FORGOTTEN FANTASY

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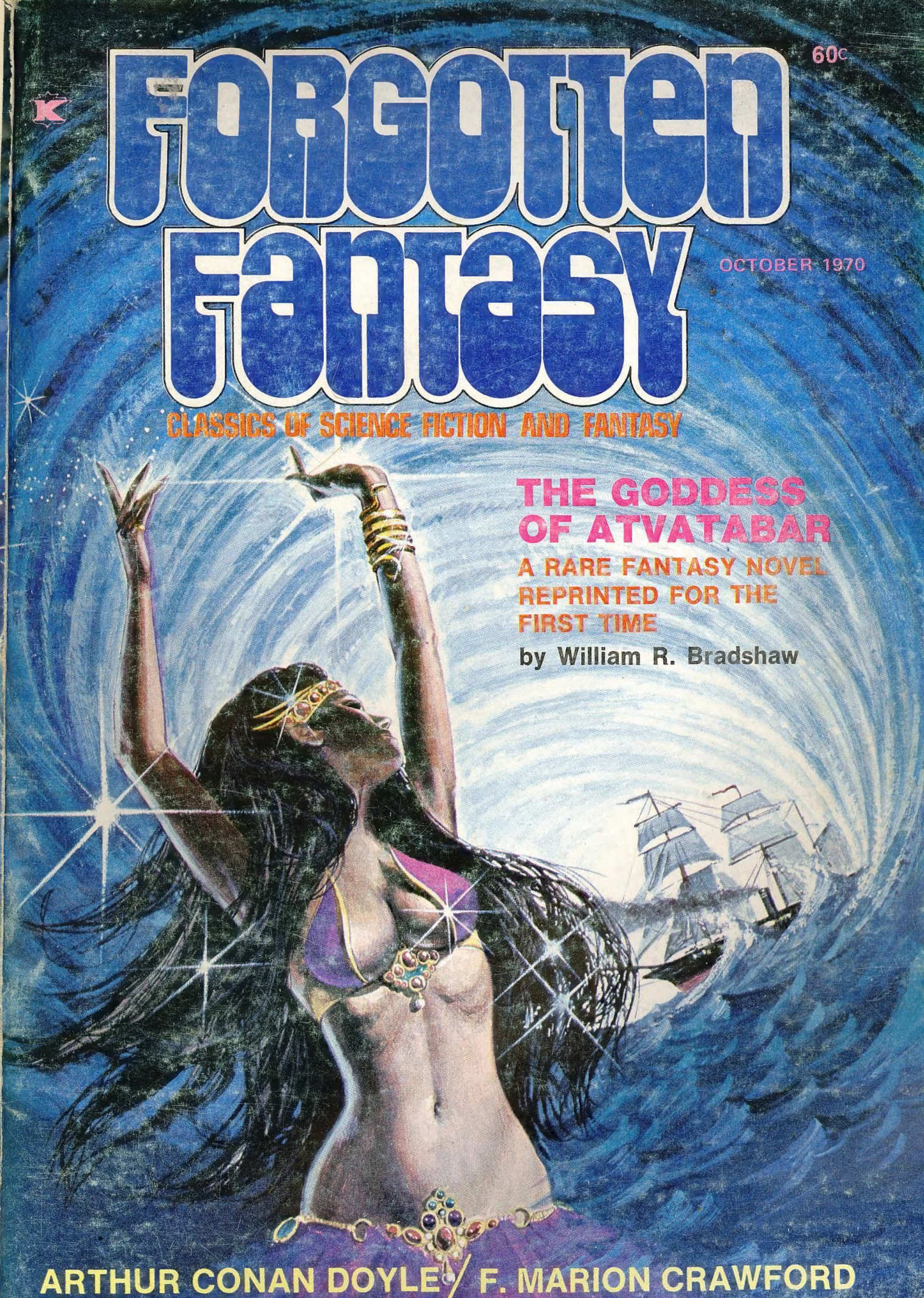
OCTOBER 1970

CLASSICS OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY



THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR

A RARE FANTASY NOVEL REPRINTED FOR THE FIRST TIME

by William R. Bradshaw

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE / F. MARION CRAWFORD

Summer

FORGOTTEN FANTASY

CLASSICS OF SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

Vol. 1, No. 1 October, 1970

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Cover by Bill Hughes, illustrating THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR. Interior illustrations by C. Durand Chapman, R. W. Rattray, Carl Gutherz, Harold Haven Brown, Paul de Longpre, and Bill Hughes.

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EDITOR: Douglas Menville ASSOC. EDITOR: R. Reginald

EDITORIAL

XCAVATIONS

ONCE there was a magazine. Actually, two magazines, and they were almost twins, except that one proved far stronger than the other, with a life span of fourteen years. They were the most beautiful fantasy magazines ever published, for they contained some of the finest work of such masters of fantastic art as Virgil Finlay, Hannes Bok, Frank R. Paul, and Lawrence. And they brought to a faithful and articulate readership, hungry for then-unavailable fantasy classics of the past, a fine selection of imaginative fiction from many sources.

When FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES made its newsstand debut with the September-October, 1939 issue, under the editorship of Mary Gnaedinger, it was a rather unimpressive-looking magazine; surrounded by the lurid covers of dozens of other pulps with names like TERROR TALES, THRILLING MYSTERY, AMAZING STORIES, WEIRD TALES, and THE SPIDER, it looked oddly sober. Only its name seemed at home. The first issue featured no cover illustration at all — merely a listing of the contents. But what contents! Here once again were fantasy classics thought lost forever in the yellowing pages of the old Munsey magazines of twenty and thirty years before. A. Merritt's THE MOON POOL! Ray Cummings' THE GIRL IN THE GOLDEN ATOM! Plus shorter stries by Manly Wade Wellman, Tod Robbins, Robert N. Leath, Donald Wandrei, and J.U. Giesy. Fantasy fans rejoiced! Almost immediately the magazine began to build up a loyal and grateful following, consisting of those who had read many of the old stories before, and were now enjoying them once more; and younger readers, who had missed the era of ARGOSY, ALL-STORY, CAVALIER, and the like. With the sixth issue, FFM's first cover illustration appeared — by Virgil Finlay — the first of many beautiful works of fantasy art with which he was to grace FFM and its forthcoming sister publication.

The first issue of FANTASTIC NOVELS was dated July, 1940, and featured the Austin Hall—Homer Eon Flint classic, THE BLIND SPOT, with a Finlay cover. The purpose of FN, as implied by its title, was to feature longer, complete works of fantasy, thereby eliminating the

necessity for serials in FFM. This would have worked out well, with FFM running shorter pieces and FN running novels, had not World War II intervened. The paper shortage soon demanded a sacrifice, and FANTASTIC NOVELS suspended publication in 1941, after only five issues.

FFM struggled bravely on through the war years, presenting a fine selection of magazine classics by A. Merritt, George Allan England, Austin Hall, Ralph Milne Farley, Francis Stevens, Ray Cummings, and many others, all graced with fabulous Finlay covers, each one more gorgeous than the next. Then, in 1943, two important changes occurred: First, Virgil Finlay went off to war, leaving as a replacement an excellent artist named Lawrence Sterne Stevens, who used the single *nom de pinceau* "Lawrence." He produced some amazingly beautiful covers and interior art, and was immediately accepted by a majority of the readers as a worthy successor to Finlay, who was not to return until 1946.

The second change was one of editorial policy: no more magazine story reprints, only hard-cover novels and short stories would be used. At first, many of the fans were dismayed by this switch, apparently unaware of the vast backlog of book fantasy available. But as Mary Gnaedinger proceeded to present her readers with an even better selection of fantasy classics than before, they soon settled back to a quarterly feast of rare, hard-to-find novels and short stories by such authors as H. Rider Haggard, John Taine, Algernon Blackwood, William Hope Hodgson, S. Fowler Wright, H.G. Wells, and many others.

By 1948, economics allowed the revival of FANTASTIC NOVELS, with A. Merritt's much-requested SHIP OF ISHTAR. Other Merritt novels followed, along with scarce works by Garrett P. Serviss, Tod Robbins, George Allan England, H.P. Lovecraft, Murray Leinster, and many more. And so, for a few brief years, the two magazines were again alive and well; but the end of an era was fast approaching.

Between the years 1951 and 1956, the pulps died out like dinosaurs, with only a few of the hardiest making the transition to the new digest size. FANTASTIC NOVELS was one of the earliest to go, in 1951. FFM was not far behind, although it lingered on valiantly, experimenting with new formats, until 1953. New science fiction was enjoying an incredible renaissance, and new titles were springing up like mushrooms, but for many loyal fans of the classics of yesteryear, the newsstands would never be the same again without that familiar lurid red-and-yellow heading blazing out at them.

For more than ten years afterward, newsstand pickings for lovers of classic fantasy were extremely slim: only an occasional reprint or two in a magazine or paperback anthology. Then, in 1962, the Burroughs boom sparked a few new paperback reprints of fantasy classics, but it was not until the Tolkien craze hit around 1965 that the fantasy renaissance burst into full bloom, deluging us with dozens of new swords-and-sorcery novels, and stimulating a new crop of fantasy reprints. Today, the most outstanding series of reprints is Lin Carter's fine Adult Fantasy line from Ballantine Books, while Dover Publications continues to provide an admirable selection of hard-to-find material by John Taine, Olaf Stapledon, H.G. Wells, and others in a quality paperback format. Today, the works of Edgar Rice Burroughs, A. Merritt, Robert E. Howard,

E.R. Eddison, H.P. Lovecraft, and other all-time favorites have been reprinted in paperback editions; but many of these and other reprints are themselves already out of print and fast becoming collectors' items. However, there still remains a vast reservoir of forgotten classics of imaginative literature to be reprinted.

In the magazine field, Robert A.W. Lowndes' fine group of publications — MAGAZINE OF HORROR, STARTLING MYSTERY STORIES, WEIRD TERROR TALES, and the forthcoming BIZARRE FANTASY TALES — is doing a superb job of reprinting weird fantasy from WEIRD TALES, STRANGE TALES, and other sources; and a few other magazines are reprinting stories from other old pulps, but there still has been no magazine to fill the gap left by the demise of FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and FANTASTIC NOVELS.

Until now.

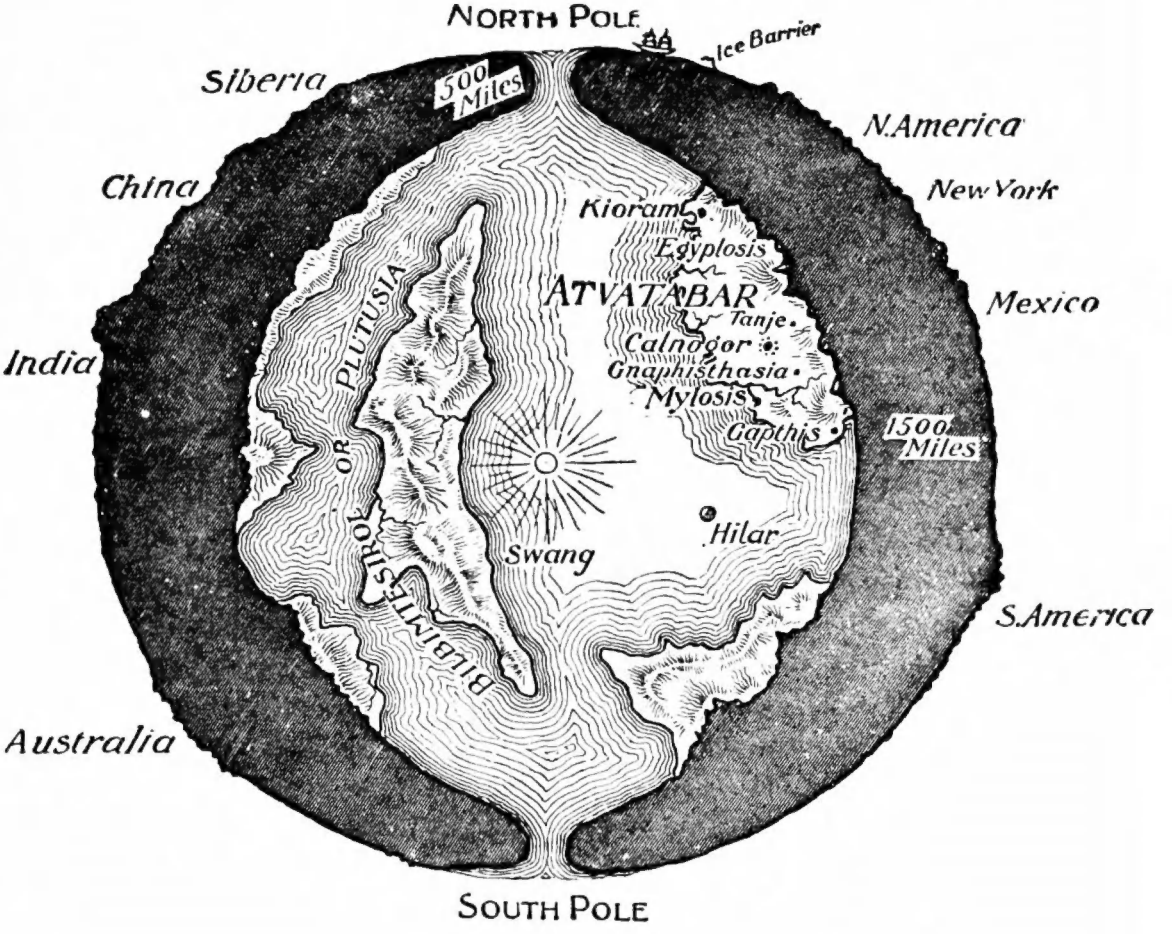
FORGOTTEN FANTASY has been created in an attempt to bring to today's fantasy fans some of the many novels and short stories of imaginative literature still forgotten in the mists of time, mouldering away in dusty libraries, some for nearly a century. Books which have become almost impossible to find by the collector, and for which he must pay exorbitant prices when they do turn up. We feel that many fans must be curious to read novels and stories of which they may have heard or seen advertised — to sample the quaint and fascinating concepts and imaginations of the men who shaped the course of today's imaginative fiction, long before there were any fantasy of SF magazines at all.

With this goal in mind, along with the goal of entertaining and diverting you for a while from the grim reality that surrounds us daily, here is the first issue of FORGOTTEN FANTASY. We intend to present works of imagination by authors both familiar and unfamiliar to today's readers — science fiction, adventure fantasy, ghost stories, weird fiction, tales of the occult, horror stories, all liberally spiced with fantasy art and decoration, old and new. To start with, we are bringing you one of the rarest of all science fiction classics: William R. Bradshaw's THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR, first published in 1892; plus a long novelette by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, THE PARASITE. To the best of my knowledge neither of these works has ever before been reprinted in this country. We hope you enjoy them.

If you do, write and let us know. Likewise, if you don't. We hope to establish a letter column in the next issue, so let us have it — we'll print as many as we have room for. FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES had one of the longest and most interesting letter sections of all the pulps during its reign, and such a section is the editor's only method of direct communication with his readers. And we believe that a magazine should care about what its readers think, and what they would like to see in it.

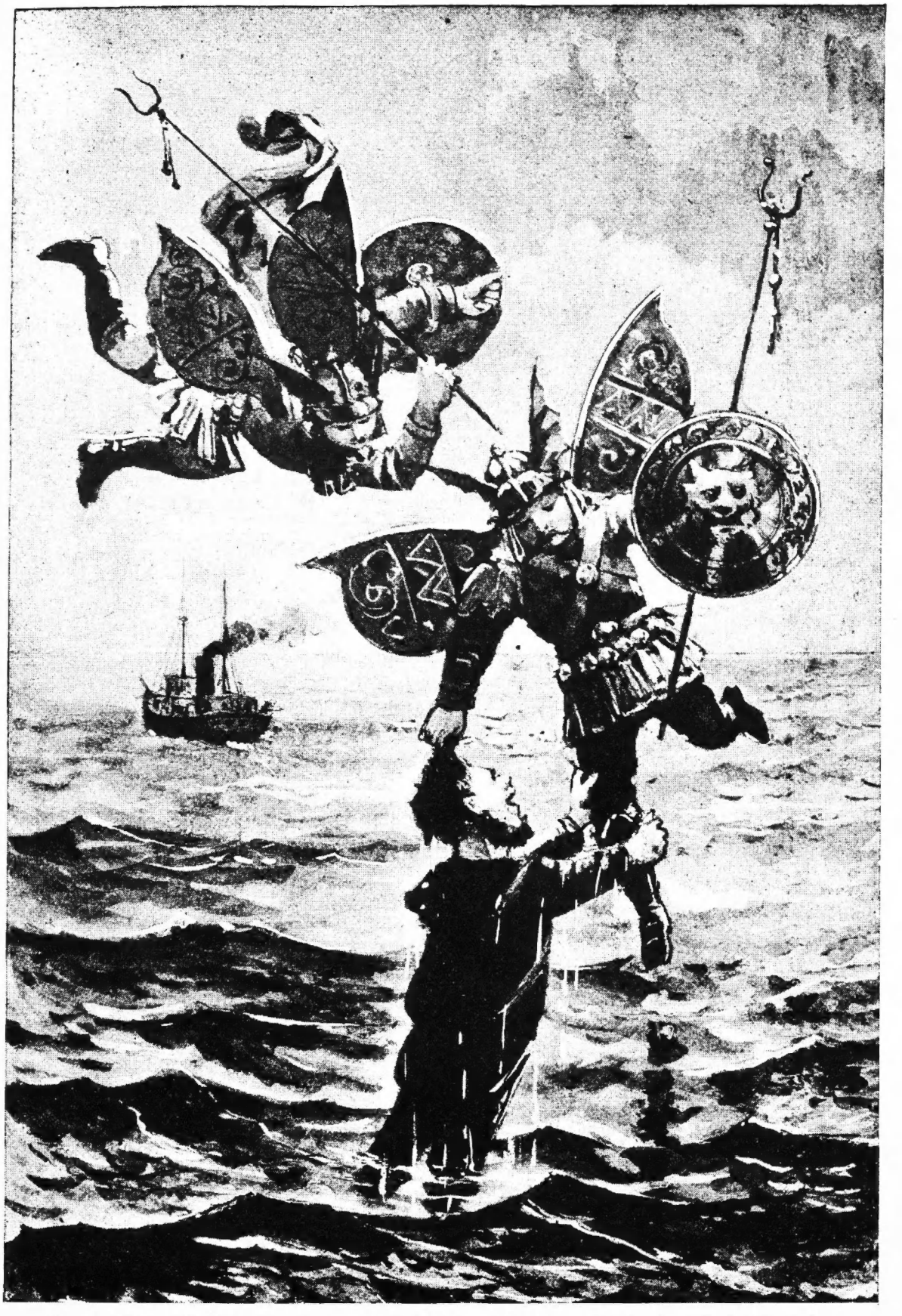
So — to Mary Gnaedinger, editor of the most beautiful fantasy magazines ever published, this first issue of FORGOTTEN FANTASY is respectfully dedicated.

—DM



MAP of the Interior World.

Frontispiece from THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR by William R. Bradshaw, published 1892 by J. F. Douthitt, New York.



One of the flying men caught Flathootly by the hair of the head, and lifted him out of the water.

THE

GODDESS OF ATVATABAR

BEING THE

HISTORY OF THE DISCOVERY

OF THE

INTERIOR WORLD

AND

CONQUEST OF ATVATABAR

BY

WILLIAM R. BRADSHAW

INTRODUCTION

"DOWN, down, down. Would the fall never come to an end? 'I wonder how many miles I've fallen by this time?' said she aloud. 'I must be getting somewhere near the centre of the earth. Let me see: that would be four thousands miles down, I think —' "

— ALICE'S ADVENTURES UNDER GROUND (1864)
by Lewis Carroll

The idea of a world inside our world has captivated the imaginations of writers and scientists for hundreds of years, extending back to the famous English astronomer Edmund Halley, discoverer of the world's most famous comet, who claimed in an essay published in 1692 that the earth was composed of four concentric spheres, each capable of bearing life, with light and heat supplied by luminous gases between the shells. The first treatment of the hollow earth theory in fiction seems to be the Danish novel by Ludvig Holberg, THE JOURNEY OF NIELS KLIM TO THE WORLD UNDERGROUND, first published in 1741. About 1786, one of the many extravagant journeys in R.E. Raspe's BARON MUNCHAUSEN concerned a short trip by the Baron to an underground world where he visited with Vulcan and Venus.

But it was a strange English-language circular sent to institutions of learning in 1818, apparently in earnest, by Captain John Cleve Symmes, that turned the imaginations of many writers toward the idea of a world inside the earth. In this circular, Captain Symmes claimed that the earth was hollow and liveable inside, containing a number of concentric spheres accessible by means of the poles. He published a non-fiction volume based on his theory in 1826, but six years previously, a Captain Adam Seaborn had written a novel of an inner world called SYMZONIA. It is entirely possible that Seaborn and Symmes were the same, but no one knows for sure. At any rate, Symmes' conception gave birth to a great many novels and stories dealing with interior worlds, as well as a number of non-fiction books which persist in taking the idea seriously. Even today, there are serious believers in the hollow earth theory still publishing books and articles on the subject. Edgar Allan Poe used the concept several times in his stories, most notably in the unfinished NARRATIVE OF ARTHUR GORDON PYM (1837); Jules Verne produced the most famous of all inner-world novels, A JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH, in 1864; that same year saw the first version of Lewis Carroll's immortal ALICE IN WONDERLAND, which was called ALICE'S ADVENTURES

UNDER GROUND; and Edgar Rice Burroughs' exciting Pellucidar novels, written between 1914 and 1944, were obviously derived directly from Symzonian theory

But along with the more famous treatments of the hollow earth in fiction, a number of inner-world novels by lesser-known authors were produced during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. One of the rarest and strangest of these is THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR, published in 1892 by J.F. Douthitt of New York, in a lavish volume illustrated by eight different artists! It follows the classic pattern of the Arctic voyage to discover the North Pole, and the entrance into a weird underground world through an opening there. But ATVATABAR is more than just a science fiction adventure story: the author combines advanced scientific concepts with a strange atmosphere of mysticism in a manner that should appeal to many of today's readers who are interested in the increasing awareness of occult and mystical teachings.

THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR was the only fantasy novel ever written by its author, William Richard Bradshaw. How he came to write such a strange story is a mystery in itself; what few facts are known about his life and work shed little light on the matter. Bradshaw was born in Ireland in 1851 and educated in Belfast and London, where he studied science and languages. He married Emma Douglas in 1878, and eventually became the father of two sons and three daughters. He became known in Ireland as an essayist, debater, and dramatic reader, and was appointed Commissioner for Taking Affidavits for Belfast and County Antrim, 1878. He came to the United States in 1883, where he became editor of LITERARY LIFE in 1886, and later of DECORATOR AND FURNISHER. Bradshaw became an authority on questions of decorative art, and contributed prose and verse to many magazines and journals. He wrote several volumes of non-fiction, including one on the history of wall paper and another on vivisection, which he fought for many years. He was President of the New York Anti-Vivisection Society when he died at his home in Flushing, New York, in 1927.

The illustrations reproduced here for THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR are from the first edition of the novel, which is reprinted here for the first time in almost 80 years.

THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR

CHAPTER I.

A POLAR CATASTROPHE

I HAD been asleep when a terrific noise awoke me. I rose up on my couch in the cabin and gazed wildly around, dazed with the feeling that something extraordinary had happened. By degrees becoming conscious of my surroundings, I saw Captain Wallace, Dr. Merryferry, Astronomer Starbottle, and Master-at-Arms Flathootly beside me.

"Commander White," said the captain, "did you hear that roar?"

"What roar?" I replied. "Where are we?"

"Why, you must have been asleep," said he, "and yet the roar was enough to raise the dead. It seemed as if both earth and heaven were split open."

"What is that hissing sound I hear?" I inquired.

"That, sir," said the doctor, "is the sound of millions of flying sea-fowl frightened by the awful noise. The midnight sun is darkened with the flight of so many birds. Surely, sir, you must have heard that dreadful shriek. It froze the blood in our veins with horror."

I began to understand that the *Polar King* was safe, and that we were all still alive and well. But what could my officers mean by the terrible noise they talked about?

I jumped out of bed saying, "Gentlemen, I must investigate this whole business. You say the *Polar King* is safe?"

"Shure, sorr," said Flathootly, the master-at-arms, "the ship lies still anchored to the ice-fut where we put her this afthernoon. She's all right."

I at once went on deck. Sure enough the ship was as safe as if in harbor. Birds flew about in myriads, at time obscuring the sun, and now and then we heard growling reverberations from distant icebergs, answering back the fearful roar that had roused

them from their polar sleep.

The sea, that is to say the enormous ice-pack in which we lay, heaved and fell like an earthquake. It was evident that a catastrophe of no common character had happened.

What was the cause that startled the polar midnight with such unwanted commotion?

Sailors are very superstitious; with them every unknown sound is a cry of disaster. It was necessary to discover what had happened, lest the courage of my men should give way and involve the whole expedition in ruin.

The captain, although alarmed, was as brave as a lion, and as for Flathootly, he would follow me through fire and water like the brave Irishman that he was. The scientific staff were gentlemen of education, and could be relied upon to show an example of bravery that would keep the crew in good spirits.

"Do you remember the creek in the ice-foot we passed this morning," said the captain, "the place where we shot the polar bear?"

"Quote well," I said.

"Well, the roar that frightened us came from that locality. You remember all day we heard strange squealing sounds issuing from the ice, as though it was being rent or splot open by some subterranean force."

The entire events of the day came to my mind in all their clearness. I did remember the strange sounds the captain referred to. I thought then that perhaps they had been caused by Professor Rackiron's shell of terrorite which he had fired at the southern face of the vast range of ice mountains that formed an impenetrable barrier to the pole. The men were in need of a change of diet, and we through the surest way of getting the sea-fowl was to explode a shell among them. The face of the ice cliffs was the home of innumerable birds peculiar to the Arctic zone. There myriads of gulls, kittiwakes, murres, guillemots, and such like creatures, made the ice alive with feathered forms.

The terrorite gun was fired with ordinary powder, and although we could approach no nearer the cliffs than five miles, on account of the solid ice-foot, yet our chief gun was good for that distance.

The sheel was fired and exploded high up on the face of the crags. The effect was startling. The explosion brought down

tons of the frosty marble. The debris fell like blocks of iron that rang with a piercing cry on the ice-bound breast of the ocean. Millions of sea-fowl of every conceivable variety darkened the air. Their rushing wings sounded like the hissing of a tornado. Thousands were killed by the shock. A detachment of sailors under First Officer Renwick brought in heavy loads of dead fowl for a change of diet. The food, however, proved indigestible, and made the men ill.

We resolved, as soon as the sun had mounted the heavens from his midnight declension, to retrace our course somewhat and discover the cause of the terrible outcry of the night. We had been sailing for weeks along the southern ice-foot that belonged to the interminable ice hills which formed an effectual barrier to the pole. Day after day the *Polar King* had forced its way through a gigantic floe of piled-up ice blocks, floating cakes of ice, and along ridges of frozen enormity, cracked, broken, and piled together in endless confusion. We were in quest of a northward passage out of the terrible ice prison that surrounded us, but failed to discover the sightest opening. It had become a question of abandoning our enterprise of discovering the North Pole and returning home again or abandoning the ship, and, taking our dogs and sledges, brave the nameless terrors of the icy hills. Of course in such case the ship would be our base of supplies and of action in whatever expedition might be set on foot for polar discovery.

About six o'clock in the morning of the 20th of July we began to work the ship around, to partially retrace our voyage. All hands were on the lookout for any sign of such a catastrophe as might have caused the midnight commotion. After travelling about ten miles we reached the creek where the bear had been killed the day before. The man on the lookout on the topmast sung out:

"Creek bigger than yesterday!"

Before we had time to examine the creek with our glasses he sung out:

"Mountains split in two!"

Sure enough, a dark blue gash ran up the hills to their very summit, and as soon as the ship came abreast of the creek we saw that the range of frozen precipices had been riven apart, and a streak of dark blue water lay between, on which the ship might possibly reach the polar sea beyond.

Dare we venture into that inviting gulf?

The officers crowded around me. "Well, gentlemen," said I, "what do you say, shall we try the passage?"

"We only measure fifty feet on the beam, while the fissure is at least one hundred feet wide; so we have plenty of room to work the ship," said the captain.

"But, captain," said I, "if we find the width only fifty feet a few miles from here, what then?"

"Then we must come back," said he, "that's all."

"Suppose we cannot come back — suppose the walls of ice should begin to close up again?" I said.

"I don't believe they will," said Professor Goldrock, who was our naturalist and was well informed in geology.

"Why not?" I inquired.

"Well," said he, "to our certain knowledge this range of ice hills extends five hundred miles east and west of us. The sea is here over one hundred and fifty fathoms deep. This barrier is simply a congregation of icebergs, frozen into a continuous solid mass. It is quite certain that the mass is anchored to the bottom, so that it is not free to come asunder and then simply close up again. My theory is this: Right underneath us there is a range of submarine rocks or hills running north and south. Last night an earthquake lifted this submarine range, say, fifty feet above its former level. The enormous upward pressure split open the range of ice resting thereon, and, unless the mountains beneath us subside to their former level, these rent walls of ice will never come together again. The passage will become filled up with fresh ice in a few hours, so that in any case there is no danger of the precipices crushing the ship."

"Your opinion looks feasible," I replied.

"Look," said he; "you will see that the top of the crevasse is wider than it is at the level of the water, one proof at least that my theory is correct."

The professor was right; there was a perceptible increase in the width of the opening at the top.

To make ourselves still more sure we took soundings for a mile east and west of the chasm, and found the professor's theory of a submarine range of hills correct. The water was shallowest right under the gap, and was very much deeper only a short distance on either side. I said to the officers and sailors: "My men, are you willing to enter this gap with a view of

getting beyond the barrier for the sake of science and fortune and the glory of the United States?"

They gave a shout of assent that robbed the gulf of its terrors. I signalled the engineer full speed ahead, and in a short time we crossed the ice-foot and entered the chasm.

It could be nothing else but an upheaval of nature that caused the rent, as the distance was uniform between the walls however irregular the windings made. And such walls! For a distance of twenty miles we sailed between smooth glistening precipices of palaeocrystic ice rising two hundred feet above the water. The opening remained perceptibly wider at the top than below.

After a distance of twenty miles the height gradually decreased until within a distance of another fifty miles the ice sank to the level of the water.

The sailors gave a shout of triumph which was echoed from the ramparts of ice. To our astonishment we found we had reached a mighty field of loose pack ice, while on the distant horizon were glimpses of blue sea!

CHAPTER II.

THE CAUSE OF THE EXPEDITION.

The *Polar King*, in lat. 84', long. 151' 14", had entered an ocean covered with enormous ice-floes. What surprised up most was the fact that we could make any headway whatever, and that the ice wasn't frozen into one solid mass as every one expected. On the contrary, leads of open water reached in all directions, and up those leading nearest due north we joyfully sailed.

May the 10th was a memorable day in our voyage. On that day we celebrated the double event of having reached the furthest north and of having discovered an open polar sea.

Seated in the luxurious cabin of the ship, I mused on the origin of this extraordinary expedition. It was certain, if my father were alive he would fully approve of the use I was making of the wealth he had left me. He was a man utterly without romance, a hard-headed man of facts, which quality

I signalled the engineer full speed ahead, and in a short time we crossed the ice-foot and entered the chasm.

doubtless was the cause of his amassing so many millions of dollars.

My father could appreciate the importance of theories, of enthusiastic ideals, but he preferred others to act upon them. As for himself he would say, "I see no money in it for me." He believed that many enthusiastic theories were the germs of great fortunes, but he always said with a knowing smile, "YOU know it is never safe to be a pioneer in anything. The pioneer usually gets killed in creating an inheritance for his successors." It was a selfish policy which arose from his financial experiences, that in proportion as a man was selfish he was successful.

I was always of a totally different temperament to my father. I was romantic, idealistic. I loved the marvellous, the magnificent, the miraculous and the mysterious, qualities that I inherited from my mother. I used to dream of exploring tropic islands, of visiting the lands of Europe and the Orient, and of haunting temples and tombs, palaces and pagodas. I wished to discover all that was weird and wonderful on the earth, so that my experiences would be a description of earth's girdle of gold, bringing within reach of the enslaved multitudes of all nations ideas and experiences of surpassing novelty and grandeur that would refresh their parched souls. I longed to whisper in the ear of the laborer at the wheel that the world was not wholly a blasted place, but that here and there oases made green its barrenness. If he could not actually in person mingle with its joys, his soul, that neither despot nor nonopolist could chain, might spread its wings and feast on such delights as my journeyings might furnish.

How seldom do we realize our fondest desires! Just at the time of my father's death the entire world was shocked with the news of the failure of another Arctic expedition, sent out by the United States, to discover, if possible, the North Pole. The expedition leaving their ship frozen up in Smith's Sound essayed to reach the pole by means of a monster balloon and a favoring wind. The experiment might possibly have succeeded had it not happened that the car of the balloon struck the crest of an iceberg and dashed its occupants into a fearful crevasse in the ice, where they miserably perished. This calamity brought to recollection the ill-fated Sir John Franklin and *Jeanette* expeditions; but, strange to say, in my mind at least, such disasters produced no deterrent effect against the setting forth

of still another enterprise in Arctic research.

From the time the expedition I refer to sailed from New York until the news of its dreadful fate reached the country, I had been reading almost every narrative of polar discovery. The consequence was I had awakened in my mind an enthusiasm to penetrate the sublime secret of the pole. I longed to stand, as it were, on the roof of the world and see beneath me the great globe revolve on its axis. There, where there is neither north, nor south, nor east, nor west, I could survey the frozen realms of death. I would dare to stand on the very pole itself with my few hardy companions, monarch of an empire of ice, on a spot that never feels the life-sustaining revolutions of the earth. I know that on the equator, where all is light, life, and movement, continents and seas flash through space at the rate of one thousand miles an hour, but on the pole the wheeling of the earth is as dead as the desolation that surrounds it.

I had conversed with Arctic navigators both in England and the United States. Some believed the pole would never be discovered. Others, again, declared their belief in an open polar sea. It was generally conceded that the Smith's Sound route was impracticable, and that the only possible way to approach the pole was by the Behring Strait route, that is, by following the 170th degree of west longitude north of Alaska.

I thought it a strange fact that modern sailors, armed with all the resources of science and with the experience of numerous Arctic voyages to guide them, could get only three degrees nearer the pole than Henry Hudson did nearly three hundred years ago. That redoubtable seaman possessed neither the ships nor men of later voyagers nor the many appliances of his successors to mitigate the intense cold, yet his record in view of the facts of the case remains triumphant.

It was at this time that my father died. He left me the bulk of his property under the following clause in his will:

"I hereby bequeath to my dear son, Lexington White, the real estate, stocks, bonds, shares, title-deeds, mortgages, and other securities that I die possessed of, amounting at present market prices to over five million dollars. I desire that my said son use this property for some beneficent purpose, of use to his fellow-men, excepting what money may be necessary for his personal wants as a gentleman."

I could scarcely believe my father was so wealthy as to be

able to leave me so large a fortune, but his natural secretiveness kept him from mentioning the amount of his gains, even to his own family. No sooner did I realize the extent of my wealth that I resolved to devote it to fitting out a private expedition with no less an object that to discover the North Pole myself. Of course I knew the undertaking was extremely hazardous and doubtful of success. It could hardly be possible that any private individual, however wealthy and daring, could hope to succeed where all the resources of mighty nations had failed.

Still, these same difficulties had a tremendous power of attracting fresh exploits on that fatal field. Who could say that even I alone might not stumble upon success? In a word, I had made up my mind to set forth in a vessel strong and swift and manned by sailors experienced in Arctic voyages, under my direct command. The expedition would be kept a profound secret; I would leave New York ostensibly for Australia, then, doubling Cape Horn, would make direct for Behring Sea. If I failed, none would be the wiser; if I succeeded, what fame would be mine!

CHAPTER III.

BEGINNING THE VOYAGE.

I determined to build a vessel of such strength and equipment as could not fail, with ordinary good fortune, to carry us through the greatest dangers in Arctic navigation. Short of being absolutely frozen in the ice, I hoped to reach the pole itself, if there should be sufficient water to float us. The vessel, which I named the *Polar King*, although small in size was very strong and compact. Her length was 150 feet and her width amidships 50 feet. Her frames and planking were made of well-seasoned oak. The outer planking was sheathed in steel plates from four to six inches in thickness. This would protect us from the edges of the ancient ice that might otherwise cut into the planking and so destroy the vessel.

The ship was armed as follows: A colossal terrorite gun that stood in the centre of the deck, whose 250-pound shell of explosive terrorite was fired by a charge of gunpowder without

exploding the terrorite while leaving the gun. This was to destroy ice-bergs and heavy pack-ice. A battery of twelve 100-pounder terrorite guns, with shells would explode by percussion in striking the object aimed at. A battery of six guns of the Gatling type, to repel boarding parties in case we reached a hostile country. There was also an armory of magazine rifles, revolvers, cutlasses, etc., as well as 50 tons of gunpowder, terrorite, and revolver-rifle cartridges.

The ship was driven by steam, the triple-expansion engine being 500-horse power and the rate of speed twenty-five miles an hour. By an important improvement on the steam engine, invented by myself, one ton of coal did the work of 50 tons without such improvement. The bunkers held 250 tons of coal, which was thus equal to 12,500 tons in any other vessel. There was also an auxiliary engine for working the pumps, electric dynamo, cargo, anchors, etc. One of the most useful fittings was the apparatus that both heated the ship and condensed the sea water for consumption on board ship, and for feeding the boilers.

The ship's company was as follows:

OFFICERS.

Lexington White, Commander of the Expedition.
Captain, William Wallace.
First Officer Renwick, Navigating Lieutenant.
Second Officer Auston, Captain of the terrorite gun.
Third Officer Haddock, Captain of the main deck battery.

SCIENTIFIC STAFF.

Professor Rackiron, Electrician and Inventor.
Professor Starbottle, Astronomer.
Professor Goldrock, Naturalist.
Doctor Merryferry, Ship's Physician.

PETTY OFFICERS.

Master-at-Arms Flathootly.
First Engineer Douglass.
Second Engineer Anthoney.
Pilot Rowe.
Carpenter Martin.
Painter Hereward.
Boatswain Dunbar.

Ninety-five able-bodied seamen, including mechanics, gunners, cooks, tailors, stockers, etc.

Total of ship's company, 110 souls.

Believing in the absolute certainty of discovering the pole and our consequent frame, I had included in the ship's stores a special triumphal outfit for both officers and sailors. This consisted of a Viking helmet of polished brass surmounted by the figure of a silver-plated polar bear, to be worn by both officers and sailors. For the officers a uniform of navy-blue cloth was provided, consisting of frock coat embroidered with a profusion of gold striping on shoulders and sleeves, and gold-striped pantaloons. For each sailor there was provided a uniform consisting of outer navy-blue cloth jacket, with inner blue serge jacket, having the figure of a globe embroidered in gold on the breast of the latter, surmounted by the figure of a polar bear in silver. Each officer and sailor was armed with a cutlass having the figure of a polar bear in silver-plated brass surmounting the hilt. This was the gala dress, but for every-day use the entire company was supplied with the usual Arctic outfit to withstand the terrible climate of high latitudes.

Foreseeing the necessity of pure air and freedom from damp surroundings, I had the men's berths built on the spar deck, contrary to the usual custom. The spar deck was entirely covered by a hurricane deck, thus giving complete protection from cold and the stormy weather we would be sure to encounter on the voyage.

Our only cargo consisted of provisions, ship's stores, ammunition, coal, and a large stock of chemical batteries and a dynamo for furnishing electricity to light the ship. We also shipped largely of materials to manufacture shells for the terrorite guns.

The list of stores included an ample supply of tea, coffee, canned milk, butter, pickles, canned meats, flour, beans, peas, pork, molasses, corn, onions, potatoes, cheese, prunes, pemmican, rice, canned fowl, fish, pears, peaches, sugar, carrots, etc.

The refrigerator contained a large quantity of fresh beef, mutton, veal, etc. We brought no luxuries except a few barrels of run for special occasion or accidents. Exposure and hard work will make the plainest food seen a banquet.

Thus fully equipped, the *Polar King* quietly left the Atlantic Basin in Brooklyn, N.Y., ostensibly on a voyage to Australia. The newspapers contained brief notices to the effect that Lexington White, a gentleman of fortune, had left New York for a voyage to Australia and the Southern Ocean, via Cape Horn, and would be gone for two years.

We left on New Year's Day, and had our first experience of a polar pack in New York Bay, which was thickly covered with crowded ice. Gaining the open water, we soon left the ice behind, and, after a month's steady steaming, entered the Straits of Megellan, having touched at Monte Video for supplies and water.

Leaving the Straits we entered the Pacific Ocean, steering north. Touching at Valparaiso, we sailed on without a break until we arrived at Sitka, Alaska, on the 1st of March.

Receiving our final stores at Sitka, the vessel at once put to sea again, and in a week reached Behring Strait and entered the Arctic Ocean. I ordered the entire company to put on their Arctic clothing, consisting of double suits of underclothing, three pairs of socks, ordinary wool suits, over which were heavy furs, fur helmets, moccasins and Labrador boots.

All through the Straits we had encountered ice, and after we had sailed two days in the Arctic Sea, a hurricane from the northwest smote us, driving us eastward over the 165th parallel, north of Alaska. We were surrounded with whirlwinds of snow frozen as hard as hail. We experienced the benefit of having our decks covered with a steel shell. There was plenty of room for the men to exercise on deck shielded from the pitiless storm that drove the snow like a storm of gravel before it. Exposure to such a blizzard meant frost-bite, perhaps death. The outside temperature was 40 below zero, the inside temperature 40 above zero, cold enough to make the men digest an Arctic diet.

We kept the prow of the ship to the storm, and every wave that washed over us made thicker our cuirass of ice. It was gratifying to note the contract between our comfortable quarters and the howling desolation around us.

While waiting for the storm to subside we had leisure to speculate on the chances of success in discovering the pole.

Captain Wallace had caused to be put up in each of our four cabins the following tables of Arctic progress made since Hudson's voyage in 1607:

RECORD OF HIGHEST LATITUDES REACHED.

Hudson . . .	80' 23" in 1607	Meyer . . .	82' 09" in 1871
Phipps . . .	80' 48" in 1773	Parry	82' 45" in 1827
Scoresby . .	81' 12" in 1806	Aldrich . . .	83' 07" in 1876
Payer	82' 07" in 1872	Markham . .	83' 20" in 1876
		Lockwood .	83' 24" in 1883

"Does it not seem strange," said I, "that nearly three hundred years of naval progress and inventive skill can produce no better record in polar discovery than this? With all our skill and experience we have only distanced the heroic Hudson three degrees; that is one degree for every hundred years. At this rate of progress the pole may be discovered in the year 2600."

"It is a record of naval imbecility," said the captain; "there is no reason why our expedition cannot at least touch the 85th degree. That would be doing the work of two hundred years in as many days."

"Why not do the work of the next 700 years while we are at it?" said Professor Rackiron. "Let us take the ship as far as we can go and then bundle our dogs and a few of the best men into the balloon and finish a job that the biggest governments on earth are unable to do."

"That's precisely what we've come here for," said I, "but we must have prudence as well as boldness, so as not to throw away our lives unnecessarily. In any case we will beat the record ere we return."

CHAPTER IV.

OUR ADVENTURES IN THE POLAR SEA.

The storm lasted four days. On its subsidence we discovered ourselves completely surrounded with ice. We were beset by a veritable polar pack, brought down by the violence of the gale. The ice was covered deeply with snow, which made a dazzling scene when lit by the brilliant sun. We seemed transported to a new world. Far as the eye could see huge masses of ice interposed with floe bergs of vast dimensions. The captain allowed the sailors to exercise themselves on the solidly frozen

snow. It was impossible to get any frest meat, as the pack, being of a temporary nature, had not yet become the home of bears, walrus, or seal.

We saw a water sky in the north, showing that there was open water in that direction, but meantime we could do nothing but drift in the embrace of the ice in an easterly direction. In about a week the pack began to open and water lanes to appear. A more or less open channel appearing in a northeasterly direction, we got the ship warped around, and, getting up steam, drew slowly out of the pack.

Birds began to appear and flocks of ducks and geese flew across our track, taking a westerly course. We were now in the latitude of Wrangel Island, but in west longitude 165. We had the good fortune to see a large bear floating on an isolated floe toward which we steered. I drew blood at the first shot, but Flathootly's rifle killed him. The sailors had fresh meat that day for dinner.

The day following we brought down some geese and eider ducks that sailed too near the ship. We followed the main leads in preference to forcing a passage due north, and when in lat. 78' long. 150' the watch cried out "Land ahead!" On the eastern horizon rose several peaks of mountains, and on approaching nearer we discovered a large island extending some thirty miles north and south. The ice-foot surrounding the land was several miles in width, and bringing the ship alongside, three-fourths of the sailors, accompanied by the entire dogs and sledges, started for the land on a hunting expedition.

It was a fortunate thing that we discovered the island, for, with our slow progress and monotonous confinement, the men were getting tired of their captivity and anxious for active exertion.

The sailors did not return until long after midnight, encouraged to stay out by the fact that it was the first night the sun remained entirely above the horizon.

It was the 10th of April, or rather the morning of the 11th, when the sailors returned with three of the five sledges laden with the spoils of the chase. They had bagged a musk ox, a bear, an Arctic wolf, and six hares — a good day's work. Grog was served all around in honor of the midnight sun and the capture of fresh meat. We dressed the ox and bear, giving the offal as well as the wolf to the dogs, and revelled for the next few days

in the luxury of fresh meat.

The island not being marked on our charts, we took credit to ourselves as its discoverers, and took possession of the same in the name of the United States.

The captain proposed to the sailors to call it Lexington Island in honor of their commander, and the men replied to his proposition with such a rousing cheer that I felt obliged to accept the distinction.

Flathootly reported that there was a drove of musk oxen on the island, and before finally leaving it we organized a grand hunting expedition for the benefit of all concerned.

Leaving but five men, including the first officer and engineer, on board to take care of the ship, I took charge of the hunt. After a rough-and-tumble scramble over the chaotic ice-foot, we reached the mainland in good shape, save that a dog broke its leg in the ice and had to be shot. Its companions very feelingly gave it a decent burial in their stomachs.

Mounting an ice-covered hillock, we saw, two miles to the southeast in a valley where grass and moss were visible, half a dozen musk oxen, doubtless the entire herd. We adopted the plan of surrounding the herd, drawing as near the animals as possible without alarming them. Sniffing danger in the southeasterly wind, the herd broke away to the northwest. The sailors jumped up and yelled, making the animals swerve to the north. A semicircle of rifles was discharged at the unhappy brutes. Two fell dead in their tracks and the remaining four, badly wounded, wheeled and made off in the opposite direction. The other wing of the sailors now had their innings as we fell flat and heard bullets fly over us. Three more animals fell, mortally wounded. A bull calf, the only remnant of the herd on its legs, looked in wonder at the sailor who despatched it with his revolver. The dogs held high carnival for an hour or more on the slaughtered oxen. We packed the sledges with a carcass on each, and in due time regained the ship, pleased with our day's work.

Leaving Lexington Island we steered almost due north through a vast open pack. On the 1st of May we arrived in lat. 78' 30" west long. 155' 50", our course having been determined by the lead of the lanes in the enormous drifts of ice. Here another storm overtook us, travelling due east. We were once more beset, and drifted helplessly for three days before the

A semicircle of rifles was discharged at the unhappy brutes, and two fell dead in their tracks.

storm subsided. We found ourselves in long. 150' again, in danger of being nipped. The wing, suddenly drifting to the east, reopened the pack for us to our intense relief.

Taking advantage of some fine leads and favorable winds, we passed through leagues of ice, piled-up floes and floebergs, forming scenes of Arctic desolation beyond imagination to conceive. At last we arrived at a place beyond which it was impossible to proceed. We had struck against the gigantic barrier of what appeared to be an immense continent of ice, for a range of ice-clad hills lay only a few miles north of the *Polar King*. At last the sceptre of the Ice King waved over us with the command, "Thus far and no further."

CHAPTER V.

WE ENTER THE POLAR GULF.

How the *Polar King* penetrated what appeared an insurmountable obstacle, and the joyful proof that the hills did not belong to a polar continent, but were a continuous congregation of icebergs, frozen in one solid mass, are already known to the reader.

The gallant ship continued to make rapid progress toward the open water lying ahead of us. Mid-day found us in 84' 10" north latitude and 150' west longitude. The sun remained in the sky as usual to add his splendor to our day of deliverance and exultation.

We felt what it was to be wholly cut off from the outer world. The chances were that the passage in the ice would be frozen up solid again soon after we had passed through it. Even with our dogs and sledges the chances were against our retreat southward.

The throbbing of the engine was the only sound that broke the stillness of the silent sea. The laugh of the sailors sounded hollow and strange, and seemed a reminder that with all our freedom we were prisoners of the ice, sailing where no ship had ever sailed nor human eye gazed on such a sea of terror and beauty.

Happily we were not the only beings that perpled the

solitudes of the pole. Flocks of gulls, geese, ptarmigan, and other Arctic fowls wheeled round us. They seemed almost human in their movements, and were the links that bound us to the beating hearts far enough off then to be regretted by us.

Every man on board the vessel was absorbed in thought concerning our strange position. The beyond? That was the momentous question that lay like a load on every soul.

While thinking of these things, Professor Starbottle inquired, if with such open water as we sailed in, how soon I expected to reach the pole.

"Well," said I, "we ought to be at the 85th parallel by this time. Five more degrees, or 300 miles, will reach it. The *Polar King* will cover that distance easily in twenty hours. It is now 6 P.M.; at 2 P.M. to-morrow, the 12th of May, we will reach the pole."

Professor Starbottle shook his head deprecatingly. "I am afraid, commander," said he, "we will never reach the pole."

His look, his voice, his manner, filled me with the idea that something dreadful was going to happen. My lips grew dry with a sudden excitement, as I hastily inquired why he felt so sure we would never reach the object of our search.

"What time is it, commander?" said he.

I pulled forth my chronometer; it was just six o'clock.

"Well, then," said he, "look at the sun. The sun has swung round to the west, but hasn't fallen any."

I looked at the sun, which, sure enough, stood as high as at mid-day. I was paralyzed with a nameless dread. I stood rooted to the deck in anticipation of some dreadful horror.

"Good heavens!" I gasped, "what — what do you mean?"

"I mean," said he, "the sun is not going to fall again on this course It's we who are going to fall."

"The sun will fall to its usual position at midnight," I stammered; "wait — wait till midnight."

"The sun won't fall at midnight," said the professor. "I am afraid to tell you why," he added.

"In God's name," I shouted, "tell me the meaning of this!"

I will never forget the feeling that crazed me as the professor said: "I fear, commander, we are falling into the interior of the earth!"

"You are mad, sir!" I shouted. "It cannot be — we are sailing to the North Pole."

"Wait till midnight, commander, "said he, shaking my hand. I took his hand and echoed his words — "Wait till midnight." After a pause I inquired if he had mentioned his extraordinary fears to any one else.

"Not a soul," he replied.

"Then," said I, "say nothing to anybody until midnight."

"Ay, ay, sir," said he, and disappeared.

The sailors evidently expected that something was going to happen on account of the sun standing still in the heavens. They were gathered in groups on deck discussing the situation with bated breath. I noticed them looking at me with wild eyes, like sheep cornered for execution. The officers avoided calling my attention to the unusual sight, possible divining I was already fully excited by it.

Never was midnight looked for so eagerly by any mortal on earth as I awaited the dreadful hour that would either confirm or dispel my fears.

Midnight came and the sun had not fallen in the sky! There he stood as high as at noonday, at least five degrees higher than his position twenty-four hours before.

Professor Starbottle, approaching me, said: "Commander, my prognostication was correct; you see the sun's elevation is unchanged since mid-day. Now one of two things has happened — either the axis of the earth has approached five degrees nearer the plane of its orbit since mid-day or we are sailing down into a subterranean gulf! That the former is impossible, mid-day to-day will disprove. If my theory of a subterranean sea is correct, the sun will fall below the horizon at mid-day, and our only light will be the earth-light of the opposite mouth of the gulf into which we are rapidly sinking."

"Professor," said I, "tell the officers and the scientific staff to meet me at once in the cabin. This is a tremendous crisis!"

Ere I could leave the deck the captain, officers, doctor, naturalist, Professor Rackiron, and many of the crew surrounded me, all in a state of the greatest consternation.

CHAPTER VI.

DAY BECOMES NIGHT AND NIGHT DAY.

"Commander," said Captain Wallace, "I beg to report that the pole star has suddenly fallen five degrees south from its position overhead, and the sun has risen to his mid-day position in the sky! I fear we are sailing into a vast polar depression something greater than the description given in our geographies, that the earth is flattened at the poles."

"Do you really think, captain," I inquired, "that we are sailing into a hollow place around the pole?"

"Why, I am sure of it," said he. "Nothing else can explain the sudden movement of the heavenly bodies. Remember, we have only passed the 85th parallel but a few miles and ought to have the pole star right overhead."

"Professor Starbottle has a theory," I said, "that may account for the strange phenomena we witness. Let these gentlemen hear your theory, professor."

The professor stated very deliberately what he had already communicated to me, viz.: that we were really descending to the interior of the earth, that the bows of the ship were gradually pointing to its centre, and that if the voyage were continued we would find ourselves swallowed up in a vast polar gulf leading to God knows what infernal regions.

The terror inspired by the professor's words was plainly visible on every face.

"Let us turn back!" shouted some of the sailors.

"My opinion." said the captain, "is that we have entered a polar depression; it is impossible to think that the earth is a hollow shell into which we may sail so easily as this."

"If I might venture a remark," said Pilot Rowe, "I think Professor Starbottle is right. If the earth is a hollow shell having a subterranean ocean, we can sail thereon bottom upward and masts downward, just as easily as we sail on the surface of the ocean here."

"I believe an interior ocean an impossibility," said the captain.

"You're right, sorr," said the master-at-arms, "for what would keep the ship sticking to the wather upside down?"

"I don't say that the earth is absolutely a hollow sphere," said the professor, "but I do say this, we are now sailing into a polar abyss, and if the sun disappears at noon to-day it will be because we have sailed far enough into the gulf to put the ocean over which we have sailed between us and that luminary. If the sun disappears at noon, depend upon it we will never reach the pole, which will forever remain only the ideal axis of the earth."

"Do you mean to say," I inquired, "that what men have called the pole is only the mouth of an enormous cavern, perhaps the vestibule of a subterranean world?"

"That is precisely the theory I advance to account for this strange ending of our voyage," said the professor.

The murmurs of excitement among the men again broke out into wild cries of "Turn back the ship!"

I encouraged the men to calm themselves. "As long as the ship is in no immediate danger," said I, "we can wait till noonday and see if the professor's opinion is supported by the behavior of the sun. If so, we will then hold a council of all hands and decide on what course to follow. Depart to your respective posts of duty until mid-day, when we will decide on such action as will be for the good of all."

The men, terribly frightened, dispersed, leaving Captain Wallace, First Officer Renwick, Professors Starbottle, Goldrock, and Rackiron, the doctor and myself together.

Dreadful as was the thought of quietly sinking into a polar gulf from which possibly there might be no escape, yet the bare possibility of returning to tell the world of our tremendous discovery created a desire to explore still further the abyss into which we had entered. I confess that my first feeling of terror was rapidly giving way to a passion for discovery. What fearful secrets might not be held in the darkness toward which we undoubtedly travelled! Would it be our fortune to pierce the darkness and silence of a polar cavern? When I thought of the natural terror of the sailors, I dared not think of our sailing further than mid-day, in case we had really entered an abyss.

"Commander," said Professor Starbottle, "this is the most important day, or rather night, of the voyage. I propose we stay on deck and enjoy the sunlight as long as we can."

One glance at the sun sufficed to tell us the truth; he was rapidly falling from the sky. At midnight he was 20 degrees and at 1 A.M. only 18 degrees above the waste of waters.

The terror inspired by the Professor's words was plainly visible on every face.

This proved we were as rapidly taking leave of the glorious orb, on an expedition fraught with the greatest peril and unknown possibilities of science, conquest, and commerce.

By a tacit consent we turned our attention to the scene around us. The water was very free from ice, only here and there icebergs floated. The diminished radiation of light produced a weird effect, growing more spectral as the sun sank in the heavens.

Professor Goldrock pointed out a flock of geese actually flying ahead of us into the gulf, if gulf indeed it were. We considered this a good omen and took heart accordingly.

The captain pointed out a strange apparition in the north, but which was really south of the pole, and discoverable with the glass. It appeared to be the limb of some rising planet between us and the sun that seemed faintly illuminated by moonlight. Professor Starbottle said it was the opposite edge of the polar gulf that was about to envelop us. It was illuminated by the earthlight reflected from the same ocean on which the *Polar King* floated.

The sun, as he swung round to the south, fell rapidly to the horizon, and at eight o'clock disappeared below the water. Was there ever a day in human experience as portentous as that? When did the sun set at 8 A.M. in the Arctic summer, leaving the earth in darkness? We knew then that Professor Starbottle's theory of a polar gulf was a truth beyond question. It was a fearful fact!

But the grandest spectacle we had yet seen now lay before us. The opposite rapidly rising limb of the polar gulf, 500 miles away, was brilliantly illuminated by the sun's rays far overhead, and its splendid earthlight, twenty times brighter than moonlight, falling upon us, compensated for the sudden obliteration of the daylight.

It was mid-day, and our only light was the earthlight of the gulf There stood over us the still rising circular rim of the ocean, sparkling like an enormous jewel. It was a bewildering experience In the light of that distant ocean I assembled the men on deck and thus addressed them:

"My men, when we started on the present expedition you stipulated for a voyage of discovery to the North Pole (if possible) and return to New York again. The first part of the voyage is happily accomplished. We alone of all the explorers

who have essayed polar discovery have been rewarded with a sight of the pole. The mystery of the earth's axis is no longer a secret. Here before your eyes is the axis on which the earth performs its daily revolution. The North Pole is an immense gulf 500 miles in diameter and of unknown depth. Within this gulf lies our ship, at least a hundred miles below the level of the outer ocean!

"The question we are now called upon to decide is this: Are we to remain satisfied with our present achievement, turn back the ship, and go home without attempting to discover whither leads this enormous gulf? As far as the officers of the ship and the scientific staff are concerned, as far as I myself am concerned, I am satisfied if we were once back in New York again, our first thought would be to return hither, and, taking up the thread of our journey, endeavor to explore the farthest recesses of the gulf."

I was here interrupted by loud applause from the entire officers and many of the men.

"This being so, why should we waste a journey to New York and back again for nothing? Why not, with our good ship well armed and provisioned, that has in safety carried us so far, why not, I say, proceed further, taking advantage of the only opportunity the ages of time have ever offered to man to explore earth's profoundest secrets?

"Who knows what oceans, what continents, what nations, it may be of men like ourselves, may not exist in a subterranean world? Who knows what gold, what silver, what precious stones are there piled perhaps mountains high? Are we to tamely throw aside the possibility of such glory on account of base fears, and, returning home, allow others to snatch from our grasp the golden prize?

"My men, I cannot think you will do this. Our future lies entirely in your hands. We cannot proceed further on our voyage without your assistance. I will not compel a single man to go further against his will. I call for volunteers for the interior world! I am willing to lead you on; who will follow me?"

CHAPTER VII.

WE DISCOVER THE INTERIOR WORLD.

The officers and sailors responded to my speech with ringing cheers. Every man of them volunteered to stay by the ship and continue our voyage down the gulf. Whatever malcontents there may have been among the sailors, those, influenced by the prevailing enthusiasm, were afraid to exhibit any cowardice, and all were unanimous for further exploration.

I signalled our resolution by a discharge of three guns, which created the most thrilling reverberations in the mysterious abyss.

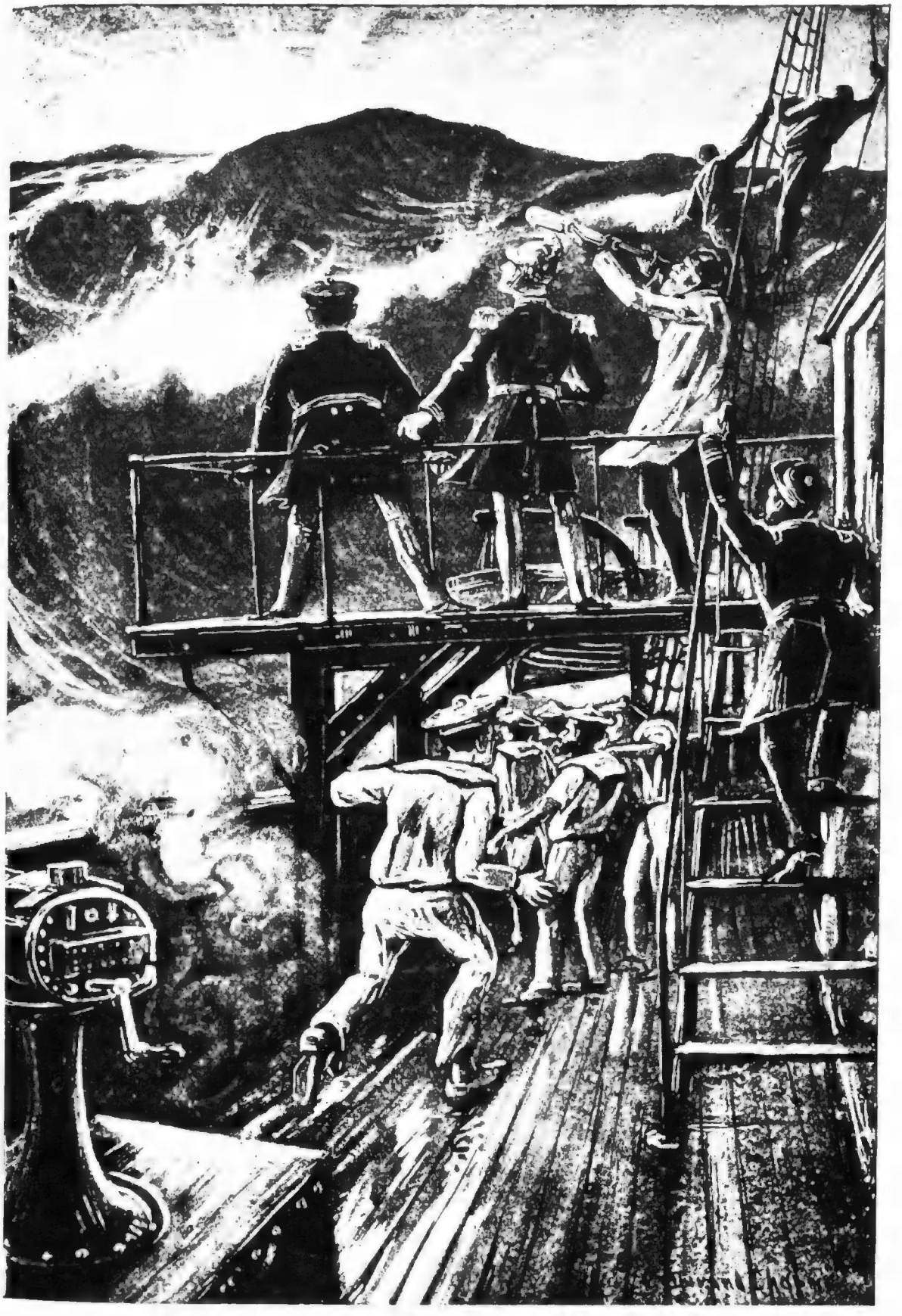
Starting the engine again, the prow of the *Polar King* was pointed directly toward the darkness before us, toward the centre of the earth. We were determined to explore the hollow ocean to its further confines, if our provisions held out until such a work would be accomplished.

We hoped at midnight to obtain our last look at the sun, as we would then be brought into the position of the opposite side of the watery crater down which we sailed. At eleven o'clock the sun rose above the limb of the gulf, which was now veiled in darkness. We were gladdened with two hours of sunlight, the sun promptly setting at 1 A.M. of the new day.

We continued our voyage in the semi-darkness, the prow of the vessel still pointed to the centre of the earth, while the polar star shone in the outer heavens on the horizon directly over the rail of the vessel's stern.

It did not appear to us that we were dropping straight down into the interior of the earth; on the contrary, we always seemed to float on a horizontal sea, and the earth seemed to turn up toward us and the polar cavern to gradually engulf us. The sight we beheld that day was inexpressibly magnificent. Five hundred miles above us rose the crest of the circular polar sea. Its upper hemisphere glowed with the light of the unseen sun. We were surrounded by fifteen hundred miles of perpendicular ocean, crowned with a diadem of icebergs!

Glorious as was the sight, the sailors were terribly apprehensive of nameless disasters in such monstrous surroundings. It was impossible for them to understand how the



At this moment a wild cry arose from the sailors.
With one voice they shouted, "The sun! The sun!"

ocean roof could remain suspended above us like the vault of heaven. The idea of being able to sail down a tubular ocean, the antechamber of some infernal world, was incomprehensible. We were traversing sea-built corridors, whose oscillating floors and roof remained providentially apart to permit us to explore the mystery beyond.

Mid-day on the 13th of May brought no sight of the sun, but only a deepening twilight, the dim reflection of the bright sky we had left behind. The further we sailed into the gulf the less its diameter grew. When we had penetrated the vast aperture some two hundred and fifty miles, we found the aerial diameter was reduced to about fifty miles, thus forming a conical abyss. We were clearly sailing down a gigantic vortex or gulf of water, and we began to feel a diminishing gravity the further we approached the central abyss.

The cavernous sea was subject to enormous undulations, or tidal waves, either the result of storms in the interior of the earth or mighty adjustments of gravity between the interior and exterior oceans. As we were lifted up upon the crest of an immense tidal wave several of the sailors, as well as the lookout, declared they had seen a flash of light, in the direction of the centre of the earth!

We were all terribly excited at the news, and as the ship was lifted on the crest of the next wave, we saw clearly an orb of flame that lighted up the circling undulations of water with the flush of dawn! We were now between two spectral lights — the faint twilight of the outer sun and the intermittent dawn of some strange source of light in the interior of the earth.

The sailors crowded to the top of both masts and stood upon cross-trees and rigging, wildly anxious to discover the meaning of the strange light and whatever the view from the next crest of waters would reveal.

"What do you think is the source of this strange illumination," I inquired of the captain, "unless it is the radiance of fires in the centre of the earth?"

"It comes from some definite element of fire," said the professor, "the nature of which we will soon discover. It certainly does not belong to the sun, nor can I attribute it to an aurora dependent on solar agency."

"Possibly," said Professor Rackiron, "we are on the threshold of if not the infernal regions at least a supplementary edition of

the same. We may be yet presented at court — the court of Mephistopheles."

"You speak idle words, professor," said I. "On the eve of confronting unknown and perhaps terrible consequences you walk blindfold into the desperate chances of our journey with a jest on your lips."

"Pardon me, commander," said he, "I do not jest. Have not the ablest theologians concurred in the statement that hell lies in the centre of the earth, and that the lake of fire and brimstone there sends up its smoke of torment? For aught we know this lurid light is the reflection of the infernal fires."

At this moment a wild cry arose from the sailors. With one voice they shouted:

"The sun! The sun! The sun!"

The *Polar King* had gained at last the highest horizon or vortex of water, and there, before us, a splendid orb of light hung in the centre of the earth, the source of the rosy flame that welcomed us through the sublime portal of the pole!

As soon as the astonishment consequent on discovering a sun in the interior of the earth had somewhat subsided, we further discovered that the earth was indeed a hollow sphere. It was now as far to the interior as to the exterior surface, thus showing the shell of the earth to be at the pole at least 500 miles in thickness. We were half way to the interior sphere.

Professor Starbottle, who had been investigating the new world with his glass, cried out: "Commander, we are to be particularly congratulated; the whole interior planet is covered with continents and oceans just like the outer sphere!"

"We have discovered an El Dorado," said the captain, with enthusiasm; "if we discover nothing else I will die happy."

"The heaviest elements fall to the centre of all spheres," said Professor Goldrock. "I am certain we shall discover mountains of gold ere we return."

"I think we ought to salute our glorious discovery," said Professor Rackiron. "You see the infernal world isn't nearly so bad a place as we thought it was."

I ordered a salute of one hundred terrorite guns to be given in honor of our discovery, and the firing at once began. The echoed roaring of the guns was indescribably grand. The trumpet-shaped caverns of water, both before and behind us, multiplied the heavy reverberations until the air of the gulf was

rent with their thunder. The last explosion was followed by long-drawn echoes of triumph that marked our introduction to the interior world.

Strange to say that on the very threshold of success there are men who suddenly take fright at the new conditions that confront them. It appeared that Boatswain Dunbar and eleven sailors who had unwillingly sailed thus far refused to proceed further with the ship, being terrified at the discovery we had made. I could have obliged them to have remained with us, but their reason being possibly affected, I saw that their presence as malcontents might in time cause a mutiny, or at all events an ever-present source of trouble. They were wildly anxious to leave the ship and return home; consequently I gave them liberty to depart. The largest boat was lowered, together with a mast and sails. I gave the command to Dunbar, and furnished the boat with ample stores and planty of clothing. I also gave them one-half of the dogs and two sledges for crossing the ice. When the men were finally seated Dunbar cast off the rope and steered for the outer sea. We gave them a parting salute by firing a gun, and in a short time they were lost in the darkness of the gulf.

CHAPTER VIII.

EXTRAORDINARY LOSS OF WEIGHT.

The first thought that occurred to us after the excitement of discovery had somewhat subsided was that the interior of the earth was in all probability a habitable planet, possessing as it did a life-giving luminary of its own, and our one object was to get into the planet as quickly as possible. A continual breeze from the interior ocean of air passed out of the gulf. Its temperature was much higher than that of the sea on which we sailed, and it was only now that we began to think of laying off our Arctic furs.

A closer observation of the interior sun revealed the knowledge that it was a very luminous orb, producing a climate similar to that of the tropics or nearly so. As we entered the interior sphere the sun rose higher and higher above us, until at

last he stood vertically above our heads at a height of about 3,500 miles. We saw at once what novel conditions of life might exist under an earth-surrounded sun, casting everywhere perpendicular shadow, and neither rising nor setting, but surgace of the world, proved that the shell of the earth, naturally made thicker at the equator by reason of centrifugal by oceans, continents, islands, and seas.

A peculiar circumstance, first noticed immediately after arriving at the centre of the gulf, was that each of us possessed a sense of physical buoyancy, hitherto unfelt.

Flathootly told me he felt like jumping over the mast in his newly-found vigor of action, and the sailors began a series of antics quite foreign to their late stolid behavior. I felt myself possessed of a very elastic step and a similar desire to jump overboard and leap miles out to sea. I felt that I could easily jump a distance of several miles.

Professor Starbottle explained this phenomenal activity by stating that on the outer surface of the earth a man who weighs one hundred and fifty pounds, would weigh practically nothing on the interior surface of an earth shell of any equal thickness throughout. But the fact that we did weigh something, and that the ship and ocean itself remained on the under surface of the world, proved that the shell of the arth, naturally made thicker at the equator by reason of centrifugal gravity than at the poles, has sufficient equatorial attraction to keep open the polar gulf. Besides this centrifugal gravity confers a certain degree of weight on all objects in the interior sphere.

"I'll get a pair of scales," said Flathootly, "an' see how light I am in weight."

"Don't mind scales," said the professor, "for the weights themselves have lost weight."

"Well, I'm one hundred and seventy-five pounds to a feather," said Flathootly, "an' I'll soon see if the weights are right or not."

"The weights are right enough," said the professor, "and yet they are wrong."

"An' how can a thing be roight and wrang at the same time, I'd loike to know? We'll thry the weights anyway," said the Irishman.

So saying, Flathootly got a little weighing machine on deck, and, standing thereon, a sailor piled on the weights on the

opposite side.

He shouted out: "There now, do you see that? I'm wan hundred and siventy-siven pounds, jist what I always was."

"My dear sir," said the professor, "you don't seem to understand this matter; the weights have lost weight equally with yourself, hence they still appear to you as weighing one hundred and seventy-seven pounds."

"Excuse me, sorr," said Flathootly. "If the weights have lost weight, the chap that stole it was cute enough to put it back again before I weighed meself. Don't you see wid yer two eyes I'm still as heavy as iver I was?"

"You will require ocular demonstration that what I say is correct. Here, sir, let me weigh you with this instrument," said the professor.

The instrument referred to was a large spring-balance with which it was proposed to weigh Flathootly. One end of it was fastened to the mast, and to the hook hanging from the other end the master-at-arms secured himself. The hand on tne dial plate moved a certain distance and stopped at seventeen pounds. The expression on the Irishman's face was something awful to behold.

"Does this machine tell the thruth?" he inquired in a tearful voice.

We assured him it was absolutely correct. He only weighed seventeen pounds.

"Oh, howly Mother of Mercy!" yelled Flathootly. "Consumption has me by the back of the neck. I've lost a hundred and sixty pounds in three days. Oh, sir, for the love of heaven, take me back to me mother. I'm kilt entoirely."

It wa ssome time before Flathootly could understand that his lightness of weight was due to the lesser-sized world he was continually arriving upon, together with centrifugal gravity, and that we all suffered from his affliction of being each "less than half a man" as he termed it. The weighing of the weights wherewith he had weighed himself proved conclusively that the depreciation in gravity applied equally to everything around us.

The extreme lightness of our bodies, and the fact that our muscles had been used to move about ten times our then weight, was the cause of our wonderful buoyancy.

The sailors began leaping from the ship to a large rock that rose out of the water about half a mile off. Their agility was

marvellous, and Flathootly covered himself with glory in leaping over the ship hundreds of feet in the air and alighting on the same spot on deck again.

Their officers and scientific staff remained on deck as became their dignity, although tempted to try their agility like the sailors.

Flathootly surprised us by leaping on a yardarm and exclaiming: "Gintlemen, I tell ye what it is, I'm no weight at all."

"How do you make that out?" said the professor.

"Well, Oi've been thinking," said he, "that, as you say, we're in the middle of the two wurrlds. Now it stands to sense that the wan wurrld, I mane the sun up there, is pullin' us up an' the t'other wurrld is pullin' us down, an as both wurrlds is pulling aqually, why av corse we don't amount to no weight at all. How could I turn fifteen summersaults at wance if I was any weight? That shows yer weighing machine is all wrang again."

"How can you stand on the deck if you are no weight?" inquired the professor.

"Why, I'm only pressing me feet on the boards," said the Irishman; "look here!" So saying, he leaped from the yard and revolved in the air at least twenty times before alighting on the deck.

"Now," said the professor, "I'll explain why you only weigh seventeen pounds as indicated by the spring-balance. We have sailed down the gulf 500 miles, haven't we?"

"Yis, sorr."

"And here we are sailing upside down on the inside roof of the world —"

"Sailin' upside down? Indeed, sorr, an' ye can't make me believe that, for shure I'm shtandin' on me feet like yourself, head uppermost."

"Well, whether you believe it or not, we are sailing upside down, just as ships going to Australia sail upside down as compared with ships sailing the North Atlantic. But the point of gravity is this: Here we are surrounded on all sides by the shell of the earth, which attracts equally in all directions. Hence all objects in the interior world have no weight as regards whatever thickness of the earth's shell surrounds them. You see, weight is caused by an object having the world on one side of it. Thus both the world and the object attract each other according to

the density and distance apart. What we call a pound weight is a mass of matter attracted by the earth on its surface with a force equal to the weight of sixteen ounces. A pound weight on the surface of the earth weighs sixteen ounces, and all the mighty volume of our planet, with all its mountains, continents and seas, weighs only sixteen ounces on the surface of a pound weight. The earth may still weigh many millions of tons as regards the sun, but as regards a pound weight it only weighs sixteen ounces."

"That is an illustration of Flathootly's mental calibre," said Captain Wallace. "He only believes what his brain can accommodate in the way of knowledge."

"God bless the captain," said Flathootly, "I'm shure his brain is as big as mine any day in the week."

"Now," continued the astronomer, "it seems to me that the substances of the earth, rocks, metals, and water, have, under the influence of centrifugal gravity, massed themselves very thickly at the equator or point of greatest motion, and stretch toward the poles in a gradually-lessening mass until the polar gulfs are reached. Thus the earth's shell resembles a musk-melon with the inside cleaned out."

"It makes me mouth wather to think of it," said Flathootly.

"Now, listen," said the astronomer; "we are also under the influence of the earth's centrifugal motion, and wherever we are on the interior surface we swing round our circle of latitude in twenty-four hours, and thus men, ship, and ocean are held up against the interior vault like a boy being able to hold water in a vertical position at the bottom of the pail he swings round him at the end of a cord."

"Don't you think, professor," I inquired, "we will become heavier as we approach the region of greatest motion under the equator?"

"I don't think so," he replied, "for the ocean around the poles has naturally gravitated to the internal as well as to the external equator, to restore the equilibrium of gravity. The reason why a man does not weigh less on the external equator than at the poles, although flying around at the rate of a thousand miles an hour, is that the deeper ocean, that is, the extra twenty-six miles that the earth is thicker on the equator, counterbalances by its attraction the loss of weight due to the rapid centrifugal motion, and so preserves in all objects on the

earth a uniform weight."

"The whole thing," said Flathootly, "is as clear as mud. I'm glad to know, sorr, I haven't lost me entire constitution at all evinets, an' if I can only carry home what weight I've got lift I'll make a fortune in a dime museum."

CHAPTER IX.

AFLOAT ON THE INTERIOR OCEAN.

As the *Polar King* sped southward over the interior sea the wonders of the strange world we had discovered began to dawn upon us. The colossal vault rose more and more above us and the sun threw his mild and vertical rays directly upon ship and sea, producing a most delightful climate. The ocean had a temperature of 75 degrees Fahr. and the air 85 degrees. We were absolutely sailing upside down to an inhabitant of the outer sphere, yet we seemed to ourselves to be sailing naturally erect on the sea with the sun above us.

Our first experience in the internal sphere was that of a sudden storm. The sun grew dark and appeared like a disc of sombre gold. The ocean was lashed by a furious hurricane into incredible mountains of water. Every crest of the waves seemed a mass of yellow flame. The internal heavens were rent open with gulfs of sulphur-colored fire, while the thunder reverberated with terrible concussions. The ship would spin upon the water as though every wave were a whirlpool. A golden-yellow phosphorescence covered the ocean. The water boiled in maddening eddies of lemon-colored seas, while from the hurricane decks streamed cataracts of saffron fire. The lightning, like streaks of molten gold, hurled its burning darts into the sea. Everything bore the glow of amber-colored fire. The sailors congratulated themselves on the shelter provided by the deck overhead. The motion of the ship exceeded all former experiences, for it leaped and plunged in a terrific manner. It was a question whether we would survive the storm or not, so violent was the shaking up both ship and men received. Fortunately, the loss of weight in everything, which was the cause of the rapid motion, permitted no more damage than

would be caused by a lesser storm on heavier objects.

The professor stated that he believed the tempest was occasioned by a polar tidal wave of air rushing into the interior sphere, to supply the exhaustion caused by outgoing warm currents, owing perhaps to a periodical overheating of the air by the internal sun. When a certain volume of the air was expelled, so that it could no longer resist external pressure, then the external air rushed down the polar gulf, creating by meeting warm outward-flowing currents cyclones such as we were then experiencing.

By degrees the storm abated, the sea grew calm, the heavens above us became clearer, and the sun assumed the rose-color he first presented to our gaze, standing right in the zenith.

The only damage done to the crew was a few broken limbs and some severe bruises. The ship had lost several spars, and one of her boats was blown out of its lashings on deck and was lost.

It was a week since we had left the outer world, and what a change had occurred in that short space of time! The excitement had been so intense that not a man of us had slept during that period, and as for meals, we had forgotten about them altogether.

A general order was given the cooks to prepare a banquet to duly inaugurate our discovery of the new world. Both officers and men, including myself, sat down at the same table, where we satisfied the cravings of a week's hunger.

I expressed my heartfelt pleasure in the safety of the crew and ship so far in making so tremendous a discovery. I relied on the courage and loyalty of the crew for still further explorations in the strange and mysterious planet we had discovered. I declared that those who shared the dangers of the expedition would also share in whatever reward fortune might bestow upon us.

It is needless to say such sentiments were enthusiastically applauded.

I praised my able coadjutor, Captain Wallace, without whose skilful seamanship not a soul of us could ever have reached that secret world. "It was he," said I, "who has guided us without a chart through five hundred miles of polar cavern to the realms of Pluto, to Plutusia, the interior world. On him again we must depend for a safe exit when our explorations are ended."

Flathootly attempted to make a speech, but, like the rest of

the company, fell asleep, and in less than half an hour afterward not a soul remained awake, excepting Professor Starbottle and myself.

We both struggled against sleep long enough to take a survey of the internal sphere. The *Polar King* floated on the wide bosom of the sea underneath the perpendicular sun that lit all Plutusia with its beams. With our telescopes we discovered oceans, continents, mountain ranges, lakes, cities, railroads, ships, and buildings of all kinds spread like an immense map on the concave vault of the earth overhead. It was a sight that along amply repaid us for the discovery of so sublime a sphere.

We thought what a cry of joy would electrify both planets when through our instrumentality they first knew of each other's existence. We along possessed the tremendous secret! Then, what possibilities of commerce! What keen and glorious revelations of art! What unfolding of the secrets of nature each world would find in the other! What inventions rival nations would discover in either world, and here for the outer world what possible mountains of gold, what quarries of jewels! What means of empire and joy and love! But such thoughts were too vast for wearied souls. We were stunned by such conceptions, and yielding to nature, sank into a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER X.

A VISIT FROM THE INHABITANTS OF PLUTUSIA.

How long we slept it is impossible to say. We must have remained in slumber at least three days after the great excitement of our voyage so far. The direct cause of my awaking was a loud noise on deck, and on coming up to learn the cause, I saw Flathootly shaking his fist at two strange flying men who hovered over the ship.

"Bad luck to ye," shouted Flathootly, "if iver I get a grip of ye again you won't sail away so swately after jabbin' me in the neck like that."

"Flathootly!" I cried, "what's the meaning of this? Were those men on board ship? Had you hold of them?"

"Begorra, sorr," he replied, holding his hand over a slight

wound in his neck, "I was slaping as swately as a child when I felt something tickling me nose. I got up to see what was the matther wid me, and sure enough found thim two rascals prowlin' about the deck. Whin they saw me making a move they jumped back and roosted on the rail. I wanted to catch howlt of wan of thim as a curiosity and I goes up to the short fellow, an' says I, quite honey like: 'Good-marnin', sorr! Could you give me a match to loight me pipe?' an' before the fellow had time to know where he was I had howlt of him, wings an' all. Why, he was as weak as wather, and I was knocking his head on the deck to kape him quiet, whin the other fellow let fly and stuck his spear in me neck, and whin I was trying to catch the second fellow the first fellow got away. Bejabers, the next time I get the grip on either of thim his mutton's cooked."

"I fear, Flathootly," said I, "you will never catch either of them again. Don't you see they have got wings and can fly wherever they like beyond reach?"

The two men that flew around the ship were strange beings. Their complexions were bright yellow and their hair black. They were not above five and a half feet in height, but possessed athletic frames. Their wings were long polished blades of metal of a gleaming white, like gigantic oars, which were moved by some powerful force (possibly electricity) quite independent of the body. Their aerial blades flashed and whirled in the sunlight with blinding rapidity. Their attire consisted of what appeared to be leather tights covering the legs, of a pale yellow tint with crimson metallic embroidery. The dynamo and wings were fastened to a crimson jacket of unique shape that supported the body in flight. Their heads were protected by white metal helmets, and they wore tightly-fitting metal boots, reaching half way up to the knee, the metal being arranged in overlapping scales. Each flying man was armed with a spear and shields. The *tout ensemble* was a picture of agility and grace.

The sailors, now thoroughly awake, gave expression to loud exclamations of surprise at the sight of the two strange flying men wheeling around the ship overhead. Professor Starbottle thought that the strangers must belong to some wealthy and civilized country, for men in a savage state would be incapable of inventing such powers of flight and presenting so ornate an appearance.

"They are soldiers," said Professor Rackiron; "see the spears and shields they wear."

"They're bloody pirates!" said Flathootly. "It was the long fellow that stabbed me."

"You're all right," said the doctor to Flathootly. "Thank your stars the spear wasn't poisoned, or you would be a dead man."

"Be the powers, I'll have that fellow yet," said the master-at-arms. "I'm going to take a jump, and, be me sowl, wan of thim fellows'll get left."

The strangers were now flying quite close to the ship, and Flathootly unexpectedly gave a tremendous spring into the air. He would have caught one of the aerial men for certain, but they, having wings, foiled him by simply moving out of the line of the Irishman's flight.

Flathootly dropped into the sea about a quarter of a mile away, and would probably have been drowned had it not been for the generosity of the strangers themselves. One of the flying men, hastening to the rescue, caught him by the hair of the head and lifted him out of the water. Flathootly caught the stranger by one of his legs and held on like grim death. The flying man brought his burden right over the ship and attempted to drop Flathootly on deck, who shouted, "I hev him, boys! I hev him! Catch howlt of us, some of you!" Immediately a dozen sailors leaped up, and, grasping the winged man and his burden, brought both successfully down to the deck.

Seeing himself overpowered, the stranger submitted to his captivity with as good a grace as possible. We removed his shield and spear, and, merely tying a rope to his leg to secure our prize, gave him the freedom of the ship.

He sulked for a long time, and maintained an animated conversation with his free companion in a language whose meaning none of us understood. He finally condescended to eat some of the food we set before him, and his companion came near enough to take a glass of wine from his captive brother and drink it with evident relish.

Flathootly was so far friendly disposed to his assailant as to offer him a glass of ship's rum. The stranger to our surprise did not refuse it, but, putting the glass to his lips, quaffed its contents at a single draught. When he became more accustomed

to his surroundings we ventured to examine his curious equipment.

Upon examination we found that the wings of our captive were simply large aerial oars, about four and a half feet in length and three feet wide at the widest part, tapering down to a few inches wide at the dynamo that moved them. Such small extent of surface evidently required an enormous force to propel a man in rapid flight. We found the dynamo to consist of a central wheel made to revolve by the attraction of a vast occult force evolved from the contact of two metals, one being of a vermilion color and the other of a bright green tint, that constituted the cell of the apparatus. No acid was required, nor did the contact of the metal produce any wasting of their substance. A colossal current of mysterious magnetism made the wheel revolve, the current being guided in its work by an automatic insulation of one hemisphere of the wheel.

I put one hand on the dynamo and made a gesture of inquiry with the other, whereupon our strange friend said, "Nojmesedi!" Was this the name of the new force we had discovered, or the name of the flying apparatus as a whole? Before we could settle the point our friend became communicative, and, smiting his breast, said:

"Plothoy, wayleal ar Atvatabar!"

With the right hand he pointed to a continent rising above us, its mighty features being clearly visible to the naked eye.

CHAPTER XI.

WE LEARN ATVATABARESE.

This exclamation was a very puzzling phrase to us.

Professor Starbottle said: "It appears to me, gentlemen, before we can make any use of our prisoner we must first learn his language."

Again the stranger smote his breast, exclaiming: "Plothoy, wayleal ar Atvatabar."

"Well, of all the lingoes I iver heard," said Flathootly, "this is the worst case yet. It bates Irish, which is the toughest langwidge to larn undher the sun. What langwidge do you call

that, sorr?"

Professor Goldrock, besides being a naturalist, was an adept in language. He stated that our captive appeared to be either a soldier or courier or coast-guard of his country, which was evidently indicated by the last word, Atavatabar. "Let us take for granted," said he, "that 'Plothoy' is his name and 'Atvatabar' his country. We have left the two words 'wayleal ar.' Now the pronunciation and grouping of the letters leads me to think that the words resemble the English language more nearly than any other tongue. The word 'wayleal' has the same number of letters as 'soldier' and 'courier,' and I note that the fourth and last letters are identical in both 'courier' and 'wayleal.' On the supposition that both words are identical we might compare them thus:

c	is	w	i	is	e
o	is	a	e	is	i or a
u	is	y	r	is	l
r	is	l			

The word 'wayleil' or 'wayleal' means to us leal or strong — by the way, a very good name for a soldier."

At this moment our mysterious friend yelled out:

"Plothoy, wayleal ar Atvatabar, em Bilbimtesirol!"

"Kape quiet, me boy," said Flathootly, "and we'll soon find out all about you."

"Rather let him talk away," said the professor, "and we'll find out who he is much quicker. You see he has given us two new words this time, the words 'em Bilbimtesirol.' Now an idea strikes me — let us transpose the biggest word thus:

b	is	p	e	is	i
i	is	e	s	is	c
l	is	r	i	is	u
b	is	p	r	is	l
i	is	c	o	is	a
m	is	n	l	is	r
t	is	d			

Here we have the word 'perpendicular.' What does 'Bilbimtesirol' as 'perpendicular' mean? It may mean that the interior planet is lit by a perpendicular sun, and that we are in a land of perpendicular light and shadow. See how the shadow of

every man surrounds his boots! Now, granting 'wayleal' means 'courier' and 'Bilbimtesirol' 'perpendicular,' we have a clue to the language of Atvatabar. It seems to me to be a miraculous transposition of the English language thus:

a	is	o	n	is	m
b	is	p	o	is	a
c	is	s or k	p	is	b
d	is	t	q	is	v
e	is	i or a	r	is	l
f	is	f or v	s	is	c or s
g	is	j	t	is	d
h	is	oh	u	is	ij
i	is	e	v	is	qu
j	is	g	w	is	y c or s
k	is	c	x	is	z
l	is	r	y	is	u or i
m	is	n	z	is	x

According to this transposition our friend means, 'Plothoy courier of Atvatabar, in Bilbimtesirol.' Let us see if we can so understand him." So saying, the professor approached and said:

"Ec wayl moni Plothoy?" (Is your name Plothoy?)

"Wie cel, ni moni ec Plothoy" (Yes, sir, my name is Plothoy), promptly replied the stranger.

"Good!" said the professor; "that's glorious! We understand each other now."

I congratulated the professor on his brilliant discovery. It was magnificent! We could now converse with our prisoner on any subject we desired.

We had the key in our hands that would unlock the wonders of Plutusia, or rather Bilbimtesirol, the interior world.

Flathootly turned a dozen summersaults in the air to express his delight. The sailors spun upon the deck, and threw each other into the air like jugglers playing with balls, in pure excitement.

"Ec Atvatabar dofi moni ar wail saimtle?" (Is Atvatabar the name of your country?) inquired the professor of Plothoy.

"E on o wayleal ar Fec Nogicdi, Cemj Aldemegry Bhoolmakar ar Atvatabar" (I am a wayleal of his majesty King Aldemegry Bhoolmakar of Atvatabar), said Plothoy.

Atvatabar, then, was a kingdom. We should go there certainly

and see King Bhoolmakar and his people. But where was this mysterious country?

"Yohili ec Atvatabar?" we asked of Plothoy.

"Dohili!" he replied, pointing to a continent in the southwest. The southwest in the interior world, it should be stated, corresponds to the southeast on the outer earth. Atvatabar, then, lay underneath the Atlantic Ocean.

"Yohod ec dohi moni ar dohi miolicd gliod sedi?" (What is the name of the nearest great city?) we asked.

"Kioram," replied Plothoy. "Dohili ed ec fequi ohymtlit ueric tyi caydoh docd." (There it is, five hundred miles due southeast.)

We looked in the direction indicated with out glasses and plainly saw the white marble buildings of a large city not three degrees above the plane of our position. Further off, in the haze of distance, a mighty continent unrolled its landscapes, until it was merged in the brightness of the sunlight above us.

All this time Plothoy's companion circumnavigated the ship on his swift wings. We inquired his name.

"Lecholt," said Plothoy, "omt ohi orca ec o wayleal." (And he also is a wayleal.)

"What is the name of the sun above us?" we inquired.

"Swang," said Plothoy.

Good! we would sail direct to Kioram, the principal port of Atvatabar.

I assured Plothoy that as long as he was detained by us he would receive the greatest consideration at our hands. We would do him no injury, but, on the contrary, amply reward him for his services. He could understand that, being strangers in an unknown world, it was absolutely necessary for us to have a pilot, or guide, not merely to advise how to direct the ship, but to inform us regarding the laws, manners, and customs of the people we proposed visiting, that we might accommodate ourselves to such novel experiences as we were certain to undergo. We told him we had come to Bilbimtesirol as pioneers of the outer planet, as heralds of the intercourse that would undoubtedly take place between two worlds separated for ages until now. We assured Plothoy how indebted we were to him for the information he had already given, and his great importance to us in a voyage that would affect the interests of thousands of millions of men ought to reconcile him to his brief

captivity. We could not afford to lose him, and therefore asked him to remain with us for the remainder of the voyage, and on reaching Kioram we would give him his liberty.

These words, with the treatment he was receiving, completely reconciled Plothoy, who called Lecholt to come down on deck beside him. His companion obeyed, and presently the two strangers sat on the rail of the vessel engaged in earnest conversation.

Presently Plothoy said that his companion Lecholt would go forward in advance of the ship to inform the king of our coming, that due preparations be made for our reception. This was an admirable suggestion, and accordingly we despatched Lecholt with a message of profound respect for King Aldemegry Bhoolmakar, saying that the commander of the *Polar King* with his officers and retinue would do themselves the honor of visiting his majesty and people as soon as the *Polar King* would reach Atvatabar.

Poising himself for a moment on his wings, Lecholt saluted us with his sword and immediately swept away in the direction of Atvatabar.

CHAPTER XII.

WE ARRIVE AT KIORAM.

BETWEEN the time of departure of Lecholt and our arrival at Kioram we kept Plothoy as busy as possible answering our questions.

We found that all the soldiers of the king were known as wayleals, and that all were equipped with magnetic wings. The wings were worked by a little dynamo supplied by magnicity. A single cell, six cubic inches in size, produced a current both enormously powerful and constant. I could recollect no cell in the outer world of the same size so powerful, hence here was an inventive discovery of the first importance. The cell was composed of two metals, terrelium, a vermilion metal found only in Atvatabar, and aquelium, a bright green metal elaborated from the waters of the internal ocean, which metals simply placed in contact, without the addition of an acid or

alkaline salt, generated a powerful current. Both cell and dynamo were strapped to the back by a strong leathern jacket, which also supported the soldier in flight. The weight of a man being only fifteen pounds on the surface of the interior earth, and no weight at all fifty miles above it, prevented any fatigue being experienced from flight. It was the easiest of all methods of locomotion, and eminently suited to the inhabitants of such a world as Bilbimtesirol.

Plothoy informed us that the government of Atvatabar was an elective monarchy. The king and nobles were elected for life and no title was hereditary. There was a legislative assembly founded on the popular will called the Borodemy. The king's palace and Borodemy were situated in Calnogor, the capital city of the realm, which lay five hundred miles inland and communicated with Kioram by a sacred railroad, as well as by aerial ship.

The largest building in Calnogor was the Bormidophia, or pantheon, where the worship of the gods was held. The only living object of worship was the Lady Lyone, the Supreme Goddess of Atvatabar. There were different kinds of golden gods worshipped, or symbols that represented the inventive forces, art, and spiritual power.

The king was head of the army and navy and the people were divided into several classes of nobles and common people. The Atvatabarese were very wealthy, gold being as common as iron in the outer world. They were a peaceful people, and Atvatabar being itself an immense island continent, lying far from any other land, there had been no wars with any external nation, nor even civil war, for over a hundred years.

There were plenty of newspapers, and the most wonderful inventions had been in use for ages. Railroads, pneumatic tubes, telegraphs, telephones, phonographs, electric lights, rain makers, seaboots, marine railroads, flying machines, megaphones, velocipedes without wheels, aerophers, etc., were quite common, not to speak of such inventions as sowing, reaping, sewing, bootblacking and knitting machines. Of course, printing, weaving, and such like machines had been in use since the dawn of history. Strange to say they had no steam engines, and terrorite and gunpowder were unknown. Their great source of power was magnicity, generated by the two powerful metals terrelium and aquelium, and compressed air their explosive

force.

As we approached this wonderful country we noticed a number of splendid ships coming to meet us. Plated with gold and fully rigged, they presented a beautiful appearance. They were each propelled by magnicity. Plothoy said they were the fleet of Atvatabar coming to welcome us. The royal navy was in command of Admiral Jolar, who had never yet seen active service, but was a worthy representative of the king.

Our rapid steaming in the direction of the fleet, which as rapidly approached us, soon brought the *Polar King* within range of their guns. Plothoy was set free, as we then knew all about Atvatabar necessary to know prior to seeing the admiral, who could give us more definite information.

A roar of guns saluted us from at least one hundred vessels. There was no smoke, the guns being discharged by compressed air. Each vessel bore the flag of Atvatabar, a pink-colored disc surrounded by a circle of green on a violet field. The disc represented the sun above us, the green circle Atvatabar, and the violet field the surrounding sea. From the peak of the *Polar King* the American flag floated, the first flag of the outer sphere that was ever unrolled in the air of the interior world.

The ships approached us in double column and presented an appearance of the utmost grandeur. It was evident we were the discoverers of a powerful and opulent country, and not a barbarous land. Here were civilization and courtesy, and, not to be outdone in these qualities, I ordered a salute from our terrorite guns. The explosive shells discharged by gunpowder into the sea sent up columns of water and foam all around us to an astonishing height, and it took a considerable time for the sea to subside the gravity of the water being only one-tenth that of the external ocean.

The Atvatabarese must have been greatly astonished at the explosions, as Plothoy informed us that no such weapon as ours formed part of the armament of the Atvatabar navy.

The fleet ceased firing, and presently a gayly-decorated magnic launch shot off from the flagship, bearing two officers in brilliant uniforms. Plothoy, as the boat approached us, said the officers were Admiral Jolar of the fleet and Koshnili, Grand Minister of the government. The boat came alongside the *Polar King*, and, lowering a gangway, the illustrious visitors came on board.

Admiral Jolar was arrayed in an olive-green coat, decorated with overlapping scales of gold embroidery, and olive-green trousers with an outer stripe similarly decorated. The uniform of Koshnili, the Grand Minister, was of electric-blue cloth covered with serpentine bands of gold embroidery, radiating downward. A small but brilliant retinue accompanied each official. As the distinguished visitors stepped on deck, the entire fleet saluted us with a second roar of guns. Plothoy announced their names and dignities. Being able to greet their excellencies in their own language greatly astonished them.

I learned from the admiral that the Grand Minister Koshnili was sent by his majesty, King Aldemegry Bhoolmakar, as a special envoy to bid us welcome in the name of the king and people of Atvatabar. The story told by Lecholt had been proclaimed by royal authority throughout the country, and the day of our arrival in Calnogor, the metropolis, was to be observed as a national holiday.

A brilliant programme of entertainment had been devised, calculated to do us infinite honor. I conferred on Admiral Jolar the title of Honorary Commander of the *Polar King*, and on Koshnili that of Honorary Captain.

The admiral said that both he and Koshnili would remain on our ship until we arrived in the city of Kioram.

The admiral, by signalling from the *Polar King*, put his navy into a series of brilliant evolutions. A curious feature was the fact that each sailor possessed wings, was in fact a wayleal, like Plothoy. The sailors, wing-jackets or fletyemings, as they were called, of one vessel, would rise like a swarm of bees and settle on another vessel. The evolutions made in this way were both majestic and surprising.

The entire fletyemings of each squadron on either side of us were drawn up in battle array in the space between the ships and fought each other in mock battle with spears, while the ships discharged their guns at each other.

We reached the harbor of Kioram, in which the royal navy anchored in double column. The *Polar King* sailed slowly down the imperial avenue of ships amid the thunder of guns and the cheers of fletyemings.

The sun shone gloriously as we stepped from the deck of the ship upon the white marble city wharf. Everything was new, strange, and splendid. We were received by Governor Ladalmir,

of Kioram, the commandant of the fort, and his staff, Captains Pra and Nototherboc. Beyond the notables a vast crowd of Atatabarese cheered us vociferously, while the guns of the fort, on a commanding height, roared their welcome.

CHAPTER XIII.

MARCHING IN TRIUMPH.

THERE was a blaze of excitement in the streets of Kioram when our procession appeared on the grand boulevard leading from the harbor to the fortress, some four miles in length. We presented a strange appearance not only to the people of the city, but to ourselves as well.

Prior to our appearance before the people we were obliged to adjust ourselves to the motion of an immense walking machine, the product of the inventive skill of Atvatabar.

Governor Ladalmir explained that the calvary of Atvatabar were mounted on such locomotive machines, built on the plan of immense ostriches, called bockhockids. They were forty feet in height from toe to head, the saddle being thirty feet from the ground. The iron muscles of legs and body, moved by a powerful magnic motor inside the body of the monster, acted on bones of hollow steel. Each machine was operated by the dynamo in the body, which was adjusted to act or remain inert, as required, when riding the structure. A switch in front of the saddle set the bockhockid in motion or brought it to rest again. It was simply a gigantic velocipede without wheels. "We'll ride the bastes," said Flathootly, with suppressed excitement.

"Do you think you can accommodate yourselves to ride such a machine?" said the governor. "You will find it, after a little practice, an imposing method of travel." We were assembled in a spacious court that surrounded the private dock of the king. Into this dock the *Polar King* had been brought for greater safety and also to facilitate popular inspection. I determined that both officers and sailors should equally take part in the honors of our reception, and I informed the governor that we would like to see first how the machines were worked.

At a signal from the governor, Captains Pra and Nototherboc

disappeared and presently returned to the court-yard mounted on two gigantic bockhockids, on which they curvetted and swept around in gallant style.

We were both astonished and delighted at the performance. It was marvellous to see such agility and obedience to the wish of the rider on such ungainly monsters. The sailors were only too anxious to mount such helter-skelters as the machine ostriches of Atvatabar. The stride made by each bird was over forty feet, and nothing on earth could overtake such coursers in full flight.

The governor, proud of his two-legged horses, as he called them, grew eloquent in their behalf.

"Consider an army of men," said he, "mounted on such machines. How swift! How formidable! What a terrible combat when two such armies meet, armed with their magnic spears! What display of prodigious agility! What breathless swerving to and fro! What fearful fleetness of pursuer and pursued! Aided as we are by the almost total absence of gravity, our inventors have produced a means of locomotion for individual men second only to the flying motor. We possess, also, flying bockhockids who are our cavalry in aerial warfare."

The enraptured sailors were only too anxious to mount the enormous birds and sally forth to electrify the city. Ninety-eight bockhockids were required to mount the entire company. This number was brought into the court-yard by a detachment of soldiers who nimbly unseated themselves and slid down the smooth legs of the birds to the ground.

"I say, yer honor," said Flathootly to the governor, "have you any insurance companies in this counthry?"

"Why, certainly," replied the governor.

"Then I want in inshure my loife if I have to mount a baste loike that."

"Oh, I'll see that you are amply compensated for any injuries you may sustain by falling off the machine," said the governor.

"Sorr, is yer word as good as yer bond?" inquired Flathootly.

"Certainly," replied the governor.

"Well thin, sorr, gimme yer bond," said Flathootly.

The governor duly put his signature to a statement that Flathootly should be compensated for any injuries received in consequence of his riding the bockhockid. Flathootly carefully deposited the document in a little satchel he carried in his breast, and thereupon, sailor fashion, climbed up the leg of the

machine and seated himself on the gold-embroidered saddlecloth.

In like manner the sailors got seated on their machines, the entire company forming an imposing phalanx. I found it quite easy to balance myself on the two-legged monsters in consequence of the large base given each leg by the outspreading toes.

While the sailors were getting seated a military band, composed of fifty musicians, each mounted on a bockhockid, played the March of Atvatabar in soul-stirring strains.

The word of command being given, the great doors of the court-yard were flung open and forth issued the musicians with banners flying. Then followed the seamen of the *Polar King*, led by the governor, Koshnili and myself.

The excited populace cheered a hearty welcome. A brigade of five thousand bockhockids fell into line as an escort of honor. The ever-shining sun lent a brilliant effect to the pageant. Our complexions were lighter than those of the Atvatabarese, who were universally of a golden-yellow tint, and it was surprising to see how fair the people appeared, considering that they lived in a land where the sun never sets. None had a complexion darker than a rich chocolate-brown color. This was accounted for by the fact that the light of Swang was not half as intense as that of the outer sun in the tropics. The diminutive size of the luminary counterbalanced its proximity to the surrounding planet. The light that fell upon Atvatabar was warm, genial, glowing, and rosy, imparting to life a delightful sensation. As the procession advanced we saw splendid emporiums of trade chiselled of white marble, crowded roof and window with dense masses of people. On either side of the fine boulevard leading to the palace the people were jammed into an immovable mass and were wild with enthusiasm. The roadway was lined with trees that seemed like magnolias, oranges, and oleanders.

"Now this is something loike a recipshon," said Flathootly. "I'm well plazed wid it."

"I am delighted to know that your honor thinks so highly of our efforts to please you," said the governor.

Flathootly turned round and shouted to the sailors, "Remimber, my bhoys, we will hev a grant feast at the ind of the performance." As he spoke, he unfortunately touched the switch starting the bockhockid into a gallop, and in a moment

the machine dashed furiously forward, running into the musicians, knocking down some of the other bockhockids, scattering others in all directions, and then flying ahead amid the roars of the people. Flathootly was thrown off his seat, but in falling to the ground managed to get hold of the bockhockid's leg at the knee-joint, to which he clung with the energy of despair. A squad of police, who also rode bockhockids, dashed after the flying Flathootly, and one of them got hold of the switch on the back of the machine and so brought it to a standstill.

Flathootly was terrified, but uninjured. His first concern was to see if his "insurance" was safe. He found the document still in his breast, and this being so, was induced to remount his steed. "I hope your honor has met with no accident?" said the governor, riding up.

"As long as I've yer honor's handwritin' I'm all right," said Flathootly. "If I break me leg what odds, so long as I'm insured?"

The scattered musicians were assembled in order again and the procession continued its way toward the palace. There were on all sides evidences of wealth, culture, and refinement. Every building was constructed of chiselled marble.

The fortress and palace of Kioram stood in a large square, occupying the most commanding position in the city. From the fort could be seen the white shores and surrounding sea of Atvatabar. The harbor was surrounded with white stone piers lined with the commerce of the kingdom. The charm of the scene was largely lost on Flathootly and the sailors, who cared more for the material benefit of their reception than for its ideal beauty.

The procession arrived at a pillared archway leading underneath the solid walls of the fortress. These walls were fully one hundred feet in height and fifty feet in thickness. The top of the walls consisted of a level circular roadway, whereon a guard of bockhockids constantly swept around with amazing swiftness.

It was a sight grotesque in the extreme. The flying wayleals looked like a race between enormous ostriches with a wild confusion of legs on the lofty ramparts.

"Flying divils let loose," was the subdued remark of Flathootly.

There was a gay time in the banqueting hall of the palace. We were royally feasted, and for wine we drank squang, the choicest wine of Atvatabar.

The governor informed us that our appearance in the interior world had been heralded all over the country, and strange speculations had been made as to what world or country we belonged to. "We know, of course," said he, "that you do not belong to any race of men in our sphere, and this makes public curiosity all the greater concerning you. What country do you come from?" said he, addressing Flathootly.

"Oi'm from the United States, the foinest counthry on the outside of the world; but I was born in Tipperary," said Flathootly.

"Ah," said the governor," I should be delighted to visit your country."

"You might be gettin' frightened, sorr, at the dark ivery noight," said Flathootly.

"What is the night?" said the governor.

"Och, and have ye lived to be a gray-haired man and don't know that it's dark at noight whin the sun jumps round to the other soide of the wurrld?"

"But it's never dark here," said the governor.

"Thrue for you, but it ought to be. How can a Christian slape wid the sun shinin' all the toime?" rejoined the Irishman.

"Oh, you can sleep here in the sunshine," said the governor, "as well as inside the house."

"Does it iver rain here?" said Flathootly.

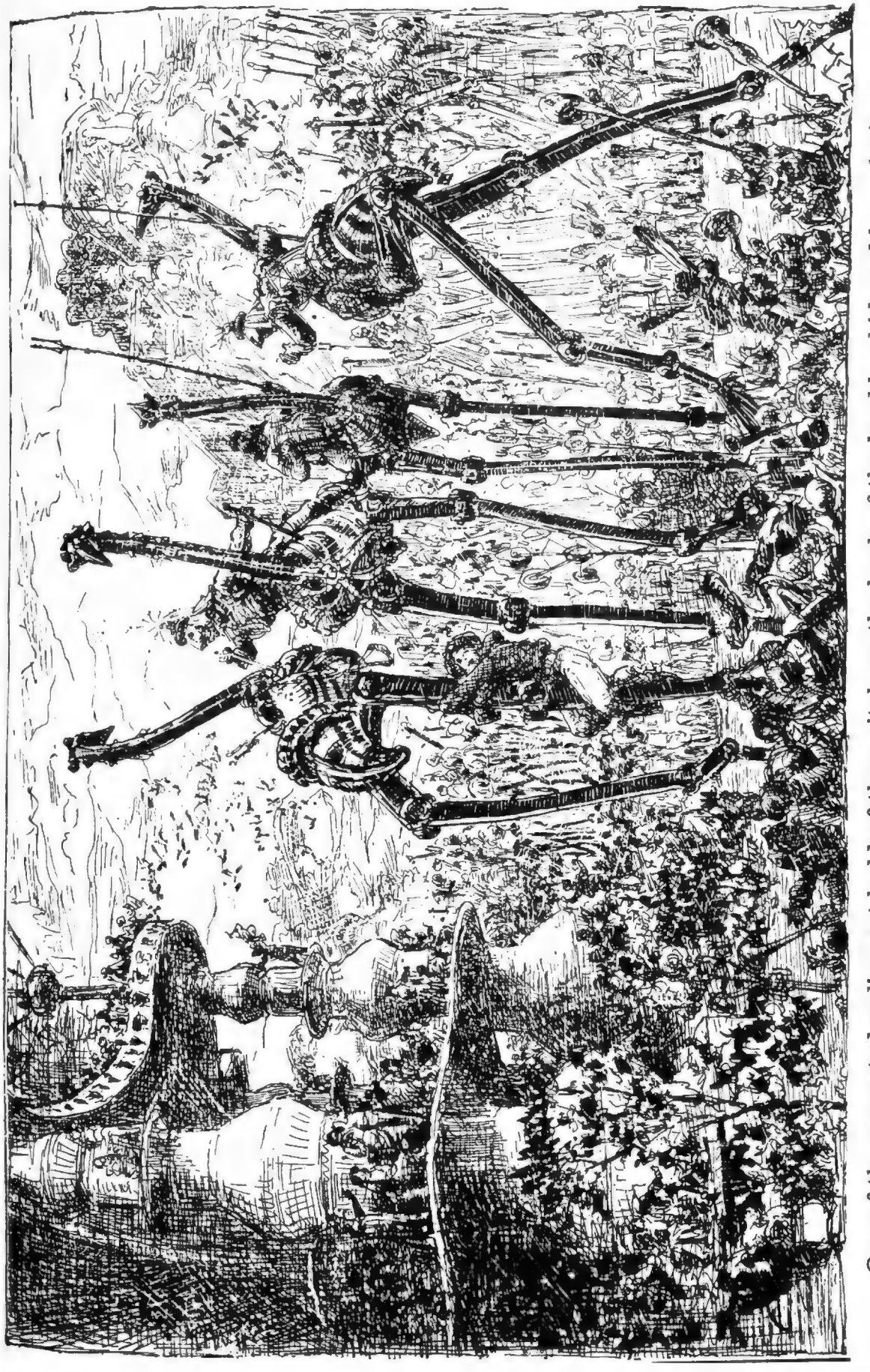
"But little," replied the governor; "not more than six inches of rain falls in a year."

"Bedad, you ought to be in Oireland to see it rain. There you'd git soaked to your heart's content. An' tell me how do you grow your cabbages without rain?" he continued.

"Well," said the governor, "rain is produced by firing into the air balls of solid gas so intensely cold that in turning to the gaseous form they condense in rain the invisible vapor in the air."

"Bedad, that's what they do in our country," said Flathootly, "only they explode shells of dynamite in the air. Can you tell me," he added, "have you got tides in the say here?"

"We have never been able to discover what force it is that



One of the mounted police got hold of the switch on the back of the bockhockid, and brought it to a standstill.

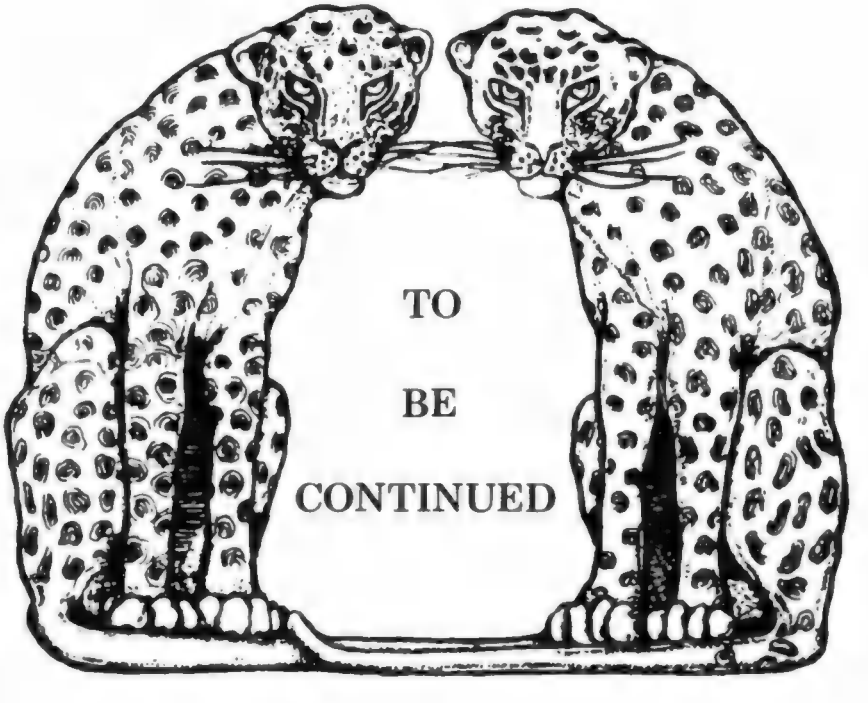
lifts the sea so regularly," said the governor. "We call it the breathing of the ocean."

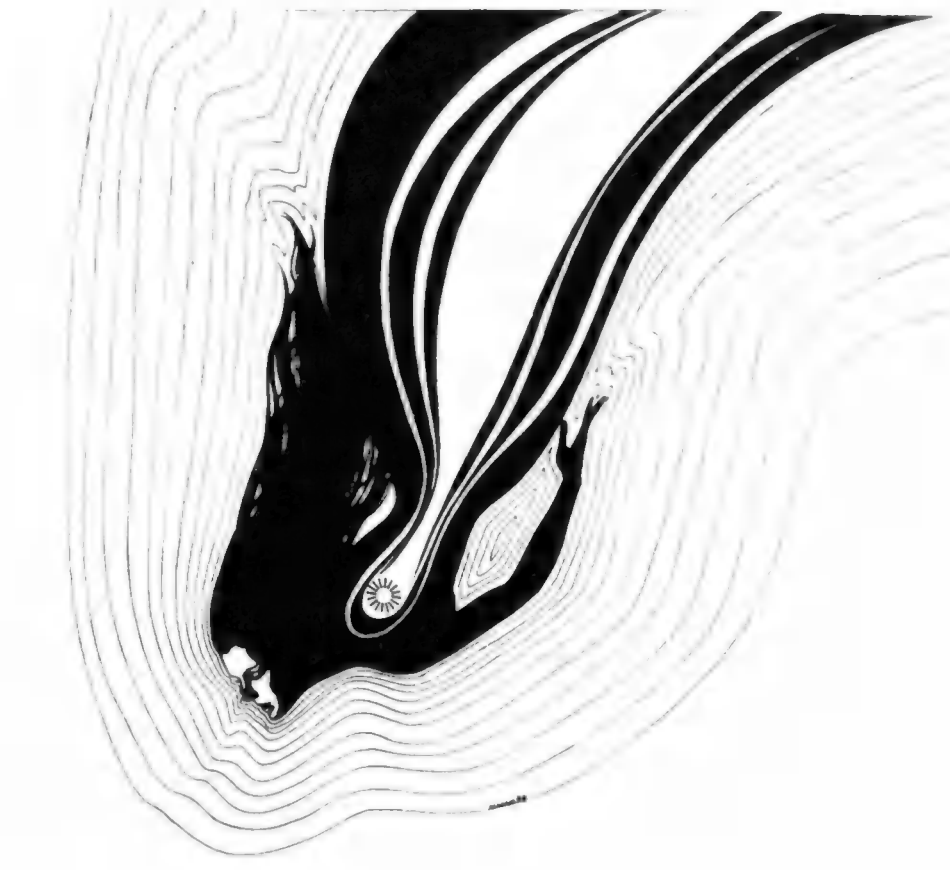
"Shure any schoolboy knows it's the moon that does it," replied Flathootly.

"The moon?" queried the governor.

"Why, of coorse it's the moon on the other side of the wurrld that lifts up the wather both inside and out. Ye're wake in geography not to know that," said Flathootly.

The governor looked at me for verification of this astonishing story. "Where is that wonderful moon," he inquired, "that I hear of? Where is the surface of the earth that slopes away out of sight?" Just then the bell sounded its message that called the people to rest, and the banqueting came to an end. We were forthwith shown to the private apartments allotted to us in the palace.





THE PARASITE

by Arthur Conan Doyle

Illustrated by Bill Hughes

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE (1859 — 1930) needs no introduction to readers of mystery and science fiction, for his stories of Sherlock Holmes and Professor Challenger are among the best-known works in the English language. His range of writing interests was wide and varied, and in addition to the detective story, he produced historical novels and stories, medical and sports stories, and tales of terror and the occult. Many of his early stories showed the influence of Poe, and this long novelette of a psychic vampire, published in 1895, is one of his weirdest tales.

MARCH 24. The spring is fairly with us now. Outside my laboratory window the great chestnut-tree is all covered with the big, glutinous, gummy buds, some of which have already begun to break into little green shuttlecocks. As you walk down the lanes you are conscious of the rich, silent forces of nature working all around you. The wet earth smells fruitful and luscious. Green shoots are peeping out everywhere. The twigs are stiff with their sap; and the moist, heavy English air is laden with a faintly resinous perfume. Buds in the hedges, lambs beneath them — everywhere the work of reproduction going forward!

I can see it without, and I can feel it within. We also have our spring when the little arterioles dilate, the lymph flows in a brisker stream, the glands work harder, winnowing and straining. Every year nature readjusts the whole machine. I can feel the ferment in my blood at this very moment, and as the cool sunshine pours through my window I could dance about in it like a gnat. So I should, only that Charles Sadler would rush upstairs to know what was the matter. Besides, I must remember that I am Professor Gilroy. An old professor may afford to be natural, but when fortune has given one of the first chairs in the university to a man of four-and-thirty he must try and act the part consistently.

What a fellow Wilson is! If I could only throw the same enthusiasm into physiology that he does into psychology, I should become a Claude Bernard at the least. His whole life and soul and energy work to one end. He drops to sleep collating his results of the past day, and he wakes to plan his researches for the coming one. And yet, outside the narrow circle who follow his proceedings, he gets so little credit for it. Physiology is a recognized science. If I add even a brick to the edifice, every one sees and applauds it. But Wilson is trying to dig the foundations for a science of the future. His work is underground and does not show. Yet he goes on uncomplainingly, corresponding with a hundred semi-maniacs in the hope of finding one reliable witness, sifting a hundred lies on the chance of gaining one little speck of truth, collating old books, devouring new ones, experimenting, lecturing, trying to light up in others the fiery interest which is consuming him. I am filled with wonder and admiration when I think of him, and

yet, when he asks me to associate myself with his researches, I am compelled to tell him that, in their present state, they offer little attraction to a man who is devoted to exact science. If he could show me something positive and objective, I might than be tempted to approach the question from its physiological side. So long as half his subjects are tainted with *charlatanerie* and the other half with hysteria we physiologists must content ourselves with the body and leave the mind to our descendants.

No doubt I am a materialist. Agatha says that I am a rank one. I tell her that is an excellent reason for shortening our engagement, since I am in such urgent need of her spirituality. And yet I may claim to be a curious example of the effect of education upon temperament, for by nature I am, unless I deceive myself, a highly psychic man. I was a nervous, sensitive boy, a dreamer, a somnambulist, full of impressions and intuitions. My black hair, my dark eyes, my thin, olive face, my tapering fingers, are all characteristic of my real temperament, and cause experts like Wilson to claim me as their own. But my brain is soaked with exact knowledge. I have trained myself to deal only with fact and with proof. Surmise and fancy have no place in my scheme of thought. Show me what I can see with my microscope, cut with my scalpel, weigh in my balance, and I will devote a lifetime to its investigation. But when you ask me to study feelings, impressions, suggestions, you ask me to do what is distasteful and even demoralizing. A departure from pure reason affects me like an evil smell or a musical discord.

Which is a very sufficient reason why I am a little loath to go to Professor Wilson's to-night. Still I feel that I could hardly get out of the invitation without positive rudeness, and, now that Mrs. Marden and Agatha are going, of course I would not if I could. But I had rather meet them anywhere else. I know that Wilson would draw me into this nebulous semi-science of his if he could. In his enthusiasm he is perfectly impervious to hints or remonstrances. Nothing short of a positive quarrel will make him realize my aversion to the whole business. I have no doubt that he has some new mesmerist or clairvoyant or medium or trickster of some sort whom he is going to exhibit to us, for even his entertainments bear upon his hobby. Well, it will be a treat for Agatha, at any rate. She is interested in it, as woman usually is in whatever is vague andmystical and indefinite.

10.50 P.M. This diary-keeping of mine is, I fancy, the

outcome of that scientific habit of mind about which I wrote this morning. I like to register impressions while they are fresh. Once a day at least I endeavor to define my own mental position. It is a useful piece of self-analysis, and has, I fancy, a steadying effect upon the character. Frankly, I must confess that my own needs what stiffening I can give it. I fear that, after all, much of my neurotic temperament survives, and that I am far from that cool, calm precision which characterizes Murdoch or Pratt-Haldane. Otherwise, why should the tomfoolery which I have witnessed this evening have set my nerves thrilling so that even now I am all unstrung? My only comfort is that neither Wilson nor Miss Penclosa nor even Agatha could have possibly known my weakness.

And what in the world was there to excite me? Nothing, or so little that it will seem ludicrous when I set it down.

The Mardens got to Wilson's before me. In fact, I was one of the last to arrive and found the room crowded. I had hardly time to say a word to Mrs. Marden and to Agatha, who was looking charming in white and pink, with glittering wheat-ears in her hair, when Wilson came twitching at my sleeve.

"You want something positive, Gilroy," said he, drawing me apart into a corner. "My dear fellow, I have a phenomenon — a phenomen!"

I should have been more impressed had I not heard the same before. His sanguine spirit turns every fire-fly into a star.

"No possible question about the *bona fides* this time," said he, in answer, perhaps, to some little gleam of amusement in my eyes. "My wife has known her for many years. They both come from Trinidad, you know. Miss Penclosa has only been in England a month or two, and knows no one outside the university circle, but I assure you that the things she has told us suffice in themselves to establish clairvoyance upon an absolutely scientific basis. There is nothing like her, amateur or professional. Come and be introduced!"

I like none of these mystery-mongers, but the amateur least of all. With the paid performer you may pounce upon him and expose him the instant that you have seen through his trick. He is there to deceive you, and you are there to find him out. But what are you to do with the friend of your host's wife? Are you to turn on a light suddenly and expose her slapping a surreptitious banjo? Or are you to hurl cochineal over her

evening frock when she steals round with her phosphorus bottle and her supernatural platitude? There would be a scene, and you would be looked upon as a brute. So you have your choice of being that or a dupe. I was in no very good humor as I followed Wilson to the lady.

Any one less like my idea of a West Indian could not be imagined. She was a small, frail creature, well over forty, I should say, with a pale, peaky face, and hair of a very light shade of chestnut. Her presence was insignificant and her manner retiring. In any group of ten women she would have been the last whom one would have picked out. Her eyes were perhaps her most remarkable, and also, I am compelled to say, her least pleasant, feature. They were gray in color, — gray with a shade of green, — and their expression struck me as being decidedly furtive. I wonder if furtive is the word, or should I have said fierce? On second thoughts, feline would have expressed it better. A crutch leaning against the wall told me what was painfully evident when she rose: that one of her legs was crippled.

So I was introduced to Miss Penclosa, and it did not escape me that as my name was mentioned she glanced across at Agatha. Wilson had evidently been talking. And presently, no doubt, thought I, she will inform me by occult means that I am engaged to a young lady with wheat-ears in her hair. I wondered how much more Wilson had been telling her about me.

"Professor Gilroy is a terrible sceptic," said he; "I hope, Miss Penclosa, that you will be able to convert him."

She looked keenly up at me.

"Professor Gilroy is quite right to be sceptical if he has not seen any thing convincing," said she. "I should have thought," she added, "that you would yourself have been an excellent subject."

"For what, may I ask?" said I.

"Well, for mesmerism, for example."

"My experience has been that mesmerists go for their subjects to those who are mentally unsound. All their results are vitiated, as it seems to me, by the fact that they are dealing with abnormal organisms."

"Which of these ladies would you say possessed a normal organism?" she asked. "I should like you to select the one who seems to you to have the best balanced mind. Should we say the

girl in pink and white? — Miss Agatha Marden, I think the name is."

"Yes, I should attach weight to any results from her."

"I have never tried how far she is impressionable. Of course some people respond much more rapidly than others. May I ask how far your scepticism extends? I suppose that you admit the mesmeric sleep and the power of suggestion."

"I admit nothing, Miss Penclosa."

"Dear me, I thought science had got further than that. Of course I know nothing about the scientific side of it. I only know what I can do. You see the girl in red, for example, over near the Japanese jar. I shall will that she come across to us."

She bent forward as she spoke and dropped her fan upon the floor. The girl whisked round and came straight toward us, with an enquiring look upon her face, as if some one had called her.

"What do you think of that, Gilroy?" cried Wilson, in a kind of ecstasy.

I did not dare to tell him what I thought of it. To me it was the most barefaced, shameless piece of imposture that I had ever witnessed. The collusion and the signal had really been too obvious.

"Professor Gilroy is not satisfied," said she, glancing up at me with her strange little eyes. "My poor fan is to get the credit of that experiment. Well, we must try something else. Miss Marden, would you have any objection to my putting you off?"

"Oh, I should love it!" cried Agatha.

By this time all the company had gathered round us in a circle, the shirt-fronted men, and the white-throated women, some awed, some critical, as though it were something between a religious ceremony and a conjurer's entertainment. A red velvet arm-chair had been pushed into the centre, and Agatha lay back in it, a little flushed and trembling slightly from excitement. I could see it from the vibration of the wheat-ears. Miss Penclosa rose from her seat and stood over her, leaning upon her crutch.

And there was a change in the woman. She no longer seemed small or insignificant. Twenty years were gone from her age. Her eyes were shining, a tinge of color had come into her sallow cheeks, her whole figure had expanded. So I have seen a dull-eyed, listless lad change in an instant into briskness and life when given a task of which he felt himself master. She looked

down at Agatha with an expression which I resented from the bottom of my soul — the expression with which a Roman empress might have looked at her kneeling slave. Then with a quick, commanding gesture she tossed up her arms and swept them slowly down in front of her.

I was watching Agatha narrowly. During three passes she seemed to be simply amused. At the fourth I observed a slight glazing of her eyes, accompanied by some dilation of her pupils. At the sixth there was a momentary rigor. At the seventh her lids began to droop. At the tenth her eyes were closed, and her breathing was slower and fuller than usual. I tried as I watched to preserve my scientific calm, but a foolish, causeless agitation convulsed me. I trust that I hid it, but I felt as a child feels in the dark. I could not have believed that I was still open to such weakness.

"She is in the trance," said Miss Penclosa.

"She is sleeping!" I cried.

"Wake her, then!"

I pulled her by the arm and shouted in her ear. She might have been dead for all the impression that I could make. Her body was there on the velvet chair. Her organs were acting — her heart, her lungs. But her soul! It had slipped from beyond our ken. Whither had it gone? What power had dispossessed it? I was puzzled and disconcerted.

"So much for the mesmeric sleep," said Miss Penclosa. "As regards suggestion, whatever I may suggest Miss Marden will infallibly do, whether it be now or after she has awakened from her trance. Do you demand proof of it?"

"Certainly," said I.

"You shall have it." I saw a smile pass over her face, as though an amusing thought had struck her. She stooped and whispered earnestly into her subject's ear. Agatha, who had been so deaf to me, nodded her head as she listened.

"Awake!" cried Miss Penclosa, with a sharp tap of her crutch upon the floor. The eyes opened, the glazing cleared slowly away, and the soul looked out once more after its strange eclipse.

We went away early. Agatha was none the worse for her strange excursion, but I was nervous and unstrung, unable to listen to or answer the stream of comments which Wilson was pouring out for my benefit. As I bade her good-night Miss

Penclosa slipped a piece of paper into my hand.

"Pray forgive me," said she, "if I take means to overcome your scepticism. Open this note at ten o'clock to-morrow morning. It is a little private test."

I can't imagine what she means, but there is the note, and it shall be opened as she directs. My head is aching, and I have written enough for to-night. Tomorrow I dare say that what seems so inexplicable will take quite another complexion. I shall not surrender my convictions without a struggle.

March 25. I am amazed, confounded. It is clear that I much reconsider my opinion upon this matter. But first let me place on record what has occurred.

I had finished breakfast, and was looking over some diagrams with which my lecture is to be illustrated, when my housekeeper entered to tell me that Agatha was in my study and wished to see me immediately. I glanced at the clock and saw with surprise that it was only half-past nine.

When I entered the room, she was standing on the hearth-rug facing me. Something in her pose chilled me and checked the words which were rising to my lips. Her veil was half down, but I could see that she was pale and that her expression was constrained.

"Austin," she said, "I have come to tell you that our engagement is at an end."

I staggered. I believe that I literally did stagger. I know that I found myself leaning against the bookcase for support.

"But — but —" I stammered. "This is very sudden, Agatha."

"Yes, Austin, I have come here to tell you that our engagement is at an end."

"But surely," I cried, "you will give me some reason! This is unlike you, Agatha. Tell me how I have been unfortunate enough to offend you."

"It is all over, Austin."

"But why? You must be under some delusion, Agatha. Perhaps you have been told some falsehood about me. Or you may have misunderstood something that I have said to you. Only let me know what it is, and a word may set it all right."

"We must consider it all at an end."

"But you left me last night without a hint at any disagreement. What could have occurred in the interval to change you so? It must have been something that happened last

night. You have been thinking it over and you have disapproved of my conduct. Was it the mesmerism? Did you blame me for letting that woman exercise her power over you? You know that at the least sign I should have interfered."

"It is useless, Austin. All is over."

Her voice was cold and measured; her manner strangely formal and hard. It seemed to me that she was absolutely resolved not to be drawn into any argument or explanation. As for me, I was shaking with agitation, and I turned my face aside, so ashamed was I that she should see my want of control.

"You must know what this means to me!" I cried. "It is the blasting of all my hopes and the ruin of my life! You surely will not inflict such a punishment upon me uheard. You will let me know what is the matter. Consider how impossible it would be for me, under any circumstances, to treat you so. For God's sake, Agatha, let me know what I have done!"

She walked past me without a word and opened the door.

"It is quite useless, Austin," said she. "You must consider our engagement at an end." An instant later she was gone, and, before I could recover myself sufficiently to follow her, I heard the hall-door close behind her.

I rushed into my room to change my coat, with the idea of hurrying round to Mrs. Marden's to learn from her what the cause of my misfortune might be. So shaken was I that I could hardly lace my boots. Never shall I forget those horrible ten minutes. I had just pulled on my overcoat when the clock upon the mantel-piece struck ten.

Ten! I associated the idea with Miss Penclosa's note. It was lying before me on the table, and I tore it open. It was scribbled in pencil in a peculiarly angular handwriting.

"MY DEAR PROFESSOR GILROY [it said]: Pray excuse the personal nature of the test which I am giving you. Professor Wilson happened to mention the relations between you and my subject of this evening, and it struck me that nothing could be more convincing to you than if I were to suggest to Miss Marden that she should call upon you at half-past nine to-morrow morning and suspend your engagement for half an hour or so. Science is so exacting that it is difficult to give a satisfying test, but I am convinced that this at least will be an action which she would be most unlikely to do of her own free will. Forget any

thing that she may have said, as she has really nothing whatever to do with it, and will certainly not recollect any thing about it. I write this note to shorten your anxiety, and to beg you to forgive me for the momentary unhappiness which my suggestion must have caused you.

"Yours faithfully,

" HELEN PENCLOSA "

Really, when I had read the note, I was too relieved to be angry. It was a liberty. Certainly it was a very great liberty indeed on the part of a lady whom I had only met once. But, after all, I had challenged her by my scepticism. It may have been, as she said, a little difficult to devise a test which would satisfy me.

And she had done that. There could be no question at all upon the point. For me hypnotic suggestion was finally established. It took its place from now onward as one of the facts of life. That Agatha, who of all women of my acquaintance has the best balanced mind, had been reduced to a condition of automatism appeared to be certain. A person at a distance had worked her as an engineer on the shore might guide a Brennan torpedo. A second soul had stepped in, as it were, had pushed her own aside, and had seized her nervous mechanism, saying: "I will work this for half an hour." And Agatha must have been unconscious as she came and as she returned. Could she make her way in safety through the streets in such a state? I put on my hat and hurried round to see if all was well with her.

Yes. She was at home. I was shown into the drawing-room and found her sitting with a book upon her lap.

"You are an early visitor, Austin," said she, smiling.

"And you have been an even earlier one," I answered.

She looked puzzled. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"You have not been out to-day?"

"No, certainly not."

"Agatha," said I seriously, "would you mind telling me exactly what you have done this morning?"

She laughed at my earnestness.

"You've got on your professional look, Austin. See what comes of being engaged to a man of science. However, I will tell you, though I can't image what you want to know for. I got up

at eight. I breakfasted at half-past. I came into this room at ten minutes past nine and began to read the 'Memoirs of Mme. de Remusat.' In a few minutes I did the French lady the bad compliment of dropping to sleep over her pages, and I did you, sir, the very flattering one of dreaming about you. It is only a few minutes since I woke up."

"And found yourself where you had been before?"

"Why, where else should I find myself?"

"Would you mind telling me, Agatha, what it was that you dreamed about me? It really is not mere curiosity on my part."

"I merely had a vague impression that you came into it. I cannot recall any thing definite."

"If you have not been out to-day, Agatha, how is it that your shoes are dusty?"

A pained look came over her face.

"Really, Austin, I do not know what is the matter with you this morning. One would almost think that you doubted my word. If my boots are dusty, it must be, of course, that I have put on a pair which the maid had not cleaned."

It was perfectly evident that she knew nothing whatever about the matter, and I reflected that, after all, perhaps it was better that I should not enlighten her. It might frighten her, and could serve no good purpose that I could see. I said no more about it, therefore, and left shortly afterward to give my lecture.

But I am immensely impressed. My horizon of scientific possibilities has suddenly been enormously extended. I no longer wonder at Wilson's demonic energy and enthusiasm. Who would not work hard who had a vast virgin field ready to his hand? Why, I have known the novel shape of a nucleolus, or a trifling peculiarity of striped muscular fibre seen under a 300-diameter lens, fill me with exultation. How petty do such researches seem when compared with this one which strikes at the very roots of life and the nature of the soul! I had always looked upon spirit as a product of matter. The brain, I thought, secreted the mind, as the liver does the bile. But how can this be when I see mind working from a distance and playing upon matter as a musician might upon a violin? The body does not give rise to the soul, then, but is rather the rough instrument by which the spirit manifests itself. The windmill does not give rise to the wind, but only indicates it. It was opposed to my whole

habit of thought, and yet it was undeniably possible and worthy of investigation.

And why should I not investigate it? I see that under yesterday's date I said: "If I could see something positive and objective, I might be tempted to approach it from the physiological aspect." Well, I have got my test. I shall be as good as my word. The investigation would, I am sure, be of immense interest. Some of my colleagues might look askance at it, for science is full of unreasoning prejudices, but if Wilson has the courage of his convictions, I can afford to have it also. I shall go to him to-morrow morning — to him and to Miss Penclosa. If she can show us so much, it is probable that she can show us more.

CHAPTER II

MARCH 26. Wilson was, as I had anticipated, very exultant over my conversion, and Miss Penclosa was also demurely pleased at the result of her experiment. Strange what a silent, colorless creature she is save only when she exercises her power! Even talking about it gives her color and life. She seems to take a singular interest in me. I cannot help observing how her eyes follow me about the room.

We had the most interesting conversation about her own powers. It is just as well to put her views on record, though they cannot, of course, claim any scientific weight.

"You are on the very fringe of the subject," said she, when I had expressed wonder at the remarkable instance of suggestion which she had shown me. "I had no direct influence upon Miss Marden when she came round to you. I was not even thinking of her that morning. What I did was to set her mind as I might set the alarum of a clock so that at the hour named it would go off of its own accord. If six months instead of twelve hours had been suggested, it would have been the same."

"And if the suggestion had been to assassinate me?"

"She would most inevitably have done so."

"But this is a terrible power!" I cried.

"It is, as you say, a terrible power," she answered gravely, "and the more you know of it the more terrible will it seem to you."

"May I ask," said I, "what you meant when you said that this matter of suggestion is only at the fringe of it? What do you consider the essential?"

"I had rather not tell you."

I was surprised at the decision of her answer.

"You understand," said I, "that it is not out of curiosity I ask, but in the hope that I may find some scientific explanation for the facts with which you furnish me."

"Frankly, Professor Gilroy," said she, "I am not at all interested in science, nor do I care whether it can or cannot classify these powers."

"But I was hoping —"

"Ah, that is quite another thing. If you make it a personal matter," said she, with the pleasantest of smiles, "I shall be only too happy to tell you any thing you wish to know. Let me see; what was it you asked me? Oh, about the further powers. Professor Wilson won't believe in them, but they are quite true all the same. For example, it is possible for an operator to gain complete command over his subject — presuming that the latter is a good one. Without any previous suggestion he may make him do whatever he likes."

"Without the subject's knowledge?"

"That depends. If the force were strongly exerted, he would know no more about it than Miss Marden did when she came round and frightened you so. Or, if the influence was less powerful, he might be conscious of what he was doing, but be quite unable to prevent himself from doing it."

"Would he have lost his own will power, then?"

"It would be over-ridden by another stronger one."

"Have you ever exercised this power yourself?"

"Several times."

"Is your own will so strong, then?"

"Well, it does not entirely depend upon that. Many have strong wills which are not detachable from themselves. The thing is to have the gift of projecting it into another person and superseding his own. I find that the power varies with my own strength and health."

"Practically, you send your soul into another person's body."

"Well, you might put it that way."

"And what does your own body do?"

"It merely feels lethargic."

"Well, but is there no danger to your own health?" I asked.

"There might be a little. You have to be careful never to let your own consciousness absolutely go; otherwise, you might experience some difficulty in finding your way back again. You must always preserve the connection, as it were. I am afraid I express myself very badly, Professor Gilroy, but of course I don't know how to put these things in a scientific way. I am just giving you my own experiences and my own explanations."

Well, I read this over now at my leisure, and I marvel at myself! Is this Austin Gilroy, the man who has won his way to the front by his hard reasoning power and by his devotion to fact? Here I am gravely retailing the gossip of a woman who tells me how her soul may be projected from her body, and how, while she lies in a lethargy, she can control the actions of people at a distance. Do I accept it? Certainly not. She must prove and re-prove before I yield a point. But if I am still a sceptic, I have at least ceased to be a scoffer. We are to have a sitting this evening, and she is to try if she can produce any mesmeric effect upon me. If she can, it will make an excellent starting-point for our investigation. No one can accuse *me*, at any rate, of complicity. If she cannot, we must try and find some subject who will be like Caesar's wife. Wilson is perfectly impervious.

10 P.M. I believe that I am on the threshold of an epoch-making investigation. To have the power of examining these phenomena from inside — to have an organism which will respond, and at the same time a brain which will appreciate and criticise — that is surely a unique advantage. I am quite sure that Wilson would give five years of his life to be as susceptible as I have proved myself to be.

There was no one present except Wilson and his wife. I was seated with my head leaning back, and Miss Penclosa, standing in front and a little to the left, used the same long, sweeping strokes as with Agatha. At each of them a warm current of air seemed to strike me, and to suffuse a thrill and glow all through me from head to foot. My eyes were fixed upon Miss Penclosa's face, but as I gazed the features seemed to blur and to fade away. I was conscious only of her own eyes looking down at me, gray, deep, inscrutable. Larger they grew and larger, until they changed suddenly into two mountain lakes toward which I seemed to be falling with horrible rapidity. I shuddered, and as I

did so some deeper stratum of thought told me that the shudder represented the rigor which I had observed in Agatha. An instant later I struck the surface of the lakes, now joined into one and down I went beneath the water with a fulness in my head and a buzzing in my ears. Down I went, down, down, and then with a swoop up again until I could see the light streaming brightly through the green water. I was almost at the surface when the word "Awake!" rang through my head, and, with a start, I found myself back in the arm-chair, with Miss Penclosa leaning on her crutch, and Wilson, his note-book in his hand, peeping over her shoulder. No heaviness or weariness was left behind. On the contrary, though it is only an hour or so since the experiment, I feel so wakeful that I am more inclined for my study than my bedroom. I see quite a vista of interesting experiments extending before us, and am all impatience to begin upon them.

March 27. A blank day, as Miss Penclosa goes with Wilson and his wife to the Suttons' Have begun Binet and Ferre's "Animal Magnetism." What strange, deep waters these are! Results, results, results — and the cause an absolute mystery. It is stimulating to the imagination, but I must be on my guard against that. Let us have no inferences nor deductions, and nothing but solid facts. I *know* that the mesmeric trance is true; I *know* that mesmeric suggestion is true; I *know* that I am myself sensitive to this force. That is my present position. I have a large new note-book which shall be devoted entirely to scientific detail.

Long talk with Agatha and Mrs. Marden in the evening about our marriage. We think that the summer vac. (the beginning of it) would be the best time for the wedding. Why should we delay? I grudge even those few months. Still, as Mrs. Marden says, there are a good many things to be arranged.

March 28. Mesmerized again by Miss Penclosa. Experience much the same as before, save that insensibility came on more quickly. See Note-book A for temperature of room, barometric pressure, pulse, and respiration as taken by Professor Wilson.

March 29. Mesmerized again. Details in Note-book A.

March 30. Sunday, and a blank day. I grudge any interruption of our experiments. At present they merely embrace the physical signs which go with slight, with complete, and with extreme insensibility. Afterward we hope to pass on to

the phenomena of suggestion and of lucidity. Professors have demonstrated these things upon women at Nancy and at the Salpetriere. It will be more convincing when a woman demonstrates it upon a professor, with a second professor as a witness. And that I should be the subject — I, the sceptic, the materialist! At least, I have shown that my devotion to science is greater than to my own personal consistency. The eating of our own words is the greatest sacrifice which truth ever requires of us.

My neighbor, Charles Sadler, the handsome young demonstrator of anatomy, came in this evening to return a volume of Virchow's "Archives" which I had lent him. I call him young, but, as a matter of fact, he is a year older than I am.

"I understand, Gilroy," said he, "that you are being experimented upon by Miss Penclosa.

"Well," he went on, when I had acknowledged it, "if I were you, I should not let it go any further. You will think me very impertinent, no doubt, but, none the less, I feel it to be my duty to advise you to have no more to do with her."

Of course I asked him why.

"I am so placed that I cannot enter into particulars as freely as I could wish," said he. "Miss Penclosa is the friend of my friend, and my position is a delicate one. I can only say this: that I have myself been the subject of some of the woman's experiments, and that they have left a most unpleasant impression upon my mind."

He could hardly expect me to be satisfied with that, and I tried hard to get something more definite out of him, but without success. Is it conceivable that he could be jealous at my having superseded him? Or is he one of those men of science who feel personally injured when facts run counter to their preconceived opinions? He cannot seriously suppose that because he has some vague grievance I am, therefore, to abandon a series of experiments which promise to be so fruitful of results. He appeared to be annoyed at the light way in which I treated his shadowy warnings, and we parted with some little coldness on both sides.

March 31. Mesmerized by Miss P.

April 1. Mesmerized by Miss P. (Note-book A.)

April 2. Mesmerized by Miss P. (Sphygmographic chart taken by Professor Wilson.)

April 3. It is possible that this course of mesmerism may be a little trying to the general consititution. Agatha says that I am thinner and darker under the eyes. I am conscious of a nervous irritability which I had not observed in myself before. The least noise, for example, makes me start, and the stupidity of a student causes me exasperation instead of amusement. Agatha wishes me to stop, but I tell her that every course of study is trying, and that one can never attain a result without paying some price for it. When she sees the sensation which my forthcoming paper on "The Relation between Mind and Matter" may make, she will understand that it is worth a little nervous wear and tear. I should not be surprised if I got my F.R.S. over it.

Mesmerized again in the evening. The effect is produced more rapidly now, and the subjective visions are less marked. I keep full notes of each sitting. Wilson is leaving for town for a week or ten days, but we shall not interrupt the experiments, which depend for their value as much upon my sensations as on his observations.

April 4. I must be carefully on my guard. A complication has crept into our experiments which I had not reckoned upon. In my eagerness for scientific facts I have been foolishly blind to the human relations between Miss Penclosa and myself. I can write here what I would not breathe to a living soul. The unhappy woman appears to have formed an attachment for me.

I should not say such a thing, even in the privacy of my own intimate journal, if it had not come to such a pass that it is impossible to ignore it. For some time, — that is, for the last week, — there have been signs which I have brushed aside and refused to think of. Her brightness when I come, her dejection when I go, her eagerness that I should come often, the expression of her eyes, the tone of her voice — I tried to think that they meant nothing, and were, perhaps, only her ardent West Indian manner. But last night, as I awoke from the mesmeric sleep, I put out my hand, unconsciously, involuntarily, and clasped hers. When I came fully to myself, we were sitting with them locked, she looking up at me with an expectant smile. And the horrible thing was that I felt impelled to say what she expected me to say. What a false wretch I should have been! How I should have loathed myself to-day had I yielded to the temptation of that moment! But, thank God, I

was strong enough to spring up and hurry from the room. I was rude, I fear, but I could not, no, I *could* not, trust myself another moment. I, a gentleman, a man of honor, engaged to one of the sweetest girls in England — and yet in a moment of reasonless passion I nearly professed love for this woman whom I hardly know. She is far older than myself and a cripple. It is monstrous, odious; and yet the impulse was so strong that, had I stayed another minute in her presence, I should have committed myself. What was it? I have to teach others the workings of our organism, and what do I know of it myself? Was it the sudden upcropping of some lower stratum in my nature — a brutal primitive instinct suddenly asserting itself? I could almost believe the tales of obsession by evil spirits, so overmastering was the feeling.

Well, the incident places me in a most unfortunate position. On the one hand, I am very loath to abandon a series of experiments which have already gone so far, and which promise such brilliant results. On the other, if this unhappy woman has conceived a passion for me —— But surely even now I must have made some hideous mistake. She, with her age and her deformity! It is impossible. And then she knew about Agatha. She understood how I was placed. She only smiled out of amusement, perhaps, when in my dazed state I seized her hand. It was my half-mesmerized brain which gave it a meaning, and sprang with such bestial swiftness to meet it. I wish I could persuade myself that it was indeed so. On the whole, perhaps, my wisest plan would be to postpone our other experiments until Wilson's return. I have written a note to Miss Penclosa, therefore, making no allusion to last night, but saying that a press of work would cause me to interrupt our sittings for a few days. She has answered, formally enough, to say that if I should change my mind I should find her at home at the usual hour.

10 P.M. Well, well, what a thing of straw I am! I am coming to know myself better of late, and the more I know the lower I fall in my own estimation. Surely I was not always so weak as this. At four o'clock I should have smiled had any one told me that I should go to Miss Penclosa's to-night, and yet, at eight, I was at Wilson's door as usual. I don't know how it occurred. The influence of habit, I suppose. Perhaps there is a mesmeric craze as there is an opium craze, and I am a victim to it. I only know that as I worked in my study I became more and more

uneasy. I fidgeted. I worried. I could not concentrate my mind upon the papers in front of me. And then, at last, almost before I knew what I was doing, I seized my hat and hurried round to keep my usual appointment.

We had an interesting evening. Mrs. Wilson was present during most of the time, which prevented the embarrassment which one at least of us must have felt. Miss Penclosa's manner was quite the same as usual, and she expressed no surprise at my having come in spite of my note. There was nothing in her bearing to show that yesterday's incident had made any impression upon her, and so I am inclined to hope that I overrated it.

April 6 (evening). No, no, no, I did not overrate it. I can no longer attempt to conceal from myself that this woman has conceived a passion for me. It is monstrous, but it is true. Again, tonight, I awoke from the mesmeric trance to find my hand in hers, and to suffer that odious feeling which urges me to throw away my honor, my career, every thing, for the sake of this creature who, as I can plainly see when I am away from her influence, possesses no single charm upon earth. But when I am near her, I do not feel this. She rouses something in me, something evil, something I had rather not think of. She paralyzes my better nature, too, at the moment when she stimulates my worse. Decidedly it is not good for me to be near her.

Last night was worse than before. Instead of flying I actually sat for some time with my hand in hers talking over the most intimate subjects with her. We spoke of Agatha, among other things. What could I have been dreaming of? Miss Penclosa said that she was conventional, and I agreed with her. She spoke once or twice in a disparaging way of her, and I did not protest. What a creature I have been!

Weak as I have proved myself to be, I am still strong enough to bring this sort of thing to an end. It shall not happen again. I have sense enough to fly when I cannot fight. From this Sunday night onward I shall never sit with Miss Penclosa again. Never! Let the experiments go, let the research come to an end; any thing is better than facing this monstrous temptation which drags me so low. I have said nothing to Miss Penclosa, but I shall simply stay away. She can tell the reason without any words of mine.

April 7. Have stayed away as I said. It is a pity to ruin such an interesting investigation, but it would be a greater pity still to ruin my life, and I *know* that I can not trust myself with that woman.

11 P.M. God help me! What is the matter with me? Am I going mad? Let me try and be calm and reason with myself. First of all I shall set down exactly what occurred.

It was nearly eight when I wrote the lines with which this day begins. Feeling strangely restless and uneasy, I left my rooms and walked round to spend the evening with Agatha and her mother. They both remarked that I was pale and haggard. About nine Professor Pratt-Haldane came in, and we played a game of whist. I tried hard to concentrate my attention upon the cards, but the feeling of restlessness grew and grew until I found it impossible to struggle against it. I simply *could* not sit still at the table. At last, in the very middle of a hand, I threw my cards down and, with some sort of an incoherent apology about having an appointment, I rushed from the room. As if in a dream I have a vague recollection of tearing through the hall, snatching my hat from the stand, and slamming the door behind me. As in a dream, too, I have the impression of the double line of gas-lamps, and my bespattered boots tell me that I must have run down the middle of the road. It was all misty and strange and un-natural. I came to Wilson's house; I saw Mrs. Wilson and I saw Miss Penclosa. I hardly recall what we talked about, but I do remember that Miss P. shook the head of her crutch at me in a playful way, and accused me of being late and of losing interest in our experiments. There was no mesmerism, but I stayed some time and have only just returned.

My brain is quite clear again now, and I can think over what has occurred. It is absurd to suppose that it is merely weakness and force of habit. I tried to explain it in that way the other night, but it will no longer suffice. It is something much deeper and more terrible than that. Why, when I was at the Mardens' whist-table, I was dragged away as if the noose of a rope had been cast round me. I can no longer disguise it from myself. The woman has her grip upon me. I am in her clutch. But I must keep my head and reason it out and see what is best to be done.

But what a blind fool I have been! In my enthusiasm over my research I have walked straight into the pit, although it lay gaping before me. Did she not herself warn me? Did she not tell

me, as I can read in my own journal, that when she has acquired power over a subject she can make him do her will? And she has acquired that power over me. I am for the moment at the beck and call of this creature with the crutch. I must come when she wills it. I must do as she wills. Worst of all, I must feel as she wills. I loathe her and fear her, yet, while I am under the spell, she can doubtless make me love her.

There is some consolation in the thought, then, that those odious impulses for which I have blamed myself do not really come from me at all. They are all transferred from her, little as I could have guessed it at the time. I feel cleaner and lighter for the thought.

April 8. Yes, now, in broad daylight, writing coolly and with time for reflection, I am compelled to confirm every thing which I wrote in my journal last night. I am in a horrible position, but, above all, I must not lose my head. I must pit my intellect against her powers. After all, I am no silly puppet, to dance at the end of a string. I have energy, brains, courage. For all her devil's tricks I may beat her yet. May! I *must*, or what is to become of me?

Let me try to reason it out! This woman, by her own explanation, can dominate my nervous organism. She can project herself into my body and take command of it. She has a parasite soul; yes, she is a parasite, a monstrous parasite. She creeps into my frame as the hermit crab does into the whelk's shell. I am powerless. What can I do? I am dealing with forces of which I know nothing. And I can tell no one of my trouble. They would set me down as a madman. Certainly, if it got noised abroad, the university would say that they had no need of a devil-ridden professor. And Agatha! No, no, I must face it alone.

CHAPTER III

I READ over my notes of what the woman said when she spoke about her powers. There is one point which fills me with dismay. She implies that when the influence is slight the subject knows what he is doing, but cannot control himself, whereas when it is strongly exerted he is absolutely unconscious. Now, I have always known what I did, though less so last night than on

the previous occasions. That seems to mean that she has never yet exerted her full powers upon me. Was ever a man so placed before?

Yes, perhaps there was, and very near me, too. Charles Sadler must know something of this! His vague words of warning take a meaning now. Oh, if I had only listened to him then, before I helped by these repeated sittings to forge the links of the chain which binds me! But I will see him to-day. I will apologize to him for having treated his warning so lightly. I will see if he can advise me.

4 P.M. No, he cannot. I have talked with him, and he showed such surprise at the first words in which I tried to express my unspeakable secret that I went no further. As far as I can gather (by hints and inferences rather than by any statement), his own experience was limited to some words or looks such as I have myself endured. His abandonment of Miss Penclosa is in itself a sign that he was never really in her toils. Oh, if he only knew his escape! He has to thank his phlegmatic Saxon temperament for it. I am black and Celtic, and this hag's clutch is deep in my nerves. Shall I ever get it out? Shall I ever be the same man that I was just one short fortnight ago?

Let me consider what I had better do. I cannot leave the university in the middle of the term. If I were free, my course would be obvious. I should start at once and travel in Persia. But would she allow me to start? And could her influence not reach me in Persia, and bring me back to within touch of her crutch? I can only find out the limits of this hellish power by my own bitter experience. I will fight and fight and fight — and what can I do more?

I know very well that about eight o'clock to-night that craving for her society, that irresistible restlessness, will come upon me. How shall I overcome it? What shall I do? I must make it impossible for me to leave the room. I shall lock the door and throw the key out of the window. But, then, what am I to do in the morning? Never mind about the morning. I must at all costs break this chain which holds me.

April 9. Victory! I have done splendidly! At seven o'clock last night I took a hasty dinner, and then locked myself up in my bedroom and dropped the key into the garden. I chose a cheery novel, and lay in bed for three hours trying to read it, but really in a horrible state of trepidation, expecting every

instant that I should become conscious of the impulse. Nothing of the sort occurred, however, and I awoke this morning with the feeling that a black nightmare had been lifted off me. Perhaps the creature realized what I had done, and understood that it was useless to try to influence me. At any rate, I have beaten her once, and if I can do it once, I can do it again.

It was most awkward about the key in the morning. Luckily, there was an under-gardener below, and I asked him to throw it up. No doubt he thought I had just dropped it. I will have doors and windows screwed up and six stout men to hold me down in my bed before I will surrender myself to be hag-ridden in this way.

I had a note from Mrs. Marden this afternoon asking me to go round and see her. I intended to do so in any case, but had not expected to find bad news waiting for me. It seems that the Armstrongs, from whom Agatha has expectations, are due home from Adelaide in the *Aurora*, and that they have written to Mrs. Marden and her to meet them in town. They will probably be away for a month or six weeks, and, as the *Aurora* is due on Wednesday, they must go at once — tomorrow, if they are ready in time. My consolation is that when we meet again there will be no more parting between Agatha and me.

"I want you to do one thing, Agatha," said I, when we were alone together. "If you should happen to meet Miss Penclosa, either in town or here, you must promise me never again to allow her to mesmerize you."

Agatha opened her eyes.

"Why, it was only the other day that you were saying how interesting it all was, and how determined you were to finish your experiments."

"I know, but I have changed my mind since then."

"And you won't have it any more?"

"No."

"I am so glad, Austin. You can't think how pale and worn you have been lately. It was really our principal objection tc going to London now that we did not wish to leave you when you were so pulled down. And your manner has been so strange occasionally — especially that night when you left poor Professor Pratt-Haldane to play dummy. I am convinced that these experiments are very bad for your nerves."

"I think so, too, dear."

"And for Miss Penclosa's nerves as well. You have heard that she is ill?"

"No."

"Mrs. Wilson told us so last night. She described it as a nervous fever. Professor Wilson is coming back this week, and of course Mrs. Wilson is very anxious that Miss Penclosa should be well again then, for he has quite a programme of experiments which he is anxious to carry out."

I was glad to have Agatha's promise, for it was enough that this woman should have one of us in her clutch. On the other hand, I was disturbed to hear about Miss Penclosa's illness. It rather discounts the victory which I appeared to win last night. I remember that she said that loss of health interfered with her power. That may be why I was able to hold my own so easily. Well, well, I must take the same precautions to-night and see what comes of it. I am childishly frightened when I think of her.

April 10. All went very well last night. I was amused at the gardener's face when I had again to hail him this morning and to ask him to throw up my key. I shall get a name among the servants if this sort of thing goes on. But the great point is that I stayed in my room without the slightest inclination to leave it. I do believe that I am shaking myself clear of this incredible bond — or is it only that the woman's power is in abeyance until she recovers her strength? I can but pray for the best.

The Mardens left this morning, and the brightness seems to have gone out of the spring sunshine. And yet it is very beautiful also as it gleams on the green chestnuts opposite my windows, and gives a touch of gayety to the heavy, lichen-mottled walls of the old colleges. How sweet and gentle and soothing is Nature! Who would think that there lurked in her also such vile forces, such odious possibilities! For of course I understand that this dreadful thing which has sprung out at me is neither supernatural nor even preternatural. No, it is a natural force which this woman can use and society is ignorant of. The mere fact that it ebbs with her strength shows how entirely it is subject to physical laws. If I had time, I might probe it to the bottom and lay my hands upon its antidote. But you cannot tame the tiger when you are beneath his claws. You can but try to writhe away from him. Ah, when I look in the glass and see my own dark eyes and clear-cut Spanish face, I

long for a vitriol splash or a bout of the small-pox. One or the other might have saved me from this calamity.

I am inclined to think that I may have trouble to-night. There are two things which make me fear so. One is that I met Mrs. Wilson in the street, and that she tells me that Miss Penclosa is better, though still weak. I find myself wishing in my heart that the illness had been her last. The other is that Professor Wilson comes back in a day or two, and his presence would act as a constraint upon her. I should not fear our interviews if a third person were present. For both these reasons I have a presentiment of trouble to-night, and I shall take the same precautions as before.

April 10. No, thank God, all went well last night. I really could not face the gardener again. I locked my door and thrust the key underneath it, so that I had to ask the maid to let me out in the morning. But the precaution was really not needed, for I never had any inclination to go out at all. Three evenings in succession at home! I am surely near the end of my troubles, for Wilson will be home again either today or to-morrow. Shall I tell him of what I have gone through or not? I am convinced that I should not have the slightest sympathy from him. He would look upon me as an interesting case, and read a paper about me at the next meeting of the Psychical Society, in which he would gravely discuss the possibility of my being a deliberate liar, and weigh it against the chances of my being in an early stage of lunacy. No, I shall get no comfort out of Wilson.

I am feeling wonderfully fit and well. I don't think I ever lectured with greater spirit. Oh, if I could only get this shadow off my life, how happy I should be! Young, fairly wealthy, in the front rank of my profession, engaged to a beautiful and charming girl — have I not every thing which a man could ask for? Only one thing to trouble me, but what a thing it is!

Midnight. I shall go mad. Yes, that will be the end of it. I shall go mad. I am not far from it now. My head throbs as I rest it on my hot hand. I am quivering all over like a scared horse. Oh, what a night I have had! And yet I have some cause to be satisfied also.

At the risk of becoming the laughing-stock of my own servant, I again slipped my key under the door, imprisoning myself for the night. Then, finding it too early to go to bed, I lay down with my clothes on and began to read one of Dumas's

novels. Suddenly I was gripped — gripped and dragged from the couch. It is only thus that I can describe the overpowering nature of the force which pounced upon me. I clawed at the coverlet. I clung to the wood-work. I believe that I screamed out in my frenzy. It was all useless, hopeless. I *must* go. There was no way out of it. It was only at the outset that I resisted. The force soon became too overmastering for that. I thank goodness that there were no watchers there to interfere with me. I could not have answered for myself if there had been. And, besides the determination to get out, there came to me, also, the keenest and coolest judgment in choosing my means. I lit a candle and endeavored, kneeling in front of the door, to pull the key through with the feather-end of a quill pen. It was just too short and pushed it further away. Then with quiet persistence I got a paper-knife out of one of the drawers, and with that I managed to draw the key back. I opened the door, stepped into my study, took a photograph of myself from the bureau, wrote something across it, placed it in the inside pocket of my coat, and then started off for Wilson's.

It was all wonderfully clear, and yet disassociated from the rest of my life, as the incidents of even the most vivid dream might be. A peculiar double consciousness possessed me. There was the predominant alien will, which was bent upon drawing me to the side of its owner, and there was the feebler protesting personality, which I recognized as being myself, tugging feebly at the overmastering impulse as a led terrier might at its chain. I can remember recognizing these two conflicting forces, but I recall nothing of my walk, nor of how I was admitted to the house.

Very vivid, however, is my recollection of how I met Miss Penclosa. She was reclining on the sofa in the little boudoir in which our experiments had usually been carried out. Her head was rested on her hand, and a tiger-skin rug had been partly drawn over her. She looked up expectantly as I entered, and, as the lamp-light fell upon her face, I could see that she was very pale and thin, with dark hollows under her eyes. She smiled at me, and pointed to a stool beside her. It was with her left hand that she pointed, and I, running eagerly forward, seized it, — I loathe myself as I think of it, — and pressed it passionately to my lips. Then, seating myself upon the stool, and still retaining her hand, I gave her the photograph which I had brought with

me, and talked and talked and talked — of my love for her, of my grief over her illness, of my joy at her recovery, of the misery it was to me to be absent a single evening from her side. She lay quietly looking down at me with imperious eyes and her provocative smile. Once I remember that she passed her hand over my hair as one caresses a dog; and it gave me pleasure — the caress. I thrilled under it. I was her slave, body and soul, and for the moment I rejoiced in my slavery.

And then came the blessed change. Never tell me that there is not a Providence! I was on the brink of perdition. My feet were on the edge. Was it a coincidence that at that very instant help should come? No, no, no; there is a Providence, and its hand has drawn me back. There is something in the universe stronger than this devil woman with her tricks. Ah, what a balm to my heart it is to think so!

As I looked up at her I was conscious of a change in her. Her face, which had been pale before, was now ghastly. Her eyes were dull, and the lids dropped heavily over them. Above all, the look of serene confidence had gone from her features. Her mouth had weakened. Her forehead had puckered. She was frightened and undecided. And as I watched the change my own spirit fluttered and struggled, trying hard to tear itself from the grip which held it — a grip which, from moment to moment, grew less secure.

"Austin," she whispered, "I have tried to do too much. I was not strong enough. I have not recovered yet from my illness. But I could not live longer without seeing you. You won't leave me, Austin? This is only a passing weakness. If you will only give me five minutes, I shall be myself again. Give me the small decanter from the table in the window."

But I had regained my soul. With her waning strength the influence had cleared away from me and left me free. And I was aggressive — bitterly, fiercely aggressive. For once at least I could make this woman understand what my real feelings toward her were. My soul was filled with a hatred as bestial as the love against which it was a reaction. It was the savage, murderous passion of the revolted serf. I could have taken the crutch from her side and beaten her face in with it. She threw her hands up, as if to avoid a blow, and cowered away from me into the corner of the settee.

"The brandy!" she gasped. "The brandy!"

I took the decanter and poured it over the roots of a palm in the window. Then I snatched the photograph from her hand and tore it into a hundred pieces.

"You vile woman," I said, "if I did my duty to society, you would never leave this room alive!"

"I love you, Austin; I love you!" she wailed.

"Yes," I cried, " and Charles Sadler before. And how many others before that?"

"Charles Sadler!" she gasped. "He has spoken to you? So, Charles Sadler, Charles Sadler!" Her voice came through her white lips like a snake's hiss.

"Yes, I know you, and others shall know you, too. You shameless creature! You knew how I stood. And yet you used your vile power to bring me to your side. You may, perhaps, do so again, but at least you will remember that you have heard me say that I love Miss Marden from the bottom of my soul, and that I loathe you, abhor you! The very sight of you and the sound of your voice fill me with horror and disgust. The thought of you is repulsive. That is how I feel toward you, and if it pleases you by your tricks to draw me again to your side as you have done to-night, you will at least, I should think, have little satisfaction in trying to make a lover out of a man who has told you his real opinion of you. You may put what words you will into my mouth, but you cannot help remembering —"

I stopped, for the woman's head had fallen back, and she had fainted. She could not bear to hear what I had to say to her! What a glow of satisfaction it gives me to think that, come what may, in the future she can never misunderstand my true feelings toward her. But what will occur in the future? What will she do next? I dare not think of it. Oh, if only I could hope that she will leave me alone! But when I think of what I said to her — Never mind; I have been stronger than she for once.

April 11. I hardly slept last night, and found myself in the morning so unstrung and feverish that I was compelled to ask Pratt-Haldane to do my lecture for me. It is the first that I have ever missed. I rose at mid-day, but my head is aching, my hands quivering, and my nerves in a pitiable state.

Who should come round this evening but Wilson. He has just come back from London, where he has lectured, read papers, convened meetings, exposed a medium, conducted a series of experiments on thought transference, entertained Professor

Richet of Paris, spent hours gazing into a crystal, and obtained some evidence as to the passage of matter through matter. All this he poured into my ears in a single gust.

"But you!" he cried at last. "You are not looking well. And Miss Penclosa is quite prostrated to-day. How about the experiments?"

"I have abandoned them."

"Tut, tut! Why?"

"The subject seems to me to a dangerous one."

Out came his big brown note-book.

"This is of great interest," said he. "What are your grounds for saying that it is a dangerous one? Please give your facts in chronological order, with approximate dates and names of reliable witnesses with their permanent addresses."

"First of all," I asked, "would you tell me whether you have collected any cases where the mesmerist has gained a command over the subject and has used it for evil purposes?"

"Dozens!" he cried exultantly. "Crime by suggestion —"

"I don't mean suggestion. I mean where a sudden impulse comes from a person at a distance — an uncontrollable impulse."

"Obsession!" he shrieked, in an ecstasy of delight. "It is the rarest condition. We have eight cases, five well attested. You don't mean to say —" His exultation made him hardly articulate.

"No, I don't," said I. "Good-evening! You will excuse me, but I am not very well to-night." And so at last I got rid of him, still brandishing his pencil and his note-book. My troubles may be bad to bear, but at least it is better to hug them to myself than to have myself exhibited by Wilson, like a freak at a fair. He has lost sight of human beings. Every thing to him is a case and a phenomenon. I will die before I speak to him again upon the matter.

April 12. Yesterday was a blessed day of quiet, and I enjoyed an uneventful night. Wilson's presence is a great consolation. What can the woman do now? Surely, when she has heard me say what I have said, she will conceive the same disgust for me which I have for her. She could not, no, she *could* not, desire to have a lover who had insulted her so. No, I believe I am free from her love — but how about her hate? Might she not use these powers of hers for revenge? Tut! why should I frighten

myself over shadows? She will forget about me, and I shall forget about her, and all will be well.

April 13. My nerves have quite recovered their tone. I really believe that I have conquered the creature. But I must confess to living in some suspense. She is well again, for I hear that she was driving with Mrs. Wilson in the High Street in the afternoon.

April 14. I do wish I could get away from the place altogether. I shall fly to Agatha's side the very day that the term closes. I suppose it is pitiably weak of me, but this woman gets upon my nerves most terribly. I have seen her again, and I have spoken with her.

It was just after lunch, and I was smoking a cigarette in my study, when I heard the step of my servant Murray in the passage. I was languidly conscious that a second step was audible behind, and had hardly troubled myself to speculate who it might be, when suddenly a slight noise brought me out of my chair with my skin creeping with apprehension. I had never particularly observed before what sort of sound the tapping of a crutch was, but my quivering nerves told me that I heard it now in the sharp wooden clack which alternated with the muffled thud of the foot-fall. Another instant and my servant had shown her in.

I did not attempt the usual conventions of society, nor did she. I simply stood with the smouldering cigarette in my hand, and gazed at her. She in her turn looked silently at me, and at her look I remembered how in these very pages I had tried to define the expression of her eyes, whether they were furtive or fierce. To-day they were fierce — coldly and inexorably so.

"Well," said she at last, "are you still of the same mind as when I saw you last?"

"I have always been of the same mind."

"Let us understand each other, Professor Gilroy," said she slowly. "I am not a very safe person to trifle with, as you should realize by now. It was you who asked me to enter into a series of experiments with you, it was you who won my affections, it was you who professed your love for me, it was you who brought me your own photograph with words of affection upon it, and, finally, it was you who on the very same evening thought fit to insult me most outrageously, addressing me as no man has ever dared to speak to me yet. Tell me that

those words came from you in a moment of passion and I am prepared to forget and to forgive them. You did not mean what you said, Austin? You do not really hate me?"

I might have pitied this deformed woman — such a longing for love broke suddenly through the menace of her eyes. But then I thought of what I had gone through, and my heart set like flint.

"If ever you heard me speak of love," said I, "you know very well that it was your voice which spoke, and not mine. The only words of truth which I have ever been able to say to you are those which you heard when last we met."

"I know. Some one has set you against me. It was he!" She tapped with her crutch upon the floor. "Well, you know very well that I could bring you this instant crouching like a spaniel to my feet. You will not find me again in my hour of weakness, when you can insult me with impunity. Have a care what you are doing, Professor Gilroy. You stand in a terrible position. You have not yet realized the hold which I have upon you."

I shrugged my shoulders and turned away.

"Well," said she, after a pause, "if you despise my love, I must see what can be done with fear. You smile, but the day will come when you will come screaming to me for pardon. Yes, you will grovel on the ground before me, proud as you are, and you will curse the day that ever you turned me from your best friend into your most bitter enemy. Have a care, Professor Gilroy!" I saw a white hand shaking in the air, and a face which was scarcely human, so convulsed was it with passion. An instant later she was gone, and I heard the quick hobble and tap receding down the passage.

But she has left a weight upon my heart. Vague presentiments of coming misfortune lie heavy upon me. I try in vain to persuade myself that these are only words of empty anger. I can remember those relentless eyes too clearly to think so. What shall I do — ah, what shall I do? I am no longer master of my own soul. At any moment this loathsome parasite may creep into me, and then — I must tell some one my hideous secret — I must tell it or go mad. If I had some one to sympathize and advise! Wilson is out of the question. Charles Sadler would understand me only so far as his own experience carries him. Pratt-Haldane! He is a well-balanced man, a man of great common-sense and resource. I will go to him. I will tell him every thing. God grant that he may be able to advise me!

CHAPTER IV

6.45 P.M. No, it is useless. There is no human help for me; I must fight this out single-handed. Two courses lie before me. I might become this woman's lover. Or I must endure such persecutions as she can inflict upon me. Even if none come, I shall live in a well of apprehension. But she may torture me, she may drive me mad, she may kill me: I will never, never, never give in. What can she inflict which would be worse than the loss of Agatha, and the knowledge that I am a perjured liar, and have forfeited the name of gentleman?

Pratt-Haldane was most amiable, and listened with all politeness to my story. But when I looked at his heavy set features, his slow eyes, and the ponderous study furniture which surrounded him, I could hardly tell him what I had come to say. It was all so substantial, so material. And, besides, what would I myself have said a short month ago if one of my colleagues had come to me with a story of demonic possession? Perhaps I should have been less patient than he was. As it was, he took notes of my statement, asked me how much tea I drank, how many hours I slept, whether I had been overworking much, had I had sudden pains in the head, evil dreams, singing in the ears, flashes before the eyes — all questions which pointed to his belief that brain congestion was at the bottom of my trouble. Finally he dismissed me with a great many platitudes about open-air exercise, and avoidance of nervous excitement. His prescription, which was for chloral and bromide, I rolled up and threw into the gutter.

No, I can look for no help from any human being. If I consult any more, they may put their heads together and I may find myself in an asylum. I can but grip my courage with both hands, and pray that an honest man may not be abandoned.

April 15. It is the sweetest spring within the memory of man. So green, so mild, so beautiful! Ah, what a contrast between nature without and my own soul so torn with doubt and terror! It has been an uneventful day, but I know that I am on the edge of an abyss. I know it, and yet I go on with the routine of my life. The one bright spot is that Agatha is happy and well and out of all danger. If this creature had a hand on each of us, what might she not do?

April 16. The woman is ingenious in her torments. She knows how fond I am of my work, and how highly my lectures are thought of. So it is from that point that she now attacks me. It will end, I can see, in my losing my professorship, but I will fight to the finish. She shall not drive me out of it without a struggle.

I was not conscious of any change during my lecture this morning save that for a minute or two I had a dizziness and swimminess which rapidly passed away. On the contrary, I congratulated myself upon having made my subject (the functions of the red corpuscles) both interesting and clear. I was surprised, therefore, when a student came into my laboratory immediately after the lecture, and complained of being puzzled by the discrepancy between my statements and those in the text-books. He showed me his note-book, in which I was reported as having in one portion of the lecture championed the most outrageous and unscientific heresies. Of course I denied it, and declared that he had misunderstood me, but on comparing his notes with those of his companions, it became clear that he was right, and that I really had made some most preposterous statements. Of course I shall explain it away as being the result of a moment of aberration, but I feel only too sure that it will be the first of a series. It is but a month now to the end of the session, and I pray that I may be able to hold out until then.

April 26. Ten days have elapsed since I have had the heart to make any entry in my journal. Why should I record my own humiliation and degradation? I had vowed never to open it again. And yet the force of habit is strong, and here I find myself taking up once more the record of my own dreadful experiences — in much the same spirit in which a suicide has been known to take notes of the effects of the poison which killed him.

Well, the crash which I had foreseen has come — and that no further back than yesterday. The university authorities have taken my lectureship from me. It has been done in the most delicate way, purporting to be a temporary measure to relieve me from the effects of overwork, and to give me the opportunity of recovering my health. None the less, it has been done, and I am no longer Professor Gilroy. The laboratory is still in my charge, but I have little doubt that that also will soon go.

The fact is that my lectures had become the laughing-stock of the university. My class was crowded with students who came to see and hear what the eccentric professor would do or say next. I cannot go into the detail of my humiliation. Oh, that devilish woman! There is no depth of buffoonery and imbecility to which she has not forced me. I would begin my lecture clearly and well, but always with the sense of a coming eclipse. Then as I felt the influence I would struggle against it, striving with clenched hands and beads of sweat upon my brow to get the better of it, while the students, hearing my incoherent words and watching my contortions, would roar with laughter at the antics of their professor. And then, when she had once fairly mastered me, out would come the most outrageous things — silly jokes, sentiments as though I were proposing a toast, snatches of ballads, personal abuse even against some member of my class. And then in a moment my brain would clear again, and my lecture would proceed decorously to the end. No wonder that my conduct has been the talk of the colleges. No wonder that the University Senate has been compelled to take official notice of such a scandal. Oh, that devilish woman!

And the most dreadful part of it all is my own loneliness. Here I sit in a commonplace English bow-window, looking out upon a commonplace English street with its garish 'buses and its lounging policeman, and behind me there hangs a shadow which is out of all keeping with the age and place. In the home of knowledge I am weighed down and tortured by a power of science knows nothing. No magistrate would listen to me. No paper would discuss my case. No doctor would believe my symptoms. My own most intimate friends would only look upon it as a sign of brain derangement. I am out of all touch with my kind. Oh, that devilish woman! Let her have a care! She may push me too far. When the law cannot help a man, he may make a law for himself.

She met me in the High Street yesterday evening and spoke to me. It was as well for her, perhaps, that it was not between the hedges of a lonely country road. She asked me with her cold smile whether I had been chastened yet. I did not deign to answer her. "We must try another turn of the screw," said she. Have a care, my lady, have a care! I had her at my mercy once. Perhaps another chance may come.

April 28. The suspension of my lectureship has had the effect also of taking away her means of annoying me, and so I have enjoyed two blessed days of peace. After all, there is no reason to despair. Sympathy pours in to me from all sides, and every one agrees that it is my devotion to science and the arduous nature of my researches which have shaken my nervous system. I have had the kindest message from the council advising me to travel abroad, and expressing the confident hope that I may be able to resume all my duties by the beginning of the summer term. Nothing could be more flattering than their allusions to my career and to my services to the university. It is only in misfortune that one can test one's own popularity. This creature may weary of tormenting me, and then all may yet be well. May God grant it!

April 29. Our sleepy little town has had a small sensation. The only knowledge of crime which we ever have is when a rowdy undergraduate breaks a few lamps or comes to blows with a policeman. Last night, however, there was an attempt made to break into the branch of the Bank of England, and we are all in a flutter in consequence.

Parkenson, the manager, is an intimate friend of mine, and I found him very much excited when I walked round there after breakfast. Had the thieves broken into the counting-house, they would still have had the safes to reckon with, so that the defence was considerably stronger than the attack. Indeed, the latter does not appear to have ever been very formidable. Two of the lower windows have marks as if a chisel or some such instrument had been pushed under them to force them open. The police should have a good clue, for the wood-work had been done with green paint only the day before, and from the smears it is evident that some of it has found its way on to the criminal's hands or clothes.

4.30 P.M. Ah, that accursed woman! That thrice accursed woman! Never mind! She shall not beat me! No, she shall not! But, oh, the she-devil! She has taken my professorship. Now she would take my honor. Is there nothing I can do against her, nothing save — Ah, but, hard pushed as I am, I cannot bring myself to think of that!

It was about an hour ago that I went into my bedroom, and was brushing my hair before the glass, when suddenly my eyes lit upon something which left me so sick and cold that I sat

down upon the edge of the bed and began to cry. It is many a long year since I shed tears, but all my nerve was gone, and I could but sob and sob in impotent grief and anger. There was my house jacket, the coat I usually wear after dinner, hanging on its peg by the wardrobe, with the right sleeve thickly crusted from wrist to elbow with daubs of green paint.

So this was what she meant by another turn of the screw! She had made a public imbecile of me. Now she would brand me as a criminal. This time she has failed. But how about the next? I dare not think of it — and of Agatha and my poor old mother! I wish that I were dead!

Yes, this is the other turn of the screw. And this is also what she meant, no doubt, when she said that I had not realized yet the power she has over me. I look back at my account of my conversation with her, and I see how she declared that with a slight exertion of her will her subject would be conscious, and with a stronger one unconscious. Last night I was unconscious. I could have sworn that I slept soundly in my bed without so much as a dream. And yet those stains tell me that I dressed, made my way out, attempted to open the bank windows, and returned. Was I observed? Is is possible that some one saw me do it and followed me home? Ah, what a hell my life has become! I have no peace, no rest. But my patience is nearing its end.

10 P.M. I have cleaned my coat with turpentine. I do not think that any one could have seen me. It was with my screw-driver that I made the marks. I found it all crusted with paint, and I have cleaned it. My head aches as if it would burst, and I have taken five grains of antipyrine. If it were not for Agatha, I should have taken fifty and had an end of it.

May 3. Three quiet days. This hell fiend is like a cat with a mouse. She lets me loose only to pounce upon me again. I am never so frightened as when every thing is still. My physical state is deplorable — perpetual hiccough and ptosis of the left eyelid.

I have heard from the Mardens that they will be back the day after tomorrow. I do not know whether I am glad or sorry. They were safe in London. Once here they may be drawn into the miserable network in which I am myself struggling. And I must tell them of it. I cannot marry Agatha so long as I know that I am not responsible for my own actions. Yes, I must tell

them, even if it brings every thing to an end between us.

To-night is the university ball, and I must go. God knows I never felt less in the humor for festivity, but I must not have it said that I am unfit to appear in public. If I am seen there, and have speech with some of the elders of the university it will go a long way toward showing them that it would be unjust to take my chair away from me.

11.30 P.M. I have been to the ball. Charles Sadler and I went together, but I have come away before him. I shall wait up for him, however, for, indeed, I fear to go to sleep these nights. He is a cheery, practical fellow, and a chat with him will steady my nerves. On the whole, the evening was a great success. I talked to every one who has influence, and I think that I made them realize that my chair is not vacant quite yet. The creature was at the ball — unable to dance, of course, but sitting with Mrs. Wilson. Again and again her eyes rested upon me. They were almost the last things I saw before I left the room. Once, as I sat sideways to her, I watched her, and saw that her gaze was following some one else. It was Sadler, who was dancing at the time with the second Miss Thurston. To judge by her expression, it is well for him that he is not in her grip as I am. He does not know the escape he has had. I think I hear his step in the street now, and I will go down and let him in. If he will —

May 4. Why did I break off in this way last night? I never went down stairs, after all — at least, I have no recollection of doing so. But, on the other hand, I cannot remember going to bed. One of my hands is greatly swollen this morning, and yet I have no remembrance of injuring it yesterday. Otherwise, I am feeling all the better for last night's festivity. But I cannot understand how it is that I did not meet Charles Sadler when I so fully intended to do so. Is it possible — My God, it is only too probable! Has she been leading me some devil's dance again? I will go down to Sadler and ask him.

Mid-day. The thing has come to a crisis. My life is not worth living. But, if I am to die, then she shall come also. I will not leave her behind, to drive some other man mad as she has me. No, I have come to the limit of my endurance. She has made me as desperate and dangerous a man as walks the earth. God knows I have never had the heart to hurt a fly, and yet, if I had my hands now upon that woman, she should never leave this room alive. I shall see her this very day, and she shall learn what

she has to expect from me.

I went to Sadler and found him, to my surprise, in bed. As I entered he sat up and turned a face toward me which sickened me as I looked at it.

"Why, Sadler, what has happened?" I cried, but my heart turned cold as I said it.

"Gilroy," he answered, mumbling with his swollen lips, "I have for some weeks been under the impression that you are a madman. Now I know it, and that you are a dangerous one as well. If it were not that I am unwilling to make a scandal in the college, you would now be in the hands of the police."

"Do you mean —" I cried.

"I mean that as I opened the door last night you rushed out upon me, struck me with both your fists in the face, knocked me down, kicked me furiously in the side, and left me lying almost unconscious in the street. Look at your own hand bearing witness against you"

Yes, there it was, puffed up, with sponge-like knuckles, as after some terrific blow. What could I do? Though he put me down as a madman, I must tell him all. I sat by his bed and went over all my troubles from the beginning. I poured them out with quivering hands and burning words which might have carried conviction to the most sceptical. "She hates you and she hates me!" I cried. "She revenged herself last night on both of us at once. She saw me leave the ball, and she must have seen you also. She knew how long it would take you to reach home. Then she had but to use her wicked will. Ah, your bruised face is a small thing beside by bruised soul!"

He was struck by my story. That was evident. "Yes, yes, she watched me out of the room," he muttered. "She is capable of it. But is it possible that she has really reduced you to this? What do you intend to do?"

"To stop it!" I cried. "I am perfectly desperate; I shall give her fair warning to-day, and the next time will be the last."

"Do nothing rash," said he.

"Rash!" I cried. "The only rash thing is that I should postpone it another hour." With that I rushed to my room, and here I am on the eve of what may be the great crisis of my life. I shall start at once. I have gained one thing today, for I have made one man, at least, realize the truth of this monstrous experience of mine. And, if the worst should happen, this diary

remains as a proof of the goad that has driven me.

Evening. When I came to Wilson's, I was shown up, and found that he was sitting with Miss Penclosa. For half an hour I had to endure his fussy talk about his recent research into the exact nature of the spiritualistic rap, while the creature and I sat in silence looking across the room at each other. I read a sinister amusement in her eyes, and she must have seen hatred and menace in mine. I had almost despaired of having speech with her when he was called from the room, and we were left for a few moments together.

"Well, Professor Gilroy — or is it Mr. Gilroy?" said she, with that bitter smile of hers. "How is your friend Mr. Charles Sadler after the ball?"

"You fiend!" I cried. "You have come to the end of your tricks now. I will have no more of them. Listen to what I say." I strode across and shook her roughly by the shoulder. "As sure as there is a God in heaven, I swear that if you try another of your deviltries upon me, I will have your life for it. Come what may, I will have your life. I have come to the end of what a man can endure."

"Accounts are not quite settled between us," said she, with a passion that equalled my own. "I can love, and I can hate. You had your choice. You chose to spurn the first; now you must test the other. It will take a little more to break your spirit, I see, but broken it shall be. Miss Marden comes back to-morrow, as I understand."

"What has that to do with you?" I cried. "It is a pollution that you should dare even to think of her. If I thought that you would harm her —"

She was frightened, I could see, though she tried to brazen it out. She read the black thought in my mind, and cowered away from me.

"She is fortunate in having such a champion," said she. "He actually dares to threaten a lonely woman. I must really congratulate Miss Marden upon her protector."

The words were bitter, but the voice and manner were more acid still.

"There is no use talking," said I. "I only came here to tell you, - and to tell you most solemnly, — that your next outrage upon me will be your last." With that, as I heard Wilson's step upon the stair, I walked from the room. Ay, she may look

venomous and deadly, but, for all that, she is beginning to see now that she has as much to fear from me as I can have from her. Murder! It has an ugly sound. But you don't talk of murdering a snake or of murdering a tiger. Let her have a care now.

May 5. I met Agatha and her mother at the station at eleven o'clock. She is looking so bright, so happy, so beautiful. And she was so overjoyed to see me. What have I done to deserve such love? I went back home with them, and we lunched together. All the troubles seem in a moment to have been shredded back from my life. She tells me that I am looking pale and worried and ill. The dear child puts it down to my loneliness and the perfunctory attentions of a housekeeper. I pray that she may never know the truth! May the shadow, if shadow there must be, lie ever black across my life and leave hers in the sunshine. I have just come back from them, feeling a new man. With her by my side I think that I could show a bold face to any thing which life might send.

5 P.M. Now, let me try to be accurate. Let me try to say exactly how it occurred. It is fresh in my mind, and I can set it down correctly, though it is not likely t at the time will ever come when I shall forget the doings of to-day.

I had returned from the Mardens' after lunch, and was cutting some microscopic sections in my freezing microtome, when in an instant I lost consciousness in the sudden hateful fashion which has become only too familiar to me of late.

When my senses came back to me I was sitting in a small chamber, very different from the one in which I had been working. It was cosey and bright, with chintz-covered settees, colored hangings, and a thousand pretty little trifles upon the wall. A small ornamental clock ticked in front of me, and the hands pointed to half-past three. It was all quite familiar to me, and yet I stared about for a moment in a half-dazed way until my eyes fell upon a cabinet photograph of myself upon the top of the piano. On the other side stood one of Mrs. Marden. Then, of course, I remembered where I was. It was Agatha's boudoir.

But how came I there, and what did I want? A horrible sinking came to my heart. Had I been sent here on some devilish errand? Had that errand already been done? Surely it must; otherwise, why should I be allowed to come back to consciousness? Oh, the agony of that moment! What had I

done? I sprang to my feet in my despair, and as I did so a small glass bottle fell from my knees on the the carpet.

It was unbroken, and I picked it up. Outside was written "Sulphuric Acid. Fort." When I drew the round glass stopper, a thick fume rose slowly up, and a pungent, choking smell pervaded the room. I recognized it as one which I kept for chemical testing in my chambers. But why had I brought a bottle of vitriol into Agatha's chamber? Was it not this thick, reeking liquid with which jealous women had been known to mar the beauty of their rivals? My heart stood still as I held the bottle to the light. Thank God, it was full! No mischief had been done as yet. But had Agatha come in a minute sooner, was it not certain that the hellish parasite within me would have dashed the stuff into her — Ah, it will not bear to be thought of! But it must have been for that. Why else should I have brought it? At the thought of what I might have done my worn nerves broke down, and I sat shivering and twitching, the pitiable wreck of a man.

It was the sound of Agatha's voice and the rustle of her dress which restored me. I looked up, and saw her blue eyes, so full of tenderness and pity, gazing down at me.

"We must take you away to the country, Austin," she said. "You want rest and quiet. You look wretchedly ill."

"Oh, it is nothing!" said I, trying to smile. "It was only a momentary weakness. I am all right again now."

"I am so sorry to keep you waiting. Poor boy, you must have been here quite half an hour! The vicar was in the drawing-room, and, as I knew that you did not care for him, I thought it better that Jane should show you up here. I thought the man would never go!"

"Thank God he stayed! Thank God he stayed!" I cried hysterically.

"Why, what is the matter with you, Austin?" she asked, holding my arm as I staggered up from the chair. "Why are you glad that the vicar stayed? And what is this little bottle in your hand?"

"Nothing," I cried, thrusting it into my pocket. "But I must go. I have something important to do."

"How stern you look, Austin! I have never seen your face like that. You are angry?"

"Yes, I am angry."

"But not with me?"

"No, no, my darling! You would not understand."

"But you have not told me why you came."

"I came to ask you whether you would always love me — no matter what I did, or what shadow might fall on my name. Would you believe in me and trust me however black appearances might be against me?"

"You know that I would, Austin."

"Yes, I know that you would. What I do I shall do for you. I am driven to it. There is no other way out, my darling!" I kissed her and rushed from the room.

The time for indecision was at an end. As long as the creature threatened my own prospects and my honor there might be a question as to what I should do. But now, when Agatha — my innocent Agatha — was endangered, my duty lay before me like a turnpike road. I had no weapon, but I never paused for that. What weapon should I need, when I felt every muscle quivering with the strength of a frenzied man? I ran through the streets, so set upon what I had to do that I was only dimly conscious of the faces of friends whom I met — dimly conscious also that Professor Wilson met me, running with equal precipitance in the opposite direction. Breathless but resolute I reached the house and rang the bell. A white-cheeked maid opened the door, and turned whiter yet when she saw the face that looked in at her.

"Show me up at once to Miss Penclosa," I demanded.

"Sir," she gasped, "Miss Penclosa died this afternoon at half-past three!"

by
Thomas Lovell Beddoes
(1803 — 1849)

A ghost, that loved a lady fair,
Ever in the starry air
  Of midnight at her pillow stood;
And, with a sweetness skies above
The luring words of human love,
  Her soul the phantom wooed.
Sweet and sweet is their poisoned
  note,
The little snakes of silver throat,
In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
Ever singing "die, oh! die."

Young soul put off your flesh, and
  come
With me into the quiet tomb,
  Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet;
The earth will swing us, as she goes,
Beneath our coverlid of snows,
  And the warm leaden sheet.
Dear and dear is their poisoned note,
The little snakes of silver throat,
In mossy skulls that nest and lie,
Ever singing "die, oh! die."

THE DEAD SMILE

by F. Marion Crawford

Illustrated by Bill Hughes

FRANCIS MARION CRAWFORD (1854 — 1909) was the nephew of Julia Ward Howe, the dramatist and poet who wrote "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" during the Civil War, and the son of Thomas Crawford, a noted sculptor. He was born in Italy and spent much of his early life and his later years there, using it as the setting for many of his novels. He travelled extensively, becoming familiar with many parts of the world, and was an amazing linguist, with a command of over 15 languages. The start of his enormous popularity as a writer came with the publication of his novel MR. ISAACS in 1882, the story of a diamond merchant in India. He produced 45 novels, most of them historical, but through many of them runs a strong thread of mysticism. Several of his novels deal openly with the supernatural, such as WITH THE IMMORTALS (1888) and THE WITCH OF PRAGUE (1891), but it is for his weird tales that he is chiefly remembered today. Crawford has few peers at creating a mood of almost unbearable horror; his best-known story is "The Upper Berth," but here is another, less familiar, chiller from his 1911 collection, UNCANNY TALES, that rivals even Poe in morbidity.

CHAPTER I

SIR HUGH OCKRAM smiled as he sat by the open window of his study, in the late August afternoon; and just then a curiously yellow cloud obscured the low sun, and the clear summer light turned lurid, as if it had been suddenly poisoned and polluted by the foul vapours of a plague. Sir Hugh's face seemed, at best, to be made of fine parchment drawn skin-tight over a wooden mask, in which two eyes were sunk out of sight, and peered from far within through crevices under the slanting, wrinkled lids, alive and watchful like two toads in their holes, side by side and exactly alike. But as the light changed, then a little yellow glare flashed in each. Nurse Macdonald said once that when Sir Hugh smiled he saw the faces of two women in hell — two dead women he had betrayed. (Nurse Macdonald was a hundred years old.) And the smile widened, stretching the pale lips across the discoloured teeth in an expression of profound self-satisfaction, blended with the most unforgiving hatred and contempt for the human doll. The hideous disease of which he was dying had touched his brain. His son stood beside him, tall, white and delicate as an angel in a primitive picture; and though there was deep distress in his violet eyes as he looked at his father's face, he felt the shadow of that sickening smile stealing across his own lips and parting them and drawing them against his will. And it was like a bad dream, for he tried not to smile and smiled the more. Beside him, strangely like him in her wan, angelic beauty, with the same shadowy golden hair, the same sad violet eyes, the same luminously pale face, Evelyn Warburton rested one hand upon his arm. And as she looked into her uncle's eyes, and could not turn her own away, she knew that the deathly smile was hovering on her own red lips, drawing them tightly across her little teeth, while two bright tears ran down her cheeks to her mouth, and dropped from the upper to the lower lip while she smiled — and the smile was like the shadow of death and the seal of damnation upon her pure, young face.

"Of course," said Sir Hugh very slowly, and still looking out at the trees, "if you have made up your mind to be married, I cannot hinder you, and I don't suppose you attach the smallest importance to my consent —"

"Father!" exclaimed Gabriel reproachfully.

"No; I do not deceive myself," continued the old man, smiling terribly. "You will marry when I am dead, though there is a very good reason why you had better not — why you had better not," he repeated very emphatically, and he slowly turned his toad eyes upon the lovers.

"What reason?" asked Evelyn in a frightened voice.

"Never mind the reason, my dear. You will marry just as if it did not exist." There was a long pause. "Two gone," he said, his voice lowering strangely, "and two more will be four — all together — for ever and ever, burning, burning, burning bright."

At the last words his head sank slowly back, and the little glare of the toad eyes disappeared under the swollen lids; and the lurid cloud passed from the westering sun, so that the earth was green again and the light pure. Sir Hugh had fallen asleep, as he often did in his last illness, even while speaking.

Gabriel Ockram drew Evelyn away, and from the study they went out into the dim hall, softly closing the door behind them, and each audibly drew breath, as though some sudden danger had been passed. They laid their hands each in the other's, and their strangely-like eyes met in a long look, in which love and perfect understanding were darkened by the secret terror of an unknown thing. Their pale faces reflected each other's fear.

"It is his secret," said Evelyn at last. "He will never tell us what it is."

"If he dies with it," answered Gabriel, "let it be on his own head!"

"On his head!" echoed the dim hall. It was a strange echo, and some were frightened by it, for they said that if it were a real echo it should repeat everything and not give back a phrase here and there, now speaking, now silent. But Nurse Macdonald said that the great hall would never echo a prayer when an Ockram was to die, though it would give back curses ten for one.

"On his head!" it repeated quite softly, and Evelyn started and looked round.

"It is only the echo," said Gabriel, leading her away.

They went out into the late afternoon light, and sat upon a stone seat behind the chapel, which was built across the end of the east wing. It was very still, not a breath stirred, and there was no sound near them. Only far off in the park a song-bird

was whistling the high prelude to the evening chorus.

"It is very lonely here," said Evelyn, taking Gabriel's hand nervously, and speaking as if she dreaded to disturb the silence. "If it were dark, I should be afraid."

"Of what? Of me?" Gabriel's sad eyes turned to her.

"Oh no! How could I be afraid of you? But of the old Ockrams — they say they are just under our feet here in the north vault outside the chapel, all in their shrouds, with no coffins, as they used to bury them."

"As they always will — as they will bury my father, and me. They say an Ockram will not lie in a coffin."

"But it cannot be true — these are fairy tales — ghost stories!" Evelyn nestled nearer to her companion, grasping his hand more tightly, and the sun began to godown.

"Of course. But there is the story of old Sir Vernon, who was beheaded for treason under James II. The family brought his body back from the scaffold in an iron coffin with heavy locks, and they put it in the north vault. But ever afterwards, whenever the vault was opened to bury another of the family, they found the coffin wide open, and the body standing upright against the wall, and the head rolled away in a corner, smiling at it."

"As Uncle Hugh smiles?" Evelyn shivered.

"Yes, I suppose so," answered Gabriel, thoughtfully. "Of course I never saw it, and the vault has not been opened for thirty years — none of us have died since then."

"And if — if Uncle Hugh dies — shall you —" Evelyn stopped, and her beautiful thin face was quite white.

"Yes. I shall see him laid there too — with his secret, whatever it is." Gabriel sighed and pressed the girl's little hand.

"I do not like to think of it," she said unsteadily. "O Gabriel, what can the secret be? He said we had better not marry — not that he forbade it — but he said it so strangely, and he smiled — uhh!" Her small white teeth chattered with fear, and she looked over her shoulder while drawing still closer to Gabriel. "And, somehow, I felt it in my own face —"

"So did I," answered Gabriel in a low, nervous voice. "Nurse Macdonald —" He stopped abruptly.

"What? What did she say?"

"Oh — nothing. She has told me things — they would frighten you, dear. Come, it is growing chilly." He rose, but Evelyn held

his hand in both of hers, still sitting and looking up into his face.

"But we shall be married, just the same — Gabriel! Say that we shall!"

"Of course, darling — of course. But while my father is so very ill, it is impossible —"

"O Gabriel, Gabriel, dear! I wish we were married now!" cried Evelyn in sudden distress. "I know that something will prevent it and keep us apart."

"Nothing shall!"

"Nothing?"

"Nothing human," said Gabriel Ockram, as she drew him down to her.

And their faces, that were so strangely alike, met and touched — and Gabriel knew that the kiss had a marvellous savour of evil, but on Evelyn's lips it was like the cool breath of a sweet and mortal fear. And neither of them understood, for they were innocent and young. Yet she drew him to her by her lightest touch, as a sensitive plant shivers and waves its thin leaves, and bends and closes softly upon what it wants; and he let himself be drawn to her willingly, as he would if her touch had been deadly and poisonous; for she strangely loved that half voluptuous breath of fear, and he passionately desired the nameless evil something that lurked in her maiden lips.

"It is as if we loved in a strange dream," she said.

"I fear the waking," he murmured.

"We shall not wake, dear — when the dream is over it will have already turned into death, so softly that we shall not know it. But until then —"

She paused, and her eyes sought his, and their faces slowly came nearer. It was as if they had thoughts in their red lips that foresaw and foreknew the deep kiss of each other.

"Until then —" she said again, very low, and her mouth was nearer to his.

"Dream — till then," murmured his breath.

CHAPTER II

NURSE MACDONALD was a hundred years old. She used to sleep sitting all bent together in a great old leathern arm-chair with wings, her feet in a bag footstool lined with sheepskin, and

many warm blankets wrapped about her, even in summer. Beside her a little lamp always burned at night by an old silver cup, in which there was something to drink.

Her face was very wrinkled, but the wrinkles were so small and fine and near together that they made shadows instead of lines. Two thin locks of hair, that was turning from white to a smoky yellow again, were drawn over her temples from under her starched white cap. Every now and then she woke, and her eyelids were drawn up in tiny folds like little pink silk curtains, and her queer blue eyes looked straight before her through doors and walls and worlds to a far place beyond. Then she slept again, and her hands lay one upon the other on the edge of the blanket; the thumbs had grown longer than the fingers with age, and the joints shone in the low lamplight like polished crab-apples.

It was nearly one o'clock in the night, and the summer breeze was blowing the ivy branch against the panes of the window with a hushing caress. In the small room beyond, with the door ajar, the girl-maid who took care of Nurse Macdonald was fast asleep. All was very quiet. The old woman breathed regularly, and her indrawn lips trembled each time as the breath went out, and her eyes were shut.

But outside the closed window there was a face, and violet eyes were looking steadily at the ancient sleeper, for it was like the face of Evelyn Warburton, though there were eighty feet from the sill of the window to the foot of the tower. Yet the cheeks were thinner than Evelyn's, and as white as a gleam, and the eyes stared, and the lips were not red with life; they were dead, and painted with new blood.

Slowly Nurse Macdonald's wrinkled eyelids folded themselves back, and she looked straight at the face at the window while one might count ten.

"Is it time?" she asked in her little old, far-away voice.

While she looked the face at the window changed, for the eyes opened wider and wider till the white glared all round the bright violet, and the bloody lips opened over gleaming teeth, and stretched and widened and stretched again, and the shadowy golden hair rose and streamed against the window in the night breeze. And in answer to Nurse Macdonald's question came the sound that freezes the living flesh.

That low-moaning voice that rises suddenly, like the scream

of storm, from a moan to a wail, from a wail to a howl, from a howl to the fear-shriek of the tortured dead — he who has heard knows, and he can bear witness that the cry of the banshee is an evil cry to hear alone in the deep night. When it was over and the face was gone, Nurse Macdonald shook a little in her great chair, and still she looked at the black square of the window, but there was nothing more there, nothing but the night, and the whispering ivy branch. She turned her head to the door that was ajar, and there stood the girl in her white gown, her teeth chattering with fright.

"It is time, child," said Nurse Macdonald. "I must go to him, for it is the end."

She rose slowly, leaning her withered hands upon the arms of the chair, and the girl brought her a woollen gown and a great mantle, and her crutch-stick, and made her ready. But very often the girl looked at the window and was unjointed with fear, and often Nurse Macdonald shook her head and said words which the maid could not understand.

"It was like the face of Miss Evelyn," said the girl at last, trembling.

But the ancient woman looked up sharply and angrily, and her queer blue eyes glared. She held herself by the arm of the great chair with her left hand, and lifted up her crutch-stick to strike the maid with all her might. But she did not.

"You are a good girl," she said, "but you are a fool. Pray for wit, child, pray for wit — or else find service in another house than Ockram Hall. Bring the lamp and help me under my left arm."

The crutch-stick clacked on the wooden floor, and the low heels of the woman's slippers clappered after her in slow triplets, as Nurse Macdonald got toward the door. And down the stairs each step she took was a labour in itself, and by the clacking noise the waking servants knew that she was coming, very long before they saw her.

No one was sleeping now, and there were lights, and whisperings, and pale faces in the corridors near Sir Hugh's bedroom, and now some one went in, and now some one came out, but every one made way for Nurse Macdonald, who had nursed Sir Hugh's father more than eighty years ago.

The light was soft and clear in the room. There stood Gabriel Ockram by his father's bedside, and there knelt Evelyn

Warburton, her hair lying like a golden shadow down her shoulders, and her hands clasped nervously together. And opposite Gabriel, a nurse was trying to make Sir Hugh drink. But he would not, and though his lips were parted, his teeth were set. He was very, very thin and yellow now, and his eyes caught the light sideways and were as yellow coals.

"Do not torment him," said Nurse Macdonald to the woman who held the cup. "Let me speak to him, for his hour is come."

"Let her speak to him," said Gabriel in a dull voice.

So the ancient woman leaned to the pillow and laid the feather-weight of her withered hand, that was like a brown moth, upon Sir Hugh's yellow fingers, and she spoke to him earnestly, while only Gabriel and Evelyn were left in the room to hear.

"Hugh Ockram," she said, "this is the end of your life; and as I saw you born, and saw your father born before you, I am come to see you die. Hugh Ockram, will you tell me the truth?"

The dying man recognised the little far-away voice he had known all his life, and he very slowly turned his yellow face to Nurse Macdonald; but he said nothing. Then she spoke again.

"Hugh Ockram, you will never see the daylight again. Will you tell the truth?"

His toad-like eyes were not yet dull. They fastened themselves on her face.

"What do you want of me?" he asked, and each word struck hollow upon the last. "I have no secrets. I have lived a good life."

Nurse Macdonald laughed — a tiny, cracked laugh, that made her old head bob and tremble a little, as if her neck were on a steel spring. But Sir Hugh's eyes grew red, and his pale lips began to twist.

"Let me die in peace," he said slowly.

But Nurse Macdonald shook her head, and her brown, moth-like hand left his and fluttered to his forehead.

"By the mother that bore you and died of grief for the sins you did, tell me the truth!"

Sir Hugh's lips tightened on his discoloured teeth.

"Not on earth," he answered slowly.

"By the wife who bore your son and died heart-broken, tell me the truth!"

"Neither to you in life, nor to her in eternal death."

His lips writhed, as if the words were coals between them, and a great drop of sweat rolled across the parchment of his forehead. Gabriel Ockram bit his hand as he watched his father die. But Nurse Macdonald spoke a third time.

"By the woman whom you betrayed, and who waits for you this night, Hugh Ockram, tell me the truth!"

"It is too late. Let me die in peace."

The writhing lips began to smile across the set yellow teeth, and the toad eyes glowed like evil jewels in his head.

"There is time," said the ancient woman. "Tell me the name of Evelyn Warburton's father. Then I will let you die in peace."

Evelyn started back, kneeling as she was, and stared at Nurse Macdonald, and then at her uncle.

"The name of Evelyn's father?" he repeated slowly, while the awful smile spread upon his dying face.

The light was growing strangely dim in the great room. As Evelyn looked, Nurse Macdonald's crooked shadow on the wall grew gigantic. Sir Hugh's breath came thick, rattling in his throat, as death crept in like a snake and choked it back. Evelyn prayed aloud, high and clear.

Then something rapped at the window, and she felt her hair rise upon her head in a cool breeze, as she looked around in spite of herself. And when she saw her own white face looking in at the window, and her own eyes staring at her through the glass, wide and fearful, and her own hair streaming against the pane, and her own lips dashed with blood, she rose slowly from the floor and stood rigid for one moment, till she screamed once and fell straight back into Gabriel's arms. But the shriek that answered hers was the fear-shriek of the tormented corpse, out of which the soul cannot pass for shame of deadly sins, though the devils fight in it with corruption, each for their due share.

Sir Hugh Ockram sat upright in his deathbed, and saw and cried aloud:

"Evelyn!" His harsh voice broke and rattled in his chest as he sank down. But still Nurse Macdonald tortured him, for there was a little life left in him still.

"You have seen the mother as she waits for you, Hugh Ockram. Who was this girl Evelyn's father? What was his name?"

For the last time the dreadful smile came upon the twisted

lips, very slowly, very surely now, and the toad eyes glared red, and the parchment face glowed a little in the flickering light. For the last time words came.

"They know it in hell."

Then the glowing eyes went out quickly, the yellow face turned waxen pale, and a great shiver ran through the thin body as Hugh Ockram died.

But in death he still smiled, for he knew his secret and kept it still, on the other side, and he would take it with him, to lie with him for ever in the north vault of the chapel where the Ockrams lie uncoffined in their shrouds — all but one. Though he was dead, he smiled, for he had kept his treasure of evil truth to the end, and there was none left to tell the name he had spoken, but there was all the evil he had not undone left to bear fruit.

As they watched — Nurse Macdonald and Gabriel, who held Evelyn still unconscious in his arms while he looked at the father — they felt the dead smile crawling along their own lips — the ancient crone and the youth with the angel's face. Then they shivered a little, and both looked at Evelyn as she lay with her head on his shoulder, and, though she was very beautiful, the same sickening smile was twisting her young mouth too, and it was like the foreshadowing of a great evil which they could not understand.

But by and by they carried Evelyn out, and she opened her eyes and the smile was gone. From far away in the great house the sound of weeping and crooning came up the stairs and echoed along the dismal corridors, for the women had begun to mourn the dead master, after the Irish fashion, and the hall had echoes of its own all that night, like the far-off wail of the benshee among forest trees.

When the time was come they took Sir Hugh in his winding-sheet on a trestle bier, and bore him to the chapel and through the iron door and down the long descent to the north vault, with tapers, to lay him by his father. And two men went in first to prepare the place, and came back staggering like drunken men, and white, leaving their lights behind them.

But Gabriel Ockram was not afraid, for he knew. And he went in alone and saw that the body of Sir Vernon Ockram was leaning upright against the stone wall, and that its head lay on the ground near by with the face turned up, and the dried

leathern lips smiled horribly at the dried-up corpse, while the iron coffin, lined with black velvet, stood open on the floor.

Then Gabriel took the thing in his hands, for it was very light, being quite dried by the air of the vault, and those who peeped in from the door saw him lay it in the coffin again, and it rustled a little, like a bundle of reeds, and sounded hollow as it touched the sides and the bottom. He also placed the head upon the shoulders and shut down the lid, which fell to with a rusty spring that snapped.

After that they laid Sir Hugh beside his father, with the trestle bier on which they had brought him, and they went back to the chapel.

But when they saw one another's faces, master and men, they were all smiling with the dead smile of the corpse they had left in the vault, so that they could not bear to look at one another until it had faded away.

CHAPTER III

GABRIEL OCKRAM became Sir Gabriel, inheriting the baronetcy with the half-ruined fortune left by his father, and still Evelyn Warburton lived at Ockram Hall, in the south room that had been hers ever since she could remember anything. She could not go away, for there were no relatives to whom she could have gone, and besides, there seemed to be no reason why she should not stay. The world would never trouble itself to care what the Ockrams did on their Irish estates, and it was long since the Ockrams had asked anything of the world.

So Sir Gabriel took his father's place at the dark old table in the dining-room, and Evelyn sat opposite to him, until such time as their mourning should be over, and they might be married at last. And meanwhile their lives went on as before, since Sir Hugh had been a hopeless invalid during the last year of his life, and they had seen him but once a day for the little while, spending most of their time together in a strangely perfect companionship.

But though the late summer saddened into autumn, and autumn darkened into winter, and storm followed storm, and rain poured on rain through the short days and the long nights, yet Ockram Hall seemed less gloomy since Sir Hugh had been laid in the north vault beside his father. And at Christmastide

Evelyn decked the great hall with holly and green boughs, and huge fires blazed on every hearth. Then the tenants were all bidden to a New Year's dinner, and they ate and drank well, while Sir Gabriel sat at the head of the table. Evelyn came in when the port wine was brought, and the most respected of the tenants made a speech to propose her health.

It was long, he said, since there had been a Lady Ockram. Sir Gabriel shaded his eyes with his hand and looked down at the table, but a faint colour came into Evelyn's transparent cheeks. But, said the grey-haired farmer, it was longer still since there had been a Lady Ockram so fair as the next was to be, and he gave the health of Evelyn Warburton.

Then the tenants all stood up and shouted for her, and Sir Gabriel stood up likewise, beside Evelyn. And when the men gave the last and loudest cheer of all there was a voice not theirs, above them all, higher, fiercer, louder — a scream not earthly, shrieking for the bride of Ockram Hall. And the holly and the green boughs over the great chimney-piece shook and slowly waved as if a cool breeze were blowing over them. But the men turned very pale, and many of them set down their glasses, but others let them fall upon the floor for fear. And looking into one another's faces, they were all smiling strangely, a dead smile, like dead Sir Hugh's. One cried out words in Irish, and the fear of death was suddenly upon them all, so that they fled in panic, falling over one another like wild beasts in the burning forest, when the thick smoke runs along before the flame; and the tables were overset, and drinking glasses and bottles were broken in heaps, and the dark red wine crawled like blood upon the polished floor.

Sir Gabriel and Evelyn stood alone at the head of the table before the wreck of the feast, not daring to turn to see each other, for each knew that the other smiled. But his right arm held her and his left hand clasped her right as they stared before them; and but for the shadows of her hair one might not have told their two faces apart. They listened long, but the cry came not again, and the dead smile faded from their lips, while each remembered that Sir Hugh Ockram lay in the north vault, smiling in his winding-sheet, in the dark, because he had died with his secret.

So ended the tenants' New Year's dinner. But from that time on Sir Gabriel grew more and more silent, and his face grew

even paler and thinner than before. Often without warning and without words, he would rise from his seat, as if something moved him against his will, and he would go out into the rain or the sunshine to the north side of the chapel, and sit on the stone bench, staring at the ground as if he could see through it and through the vault below, and through the white winding-sheet in the dark, to the dead smile that would not die.

Always when he went out in that way Evelyn came out presently and sat beside him. Once, too, as in summer, their beautiful faces came suddenly near, and their lids drooped, and their red lips were almost joined together. But as their eyes met, they grew wide and wild, so that the white showed in a ring all round the deep violet, and their teeth chattered, and their hands were like hands of corpses, each in the other's, for the terror of what was under their feet, and of what they knew but could not see.

Once, also, Evelyn found Sir Gabriel in the chapel alone, standing before the iron door that led down to the place of death, and in his hand there was the key to the door; but he had not put it into the lock. Evelyn drew him away, shivering, for she had also been driven in waking dreams to see that terrible thing again, and to find out whether it had changed since it had lain there.

"I'm going mad," said Sir Gabriel, covering his eyes with his hand as he went with her. "I see it in my sleep, I see it when I am awake — it draws me to it, day and night — and unless I see it I shall die!"

"I know," answered Evelyn, "I know. It is as if threads were spun from it, like a spider's, drawing us down to it." She was silent for a moment, and then she started violently and grasped his arm with a man's strength, and almost screamed the words she spoke. "But we must not go there!" she cried. "We must not go!"

Sir Gabriel's eyes were half shut, and he was not moved by the agony of her face.

"I shall die, unless I see it again," he said, in a quiet voice not like his own. And all that day and that evening he scarcely spoke, thinking of it, always thinking, while Evelyn Warburton quivered from head to foot with a terror she had never known.

She went alone, on a grey winter's morning, to Nurse Macdonald's room in the tower, and sat down beside the great

leathern easy-chair, laying her thin white hand upon the withered fingers.

"Nurse," she said, "what was it that Uncle Hugh should have told you, that night before he died? It must have been an awful secret — and yet, though you asked him, I feel somehow that you know it, and that you know why he used to smile so dreadfully."

The old woman's head moved slowly from side to side.

"I only guess — I shall never know," she answered slowly in her cracked little voice.

"But what do you guess? Who am I? Why did you ask who my father was? You know I am Colonel Warburton's daughter, and my mother was Lady Ockram's sister, so that Gabriel and I are cousins. My father was killed in Afghanistan. What secret can there be?"

"I do not know. I can only guess."

"Guess what?" asked Evelyn imploringly, and pressing the soft withered hands, as she leaned forward. But Nurse Macdonald's wrinkled lids dropped suddenly over her queer blue eyes, and her lips shook a little with her breath, as if she were asleep.

Evelyn waited. By the fire the Irish maid was knitting fast, and the needles clicked like three or four clocks ticking against each other. And the real clock on the wall solemnly ticked alone, checking off the seconds of the woman who was a hundred years old, and had not many days left. Outside the ivy branch beat the window in the wintry blast, as it had beaten against the glass a hundred years ago.

Then as Evelyn sat there she felt again the waking of a horrible desire — the sickening wish to go down, down to the thing in the north vault, and to open the winding-sheet, and see whether it had changed; and she held Nurse Macdonald's hands as if to keep herself in her place and fight against the appalling attraction of the evil dead.

But the old cat that kept Nurse Macdonald's feet warm, lying always on the bag footstool, got up and stretched itself, and looked up into Evelyn's eyes, while its back arched, and its tail thickened and bristled, and its ugly pink lips drew back in a devilish grin, showing its sharp teeth. Evelyn stared at it, half fascinated by its ugliness. Then the creature suddenly put out one paw with all its claws spread, and spat at the girl, and all at

once the grinning cat was like the smiling corpse far down below, so that Evelyn shivered down to her small feet, and covered her face with her free hand, lest Nurse Macdonald should wake and see the dead smile there, for she could feel it.

The old woman had already opened her eyes again, and she touched her cat with the end of her crutch-stick, whereupon its back went down and its tail shrunk, and it sidled back to its place on the bag footstool. But its yellow eyes looked up sideways at Evelyn, between the slits of its lids.

"What is it that you guess, nurse?" asked the young girl again.

"A bad thing — a wicked thing. But I dare not tell you, lest it might not be true, and the very thought should blast your life. For if I guess right, he meant that you should not know, and that you two should marry, and pay for his old sin with your souls."

"He used to tell us that we ought not to marry —"

"Yes — he told you that, perhaps — but it was as if a man put poisoned meat before a starving beast, and said 'do not eat' but never raised his hand to take the meat away. And if he told you that you should not marry, it was because he hoped you would; for of all men living or dead, Hugh Ockram was the falsest man that ever told a cowardly lie, and the cruelest that ever hurt a weak woman, and the worst that ever loved a sin."

"But Gabriel and I love each other," said Evelyn very sadly.

Nurse Macdonald's old eyes looked far away, at sights seen long ago, and that rose in the grey winter air amid the mists of an ancient youth.

"If you love, you can die together," she said, very slowly. "Why should you live, if it is true? I am a hundred years old. What has life given me? The beginning is fire; the end is a heap of ashes; and between the end and the beginning lies all the pain of the world. Let me sleep, since I cannot die."

Then the old woman's eyes closed again, and her head sank a little lower upon her breast.

So Evelyn went away and left her asleep, with the cat asleep on the bag footstool; and the young girl tried to forget Nurse Macdonald's words, but she could not, for she heard them over and over again in the wind, and behind her on the stairs. And as she grew sick with fear of the frightful unknown evil to which her soul was bound, she felt a bodily something pressing her,

and pushing her, and forcing her on, and from the other side she felt the threads that drew her mysteriously; and when she shut her eyes, she saw in the chapel behind the altar, the low iron door through which she must pass to go to the thing.

And as she lay awake at night, she drew the sheet over her face, lest she should see shadows on the wall beckoning to her; and the sound of her own warm breath made whisperings in her ears, while she held the mattress with her hands, to keep from getting up and going to the chapel. It would have been easier if there had not been a way thither through the library, by a door which was never locked. It would be fearfully easy to take her candle and go softly through the sleeping house. And the key of the vault lay under the altar behind a stone that turned. She knew the little secret. She could go alone and see.

But when she thought of it, she felt her hair rise on her head, and first she shivered so that the bed shook, and then the horror went through her in a cold thrill that was agony again, like myriads of icy needles, boring into her nerves.

CHAPTER IV

THE old clock in Nurse Macdonald's tower struck midnight. From her room she could hear the creaking chains and weights in their box in the corner of the staircase, and overhead the jarring of the rusty lever that lifted the hammer. She had heard it all her life. It struck eleven strokes clearly, and then came the twelfth, with a dull half stroke, as though the hammer were too weary to go on, and had fallen asleep against the bell.

The old cat got up from the bag footstool and stretched itself, and Nurse Macdonald opened her ancient eyes and looked slowly round the room by the dim light of the night lamp. She touched the cat with her crutch-stick, and it lay down upon her feet. She drank a few drops from her cup and went to sleep again.

But downstairs Sir Gabriel sat straight up as the clock struck, for he had dreamed a fearful dream of horror, and his heart stood still, till he awoke at its stopping, and it beat again furiously with his breath, like a wild thing set free. No Ockram had ever known fear waking, but sometimes it came to Sir Gabriel in his sleep.

He pressed his hands to his temples as he sat up in bed, and

his hands were icy cold, but his head was hot. The dream faded far, and in its place there came the master thought that racked his life; with the thought also came the sick twisting of his lips in the dark that would have been a smile. Far off, Evelyn Warburton dreamed that the dead smile was on her mouth, and awoke, starting with a little moan, her face in her hands, shivering.

But Sir Gabriel struck a light and got up and began to walk up and down his great room. It was midnight, and he had barely slept an hour, and in the north of Ireland the winter nights are long.

"I shall go mad," he said to himself, holding his forehead. He knew that it was true. For weeks and months the possession of the thing had grown upon him like a disease, till he could think of nothing without thinking first of that. And now all at once it outgrew his strength, and he knew that he must be its instrument or lose his mind — that he must do the deed he hated and feared, if he could fear anything, or that something would snap in his brain and divide him from life while he was yet alive. He took the candlestick in his hand, the old-fashioned heavy candlestick that had always been used by the head of the house. He did not think of dressing, but went as he was, in his silk night clothes and his slippers, and he opened the door. Everything was very still in the great old house. He shut the door behind him and walked noiselessly on the carpet through the long corridor. A cool breeze blew over his shoulder and blew the flame of his candle straight out from him. Instinctively he stopped and looked round, but all was still, and the upright flame burned steadily. He walked on, and instantly a strong draught was behind him, almost extinguishing the light. It seemed to blow him on his way, ceasing whenever he turned, coming again when he went on — invisible, icy.

Down the great staircase to the echoing hall he went, seeing nothing but the flaring flame of the candle standing away from him over the guttering wax, while the cold wind blew over his shoulder and through his hair. On he passed through the open door into the library, dark with old books and carved bookcases; on through the door in the shelves, with painted shelves on it, and the imitated backs of books, so that one needed to know where to find it — and it shut itself after him with a soft click. He entered the low-arched passage, and though

the door was shut behind him and fitted tightly in its frame, still the cold breeze blew the flame forward as he walked. And he was not afraid; but his face was very pale, and his eyes were wide and bright, looking before him, seeing already in the dark air the picture of the thing beyond. But in the chapel he stood still, his hand on the little turning stone tablet in the back of the stone altar. On the tablet were engraved words: *"Clavis sepulchri Clarissimorum Dominorum De Ockram"* — ("the key to the vault of the most illustrious lords of Ockram.") Sir Gabriel paused and listened. He fancied that he heard a sound far off in the great house where all had been so still, but it did not come again. Yet he waited at the last, and looked at the low iron door. Beyond it, down the long descent, lay his father uncoffined, six months dead, corrupt, terrible in his clinging shroud. The strangely preserving air of the vault could not yet have done its work completely. But on the thing's ghastly features, with their half-dried, open eyes, there would still be the frightful smile with which the man had died — the smile that haunted —

As the thought crossed Sir Gabriel's mind, he felt his lips writhing, and he struck his own mouth in wrath with the back of his hand so fiercely that a drop of blood ran down his chin, and another, and more, falling back in the gloom upon the chapel pavement. But still his bruised lips twisted themselves. He turned the tablet by the simple secret. It needed so safer fastening, for had each Ockram been coffined in pure gold, and had the door been open wide, there was not a man in Tyrone brave enough to go down to that place, saving Gabriel Ockram himself, with his angel's face and his thin, white hands, and his sad unflinching eyes. He took the great old key and set it into the lock of the iron door; and the heavy, rattling noise echoed down the descent beyond like footsteps, as if a watcher had stood behind the iron and were running away within, with heavy dead feet. And though he was standing still, the cool wind was from behind him, and blew the flame of the candle against the iron panel. He turned the key.

Sir Gabriel saw that his candle was short. There were new ones on the altar, with long candlesticks, and he lit one, and left his own burning on the floor. As he set it down on the pavement his lip began to bleed again, and another drop fell upon the stones.

He drew the iron door open and pushed it back against the chapel wall, so that it should not shut of itself, while he was within; and the horrible draught of the sepulchre came up out of the depths in his face, foul and dark. He went in, but though the fetid air met him, yet the flame of the tall candle was blown straight from him against the wind while he walked down the easy incline with steady steps, his loose slippers slapping the pavement as he trod.

He shaded the candle with his hand, and his fingers seemed to be made of wax and blood as the light shone through them. And in spite of him the unearthly draught forced the flame forward, till it was blue over the black wick, and it seemed as if it must go out. But he went straight on, with shining eyes.

The downward passage was wide, and he could not always see the walls by the struggling light, but he knew when he was in the place of death by the larger, drearier echo of his steps in the greater space, and by the sensation of a distant blank wall. He stood still, almost enclosing the flame of the candle in the hollow of his hand. He could see a little, for his eyes were glowing used to the gloom. Shadowy forms were outlined in the dimness, where the biers of the Ockrams stood crowded together, side by side, each with its straight, shrouded corpse, strangely preserved by the dry air, like the empty shell that the locust sheds in summer. And a few steps before him he saw clearly the dark shape of headless Sir Vernon's iron coffin, and he knew that nearest to it lay the thing he sought.

He was as brave as any of those dead men had been, and they were his fathers, and he knew that sooner or later he should lie there himself, beside Sir Hugh, slowly drying to a parchment shell. But he was still alive, and he closed his eyes a moment, and three great drops stood on his forehead.

Then he looked again, and by the whiteness of the winding-sheet he knew his father's corpse, for all the others were brown with age; and, moreover, the flame of the candle was blown toward it. He made four steps till he reached it, and suddenly the light burned straight and high, shedding a dazzling yellow glare upon the fine linen that was all white, save over the face, and where the joined hands were laid on the breast. And at those places ugly stains had spread, darkened with outlines of the features and of the tight-clasped fingers. There was a frightful stench of drying death.

As Sir Gabriel looked down, something stirred behind him, softly at first, then more noisily, and something fell to the stone floor with a dull thud and rolled up to his feet; he started back, and saw a withered head lying almost face upward on the pavement, grinning at him. He felt the cold sweat standing on his face, and his heart beat painfully.

For the first time in all his life that evil thing which men call fear was getting hold of him, checking his heart-strings as a cruel driver checks a quivering horse, clawing at his backbone with icy hands, lifting his hair with freezing breath, climbing up and gathering in his midriff with leaden weight.

Yet presently he bit his lip and bent down, holding the candle in one hand, to lift the shroud back from the head of the corpse with the other. Slowly he lifted it. Then it clove to the half-dried skin of the face, and his hand shook as if some one had struck him on the elbow, but half in fear and half in anger at himself, he pulled it, so that it came away with a little ripping sound. He caught his breath as he held it, now yet throwing it back, and now yet looking. The horror was working in him, and he felt that old Vernon Ockram was standing up in his iron coffin, headless, yet watching him with the stump of his severed neck.

While he held his breath he felt the dead smile twisting his lips. In sudden wrath at his own misery, he tossed the death-stained linen backward, and looked at last. He ground his teeth lest he should shriek aloud.

There it was, the thing that haunted him, that haunted Evelyn Warburton, that was like a blight on all that came near him.

The dead face was blotched with dark stains, and the thin, grey hair was matted about the discoloured forehead. The sunken lids were half open, and the candle light gleamed on something foul where the toad eyes had lived.

But yet the dead thing smiled, as it had smiled in life; the ghastly lips were parted and drawn wide and tight upon the wolfish teeth, cursing still, and still defying hell to do its worst — defying, cursing, and always and for ever smiling alone in the dark.

Sir Gabriel opened the winding-sheet where the hands were, and the blackened, withered fingers were closed upon something stained and mottled. Shivering from head to foot,

but fighting like a man in agony for his life, he tried to take the package from the dead man's hold. But as he pulled at it the claw-like fingers seemed to close more tightly, and when he pulled harder the shrunken hands and arms rose from the corpse with a horrible look of life following his motion — then as he wrenched the sealed packet loose at last, the hands fell back into their place still folded.

He set down the candle on the edge of the bier to break the seals from the stout paper. And, kneeling on one knee, to get a better light, he read what was within, written long ago in Sir Hugh's queer hand.

He was no longer afraid.

He read how Sir Hugh had written it all down that it might perchance be a witness of evil and of his hatred; how he had loved Evelyn Warburton, his wife's sister; and how his wife had died of a broken heart with his curse upon her, and how Warburton and he had fought side by side in Afghanistan, and Warburton had fallen; but Ockram had brought his comrade's wife back a full year later, and little Evelyn, her child, had been born in Ockram Hall. And next, how he had wearied of the mother, and she had died like her sister with his curse on her. And then, how Evelyn had been brought up as his niece, and how he had trusted that his son Gabriel and his daughter, innocent and unknowing, might love and marry, and the souls of the women he had betrayed might suffer another anguish before eternity was out. And, last of all, he hoped that some day, when nothing could be undone, the two might find his writing and live on, not daring to tell the truth for their children's sake and the world's word, man and wife.

This he read, kneeling beside the corpse in the north vault, by the light of the altar candle; and when he had read it all, he thanked God aloud that he had found the secret in time. But when he rose to his feet and looked down at the dead face it was changed, and the smile was gone from it for ever, and the jaw had fallen a little, and the tired, dead lips were relaxed. And then there was a breath behind him and close to him, not cold like that which had blown the flame of the candle as he came, but warm and human. He turned suddenly.

There she stood, all in white, with her shadowy golden hair — for she had risen from her bed and had followed him noiselessly, and had found him reading, and had herself read

over his shoulder. He started violently when he saw her, for his nerves were unstrung — and then he cried out her name in the still place of death:

"Evelyn!"

"My brother!" she answered, softly and tenderly, putting out both hands to meet his.

THE COVER

Our cover for his issue was painted by a talented young Los Angeles artist, Bill Hughes. Bill is a newcomer to science fiction and fantasy illustrating, but is fast making a name for himself with a series of excellent covers for Charles Neutzel's Powell Science Fiction paperback series. Bill has worked with several advertising agencies in Los Angeles and Las Vegas, and while with the Petersen Publishing Company, he won the 1964 Design/West Award for Best Editorial Design Incorporating Contemporary Photography. Bill has done quite a lot of magazine illustration, design and layout, and edits and art directs two local movie magazines, but his cover for FORGOTTEN FANTASY is his first for an SF magazine. We're certain it won't be his last.

NEXT ISSUE

PROGNOSTICATIONS

Next issue we'll continue our serial, THE GODDESS OF ATVATABAR, by William R. Bradshaw, and we'll have several fascinating fantasy gems from the past for you by Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, Lord Dunsany, and hopefully a short science fiction tale by — Voltaire! Also, if space permits, we hope to have a letter column going, so send your cheers and jeers to: FORGOTTEN FANTASY, 1521 N. Vine Street, Hollywood, California, 90028.

We've already had several inquiries about subscription rates, so I think that this is as good a place as any to state that we are not accepting subscriptions at this time. We may do so later, but we want to wait and see how the magazine is accepted first. However, individual back issues will be available through the mail if you should miss them on the newsstand.

The editors and publishers of FORGOTTEN FANTASY have made every effort to determine the copyrights of all material used. If we should inadvertently infringe on any copyrights, we hereby apologize in advance to the copyright holders. Most of the decorations used in this issue are courtesy Dover Publications, from two volumes in their excellent Pictorial Archives series: ART NOUVEAU, edited by Edmund V. Gillon, Jr., and ALPHABETS AND ORNAMENTS, by Ernest Lehner.

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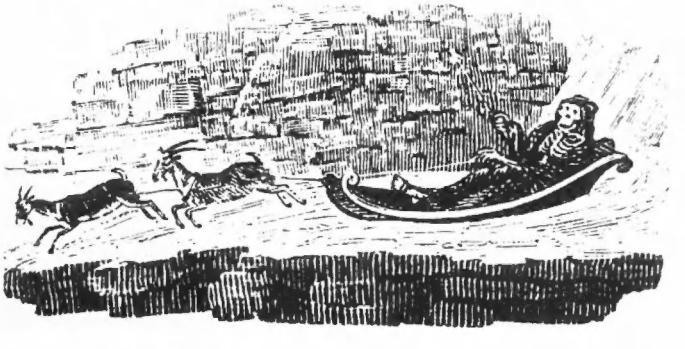

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FORGOTTEN FANTASY
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Jack London • Robert W. Chambers
Edgar Allan Poe • H. G. Wells
Jules Verne • Algernon Blackwood
M. R. James
and Many Others!