribution to Cellini, besides some other words, which I have never been able to make out. But I think it is clear that the crystal was used for evil purposes, and that is why I dislike seeing it on the table. If Avison had asked me, I should have forbidden him to produce it.'

'Then I am ver' glad he did not ask you, *mein Herr*,' observed the German, bluntly, 'for I should not then have seen him. But this inventory you speak of, is it permitted that I study it?'

'Certainly, Herr Aufrecht,' replied the squire, and walking to one of the bookcases, he unlocked the glass doors and took out a small volume, bound in faded red leather with gilt ornaments.

'This is the book,' he said; 'I will find you the page with the sketch,' and a minute later he handed the volume to the profes-

sor. I glanced across and saw a little drawing, unquestionably depicting the piece of plate before us, with some lines of writing beneath; the whole in faded ink, almost the colour of rust.

The professor's lens came out again and, with its aid, he read out the description beneath the picture.

“‘Item. *Vasculum argenteum, crystallo ornatum in quattuor statuas imposito. Opus Benevenuti, aurificis clarissimi. Quo crystallo Romæ in ritibus nostris pontifex noster Pomponius olim uti solebat.*”’ \*

‘Well, that sounds conclusive enough,’ said Father Bertrand, who had been listening intently. ‘*Opus Benevenuti, aurificis clarissimi*, could only mean Cellini; and the last sentence certainly sounds very suspicious, though it doesn’t give one much to go upon as to the use made of the crystal.’

‘But there is more yet,’ broke in Herr Aufrecht, ‘it is in another script and much fainter.’ He peered into the page with eyes screwed up, and then exclaimed in surprise, ‘Why it is Greek!’

‘Indeed,’ said the squire, with interest, ‘that accounts for my failure to read it. I’m afraid I forgot all the Greek I ever knew as soon as I left school.’

Meanwhile the professor had produced his pocket-book, and was jotting down the words as he deciphered them, while Father Bertrand and myself took the opportunity to examine the work on the little plaques which adorned the base of the fountain.

‘I haf him all now,’ announced Herr Aufrecht, triumphantly, after a few minutes. ‘Listen and I will translate him to you,’ and after a little hesitation he read out the following :

In the globe all truth is recorded, of the present, the past and the future.

To him that shall gaze it is shown; whosoever shall seek he shall find.  
O Lucifer, star of the morn, give ear to the voice of thy servant,  
Enter and dwell in my heart, who adore thee as master and lord.

Fabius Britannicus.

‘*Fabius Britannicus*,’ exclaimed the squire, as the professor

\* ‘Item. A vessel of silver, adorned with a crystal supported on four statuettes. The work of Benvenuto, most famous of goldsmiths. This crystal our Pontiff Pomponius was wont to use in our rites at Rome in days gone by.’

ceased reading, 'why, those are the words on the base of the pagan altar in the background of Sir Hubert's portrait!'

'I doubt not he was named Fabius Britannicus in the Academia,' answered the German; 'all the members thereof did receive classical names in place of their own.'

'It must be that,' said the squire; 'so he really was a worshipper of Satan. No wonder tradition paints him in such dark colours. But, why – of course,' he burst out, 'I see it all now, that explains everything.'

We all looked up, surprised at his vehemence, but he kept silent, until Father Bertrand said gently :

'I think, Philip, you can tell us something more about all this; will you not do so?'

The old man hesitated for a little while and then answered : 'Very well, if you wish it, you shall hear the story; but I must ask you to excuse me giving you the name. Although the principal actor in it has been dead many years now, I would rather keep his identity secret.'

'When I was still quite a young man, and before I decided to take orders, I made friends in London with a man who was a spiritualist. He was on terms of intimacy with Home, the medium, and he himself possessed considerable gifts in the same direction. He often pressed me to attend some of their seances, which I always refused to do, but our relations remained quite friendly, and at length he came down here on a visit to Stanton Rivers.'

'The man was a journalist by profession, a critic and writer on matters artistic, so one evening, although we were quite alone at dinner, I told the butler, Avison's predecessor, to put out the Cellini fountain for him to see. I did not warn him what to expect, as I wanted to get his unbiased opinion, but the moment he set eyes on it, he burst out in admiration, and, like our friend the professor tonight, he pronounced it to be unquestionably by Benvenuto himself.'

'I said it was always believed to be his work, but purposely told him nothing about Sir Hubert, or my suspicions as to the original use of the crystal, and he did not question me about its history. As the meal advanced, however, he became curiously

silent and self-absorbed. Sometimes I had to repeat what I was saying two or three times before he grasped the point; and I began to feel uncomfortable and anxious, so that it was a real relief when the butler put the decanters on the table and left us to ourselves.

'My friend was sitting on my right, at the side of the table, so that we could talk to each other more easily, and I noticed that he kept his gaze fixed on the fountain in front of him. After all it was a very natural thing for him to do, and at first I did not connect his silence and distraction with the piece of plate.

'All at once he leaned forward until his eyes were not two feet away from the great crystal globe, into which he gazed with the deepest attention, as if fascinated. It is difficult to convey to you how intense and concentrated his manner became. It was as if he looked right into the heart of the globe – not *at* it, if you understand, but at something inside it, something beneath the surface, and that something of a compelling, absorbing nature which engrossed every fibre of his being in one act of profound attention.

'For a minute or two he sat like this in perfect silence, and I noticed the sweat beginning to stand out on his forehead, while his breath came audibly between his lips, under the strain. Then, all at once, I felt I must do something, and without stopping to deliberate I said in a loud tone, "I command you to tell me what it is you see."

'As I spoke, a kind of shiver ran through his frame, but his eyes never moved from the crystal ball. Then his lips moved, and after some seconds came a faint whisper, uttered as if with extreme difficulty, and what he said was something like this:

'“There is a low, flat arch, with a kind of slab beneath it, and a picture at the back. There is a cloth on the slab, and on the cloth a tall gold cup, and lying in front of it is a thin white disc. By the side is a monster, like a huge toad,” and he shuddered, “but it is much too big to be a toad. It glistens, and its eyes have a cruel light in them. Oh, it is horrible!” Then all at once the voice leaped to a shrill note, and he spoke very rapidly, as if the scene were changing quicker than he could describe it.

'“The man in front – the one with a cross on the back of his

cloak – is holding a dagger in his hand. He raises it and strikes at the white disc. He has pierced it with the dagger. It bleeds! The white cloth beneath it is all red with blood. But the monster – some of the blood has fallen upon it as it spurted out, and the toad is writhing now as if in agony. Ah! it leaps down from the slab, it is gone. All present rise up in confusion; there is a tumult. They rush away down the dark passages. Only one remains, the man with the cross on his back. He is lying insensible upon the ground. On the slab still stands the gold cup and white disc with the bloodstained cloth, and the picture behind –” and the voice sank to an inaudible whisper, as if the speaker were exhausted.

‘Almost without thinking, I put a question to him before the sight should fade entirely. “The picture, what is it like?” But instead of answering he merely whispered “*Irene, da calda*,” and fell back as if exhausted in his chair.’

There was silence for a few moments.

‘And your friend, the spiritualist,’ began Father Bertrand, ‘could he tell you nothing more of what he saw?’

‘I did not ask him,’ answered the old priest, ‘for, when he came to himself, he seemed quite ignorant of what he had told me during his trance. But, some years afterwards, I got some further light on the incident, and that in quite an unexpected way. Just wait a minute, and I will show you what I believe to be the picture he saw at the back of the niche!’ And the old man walked to one of the bookcases and selected a large folio volume.

‘The picture I am going to show you is an exact copy of one of the frescoes in the catacombs of SS. Peter and Marcellinus, where I came upon it, quite unexpectedly, during my period in Rome as a student; it has been reproduced since by Lanciani in one of his books. Ah, here it is,’ and he laid the album on the table.

There, before us, was a copy of an undeniable catacomb fresco depicting an ‘agape’ or love-feast! a group of figures symbolical both of the Last Supper and the communion of the elect. Above it were the contemporary inscriptions, ‘IRENE DA CALDA’ and ‘AGAPE MISCE MI’, while round about were scrawled, in characters evidently much more recent, a number of names: ‘POM-PONIUS, FABIANUS, RUFFUS, LETUS, VOLSCUS, FABIUS’ and others, all of them members of the notorious Academy. There

they had written them in charcoal, and there they still remain today, as evidence how the innermost recesses of a Christian catacomb were profaned, and the cult of Satan practised there, by the neo-pagans of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

We sat looking at the picture in silence for a minute or so, and then Herr Aufrecht turned to the Dominican.

'Fra Bertrand,' he said, 'you are Master in *Theologia*, what is your opinion of all this?'

The friar hesitated for a moment before he answered.

'Well, Herr Aufrecht,' he said at length, 'the Church has never ceased to teach the possibility of diabolical possession, and for my part I see no reason why a thing,' and he pointed to the crystal, 'should not become "possessed" in much the same way as a person can. But if you ask my opinion on the practical side of the question, I should say that, since Father Philip here cannot legally part with his heirloom, he certainly acts wisely in keeping it under lock and key.'

*Amelia B. Edwards*

## MY BROTHER'S GHOST STORY

*from* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, 1860

Mine is my brother's Ghost Story. It happened to my brother about thirty years ago, while he was wandering, sketch-book in hand, among the High Alps, picking up subjects for an illustrated work on Switzerland. Having entered the Oberland by the Brunig Pass, and filled his portfolio with what he used to call 'bits' from the neighbourhood of Meyringen, he went over the Great Scheideck to Grindlewald, where he arrived one dusky September evening, about three quarters of an hour after sunset. There had been a fair that day, and the place was crowded. In the best inn there was not an inch of space to spare – there were only two inns at Grindlewald, thirty years ago – so my brother went to one at the end of the covered bridge next the church, and there, with some difficulty, obtained the promise of a pile of rugs and a mattress, in a room which was already occupied by three other travellers.

The Adler was a primitive hostelry, half farm, half inn, with great rambling galleries outside, and a huge general room, like a barn. At the upper end of this room stood long stoves, like metal counters, laden with steaming-pans, and glowing underneath like furnaces. At the lower end, smoking, supping, and chatting, were congregated some thirty or forty guests, chiefly mountaineers, char drivers, and guides. Among these my brother took his seat, and was served, like the rest, with a bowl of soup, a platter of beef, a flagon of country wine, and a loaf made of Indian corn. Presently, a huge St Bernard dog came and laid his nose upon my brother's arm. In the meantime he fell into conversation with two Italian youths, bronzed and dark-eyed, near whom he happened to be seated. They were Florentines. Their names, they told him, were Stefano and Battisto. They had been travelling for some months on commission, selling cameos,

mosaics, sulphur casts, and the like pretty Italian trifles, and were now on their way to Interlaken and Geneva. Weary of the cold North, they longed, like children, for the moment which should take them back to their own blue hills and grey-green olives; to their workshop on the Ponte Vecchio, and their home down by the Arno.

It was quite a relief to my brother, on going up to bed, to find that these youths were to be two of his fellow-lodgers. The third was already there, and sound asleep, with his face to the wall. They scarcely looked at this third. They were all tired, and all anxious to rise at daybreak, having agreed to walk together over the Wengern Alp as far as Lauterbrunnen. So, my brother and the two youths exchanged a brief good night, and, before many minutes, were all as far away in the land of dreams as their unknown companion.

My brother slept profoundly – so profoundly that, being roused in the morning by a clamour of merry voices, he sat up dreamily in his rugs, and wondered where he was.

‘Good day, signor,’ cried Battisto. ‘Here is a fellow-traveller going the same way as ourselves.’

‘Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg, musical-box maker by trade, stands five feet eleven in his shoes, and is at monsieur’s service to command,’ said the sleeper of the night before.

He was as fine a young fellow as one would wish to see. Light, and strong, and well proportioned, with curling brown hair, and bright, honest eyes that seemed to dance at every word he uttered.

‘Good morning,’ said my brother. ‘You were asleep last night when we came up.’

‘Asleep! I should think so, after being all day in the fair, and walking from Meyringen the evening before. What a capital fair it was!’

‘Capital, indeed,’ said Battisto. ‘We sold cameos and mosaics yesterday, for nearly fifty francs.’

‘Oh, you sell cameos and mosaics, you two! Show me your cameos, and I will show you my musical boxes. I have such pretty ones, with coloured views of Geneva and Chillon on the lids, playing two, four, six and even eight tunes. Bah! I will give you a concert!’



And with this he unstrapped his pack, displayed his little boxes on the table, and wound them up, one after the other, to the delight of the Italians.

'I helped to make them myself, every one,' said he, proudly. 'Is it not pretty music? I sometimes set one of them when I go to bed at night, and fall asleep listening to it. I am sure, then, to have pleasant dreams! But let us see your cameos. Perhaps I may buy one for Marie, if they are not too dear. Marie is my sweetheart, and we are to be married next week.'

'Next week!' exclaimed Stefano. 'That is very soon. Battisto has a sweetheart also, up at Impruneta; but they will have to wait a long time before they can buy the ring.'

Battisto blushed like a girl.

'Hush, brother!' said he. 'Show the cameos to Christien, and give your tongue a holiday!'

But Christien was not so to be put off.

'What is her name?' said he. 'Tush! Battisto, you must tell me her name! Is she pretty? Is she dark, or fair? Do you often see her when you are at home? Is she very fond of you? Is she as fond of you as Marie is of me?'

'Nay, how should I know that?' asked the soberer Battisto. 'She loves me, and I love her – that is all.'

'And her name?'

'Margherita.'

'A charming name! And she is herself as pretty as her name, I'll engage. Did you say she was fair?'

'I said nothing about it one way or the other,' said Battisto, unlocking a green box clamped with iron, and taking out tray after tray of his pretty wares. 'There! Those pictures all inlaid in little bits are Roman mosaics – these flowers on a black ground are Florentine. The ground is of hard dark stone, and the flowers are made of thin slices of jasper, onyx, cornelian, and so forth. Those forget-me-nots, for instance, are bits of turquoise, and that poppy is cut from a piece of coral.'

'I like the Roman ones best,' said Christien. 'What place is that with all the arches?'

'This is the Coliseum, and the one next to it is St Peter's. But we Florentines care little for the Roman work. It is not half so

fine or so valuable as ours. The Romans make their mosaics of composition.'

'Composition or no, I like the little landscapes best,' said Christien. 'There is a lovely one, with a pointed building, and a tree, and mountains at the back. How I should like that one for Marie!'

'You may have it for eight francs,' replied Battisto; 'we sold two of them yesterday for ten each. It represents the tomb of Caius Cestius, near Rome.'

'A tomb!' echoed Christien, considerably dismayed. '*Diable!* That would be a dismal present to one's bride.'

'She would never guess that it was a tomb, if you did not tell her,' suggested Stefano.

Christien shook his head.

'That would be next door to deceiving her,' said he.

'Nay,' interposed my brother, 'the owner of that tomb has been dead these eighteen or nineteen hundred years. One almost forgets that he was ever buried in it.'

'Eighteen or nineteen hundred years? Then he was a heathen?'

'Undoubtedly, if by that you mean that he lived before Christ.'

Christien's face lighted up immediately.

'Oh, that settles the question,' said he, pulling out his little canvas purse, and paying his money down at once. 'A heathen's tomb is as good as no tomb at all. I'll have it made into a brooch for her, at Interlaken. Tell me, Battisto, what shall you take home to Italy for your Margherita?'

Battisto laughed, and chinked his eight francs. 'That depends on trade,' said he; 'if we make good profits between this and Christmas, I may take her a Swiss muslin from Berne; but we have already been away seven months, and we have hardly made a hundred francs over and above our expenses.'

And with this, the talk turned upon general matters, the Florentines locked away their treasures, Christien re strapped his pack, and my brother and all went down together, and breakfasted in the open air outside the inn.

It was a magnificent morning: cloudless and sunny, with a cool breeze that rustled in the vine upon the porch, and flecked the table with shifting shadows of green leaves. All around and

about them stood the great mountains, with their blue-white glaciers bristling down to the verge of the pastures, and the pine-woods creeping darkly up their sides. To the left, the Wetterhorn; to the right, the Eiger; straight before them, dazzling and imperishable, like an obelisk of frosted silver, the Schreckhorn, or Peak of Terror. Breakfast over, they bade farewell to their hostess, and, mountain-staff in hand, took the path to the Wengern Alp. Half in light, half in shadow, lay the quiet valley, dotted over with farms, and traversed by a torrent that rushed, milk-white, from its prison in the glacier. The three lads walked briskly in advance, their voices chiming together every now and then in chorus of laughter. Somehow my brother felt sad. He lingered behind, and, plucking a little red flower from the bank, watched it hurry away with the torrent, like a life on the stream of time. Why was his heart so heavy, and why were their hearts so light?

As the day went on, my brother's melancholy, and the mirth of the young men, seemed to increase. Full of youth and hope, they talked of the joyous future, and built up pleasant castles in the air. Battisto, grown more communicative, admitted that to marry Margherita, and become a master mosaicist, would fulfil the dearest dream of his life. Stefano, not being in love, preferred to travel. Christien, who seemed to be the most prosperous, declared that it was his darling ambition to rent a farm in his native Kander Valley, and lead the patriarchal life of his fathers. As for the musical-box trade, he said, one should live in Geneva to make it answer; and, for his part, he loved the pine-forests and the snow-peaks, better than all the towns in Europe. Marie, too, had been born among the mountains, and it would break her heart, if she thought she were to live in Geneva all her life, and never see the Kander Thal again. Chatting thus, the morning wore on to noon, and the party rested awhile in the shade of a clump of gigantic firs festooned with trailing banners of grey-green moss.

Here they ate their lunch, to the silvery music of one of Christien's little boxes, and by-and-by heard the sullen echo of an avalanche far away on the shoulder of the Jungfrau.

Then they went on again in the burning afternoon, to heights

where the Alp-rose fails from the sterile steep, and the brown lichen grows more and more scantily among the stones. Here, only the bleached and barren skeletons of a forest of dead pines varied the desolate monotony; and high on the summit of the pass, stood a little solitary inn, between them and the sky.

At this inn they rested again, and drank to the health of Christien and his bride, in a jug of country wine. He was in uncontrollable spirits, and shook hands with them all, over and over again.

'By nightfall tomorrow,' said he, 'I shall hold her once more in my arms! It is now nearly two years since I came home to see her, at the end of my apprenticeship. Now I am foreman, with a salary of thirty francs a week, and well able to marry.'

'Thirty francs a week!' echoed Battisto. '*Corpo di Bacco!* that is a little fortune.'

Christien's face beamed.

'Yes,' said he, 'we shall be very happy; and, by-and-by – who knows? – we may end our days in the Kander Thal, and bring up our children to succeed us. Ah! If Marie knew that I should be there tomorrow night, how delighted she would be!'

'How so, Christien?' said my brother. 'Does she not expect you?'

'Not a bit of it. She has no idea that I can be there till the day after tomorrow – nor could I, if I took the road all round by Unterseen and Frütigen. I mean to sleep tonight at Lauterbrunnen, and tomorrow morning shall strike across the Tschlingel glacier to Kandersteg. If I rise a little before daybreak, I shall be at home by sunset.'

At this moment the path took a sudden turn, and began to descend in sight of an immense perspective of very distant valleys. Christien flung his cap into the air, and uttered a great shout.

'Look!' said he, stretching out his arms as if to embrace all the dear familiar scene: 'O! Look! There are the hills and woods of Interlaken, and here, below the precipices on which we stand, lies Lauterbrunnen! God be praised, who has made our native land so beautiful!'

The Italians smiled at each other, thinking their own Arno valley far more fair; but my brother's heart warmed to the boy,

and echoed his thanksgiving in that spirit which accepts all beauty as a birthright and an inheritance. And now their course lay across an immense plateau, all rich with corn-fields and meadows, and studded with substantial homesteads built of old brown wood, with huge sheltering eaves, and strings of Indian corn hanging like golden ingots along the carven balconies. Blue whortleberries grew beside the footway, and now and then they came upon a wild gentian, or a star-shaped *immortelle*. Then the path became a mere zigzag on the face of the precipice, and in less than half an hour they reached the lowest level of the valley. The glowing afternoon had not yet faded from the uppermost pines, when they were all dining together in the parlour of a little inn looking to the Jungfrau. In the evening my brother wrote letters, while the three lads strolled about the village. At nine o'clock they bade each other good night, and went to their several rooms.

Weary as he was, my brother found it impossible to sleep. The same unaccountable melancholy still possessed him, and when at last he dropped into an uneasy slumber, it was but to start over and over again from frightful dreams, faint with a nameless terror. Towards morning, he fell into a profound sleep, and never woke until the day was fast advancing towards noon. He then found, to his regret, that Christien had long since gone. He had risen before daybreak, breakfasted by candlelight, and started off in the grey dawn – ‘as merry’, said the host, ‘as a fiddler at a fair’.

Stefano and Battisto were still waiting to see my brother, being charged by Christien with a friendly farewell message to him, and an invitation to the wedding. They, too, were asked, and meant to go; so, my brother agreed to meet them at Interlaken on the following Tuesday, whence they might walk to Kandersteg by easy stages, reaching their destination on the Thursday morning, in time to go to church with the bridal party. My brother then bought some of the little Florentine cameos, wished the two boys every good fortune, and watched them down the road till he could see them no longer.

Left now to himself, he wandered out with his sketch-book, and spent the day in the upper valley; at sunset, he dined alone

in his chamber, by the light of a single lamp. This meal despatched, he drew nearer to the fire, took out a pocket edition of Goethe's *Essays on Art*, and promised himself some hours of pleasant reading. (Ah, how well I know that very book, in its faded cover, and how often I have heard him describe that lonely evening!) The night had by this time set in cold and wet. The damp logs spluttered on the hearth, and a wailing wind swept down the valley, bearing the rain in sudden gusts against the panes. My brother soon found that to read was impossible. His attention wandered incessantly. He read the same sentence over and over again, unconscious of its meaning, and fell into long trains of thought leading far into the dim past.

Thus the hours went by, and at eleven o'clock he heard the doors closing below, and the household retiring to rest. He determined to yield no longer to this dreaming apathy. He threw on fresh logs, trimmed the lamp, and took several turns about the room. Then he opened the casement, and suffered the rain to beat against his face, and the wind to ruffle his hair, as it ruffled the acacia leaves in the garden below. Some minutes passed thus, and when, at length, he closed the window and came back into the room, his face and hair and all the front of his shirt were thoroughly saturated. To unstrap his knapsack and take out a dry shirt was, of course, his first impulse – to drop the garment, listen eagerly, and start to his feet, breathless and bewildered, was the next.

For, borne fitfully upon the outer breeze, now sweeping past the window, now dying in the distance, he heard a well-remembered strain of melody, subtle and silvery as the 'sweet airs' of Prospero's isle, and proceeding unmistakably from the musical-box which had, the day before, accompanied the lunch under the fir-trees of the Wengern Alp!

Had Christien come back, and was it thus that he announced his return? If so, where was he? Under the window? Outside in the corridor? Sheltering in the porch, and waiting for admittance? My brother threw open the casement again, and called him by his name. .

'Christien! Is that you?'

All without was intensely silent. He could hear the last gust of

wind and rain moaning farther and farther away upon its wild course down the valley, and the pine-trees shivering, like living things.

'Christien !' he said again, and his own voice seemed to echo strangely on his ear. 'Speak ! Is it you ?'

Still no one answered. He leaned out into the dark night; but could see nothing – not even the outline of the porch below. He began to think that his imagination had deceived him, when suddenly the strain burst forth again; – this time, apparently in his own chamber.

As he turned, expecting to find Christien at his elbow, the sounds broke off abruptly, and a sensation of intensest cold seized him in every limb – not the mere chill of nervous terror, not the mere physical result of exposure to wind and rain, but a deadly freezing of every vein, a paralysis of every nerve, an appalling consciousness that in a few moments more the lungs must cease to play, and the heart to beat ! Powerless to speak or stir, he closed his eyes, and believed that he was dying.

This strange faintness lasted but a few seconds. Gradually the vital warmth returned, and, with it, strength to close the window, and stagger to a chair. As he did so, he found the breast of his shirt all stiff and frozen, and the rain clinging in solid icicles upon his hair.

He looked at his watch. It had stopped at twenty minutes before twelve. He took his thermometer from the chimney-piece, and found the mercury at sixty-eight. Heavenly powers ! How were these things possible in a temperature of sixty-eight degrees, and with a large fire blazing on the hearth ?

He poured out half a tumbler of cognac, and drank it at a draught. Going to bed was out of the question. He felt that he dared not sleep – that he scarcely dared to think. All he could do, was, to change his linen, pile on more logs, wrap himself in his blankets, and sit all night in an easy-chair before the fire.

My brother had not long sat thus, however, before the warmth, and probably the nervous reaction, drew him off to sleep. In the morning he found himself lying on the bed, without being able to remember in the least how or when he reached it.

It was again a glorious day. The rain and wind were gone, and

the Silverhorn at the end of the valley lifted its head into an unclouded sky. Looking out upon the sunshine, he almost doubted the events of the night, and, but for the evidence of his watch, which still pointed to twenty minutes before twelve, would have been disposed to treat the whole matter as a dream. As it was, he attributed more than half his terrors to the prompting of an over-active and over-wearied brain. For all this, he still felt depressed and uneasy, and so very unwilling to pass another night at Lauterbrunnen, that he made up his mind to proceed that morning to Interlaken. While he was yet loitering over his breakfast, and considering whether he should walk the seven miles of road, or hire a vehicle, a char came rapidly up to the inn door, and a young man jumped out.

'Why, Battisto!' exclaimed my brother, in astonishment, as he came into the room; 'what brings *you* here today? Where is Stefano?'

'I have left him at Interlaken, signor,' replied the Italian.

Something there was in his voice, something in his face, both strange and startling.

'What is the matter?' asked my brother, breathlessly. 'He is not ill? No accident has happened?'

Battisto shook his head, glanced furtively up and down the passage, and closed the door.

'Stefano is well, signor; but – but a circumstance has occurred – a circumstance so strange! – Signor, do you believe in spirits?'

'In spirits, Battisto?'

'Ay, signor; for if ever the spirit of any man, dead or living, appealed to human ears, the spirit of Christien came to me last night, at twenty minutes before twelve o'clock.'

'At twenty minutes before twelve o'clock!' repeated my brother.

'I was in bed, signor, and Stefano was sleeping in the same room. I had gone up quite warm, and had fallen asleep, full of pleasant thoughts. By-and-by, although I had plenty of bed-clothes, and a rug over me as well, I woke, frozen with cold and scarcely able to breathe. I tried to call to Stefano; but I had no power to utter the slightest sound. I thought my last moment was come. All at once, I heard a sound under the window – a sound



which I knew to be Christien's musical-box; and it played as it played when we lunched under the fir-trees, except that it was more wild and strange and melancholy and most solemn to hear – awful to hear! Then, signor, it grew fainter and fainter – and then it seemed to float past upon the wind, and die away. When it ceased, my frozen blood grew warm again, and I cried out to Stefano. When I told him what had happened, he declared I had been only dreaming. I made him strike a light, that I might look at my watch. It pointed to twenty minutes before twelve, and had stopped there; and – stranger still – Stefano's watch had done the very same. Now tell me, signor, do you believe that there is any meaning in this, or do you think, as Stefano persists in thinking, that it was all a dream?’

‘What is your own conclusion, Battisto?’

‘My conclusion, signor, is that some harm has happened to poor Christien on the glacier, and that his spirit came to me last night.’

‘Battisto, he shall have help if living, or rescue for his poor corpse if dead; for I, too, believe that all is not well.’

And with this, my brother told him briefly what had occurred to himself in the night; despatched messengers for the three best guides in Lauterbrunnen; and prepared ropes, ice-hatchets, alpen-stocks, and all such matters necessary for a glacier expedition. Hasten as he would, however, it was nearly midday before the party started.

Arriving in about half an hour at a place called Stechelberg, they left the char, in which they had travelled so far, at a châlet, and ascended a steep path in full view of the Breithorn glacier, which rose up to the left, like a battlemented wall of solid ice. The way now lay for some time among pastures and pine-forests. Then they came to a little colony of châlets, called Steinberg, where they filled their water-bottles, got their ropes in readiness, and prepared for the Tschlingel glacier. A few minutes more, and they were on the ice.

At this point, the guides called a halt, and consulted together. One was for striking across the lower glacier towards the left, and reaching the upper glacier by the rocks which bound it on the south. The other two preferred the north, or right side; and

this my brother finally took. The sun was now pouring down with almost tropical intensity, and the surface of the ice, which was broken into long treacherous fissures, smooth as glass and blue as the summer sky, was both difficult and dangerous. Silently and cautiously, they went, tied together at intervals of about three yards each: with two guides in front, and the third bringing up the rear. Turning presently to the right, they found themselves at the foot of a steep rock, some forty feet in height, up which they must climb to reach the upper glacier. The only way in which Battisto or my brother could hope to do this, was by the help of a rope steadied from below and above. Two of the guides accordingly clambered up the face of the crag by notches in the surface, and one remained below. The rope was then let down, and my brother prepared to go first. As he planted his foot in the first notch, a smothered cry from Battisto arrested him.

'Santa Maria! Signor! Look yonder!'

My brother looked, and there (he ever afterwards declared), as surely as there is a heaven above us all, he saw Christien Baumann standing in the full sunlight, not a hundred yards distant! Almost in the same moment that my brother recognized him, he was gone. He neither faded, nor sank down, nor moved away; but was simply gone, as if he had never been. Pale as death, Battisto fell upon his knees, and covered his face with his hands. My brother, awe-stricken and speechless, leaned against the rock, and felt that the object of his journey was but too fatally accomplished. As for the guides, they could not conceive what had happened.

'Did you see nothing?' asked my brother and Battisto, both together.

But the men had seen nothing, and the one who had remained below, said, 'What should I see but the ice and the sun?'

To this my brother made no other reply than by announcing his intention to have a certain crevasse, from which he had not once removed his eyes since he saw the figure standing on the brink, thoroughly explored before he went a step farther; whereupon the two men came down from the top of the crag, resumed the ropes, and followed my brother, incredulously. At the narrow

end of the fissure, he paused, and drove his alpenstock firmly into the ice. It was an unusually long crevasse – at first a mere crack, but widening gradually as it went, and reaching down to unknown depths of dark deep blue, fringed with long pendent icicles, like diamond stalactites. Before they had followed the course of this crevasse for more than ten minutes, the youngest of the guides uttered a hasty exclamation.

‘I see something!’ cried he. ‘Something dark, wedged in the teeth of the crevasse, a great way down!’

They all saw it: a mere indistinguishable mass, almost closed over by the ice-walls at their feet. My brother offered a hundred francs to the man who would go down and bring it up. They all hesitated.

‘We don’t know what it is,’ said one.

‘Perhaps it is only a dead chamois,’ suggested another.

Their apathy enraged him.

‘It is no chamois,’ he said, angrily. ‘It is the body of Christien Baumann, native of Kandersteg. And, by Heaven, if you are all too cowardly to make the attempt, I will go down myself!’

The youngest guide threw off his hat and coat, tied a rope about his waist, and took a hatchet in his hand.

‘I will go, monsieur,’ said he; and without another word, suffered himself to be lowered in. My brother turned away. A sickening anxiety came upon him, and presently he heard the dull echo of the hatchet far down in the ice. Then there was a call for another rope, and then – the men all drew aside in silence, and my brother saw the youngest guide standing once more beside the chasm, flushed and trembling, with the body of Christien lying at his feet.

Poor Christien! They made a rough bier with their ropes and alpenstocks, and carried him, with great difficulty, back to Steinberg. There, they got additional help as far as Stechelberg, where they laid him in the char, and so brought him on to Lauterbrunnen. The next day, my brother made it his sad business to precede the body to Kandersteg, and prepare his friends for its arrival. To this day, though all these things happened thirty years ago, he cannot bear to recall Marie’s despair, or all the mourning that he innocently brought upon that peaceful valley. Poor Marie

has been dead this many a year; and when my brother last passed through the Kander Thal on his way to the Ghemmi, he saw her grave, beside the grave of Christien Baumann, in the village burial-ground.

This is my brother's Ghost Story.

*J. Sheridan Le Fanu*

## SIR DOMINICK'S BARGAIN

A LEGEND OF DUNORAN

*from* ALL THE YEAR ROUND, 1872

In the early autumn of the year 1838, business called me to the south of Ireland. The weather was delightful, the scenery and people were new to me, and sending my luggage on by the mail-coach route in charge of a servant, I hired a serviceable nag at a posting-house, and, full of the curiosity of an explorer, I commenced a leisurely journey of five-and-twenty miles on horseback, by sequestered cross-roads, to my place of destination. By bog and hill, by plain and ruined castle, and many a winding stream, my picturesque road led me.

I had started late, and having made little more than half my journey, I was thinking of making a short halt at the next convenient place, and letting my horse have a rest and a feed, and making some provision also for the comforts of his rider.

It was about four o'clock when the road, ascending a gradual steep, found a passage through a rocky gorge between the abrupt termination of a range of mountains to my left and a rocky hill, that rose dark and sudden at my right. Below me lay a little thatched village, under a long line of gigantic beech-trees, through the boughs of which the lowly chimneys sent up their thin turf-smoke. To my left, stretched away for miles, ascending the mountain range I have mentioned, a wild park, through whose sward and ferns the rock broke, time-worn and lichen-stained. This park was studded with straggling wood, which thickened to something like a forest, behind and beyond the little village I was approaching, clothing the irregular ascent of the hillsides with beautiful, and in some places discoloured foliage.

As you descend, the road winds slightly, with the grey park-wall, built of loose stone, and mantled here and there with ivy, at its left, and crosses a shallow ford; and as I approached the village, through breaks in the woodlands, I caught glimpses of the

long front of an old ruined house, placed among the trees, about halfway up the picturesque mountain-side.

The solitude and melancholy of this ruin piqued my curiosity, and when I had reached the rude thatched public-house, with the sign of St Columbkil, with robes, mitre, and crozier displayed over its lintel, having seen to my horse and made a good meal myself on a rasher and eggs, I began to think again of the wooded park and the ruinous house, and resolved on a ramble of half an hour among its sylvan solitudes.

The name of the place, I found, was Dunoran; and beside the gate a stile admitted to the grounds, through which, with a pensive enjoyment, I began to saunter towards the dilapidated mansion.

A long grass-grown road, with many turns and windings, led up to the old house, under the shadow of the wood.

The road, as it approached the house, skirted the edge of a precipitous glen, clothed with hazel, dwarf-oak, and thorn, and the silent house stood with its wide-open hall-door facing this dark ravine, the further edge of which was crowned with towering forest; and great trees stood about the house and its deserted court-yard and stables.

I walked in and looked about me, through passages overgrown with nettles and weeds; from room to room with ceilings rotted, and here and there a great beam dark and worn, with tendrils of ivy trailing over it. The tall walls with rotten plaster were stained and mouldy, and in some rooms the remains of decayed wainscoting crazily swung to and fro. The almost sashless windows were darkened also with ivy, and about the tall chimneys the jackdaws were wheeling, while from the huge trees that overhung the glen in sombre masses at the other side, the rooks kept up a ceaseless cawing.

As I walked through these melancholy passages – peeping only into some of the rooms, for the flooring was quite gone in the middle, and bowed down toward the centre, and the house was very nearly unroofed, a state of things which made the exploration a little critical – I began to wonder why so grand a house, in the midst of scenery so picturesque, had been permitted to go to decay; I dreamed of the hospitalities of which it had long ago

been the rallying place, and I thought what a scene of Red-gauntlet revelries it might disclose at midnight.

The great staircase was of oak, which had stood the weather wonderfully, and I sat down upon its steps, musing vaguely on the transitoriness of all things under the sun.

Except for the hoarse and distant clamour of the rooks, hardly audible where I sat, no sound broke the profound stillness of the spot. Such a sense of solitude I have seldom experienced before. The air was stirless, there was not even the rustle of a withered leaf along the passage. It was oppressive. The tall trees that stood close about the building darkened it, and added something of awe to the melancholy of the scene.

In this mood I heard, with an unpleasant surprise, close to me, a voice that was drawling, and, I fancied, sneering, repeat the words: 'Food for worms, dead and rotten; God over all.'

There was a small window in the wall, here very thick, which had been built up, and in the dark recess of this, deep in the shadow, I now saw a sharp-featured man, sitting with his feet dangling. His keen eyes were fixed on me, and he was smiling cynically, and before I had well recovered my surprise, he repeated the distich:

If death was a thing that money could buy,  
The rich they would live, and the poor they would die.

'It was a grand house in its day, sir,' he continued, 'Dunoran House, and the Sarsfields. Sir Dominick Sarsfield was the last of the old stock. He lost his life not six foot away from where you are sitting.'

As he thus spoke he let himself down, with a little jump, on to the ground.

He was a dark-faced, sharp-featured, little hunchback, and had a walking-stick in his hand, with the end of which he pointed to a rusty stain in the plaster of the wall.

'Do you mind that mark, sir?' he asked.

'Yes,' I said, standing up, and looking at it, with a curious anticipation of something worth hearing.

'That's about seven or eight feet from the ground, sir, and you'll not guess what it is.'

'I dare say not,' said I, 'unless it is a stain from the weather.'

'Tis nothing so lucky, sir,' he answered, with the same cynical smile and a wag of his head, still pointing at the mark with his stick. 'That's a splash of brains and blood. It's there this hundhred years; and it will never leave it while the wall stands.'

He was murdered, then?'

'Worse than that, sir,' he answered.

'He killed himself, perhaps?'

'Worse than that, itself, this cross between us and harm! I'm oulder than I look, sir; you wouldn't guess my years.'

He became silent, and looked at me, evidently inviting a guess.

'Well, I should guess you to be about five-and-fifty.'

He laughed, and took a pinch of snuff, and said :

'I'm that, your honour, and something to the back of it. I was seventy last Candlemas. You would not a' thought that, to look at me.'

'Upon my word I should not; I can hardly believe it even now. Still, you don't remember Sir Dominick Sarsfield's death?' I said, glancing up at the ominous stain on the wall.

'No, sir, that was a long while before I was born. But my grandfather was butler here long ago, and many a time I heard tell how Sir Dominick came by his death. There was no mather in the great house ever sinst that happened. But there was two sarvants in care of it, and my aunt was one o' them; and she kep' me here wid her till I was nine year old, and she was lavin' the place to go to Dublin; and from that time it was let to go down. The wind sthript the roof, and the rain rotted the timber, and little by little, in sixty years' time, it kem to what you see. But I have a likin' for it still, for the sake of ould times; and I never come this way but I take a look in. I don't think it's many more times I'll be turnin' to see the ould place, for I'll be undher the sod myself before long.'

'You'll outlive younger people,' I said.

And, quitting that trite subject, I ran on :

'I don't wonder that you like this old place; it is a beautiful spot, such noble trees.'

'I wish ye seen the glin when the nuts is ripe; they're the



sweetest nuts in all Ireland, I think,' he rejoined, with a practical sense of the picturesque. 'You'd fill your pockets while you'd be lookin' about you.'

'These are very fine old woods,' I remarked. 'I have not seen any in Ireland I thought so beautiful.'

'Eiah! your honour, the woods about here is nothing to what they wor. All the mountains along here was wood when my father was a gossoon, and Murroa Wood was the grandest of them all. All oak mostly, and all cut down as bare as the road. Not one left here that's fit to compare with them. Which way did your honour come hither – from Limerick?'

'No. Killaloe.'

'Well, then, you passed the ground where Murroa Wood was in former times. You kem undher Lisnavourra, the steep knob of a hill about a mile above the village here. 'Twas near that Murroa Wood was, and 'twas there Sir Dominick Sarsfield first met the devil, the Lord between us and harm, and a bad meeting it was for him and his.'

I had become interested in the adventure which had occurred in the very scenery which had so greatly attracted me, and my new acquaintance, the little hunchback, was easily entreated to tell me the story, and spoke thus, so soon as we had each resumed his seat:

It was a fine estate when Sir Dominick came into it; and grand doings there was entirely, feasting and fiddling, free quarters for all the pipers in the counthry round, and a welcome for every one that liked to come. There was wine, by the hogshead, for the quality; and potteen enough to set a town a-fire, and beer and cidher enough to float a navy, for the boys and girls, and the likes o' me. It was kep' up the best part of a month, till the weather broke, and the rain spoilt the sod for the moneen jigs, and the fair of Allybally Killudeen comin' on they wor obliged to give over their divarsion, and attind to the pigs.

But Sir Dominick was only beginnin' when they wore lavin' off. There was no way of gettin' rid of his money and estates he did not try – what with drinkin', dicin', racin', cards, and all soarts, it was not many years before the estates wor in debt, and

Sir Dominick a distressed man. He showed a bold front to the world as long as he could; and then he sould off his dogs, and most of his horses, and gev out he was going to thravel in France, and the like; and so off with him for awhile; and no one in these parts heard tale or tidings of him for two or three years. Till at last quite unexpected, one night there comes a rapping at the big kitchen window. It was past ten o'clock, and old Connor Hanlon, the butler, my grandfather, was sittin' by the fire alone, warming his shins over it. There was keen east wind blowing along the mountains that night, and whistling cowl'd enough through the tops of the trees, and soundin' lonesome through the long chimneys.

(And the story-teller glanced up at the nearest stack visible from his seat.)

So he wasn't quite sure of the knockin' at the window, and up he gets, and sees his master's face.

My grandfather was glad to see him safe, for it was a long time since there was any news of him; but he was sorry, too, for it was a changed place and only himself and old Juggy Broadrick in charge of the house, and a man in the stables, and it was a poor thing to see him comin' back to his own like that.

He shook Con by the hand, and says he :

'I came here to say a word to you. I left my horse with Dick in the stable, I may want him again before morning, or I may never want him.'

And with that he turns into the big kitchen, and draws a stool, and sits down to take an air of the fire.

'Sit down, Connor, opposite me, and listen to what I tell you, and don't be afeard to say what you think.'

He spoke all the time lookin' into the fire, with his hands stretched over it, and a tired man he looked.

'An why should I be afeard, Masther Dominick?' says my grandfather. 'Yourself was a good masther to me, and so was your father, rest his sould, before you, and I'll say the truth, and dar' the devil, and more than that, for any Sarsfield of Dunoran, much less yourself, and a good right I'd have.'

'It's all over with me, Con,' says Sir Dominick.

'Heaven forbid !' says my grandfather.

'Tis past praying for,' says Sir Dominick. 'The last guinea's gone; the ould place will follow it. It must be sold, and I'm come here, I don't know why, like a ghost to have a last look round me, and go off in the dark again.'

And with that he tould him to be sure, in case he should hear of his death, to give the oak box, in the closet off his room, to his cousin, Pat Sarsfield, in Dublin, and the sword and pistols his grandfather carried in Aughrim, and two or three thrifling things of the kind.

And says he, 'Con, they say if the divil gives you money overnight, you'll find nothing but a bagful of pebbles, and chips, and nutshells, in the morning. If I thought he played fair, I'm in the humour to make a bargain with him tonight.'

'Lord forbid!' says my grandfather, standing up, with a start and crossing himself.

'They say the country's full of men, listin' sogers for the King o' France. If I light on one o' them, I'll not refuse his offer. How contrary things goes! How long is it since me and Captain Waller fought the jewel at New Castle?'

'Six years, Masther Dominick, and ye broke his thigh with the bullet the first shot.'

'I did, Con,' says he, 'and I wish, instead, he had shot me through the heart. Have you any whisky?'

My grandfather took it out of the buffet, and the masther pours out some into a bowl, and drank it off.

'I'll go out and have a look at my horse,' says he, standing up. There was sort of a stare in his eyes, as he pulled his riding-cloak about him, as if there was something bad in his thoughts.

'Sure, I won't be a minute running out myself to the stable, and looking after the horse for you myself,' says my grandfather.

'I'm not goin' to the stable,' says Sir Dominick; 'I may as well tell you, for I see you found it out already - I'm goin' across the deer-park; if I come back you'll see me in an hour's time. But, anyhow, you'd better not follow me, for if you do I'll shoot you, and that 'id be a bad ending to our friendship.'

And with that he walks down this passage here, and turns the key in the side door at that end of it, and out wid him on the sod into the moonlight and the cowl'd wind; and my grandfather

seen him walkin' hard towards the park-wall, and then he comes in and closes the door with a heavy heart.

Sir Dominick stopped to think when he got to the middle of the deer-park, for he had not made up his mind when he left the house and the whisky did not clear his head, only it gev him courage.

He did not feel the cowld wind now, nor fear death, nor think much of anything, but the shame and fall of the old family.

And he made up his mind, if no better thought came to him between that and there, so soon as he came to Murroa Wood, he'd hang himself from one of the oak branches with his cravat.

It was a bright moonlight night, there was just a bit of a cloud driving across the moon now and then, but, only for that, as light a'most as day.

Down he goes, right for the wood of Murroa. It seemed to him every step he took was as long as three, and it was no time till he was among the big oak-trees with their roots spreading from one to another, and their branches stretching overhead like the timbers of a naked roof, and the moon shining down through them, and casting their shadows thick and twist abroad on the ground as black as my shoe.

He was sobering a bit by this time, and he slacked his pace, and he thought 'twould be better to list in' the French king's army, and thry what that might do for him, for he knew a man might take his own life any time, but it would puzzle him to take it back again when he liked.

Just as he made up his mind not to make away with himself, what should he hear but a step clinkin' along the dry ground under the trees, and soon he sees a grand gentleman right before him comin' up to meet him.

He was a handsome young man like himself, and he wore a cocked-hat with gold-lace round it, such as officers wears on their coats, and he had on a dress the same as French officers wore in them times.

He stopped opposite Sir Dominick, and he cum to a standstill also.

The two gentlemen took off their hats to one another, and says the stranger :

'I am recruiting, sir,' says he, 'for my sovereign, and you'll find my money won't turn into pebbles, chips, and nutshells, by tomorrow.'

At the same time he pulls out a big purse full of gold.

The minute he sets eyes on that gentleman, Sir Dominick had his own opinion of him; and at those words he felt the very hair standing up on his head.

'Don't be afraid,' says he, 'the money won't burn you. If it proves honest gold, and if it prospers with you, I'm willing to make a bargain. This is the last day of February,' says he; 'I'll serve you seven years, and at the end of that time you shall serve me, and I'll come for you when the seven years is over, when the clock turns the minute between February and March; and the first of March ye'll come away with me, or never. You'll not find me a bad master, any more than a bad servant. I love my own; and I command all the pleasures and the glory of the world. The bargain dates from this day, and the lease is out at midnight on the last day I told you; and in the year' – he told him the year, it was easy reckoned, but I forget it – 'and if you'd rather wait,' he says, 'for eight months and twenty-eight days, before you sign the writin', you may, if you meet me here. But I can't do a great deal for you in the mean time; and if you don't sign then, all you get from me, up to that time, will vanish away, and you'll be just as you are tonight, and ready to hang yourself on the first tree you meet.'

Well, the end of it was, Sir Dominick chose to wait, and he came back to the house with a big bag full of money, as round as your hat a'most.

My grandfather was glad enough, you may be sure, to see the master safe and sound again so soon. Into the kitchen he bangs again, and swings the bag o' money on the table; and he stands up straight, and heaves up his shoulders like a man that has just got shut of a load; and he looks at the bag, and my grandfather looks at him, and from him to it, and back again. Sir Dominick looked as white as a sheet, and says he:

'I don't know, Con, what's in it; it's the heaviest load I ever carried.'

He seemed shy of openin' the bag; and he made my grand-

father heap up a roaring fire of turf and wood, and then, at last, he opens it, and, sure enough, 'twas stuffed full o' golden guineas, bright and new, as if they were only that minute out o' the Mint.

Sir Dominick made my grandfather sit at his elbow while he counted every guinea in the bag.

When he was done countin', and it wasn't far from daylight when that time came, Sir Dominick made my grandfather swear not to tell a word about it. And a close secret it was for many a day after.

When the eight months and twenty-eight days were pretty near spent and ended, Sir Dominick returned to the house here with a troubled mind, in doubt what was best to be done, and no one alive but my grandfather knew anything about the matter, and he not half what had happened.

As the day drew near, towards the end of October, Sir Dominick grew only more and more troubled in mind.

One time he made up his mind to have no more to say to such things, nor to speak again with the like of them he met with in the wood of Murroa. Then, again, his heart failed him when he thought of his debts, and he not knowing where to turn. Then, only a week before the day, everything began to go wrong with him. One man wrote from London to say that Sir Dominick paid three thousand pounds to the wrong man, and must pay it over again; another demanded a debt he never heard of before; and another, in Dublin, denied the payment of a thundherin' big bill, and Sir Dominick could nowhere find the receipt, and so on, wid fifty others things as bad.

Well, by the time the night of 28 October came round, he was a'most ready to lose his senses with all the demands that was risin' up again him on all sides, and nothing to meet them but the help of the one dhreadful friend he had to depind on at night in the oak-wood down there below.

So there was nothing for it but to go through with the business that was begun already, and about the same hour as he went last, he takes off the little crucifix he wore round his neck, for he was a Catholic, and his gospel, and his bit o' the thrue cross that he had in a locket, since he took the money from the Evil One he

was growin' frightful in himself, and got all he could to guard him from the power of the devil. But tonight, for his life, he daren't take them with him. So he gives them into my grandfather's hands without a word, only he looked as white as a sheet o' paper; and he takes his hat and sword, and telling my grandfather to watch for him, away he goes, to try what would come of it.

It was a fine still night, and the moon – not so bright, though, now as the first time – was shinin' over heath and rock, and down on the lonesome oak-wood below him.

His heart beat thick as he drew near it. There was not a sound, not even the distant bark of a dog from the village behind him. There was not a lonelier spot in the country round, and if it wasn't for his debts and losses that was drivin' him on half mad, in spite of his fears for his soul and his hopes of paradise, and all his good angel was whisperin' in his ear, he would a' turned back, and sent for his clergy, and made his confession and his penance, and changed his ways, and led a good life, for he was frightened enough to have done a great dale.

Softer and slower he stept as he got, once more, in undher the big branches of the oak-threes; and when he got in a bit, near where he met with the bad spirit before, he stopped and looked round him, and felt himself, every bit, turning as cowl'd as a dead man, and you may be sure he did not feel much better when he seen the same man steppin' from behind the big tree that was touchin' his elbow a'most.

'You found the money good,' says he, 'but it was not enough. No matter, you shall have enough and to spare. I'll see after your luck, and I'll give you a hint whenever it can serve you; and any time you want to see me you have only to come down here, and call my face to mind, and wish me present. You shan't owe a shilling by the end of the year, and you shall never miss the right card, the best throw, and the winning horse. Are you willing?'

The young gentleman's voice almost stuck in his throat, and his hair was rising on his head, but he did get out a word or two to signify that he consented; and with that the Evil One handed him a needle, and bid him give him three drops of blood from

his arm; and he took them in the cup of an acorn, and gave him a pen, and bid him write some words that he repeated, and that Sir Dominick did not understand, on two thin slips of parchment. He took one himself and the other he sunk in Sir Dominick's arm at the place where he drew the blood, and he closed the flesh over it. And that's as true as you're sittin' there!

Well, Sir Dominick went home. He was a frightened man, and well he might be. But in a little time he began to grow aisier in his mind. Anyhow, he got out of debt very quick, and money came tumbling in to make him richer, and everything he took in hand prospered, and he never made a wager, or played a game, but he won; and for all that, there was not a poor man on the estate that was not happier than Sir Dominick.

So he took again to his old ways; for, when the money came back, all came back, and there were hounds and horses, and wine galore, and no end of company, and grand doin's, and divarsion, up here at the great house. And some said Sir Dominick was thinkin' of gettin' married; and more said he wasn't. But, anyhow, there was somethin' troublin' him more than common, and so one night, unknownst to all, away he goes to the lonesome oak-wood. It was something, maybe, my grandfather thought was troublin' him about a beautiful young lady he was jealous of, and mad in love with her. But that was only guess.

Well, when Sir Dominick got into the wood this time, he grew more in dread than ever; and he was on the point of turnin' and lavin' the place, when who should he see, close beside him, but my gentleman, seated on a big stone undher one of the trees. In place of looking the fine young gentleman in goold lace and grand clothes he appeared before, he was now in rags, he looked twice the size he had been, and his face smutted with soot, and he had a murtherin' big steel hammer, as heavy as a half-hundhred, with a handle a yard long, across his knees. It was so dark under the tree, he did not see him quite clear for some time.

He stood up, and he looked awful tall entirely. And what passed between them in that discourse my grandfather never heered. But Sir Dominick was as black as night afterwards, and hadn't a laugh for anything nor a word a'most for anyone, and



he only grew worse and worse, and darker and darker. And now this thing, whatever it was, used to come to him of its own accord, whether he wanted it or no; sometimes in one shape, and sometimes in another, in lonesome places, and sometimes at his side by night when he'd be ridin' home alone, until at last he lost heart altogether and sent for the priest.

The priest was with him a long time, and when he heered the whole story, he rode off all the way for the bishop, and the bishop came here to the great house next day, and he gev Sir Dominick a good advice. He toul't him he must give over dicin', and swearin', and drinkin', and all bad company, and live a vartuous steady life until the seven years bargain was out, and if the divil didn't come for him the minute afther the stroke of twelve the first morning of the month of March, he was safe out of the bargain. There was not more than eight or ten months to run now before the seven years wor out, and he lived all the time according to the bishop's advice, as strict as if he was 'in retreat'.

Well, you may guess he felt quare enough when the mornin' of 28 February came.

The priest came up by appointment, and Sir Dominick and his raverence wor together in the room you see there, and kep' up their prayers together till the clock struck twelve, and a good hour after, and not a sign of a disturbance, nor nothing came near them, and the priest slep' that night in the house in the room next Sir Dominick's, and all went over as comfortable as could be, and they shook hands and kissed like two comrades after winning a battle.

So, now, Sir Dominick thought he might as well have a pleasant evening, after all his fastin' and praying; and he sent round to half a dozen of the neighbouring gentlemen to come and dine with him, and his raverence stayed and dined also, and a roarin' bowl o' punch they had, and no end o' wine, and the swearin' and dice, and cards and guineas changing hands, and songs and stories, that wouldn't do anyone good to hear, and the priest slipped away, when he seen the turn things was takin', and it was not far from the stroke of twelve when Sir Dominick, sitting at the head of his table, swears, 'this is the best first of March I ever sat down with my friends.'

'It ain't the first o' March,' says Mr Hiffernan of Ballyvoreen. He was a scholar, and always kep' an almanack.

'What is it, then?' says Sir Dominick, startin' up, and dhroppin' the ladle into the bowl, and starin' at him as if he had two heads.

'Tis the twenty-ninth of February, leap year,' says he. And just as they were talkin', the clock strikes twelve; and my grandfather, who was half asleep in a chair by the fire in the hall, openin' his eyes, sees a short square fellow with a cloak on, and long black hair bushin' out from under his hat, standin' just there where you see the bit o' light shinin' again' the wall.

(My hunchbacked friend pointed with his stick to a little patch of red sunset light that relieved the deepening shadow of the passage.)

'Tell your master,' says he, in an awful voice, like the growl of a baist, 'that I'm here by appointment, and expect him downstairs this minute.'

Up goes my grandfather, by these very steps you are sittin' on.

'Tell him I can't come down yet,' says Sir Dominick, and he turns to the company in the room, and says he with a cold sweat shinin' on his face, 'for God's sake, gentlemen, will any of you jump from the window and bring the priest here?' One looked at another and no one knew what to make of it, and in the meantime, up comes my grandfather again, and says he, tremblin', 'He says, sir, unless you go down to him, he'll come up to you.'

'I don't understand this, gentlemen, I'll see what it means,' says Sir Dominick, trying to put a face on it, and walkin' out o' the room like a man through the press-room, with the hangman waitin' for him outside. Down the stairs he comes, and two or three of the gentlemen peeping over the banisters, to see. My grandfather was walking six or eight steps behind him, and he seen the stranger take a stride out to meet Sir Dominick, and catch him up in his arms, and whirl his head against the wall, and wi' that the hall-doore flies open, and out goes the candles, and the turf and wood-ashes flyin' with the wind out o' the hall-fire, ran in a drift o' sparks along the floore by his feet.

Down runs the gentlemen. Bang goes the hall-doore. Some comes runnin' up, and more runnin' down, with lights. It was all

over with Sir Dominick. They lifted up the corpse, and put its shoulders again' the wall; but there was not a gasp left in him. He was cowl'd and stiffenin' already.

Pat Donovan was comin' up to the great house late that night and after he passed the little brook, that the carriage track up to the house crosses, and about fifty steps to this side of it, his dog, that was by his side, makes a sudden wheel, and springs over the wall, and sets up a yowlin' inside you'd hear a mile away; and that minute two men passed him by in silence, goin' down from the house, one of them short and square, and the other like Sir Dominick in shape, but there was little light under the trees where he was, and they looked only like shadows; and as they passed him by he could not hear the sound of their feet and he drew back to the wall frightened; and when he got up to the great house, he found all in confusion, and the master's body, with the head smashed to pieces, lying just on *that spot*.

The narrator stood up and indicated with the point of his stick the exact site of the body, and, as I looked, the shadow deepened, the red stain of sunlight vanished from the wall, and the sun had gone down behind the distant hill of New Castle, leaving the haunted scene in the deep grey of darkening twilight.

So I and the story-teller parted, not without good wishes on both sides, and a little 'tip' which seemed not unwelcome, from me.

It was dusk and the moon up by the time I reached the village, remounted my nag, and looked my last on the scene of the terrible legend of Dunoran.

*Vincent O'Sullivan*

## THE BARGAIN OF RUPERT ORANGE

*from* A BOOK OF BARGAINS

Leonard Smithers, 1896

### I

The marvel is, that the memory of Rupert Orange, whose name was a signal for chatter amongst people both in Europe and America not many years ago, has now almost died out. Even in New York where he was born, and where the facts of his secret and mysterious life were most discussed, he is quite forgotten. At times, indeed, some old lady will whisper to you at dinner, that a certain young man reminds her of Rupert Orange, only he is not so handsome; but she is one of those who keep the mere incidents of their past much more brightly polished than the important things of their present. The men who worshipped him, who copied his clothes, his walk, his mode of pronouncing words, and his manner of saying things, stare vaguely when he is mentioned. And the other day at a well-known club I was having some general talk with a man whose black hair is shot with white, when he exclaimed somewhat suddenly: 'How little one hears about Rupert Orange now!' and then added: 'I wonder what became of him?' As to the first part of this speech I kept my mouth resolutely shut; for how could I deny his saying, since I had lately seen a weed-covered grave with the early moss growing into the letters on the headstone? As to the second part, it is now my business to set forth the answer to that: and I think when the fire begins to blaze it will lighten certain recollections which have become dark. Of course, there are numberless people who never heard the story of Rupert Orange; but there are also crowds of men and women who followed his brilliant life with intense interest, while his shameful death will be in many a one's remembrance.

The knowledge of this case I got over a year ago; and I would have written then, had my hands been free. But there has recently died at Vienna the Countess de Volnay, whose notorious connection with Orange was at one time the subject of every man's bruit. Her I met two years since in Paris, where she was living like a work-woman. I learned that she had sold her house, and her goods she had given to the poor. She was still a remarkable woman, though her great beauty had faded, and despite a restless, terrified manner, which gave one the monstrous idea that she always felt the devil looking over her shoulder. Her hair was white as paper, and yet she was far from the age when women cease to grin in ball-rooms. A great fear seemed to have sprung to her face and been paralysed there: a fear which could be detected in her shaking voice. It was from her that I learned certain primary facts of this narration; and she cried to me not to publish them till I heard of her death – as a man on the gallows sometimes asks the hangman not to adjust the noose too tight round his neck. I am altogether sure that what Orange himself told her, he never told anyone else. I wish I had her running tongue instead of my slow pen, and then I would not be writing slovenly and clumsily, doubtless, for the relation; vainly, I am afraid, for the moral.

Now Rupert Orange lived with his aunt in New York till he was twenty-four years old, and when she died, leaving her entire estate to him, a furious contest arose over the will. Principal in the contest was Mrs Annice, the wife of a discarded nephew; and she prosecuted the cause with the pertinacity and virulence which we often find in women of thirty. So good a pursuivant did she prove, that she and her husband leaped suddenly from indigence to great wealth: for the Court declared that the old lady had died lunatic; that she had been unduly influenced; and, that consequently her testament was void. But this decision, which raised them up, brought Rupert to the ground. There is no worse fall than the fall of a man from opulence to poverty; and Rupert, after his luxurious rearing, had to undergo this fall. Yet he had the vigour and confidence of the young. His little verses and sonnets had been praised when he was an amateur; now he

undertook to make his pen a breadwinner – with the direst results. At first, nothing would do him but the great magazines; and from these, week after week, he received back his really clever articles, accompanied by cold refusals. Then for months he hung about the offices of every outcast paper, waiting for the editor. When at length the editor did come, he generally told Rupert that he had promised all his outlying work to some bar-room acquaintance. So push by push he was brought to his knees; and finally he dared not walk out till nightfall, for fear some of those who knew him in prosperity might witness his destitution.

One night early in December, about six o'clock, he left the mean flat-house on the west side of the city in which he occupied one room, and started (as they say in New York) 'up town'. The snow had frozen in lumps, and the gas lamps gleamed warmly on it for the man who had not seen a fire in months. When he reached Fifty-ninth Street, he turned east and skirted Central Park till he came to the Fifth Avenue. And here a sudden fancy seized him to walk this street, which shame and pride had kept him off since his downfall. He had not proceeded far, when he was stopped by an old man.

'Can you tell me, sir,' says the old man, politely, 'if this street runs on further than Central Park?'

'Oh, yes,' answered Rupert, scraping at his throat; for he had not spoken to a soul for five days, and the phlegm had gathered. 'It goes up a considerable distance from here.'

'You'll forgive me asking you,' went on the ancient. 'I am only passing through the city, and I want to find out all I can.'

'You're quite welcome,' said Orange, 'That,' he added, pointing, 'is St Luke's Hospital.'

They spoke a few more sentences, then as the stranger turned 'down town', Rupert fell in with his walk. He did this partly because he was craving for fellowship; partly, too, from that feeling which certain men have – men who have never done anything for themselves in this world, and never will do anything – that distant relations, and even total stranger, are apt at any moment to fling fortunes into their hands. As they proceeded along the avenue, Orange turned to survey his companion. A shrewd wind

was blowing, and it tossed the old gentleman's long beard over his shoulder, and ruffled the white hair under his soft hat. His clothes were plain, even shabby; and he had an odd trick of planting his feet on the ground without bending his knees, as though his legs were broomsticks. Orange thought, bitterly enough! how short a time had passed since the days when he would have taken poison as an alternative to walking down the Fifth Avenue with such an associate. Now, they were equal: or indeed the old man was the better off of the two: for if he wore impossible broad-toed boots, Orange had to stamp his feet to keep the cold from striking through his worn-out shoes. What cared he for the criticism of the smart, well-fed 'Society' now, when numbers of that far greater society, of which he was one, were starving in garrets! As he thought these things a late afternoon reception began to pour out its crowds, and a young man and a girl, who had known Rupert in the days of his prosperity, came forth and glared with contempt at the two mean passengers. Not a muscle in Rupert's face quivered: he even afforded those two the tribute of a sneer.

When the pair of walkers reached Thirty-fourth Street they switched into Broadway. A silence had fallen between them, and it was in silence they paraded the thoroughfare. Here all was garish light and glare: carriages darted to and fro, restaurants were thronged, theatres ablaze, women smiling: everything told of a great city starting a night of pleasure. Besides the love of pleasure which was his main characteristic, Orange was distinctly gregarious; and the sight of all this joy, which he had once revelled in himself, struck like a knife into his hungry, lonely heart. At that moment he thought he would give his very soul to get some money.

'All these people seem happy,' says the old man, suddenly.

'Yes,' replied Orange: '*They* are happy enough!'

The old man caught the reply, and noticed the sour twang in it. He looked up quickly and saw that Rupert's eyes watered.

'Why man,' he exclaimed, 'I believe you're crying! or perhaps you're cold! Come in here, come right into the Hoffman House!' he went on, tugging at Rupert's coat.

Rupert hesitated. The sensitiveness of one who had never taken

a favour which he could not repay, held him back. But the desire for warmth and sympathy prevailed, so he entered. The usual crowd of loafers was about the bar, and those who composed it looked scoffingly at Orange's shiny overcoat and time-eaten trousers. Believe me, the man in rags is not half so pitiable as the poor creature who tries to maintain the appearance of a gentleman: the man who inks seams by night which grow all white by day; who keeps his fingers close pressed to his palm lest the rents in his glove be seen; who walks with his arm across his breast for fear his coat should fly open and proclaim its lack of buttons. Even the waiters looked disparagingly at Orange; and a waiter's jibes, or any flunkey's, are, perhaps, the sorest of all. But the old man, without noticing, sat down at a table and ordered a bottle of champagne. When the wine was brought, the two sat together some time in a muse. Then, of a sudden, the greybeard broke out.

'Wealth!' he cried, staring into Rupert's eyes, 'wealth is the only thing worth striving for in this world! Your tub-philosophers may laugh at it, but they only laugh to keep away from themselves a cankering envy and desire which would be more bitter than their present lack. Let any man whom you call a genius arrive at this hotel tonight, and let a millionaire arrive at the same moment, and I'll bet you the millionaire gets the attention every time! A millionaire travels round the earth, and he gets respect everywhere he goes – why? Because he buys it. That's the way to get respect in the nineteenth century – buy it! Do the fine works of art which are sold each year go to the pauper student who worships them? No, sir, they go to the man who has the money, and who shells out the biggest price. I repeat, my young friend, that what's there' (and he slapped his pocket) 'is what counts in the struggle of life.'

'I agree with you,' answered Orange, 'that money counts for a great deal.'

'A great deal!' repeated the other, scornfully, being now, perhaps, somewhat warmed with wine. 'A great deal! what have you to offer instead? Religion? Ministers are the parasites of rich men. Art? Go into the studio of any friend of yours tomorrow, and see whom he'll speak to first – you, or the man with a cheque



in his hand. Why, if a poor man had the brains of Shakespeare, or our Emerson, and was mud-splashed by the carriage wheels of a wealthy woman, the only answer to his protests would be a policeman's "move on!"

'I know it! I know it!' cried Orange, in anguish. 'I know it fifty times better than you do! I tell you I would sell my whole life now, for one year's perfect environment of riches.'

'Not one year,' said the greybeard, leaning over the table and speaking so intensely that Rupert could hardly follow him. His old face had become ghastly and looked livid in contrast to the white hair. 'Not one year, my boy, but five years! Think, only think, of the gloriousness of it all! This evening a despised pauper, tomorrow a rich man! Take courage, make up your mind to yield your life at the end of five years, and in return I will promise you, pledge you, that tomorrow morning you shall be in as sound a financial position as any man in New York.'

Now it is strange that this outrageous proposal, made in the bar-room of an hotel situated in one of the most prosaic cities in the world, did not strike Rupert Orange as at all preposterous. Probably on account of his mystical, dreaming mind, he never took thought to doubt the speaker's sincerity, but at once fell to balancing the advantages and drawbacks of the scheme.

Five years! Before his young eyes they stretched out like fifty years. It did not occur to him (it rarely occurs to any young man) to hark back to the five preceding years and note how few and swift were the strides which brought him over them to this very day he was living. Five years! They lay before him all silver with sunshine, as he looked out from his present want and darkness. This was his point of view; and let us never forget this point of view when we are passing judgement on him. No doubt, if the matter had been placed before a man of wealth, he would have denied it even momentary consideration: but the smell of cooking is only disgusting to one who has dined; it is the vagrant who sniffs eagerly the air of the kitchen through the iron grating on the street. For Rupert, at this moment, money meant all the world. He was a man who hated to face the bitter things of life: and money included release from insolent creditors, from snubs and flouts, from a small, cold, dark room, and, chief of all! re-

lease from that horror which he saw drawing nearer and nearer : the gaol.

'There is one more word to be said,' observed the old man, smoothly. 'Leaving aside the contingency of your starving to death - which, by the way, I think very likely - there is a chance of your being run over by a cart when you leave this hotel. There is an even chance of your contracting some disease during the winter. How would you like to die in a pauper hospital, where the nurses sing as they close a dead man's eyes? Now, what I propose is, that you shall be free from any physical pain for five years.'

'If I should accept,' said Orange, swirling the wine round in his glass till it creamed and foamed, 'I'd desire some slight ills to take the very sweetness out of life.' Probably he meant, for fear that when his time came he should hate to die.

He thought again. He was like a man who arrives suddenly at a mountain village on the feast of the Blessed Sacrament, and loitering in the street with his eyes enchanted by the tawdry decorations and festoons of the houses, forgets to look beyond at the awful mountain standing against the sky, with menacing thunder clouds about its breast. Before Orange's mind a gay and tempting pageant defiled. He thought of the travels he would be able to make, of luxurious palaces, of exquisite banquets, of priceless wines, of laughing, rapturous women. He thought, too, for he was far from being a merely sensuous man, of the first editions he could buy, of the rare gems, of dainty bindings. Sweetest of all were the thoughts, that he would be at his ease to do the best work that it was in him to do, and that he would be powerful enough to wreak his vengeance on his enemies very slowly, inch by inch. With that, like the crack of a rifle shot, came the thought of Mrs Annice.

He sprang to his feet. 'Listen!' he cried, in such a voice that the idlers at the bar turned round for a moment; but observing that no row was in progress to divert them, they fell once more to their drinking. 'Listen!' cried Rupert Orange again, gripping the side of the table with one hand and pointing a shaking finger at the old man. 'There is one woman alive in this city tonight who has brought me to the degradation which you witness now.

She flung me to the ground, she covered me with dust, she crushed me beneath her merciless heel! Give her to me that I may lower her pride! let me see her as abject and despised as the poorest trull that walks the streets, and I swear by God Most High to make the bargain!

The old man grasped Rupert's cold hand, and pressed it between his own feverishly hot palms. 'It is an unusual taste,' he murmured, glancing into Rupert's eyes, and smiling faintly.

## 2

Orange started 'up town' with a song in his heart. Curiously enough, he had not the slightest doubt about the genuineness of the contract, nor had he the least sorrow for what he had done. It mattered little about snubs and side looks tonight: tomorrow men and women would joyfully begin pawing him and fawning. So happy was he, his blood danced through his veins so merrily, that he ran for three or four *blocks*; and once he laughed a loud laugh, which caused a policeman to menace him with a club. But this only brought him more merriment; tomorrow, if he liked, he could laugh from Central Park to Madison Square without molestation.

When he reached the mean flat-house on the west side, there was, as usual, no light in the entrance, and he saw a postman groping among the bells.

'Say, young feller!' began the postman, 'do you know if any one by the name of Orange is kickin' around this blamed house?'

'I am he,' said Rupert Orange, and held out his hand for the letter.

'Yes, you are!' answered the postman, derisively. 'Now then, come off the roof and shew us the bell.'

Rupert indicated the place, and, as soon as the postman had dropped the letter, he whipped out his key, and to the postman's surprise unlocked the box and put the letter in his pocket.

'Well! you see my business is to deliver letters, not to give them away,' said the postman, making an official distinction. 'When you said you was the man, how was I to know you wasn't givin' me a steer?'

'Oh, that's all right I' replied Rupert. 'Good night, my friend.'

He went upstairs to his freezing little room, and sat down to think. He would not open the letter yet: his mind was too crowded to admit any new emotion. So for two hours he remained dreaming brilliant and fantastic dreams. Then he tore open the envelope. He was so poor that the gas had been turned off from his room, but by the light of a match he read a communication from Messrs Droll and Kettel, the lawyers, setting forth that a distant relative of his had recently died in a town in one of the Southern States, and had left him a fortune of nearly a million dollars. But Rupert knew that this million dollars was only nominal, that money would remain with him as long as he could call life his own.

The charwoman who came into his room next morning, found him asleep in the chair, with the letter open on his knee, and a smile lighting his face. But he was only a pauper, in arrears for his rent, so she struck him smartly between the shoulders with her broom.

'I believe I've been asleep,' said Rupert, starting and rubbing his eyes. The woman looked at him sourly, thinking that he would have to take his next sleep in one of the parks. She began to sweep the dust in his direction till he coughed violently.

'You have been very good to me since I've been here, Mrs Spill,' Rupert continued; and, I think, without irony: he had not much idea of irony. He took from his pocket the last five-dollar bill he had in the world and gave it to her. 'Please take that for your trouble.'

The woman stared at him, as she would have stared had he cut his throat before her eyes. But Orange clapped on his hat and rushed out. He had not even the five cents necessary to travel down town in a horse-car, so he walked the distance to the office of Messrs Daroll and Kettel, in Pine Street. He approached a fat clerk (who, decked as he was with doubtful jewellery, looked as if he were honouring the office by being in it at all), and asked if Mr Kettel was within. Now it is something worthy of note, that I have often called on men occupied with difficult texts; or painting pictures; or writing novels; and each one had been able to let go his work at once: while, on the other hand, it is your part

to await the pleasure of a clerk, till he has finished his enthralling occupation. True to his breed, the fat man kept Rupert standing before him for about three minutes, till he had elaborately finished a copy of a bill of details; and then looking up, and seeing only a shabby fellow, he asked sharply :

'Eh? What do you say?'

Rupert repeated his question.

'Yes, I guess he's in, but this is his busy day. You just sit right down there, young man, and he'll see you when he gets good and ready.'

The hard knocks which Rupert had received in his contest with the world had taken out of him the self-assertion that goes with wealth : so he sat for half an hour, knowing well, meanwhile, that his clothes were a cause of laughter to the underbred and badly trained clerks. At length he somewhat timidly went over to the desk again.

'Perhaps if you would be kind enough to take my name into Mr Kettel -'

'Oh look here, you make me tired!' exclaimed the fat clerk, irritably. 'Didn't I tell you that he was busy? Now, I don't want to see you monkeying round this desk any more! If you don't want to wait, why the walking's pretty good! - This young man says he wants to see you,' he added, as Mr Kettel came out of his private room.

'Well, sir, what do you want today?' asked Mr Kettel, with that most offensive tone and air which some misguided men imagine will impress the spectator as a manner for the man of great affairs. 'You had better call round some other time; we're not able to attend -' he was going on, when he happened to look narrowly into Rupert's face, and his manner changed in a second. 'Why, my dear boy, how are you! it's so long since I've seen you, that I didn't know you at first. And, how you've changed!' he went on, and could not help a glance at Rupert's shabby dress; for he was quite ignoble. Then his remark seeming of questionable taste even to him, he cried heartily: 'But come into my private room, and we can have a good long chat!' And in he went, with Rupert at his heels, leaving the fat clerk at gaze.

In a week Rupert was once more dawdling about clubs, and

attending those social functions which go to make up what is called 'a Season'. Above all, he was listening to an appalling variety of apologetic lies. To the average man who said: 'We didn't know when on earth you were coming back from Europe, my dear fellow; how did you like it over there?' he could answer with a grave face; but the women were different. One particular afternoon he was at a reception, when he heard a lady near him remark in clear accents to her friend: 'You can't think how we missed that dear Mr Orange while he was away in Africa!' and this struck Rupert as so grotesque that he apparently laughed. Amid this social intercourse, however, he avoided sedulously a meeting with Mrs Annice; he had decided not to see her for a while. Indeed, it was not till an evening late in February, after dinner, that he took a cab to her house near Washington Square. He found her at home, and had not waited a minute before she came into the room. She was a tall woman, and wonderfully handsome by gaslight; but she had that tiresome habit, which many women have, of talking intensely – in *italics*, as it were: a habit found generally in women ill brought up – women without control of their feelings, or command of the expression of them.

'My dear, dear Rupert, how glad I am to see you,' she exclaimed, throwing a white fluffy cloak off her bare shoulders, and holding out both hands as she glided towards him. 'It is so long, that I really thought we were never going to see you again. But I am *so* glad. And how very fortunate that legacy was for you – just when I suppose you were working fearfully hard. I was quite delighted when I heard of it, and my husband too. He would have been so pleased to have seen you, but he is dining out tonight.'

There was a tone of too much hypocrisy about all this, and Rupert made full allowance for it. He chatted in his easy way about his good fortune, and recited some details.

'I suppose there is not the slightest possibility of a flaw in the will?' says Mrs Annice, regarding him keenly. The lines round her mouth, had become hard, but she kept on smiling: she had some traits like Macbeth's wife.

Orange laughed his bright, merry laugh which so few could

resist. 'Oh no, I think it's all right this time !' he said, and looked at her steadfastly with his fine eyes.

Mrs Annice suddenly flushed, and then shuddered. Her heart began to throb, her head to whirl. What was the matter with her? What was this cursed sensation which was mastering her? She, with her self-poise, her deliberateness, her calculation, was, in the flash of an eye, brought to feel towards this man, whom but a moment ago she had hated more than any one man in the world, as she had never felt towards man before. It was not love, this wretched thralldom, it was not even admiration; it was a wild desire to abnegate herself, annihilate herself, in this man's personality; to become his bond-woman, the slave of his controlling will. She drove the nails into her palms, and crushed her lips between her teeth, as she rose to her feet and made one desperate try for victory.

'I was just going to the opera when you came in, Rupert,' she said; 'won't you come in my box?' – and her voice had so changed, there was such a note of tenderness and desire in it, that it seemed as if she had exposed her soul. But even in her disorganized state she was conscious that there would be a certain distinction in appearing at the opera with the re-edified Rupert Orange.

Rupert murmured something about the opera being such a bore, and at that moment the footman announced the carriage.

'Won't you come?' asked Mrs Annice, standing with her white hand resting on the back of a chair.

'I think not,' answered Rupert, with a smile.

She dismissed the carriage. As soon as the servant had gone she tried to make some trivial remark, and, half turning, looked at Orange, who rose. For an instant those two stood gazing into each other's eyes with God knows what hell in their hearts, and then, with a little cry, that was half a sob, she flung her arms about his neck, and pressed her kisses on his lips.

Yesterday afternoon I took from amongst my books a novel of Rupert Orange, and as I turned over the leaves, I fell to ponder-

ing how difficult it is to obtain any of his works today, while but a few years ago all the world was reading them; and to lose myself in amaze at our former rapturous and enthusiastic admiration of his literary art, his wit, his pathos. For in truth his art is a very tawdry art to my present liking; his wit is rather stale, his pathos a little vulgar. And the charm has likewise gone out of his poetry: even his *Chant of the Storm-Witch*, which we were used to think so melodious and sonorous, now fails to please. To explain the precise effect which his poetry has upon me now, I am forced to resort to a somewhat unhappy figure; I am forced to say that his poetry has an effect on me like *sifted ashes*! I cannot in the least explain this figure; and if it fails to convey any idea to the reader, I am afraid the failure must be set down to my clumsy writing. And yet what praise we all bestowed on these works of Rupert Orange! How eagerly we watched for them to appear; how we prized them; with what zeal we studied the newspapers for details of his interesting and successful life!

A particular account of that brilliant and successful life it would ill become me to chronicle, even if I were so minded: it was with no purpose of relating his social and literary triumphs, his continual victories during five years in the two fields he had chosen to conquer, that I started to write. But in dwelling on his life, we must not forget to take account of these triumphs. They were very rare, very proud, very precious triumphs, both in Europe and in the United States; triumphs that few men ever enjoy; triumphs which were potent enough to deaden the pallid thought of the curious limits of his life, except on three sombre occasions.

It was on the first night of a new opera at Covent Garden. Orange was in a box with a notable company, and was on the point of leaning over to whisper something amusing to the beautiful Countess of Heston, when of a sudden he shot white, and the smile left his face as if he had received a blow. On the stage a chorus had commenced in a very low tone of passionate entreaty; by degrees it swelled louder and louder, till it burst forth into a tremendous agonized prayer for pity and pardon. As Orange listened, such a dreary sense of the littleness of life, such



an awful fear of death, sang through his brain, that he grew sick, and shivered in a cold sweat.

'Why, I'm afraid Mr Orange is ill !' exclaimed the Countess.

'No, no !' muttered Orange, groping for his hat. 'Only a little faint; want some air ! - I tell you I want some air !' he broke out in a voice that was like a frightened cry, as he fumbled with the door of the box.

A certain man with a kind heart followed him into the *foyer*.

'Can I do anything for you, old chap?'

'Yes; in the name of God leave me alone !' replied Orange; and he said it in such a tone, and with a face so frightfully contorted, that those standing about fell back feeling queer, and the questioner returned to the box very gravely, and thought on his soul for the rest of the evening.

But Orange rushed out, and he hailed a hansom, and he drove till the cabman refused to drive any more; and then he walked; and it was not till he found himself on Putney Heath in his evening dress, at half-past twelve the next day, that the devil left him.

About two years after this occurrence he was wandering one Sunday evening in Chelsea, and hearing a church bell ring for the usual service, he decided to enter. As he sat waiting a little girl of four or five, with her mother, came in and sat by him: and Rupert talked to the child in his quaint, winning way, and so won her, that when the service began she continued to cling to his hand. After a while the sermon commenced, and the preacher, taking for his text the words: '*And he died*', from the fifth chapter of Genesis, tried to set forth the suddenness and unwelcomeness of death, even to the long-lived patriarchs, and its increased suddenness and unwelcomeness to most of us. The sermon I suppose, was dull and commonplace enough, but if the speaker had verily seen into the mind of one of his listeners, the effect could not have been more disastrous. Orange waited till the torture became unbearable, till he could actually feel the horrid, stifling weight of earth pressing him down in his coffin, and keeping him there for ages and ages: then with a heavy groan he started up, and rushed forth with such vehemence, that he knocked down and trampled on the little girl, in his haste to get

out of sight of the white faces of people scared at his face, and the child's sad cry was borne to him out in the dark street.

The third occasion on which this sense of despair and loss oppressed him, was at a time when he was near a rugged coast. One stormy day he rode to a certain promontory, and came suddenly in sight of the great sea. As he stood watching a lonely gull, that strained, and swooped, and dipped in the surge, while the rain drizzled, and the wind whined through the long grass, the futility of his life stung him, and he hid his face in his horse's mane and wept.

But sorest of all was the thought that he might really have won a certain fame, an easy fortune, without taking on his back the fardel which, as the months went by, became so heavy. He knew that he had done some work which would have surely gained him distinction, had he but waited. Why did you not have patience? his outraged spirit and maimed life seemed to moan; a little more patience!

I must not let you think, however, that he was unhappy. In every detail the promise of the old man was punctiliously carried out. The very maladies which Orange had desired, were twisted to his advantage. Thus, when he was laid up with a sprained ankle at an hotel at Aix-les-Bains, he formed his notorious connection with Gabrielle de Volnay. It was when he was kept for a day in the house by a cold that he wrote his little comedy, *Her Ladyship's Dinner* – a comedy which, at one time, we were all so forward to praise. And on the night upon which his cab was overturned in the Sixth Avenue, New York, and he was badly cut about the head, did he not recognize in the drunken prostitute who cursed him, the erstwhile brilliant Mrs Annice? Did he not forget his pain in the exquisite knowledge that her curses were of no avail, and flout her jeeringly, brutally? Nay! when an epidemic disease broke out in a certain part of the Riviera, and the foreign population presently fled, he used his immunity from death to hold his ground and tend the sick, and so gave cause to the newspapers to proclaim the courage and devotion of Mr Orange. And all these fortunate incidents were suddenly brought to completeness by one singular event.

It was on a winter morning, about three o'clock, that he found

himself in the district of Kilburn, and noticed a crimson stain on the sky. More from indolence than from anything else he went towards the fire; but when he came in sight of it, he was startled by a somewhat strange thing. For there at a window high up in the blazing house, stood a woman with a baby in her arms, who had clearly been left to a hideous fate on account of the fierceness of the flames. With an abrupt gesture Orange flung off his cloak.

'Where can I find the chief?' he asked a man standing near, 'because I'm going up.'

The fellow turned, and seeing Rupert in his evening suit, laughed derisively.

'I say Bill!' he sings out to his mate, 'this 'ere bloke says as how he's goin' up!' and the other's scoffing reply struck Rupert's ears as he pushed through the crowd.

By a letter which he carried with him, or some such authority, Orange gained his request; and the next thing that the people saw was a ladder rigged, and the figure of a man ascending through clouds of smoke. Higher and higher he went, while the flames licked and sizzled around him and seared his flesh: higher and higher till he had almost reached the window, and a wild cheer burst from the crowd for such a deed of heroism. But at that moment a long tongue of flame leaped into the sky, the building tottered and then crashed down, and Orange was safely caught by some strong arms, while the woman and child met death within the ruins. Of course this affair was noised abroad the next day; for some weeks Orange, with his hand in a sling, was a picturesque figure in several London drawing-rooms.

Now, which one of us shall say that Orange, with the tested knowledge of his exemption from death, and strong in that knowledge, deliberately did this heroic act to improve his fame, to exalt his honour? I have stated before that we must be cautious in passing judgement on him, and I must again insist on this caution. As for myself, I should be sorry to think that there is no beautiful, merciful Spirit to note an unselfish impulse, which took no thought of glory or advertisement, and count it to the man for honesty.

But the time ran, and the years sped, until was come the last month of that fifth year, which meant the end of years for

Orange. When in the days of his happiness and strength, he had dwelt on this time at all, he had planned to seek out, on the last day of the year, some mountain crag in Switzerland, and there meet death, coming in the train of the rising sun, with calm and steady eyes. Alas! now to his anguish he felt a desire, which was stronger than his will, tearing at his heart to visit once more the scene of his hardships, look again on the place where his bargain was concluded. I make certain, from a letter of his which I have seen, that in taking passage for New York, Rupert had no idea of turning aside his doom. The *Cambria*, on which he sailed, was due to arrive at New York a full week before the end of the year; but she encountered baffling winds and seas, and it was not till the evening of the thirty-first of December that she sighted the light on Fire Island.

As the steamer went at speed towards Sandy Hook, Orange stood alone on the deck, watching the smoke from her funnel rolling seaward: of a sudden he saw rise out of the cloud, the presentment, grim and menacing, of God the Father.

## 4

As the *Cambria* moved up towards the city, on the morning of New Year's Day, a certain frenzy which was half insane, and a fierce loathing of familiar sights – Castle Garden, the spire of Trinity Church – took hold of Orange. He passionately cursed himself for not staying in Europe; he cursed the hour he was born; he cursed, above all! the hour in which he had made that fatal bargain. As soon as the vessel was made fast to the dock, he hastened ashore; and leaving his servant to look after his luggage, he sprang into a *hack*, and directed the driver to go 'up town'.

'Where to, boss?' inquired the man, looking at him curiously.

'The Hoffman House,' replied Orange, before he thought. Then he cursed himself again, but he did not change the order.

I have said that the driver looked at Orange curiously; and in truth he was a strange sight. All the dignity of his demeanour was gone: his eyes were bloodshot, and his complexion a dirty yellow: he was unshorn, his tie was loose, and his collar open.

His terror grew as he passed along the well-known streets: he screamed out hateful, obscene things, rolling about in the vehicle, while foam came from his mouth; and as he arrived at the hotel, in his distraction he drove his hand through the window glass, which cut him into the bone.

'An accident,' he panted hoarsely to the porter who opened the door: 'a slight accident! God damn you!' he yelled, 'can't you see it was an accident?' and he went up the hall to the office, leaving behind him a trail of blood. The clerk at the desk, seeing his disorder, was on the point of refusing him a room; but when Orange wrote his name in the visitor's book, he smirked, and ordered the best set of apartments in the house to be made ready. To these apartments Orange retired, and sat all day in a sort of dull horror. For a sudden death he had in a measure prepared himself: he had made his bargain, he had bought his freedom from the cares which are the burthen of all men, and he knew that he must pay the debt: but for some uncertain, treacherous calamity he had not prepared. He was not fool enough to dream that the one to whom the debt was owed would relent: but before his creditor's method of exacting payment he was at a stand. He thought and thought, rubbing his face in his hands, till his head was near bursting: in a sudden spasm he fell off the chair to the floor; and that night he was lying stricken by typhoid fever.

And for weeks he lay with a fiery forehead and blazing eyes, finding the lightest covering too heavy and ice too hot. Even when the known disease seemed to have been subdued, certain strange complications arose which puzzled the physicians: amongst these a painful vomiting which racked the man's frame and left an exhaustion akin to death, and a curious lothly decay of the flesh. This last was so venomous an evil, that one of the nurses having touched the sick man in her ministrations, and neglected to immediately purify herself, within a few hours incontinently deceased. After a while, to assist these enemies of Orange, there came pneumonia. It would seem as though he were experiencing all the maladies from which he had been free during the past five years; for besides his corporal ills he had become lunatic, and he was raving. Those who tended him, used as they

were to outrageous scenes, shuddered and held each other's hands when they heard him shriek his curses, and realized his abject fear of death. At times, too, they would hear him weeping softly, and whispering the broken little prayers he had learned in childhood: praying God to save him in this dark hour from the wiles of the devil.

At length, one evening towards the end of March, the mental clearness of Orange somewhat revived, and he felt himself compelled to get up and put on his clothes. The nurse, thinking that the patient was resting quietly, and fearing the shine of the lamp might distress him, had turned it low and gone away for a little: so it was without interruption, although reeling from giddiness, and scorched with fever, that Rupert groped about till he found some garments, and his evening suit. Clad in these, and throwing a cloak over his shoulders, he went downstairs. Those whom he met, that recognized him, looked at him wonderingly and with a vague dread; but he appeared to have his understanding as well as they, and so he passed through the hall without being stopped; and going into the bar, he called for brandy. The bar-tender, to whom he was known, exclaimed in astonishment; but he got no reply from Orange, who, pouring himself out a large quantity of the fiery liquor found it colder than the coldest iced water in his burning frame. When he had taken the brandy, he went into the street. It was a bleak seasonable night, and a bitter frost-rain was falling: but Orange went through it, as if the bitter weather was not unwelcome coolness, although he shuddered in an ague-fit. As he stood on the corner of Twenty-third Street, his cloak thrown open, the sleet sowing down on his shirt, and the slush which covered his ankles soaking through his thin shoes, a member of his club came by and spoke to him.

'Why, good God! Orange, you don't mean to say you're out on a night like this! You must be much better - eh?' he broke off, for Orange had given him a grey look, with eyes in which there was no speculation; and the man hurried away scared and rather aghast. 'These poet chaps are always queer fishes,' he muttered uneasily, as he turned into the Fifth Avenue Hotel.

Of the events of terror and horror which happened on that awful night, when a human soul was paying the price of an

astonishing violation of the order of the universe, no man shall ever tell. Blurred, hideous, and enormous visions of *dives*, of hells where the worst scum of the town consorted, of a man who spat on him, of a woman who struck him across the face with her umbrella, calling him the foulest of names – visions such as these, and more hateful than these, presented themselves to Orange, when he found himself, at three o'clock in the morning, standing under a lamp-post in that strange district of New York called 'The Village'.

The rain had given way to a steady fall of snow: and as he stood there, a squalid harlot, an outcast amongst outcasts, approached, and solicited him in the usual manner.

'Come along – do!' she said, shivering: 'We can get a drink at my place.'

Receiving no answer, she peered into his face, and gave a cry of loathing and fear.

'Oh, look here!' she said, roughly, coughing down her disgust: 'You've been drinking too much, and you've got a load. Come ahead with me and you can have a good sleep.'

At that word Orange turned, and gazed at her with a vacant, dreary, silly smile. He raised his hand, and when she shrank away – 'Are you afraid of me?' he said, not coarsely, but quietly, even gently, like a man talking in his sleep. Then they went on together, till they came to a dilapidated house close by the river. They entered, and turned into a dirty room lit by a flaring jet of gas.

'Now, dear; let's have some money,' says the woman, 'and I'll get you a nice drink.'

Still no answer from Orange: only that same vacant smile, which was beginning to be horrible.

'Give me some money: do you hear!' cried the woman, stridently. Then she seized him, and went through his pockets in an accustomed style, and found three cents.

'What the hell do you mean by coming here with only this!' bellowed the woman, holding out the mean coins to Orange. She struck him; but she was very frightened, and went to the stairs.

'Say! Tom – Tommy,' she called; 'you'd better come down and put this loafer out!'

A great hulking man came down the stairs, and gazed for an instant at Rupert – standing under the gas-jet, with the woman plucking the studs from his shirt. For an instant the man stood, feeling sick and in a sweat; and then, by a great effort, he approached Orange, and seized him by the collar.

‘Here, out you go!’ he said. ‘We don’t want none of your sort around here!’ The man dragged Orange to the street door, and gave the wretch such a powerful shove, that he fell on the pavement, and rolled into the gutter.

And later in the morning, one who passed by the way found him there : dead before the squalid harlot’s door.



*J. Sheridan Le Fanu*

## CARMILLA

*from* IN A GLASS DARKLY

Richard Bentley, 1872

### PROLOGUE

Upon a paper attached to the Narrative which follows, Doctor Hesselius has written a rather elaborate note, which he accompanies with a reference to his Essay on the strange subject which the MS illuminates.

This mysterious subject he treats, in that Essay, with his usual learning and acumen, and with remarkable directness and condensation. It will form one volume of the series of that extraordinary man's collected papers.

As I publish the case, in this volume, simply to interest the 'laity', I shall forestall the intelligent lady, who relates it, in nothing; and, after due consideration, I have determined, therefore, to abstain from presenting any *précis* of the learned Doctor's reasoning, or extract from his statement on a subject which he describes as 'involving, not improbably, some of the profoundest arcana of our dual existence, and its intermediates'.

I was anxious, on discovering this paper, to re-open the correspondence commenced by Doctor Hesselius, so many years before, with a person so clever and careful as his informant seems to have been. Much to my regret, however, I found that she had died in the interval.

She, probably, could have added little to the Narrative which she communicates in the following pages, with, so far as I can pronounce, such a conscientious particularity.

## CHAPTER 1

## AN EARLY FRIGHT

In Styria, we, though by no means magnificent people, inhabit a castle, or schloss. A small income, in that part of the world, goes a great way. Eight or nine hundred a year does wonders. Scantily enough ours would have answered among wealthy people at home. My father is English, and I bear an English name, although I never saw England. But here, in this lonely and primitive place, where everything is so marvellously cheap, I really don't see how ever so much more money would at all materially add to our comforts, or even luxuries.

My father was in the Austrian service, and retired upon a pension and his patrimony, and purchased this feudal residence, and the small estate on which it stands, a bargain.

Nothing can be more picturesque or solitary. It stands on a slight eminence in a forest. The road, very old and narrow, passes in front of its drawbridge, never raised in my time, and its moat, stocked with perch, and sailed over by many swans, and floating on its surface white fleets of water-lilies.

Over all this the schloss shows its many-windowed front; its towers, and its Gothic chapel.

The forest opens in an irregular and very picturesque glade before its gate, and at the right a steep Gothic bridge carries the road over a stream that winds in deep shadow through the wood.

I have said that this is a very lonely place. Judge whether I say truth. Looking from the hall door towards the road, the forest in which our castle stands extends fifteen miles to the right, and twelve to the left. The nearest inhabited village is about seven of your English miles to the left. The nearest inhabited schloss of any historic associations, is that of old General Spielsdorf, nearly twenty miles away to the right.

I have said 'the nearest *inhabited* village', because there is, only three miles westward, that is to say in the direction of

General Spielsdorf's schloss, a ruined village, with its quaint little church, now roofless, in the aisle of which are the mouldering tombs of the proud family of Karnstein, now extinct, who once owned the equally desolate château which, in the thick of the forest, overlooks the silent ruins of the town.

Respecting the cause of the desertion of this striking and melancholy spot, there is a legend which I shall relate to you another time.

I must tell you now, how very small is the party who constitute the inhabitants of our castle. I don't include servants, or those dependants who occupy rooms in the buildings attached to the schloss. Listen, and wonder! My father, who is the kindest man on earth, but growing old; and I, at the date of my story, only nineteen. Eight years have passed since then. I and my father constituted the family at the schloss. My mother, a Styrian lady, died in my infancy, but I had a good-natured governess, who had been with me from, I might almost say, my infancy. I could not remember the time when her fat, benignant face was not a familiar picture in my memory. This was Madame Perrodon, a native of Berne, whose care and good nature in part supplied to me the loss of my mother, whom I do not even remember, so early I lost her. She made a third at our little dinner party. There was a fourth, Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, a lady such as you term, I believe, a 'finishing governess'. She spoke French and German, Madame Perrodon French and broken English, to which my father and I added English, which, partly to prevent its becoming a lost language among us, and partly from patriotic motives, we spoke every day. The consequence was a Babel, at which strangers used to laugh, and which I shall make no attempt to reproduce in this narrative. And there were two or three young lady friends besides, pretty nearly of my own age, who were occasional visitors, for longer or shorter terms; and these visits I sometimes returned.

These were our regular social resources; but of course there were chance visits from 'neighbours' of only five or six leagues' distance. My life was, notwithstanding, rather a solitary one, I can assure you.

My *gouvernantes* had just so much control over me as you

might conjecture such sage persons would have in the case of a rather spoiled girl, whose only parent allowed her pretty nearly her own way in everything.

The first occurrence in my existence, which produced a terrible impression upon my mind, which, in fact, never has been effaced, was one of the very earliest incidents of my life which I can recollect. Some people will think it so trifling that it should not be recorded here. You will see, however, by-and-by, why I mention it. The nursery, as it was called, though I had it all to myself, was a large room in the upper story of the castle, with a steep oak roof. I can't have been more than six years old, when one night I awoke, and looking round the room from my bed, failed to see the nursery-maid. Neither was my nurse there; and I thought myself alone. I was not frightened, for I was one of those happy children who are studiously kept in ignorance of ghost stories, of fairy tales, and of all such lore as makes us cover up our heads when the door creaks suddenly, or the flicker of an expiring candle makes the shadow of a bed-post dance upon the wall, nearer to our faces. I was vexed and insulted at finding myself, as I conceived, neglected, and I began to whimper, preparatory to a hearty bout of roaring; when to my surprise, I saw a solemn, but very pretty face looking at me from the side of the bed. It was that of a young lady who was kneeling, with her hands under the coverlet. I looked at her with a kind of pleased wonder, and ceased whimpering. She caressed me with her hands, and lay down beside me on the bed, and drew me towards her, smiling; I felt immediately delightfully soothed, and fell asleep again. I was wakened by a sensation as if two needles ran into my breast very deep at the same moment, and I cried loudly. The lady started back, with her eyes fixed on me, and then slipped down upon the floor, and, as I thought, hid herself under the bed.

I was now for the first time frightened, and I yelled with all my might and main. Nurse, nursery-maid, housekeeper, all came running in, and hearing my story, they made light of it, soothing me all they could meanwhile. But, child as I was, I could perceive that their faces were pale with an unwonted look of anxiety, and I saw them look under the bed, and about the room,

and peep under tables and pluck open cupboards; and the housekeeper whispered to the nurse: 'Lay your hand along that hollow in the bed; some one *did* lie there, so sure as you did not; the place is still warm.'

I remember the nursery-maid petting me, and all three examining my chest, where I told them I felt the puncture, and pronouncing that there was no sign visible that any such thing had happened to me.

The housekeeper and the two other servants who were in charge of the nursery, remained sitting up all night; and from that time a servant always sat up in the nursery until I was about fourteen.

I was very nervous for a long time after this. A doctor was called in, he was pallid and elderly. How well I remember his long saturnine face, slightly pitted with smallpox, and his chestnut wig. For a good while, every second day, he came and gave me medicine, which of course I hated.

The morning after I saw this apparition I was in a state of terror, and could not bear to be left alone, daylight though it was, for a moment.

I remember my father coming up and standing at the bedside, and talking cheerfully, and asking the nurse a number of questions, and laughing very heartily at one of the answers; and patting me on the shoulder, and kissing me, and telling me not to be frightened, that it was nothing but a dream and could not hurt me.

But I was not comforted, for I knew the visit of the strange woman was *not* a dream; and I was *awfully* frightened.

I was a little consoled by the nursery-maid's assuring me that it was she who had come and looked at me, and lain down beside me in the bed, and that I must have been half-dreaming not to have known her face. But this, though supported by the nurse, did not quite satisfy me.

I remember, in the course of that day, a venerable old man, in a black cassock, coming into the room with the nurse and housekeeper, and talking a little to them, and very kindly to me; his face was very sweet and gentle, and he told me they were going to pray, and joined my hands together, and desired me to

say, softly, while they were praying, 'Lord, hear all good prayers for us, for Jesus' sake.' I think these were the very words, for I often repeated them to myself, and my nurse used for years to make me say them in my prayers.

I remember so well the thoughtful sweet face of that white-haired old man, in his black cassock, as he stood in that rude, lofty, brown room, with the clumsy furniture of a fashion three hundred years old, about him, and the scanty light entering its shadowy atmosphere through the small lattice. He kneeled, and the three women with him, and he prayed aloud with an earnest quavering voice for, what appeared to me, a long time. I forget all my life preceding that event, and for some time after it is all obscure also; but the scenes I have just described stand out vivid as the isolated pictures of the phantasmagoria surrounded by darkness.

## CHAPTER 2

### A GUEST

I am now going to tell you something so strange that it will require all your faith in my veracity to believe my story. It is not only true, nevertheless, but truth of which I have been an eye-witness.

It was a sweet summer evening, and my father asked me, as he sometimes did, to take a little ramble with him along that beautiful forest vista which I have mentioned as lying in front of the schloss.

'General Spielsdorf cannot come to us as soon as I had hoped,' said my father, as we pursued our walk.

He was to have paid us a visit of some weeks, and we had expected his arrival next day. He was to have brought with him a young lady, his niece and ward, Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt, whom I had never seen, but whom I had heard described as a very charming girl, and in whose society I had promised myself many happy days. I was more disappointed than a young lady

living in a town, or a bustling neighbourhood can possibly imagine. This visit, and the new acquaintance it promised, had furnished my day dream for many weeks.

‘And how soon does he come?’ I asked.

‘Not till autumn. Not for two months, I dare say,’ he answered. ‘And I am very glad now, dear, that you never knew Mademoiselle Rheinfeldt.’

‘And why?’ I asked, both mortified and curious.

‘Because the poor young lady is dead,’ he replied. ‘I quite forgot I had not told you, but you were not in the room when I received the General’s letter this evening.’

I was very much shocked. General Spielsdorf had mentioned in his first letter, six or seven weeks before, that she was not so well as he would wish her, but there was nothing to suggest the remotest suspicion of danger.

‘Here is the General’s letter,’ he said, handing it to me. ‘I am afraid he is in great affliction; the letter appears to me to have been written very nearly in distraction.’

We sat down on a rude bench, under a group of magnificent lime trees. The sun was setting with all its melancholy splendour behind the sylvan horizon, and the stream that flows beside our home, and passes under the steep old bridge I have mentioned, wound through many a group of noble trees, almost at our feet, reflecting in its current the fading crimson of the sky. General Spielsdorf’s letter was so extraordinary, so vehement, and in some places so self-contradictory, that I read it twice over – the second time aloud to my father – and was still unable to account for it, except by supposing that grief had unsettled his mind.

It said,

I have lost my darling daughter, for as such I loved her. During the last days of dear Bertha’s illness I was not able to write to you. Before then I had no idea of her danger. I have lost her, and now learn *all*, too late. She died in the peace of innocence, and in the glorious hope of a blessed futurity. The fiend who betrayed our infatuated hospitality has done it all. I thought I was receiving into my house innocence, gaiety, a charming companion for my lost Bertha. Heavens! what a fool have I been! I thank God my child died without a

suspicion of the cause of her sufferings. She is gone without so much as conjecturing the nature of her illness, and the accursed passion of the agent of all this misery. I devote my remaining days to tracking and extinguishing a monster. I am told I may hope to accomplish my righteous and merciful purpose. At present there is scarcely a gleam of light to guide me. I curse my conceited incredulity, my despicable affectation of superiority, my blindness, my obstinacy – all – too late. I cannot write or talk collectedly now. I am distracted. So soon as I shall have a little recovered, I mean to devote myself for a time to enquiry, which may possibly lead me as far as Vienna. Some time in the autumn, two months hence, or earlier if I live, I will see you – that is, if you permit me; I will then tell you all that I scarce dare put upon paper now. Farewell. Pray for me, dear friend.

In these terms ended this strange letter. Though I had never seen Bertha Rheinfeldt, my eyes filled with tears at the sudden intelligence; I was startled, as well as profoundly disappointed.

The sun had now set, and it was twilight by the time I had returned the General's letter to my father.

It was a soft clear evening, and we loitered, speculating upon the possible meanings of the violent and incoherent sentences which I had just been reading. We had nearly a mile to walk before reaching the road that passes the schloss in front, and by that time the moon was shining brilliantly. At the drawbridge we met Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, who had come out, without their bonnets, to enjoy the exquisite moonlight.

We heard their voices gabbling in animated dialogue as we approached. We joined them at the drawbridge, and turned about to admire with them the beautiful scene.

The glade through which we had just walked lay before us. At our left the narrow road wound away under clumps of lordly trees, and was lost to sight amid the thickening forest. At the right the same road crosses the steep and picturesque bridge, near which stands a ruined tower, which once guarded that pass; and beyond the bridge an abrupt eminence rises, covered with trees, and showing in the shadow some grey ivy-clustered rocks.

Over the sward and low grounds, a thin film of mist was stealing like smoke, marking the distances with a transparent veil;



and here and there we could see the river faintly flashing in the moonlight.

No softer, sweeter scene could be imagined. The news I had just heard made it melancholy; but nothing could disturb its character of profound serenity, and the enchanted glory and vagueness of the prospect.

My father, who enjoyed the picturesque, and I, stood looking in silence over the expanse beneath us. The two good governesses, standing a little way behind us, discoursed upon the scene, and were eloquent upon the moon.

Madame Perrodon was fat, middle-aged, and romantic, and talked and sighed poetically. Mademoiselle Da Lafontaine – in right of her father, who was a German, assumed to be psychological, metaphysical, and something of a mystic – now declared that when the moon shone with a light so intense it was well known that it indicated a special spiritual activity. The effect of the full moon in such a state of brilliancy was manifold. It acted on dreams, it acted on lunacy, it acted on nervous people; it had marvellous physical influences connected with life. Mademoiselle related that her cousin, who was mate of a merchant ship, having taken a nap on deck on such a night, lying on his back, with his face full in the light of the moon, had awakened, after a dream of an old woman clawing him by the cheek, with his features horribly drawn to one side; and his countenance had never quite recovered its equilibrium.

‘The moon, this night,’ she said, ‘is full of odylic and magnetic influence – and see, when you look behind you at the front of the schloss, how all its windows flash and twinkle with that silvery splendour, as if unseen hands had lighted up the rooms to receive fairy guests.’

There are indolent states of the spirits in which, indisposed to talk ourselves, the talk of others is pleasant to our listless ears; and I gazed on, pleased with the tinkle of the ladies’ conversation.

‘I have got into one of my moping moods tonight,’ said my father, after a silence, and quoting Shakespeare, whom, by way of keeping up our English, he used to read aloud, he said:

“In truth I know not why I am so sad:  
It wearies me; you say it wearies you;  
But how I got it – came by it.”

‘I forget the rest. But I feel as if some great misfortune were hanging over us. I suppose the poor General’s afflicted letter has had something to do with it.’

At this moment the unwonted sound of carriage wheels and many hoofs upon the road, arrested our attention.

They seemed to be approaching from the high ground overlooking the bridge, and very soon the equipage emerged from that point. Two horsemen first crossed the bridge, then came a carriage drawn by four horses, and two men rode behind.

It seemed to be the travelling carriage of a person of rank; and we were all immediately absorbed in watching that very unusual spectacle. It became, in a few moments, greatly more interesting, for just as the carriage had passed the summit of the steep bridge, one of the leaders, taking fright, communicated his panic to the rest, and, after a plunge or two, the whole team broke into a wild gallop together, and dashing between the horsemen who rode in front, came thundering along the road towards us with the speed of a hurricane.

The excitement of the scene was made more painful by the clear, long-drawn screams of a female voice from the carriage window.

We all advanced in curiosity and horror; my father in silence, the rest with various ejaculations of terror.

Our suspense did not last long. Just before you reach the castle drawbridge, on the route they were coming, there stands by the roadside a magnificent lime tree, on the others stands an ancient stone cross, at sight of which the horses, now going at a pace that was perfectly frightful, swerved so as to bring the wheel over the projecting roots of the tree.

I knew what was coming. I covered my eyes, unable to see it out, and turned my head away; at the same moment I heard a cry from my lady-friends, who had gone on a little.

Curiosity opened my eyes, and I saw a scene of utter confusion. Two of the horses were on the ground, the carriage lay upon its side, with two wheels in the air; the men were busy removing

the traces, and a lady, with a commanding air and figure had got out, and stood with clasped hands, raising the handkerchief that was in them every now and then to her eyes. Through the carriage door was now lifted a young lady, who appeared to be lifeless. My dear old father was already beside the elder lady, with his hat in his hand, evidently tendering his aid and the resources of his schloss. The lady did not appear to hear him, or to have eyes for anything but the slender girl who was being placed against the slope of the bank.

I approached; the young lady was apparently stunned, but she was certainly not dead. My father, who piqued himself on being something of a physician, had just had his fingers to her wrist and assured the lady, who declared herself her mother, that her pulse, though faint and irregular, was undoubtedly still distinguishable. The lady clasped her hands and looked upward, as if in a momentary transport of gratitude; but immediately she broke out again in that theatrical way which is, I believe, natural to some people.

She was what is called a fine-looking woman for her time of life, and must have been handsome; she was tall, but not thin, and dressed in black velvet, and looked rather pale, but with a proud and commanding countenance, though now agitated strangely.

‘Was ever being so born to calamity?’ I heard her say, with clasped hands, as I came up. ‘Here am I, on a journey of life and death, in prosecuting which to lose an hour is possibly to lose all. My child will not have recovered sufficiently to resume her route for who can say how long. I must leave her; I cannot, dare not, delay. How far on, sir can you tell, is the nearest village? I must leave her there; and shall not see my darling, or even hear of her till my return, three months hence.’

I plucked my father by the coat, and whispered earnestly in his ear, ‘Oh! papa, pray ask her to let her stay with us – it would be so delightful. Do, pray.’

‘If Madame will entrust her child to the care of my daughter and of her good *gouvernante*, Madame Perrodon, and permit her to remain as our guest, under my charge, until her return, it will confer a distinction and an obligation upon us, and we shall

treat her with all the care and devotion which so sacred a trust deserves.'

'I cannot do that, sir, it would be to task your kindness and chivalry too cruelly,' said the lady, distractedly.

'It would, on the contrary, be to confer on us a very great kindness at the moment when we most need it. My daughter has just been disappointed by a cruel misfortune, in a visit from which she had long anticipated a great deal of happiness. If you confide this young lady to our care it will be her best consolation. The nearest village on your route is distant, and affords no such inn as you could think of placing your daughter at; you cannot allow her to continue her journey for any considerable distance without danger. If, as you say, you cannot suspend your journey, you must part with her tonight, and nowhere could you do so with more honest assurances of care and tenderness than here.'

There was something in this lady's air and appearance so distinguished, and even imposing, and in her manner so engaging, as to impress one, quite apart from the dignity of her equipage, with a conviction that she was a person of consequence.

By this time the carriage was replaced in its upright position, and the horses, quite tractable, in the traces again.

The lady threw on her daughter a glance which I fancied was not quite so affectionate as one might have anticipated from the beginning of the scene; then she beckoned slightly to my father and withdrew two or three steps with him out of hearing; and talked to him with a fixed and stern countenance, not at all like that with which she had hitherto spoken.

I was filled with wonder that my father did not seem to perceive the change, and also unspeakably curious to learn what it could be that she was speaking, almost in his ear, with so much earnestness and rapidity.

Two or three minutes at most, I think, she remained thus employed, then she turned, and a few steps brought her to where her daughter lay, supported by Madame Perrodon. She kneeled beside her for a moment and whispered, as Madame supposed, a little benediction in her ear; then hastily kissing her, she stepped into her carriage, the door was closed, the footmen in stately

liveries jumped up behind, the outriders spurred on, the postillions cracked their whips, the horses plunged and broke suddenly into a furious canter that threatened soon again to become a gallop, and the carriage whirled away, followed at the same rapid pace by the two horsemen in the rear.

## CHAPTER 3

### WE COMPARE NOTES

We followed the *cortège* with our eyes until it was swiftly lost to sight in the misty wood; and the very sound of the hoofs and wheels died away in the silent night air.

Nothing remained to assure us that the adventure had not been an illusion for a moment but the young lady, who just at that moment opened her eyes. I could not see, for her face was turned from me, but she raised her head, evidently looking about her, and I heard a very sweet voice ask complainingly, 'Where is mamma?'

Our good Madame Perrodon answered tenderly, and added some comfortable assurances.

I then heard her ask :

'Where am I? What is this place?' and after that she said, 'I don't see the carriage; and Matska, where is she?'

Madame answered all her questions in so far as she understood them; and gradually the young lady remembered how the misadventure came about, and was glad to hear that no one in, or in attendance on, the carriage was hurt; and on learning that her mamma had left her here, till her return in about three months, she wept.

I was going to add my consolations to those of Madame Perrodon when Mademoiselle De Lafontaine placed her hand upon my arm, saying :

'Don't approach, one at a time is as much as she can at present converse with; a very little excitement would possibly overpower her now.'

As soon as she is comfortably in bed, I thought, I will run up to her room and see her.

My father in the meantime had sent a servant on horseback for the physician, who lived about two leagues away; and a bedroom was being prepared for the young lady's reception.

The stranger now rose, and leaning on Madame's arm, walked slowly over the drawbridge and into the castle gate.

In the hall the servants waited to receive her, and she was conducted forthwith to her room.

The room we usually sat in as our drawing-room is long, having four windows, that looked over the moat and drawbridge, upon the forest scene I have just described.

It is furnished in old carved oak, with large carved cabinets, and the chairs are cushioned with crimson Utrecht velvet. The walls are covered with tapestry, and surrounded with great gold frames, the figures being as large as life, in ancient and very curious costume, and the subjects represented are hunting, hawking, and generally festive. It is not too stately to be extremely comfortable; and here we had our tea, for with his usual patriotic leanings he insisted that the national beverage should make its appearance regularly with our coffee and chocolate.

We sat here this night, and with candles lighted, were talking over the adventure of the evening.

Madame Perrodon and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine were both of our party. The young stranger had hardly lain down in her bed when she sank into a deep sleep; and those ladies had left her in the care of a servant.

'How do you like our guest?' I asked, as soon as Madame entered. 'Tell me all about her.'

'I like her extremely,' answered Madame, 'she is, I almost think, the prettiest creature I ever saw; about your age, and so gentle and nice.'

'She is absolutely beautiful,' threw in Mademoiselle, who had peeped for a moment into the stranger's room.

'And such a sweet voice!' added Madame Perrodon.

'Did you remark a woman in the carriage, after it was set up again, who did not get out,' inquired Mademoiselle, 'but only looked from the window?'

No, we had not seen her.

Then she described a hideous black woman, with a sort of coloured turban on her head, who was gazing all the time from the carriage window, nodding and grinning derisively towards the ladies, with gleaming eyes and large white eye-balls, and her teeth set as if in fury.

'Did you remark what an ill-looking pack of men the servants were?' asked Madame.

'Yes,' said my father, who had just come in, 'ugly, hang-dog looking fellows, as ever I beheld in my life. I hope they mayn't rob the poor lady in the forest. They are clever rogues, however; they got everything to rights in a minute.'

'I dare say they are worn out with too long travelling,' said Madame. 'Besides looking wicked, their faces were so strangely lean, and dark, and sullen. I am very curious, I own; but I dare say the young lady will tell us all about it tomorrow, if she is sufficiently recovered.'

'I don't think she will,' said my father, with a mysterious smile, and a little nod of his head, as if he knew more about it than he cared to tell us.

This made me all the more inquisitive as to what had passed between him and the lady in the black velvet, in the brief but earnest interview that had immediately preceded her departure.

We were scarcely alone, when I entreated him to tell me. He did not need much pressing.

'There is no particular reason why I should not tell you. She expressed a reluctance to trouble us with the care of her daughter, saying she was in delicate health, and nervous, but not subject to any kind of seizure – she volunteered that – nor to any illusion; being, in fact, perfectly sane.'

'How very odd to say all that!' I interpolated. 'It was so unnecessary.'

'At all events it *was* said,' he laughed, 'and as you wish to know all that passed, which was indeed very little, I tell you. She then said, "I am making a long journey of *vital* importance" – she emphasized the word – "rapid and secret; I shall return for my child in three months; in the meantime, she will be silent as to who we are, whence we come, and whither we are travelling."

That is all she said. She spoke very pure French. When she said the word "secret", she paused for a few seconds, looking sternly, her eyes fixed on mine. I fancy she makes a great point of that. You saw how quickly she was gone. I hope I have not done a very foolish thing, in taking charge of the young lady.'

For my part, I was delighted. I was longing to see and talk to her; and only waiting till the doctor should give me leave. You who live in towns, can have no idea how great an event the introduction of a new friend is, in such a solitude as surrounded us.

The doctor did not arrive till nearly one o'clock; but I could no more have gone to my bed and slept, than I could have overtaken on foot, the carriage in which the princess in black velvet had driven away.

When the physician came down to the drawing-room, it was to report very favourably upon his patient. She was now sitting up, her pulse quite regular, apparently perfectly well. She had sustained no injury, and the little shock to her nerves had passed away quite harmlessly. There could be no harm certainly in my seeing her, if we both wished it; and, with this permission, I sent, forthwith, to know whether she would allow me to visit her for a few minutes in her room.

The servant returned immediately to say that she desired nothing more.

You may be sure I was not long in availing myself of this permission.

Our visitor lay in one of the handsomest rooms in the schloss. It was, perhaps, a little stately. There was a sombre piece of tapestry opposite the foot of the bed, representing Cleopatra with the asp to her bosom; and other solemn classic scenes were displayed, a little faded, upon the other walls. But there was gold carving, and rich and varied colour enough in the other decorations of the room, to more than redeem the gloom of the old tapestry.

There were candles at the bedside. She was sitting up; her slender pretty figure enveloped in the soft silk dressing-gown, embroidered with flowers, and lined with thick quilted silk, which her mother had thrown over her feet as she lay upon the ground.



What was it that, as I reached the bedside and had just begun my little greeting, struck me dumb in a moment, and made me recoil a step or two from before her? I will tell you.

I saw the very face which had visited me in my childhood at night, which remained so fixed in my memory, and on which I had for so many years so often ruminated with horror, when no one suspected of what I was thinking.

It was pretty, even beautiful; and when I first beheld it, wore the same melancholy expression.

But this almost instantly lighted into a strange fixed smile of recognition.

There was a silence of fully a minute, and then at length *she* spoke; *I* could not.

'How wonderful!' she exclaimed. 'Twelve years ago, I saw your face in a dream, and it has haunted me ever since.'

'Wonderful indeed!' I repeated, overcoming with an effort the horror that had for a time suspended my utterances. 'Twelve years ago, in vision or reality, *I* certainly saw you. I could not forget your face. It has remained before my eyes ever since.'

Her smile had softened. Whatever I had fancied strange in it, was gone, and it and her dimpling cheeks were now delightfully pretty and intelligent.

I felt reassured, and continued more in the vein which hospitality indicated, to bid her welcome, and to tell her how much pleasure her accidental arrival had given us all, and especially what a happiness it was to me.

I took her hand as I spoke. I was a little shy, as lonely people are, but the situation made me eloquent, and even bold. She pressed my hand, she laid hers upon it, and her eyes glowed, as, looking hastily into mine, she smiled again, and blushed.

She answered my welcome very prettily. I sat down beside her, still wondering; and she said:

'I must tell you my vision about you; it is so very strange that you and I should have had, each of the other so vivid a dream, that each should have seen, I you and you me, looking as we do now, when of course we both were mere children. I was a child about six years old, and I awoke from a confused and troubled dream, and found myself in a room, unlike my nursery, wain-

scoted clumsily in some dark wood, and with cupboards and bedsteads, and chairs, and benches placed about it. The beds were, I thought, all empty, and the room itself without any one but myself in it; and I, after looking about me for some time, and admiring especially an iron candlestick, with two branches, which I should certainly know again, crept under one of the beds to reach the window; but as I got from under the bed, I heard someone crying; and looking up, while I was still upon my knees, I saw *you* – most assuredly you – as I see you now; a beautiful young lady, with golden hair and large blue eyes, and lips – your lips – you, as you are here. Your looks won me; I climbed on the bed and put my arms about you, and I think we both fell asleep. I was aroused by a scream; you were sitting up screaming. I was frightened, and slipped down upon the ground, and, it seemed to me, lost consciousness for a moment; and when I came to myself, I was again in my nursery at home. Your face I have never forgotten since. I could not be misled by mere resemblance. You *are* the lady whom I then saw.’

It was now my turn to relate my corresponding vision, which I did, to the undisguised wonder of my new acquaintance.

‘I don’t know which should be most afraid of the other,’ she said, again smiling. ‘If you were less pretty I think I should be very much afraid of you, but being as you are, and you and I both so young, I feel only that I have made your acquaintance twelve years ago, and have already a right to your intimacy; at all events, it does seem as if we were destined, from our earliest childhood, to be friends. I wonder whether you feel as strangely drawn towards me as I do to you; I have never had a friend – shall I find one now?’ She sighed, and her fine dark eyes gazed passionately on me.

Now the truth is, I felt rather unaccountably towards the beautiful stranger. I did feel, as she said, ‘drawn towards her’, but there was also something of repulsion. In this ambiguous feeling, however, the sense of attraction immensely prevailed. She interested and won me; she was so beautiful and so indescribably engaging.

I perceived now something of languor and exhaustion stealing over her, and hastened to bid her good night.

'The doctor thinks,' I added, 'that you ought to have a maid to sit up with you tonight; one of ours is waiting, and you will find her a very useful and quiet creature.'

'How kind of you, but I could not sleep, I never could with an attendant in the room. I shan't require any assistance – and, shall I confess my weakness, I am haunted with a terror of robbers. Our house was robbed once, and two servants murdered, so I always lock my door. It has become a habit – and you look so kind I know you will forgive me. I see there is a key in the lock.'

She held me close in her pretty arms for a moment and whispered in my ear, 'Good night, darling, it is very hard to part with you, but good night; tomorrow, but not early, I shall see you again.'

She sank back on the pillow with a sigh, and her fine eyes followed me with a fond and melancholy gaze, and she murmured again, 'Good night, dear friend.'

Young people like, and even love, on impulse. I was flattered by the evident, though as yet undeserved, fondness she showed me. I liked the confidence with which she at once received me. She was determined that we should be very dear friends.

Next day came and we met again. I was delighted with my companion; that is to say, in many respects.

Her looks lost nothing in daylight – she was certainly the most beautiful creature I had ever seen, and the unpleasant remembrance of the face presented in my early dream, had lost the effect of the first unexpected recognition.

She confessed that she had experienced a similar shock on seeing me, and precisely the same faint antipathy that had mingled with my admiration of her. We now laughed together over our momentary horrors.

## CHAPTER 4

## HER HABITS - A SAUNTER

I told you that I was charmed with her in most particulars.

There were some that did not please me so well.

She was above the middle height of women. I shall begin by describing her. She was slender, and wonderfully graceful. Except that her movements were languid - *very* languid - indeed, there was nothing in her appearance to indicate an invalid. Her complexion was rich and brilliant; her features were small and beautifully formed; her eyes large, dark, and lustrous; her hair was quite wonderful, I never saw hair so magnificently thick and long when it was down about her shoulders; I have often placed my hands under it, and laughed with wonder at its weight. It was exquisitely fine and soft, and in colour a rich very dark brown, with something of gold. I loved to let it down, tumbling with its own weight, as, in her room, she lay back in her chair talking in her sweet low voice, I used to fold and braid it, and spread it out and play with it. Heavens! If I had but known all!

I said there were particulars which did not please me. I have told you that her confidence won me the first night I saw her; but I found that she exercised with respect to herself, her mother, her history, everything in fact connected with her life, plans, and people, an ever-wakeful reserve. I dare say I was unreasonable, perhaps I was wrong; I dare say I ought to have respected the solemn injunction laid upon my father by the stately lady in black velvet. But curiosity is a restless and unscrupulous passion, and no one girl can endure, with patience, that hers should be baffled by another. What harm could it do anyone to tell me what I so ardently desired to know? Had she no trust in my good sense or honour? Why would she not believe me when I assured her, so solemnly, that I would not divulge one syllable of what she told me to any mortal breathing.

There was a coldness, it seemed to me, beyond her years, in her smiling, melancholy, persistent refusal to afford me the least ray of light.

I cannot say we quarrelled upon this point, for she would not quarrel upon any. It was, of course, very unfair of me to press her, very ill-bred, but I really could not help it; and I might just as well have let it alone.

What she did tell me amounted, in my unconscionable estimation – to nothing.

It was all summed up in three very vague disclosures.

First. – Her name was Carmilla.

Second. – Her family was very ancient and noble.

Third. – Her home lay in the direction of the west.

She would not tell me the name of her family, nor their armorial bearings, nor the name of their estate, nor even that of the country they lived in.

You are not to suppose that I worried her incessantly on these subjects. I watched opportunity, and rather insinuated than urged my inquiries. Once or twice, indeed, I did attack her more directly. But no matter what my tactics, utter failure was invariably the result. Reproaches and caresses were all lost upon her. But I must add this, that her evasion was conducted with so pretty a melancholy and deprecation, with so many, and even passionate declarations of her liking for me and trust in my honour, and with so many promises, that I should at last know all, that I could not find it in my heart long to be offended with her.

She used to place her pretty arms about my neck, draw me to her, and laying her cheek to mine, murmur with her lips near my ear, 'Dearest, your little heart is wounded; think me not cruel because I obey the irresistible law of my strength and weakness; if your dear heart is wounded, my wild heart bleeds with yours. In the rapture of my enormous humiliation I live in your warm life, and you shall die – die, sweetly die – into mine. I cannot help it; as I draw near to you, you in your turn, will draw near to others, and learn the rapture of that cruelty, which yet is love; so, for a while, seek to know no more of me and mine, but trust me with all your loving spirit.'

And when she had spoken such a rhapsody, she would press

me more closely in her trembling embrace, and her lips in soft kisses gently glow upon my cheek.

Her agitations and her language were unintelligible to me.

From these foolish embraces, which were not of very frequent occurrence, I must allow, I used to wish to extricate myself; but my energies seemed to fail me. Her murmured words sounded like a lullaby in my ear, and soothed my resistance into a trance, from which I only seemed to recover myself when she withdrew her arms.

In these mysterious moods I did not like her. I experienced a strange tumultuous excitement that was pleasurable, ever and anon, mingled with a vague sense of fear and disgust. I had no distinct thoughts about her while such scenes lasted, but I was conscious of a love growing into adoration, and also of abhorrence. This I know is paradox, but I can make no other attempt to explain the feeling.

I now write, after an interval of more than ten years, with a trembling hand, with a confused and horrible recollection of certain occurrences and situations, in the ordeal through which I was unconsciously passing; though with a vivid and very sharp remembrance of the main current of my story. But, I suspect, in all lives there are certain emotional scenes, those in which our passions have been most wildly and terribly roused, that are of all others the most vaguely and dimly remembered.

Sometimes after an hour of apathy, my strange and beautiful companion would take my hand and hold it with a fond pressure, renewed again and again; blushing softly, gazing in my face with languid and burning eyes, and breathing so fast that her dress rose and fell with the tumultuous respiration. It was like the ardour of a lover; it embarrassed me; it was hateful and yet overpowering; and with gloating eyes she drew me to her, and her hot lips travelled along my cheek in kisses; and she would whisper, almost in sobs, 'You are mine, you *shall* be mine, and you and I are one for ever.' Then she has thrown herself back in her chair, with her small hands over her eyes, leaving me trembling.

'Are we related,' I used to ask; 'what can you mean by all this? I remind you perhaps of someone whom you love; but you

must not, I hate it; I don't know you – I don't know myself when you look so and talk so.'

She used to sigh at my vehemence, then turn away and drop my hand.

Respecting these very extraordinary manifestations I strove in vain to form any satisfactory theory – I could not refer them to affectation or trick. It was unmistakably the momentary breaking out of suppressed instinct and emotion. Was she, notwithstanding her mother's volunteered denial, subject to brief visitations of insanity; or was there here a disguise and a romance? I had read in old story books of such things. What if a boyish lover had found his way into the house, and sought to prosecute his suit in masquerade, with the assistance of a clever old adventurer. But here were many things against this hypothesis, highly interesting as it was to my vanity.

I could boast of no little attentions such as masculine gallantry delights to offer. Between these passionate moments there were long intervals of common-place, of gaiety, of brooding melancholy, during which, except that I detected her eyes so full of melancholy fire, following me, at times I might have been as nothing to her. Except in these brief periods of mysterious excitement her ways were girlish; and there was always a languor about her, quite incompatible with a masculine system in a state of health.

In some respects her habits were odd. Perhaps not so singular in the opinion of a town lady like you, as they appeared to us rustic people. She used to come down very late, generally not till one o'clock, she would then take a cup of chocolate, but eat nothing; we then went out for a walk, which was a mere saunter, and she seemed, almost immediately, exhausted, and either returned to the schloss or sat on one of the benches that were placed, here and there, among the trees. This was a bodily languor in which her mind did not sympathize. She was always an animated talker, and very intelligent.

She sometimes alluded for a moment to her own home, or mentioned an adventure or situation, or an early recollection, which indicated a people of strange manners, and described customs of which we knew nothing. I gathered from these

chance hints that her native country was much more remote than I had at first fancied.

As we sat thus one afternoon under the trees a funeral passed us by. It was that of a pretty young girl, whom I had often seen, the daughter of one of the rangers of the forest. The poor man was walking behind the coffin of his darling; she was his only child, and he looked quite heartbroken. Peasants walking two-and-two came behind, they were singing a funeral hymn.

I rose to mark my respect as they passed, and joined in the hymn they were very sweetly singing.

My companion shook me a little roughly, and I turned surprised.

She said brusquely, 'Don't you perceive how discordant that is?'

'I think it is very sweet, on the contrary,' I answered, vexed at the interruption, and very uncomfortable, lest the people who composed the little procession should observe and resent what was passing.

I resumed, therefore, instantly, and was again interrupted. 'You pierce my ears,' said Carmilla, almost angrily, and stopping her ears with her tiny fingers. 'Besides, how can you tell that your religion and mine are the same; your forms wound me, and I hate funerals. What a fuss! Why, *you must die* - *everyone* must die; and all are happier when they do. Come home.'

'My father has gone on with the clergyman to the churchyard. I thought you knew she was to be buried today.'

'*She?* I don't trouble my head about peasants. I don't know who she is,' answered Carmilla, with a flash from her fine eyes.

'She is the poor girl who fancied she saw a ghost a fortnight ago, and has been dying ever since, till yesterday, when she expired.'

'Tell me nothing about ghosts. I shan't sleep tonight if you do.'

'I hope there is no plague or fever coming; all this looks very like it,' I continued. 'The swineherd's young wife died only a week ago, and she thought something seized her by the throat as she lay in her bed, and nearly strangled her. Papa says such horrible fancies do accompany some forms of fever. She was



quite well the day before. She sank afterwards, and died before a week.'

'Well, *her* funeral is over, I hope, and *her* hymn sung; and our ears shan't be tortured with that discord and jargon. It has made me nervous. Sit down here, beside me; sit close; hold my hand; press it hard – hard – harder.'

We had moved a little back, and had come to another seat.

She sat down. Her face underwent a change that alarmed and even terrified me for a moment. It darkened, and became horribly livid; her teeth and hands were clenched, and she frowned and compressed her lips, while she stared down upon the ground at her feet, and trembled all over with a continued shudder as irrespressible as *ague*. All her energies seemed strained to suppress a fit, with which she was then breathlessly tugging; and at length a low convulsive cry of suffering broke from her, and gradually the hysteria subsided. 'There! That comes of strangling people with hymns!' she said at last. 'Hold me, hold me still. It is passing away.'

And so gradually it did; and perhaps to dissipate the sombre impression which the spectacle had left upon me, she became unusually animated and chatty; and so we got home.

This was the first time I had seen her exhibit any definable symptoms of that delicacy of health which her mother had spoken of. It was the first time, also, I had seen her exhibit anything like temper.

Both passed away like a summer cloud; and never but once afterwards did I witness on her part a momentary sign of anger. I will tell you how it happened.

She and I were looking out of one of the long drawing-room windows, when there entered the court-yard, over the draw-bridge, a figure of a wanderer whom I knew very well. He used to visit the *schloss* generally twice a year.

It was the figure of a hunchback, with the sharp lean features that generally accompany deformity. He wore a pointed black beard, and he was smiling from ear to ear, showing his white fangs. He was dressed in buff, black, and scarlet, and crossed with more straps and belts than I could count, from which hung

all manner of things. Behind, he carried a magic-lantern, and two boxes, which I well knew, in one of which was a salamander, and in the other a mandrake. These monsters used to make my father laugh. They were compounded of parts of monkeys, parrots, squirrels, fish, and hedgehogs, dried and stitched together with great neatness and startling effect. He had a fiddle, a box of conjuring apparatus, a pair of foils and masks attached to his belt, several other mysterious cases dangling about him, and a black staff with copper ferrules in his hand. His companion was a rough spare dog, that followed at his heels, but stopped short, suspiciously, at the drawbridge, and in a little while began to howl dismally.

In the meantime, the mountebank, standing in the midst of the court-yard, raised his grotesque hat, and made us a very ceremonious bow, paying his compliments very volubly in execrable French, and German not much better. Then, disengaging his fiddle, he began to scrape a lively air, to which he sang with a merry discord, dancing with ludicrous airs and activity, that made me laugh, in spite of the dog's howling.

Then he advanced to the window with many smiles and salutations, and his hat in his left hand, his fiddle under his arm, and with a fluency that never took breath, he gabbled a long advertisement of all his accomplishments, and the resources of the various arts which he placed at our service, and the curiosities and entertainments which it was in his power, at our bidding to display.

'Will your ladyships be pleased to buy an amulet against the oupire, which is going like the wolf, I hear, through these woods,' he said, dropping his hat on the pavement. 'They are dying of it right and left, and here is a charm that never fails; only pinned to the pillow, and you may laugh in his face.'

These charms consisted of oblong slips of vellum, with cabalistic ciphers and diagrams upon them.

Carmilla instantly purchased one, and so did I.

He was looking up, and we were smiling down upon him, amused; at least, I can answer for myself. His piercing black eye, as he looked up in our faces, seemed to detect something that fixed for a moment his curiosity.

In an instant he unrolled a leather case, full of all manner of odd little steel instruments.

'See here, my lady,' he said, displaying it, and addressing me, 'I profess, among other things less useful, the art of dentistry. Plague take the dog!' he interpolated. 'Silence, beast! He howls so that your ladyships can scarcely hear a word. Your noble friend, the young lady at your right, has the sharpest tooth - long, thin, pointed, like an awl, like a needle; ha, ha! With my sharp and long sight, as I look up, I have seen it distinctly; now if it happens to hurt the young lady, and I think it must, here am I, here are my file, my punch, my nippers; I will make it round and blunt, if her ladyship pleases; no longer the tooth of a fish, but of a beautiful young lady as she is. Hey? Is the young lady displeased? Have I been too bold? Have I offended her?'

The young lady, indeed, looked very angry as she drew back from the window.

'How dares that mountebank insult us so? Where is your father? I shall demand redress from him. My father would have had the wretch tied up to the pump, and flogged with a cart-whip, and burnt to the bones with the castle brand!'

She retired from the window a step or two, and sat down, and hardly lost sight of the offender, when her wrath subsided as suddenly as it had risen, and she gradually recovered her usual tone, and seemed to forget the little hunchback and his follies.

My father was out of spirits that evening. On coming in he told us that there had been another case very similar to the two fatal ones which had lately occurred. The sister of a young peasant on his estate, only a mile away, was very ill, had been, as she described it, attacked very nearly in the same way, and was now slowly but steadily sinking.

'All this,' said my father, 'is strictly referable to natural causes. These poor people infect one another with their superstitions, and so repeat in imagination the images of terror that have infested their neighbours.'

'But that very circumstance frightens one horribly,' said Carmilla.

'How so?' inquired my father.

'I am so afraid of fancying I see such things; I think it would be bad as reality.'

'We are in God's hands; nothing can happen without His permission, and all will end well for those who love Him. He is our faithful creator; He had made us all, and will take care of us.'

'Creator! *Nature*!' said the young lady in answer to my gentle father. 'And this disease that invades the country is natural. Nature. All things proceed from Nature – don't they? All things in the heaven, in the earth, and under the earth, act and live as Nature ordains? I think so.'

'The doctor said he would come here today,' said my father, after a silence. 'I want to know what he thinks about it, and what he thinks we had better do.'

'Doctors never did me any good,' said Carmilla.

'Then you have been ill?' I asked.

'More ill than ever you were,' she answered.

'Long ago?'

'Yes, a long time. I suffered from this very illness; but I forget all but my pains and weakness, and they were not so bad as are suffered in other diseases.'

'You were very young then?'

'I dare say; let us talk no more of it. You would not wound a friend?' She looked languidly in my eyes, and passed her arm round my waist lovingly, and led me out of the room. My father was busy over some papers near the window.

'Why does your papa like to frighten us?' said the pretty girl with a sigh and a little shudder.

'He doesn't, dear Carmilla, it is the very furthest thing from his mind.'

'Are you afraid, dearest?'

'I should be very much if I fancied there was any real danger of my being attacked as those poor people were.'

'You are afraid to die?'

'Yes, every one is.'

'But to die as lovers may – to die together, so that they may live together. Girls are caterpillars while they live in the world, to be finally butterflies when the summer comes; but in the

meantime there are grubs and larvae, don't you see – each with their peculiar propensities, necessities and structure. So says Monsieur Buffon, in his big book, in the next room.'

Later in the day the doctor came, and was closeted with papa for some time. He was a skilful man, of sixty and upwards, he wore powder, and shaved his pale face as smooth as a pumpkin. He and papa emerged from the room together, and I heard papa laugh, and say as they came out :

'Well, I do wonder at a wise man like you. What do you say to hippogriffs and dragons?'

The doctor was smiling, and made answer, shaking his head –

'Nevertheless, life and death are mysterious states, and we know little of the resources of either.'

And so they walked on, and I heard no more. I did not then know what the doctor had been broaching, but I think I guess it now.

## CHAPTER 5

### A WONDERFUL LIKENESS

This evening there arrived from Gratz the grave, dark-faced son of the picture-cleaner, with a horse and cart laden with two large packing-cases, having many pictures in each. It was a journey of ten leagues, and whenever a messenger arrived at the schloss from our little capital of Gratz, we used to crowd about him in the hall, to hear the news.

This arrival created in our secluded quarters quite a sensation. The cases remained in the hall, and the messenger was taken charge of by the servants till he had eaten his supper. Then with assistants, and armed with hammer, ripping chisel, and turn-screw he met us in the hall, where we had assembled to witness the unpacking of the cases.

Carmilla sat looking listlessly on; while one after the other the old pictures, nearly all portraits, which had undergone the process of renovation, were brought to light. My mother was of

an old Hungarian family, and most of these pictures, which were about to be restored to their places, had come to us through her.

My father had a list in his hand, from which he read, as the artist rummaged out the corresponding numbers. I don't know that the pictures were very good, but they were undoubtedly very old, and some of them very curious. They had, for the most part, the merit of being now seen by me, I may say, for the first time; for the smoke and dust of time had all but obliterated them.

'There is a picture that I have not seen yet,' said my father. 'In one corner, at the top of it, is the name, as well as I could read, "Marcia Karnstein," and the date "1698"; and I am curious to see how it has turned out.'

I remembered it; it was a small picture, about a foot and a half high, and nearly square, without a frame; but it was so blackened by age that I could not make it out.

The artist now produced it, with evident pride. It was quite beautiful; it was startling; it seemed to live. It was the effigy of Carmilla!

'Carmilla, dear, here is an absolute miracle. Here you are, living, smiling, ready to speak, in this picture. Isn't it beautiful, papa? And see, even the little mole on her throat.'

My father laughed, and said, 'Certainly it is a wonderful likeness,' but he looked away, and to my surprise seemed but little struck by it, and went on talking to the picture-cleaner, who was also something of an artist, and discoursed with intelligence about the portraits or other works, which his art had just brought into light and colour, while I was more and more lost in wonder the more I looked at the picture.

'Will you let me hang this picture in my room, papa?' I asked.

'Certainly, dear,' said he, smiling, 'I'm very glad you think it so like. It must be prettier even than I thought it, if it is.'

The young lady did not acknowledge this pretty speech, did not seem to hear it. She was leaning back in her seat, her fine eyes under their long lashes gazing on me in contemplation, and she smiled in a kind of rapture.

'And now you can read quite plainly the name that is written

in the corner. It is not Marcia; it looks as if it was done in gold. The name is Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, and this a little coronet over it, and underneath A.D. 1698. I am descended from the Karnsteins; that is, mamma was.'

'Ah!' said the lady, languidly, 'so am I, I think, a very long descent, very ancient. Are there any Karnsteins living now?'

'None who bear the name, I believe. The family were ruined, I believe, in some civil wars, long ago, but the ruins of the castle are only about three miles away.'

'How interesting!' she said, languidly. 'But see what beautiful moonlight!' She glanced through the hall door, which stood a little open. 'Suppose you take a little ramble round the court and look down at the road and river.'

'It is so like the night you came to us,' I said.

She sighed, smiling.

She rose, and each with her arm about the other's waist, we walked out upon the pavement.

In silence, slowly we walked down to the drawbridge, where the beautiful landscape opened before us.

'And so you were thinking of the night I came here?' she almost whispered. 'Are you glad I came?'

'Delighted, dear Carmilla,' I answered.

'And you ask for the picture you think like me, to hang in your room,' she murmured with a sigh, as she drew her arm closer about my waist, and let her pretty head sink upon my shoulder.

'How romantic you are, Carmilla,' I said. 'Whenever you tell me your story, it will be made up chiefly of some one great romance.'

She kissed me silently.

'I am sure, Carmilla, you have been in love; that there is, at this moment, an affair of the heart going on.'

'I have been in love with no one, and never shall,' she whispered, 'unless it should be with you.'

How beautiful she looked in the moonlight!

Shy and strange was the look with which she quickly hid her face in my neck and hair, with tumultuous sighs, that seemed almost to sob, and pressed in mine a hand that trembled.

Her soft cheek was glowing against mine. 'Darling, darling,' she murmured, 'I live in you; and you would die for me, I love you so.'

I started from her.

She was gazing on me with eyes from which all fire, all meaning had flown, and a face colourless and apathetic.

'Is there a chill in the air, dear?' she said drowsily. 'I almost shiver; have I been dreaming? Let us come in. Come, come; come in.'

'You look ill, Carmilla; a little faint. You certainly must take some wine,' I said.

'Yes, I will. I'm better now. I shall be quite well in a few minutes. Yes, do give me a little wine,' answered Carmilla, as we approached the door. 'Let us look again for a moment; it is the last time, perhaps, I shall see the moonlight with you.'

'How do you feel now, dear Carmilla? Are you really better?' I asked.

I was beginning to take alarm, lest she should have been stricken with the strange epidemic that they said had invaded the country about us.

'Papa, would be grieved beyond measure,' I added, 'if he thought you were ever so little ill, without immediately letting us know. We have a very skilful doctor near this, the physician who was with papa today.'

'I'm sure he is. I know how kind you all are; but, dear child, I am quite well again. There is nothing ever wrong with me, but a little weakness. People say I am languid; I am incapable of exertion; I can scarcely walk as far as a child of three years old; and every now and then the little strength I have falters, and I become as you have just seen me. But after all I am very easily set up again; in a moment I am perfectly myself. See how I have recovered.'

So, indeed, she had! and she and I talked a great deal, and very animated she was; and the remainder of that evening passed without any recurrence of what I called her infatuations. I mean her crazy talk and looks, which embarrassed, and even frightened me.



But there occurred that night an event which gave my thoughts quite a new turn, and seemed to startle even Carmilla's languid nature into momentary energy.

## CHAPTER 6

### A VERY STRANGE AGONY

When we got into the drawing-room, and had sat down to our coffee and chocolate, although Carmilla did not take any, she seemed quite herself again, and Madame, and Mademoiselle De Lafontaine, joined us, and made a little card party, in the course of which papa came in for what he called his 'dish of tea'.

When the game was over he sat down beside Carmilla on the sofa, and asked her, a little anxiously, whether she had heard from her mother since her arrival.

She answered 'No.'

He then asked her whether she knew where a letter would reach her at present.

'I cannot tell,' she answered, ambiguously, 'but I have been thinking of leaving you; you have been already too hospitable and too kind to me. I have given you an infinity of trouble, and I should wish to take a carriage tomorrow, and post in pursuit of her; I know where I shall ultimately find her, although I dare not tell you.'

'But you must not dream of any such thing,' exclaimed my father, to my great relief. 'We can't afford to lose you so, and I won't consent to your leaving us, except under the care of your mother, who was so good as to consent to your remaining with us till she should herself return. I should be quite happy if I knew that you heard from her; but this evening the accounts of the progress of the mysterious disease that has invaded our neighbourhood, grow even more alarming; and my beautiful guest, I do feel the responsibility, unaided by advice from your mother, very much. But I shall do my best; and one thing is certain, that you must not think of leaving us without her distinct direction

to that effect. We should suffer too much in parting from you to consent to it easily.'

'Thank you, sir, a thousand times for your hospitality,' she answered, smiling bashfully. 'You have all been too kind to me; I have seldom been so happy in all my life before, as in your beautiful château, under your care, and in the society of your dear daughter.'

So he gallantly, in his old-fashioned way, kissed her hand, smiling, and pleased at her little speech.

I accompanied Carmilla as usual to her room, and sat and chatted with her while she was preparing for bed.

'Do you think,' I said, at length, 'that you will ever confide fully in me?'

She turned round smiling, but made no answer, only continued to smile on me.

'You won't answer that?' I said. 'You can't answer pleasantly; I ought not to have asked you.'

'You were quite right to ask me that, or anything. You do not know how dear you are to me, or you could not think any confidence too great to look for. But I am under vows, no nun half so awfully, and I dare not tell my story yet, even to you. The time is very near when you shall know everything. You will think me cruel, very selfish, but love is always selfish; the more ardent the more selfish. How jealous I am you cannot know. You must come with me, loving me, to death; or else hate me, and still come with me, and *hating* me through death and after. There is no such word as indifference in my apathetic nature.'

'Now, Carmilla, you are going to talk your wild nonsense again,' I said hastily.

'Not I, silly little fool as I am, and full of whims and fancies; for your sake I'll talk like a sage. Were you ever at a ball?'

'No; how you do run on. What is it like? How charming it must be.'

'I almost forget, it is years ago.'

I laughed.

'You are not so old. Your first ball can hardly be forgotten yet.'

'I remember everything about it – with an effort. I see it all,

as divers see what is going on above them, through a medium, dense, rippling, but transparent. There occurred that night what has confused the picture, and made its colours fast. I was all but assassinated in my bed, wounded *here*, she touched her breast, 'and never was the same since.'

'Were you near dying?'

'Yes, very – a cruel love – strange love, that would have taken my life. Love will have its sacrifices. No sacrifice without blood. Let us go to sleep now; I feel so lazy. How can I get up just now and lock my door?'

She was lying with her tiny hands buried in her rich wavy hair, under her cheek, her little head upon the pillow, and her glittering eyes followed me wherever I moved, with a kind of shy smile that I could not decipher.

I bid her good night, and crept from the room with an uncomfortable sensation.

I often wondered whether our pretty guest ever said her prayers. I certainly had never seen her upon her knees. In the morning she never came down until long after our family prayers were over, and at night she never left the drawing-room to attend our brief evening prayers in the hall.

If it had not been that it had casually come out in one of our careless talks that she had been baptized, I should have doubted her being a Christian. Religion was a subject on which I had never heard her speak a word. If I had known the world better, this particular neglect or antipathy would not have so much surprised me.

The precautions of nervous people are infectious, and persons of a like temperament are pretty sure, after a time, to imitate them. I had adopted Carmilla's habit of locking her bed-room door, having taken into my head all her whimsical alarms about midnight invaders, and prowling assassins. I had also adopted her precautions of making a brief search through her room, to satisfy herself that no lurking assassin or robber was 'ensconced'.

These wise measures taken, I got into my bed and fell asleep. A light was burning in my room. This was an old habit, of very early date, and which nothing could have tempted me to dispense with.

Thus fortified I might take my rest in peace. But dreams come through stone walls, light up dark rooms, or darken light ones, and their persons make their exits and their entrances as they please, and laugh at locksmiths.

I had a dream that night that was the beginning of a very strange agony.

I cannot call it a nightmare, for I was quite conscious of being asleep. But I was equally conscious of being in my room, and lying in bed, precisely as I actually was. I saw, or fancied I saw, the room and its furniture just as I had seen it last, except that it was very dark, and I saw something moving round the foot of the bed, which at first I could not accurately distinguish. But I soon saw that it was a sooty-black animal that resembled a monstrous cat. It appeared to me about four or five feet long, for it measured fully the length of the hearth-rug as it passed over it; and it continued to-ing and fro-ing with the lithe sinister restlessness of a beast in a cage. I could not cry out, although as you may suppose, I was terrified. Its pace was growing faster, and the room rapidly darker and darker, and at length so dark that I could no longer see anything of it but its eyes. I felt it spring lightly on the bed. The two broad eyes approached my face, and suddenly I felt a stinging pain as if two large needles darted, an inch apart, deep into my breast. I waked with a scream. The room was lighted by the candle that burnt there all through the night, and I saw a female figure standing at the foot of the bed, a little at the right side. It was in a dark loose dress, and its hair was down and covered its shoulders. A block of stone could not have been more still. There was not the slightest stir of respiration. As I stared at it, the figure appeared to have changed its place, and was now nearer the door; then, close to it, the door opened, and it passed out.

I was now relieved, and able to breathe and move. My first thought was that Carmilla had been playing me a trick, and that I had forgotten to secure my door. I hastened to it, and found it locked as usual on the inside. I was afraid to open it – I was horrified. I sprang into my bed and covered my head up in the bed-clothes, and lay there more dead than alive till morning.

## CHAPTER 7

## DESCENDING

It would be vain my attempting to tell you the horror with which, even now, I recall the occurrence of that night. It was no such transitory terror as a dream leaves behind it. It seemed to deepen by time, and communicated itself to the room and the very furniture that had encompassed the apparition.

I could not bear next day to be alone for a moment. I should have told papa, but for two opposite reasons. At one time I thought he would laugh at my story, and I could not bear its being treated as a jest; and at another, I thought he might fancy that I had been attacked by the mysterious complaint which had invaded our neighbourhood. I had myself no misgivings of the kind, and as he had been rather an invalid for some time, I was afraid of alarming him.

I was comfortable enough with my good-natured companions, Madame Perrodon, and the vivacious Mademoiselle de Lafontain. They both perceived that I was out of spirits and nervous, and at length I told them what lay so heavy at my heart.

Mademoiselle laughed, but I fancied that Madame Perrodon looked anxious.

'By-and-by,' said Mademoiselle, laughing, 'the long lime tree walk, behind Carmilla's bedroom window, is haunted!'

'Nonsense!' exclaimed Madame, who probably thought the theme rather inopportune, 'and who tells that story, my dear?'

'Martin says that he came up twice, when the old yard-gate was being repaired, before sunrise, and twice saw the same female figure walking down the lime tree avenue.'

'So he well might, as long as there are cows to milk in the river fields,' said Madame.

'I dare say; but Martin chooses to be frightened, and never did I see a fool *more* frightened.'

'You must not say a word about it to Carmilla, because she

can see down that walk from her room window,' I interposed, 'and she is, if possible, a greater coward than I.'

Carmilla came down rather later than usual that day.

'I was so frightened last night,' she said, so soon as we were together, 'and I am sure I should have been something dreadful if it had not been for that charm I bought from the poor little hunchback whom I called such hard names. I had a dream of something black coming round my bed, and I awoke in a perfect horror, and I really thought, for some seconds, I saw a dark figure near the chimney piece, but I felt under my pillow for my charm, and the moment my fingers touched it, the figure disappeared, and I felt quite certain, only that I had it by me, that something frightful would have made its appearance, and perhaps throttled me, as it did those poor people we heard of.'

'Well, listen to me,' I began, and recounted my adventure, at the recital of which she appeared horrified.

'And had you the charm near you?' she asked, earnestly.

'No, I had dropped it into a china vase in the drawing-room, but I shall certainly take it with me tonight, as you have so much faith in it.'

At this distance of time I cannot tell you, or even understand, how I overcame my horror so effectually as to lie alone in my room that night. I remember distinctly that I pinned the charm to my pillow. I fell asleep almost immediately, and slept even more soundly than usual all night.

Next night I passed as well. My sleep was delightfully deep and dreamless. But I wakened with a sense of lassitude and melancholy which, however, did not exceed a degree that was almost luxurious.

'Well, I told you so,' said Carmilla, when I described my quiet sleep, 'I had such delightful sleep myself last night; I pinned the charm to the breast of my nightdress. It was too far away the night before. I am quite sure it was all fancy, except the dreams. I used to think that evil spirits made dreams, but our doctor told me it is no such thing. Only a fever passing by, or some other malady, as they often do, he said, knocks at the door, and not being able to get in, passes on, with that alarm.'

'And what do you think the charm is?' said I.

'It has been fumigated or immersed in some drug, and is an antidote against the malaria,' she answered.

'Then it acts only on the body?'

'Certainly; you don't suppose that evil spirits are frightened by bits of ribbon, or the perfumes of a druggist's shop? No, these complaints, wandering in the air, begin by trying the nerves, and so infect the brain; but before they can seize upon you, the antidote repels them. That I am sure is what the charm has done for us. It is nothing magical, it is simply natural.'

I should have been happier if I could quite have agreed with Carmilla, but I did my best, and the impression was a little losing its force.

For some nights I slept profoundly; but still every morning I felt the same lassitude, and a languor weighed upon me all day. I felt myself a changed girl. A strange melancholy was stealing over me, a melancholy that I would not have interrupted. Dim thoughts of death began to open, and an idea that I was slowly sinking took gentle, and, somehow, not unwelcome possession of me. If it was sad, the tone of mind which this induced was also sweet. Whatever it might be, my soul acquiesced in it.

I would not admit that I was ill, I would not consent to tell my papa, or to have the doctor sent for.

Carmilla became more devoted to me than ever, and her strange paroxysms of languid adoration more frequent. She used to gloat on me with increasing ardour the more my strength and spirits waned. This always shocked me like a momentary glare of insanity.

Without knowing it, I was now in a pretty advanced stage of the strangest illness under which mortal ever suffered. There was an unaccountable fascination in its earlier symptoms that more than reconciled me to the incapacitating effect of that stage of the malady. This fascination increased for a time, until it reached a certain point, when gradually a sense of the horrible mingled itself with it, deepening, as you shall hear, until it discoloured and perverted the whole state of my life.

The first change I experienced was rather agreeable. It was very near the turning point from which began the descent of Avernus.

Certain vague and strange sensations visited me in my sleep. The prevailing one was of that pleasant, peculiar cold thrill which we feel in bathing, when we move against the current of a river. This was soon accompanied by dreams that seemed interminable, and were so vague that I could never recollect their scenery and persons, or any one connected portion of their action. But they left an awful impression, and a sense of exhaustion, as if I had passed through a long period of great mental exertion and danger. After all these dreams there remained on waking a remembrance of having been in a place very nearly dark, and of having spoken to people whom I could not see; and especially of one clear voice, of a female's, very deep, that spoke as if at a distance, slowly, and producing always the same sensation of indescribable solemnity and fear. Sometimes there came a sensation as if a hand was drawn softly along my cheek and neck. Sometimes it was as if warm lips kissed me, and longer and more lovingly as they reached my throat, but there the caress fixed itself. My heart beat faster, my breathing rose and fell rapidly and full drawn; a sobbing, that rose into a sense of strangulation, supervened, and turned into a dreadful convulsion, in which my senses left me, and I became unconscious.

It was now three weeks since the commencement of this unaccountable state. My sufferings had, during the last week, told upon my appearance. I had grown pale, my eyes were dilated and darkened underneath, and the languor which I had long felt began to display itself in my countenance.

My father asked me often whether I was ill; but, with an obstinacy which now seems to me unaccountable, I persisted in assuring him that I was quite well.

In a sense this was true. I had no pain, I could complain of no bodily derangement. My complaint seemed to be one of the imagination, or the nerves, and, horrible as my sufferings were, I kept them, with a morbid reserve, very nearly to myself.

It could not be that terrible complaint which the peasants call the oupire, for I had now been suffering for three weeks, and they were seldom ill for much more than three days, when death put an end to their miseries.

Carmilla complained of dreams and feverish sensations, but



by no means of so alarming a kind as mine. I say that mine were extremely alarming. Had I been capable of comprehending my condition, I would have invoked aid and advice on my knees. The narcotic of an unsuspected influence was acting upon me, and my perceptions were benumbed.

I am going to tell you now of a dream that led immediately to an odd discovery.

One night, instead of the voice I was accustomed to hear in the dark, I heard one, sweet and tender, and at the same time terrible, which said, 'Your mother warns you to beware of the assassin.' At the same time a light unexpectedly sprang up, and I saw Carmilla, standing, near the foot of my bed, in her white nightdress, bathed, from her chin to her feet, in one great stain of blood.

I wakened with a shriek, possessed with the one idea that Carmilla was being murdered. I remember springing from my bed, and my next recollection is that of standing on the lobby, crying for help.

Madame and Mademoiselle came scurrying out of their rooms in alarm; a lamp burned always on the lobby, and seeing me, they soon learned the cause of my terror.

I insisted on our knocking at Carmilla's door. Our knocking was unanswered. It soon became a pounding and an uproar. We shrieked her name but all was vain.

We all grew frightened, for the door was locked. We hurried back, in panic, to my room. There we rang the bell long and furiously. If my father's room had been at that side of the house, we would have called him up at once to our aid. But, alas! he was quite out of hearing, and to reach him involved an excursion for which we none of us had courage.

Servants, however, soon came running up the stairs; I had got on my dressing-gown and slippers meanwhile, and my companions were already similarly furnished. Recognizing the voices of the servants on the lobby, we sallied out together; and having renewed, as fruitlessly, our summons at Carmilla's door, I ordered the men to force the lock. They did so, and we stood, holding our lights aloft, in the doorway, and so stared into the room.

We called her by name; but there was still no reply. We looked

round the room. Everything was undisturbed. It was exactly in the state in which I left it on bidding her good night. But Carmilla was gone.

## CHAPTER 8

### SEARCH

At sight of the room, perfectly undisturbed except for our violent entrance, we began to cool a little, and soon recovered our senses sufficiently to dismiss the men. It had struck Mademoiselle that possibly Carmilla had been wakened by the uproar at her door, and in her first panic had jumped from her bed, and hid herself in a press, or behind a curtain, from which she could not, of course, emerge until the major-domo and his myrmidons had withdrawn. We now recommenced our search, and began to call her by name again.

It was all to no purpose. Our perplexity and agitation increased. We examined the windows, but they were secured. I implored of Carmilla, if she had concealed herself, to play this cruel trick no longer – to come out, and to end our anxieties. It was all useless. I was by this time convinced that she was not in the room, nor in the dressing-room, the door of which was still locked on this side. She could not have passed it. I was utterly puzzled. Had Carmilla discovered one of those secret passages which the old housekeeper said were known to exist in the schloss, although the tradition of their exact situation had been lost? A little time would, no doubt, explain all – utterly perplexed as, for the present, we were.

It was past four o'clock, and I preferred passing the remaining hours of darkness in Madame's room. Daylight brought no solution of the difficulty.

The whole household, with my father at its head, was in a state of agitation next morning. Every part of the château was searched. The grounds were explored. Not a trace of the missing lady could be discovered. The stream was about to be dragged;

my father was in distraction; what a tale to have to tell the poor girl's mother on her return. I, too, was almost beside myself, though my grief was quite of a different kind.

The morning was passed in alarm and excitement. It was now one o'clock, and still no tidings. I ran up to Carmilla's room, and found her standing at her dressing-table. I was astounded. I could not believe my eyes. She beckoned me to her with her pretty finger, in silence. Her face expressed extreme fear.

I ran to her in an ecstasy of joy; I kissed and embraced her again and again. I ran to the bell and rang it vehemently, to bring others to the spot, who might at once relieve my father's anxiety.

'Dear Carmilla, what has become of you all this time? We have been in agonies of anxiety about you,' I exclaimed. 'Where have you been? How did you come back?'

'Last night has been a night of wonders,' she said.

'For mercy's sake, explain all you can.'

'It was past two last night,' she said, 'when I went to sleep as usual in my bed, with my doors locked, that of the dressing-room and that opening upon the gallery. My sleep was uninterrupted, and, so far as I know, dreamless; but I awoke just now on the sofa in the dressing-room there, and I found the door between the rooms open, and the other door forced. How could all this have happened without my being awakened? It must have been accompanied with a great deal of noise, and I am particularly easily wakened; and how could I have been carried out of my bed without my sleep having been interrupted, I whom the slightest stir startles?'

By this time, Madame, Mademoiselle, my father, and a number of the servants were in the room. Carmilla was, of course, overwhelmed with inquiries, congratulations, and welcomes. She had but one story to tell, and seemed the least able of all the party to suggest any way of accounting for what had happened.

My father took a turn up and down the room, thinking. I saw Carmilla's eye follow him for a moment with a sly, dark glance.

When my father had sent the servants away, Mademoiselle having gone in search of a little bottle of valerian and sal-volatile,

and there being no one now in the room with Carmilla except my father, Madame, and myself, he came to her thoughtfully, took her hand very kindly, led her to the sofa, and sat down beside her.

‘Will you forgive me, my dear, if I risk a conjecture, and ask a question?’

‘Who can have a better right?’ she said. ‘Ask what you please, and I will tell you everything. But my story is simply one of bewilderment and darkness. I know absolutely nothing. Put any question you please. But you know, of course, the limitations mamma has placed me under.’

‘Perfectly, my dear child. I need not approach the topics on which she desires our silence. Now, the marvel of last night consists in your having been removed from your bed and your room without being wakened, and this removal having occurred apparently while the windows were still secured, and the two doors locked upon the inside. I will tell you my theory, and first ask you a question.’

Carmilla was leaning on her hand dejectedly; Madame and I were listening breathlessly.

‘Now, my question is this. Have you ever been suspected of walking in your sleep?’

‘Never since I was very young indeed.’

‘But you did walk in your sleep when you were young?’

‘Yes; I know I did. I have been told so often by my old nurse.’

My father smiled and nodded.

‘Well, what has happened is this. You got up in your sleep, unlocked the door, not leaving the key, as usual, in the lock, but taking it out and locking it on the outside; you again took the key out, and carried it away with you to some one of the five-and-twenty rooms on this floor, or perhaps upstairs or downstairs. There are so many rooms and closets, so much heavy furniture, and such accumulations of lumber, that it would require a week to search this old house thoroughly. Do you see, now, what I mean?’

‘I do, but not all,’ she answered.

‘And how, papa, do you account for her finding herself on the sofa in the dressing-room, which we had searched so carefully?’

'She came there after you had searched it, still in her sleep, and at last awoke spontaneously, and was as much surprised to find herself where she was as anyone else. I wish all mysteries were as easily and innocently explained as yours, Carmilla,' he said, laughing. 'And so we may congratulate ourselves on the certainty that the most natural explanation of the occurrence is one that involves no drugging, no tampering with locks, no burglars, or poisoners, or witches – nothing that need alarm Carmilla, or anyone else, for our safety.'

Carmilla was looking charmingly. Nothing could be more beautiful than her tints. Her beauty was, I think enhanced by that graceful languor that was peculiar to her. I think my father was silently contrasting her looks with mine, for he said :

'I wish my poor Laura was looking more like herself;' and he sighed.

So our alarms were happily ended, and Carmilla restored to her friends.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE DOCTOR

As Carmilla would not hear of an attendant sleeping in her room, my father arranged that a servant should sleep outside her door so that she could not attempt to make another such excursion without being arrested at her own door.

That night passed quietly; and next morning early, the doctor, whom my father had sent for without telling me a word about it, arrived to see me.

Madame accompanied me to the library; and there the grave little doctor, with white hair and spectacles, whom I mentioned before, was waiting to receive me.

I told him my story, and as I proceeded he grew graver and graver.

We were standing, he and I, in the recess of one of the windows, facing one another. When my statement was over, he

leaned with his shoulders against the wall, and with his eyes fixed on me earnestly with an interest in which was a dash of horror.

After a minute's reflection, he asked Madame if he could see my father.

He was sent for accordingly, and as he entered, smiling, he said :

'I dare say, doctor, you are going to tell me that I am an old fool for having brought you here; I hope I am.'

But his smile faded into shadow as the doctor, with a very grave face, beckoned him to him.

He and the doctor talked for some time in the same recess where I had just conferred with the physician. It seemed an earnest and argumentative conversation. The room is very large, and I and Madame stood together, burning with curiosity, at the further end. Not a word could we hear, however, for they spoke in a very low tone, and the deep recess of the window quite concealed the doctor from view, and very nearly my father, whose foot, arm, and shoulder only could we see; and the voices were, I suppose, all the less audible for the sort of closet which the thick wall and window formed.

After a time my father's face looked into the room; it was pale, thoughtful, and, I fancied, agitated.

'Laura, dear, come here for a moment. Madame, we shan't trouble you, the doctor says, at present.'

Accordingly I approached, for the first time a little alarmed; for, although I felt very weak, I did not feel ill; and strength, one always fancies, is a thing that may be picked up when we please.

My father held out his hand to me as I drew near, but he was looking at the doctor, and he said :

'It certainly *is* very odd; I don't understand it quite. Laura, come here, dear; now attend to Doctor Spielsberg, and recollect yourself.'

'You mentioned a sensation like that of two needles piercing the skin, somewhere about your neck, on the night when you experienced your first horrible dream. Is there still any soreness?'

'None at all,' I answered.

'Can you indicate with your finger about the point at which you think this occurred?'

'Very little below my throat – *here*,' I answered.

I wore a morning dress, which covered the place I pointed to.

'Now you can satisfy yourself,' said the doctor. 'You won't mind your papa's lowering your dress a very little. It is necessary, to detect a symptom of the complaint under which you have been suffering.'

I acquiesced. It was only an inch or two below the edge of my collar.

'God bless me! – so it is,' exclaimed my father, growing pale.

'You see it now with your own eyes,' said the doctor, with a gloomy triumph.

'What is it?' I exclaimed, beginning to be frightened.

'Nothing, my dear young lady, but a small blue spot, about the size of the tip of your little finger; and now,' he continued, turning to papa, 'the question is what is best to be done?'

'Is there any danger?' I urged, in great trepidation.

'I trust not, my dear,' answered the doctor. 'I don't see why you should not recover. I don't see why you should not begin *immediately* to get better. That is the point at which the sense of strangulation begins?'

'Yes,' I answered.

'And – recollect as well as you can – the same point was a kind of centre of that thrill which you described just now, like the current of a cold stream running against you?'

'It may have been; I think it was.'

'Ay, you see?' he added, turning to my father. 'Shall I say a word to Madame?'

'Certainly,' said my father.

He called Madame to him, and said :

'I find my young friend here far from well. It won't be of any great consequence, I hope; but it will be necessary that some steps be taken, which I will explain by-and-by; but in the meantime, Madame, you will be so good as not to let Miss Laura be alone for one moment. That is the only direction I need give for the present. It is indispensable.'

'We may rely upon your kindness, Madame, I know,' added my father.

Madame satisfied him eagerly.

'And you, dear Laura, I know you will observe the doctor's direction.'

'I shall have to ask your opinion upon another patient, whose symptoms slightly resemble those of my daughter, that have just been detailed to you – very much milder in degree, but I believe quite of the same sort. She is a young lady – our guest; but as you say you will be passing this way again this evening, you can't do better than take your supper here, and you can then see her. She does not come down till the afternoon.'

'I thank you,' said the doctor. 'I shall be with you, then, at about seven this evening.'

And then they repeated their directions to me and to Madame, and with this parting charge my father left us, and walked out with the doctor; and I saw them pacing together up and down between the road and the moat, on the grassy platform in front of the castle, evidently absorbed in earnest conversation.

The doctor did not return. I saw him mount his horse there, take his leave, and ride away eastward through the forest. Nearly at the same time I saw the man arrive from Dranfled with the letters, and dismount and hand the bag to my father.

In the meantime, Madame and I were both busy, lost in conjecture as to the reasons of the singular and earnest direction which the doctor and my father had concurred in imposing. Madame, as she afterwards told me, was afraid the doctor apprehended a sudden seizure, and that, without prompt assistance, I might either lose my life in a fit, or at least be seriously hurt.

This interpretation did not strike me; and I fancied perhaps luckily for my nerves, that the arrangement was prescribed simply to secure a companion, who would prevent my taking too much exercise, or eating unripe fruit, or doing any of the fifty foolish things to which young people are supposed to be prone.

About half an hour after, my father came in – he had a letter in his hand – and said:

'This letter had been delayed; it is from General Spielsdorf.



He might have been here yesterday, he may not come till to-morrow, or he may be here today.'

He put the open letter into my hand; but he did not look pleased, as he used when a guest, especially one so much loved as the General, was coming. On the contrary, he looked as if he wished him at the bottom of the Red Sea. There was plainly something on his mind which he did not choose to divulge.

'Papa, darling, will you tell me this?' said I, suddenly laying my hand on his arm, and looking, I am sure, imploringly in his face.

'Perhaps,' he answered, smoothing my hair caressingly over my eyes.

'Does the doctor think me very ill?'

'No dear; he thinks, if right steps are taken, you will be quite well again, at least on the high road to a complete recovery, in a day or two,' he answered, a little drily. 'I wish our good friend, the General, had chosen any other time; that is, I wish you had been perfectly well to receive him.'

'But do tell me, papa,' I insisted, '*what* does he think is the matter with me?'

'Nothing; you must not plague me with questions,' he answered, with more irritation than I ever remember him to have displayed before; and seeing that I looked wounded, I suppose, he kissed me, and added, 'You shall know all about it in a day or two; that is, all that I know. In the meantime, you are not to trouble your head about it.'

He turned and left the room, but came back before I had done wondering and puzzling over the oddity of all this; it was merely to say that he was going to Karnstein and had ordered the carriage to be ready at twelve, and that I and Madame should accompany him; he was going to see the priest who lived near those picturesque grounds, upon business, and as Carmilla had never seen them, she could follow, when she came down, with Mademoiselle, who would bring materials for what you call a picnic, which might be laid for us in the ruined castle.

At twelve o'clock, accordingly, I was ready, and not long after, my father, Madame and I set out upon our projected drive. Passing the drawbridge we turn to the right, and follow the road

over the steep Gothic bridge westward, to reach the deserted village and ruined castle of Karnstein.

No sylvan drive can be fancied prettier. The ground breaks into gentle hills and hollows, all clothed with beautiful wood, totally destitute of the comparative formality which artificial planting and early culture and pruning impart.

The irregularities of the ground often lead the road out of its course, and cause it to wind beautifully round the sides of broken hollows and the steeper sides of the hills, among varieties of ground almost inexhaustible.

Turning one of these points, we suddenly encountered our old friend, the General, riding towards us, attended by a mounted servant. His portmanteaux were following in a hired wagon, such as we term a cart.

The General dismounted as we pulled up, and, after the usual greetings, was easily persuaded to accept the vacant seat in the carriage, and send his horse on with his servant to the schloss.

## CHAPTER 10

### BEREAVED

It was about ten months since we had last seen him; but that time had sufficed to make an alteration of years in his appearance. He had grown thinner; something of gloom and anxiety had taken the place of that cordial serenity which used to characterize his features. His dark blue eyes, always penetrating, now gleamed with a sterner light from under his shaggy grey eyebrows. It was not such a change as grief alone usually induces, and angrier passions seemed to have had their share in bringing it about.

We had not long resumed our drive, when the General began to talk, with his usual soldierly directness, of the bereavement, as he termed it, which he had sustained in the death of his beloved niece and ward; and he then broke out in a tone of intense

bitterness and fury, inveighing against the 'hellish arts' to which she had fallen a victim, and expressing with more exasperation than piety, his wonder that Heaven should tolerate so monstrous an indulgence of the lusts and malignity of hell.

My father, who saw at once that something very extraordinary had befallen, asked him, if not too painful to him, to detail the circumstances which he thought justified the strong terms in which he expressed himself.

'I should tell you all with pleasure,' said the General, 'but you would not believe me.'

'Why should I not?' he asked.

'Because,' he answered testily, 'you believe in nothing but what consists with your own prejudices and illusions. I remember when I was like you, but I have learned better.'

'Try me,' said my father; 'I am not such a dogmatist as you suppose. Besides which, I very well know that you generally require proof for what you believe, and am, therefore, very strongly predisposed to respect your conclusions.'

'You are right in supposing that I have not been led lightly into a belief in the marvellous – for what I have experienced *is* marvellous – and I have been forced by extraordinary evidence to credit that which ran counter, diametrically, to all my theories. I have been made the dupe of a preternatural conspiracy.'

Notwithstanding his professions of confidence in the General's penetration, I saw my father, at this point, glance at the General, with, as I thought a marked suspicion of his sanity.

The General did not see it, luckily. He was looking gloomily and curiously into the glades and vistas of the woods that were opening before us.

'You are going to the Ruins of Karnstein?' he said. 'Yes, it is a lucky coincidence; do you know I was going to ask you to bring me there to inspect them. I have a special object in exploring. There is a ruined chapel, isn't there, with a great many tombs of that extinct family?'

'So there are – highly interesting,' said my father. 'I hope you are thinking of claiming the title and estates?'

My father said this gaily, but the General did not recollect the laugh, or even the smile, which courtesy exacts for a friend's

joke; on the contrary, he looked grave and even fierce, ruminating on a matter that stirred his anger and horror.

'Something very different,' he said, gruffly. 'I mean to unearth some of those fine people. I hope, by God's blessing, to accomplish a pious sacrilege here, which will relieve our earth of certain monsters, and enable honest people to sleep in their beds without being assailed by murderers. I have strange things to tell you, my dear friend, such as I myself would have scouted as incredible a few months since.'

My father looked at him again, but this time not with a glance of suspicion – with an eye, rather, of keen intelligence and alarm.

'The house of Karnstein,' he said, 'has been long extinct: a hundred years at least. My dear wife was maternally descended from the Karnsteins. But the name and title have long ceased to exist. The castle is a ruin; the very village is deserted; it is fifty years since the smoke of a chimney was seen there; not a roof left.'

'Quite true. I have heard a great deal about that since I last saw you; a great deal that will astonish you. But I had better relate everything in the order in which it occurred,' said the General. 'You saw my dear ward – my child, I may call her. No creature could have been more beautiful and only three months ago none more blooming.'

'Yes, poor thing! when I saw her last she certainly was quite lovely,' said my father. 'I was grieved and shocked more than I can tell you, my dear friend; I knew what a blow it was to you.'

He took the General's hand, and they exchanged a kind pressure. Tears gathered in the old soldier's eyes. He did not seek to conceal them. He said:

'We have been very old friends; I knew you would feel for me, childless as I am. She had become an object of very dear interest to me, and repaid my care by an affection that cheered my home and made my life happy. That is all gone. The years that remain to me on earth may not be very long; but by God's mercy I hope to accomplish a service to mankind before I die, and to subserve the vengeance of Heaven upon the fiends who have murdered my poor child in the spring of her hopes and beauty!'

'You said, just now, that you intended relating everything as it occurred,' said my father. 'Pray do; I assure you that it is not mere curiosity that prompts me.'

By this time we had reached the point at which the Drunstall road, by which the General had come, diverges from the road which we were travelling to Karnstein.

'How far is it to the ruins?' inquired the General, looking anxiously forward.

'About half a league,' answered my father. 'Pray let us hear the story you were so good as to promise.'

## CHAPTER 11

### THE STORY

'With all my heart,' said the General, with an effort; and after a short pause in which to arrange his subject, he commenced one of the strangest narratives I ever heard.

'My dear child was looking forward with great pleasure to the visit you had been so good as to arrange for her to your charming daughter.' Here he made me a gallant but melancholy bow. 'In the meantime we had an invitation to my old friend the Count Carlsfeld, whose schloss is about six leagues to the other side of Karnstein. It was to attend the series of fêtes which, you remember, were given by him in honour of his illustrious visitor, the Grand Duke Charles.'

'Yes; and very splendid, I believe, they were,' said my father.

'Princely! But then his hospitalities are quite regal. He has Aladdin's lamp. The night from which my sorrow dates was devoted to a magnificent masquerade. The grounds were thrown open, the trees hung with coloured lamps. There was such a display of fireworks as Paris itself had never witnessed. And such music – music, you know, is my weakness – such ravishing music! The finest instrumental band, perhaps, in the world, and the finest singers who could be collected from all the great operas

in Europe. As you wandered through these fantastically illuminated grounds, the moon-lighted château throwing a rosy light from its long rows of windows, you would suddenly hear these ravishing voices stealing from the silence of some grove, or rising from boats upon the lake. I felt myself, as I looked and listened, carried back into the romance and poetry of my early youth.

‘When the fireworks were ended, and the ball beginning, we returned to the noble suite of rooms that was thrown open to the dancers. A masked ball, you know, is a beautiful sight; but so brilliant a spectacle of the kind I never saw before.

‘It was a very aristocratic assembly. I was myself almost the only “nobody” present.

‘My dear child was looking quite beautiful. She wore no mask. Her excitement and delight added an unspeakable charm to her features, always lovely. I remarked a young lady, dressed magnificently, but wearing a mask, who appeared to me to be observing my ward with extraordinary interest. I had seen her, earlier in the evening, in the great hall, and again, for a few minutes, walking near us, on the terrace under the castle windows, similarly employed. A lady, also masked, richly and gravely dressed, and with a stately air, like a person of rank, accompanied her as a chaperon. Had the young lady not worn a mask, I could, of course, have been much more certain upon the question whether she was really watching my poor darling. I am now well assured that she was.

‘We were now in one of the *salons*. My poor dear child had been dancing, and was resting a little in one of the chairs near the door; I was standing near. The two ladies I have mentioned had approached, and the younger took the chair next my ward; while her companion stood beside me, and for a little time addressed herself, in a low tone, to her charge.

‘Availing herself of the privilege of her mask she turned to me, and in the tone of an old friend, and calling me by my name, opened a conversation with me, which piqued my curiosity a good deal. She referred to many scenes where she had met me – at Court, and at distinguished houses. She alluded to little incidents which I had long ceased to think of, but which, I found,

had only lain in abeyance in my memory, for they instantly started into life at her touch.

'I became more and more curious to ascertain who she was, every moment. She parried my attempts to discover very adroitly and pleasantly. The knowledge she showed of many passages in my life seemed to me all but unaccountable; and she appeared to take a not unnatural pleasure in foiling my curiosity, and in seeing me flounder, in my eager perplexity, from one conjecture to another.

'In the meantime the young lady, whom her mother called by the odd name of Millarca, when she once or twice addressed her, had, with the same ease and grace, got into conversation with my ward.

'She introduced herself by saying that her mother was a very old acquaintance of mine. She spoke of the agreeable audacity which a mask rendered practicable; she talked like a friend; she admired her dress, and insinuated very prettily her admiration of her beauty. She amused her with laughing criticisms upon the people who crowded the ballroom, and laughed at my poor child's fun. She was very witty and lively when she pleased, and after a time they had grown very good friends, and the young stranger lowered her mask, displaying a remarkably beautiful face. I had never seen it before, neither had my dear child. But though it was new to us, the features were so engaging, as well as lovely, that it was impossible not to feel the attraction powerfully. My poor girl did so. I never saw anyone more taken with another at first sight, unless indeed, it was the stranger herself, who seemed quite to have lost her heart to her.

'In the meantime, availing myself of the licence of a masquerade, I put not a few questions to the elder lady.

"You have puzzled me utterly," I said, laughing. "Is that not enough? won't you, now, consent to stand on equal terms, and do me the kindness to remove your mask?"

"Can any request be more unreasonable?" she replied. "Ask a lady to yield an advantage! Beside, how do you know you should recognize me? Years make changes."

"As you see," I said, with a bow, and, I suppose, a rather melancholy little laugh.

"As philosophers tell us," she said; "and how do you know that a sight of my face would help you?"

"I should take chance for that," I answered. "It is vain trying to make yourself out an old woman; your figure betrays you."

"Years, nevertheless, have passed since I saw you, rather since you saw me, for that is what I am considering. Millarca, there, is my daughter; I cannot then be young, even in the opinion of people whom time has taught to be indulgent, and I may not like to be compared with what you remember me. You have no mask to remove. You can offer me nothing in exchange."

"My petition is to your pity, to remove it."

"And mine to yours, to let it stay where it is," she replied.

"Well, then, at least you will tell me whether you are French or German; you speak both languages so perfectly."

"I don't think I shall tell you that, General; you intend a surprise, and are meditating the particular point of attack."

"At all events, you won't deny this," I said, "that being honoured by your permission to converse, I ought to know how to address you. Shall I say *Madame la Comtesse*?"

"She laughed, and she would, no doubt, have met me with another evasion – if, indeed, I can treat any occurrence in an interview every circumstance of which was pre-arranged, as I now believe, with the profoundest cunning, as liable to be modified by accident.

"As to that," she began; but she was interrupted, almost as she opened her lips, by a gentleman, dressed in black, who looked particularly elegant and distinguished, with this drawback, that his face was the most deadly pale I ever saw, except in death. He was in no masquerade – in the plain evening dress of a gentleman; and he said, without a smile, but with a courtly and unusually low bow:

"Will *Madame la Comtesse* permit me to say a very few words which may interest her?"

The lady turned quickly to him, and touched her lip in token of silence; she then said to me, "Keep my place for me, General; I shall return when I have said a few words."

'And with this injunction, playfully given, she walked a little



aside with the gentleman in black, and talked for some minutes, apparently very earnestly. They then walked away slowly together in the crowd, and I lost them for some minutes.

'I spent the interval in cudgelling my brains for conjecture as to the identity of the lady who seemed to remember me so kindly, and I was thinking of turning about and joining in the conversation between my pretty ward and the Countess's daughter, and trying whether, by the time she returned, I might not have a surprise in store for her, by having her name, title, château, and estates at my fingers' ends. But at this moment she returned, accompanied by the pale man in black, who said :

"I shall return and inform Madame la Comtesse when her carriage is at the door."

'He withdrew with a bow.'

## CHAPTER 12

### A PETITION

"Then we are to lose Madame la Comtesse, but I hope only for a few hours," I said, with a low bow.

"It may be that only, or it may be a few weeks. It was very unlucky his speaking to me just now as he did. Do you now know me?"

'I assured her I did not.

"You shall know me," she said, "but not at present. We are older and better friends than, perhaps, you suspect. I cannot yet declare myself. I shall in three weeks pass your beautiful schloss about which I have been making inquiries. I shall then look in upon you for an hour or two, and renew a friendship which I never think of without a thousand pleasant recollections. This moment a piece of news has reached me like a thunderbolt. I must set out now, and travel by a devious route, nearly a hundred miles, with all the dispatch I can possibly make. My perplexities multiply. I am only deterred by the compulsory reserve I practise

as to my name from making a very singular request of you. My poor child has not quite recovered her strength. Her horse fell with her, at a hunt which she had ridden out to witness, her nerves have not yet recovered the shock, and our physician says that she must on no account exert herself for some time to come. We came here, in consequence, by very easy stages – hardly six leagues a day. I must now travel day and night, on a mission of life and death – a mission the critical and momentous nature of which I shall be able to explain to you when we meet, as I hope we shall, in a few weeks, without the necessity of any concealment.”

‘She went on to make her petition, and it was in the tone of a person from whom such a request amounted to conferring, rather than seeking a favour. This was only in manner, and, as it seemed, quite unconsciously. Than the terms in which it was expressed, nothing could be more deprecatory. It was simply that I would consent to take charge of her daughter during her absence.

‘This was, all things considered, a strange, not to say, an audacious request. She in some sort disarmed me, by stating and admitting everything that could be urged against it, and throwing herself entirely upon my chivalry. At the same moment, by a fatality that seems to have predetermined all that happened, my poor child came to my side, and, in an undertone, besought me to invite her new friend, Millarca, to pay us a visit. She had just been sounding her, and thought, if her mamma would allow her, she would like it extremely.

‘At another time I should have told her to wait a little, until, at least, we knew who they were. But I had not a moment to think in. The two ladies assailed me together, and I must confess the refined and beautiful face of the young lady, about which there was something extremely engaging, as well as the elegance and fire of high birth, determined me; and quite overpowered, I submitted, and undertook, too easily, the care of the young lady, whom her mother called Millarca.

‘The Countess beckoned to her daughter, who listened with grave attention while she told her, in general terms, how suddenly and peremptorily she had been summoned, and also of the

arrangement she had made for her under my care, adding that I was one of her earliest and most valued friends.

'I made, of course, such speeches as the case seemed to call for, and found myself, on reflection, in a position which I did not half like.

'The gentleman in black returned, and very ceremoniously conducted the lady from the room.

'The demeanour of this gentleman was such as to impress me with the conviction that the Countess was a lady of very much more importance than her modest title alone might have led me to assume.

'Her last charge to me was that no attempt was to be made to learn more about her than I might have already guessed, until her return. Our distinguished host, whose guest she was, knew her reasons.

'“But here,” she said, “neither I nor my daughter could safely remain for more than a day. I removed my mask imprudently for a moment, about an hour ago, and, too late, I fancied you saw me. So I resolved to seek an opportunity of talking a little to you. Had I found that you *had* seen me, I should have thrown myself on your high sense of honour to keep my secret for some weeks. As it is, I am satisfied that you did not see me; but if you now *suspect*, or, on reflection, *should* suspect, who I am, I commit myself, in like manner, entirely to your honour. My daughter will observe the same secrecy, and I well know that you will, from time to time, remind her, lest she should thoughtlessly disclose it.”

'She whispered a few words to her daughter, kissed her hurriedly twice, and went away, accompanied by the pale gentleman in black, and disappeared in the crowd.

'“In the next room,” said Millarca, “there is a window that looks upon the hall door. I should like to see the last of mamma, and to kiss my hand to her.”

'We assented, of course, and accompanied her to the window. We looked out, and saw a handsome old-fashioned carriage, with a troop of couriers and footmen. We saw the slim figure of the pale gentleman in black, as he held a thick velvet cloak, and placed it about her shoulders and threw the hood over her head.

She nodded to him, and just touched his hand with hers. He bowed low repeatedly as the door closed, and the carriage began to move.

"She is gone," said Millarca, with a sigh.

"She is gone," I repeated to myself, for the first time – in the hurried moments that had elapsed since my consent – reflecting upon the folly of my act.

"She did not look up," said the young lady, plaintively.

"The Countess had taken off her mask, perhaps, and did not care to show her face," I said; "and she could not know that you were in the window."

"She sighed and looked in my face. She was so beautiful that I relented. I was sorry I had for a moment repented of my hospitality, and I determined to make her amends for the unavowed churlishness of my reception.

"The young lady, replacing her mask, joined my ward in persuading me to return to the grounds, where the concert was soon to be renewed. We did so, and walked up and down the terrace that lies under the castle windows. Millarca became very intimate with us, and amused us with lively descriptions and stories of most of the great people whom we saw upon the terrace. I liked her more and more every minute. Her gossip, without being ill-natured, was extremely diverting to me, who had been so long out of the great world. I thought what life she would give to our sometimes lonely evenings at home.

"This ball was not over until the morning sun had almost reached the horizon. It pleased the Grand Duke to dance till then, so loyal people could not go away, or think of bed.

"We had just got through a crowded saloon, when my ward asked me what had become of Millarca. I thought she had been by my side, and she fancied she was by mine. The fact was, we had lost her.

"All my efforts to find her were vain. I feared that she had mistaken, in the confusion of a momentary separation from us, other people for her new friends, and had, possibly, pursued and lost them in the extensive grounds which were thrown open to us.

"Now, in its full force, I recognized a new folly in my having

undertaken the charge of a young lady without so much as knowing her name; and fettered as I was by promises, of the reasons for imposing which I knew nothing, I could not even point my inquiries by saying that the missing young lady was the daughter of the Countess who had taken her departure a few hours before.

'Morning broke. It was clear daylight before I gave up my search. It was not till near two o'clock next day that we heard anything of my missing charge.

'At about that time a servant knocked at my niece's door, to say that he had been earnestly requested by a young lady, who appeared to be in great distress, to make out where she could find the General Baron Spielsdorf and the young lady, his daughter, in whose charge she had been left by her mother.

'There could be no doubt, notwithstanding the slight inaccuracy, that our young friend had turned up; and so she had. Would to Heaven we had lost her!

'She told my poor child a story to account for her having failed to recover us for so long. Very late, she said, she had got into the housekeeper's bedroom in despair of finding us, and had then fallen into a deep sleep which, long as it was, had hardly sufficed to recruit her strength after the fatigues of the ball.

'That day Millarca came home with us. I was only too happy, after all, to have secured so charming a companion for my dear girl.'

## CHAPTER 13

### THE WOODMAN

'There soon, however, appeared some drawbacks. In the first place, Millarca complained of extreme languor – the weakness that remained after her late illness – and she never emerged from her room till the afternoon was pretty far advanced. In the next place, it was accidentally discovered, although she always locked her door on the inside, and never disturbed the key from its

place, till she admitted the maid to assist at her toilet, that she was undoubtedly sometimes absent from her room in the very early morning, and at various times later in the day, before she wished it to be understood that she was stirring. She was repeatedly seen from the windows of the schloss, in the first faint grey of the morning, walking through the trees, in an easterly direction, and looking like a person in a trance. This convinced me that she walked in her sleep. But this hypothesis did not solve the puzzle. How did she pass out from her room, leaving the door locked on the inside. How did she escape from the house without unbarring door or window?

‘In the midst of my perplexities, an anxiety of a far more urgent kind presented itself.

‘My dear child began to lose her looks and health, and that in a manner so mysterious, and even horrible, that I became thoroughly frightened.

‘She was at first visited by appalling dreams; then, as she fancied, by a spectre, something resembling Millarca, sometimes in the shape of a beast, indistinctly seen, walking round the foot of the bed, from side to side. Lastly came sensations. One, not unpleasant, but very peculiar, she said, resembled the flow of an icy stream against her breast. At a later time, she felt something like a pair of needles pierce her, a little below the throat, with a very sharp pain. A few nights after, followed a gradual and convulsive sense of strangulation; then came unconsciousness.’

I could hear distinctly every word the kind old General was saying, because by this time we were driving upon the short grass that spreads on either side of the road as you approach the roofless village which had not shown the smoke of a chimney for more than half a century.

You may guess how strangely I felt as I heard my own symptoms so exactly described in those which had been experienced by the poor girl who, but for the catastrophe which followed, would have been at that moment a visitor at my father’s château. You may suppose, also, how I felt as I heard him detail habits and mysterious peculiarities which were, in fact, those of our beautiful guest, Carmilla!

A vista opened in the forest; we were on a sudden under the

chimneys and gables of the ruined village, and the towers and battlements of the dismantled castle, round which gigantic trees are grouped, overhung us from a slight eminence.

In a frightened dream I got down from the carriage, and in silence, for we had each abundant matter for thinking; we soon mounted the ascent, and were among the spacious chambers, winding stairs, and dark corridors of the castle.

'And this was once the palatial residence of the Karnsteins!' said the old General at length, as from a great window he looked out across the village, and saw the wide, undulating expanse of forest. 'It was a bad family, and here its blood-stained annals were written,' he continued. 'It is hard that they should, after death, continue to plague the human race with their atrocious lusts. That is the chapel of the Karnsteins, down there.'

He pointed down to the grey walls of the Gothic building, partly visible through the foliage, a little way down the steep. 'And I hear the axe of a woodman,' he added, 'busy among the trees that surround it; he possibly may give us the information of which I am in search, and point out the grave of Mircalla, Countess of Karstein. These rustics preserve the local traditions of great families, whose stories die out among the rich and titled so soon as the families themselves become extinct.'

'We have a portrait, at home, of Mircalla, the Countess Karnstein; should you like to see it?' asked my father.

'Time enough, dear friend,' replied the General. 'I believe that I have seen the original; and one motive which has led me to you earlier than I at first intended, was to explore the chapel which we are now approaching.'

'What! see the Countess Mircalla,' exclaimed my father; 'why, she has been dead more than a century!'

'Not so dead as you fancy, I am told,' answered the General.

'I confess, General, you puzzle me utterly,' replied my father, looking at him, I fancied, for a moment with a return of the suspicion I detected before. But although there was anger and detestation, at times, in the old General's manner, there was nothing flighty.

'There remains to me,' he said, as we passed under the heavy arch of the Gothic church – for its dimensions would have justi-

fied its being so styled – ‘but one object which can interest me during the few years that remain to me on earth, and that is to wreak on her the vengeance which, I thank God, may still be accomplished by a mortal arm.’

‘What vengeance can you mean?’ asked my father, in increasing amazement.

‘I mean, to decapitate the monster,’ he answered, with a fierce flush, and a stamp that echoed mournfully through the hollow ruin, and his clenched hand was at the same moment raised, as if it grasped the handle of an axe, while he shook it ferociously in the air.

‘What!’ exclaimed my father, more than ever bewildered.

‘To strike her head off.’

‘Cut her head off!’

‘Aye, with a hatchet, with a spade, or with anything that can cleave through her murderous throat. You shall hear,’ he answered, trembling with rage. And hurrying forward he said :

‘That beam will answer for a seat; your dear child is fatigued; let her be seated, and I will, in a few sentences, close my dreadful story.’

The squared block of wood, which lay on the grass-grown pavement of the chapel, formed a bench on which I was very glad to seat myself, and in the meantime the General called to the woodman, who had been removing some boughs which leaned upon the old walls; and, axe in hand, the hardy old fellow stood before us.

He could not tell us anything of these monuments; but there was an old man, he said, a ranger of this forest, at present sojourning in the house of the priest, about two miles away, who could point out every monument of the old Karnstein family and, for a trifle, he undertook to bring him back with him, if we would lend him one of our horses, in little more than half an hour.

‘Have you been long employed about this forest?’ asked my father of the old man.

‘I have been a woodman here,’ he answered in his *patois*, ‘under the forester, all my days; so has my father before me, and so on, as many generations as I can count up. I could show you



the very house in the village here, in which my ancestors lived.'

'How came the village to be deserted?' asked the General.

'It was troubled by *revenants*, sir; several were tracked to their graves, there detected by the usual tests, and extinguished in the usual way, by decapitation, by the stake, and by burning; but not until many of the villagers were killed.

'But after all these proceedings according to law,' he continued 'so many graves opened, and so many vampires deprived of their horrible animation – the village was not relieved. But a Moravian nobleman, who happened to be travelling this way, heard how matters were, and being skilled – as many people are in his country – in such affairs, he offered to deliver the village from its tormentor. He did so thus: There being a bright moon that night, he ascended, shortly after sunset, the tower of the chapel here, from whence he could distinctly see the churchyard beneath him; you can see it from that window. From this point he watched until he saw the vampire come out of his grave, and place near it the linen clothes in which he had been folded, and glide away towards the village to plague its inhabitants.

'The stranger, having seen all this, came down from the steeple, took the linen wrappings of the vampire, and carried them up to the top of the tower, which he again mounted. When the vampire returned from his prowlings and missed his clothes, he cried furiously to the Moravian, whom he saw at the summit of the tower, and who in reply beckoned him to ascend and take them. Whereupon the vampire, accepting his invitation, began to climb the steeple, and so soon as he had reached the battlements, the Moravian, with a stroke of his sword, clove his skull in twain, hurling him down to the churchyard, whither, descending by the winding stairs, the stranger followed and cut his head off, and next day delivered it and the body to the villagers, who duly impaled and burnt them.

'This Moravian nobleman had authority from the then head of the family to remove the tomb of Mircalla, Countess Karnstein, which he did effectually, so that in a little while its site was quite forgotten.'

'Can you point out where it stood?' asked the General, eagerly.

The forester shook his head and smiled.

'Not a soul living could tell you that now,' he said; 'besides they say her body was removed; but no one is sure of that either.'

Having thus spoken, as time pressed, he dropped his axe and departed, leaving us to hear the remainder of the General's strange story.

## CHAPTER 14

### THE MEETING

'My beloved child,' he resumed, 'was now growing rapidly worse. The physician who attended her had failed to produce the slightest impression upon her disease, for such I then supposed it to be. He saw my alarm, and suggested a consultation. I called in an abler physician, from Gratz. Several days elapsed before he arrived. He was a good and pious, as well as a learned man. Having seen my poor ward together, they withdrew to my library to confer and discuss. I, from the adjoining room, where I awaited their summons, heard these two gentlemen's voices raised in something sharper than a strictly philosophical discussion. I knocked at the door and entered. I found the old physician from Gratz maintaining his theory. His rival was combating it with undisguised ridicule, accompanied with bursts of laughter. This unseemly manifestation subsided and the altercation ended on my entrance.

"Sir," said my first physician, "my learned brother seems to think that you want a conjuror, and not a doctor."

"Pardon me," said the old physician from Gratz, looking displeased, "I shall state my own view of the case in my own way another time. I grieve, Monsieur le Général, that by my skill and science I can be of no use. Before I go I shall do myself the honour to suggest something to you."

'He seemed thoughtful, and sat down at a table, and began to write. Profoundly disappointed, I made my bow, and as I turned to go, the other doctor pointed over his shoulder to his com-

panion who was writing, and then, with a shrug, significantly touched his forehead.

'This consultation, then, left me precisely where I was. I walked out into the grounds, all but distracted. The doctor from Gratz, in ten or fifteen minutes, overtook me. He apologized for having followed me, but said that he could not conscientiously take his leave without a few words more. He told me that he could not be mistaken; no natural disease exhibited the same symptoms; and that death was already very near. There remained, however, a day, or possibly two, of life. If the fatal seizure were at once arrested, with great care and skill her strength might possibly return. But all hung now upon the confines of the irrevocable. One more assault might extinguish the last spark of vitality which is, every moment, ready to die.

'“And what is the nature of the seizure you speak of?” I entreated.

'“I have stated all, fully in this note, which I place in your hands, upon the distinct condition that you send for the nearest clergyman, and open my letter in his presence, and on no account read it till he is with you; you would despise it else, and it is a matter of life and death. Should the priest fail you, then, indeed, you may read it.”

'He asked me, before taking his leave finally, whether I would wish to see a man curiously learned upon the very subject, which, after I had read his letter, would probably interest me above all others, and he urged me earnestly to invite him to visit him there; and so took his leave.

'The ecclesiastic was absent, and I read the letter by myself. At another time, or in another case, it might have excited my ridicule. But into what quackeries will not people rush for a last chance, where all accustomed means have failed, and the life of a beloved object is at stake?

'Nothing, you will say, could be more absurd than the learned man's letter. It was monstrous enough to have consigned him to a madhouse. He said that the patient was suffering from the visits of a vampire! The punctures which she described as having occurred near the throat, were, he insisted, the insertion of those two long, thin, and sharp teeth which, it is well known, are

peculiar to vampires; and there could be no doubt, he added, as to the well-defined presence of the small livid mark which all concurred in describing as that induced by the demon's lips, and every symptom described by the sufferer was in exact conformity with those recorded in every case of a similar visitation.

'Being myself wholly sceptical as to the existence of any such portent as the vampire, the supernatural theory of the good doctor furnished, in my opinion, but another instance of learning and intelligence oddly associated with some hallucination. I was so miserable, however, that, rather than try nothing, I acted upon the instructions of the letter.

'I concealed myself in the dark dressing-room, that opened upon the poor patient's room, in which a candle was burning, and watched there till she was fast asleep. I stood at the door, peeping through the small crevice, my sword laid on the table beside me, as my directions prescribed, until, a little after one, I saw a large black object, very ill-defined, crawl, as it seemed to me, over the foot of the bed, and swiftly spread itself up to the poor girl's throat, where it swelled, in a moment, into a great, palpitating mass.

'For a few moments I had stood petrified. I now sprang forward, with my sword in my hand. The black creature suddenly contracted towards the foot of the bed, glided over it, and, standing on the floor about a yard below the foot of the bed, with a glare of skulking ferocity and horror fixed on me, I saw Millarca. Speculating I know not what, I struck at her instantly with my sword; but I saw her standing near the door, unscathed. Horrified, I pursued, and struck again. She was gone! and my sword flew to shivers against the door.

'I can't describe to you all that passed on that horrible night. The whole house was up and stirring. The spectre Millarca was gone. But her victim was sinking fast, and before the morning dawned, she died.'

The old General was agitated. We did not speak to him. My father walked to some little distance, and began reading the inscriptions on the tombstones; and thus occupied, he strolled into the door of a side chapel to prosecute his researches. The General leaned against the wall, dried his eyes, and sighed heavily. I

was relieved on hearing the voices of Carmilla and Madame, who were at that moment approaching. The voices died away.

In this solitude, having just listened to so strange a story, connected, as it was, with the great and titled dead, whose monuments were mouldering among the dust and ivy around us, and every incident of which bore so awfully upon my own mysterious case – in this haunted spot, darkened by the towering foliage that rose on every side, dense and high above its noiseless walls – a horror began to steal over me, and my heart sank as I thought that my friends were, after all, not about to enter and disturb this triste and ominous scene.

The old General's eyes were fixed on the ground, as he leaned with his hand upon the basement of a shattered monument.

Under a narrow, arched doorway, surmounted by one of those demoniacal grotesques in which the cynical and ghastly fancy of old Gothic carving delights, I saw very gladly the beautiful face and figure of Carmilla enter the shadowy chapel.

I was just about to rise and speak, and nodded smiling, in answer to her peculiarly engaging smile; when, with a cry, the old man by my side caught up the woodman's hatchet, and started forward. On seeing him a brutalized change came over her features. It was an instantaneous and horrible transformation, as she made a crouching step backwards. Before I could utter a scream, he struck at her with all his force, but she dived under his blow, and unscathed, caught him in her tiny grasp by the wrist. He struggled for a moment to release his arm, but his hand opened, the axe fell to the ground, and the girl was gone.

He staggered against the wall. His grey hair stood upon his head, and a moisture shone over his face, as if he were at the point of death.

The frightful scene had passed in a moment. The first thing I recollect after, is Madame standing before me, and impatiently repeating again and again, the question, 'Where is Mademoiselle Carmilla?'

I answered at length, 'I don't know – I can't tell – she went there,' and I pointed to the door through which Madame had just entered; 'only a minute or two since.'

'But I have been standing there, in the passage, ever since Mademoiselle Carmilla entered; and she did not return.'

She then began to call 'Carmilla' through every door and passage and from the windows, but no answer came.

'She called herself Carmilla?' asked the General, still agitated.

'Carmilla, yes,' I answered.

'Aye,' he said; 'that is Millarca. That is the same person who long ago was called Mircalla, Countess Karnstein. Depart from this accursed ground, my poor child, as quickly as you can. Drive to the clergyman's house, and stay there till we come. Begone! May you never behold Carmilla more; you will not find her here.'

## CHAPTER 15

### ORDEAL AND EXECUTION

As he spoke one of the strangest-looking men I ever beheld, entered the chapel at the door through which Carmilla had made her entrance and her exit. He was tall, narrow-chested, stooping, with high shoulders, and dressed in black. His face was brown and dried in with deep furrows; he wore an oddly shaped hat with a broad leaf. His hair, long and grizzled, hung on his shoulders. He wore a pair of gold spectacles, and walked slowly, with an odd shambling gait, and his face, sometimes turned up to the sky, and sometimes bowed down toward the ground, seemed to wear a perpetual smile; his long thin arms were swinging, and his lank hands, in old black gloves ever so much too wide for them, waving and gesticulating in utter abstraction.

'The very man!' exclaimed the General, advancing with manifest delight. 'My dear Baron, how happy I am to see you, I had no hope of meeting you so soon.' He signed to my father, who had by this time returned, and leading the fantastic old gentleman, whom he called the Baron, to meet him. He introduced him formally, and they at once entered into earnest conversation. The stranger took a roll of paper from his pocket, and

spread it on the worn surface of a tomb that stood by. He had a pencil case in his fingers, with which he traced imaginary lines from point to point on the paper, which from their often glancing from it, together, at certain points of the building, I concluded to be a plan of the chapel. He accompanied, what I may term his lecture, with occasional readings from a dirty little book, whose yellow leaves were closely written over.

They sauntered together down the side aisle, opposite to the spot where I was standing, conversing as they went; then they began measuring distances by paces, and finally they all stood together, facing a piece of the side-wall, which they began to examine with great minuteness; pulling off the ivy that clung over it, and rapping the plaster with the ends of their sticks, scraping here, and knocking there. At length they ascertained the existence of a broad marble tablet, with letters carved in relief upon it.

With the assistance of the woodman, who soon returned, a monumental inscription, and carved escutcheon, were disclosed. They proved to be those of the long lost monument of Mircalla, Countess Karnstein.

The old General, though not I fear given to the praying mood, raised his hands and eyes to heaven, in mute thanksgiving for some moments.

'Tomorrow,' I heard him say; 'the commissioner will be here, and the Inquisition will be held according to law.'

Then turning to the old man with the gold spectacles, whom I have described, he shook him warmly by both hands and said :

'Baron, how can I thank you? How can we all thank you? You will have delivered this region from a plague that has scourged its inhabitants for more than a century. The horrible enemy, thank God, is at last tracked.'

My father led the stranger aside, and the General followed. I knew that he had led them out of hearing, that he might relate my case, and I saw them glance often quickly at me, as the discussion proceeded.

My father came to me, kissed me again and again, and leading me from the chapel, said :

'It is time to return, but before we go home, we must add to

our party the good priest, who lives but a little way from this; and persuade him to accompany us to the schloss.'

In this quest we were successful: and I was glad, being unspeakably fatigued when we reached home. But my satisfaction was changed to dismay, on discovering that there were no tidings of Carmilla. Of the scene that had occurred in the ruined chapel, no explanation was offered to me, and it was clear that it was a secret which my father for the present determined to keep from me.

The sinister absence of Carmilla made the remembrance of the scene more horrible to me. The arrangements for that night were singular. Two servants and Madame were to sit up in my room that night; and the ecclesiastic with my father kept watch in the adjoining dressing-room.

The priest had performed certain solemn rites that night, the purport of which I did not understand any more than I comprehended the reason of this extraordinary precaution taken for my safety during sleep.

I saw all clearly a few days later.

The disappearance of Carmilla was followed by the discontinuance of my nightly sufferings.

You have heard, no doubt, of the appalling superstition that prevails in Upper and Lower Styria, in Moravia, Silesia, in Turkish Servia, in Poland, even in Russia; the superstition, so we must call it, of the vampire.

If human testimony, taken with every care and solemnity, judicially, before commissions innumerable, each consisting of many members, all chosen for integrity and intelligence, and constituting reports more voluminous perhaps than exist upon any one other class of cases, is worth anything, it is difficult to deny, or even to doubt the existence of such a phenomenon as the vampire.

For my part I have heard no theory by which to explain what I myself have witnessed and experienced, other than that supplied by the ancient and well-attested belief of the country.

The next day the formal proceedings took place in the Chapel of Karnstein. The grave of the Countess Mircalla was opened; and the General and my father recognized each his perfidious



and beautiful guest, in the face now disclosed to view. The features, though a hundred and fifty years had passed since her funeral, were tinted with the warmth of life. Her eyes were open; no cadaverous smell exhaled from the coffin. The two medical men, one officially present, the other on the part of the promoter of the inquiry, attested the marvellous fact, that there was a faint but appreciable respiration, and a corresponding action of the heart. The limbs were perfectly flexible, the flesh elastic; and the leaden coffin floated with blood, in which to a depth of seven inches, the body lay immersed. Here then, were all the admitted signs and proofs of vampirism. The body, therefore, in accordance with the ancient practice, was raised, and a sharp stake driven through the heart of the vampire, who uttered a piercing shriek at the moment, in all respects such as might escape from a living person in the last agony. Then the head was struck off, and a torrent of blood flowed from the severed neck. The body and head were next placed on a pile of wood, and reduced to ashes, which were thrown upon the river and borne away, and that territory has never since been plagued by the visits of a vampire.

My father has a copy of the report of the Imperial Commission, with the signatures of all who were present at these proceedings, attached in verification of the statement. It is from this official paper that I have summarized my account of this last shocking scene.

## CHAPTER 16

### CONCLUSION

I write all this you suppose with composure. But far from it; I cannot think of it without agitation. Nothing but your earnest desire so repeatedly expressed, could have induced me to sit down to a task that has unstrung my nerves for months to come, and re-induced a shadow of the unspeakable horror which years after my deliverance continued to make my days and nights dreadful, and solitude insupportably terrific.

Let me add a word or two about that quaint Baron Vordenburg, to whose curious lore we were indebted for the discovery of the Countess Mircalla's grave.

He had taken up his abode in Gratz, where, living upon a mere pittance, which was all that remained to him of the once princely estates of his family, in Upper Styria, he devoted himself to the minute and laborious investigation of the marvellously authenticated tradition of vampirism. He had at his fingers' ends all the great and little works upon the subject. *Magia Posthuma*, *Phlegon de Mirabilibus*, *Augustinus de curâ pro Mortuis*, *Philosophicæ et Christianæ Cogitationes de Vampiris*, by John Christopher Herenberg; and a thousand others, among which I remember only a few of those which he lent to my father. He had a voluminous digest of all the judicial cases, from which he had extracted a system of principles that appear to govern – some always, and others occasionally only – the condition of the vampire. I may mention, in passing, that the deadly pallor attributed to that sort of *revenants*, is a mere melodramatic fiction. They present, in the grave, and when they show themselves in human society, the appearance of healthy life. When disclosed to light in their coffins, they exhibit all the symptoms that are enumerated as those which proved the vampire-life of the long-dead Countess Karnstein.

How they escape from their graves and return to them for certain hours every day, without displacing the clay or leaving any trace of disturbance in the state of the coffin or the cerements, has always been admitted to be utterly inexplicable. The amphibious existence of the vampire is sustained by daily renewed slumber in the grave. Its horrible lust for living blood supplies the vigour of its waking existence. The vampire is prone to be fascinated with an engrossing vehemence, resembling the passion of love, by particular persons. In pursuit of these it will exercise inexhaustible patience and stratagem, for access to a particular object may be obstructed in a hundred ways. It will never desist until it has satiated its passion, and drained the very life of its coveted victim. But it will, in these cases, husband and protract its murderous enjoyment with the refinement of an epicure, and heighten it by the gradual approaches of an artful courtship. In

these cases it seems to yearn for something like sympathy and consent. In ordinary ones it goes direct to its object, overpowers with violence, and strangles and exhausts often at a single feast.

The vampire is, apparently, subject, in certain situations, to special conditions. In the particular instance of which I have given you a relation, Mircalla seemed to be limited to a name which, if not her real one, should at least reproduce, without the omission or addition of a single letter, those, as we say, anagrammatically, which compose it. *Carmilla* did this; so did *Millarca*.

My father related to the Baron Vordenburg, who remained with us for two or three weeks after the expulsion of Carmilla, the story about the Moravian nobleman and the vampire at Karnstein churchyard, and then he asked the Baron how he had discovered the exact position of the long-concealed tomb of the Countess Millarca. The Baron's grotesque features puckered up into a mysterious smile; he looked down, still smiling on his worn spectacle-case and fumbled with it. Then looking up, he said:

'I have many journals, and other papers, written by that remarkable man; the most curious among them is one treating of the visit of which you speak, to Karnstein. The tradition, of course, discolours and distorts a little. He might have been termed a Moravian nobleman, for he had changed his abode to that territory, and was, beside, a noble. But he was, in truth, a native of Upper Styria. It is enough to say that in very early youth he had been a passionate and favoured lover of the beautiful Mircalla, Countess Karnstein. Her early death plunged him into inconsolable grief. It is the nature of vampires to increase and multiply, but according to an ascertained and ghostly law.

'Assume, at starting, a territory perfectly free from that pest. How does it begin, and how does it multiply itself? I will tell you. A person, more or less wicked, puts an end to himself. A suicide, under certain circumstances, becomes a vampire. That spectre visits living people in their slumbers; *they* die, and almost invariably, in the grave, develop into vampires. This happened in the case of the beautiful Mircalla, who was haunted by one of those demons. My ancestor, Vordenburg, whose title I still bear, soon discovered this, and in the course of the studies to which he devoted himself, learned a great deal more.

‘Among other things, he concluded that suspicion of vampirism would probably fall, sooner or later, upon the dead Countess, who in life had been his idol. He conceived a horror, be she what she might, of her remains being profaned by the outrage of a posthumous execution. He has left a curious paper to prove that the vampire, on its expulsion from its amphibious existence, is projected into a far more horrible life; and he resolved to save his once beloved Mircalla from this.

‘He adopted the stratagem of a journey here, a pretended removal of her remains, and a real obliteration of her monument. When age had stolen upon him, and from the vale of years he looked back on the scenes he was leaving, he considered, in a different spirit, what he had done, and a horror took possession of him. He made the tracings and notes which have guided me to the very spot, and drew up a confession of the deception that he had practised. If he had intended any further action in this matter, death prevented him; and the hand of a remote descendant has too late for many, directed the pursuit to the lair of the beast.’

We talked a little more, and among other things he said was this :

‘One sign of the vampire is the power of the hand. The slender hand of Mircalla closed like a vice of steel on the General’s wrist when he raised the hatchet to strike. But its power is not confined to its grasp; it leaves a numbness in the limb it seizes, which is slowly, if ever, recovered from.’

The following spring my father took me on a tour through Italy. We remained away for more than a year. It was long before the terror of recent events subsided; and to this hour the image of Carmilla returns to memory with ambiguous alternations – sometimes the playful, languid, beautiful girl; sometimes the writhing fiend I saw in the ruined church; and often from a reverie I have started, fancying I heard the light step of Carmilla at the drawing-room door.

*Frederick Marryat*

## THE WHITE WOLF OF THE HARTZ MOUNTAINS

*from* THE PHANTOM SHIP

Henry Colburn, 1839

*'The Phantom Ship' appeared serially in the NEW MONTHLY  
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### 1

Before noon Philip and Krantz had embarked, and made sail in the peroqua.

They had no difficulty in steering their course; the islands by day, and the clear stars by night, were their compass. It is true that they did not follow the more direct track, but they followed the more secure, working up the smooth waters, and gaining to the northward more than to the west. Many times they were chased by the Malay proas, which infested the islands, but the swiftness of their little peroqua was their security; indeed, the chase was, generally speaking, abandoned as soon as the smallness of the vessel was made out by the pirates, who expected that little or no booty was to be gained.

One morning, as they were sailing between the isles, with less wind than usual, Philip observed –

‘Krantz, you said that there were events in your own life, or connected with it, which would corroborate the mysterious tale I confided to you. Will you now tell me to what you referred?’

‘Certainly,’ replied Krantz; ‘I have often thought of doing so, but one circumstance or another has hitherto prevented me; this is, however, a fitting opportunity. Prepare therefore to listen to a strange story, quite as strange, perhaps, as your own.’

‘I take it for granted that you have heard people speak of the Hartz Mountains,’ observed Krantz.

‘I have never heard people speak of them, that I can recollect,’

replied Philip; 'but I have read of them in some book, and of the strange things which have occurred there.'

'It is indeed a wild region,' rejoined Krantz, 'and many strange tales are told of it; but strange as they are, I have good reason for believing them to be true.'

'My father was not born, or originally a resident, in the Hartz Mountains; he was a serf of an Hungarian nobleman, of great possessions, in Transylvania; but although a serf, he was not by any means a poor or illiterate man. In fact, he was rich, and his intelligence and respectability were such, that he had been raised by his lord to the stewardship; but whoever may happen to be born a serf, a serf must he remain, even though he become a wealthy man: such was the condition of my father. My father had been married for about five years; and by his marriage had three children - my eldest brother Caesar, myself (Hermann), and a sister named Marcella. You know, Philip, that Latin is still the language spoken in that country; and that will account for our high-sounding names. My mother was a very beautiful woman, unfortunately more beautiful than virtuous: she was seen and admired by the lord of the soil; my father was sent away upon some mission; and during his absence, my mother, flattered by the attentions, and won by the assiduities, of this nobleman, yielded to his wishes. It so happened that my father returned very unexpectedly, and discovered the intrigue. The evidence of my mother's shame was positive: he surprised her in the company of her seducer! Carried away by the impetuosity of his feelings, he watched the opportunity of a meeting taking place between them, and murdered both his wife and her seducer. Conscious that, as a serf, not even the provocation which he had received would be allowed as a justification of his conduct, he hastily collected together what money he could lay his hands upon, and, as we were then in the depth of winter, he put his horses to the sleigh, and taking his children with him, he set off in the middle of the night, and was far away before the tragical circumstance had transpired. Aware that he would be pursued, and that he had no chance of escape if he remained in any portion of his native country (in which the authorities could lay hold of him), he continued his flight without intermission until he had

buried himself in the intricacies and seclusions of the Hartz Mountains. Of course, all that I have now told you I learned afterwards. My oldest recollections are knit to a rude, yet comfortable cottage, in which I lived with my father, brother, and sister. It was on the confines of one of those vast forests which cover the northern part of Germany; around it were a few acres of ground, which, during the summer months, my father cultivated, and which, though they yielded a doubtful harvest, were sufficient for our support. In the winter we remained much indoors, for, as my father followed the chase, we were left alone, and the wolves during that season incessantly prowled about. My father had purchased the cottage, and land about it, of one of the rude foresters, who gain their livelihood partly by hunting, and partly by burning charcoal, for the purpose of smelting the ore from the neighbouring mines; it was distant about two miles from any other habitation. I can call to mind the whole landscape now; the tall pines which rose up on the mountain above us, and the wide expanse of the forest beneath, on the topmost boughs and heads of whose trees we looked down from our cottage, as the mountain below us rapidly descended into the distant valley. In summer time the prospect was beautiful: but during the severe winter a more desolate scene could not well be imagined.

‘I said that, in the winter, my father occupied himself with the chase; every day he left us, and often would he lock the door, that we might not leave the cottage. He had no one to assist him, or to take care of us – indeed, it was not easy to find a female servant who would live in such a solitude; but, could he have found one, my father would not have received her, for he had imbibed a horror of the sex, as the difference of his conduct towards us, his two boys, and my poor little sister Marcella evidently proved. You may suppose we were sadly neglected; indeed, we suffered much, for my father, fearful that we might come to some harm, would not allow us fuel when he left the cottage; and we were obliged, therefore, to creep under the heaps of bears’ skins, and there to keep ourselves as warm as we could until he returned in the evening, when a blazing fire was our delight. That my father chose this restless sort of life may appear

strange, but the fact was, that he could not remain quiet; whether from the remorse for having committed murder, or from the misery consequent on his change of situation, or from both combined, he was never happy unless he was in a state of activity. Children, however, when left so much to themselves, acquire a thoughtfulness not common to their age. So it was with us; and during the short cold days of winter, we would sit silent, longing for the happy hours when the snow would melt and the leaves burst out, and the birds begin their songs, and when we should again be set at liberty.

'Such was our peculiar and savage sort of life until my brother Caesar was nine, myself seven, and my sister five years old, when the circumstances occurred on which is based the extraordinary narrative which I am about to relate.

'One evening my father returned home rather later than usual; he had been unsuccessful, and as the weather was very severe, and many feet of snow were upon the ground, he was not only very cold, but in a very bad humour. He had brought in wood, and we were all three gladly assisting each other in blowing on the embers to create a blaze, when he caught poor little Marcella by the arm and threw her aside; the child fell, struck her mouth, and bled very much. My brother ran to raise her up. Accustomed to ill-usage, and afraid of my father, she did not dare to cry, but looked up in his face very piteously. My father drew his stool nearer to the hearth, muttered something in abuse of women, and busied himself with the fire, which both my brother and I had deserted when our sister was so unkindly treated. A cheerful blaze was soon the result of his exertions; but we did not, as usual, crowd round it. Marcella, still bleeding, retired to a corner, and my brother and I took our seats beside her, while my father hung over the fire gloomily and alone. Such had been our position for about half an hour, when the howl of a wolf, close under the window of the cottage fell on our ears. My father started up, and seized his gun; the howl was repeated; he examined the priming, and then hastily left the cottage, shutting the door after him. We all waited (anxiously listening), for we thought that if he succeeded in shooting the wolf, he would return in a better humour; and, although he was harsh to all of



us, and particularly so to our little sister, still we loved our father, and loved to see him cheerful and happy, for what else had we to look up to? And I may here observe, that perhaps there never were three children who were fonder of each other; we did not, like other children, fight and dispute together; and if, by chance, any disagreement did arise, between my elder brother and me, little Marcella would run to us, and kissing us both, seal, through her entreaties, the peace between us. Marcella was a lovely, amiable child; I can recall her beautiful features even now. Alas! poor little Marcella.'

'She is dead, then?' observed Philip.

'Dead! yes, dead! but how did she die? – But I must not anticipate, Philip; let me tell my story.

'We waited for some time, but the report of the gun did not reach us, and my elder brother then said, "Our father has followed the wolf, and will not be back for some time. Marcella, let us wash the blood from your mouth, and then we will leave this corner and go to the fire to warm ourselves."

'We did so, and remained there until near midnight, every minute wondering, as it grew later, why our father did not return. We had no idea that he was in any danger, but we thought he must have chased the wolf for a very long time. "I will look out and see if father is coming," said my brother Caesar, going to the door. "Take care," said Marcella, "the wolves must be about now, and we cannot kill them, brother." My brother opened the door very cautiously, and but a few inches; he peeped out. "I see nothing," said he, after a time, and once more he joined us at the fire. "We have had no supper," said I, for my father usually cooked the meat as soon as he came home; and during his absence we had nothing but the fragments of the preceding day.

' "And if our father comes home, after his hunt, Caesar," said Marcella, "he will be pleased to have some supper; let us cook it for him and for ourselves." Caesar climbed upon the stool, and reached down some meat – I forget now whether it was venison or bear's meat, but we cut off the usual quantity, and proceeded to dress it, as we used to do under our father's superintendence. We were all busy putting it into the platters before the fire, to await his coming, when we heard the sound of a horn. We listen-

ed – there was a noise outside, and a minute afterwards my father entered, ushered in a young female and a large dark man in a hunter's dress.

‘Perhaps I had better now relate what was only known to me many years afterwards. When my father had left the cottage, he perceived a large white wolf about thirty yards from him; as soon as the animal saw my father, it retreated slowly, growling and snarling. My father followed; the animal did not run, but always kept at some distance; and my father did not like to fire until he was pretty certain that his ball would take effect; thus they went on for some time, the wolf now leaving my father far behind, and then stopping and snarling defiance at him, and then, again, on his approach, setting off at speed.

‘Anxious to shoot the animal (for the white wolf is very rare), my father continued the pursuit for several hours, during which he continually ascended the mountain.

‘You must know, Philip, that there are peculiar spots on those mountains which are supposed, and, as my story will prove, truly supposed, to be inhabited by the evil influences: they are well known to the huntsmen, who invariably avoid them. Now, one of these spots, an open space in the pine forest above us, had been pointed out to my father as dangerous on that account. But whether he disbelieved these wild stories, or whether, in his eager pursuit of the chase, he disregarded them, I know not; certain, however, it is, that he was decoyed by the white wolf to this open space, when the animal appeared to slacken her speed. My father approached, came close up to her, raised his gun to his shoulder and was about to fire, when the wolf suddenly disappeared. He thought that the snow on the ground must have dazzled his sight, and he let down his gun to look for the beast – but she was gone; how she could have escaped over the clearance, without his seeing her, was beyond his comprehension. Mortified at the ill success of his chase, he was about to retrace his steps, when he heard the distant sound of a horn. Astonishment at such a sound – at such an hour – in such a wilderness, made him forget for the moment his disappointment, and he remained riveted to the spot. In a minute the horn was blown a second time, and at no great distance; my father stood still, and listened; a third time, it was

blown. I forget the term used to express it, but it was the signal which, my father well knew, implied that the party was lost in the woods. In a few minutes more my father beheld a man on horseback, with a female seated on the crupper, enter the cleared space, and ride up to him. At first, my father called to mind the strange stories which he had heard of the supernatural beings who were said to frequent these mountains; but the nearer approach of the parties satisfied him that they were mortals like himself. As soon as they came up to him, the man who guided the horse accosted him. "Friend hunter, you are out late, the better fortune for us; we have ridden far, and are in fear of our lives, which are eagerly sought after. These mountains have enabled us to elude our pursuers; but if we find not shelter and refreshment, that will avail us little, as we must perish from hunger and the inclemency of the night. My daughter, who rides behind me, is now more dead than alive – say, can you assist us in our difficulty?"

"My cottage is some few miles distant," replied my father, "but I have little to offer you besides a shelter from the weather; to the little I have you are welcome. May I ask whence you come?"

"Yes, friend, it is no secret now; we have escaped from Transylvania, where my daughter's honour and my life were equally in jeopardy!"

"This information was quite enough to raise an interest in my father's heart. He remembered his own escape: he remembered the loss of his wife's honour, and the tragedy by which it was wound up. He immediately, and warmly, offered all the assistance which he could afford them.

"There is no time to be lost, then, good sir," observed the horseman; "my daughter is chilled with the frost, and cannot hold out much longer against the severity of the weather."

"Follow me," replied my father, leading the way towards his home.

"I was lured away in pursuit of a large white wolf," observed my father; "it came to the very window of my hut, or I should not have been out at this time of night."

"The creature passed by us as we came out of the wood," said the female, in a silvery tone.

“I was nearly discharging my piece at it,” observed the hunter; “but since it did us such good service, I am glad that I allowed it to escape.”

‘In about an hour and a half, during which my father walked at a rapid pace, the party arrived at the cottage, and, as I said before, came in.

“We are in good time, apparently,” observed the dark hunter, catching the smell of the roasted meat, as he walked to the fire and surveyed my brother and sister and myself. “You have young cooks here, *Meinheer*.” “I am glad that we shall not have to wait,” replied my father. “Come, mistress, seat yourself by the fire; you require warmth after your cold ride.” “And where can I put up my horse, *Meinheer*?” observed the huntsman. “I will take care of him,” replied my father, going out of the cottage door.

‘The female must, however, be particularly described. She was young, and apparently twenty years of age. She was dressed in a travelling dress, deeply bordered with white fur, and wore a cap of white ermine on her head. Her features were very beautiful, at least I thought so, and so my father has since declared. Her hair was flaxen, glossy, and shining, and bright as a mirror; and her mouth, although somewhat large when it was open, showed the most brilliant teeth I have ever beheld. But there was something about her eyes, bright as they were, which made us children afraid; they were so restless, so furtive; I could not at that time tell why, but I felt as if there was cruelty in her eye; and when she beckoned us to come to her, we approached her with fear and trembling. Still she was beautiful, very beautiful. She spoke kindly to my brother and myself, patted our heads and caressed us; but Marcella would not come near her; on the contrary, she slunk away, and hid herself in the bed, and would not wait for the supper, which half an hour before she had been so anxious for.

‘My father, having put the horse into a close shed, soon returned, and supper was placed on the table. When it was over, my father requested the young lady would take possession of the bed, and he would remain at the fire, and sit up with her father. After some hesitation on her part, this arrangement was agreed

to, and I and my brother crept into the other bed with Marcella, for we had as yet always slept together.

‘But we could not sleep; there was something so unusual, not only in seeing strange people, but in having those people sleep at the cottage, that we were bewildered. As for poor little Marcella, she was quiet, but I perceived that she trembled during the whole night, and sometimes I thought that she was checking a sob. My father had brought out some spirits, which he rarely used, and he and the strange hunter remained drinking and talking before the fire. Our ears were ready to catch the slightest whisper – so much was our curiosity excited.

“‘You said you came from Transylvania?’ observed my father.

“‘Even so, Meinheer,” replied the hunter. “I was a serf to the noble house of —; my master would insist upon my surrendering up my fair girl to his wishes; it ended in my giving him a few inches of my hunting-knife.”

“‘We are countrymen and brothers in misfortune,” replied my father, taking the huntsman’s hand and pressing it warmly.

“‘Indeed! Are you then from that country?’

“‘Yes; and I too have fled for my life. But mine is a melancholy tale.”

“‘Your name?’ inquired the hunter.

“‘Krantz.”

“‘What! Krantz of —? I have heard your tale; you need not renew your grief by repeating it now. Welcome, most welcome, Meinheer, and, I may say, my worthy kinsman. I am your second cousin, Wilfred of Barnsdorf,” cried the hunter, rising up and embracing my father.

‘They filled their horn-mugs to the brim, and drank to one another after the German fashion. The conversation was then carried on in a low tone; all that we could collect from it was that our new relative and his daughter were to take up their abode in our cottage, at least for the present. In about an hour they both fell back in their chairs and appeared to sleep.

“‘Marcella, dear, did you hear?’ said my brother, in a low tone.

“‘Yes,” replied Marcella, in a whisper, “I heard all. Oh!

brother, I cannot bear to look upon that woman – I feel so frightened.”

‘My brother made no reply, and shortly afterwards we were all three fast asleep.

‘When we awoke the next morning, we found that the hunter’s daughter had risen before us. I thought she looked more beautiful than ever. She came up to little Marcella and caressed her; the child burst into tears, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

‘But not to detain you with too long a story, the huntsman and his daughter were accommodated in the cottage. My father and he went out hunting daily, leaving Christina with us. She performed all the household duties; was very kind to us children; and gradually the dislike even of little Marcella wore away. But a great change took place in my father; he appeared to have conquered his aversion to the sex, and was most attentive to Christina. Often, after her father and we were in bed, would he sit up with her, conversing in a low tone by the fire. I ought to have mentioned that my father and the huntsman Wilfred slept in another portion of the cottage, and that the bed which he formerly occupied, and which was in the same room as ours, had been given up to the use of Christina. These visitors had been about three weeks at the cottage, when, one night, after we children had been sent to bed, a consultation was held. My father had asked Christina in marriage, and had obtained both her own consent and that of Wilfred; after this, a conversation took place, which was, as nearly as I can recollect, as follows :

“‘You may take my child, Meinheer Krantz, and my blessing with her, and I shall then leave you and seek some other habitation – it matters little where.”

“‘Why not remain here, Wilfred?’”

“‘No, no, I am called elsewhere; let that suffice, and ask no more questions. You have my child.”

“‘I thank you for her, and will duly value her; but there is one difficulty.”

“‘I know what you would say; there is no priest here in this wild country; true; neither is there any law to bind. Still must some ceremony pass between you, to satisfy a father. Will you

consent to marry her after my fashion? If so, I will marry you directly."

"I will," replied my father.

"Then take her by the hand. Now, Meinheer, swear."

"I swear," repeated my father.

"By all the spirits of the Hartz Mountains—"

"Nay, why not by Heaven?" interrupted my father.

"Because it is not my humour," rejoined Wilfred. "If I prefer that oath, less binding, perhaps, than another, surely you will not thwart me."

"Well, be it so, then; have your humour. Will you make me swear by that in which I do not believe?"

"Yet many do so, who in outward appearance are Christians," rejoined Wilfred; "say, will you be married, or shall I take my daughter away with me?"

"Proceed," replied my father impatiently.

"I swear by all the spirits of the Hartz Mountains, by all their power for good or for evil, that I take Christina for my wedded wife; that I will ever protect her, cherish her, and love her; that my hand shall never be raised against her to harm her."

My father repeated the words after Wilfred.

"And if I fail in this my vow, may all the vengeance of the spirits fall upon me and upon my children; may they perish by the vulture, by the wolf, or other beasts of the forest; may their flesh be torn from their limbs, and their bones blanch in the wilderness: all this I swear."

My father hesitated, as he repeated the last words; little Marcella could not restrain herself, and as my father repeated the last sentence, she burst into tears. This sudden interruption appeared to discompose the party, particularly my father; he spoke harshly to the child, who controlled her sobs, burying her face under the bedclothes.

Such was the second marriage of my father. The next morning, the hunter Wilfred mounted his horse and rode away.

My father resumed his bed, which was in the same room as ours; and things went on much as before the marriage, except that our new mother-in-law did not show any kindness towards us; indeed, during my father's absence, she would often beat us,

particularly little Marcella, and her eyes would flash fire, as she looked eagerly upon the fair and lovely child.

'One night my sister awoke me and my brother.

' "What is the matter?" said Caesar.

' "She has gone out," whispered Marcella.

' "Gone out!"

' "Yes, gone out at the door, in her night-clothes," replied the child; "I saw her get out of bed, look at my father to see if he slept, and then she went out at the door."

'What could induce her to leave her bed, and all undressed to go out, in such bitter wintry weather, with the snow deep on the ground, was to us incomprehensible; we lay awake, and in about an hour we heard the growl of a wolf close under the window.

' "There is a wolf," said Caesar. "She will be torn to pieces."

' "Oh, no!" cried Marcella.

'In a few minutes afterwards our mother-in-law appeared; she was in her night-dress, as Marcella had stated. She let down the latch of the door, so as to make no noise, went to a pail of water, and washed her face and hands, and then slipped into the bed where my father lay.

'We all three trembled - we hardly knew why; but we resolved to watch the next night. We did so; and not only on the ensuing night, but on many others, and always at about the same hour, would our mother-in-law rise from her bed and leave the cottage; and after she was gone we invariably heard the growl of a wolf under our window, and always saw her on her return wash herself before she retired to bed. We observed also that she seldom sat down to meals, and that when she did she appeared to eat with dislike; but when the meat was taken down to be prepared for dinner, she would often furtively put a raw piece into her mouth.

'My brother Caesar was a courageous boy; he did not like to speak to my father until he knew more. He resolved that he would follow her out, and ascertain what she did. Marcella and I endeavoured to dissuade him from the project; but he would not be controlled; and the very next night he lay down in his clothes, and as soon as our mother-in-law had left the cottage he jumped up, took down my father's gun, and followed her.



'You may imagine in what a state of suspense Marcella and I remained during his absence. After a few minutes we heard the report of a gun. It did not awaken my father; and we lay trembling with anxiety. In a minute afterwards we saw our mother-in-law enter the cottage – her dress was bloody. I put my hand to Marcella's mouth to prevent her crying out, although I was myself in great alarm. Our mother-in-law approached my father's bed, looked to see if he was asleep, and then went to the chimney and blew up the embers into a blaze.

"Who is there?" said my father, waking up.

"Lie still, dearest," replied my mother-in-law; "it is only me; I have lighted the fire to warm some water; I am not quite well."

"My father turned round, and was soon asleep; but we watched our mother-in-law. She changed her linen, and threw the garments she had worn into the fire; and we then perceived that her right leg was bleeding profusely, as if from a gun-shot wound. She bandaged it up, and then dressing herself, remained before the fire until the break of day.

'Poor little Marcella, her heart beat quick as she pressed me to her side – so indeed did mine. Where was our brother Caesar? How did my mother-in-law receive the wound unless from his gun? At last my father rose, and then for the first time I spoke, saying, "Father, where is my brother Caesar?"

"Your brother?" exclaimed he; "why, where can he be?"

"Merciful Heaven! I thought as I lay very restless last night," observed our mother-in-law, "that I heard somebody open the latch of the door; and, dear me, husband, what has become of your gun?"

'My father cast his eyes up above the chimney, and perceived that his gun was missing. For a moment he looked perplexed; then, seizing a broad axe, he went out of the cottage without saying another word.

'He did not remain away from us long; in a few minutes he returned, bearing in his arms the mangled body of my poor brother; he laid it down, and covered up his face.

'My mother-in-law rose up, and looked at the body, while Marcella and I threw ourselves by its side, wailing and sobbing bitterly.

“Go to bed again, children,” said she sharply. “Husband,” continued she, “your boy must have taken the gun down to shoot a wolf, and the animal has been too powerful for him. Poor boy! he has paid dearly for his rashness.”

‘My father made no reply. I wished to speak – to tell all – but Marcella, who perceived my intention, held me by the arm, and looked at me so imploringly, that I desisted.

‘My father, therefore, was left in his error; but Marcella and I, although we could not comprehend it, were conscious that our mother-in-law was in some way connected with my brother’s death.

‘That day my father went out and dug a grave; and when he laid the body in the earth he piled up stones over it, so that the wolves should not be able to dig it up. The shock of this catastrophe was to my poor father very severe; for several days he never went to the chase, although at times he would utter bitter anathemas and vengeance against the wolves.

‘But during this time of mourning on his part, my mother-in-law’s nocturnal wanderings continued with the same regularity as before.

‘At last my father took down his gun to repair to the forest; but he soon returned, and appeared much annoyed.

“Would you believe it, Christina, that the wolves – perdition to the whole race! – have actually contrived to dig up the body of my poor boy, and now there is nothing left of him but his bones.”

“Indeed!” replied my mother-in-law. Marcella looked at me, and I saw in her intelligent eye all she would have uttered.

“A wolf growls under our window every night, father,” said I.

“Ay, indeed! Why did you not tell me, boy? Wake me the next time you hear it.”

I saw my mother-in-law turn away; her eyes flashed fire, and she gnashed her teeth.

‘My father went out again, and covered up with a larger pile of stones the little remains of my poor brother which the wolves had spared. Such was the first act of the tragedy.

‘The spring now came on; the snow disappeared, and we

were permitted to leave the cottage; but never would I quit for one moment my dear sister, to whom, since the death of my brother, I was more ardently attached than ever; indeed, I was afraid to leave her alone with my mother-in-law, who appeared to have a particular pleasure in ill-treating the child. My father was now employed upon his little farm, and I was able to render him some assistance.

‘Marcella used to sit by us while we were at work, leaving my mother-in-law alone in the cottage. I ought to observe that, as the spring advanced, so did my mother-in-law decrease her nocturnal rambles, and that we never heard the growl of the wolf under the window after I had spoken of it to my father.

‘One day, when my father and I were in the field, Marcella being with us, my mother-in-law came out, saying that she was going into the forest to collect some herbs my father wanted, and that Marcella must go to the cottage and watch the dinner. Marcella went; and my mother-in-law soon disappeared in the forest, taking a direction quite contrary to that in which the cottage stood, and leaving my father and me, as it were, between her and Marcella.

‘About an hour afterwards we were startled by shrieks from the cottage – evidently the shrieks of little Marcella. “Marcella has burnt herself, father,” said I, throwing down my spade. My father threw down his, and we both hastened to the cottage. Before we could gain the door, out darted a large white wolf, which fled with the utmost celerity. My father had no weapon; he rushed into the cottage, and there saw poor little Marcella expiring. Her body was dreadfully mangled and the blood pouring from it had formed a large pool on the cottage floor. My father’s first intention had been to seize his gun and pursue; but he was checked by this horrid spectacle; he knelt down by his dying child, and burst into tears. Marcella could just look kindly on us for a few seconds, and then her eyes were closed in death.

‘My father and I were still hanging over my poor sister’s body when my mother-in-law came in. At the dreadful sight she expressed much concern; but she did not appear to recoil from the sight of blood, as most women do.

“‘Poor child!’ said she, “it must have been that great white

wolf which passed me just now, and frightened me so. She's quite dead, Krantz."

"I know it! - I know it!" cried my father, in agony.

I thought my father would never recover from the effects of this second tragedy; he mourned bitterly over the body of his sweet child, and for several days would not consign it to its grave, although frequently requested by my mother-in-law to do so. At last he yielded, and dug a grave for her close by that of my poor brother, and took every precaution that the wolves should not violate her remains.

I was now really miserable as I lay alone in the bed which I had formerly shared with my brother and sister. I could not help thinking that my mother-in-law was implicated in both their deaths, although I could not account for the manner; but I no longer felt afraid of her; my little heart was full of hatred and revenge.

The night after my sister had been buried, as I lay awake, I perceived my mother-in-law get up and go out of the cottage. I waited some time, then dressed myself, and looked out through the door, which I half opened. The moon shone bright, and I could see the spot where my brother and my sister had been buried; and what was my horror when I perceived my mother-in-law busily removing the stones from Marcella's grave!

She was in her white night-dress, and the moon shone full upon her. She was digging with her hands, and throwing away the stones behind her with all the ferocity of a wild beast. It was some time before I could collect my senses and decide what I should do. At last I perceived that she had arrived at the body, and raised it up to the side of the grave. I could bear it no longer: I ran to my father and awoke him.

"Father, father!" cried I, "dress yourself, and get your gun."

"What!" cried my father, "the wolves are there, are they?"

He jumped out of bed, threw on his clothes, and in his anxiety did not appear to perceive the absence of his wife. As soon as he was ready I opened the door, he went out, and I followed him.

Imagine his horror, when (unprepared as he was for such a sight) he beheld, as he advanced towards the grave, not a wolf, but his wife, in her night-dress, on her hands and knees, crouch-

ing by the body of my sister, and tearing off large pieces of the flesh, and devouring them with all the avidity of a wolf. She was too busy to be aware of our approach. My father dropped his gun; his hair stood on end, so did mine; he breathed heavily, and then his breath for a time stopped. I picked up the gun and put it into his hand. Suddenly he appeared as if concentrated rage restored him to double vigour; he levelled his piece, fired, and with a loud shriek down fell the wretch whom he had fostered in his bosom.

“God of heaven!” cried my father, sinking down upon the earth in a swoon, as soon as he had discharged his gun.

‘I remained some time by his side before he recovered. “Where am I?” said he, “what has happened? Oh! – yes, yes! I recollect now. Heaven forgive me!”

‘He rose and we walked up to the grave; what again was our astonishment and horror to find that, instead of the dead body of my mother-in-law, as we expected, there was lying over the remains of my poor sister a large white she-wolf.

“The white wolf,” exclaimed my father, “the white wolf which decoyed me into the forest – I see it all now – I have dealt with the spirits of the Hartz Mountains.”

‘For some time my father remained in silence and deep thought. He then carefully lifted up the body of my sister, replaced it in the grave, and covered it over as before, having struck the head of the dead animal with the heel of his boot, and raving like a madman. He walked back to the cottage, shut the door, and threw himself on the bed; I did the same, for I was in a stupor of amazement.

‘Early in the morning we were both roused by a loud knocking at the door, and in rushed the hunter Wilfred.

“My daughter – man – my daughter! – where is my daughter?” cried he in rage.

“Where the wretch, the fiend should be, I trust,” replied my father, starting up, and displaying equal choler: “where she should be – in hell! Leave this cottage, or you may fare worse.”

“Ha – ha!” replied the hunter, ‘would you harm a potent spirit of the Hartz Mountains? Poor mortal, who must needs wed a werewolf.’

““Out, demon ! I defy thee and thy power.”

““Yet shall you feel it; remember your oath – your solemn oath – never to raise your hand against her to harm her.”

““I made no compact with evil spirits.”

““You did, and if you failed in your vow, you were to meet the vengeance of the spirits. Your children were to perish by the vulture, the wolf –”

““Out, out, demon !”

““And their bones blanch in the wilderness. Ha – ha !”

‘My father, frantic with rage, seized his axe and raised it over Wilfred’s head to strike.

““All this I swear,” continued the huntsman mockingly.

‘The axe descended; but it passed through the form of the hunter, and my father lost his balance, and fell heavily on the floor.

““Mortal !” said the hunter, striding over my father’s body, “we have power over those only who have committed murder. You have been guilty of a double murder : you shall pay the penalty attached to your marriage vow. Two of your children are gone, the third is yet to follow – and follow them he will, for your oath is registered. Go – it were kindness to kill thee – your punishment is, that you live !”

‘With these words the spirit disappeared. My father rose from the floor, embraced me tenderly, and knelt down in prayer.

‘The next morning he quitted the cottage for ever. He took me with him, and bent his steps to Holland, where he safely arrived. He had some little money with him; but he had not been many days in Amsterdam before he was seized with a brain fever, and died raving mad. I was put into the asylum, and afterwards was sent to sea before the mast. You now know all my history. The question is, whether I am to pay the penalty of my father’s oath? I am myself perfectly convinced that, in some way or another, I shall.’

On the twenty-second day the high land of the south of Sumatra was in view : as there were no vessels in sight, they resolved to

keep their course through the Straits, and run for Pulo Penang, which they expected, as their vessel lay so close to the wind, to reach in seven or eight days. By constant exposure Philip and Krantz were now so bronzed, that with their long beards and Mussulman dresses, they might easily have passed for natives. They had steered during the whole of the days exposed to a burning sun; they had lain down and slept in the dew of the night; but their health had not suffered. But for several days, since he had confided the history of his family to Philip, Krantz had become silent and melancholy; his usual flow of spirits had vanished, and Philip had often questioned him as to the cause. As they entered the Straits, Philip talked of what they should do upon their arrival at Goa; when Krantz gravely replied, 'For some days, Philip, I have had a presentiment that I shall never see that city.'

'You are out of health, Krantz,' replied Philip.

'No, I am in sound health, body and mind. I have endeavoured to shake off the presentiment, but in vain; there is a warning voice that continually tells me that I shall not be long with you. Philip, will you oblige me by making me content on one point? I have gold about my person which may be useful to you; oblige me by taking it, and securing it on your own.'

'What nonsense, Krantz.'

'It is no nonsense, Philip. Have you not had your warnings? Why should I not have mine? You know that I have little fear in my composition, and that I care not about death; but I feel the presentiment which I speak of more strongly every hour ...'

'There are the imaginings of a disturbed brain, Krantz; why you, young, in full health and vigour, should not pass your days in peace, and live to a good old age, there is no cause for believing. You will be better tomorrow.'

'Perhaps so,' replied Krantz; 'but you still must yield to my whim, and take the gold. If I am wrong, and we do arrive safe, you know, Philip, you can let me have it back,' observed Krantz, with a faint smile - 'but you forget, our water is nearly out, and we must look out for a rill on the coast to obtain a fresh supply.'

'I was thinking of that when you commenced this unwelcome topic. We had better look out for the water before dark,

and as soon as we have replenished our jars, will make sail again.'

At the time that this conversation took place, they were on the eastern side of the Strait, about forty miles to the northward. The interior of the coast was rocky and mountainous, but it slowly descended to low land of alternate forest and jungles, which continued to the beach; the country appeared to be uninhabited. Keeping close in to the shore, they discovered, after two hours' run, a fresh stream which burst in a cascade from the mountains, and swept its devious course through the jungle, until it poured its tribute into the waters of the Strait.

They ran close into the mouth of the stream, lowered the sails, and pulled the peroqua against the current, until they had advanced far enough to assure them that the water was quite fresh. The jars were soon filled, and they were again thinking of pushing off, when enticed by the beauty of the spot, the coolness of the fresh water, and wearied with their long confinement on board of the peroqua, they proposed to bathe – a luxury hardly to be appreciated by those who have not been in a similar situation. They threw off their Mussulman dresses, and plunged into the stream, where they remained for some time. Krantz was the first to get out; he complained of feeling chilled, and he walked on to the banks where their clothes had been laid. Philip also approached nearer to the beach, intending to follow him.

'And now, Philip,' said Krantz, 'this will be a good opportunity for me to give you the money. I will open my sash and pour it out, and you can put it into your own before you put it on.'

Philip was standing in the water, which was about level with his waist.

'Well, Krantz,' said he, 'I suppose if it must be so, it must; but it appears to me an idea so ridiculous – however, you shall have your own way.'

Philip quitted the run, and sat down by Krantz, who was already busy in shaking the doubloons out of the folds of his sash; at last he said –

'I believe, Philip, you have got them all, now? – I feel satisfied.'



'What danger there can be to you, which I am not equally exposed to, I cannot conceive,' replied Philip; 'however –'

Hardly had he said these words, when there was a tremendous roar – a rush like a mighty wind through the air – a blow which threw him on his back – a loud cry – and a contention. Philip recovered himself, and perceived the naked form of Krantz carried off with the speed of an arrow by an enormous tiger through the jungle. He watched with distended eyeballs; in a few seconds the animal and Krantz had disappeared.

'God of heaven! would that Thou hadst spared me this,' cried Philip, throwing himself down in agony on his face. 'O Krantz! my friend – my brother – too sure was your presentiment. Merciful God! have pity – but Thy will be done.' And Philip burst into a flood of tears.

For more than an hour did he remain fixed upon the spot, careless and indifferent to the danger by which he was surrounded. At last, somewhat recovered, he rose, dressed himself, and then again sat 'down – his eyes fixed upon the clothes of Krantz, and the gold which still lay on the sand.

'He would give me that gold. He foretold his doom. Yes! yes! it was his destiny, and it has been fulfilled. *His bones will bleach in the wilderness*, and the spirit-hunter and his wolfish daughter are avenged.'

*Roger Pater*

## A PORTA INFERI

*from* MYSTIC VOICES

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Professor Aufrecht returned to London next day and I went with him as far as the junction, where I had some shopping to do, so I saw nothing of the squire and the old Dominican Father until the evening. After dinner we were talking in the library when Avison came in and removed the coffee cups.

'I'm always a little afraid of Avison,' remarked Father Bertrand confidently, as the butler disappeared with his tray, 'he makes me feel as if I must be on my best behaviour, like a schoolboy when the Headmaster is present.'

'I know what you mean,' answered the squire, 'I used to feel much the same with old Wilson, Avison's predecessor. But then, you see, Wilson once caught me in the pantry, eating the dessert, when I was supposed to be safely in bed in the nursery; and even after I became a priest and his master I felt that he half suspected I should be up to the same trick again, if he wasn't on his guard! Now with Avison it is different; you see, he has only been here about thirty years, whereas Wilson was butler before I was born.'

'Is it really thirty years since Wilson died?' asked Father Bertrand - 'but yes, I suppose it must be. He was a splendid old man. I always used to think of him as a retainer, "servant" was much too undignified a term for him. On my first visit here I remember feeling that he was taking stock of me, and that, if I didn't pass muster, he would not allow you to ask me down again. Was it all my imagination, Philip, or did he exercise a veto on your visiting list?'

'Oh no,' laughed the squire, 'Wilson would never have taken such a liberty, but I must admit he contrived to let me know what he thought of my friends. Don't be afraid, Bertrand, you passed with honours on the very first occasion. "Quite a gentle-

man, sir, the young Dominican Father," was his verdict. Dear old Wilson, I can hear him say it now.'

'Doesn't Thackeray say somewhere that to win the approval of a butler is the highest test of good breeding?' I asked.

'I don't remember that,' answered the squire, 'though I think he says that to look like a butler is the safest thing for a political leader, as it always suggests respectability. All the same, I came to trust Wilson's judgement, and it often stood me in good stead as a young man. But it is strange we should have got upon the subject tonight, for the only time I ever came near a quarrel with him was about his opinion of my friend the spiritualist, whose story I told you yesterday. The old butler took a strong dislike to him during his first visit here, and after he left we had quite a little scene. Wilson literally begged me not to make an intimate of him, and I remember getting annoyed with the old man and telling him sharply to mind his own business. He took the rebuke like a lamb and begged my pardon for venturing to speak in such a way to me. "But you can't tell, Mr Philip," he added, "what it means to me to see a man like that among your friends."' '

'I meant to ask you what became of the spiritualist,' said Father Bertrand, 'but it slipped my memory. Was the incident you told us the only thing of the kind, or did you come across any other examples of his faculty?'

'Well,' answered the squire, with a little hesitation, 'perhaps you'll laugh at me, but old Wilson's opinion impressed me more than I cared to admit to him, and not long afterwards some facts came to my knowledge which went a long way to confirm it. In consequence I let our intimacy cool, and soon afterwards the man left England altogether and I only met him once again, quite by accident, many years later.' He paused for a moment, and then continued. 'If you like I will tell you what happened on that occasion. The whole affair was over in a few hours, but while it lasted it was so startling that I have often thanked God since that I followed Wilson's advice and did not allow our former intimacy to develop.

'The incident I told you last night must have occurred about the year 1858, and the man passed out of my life within a year or

so after that. Still, I never saw the Cellini fountain without it bringing him back to my mind, and I often wondered idly what had happened to him. I never heard a word about him, however, and in time I came to think he must be dead.

'More than twenty years later I was supplying at a mission on the outskirts of a large manufacturing town in the North. The place was not more than two or three miles from the heart of the city, but it was practically in the country, and the only exceptional feature about my work was the fact that I had to visit a large lunatic asylum which stood within the parish. The building had originally been the mansion of a county family, but they had died out, and when the property came into the market it was bought by the Corporation, and the mansion itself had been added to and adapted to serve its new purpose. There were a few Catholics among the inmates, and I found that one of the doctors was a Catholic too, so we soon became very good friends. One afternoon, as I was leaving the asylum, he asked me to go and have tea in his rooms. These were in a wing of the original building, where I had never been before, and his windows looked out on an old formal garden.

"Why," I exclaimed, "I thought I had seen all the grounds, but this part is quite new to me."

"Yes, it would be," he replied. "You see, we have to keep the more serious cases separate from the others, and this part of the grounds is in their enclosure. If you like we will go round the old garden after tea; there probably won't be more than one or two patients in it, and it will be all right if I go with you."

'To tell the truth I was always a little uneasy when I went among the patients, even the harmless ones, but my glimpse of the garden made me long to see it all; so I accepted the offer, and when tea was over we walked down on to the terrace beneath. The place had been laid out with great skill in the eighteenth century, and the paved walks with their old stone parapets and vases made an exquisite setting to the beds of bright flowers, relieved here and there by yew trees, clipped into fantastic shapes. There was not a soul about, and I quite forgot my uneasiness until we passed through an opening in a tall hedge at the bottom of the slope and came out on to a lawn beyond. At one end of

this was a little pool, and my heart gave a great thump as I looked at it, for kneeling by the side, so that his profile was turned towards us, was a man whose face was perfectly familiar. It was my former friend the spiritualist, and, except that his shoulders were bent and his hair absolutely white, his appearance had scarcely changed in all the years, so that I recognized him in an instant. But it was not the surprise of meeting him thus unexpectedly which made me catch my breath and held me speechless. What sent the blood back to my heart, and then made it surge to the brain in a great wave of pity, was his occupation; for carefully, with earnest gaze and rapt attention, he knelt there building castles in the mud! The doctor must have noticed that I was upset, for he took my arm, as if to lead me back again, when I stopped him.

"No, no, Doctor," I whispered, "I'm not frightened; it isn't that. But the man kneeling there, I used to know him well, I am certain of it."

"Indeed," he whispered back, "he is the most curious case we have here – quite a mystery, in fact. I must get you to tell me what you know about him."

"Yes, certainly," I answered, "but I want to speak to him. He may turn and recognize me at any moment, and I do not want him to think I have come to spy upon him."

"You are right," he replied, "and if you can only gain his confidence it may be of great importance, for he is a case of lost identity, and your old friendship may perhaps revive his memory, and reconnect him with the vanished past." With this he led me up to where the man was kneeling, but he never turned nor seemed to notice our presence, until the doctor addressed him in a loud voice.

"Come now, Lushington," he said, "I've brought an old friend to see you. Look up and see if you don't recognize him." Very slowly, as if with an effort, the kneeling figure raised its head and turned towards us; but slow as the movement was, it barely gave me time to recover from my surprise, for the doctor had addressed him by a name that was utterly unlike the one he had formerly borne, and yet here he was answering to it, as if it were his own!

"I wonder if you can recognize me after all these years?" I asked him, when he had gazed at me in silence for some moments without the smallest sign of recognition.

"Recognize yer? No, I'm shot if I do," he said at length; and I got another surprise, for the words were spoken in a hard, vulgar voice, totally different from the quiet, refined speech of my former friend.

"Think again, Lushington," said the doctor, "for this gentleman is quite right, he used to know you well many years ago." With a scowl the man turned upon him angrily:

"What the blazes do you know about it, you little body-snatcher?" he snarled. "I'll trouble you to mind your own business. As if you knew anything about me and what I was 'many years ago'. I wouldn't have spoken to you then, and wouldn't now, but that you've got me locked in this infernal prison of yours."

"It must be fully twenty years since last you saw me," I said gently, for I wanted to calm him down if possible, "and I was a layman then, so my dress has changed as well as my appearance; but I hoped you might recollect my face."

"I don't, anyhow," said he, though with less confidence I thought, as if some faint glimmer of memory were returning; "but you says you're sure you know me, eh? Dick Lushington?"

"Quite sure of it," I answered. "But I must admit one thing. When I knew you, twenty years ago, you were not called Dick Lushington, but ...' and I spoke the man's real name, which I had known him by. The effect was instantaneous and almost terrifying. No sooner had the words passed my lips than he leaped to his feet, shaking with passion. His face became livid with rage, he foamed at the mouth, and I thought he was going to have a fit.

"Liar, liar, liar!" he shrieked in my face. "How dare you say it? It isn't true – by Hell, I swear it isn't! He's dead, the blackguard that you say I am – I won't soil my lips by repeating his filthy name – and now you'll be saying I killed him. You devil, why don't you say it? It's a lie, of course, but so's what you said before – lies, lies, lies everywhere!" and the madman dropped to his knees again and drove his fingers deep into the

mud. I noticed now that there was a warder standing behind us, and saw the doctor make a sign to him.

"Come away, Father," he whispered to me, "we must give him time to calm down. The warder will look after him, and he will recover more quickly if we go away;" and taking my arm again he led me back towards the mansion. When we had passed through the hedge and were well out of earshot, the doctor began to speak again.

"I'm afraid the experiment was not a great success, Father," he said. "I've never seen Lushington lose his self-control so suddenly, and the worst of it is that his heart is in a terrible state, so an outbreak like this is liable to prove fatal."

"It certainly was a terrible thing to witness," I answered; "but I'm not so sure we weren't successful in one respect. You are an expert in these matters and I know nothing about them, but surely the fact is clear now that he still knows his real name although he wishes others to be kept in ignorance of it."

"Certainly," answered the doctor; "but how does that help us, Father?"

"First let me tell you what I can about his past life, in the days when I knew him," I answered, "and then you can say if my idea of his case is a possible one."

"We had reached the house now, and when we were in the doctor's sitting-room again I told him all I knew. Put shortly it was this. When I first met Lushington – I will use that name, if you don't mind, as there is no reason for disclosing his identity – he was a young man, well educated, with a comfortable private income of his own, and moving in good society in London, which was only natural, for he came of an excellent family. He was then beginning to dabble in spiritualism, and had been introduced to Home, the famous medium. For my part I tried to dissuade him from this, and always refused to attend any of their séances though he often urged me to, but he ignored my advice and became more and more absorbed in his pursuit, as he found that he himself possessed special gifts as a medium; in fact, Home often urged him to devote his whole life to "the Cause", as he liked to call it. I also told the doctor the story you heard last night – I mean what happened here, when I brought out the Cellini foun-

tain for him to see – and how, later on, his reputation had become an undesirable one and he had left the country, since when I had heard and seen nothing of him until that afternoon; and then I asked to be told the circumstances which led to his incarceration in the asylum. The doctor hesitated for a little before he answered.

“Well, Father,” said he, “you know we are not allowed to let such facts be known outside the staff, but I think you may be considered as one of ourselves. Not that there’s much to tell in any case, for, as I told you, Lushington is our enigma. He was brought here about five years ago by the solicitor of a well-known public man, the head of the family to which he belongs; but even the family lawyer could tell us very little. His residence abroad, which you mentioned just now, must have terminated quite ten years ago, for he had been living in Belfast for five years or so before he came here. For a long time before that he had had no personal dealings with his relatives, but they kept in touch with him through the family solicitors, who used to send him a cheque for his half-year’s income every six months, which cheques he always acknowledged.

“The arrangement suited both sides, for Lushington wished to avoid his family, and I gathered that they returned the feeling, though I did not learn why; but what you say about his career as a medium no doubt supplies the explanation. However, shortly before he came here, instead of the customary formal note acknowledging their cheque, the solicitors received a long letter, full of foul language and abuse, with a deliberate accusation of dishonesty on their part, and a threat of legal proceedings for breach of trust and misappropriation of his money. The charge was manifestly absurd, but as the chief trustee was the public man I have mentioned, he could not run the risk of leaving such a charge unanswered, so one of the firm was sent over to Ireland to see Lushington and investigate the affair.

“He arrived in Belfast to find that his man had been arrested the day before on a criminal charge, but on examination he was found to be hopelessly insane. The solicitor obtained full powers to act on behalf of the family, and he was brought here soon afterwards. But now comes the strange part of the affair. As you



know, one element in his case is that of lost identity. The man insists that he is Dick Lushington, and either refuses to admit that he ever bore his real name, or else, as today, maintains that the man who bore it is dead. What makes this feature of his case so odd is that, years ago, a man called Dick Lushington really lived in Belfast. He was a notorious bad lot, cunning and unscrupulous, an habitual criminal, in fact, who served numerous terms in gaol, and, when out of it, was leader of the worst gang of ruffians in the city. Finally he committed murder, and, failing to escape, took his own life to avoid being arrested and hanged. But the oddest part of it all is this, that the real Dick Lushington killed himself *nearly thirty years* ago, long before our patient ever went to Belfast – in fact, while he was still quite young and respectable; yet one of the senior police officials there, who saw the man before he came here, declares that his voice and manner, his tricks of speech and choice of oaths, are identical with those of the notorious criminal Lushington, whose name this poor wretch has adopted, but whom he never can have seen!”

“Extraordinary,” I said, “it sounds like a case of possession;” but as I was speaking a knock came at the door and a warder entered.

“‘Beg pardon, sir,’” he said, addressing the doctor, “but I came to report about Lushington. After you and the other gentleman left the garden he calmed down, and I got him to come in quietly to his room. When he got there, he threw himself on the bed like one exhausted and began to cry, at the same time talking to himself in his other voice – you know what I mean, sir – like a gentleman. After a bit he called me up and said :

“‘Tell him I want to see him.’

“‘Tell who?’ says I.

“‘Why, Philip, of course,’ says he – ‘the gentleman who was in the garden just now.’

“‘Well, sir, I didn’t want to bother you with his nonsense, so I said I thought the gentleman was gone; but no, he wouldn’t have it.

“‘Go and see,’ says he, and, try as I would, I couldn’t put him off it. At last I said I’d go and see, so here I am, sir.”

“And a good thing too,” exclaimed the doctor impatiently.

"I only hope we shall not be too late, and find the quiet mood has passed. Come, Father, this is important. If Lushington is still in this state, you may be able to do something with him."

"By all means, let us go at once," I said, rising, and we hurried off to the poor creature's cell, which the doctor and myself entered, leaving the warder outside, with instructions to come in at once if either of us called. The man was lying on his bed, apparently in a state of extreme exhaustion, but as we entered he turned his head to see who we were, and a great sigh escaped his lips.

"Oh, Philip, come to me," he murmured faintly, and I hastened to the bedside and took both his hands in mine.

"After all these years, to see you once again," he said, almost in a whisper. "Oh, Philip, if I had but taken your advice!" I pressed his fingers in my own, hardly daring to speak, and he lay silent, with eyes closed, for quite a minute. Then, all at once, his eyes opened, and he turned to me with a quick glance of terror.

"Take me away with you, Philip," he cried, "quickly, before the other one comes back!" and he flung his arms round me like a frightened child. Gently I laid him back upon the bed, supporting the poor feeble body in my arms, and tried to reassure him.

"You're all safe now, old fellow," I whispered gently. "He won't come back while I am here, no chance of it."

"Oh, do you think so?" he answered eagerly. "Then - why - then you must never leave me. My God! how I hate him, devil that he is; and oh, to think I let him in so willingly!"

"We'll keep him out together, you and I, never fear of that," I assured him bravely, though, even as I spoke, I was wondering what in the world it all meant; and then I added foolishly, "Tell me, who is he?"

"Who is he?" he almost shrieked, his terror returning more intensely than before. "Who is he? Why, Dick Lushington, of course - the devil-man, who gets inside and uses me. He uses me, I tell you like a slave. My hands, my limbs, my brain, my will, he's got it all, all of me, at his mercy. The filthy, hateful devil that he is, and did it by pretending to be my friend."

"Hush, hush, be calm," I said, "you will exhaust yourself. Be

calm, he won't come back while I am here. You see, I am a priest now, did you know it? I promise you, you will be safe with me."

"Thank God for that," he said more calmly, "but oh, Philip, don't forsake me. I shan't last long now, I shan't keep you long. You were my friend once, be my saviour now. Promise me you'll be with me at the end. Don't leave me here to die, alone with him."

"I promise you faithfully that I will do everything in my power to help you," I answered solemnly; "but now you must rest yourself, and try to sleep," and I laid his head back on the pillow, taking his hand in mine again, while he closed his eyes.

"I will do anything – anything you tell me," he whispered, "only forsake me not, or I am lost." Then he lay still, and in less than five minutes, to my amazement, the grip on my hand relaxed, his fingers fell back, and he was sleeping like a child. The doctor crept to the door and beckoned the warder in.

"Stay here by the bedside," he ordered, "and if he wakes up, say to him at once, 'Father Philip is still here and will come if you require him.' If he says he does, pull the bell which communicates with my room." Then he touched my arm and led me away on tip-toe along the gallery.

"Well," I said, at length, when we had reached the doctor's room, "I don't know what you think, but to my mind it seems a clear case of possession. I have heard of other similar cases among spiritualists."

"It certainly does look like it," he admitted; "but I am more concerned as to the immediate treatment than I am to explain the origin of his malady. Do you realize, my dear Father, what you have taken upon yourself?"

"You mean by promising to do all I can for him?" I asked.

"I mean by intervening in the case at all," he answered grimly. "The man's life is in your hands now, and if you fail him, if you are not at hand whenever he calls for you, I think the consequences will probably be fatal!"

"I shall certainly not shirk the consequences of my promise," I answered; "but did you notice what he said to me? 'I shan't

last long now, promise me you'll be with me at the end.' I may be wrong, but if he is convinced that he is dying, is it not more than probable that he will do so?"

"Well, yes," admitted the doctor, "there is something in that. In fact, if he gets another paroxysm, like you saw in the garden, I do not think he will survive it. But short of that, I shouldn't be surprised if he were to linger on for some time, or even for several weeks."

"If he does, I shall have to make some arrangement about the parish work," I answered, "but my own belief is that he won't last many hours. I have learned to trust the instincts of a dying man." We talked for some time longer on the point, each of us maintaining his own view, without convincing the other.

"Well, I only hope you may be right," said the doctor, at length; "for many reasons it will be better so. Still, speaking merely from a professional point of view, I see no reason why -" but his words were cut short by the clash of a bell, ringing violently in the adjoining bedroom. The doctor leaped to his feet, and ran to the door between the two rooms.

"No. 17!" he exclaimed, "it is Lushington's cell. Come, Father" - and once more we hurried down the corridor. As we entered the room I could scarce believe my eyes. The man we had left, not half an hour before, in a state of utter collapse was on the floor kneeling over the prostrate figure of the warder, who was trying to tear away the fingers of the maniac, which were tightly fastened on his throat. The doctor flung himself upon the kneeling man. The weight of the charge knocked him backwards, enabling the warder to rise. The madman's arms shot out, but luckily I caught one of his wrists, and the warder, a big, powerful man, soon captured the other.

"The handcuffs, in my pocket - quick, Doctor," he cried, "get 'em out while we turn him over!" - and in a few seconds we had the poor wretch secured, with his wrists handcuffed behind his back. He went on struggling until the warder had got his ankles fettered with a strap, but the three of us were too much for him, and in a minute or so he was lying, safely pinioned, on the bed. All this while he had never spoken, though his breath

came in great gasps that shook his whole frame; now, at length, he seemed calmer, and I thought it time to speak.

"“You’re all right now, old fellow,” I said gently, “don’t be afraid; it is I, Philip – I am here as I promised.” The man turned his eyes upon me, and the look of hatred in them was appalling.

"“All right, am I?” he shrieked savagely. “If it wasn’t for these — handcuffs, I’d soon show yer I’m all right. A nice, mean, low sort of priest’s trick to play on me. Thought you’d get hold of yer old pal, and pilot him into heaven while number one was out, did yer? Bah!” — and he spat at me — “you dirty swine!”

"“Ask the warder to wait outside, Doctor,” I said, for a sudden inspiration came to me; and the man withdrew at his command.

"“What yer going to do now, curse ye — sing a hymn?” sneered the madman on the bed, as I took my breviary from my pocket. Without answering I turned to the prayers for the dying, and, kneeling down, began to recite them aloud and slowly, while the thing that animated my poor friend’s body gave a shriek of malicious hatred.

“The scene that followed was literally indescribable, but I stuck to my task, and, as calmly as I could manage, went through the litanies and all the prayers for a departing soul; while the thing on the bed jerked itself from side to side, so far as the fastenings would allow, and the harsh, strident voice of Dick Lushington, the long-dead murderer, howled oaths, sang filthy songs, hurled curses at my head, and poured forth blasphemies unspeakable. As I reached the end of the prayers the question arose in my mind, “What shall I do now?” when, all at once, a strange phenomenon occurred. It seemed as if some mighty force took hold of me, overpowering my limbs, my will, and all my faculties, so that I no more controlled my soul or body, but simply yielded myself up to serve. I was conscious that I had risen to my feet and was standing beside the bed. Then, in a tone of stern command, I heard my own voice speak the words, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, I command thee, thou evil spirit, to go out of him!”

“The body on the bed gave one tremendous heave, as if to break the bands with which it was fettered, and then fell back with a cry of baffled rage and frenzy, such as I never heard be-

fore and never wish to hear again. Then, gradually, before my astonished gaze, the face that was all distorted with anger grew calm, the purple flesh and swollen veins became deadly pale, and the eyes which looked up at me were no longer those of a madman, but the eyes of my long-lost friend. Then the lips moved feebly, and I caught a faint whisper.

“God bless you, Philip, you have saved me ! Jesus, be merciful to me a sinner.”

The voice died away, one great sigh shook the frame of the dying man, and I quickly gave him the last absolution. There was silence for a minute or so, and then the doctor stepped forward.

“You may come away now, Father,” he said softly. “You have kept your promise. He is dead.”

Richard Barham

## JERRY JARVIS'S WIG

A LEGEND OF THE WEALD OF KENT

from THE INGOLDSBY LEGENDS (*Third Series*)

Richard Bentley, 1847

'The wig's the thing! the wig! the wig.' – Old Song

'Joe,' said old Jarvis, looking out of his window – it was on his ground-floor back – 'Joe, you seem to be very hot, Joe, and you have got no wig!'

'Yes, sir,' quoth Joseph, pausing and resting upon his spade, 'it's as hot a day as ever I *see*; but the celery must be got in, or there'll be no autumn crop, and –'

'Well, but Joe, the sun's so hot, and it shines so on your bald head, it makes one wink to look at it. You'll have a *coup de soleil*, Joe.'

'A *what*, sir?'

'No matter; it's very hot working; and if you'll step indoors I'll give you –'

'Thank ye, your honour, a drop of beer will be very acceptable.'

Joe's countenance brightened amazingly.

'Joe, I'll give you – my old wig!'

The countenance of Joseph fell, his grey eye had glistened as a blest vision of double X flitted athwart his fancy; his glance faded again into the old, filmy, gooseberry-coloured hue, as he growled in a minor key, 'A wig, sir!'

'Yes, Joe, a wig. The man who does not study the comfort of his dependants is an unfeeling scoundrel. You shall have my old worn-out wig.'

'I hope, sir, you'll give me a drop o' beer to drink your honour's health in; it *is* very hot, and –'

'Come in, Joe, and Mrs Witherspoon shall give it you.'

'Heaven bless your honour!' said honest Joe, striking his

spade perpendicularly into the earth, and walking with more than usual alacrity towards the close-cut, quickset hedge which separated Mr Jarvis's garden from the high road.

From the quickset hedge aforesaid he now raised, with all due delicacy, a well-worn and somewhat dilapidated jacket, of a stuff by drapers most pseudonymously termed 'everlasting'. Alack! alack! what is there to which *tempus edax rerum* will accord that epithet? In its high and palmy days it had been all of a piece; but as its master's eye now fell upon it, the expression of his countenance seemed to say with Octavian,

Those days are gone, Floranthe!

It was now, from frequent patching, a coat not unlike that of the patriarch, one of many colours.

Joseph Washford inserted his wrists into the corresponding orifices of the tattered garment, and with a steadiness of circumgyration, to be acquired only by long and sufficient practice, swung it horizontally over his ears and settled himself into it.

'Confound your old jacket!' cried a voice from the other side the hedge; 'keep it down, you rascal! Don't you see my horse is frightened at it?'

'Sensible beast!' apostrophized Joseph, 'I've been frightened at it myself every day for the last two years.'

The gardener cast a rueful glance at its sleeve, and pursued his way to the door of the back kitchen.

'Joe,' said Mrs Witherspoon, a fat, comely dame, of about five-and-forty - 'Joe, your master is but too good to you; he is always kind and considerate. Joe, he has desired me to give you his old wig.'

'And the beer, Ma'am Witherspoon?' said Washford, taking the proffered caxon, and looking at it with an expression somewhat short of rapture; 'and the beer, ma'am!'

'The beer, you guzzling wretch! - what beer? Master said nothing about no beer. You ungrateful fellow, has not he given you a wig?'

'Why, yes, Madam Witherspoon! but then, you see, his honour said it was very hot, and I'm very dry, and -'



'Go to the pump, sot I' said Mrs Witherspoon, as she slammed the back-door in the face of the petitioner.

Mrs Witherspoon was 'of the Lady Huntingdon persuasion', and Honorary Assistant Secretary to the Appledore branch of the 'Ladies' Grand Junction Water-working Temperance Society'.

Joe remained for a few moments lost in mental abstraction; he looked at the door, he looked at the wig; his first thought was to throw it into the pigsty, – his corruption rose, but he resisted the impulse; he got the better of Satan; the half-formed imprecation died before it reached his lips. He looked disdainfully at the wig; it had once been a comely jasey enough, of the colour of over-baked ginger-bread, one of the description commonly known during the latter half of the last century by the name of a 'brown George'. The species, it is to be feared, is now extinct, but a few, a very few of the same description might, till very lately, be occasionally seen – *rari nantes in gurgite vasto* – the glorious relics of a bygone day, crowning the *cerebellum* of some venerated and venerable provost, or judge of assize; but Mr Jarvis's wig had one peculiarity; unlike most of its fellows, it had a tail! – 'cribbed and confined', indeed, by a shabby piece of faded shalloon.

Washford looked at it again; he shook his bald head; the wig had certainly seen its best days; still it had about it somewhat of an air of faded gentility; it was 'like ancient Rome, majestic in decay' – and as the small ale was not to be forthcoming, why – after all, an old wig was better than nothing!

Mr Jeremiah Jarvis, of Appledore, in the Weald of Kent, was a gentleman by act of parliament; one of that class of gentlemen who, disdaining the *bourgeois*-sounding name of 'attorney-at-law', are, by a legal fiction, denominated solicitors. I say by a legal fiction, surely the general tenor of the intimation received by such as enjoy the advantage of their correspondence, has little in common with the idea usually attached to the term 'solicitation'. 'If you don't pay my bill, and costs, I'll send you to jail,' is a very energetic *entreaty*. There are, it is true, etymologists who derive their style and title from the Latin infinitive '*solicitare*', to 'make anxious' – in all probability they are right.

If this be the true etymology of his title, as it was the main end of his calling, then was Jeremiah Jarvis a worthy exemplar of the *genus* to which he belonged. Few persons in his time had created greater solicitude among his Majesty's lieges within the 'Weald'. He was rich, of course. The best house in the country-town is always the lawyer's, and it generally boasts a green door, stone steps, and a brass knocker. In neither of these appendanges to opulence was Jeremiah deficient; but then he was so very *rich*; his reputed wealth, indeed, passed all the common modes of accounting for its increase. True, he was so universal a favourite that every man whose will he made was sure to leave him a legacy; that he was a sort of general assignee to all the bankruptcies within twenty miles of Appledore; was clerk to half the 'trusts'; and treasurer to most of the 'rates', 'funds', and 'subscriptions', in that part of the country; that he was land-agent to Lord Mountrhino, and steward to the rich Miss Tabbytale of Smerri-diddle Hall; that he had been guardian (?) to three young profligates who all ran through their property, which, somehow or another, came at last into his hands, 'at an equitable valuation'. Still his possessions were so considerable, as not to be altogether accounted for, in vulgar esteem, even by these and other honourable modes of accumulation; nor were there wanting those who conscientiously entertained a belief that a certain dark-coloured gentleman, of indifferent character, known principally by his predilection for appearing in perpetual mourning, had been through life his great friend and counsellor, and had mainly assisted in the acquirement of his revenues. That 'old Jerry Jarvis had sold himself to the devil' was, indeed, a dogma which it was heresy to doubt in Appledore; – on this head, at least, there were few schismatics in the parish.

When the worthy 'Solicitor' next looked out of his ground-floor back, he smiled with much complacency at beholding Joe Washford again hard at work – in his wig – the little tail afore-said oscillating like a pendulum in the breeze. If it be asked what could induce a gentleman whose leading principle seems to have been self-appropriation, to make so magnificent a present, the answer is, that Mr Jarvis might perhaps have thought an occasional act of benevolence necessary or politic; he is not the only

person, who, having stolen a quantity of leather, has given away a pair of shoes, *pour l'amour de Dieu* – perhaps he had other motives.

Joe, meanwhile, worked away at the celery-bed; but truth obliges us to say, neither with the same degree of vigour or perseverance as had marked the earlier efforts of the morning. His pauses were more frequent; he rested longer on the handle of his spade; while ever and anon his eye would wander from the trench beneath him to an object not unworthy the contemplation of a natural philosopher. This was an apple-tree.

Fairer fruit never tempted Eve, or any of her daughters; the bending branches groaned beneath their luxuriant freight, and dropping to earth, seemed to ask the protecting aid of man either to support or to relieve them. The fine, rich glow of their sun-streaked clusters derived additional loveliness from the level beams of the descending day-star. An anchorite's mouth had watered at the pippins.

On the precise graft of the espalier of Eden, 'Sanchoniathon, Manetho, and Berosus' are undecided; the best-informed Talmudists, however, have, if we are to believe Dr Pinner's German Version, pronounced it a Ribstone pippin, and a Ribstone pippin-tree it was that now attracted the optics and discomposed the inner man of the thirsty, patient, but perspiring gardener. The heat was still oppressive; no beer had moistened his lip, though its very name, uttered as it was in the ungracious tones of a Witherspoon, had left behind a longing as intense as fruitless. His thirst seemed supernatural, when at this moment his left ear experienced a 'slight and tickling sensation', such as we are assured is occasionally produced by an infinitesimal dose in homeopathy; a still, small *voice* – it was as though a daddy long-legs were whispering in his *tympanum* – a small *voice* seemed to say, 'Joe! – take an apple, Joe!'

Honest Joseph started at the suggestion; the rich crimson of his jolly nose deepened to a purple tint in the beams of the setting sun; his very forehead was incarnadine. He raised his hand to scratch his ear – the little tortuous tail had worked its way into it – he pulled it out by the bit of shalloon, and allayed the itching, then cast his eye wistfully towards the mansion where his

master was sitting by the open window. Joe pursed up his parched lips into an arid whistle, and with a desperate energy struck his spade once more into the celery-bed.

Alack! alack! what a piece of work is man! – how short his triumphs! – how frail his resolutions!

From this fine and very original moral reflection we turn reluctantly to record the sequel. The celery-bed, alluded to as the main scene of Mr Washford's operations, was drawn in a rectilinear direction, nearly across the whole breadth of the parallelogram that comprised the 'kitchen-garden'. Its northern extremity abutted to the hedge before-mentioned, its southern one – woe is me that it should have been so! – was in fearful vicinity to the Ribstone pippin-tree. One branch, low bowed to earth, seemed ready to discharge its precious burden into the very trench. As Joseph stooped to insert the last plant with his dibble, an apple of more than ordinary beauty bobbed against his knuckles – 'He's taking snuff, Joe,' whispered the same small *voice*; – the tail had twisted itself into its old position. 'He is sneezing! – now, Joe! – now!' and, ere the agitated horticulturist could recover from his surprise and alarm, the fruit was severed, and – in his hand!

'He! he! he!' shrilly laughed, or seemed to laugh, that accursed little pigtail – Washford started at once to the perpendicular; – with an enfrenzied grasp he tore the jasey from his head, and, with that in one hand, and his ill-acquired spoil in the other, he rushed distractedly from the garden!



All that night was the humble couch of the once-happy gardener haunted with the most fearful visions. He was stealing apples, – he was robbing hen-roosts – he was altering the chalks upon the milk-score – he had purloined three *chemises* from a hedge, and he awoke in the very act of cutting the throat of one of Squire Hodge's sheep! A clammy dew stood upon his temple – the cold perspiration burst from every pore – he sprang in terror from the bed.

'Why, Joe, what ails thee, man?' cried the usually incurious Mrs Washford; 'what be the matter with thee? Thee hast done

nothing but grunt and growl all t' night long, and now thee dost stare as if thee saw summut. What bees it, Joe?'

A long-drawn sigh was her husband's only answer; his eye fell upon the bed. 'How the devil came *that* here?' quoth Joseph, with a sudden recoil: 'who put that thing on my pillow?'

'Why, I did, Joseph. Th' ould nightcap is in the wash, and thee didst toss and tumble so, and kick the clothes off, I thought thee mightest catch cold, so I clapt t' wig atop o' thee head.'

And there it lay – the little sinister-looking tail impudently perked up, like an infernal gnomon on a Satanic dial-plate – Larceny and Ovide shone in every hair of it!

The dawn was overcast, the morning lower'd,  
And heavily in clouds brought on the day,

when Joseph Washford once more repaired to the scene of his daily labours; a sort of unpleasant consciousness flushed his countenance, and gave him an uneasy feeling as he opened the garden gate; for Joe, generally speaking, was honest as the skin between his brows; his hand faltered as it pressed the latch. 'Pooh, pooh! 'twas but an apple, after all!' said Joseph. He pushed open the wicket, and found himself beneath the tempting tree.

But vain now were all its fascinations; like fairy gold seen by the morning light, its charms had faded into very nothingness. Worlds, to say nothing of apples, which in shape resemble them, would not have bought him to stretch forth an unhallowed hand again; he went steadily to his work.

The day continued cloudy; huge drops of rain fell at intervals, stamping his bald pate with spots as big as halfpence; but Joseph worked on. As the day advanced, showers fell thick and frequent; the fresh-turned earth was itself fragrant as a *bouquet* – Joseph worked on; and when at last *Jupiter Pluvius* descended in all his majesty, soaking the ground into the consistency of dingy pudding, he put on his party-coloured jacket, and strode towards his humble home, rejoicing in his renewed integrity. ' 'Twas but an apple, after all! Had it been an apple-pie, indeed!' –

'An apple-pie!' the thought was a dangerous one – too dangerous to dwell on. But Joseph's better Genius was this time lord of the ascendant; – he dismissed it, and passed on.

On arriving at his cottage, an air of bustle and confusion prevailed within, much at variance with the peaceful serenity usually observable in its economy. Mrs Washford was in high dudgeon! her heels clattered on the red-tiled floor, and she whisked about the house like a parched pea upon a drum-head; her voice, generally small and low – ‘an excellent thing in woman’ – was pitched at least an octave above its ordinary level; she was talking fast and furious. Something had evidently gone wrong. The mystery was soon explained. The ‘*cussed old twoad* of a cat’ had got into the dairy, and licked off the cream from the only pan their single cow had filled that morning! And there she now lay, purring as in scorn. Tib, heretofore the meekest of mousers, the honestest, the least ‘*scaddle*’ of the feline race – a cat that one would have sworn might have been trusted with untold fish – yes – there was no denying it – proofs were too strong against her – yet there she lay, hardened in her iniquity, coolly licking her whiskers, and reposing quietly upon – what? – Jerry Jarvis’s old wig!!

The patience of a Stoic must have yielded; it had been too much for the temperament of the Man of Uz. Joseph Washford lifted his hand – that hand which had never yet been raised on Tibby, save to fondle and caress – it now descended on her devoted head in one tremendous ‘dowse’. Never was a cat so astonished – so enraged – all the tiger portion of her nature rose in her soul. Instead of galloping off, hissing and sputtering, with arched back, and tail erected, as any ordinary Grimalkin would unquestionably have done under similar circumstances, she paused a moment – drew back on her haunches – all her energies seemed concentrated for one prodigious spring; a demoniac fire gleamed in her green and yellow eyeballs, as bounding upwards, she fixed her talons firmly in each of her assailant’s cheeks! – many and many a day after were sadly visible the marks of those envenomed claws – then dashing over his shoulder with an unearthly mew, she leaped through the open casement, and was seen no more.

‘The Devil’s in the cat!’ was the apostrophe of Mrs Margaret Washford. Her husband said nothing, but thrust the old wig into his pocket, and went to bathe his scratches at the pump.

Day after day, night after night, 'twas all the same – Joe Washford's life became a burden to him; his natural upright and honest mind struggled hard against the frailty of human nature. He was ever restless and uneasy; his frank, open, manly look, that blenched not from the gaze of the spectator, was no more: a sly and sinister expression had usurped the place of it.

Mr Jeremiah Jarvis had little of what the world calls 'Taste', still less of Science. Ackerman would have called him a 'Snob', and Buckland a 'Nincompoop'. Of the Horticultural Society, its *fêtes*, its fruits, and its fiddlings, he knew nothing. Little recked he of flowers – save cauliflowers – in these, indeed, he was a *connoisseur*! To their cultivation and cookery the respective talents of Joe and Madame Witherspoon had long been dedicated; but as for a *bouquet*! – Hardham's 37 was 'the only one fit for a gentleman's nose'. And yet, after all, Jerry Jarvis had a good-looking tulip-bed. A female friend of his had married a Dutch merchant; Jerry drew the settlement; the lady paid him by a cheque on 'Child's', the gentleman by a present of a 'box of roots'. Jerry put the latter in his garden – he had rather they had been schalots.

Not so his neighbour, Jenkinson; he *was* a man of 'Taste' and of 'Science'; he was an F.R.C.E.B.S., which, as he told the Vicar, implied, 'Fellow of the Royal Cathartico-Emetico-Botanical Society', and his autograph in Sir John Frostyface's album stood next to that of the Emperor of all the Russias. Neighbour Jenkinson fell in love with the pips and petals of 'neighbour Jarvis's tulips'. There were one or two among them of such brilliant, such surpassing beauty – the 'cups' so well formed – the colours so defined. To be sure, Mr Jenkinson had enough in his own garden; but then 'Enough,' says the philosopher, 'always means a little more than a man has got.' – Alas! alas! Jerry Jarvis was never known to *bestow* – his neighbour dared not offer to *purchase* from so wealthy a man; and, worse than all, Joe, the gardener, was incorruptible – ay, but the wig?

Joseph Washford was working away again in the blaze of the midday sun; his head looked like a copper saucepan fresh from the brazier's.

'Why, where's your wig, Joseph?' said the voice of his master

from the well-known window: 'what have you done with your wig?' The question was embarrassing – its tail had tickled his ear till it had made it sore; Joseph had put the wig in his pocket.

Mr Jeremiah Jarvis was indignant; he liked not that his benefits should be ill appreciated by the recipient. 'Hark ye, Joseph Washford,' said he, 'either wear my wig, or let me have it again!'

There was no mistaking the meaning of his tones; they were resonant of indignation and disgust, of mingled grief and anger, the amalgamation of sentiment naturally produced by

Friendship unreturn'd,  
And unrequited love.

Washford's heart smote him: he felt all that was implied in his master's appeal. 'It's here, your Honour,' said he; 'I had only taken it off because we have had a smartish shower; but the sky is brightening now.' The wig was replaced, and the little tortuous pigtail wriggled itself into its accustomed position.

At this moment neighbour Jenkinson peeped over the hedge.

'Joe Washford!' said neighbour Jenkinson.

'Sir to you,' was the reply.

'How beautiful your tulips look after the rain!'

'Ah! sir, master sets no great store by them flowers,' returned the gardener.

'Indeed! Then perhaps he would have no objection to part with a few?'

'Why, no! – I don't think master would like to *give* them – or anything else – away, sir;' and Washford scratched his ear.

'Joe!!' said Mr Jenkinson – 'Joe!'

The Sublime, observes Longinus, is often embodied in a monosyllable – 'Joe!!!' – Mr Jenkinson said no more; but a half-crown shone from beneath his upraised fingers, and its 'poor, poor dumb mouth' spoke for him.

How Joseph Washford's left ear *did* itch. He looked to the ground-floor back – Mr Jarvis had left the window.

Mr Jenkinson's ground-plot boasted, at daybreak next morning a splendid *Semper Augustus*, 'which was not so before', and Joseph Washford was led home, much about the same time, in a



most extraordinary state of 'civilation', from 'The Three Jolly Potboys'.

From that hour he was the Fiend's!!



'*Facilis descensus Avernil*' says Virgil. 'It is only the first step that is attended with any difficulty', says – somebody else – when speaking of the decollated martyr, St Dennis's walk with his head under his arm. 'The First Step!' – Joseph Washford had taken that step! – he had taken two – three – four steps; and now, from a hesitating, creeping, cat-like mode of progression, he had got into a firmer tread – an amble – a positive trot! He took the family linen 'to the wash': – one of Madame Witherspoon's best Holland *chemises* was never seen after.

'Lost! – impossible! How *could* it be lost? – where *could* it be gone to? – who *could* have got it? It was her best – her *very* best! – she should know it among a hundred – among a thousand! – it was marked with a great W in the corner! – Lost? – impossible – She would *see*! – Alas! she never *did* see – the *chemise* – *abiit, erupit, evasit*! – it was

Like the lost Pleiad, seen on earth no more,

– but Joseph Washford's Sunday shirt *was* seen, finer and fairer than ever – the pride and *dulce decus* of the Meeting.

The Meeting? – ay, the Meeting. Joe Washford never missed the Appledore Independent Meeting House, whether the service were in the morning or afternoon – whether the Rev. Mr Slyandry exhorted or made way for the Rev. Mr Tearbrain. Let who would officiate, there was Joe. As I have said before, he never missed; – but other people missed – one missed an umbrella – one a pair of clogs. Farmer Johnson missed his tobacco-box – Farmer Jackson his greatcoat – Miss Jackson missed her hymn-book – a diamond edition, bound in maroon-coloured velvet with gilt corners and clasps. Everything, in short, was missed – but Joe Washford; there *he* sat, grave, sedate, and motionless – all save that restless, troublesome, fidgety little Pigtail attached to his wig, which nothing *could* keep quiet, or prevent from tickling and interfering with Miss Thompson's curls, as she sat back

to back with Joe, in the adjoining pew. After the third Sunday, Nancy Thompson eloped with the tall recruiting sergeant of the Connaught Rangers.

The summer passed away – autumn came and went – and Christmas, jolly Christmas, that period of which we are accustomed to utter the mournful truism, it 'comes but *once* a year', was at hand. It was a fine bracing morning, the sun was just beginning to throw a brighter tint upon the Quaker-coloured ravine of Orlestone-hill, when a medical gentleman, returning to the quiet little village of Ham Street, that lies at its foot, from a farm-house at Kingsnorth rode briskly down the declivity.

After several hours of patient attention, Mr Moneypenny had succeeded in introducing to the notice of seven little expectant brothers and sisters a 'remarkably fine child', and was now hurrying home in the sweet hope of a comfortable 'snooze' for a couple of hours before the announcement of tea and muffins should arouse him to fresh exertion. The road at this particular spot had, even then, been cut deep below the surface of the soil, for the purpose of diminishing the abruptness of the descent, and, as either side of the superincumbent banks was clothed with a thick mantle of tangled copsewood, the passage, even by day, was sufficiently obscure, the level beams of the rising or setting sun, as they happened to enfilade the gorge, alone illuminating its recesses. A long stream of rosy light was just beginning to make its way through the vista, and Mr Moneypenny's nose had scarcely caught and reflected its kindred ray, when the sturdiest and most active cob that ever rejoiced in the appellation of a 'Suffolk Punch', brought herself up in mid career upon her haunches, and that with a suddenness which had almost induced her rider to describe that beautiful mathematical figure, the *parabola*, between her ears. Peggy – her name was Peggy – stood stock-still, snorting like a stranded grampus, and alike insensible to the gentle hints afforded her by hand and heel.

'Tch! – tch! – get along, Peggy!' half-exclaimed, half-whistled the equestrian. If ever steed said in its heart, 'I'll be shot if I do!' it was Peggy at that moment. She planted her forelegs deep in the sandy soil, raised her stump of a tail to an elevation approaching the horizontal, protruded her nose like a pointer at

a covey, and with expanded nostril continued to snuffle most egregiously.

Mr Geoffrey Gambado, the illustrious 'Master of the Horse to the Doge of Venice', tells us, in his far-famed treatise on the Art Equestrian, that the most embarrassing position in which a rider can be placed is, when *he* wishes to go one way, and his horse is determined to go another. There is, to be sure, a *tertium quid*, which, though it 'splits the difference', scarcely obviates the inconvenience; this is when the parties compromise the matter by not going any way at all – to this compromise Peggy and her (*soi-disant*) master were now reduced; they had fairly joined issue. 'Budge!' quoth the doctor – 'Budge not!' quoth the fiend, – for nothing short of a fiend could, of a surety, inspire Peggy at such a time with such unwanted obstinacy – Moneypenny whipped and spurred – Peggy plunged, and reared, and kicked, and for several minutes to a superficial observer the termination of the contest might have appeared uncertain; but your profound thinker sees at a glance that, however the scales may appear to vibrate, when the question between the sexes is one of perseverance, it is quite a lost case for the masculine gender. Peggy beat the doctor 'all to sticks', and when he was fairly tired of goading and thumping, maintained her position as firmly as ever.

It is of no great use, and not particularly agreeable, to sit still, on a cold frosty morning in January, upon the outside of a brute that will neither go forwards nor backwards – so Mr Moneypenny got off, and muttering curses *both* 'loud' and 'deep' between his chattering teeth, 'progressed' as near as the utmost extremity of the extended bridle would allow him, to peep among the weeds and brushwood that flanked the road, in order to discover, if possible, what it was that so exclusively attracted the instinctive attention of his Bucephalus.

His curiosity was not long at fault; the sunbeam glanced partially upon some object ruddier even than itself – it was a scarlet waistcoat, the wearer of which, overcome perchance by Christmas computation, seemed to have selected for his 'thrice-driven bed of down' the thickest clump of the tallest and most imposing nettles, thereon to doze away the narcotic effects of superabundant juniper.

This, at least, was Mr Moneypenny's belief, or he would scarcely have uttered, at the highest pitch of his *contralto*, 'What are you doing there, you drunken rascal? frightening my horse!' – We have already hinted, if not absolutely asserted, that Peggy was a mare; but this was no time for verbal criticism – 'Get up, I say – get up, and go home, you scoundrel!' – But the 'scoundrel' and 'drunken rascal' answered not; he moved not, nor could the prolonged shouting of the appellant, aided by significant explosions from a double-thonged whip, succeed in eliciting a reply. No motion indicated that the recumbent figure, whose outline alone was visible, was a living and a breathing man.

The clear, shrill tones of a ploughboy's whistle sounded at this moment from the bottom of the hill, where the broad and green expanse of Romney Marsh stretches away from its foot for many a mile, and now gleamed through the mists of morning, dotted and enamelled with its thousand flocks. In a few minutes his tiny figure was seen 'slouching' up the ascent, casting a most disproportionate and ogre-like shadow before him.

'Come here, Jack,' quoth the doctor – 'come here, boy; lay hold of this bridle, and mind that my horse does not run away.'

Peggy threw up her head, and snorted disdain of the insinuation – she had not the slightest intention of doing any such thing.

Mr Moneypenny meanwhile, disencumbered of his restive nag, proceeded, by manual application, to arouse the sleeper.

Alas! the Seven of Ephesus might sooner have been awakened from their century of somnolency. His was that 'dreamless sleep that knows no waking'; his cares in this world were over. Vainly did Moneypenny practise his own constant precept, 'To be well shaken!' – there lay before him the lifeless body of a **MURDERED MAN!**

The corpse lay stretched upon its back, partially concealed, as we have before said, by the nettles which had sprung up among the stumps of the half-grubbed underwood; the throat was fearfully lacerated, and the dark, deep, arterial dye of the coagulated blood showed that the carotid had been severed. There was little to denote the existence of any struggle; but as the day brightened, the sandy soil of the road exhibited an impression as of a

body that had fallen on its plastic surface, and had been dragged to its present position, while fresh horse-shoe prints seemed to intimate that either the assassin or his victim had been mounted. The pockets of the deceased were turned out, and empty; a hat and heavy-loaded whip lay at no great distance from the body.

'But what have we here?' quoth Dr Money Penny; 'what is that the poor fellow holds so tightly in his hand?'

That hand had manifestly clutched some article with all the spasmodic energy of a dying grasp – IT WAS AN OLD WIG!

Those who are fortunate enough to have seen a Cinque Port court-house may possibly divine what that useful and most necessary edifice was some eighty years ago. Many of them seem to have undergone little alteration, and are in general of a composite order of architecture, a fanciful arrangement of brick and timber, with what Johnson would have styled 'interstices, reticulated, and decussated' between 'intersections' of lath and plaster. Its less euphonious designation in the 'Weald' is a 'noggin'. One half the basement story is usually of the more solid material, the other, open to the street – from which it is separated only by a row of dingy columns, supporting a portion of the superstructure, – is paved with tiles, and sometimes does duty as a market-place, while, in its centre, flanking the board staircase that leads to the sessions-house above, stands an ominous-looking machine, of heavy perforated wood, clasped within whose stern embrace 'the rude forefathers of the hamlet' sleep off occasionally the drowsiness produced by convivial excess, in a most undignified position, an inconvenience much increased at times by some mischievous urchin, who, after abstracting the shoes of the helpless *detenu*, amuses himself by tickling the soles of his feet.

It was in such a place, or rather in the Court-room above, that in the year 1761 a hale, robust man, somewhat past the middle age, with a very bald pate, save where a continued tuft of coarse, wiry hair, stretching from above each ear, swelled out into a greyish-looking bush upon the occiput, held up his hand before a grave and enlightened assemblage of Dymchurch jurymen. He stood arraigned for that offence most heinous in the sight of God and man, the deliberate and cold-blooded butchery of an un-

offending, unprepared, fellow-creature, – *homicidium quod nullo vidente, nullo auscultante, clam perpetratur.*

The victim was one Humphry Bourne, a reputable grazier of Ivychurch, worthy and well-to-do, though, perchance, a thought too apt to indulge on a market-day, when 'a score of ewes' had brought in a reasonable profit. Some such cause had detained him longer than usual at an Ashford cattle-show; he had left the town late, and alone; early in the following morning his horse was found standing at his own stable-door, the saddle turned round beneath its belly, and much about the time that the corpse of its unfortunate master was discovered some four miles off, by our friend the pharmacopolist.

That poor Bourne had been robbed and murdered there could be no question.

Who, then, was the perpetrator of the atrocious deed? – The unwilling hand almost refuses to trace the name of – Joseph Washford.

Yet so it was. Mr Jeremiah Jarvis was himself the coroner for that division of the county of Kent known by the name of 'The Lath of Scraye'. He had not sat two minutes on the body before he recognized his *quondam* property, and started at beholding in the grasp of the victim, as torn in the death-struggle from the murderer's head, his own OLD WIG! – his own perky little pig-tail, tied up with a piece of shabby shalloon, now wriggling and quivering, as in salutation of its ancient master. The silver buckles of the murdered man were found in Joe Washford's shoes – broad pieces were found in Joe Washford's pockets – Joe Washford had himself been found, when the hue-and-cry was up, hid in a corn-rig at no great distance from the scene of slaughter, his pruning-knife red with the evidence of his crime – 'the grey hairs yet stuck to the heft!'

For their humane administration of the laws, the lieges of this portion of the realm have long been celebrated. Here it was that merciful verdict was recorded in the case of the old lady accused of larceny, 'We find her Not Guilty, and hope she will never do so any more!' Here it was that the more experienced culprit, when called upon to plead with the customary, though somewhat superfluous, inquiry, as to 'how he would be tried?' substituted

for the usual reply 'By God and my country', that of 'By your worship and a Dymchurch Jury'. – Here it was – but enough! – not even a Dymchurch jury could resist such evidence, even though the gallows (*i.e.* the expense of erecting one) stared them, as well as the criminal, in the face. The very pigtail alone! – ever at his ear! – a clearer case of *suadente Diabolo* never was made out. Had there been a doubt, its very conduct in the Court-house would have settled the question. The Rev. Joel Ingoldsby, umquihle chaplain to the Romney Bench, has left upon record that when exhibited in evidence, together with the blood-stained knife, its twistings, its caperings, its gleeful evolutions quite 'flabbergasted' the jury, and threw all beholders into a consternation. It was remarked too, by many in the Court, that the Forensic Wig of the Recorder himself, was, on that trying occasion, palpably agitated, and that its three depending, learned-looking tails lost curl at once, and slunk beneath the obscurity of the powdered collar, just as the boldest dog recoils from a rabid animal of its own species, however small and insignificant.

Why prolong the painful scene? – Joe Washford was tried – Joe Washford was convicted – Joe Washford was hanged!

The fearful black gibbet, on which his body clanked in its chains to the midnight winds, frowns no more upon Orlestone Hill; it has sunk beneath the encroaching hand of civilization; but there it might be seen late in the last century, an awful warning to all bald-pated gentlemen how they wear, or accept, the old wig of a Special Attorney.

Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes!

Such gifts as we have seen, may lead to a 'Morbid Delusion, the climax of which is Murder!'

The fate of the Wig itself is somewhat doubtful; nobody seems to have recollected, with any degree of precision, what became of it. Mr Ingoldsby 'had heard' that, when thrown into the fire by the Court-keeper, after whizzing, and fizzling, and performing all sorts of supernatural antics and contortions, it at length whirled up the chimney with a bang that was taken for the explosion of one of the Feversham powder-mills, twenty miles off; while others insinuate that in the 'Great Storm' which took place on

the night when Mr Jeremiah Jarvis went to his 'long home' – wherever that may happen to be – and the whole of 'The Marsh' appeared as one broad sheet of flame, something that looked very like a Fiery Wig – perhaps a miniature Comet – it had unquestionably a tail – was seen careering in the blaze, – and seeming to 'ride on the whirl and direct the storm'.



John Guinan

## THE WATCHER O' THE DEAD

*from the CORNHILL MAGAZINE, 1929*

It is now the fall of the night. The last of the neighbours are hitting the road for home. The time they went out through that door together, for the sake of the company on the way, as they said, did they give e'er a thought at all to myself, left alone here in this desolate house? To be sure, they asked me more than once why I refuse to leave the place, and the day is in it, by the same token. But I have no call to answer them, though what I am about to set down here in black and white will settle the question, at least for myself.

A few hours ago, and the corpse of Tim McGowan was taken from under this roof and buried deep in the clay. They laid the spade and the shovel like a rude cross on the fresh sod of his grave, and they went down on their knees and said a few hasty prayers for the good of his soul. One or two, and their faces hidden in their hats, took good care not to rise from the wet ground till they got sight of others already on their two feet. Letting on that their thoughts were on higher things, they kept in mind the old belief that the first one to leave the churchyard warm in life would not be the last to come back cold in death.

The little groups moving out began to talk of the man who was gone. Their talk ran in whispers, for fear they might trouble his long sleep. They all knew, though none had the rights of it, that he was after earning his rest dearly. An old man, whose face was hard, even for his years, took a white clay pipe from the pocket of his body coat.

'God rest your soul, Tim McGowan,' he cried. It was the custom to pray for the dead before taking a 'draw' from a wake pipe. 'God rest you in the grave,' he added, 'for it's little peace or ease you had and you in the world that we know!'

The bulk of those who heard his words caught, a little gladly, a mocking undertone which stole through the kindly feeling that

had at first shaken his voice. A young man, with eager eyes and a desire to know and talk of things that should be left hidden, took courage and spoke out bluntly :

'For him to be haunting the graveyard like a ghost, and he a living man ! That was a strange vagary, for sure.'

'It was the death of the good woman a year ago,' the old man went on, speaking more openly, in his turn. 'It was her loss turned his poor head.'

'There's no denying there was a queer strain in him already,' the young man said to that. 'Sure they say all of that family were a bit touched !'

They did not scruple to speak like this before myself, and I of the one blood with the man who was dead, if any of them could know or suspect that. They were after doing their duty towards his mortal remains : if there was a kink in his nature or a mystery about his life why, they might fairly ask, should it not fill the gossip of an idle hour ? But it was myself only, the stranger amongst them, who knew the true reason of Tim McGowan's nightly vigils in Gort na Marbh, why he, a living man, as was said, chose to become the Watcher o' the Dead in the lonesome graveyard. It was ere yesterday morning he told me his secret. Tim was lying there in the settle-bed from which his stark body was carried feet foremost this day. I was trying to get ready a little food by the fire on the hearth, for Tim had not been able to rise, let alone to do a hand's turn for himself. Our wants were simple, and it was not for the first time that I had turned my poor endeavours to homely use.

'There are times,' I made bold to remark, 'there are times I feel this house to be haunted;' for every night during the short spell since I came to see my kinsman, I was sure I heard the fall of footsteps on the floor after the pair of us had gone to our beds. The rattling of the door, if it was not a troubled dream, had also startled me in my sleep. I had begun to ask myself was it one of these houses where the door must be left on the latch and the hearth swept clean for Those who come back. Always at a certain hour Tim was in a hurry to rake the fire and get shut of me out of the kitchen. A pang now shot through my breast. With the poor man hardly able to raise hand or foot, it was not kind to

draw down such a thing. But he looked glad that I had given him the chance to speak out.

'As you make mention of it,' he said eagerly, 'I want to let you know the house is haunted, surely! But it is not by any spirit of good or evil from beyond the grave. That is a strange thing, you will be saying.'

'It is a strange thing,' I agreed. I had no doubt what he was going to disclose. He had already given me the story of a house built, and not without warning, on a 'fairy pass', through which the Sluagh Sidhe in their hosting and revels swept gaily every night. This was the house for sure: The Gentle Folk had never passed the gates of death and know nothing of the grave.

'But,' he went on, 'there is one other thing as strange again. It is that same you will now be hearing, if you pay heed to me.'

'You mean that this is the house' - I began, intending to say that it was the house of the story, but I checked myself - 'that it is a case of a fallen angel, hanging between heaven and hell, who never had to pay the penalty of death?'

'If you let me,' he made answer, 'I will tell you the truth. The place is haunted by a mortal man!'

'One still in the world, one who goes about in his clothes, one to be seen by daylight?' I asked, without drawing breath.

'In troth,' he declared, 'it is haunted by the man who tells it, and no other, if I am still in the flesh itself!'

I lifted him slightly in the bed, not knowing what to say or think. Was this his way of speaking about some common habit, or was his reason leaving him?

'Whisper!' he said, and his face was flushed. 'You came here to gather old stories out of the past, over and above seeing your last living relative in the world, leaving out Michael, my son, who should be here by this. I might do worse than give you the true version of my own trouble.'

This made a double reason why I should hear him out. There is no man but carries in his breast the makings of a story, which, though never told, comes more home to him, than any the mind of another man can find and fashion in words.

'What harm if my story should turn out a poor thing in the telling?' he sighed. 'It will ease my mind, if it does only that.'

And who knows : but we will talk of that when the times comes.'

He turned aside from the food I was coaxing him to take, and started :

'It is now a year since herself was laid to rest. Laid to rest !' He laughed, a little bitterly. 'That is what they call it. A week after that again, call it what you like, the graveyard was closed by orders. There are people still to the fore who have their rights under the law ; but it is hardly likely that many, if any of them, will try to make good their claim to be buried in Gort na Marbh.'

Gurthnamorrah, the Field of the Dead, that is what those around and about call the lonely patch to this day. Though this generation of them are 'dull of' the ancient tongue, such names, of native savour, help to keep them one in soul with the proud children of Banbha who are in eternity. Vivid imagery, symbols drawn, in a manner of speaking, from the brown earth, words of strength and beauty that stud like gems of light and grace the common speech hold not merely an abiding charm in themselves. Such heritages of the mind of the Gael evoke through active fancy the fuller life of the race of kings no less surely than those relics of skill and handicraft found by chance in tilth or red bog, the shrine of bell or battle book, the bronze spear head, the torque of gold.

'But, surely,' I objected, 'those who are able would like to have their bones laid beside their own when their day of nature is past ! Surely they would choose such a ground as the place of their resurrection, as the holy men of old used to say !'

'Time and time again,' he made answer, 'people have left it to their deaths not to be buried in Gort na Marbh. Man and wife have been parted, mother and child. What call have I to tell you the reason ? You know it rightly. You know it is the lot of the last body brought to its long home to be from that time forth the Watcher o' the Dead ?'

'I have heard tell of that queer - of that belief,' I replied. 'That the poor soul cannot go to its rest, if it took years itself, till another comes to fill its place ; that it must wander about in the dead of the night amongst the graves where the mortal body is crumbling to dust ; and, as one might say in a plain way, keep an eye over the place !'

'And who would care to be buried in ground that was shut up for ever?' he asked. 'Even at the best of times people try their best endeavours to be the first through the gate with the corpse of their own friend and when two funerals happen to fall on the one day.'

And then he went on to tell me, and his voice failing at that, of all he was after going through thinking of his woman, his share of the world, making the weary, dreary, rounds of the graveyard during the best part of the changing year. And, bitter agony! he felt that she could not share in the Communion of Saints, that all his good works for her sake would not hasten her release. But the thing that made it the hardest for him to bear was this: It was through his veneration for the old customs, through his great respect even for the dead, that this awful tribulation had come to the pair of them.

'Let you not be laughing at what I'm going to tell you now,' he warned me: 'for I won't deny there have been times when I made merry over the like myself. It was a seldom thing two funerals to be on the one day; nor would it have come to happen at the time it did if the other people had the proper spirit, like myself, or the right regard for the things good Christians hold highly. Listen! They knew the order to close the graveyard, the other people knew it was on the road, for the man who was dead and going to be buried on the same day as herself was himself on the Board of Guardians. That was why they waked him for one night only, and they people of means, and rushed with him in unseemly haste to Gort na Marbh. But we got wind of it, and would have been the first, for all that, only we followed the old road, the long road, and in a decent and becoming way walked in through the open gate while they took a short cut and got in over the stile. We did more than that, and so did they. While the savages, for they were little else, while they were trampling above the relics of the dead, we went round about the ground in the track of the sun till we came in the proper course to the side of the open grave.'

This set me thinking of the ancient ritual by which the corpse is brought round to pay its respects, as a body might say, to those who have gone before. I began to ask myself was it a fragment

of Druid worship that had come down even to our own day. But this is what I said to my kinsman :

'You did what was right, and no one would be better pleased than the woman who was gone !'

'That is the way I felt myself at the first going off,' he agreed : 'but soon I began to question myself : When I did the right thing, that the neighbours gave me full credit for, was I thinking more of what was expected from the living or what was due to the dead ? Was I thinking of myself, and the great name I'd be getting from the self-same neighbours, or of the woman going into the clay, who only wanted their prayers ? Many's the long night this thought kept me on the rack till I was nigh gone astray in the head. In my mind I saw her, and her brown habit down to her feet, and she looking to me for help, and it my sin of human respect, as I felt, that kept her so long from walking on the sunny hills of Glory ! Funeral after funeral went the way, for people have to die ; but not a one passed the rusty gate of Gort na Marbh as a poor woman of the roads might give the go-by to a stricken house.

'At length and at last, I could stand it no longer, and one night I got up from my bed and made my way to the graveyard. 'Twas in the dark hour before the crowing of the cocks, when wandering spirits are warned home to their house of clay.'

'And did you half expect to see the Watcher o' the Dead ?' I asked.

'Did I ? And why not ?' he asked in turn, by way of reply.

'With your mind disturbed that way,' I went on, 'the wonder is you didn't see her, if only in fancy.'

I meant to be kind. He faced me testily.

'I did see her, as sure as I'm a living man !' he declared.

I had not the heart to urge my view that it was only a brain-born figure.

'I no sooner crossed the stile,' he said softly, 'than I got clear sight of herself. She was moving through the graves she guarded, and a kindly look in her two eyes. The dead image I thought her of the Nuns you see in the sick ward of the poorhouse in Bally-brosna, and she taking a look at the beds in their little rows, and fearing to waken the tired sleepers in her charge. There she was,

in truth, as I had seen her a thousand times in my own mind.'

'In your own mind!' I said after him. 'It was on your eyes, so to speak, and you merely saw what was in your mind already. Was it not more natural to see the figment that never left your sight than not to see it at all?'

It was all very clear to me, and I felt this was sound talk; and isn't it a caution the way the rage of battle will rise in a body and set the tongue loose! But Tim's reply put a stop to any dispute or war of words.

'It was in my mind, for sure,' he said. 'But tell me, you who have the book learning, why was it in my mind? When a man's brain begins to work, what gives it the start, or sets it going - or does it start to go of itself?'

I had to give in that I always left such vexed questions to wiser heads, adding, whimsically enough as it seems to me now, that I was not such a great fool as to attempt an answer where they failed. In a way I was put out by the reflection that this old man, who 'didn't know his letters', was making a mockery of me on the head of my few books and my small store of book learning.

'There is nothing hard about the case I am after putting before you,' he said. 'It was on my mind because the thing was taking place in Gort na Marbh night after night, was taking place in the Field of the Dead, though there was no living eye to see it!'

I had no reply to that, whether it was a head-made ghost or not. Where was the use of starting to argue that nothing really takes place if not within the knowledge of man? I told myself weakly that such visions were due to the queer strain in the old man the neighbours spoke about this day. It might be that, in his present state, all this had only come into his head as the two of us talked together. It did not occur to me then, and I have too much respect for the dead to credit it now, that he was 'taking a rise' out of me, as the plain saying is.

Tim became a little rambling in his speech and asked me to let him lie flat in the bed. I gathered from the words he mumbled and jumbled that he made a promise to the departed spirit to take her place till his own time came in real earnest: that he had bid her go to her rest, in the Name of God, much, I could not help but think, as one might banish an evil spirit to the 'red sea'

to make ropes of the sand; that he had kept his word, which brought great peace to his breast: and that he never set eyes on her again from that hour, there or there else.

I had no doubt he had but laid the ghost of his own troubled thoughts. It is not every poor mortal can do that same, even by dint of hard sacrifice. Tim was growing worse. I tried hard to cheer him. It was all to no use. I talked of his son, Michael, who was far away on the fishing grounds. We had already sent word for him to come home, and he might be here any stroke, if it was a long ways off, itself.

'Michael will never be here in time!' the father groaned. 'That is my great trouble. I never could ask another to do it. It would be again' reason.'

'There is nothing you could name I would not gladly do!' I declared; and, in all fair speaking, I meant it.

'There are things no man should ask of his friend,' he said to that, with a slight shake of the head.

'And who else should he ask but his friend?' I laughed, trying to rouse him. 'But, first, I'll send for the Doctor -'

'The Doctor, how are ye!' he broke in on me. 'That is not what I want. What can the like of himself do for a body who has seen the Watcher o' the Dead?'

'What harm if you did itself?' I asked. 'The sign of a long life it is, as likely as not. It would be another story, entirely, one's "fetch" to be seen in the late hours of the day. An early death that would signify.'

'The man,' he made answer, 'the man who lays eyes on the Watcher o' the Dead, late or early, if the like could come to pass at all before dark, that man will soon be only a shadow himself. I am saying, he will soon be among the silent company. The time I took the woman's place, the woman who held my heart for years, I knew rightly, it would not be for long. It is for that reason and no other I am after telling you my secret sorrow. I will never be able to put out this night, if I live through this night of the nights, or any night for the future; and if it was a thing I failed her, sure herself would be disturbed in her rest.'

I took a grip of his hand and looked down steadily into his eyes.



'Put your trust in me!' I said. 'I'll take your place till such time as you are laid in the clay!'

Who is it, though he might throw doubt on the very stars above his head, would not try to humour an old man or a little child?

'God sent you for a friend,' he said, 'praised be His holy Name! For all I know, I may not want you to do so much: I may want you to do a little more, but in another way. I want you to take my place till Michael comes, and not an hour more; I want you, as well as that, to tell him all I have told you and to give him my dying wish, if it is a thing he does not come before I go for ever. Whisper! You'll tell Michael, in case I'm too far through myself, that I am dying happy knowing he will not refuse a last favour to the father who reared him. It is this: That he will become the Watcher o' the Dead, though a living man, like myself, and let me, after so much fret and torment, go straight to herself, to his mother, in Heaven. Tell him I know he will do this, for the rest of his mortal days, if it comes to that. Tell him I know that, after that again, if he gets no release he will have his bones laid in Gort na Marbh and wait his own turn. I have done my share of watching, God knows!'

Some kind neighbours gathered during the course of the day, and the priest of the parish was sent for. Father Malachy was a man of the world, without being worldly. It is not for the knowing, and never will be in this world, whether Tim told him about the Watcher o' the Dead. As a man, his reverence knew all the customs and beliefs of the people, for he was one of them himself. Deep in his nature a body might expect to find a kindly toleration for the harmless 'superstitions', as some would call them, lingering from the pagan days of Firbolg or Tuatha de Danaan. As a priest, he had, no doubt, full knowledge of the rites of the Church for dealing with 'appearances' from the other world, which shows it to be no harm to give heed to such things.

Tim kept quiet till the night wore on. Then he got restless and began to mutter to himself. The use of his speech was well-nigh gone. I caught such words as 'Gort na Marbh', and 'Herself', and 'the Watcher o' the Dead'. His grip was tight on my fist

when I said in his ear that I would not fail him, dead or alive, till Michael came. The kind neighbours did not let on to hear the pair of us, and I left him in their charge while I set out for the strange duty I had taken on myself so lightly, taken on, indeed, with a certain zest, in the vague hope of enlarging my experience. It was clear from Tim's behaviour that the hour of the night had come when he felt the 'call' to the graveyard, and still there was no sign of Michael. The moon was in the sky. The night was cold. There was no stir. The place held no terrors for me. I set little store by Tim's story, except as a 'study' in delusion. The old man was much in my thoughts, for he was passing rapidly away. I saw him in my mind, as he used to say, and he walking here and there through the graves that now held nothing but cold clay, passing by fallen stones, broken and moss-grown. I tried hard to banish such airy pictures, for I did not want to begin seeing sights.

What was that story Tim told me a few days ago as we stood before a headstone in Gort na Marbh? It was a true tale of revenge, revenge both on the living and the dead, and it was a poor sort of revenge at that. Before long I would be seeing again the spot where the dead man he spoke about was laid in the clay. His relations, in blood and law, hoped to benefit largely by his death. But he left all to his son. The boy was an only child whose mother died the hour he came into the world. He came home, a likely youth, to be at the father's funeral. For the first time in his young life he saw the place that was now to be his own. It was natural for him to ask why the usual black plumes did not wave above the hearse instead of white. The errors of the past, if any, should have been covered by charity. Feuds are forgiven, if not forgotten, in the hour of death. It is what they told him, with wild malice, that black plumes were only for people who were lawfully joined in wedlock.

Here I found the elements of tragedy, but the story only helped to keep the figure of Tim before me. I was stepping over the stile and thinking of the nights he spent walking about in the dreary waste, for, after so much neglect, that is what it had by now sunk to. I felt the nettles rank and dank as I set foot on the ground; and then – it was not wild phantasy! – I got sight of Tim

moving in the moonlight among the shadows of the headstones and the trees.

'In the Name of God!' I cried, profanely, I am half afraid, 'leave the place at once, and let me keep my promise in peace.'

I was furious with the neighbours for letting him rise and he in a fever. But were they to be blamed? I crossed hastily and found myself alone! This gave me a start, and I began to wonder whether in that strange ground – for, surely, the place was not 'right'! – I, in my turn, saw what was on my eyes only! Had Tim been there in the flesh or was it that I, in my turn, had laid but the ghost of a deranged imagination? Could it be that the queer strain of the family, if there is such a thing, runs in my own blood? Or does a sane man put such a question to himself? Without waiting for the crowing of the cocks, I made haste back to the house. My heart was beating loudly.

'We were going to call after you,' the neighbours said to me. 'Hardly was your back turned when the end came!'

Tim was stretched there in his long sleep, his features set free by the kindly touch of death!

Last night at the same hour we dug his grave. I was heartened by the presence of the neighbours and lingered over the work till the dawn broke, walking about from time to time, 'by way of no harm', trying to keep my promise to the dead man. More than once the shadows, moving with the shifting lanthorn, took a start out of me. There were a few of the neighbours would not put out with us. One was a strong young man who was so free of the tongue this day.

'Why do you want to choose such an unreasonable hour?' they grumbled. 'It is not lucky to turn up the sod in the dead of the night.'

'As likely as not,' I heard another make answer, 'he was waiting to see would Michael come on the long car.'

I did not put him right. If we were waiting for Michael only the work could have been left over till morning. It is the long wait we would have, for the same Michael, God rest the poor boy! God rest him! I say, for before Tim was taken out this day word came that the hardy young fisherman had been lost a week ago in the depths of the salt water. The hungry, angry sea did not

give up its dead. And now his death comes home to me! Michael's bones will never be laid in Gort na Marbh. Michael will never, never, either in life or death, become the Watcher o' the Dead! And I have pledged my word to the man who is gone, the father, to take his place till such time as Michael should come home! That will be never, never!

What way can I break my word to the dead, whether I credit his story or doubt it? It was part of his own belief, part of himself. What odds does it make even if he was out of his mind, or if I am a madman myself? A promise, a promise to one passed away, is sacred.

Where is the good of talking of common sense? Half the world is stupid with common sense, if there is any such quality. But I see a dismal prospect before me, till the end of my days, as likely as not, let alone, for all I know, till the Day of Judgement itself! Already I feel there is a stir in my blood, the time has come for me to get up and make my lonely vigil: for I have been putting this down in black and white for many hours. It is a true word for Tim; every man has his own story, his own agony. But I set out to tell of his troubles, which, for sure, are at an end, and not of my own, which, for all a body can see, are only in their birth throes.

*E. and H. Heron*

## THE STORY OF KONNOR OLD HOUSE

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'I hold,' Mr Flaxman Low, the eminent psychologist, was saying, 'that there are no other laws in what we term the realm of the supernatural but those which are the projections or extensions of natural laws.'

'Very likely that's so,' returned Naripse, with suspicious humility. 'But, all the same, Konnor Old House presents problems that won't work in with any natural laws I'm acquainted with. I almost hesitate to give voice to them, they sound so impossible and – and absurd.'

'Let's judge of them,' said Low.

'It is said,' said Naripse, standing up with his back to the fire, 'it is said that a Shining Man haunts the place. Also a light is frequently seen in the library – I've watched it myself of a night from here – yet the dust there, which happens to lie very thick over the floor and the furniture, has afterwards shown no sign of disturbance.'

'Have you satisfactory evidence of the presence of the Shining Man?'

'I think so,' replied Naripse shortly. 'I saw him myself the night before I wrote asking you to come up to see me. I went into the house after dusk, and was on the stairs when I saw him: the tall figure of a man, absolutely white and shining. His back was towards me, but the sullen, raised shoulders and side-long head expressed a degree of sinister animosity that exceeded anything I've ever met with. So I left him in possession, for it's a fact that anyone who has tried to leave his card at Konnor Old House has left his wits with it.'

'It certainly sounds rather absurd,' said Mr Low, 'but I suppose we have not heard all about it yet?'

'No, there is a tragedy connected with the house, but it's quite a commonplace sort of story and in no way accounts for the Shining Man.'

Naripse was a young man of means, who spent most of his time abroad, but the above conversation took place at the spot to which he always referred as home – a shooting-lodge connected with his big grouse-moor on the West Coast of Scotland. The lodge was a small new house built in a damp valley, with a trout-stream running just beyond the garden-hedge.

From the high ground above, where the moor stretched out towards the Solway Firth, it was possible on a fine day to see the dark cone of Ailsa Crag rising above the shimmering ripples. But Mr Low happened to arrive in a spell of bad weather, when nothing was visible about the lodge but a few roods of sodden lowland, and a curve of the yellow tumbling little river, and beyond a mirky outline of shouldering hills burred by the ever-falling rain. It may have been eleven o'clock on a depressing, muggy night, when Naripse began to talk about Konnor Old House as he sat with his guests over a crackling flaming fire of pinewood.

'Konnor Old House stands on a spur of the ridge opposite – one of the finest sites possible, and it belongs to me. Yet I am obliged to live in this damp little boghole, for the man who would pass a night in Konnor is not to be met with in this county!'

Sullivan, the third man present, replied he was, perhaps – with a glance at Low – there were two, which stung Naripse, who turned his words into a deliberate challenge.

'Is it a bet?' asked Sullivan, rising. He was a tallish man, dark, and clean-shaven, whose features were well known to the public in connection with the emerald green jersey of the Rugby International Football Team of Ireland. 'It if is, it's a bet I'm going to win! Good night. In the morning, Naripse, I'll trouble you for the difference.'

'The affair is much more in Low's line than in yours,' said Naripse. 'But you're not really going?'

'You may take it I am though!'

'Don't be a fool, Jack! Low, tell him not to go, tell him there are things no man ought to meddle with -' he broke off.

'There are things no man can meddle with,' replied Sullivan, obstinately fixing his cap on his head, 'and my backing out of this bet would stand in as one of them!'

Naripse was strangely urgent.

'Low, speak to him! You know -'

Flaxman Low saw that the big Irishman's one vanity had got upon its legs; he also saw that Naripse was very much in earnest.

'Sullivan's big enough to take care of himself,' he said laughing. 'At the same time, if he doesn't object, we might as well hear the story before he starts.'

Sullivan hesitated, then flung his cap into a corner.

'That's so,' he said.

It was a warm night for the time of the year, and they could hear, through the open window, the splashing downpour of the rain.

'There's nothing so lonely as the drip of heavy rain!' began Naripse, 'I always associate it with Konnor Old House. The place has stood empty for ten years or more, and this is the story they tell about it. It was last inhabited by a Sir James Mackian, who had been a merchant of sorts in Sierra Leone. When the baronetcy fell to him, he came to England and settled down in this place with a pretty daughter and a lot of servants, including a nigger, named Jake, whose life he was said to have saved in Africa. Everything went on well for nearly two years, when Sir James had occasion to go to Edinburgh for a few days. During his absence his daughter was found dead in her bed, having taken an overdose of some sleeping draught. The shock proved too great for her father. He tried travelling, but, on his return home, he fell into a settled melancholy, and died some months later a dumb imbecile at the asylum.'

'Well, I shan't object to meeting the girl as she's so pretty,' remarked Sullivan with a laugh. 'But there's not much in the story.'

'Of course,' added Naripse, 'countryside gossip adds a good deal of colour to the plain facts of the case. It is said that terrible details connected with Miss Mackian's death were suppressed at

the inquest, and people recollected afterwards that for months the girl had worn an unhappy, frightened look. It seemed she disliked the negro, and had been heard to beg her father to send him away, but the old man would not listen to her.'

'What became of the negro in the end?' asked Flaxman Low.

'In the end Sir James kicked him out after a violent scene, in the course of which he appears to have accused Jake of having some hand in causing the girl's death. The nigger swore he'd be revenged on him, but, as a matter of fact, he left the place almost immediately, and has never been heard of since - which disposes of the nigger. A short time after the old man went mad; he was found lying on a couch in the library - a hopeless imbecile.' Saying this, Naripse went to the window, and looked out into the rainy darkness. 'Konnor Old House stands on the ridge opposite, and a part of the building, including the library window, where the light is sometimes seen, is visible through the trees from here. There is no light there tonight, though.'

Sullivan laughed his big, full laugh.

'How about your shining man? I hope we may have the luck to meet. I suspect some canny Scots tramp knows where to get a snug roost rent free.'

'That may be so,' replied Naripse, with a slow patience. 'I can only say that after seeing the light of a night, I have more than once gone up in the morning to have a look at the library, and never found the thick dust in the least disturbed.'

'Have you noticed if the light appears at regular intervals?' said Low.

'No; it's there on and off. I generally see it in rainy weather.'

'What sort of people have gone crazy in Konnor Old House?' asked Sullivan.

'One was a tramp. He must have lived pleasantly in the kitchen for days. Then he took to the library, which didn't agree with him apparently. He was found in a dying state lying upon Sir James's couch, with horrible black patches on his face. He was too far gone to speak, so nothing was gleaned from him.'

'He probably had a dirty face, and, having caught cold in the rain, went into Konnor Old House and died quietly there of pneumonia or something of the kind, just as you or I might have



done, tucked up in our own little beds at home,' commented Sullivan.

'The last man to try his luck with the ghosts,' went on Naripse, without noticing this remark, 'was a young fellow, called Bowie, a nephew of Sir James. He was a student at Edinburgh University and he wanted to clear up the mystery. I was not at home, but my factor allow him to pass a night in the house. As he did not appear next day, they went to look for him. He was found lying on the couch – and he has not spoken a rational word since.'

'Sheer – mere physical fright, acting on an overwrought brain!' Sullivan summed up the case scornfully. 'And now I'm off. The rain has stopped, and I'll get up to the house before midnight. You may expect me at dawn to tell you what I've seen.'

'What do you intend to do when you get there?' asked Flaxman Low.

'I'll pass the night on the ghostly couch which I suppose I shall find in the library. Take my word for it, madness is in Sir James's family; father and daughter and nephew all gave proof of it in different ways. The tramp, who was perhaps in there for a couple of days, died a natural death. It only needs a healthy man to run the gauntlet and set all this foolish talk at rest.'

Naripse was plainly much disturbed though he made no further objection, but when Sullivan was gone, he moved restlessly about the room looking out of the window from time to time. Suddenly he spoke:

'There it is! The light I mentioned to you.'

Mr Low went to the window. Away on the opposite ridge a faint light glimmered out through the thick gloom. Then he glanced at his watch.

'Rather over an hour since he started,' he remarked. 'Well, now, Naripse, if you will be so good as to hand me *Human Origins* from the shelf behind you, I think we may settle down to wait for dawn. Sullivan's just the man to give a good account of himself – under most circumstances.'

'Heaven send there may be no black side to this business!' said Naripse. 'Of course I was a fool to say what I did about the Old House, but nobody except an ass like Jack would think I

meant it. I wish the night was well over! That light is due to go out in two hours anyway.'

Even to Mr Low the night seemed unbearably long; but at the first streak of dawn he tossed his book on to the sofa, stretched himself, and said: 'We may as well be moving; let's go and see what Sullivan is doing.'

The rain began to fall again, and was coming down in close straight lines as the two men drove up the avenue to Konnor Old House. As they ascended, the trees grew thicker on the banks of the cutting which led them in curves to the terrace on which stood the house. Although it was a modern red-brick building, rather picturesque with its gables and sharply pitched overhanging roofs, it looked desolate and forbidding enough in the grey daybreak. To the left lay lawns and gardens, to the right the cliff fell away steeply to where the burn roared in spate some three hundred feet below. They drove round to the empty stables, and then hurried back to the house on foot by a path that debouched directly under the library window. Naripse stopped under it, and shouted: 'Hullo! Jack, where are you?'

But no answer came, and they went on to the hall door. The gloom of the wet dawning and the heavy smell of stagnant air filled the big hall as they looked round at its dreary emptiness. The silence within the house itself was oppressive. Again Naripse shouted, and the noise echoed harshly through the passages, jarring on the stillness. Then he led the way to the library at a run.

As they came in sight of the doorway a wave of some nauseating odour met them, and at the same moment they saw Sullivan lying just outside the threshold, his body twisted and rigid like a man in the extremity of pain, his contorted profile ivory-pale against the dark oak flooring. As they stooped to raise him, Mr Low had just time to notice the big gloomy room beyond, with its heaped and trampled layers of accumulated dust. There was no time for more than a glance, for the indescribable, fetid odour almost overpowered them as they hastened to carry Sullivan into the open air.

'We must get him home as soon as we can,' said Mr Low, 'for we have a very sick man on our hands.'

This proved to be true. But in a few days, thanks to Mr Low's treatment and untiring care, the severe physical symptoms became less urgent, and in due time Sullivan's mind cleared.

The following account is taken from the written statement of his experience in Konnor Old House :

'On reaching the house he entered as noiselessly as possible, and made for the library, finding his way by the help of a series of matches to Sir James's couch, upon which he lay down. He was conscious at once of an acrid taste in his mouth, which he accounted for by the clouds of dust he had raised in crossing the room.

'First he began to think about the approaching football match with Scotland, for which he was already in training. He was still in his mood of derisive incredulity. The house seemed vastly empty, and wrapped in an uneasy silence, a silence which made each of his comfortable movements an omen of significance. Presently the sense of a presence in the room was borne in upon him. He sat up, and spoke softly. He almost expected someone to answer him, and so strong did this feeling become that he called out: "Who's there?" No reply came, and he sat on amidst the oppressive silence. He says the slightest noise would have been a relief. It was the listening in the silence that bred in him so intense a longing to grapple with some solid opponent.

'Fear! He, who had denied the very existence of cause for fear, found himself shivering with an untranslatable terror! This was fear. He realized it with an infinite recoil of anger.

'Presently he became aware that the darkness about him was clearing. A feeble light filtered slowly through it from above. Looking up at the ceiling, he perceived directly above his head an irregular patch of pale phosphorescent luminance, which grew gradually brighter. How long he sat with his head thrown back, staring at the light, he does not know. It seemed years. Then he spoke to himself plainly. With an immense effort, he forced his eyes away from the light and got upon his feet to drag his limbs round the room. The phosphorescence was of a greenish tint, and as strong as moonlight, but the dust rose like vapour at the slightest movement, and somewhat obscured its power. He moved about, but not for long. A clogging weight, such as one

feels in nightmare, pressed upon him, and his exhaustion was intensified by the overpowering physical disgust bred in him by the repulsive odour which passed across his face as he staggered back to the couch.

‘For a few moments he would not look up. He says he had an impression that someone was watching him through the radiance as through a window. The atmosphere about him was thickening and cloaking the walls with drowsy horror, while his senses revolted and choked at the growing odour. Then followed a state of semi-sleep, for he recollects no more until he found himself staring again at the luminous patch on the ceiling.

‘By this time the brightness was beginning to dim; dark smears showed through it here and there, which ran slowly together till out of them grew and protruded a fat, black, evil face. A second later Sullivan was aware that the horrible face was sinking down nearer and nearer to his own, while all about it the light changed to black, dripping fluid, that formed great drops and fell.

‘It seemed as if he could not save himself; he could not move! The fighting blood in him had died out. Then fear, mad fear and strong loathing gave him the strength to act. He saw his own hand working savagely, it passed through and through the impending face, yet he swears that he felt a slight impact and that he saw the fat, glazed skin quiver! Then, with a final struggle, he tore it himself from the couch, and, rushing to the door, he wrenched open, and plunged forward into a red vacancy, down – down – After that he remembered no more.’

While Sullivan still lay ill and unable to give an account of himself or of what had happened at Konnor Old House, Mr Flaxman Low expressed his intention of paying a visit to the asylum for the purpose of seeing young Bowie. But on arrival at the asylum, he found that Bowie had died during the previous night. A weary-eyed assistant doctor took Mr Low to see the body. Bowie had evidently been of a gaunt, but powerful build. The features, though harsh, were noble, the face being somewhat disfigured by a rough, raised discoloration, which extended from the centre of the forehead to behind the right ear.

Mr Low asked a question.

'Yes, it is a very obscure case,' observed the assistant, 'but it is the disease he died of. When he was brought here some months ago he had a small dark spot on his forehead, but it spread rapidly, and there are now similar large patches over the whole of his body. I take it to be of a cancerous character, likely to occur in a scrofulous subject after a shock and severe mental strain, such as Bowie chose to subject himself to by passing a night in Konnor Old House. The first result of the shock was the imbecility, an increasing lethargic condition of the body supervened and finally coma.'

While the doctor was speaking, Mr Low bent over the dead man and closely examined the mark upon the face.

'This mark appears to be the result of a fungoid growth, perhaps akin to the Indian disease known as *mycetoma*?' he said at length.

'It may be so. The case is very obscure, but the disease, whatever we may call it, appears to be in Bowie's family, for I believe his uncle, Sir James Mackian, had precisely similar symptoms during his last illness. He also died in this institution, but that was before my time,' replied the assistant.

After a further examination of the body Mr Low took his leave, and during the following day or two was busily engaged in a spare empty room placed at his disposal by Naripse. A deal table and chair were all he required, Mr Low explained, and to these he added a microscope, an apparatus for producing a moist heat, and the coat worn by Sullivan on the night of his adventure. At the end of the third day, as Sullivan was already on the road to recovery, Mr Low, accompanied by Naripse, paid a second visit to Konnor Old House, during which Low mentioned some of his conclusions about the strange events which had occurred there. It will be an easy task to compare Mr Flaxman Low's theory with the experience detailed by Sullivan, and with the one or two subsequent discoveries that added something like confirmation to his conclusions.

Mr Low and his host drove up as on the previous occasion, and stabled the horse as before. The day was dry, but grey, and the time the early afternoon. As they ascended the path leading

to the house, Mr Low remarked, after gazing up for a few seconds at the library window :

‘That room has the air of being occupied.’

‘Why? – What makes you think so?’ asked Naripse nervously.

‘It is hard to say, but it produces that impression.’

Naripse shook his head despondently.

‘I’ve always noticed it myself,’ he returned. ‘I wish Sullivan were all right again and able to tell us what he saw in there. Whatever it was it has nearly cost him his life. I don’t suppose we shall ever know anything more definite about the matter.’

‘I fancy I can tell you,’ replied Low, ‘but let us get on into the library, and see what it looks like before we enter into the subject any further. By the way, I should advise you to tie your handkerchief over your mouth and nose before we go into the room.’

Naripse, upon whom the events of the last few days had had a very strong effect, was in a state of scarcely controllable excitement.

‘What do you mean, Low? – you can’t have any idea –’

‘Yes, I believe the dust in the house to be simply poisonous. Sullivan inhaled any amount of it – hence his condition.’

The same suggestion of loneliness and stagnation hung about the house as they passed through the hall and entered the library. They halted at the door and looked in. The amount of greenish dust in the room was extraordinary; it lay in little drifts and mounds over the floor, but most abundantly just about the couch. Immediately above this spot, they perceived on the ceiling a long, discoloured stain. Naripse pointed to it.

‘Do you see that? It is a bloodstain, and, I give you my word, it grows larger and larger every year!’ He finished the sentence in a low voice, and shuddered.

‘Ah, so I should have expected,’ observed Flaxman Low, who was looking at the stained ceiling with much interest. ‘That, of course, explains everything.’

‘Low, tell me what you mean? A bloodstain that grows year by year explains everything?’ Naripse broke off and pointed to the couch. ‘Look there! a cat’s been walking over that sofa.’

Mr Low put his hand on his friend's shoulder and smiled.

'My dear fellow! That stain on the ceiling is simply a patch of mould and fungi. Now come in carefully without raising the dust, and let us examine the cat's footsteps, as you call them.'

Naripse advanced to the couch and considered the marks gravely.

'They are not the footmarks of any animal, they are something much more unaccountable. They are raindrops. And why should raindrops be here in this perfectly watertight room, and even then only in one small part of it? You can't very well explain that, and you certainly can't have expected it?'

'Look round and follow my points,' replied Mr Low. 'When we came to fetch Sullivan, I noticed the dust which far exceeds the ordinary accumulation even in the most neglected places. You may also notice that it is of a greenish colour and of extreme fineness. This dust is of the same nature as the powder you find in a puff-ball, and is composed of minute sporuloid bodies. I found that Sullivan's coat was covered with this fine dust, and also about the collar and upper portion of the sleeve I found one or two gummy drops which correspond to these raindrops, as you call them. I naturally concluded from their position that they had fallen from above. From the dust, or rather spores, which I found on Sullivan's coat, I have since cultivated no fewer than four specimens of fungi, of which three belong to known African species; but the fourth, so far as I know, has never been described, but it approximates most closely to one of the *phal-liodei*.'

'But how about the raindrops, or whatever they are? I believe they drop from that horrible stain.'

'They are drops from the stain, and are caused by the unnamed fungus I have just alluded to. It matures very rapidly, and absolutely decays as it matures, liquefying into a sort of dark mucilage, full of spores, which drips down, and diffuses a most repulsive odour. In time the mucilage dries, leaving the dust of the spores.'

'I don't know much about these things myself,' replied Naripse dubiously, 'and it strikes me you know more than enough. But look here, how about the light? You saw it last night yourself.'

'It happens that the three species of African fungi possess well known phosphorescent properties, which are manifested not only during decomposition, but also during the period of growth. The light is only visible from time to time; probably climatic and atmospheric conditions only admit of occasional efflorescence.'

'But,' objected Naripse, 'supposing it to be a case of poisoning by fungi as you say, how is it that Sullivan, though exposed to precisely the same sources of danger as the others who have passed a night here, has escaped? He has been very ill, but his mind has already regained its balance, whereas, in the three other cases, the mind was wholly destroyed.'

Mr Low looked very grave.

'My dear fellow, you are such an excitable and superstitious person that I hesitate to put your nerves to any further test.'

'Oh, go on!'

'I hesitate for two reasons. The one I have mentioned, and also because in my answer I must speak of curious and unpleasant things, some of which are proved facts, others only more or less well-founded assumptions. It is acknowledged that fungi exert an important influence in certain diseases, a few being directly attributable to fungi as a primary cause. Also it is an historical fact that poisonous fungi have more than once been used to alter the fate of nations. From the evidence before us and the condition of Bowie's body, I can but conclude that the unknown fungus I have alluded to is of a singularly malignant nature, and acts through the skin upon the brain with terrible rapidity, afterwards gradually interpenetrating all the tissues of the body, and eventually causing death. In Sullivan's case, luckily, the falling drops only touched his clothing, not his skin.'

'But wait a minute, Low, how did these fungi come here? And how can we rid the house of them? Upon my word, it is enough to make a man go off his head to hear about it. What are you going to do now?'

'In the first place we will go upstairs and examine the flooring just above that stained patch of ceiling.'

'You can't do that I'm afraid. The room above this happens to be divided into two portions by a hollow partition between 2ft and 3ft thick,' said Naripse, 'the interior of which may



originally have been meant for a cupboard, but I don't think it has ever been used.'

'Then let us examine the cupboard; there must be some way of getting into it.'

Upon this Naripse led the way upstairs, but as he gained the top, he leant back, and grasping Mr Low by the arm thrust him violently forward.

'Look! the light - did you see the light?' he said.

For a second or two it seemed as if a light, like the elusive light thrown by a rotating reflector, quivered on the four walls of the landing, then disappeared almost before one could be certain of having seen it.

'Can you point me out the precise spot where you saw the shining figure you told us of?' asked Low.

Naripse pointed to a dark corner of the landing.

'Just there in front of that panel between the two doors. Now that I come to think of it, I fancy there is some means of opening the upper part of that panel. The idea was to ventilate the cupboard-like space I mentioned just now.'

Naripse walked across the landing and felt round the panel, till he found a small metal knob. On turning this, the upper part of the panel fell back like a shutter, disclosing a narrow space of darkness beyond. Naripse thrust his head into the opening and peered into the gloom, but immediately started back with a gasp.

'The shining man!' he cried. 'He's there!'

Mr Flaxman Low, hardly knowing what to expect, looked over his shoulder; then, exerting his strength, pulled away some of the lower boarding. For within, at arm's length, stood a dimly shining figure! A tall man, with his back towards them, leaning against the left side of the partition, and shrouded from head to foot in faintly luminous white mould.

The figure remained quite motionless while they stared at it in surprise; then Mr Flaxman Low pulled on his glove, and, leaning forward, touched the man's head. A portion of the white mass came away in his fingers, the lower surface of which showed a bunch of frizzled negroid hair.

'Good Heavens, Low, what do you make of this?' asked

Naripse. 'It must be the body of Jake. But what is this shining stuff?'

Low stood under the wide skylight and examined what he held in his fingers.

'Fungus,' he said at last. 'And it appears to have some property allied to the mouldy fungus which attacks the common house-fly. Have you not seen them dead upon window-panes, stiffly fixed upon their legs, and covered with a white mould? Something of the same kind has taken place here.'

'But what had Jake to do with the fungus? And how did he come here?'

'All that, of course, we can only surmise,' replied Mr Low. 'There is little doubt that secrets of nature hidden from us are well known to the various African tribes. It is possible that the negro possessed some of these deadly spores, but how or why he made use of them are questions that can never be cleared up now.'

'But what was he doing here?' asked Naripse.

'As I said before we can only guess the answer to that question, but I should suppose that the negro made use of this cupboard as a place where he could be free from interruption; that he here cultivated the spores is proved by the condition of his body and of the ceiling immediately below. Such an occupation is by no means free from danger, especially in an airless and inclosed space such as his. It is evident that either by design or accident he became infected by the fungus poison, which in time covered his whole body as you now see. The subject of obeah,' Flaxman Low went on reflectively, 'is one to the study of which I intend to devote myself at some future period. I have, indeed, already made some arrangements for an expedition in connection with the subject into the interior of Africa.'

'And how is the horrible thing to be got rid of? Nothing short of burning the place down would be of any radical use,' remarked Naripse.

Low, who by this time was deeply engrossed in considering the strange facts with which he had just become acquainted, answered abstractedly: 'I suppose not.'

Naripse said no more, and the words were only recalled to Mr

Low's mind a day or two later, when he received by post a copy of the *West Coast Advertiser*. It was addressed in the handwriting of Naripse, and the following extract was lightly scored :

Konnor Old House, the property of Thomas Naripse, Esquire, of Konnor Lodge, was, we regret to say, destroyed by fire last night. We are sorry to add that the loss to the owner will be considerable, as no insurance policy had been effected with regard to the property.

W. B. Seabrook

## TOUSSEL'S PALE BRIDE

from THE MAGIC ISLAND

George G. Harrap, 1929

An elderly and respected Haitian gentleman whose wife was French had a young niece, by name Camille, a fair-skinned octoroon girl whom they introduced and sponsored in Port-au-Prince society, where she became popular, and for whom they hoped to arrange a brilliant marriage.

Her own family, however, was poor; her uncle, it was understood, could scarcely be expected to dower her – he was prosperous, but not wealthy, and had a family of his own – and the French *dot* system prevails in Haiti, so that while the young beaux of the *élite* crowded to fill her dance-cards, it became gradually evident that none of them had serious intentions.

When she was nearing the age of twenty, Matthieu Toussel, a rich coffee-grower from Morne Hôpital, became a suitor, and presently asked her hand in marriage. He was dark and more than twice her age, but rich, suave, and well educated. The principal house of the Toussel habitation, on the mountainside almost overlooking Port-au-Prince, was not thatched, mud-walled, but a fine wooden bungalow, slate-roofed, with wide verandahs, set in a garden among gay poisettias, palms, and Bougainvillea vines. He had built a road there, kept his own big motor-car, and was often seen in the fashionable cafés and clubs.

There was an old rumour that he was affiliated in some way with Voodoo or sorcery, but such rumours are current concerning almost every Haitian who has acquired power in the mountains, and in the case of men like Toussel are seldom taken seriously. He asked no *dot*, he promised to be generous, both to her and her straitened family, and the family persuaded her into the marriage.

The black planter took his pale girl-bride back with him to the mountain, and for almost a year, it appears, she was not un-

happy, or at least gave no signs of it. They still came down to Port-au-Prince, appeared occasionally at the club *soirées*. Toussel permitted her to visit her family whenever she liked, lent her father money, and arranged to send her young brother to a school in France.

But gradually her family, and her friends as well, began to suspect that all was not going so happily up yonder as it seemed. They began to notice that she was nervous in her husband's presence, that she seemed to have acquired a vague, growing dread of him. They wondered if Toussel were ill-treating or neglecting her. The mother sought to gain her daughter's confidence, and the girl gradually opened her heart. No, her husband had never ill-treated her, never a harsh word; he was always kindly and considerate, but there were nights when he seemed strangely preoccupied, and on such nights he would saddle his horse and ride away into the hills, sometimes not returning until after dawn, when he seemed even stranger and more lost in his own thoughts than on the night before. And there was something in the way he sometimes sat staring at her which made her feel that she was in some way connected with those secret thoughts. She was afraid of his thoughts and afraid of him. She knew intuitively, as women know, that no other woman was involved in the nocturnal excursions. She was not jealous. She was in the grip of an unreasoning fear. One morning when she thought he had been away all night in the hills, chancing to look out of the window, so she told her mother, she had seen him emerging from the door of a low frame building in their own big garden, set at some distance from the others and which he had told her was his office where he kept his accounts, his business papers, and the door always locked . . . 'So, therefore,' said the mother, relieved and reassured, 'what does this all amount to? Business troubles, those secret thoughts of his, probably . . . some coffee combination he is planning and which is perhaps going wrong, so that he sits up all night at his desk figuring and devising, or rides off to sit up half the night consulting with others. Men are like that. It explains itself. The rest of it is nothing but your nervous imagining.'

And this was the last rational talk the mother and daughter

ever had. What subsequently occurred up there on the fatal night of the first wedding anniversary they pieced together from the half-lucid intervals of a terrorized, cowering, hysterical creature, who finally went stark, raving mad. But what she had gone through was indelibly stamped on her brain; there were early periods when she seemed quite sane, and the sequential tragedy was gradually evolved.

On the evening of their anniversary Toussel had ridden away, telling her not to sit up for him, and she had assumed that in his preoccupation he had forgotten the date, which hurt her and made her silent. She went away to bed early, and finally fell asleep.

Near midnight she was awakened by her husband, who stood by the bedside, holding a lamp. He must have been some time returned, for he was fully dressed now in formal evening clothes.

'Put on your wedding dress and make yourself beautiful,' he said; 'we are going to a party.' She was sleepy and dazed, but innocently pleased, imagining that a belated recollection of the date had caused him to plan a surprise for her. She supposed he was taking her to a late supper-dance down at the club by the sea-side, where people often appeared long after midnight. 'Take your time,' he said, 'and make yourself as beautiful as you can - there is no hurry.'

An hour later when she joined him on the verandah, she said, 'But where is the car?'

'No,' he replied, 'the party is to take place here,' and she noticed that there were lights in the outbuilding, the 'office' across the garden. He gave her no time to question or protest. He seized her arm, led her through the dark garden, and opened the door. The office, if it had ever been one, was transformed into a dining-room, softly lighted with tall candles. There was a big old-fashioned buffet with a mirror and cut-glass bowls, plates of cold meats and salads, bottles of wine and decanters of rum.

In the centre of the room was an elegantly set table with damask cloth, flowers, glittering silver. Four men, also in evening clothes, but badly fitting, were already seated at this table. There were two vacant chairs at its head and foot. The seated

men did not rise when the girl in her bride-clothes entered on her husband's arm. They sat slumped down in their chairs and did not even turn their heads to greet her. There were wine-glasses partly filled before them, and she thought they were already drunk.

As she sat down mechanically in the chair to which Toussel led her, seating himself facing her, with the four guests ranged between them, two on either side, he said, in an unnatural strained way, the stress increasing as he spoke :

'I beg you . . . to forgive my guests their . . . seeming rudeness. It has been a long time . . . since . . . they have . . . tasted wine . . . sat like this at table . . . with . . . with so fair a hostess . . . But, ah, presently . . . they will drink with you, yes . . . lift . . . their arms, as I lift mine . . . clink glasses with you . . . more . . . they will arise and . . . dance with you . . . more . . . they will . . .'

Near her, the black fingers of one silent guest were clutched rigidly around the fragile stem of a wine-glass, tilted, spilling. The horror pent up in her overflowed. She seized a candle, thrust it close to the slumped, bowed face, and saw the man was dead. She was sitting at a banquet table with four propped-up corpses.

Breathless for an instant, then screaming, she leaped to her feet and ran. Toussel reached the door too late to seize her. He was heavy and more than twice her age. She ran still screaming across the dark garden, flashing white among the trees, out through the gate. Youth and utter terror lent wings to her feet, and she escaped . . .

A procession of early market-women, with their laden baskets and donkeys, winding down the mountainside at dawn, found her lying unconscious far below, at the point where the jungle trail emerged into the road. Her filmy dress was ripped and torn, her little white satin bride-slippers were scuffed and stained, one of the high heels ripped off where she had caught it in a vine and fallen.

They bathed her face to revive her, bundled her on a pack-donkey, walking beside her, holding her. She was only half conscious, incoherent, and they began disputing among themselves as peasants do. Some thought she was a French lady who had been thrown or fallen from a motor-car; others thought she

was a *Dominicaine*, which has been synonymous in creole from earliest colonial days with 'fancy prostitute'. None recognized her as Madame Toussel; perhaps none of them had ever seen her. They were discussing and disputing whether to leave her at a hospital of Catholic sisters on the outskirts of the city, which they were approaching, or whether it would be safer – for them – to take her directly to police headquarters and tell their story. Their loud disputing seemed to rouse her; she seemed partially to recover her senses and understand what they were saying. She told them her name, her maiden family name, and begged them to take her to her father's house.

There, put to bed and with doctors summoned, the family were able to gather from the girl's hysterical utterances a partial comprehension of what had happened. They sent up that same day to confront Toussel if they could – to search his habitation. But Toussel was gone, and all the servants were gone except one old man, who said that Toussel was in Santo Domingo. They broke into the so-called office, and found there the table still set for six people, wine spilled on the table-cloth, a bottle overturned, chairs knocked over, the platters of food still untouched on the sideboard, but beyond that they found nothing.

Toussel never returned to Haiti. It is said that he is living now in Cuba. Criminal pursuit was useless. What reasonable hope could they have had of convicting him on the unsupported evidence of a wife of unsound mind?

And there, as it was related to me, the story trailed off to a shrugging of the shoulders, to mysterious inconclusion.

What had this Toussel been planning – what sinister, perhaps criminal necromancy in which his bride was to be the victim or the instrument? What would have happened if she had not escaped?

I asked these questions, but got no convincing explanation or even theory in reply. There are tales of rather ghastly abominations, unprintable, practised by certain sorcerers who claim to raise the dead, but so far as I know they are only tales. And as for what actually did happen that night, credibility depends on the evidence of a demented girl.

So what is left?



What is left may be stated in a single sentence :

Matthieu Toussel arranged a wedding anniversary supper for his bride at which six plates were laid, and when she looked into the faces of his four other guests, she went mad.



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