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I HAVE some doubts about tbe psychological bearings of fear. In old English, "perplexity" was often used as its equivalent, and it seems a pity that this usage has been dropped. We want a word for fear that would express a kind of mental syllabub. Dr. Johnson, following Locke, defines fear as "a painful apprehension of future danger." Now I confess that I do not like the word "apprehension," which means a *laying hold*, because I cannot help concluding that fear is altogether a *letting go*. If logicians would let me, I would define fear *per metaphoram*, and call it "resentment at being kicked out of one's rut." The most philosophical remark of Falstaff's was that he was a "coward upon instinct.

When all our instincts, which are but sublimated habits, are turned topsy-turvy, then we know what fear is. Though your particular rut *must* lead to the cannon's mouth, you are cheerful and impavid in it as a man just and firm of purpose should he; but when you are kicked into a neighbouring rut which *may* lead to the Hesperides, the blood freezes in your veins. Luckily a perfect terror, an utter annihilation of all ruts whatsoever, an overhead plunge into the unknown, comes but once or twice in any man's life. The occasion may be trivial. A belated jackass, the love-plaint of a feline Sappho, a brawl of rodents behind the wainscot, a pendent night-shirt whose fluttering tails are visited by playful moonbeams—any of these things is sufficient. Or the occasion may be great; a convulsion of nature, or the approach of death in a strange garb. It matters not. The supreme moment of terror, when the scalp lifts like the lining of a hat, when a man is clothed from head to foot in a raiment of "goose-skin," when the knees refuse to bend, and are yet too weak to keep straight, and when the heart feels like the kernel of a rotten nut—*that* moment is never to be forgotten. Then the man feels the natural and the supernatural, the real and the ideal, the subject and the object, the *ego* and the *non ego*, the present and the remote, all jumbled together in a mad dance through his bewildered consciousness. Then Pope's line is reversed and sense leans for aid on metaphysic. Then the man discerns how infinitely little he is when reduced within his own circumference; how dependent he has been on a tiny world, outside which he is "quenched in a boggy Syrtis." Then he discovers how necessary to his happiness are the ordinary conditions of thought, and that, if he only knew it, the most awful, the most intensely horrible thing the imagination can conceive of, is a syllogism with an alien conclusion. Then, for an instant, he learns what it is to be dead.

The qualifications of a perfect terror are three. It must be unexpected; it must be absolutely incomprehensible; and it must culminate like a nightmare. Once I had a terror which so perfectly fulfilled these requirements that no man may hope to have a better.

This thing happened to me in the city of Pieter-Maritzburg, in the colony of Natal; and in order that I may tell my tale intelligibly, I may be allowed to give some short description of the place. The city is named from one Pieter Maritz, whose sacred bard I have never met with, and the memory of whose deeds, therefore—of the pounds of Boer tobacco he smoked in a green-stone pipe, of the hollands he drank, of the wide trousers he wore, and of the Dutch oaths he swore—must for ever, as far as I am concerned, be 'whelmed in long night. Maritzburg (as the name is commonly abbreviated) is the seat of government and the headquarters of the garrison. All the other towns in Natal—Durban especially—which consider themselves not to be sneezed at, *are* sneezed at by Maritzburg. We are slightly aristocratic in Maritzburg; we have been known to wear gloves; we have caught a little of the hoity-toitiness that lingers round the purlieus of bureaucracy. In this respect Maritzburg is not remarkable; but in another respect, namely, brilliancy of colouring, Maritzburg is one of the most remarkable towns I ever saw. It lies

on a shoulder of table-land, surrounded on three sides by an amphitheatre of hills, which to a European eye are singularly brown and barren of aspect. In the midst of this great ugly basin Maritzburg absolutely blossoms. All its roofs are of red tile, all its hedges are rose hedges, and nearly all its trees are peach trees; and thus, when peaches and roses are in bloom there is red and pink enough to make the town look like a gigantic nosegay.

Another peculiarity of the town is very pleasant; one, two, or even three streams of bright, clear, swiftly-flowing water run down each street. A large head of water comes downwards on the town from the top of the shoulder on which it is built, and this water supply is subdivided as it enters the town into a multitude of small rivulets—or *sluyts*, as the Dutch call them. Thus, a street in Maritzburg is formed in the following way: each house stands well back from the road in its *erf* or plot of ground, then comes a thick and lofty hedge of roses, then a *sluyt*, then a raised footpath or causeway, then another *sluyt*, then the roadway. Now these *sluyts*, however much they may add to the cleanliness of the place, are exceedingly awkward to the pedestrian. Every *sluyt* is about a yard below the footpath, and being bridged over by innumerable slabs of stone and logs of wood, forms in fact a series of traps and pitfalls.

If I have drawn my picture rightly, the reader will see that to walk along a footpath in Maritzburg on a dark night, without the assistance of a single street-lamp, requires some care, even if the mind is unoccupied and the senses under control; but to walk there on a dark night, hearing behind one the— But I must proceed in due order.

On the night when the terror came to me I was returning from the fort at the top of the town to the hotel where I was staying, which was at the lower end. I had a distance of about one mile to walk. It was midnight. The night was dark, but not with a thick, murky darkness. There was no moon, and the sky was clouded over; but the edges of the horizon could be just distinguished, and the roadway and hedges made out with little trouble. In short, the night was not one in which a man has to grope his way, though he could hardly walk quickly and boldly. Every one had gone to bed, and not a light was visible in the street, except an oil lamp hanging before the hotel, the glimmer of which, the street being quite straight, I could see in the distance almost as soon as I started on my walk. There was no wind. All was so still that the liquid warbling of the frogs in the *vley* below the town sounded near and loud. Besides this, and the multitudinous murmur of nature, which she never wholly intermits in her most silent watches, and which one hears and hears not, there was perfect quiet.

I had got but a little way on my journey, walking cautiously along the raised footpath, when I became aware that I was followed. Close behind me the sound—very soft and gentle, but unmistakable—of a footfall made itself heard. I stopped, and the footfall stopped also. I could see nothing whatever, and the sound—though so faint as to be almost like an echo of my own steps—had appeared to be close at hand; not more, in fact, than three or

four yards distant. I thought I had been mistaken, and walked on again. Yes! again came the footfall, and—no—*not* an echo. Whenever an echo is heard, there is a certain interval of time between the sound and its reverberation. This interval may be momentary—a mere fraction of a second—but is always appreciable; or rather, to put it another way, if the echo is appreciable, there must be an interval.

Now, the rhythm—the "time" as rowing men would say—of this footfall was exact. As my foot touched the ground so did that other foot, in precise and unvarying coincidence. The character of the sound was very remarkable. The path was hard and firm, with many small stones scattered here and there, and with gravel sprinkled on it. My boots made a crunching noise as I walked. But this footfall was most evidently caused by feet that were neither shod, nor (being unshod) of a horny or hoofy kind. And yet, on the other hand, there was nothing of the dull thud that would be made by the naked foot of a man, or by any animal with a soft paw going pit-a-pat over the ground, as Bunyan describes it, "with a great padding pace." There was an undoubted impact on the gravel—of *that* I was sure—and beyond that I could liken the sound to nothing earthly.

Again, the supposition that my follower was a beast was negatived by the too evident mockery of the sound. No beast, surely, would go to the trouble of "keeping time" with a belated wayfarer, and the cessation and renewal of these footsteps concurrently with mine proved that mockery was deliberately intended. I say *no* beast; but, perhaps, I ought to have excepted the ape tribe. A monstrous ape, whose mind was just developing to a human enjoyment of mischief, might have pleased his genius with this hideous mimicry. But an ape always walks with a shuffling, shambling gait, and for him the tripping levity of these steps would have been impossible. An ape is not accustomed to walk on two legs, and the creature that pursued me was so accustomed; there was a regularity and firmness in what I may call the accentuation of the tread, however gentle, light, and aerial that tread might be, which left no room for doubt.

When I first became conscious that I was being pursued of set purpose by a footfall, I was startled, but scarcely terrified. A savage beast was out of the question, and Maritzburg was entirely free from crimes of violence: the white inhabitants were too well off to become highway robbers; while to attack one of the superior race was quite alien from the habits and ideas of the Coolie or Kafir population. I began, then, by being more curious than alarmed. But as the strangeness of the circumstance forced itself more and more on my attention my curiosity soon passed through fear to horror.

I tried in vain to convince myself that I was mistaken. I stopped short at least half-a-dozen times, and then walked on with a quick impulse. I walked as fast as I could; I took short strides—long strides; I sauntered slowly (this was very difficult); but all to no purpose. Exactly as I did so did the footfall; stopping when I stopped, and keeping perfect time with my varied paces. Only one thing I noticed, and that was a slight hesitation when I suddenly

changed my steps from fast to slow, from long to short, or *vice versa*; as if the thing that followed me could not instantaneously accommodate itself to the change. But this hesitation was only momentary. Indeed, the versatile quickness, with which its gait was made to correspond with mine through every mode of puzzling alternation, was something marvellous. No drum-major ever had such command over the rhythm of motion.

In the surprise and terror now gradually stealing over me it will easily be imagined how difficult it was to keep a footing on the raised causeway. More than once I all but slipped into the *sluyt* , and whenever I did stumble a feeling of unsurmountable alarm came over me that, if I fell, something would be *on* me and *at* me. It was better to be upright on two shaky legs, which might be called on for instant flight, than prone in a ditch, helpless, and with I knew not what stalking jauntUy around. No; I was sure I could walk no longer on the causeway.

With sudden resolution, I jumped a floundering, stumbling, headlong jump from the path, over the *sluyt* that ran on the roadway side, and got on the broad road itself. Having gained the middle of the road, I stood still and listened. At first there was silence. Then I heard my own jump exactly repeated in faint, ethereal mimicry. I heard the same stumbling jump, the same long strides, the same little run of recovery on the road. I could bear it no longer. "Who's there?" I shouted.

The only certain theory respecting 'The Night-side of Nature' at which, after diligent study of Mrs. Crowe and other approved writers, I have been able to arrive, is, that it is bad, fatally bad, policy to speak to anything uncanny—a ghost, for instance. If ever you meet with a companion who seems likely to turn round the corner of bogeydom, remember that "Silence is golden," and that speech is exceedingly base metal. The probability of this theory is easily demonstrated. When you speak to an uncanniness you thereby—*ipso facto*—recognise it; you promote it to a *raison d'être*.

The popular superstition that a ghost cannot speak unless spoken to is founded on strictly logical reasoning. By addressing an uncanniness in words, however bold and masterful, you at once limit your range of available hypotheses to two: you confess, by implication, that the thing you address must be either a *human* being or a *supernatural* being. There is no escape from the alternative. You do not hold converse with a hallucination, an extraordinary shadow, an unexpected light, a mysterious sound, an inexplicable phenomenon. If you are strong-minded enough to infer that your visitant is the result of a heedless supper, you do not (in default of a medicine chest) exorcise by any form of words the bit of cucumber that is troubling you. By speaking you personify, where it is for the interest of your sanity that personality should be out of the question. Treat, then, a ghost with the insular pride of an Englishman. Consider him a foreigner, and therefore a suspicious character, of whose social status you cannot be sure. Domineer over him by not saying "How d'ye do?" If you so much as "pass the time of day" with him, your acquaintance ripens with awful rapidity into intimacy

of the closest. It is far better, if the temptation to speak becomes too strong, to retire at once under the bed-clothes, when that friendly shelter is present, and abstract your thoughts altogether from what may be outside. It is not, I believe, within the memory of the chroniclers that any uncanny thing has ever attempted to lift the shrouding drapery. You may, indeed, feel somewhat ticklish about those lumpy and angular parts which mark out the human outline, however deeply smothered under blankets but you are—if there is truth in history—absolutely safe. And if there is no haven of blankets and counterpanes, and the thing *must* be faced, recollect—cleave, cling to the recollection—that supernatural etiquette does not permit a grisliness to introduce itself. The golden sceptre of speech must first be held out.

I had, I say, made a shocking blunder in speaking. And yet I almost think I should have been relieved by an answer. But not so much as a *Hem!* was vouchsafed in reply; there was not the faintest whisper of a voice; it was *nil, et praeterea nil* —absolute nothingness, made sensible by a footfall. There was nothing for it but to walk on. But now I had not the smallest remnant of reason left: that *divinae particula aurae* had quite deserted me. I now pursued my way, as Coleridge says:

"Like one, that on a lonesome road

Doth walk in fear and dread,

And having once turned round, walks on,

And turns no more his head.

Because he knows a frightful fiend

Doth close behind him tread."

Just so I walked, and the footfall pattered softly behind me.

The question, "What is it?" had by this time tenfold horrors. It may, perhaps, be suggested that I was no longer able to follow out any inquiry; but I *was*; only, by my insensate rashness of speech, I had shut myself out from any natural explanation. I was *ex hypothesi* confined to the supernatural. I could not even, as the satirist says, "hold the eel of science by the tail." The thing that dogged me was, I was compelled to think, either, first, a visitor from superior regions, or, secondly, a visitor from inferior (*very* inferior) regions, or, thirdly, no visitor at all, but a lingerer who ought to be elsewhere when the cock crew. Oh, for the welcome summons of an ear-splitting cock-a-doodle-do! Oh, for a steam fire-engine fed by a river of holy water! The sheer mischievousness of the trick narrowed my speculations by forbidding the notion of celestial ministry. I was driven, irresistibly propelled, to the alternative of "auld Hornie" (by self or agent) *or* some wandering ghost who had business with me. As to the first supposition, I was unable to adopt the reasoning of Robinson Crusoe under very similar circumstances. When that solitary was frightened out of his wits by the apparition of a footprint on the sands of his desert island, he comforted himself by the conclusion that it could not have been the arch enemy, because, says

Robinson, "as I lived quite on the other side of the island, he would never have been so simple as to leave a mark in a place where it was ten thousand to one whether I should ever see it or not, and in the sand, too, which the first surge of the sea upon a high wind would have defaced entirely." And he continues: "All this seemed inconsistent with the thing itself, and with all notions we usually entertain of the subtlety of the devil."

With the deepest respect for Robinson Crusoe's metaphysical and theological powers, evidenced in his conversations with Friday—powers in which I confess myself far his inferior—I cannot in this one instance admit the cogency of his reasoning. If the alarming footprint had been made by the gentleman in question, *non constat* that it was not formed on the sands by a viewless foot a second or two before Robinson came up to the spot. Thus the reflection so comforting to the sagacious mariner vanishes at once. Robinson, thou reasonest *not* well.

But there was a very different reflection equally applicable to his case and to mine. I do not say that it is deducible from the principles of scientific theology—I leave that to the General Assembly—but I distinctly remember that it struck me very forcibly, even in my extremest fright. It was this: What end could be served by the terrifying to imbecility of a harmless night-walker? If divines have not instructed us to little purpose, we all believe that the "muckle-horned Clootie" has serious business in hand. He has no leisure for idle schoolboy tricks. Even if practical jokes were consonant with his imperial dignity, his sterner duties leave him no time for pranks which would better befit the idleness of a cavalry subaltern. This consideration would be weighty in Europe, much more in South Africa, which, from the mere fact of its being sparsely populated, must be looked on as comparatively out of his way. The whole mediaeval theory of witchcraft appears to me to have gone astray simply by missing this train of reasoning. Was I not, therefore, justified in rejecting the intervention of him whom, in the north of England, with a quaint recognition of his perennial youth conjoined with senile cunning, they call "th' ould lad?" Stay; he has underlings. *Qui facit per alium facit per se*. Cob, Mob, and Chittabob were doubtless at liberty. If their annals are writ true, it would just suit their tastes to "tickle the catastrophe" of a shuddering mortal. Yes, here *was* a flaw in my calculations; but, as a matter of fact, I did not think of Cob, Mob, and Chittabob. I was thus reduced to the last hypothesis, namely, that a ghost was dogging me. I do not mean, of course, to assert that in the rush of excited surmises which passed through my mind, I actually reasoned as consecutively as I am now setting down my thoughts. I only wish it to be understood that, after taking leave of my scientific senses by the unpardonable folly of speaking, I came finally to some such conclusion by some such method.

I was now walking with all my speed, but my utmost speed (though I have always been reputed a pretty good stepper) seemed that awful no speed of dreams, when one is agonised with an imaginary need for haste or flight, and is yet ridden by the inexorable nightmare at a snail's pace. I was very warm in front, but cold chills shivered down my spine. The distance still to

be traversed seemed interminable and hopeless. What with the darkness, and what with the dire necessity of turning my head every moment to look backwards, I walked a dreadfully zigzag course. The footsteps I never ceased to hear; regular when mine were regular, irregular when mine were irregular. Again and again I called, but no response ever came. Once, in a fit of desperation, I stopped, flung my arms about, stamped violently, and *shoo'd* with all my might, like one attempting to frighten away intruding cats or birds. When I had made this silly demonstration, there was first a pause, and then the footsteps disdainfully and slowly danced *round* me in a half-circle, from right to left and back again. When I proceeded, they followed, as they had done, directly behind.

Walking in this way I came to a part of the road where it became a little wider, and also, there being fewer trees to overshadow it, a little lighter. Now for the first time I *saw* something. In one of my terrified backward glances I saw that the footsteps were accompanied by a globular apparition. It seemed about a foot in diameter, and of a dusky grey colour. This dim, undefined ball of misty hue moved with the footsteps, but not, as far as I could distinguish, having any other connection with them. On the contrary, it moved through the air at the distance of about a yard from the ground, as if self-supported. I say " moved," because I could just discern a sort of undulatory rise and fall, and because I could not but notice that the interval between me and it was never diminished by my greatest efforts. The airy phantom neither approached nor receded. Soon after I saw this apparition, I also heard something I had not heard before. It was a rustling noise, repeated once or twice, and most like a quick shudder passing through stiff drapery. If any doubt remained, if any accession of terror was possible, that doubt now fled, that accession of terror now came.

It occurs to me that some reader may ask why in the name of fortune or misfortune, there being houses on both sides of the street, I did not seek shelter and protection. Pride, my dear reader, pride, stronger than all terror, strongest of all human feelings. What would you, my reader, say if you were knocked up at midnight by a gentleman with a scared look and an incoherent story of a spectre? Would you not take the strongest horsewhip, unchain Pincher, and (while your spouse s eloquence flowed "sweeter than honey" from her chamber window, and all your children screamed in their cots,) go forth to drive the intruder from your curtilage? Of course you would. Would you not tell the distressed suppliant to go to him from whom and from whose emissaries and shadowy liegemen he was seeking deliverance? Of course you would. If you happened to know the disturber of your peace, would you not reproach him the next morning, hint at soda-water, and generally wonder at him? Of course you would. And if you believed his story—what then? Hospitality has its limits. Could you be expected to open your door to a friend who might be arm in arm with "the Black Man," as Matthew Hopkins would have called him? Human sympathy does not extend to helping one's fellow-creatures against the supernatural. I question if the most tender-hearted, stanch, and chivalrous man that ever lived would

not have left St. Dunstan and his opponent to "have it out." And the house, at the portal of which you implored aid, might be tenanted by none but lonely women. When the female body is wrapt in night attire and the female head is coroneted with curl papers the female mind is apt to dwell on water-jugs and kitchen pokers. A Niobe in a night-cap, at any moment between midnight and sunrise, has a concentrated power of squealing which one durst not even think of. Nor could the most frightful apparition excuse an Englishman for seeking the protection of a woman. Forbid it, memories of Cressy and Poictiers! And yet I would confine my valour to proper limits. I would not for the world imply that memories of Cressy and Poictiers should rob any Englishman of his prerogative of being frightened at a ghost; especially in these modern days, when it has become most necessary to insist on that prerogative. Our "fathers of war-proof" were frightened, and *they* believed in ghosts; much more ought we, on every principle of common sense, to be frightened—we, who do not believe in them. I cherish (as a pleasant inward protest against the Positivism of the age) the conviction that, if a ghost of the commonest turnip-headed, saucer-eyed description could be turned loose in the meeting-room of the Royal Society, we should see the extremest extremity of terror which human countenances are capable of expressing. I ought, however, in honesty to add that memories of Cressy and Poictiers did not occur to me much on this occasion; but I did not seek shelter.

I had walked perhaps two-thirds of the distance when I became aware of the apparition, and how I got over the remaining ground I can hardly tell. I did not dare to run. I felt that, if I ran, all self-control, all resisting power of will, would be gone. I had a sort of suspicion that, if I even appeared to hurry, I should be overpowered by some force which could only be kept in check by the exercise of a defiant volition.

I was now within a very short distance of my hotel—not more than three or four hundred yards away. But I had a foreboding that I should never reach it before another phase of the horror was disclosed. The thing was growing on me. Some *dénouement* must come. It *did* come.

I had by this time arrived at a large building, used as a Kafir chapel by those natives who had been brought by various civiluing agencies to wear trousers and sing hymns. What other goal of learning was before them I cannot say; but I am in a position to state that, at this particular period, a respectable number of Zulus had renounced the error of bare legs, and had taken to sing hymns with much fervour and perseverance. I do not think they were particular about words—any words which were not downright swearing did for *them*—and I am sure they were not particular about tune. In his unenlightened state, the Kafir will sit for hours chanting a kind of plain-song, and accompanying himself with a barbarous *tum-tiddy-tum* produced from a stringed instrument like a bow. When his mind is enlarged by instruction, he puts on trousers, and sings his plain-song to a form of words in which references to the *assegai* , the *knobkerry* (or Kafir club), and the blood of his foes, are only introduced when the singer is carried

away by the violence of his emotions. His "doxy" may be described as that of the Indians of South America, mentioned by Humboldt, who are said to be *baxa la campana*—as Paganism vibrating with the tinkle of a church bell.

Turning the corner of the chapel I came upon a party of devotees seated round a fire, and even at that late hour in full tide of song. How it was that I had not heard them before, nor seen the reflection of their fire, I cannot say; but when I did hear and see, I felt with a thrill of conviction that the Zulu is indeed "a man and a brother." They were a party of six or seven. One or two were Hottentot waggon-drivers, and the rest Kafirs. Every man was busy unburdening his soul without "remorse or mitigation of voice," and the joint effect was something like what might be produced by the butcher, the sweep, the milkman, and the watercress seller, all shouting the cries of their respective trades down one area in one breath. But I was in no humour for musical criticism. As soon as I saw the absorbed group I jumped across the *sluyt* and rushed towards those dusky brethren. As I got within the light of their fire I turned round.

Out of the darkness there stalked solemnly, with a grave and self-possessed air, a large crane; not one of the ordinary species, such as is seen in Europe, but the great gaunt "Kafir crane," as he is called in Africa—I know not his scientific name—which is at least twice as large. He did not seem in the smallest degree abashed, nor was he disconcerted. If anything was discernible in his bearing, it was, perhaps, a little conceit, as though he felt that he had done a clever thing in keeping pace with me so long; but I cannot say that he displayed much emotion of any kind. As I came to the fire he walked up to my side, holding his head absurdly far back, though he gave one or two drives or ducks forward with his long neck, as if saluting the company. He then stood still, rubbed his beak a few times against his legs, and regarded the Kafirs with great contempt, evidently not thinking much of their hymnology. Meanwhile the Kafirs looked at me and also at the crane, which they knew quite well. I tried to mutter that I wanted a light for my pipe, but something in the nervous haste of my manner gave them an inkling of the truth, for they all with one accord rolled over on their backs in agonies of laughter, and I was derided by sets of black toes in ecstasies; and therefore I withdrew with that dignity one of the higher Aryan race can always assume, and sought my hotel, still accompanied by the mimetic crane. When I reached the door of the hotel, I grieve to say that in sudden wrath I shied a stone at the crane, who went off again into the darkness with a hop and a skip of offended pertness and a flourish of his feathers, much as an ancient dame of quality might trot over a muddy street holding up and shaking out her flounces.

THE END

AN INDIAN GHOST

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I WAS very weary, after a long days work in the scorching, blinding sun among the tea-bushes, and my limbs ached with that dull pain which is the common precursor of malarious fever. I would gladly have slept; but the wind, which had sprung up at sunset, had grown fainter and more faint, and now the air was still and heavy with the damp oppressive heat which foretells a storm. Great banks of black cloud slowly piled themselves in the western sky and blotted out the light of the stars. As I lay before the open door which led into the wide veranda in front of the bungalow, I watched the threatening masses growing higher and higher over the dark belt of forest which formed the boundary of my tea-garden. Outside, I could see wheel-

ing swarms of fireflies lighting up the tea-bushes with fantastic illumination. Within, all round me was the monotonous murmur of countless mosquitoes. From their venomous sting I was protected by the gauze-net which hung round my bed; but their faint drone dwelt with unwonted persistency upon my overstrung nerves, and effectually dispelled all hope of slumber. Now and again—a hideous relief to the hateful singsong of the mosquitoes—howled a chorus of jackals, now near, now far, but always jarring upon my nerves with a shock of surprise.

I lighted my lamp and tried to read; but my eyes were dazed with the shadeless glare of the day, and my head felt hot and feverish. The words chased each other across the pages, or mixed themselves incoherently with my own wandering thoughts. I felt inclined to wake one of my servants; but the effort of rising was more than I cared to undertake. It seemed easier to lie and watch the storm gathering, to see the distant hills and the brown frothing current of the stream in which the long black masses of the tea-boats were moored, lighted up by lurid flashes of lightning. Save myself, there was not a single soul in the bungalow. It is usual in Indian households for one or two of the servants to lay their simple bedding in one of the doorways or verandas, and there enjoy the sleep which comes so readily to the average oriental by night or day. But my bungalow had the reputation, among the servants and the coolies in the lines, of being haunted. I had not troubled myself to discover the details and the origin of the story. It is enough for an innocent screech-owl to establish herself among the convenient rafters of an Indian roof, to confer a superstitious horror upon the house; and I had not only repressed any faint curiosity I might have felt as to the particular demon or ghost which frightened my servants, but had indulged their wish to keep out of its way. That night, however, my nerves were unstrung; and in spite of repeated efforts to recall my mind to a more rational mood, I felt a sense of solitude and discomfort which hardly amounted to positive terror, but still weighed heavily upon my spirits. I felt vaguely that this unwonted depression of nervous energy, and the dull physical aching which accompanied it, were due to an incipient attack of fever; and, half unconsciously, got up and helped myself to a dose of quinine from my medicine chest. As I walked across the room I looked automatically in the corner where my spaniel Ponto habitually lay. He was not there; and it was a moment or two before my confused brain remembered that he had been sent away to the native doctor's hut in the lines to be treated for cancer in the ear, a pest to which dogs of his kind are much subject in India, His absence pressed strangely upon my already disordered nerves, and I felt more than ever desirous of some kind of human society.

Meanwhile, the slowly gathering storm seemed to have gathered its strength for the final onset. Far away in the distant woods I heard the sound of rain and wind, growing louder and nearer, and vivid flashes of lightning were followed by deafening rolls of thunder. A cooler air poured through the open door and caused my lamp to flicker and waver. Suddenly the rain and the wind burst upon the bungalow; great drops pattered on the thatched roof, and there was sound of rushing sluicing water round the eaves. The open doors began to bang and beat to and fro, and the lamp went out. Outside and inside the bungalow was pitchy darkness, momentarily rent asunder by the piercing whiteness of the flashes of lightning; and in the sudden glare the drops falling from the thatch seemed to stand still. I felt that I ought to get up and close the doors; but in spite of the comparative coolness of the air, which brought with it a revivifying odour of moist earth, I felt loth to stir, and I drew a light quilt over me and languidly watched the lightning. The storm gradually passed its height, and the rushing wind gave place to a steady and strenuous sound of pouring rain. I cursed the foolish fear which prevented my servants from coming to close the jalousies, and listened, in spite of myself, to ascertain if any of them should pluck up courage to come to my aid with a lantern. At last I heard the sound of feet in the veranda at the back and heard the boards creak. I called out, but received no reply. The steps approached my room, and with them, strange to say, I heard the faint clank of a chain. Again I called aloud and again got no reply. The steps came nearer, nearer, and suddenly I felt a heavy weight on my chest, a hot breathing in my face, and the glare of two green eyes close to mine; and then I fainted.

When I came to myself, the lamp was lighted, and my bearer was treading cautiously about the room. Poor Ponto, he said, had been frightened by the storm and had broken loose from his confinement in the doctor's quarters. And then I noticed that Ponto was under my bed, licking my hand as it lay over the edge.

As some excuse for the scare I experienced, I must explain that it was followed by a very severe attack of jungle fever, which compelled me and Ponto to take a change of air and scene. As for my bearer, he believes more firmly than ever that the bungalow is haunted, and has invented a theory that had not Ponto, warned by an instinct keener than human wisdom, come to my aid, his master would have been slain outright by a gigantic and ghastly *bhut*.

THE END

Version 1 published in:
***Household Words*, March 1853**
Version 2 published in
***The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 5 March 1936**

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

This RGL e-book offers two versions of a legendary Australian ghost story revolving around the murder, in 1826, of one Frederick Fisher, a resident of Campbelltown, New South Wales. The first was published in 1853 as an anonymous story in Charles Dickens' weekly magazine *Household Words*. The second, earlier, version appeared in the Australian press in 1836, ten years after the murder.

COLONIAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE, SEPT 22, 1826.

SUPPOSED MURDER.

WHEREAS FREDERICK FISHER,

by the Ship Atlas, holding a Ticket of Leave, and lately residing at Campbell Town, has disappeared within the last Three Months; it is hereby notified, that a REWARD of TWENTY POUNDS will be given for the Discovery of the Body of the said Frederick Fisher; or, if he shall have quitted the Colony, a Reward of FIVE POUNDS will be given to any Person or Persons who shall produce Proof of the same.

By His Excellency's Command,

ALEXANDER M'LEAY.

From *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*, 23 Sep 1836

FISHER'S GHOST : VERSION ONE

HOUSEHOLD WORDS.
A WEEKLY JOURNAL.
CONDUCTED BY CHARLES DICKENS.

FISHER'S GHOST.

IN the colony of New South Wales, at a place called Penrith, distant from Sydney about thirty-seven miles, lived a farmer named Fisher. He had been, originally, transported, but had become free by servitude. Unceasing toil, and great steadiness of character, had acquired for him a considerable property, for a person in his station of life. His lands and stock were not worth less than four thousand pounds. He was unmarried, and was about forty-five years old.

Suddenly Fisher disappeared; and one of his neighbours—a man named Smith—gave out that he had gone to England, but would return in two or three years. Smith produced a document, purporting to be executed by Fisher; and, according to this document, Fisher had appointed Smith to act as his agent during his absence. Fisher was a man of very singular habits and eccentric character, and his silence about his departure, instead of creating surprise, was declared to be "exactly like him."

About six months after Fisher's disappearance, an old man called Ben Weir, who had a small farm near Penrith, and who always drove his own cart to market, was returning from Sydney, one night, when he beheld, seated on a rail which bounded the road—Fisher. The night was very dark, and the distance of the fence from the middle of the road was, at least, twelve yards. Weir, nevertheless, saw Fisher's figure seated on the rail. He pulled his old mare up, and called out, "Fisher, is that you?" No answer was returned; but there, still on the rail, sat the form of the man with whom he had been on the most intimate terms. Weir—who was not drunk, though he had taken several glasses of strong liquor on the road—jumped off his cart, and approached the rail. To his surprise, the form vanished.

"Well," exclaimed old Weir, "this is very curious, anyhow;" and, breaking several branches of a sapling so as to mark the exact spot, he remounted his cart, put his old mare into a jog- trot, and soon reached his home.

Ben was not likely to keep this vision a secret from his old woman. All that he had seen he faithfully related to her.

"Hold your nonsense, Ben!" was old Betty's reply. "You know you have been a drinking and disturbing of your imagination. Ain't Fisher agone to England? And if he had a come back, do you think we shouldn't a heard on it?"

"Ay, Betty!" said old Ben, "but he'd a cruel gash in his forehead, and the blood was all fresh like. Faith, it makes me shudder to think on't. It were his ghost."

"How can you talk so foolish, Ben?" said the old woman. "You must be drunk surely to get on about ghosteses."

"I tell thee I am *not* drunk," rejoined old Ben, angrily. "There's been foul play, Betty; I'm sure on't. There sat Fisher on the rail—not more than a matter of two mile from this. Egad, it were on his own fence that he sat. There he was, in his shirt-sleeves, with his arms a-folded; just as he used to sit when he was a waiting for anybody coming up the road. Bless you, Betty, I seed 'im till I was as close as I am to thee; when, all on a sudden, he vanished, like smoke."

"Nonsense, Ben: don't talk of it," said old Betty, "or the neighbours will only laugh at you. Come to bed, and you'll forget all about it before to-morrow morning."

Old Ben went to bed; but he did not next morning forget all about what he had seen on the previous night: on the contrary, he was more positive than before. However, at the earnest, and often repeated request of the old woman, he promised not to mention having seen Fisher's ghost, for fear that it might expose him to ridicule.

On the following Thursday night, when old Ben was returning from market—again in his cart—he saw, seated upon the same rail, the identical apparition. He had purposely abstained from drinking that day, and was in the full possession of all his senses. On this occasion old Ben was too much alarmed to stop. He urged the old mare on, and got home as speedily as possible. As soon as he had unharnessed and fed the mare, and taken his purchases out of the cart, he entered his cottage, lighted his pipe, sat over the fire with his better half, and gave her an account of how he had disposed of his produce, and what he had brought back from Sydney in return. After this he said to her, "Well, Betty, I'm not drunk to-night, anyhow, am I?"

"No," said Betty. "You are quite sober, sensible like, tonight, Ben; and therefore you have come home without any ghost in your head. Ghosts! Don't believe there is such things."

"Well, you are satisfied I am not drunk; but perfectly sober," said the old man.

"Yes, Ben," said Betty.

"Well, then," said Ben, "I tell thee what, Betty. I saw Fisher tonight again!"

"Stuff!" cried old Betty.

"You may say *stuff*" said the old farmer; but I tell you what—I saw him as plainly as I did last Thursday night. Smith is a bad 'un. Do you think Fisher would ever have left this country without coming to bid you and me good-bye!"

"It's all fancy!" said old Betty. "Now drink your grog and smoke your pipe, and think no more about the ghost. I won't hear on't."

"I'm as fond of my grog and my pipe as most men," said old Ben; "but I'm not going to drink anything tonight. It may be all fancy, as you call it, but I am now going to tell Mr. Grafton all I saw, and what I think;" and with these words he got up, and left the house.

Mr. Grafton was a gentleman who lived about a mile from old Weir's farm. He had been formerly a lieutenant in the navy, but was now on half-pay, and was a settler in the new colony; he was, a magistrate, in the commission of the peace.

When old Ben arrived at Mr. Grafton's house, Mr. Grafton was about to retire to bed; but he requested old Ben might be shown in. He desired the farmer to take a seat by the fire, and then inquired what was the latest news in Sydney.

"The news in Sydney, sir, is very small," said old Ben; "wheat is falling, but maize still keeps its price—seven and sixpence a bushel: but I want to tell you, sir, something that will astonish you."

"What is it, Ben?" asked Mr. Grafton.

"Why, sir," resumed old Ben, "you know I am not a weak-minded man, nor a fool, exactly; for I was born and bred in Yorkshire."

"No, Ben, I don't believe you to be weak-minded, nor do I think you a fool," said Mr. Grafton; "but what can you have to say that you come at this late hour, and that you require such a preface!"

"That I have seen the ghost of Fisher, sir," said the old man; and he detailed the particulars of which the reader is already in possession.

Mr. Grafton was at first disposed to think with old Betty, that Ben had seen Fisher's ghost through an extra glass or two of rum on the first night; and that on the second night, when perfectly sober, he was unable to divest himself of the idea previously entertained. But after a little consideration the words "How very singular!" involuntarily escaped him.

"Go home, Ben," said Mr. Grafton, "and let me see you tomorrow at sunrise. We will go together to the place where you say you saw the ghost."

Mr. Grafton used to encourage the aboriginal natives of New South Wales (that race which has been very aptly described "the last link in the human

chain") to remain about his premises. At the head of a little tribe then encamped on Mr. Grafton's estate, was a sharp young man named Johnny Crook. The peculiar faculty of the aboriginal natives of New South Wales, of tracking the human foot not only over grass but over the hardest rock; and of tracking the whereabouts of runaways by signs imperceptible to civilized eyes, is well known; and this man, Johnny Crook, was famous for his skill in this particular art of tracking. He had recently been instrumental in the apprehension of several desperate bushrangers whom he had tracked over twenty-seven miles of rocky country and fields, which they had crossed bare-footed, in the hope of checking the black fellow in the progress of his keen pursuit with the horse police.

When old Ben Weir made his appearance in the morning at Mr. Grafton's house, the black chief, Johnny Crook, was summoned to attend. He came and brought with him several of his subjects. The party set out, old Weir showing the way. The leaves on the branches of the saplings which he had broken on the first night of seeing the ghost were withered, and sufficiently pointed out the exact rail on which the phantom was represented to have sat. There were stains upon the rail. Johnny Crook, who had then no idea of what he was required for, pronounced these stains to be "White man's blood;" and, after searching about for some time, he pointed to a spot whereon he said a human body had been laid.

In New South Wales long droughts are not very uncommon; and not a single shower of rain had fallen for seven months previously—not sufficient even to lay the dust upon the roads.

In consequence of the time that had elapsed, Crook had no small difficulty to contend with; but in about two hours he succeeded in tracking the footsteps of one man to the unfrequented side of a pond at some distance. He gave it as his opinion that another man had been dragged thither. The savage walked round and round the pond, eagerly examining its borders and the sedges and weeds springing up around it. At first he seemed baffled. No clue had been washed ashore to show that anything unusual had been sunk in the pond; but, having finished this examination, he laid himself down on his face and looked keenly along the surface of the smooth and stagnant water. Presently he jumped up, uttered a cry peculiar to the natives when gratified by finding some long-sought object, clapped his hands, and, pointing to the middle of the pond to where the decomposition of some sunken substance had produced a slimy coating streaked with prismatic colours, he exclaimed, "White man's fat!" The pond was immediately searched; and, below the spot indicated, the remains of a body were discovered. A large stone and a rotted silk handkerchief were found near the body; these had been used to sink it.

That it was the body of Fisher there could be no question. It might have been identified by the teeth; but on the waistcoat there were some large brass buttons which were immediately recognised, both by Mr. Grafton and

by old Ben Weir, as Fisher's property. He had worn those buttons on his waistcoat for several years.

Leaving the body by the side of the pond, and old Ben and the blacks to guard it, Mr. Grafton cantered up to Fisher's house. Smith was not only in possession of all the missing man's property, but had removed to Fisher's house. It was about a mile and a half distant. They inquired for Mr. Smith. Mr. Smith, who was at breakfast, came out, and invited Mr. Grafton to alight; Mr. Grafton accepted the invitation, and after a few desultory observations said, "Mr. Smith, I am anxious to purchase a piece of land on the other side of the road, belonging to this estate, and I would give a fair price for it. Have you the power to sell?"

"Oh yes, sir," replied Smith. "The power which I hold from Fisher is a general power;" and he forthwith produced a document purporting to be signed by Fisher, but which was not witnessed.

"If you are not very busy, I should like to show you the piece of land I allude to," said Mr. Grafton.

"Oh certainly, sir. I am quite at your service," said Smith; and he then ordered his horse to be saddled.

It was necessary to pass the pond where the remains of Fisher's body were then exposed. When they came near to the spot, Mr. Grafton, looking Smith full in the face, said, "Mr. Smith, I wish to show you something. Look here!" He pointed to the decomposed body, and narrowly watching Mr. Smith's countenance, remarked: "These are the remains of Fisher. How do you account for their being found in this pond?"

Smith, with the greatest coolness, got off his horse, minutely examined the remains, and then admitted that there was no doubt they were Fisher's. He confessed himself at a loss to account for their discovery, unless it could be (he said) that somebody had waylaid him on the road when he left his home for Sydney; had murdered him for the gold and bank-notes which he had about his person, and had then thrown him into the pond. "My hands, thank Heaven!" he concluded, "are clean. If my old friend could come to life again, he would tell you that *I* had no hand in his horrible murder."

Mr. Grafton knew not what to think. He was not a believer in ghosts. Could it be possible, he began to ask himself, that old Weir had committed this crime, and—finding it weigh heavily on his conscience, and fearing that he might be detected—had trumped up the story about the ghost—had pretended that he was led to the spot by supernatural agency—and thus by bringing the murder voluntarily to light, hoped to stifle all suspicion. But then he considered Weir's excellent character, his kind disposition, and good nature. These at once put to flight his suspicion of Weir; but still he was by no means satisfied of Smith's guilt, much as appearances were against him.

Fisher's servants were examined, and stated that their master had often talked of going to England on a visit to his friends, and of leaving Mr. Smith

to manage his farm; and that though they were surprised when Mr. Smith came, and said he had "gone at last," they did not think it at all unlikely that he had done so. An inquest was held, and a verdict of wilful murder found against Thomas Smith. He was thereupon transmitted to Sydney for trial, at the ensuing sessions, in the supreme court. The case naturally excited great interest in the colony; and public opinion respecting Smith's guilt was evenly balanced.

The day of trial came; and the court was crowded almost to suffocation. The Attorney-General very truly remarked that there were circumstances connected with the case which were without any precedent in the annals of jurisprudence. The only witnesses were old Weir and Mr. Grafton. Smith, who defended himself with great composure and ability, cross-examined them at considerable length, and with consummate skill. The prosecution having closed, Smith addressed the jury (which consisted of military officers) in his defence. He admitted that the circumstances were strong against him; but he most ingeniously proceeded to explain them. The power of attorney, which he produced, he contended had been regularly granted by Fisher, and he called several witnesses, who swore that they believed the signature to be that of the deceased. He, further, produced a will, which had been drawn up by Fisher's attorney, and by that will Fisher had appointed Smith his sole executor, in the event of his death. He declined, he said, to throw any suspicion on Weir; but he would appeal to the common sense of the jury whether the ghost story was entitled to any credit; and, if it were not, to ask themselves why it had been invented. He alluded to the fact—which in cross- examination Mr. Grafton swore to—that when the remains were first shown to him, he did not conduct himself as a guilty man would have been likely to do, although he was horror-stricken on beholding the hideous spectacle. He concluded by invoking the Almighty to bear witness that he was innocent of the diabolical crime for which he had been arraigned. The judge (the late Sir Francis Forbes) recapitulated the evidence. It was no easy matter to deal with that part of it which had reference to the apparition: and if the charge of the judge had any leaning one way or the other, it was decidedly in favour of an acquittal. The jury retired; but, after deliberating for seven hours, they returned to the court, with a verdict of Guilty.

The judge then sentenced the prisoner to be hanged on the following Monday. It was on a Thursday night that he was convicted. On the Sunday, Smith expressed a wish to see a clergyman. His wish was instantly attended to, when he confessed that he, and he alone, committed the murder; and that it was upon the very rail where Weir swore that he had seen Fisher's ghost sitting, that he had knocked out Fisher's brains with a tomahawk. The power of attorney he likewise confessed was a forgery, but declared that the will was genuine.

This is very extraordinary, but is, nevertheless, true in substance, if not in every particular. Most persons who have visited Sydney for any length of time will no doubt have had it narrated to them.

FISHER'S GHOST : VERSION TWO.

The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser, 5 March 1936

[The incidents related in the following tale must be familiar to many of our readers, especially to those in Campbelltown and its neighbourhood. We have trusted solely to memory in drawing up the statements, the inaccuracies, however (if there be any), can only be of minor importance; the principal portions of the tale may be relied on as strictly true. We leave others to solve the problem of the appearance of Fisher's Ghost, contenting ourselves with simply telling the tale as it was told to us. Most of those concerned in the investigation of the affair are still alive, and can bear testimony to its truth.]

READER, have you ever paid a visit to the town or rather the village of Campbelltown? If you have not, we advise you to do so speedily. We recommend you to do so the more willingly because we can speak from experience of tbe pleasure we have felt when domiciled in its comfortable little inn, enjoying a few days' relaxation from the bustle and dust of Sydney. If you have been there you can dispense with our description of its neat little church, its straggling appearance, and its pleasant situation, in short, of all the beauties which it presents to a toil-worn dust-blinded cit on his first visit—and enable us to come at once to the subject of our tale.

The visitant to Campbelltown must have observed as he strolled through the village, a large unfinished brick building fast mouldering to decay, which seems to have been intended at the time of its erection for a store; its appearance however shows that whatever may have been the intention in erecting it, something must have intervened to prevent the accomplishment of the object. It is now rapidly falling into decay, and the freshness of the grass which covers the sward around it shows that whatever the cause may be, the ruins are not much frequented by the inhabitants of the surrounding cottages.

The unfinished building and the land which surrounds it, were the property some few years ago of a man named Frederick Fisher, who occupied an adjoining cottage, of which scarcely a trace now remains. Fisher had been originally a prisoner, he had served his time in the employ of a gentleman in the neighbourhood, and had removed to the town when he obtained his ticket-of-leave. Some years previous to the commencement of our tale, he had received his certificate of freedom, having undergone his sentence which had been awarded to him by the laws of his country. He had also soon after he became free obtained a grant of a town allotment and had commenced the building referred to, intending on its completion to occupy one portion of it as a dwelling-house, and to convert the remaining part into a store.

Fisher was but a boy at the time of the commission of the offence which had led to his transportation. His relatives, enraged at the disgrace he had subjected them to by his misconduct, had taken little notice of him after that period; and as he could put no trust in those whom he saw around him placed in circumstances similar to his own, he had, consequently, formed no friendship which might have enabled him to pass pleasantly his vacant time; his education, also, had been much neglected in his youth by those very relatives who were so liberal of their censure after he had gone astray; it is not, therefore, matter of surprise, that his time should have, occasionally, hung heavy on his hands. His own fireside presented few attractions to him; his conduct, since his arrival in the colony, not having been such as to afford him much gratification in the retrospect; the resolutions of amendment he had made whilst in gaol and on the passage out, had melted like snow when exposed to the demoralising influence of the example set by those around him. Fisher, like most of his class, flew for refuge from unpleasant recollections, to the society which the neighbouring taproom afforded, and sought for that which he found not at home, in quaffing the flowing bowl.

The necessary consequences of conduct such as this soon became apparent, his business, to which on gaining his freedom, he had paid strict attention, was now neglected, but instead of endeavouring, by exertion, to extricate himself from the difficulties which began to surround him—he plunged yet deeper into a life of dissipation, frequenting the purlieus of the tap both night and day. His inevitable ruin soon became so apparent, that his creditors resolved no longer to brook delay; he was accordingly arrested and lodged in jail, at the instance of one of their number, for a debt of £150.

Although Fisher had been weak enough to allow the bad example of others to lead him astray, he was yet far from having reached that pitch of depravity which many of his associates had attained; although he had neglected his business, and spent in dissipation those means which ought to have been applied to the liquidation of his debts, he had yet sufficient moral principle remaining to shudder when one of his drunken associates named Worral, suggested the expediency of entering into a scheme to defraud his creditors by making over to him the whole of his property which yet remained; making, at the same time, a private engagement that it should be restored to him as soon as he was permitted to leave the jail.

The persuasions of Worral who represented to him the ease and safety with which he might thus revenge himself on his creditors and regain possession of his property without any incumbrance, soon overcame the feelings of repugnance which he had at first felt, and he consented to make a transfer of all he possesed to Worral, under these conditions.

Mr. P. at whose instance Fisher had been incarcerated, finding that he was not the owner of the property he had supposed, consented after some time, to his liberation, as the only means by which he was likely ever to re-

cover the amount his claim. Fisher, immediately on his release, returned to Campbelltown, exulting in the success of his scheme.

Shortly after Fisher's return, he left his house one evening with the intention, it was supposed, of resorting, according to his usual custom, to some of the neighbouring ginshops. Morning came, but his continued absence excited no surprise, as it was supposed that he had got so drunk the previous night as to be unable to return home.

As the day wore on, and no signs of his appearance, a neighbour went to inquire at the various public houses whether he had been there. He had not been at any of his usual haunts, nor had any person seen him since the previous evening.

Many conjectures were made as to the cause of his protracted absence, but no feasible reason could be adduced until the afternoon. Worral returned from Sydney, whither he said he had accompanied Fisher on the previous evening, who had sailed early that morning for England, in order to avoid the importunities of his creditors, who had lately been rather troublesome to him, some of them having even threatened to lodge him again in jail. This was corroborated by the fact, that a vessel did sail for England on that day.

Worral's statements set completely at rest all the conjectures which had been previously afloat, as to the cause of Fisher's disappearance, and he was allowed to take undisputed possession of the property, on producing Fisher's conveyance.

Time wore on, and Fisher's name was almost forgotten or never alluded to, except by the the deluded creditors, who consoled themselves for their loss by venting imprecations and forming resolutions, never again to be so easily gulled.

About six weeks after Fisher's disappearance, Mr. Hurly, a respectable settler in the vicinity of Campbelltown, was returning thence to his residence; he had long been acquainted with Fisher, and it is by no mean improbable that his mind reverted to his sudden disappearance when passing the place where he had so long resided; be that as it may, however, no doubt as to Worral's statement ever entered his mind.

It was about ten o'clock at night when he left Campbelltown; the moon had risen, but her brilliance was obscured by clouds. After he had passed the late residence of Fisher, about from five to eight hundred yards, he observed the figure of a man sitting on the top of the fence on the same side of the road as the house. On approaching nearer, what was his surprise to recognize distinctly the features of Fisher, whom he had supposed then far on his way to England. He approached the figure with the intention of assuring himself that he had not been deceived by a fancied resemblance. The ghastly appearance which the features presented to his view on his

near approach, struck such a chill of terror to his heart, as chained him motionless to the spot.

The figure, as he gazed, rose from the fence and waving its arm pointed in the direction of a small dry creek, which crosses the paddock at that place, and disappeared gradually from his view, apparently following the windings of the creek.

The terror which overpowered the faculties of Hurly at this sight, defies all power of description; in a state of stupefaction he left the spot, and endeavoured to obtain an entrance into the nearest house. How he managed to find his way to the house he has no recollection, but just as he approached it, his senses totally forsook him. The noise caused by his head striking the door as he fell alarmed the inmates, who on opening it found him in a death-like swoon; he was carried into the house, where he lay for a whole week in the delirium of a brain fever.

The frequent mention of the name of Fisher in his ravings, attracted the attention of those who attended him, and conjecture was soon busy at work to assertain what had driven him into such a state; his known character of sobriety, as well as the testimony of those who had parted from him only a few minutes before, forbade the supposition that it had been caused by drunkenness; and rumour, with her thousand tongues, turned the villagers' heads with vain conjectures as to its probable cause.

On the morning of the ninth day of Hurley's illness, he awoke after a long and refreshing sleep, in the full possession of his senses, and expressed a wish to those around him that the Police Magistrate should be sent for immediately.

William Howe, Esq., of Glenlee, who then filled the situation of Superintendent of Police for Campbelltown and the surrounding districts, was sent for, and came immediately on being made aware of the circumstances. To him Hurley disclosed what he had seen, and suspicion of Fisher's having met with foul play, which that sight impressed on his mind.

As soon as Hurley was able to leave his bed, Mr. Howe accompanied by a few constables, among whom was a native black named Gilbert, went, conducted by Hurley, to the place where the apparition had been seen. On closely examining the panel of fencing pointed out, Mr. Howe discovered spots of blood. An active search was commenced to discover further traces of the supposed murder, but nothing more was observed.

It was thought advisable to trace the course of the creek in the direction to which the apparition had pointed, and in which it had disappeared. Some small ponds of water still remained in the creek, and these Black Gilbert was directed to explore with his spear; he carefully examined each as he approached it, but the shake of the head denoted his want of success. On approaching a larger pond than any of those he had before searched,

the standers by observed his eyes sparkle as he exclaimed in a tone of triumph, while yet at some distance from the spot, "white man's fat sit down here."

As soon as he reached the bank of the pond he thrust his spear into the water, and after some search, he pointed to a particular spot in the water, saying "white man there."

The constables were immediately set to work to clear away the water, which was soon effected—and on digging among the sand the remains of a human being in an advanced stage of decomposition, were disovered.

It became now obvious to all, that Fisher (if the remains which had been found were really his) had met with an untimely end. Suspicion alighted on Worral, who was the only person who had reaped any benefit from Fisher's death; and it was remembered #also that he it was who had first propagated the story of Fisher's return to England. Many circumstances, corroborative of this suspicion, flashed on the minds of the neighbours, which until now had escaped their notice.

Mr. Howe caused Worral to be arrested, and the suspicion being confirmed by a body of circumstantial evidence, he was committed to take his trial before the Supreme Court for the murder. The conviction that retributive justice was now about to overtake him had such an effect on his mind that he confessed his guilt.

His reason for so barbarrous a proceeding arose from the transaction mentioned in the former part of the narrative. Fisher overjoyed at the success of the scheme by which he had defrauded his creditors, forgot to regain possession of the deed of conveyance by which he had made over his properly to Worral. The thought occurred to Worral that if he could only get Fisher quietly out of the way, he would be able to claim possession of the property in right of that conveyance. This project had repeatedly occurred to him while Fisher was in jail, and he had resolved even then, either to regain possession of the private agreement which compelled him to restore the property, whenever it might be required, or to get rid of him entirely. Foiled in his scheme to obtain possession of this document by Fisher's unexpected liberation, he formed the diabolical scheme which he ultimately accomplished.

Under the mask of friendship, he was Fisher's companion during the day —and night after night he watched Fisher's motions from the time of his return from jail, but had accidentally been foiled in every attempt he had made, until the one on which the murder was committed.

On that night he was as usual prowling about Fisher's cottage, looking out for an opportunity to attain his ends, when Fisher, tempted by the beauty of the evening, left his house to take a walk, followed at some distance by Worral. At the place where the blood was afterwards discovered, Fisher stopped and leaned against the fence, apparently wrapped in deep

thought. The assassin had now before him the opportunity he had so long waited for, and taking up a broken panel of the fence, he stole quietly behind him, and with one blow of his weapon stretched him lifeless on the ground; he carried the dead body from the scene of the murder to the place where it was afterwards discovered, and buried it deep in the sand.

A few weeks after he had made the confession, he expiated his crime on the scaffold, imploring with his last breath the forgiveness of his Maker.

THE END

HAUNTED

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SOME few years ago one of those great national conventions which draw together all ages and conditions of the sovereign people of America was held in Charleston, South Carolina.

Colonel Demarion, one of the State Representatives, had attended that great national convention; and, after an exciting week, was returning home, having a long and difficult journey before him.

A pair of magnificent horses, attached to a light buggy, flew merrily enough over a rough country road for a while; but towards evening stormy weather reduced the roads to a dangerous condition, and compelled the

Colonel to relinquish his purpose of reaching home that night, and to stop at a small wayside tavern, whose interior illuminated by blazing wood-fires, spread a glowing halo among the dripping trees as he approached it, and gave promise of warmth and shelter at least.

Drawing up to this modest dwelling, Colonel Demarion saw through its uncurtained windows that there was no lack of company within. Beneath the trees, too, an entanglement of rustic vehicles, giving forth red gleams from every dripping angle, told him that beasts as well as men were cared for. At the open door appeared the form of a man who, at the sound of wheels, but not seeing in the outside darkness whom he addressed, called out, "'Tain't no earthly use a-stoppin' here."

Caring more for his chattels than for himself, the Colonel paid no further regard to this address than to call loudly for the landlord.

At the tone of authority, the man in outline more civilly announced himself to be the host; yet so far from inviting the traveller to alight, insisted that the house was "as full as it could pack"; but that there was a place a little farther down the road where the gentleman would be certain to find excellent accommodation.

"What stables have you here?" demanded the traveller, giving no more heed to this than to the former announcement; but bidding his servant to alight, and preparing to do so himself.

"Stables!" repeated the baffled host, shading his eyes so as to scrutinize the newcomer, "*stables*, Cap'n?"

"Yes, *stables*. I want you to take care of my horses; I can take care of myself. Some shelter for cattle you must have by the look of these traps," pointing to the wagons. "I don't want my horses to be kept standing out in this storm, you know."

"No, Major. Why no, certn'y; Marions ain't over a mile, and—"

"Conf—!" muttered the Colonel; "but it's over the *river*, which I don't intend to ford tonight under any consideration."

So saying, the Colonel leaped to the ground, directing his servant to cover the horses and then get out his valise; while the host, thus defeated, assumed the best grace he could to say that he would see what could be done "for the *horses*."

"I am a soldier, my man," added the Colonel in a milder tone, as he stamped his cold feet on the porch and shook off the rain from his travelling gear; "I am used to rough fare and a hard couch: all we want is shelter. A corner of the floor will suffice for me and my rug; a private room I can dispense with at such times as these."

The landlord seemed no less relieved at this assurance than mollified by the explanation of a traveller whom he now saw was of a very different stamp from those who usually frequented the tavern. "For the matter of *sta-*

bles, his were newly put up, and first-rate," he said; and "cert'n'y the Gen'ral was welcome to a seat by the fire while 'twas a-storming so fierce."

Colonel Demarion gave orders to his servant regarding the horses, while the landlord, kicking at what seemed to be a bundle of sacking down behind the door, shouted—"Jo! Ho, Jo! Be alive, boy, and show this gentleman's horses to the stables." Upon a repetition of which charges a tall, gaunt, dusty figure lifted itself from out of the dark corner, and grew taller and more gaunt as it stretched itself into waking with a grin which was the most visible part of it, by reason of two long rows of ivory gleaming in the red glare. The hard words had fallen as harmless on Jo's ear-drum as the kicks upon his impassive frame. To do Jo's master justice, the kicks were not vicious kicks, and the rough language was but an intimation that despatch was needed.

"Splendid pair, sir," said the now conciliating landlord. "Shove some o' them mules out into the shed, Jo (which your horses'll feel more to hum in my new stalls, Gen'ral)."

Again cautioning his man Plato not to leave them one moment, Colonel Demarion turned to enter the house.

"You'll find a rough crowd in here, sir," said the host, as he paused on the threshold; "but a good fire, anyhow. 'Tain't many of these loafers as understands this convention business—I *presume*, Gen'ral, you've attended the convention—they all on 'em *thinks* they does, tho'. Fact most on 'em thinks they'd orter be on the committee theirselves. Good many on 'em is from Char'ston today, but is in the same fix as yerself, Gen'ral—can't get across the river tonight."

"I see, I see," cried the statesman, with a gesture towards the sitting-room. "Now what have you got in your larder, Mr. Landlord? and send some supper out to my servant; he must make a bed of the carriage-mats tonight."

The landlord introduced his guest into a room filled chiefly with that shiftless and noxious element of Southern society known as "mean whites." Pipes and drinks, and excited arguments, engaged these people as they stood or sat in groups. The host addressed those who were gathered round the log fire, and they opened a way for the newcomer, some few, with republican freedom, inviting him to be seated, the rest giving one furtive glance, and then, in antipathy born of envy, skulking away.

The furniture of this comfortless apartment consisted of sloppy, much-jagged deal tables, dirty whittled benches, and a few uncouth chairs. The walls were dingy with accumulated tobacco-stains, and so moist and filthy was the floor, that the sound only of scraping seats and heavy footsteps told that it was of boards and not bare earth.

Seated with his back towards the majority of the crowd, and shielded by his newspaper, Colonel Demarion sat awhile unobserved; but was presently recognized by a man from his own immediate neighbourhood, when the in-

formation was quickly whispered about that no less a person than their distinguished congressman was among them.

This piece of news speedily found its way to the ears of the landlord, to whom Colonel Demarion was known by name only, and forthwith he reappeared to overwhelm the representative of his State with apologies for the uncourteous reception which had been given him, and to express his now very sincere regrets that the house offered no suitable accommodation for the gentleman. Satisfied as to the safety of his chattels, the Colonel generously dismissed the idea of having anything either to resent or to forgive; and assured the worthy host that he would accept of no exclusive indulgences.

In spite of which the landlord bustled about to bring in a separate table, on which he spread a clean coarse cloth, and a savoury supper of broiled ham, hot corncakes, and coffee; every few minutes stopping to renew his apologies, and even appearing to grow confidentially communicative regarding his domestic economies; until the hungry traveller cut him short with "Don't say another word about it, my friend; you have not a spare sleeping-room, and that is enough. Find me a corner—a clean corner—" looking round upon the most unclean corners of that room—"perhaps upstairs somewhere, and—"

"Ah! *upsta'rs*, Gen'ral. Now, that's jest what I had in my mind to ax you. Fact is, ther' *is* a spar' room upsta'rs, as comfortable a room as the best of folks can wish; but—"

"But it's crammed with sleeping folks, so there's an end of it," cried the senator, thoroughly bored.

"No, sir, ain't no person in it; and thee ain't no person likely to be in 'cept 'tis *yerself*, Colonel Demarion. Leastways—"

After a good deal of hesitation and embarrassment, the host, in mysterious whispers, imparted the startling fact that this most desirable sleeping-room was *haunted*; that the injury he had sustained in consequence had compelled him to fasten it up altogether; that he had come to be very suspicious of admitting strangers, and had limited his custom of late to what the bar could supply, keeping the matter hushed up in the hope that it might be the sooner forgotten by the neighbours; but that in the case of Colonel Demarion he had now made bold to mention it; "as I can't but think, sir," he urged, "you'd find it prefer'ble to sleepin' on the floor or sittin' up all night along ov these loafers. Fer if 'tis any deceivin' trick got up in the house, maybe they won't try it on, sir, to a gentleman of your reputation."

Colonel Demarion became interested in the landlord's confidences, but could only gather in further explanation that for some time past all travellers who had occupied that room had "made off in the middle of the night, never showin' their faces at the inn again"; that on endeavouring to arrest one or more in their nocturnal flight, they—all more or less terrified—had insisted on escaping without a moment's delay, assigning no other reason

than that they had seen a ghost. "Not that folks seem to get much harm by it, Colonel—not by the way they makes off without paying a cent of money!"

Great indeed was the satisfaction evinced by the victim of unpaid bills on the Colonel's declaring that room for him. "If to be turned out of my bed at midnight is all I have to fear, we will see who comes off master in my case. So, Mr. Landlord, let the chamber be got ready directly, and have a good fire built there at once."

The exultant host hurried away to confide the great news to Jo, and with him to make the necessary preparations. "Come what will, Jo, Colonel Demarion ain't the man to make off without paying down good money for his accommodations."

In reasonable time, Colonel Demarion was beckoned out of the public room, and conducted upstairs by the landlord, who, after receiving a cheerful "goodnight," paused on the landing to hear his guest bolt and bar the door within, and then push a piece of furniture against it. "Ah," murmured the host, as a sort of misgiving came over him, "if a apparishum has a mind to come thar, 'tain't all the bolts and bars in South Carlina as'll kip 'en away."

But the Colonel's precaution of securing his door, as also that of placing his revolvers in readiness, had not the slightest reference to the reputed ghost. Spiritual disturbances of such kind he feared not. Spirits *tangible* were already producing ominous demonstrations in the rooms below, nor was it possible to conjecture what troubles these might evolve. Glad enough to escape from the noisy company, he took a survey of his evil-reputed chamber. The only light was that of the roaring, crackling, blazing wood-fire, and no other was needed. And what storm-benighted traveller, when fierce winds and rains are lashing around his lodging, can withstand the cheering influences of a glorious log-fire? especially if as in that wooden tenement, that fire be of abundant pine-knots. It rivals the glare of gas and the glow of a furnace; it charms away the mustiness and fustiness of years, and causes all that is dull and dead around to laugh and dance in its bright light.

By the illumination of just such a fire, Colonel Demarion observed that the apartment offered nothing worthier of remark than that the furniture was superior to anything that might be expected in a small wayside tavern. In truth, the landlord had expended a considerable sum in fitting up this, his finest chamber, and had therefore sufficient reason to bemoan its unprofitableness.

Having satisfied himself as to his apparent security, the senator thought no more of spirits palpable or impalpable; but to the far graver issues of the convention his thoughts reverted. It was yet early; he lighted a cigar, and in full appreciation of his retirement, took out his notebook and plunged into the affairs of state. Now and then he was recalled to the circumstances of his situation by the swaggering tread of unsteady feet about the house, or when the boisterous shouts below raged above the outside storm; but even then

he only glanced up from his papers to congratulate himself upon his agreeable seclusion.

Thus he sat for above an hour, then he heaped fresh logs upon the hearth, looked again to his revolvers, and retired to rest.

The house-clock was striking twelve as the Colonel awoke. He awoke suddenly from a sound sleep, flashing, as it were, into full consciousness, his mind and memory clear, all his faculties invigorated, his ideas undisturbed, but with a perfect conviction that he was not alone.

He lifted his head. A man was standing a few feet from the bed, and between it and the fire, which was still burning, and burning brightly enough to display every object in the room, and to define the outline of the intruder clearly. His dress also and his features were plainly distinguishable: the dress was a travelling-costume, in fashion somewhat out of date; the features wore a mournful and distressed expression—the eyes were fixed upon the Colonel. The right arm hung down, and the hand, partially concealed, might, for aught the Colonel knew, be grasping one of his own revolvers; the left arm was folded against the waist. The man seemed about to advance still closer to the bed, and returned the occupant's gaze with a fixed stare.

"Stand, or I'll fire!" cried the Colonel, taking in all this at a glance, and starting up in his bed, revolver in hand.

The man remained still.

"What is your business here?" demanded the statesman, thinking he was addressing one of the roughs from below.

The man was silent.

"Leave this room, if you value your life," shouted the indignant soldier, pointing his revolver.

The man was motionless.

"RETIRE! or by heaven I'll send a bullet through you!"

But the man moved not an inch.

The Colonel fired. The bullet lodged in the breast of the stranger, but he started not. The soldier leapt to the floor and fired again. The shot entered the heart, pierced the body, and lodged in the wall beyond; and the Colonel beheld the hole where the bullet had entered, and the firelight glimmering through it. And yet the intruder stirred not. Astounded, the Colonel dropped his revolver, and stood face to face before the unmoved man.

"Colonel Demarion," spake the deep solemn voice of the perforated stranger, "in vain you shoot me—I am dead already."

The soldier, with all his bravery, gasped, spellbound. The firelight gleamed through the hole in the body, and the eyes of the shooter were riveted there.

"Fear nothing," spake the mournful presence; "I seek but to divulge my wrongs. Until my death shall be avenged my unquiet spirit lingers here. Listen."

Speechless, motionless was the statesman; and the mournful apparition thus slowly and distinctly continued:

"Four years ago I travelled with one I trusted. We lodged here. That night my comrade murdered me. He plunged a dagger into my heart while I slept. He covered the wound with a plaster. He feigned to mourn my death. He told the people here I had died of heart-complaint; that I had long been ailing. I had gold and treasures. With my treasure secreted beneath his garments he paraded mock grief at my grave. Then he departed. In distant parts he sought to forget his crime; but his stolen gold brought him only the curse of an evil conscience. Rest and peace are not for him. He now prepares to leave his native land for ever. Under an assumed name that man is this night in Charleston. In a few hours he will sail for Europe. Colonel Demarion, you must prevent it. Justice and humanity demand that a murderer roam not at large, nor squander more of the wealth that is by right my children's."

The spirit paused. To the extraordinary revelation the Colonel had listened in rapt astonishment. He gazed at the presence, at the firelight glimmering through it—through the very place where a human heart would be—and he felt that he was indeed in the presence of a supernatural being. He thought of the landlord's story; but while earnestly desiring to sift the truth of the mystery, words refused to come to his aid.

"Do you hesitate?" said the mournful spirit. "Will *you* also flee, when my orphan children cry for retribution?" Seeming to anticipate the will of the Colonel, "I await your promise, senator," he said. "There is not time to lose."

With a mighty effort, the South Carolinian said, "I promise. What would you have me do?"

In the same terse, solemn manner, the ghostly visitor gave the real and assumed names of the murderer, described his person and dress at the present time, described a certain curious ring he was then wearing, together with other distinguishing characteristics: all being carefully noted down by Colonel Demarion, who, by degrees, recovered his self-possession, and pledged himself to use every endeavour to bring the murderer to justice.

Then, with a portentous wave of the hand, "It is well," said the apparition. "Not until the spirit of my murderer shall be separated from the mortal clay can *my* spirit rest in peace." And vanished.

Half-past six in the morning was the appointed time for the steamer to leave Charleston; and the Colonel lost not a moment in preparing to depart. As he hurried down the stairs he encountered the landlord, who—his eyes rolling in terror—made an attempt to speak. Unheeding, except to demand his carriage, the Colonel pushed past him, and effected a quick escape towards the back premises, shouting lustily for "Jo" and "Plato," and for his

carriage to be got ready immediately. A few minutes more, and the bewildered host was recalled to the terrible truth by the noise of the carriage dashing through the yard and away down the road; and it was some miles nearer Charleston before the unfortunate man ceased to peer after it in the darkness—as if by so doing he could recover damages—and bemoan to Jo the utter ruin of his house and hopes.

Thirty miles of hard driving had to be accomplished in little more than five hours. No great achievement under favourable circumstances; but the horses were only half refreshed from their yesterday's journey, and though the storm was over, the roads were in a worse condition than ever.

Colonel Demarion resolved to be true to his promise; and fired by a curiosity to investigate the extraordinary communication which had been revealed to him, urged on his horses, and reached the wharf at Charleston just as the steamer was being loosed from her moorings.

He hailed her. "Stop her! Business with the captain! STOP HER!"

Her machinery was already in motion; her iron lungs were puffing forth dense clouds of smoke and steam; and as the Colonel shouted—the crowd around, from sheer delight in shouting, echoing his "Stop her! stop her!"—the voices on land were confounded with the voices of the sailors, the rattling of chains, and the hauling of ropes.

Among the passengers standing to wave farewells to their friends on the wharf were some who recognized Colonel Demarion, and drew the captain's attention towards him; and as he continued vehemently to gesticulate, that officer, from his post of observation, demanded the nature of the business which should require the ship's detention. Already the steamer was clear of the wharf. In another minute she might be beyond reach of the voice; therefore, failing by gestures and entreaties to convince the captain of the importance of his errand, Colonel Demarion, in desperation, cried at the top of his voice, "A murderer on board! For God's sake, STOP!" He wished to have made this startling declaration in private, but not a moment was to be lost; and the excitement around him was intense.

In the midst of the confusion another cry of "Man overboard!" might have been heard in a distant part of the ship, had not the attention of the crowd been fastened on the Colonel. Such a cry was, however, uttered, offering a still more urgent motive for stopping; and the steamer being again made fast, Colonel Demarion was received on board.

"Let not a soul leave the vessel!" was his first and prompt suggestion; and the order being issued, he drew the captain aside, and concisely explained his grave commission. The captain thereupon conducted him to his private room, and summoned the steward, before whom the details were given, and the description of the murderer was read over. The steward, after considering attentively, seemed inclined to associate the description with that of a passenger whose remarkably dejected appearance had already attracted his observation. In such a grave business it was, however, necessary to proceed

with the utmost caution, and the "passenger-book" was produced. Upon reference to its pages, the three gentlemen were totally dismayed by the discovery that the name of this same dejected individual was that under which, according to the apparition, the murderer had engaged his passage.

"I am here to charge that man with murder," said Colonel Demarion. "He must be arrested."

Horrified as the captain was at this astounding declaration, yet, on account of the singular and unusual mode by which the Colonel had become possessed of the facts, and the impossibility of proving the charge, he hesitated in consenting to the arrest of a passenger. The steward proposed that they should repair to the saloons and deck, and while conversing with one or another of the passengers, mention—as it were casually—in the hearing of the suspected party his own proper name, and observe the effect produced on him. To this they agreed, and without loss of time joined the passengers, assigning some feasible cause for a short delay of the ship.

The saloon was nearly empty, and while the steward went below, the other two repaired to the deck, where they observed a crowd gathered seaward, apparently watching something over the ship's side.

During the few minutes which had detained the captain in this necessarily hurried business, a boat had been lowered, and some sailors had put off in her to rescue the person who was supposed to have fallen overboard; and it was only now, on joining the crowd, that the captain learned the particulars of the accident. "Who was it?" "What was he like?" they exclaimed simultaneously. That a man had fallen overboard was all that could be ascertained. Someone had seen him run across the deck, looking wildly about him. A splash in the water had soon afterwards attracted attention to the spot, and a body had since been seen struggling on the surface. The waves were rough after the storm, and thick with seaweed, and the sailors had as yet missed the body. The two gentlemen took their post among the watchers, and kept their eyes intently upon the waves, and upon the sailors battling against them. Ere long they see the body rise again to the surface. Floated on a powerful wave, they can for the few moments breathlessly scrutinize it. The colour of the dress is observed. A face of agony upturned displays a peculiar contour of forehead; the hair, the beard; and now he struggles—an arm is thrown up, and a remarkable ring catches the Colonel's eye. "Great heavens! The whole description tallies!" The sailors pull hard for the spot, the next stroke and they will rescue—

A monster shark is quicker than they. The sea is tinged with blood. The man is no more!

Shocked and silent, Colonel Demarion and the captain quitted the deck and resummoned the steward, who had, without success, visited the berths and various parts of the ship for the individual in question. Every hole and corner was now, by the captain's order, carefully searched, but in vain; and as no further information concerning the missing party could be obtained, and the steward persisted in his statement regarding his general appear-

ance, they proceeded to examine his effects. In these he was identified beyond a doubt. Papers and relics proved not only his guilt but his remorse; remorse which, as the apparition had said, permitted him no peace in his wanderings.

Those startling words, "A murderer on board!" had doubtless struck fresh terror to his heart; and, unable to face the accusation, he had thus terminated his wretched existence.

Colonel Demarion revisited the little tavern, and on several occasions occupied the haunted chamber; but never again had he the honour of receiving a midnight commission from a ghostly visitor, and never again had the landlord to bemoan the flight of a non-paying customer.

THE END

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CHAPTER I.

RIGHT in the midst of the Harz Mountains dwelt an old, old man. The foresters who earned a scanty living, and the hunters of wild animals, sometimes, but very rarely, caught a glimpse at him, but never had they had the hardihood to follow him and ascertain where he lived.

Those who had seen him knew that his once powerful frame was nearly doubled by age, and that his snow-white hair and beard fell almost to his waist. They saw also that he always carried a large knotted stick with which he aided his footsteps and with which, perhaps, he would have protected himself against prying invaders. Nobody, however, had dared to interfere in any manner with the hermit, as should anyone chance to cross his path in the deep heart of the forest one glance of his eye—which the foresters described as singularly blue and fierce—would deter the rash intruder and send him off quickly in an opposite direction. This much, however, they had time to notice—the old man always carried a bundle of herbs and plants, and appeared to be eagerly seeking for others.

Hans Veldt, famed as a skilled hunter, had indeed once, coming upon him unawares, heard him mutter—

"I must find it, I must find it, or it will be too late, too late."

With the last words his voice had rung out in a mournful wail, and Hans Veldt, scared, had crossed himself after the fashion of Paulo the Papist, who had once visited him, and who declared that if one crossed one's self and invoked one's patron saint, the Evil One himself would be powerless; and hurrying home with all speed to his hut on the banks of the Weser, startled his fair daughter, who was sitting in the doorway quietly plaiting her long fair hair, by a recital of what he had seen and heard.

Now Liesel* was, like most girls of sixteen, full of curiosity; and as she listened to her father's account she determined secretly to penetrate deep, deep into the mighty forest, find the old man's abode, and speak to him if possible.

[* The source text has "Liezst" and "Leizst," which are presumably typographical errors for "Liesel."]

"What can he live upon? The poor old man!" she reflected, knitting her fair young brow. "He cannot bake bread, because he cannot grow corn or rye; and he cannot have meat, because surely he is too old to hunt. Wait till the morrow comes, and my father is safely away—I will go."

The next morning Hans started earlier than usual, taking with him a good stock of ammunition, with which he filled his bearskin pouch. He also told Liesel to put up more than an ordinary day's supply of bread and venison, as he was going a long distance, and might not return that night.

"Be sure you fasten the door securely against the wolves at night," was his parting injunction, "and don't linger about after nightfall."

Liesel promised, and joyfully watched her father out of sight; for the adventure she had in view was an entirely novel one, as her father rarely permitted her to wander far into the woods unless in his company.

Arraying herself in her stoutest short homespun dress, and securely plaiting and tying her long fair tresses lest they should become entangled in the thickets and brambles of the dense forest, Liesel set off, taking care to provide herself with a small basket of food.

For some hours she pressed through the forest, stopping now and again to gather rare flowers and mosses which pleased her. One lovely white flower which she discovered quite by accident delighted her most. She had come upon a narrow track whose moss- grown path was wet and slippery from the recent rain, and she had suddenly slipped down a steep incline whose almost precipitous side was covered with bushes and brambles, forming a cool, deep, dark hollow, like a well, at the base.

When she had got over her fright, and sitting up looked around her, the gloom and mist were so intense that for a few minutes she could see nothing. Then, her eye becoming accustomed to the dull light, she saw gleaming in front of her a few large white star-shaped flowers growing on a small plant whose leaves were spike-shaped.

"Oh! how pretty!" said Liesel. "Lovely little blossoms; it is a shame to pluck you, but I must have two of you. Let me count—one, two, three, four, five, six, seven of you, all growing on the one plant; I will not take all of you, pretty dears, but let me have just two, because I never saw anything so lovely before."

Then, as she carefully gathered two on their long stems, she took off her large rush hat, which she had plaited for herself, and stuck the flowers in the front of the brim.

"How you gleam and flash, you darlings! You must be like those precious gems that father tells me of, and that fine ladies wear in their hair and on their hands and arms. Father saw one of those ladies once, and he said she flashed like the stars. You will be my jewels, pretty flowers. And now, farewell, sweetest, prettiest blossoms. I will mark this spot so that I may return and find you here yet once again."

Laboriously climbing the steep ascent down which she had slipped so swiftly, Liesel arrived very much out of breath at the summit, and looked about for something with which to mark the spot.

Strong and supple, she quickly broke down a young sapling, and stripping it of its outer bark made it look in the bright sunshine like a gleaming silver wand. This she stuck deeply into the soft soil at the top of the incline, and taking the bright ribbon from her neck bound it securely to the top of the sapling, where it fluttered in the breeze like a gay little flag.

"Oh! that will do," said Liesel. Like many girls who live much alone, she had formed the habit of talking to all things—to herself, to the birds, to animals, and even to the funny little brown fish and frogs which sometimes came to the margin of the river. Thus she was happy in the midst of her solitary surroundings; for the hunters' huts were few and scattered, and intercourse between them, or the foresters, was very rare.

Only once a year Hans carried skins to the great town, which to Liesel's imagination was a veritable fairyland, for her father had never taken her with him. She, losing her mother when a mere baby, had grown up like some fair young flower—alone, and almost unseen by human being, save her father and an occasional hunter or forester, who at very rare intervals might visit their hut.

So now, Liesel tenderly stroked her bright red ribbon which she was leaving fluttering on the peeled wand, and said softly—"Don't think I do not value you, dear ribbon. I will not desert you. I will come once more and take you again. You are merely guarding the lovely flowers which I shall come for one day, if not to pluck, to look at; for oh! ribbon, they are so lovely. See, here are two of them in my hat. Now you have seen their beauty you will not mind guarding them."

Through the forest, on and on, pausing to look at the track of wild beasts and little forest animals, startling many of the latter from their lairs, and causing them to scuttle away as fast as their four little legs would carry them. Liesel would have liked to have caught them, stroked them gently and talked to them. It pained her greatly that they should fear her.

"Why do you run away, little creature?" she asked, as a stoat fled from her with every indication of alarm, "Liesel would never hurt you."

She came presently to an open space whose green velvety- looking sward and canopy of grand trees delighted her. She sat down and rested awhile, thinking of the lovely flowers which were in the brim of her hat.

"I must look at them again," she said, "how fresh they keep. I wonder what flowers they are?"

Liesel was not entirely ignorant. Her father could read, and he had taught her when she was quite a little thing. On each of his visits to Coburg he had brought her a book, so that now she had quite a little library. Among the volumes was an old work on botany, which he, noticing her love for plants and flowers, had bought for her, knowing the pleasure it would give her to study it. And many and many a weary day had Liesel beguiled in comparing the plants and flowers she found with those mentioned in her book.

"There is no flower in my book at all like this," she thought, and then put on her hat and jumped up.

"It must be getting late. I must be quick if I want to find my old man of the woods. What a funny little path leads from here. So narrow that I shall

almost have to press through it; and the trees are growing so thickly on either side as to form quite a wall."

They were, indeed. The trees and undergrowth on either side the narrow path formed a wall of impenetrable thickness, whilst arching and meeting overhead they kept almost every ray of light out. Liesel could not see the end of the path, and was almost afraid to venture into it.

"Suppose it should lead me to a wild beast's den," she thought, "I should not be able to get away from it."

She was, however, of a curious and enquiring disposition; and her curiosity overcame her timidity in this instance, as presently her wish to know what lay at the end of this dark passage led her on. She almost had to grope her way. Indeed, she would have had to do so, the passage became so dark and narrow further on, had it not been for a faint radiance like starlight which seemed to shine in front of her. On and on, until suddenly her arm was grasped and a deep hollow voice murmured in her ear—

"Stay! Are you myth or spirit that thus you come, bringing me that which for many years I have labored and toiled and searched!"

Trembling with fright, Liesel saw in the faint radiance which seemed to enfold them the figure of the white-haired white- bearded old man whom she had come out to seek.

When she realised that it was he, and nothing more fearful who had thus suddenly stopped her, she said calmly enough:

"I came to find you, sir; but, alas! I bring you nothing, unless indeed you will share the bread and meat I have in my little basket."

"What want I with bread and meat? If you speak of such gross things you must be mortal, girl. Think you that I care for bread and meat, which sustain life but for a short time, when you have with you a portion of that which if I can but obtain the whole will give me life, life! youth, youth! and health!"

His voice rose almost to a shriek as he pulled her after him for some distance, entering at length a small cavern dug out of the side of a hill, which appeared to terminate the dark walk. A rude light swung from the roof; and Liesel saw that the earthen floor had been beaten hard; and that a bundle of leaves in one corner served the hermit as a couch. There was nothing else; not a pot nor pan, not a vestige of covering to guard against cold or chilly nights; not a trace of food, except bundles of herbs and roots, which almost covered one side of the cave. A great pity filled the girl's heart, and she turned on the old man a look of tenderness.

"Poor old man! and so you really live here all alone, and like this?" she said softly.

His eyes—keen, fierce, blue ones, Liesel noticed—were fixed in an eager gaze on her hat.

"Girl! where did you get those flowers?"

He almost snatched off her hat, and carefully, reverently, removed the glistening star-like blossoms.

"I found them," she answered, simply and wonderingly.

"You know where they grow? Quick, girl!"

The veins in his temple stood out like whipcords, and he glared at her like a wild beast as she said—

"Yes."

"Lead me there quick. Lose not one second. A little longer—a little longer and it would have been too late. Come."

Still carefully holding the flowers he had taken from her, he motioned her to lead the way. Like one magnetised she obeyed, and swiftly and silently led him through the dark passage, the open glade, and along many a tortuous winding path. Once indeed it seemed as if her memory failed her, and she looked about her in perplexity. But the old man seizing her hand and looking deep into her eyes cried —

"I command you to lead me to the spot whence you gathered these flowers."

Then once more she led him—without doubt or wavering led him to the spot where she had planted the peeled sapling. There it stood, white and tall, with its little crimson flag fluttering in the breeze.

She stopped at this, and the old man, gazing wildly round in search of the blossoms, cried out:

"The flowers!—the flowers!"

"They are down there," said Liesel, pointing into the dark depth.

The old man groaned. He knew *he* could never get them.

"Girl, you must pluck them. . . Though to do so will bring ill luck in the future, I know not how or in what way. . But the flowers plucked by any other hand than mine. . . . Say, how many were there growing?"

"Seven."

"'Tis the number. Go at once since I cannot, and remember if you but crush one of the remaining five I will kill you."

Liesel did not hesitate. She knew she must obey, and looking at the track she had made when sliding down previously determined to go down now in the same manner, and was soon slipping down with the same velocity as previously.

Once in the dark depths of the hollow and waiting a few minutes she saw again the gleaming starry flowers. Sighing a little she plucked them one by one.

"Poor plant!" she said. "I cannot help taking all your treasures."

Very carefully she held the five blossoms and toiled slowly upwards until at length she stood beside the old man.

His face, seen as she saw it now in the full light of the sunshine, shocked her. It looked so old, so worn, so dying. Yes, that was the look. She had seen it once on the face of an old hunter who had died in their hut.

She was frightened as she put the flowers into his hands, which seemed now so feeble.

He took them, his white lips murmuring feebly—

"To get them now! and too late—too late—I can never return to the cave."

Then a sudden light gleaming in his eyes, which alone seemed to retain their vitality, he said—

"I *will*. It shall not be too late. Girl, as you hope for mercy, show mercy to me now. Help me to return to the cave, and then do as I bid you."

Not one thought of rebellion came to Liesel, Looking at him with her large dark eyes filled with tears she saw that he needed help, and willingly she gave it him, although she knew that by so doing she would not be able to return home that night. Full well she knew how dangerous it would be abroad in the forest after sunset; for then its wild and fierce denizens prowled forth seeking what they could devour.

How long and wearisome that return seemed. The old man had made her take off her hat and carefully place all seven blossoms in it.

"Fool! fool!" he muttered, "to carry the flowers. My age and feebleness might have robbed them of their virtue, but as yet they are undimmed; they do not droop."

Thinking to please him Liesel said—

"If they wither soon I will return and pluck you some more. The plant may flower again a week or two hence."

"Only once in a thousand years," he muttered feebly, as he leant heavily on his staff and followed her.

How slowly they went. To Liesel even it seemed an age, and at length, before they entered the narrow dark way, the old man was leaning heavily on her shoulder as well as upon his staff.

He kept his face turned from her and said—

"The dying breath—the dying breath of age will blight them. I must not breath upon them."

For this reason he crawled rather than walked in front of her when they entered the narrow path. Many times he stumbled, and would have fallen

had not Liesel upheld him; and each time he cried—

"The flowers! the flowers! take heed of the flowers."

There they bloomed, fresh and fair, as Liesel could tell from the soft radiance they shed around them.

At length the old man and Liesel were in the cave. Tottering to the wall he took from a small cavity a tiny earthenware pipkin in which were a few grains of crimson powder.

"Take this flint and tinder," he gasped, "and light the fire which is there prepared. It has waited many years."

Dry sticks were carefully laid one across the other between two stones, over which lay a couple of small bars. Liesel soon kindled the dry fuel, and then obeying the old man took the flowers one by one from her hat, and removing each blossom carefully from its stem, placed them in the pipkin with the powder.

Then from a phial which he took from his bosom the old man poured a little liquid into the pipkin, from which smoke immediately arose. Gasping, "Place it over the flames, and when it boils bring it to me," he lay back panting and laboring for breath, his eyes watching her every movement with a pathetic eagerness.

"Spill but one drop and it is futile," he murmured. "Directly it bubbles bring it here."

Earnestly Liesel watched the contents of the pipkin, from which a strange odor arose slightly confusing her senses. She saw the first bubble rise, then the second. Instantly it was one mass of bubbles. Slowly and carefully she lifted the pipkin, and placed it beside him.

"Five minutes," he murmured; "Five minutes to wait. A life time. Aye, perhaps the ending of a life before that life-giving potion can be raised. I cannot do it. My hands are feeble, shaking. Girl! come hither, and when I tell you carefully, gently place the bowl to my mouth. Another second yet to wait. Another. Now!"

Her senses reeling with the odor which filled the cave, Liesel struggled to his side, and raising the pipkin to his lips heard him murmur—

"And now for another lifetime in the heyday of youth and health which nothing save accident can cut short."

The bowl was at his lips; Liesel saw a film come over the fierce blue eyes, but the resolute will conquered, and he drained the potion to the last dregs.

With a gasping sigh Liesel dropped the bowl, which fell shattered into a dozen fragments; and overcome by the pungent odor which filled the cavern, fell back unconscious.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN she came to herself the fire had burnt itself down into soft white ashes, and she saw the figure of the old man stretched on his couch of leaves. Something in the attitude struck her, and she approached softly. The rude lantern of bear's fat and dried rushes shed its pale light full on the face of the sleeper.

Was he asleep? Liesel touched his forehead softly. It was icy cold; so were his hands. His eyes were wide open, glassy, and staring.

"Alas! alas! he is dead!" cried Liesel, "and the flowers, which must have been some kind of medicine, have failed to keep him alive. Poor old man! when it is daylight I will go home and bring father to bury him. He cannot be left like this."

Then with reverent steps she withdrew softly and sat near the narrow opening of the cave, waiting until she should see light appear at the end of the dark walk, which would, as she knew, herald the return of day.

Poor child! The wild beasts lurked in front of her in the forest; and behind her lay a dead man. Her blood curdled at the thought, and she could not refrain from shuddering and occasionally looking behind her. But neither sound nor movement came from the still occupant of the couch of dried leaves.

At length, after what seemed to the waiting girl years, a faint streak of light showed itself, and then she knew that day had dawned. Rising from her cramped position she fled swiftly away; then paused; and returning, collected an armful of brushwood and placed it carefully across the opening of the cavern. "Wild beasts might come," she said.

Then swiftly she turned homewards. No danger of losing her way, for every footstep seemed familiar as she made her way through the glade, and on and on till she came once more to the peeled sapling. She decided to let it remain there until she brought her father back with her.

To make sure of not missing her way to this spot as she went along she blazed large trees at intervals with her little knife she always carried in her pocket.

Oh! how weary she was before she came once more to familiar landmarks. The huge pine tree under which she often sat and studied botany in her own crude fashion; the slippery rock with its little trickling waterfall, near which she so often gathered ferns and mosses; and here at length was the river, and there her father's hut; and yes, here was her father, still carrying his rifle and wearing his shot belt, hurrying in alarm to meet her.

"Liesel, where have you been?"

"In the forest, father."

"You must have started very early. It is not safe."

"Father, I have been away a day and a night."

"Then as they returned together to the hut and she prepared their simple meal she told him of all that had happened.

"And oh, father!" she concluded, "come back with me and bury the poor old man. I cannot bear to think of him lying there."

"Say no more, Liesel. Of course we will do so; but wait until you are rested, you look white and weary. Go to your bed, my child, and try to sleep awhile."

For three hours Liesel slept the sleep of one utterly exhausted and then woke bright and refreshed, ready and eager to get off with her father, who while she slept had been sorting the numerous skins he had brought home with him and had also made ready their midday meal.

Liesel ate very little, so eager was she to set out, and presently they went forth. The sun was shining fiercely, and even in the depth of the forest they felt its intense heat, although its rays could not reach them. The Harzwald is seen at its best at this time of the day, and Liesel could have revelled in its beauty and the companionship of her father but for the thought of the old man whom she had left stretched stiff and stark in the cave, and to whom they were hastening to give decent burial.

"Saints forbid," said Hans, "that the elves or gnomes should have meddled with him; they are thick about here."

"I saw none," said Liesel, creeping a little closer to him. "And, oh! father, if I had thought of them I should have been dead with fright."

"You were doing a good action, Liesel; and they rarely interfere with the good and pure. But it was a risk; they are very tricky sometimes."

Ere long they came to the peeled wand, and Liesel, pointing down the steep incline, said—"That is where I slipped down twice."

"And came up again. That is the wonder, it is as steep as the side of a wall. I should say, Liesel, that yours was the first human foot that has ever trod the soil down there. But come, you must not linger. Can you find your way to the cave from here?"

"Yes, I could not miss it."

And on they went, coming at length to the glade and the narrow dark pathway leading to the cave. They walked down this in reverent silence, but when at length they reached the cave the brushwood which Liesel had placed at the entrance had been pushed aside and not a trace of the old man was to be seen, save his heavy staff, which stood in the corner.

"Gott im Himmel!" ejaculated Hans. "It is as I thought, the elves have taken him."

"Oh, father! father! perhaps wild beasts."

"Not so; there would be tracks; there are none," said Hans, carefully peering about. "Not one. It is as I said, or perhaps he belonged to the Evil One and he has carried him off. The oil is exhausted in the lantern, Liesel, and if we don't go at once we shall be in total darkness; besides, we can do no good."

They retraced their steps, the mysterious disappearance of the body of the old man haunting their minds, and almost in silence made their way home.

CHAPTER III.

THE next day Hans went forth as usual, but on his return in the evening, contrary to custom, he brought a stranger with him; a young and handsome man, whose tall figure and well-knit frame pleased and delighted Hans.

The stranger had hailed him in cheery, joyful accents and had begged to join him in the chase. Together they had tracked a wild boar and slain him, and now at Hans' urgent invitation the newcomer, who was strangely reticent as to who and what he was and whence he came, had accompanied him home.

Liesel stood at the door awaiting her father's return. The last beams of the setting sun fell on her and lit up her fair young beauty with an almost ethereal radiance.

Hans saw the perceptible start which his companion gave as he caught sight of her and that his wonderful blue eyes almost emitted sparks of light.

"My daughter," Hans said briefly, and this formed the only introduction between the two.

Liesel felt a strong repugnance to the newcomer. His eyes haunted her. Where had she seen them before? Ah! they were the exact counterpart of the old hermit's eyes. Perhaps this youth was a relation —a grandson perhaps—or a great grandson, as he did not appear to be more than nineteen. He gave his name as Paul, and with that they had to be satisfied.

Three days sped and still he lingered, going with Hans every morning and returning with him in the evening. Hans had provided him with a rifle and a knife, and he proved himself a mighty hunter. So much so that Hans pressed him to remain with him and join his fortunes to his; but Paul refused, urging that he must go to Coburg. He wanted, he said, to mingle with his fellow- creatures and fight and battle his way among them. What could Hans be thinking that he kept a beautiful girl like Liesel cooped up among the forests and mountains, when by taking her to a large town she had only to be seen to marry some rich man who would keep her in luxury. "But," he added tenderly, "it is as well. She is a tender little blossom and would perhaps wither in the glare of pleasure. Never fear, Hans, I will return— return to thee and Liesel."

Liesel turned away.

"Impudent!" she muttered. "What care I if he never returns. I hate his eyes; they make me shudder."

"And now for life and pleasure," said Paul as he took his farewell, "I will return again."

CHAPTER IV.

MONTHS passed and they had seen nothing of him; but new pleasures and new interests had crept into Liesel's life.

Her father had brought home with him one evening, in the same manner as he had brought Paul, a young fair hunter, who seeing Liesel had loved her and she in return gave him all her first pure affection.

They, with Hans' full consent, were betrothed; and though his visit to Liesel were rare yet life was now one bright unclouded happiness.

And then one day Paul returned—Paul the same, and yet not the same. There was a weariness and forlornness in his manner which touched Liesel. The world was very different to what he had imagined it, he said. Times and men were changed, and the only happiness to be found was in the solitude of the mountains and forests.

Hans welcomed him heartily, but Liesel felt vaguely unhappy. Neither she nor Hans told Paul of her betrothal to Adolph as yet. Something else intervened. Hans was so curious and intent on hearing all he could about the great world, particularly the price of skins, with which information Paul accurately furnished him—that Liesel's betrothal escaped his memory. And Liesel herself was of too modest and retiring a disposition to speak about anything which concerned herself.

By degrees she noticed that Paul's eyes—the eyes which she dreaded—constantly watched her; that no word, no movement of hers, however slight or unimportant, escaped his notice. He forestalled her when she would have drawn water from the river, and in a hundred little ways showed her that he loved her and that she filled his mind.

This, of course, made Liesel very unhappy, and she determined to ask her father to tell Paul of her betrothal to Adolph.

"If you wish it," said Hans, "particularly as his visit draws nigh again."

That evening Hans told Paul and was troubled and pained at the white, drawn look which came over his face, but he said nothing.

The next day while hunting Hans remonstrated with Paul on the reckless manner in which he was behaving. "If I had not settled that she bear she would have settled you," said Hans. "What has come over you, Paul?"

"Once I thought that life and life alone was worth everything; that to breathe, to feel oneself young, strong, and active was all that could be desired. But of what use is life when a disease fills the heart and mind? When one would give that life many times over for one kind word, one kind look?"

"Poor lad," said Hans, "is it thus with thee? Take heart! There are other maidens as fair and as good as Liesel. Loth though I am to part with thee,

yet it is better that thou shouldst go; and maybe thou wilt soon find another maid who will return thy love. Adolph comes this day, perhaps, and it would grieve me sorely if you two lads should quarrel over my Liesel."

A dark scowl swept across Paul's face and his hand instinctively sought the knife at his belt. Hans saw the action and shook his head, muttering "No, no, lad. There must be no bloodshed. Liesel is Adolph's betrothed by reason of their love."

CHAPTER V.

A WEEK after this conversation Adolph arrived and Liesel could not hide her joy. The sight of the lovers in their united affection was gall and wormwood to Paul, and he went moodily about, scowling and scarce speaking a word.

Hans feared that mischief was brewing and once more kindly but firmly entreated Paul to leave them, although he told him it "went against the grain" to do so, as it reflected on his hospitality.

The days sped by, bringing their accustomed duties and pleasures to Hans, Liesel, and Adolph. Alas! there were no pleasures for Paul. He spent sleepless miserable nights and moody profitless days. At length there came a day when by some chance Hans, while hunting with his two companions, became separated from them. Paul and Adolph were thrown together. They were tracking a brown bear. It had led them a long and circuitous chase, but at length they could tell they must be getting close to its lair. It was at no very great distance from Hans' hut, and Adolph spoke with horror of its proximity to Liesel.

"She often wanders alone in the forest," he said.

"Whom do you mean by she?" asked Paul sulkily. He had been filled with murderous thoughts against Adolph from the moment of finding himself alone with him.

"Why, Liesel—my betrothed."

"Your betrothed," said Paul sneeringly. "There are other men in the world besides you."

"Yes; but my Liesel cares for none of them. She only cares for me."

"It's a lie," thundered Paul, springing upon him. "Defend yourself if you can, for you or I must die."

"Paul!" exclaimed Adolph, warding off his attack. "Are you mad? I have no cause of quarrel against you."

"But I have with you," shouted Paul, his blue eyes blazing with wrath. "But for you Liesel would have loved me, and now—and now—life is not worth living."

Before Adolph could prevent him he had raised his hand swiftly and pierced his own side with his knife.

Adolph knelt beside him as he lay on the turf. The blood welling from the wound was fast staining its emerald hue with a dark purple color.

"Paul! Paul! what have you done? Help! Help! Hans! Hans!" he shouted, loading his rifle rapidly and letting off two or three charges in quick succession—a signal agreed upon in case of need.

Hans, who had been unsuccessful and was returning homeward, was on the spot in a very short tune. His horror was great at seeing Paul, who was now almost speechless but conscious. In answer to Hans' terrified questions as to whether they had fought he shook his head. Adolph explained rapidly as they quickly made a litter for the fast-dying man.

Tenderly they carried him home, and as the sun was setting, in at the open door, white and tearful, Liesel met them.

Paul feebly stretched his hand towards her, and as Hans held a flask to his lips he revived enough to whisper!

"Liesel, I am dying. Life was not worth living without love—your love; there was only one woman's love worth gaining—Liesel, bend closer. It will be death this time. Do you remember—the cave—do you remember—" His voice died away; the feeble grasp of his fingers relaxed and silence reigned in the little hut, for Death, the King of Terrors, had forced an entrance.

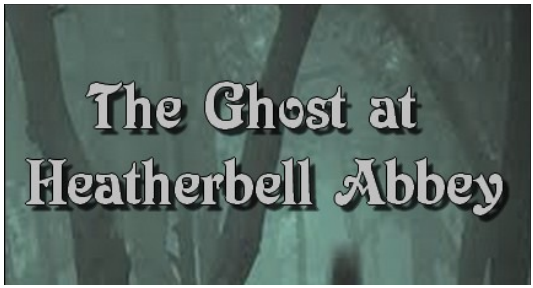
* * * * *

WHEN Liesel in after days, a happy wife and mother, told Hans that Paul had by his last whispered words to her confirmed the suspicion which she had always had—that his spirit had once inhabited the worn-out frame of the old, old man who had been known as the Hermit—Hans laughed and pinching her cheek softly said—

"Happiness has turned thy brain, Liesel. If the Hermit could have gained a new lease of life, and such life and youth and health as poor Paul had, do you think he would have forfeited it all after one short year? No, no. The Hermit was spirited away by elves or gnomes, who, as you know, haunt these parts."

"Never mind," said Liesel under her breath; "I know what I know." He spoke of the cave, and he said—"Life was not worth living without Love."

THE END



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OF

LIGHT AND AMUSING LITERATURE

FOR

THE HOURS OF RELAXATION.

VOLUME II.

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I.

AT nineteen I returned from a foreign school and lived with my father in England. I had been at home a year when I received an urgent invitation

from an old friend of my dead mother, to go and spend Christmas at her house, far away in the country.

'It may be dull,' she wrote, 'but you can go away whenever you wish. Only let me look on the face of your mother's child.'

My father said, 'Go, my dear, I wish you to make this visit.'

Heatherbell Abbey was situated in a remote moorland country. I arrived there one wintry evening, when all the old chimneys were roaring, and the wet ivy was slapping against the window-panes. I found my mother's friend a kind-faced, stately old lady, reclining in front of a wide grate full of glowing fire. She was too infirm to rise, but received me tenderly, and sent me with the housekeeper to get rid of my travel-stains. I liked at once the pretty fire-lit room to which I was conducted, also the housekeeper's good-humoured grandmotherly countenance. I soon felt at home in Heatherbell Abbey. It was a still, quaint household, where the people seemed to me to live and move about in a kind of peaceful dream. I liked it at first, and afterwards I loved it.

Christmas week arrived, and with it Mrs. Holme's only son, the youngest, and the only living child of many. I made tea on those happy evenings for mother and son, and I cantered every day over the frosty roads with Alaric Holme, and worked *frivolité* at night by the lamplight, while he read aloud to his mother and me. It was a happy time and very quiet, because Mrs. Holme was not able to receive visitors.

On days when Alaric Holme went to shoot over the hills, I loved to roam the moors alone, and climb the rocks, or gather holly and snow-berries for a drawing-room basket; or when December snows and rains forbade such excursions, to take my block and pencil up to one of the odd little cell-like rooms at the top of the house, with their slanting roofs and latticed windows, and there pass delightful hours in sketching illustrations for German legends made up of wild suggestive bits of the landscape, and eerie figures traced in the drifting clouds.

Mrs. Betty the housekeeper accompanied me all over the abbey, telling many a story of forgotten tenants who once occupied its many chambers. It was a quaint, stately old building, perplexingly suggestive of exactly opposite phases of life. Some of the apartments were fitted up in a style of old-fashioned frivolous grandeur, while the corridors looked like cloisters, and the oriel window which faced the sun would have fitly enriched a church. I discovered that the abbey had, as its name suggests, once been inhabited by monks; and as I sat often on dark days under the grave smiles of the twelve apostles, basking in the amber glow from the glass, and dreaming of summer sunsets, I delighted in sketching heads of saintly abbots who might have prayed and laboured within the walls, and groups of acolytes, whose voices might have rung through the abbey—how many silent years backward into the past.

There was a certain long, bleak drawing-room, which was never used, and which seemed too damp and chill ever to be inhabited with comfort. I sometimes strayed into it, and speculated on what it might have been when in use, or what it might still be if revivified. I believed it was a pretty room once, when the buff- and-silver papering was fresh, when the faded carpet was bright, when flowers overflowed those monster china vases, and the tall windows stood open like doors, with the ivy and jasmine crushing into the room. But now there was a chill, earthy dampness in the atmosphere, as though no window had been opened, and no fire lighted in it for years. Garnishings of withered holly were falling into dust over the highest mirrors and pictures. I drew Mrs. Betty's attention to this. She said: 'Yes, it was last used at Christmas time, and the holly was never taken down. The mistress took a dislike to the room, and never entered it since.'

This room had a ghostly fascination for me, and I used to steal into it in the wintry twilight, and walk up and down in the gathering shadows, watching with relish the tossing of spectral branches outside, and listening to the pealing howl of the wind. I had of late been reading too many German legends; but I was young, and full of bright health, and what must have been intolerably dismal to many, was luxury to me.

One evening I was thus passing the half-hour before tea. I walked up and down, repeating softly to myself—

'It stands in the lonely Winterthal
At the base of Ilsburg hill;
It stands as though it fain would fall,
The dark deserted Mill.

'Its engines coated with moss and mould
Bide silent all the day;
Its mildewed walls and windows old
Are crumbling into decay.'

It was quite dusk, but that gleam of clearness which sometimes comes just before dark after a day of continuous rain, now struggled with the shadows, and cast a broad space of lightness under the dull eye of each blank window. This was the aspect of the room as I turned near the door to retrace my steps to the shadowy recesses at the farther end.

Pausing a moment, and glancing involuntarily at the most distant window, I started at seeing some one standing beside it. I instinctively passed my hand over my eyes, and looked again. Neither fancy, nor any grotesque combination of light and shade had deceived me. A young lady was standing gazing intently out on the misty moors with her small clenched hand leaning on a little work-table which stood in the window. The figure was tall, though so exquisitely shaped that it hardly appeared so, and clad in black silk, which fell in graceful lustrous drapery to the ground, sweeping the floor behind. The side of the cheek turned towards me was perfect in sym-

metry and fair as a lily, without a tinge of colour. The hair, black as night, was twined in profuse braided masses round the small head. A band of white encircled the throat and wrists, relieving the darkness of the dress.

As I gazed, the figure turned slowly round with such an expression of hate and deadly purpose on the face as I shall never forget. Then as the countenance became perfectly revealed to me, its look changed gradually to one of triumph, malicious joy, its wickedness almost hidden under a radiant smile.

I gazed with amazement on the face, so wondrously beautiful. The dark eyes glittered like jewels, haloed with dusk fringes, and lightly overshadowed by delicate curved brows. The nose was small and straight, the lips red and thin, like a vermilion line traced on ivory. That wild, beautiful, audacious smile quivered over all like moonlight, making me shrink in terror from I knew not what. As I watched the smile faded, and an expression of anguish and despair convulsed the face; a veil of mist seemed to rise between me and the strange figure, and then, cold and trembling, I crept out of the room. With a return of courage I paused in the hall, and glanced backward, but the darkness had fallen, and no figure was discernible.

I fled down the hall, scarce breathing till I reached Mrs. Betty's room. I met her coming to seek me. The urn had gone up, and Mrs. Holme was impatient for tea. I pressed across Mrs. Betty's threshold, eager to feel, even for a moment, the reassurance given by light and warmth.

Mrs. Betty looked startled when she saw my face. 'My word, miss,' she said, 'you look as if you had seen a ghost.'

I tried to laugh. 'Tell me quickly,' I said, 'who is the strange young lady in the long drawing-room?'

'A young lady in the long drawing-room?'

'Yes, do you not know? Nay, you must. A beautiful girl in a black silk dress, with dark hair, and pale, fair face.'

Mrs. Betty turned pale, and laid the jar of preserves which she carried upon the table, as if she had grown suddenly too weak to hold it.

'It must be a mistake, or you are only in jest, miss,' she said. 'There is no such person in or near the house as you describe.'

'I have not been mistaken, and I am too much in earnest to jest. If there is no such person, then it must have been a ghost.'

'Hush! miss, for God's sake!' said Mrs. Betty, joining her hands in awe. 'Do not say such a thing lightly. Your eyes deceived you in the dark. Think no more about it, miss, but please go quickly to the drawing-room. The mistress will wonder where you can be.'

'I will go,' I said; 'but remember I am positive.'

'Stay, miss,' said Mrs. Betty, coming after me ere I had taken half a dozen steps. 'You will promise to say nothing of this to any one; not to the mistress or Mr. Alaric?'

I promised, and reluctantly hastened to the drawing-room.

II.

A MONTH passed, and I had never encountered the strange young lady again. During this time Mr. Alaric had departed, leaving Heatherbell Abbey more still and dreamlike a dwelling than before. Mrs. Holme and Mrs. Betty each mourned his departure in her own particular way, but each consoled herself with the promise he had given of a speedy return. The morning on which he went was raw and cheerless, and somehow, as I passed down the corridor to breakfast, I thought the twelve apostles looked particularly grave, and the stained glass miserably dull. Coming up again, however (after the wheels had rolled out of hearing down the avenue), with some hothouse violets in my hand, I thought the amber sunshine had grown wonderfully radiant, a fact difficult to account for, as the day was certainly as dark as ever.

A month had passed, and though I had not forgotten my vision of the long drawing-room, pleasanter and more engrossing thoughts had prevented me from dwelling morbidly upon the recollection. One evening Mrs. Holme slept in the firelight, and I had flown up to one of the cell-like rooms to snatch a bit of waste and cloudland for a vignette. I had lingered till there was danger of spoiling my work for want of light, and at last gathered up my pencils to descend. On opening the door I beheld the opposite door unclose also, and a figure flitted over the threshold, the same that I had seen in the

long drawing-room; the slim, swaying form, the black, lustrous drapery, the pale face, and raven hair. Only the width of the corridor separated me from her; I heard the rustle of her silk skirt, and felt a cold stir in the air as it wafted past. She flung a strange, gleaming smile at me, and flitted on along the corridor, and disappeared down the staircase.

I felt all the sickening distress of supernatural terror; it tormented and paralyzed me, but I could not swoon. I staggered against the wall, but the wild question, 'What is it? What is it?' would not suffer my senses to leave me. My eyes wandered from that mysterious door opposite to the staircase, to which my limbs refused to carry me, and up which I had a horrid expectation of seeing that terrible white face with its fearful beauty coming again to meet me. At length, with a frantic effort I dashed down the corridor and stairs. Reckless with terror, I sprang from flight to flight with a speed which my weak limbs could not support. The swift descent made my head reel, my knees bent, I grew blind, and fell heavily from a considerable height into the hall.

I broke my arm in that fall, and then I did faint. When I recovered, my arm was set, and Mrs. Betty and a doctor were with me in my own pretty chamber.

I implored Mrs. Betty not to leave me for a moment. I shuddered at the thought of being left alone. I told my story at once. The doctor shrugged his shoulders, and desired Mrs. Betty on no account to leave me, an order which she scrupulously obeyed, nursing me tenderly till I had grown quite well again.

She tried to divert me by telling anecdotes of the family, and especially of Mr. Alaric, child, boy, and man. But still my thoughts would wander back to that haunting vision, oftenest in twilight, when the white face and glittering eyes seemed gleaming on me from every shadowy corner.

One evening when my brain ached with pondering this uneasy theme, I said:

'Mrs. Betty, is there no story connected with the house which might account for the appearance of this spirit, for spirit I believe it to be?'

She tried to evade the question, but I saw that I had guessed rightly. There was a story, and after much coaxing I prevailed on her to tell it to me. It impressed me drearily at the time; I suffered from it for a day and two nights; but then the sun shone out, and a summer wind blew away all my trouble. I have tried to put together the fragments of a story which Mrs. Betty told me. It runs as follows:—

III.

TWENTY-FIVE years before the date of my first visit there, Heatherbell Abbey was a merry home, full of young life, and the music of young voices. Alaric Holme, the youngest of many, was then unborn, and Clarence, the eldest, the hope and pride of the house and name, was twenty-five. Clarence

was the child of a former marriage, and all the rest of the children were very much younger. Mrs. Holme was the most affectionate of stepmothers, and all almost forgot that she was not the real mother of the eldest son.

A few months before the period of the story, Mrs. Holme had made a change in the arrangements of her household; the elder children had been sent to school, and a governess had been engaged for the younger ones. The mother had been anxious to find a young person who would be gentle and yielding, and not too strict with her darlings. She fancied that an inexperienced girl might better submit to her supervision than one well drilled to the occupation of teaching. She engaged her governess rather indiscreetly; but the young lady had excellent testimonials, and Mrs. Holme was at the time quite satisfied.

Eunice Frith arrived at Heatherbell Abbey one stormy evening in October. The trees were wailing and crashing, and the sea booming on the strand between the gusts, when a vehicle rolled up the avenue, bringing the newcomer to her destination. When opened, the great hall door was swung back to the wall by the storm, and a cold wind swirled in under the mats and over the thresholds, and swept the bright inner hearth with a chill breath, and an unheard wail.

The long drawing-room, then the family evening room, was filled with glow and brilliance. It was teatime, pleasantest of domestic hours. Mr. Holme reclined in his armchair by the wide, bright hearth. Mrs. Holme had just taken her seat opposite the steaming urn. The rich lamp and firelight sparkled on the china and the silver, on the half-closed, reposing eyes, and the ease- enjoying brows and lips of the husband and father, and on the shining hair and burnished drapery of the wife and mother. It danced into the bewildering recesses and flattering vistas of the mirrors. It leaped over polished ornaments and fanciful cabinets, and the carved backs of dark, grotesque chairs. It was everywhere in snatches, this beautiful wandering home-light, beckoning quaint fancies from their nooks, sweet affections from their rose-coloured niches, young thrifty hopes from the warm atmosphere of their teeming growth, and leading them in flowery chains to dance a dance of worship round the silent, potent hearth-blaze. It brought Clarence Holme to his seat at the tea- table, and thus it brought a new flush of smiles to the other two faces in the room.

Clarence Holme was the more petted by all, and the more beloved by his stepmother because that she had no son of her own. He was the heir and the pride of the house, and the darling of father, mother, and sisters. His innocent manhood excused their creed that Clarence could do no wrong. His affectionate smile was their brightest sunshine, his kindly word and witty jest their dearest music.

Clarence came and took his seat at the table. His figure was a good height and well knit, broad-chested, and round-limbed. His fair hair swept from his forehead in sunshiny rings and masses, with a dash of warmer colour in the shadows. He had been out in the storm with the gamekeeper, and his

brow was very fair and his eyes very bright as he sat down smiling by his step-mother's side. Three little fairies who had been allowed to wait up to welcome their new governess, gathered round his elbows with a score of questions and appeals to 'Clarrie'.

Mr. Holme, with beaming eyes resting on the group at the table, had just risen to approach and join it, when that expected peal rang out from the bell with an unrecognized menace in its shrill clamour, the hall door swung back, and that cold breath swept under the threshold.

Eunice Frith entered the long drawing-room with the step of an empress, her black silken drapery glistening and darkling around and behind her like a sombre cloud. She looked like the young queen of night, though she wore no jewels, except one diamond which blazed at her throat, and her eyes which glittered under her white forehead with a brilliance which no gems ever possessed.

Mr. Holme started and looked at his wife. Mrs. Holme rose, flushed and uneasy. This was not quite the kind of person she had wished to see. She glanced from her husband to Clarence, who stood with his hand on the back of his chair, and his head bent forward in reverential and wondering admiration.

Eunice Frith passed down the long drawing-room without blush or falter, her dark head with its braided crown gracefully erect, her face, fair and unruffled as snow, her lips—red as the holly-berries ripening for Christmas in the wood—undistressed by any nervous quiver. She accepted the greetings of her surprised employers with passionless ease, and took her seat at the tea-table as though she had been accustomed to sit there all her life.

And the shrinking home-light glanced over her with a nervous start, and fled away; and Eunice Frith seemed illumined by some cold, foreign gleam —some white reflection from an iceberg.

IV.

TWO months passed, and Eunice Frith was one of the household. In her glistening and darkling robe she flitted from school-room to drawing-room. Her low, clear voice was expected to mingle in the domestic converse, and her smile, though too gleamy, was found to possess a fascination. Her influence over the children was complete—an influence which had no root in love, but was composed of a share of admiration and a species of attraction which was more than half fear—a fear of which the little pupils themselves were scarce conscious.

It was breakfast-time at Heatherbell Abbey. Eunice Frith stood at the window unlacing and lacing her white fingers, while her wild dark eyes with their jewelled glitter were roving restlessly over the waste land of snow outside. Mrs. Holme stood by the hearth, waiting for her husband's entrance, with her eyes fixed uneasily on Clarence, who was studying the young governess over the edge of his book. He met his stepmother's glance as the ap-

pearance of the letter-bag diverted his attention. He met that anxious, scrutinizing look with an open smile which seemed to say—

'No, mother; be at rest. I shall never fall love with that uncanny beauty.'

And Mrs. Holme turned to the letter-bag.

Eunice Frith expected no letters, for she never turned her head, nor removed her eyes, nor appeared to disturb the spirit within her from the contemplation of that silent white world whose temperature seemed so nearly akin to that of her own blood. Clarence sprang forward for his share of the correspondence, and Mrs. Holme, with an open letter in her hand, uttered an exclamation of sorrow and alarm. One of her precious girls was ill in a far-away school in France. Not dangerously, but still *ill*. They must go away at once, she and her husband; they must depart at once to see the sufferer.

'How provoking!' cried Mrs. Holme to Clarence.

'Ariel Forrest was to have been here the day after to- morrow.'

Ariel Forrest was a name Mrs. Holme loved to utter. The girl was the motherless daughter of a school friend. And this name, which his stepmother loved to utter, Clarence loved to hear.

Eunice Frith opened her red lips and closed them again. This was the only token she gave of having heard what had been said.

'And will she not come now?' asked Clarence, in a voice which was careless with an effort.

'No; she will not come now, I am sure. I must write and tell her.'

And the disappointing note was written to Ariel Forrest, who had promised to spend her Christmas at Heatherbell Abbey, and Mr. and Mrs. Holme left for France that night. 'We shall be home again for Christmas-day, if possible,' were their last words.

A certain kind, harmless old Aunt Mattie, who lived a few miles away, came to matronize the household in the absence of the mistress, and took up her abode in the Abbey.

'But she is not coming,' said Eunice Frith, as she stood tapping her foot in the twilight at the window, where the chill snow-wreaths looked wanly in at the ruddy hearth. 'She is not coming, and the watchful stepmother is away. And as for her'— with a scornful glance at the poor old lady, unconsciously nodding in her chair—'she is no match for me. I fear her as little as the mouse that nibbles at the wainscot.'

But Eunice Frith was not omniscient. She could not see beyond the verge of ordinary mortal vision. She did not know that Mrs. Holme's note had not reached her young friend's dwelling till the bird had flown. Therefore, when one evening she tied on her bonnet and wrapped herself in a rough gray shawl for a swift walk over the snow, she did not expect to meet Ariel Forrest before she returned.

V.

EUNICE FRITH stood transfixed in meditation on the Elfin Span, a quaint old bridge built high over a boiling torrent rushing from the mountain. There were weird stories about this bridge of ghosts and goblins haunting it at nightfall. It was near nightfall now, and there were few in the country besides the governess from the Abbey who would have stood there so calmly leaning over the old wall, the only speck in the white waste. But Eunice Frith feared neither man nor spirit.

Snow was on the earth and snow was in the sky. Nature wore a shroud, and the shroud was stained with blood. A long, ragged, crimson streak lay on the brink of the horizon, like gore welling from the dull lips of the gray distant sea. Eunice Frith looked like a spirit herself, motionless by the wall in her gray garments, with her weird glittering eyes building monuments of ambition in the misty undulations of the thick white clouds.

Woods and mountains, regal in their wintry ermine, stretched behind her, pale uplands swept away at either side, and below in the vale rose the Abbey with its ivied gables and chimneys, one fiery star from the oriel glaring back defiance at that angry western gleam by the sea.

'Mine! Mine!' whispered Eunice Frith between her closed lips as her eyes roved over the rich lands and the noble homestead.

'Mine! mine!' echoed the water rushing under the dark arch of the Span; and the wind swept by moaning faintly—'Oh! Clarence Holme, woe on you that you have looked with frank admiration on this woman's cruel beauty!'

Hark! there were wheels on the road in the distance; and as the governess looked and listened a figure sprang up on the pathway down below. The slight form of a young girl with bright brown curls blowing in waves and clusters from under her velvet hat with its drooping scarlet-tipped feathers. She was wrapped up in black velvet and sables, and her hands were thrust in a costly muff. She stepped airily over the snow in her dainty boots, seeming to follow the carriage with haste.

She glanced up and beheld the gray figure on the bridge, and met the white repellent face and wrathful eyes of the governess. From her triumphant dream of ambition Eunice Frith was aroused to behold the advent of her rival.

'My foe!' murmured Eunice Frith between her shut teeth; and then, as the young stranger fled away in fear, and she stood once more alone in the ghostly twilight, with the white foam of the river hissing in her ears, she became aware, by a sudden shock of intolerable pain, that not only were all the hopes of her deep- laid ambition cast upon this stake, but that all the love of which her resolute, tenacious nature was capable of conceiving and retaining, had gone forth to wrestle and do battle for its one prize in life. Racked and quivering, the heart of Eunice Frith crouched in humiliation before her intellect like an unfaithful slave before his enraged master. It had sworn to take a cool, stern part in a great cause, and it had turned craven and suffered defeat.

But the discovery was made, the humiliation endured, and her suffering only strengthened a thousandfold the iron determination to work her own will.

'She shall not crush me!' she said. I will crush her, *him* first.'

And then she wrapped herself more closely in her gray shawl, and with fiercely swift footsteps hurried over the snowy moors home to the Abbey. The long drawing-room was full of fire-light when Eunice Frith's white face peered in at the window like a wintry moon when there are signs of a storm. Ariel Forrest had thrown her hat on the floor, and her bright curls were wandering away from her blooming cheeks and down over her shoulders as she sat on a low stool by old Aunt Mattie's arm-chair, and heard of the departure of the mistress and master of Heatherbell Abbey.

'But I am glad I came,' said she, 'if only to see you, Aunt Mattie, and the children.'

'And no one else, Ariel?' whispered Clarence, who stood gravely in the flickering shadows, watching her every movement.

Aunt Mattie was very deaf, but Ariel made no answer with her lips. She looked silently at the coals for a few moments, and then, as a chill recollec-

tion startled her reverie, she cried, with a shiver—

'Oh! Aunt Mattie, I wonder who is the beautiful, fierce- looking girl whom I passed standing all alone on the Elfin Span? I almost thought she was a ghost.'

'Miss Frith, the governess, is out walking, is she not, Clarence? I don't know any one else whom the description would suit. Yes, my dear, I suppose you met the governess.'

VI.

A VERY sunbeam on the snow was Ariel Forrest on those December days at Heatherbell Abbey. A very home sprite, with her radiant smile, her sunny hair, her white floating dress. The children flew from Eunice Frith and clung to her. Aunt Mattie spoke querulously to the governess, and beamed her love in smiles upon her blithe, pretty young favourite. Clarence Holme, in his capacity of host to a beautiful, friendless girl in his father's house, was kind and attentive and chivalrous, never thinking how Eunice Frith's glittering eyes followed every speaking look that passed from his to Ariel's, little dreaming how she paced her chamber night after night, biting her red lips and clenching her slender hands in paroxysms of jealousy.

It was vacation time now, and children and governess were free to mingle in the general sports and merriment of the household. Good news had arrived from France, and all were gay and glad— but one.

A wonderful change came over Eunice Frith. Cold and still and proud in her exceeding beauty she had been. She had thought to conquer without an effort, or to retire haughtily from the field. Now her proud neck was bent, and she stooped to work, to toil, to make a mighty struggle to gain her object.

Eunice Frith, who could have imagined that your cold cheek could glow with so radiant a blush; who guessed that your proud lips could wreathe themselves into such bewildering smiles; that your low, seldom-heard voice could pour forth a cataract of song such as to shake the souls of reverent listeners? And yet these miracles were wrought in Heatherbell Abbey on those snowy December days; and with triumph Eunice Frith saw Ariel Forrest stand eclipsed.

The governess was sweet-voiced and gentle to the curly-haired girl whose trusting eyes met hers without a shadow of suspicion. She was amiable to the children and attentive to Aunt Mattie. Eunice Frith was singular and admirable from every point of view,— and yet—the heart of Clarence Holme was in the keeping of Ariel Forrest.

Slowly, like a storm-cloud, the truth gathered round the soul of Eunice Frith, and still her eyes shone forth like stars from the darkness. But the crisis was coming, the shadow was falling, chill winds were gathering round the Abbey hearth. A prophecy had been uttered that night on the Elfin Span —'I will crush her or him.'

VII.

IT was the day before Christmas Eve, and on Christmas Eve Mr. and Mrs. Holme were to return to Heatherbell Abbey. It was a calm evening after a night and day of such rain and storm as had enraged the mountain torrents, making them rush madly through the glens and valleys, crashing down trees and bridges, and annihilating all slight impediments to the fury of their flight. It was now quite still, but for the hoarse baying of waters in the distance, and it was growing dark. Eunice Frith had been for one of her swift solitary walks to the Elfin Span, and she was returning at her usual firelight hour. Through the drawing-room window she saw a picture—Clarence Holme standing on the hearth, and Ariel's head upon his shoulder, and Ariel's drapery sweeping his feet.

Eunice Frith went straight through the hall-door, crossed the hall, and stood at the drawing-room threshold, listening.

Ariel had asked some question, for Clarence was saying, half jestingly, half-tenderly, 'Is there anything I would *not* do for you, Ariel?'

'There is one thing you would scarcely do, Mr. Holme,' said a low, icy voice behind Clarence. 'You would not ride across the Elfin Span at nightfall, at this hour, not to save the life dearest to you in the world.'

There was a cutting sneer in the words, and Clarence turned sharply, in surprise; but he was too happy just then to be angry with any one.

'Why so, Miss Frith?' he said. 'Is it because of the ghosts and goblins?'

'You would not do it,' coldly persisted the governess.

'Why do you accuse him of being a coward?' cried Ariel, with kindling cheeks.

But Eunice Frith simply walked out of the room.

'Do it, Clarence!' said Ariel, when the door had closed upon her. 'How dare she stigmatize you as a coward! She thinks herself braver than any one in the world, because she walks from that place every evening at nightfall. Don't leave her the boast that no one would do it but herself. 'Tis only a mile: go and get Chestnut, and canter to the bridge and back again.'

'But, Ariel, my child, it would be nonsense to take so much notice of silly words!'

'No matter; it won't be nonsense. She shan't say that again. I'll give orders for tea, and by the time the urn is on the table you'll be here again.'

'Well, be it so, my liege lady. I shall imag ine my self your knight-er rant as I ride along, jour ney ing to do bat tle with some ter ri ble gi ant for your sake, in stead of go ing on a fool ish er rand, like the King of France and all his men, up the hill and down again.'

'Bring a bunch of heather, as a proof of your having been there!' called Ariel from the porch, as her lover rode merrily away down the avenue,

among the shadows of the trees.

'I wish I had not sent him: something may happen to him,' said Ariel, as she re-entered the long drawing-room. But she checked her speech in mortification at seeing Eunice Frith standing at the far window, leaning with one hand on a little work-table, and looking intently towards the Elfin Span.

Ariel Forrest sat down with a shiver beside the fender, and tried to wrestle with a feeling which was daily growing stronger within her—dislike of Eunice Frith.

The governess from her window could see the flutter of a rider's cloak flying along the upland path to the Elfin Span. It reached a certain point, and vanished. At that moment Ariel Forrest started to hear a low moan from the window where Eunice Frith stood.

VIII.

'WHERE can he be?—where can he be?' sobbed Ariel Forrest, sitting up stairs in Aunt Mattie's dressing-room, with her head on the old lady's lap.

Nine o'clock struck, and ten, and still the rider had not come back, and still the untasted tea was on the table in the long drawing-room, and Eunice Frith stood staring at the dark window, with her hand on the work-table, and her face from the light.

No one sought her, no one disturbed her. The room was deserted.

Servants were hurrying to and fro, looking blankly and fearfully in one another's faces, and speaking in subdued whispers; messengers went, and returned with white faces and stiff tongues. The Elfin Span was broken in by the torrent, and horse and rider lay at the bottom of the horrid chasm.

IX.

CLARENCE HOLME was carried stark and stiff to the door through which he had passed forth so gaily. Father and mother returned on that dismal Christmas Eve, and found their boy, their hope and pride, a corpse.

Ariel Forrest—we will not speak of her, but to hope and pray that God comforted her in her surpassing sorrow.

When in the gray morning a weeping, shuddering servant sought the desolation of the long drawing-room, she was seized with an unaccountable terror at seeing the slight statuesque figure still standing at the distant window—still with the braid-crowned head turned towards the Elfin Span, and the little clenched hand leaning on the work-table. Perfectly motionless, without a rustle disturbing the glistening flow of her silken drapery, so stood Eunice Frith in the dreary dawn on that terrible Christmas morning.

Mrs. Betty approached her with awe-struck steps. The right hand was tightly tangled in the heavy curtain beside the window. Mrs. Betty looked in the staring glassy eyes, and removed the stiff fingers from the curtain, and Eunice Frith fell heavily to the floor, dead.

'There has been disease of the heart,' said the doctor, 'and death has resulted from the violent action caused by some sudden passion.'

X.

MRS. BETTY'S story is told. Time has been busy effacing his own work, and these things are never spoken of now. I am the wife of Alaric Holme, and the good old lady who was so kind a stepmother to the murdered Clarence is now in her grave. Of Ariel Forrest I can say nothing, except that she went abroad with her father. Mrs. Betty still lives.

I stood last night on the Elfin Span, and I fancied I saw a gray figure glide past me in the gloaming. I hurried, shivering, away, and I promised, as I walked homeward, that if ever again the spirit of Eunice Frith is seen to haunt Heatherbell Abbey, we will shut up the old place, and find a home elsewhere.

THE END

THE GHOST AT LABURNUM VILLA

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THERE can be no doubt that Mr. Paul Withers is constitutionally nervous. Mrs. Withers says so; and as a man's wife ought to know something about his weak points, the fact may be considered indisputable. Not that Withers himself seeks to conceal or deny this peculiarity; on the contrary, he makes rather a parade of it; just as some people do with their cynicism, their bad temper, or any other feature which they think gives them distinctiveness of character. Withers, being an author, is in the habit of declaring that he considers his nervousness an advantage; but when he tries to define this position, he gets too misty to follow very closely. Mrs. W., it need scarcely be said, takes the opposite view, and invariably clinches the discussion by declaring, that if Paul hadn't been so absurdly nervous he would never have seen the ghost at Laburnum Villa. As Paul believes devoutly in the one spec-

tral experience of his life, he does not find the illustration convincing; but out of respect for his wife's strength of scepticism, changes the subject.

Was there a ghost at Laburnum Villa, or was it merely a creation of Withers' over-excited brain? Our readers shall judge for themselves.

The 'neat detached villa-residence' in question was situated in a semi-rural suburb of London. The agent's advertisement, just quoted, farther described it as being 'elegantly furnished,' and within 'five minutes of a railway-station.' If anything more antagonistic to the supernatural than this can be imagined, we shall be glad to hear of it. The advertisement attracted the attention of Mrs. Withers while seated at breakfast with her family in a remote Welsh watering-place; and in the evening of the same day, just as the heavy twilight of a dull September was changing into night, Withers stood at the gate of Laburnum Villa with a small travelling-bag in his hand, and the key of that residence in his pocket.

It had been a miserable day. In the first place, his breakfast had been spoiled by the 'impetuosity' of Mrs. Withers. That worthy lady had been for some time bringing a legitimate pressure to bear to secure a month or two's stay in London. When she saw the advertisement, she became immediately and completely possessed by the idea that the neighbourhood in question combined every advantage attainable in this necessarily imperfect state of existence. To resolve and act being with her one and the same impulse, she began at once to pack Withers' travelling-bag in spite of his almost pathetic remonstrances. Finding pathos of no use he tried argument, and from that drifted into what *he* called 'firmness' and Mrs. W. 'stupidity.' At this point, when there was just ten minutes to catch the mail-train from Holyhead, Mrs. W. asked in a tone of assumed calmness, if he intended to go to London in his slippers. His only reply was to put on his boots with a gloomy frown, snatch up his bag, and depart without even a 'good-morning.' That circumstance, however, did not in the least affect the appetite with which Mrs. Withers continued her interrupted breakfast. Withers meantime speeding Londonwards, and suffering as only nervous men can suffer from the irritating strain of an express journey, was brooding over a terrible scheme of vengeance. He would take the house—O yes, *he* would take it at any risk; if it was steaming with damp, infested with the most formidable rats, overrun with specimens of natural history, with a leaky cistern and defective drains, broken-windowed, dilapidated, ay, even roofless! 'His great revenge had stomach for them all!' But he never for a moment contemplated the possibility of its being 'haunted.'

Arrived in London, shattered in body and mind, but with his gloomy purpose strong upon him, he enlisted the obstructiveness of a maddening cabman to place as many difficulties as possible in the way of his finding the house-agent. After this slave of the rank had shut him in a rickety and strong-smelling box on wheels, he displayed an amount of obtuseness about the required address that nearly made Withers jump through the window with rage. Then, when he had acquired some dim notion of where his fare

wanted to go, he proceeded with great deliberation in an entirely wrong direction. After two or three false starts of this sort, and the consequent dissipation of a good deal of valuable time, the right office was found at last; and the agent himself discovered in the act of closing his labours for the day, in order to retire to the 'bosom of his family.' This is never a good time to meet a man who hates doing things in a hurry. Therefore Withers had expended some energy against the impassible composure of Mr. Leese in vain, until he happened to mention the name of the house he wished to occupy. The words 'Laburnum Villa' seemed to act like a spell; and in ten minutes more Withers found himself in possession of the key of that 'neat detached villa-residence.' Confiding himself once more to the care of cabby, he soon forgot the temporary gleam of elation produced by this small success in gloomy reflections on the probability of his being obliged to spend the night wandering aimlessly about the suburbs in that strong-smelling cab. Then he remembered a newspaper controversy about conveying hospital-patients in public vehicles. Unpleasant impressions began to crowd upon him, and he was on the point of stopping the cab and jumping out, when it was pulled-up with a violent jerk, and he was informed that he was 'there.'

When he found himself alone in a front garden of tolerable size, he began to find the situation singular. Then a lurking suspicion that it might prove disagreeable obtruded itself. He glanced up at the front of the house, which was of the usual commonplace bow-windowed pattern, and was struck by the fact that there was no appearance of occupation. To resolve this doubt at once he blocked at the door. The sound seemed to raise a dozen melancholy echoes in the neighbourhood ; but after these had died away in a low-spirited style, there was no response from the interior of Laburnum Villa. At this point a servant, in full evening dress of light cotton print, fluttered across from one of the nearest villas for the purpose of informing him that, 'Please, sir, no one lives in that 'ouse.'

'No one! Is it left to take care of itself?'

'O no, sir. There's a person—leastways an old woman—comes in the daytime, but she don't live there regular. No one has lived there regular since Miss Steel died.'

After imparting these agreeable facts, the servant fluttered genteelly away again, leaving Withers standing on the door-step with an awkward consciousness that, from the drawing-room window of the nearest villa, eyes were bent upon him through the laths of the venetians. It would be absurd to retreat. He took the key from his pocket and entered.

Falling over a pail, happily empty, which had been carelessly left in the little hall, did not tend to put him in a good temper, or to decrease the nervousness that had been growing upon him all day. He sat down on the pail, rubbed his shins, and tried to realise the situation. Alone in a strange house, with nothing to eat, and with that faint sickness upon him which comes of the fatigue and semi-starvation of express travelling. Obviously the thing to do was to look for the kitchen. There might be something to eat: at any rate

the chance was worth trying. Fortunately the kitchen was not far off, on the ground-floor, and he groped his way there without much difficulty. Here he was rejoiced by discovering the remains of a good fire, and received a momentary shock from a woman's dress, which was hanging from a hook in a way suggestive, in the dim light from the grate, of the person—'leastways the old woman'—having made a violent end of herself. A box of matches was the next fortunate discovery made by Withers, who began to feel himself a sort of Crusoe; but after burning two or three in a vain attempt to light the gas, he was forced to the unpleasant conclusion that it was either turned off at the meter, or cut off by the gas company. Deferring farther experiments in this direction for the present, he began, with the aid of a candle, to search for provisions. The prosecution of this laudable object naturally took him into the pantry. He was standing here, holding the candle above his head, and peering anxiously about the shelves, when he heard close to him, as it seemed, the shrill treble shout in which boyhood proclaims its eternal war with mankind. 'Yah! yah! the post!' the cry sounded like. What did they mean by 'post'? Withers opened the window a little way, and listened more intently. The juvenile destroyers of peace were some distance across the field by this time, so he couldn't be sure whether his ears deceived him or not; but he certainly thought he heard 'Yah! yah! the ghost!' It was very absurd, of course; but still Withers felt 'queer' as he closed the window again and continued his search. He was rewarded by a magnificent 'find'—a half-consumed meat-pie in prime condition, doubtless the personal property of the 'person' before mentioned. It was evident that *she*, at least, was no ghost, which was so far satisfactory. With the help of the brandy in his travelling-flask, Withers made a hearty supper off the meat-pie; and, strange to say, never bestowed a thought on the probability of its 'disagreeing' with him—a subject upon which, on ordinary occasions, he was wont to be discreetly but pathetically eloquent.

'Now for the meter,' thought Withers, after finishing supper by the light of his solitary candle. He had always entertained rather a high opinion of himself, had Withers, in a modest self-contained way; but now, under the combined influence of meat-pie, brandy, and a pipe of cavendish, he began to think he had done himself scanty justice. 'Strange,' he mused over his pipe, 'how a novel situation, strange conditions, bring out what is self-reliant in a man. How soon a fellow with any stuff in him grasps and subdues unfamiliar surroundings! The curled and scented military darling of drawing-rooms becomes a hero in war and a Spartan in the camp. The refined son of metropolitan civilisation, the polished cynic of club smoking-rooms, goes to the diggings, and straightway becomes "hail fellow well met" with navvies, and a thoroughgoing advocate of Lynch law.' And then Withers began to think pleasantly of his own fertility of resource, though he had, after all, only gone into an unoccupied house, and consumed another person's provisions. Rousing himself from such meditations with a gentle melancholy upon him, as became a person never destined to be thoroughly appreciated, he went to look for the meter. He found the place where the meter *had* been, but that was all. This being an emergency to which his resources

were by no means equal, he began to doubt the absolute sufficiency of self-reliance under all circumstances. At any rate, no tolerably efficient substitute for the missing meter suggested itself to him, so he determined to distinguish himself in another unfamiliar direction. Returning upstairs, he occupied an hour or so very pleasantly, blacking his face and hands to an impossible extent, in the attempt to light a fire in the dining-room. He had chosen the dining-room to pass the night in in preference to running the risk of damp beds, because it was compact, not to say diminutive, in its proportions, and therefore more easily warmed and lighted by a fire and a couple of candles. Here, then, after the completion of his arrangements, he will be left to continue the story in his own words.

* * * * * *

I DO not know what the general experience in such cases may be, but I never can feel on thoroughly good terms with other people's furniture; there is a sense of antagonism which I find it impossible to subdue. Even while lounging in the very comfortable easy-chair in the dining-room of Laburnum Villa, I felt as strongly as possible that I was being seated under protest. The companion easy-chair balancing mine on the opposite side of the fire-place had, to my sensitive mind, a distinctly disparaging expression in its arms, and a shrug, as of contempt, in its well-stuffed back. A fiercely-gilt warrior, who was careering at a terrible rate on the top of a clock (run down and silent) decorating the mantelpiece, seemed to point his weapon at me in an openly threatening manner, and challenge me to mortal combat. Even the engravings on the walls rejected me as an alien. 'Shakespeare and his Contemporaries' were evidently engaged in discussing me in an unfavourable spirit; and Frith's 'Merrymakers' ignored me so completely that I ought to have sunk terribly in my own esteem. There was a portrait in oil, too, of a gentleman, which it was impossible to escape, because it hung opposite the chimney-glass; so that whenever I raised my head, I caught it apparently looking at me over the mantelpiece with an unmistakable expression of indignant surprise. I could almost hear it saying in an injured tone, 'What the deuce is that fellow doing in my dining-room!'

This state of feeling was becoming intensified to a most disagreeable pitch, when a framed photograph 'caught my eye'—if I may be permitted to use the phrase—and gave a new turn to my thoughts. It was a full-length of a young lady with one of the most singular faces I ever saw in my life; not a pleasant face by any means, but full of decided character, though the mouth and chin were weak without being feminine. I thought, with something like a shudder of repugnance, that Elsie Venner—that curious creature with the reptile taint in her blood—must have looked like this girl, who seemed to have nothing of girlhood about her but its physical weakness. The small colourless face, with its retreating chin, unsmiling mouth, and slightly prominent nose, its sloping narrow forehead and brilliant black eyes, had such a repellent unsympathetic character, that it created the most disagreeable impressions. I returned to my seat, from which I had risen to examine

the portrait; but I found it impossible to shake-off the feeling it had produced. It was as repugnant to me as if it had been some noxious thing endowed with a sluggish vitality which found expression in the glittering eyes alone: they seemed to hold me with a triumphant consciousness of their power, though they were looking in another direction, out of the picture, but not at the spectator. I got up under an uncontrollable impulse, and turned the face to the wall. In doing so, I discovered that on the back of the frame there was pasted one of those 'funeral cards' which some people are in the habit of sending to their friends on the occasion of a death in the family. That there might be no mistake as to the identity of the 'Laura Steel' here mentioned, a miniature photograph was affixed at the top of the card. So Laura Steel was the name of the unprepossessing young lady, and she was dead. All the nameless fascination went out of those singular orbs at the thought, and I felt something like remorse for my fancies about her.

I ought to have begun to feel fatigued by this time; but though I lay back as comfortably as possible in the easy-chair, put my feet on the fender, and stared at the fire, no drooping of the eyelids hinted at an approaching doze. It was no use trying to persuade myself that I wanted to take 'forty winks.' The fact was not to be disguised that I was most distressingly wakeful, restless, and listening; distinctly *listening*, for I caught myself in the act. It was very plain that nature was revenging itself for my ill-spent day in the abnormal activity of my nervous system. I got up, and going to a book-case in a recess, took down a volume at random. It proved to be a collection of German plays of the sanguinary school: Lessing's *Emilia Galotti*, Schiller's *Robbers*, and others of the same type. This proved a fortunate speculation; and I soon found myself going through the most harrowing and bloodthirsty scenes with that luxurious sense of suspended attention which is the first phase of an inevitable doze. Emilia was about to stab herself, and I was just nodding my admiration of her courage and virtue, when suddenly I started up broad awake, and let the book fall. I glanced almost involuntarily at the photograph, and saw, or fancied I saw, in the averted glittering eyes the same indefinable expression revived that had struck me so unpleasantly at first. What was it that had startled me? I did not know. Still less could I explain the intensity of a new sensation, possessing me completely, which seemed to hold all my being in the one act of *listening*.

A house does not need to be old and dilapidated in order to supply plenty of mysterious noises; indeed, new houses are more prolific in this respect than old ones. I heard any quantity of the usual creaking, straining, and flapping in Laburnum Villa, but nothing to which I felt inclined to give any special significance. After a few minutes, therefore, the acute tension of my nerves began to relax, and I turned once more to my book. Here I met with a disappointment; for I soon became sensible that the horrors of the German dramatist had lost their soporific effect, and, inexplicably enough, were acting as an irritant. I was reading with sharpened senses, and realising what I read. It was another disagreeable surprise to find that the late Miss Steel—or, at least, my idea of her—was getting involved in the scenes, iden-

tifying herself with the sanguinary interest as a pervading evil influence. The criminal personages seemed to gleam at me from the page with the snake-like brilliancy of her eyes, and the malignant bitterness of the wicked speeches to come from the same lax unsmiling lips. I threw down the book impatiently, and began to trim the candles ; but though I smiled while doing so at the idea of being reduced to candles in this age of gas, I could not help noticing that my hands trembled violently. I was so awkward about my work that I nearly extinguished the light. I poked the fire into a blaze, and set myself resolutely to think.

Some considerable time passed in a vain attempt to resume the mastery of myself; but I gave up the struggle at last, and resigned myself passively to wait and listen. I was sensible of no alarm, or even anxiety; I was simply held down, physically and mentally, and kept quiet. An imperious expectation of something, I did not know what, absorbed every sense and faculty of my being. How long I half sat, half lay thus, I do not know. Nature seemed to stand still; there was no time, and everything came to a breathless pause.

Then over this dead peace there came stealing a subtle infection of terror. The air was charged with it as with a plague. This horror gathered and thickened, like the darkness before a storm, until it became a palpable oppression. My body was paralysed; only my soul struggled feebly against the threatenings of madness or death.

It came at last. With my quickened senses, I could hear the stir in the air that heralded its approach, as if the atmosphere of Nature recoiled from the awful thing. It was in the room, and I recognised the figure at once, though the face was turned from me: the girl of the portrait with the snake-like eyes. I felt that if those eyes met mine, I should go mad; and yet I was powerless to look away, or move, or cry out. My heart stood still, and life was slipping away from my paralysed grasp. It was kneeling before the drawers in the lower part of the book-case, and appeared to be searching anxiously in one of them. Suddenly it recoiled, and threw its arms wildly above its head. It arose swiftly, and in the instant it stood erect was confronted by another figure, that of an old man. It seemed to read a sentence of condemnation in the face of this second comer, for it sank into a kneeling position, and clasped the other despairingly by the knees. There were savagely-rapid blows rained upon the face of the petitioner, upturned in an agony of entreaty, and a furious thrusting away. With a long wailing scream, it rolled writhing almost at my feet, and the awful eyes glared full into mine. Merciful oblivion came upon me, and I fell into a death-like unconsciousness.

When I revived, it was to find myself in a state of physical prostration as great as if I had just been recovering from a severe illness. The nervous restlessness from which I had suffered in the early part of the night had completely disappeared. It seemed that I had exhausted my powers of endurance, and my capacity for receiving violent mental impressions. I could only lie still and try, in a feeble groping way, to renew my hold upon the familiar every-day life which had become so distant and indistinct. I endeav-

oured to remember the incidents that had preceded my arrival at the villa ; but I could only do so in a confused wandering style, without sequence or coherency. Mr. Leese the house-agent got mixed up with the cabman, and both receded into some indefinite past, the duration of which it was impossible to calculate. And all the time I was thus trying to rearrange the history of the day, I was sensible of a shadowy horror in the background of my thoughts, which I knew, evade it as I might, I should be obliged to face by and by. That dreadful remembrance, I was conscious, would force itself upon me with returning physical strength, without any effort of mine to rouse it. Let it sleep now, like a coiled serpent; there were hours enough of depression in store in the future to be darkened by its malignant influence. Should I ever forget it? I could not help asking myself, even in my almost imbecile state of prostration. Would it be always, as it was now, a lurking horror, crouching for a spring when its victim was most helpless ?

I must have sat for a long time in this state of mental suspension; for when I gained energy enough to take active note of external things, I found the candles burnt out, and the fire a black mass, with some faint red sparks here and there. My first act of vitality was to seize the brandy-bottle, and take a draught of raw spirit such as would have completely stupefied me under ordinary circumstances. As it was, it produced such an immediate effect, in my weak state, that I could just stagger to the sofa, where I fell into a heavy and dreamless sleep.

It was broad daylight when I wakened again, and found a singular-looking old woman standing by the side of my improvised couch. We stared at each other, with much bewilderment on my side, and apparently much solemn relish on hers, for several minutes. She was the first to break the awkward silence, by remarking in a husky tone, 'Lor' a-mussy!' Then I sat up, and became aware that I had a very active collection of steam-hammers at work in my head. This indisposed me for conversation, especially with an old woman who seemed to breathe gin, and I lay down again. She wheezed interrogatively, and did not appear to have any intention of going away. I turned towards her, and she repeated the exclamation or observation before quoted. 'What do you want?' I asked at last, feeling under an obligation to say something. This simple question confused her so much, that she could only wheeze louder than ever, and rub her hands aimlessly with a very dirty duster. 'I suppose you are the person who takes care of the house?' I added, with the benevolent design of assisting her comprehension. 'Yes, sir; Mrs. Panting, sir, as Mr. Leese allus 'as engaged, me bein', as 'e says, trustworthy, with the 'ighest of characters, as was wrote out most beautiful by Mr. Leese's young man; an' I 'ope, sir, if you've took the 'ouse, as your good lady'll keep me on, sir, bein' easy satisfied, with a pore appetite, through bein' a widow, sir, with a small fambly, as allus did the charin' and washin' for pore Mr. Steel, and giv' the 'ighest satisfaction.' I had collapsed at first, under this sudden shower-bath of information; but the name of Steel roused me, and I determined to extract what information Mrs. Panting possessed about the family. She possessed a great deal, as it proved, and no

doubt invented whatever was necessary to fill-up the gaps in her knowledge; but in its broad outlines the story was probable enough.

Miss Steel's was one of those histories, commonplace in appearance to the outside spectator, the external features of which may be summed-up in a few lines, while an internal analysis would fill volumes. Mrs. Panting's amplified, decorated, and very discursive history may be told in a few words. Laura Steel had conceived a violent and unreasoning passion for a man who was utterly and hopelessly unworthy of the slightest public notice from any woman who valued her reputation. There had been a clandestine correspondence, and a regular series of stolen meetings, before her father discovered the state of affairs. Then came a sickening struggle for supremacy between the father and daughter: she bold, defiant, and reckless; he mad with passionate rage and the bare possibility of social disgrace. There was a short and deceitful truce, but it was only the sullen calm that precedes the fury of the storm. It came to a sudden end one day, for he had been searching among her papers during her absence, and found a certificate of marriage dated about seven months before. There was a terrible scene when she returned home at night; a scene which even imaginative Mrs. Panting trembled at the mere recollection of. He cast his daughter off with such frightful imprecations as raving demons might have uttered, and swore a horrible oath of hatred even beyond the grave. A few days after, she died in giving birth to a still-born child. The terrible passion of the old man was too much for his enfeebled frame; and he too succumbed soon after to an attack of paralysis, which, though it deprived him of speech, could not quench the hatred that burned in his eyes to the last.

WHEN Mrs. Panting had finished her story, she exhibited as corroborative evidence a manuscript volume, much burned on the outside, which she had picked up from under the grate the morning after the tragedy. As she could not read, however, she had no idea how irresistible that corroboration was. It was Miss Steel's diary, or at any rate all that was left of it. A more appalling production, for a woman's hand, I never met before, and devoutly hope never to meet again.

How is it that the worst women, if they have the power of expression, are always the most eager to make a morbid analysis of their wickedness on paper? Let philosophers answer, if they can. Miss Steel's diary was not one of incident; about her personal surroundings she wrote little beyond the facts that her mother had died while she was an infant, and that she had never loved her father. The 'sentiment,' as she considered it, of filial affection was the subject of her most caustic sarcasms. Her father, on the other hand, had reciprocated her indifference most thoroughly, and thus she had grown in a state of complete isolation. An intelligence so acute and observant that it only wanted a touch of human sympathy to produce the fruits of genius, had been perverted by indiscriminate and unwholesome reading into a field for the growth of the wildest and most unhealthy fancies. No question was too high, or too low, or too sacred for the effrontery of her amazing specula-

tions. Themes that mankind have been accustomed to approach with reverent awe were treated with revolting flippancy, as almost unworthy of serious thought. But it was when she had passed under the dominion of a new passion that all the distorted strength of her character was put forth. It was simply raving, with few intervals of lucidity; and I was compelled to give up the task of reading it from sheer inability to bear the painful feeling of mental irritation it produced. I need only add, that I felt it a duty to superintend carefully the process of reducing it by fire to a harmless pile of feathery ashes.

Human nature, even nervous human nature, will bear a great deal, we know; and I must have got over the effects of my night's experience to some extent when I could feel a sort of grim satisfaction in despatching the following telegram to Mrs. Withers at Llanfairfechan:

DON'T COME. LABURNUM VILLA WON'T DO.

THE END

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The old manor-house was now a gloomy ruin. It was surrounded by an old-fashioned, spacious garden, overgrown with weeds; but, in the drowsy and half-veiled light of an April dawn, looking almost as beautiful as if it had been kept in trim order. The gravel walks were green with moss and grass, and the fruit-trees, trained against the wall, shot out a plenteous overgrowth of wild branches which hung unprofitably over the borders. A rank crop of thistles, bind-weed and groundsel, choked the beds, over which the slimy trace of slugs and snails shone in the horizontal gleam of the uprising sun. The noble elms, which stood about the lawn in groups, were the only objects that did not hear the melancholy evidence of neglect. These giants of the wood thrive best when not interfered with by man.

Scarcely a single window-pane was unbroken in the old house; the roof was untiled; the brick-work at the lower part of the building was without mortar, and seethed crumbling with damp; and many of the shutters, which in the dwellings of that date were fixed outside the windows, hung dangling upon one rusty hinge. The entrance-door, of which the lintel had either dropped from its socket or been forced away, was fastened to the side frame by a padlock.

All was silent, deserted, desolate; nor did the aspect of the tenement tend to dissipate, by any exhibition of beauty, either in outline, colour, or detached parts, the heavy, unimaginative melancholy which the view of it inspired. It was a square, red brick house, large enough indeed to contain many rooms, and were it in good repair, to accommodate even a wealthy family; but it was utterly destitute of external interest. It had no pointed roof, no fantastic gables, no grotesque projections, no pleasant porch, in the angles of which the rose and the honeysuckle could ascend, or the ivy cling, nor any twisted and spiral chimneys, like those which surmounted the truly English and picturesque homes built in the Elizabethan era, and which, together with the rich and glorious poetry of that time, gave way to the smooth neatness cultivated during the reign of William and Mary, to which epoch the Paddington Manor-House might be referred.

Two men stood, in the silence of an April morning, contemplating the deserted scene. One of them appeared to know something of its history, and, yielding to the entreaty of his companion, related the following story:

"Ten years ago," said he, "there dwelt in this house a man of high repute for virtue and piety. He had no wife nor children, but he lived with much liberality, and kept many servants. He was constant in his attendance at church, and gladdened the hearts of the neighbouring poor by the frequency of his almsgiving.

"His fame among his neighbours was increased by his great hospitality. Scarcely a day passed without his entertaining some of them with feasts at his house, when his conversation was admired, his judgment appealed to as something more than ordinarily wise, his decisions considered final, and his

jokes received with hearty laughter; according to the time-hallowed and dutiful practice of guests at the tables of rich men.

"Nothing could exceed the costliness and rack of this man's wines, the lavish profusion of his plate nor the splendour of his rooms—*these very rooms!*—which were decorated with the richest furniture, the most costly specimens of the Italian and Flemish schools of painting, and resounded nightly with the harmony of dainty madrigals.

"One summer evening, after a sumptuous dinner had been enjoyed by himself and a numerous party, the weather being very sultry, a proposal was made by the host that the wine and dessert should be taken to the lawn, and that the revelry should be prolonged under the shade of the leafy elms which stood about the garden in groups, as now you see them. The company accordingly adjourned thither, and great was the merriment beneath the green boughs which hung over the table in heavy masses, and loud the songs in the sweet air of evening.

"Twilight came on; but still the happy revellers were loth to leave the spot, which seemed sacred to wine and music, and indolent enjoyment. The leaves which canopied them were motionless; even those which hung on the extreme point of the tenderest sprays, quivered not. One shining star, poised in the clear ether, seemed to look down with curious gaze on the jocund scene; and the soft west wind had breathed its last drowsy evening hymn. The calm, indeed, was so perfect that the master of the house ordered lights to be brought there where they sat, that the out-of-door carouse might be still enjoyed.

"'Hang care!' exclaimed he. 'This is a delicious evening; the wine has a finer relish here than in the house, and the song is more exciting and melodious under the tranquil sky than in the close room, where the sound is stifled. Come, let us have a bacchanalian chant—let us, with old Sir Toby, make the welkin dance and rouse the night-owl with a catch! I am right merry. Pass the bottle, and tune your voices—a catch, a catch! The lights will be here anon.'

"Thus he spoke; but his merriment seemed forced and unnatural. A grievous change awaited him.

"As one of the servants was proceeding from the house with a flambeau in his hand, to light the tapers already placed on the table, he saw in the walk leading from the outer gate, a matron of lofty bearing, in widow's weeds, whose skin, as the rays of the torch fell on it, looked white as the monumental effigy, and made a ghastly contrast with her black robe. Her face was like that of the grisly phantom, Death-in-life; it was rigid and sunken; but her eyes glanced about from their hollow sockets with a restless motion, and her brow was knit as if in anger. A corpse-like infant was in her arms; and she paced with proud and stately tread towards the spot where the master of the house, apparently

'Merry in heart and filled with swelling wine,'

was sitting among his jovial friends.

"The servant shuddered as he beheld the strange intruder; but he, too, had partaken of the good cheer, and felt bolder than usual. Mustering up his courage, he faced the awful woman, and demanded her errand.

"'I seek your master,' said she.

"'He is engaged, and cannot be interrupted,' replied the man. 'Ugh ! turn your face from me—I like not your locks. You are enough to freeze one's very blood.'

"'Fool !' returned the woman. Your master *must* see me.' And she pushed the servant aside.

"The menial shivered at the touch of her hand, which was heavy and cold, like marble. He felt as if rooted to the spot; he could not move to follow her as she walked on to the scene of the banquet.

"On arriving at the spot, she drew herself up beside the host, and stood there without uttering a word! He saw her, and shook in every joint. The song ceased; the guests were speechless with amazement, and sat like petrifactions, bending their gaze one way towards the strange and solemn figure which confronted them.

"'Why comest thou here?' at length demanded the rich man, in low and gasping accents. 'Vanish! Who opened the vault to let thee forth? Thou shouldst be a hundred miles away. Sink again into the earth! Hence, horrible thing! Delusion of hell! Dead creature! Ghost! Hence! What seekest thou? What can I do to keep thee in the grave? I will resign thy lands: to whom shall they be given? Thy child is dead. Who is now thy heir? Speak, and be invisible!'

"The pale woman stooped with unseemly effort, as if an image of stone were to bend, and whispered something in the ear of her questioner, which made him tremble still more violently. Then beckoning him, she passed through the deepening twilight towards the house, while he, with bristling hair and faltering gait, followed her. The terror-stricken man, the gaunt woman, and white child, looked like three corpses moving in the heavy and uncertain shades of evening, against the order of nature.

"After waiting an hour for their friend's return, the guests, who had now recovered from their first panic, became impatient to solve the mystery, and determined to seek the owner of the house, and offer such comfort as his evident trepidation required. They accordingly directed their steps towards the room into which they were informed the woman and child, and their host, had entered.

"On approaching the door, piteous groans, and incoherent exclamations were heard; above which these words were plainly audible in a female voice: 'Remember what I have said! Think of my slaughtered husband! A more terrible intruder will some night come to thy house! Thou shalt perish here and hereafter!'

"Hearing these groans and these menaces, the party instantly burst into the room, followed by a servant with a light. The man, whose face was buried in his hands, was standing alone. But, as his friends gazed around in amazement, a shadow of the woman with the infant in her arms was seen to flicker on the wall, as if moved about uncouthly by a faint wind. By degrees it faded entirely away. No one knew how the stately widow herself had disappeared, nor by what means she had obtained admittance through the outer gate.

"To the earnest inquiries of his friends the host would give no answer; and the party left the place perplexed with fearful thoughts. From that time no feasts were given in the Manor House. The apartment where the secret interview took place, and which is, to this day, called 'THE ROOM OF THE SHADOW,' was closed, and, it is said, has never since been opened. It is the chamber immediately above this, and is now the haunt of bats, and other night-birds.

"After having lived here several years in comparative solitude, a mortal sickness came upon the owner of the house. But, if his bodily sufferings were grievous to behold, the agony of his mind seemed tenfold greater, so that the friends who called to cheer him in his malady were amazed to see one of so pure a life (as they thought) given over to remorse. He felt that he must shortly appear before the Supreme Judge; and the anticipated terrors of the judgment were already upon his spirit. His countenance underwent many ghastly changes, and the sweat of dismal suffering poured in heavy beads from his face and breast.

"The throes of his conscience were too strong to be any longer endured and hidden; and, summoning one or two of his neighbours to his bedside, he confessed many sins of which he had been guilty in another part of England; he had, he said, enriched himself by the ruin of widows and orphans; and, he added, that the accursed lust for gold had made him a murderer.

"It was in vain that the pastor of the parish, who saw his bitter agony, strove to absolve him of his manifold crimes. He could not be comforted. His works, and alms, and all the good endeavours of the latter years of his life were of no avail. They were as chaff, and flew off from the weight of his transgressions. The vengeance of eternal fire haunted him while living, and he did not dare even to pray. 'Alas! my friends,' said he, to those who besought him to lift up his voice in supplication to the Most High, 'have no heart to pray, for I am already condemned! Hell is even now in my soul, there to burn for ever. Resign me, I pray you, to my lost condition, and to the fiends hovering around to seize me.'

"The menace of the strange woman was now about to be fulfilled.

"On the last night of this person's miserable life, one of his neighbours, a benevolent and pious man, sat up with the expiring wretch by his bed-side. He had for some time fallen into a state of stupor, being afraid to look any human being in the face, or even to open his eyes. He slept, or seemed to sleep for a while; then suddenly arousing himself, he appeared to be in in-

tolerable agitation of body and mind, and with an indescribable expression of countenance, shrieked out, 'Oh the intolerable horrors of damnation!'

"Midnight had now arrived. The servants were in bed, and no one was stirring in the house but the old nurse, and the friend who watched the last moments of the sufferer. All was in quiet profound as that of the sepulchre; when suddenly the sound of loud and impatient footsteps was heard in the room adjoining the forlorn man's bed-chamber.

"'What can that be?' said the nurse under her breath, and with an expression of ghastly alarm. 'Hark! the noise continues!'

"'Is any one up in the house?' inquired the friend.

"'No: besides, would a servant dare to tramp with such violence about the next room to that of his dying master?'

"The gentleman snatched up a lamp, and went forth into the next chamber. It was empty! but still the footsteps sounded loudly as those of a person waiting in angry impatience.

"Bewildered and aghast, the friend returned to the bedside of the wretch, and could not find utterance to tell the nurse what had been the result of his examination of the adjoining room.

"'For the love of heaven!' exclaimed the woman, 'speak! tell me what you have seen in the next chamber. Who is there? Why do you look so pale? What has made you dumb? Hark! The noise of the footsteps grows louder and louder. Oh! how I wish I had never entered this accursed house—this house abhorred of God and man!'

"Meanwhile, the sound of the horrid footsteps grew not only louder, but quicker and more impatient.

"The scene of their trampling was, after a time, changed. They approached the sick man's room, and were heard—plainly heard—lose by the bedside of the dying wretch, whose nurse and friend stared with speechless terror upon the floor, which sounded and shook as the invisible foot-falls passed over it.

"'Something is here—something terrible—in this very room, and close to us, though we cannot see it!' whispered the gentleman in panting accents to his companion. Go up stairs and call the servants, and let all in the house assemble here.'

"'I dare not move,' exclaimed the trembling woman. 'My brain—my brain! I am faint—I shall go mad! Let us fly from this place—the fiend is here. Help! Help! in the name of the Almighty.'

"'Be composed, I beseech you,' said the gentleman, in a voice scarcely audible. 'Recall your scattered senses. I too should be scared to death, did I not with a strong effort keep down the mad throbbing that torment me. Recollect our duty. We are Christians, and must not abandon the expiring man. God will protect us. Merciful Heaven!' he continued, with a frenzied

glance into the shadowy recesses of the chamber, 'Listen! the noise is stronger than ever—those iron footsteps!—and still we cannot discern the cause! Go and bring some companions—some human faces—our own are transformed!'

"The nurse, thus adjured, left the demon-haunted apartment with a visage white as snow; and the benevolent friend, whose spirits had been subdued by long watching in the chamber of death, and by witnessing the sick man's agony and remorse, became, now that he was left alone, wild and frantic. Assuming a courage from the very intensity of fear, he shrieked out in a voice which scarcely sounded like his own, 'What art thou, execrable thing! that comest at this dead hour? Speak, if thou canst; show thyself, if thou darest!'

"These cries roused the dying man from the miserable slumber into which he had fallen. He opened his glassy eyes—gasped for utterance, and seemed as though he would now have prayed—prayed in mortal anguish; but the words died in his throat. His lips quivered and seemed parched, as if by fire; they stood apart, and his clenched teeth grinned horribly. It was evident that he heard the footsteps; for an agony, fearful to behold, came over him. He arose in his bed—held out his arms, as if to keep off the approach of some hateful thing; and, having sat thus for a few moments, fell back, and with a dismal groan expired!

"From that very instant the sound of the footsteps was heard no more! Silence fell upon the room: when the nurse re-entered, followed by the servants, they found the sick man dead, with a face of horrible contortion—and his friend stretched on the floor in a swoon.

"The mortal part of the wretch was soon buried; and, after that time (the dismal story becoming generally known) no one would dare to inhabit the house, which gradually fell into decay, and got the fatal reputation of being haunted."

THE END

The Mummy's Soul

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PREFACE

FROM THE WIKIPEDIA ARTICLE
"CURSE OF THE PHARAOHS"
(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curse_of_the_pharaohs)

The idea of a mummy reviving from the dead, an essential element of many mummy curse tales, was developed in *The Mummy! Or a Tale of the Twenty-Second Century*[*], an early work combining science fiction and horror, written by Jane C. Loudon and published anonymously in 1827.

[* This novel is available at RLG
https://freeread.com.au/@RGLibrary/Jane Webb/Novels/TheMummy.html
https://freeread.com.au/@RGLibrary/Jane Webb/Novels/TheMummy.epub]

Louisa May Alcott was thought by Dominic Montserrat to have been the first to use a fully-formed "mummy curse" plot in her 1869 story *Lost in a Pyramid*, or *The Mummy's Curse*, a hitherto forgotten piece of mummy fiction that he rediscovered in the late 1990s. However, two stories subsequently discovered by S. J. Wolfe, Robert Singerman and Jasmine Day—*The Mummys Soul* (Anonymous, 1862) and *After Three Thousand Years* (Jane G. Austin, 1868)—have similar plots, in which a female mummy takes magical revenge upon her male desecrator. Jasmine Day, therefore, argues that the modern European concept of curses is based upon an analogy between desecration of tombs and rape, interpreting early curse fiction as proto-feminist narratives authored by women. The Anonymous and Austin stories predate Alcott's piece, raising the possibility that even earlier "lost" mummy curse prototype fiction awaits rediscovery.

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The Knickerbocker, Vol. LIX, 1862, with "The Mummy's Soul"

THE MUMMY'S SOUL.

IT was high noon, and fresh, luxuriant life without, and the darkness of mid-night and the dead within this Egyptian tomb, hollowed out of the heart of the Libyan chain of mountains. Two hundred feet above me, massive ruins, half-buried beneath the yellow, glittering sands of the desert, were revealed as the skeleton of a city of gigantic wonders. Now, Thebes was not so desolate. The sculptured faces of colossi gazed with stern, tearless eyes over the waste, as if in mockery of the frailty of contemporary creations. Around me were mummies, sculptures, and rough paintings on the walls. Life and death here touched each other, and were identified by the reality of mutual existence. A humanity of forgotten ages, by its ashes, preached sermons of profoundest truths in stupendous charnel-houses. Yet I asked myself, in a spirit of unbelief of such truths, if the oracles of Egyptian mythology spoke falsely, when they asserted, that the soul, after three thousand years of pilgrimage to other shrines, would reinvest the bodies of the dead with new life?

A startled bat flew in and out of an empty tomb; and an angry scorpion clicked his armor-plates, as he crept along the ledge of one of the crypts above me. A faint puff of air from the passage filled my nostrils with the sickening effluvia of mummies, and scattered the dust from the carvings of the pillar. I was in a casket of Death, and the jewels were mummies. Dead for centuries, yet alive in every thing but life; lacking only a breath of that life to cast off the swathing-cloths, and confront me! The thought of seeing them step from the tomb, in the hideousness of such a resurrection, made me shudder.

Yet, if their doctrine of a renewal of life after thirty centuries, were to prove true, there might at any moment be a resurrection, and a consequent paroxysm of terror on my part. What if I should be attacked, as I threaded intricate passages in this birth-place of antique horrors, by mobs of these resurrected Egyptians, infuriated by the sacrilege of my presence?

The mere idea of encountering their shrivelled forms in deadly struggle, and wrestling for victory with entwined limbs, while their crisp hair, odorous of the crypt, brushed my face; all these foolish promptings of an imagination, excited by my strange surroundings, together with a shuffling noise in a distant passage, caused me to drop my torch, and rush to the entrance of the tomb, where I stood quivering with fright, not knowing which way to turn. Fortunately, Ferraj, my guide, was the comer; else, in the darkness and sickening solitude, I should have become mad.

The tomb in which I stood had been discovered the previous day. It consisted of one large chamber with heavy arches, a massive pillar in the centre, and with three tiers of niches on each side; the fronts being ornamented with outline paintings of a brilliant red color. The

ponderous carvings of the pillar were merely heavy lines of sculpture, with no delicacy of outline, no airy gracefulness to mar the effectiveness of their stupendous symmetry. Every curve and straight line on pillar and tablet was harsh, rigid, and even cruel in its expression of power. The rough granite had been carved, in many cases, into crude and intricate delineations of human pageantry, by the ready skill of the patient artist. Yet, the hands that had cut and painted, day after day, in the service of cunning priest or mourning relative, had dropped the chisel and the brush thousands of years before, leaving outlines of works to be memorials of undeveloped grandeur.

Many of the niches in the tiers had been despoiled of their contents. One only remained untouched; upon its tablet was painted, in rich colors, a lotus-flower, broken at the blossom. There was no inscription upon the tomb to designate its occupant; no legendary engraving of his or her life's events. The cement around the edges of the tablet was as hard as the rock in which the tomb was cut. A half-hour's labor with a crow-bar had but meagre result; so I placed a quantity of powder under the lower edge of the stone, where a small cavity had been made with the bar. There was a hissing noise as the fire ran up the fuse, followed by a dull sound of explosion, that was immediately hushed and smothered by the dead silence of the passages without. The slab with its painting fell to the ground, and was shattered.

Within the niche thus opened was a mummy-case, containing a mummy, bandaged from head to foot in fine linen, and lying upon a bed of crumbling flowers. I reproached myself, in a sorrowful, musing mood, for such a sacrilege, when I found it was the body of a woman. But a sickening, musty odor from the corpse spread its subtle essences throughout the chamber, and stealing to the brain intoxicated it. I seemed to see, in this momentary inebriation of the senses, the body of this mummy snap its cerements, and slowly recede through the rocky walls, which closed not after it; while it floated, in plain sight, down a passage, in the mountain, bordered by rows of tombs, one above another. And out of these graves of stone stretched bandaged arms of tawny-skinned mummies, whose fingers vainly clutched at the phantom, as, motionless in features and limbs, it glided down the terrible aisle, and was lost in the gloom.

The agony of the vision was over. My forehead was covered with a cold perspiration, and my eyes ached with the fierce heat that had created the appalling vision; while white flames of light seemed, now and then, to mingle with the darkness of the corridor.

I looked behind me. Ferraj sat cowering upon the ground, with his hands covering his face.

"Ferraj!"

"Howadji! Brave Sidi! did you not see the body move and motion with its hands? Did it move away into the darkness?" he cried, seizing my hand.

"Of course not, you foolish fellow. Is it not there in the case? It is impossible for the dead to come to life."

I laughed feebly to put him in good spirits; but he was not at all reassured, and I noticed that, while we remained in the tomb, he stood at a distance from the mummy, holding his torch like a sword, as if to parry a blow from unseen hands.

In profound awe, and with a delicate touch, I unwrapped the face of the body. A woman's features, black and shrivelled, were revealed. I was startled—even sickened—at the hideous revelation. For an instant I had forgotten my situation, and its surroundings, and remembered only an occasion when I turned back the coffin-lid, and gazed for the last time upon the face of my dead sister. I thought, in my reverie over this mummy, of a lovely face, and fair features, like marble. Imagination had never conjured up so shocking a vision. But my zeal as an antiquary suppressed delicate dreams and disagreeable realities. This woman might have been handsome in the era in which she existed; she was, perhaps, considered as the possessor of great beauty. She was very short, slight, with a low forehead; the cheek-bones were high, but not prominent, and the nose delicate and small; the eyes, the windows to a woman's soul, were closed in a sleep of centuries. Her hair was black, curled, and somewhat faded. Her mouth was small, exquisitely formed, and the lips were devoid of any heaviness of curve to mark the tincture of Ethiopian blood. But the dark, parchment-like skin, wrinkled and rough, made me loathe the corpse, and to wonder at the love that thus burned out beauty, by slow consuming fires of subtle chemistry; and laid away the shell of the soul, that it might once more be reinvigorated with a life that in its wanderings had animated beast, bird, or insect, and acquired strength at each succeeding transmigration. As I unwrapped the long bandages from the breast, a strong gust of wind rushed from the desert into the dim crypts of the mountains. It flared the expiring torches, scattered dust from pillar and niche, and caused the mummy to crumble into a nauseous powder, that half-choked me with its subtle essence of humanity. From a mass of beads and shreds of cloth, I picked out a stone *scarabaeus*, on whose back were graven many minute hieroglyphics. I succeeded in translating the following: *"Three thousand years hence, a new life."* So the prophecy had been refuted, and dust returned to dust, I said to myself. But the doubt whether the resurrection predicted would not reform this dust into a re-created body, intruded itself, and strengthened the imagination, which hoped it would be so.

In the crypt, at the head of the body, I found a tiny vase of green translucent stone, of antique form, embellished with exquisitely carved devices. From either side sprang a serpent, which extended upward with light, graceful curves, until with its hideous fangs it indented the delicate rim of the vase. It was so fragile that it seemed as if a touch from the most careful fingers would crush it to atoms. I accidentally inverted it, and there fell upon the floor a quantity of light, fine ashes, and an insect of enormous size. It lay upon the ground, at my feet, with outstretched wings. Ferraj stooped down, and taking it in his hand, gazed upon it for a minute, his lips quivering, and his hand trembling so much that his torch almost fell to the ground.

"*Efrit! Efrit!* a foul devil!" he shouted, and cast the thing from him into the remains of the mummy. Picking it up, I examined it carefully, but with an indescribable loathing, that seized me whenever I saw the vile thing.

It was a fly, six inches long, with a head the size and shape of a pea; and appeared like a globule of liquid silver. Its small white eyes sparkled with the brilliancy of a diamond, and projected slightly from the head. The body was elastic, and of a bright golden color, encircled at regular distances with bands of green. Its long, delicate, many-jointed legs were adorned with a fine yellow hair. Its wings were broad sheets of beauty—traceries of golden lines, shadows of deep blackness—gorgeously embellished, where veins of silver hue tinged the edges, with a net-work of marvellous loveliness. These labyrinths of delicate colors so merged into one another that the eye wearied in striving to find where one hue ended and another commenced. The brilliancy of color had not been dimmed by the death of the insect, but was revealed in all its glory. From the sharp-pointed tips of these wonderful wings hung tiny tassels of finest hair, filled with the dust in which it had been buried. Notwithstanding its diversity of colors, and wondrous construction, it was hideously deformed; for springing out of the very centre of the front of its head, lay coiled a fine elastic antenna of blood-red color. Upon seeing it, my admiration changed to disgust. A shudder of terror ran over me when, with a sharp click, the extended antenna slipped from my fingers, and struck the head. Ferraj had stood apart from me during this examination; but when he saw my movement, and heard the sharp sound as the coil flew back, he uttered a low moan.

The remarkable elasticity of the insect convinced me that it had been embalmed in the vase in a fluid, long before evaporated. The ashes might or might not have formed a part of an embalming mixture. Every thing about the insect was flexible and moist, as if life had just gone out. But I could not conjecture its use when alive, or what it symbolized when dead.

The insect fascinated me, not simply by its gorgeous variety of colors, not by any hitherto unknown peculiarity of structure, nor by the brilliant appearance of its dimmed eyes, but as a whole; even the loathsome helmet upon its head, was an essential in the fascination. I hated myself for yielding to the feeling that in after-days grew into an intense passion, and a pride in the possession of so wonderful a creation.

I gathered one or two handfuls of the mummy's dust, and put them, with the fly, into the vase, and left the tomb, dispirited—overcome by the sensations experienced, and the discoveries I had made. I had not the heart to farther prosecute my investigation among the tombs, and almost immediately departed for America.

I often exhibited my mementoes to friends; the ladies, acknowledging the wondrous magnificence of the insect, almost invariably declared it to be the most treacherous thing they had ever seen, and inveighed most bitterly against a judgment that selected such abortions, as mementoes of my sojourn in Egypt.

But my wife—my young and beautiful good angel—became terribly fascinated with this insect. I did not discover this slavery of her mind, until after many months; even then, by becoming suddenly cognizant of having found it in her hands upon many occasions, it occurred to me that she might be enthralled by this creature. When I accused her of it, she burst into tears, and acknowledged the truth of my accusation; saying, in a piteous, apologetic strain, "that the fascination of the pretty thing was so irresistible, and at the same time reminded her so strongly of my long absence in foreign countries, that she could not avoid dwelling in thought upon the strange scenery and discoveries that had kept me from her, and of contemplating the only memento of such an absence." Then, for the first time, I told her of the occurrences in the tomb. When I had concluded, she clasped her pretty little hands, and said: "Fred, this insect attracts me as it attracts you; only that with my submission to its thraldom is allied a premonition, that it will work me a fearful injury. I have repelled the idea again and again, but it always returns. I strive to be philosophical, and treat it as a frenzy, but there is no relief."

Thereafter, in company, we used to pass hours in contemplating the antipathetic features of this fly, and in conjecturing what part it acted in the economy of nature, when it winged the air among people whose existence was almost forgotten. These examinations intoxicated our imaginations, by the antiquity and mystery surrounding the object of our investigation. We clung more to each other by reason of our servility to this incomprehensible influence of the fly. We were not unhappy, but simply uneasy; never striving, after a couple of months, to throw off our bondage.

If this were the termination of the history, I would weep for joy. But it is at this particular point of time that the insect, hitherto quiet, plays its active part in a tragedy to which there is no parallel.

One evening, in making an experiment, I had occasion to use a mixture of ammonia and ether, and had prepared it in a saucer, when I was suddenly called from the house, leaving the compound upon the table, in the dish. When I returned, late in the evening, I ascertained that a servant had emptied the contents of the saucer into a vase. It never occurred to me to ask what vase she meant; as there were several in the room, it surely was in one of them, and I gave no thought to the matter. The bed-room opened into the study; the two rooms were separated by a partition of lath and plaster, and the door at night always stood open.

About half-past twelve o'clock, my sleep was broken in a quiet, unaccountable way, that is often the precursor of danger. Every faculty was fresh and keen, and unusually active. Listening, my ear suddenly caught a faint sound of music, whose delicate strains floated softly toward me from a corner of the bed-room; then, with the rapidity of lightning, there burst upon me a delicious, maddening flow of measure after measure of passionate symphonies. They flowed in from the study, and beat the stagnant air to-and-fro, until every particle became a bell that tinkled sweetest melody. This music was so sweet, yet so fierce; so gentle in its cadences, yet so vigorous in its utterances; so peaceful, yet so thrilling, that the room trembled with the reverberations. A delicious langor possessed me. There was a profound silence for a minute. Then, just above my face, there was another outbreak of this wild melody; these chiming echoes.

My wife moaned, and in her restlessness, her hand fell upon my face.

My thoughts had been so absolutely controlled by the weird, soulless music, that the touch frightened me; it was as if a hand had been put forth from the thick darkness, and laid upon my forehead. But the alarm, soon repulsed by calm reason, was succeeded by another shock, less sharp and sudden, but more lasting, and full of subtle terrors and keen agony. The hand of my wife was dry, feverish and shrunken, as if a quick, consuming fever had burned out its freshness, and left beneath the parchment-like skin, the hot ashes of its previous beauty.

She moaned feebly, when I passionately called her name. I pressed my lips to her face; it was as terrible as her hand. Alarmed at her incomprehensible silence, and at the swift, silent change manifest to my touch, I lighted the candle.

She was lying upon her side, looking at me with eyes so senseless in expression, so devoid of life or brilliancy in their idiotic fixedness,

that the unexpected, terrible transformation, more grievous because of its hopelessness, touched my heart like the keen edge of a knife. I wept.

As I moaned and cried in my hopeless agony, her rough, hot hand once more rested upon my face, as if to express, feebly though it were, her sympathy for my affliction; though she could not appreciate the bitterness of my agony, she comprehended, dreamily without doubt, that a sorrow had fallen upon me.

With a cry of joy at this manifestation of her intense love, I clasped her in my arms; but the hope that had suddenly sprung up in my heart was cruelly crushed to death, for she lay in my arms a passive, undemonstrative being, with swift pulsations of the hot blood that scorched the delicate skin, until it was like fine parchment.

But while I was suffering most intensely, while my brain grew delirious under this desolation of my love—this mysterious, maddening affliction—I heard, with inexpressible fear, the wild, varying music. My wife trembled violently when she heard the clear ringing notes. Every second was affecting her appearance, developing a woman whose features were shrivelled and brown; the eyes, once animated by holiest love, were cold, passionless, and fixed in a soulless gaze. She lost all volition, and sunk into a dreadful apathy. *In every thing but form and face, she resembled the mummy in the tomb*. Hitherto my mind had been paralysed by terror and grief. Now it was recovering from its shock. I implored my wife to tell me the cause of her illness, to speak to me; and I put my ear close to her lips, to catch the faintest whisper. But the musical hum in the study was the only sound I heard. Frantic with the thought that my delay might hasten her death, I summoned a physician, who, after much delay, dare not prescribe. Another one was sent for; he had never heard or read of so strange a case. He prescribed brandy to stimulate the blood, which was fast becoming sluggish, and said that he could do no more.

It was after he had gone that, in bending over my wife, I saw several small spots of blood upon the pillow. Back of her left ear was found a spot where the skin was a little broken, as if by the prick of a pin, and from which blood slowly oozed. I was still stooping over her, and the servants were chafing her hands and feet, and giving the stimulant, when suddenly the mysterious music thrilled the air. My wife shuddered at the sound, and the women rested from their labor, to gaze upon each other in wonderment and alarm.

Taking a light from the stand, I passed into the study, closing the door after me. I had not removed my hand from the knob, when, with a whizzing noise, a large object, hot as a coal of fire, struck my face; and being beaten off, rose and fluttered hither and thither

against the high ceiling. In amazement I recognized this assailant, this musician, this exuder of sweet sounds. It was the Insect. Its body, like glistening gold and flashing emerald, was distended to its full proportions; its great tasselled wings beat the air, until it frothed into unearthly music; its eyes, sparkling like diamonds, seemed the prisons of a thousand tiny fires, burning with a steady flame; its antenna was outstretched, and felt nervously along the white ceiling, leaving small red dots as indices of its touch. The loathsome thing flew from point to point as I pursued. It easily eluded the missiles I cast at it, and suddenly disappeared through the ventilator.

I picked up from the table the little green vase, in which the resurrected insect had been kept, and found that it was nearly full of the mixture I had left in the saucer. By the agency of these liquids vigorous life had been created in the body of the embalmed insect. That I did not comprehend the principle of this resurrection, through the instrumentality of such subtle materials, was not my fault. The insect was alive, and its place in the vase filled by fluids in which it must have been immersed—I accepted the facts as they were presented.

And the insect lived on human blood! As my eye glanced along the ceiling, the red dots thereon were a revelation of the cause of my wife's suffering; and were proofs of the injection into her veins of a subtle poison, to dry up her blood and parch the fair skin. The full extent of my sorrow, past and future, passed before my straining eyes, like a terrible vision; it shook me as the wind beats a blade of dried grass. I returned to the bed-side of my wife, as a man blasted by the bitterest sorrow, and sharpest agony of the soul. Eternal misery chained me, like a felon, to ghastly horrors; while Imagination decked my future with gloomy robes, and bid me hope only for death, as life would be full of vivid phantasms to blight the most joyous moments.

To love a woman as passionately as I loved my wife, and hold her in one's arms as the last great change of life gradually develops; to feel the beatings of the heart diminish, to see the gasps for breath, to look into the eyes soon to close forever, and read in them the love they look back into yours, are the saddest of duties to the dying. But how terrible the anguish, when the eyes are fixed in an idiotic stare, their light forever extinguished, and the loved one, unconscious of your maddening grief, your piteous, unavailing love, is released by Death from her unhappy life! My wife changed but little in appearance after that memorable night. Her body became emaciated; the skin became black, and hot to the touch; the eyes were half-closed, and their light hidden. She would lie in my arms, at the window, for hours; and, with her cheek pressed closely to my breast, just over my aching heart, would imitate the sweet sounds that had been made by the insect's wings. She never spoke; nor did she evince the

slightest consciousness of my presence. Oftentimes she fiercely pressed her hands upon her head, as if it suffered intolerable pain. In my lamentable helplessness, I could do nothing but support her in my arms, and calmly endure the awful agony of the sight.

Since the night of its disappearance, I had not heard the insect. I cared not whither it had flown, so that it left me in peace. But one afternoon, when the rain was falling in broad sheets, while sitting as usual at the window, my wife lying in my arms, the hated music sounded, faint and low, in the partition separating the study from the bed-room. The strains aroused my wife from her apathy. She raised herself up, repeated them in all their variations, and as she ended, she quickly turned her face toward me, and threw her arms around my neck. There followed a sudden, convulsive gasping for breath, and a short, feeble moan. The arms unclasped, and my wife was dead.

* * * * *

My wife was buried, and I was a monomaniac. My only thought, the only thing for which I cared to live, was, in what manner I might seize and destroy the insect—the cause of all my sorrow. I tore down a large part of the partition, in which it was last heard, but was unsuccessful in my search. I was in despair. I sat for hours at the breach I had made in the wall, listening intently for the slightest sound; but none was heard, and I had come to believe that the insect had crept through some crevice into the chimney, and flown away.

The wall had not been repaired when, one night, in a pleasant stupor, I heard sweet music close to my ear, and felt cool air, and then a sharp stinging pain, lasting only for a second. The low, plaintive music soothed my brain. A delicious languor possessed me. For an instant the sublime solitude of the grave, with musical silence awed my soul. Then, with a noise like the distant cries of a vast army, there rushed upon me a scorching wind and monstrous phantasms.

I lay upon the sand before the front of the grand temple of Abou Simbal, with its three colossal statues hewn out of the mountain, sitting in a majestic agony of silence, watching the Nile, with their staring eyes of stone, as they have watched it for three thousand years. The desert laves them with its billows of sand, half-submerging their huge limbs in its yellow flow, half-revealing their stupendousness, while it contrasts the solemn grey of the rocks and statues with the gleaming of the swift river. I hear voices sounding in the inner temple, where sit the gods in gloomy darkness, where sacrifices were made and agonies endured. As I listen, the magnificent temple dissolves in the soft twilight, and the sublime idea of Sesostris shadows my soul like a cloud.

Palm-trees and shattered columns! Philae and Isis and Osiris! Mecca of a people of stupendous wonders! Island of beautiful ruins and lovely desolation! The great black rocks inclosing it smoothed their jagged edges, and the moon-light trembled in its avenues, and lingered in the courts of its temples, as the darkness in which I wandered over a great desert plain, was parted by the heavenly vision. One glimpse of its magnificent beauty, and the gloomy blackness gathered and swung to-and-fro—the proscenium to a revelation of exquisite loveliness.

Once again, as in by-gone days, I wandered among the majestic ruins of Karnac. Masses of rock carved into graceful shapes stopped my way. Architraves of noble temples, fragments of fallen columns, made me sigh at their downfall. I walked down the avenue of sphinxes, amid mutilated colossi and rudely-sculptured columns, half-buried in the glittering sands of the desert. I lingered in the great halls of temples of stupendous size, where light and darkness struggled for superiority; and the imagination shrunk to nothingness, as it essayed to compass the magnificence of dead Thebes, whose gigantic skeleton lay unburied upon the desert. I was lost in the forest of columns of the grand hall at Karnac, and shivered with supernatural terror beside the granite statues at the entrance to the temple at El Uksorein. I hungered and thirsted in my journeys among these shreds of ancient grandeur, and my soul asked for relief, for terror itself had become colossal. And amid this rubbish of dead cities, oppressed by the very magnitude of desolation, my soul cried for relief. But the hot sun poured down its hottest rays, the monstrous obelisks hid me from the cool, refreshing wind, and vast walls threatened to crush me under their broad surfaces of hieroglyphics. In my agony, I dug a shallow grave in the sand, and hid myself therein, and let the sun pierce it with its rays, and sloughing stone to descend upon it—but I slept.

Suddenly, in my fitful slumber, surrounded by these well-remembered scenes, there shivered the air, shrilly and clearly, a sound that thrilled every nerve in my body, and echoed in my brain, until the air seemed a tumult of piercing chords, that racked the sensitive nerves, and pealed upon the fastidious ear until it was deafened. Vibration after vibration of sound overwhelmed me with its powerful utterances. I rise from my grave and listen for their source. The faint glow of the rising sun steals down the rough sides of the Libyan mountains, and the lordly river sweeps past on its unending journey. Once, twice, thrice, sounds the shrill note; and the fabled Memnon, as gigantic as if it still sat upon its carved throne, upon the western plain of ruined Thebes, strides toward me, falls upon and mangles me. I am stung by thousands of quick, sharp pains; my body burns with their fires. The music grows fainter and is still.

Thick darkness overwhelms me, and I unavailingly buffet its noiseless waves.

* * * * *

The memory of the disease that tortured my mind and body during the month succeeding my visions, is rendered prominent by an illusion as painful as it was enduring. I believed that my wife, swathed in linen, aromatic of rich gums and spices, that poisoned the air with their heavy fragrance, sat at my bed-side in all the hideous blackness of her transformation; that she clasped my hand in hers, and gazed into my aching eyes with the blank idiotic stare which had characterized the final stage of her disease.

I did not doubt the reality of the vision; nor would my mind be disabused of its belief by cunning stratagems of kindly-disposed physicians. The close communion of souls, existing between living beings, was thus continued when one of them was dead. The agony of this companionship was, at first, exceedingly acute. My delirium added nothing to the happiness of this intercourse, and detracted nothing from its terrors. I was continually reminded of the mummy and the insect, and all the incidents connected with their discovery.

Day and night saw no change in the position of my wife, sitting silently at my bed-side. My head weighed me down, as if it were a mountain—a quiet Vesuvius of dormant horrors. My slumbers were infrequent, short and unquiet, full of visions of monstrosities in repose.

A month passed replete with these torments, and I fell into a deep sleep that continued for fifty hours. When I awoke, my consciousness of external things, much enfeebled to be sure, had returned. But the vigor of the mind was forever gone. I could think but slowly, and my conclusions were very imperfect. A lagging, slow-consuming fever, flowed in my veins, and my limbs had been shorn of their strength, and their quickness of movement was lost.

The condition in which I had been found by the servant, and the fatal drops of blood from the wound behind the ear, surely indicated the cause of my suffering, as identical with the cause that had killed my wife. If my many hopes had been blighted, my ambitions crushed, my heavy sorrows made still more heavy, and the swift running current of my life turned backward by the mysterious agency of this terrible insect, there yet flourished and thrived by their extinction a bitter hatred of the cause. Although my brain was dulled in its acuteness of perception, and my body was parched with a fierce unnatural heat that burned the skin into large wrinkles, and scorched the fair complexion to a tawny hue, yet I hoped and planned and lived only to destroy the insect, whose music I could

now and then hear in the wall, and from which place of concealment the fiendish thing seldom ventured.

One day, in an unusually dejected mood, I entered my study, closed the door and sat down. In an instant, I heard the music of the insect, above my head; and looking up, saw it clinging to the chandelier, near the ceiling. A sense of ineffable happiness possessed me for several minutes. I thought of all I had suffered since I found the fly in the Egyptian tomb. The minute details of this life of strange catastrophes, culminating in my own sickness, were quickly reviewed. I watched the insect as it clung to the iron pipe of the chandelier, and fluttered its great wings; they fanned delirious music into existence, but I was not charmed; its eyes glistened in all their brilliancy, but I was not fascinated. Suddenly the long legs of the creature loosened their clasp, and it dropped like lead almost upon my upturned face; but before I could strike, it had risen to the ceiling.

It was not an unequal contest that followed this attack. The insect, eluding with ease my furious blows, struck me many times in the face with its antenna, but without penetrating the skin. I struck at it with books, with sticks, and with my fist, as it circled around or above me and fanned my face with its musical wings. Its eyes, with the cold brilliancy of a diamond, were ever on the watch; and at the slightest motion I made, the insect would rise or fall in its circlings. When at last, panting, disheartened at my failure to wound or kill it, I was about to yield in despair; the insect, likewise fatigued, settled down upon the top of my book-case. The sight revived me, and I seized the nearest missile; it was the vase in which I had found the insect. My enemy was rising when I threw the vase. There was a sound like the shattering of glass; the wall was splashed with blood and the mixture in the vase; there fell upon the floor, with the pieces, the stone *scarabaeus*, and the insect. With an exclamation of joy, I picked up these, and went into the bed-room, where a fire was burning in the grate.

So strongly did I loathe the insect which, bruised, and bleeding my blood, wound his trembling antenna around my fingers, and thrust against them with its strong legs, that without a moment's hesitation, I cast it into the flames.

I heard a wail, like the cry of a woman in agony, and the study-door closed with a loud noise, as the insect was speedily consumed by the fire. With its death expired the flames. A sudden fear of something terrible about to be seen, or to happen, made me shudder. I looked at the graven stone in my hand, and at nothing else. I read, as of yore: "Three thousand years hence, a new life." A year or more had passed since I had thought of the prophecy that now flashed upon me at a time of all others to be avoided; for the reminiscences of the Egyptian tomb ought to have perished with the in-

sect in the purifying fire. The unnatural strength that had sustained me through the conflict with my enemy, had gone, and left me weakened by exertion and excitement. My limbs shook, my head throbbed with acute pain, and my tongue was parched. I arose to leave a room whose atmosphere was pregnant with terrors that I breathed, and whose every nook and corner, the breached partition, and the dead ashes in the grate, too strongly reminded me of scenes and incidents I wished to have forgotten.

O my God! In a chair behind me sat the mummy of the tomb, alive, watching me with its small cunning eyes, as it tried to free one of its hands from the decaying cerements. It was the mummy I had found, not the one that crumbled into dust before the breath of a pure desert wind. It motioned me with its disengaged hand back to my seat, and strove to stand and oppose my passage, as with a cry of horror I rushed from the room. The cool air and the passing crowds on the street, soon restored me to a calmer mind; and ashamed of my terror, I returned to the bed-room that I might prove the falsity of my illusion. I opened the door and looked in. The mummy had drawn its chair close to the grate, and was gathering from it white ashes—the remains of the burned insect. The old terror, that ever bided in my soul, crept into my reasonings, and confounded my judgment. With a despairing cry, I frantically locked the door, and fled from the house to wander up and down the streets, until long after mid-night.

She is still in my bed-room, and I am trying to starve her to death. I can not sell the house. One or two particular friends, who wished to purchase, when I told them of the occupant of the study, and, to prove the truth of my assertions, bade them look through the key-hole, looked upon me with white, terror-stricken faces, and fled from the house. The consequence of such a revelation to a stranger would be worse, and cause rumors to be circulated prejudicial to my reputation. So I have concluded that the only manner to rid myself of this living incubus is to kill her by starvation. I have no pity, no heart. The possession of so terrible a creature is worse than murder deliberately committed.

I have boarded up all the windows, and discharged the servants, living alone with my burden.

Having partly overcome my fear, I have occupied a room next the study; and in the quiet of the night, I can hear the woman moving about the room in a slow movement; now and then she sings such strange, unnatural tunes, that in my fear I am compelled to leave the house for several hours.

It seems as if she would never die, for it is nine days since she made her appearance. The other day, when in the parlor listening to an unusual, grating sound in the study, such as I had not before

heard there, some plastering fell from the wall separating the rooms, upon the floor. The Form, the Death in Life, was endeavoring to *break through!* I promptly collected building materials, and made the wall three feet thick. I worked night and day—I secured it.

Those are her *dying* groans. But whither—oh! whither! out into what new life goes that undying Egyptian soul? And *I?* Shall I be linked through eternity by a terrible destiny of unknown mystery, whirling through what Hermes Trismegistus of Thebes calls "the downward-borne elements of God?"[*]

And I too am dying. But a few hours she and I will again know in clearness and in truth the meaning of the words which Sothus wrote on the painted stone in the valley of Memphis, "wherein appeared, in but few letters, all the lore of life, and of the soul, and of after-days, and of the eternal flood."

Free! My will still moves the dead hand which pens these lines, but I hover afar over it like a star. Out into Eternity!

[* Hermes, *Poemander*, lib. I.]

THE END

The Old Tower of Frankenstein

As published in a Gothic bluebook, London, c1810

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

THIS anonymous, rather slipshod translation of a German short story of, as yet, unknown provenance was published ca. 1810 in England in a Gothic bluebook.

It has been suggested that it was one of the influences that inspired Mary Shelley to write *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818). The anthologist Peter Haining (1940-2007) and other experts on Gothic literature have asserted that it was included in a French collection of German ghost stories "Fantas-

magoriana" (1812), which Lord Byron, Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, John William Polidori and Claire Clairmont read at the Villa Diodati in Cologny, Switzerland, during June 1816. This assertion seems to be without foundation, for none of the eight stories in the anthology bears a title even faintly resembling "The Old Tower of Frankenstein." (See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasmagoriana#Stories).

There is, however, another possibility.

According to an entry in Wikipedia*, Gothic bluebooks were read by writers like Percy Shelley, Robert Southey, and Sheridan Le Fanu in their youth. One of Percy Shelley's childhood friends, Thomas Medwin, said of Shelley,

> "He was very fond of reading, and greedily devoured all the books which were brought to school after the holidays; these were mostly blue books. Who does not know what blue books mean? But if there should be any one ignorant enough not to know what those dear darling volumes, so designated from their covers, contain, be it known, that they are or were to be bought for sixpence, and embodied stories of haunted castles, bandits, murderers, and other grim personages—a most exciting and interesting sort of food for boys' minds."
>
> * https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_bluebooks

Is it possible that Percy Shelley (or even Mary herself) read the bluebook with "The Old Tower of Frankenstein" and that it was the source for the name for the protagonist of her novel? We shall never know, but it is an interesting thought.

At any rate, one passage in the story suggests that there *is* a link between it and the novel—a reference to the destruction by Baron Frankenstein of a monster who had killed his wife and child:

> "...the maiden thinks on the story of the spirit of the woman and her child once sacrificed to the monster and said to haunt the tower though the creature lay slain by the Baron Frankenstein these many years..."

—Roy Glashan, 13 April 2024.

THE OLD TOWER OF FRANKENSTEIN

TWO lovers, a youth and a maiden, once lived on the banks of the Rhine, where it winds between lofty rocks, and is overhung with gloomy forests. The passage-barques go furiously with the stream of the river in this part, and the helmsman used to return thanks when he saw behind him the old Tower of Frankenstein. From this ruin, standing upright and alone, like a pine tree, the owl still sent a long and loud cry, when the shadow of night fell heavily from the lofty bank over the boiling current of the profound water.

In the shadow of this edifice did the couple now stand, hand in hand, when the young man softly spoke:

"Once only do I desire to have thee to myself, without fear of spies, that I may be free to the delight which thy presence brings, did not the eyes of jealous suspicion watch me."

The maiden listened to his pleading breath, and tears filled her light blue eyes; but she spoke not in reply, for her heart beat so fast it held speechless her tongue.

Then at a sound from above, the youth spoke again:

"But look up! Behold the single tower of Frankenstein; hear how the owl brings forth his loud and lonely cry, and the shadow of the tower is cast across the deep water. Say, dearest, dost thou love me? Then let us haste to that tower for when the owl cries, at the safe midnight hour, it will be free to only us."

At these words, the maiden trembled and she came closer to the side of her lover. At last she spoke:

"I dare not meet you at the castle ruins for that foul bird chills my bones with thoughts of the dread curse that hangs o'er it."

And glancing up again, the maiden thinks on the story of the spirit of the woman and her child once sacrificed to the monster and said to haunt the tower though the creature lay slain by the Baron Frankenstein these many years. A chill grips her gentle frame and pale is her cheek.

But the youth, his blood now in passion risen, will not be stilled. Even should the spirits be there, he boldly charges, maybe if they go they can release the unhappy souls as some stories say. He vows that they must meet in the shade of the tower the very next night and pleads anew with his dear love. For a while she is still, then a tremble shakes her body, but she stoutly replies, "I will, love."

ANOTHER day has passed and the moon once more ascended. The breeze came chill and with a swelling noise from the forest, and the hills behind; the voice of the river rose and a melancholy shade fell over the old ruins.

But now what form is that which ascends the rocky pathway towards the grey ruin? It is the maiden that climbs amongst the waving bushes in the steep and narrow track. Her white dress flutters in the air—her steps slide—she pauses as if she would return. Midnight is near—she advances again; and now she is lost in the dark shade of the old ruined tower.

But the dauntless chevalier has met his beloved one, and tears of joy and gratitude run down his flushed cheeks; his arms entwine her waist—they are in the courtyard of the tower—their eyes are full of love. They are seated on the soft moss that springs from the ancient stones. High beats the heart of the youth, for here suspicion does not watch; but the maiden trembles—her hands are cold—she is weak and timid, and mutters as a sick child—a clammy horror creeps over her senses, as she regards the blackness of a low doorway full before her face. It once led to the pit of tears, the deep dungeon of the ancient tower.

In vain rushes through the ruin the power of the storm; in vain howl the gusts of the uprisen tempest through the desolate place.

The angel of female shame is about to fly—when, lo! a burst of rain and thunder—the heavy bird gives a last cry, and strikes, with flapping wing, affrighted from his dark roost. A dead silence prevails, and from the church steeple is heard the midnight hammer of the old bell.

What rises from the black mouth of the fearful dungeon? The eyes of the lovers are fixed as by a supernatural power. Is it fog? Is it cloud? Is it a human shape? A spectral woman comes forth; she advances towards the maiden and the youth; an infant lies at her bosom, half covered by a stained shroud.

Then did the doleful vision speak:

"Now is the doom accomplished, now is the curse lifted," uttered the pale lips of the spectral woman. "The decree is fulfilled, for by your attendance here two souls are this night rescued from the curse under which they were flung those long years ago."

She ceased. The maiden sunk low her head—the lover regarded her with a look of troubled affection. Slowly she raised the shroud-wrapped child. Mercy, mercy! was chanted in the air above: sweet sounds of harps were heard, and all had vanished in a flood of morning splendour.

Soon all had disappeared, and in a calm and lovely morning, with the sun shedding brilliancy upon the waters of the noble Rhine, the guiltless lovers descended from the old castle of Frankenstein.

THE END

THE SERGEANT'S GHOST STORY

First published in *All the Year Round*, London, January 1873

EVERYBODY, or nearly everybody, young or old, loves a ghost story. It is not necessary to believe in its truth to derive enjoyment from it. The more inexplicable it appears to our ordinary reason, the greater the charm that it exercises. Incredulity itself is pleased by a flight into the regions of the wonderful and the supernatural, as is evident from the satisfaction derived by people of all ages and nations from fairy tales, which nobody accepts for truth. But the fairy tale only appeals to the imagination. The ghost story goes deeper into the mysterious fountains of human nature, and touches on the confines of the great undiscovered land of spirits, whose secrets are not to be divulged on this side of the grave. Hence its charm and fascination, and hence everybody who reads or hears a ghost story, experiences a satis-

faction, either in believing in it implicitly, or in explaining it away by natural causes.

A few years ago I travelled in a British colony in America. The governor was absent in England on his holiday visit, and the duties of his office were temporarily performed by the chief justice, aided by the prime minister, or secretary of state. I was a frequent guest at Government House, and there became acquainted with an old soldier, one Sergeant Monaghan, who performed the part of orderly or messenger, and sometimes waited at table when the governor had company. The manners of a colony are free and easy, and learning that the old soldier was a thorough believer in ghosts, and had one ghost story which he was fond of telling, I invited him to my room, treated him to a cigar and a glass of grog, gave him a seat by the blazing wood fire, and prevailed upon him to evolve the story once again out of the coils of his memory. I repeat it, as nearly as I can, in his own words.

"You see," said Sergeant Monaghan, "Tim O'Loghlin was a delicate and wake sort of a boy. He had had a love affair in Ireland that weighed on his mind. He was a kind of cousin of mine, and served in my regiment as a private. Perhaps he would have risen to be a sergeant if he had lived, but, as I said, he was not strong. You may have noticed that from the gate of Government House, where the sentry-box stands, you can see into the burial-ground on the opposite side of the road. Not a cheerful situation for Government House. But, however, all the best rooms look into the garden at the back, and the governor need not see much of the burial-ground, except when he goes in and out. One foggy night, Tim O'Loghlin was stationed as sentry at Government House. It was full moon at the time, and the light upon the white warm mist that lay like an immense blanket over the earth, shone weak and watery-like. It was not a very thick fog, and did not hide objects at the distance of a hundred yards, but only revealed them to make them look larger than they really were. I was in the guard-room smoking my pipe, comfortably as I am now (either a pipe or a cigar, it's all the same to Sergeant Monaghan, if the baccy's good), when who should walk in but Tim O'Loghlin, with a face of such wild, blank, dismal terror, as I never saw before or since on a human being. It was fully an hour before his time to be relieved of duty, and in leaving his post he had committed a very serious offence. I ordered him back to his post, but he sat down by the fire, and doggedly refused to stir.

"'What's the matter with you, Tim?' said I. 'Are you unwell? And why did you come off duty? And it's I myself that'll have to report you.'

"'You may report—you must report; but I will not go back again, though I be shot for it. I have seen him.'

"'Him?—and who is him?'

"'Him! Why Captain Percival. He came close up to me, and pointed to a man in the burial-ground digging a grave next to his own.'

"The captain had died about a month previously, and Tim, who was very much attached to him—and indeed everybody in the regiment was—had grieved very much about his death. He had acted as the captain's servant, and had received many favours at his hand, and poor Tim was a grateful crater.

"'It's all nonsense, Tim,' said I. 'Go back to your post, and in reporting you, I'll make the best case out that I can for you.'

"'Never!' said Tim, 'if I be shot for it.'

"As chance and luck would have it, the doctor happened to drop in at this moment, and learning the circumstances that had induced Tim to leave his post, questioned him fully on the subject. But he felt Tim's pulse first, and there came over his face an expression that I noticed, but that Tim did not, which said very plainly to me that he did not like the beat of it. Tim was confident that he had seen Captain Percival, and that the captain pointed out the grave which a man was digging alongside of his own, and had distinctly told him that he was to be buried there as soon as the grave was quite ready.

"'And you saw the man digging the grave?' asked the doctor.

"'Distinctly,' replied Tim; 'and you can see him too, if you go immediately.'

"'Do you go, sergeant,' said the doctor to me, 'and I'll sit with O'Loghlin till you return. I think you had better detail another sentry in his place. Is there any brandy to be got? But stay; it does not matter. I have a flask. And O'Loghlin, my man, you must take a pull at it; it is medicine, you know, and I order it.'

"Tim was taking a pull at the flask as I went out. I thought it possible enough that the grave-digger might be at work, but I did not know what to say about the captain, except to think, perhaps, that Tim had been dreaming, and fancied he saw things that had no existence. I got into the burial-ground without difficulty—the gate was not fastened—and went straight to the grave of Captain Percival. There stood the gravestone, sure enough, with the captain's name, age, and date of death upon it, and a short story besides, setting forth what a good and brave fellow he was, which was all as true as gospel. But there was no grave-digger there, nor no open grave, as Tim had fancied. I went back, and found Tim and the doctor together, Tim not looking quite so wild and white as before, but bad and ill, all the same.

"'Well?' inquired the doctor.

"'Well!' I replied. 'There's nothing to be seen. It's just as I thought. Poor Tim's fancy has cheated him, and it's my opinion the poor boy is not well at all. An' what am I to do about reporting him?'

"'You must report him, of course,' said the doctor; 'but I don't think much harm will come to him out of that. O'Loghlin, you must go into hospital for

a day or two, and I will give you some stuff that will bring you out again right as a trivet, and you will see no more ghosts.'

"Tim shook his head, and was taken quietly to the hospital, and put to bed. The brandy had done him good; whether it was all brandy, or whether there wasn't a drop of sleeping stuff in it, I can't say, but it's very likely there was, for the doctor told me the longer he slept in reason the better it would be for him. And Tim had a long sleep, but not a very quiet one, for all that same, and tossed about for the matter of a dozen hours or so. But he never got out of bed again. When I saw him at noon the next day he was wide awake, and very feverish and excitable.

"'How are you, Tim, my poor fellow?' said I, taking his hand, which was very hot and moist.

"'I've seen him again,' he replied. "I see him now. He is sitting at the foot of the bed, and pointing to the graveyard. I know what he means.'

"'Tim, it's crazy that ye are,' said I.

"He shook his head mournfully. 'Monaghan,' he sighed, rather than said, 'ye've been a kind friend to me. Give that to the little girl in Ireland—you know.' And he drew a photographic portrait of himself from under his pillow, tied round with a blue ribbon, from which depended a crooked sixpence with a hole in it. 'In a few days ye'll be laying me in the ground alongside of the captain. Do ye see him now? he is leaving the room, smiling upon me, and still pointing to the graveyard. I am no longer afraid of him. He means me no harm, and it is no blame to him if he is sent to tell me to get ready.'

"'Tim, you are cheating yourself. What you're telling me is all a waking dream. I can see no ghost.'

"'Of course you can't,' said Tim, 'the spirits never appears to two persons at once. But Patrick Monaghan,' he added, 'let us talk no more on the subject, but send Father Riley to me, that I may unburden me sowl, and die in peace.'

"It would have been cruel in me to have argued the matter with the poor afflicted creature, and him such a friend of my own too, so I left him to go in search of the doctor first, and of Father Riley afterwards. They both came. What passed between Tim and the holy father, of course I never knew; but the doctor told me distinctly that Tim was in a very bad way. The stomach was wrong, the nerves were wrong, the brain was wrong; in fact, he was wrong altogether, and had a fever which the doctor called by a very grand and high-sounding name, which I did not hear very plainly, and which if I did I am unable to remember. Tim survived three days after this, sleeping and dozing, and talking in his sleep, and every now and then saying, amid words which I could not well put together into any meaning, 'I am coming, I am coming.' Just before he died, he grew more collected, and made me promise that he should be buried in the grave that had been dug for him by the side of the captain. I knew that no such grave had been dug as he said,

and that it was all a delusion; but what was the use of arguing with a dying man? So I promised of course, by my honour and by my sowl, to do all I could to have his last wish gratified. The doctor promised also, and so did Father Riley, and I think poor Tim died happy. His last words were something about the ribbon and the crooked sixpence, and the captain, the very last syllable being 'I come.'

"We buried the poor lad in the place assigned by himself, and I was so affected altogether by the sadness of the thing, that I could have persuaded myself, in fact I did persuade myself, that I saw Captain Percival in undress, or fatigue uniform, just as he had appeared to poor Tim walking past the sentry-box before the door of Government House, and stopping every now and then to point at the grave; and the more I closed my eyes to avoid seeing him, the more permanently and clearly he stood before me."

"And are you in any doubt on the subject now?" I inquired.

"And indeed I am," replied the sergeant, shaking the ashes from his cigar with the tip of his little finger. "Tim must have seen the ghost, and must have believed in him, and if I only saw it after Tim's death, it is but another proof of what almost everybody knows, that two people never saw the same ghost at the same time. And ghost or no ghost, it is quite clear that Tim died of him, and might have been alive at this moment but for the ghost's extraordinary behaviour. But it's one of the questions that all the talk in the world can't settle."

"Do you think Tim would have seen the ghost of Captain Percival, or anybody else, if he had been sound in mind and limb, if he had been a strong hearty man with a good appetite, and an undisordered stomach?"

"Can't say," replied the sergeant, taking a sip of his liquor. "The doctor thought not; but doctors don't know everything; and if there were no ghosts, why, I should like to ask, should the spirit of Samuel appear to Saul, and answer his questions?"

"Well, sergeant," said I, "if you are going to the Bible for arguments, I shall shut up. Finish your glass, my man, and let us say good-night."

He finished his glass, he said good-night, and walked away with the air of a man who thought he had had the best of the argument.

THE END

THE SEVERED ARM
OR
The Wehr-Wolf of Limousin

Published in:

***The Olio, or Museum of Entertainment*,**
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***Table Book of Popular Literature*,**
Vol. 2, London, 1833

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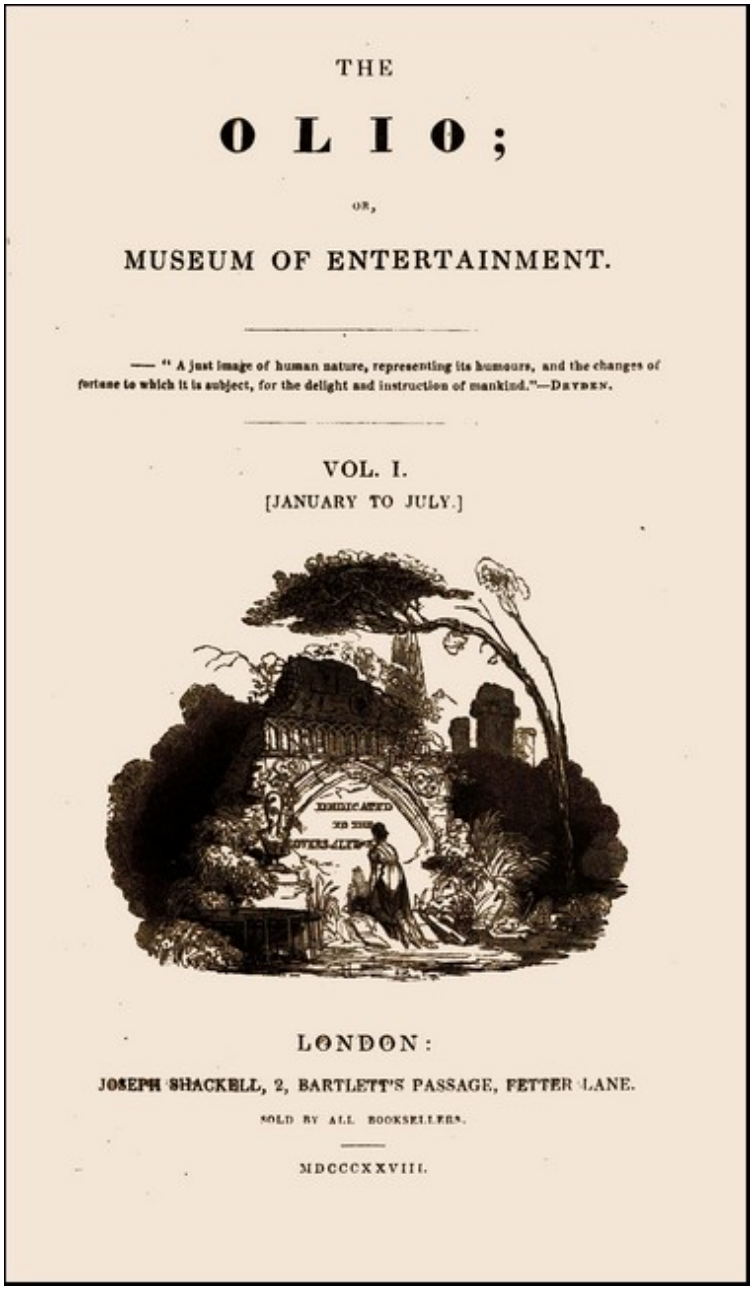
***Popular Legends and Romances*, London, 1837**


THE

OLIO;

OR,

MUSEUM OF ENTERTAINMENT.

—— "A just image of human nature, representing its humours, and the changes of fortune to which it is subject, for the delight and instruction of mankind."—DRYDEN.

VOL. I.

[JANUARY TO JULY.]

LONDON:

JOSEPH SHACKELL, 2, BARTLETT'S PASSAGE, FETTER LANE.

SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS.

MDCCCXXVIII.

Olio, February 1828, with "The Severed Arm"

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

This tale may well be the first Gothic were-wolf story ever published. The earliest date of publication found so far is February 1828.

The earliest example of this genre listed in *Wikipedia* is "Hugues, the Wer-Wolf" by Sutherland Menzies, which was published in 1838—at least a decade after the present story.

The anthologist Peter Haining (1940-2007) included an abridged version of "The Severed Arm" in his collection *The Shilling Shockers: Stories of Terror from the Gothic Bluebooks* (Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1978), saying that he found it in *Tales of Superstition*, published by Dean & Munday of Threadneedle Street, London.

This RGL edition is a complete, unabridged version of the original story. The passages missing from the Haining version—most importantly a section in which one of the protagonists, Dr. Antoine Du Pilon, holds a long and learned discourse on the subject of werewolves—have been restored from copies of the story available at the Hathi Trust website.

With regard to the text itself, I have retained the original spelling and capitalisation but, where necessary, added accents to French names and words.

—Roy Glashan, 19 April 2024

THE SEVERED ARM;
OR
THE WEHR-WOLF OF LIMOUSIN

'Twas soothly said , in olden hours,
That men were oft with wondrous powers
Endow'd their wonted forms to change,
And Wehr-Wolves wild abroad to range!

So Garwal roams in savage pride,
And hunts for blood and feeds on men,
Spreads dire destruction far and wide,
And makes the forests broad his den.*

—Marie's *Lai du Bisclavaret*.

[* These verses were included in the version of the story published in *Tales of an Antiquary* (ed. Richard Thomas), H. Colburn, London, 1828.]

THE ancient province of Poictou, in France, has long been celebrated in the annals of romance, as one of the most famous haunts of those dreadful animals, whose species is between a phantom and a beast of prey; and which are called by Germans, Wehr-Wolves, and by the French, Bisclavarets, or Loups Garoux. To the English, these midnight terrors are yet unknown, and almost without a name; but when they are spoken of in this country they are called, by the way of eminence, wild wolves. The common superstition concerning them is, that they are men in compact with the arch enemy, who have the power of assuming the form and nature of wolves at certain periods.

The hilly and woody district of the Upper Limousin, which now forms the southern division of the Upper Vienne, was that particular part of the province which the Wehr-Wolves were supposed to inhabit: whence, like the animal which gave them their name, they would wander out by midnight, far from their own hills and mountains, and run howling through the silent streets of the nearest towns and villages, to the great terror of all the inhabitants, whose piety however, was somewhat increased by these supernatural visitations.

There once stood in the suburbs of the town of St Yrieux, which is situate in those dangerous parts of ancient Poictou, an old, but handsome *Maison-de-Plaisance*, or, in plain English, a country house, belonging, by ancient descent, to the young Baroness Louise Joliedame; who, out of dread to the terrible Wehr-Wolves, a well-bred horror at the *chambres à l'antique* which it contained, and a

greater love for the gallant court of Francis I, let the Château to strangers; though they occupied but a very small portion of it, whilst the rest was left unrepaired, and was rapidly passing to decay.

One of the parties by whom the old mansion was tenanted, was a country chirurgeon, named Antoine Du Pilon; who (according to his own account) was not only well acquainted with the science of Galen and Hippocrates, but was also a profound adept in those arts, for the learning of which some men toil their whole lives away, and are none the wiser; such as alchemy, converse with spirits, magic, and so forth. Dr. Du Pilon had abundant leisure to talk of his knowledge at the little Cabaret of St Yrieux, which bore the sign of the Chevalier Bayard's arms, where he assembled round him many of the idler members of the town, the chief of whom were Cuirbouilli, the currier; Malbois, the joiner; La Jacquette, the tailor; and Nicole Bonvarlet, his host; together with several other equally arrant gossips, who all swore roundly, at the end of their parleys, that Dr Antoine Du Pilon was the best doctor, and the wisest man in the whole world! To remove, however, any wonder that may arise in the reader's mind how a professor of such skill and knowledge should be left to waste his abilities so remote from the patronage of the great, it should be remarked, that in such cases as had already come before him, he had not been quite so successful as could have been expected or desired, since old Genefrede Corbeau, who was frozen almost double with age and ague, he kept cold and fasting to preserve her from fever; and he would have cut off the leg of Pierre Faucile, the reaper, when he wounded his right arm in the harvest time, to prevent his flesh from mortifying downwards!

In a retired apartment of the same deserted mansion where this mirror of chirurgeons resided, dwelt a peasant, and his daughter, who had come to St Yrieux from a distant part of Normandy, and of whose history nothing was known, but that they seemed to be in the deepest poverty; although they neither asked relief, nor uttered a single complaint. Indeed, they rather avoided all discourse with their gossiping neighbours, and even with their fellow inmates, excepting so far as the briefest courtesy required; and as they were able, on entering their abode, to place a reasonable security for payment in the hands of old Gervais, the Baroness Joliedame's steward, they were permitted to live in the old Château with little questioning, and less sympathy. The father appeared in general to be a plain, rude peasant, whom poverty had somewhat tinctured with misanthropy: though there were times when his bluntness towered into a haughtiness not accordant with his present station, but seemed like a relique of a higher sphere, from which he had

fallen. He strove, and the very endeavour increased the bitterness of his heart to mankind, to conceal his abject indigence; but that was too apparent to all, since he was rarely to be found at St Yrieux, but led a wild life in the adjacent mountains and forests, occasionally visiting the town to bring to his daughter Adèle a portion of the spoil, which as a hunter, he indefatigably sought for the subsistence of both. Adèle, on the contrary, though she felt as deeply as her father the sad reverse of fortune to which they were exposed, had more gentleness in her sorrow, and more content in her humiliation. She would, when he returned to the cottage, worn with the fatigue of his forest labours, try, but many times in vain, to bring a smile to his face and consolation to his heart. "My father," she would say, "quit, I beseech you, this wearisome hunting for some safer employment nearer home. You depart, and I watch in vain for your return; days and nights pass away, and you come not!—while my disturbed imagination will ever whisper the danger of a forest midnight, fierce howling wolves, and robbers still more cruel."

"Robbers! girl, sayest thou?" answered her father with a bitter laugh, "and what shall they gain from me, think ye? Is there aught in this worn-out gaberdine to tempt them? Go to, Adèle! I am not now Count Gaspar de Marcanville, the friend of the royal Francis, and a knight of the Holy Ghost; but plain Hubert, the Hunter of the Limousin; and wolves, thou trowest, will not prey upon wolves."

"But, my dearest father," said Adèle, embracing him, "I would that thou wouldst seek a safer occupation nearer to our dwelling, for I would be by your side."

"What wouldst have me to do, girl?" interrupted Gaspar impatiently; "wouldst have me put this hand to the sickle or the plough, which has so often grasped a sword in the battle, and a banner-lance in the tournament? Or shall a companion of Le Saint Esprit become a fellow-handworker with the low artisans of this miserable town? I tell thee, Adèle, that but for thy sake I would never again quit the forest, but would remain there in a savage life, till I forgot my language and my species, and become a Wehr-Wolf or a wild buck!"

Such was commonly the close of their conversation; for if Adèle dared to press her entreaties further, Gaspar, half frenzied, would not fail to call to her mind all the unhappy circumstances of his fall, and work himself almost to madness by their repetition. He had, in early life, been introduced by the Count de Saintefleur to the court of Francis I, where he had risen so high in the favour of his sovereign, that he was continually in his society; and in the many wars which so embittered the reign of that excellent monarch, de Marcanville's station was ever by his side. In these conflicts, Gaspar's bosom had often been the shield of Francis even in moments of the

most imminent danger; and the grateful king as often showered upon his deliverer those rewards which, to the valiant and high-minded soldier, are far dearer than riches—the glittering jewels of knighthood, and the golden coronal of the peerage. To that friend who had fixed his feet so loftily and securely in the slippery paths of a court, Gaspar felt all the ardour of youthful gratitude; and yet he sometimes imagined, that he could perceive an abatement in the favour of de Saintefleur as that of Francis increased. The truth was, that the gold and rich promises of the king's great enemy, the Emperor Charles V, had induced de Saintefleur to swerve from his allegiance; and he now waited but for a convenient season to put the darkest designs in practice against his sovereign. He also felt no slight degree of envy, even against that very person whom he had been the instrument of raising; and at length an opportunity occurred, when he might gratify both his ambition and his revenge by the same blow. It was in one of those long wars in which the French monarch was engaged, and in which de Saintefleur and de Marcanville were his constant companions, that they were both watching his couch while he slept, when the former, in a low tone of voice, thus began to sound the faith of the latter to his royal master.

"What sayest thou, Gaspar, were not a prince's coronet and a king's revenue in Naples, better than thus ever-toiling in a war that seems unending? Hearest thou, brave de Marcanville? We can close it with the loss of one life only!"

"Queen of Heaven!" ejaculated Gaspar, "what is it thou wouldst say, de Saintefleur?"

"Say! why that there have been other kings in France before this Francis, and will be, when he shall have gone to his place. Thinkest thou that he of the double-headed black eagle, would not amply reward the sword that cut this fading lily from the earth?"

"No more, no more, de Saintefleur," cried Gaspar; "even from you who placed me where I might flourish beneath the lily's shade, will I not hear this treason. Rest secure that I will not betray thee to the king; my life shall sooner be given for thine; but I will watch thee with more vigilance than the wolf hath when he watcheth the night-fold, and your first step to the heart of Francis shall be over the body of Gaspar de Marcanville."

"Nay, then," said de Saintefleur, aside, "he must be my first victim;" and immediately drawing his sword, he cried aloud, "What, ho! guards! treason!"—whilst Gaspar stood immovable with astonishment and horror. The event is soon related; for Francis was but too easily persuaded that de Marcanville was in reality guilty of the act about to be perpetrated by de Saintefleur; and the magnanimity

of Gaspar was such, that not one word which might criminate his former friend could be drawn from him, even to save his own life. The kind-hearted Francis, however, was unable to forget in a moment the favour with which for years he had been accustomed to look upon de Marcanville; and it was only at the earnest solicitation of the courtiers, many of whom were rejoiced at the thought of a powerful rival's removal, that he could be prevailed on to pass upon him even the sentence of degradation and banishment.

Gaspar hastened to his Château, but the treasures which he was allowed to bear with him into exile, were little more than his wife Rosalie and his daughter Adèle; with whom he immured himself in the dark and almost boundless recesses of the Hanoverian Hartz, where his sorrows soon rendered his gaunt and attenuated form altogether unknown. In this savage retirement he drew up a faithful narration of de Saintefleur's treachery; and, in confirmation of its truth, procured a certificate from his confessor, Father Aegidius—one of those holy men, who of old were dwellers in forests and deserts—and directing it "To the King," placed it in the hands of his wife, that if, in any of those hazardous excursions in which he was engaged to procure their daily subsistence, he should perish, it might be delivered to Francis, and his family thus be restored to their rank and estates, when his pledge to de Saintefleur could no longer be claimed.

Years passed away, and, in the gloomy recesses of the Hercynian woods, Gaspar acquired considerable skill as a hunter; had it been to preserve his own life only, he had laid him down calmly upon the sod, and resigned that life to famine, or to the hungry wolf; but he had still two objects which bound him to existence, and therefore in the chase the wild buck was too slow to escape his spear, and the bear too weak to resist his attacks.

His fate, notwithstanding, preyed heavily upon him, and he often broke out in fits of vehement passion, and the most bitter lamentations; which at length so wrought upon the grief-worn frame of Rosalie de Marcanville, that about ten years after Gaspar's exile, her death left him a widower, when his daughter Adèle was scarcely eighteen years of age. It was then, with a mixture of desperation and distress, that de Marcanville determined to rush forth from his solitude into France; and, careless of the fate which might await him for returning from exile unrecalled, to advance even to the court, and laying his papers at the foot of the throne, to demand the ordeal of combat with de Saintefleur; but when he had arrived at the woody province of Upper Limousin, his purpose failed him, as he saw in the broad daylight, which rarely entered the Hartz Forest, the afflicting changes which ten years of the severest labour, and the most heartfelt sorrow, had made upon his

form. He might, indeed, so far as it regarded all recollections of his person, have safely gone even into the court of Francis; but Gaspar also saw, that in the retired forest surrounding St Yrieux, he might still reside unknown to his beloved France; that under the guise of a hunter, he could still provide for the support of his gentle Adèle; and that, in the event of his death he should be considerably nearer to the sovereign's abode. It was then, in consequence of these reasons, that de Marcanville employed a part of his small remaining property, in securing a residence in the dilapidated Château, as it has been already mentioned.

It was some time after their arrival, that the inhabitants of the town of St Yrieux were alarmed by the intelligence that a Wehr-Wolf, or perhaps a troop of them, certainly inhabited the woods of Limousin. The most terrific howlings were heard in the night, and the wild rush of a chase swept through the deserted streets; yet the townspeople—according to the most approved rules for acting where Wehr-Wolves are concerned—never once thought of sallying forth in a body, and with weapons and lighted brands, to scare the monsters from their prey; but adding a more secure fastening to every window, which is the Wehr-Wolf's usual entrance, they deserted such as had already fallen their victims, with one brief expression of pity for *them*, and many a *"Dieu me bénit!"* for *themselves*. It was asserted, too, that some of the country people, whose dwellings came more immediately into contact with the Limousin forests, had lost their children; whose lacerated remains, afterwards discovered in the woods, only half devoured, plainly denoted them to have fallen the prey of some abandoned Wehr-Wolf!

It is not surprising, that in a retired town, where half the people were without employment, and all were thoroughbred gossips, and lovers of wonders, that the inroads of the Wehr-Wolf formed too important an epoch in their history, to be passed over without a due discussion. Under pretence, therefore, of being a protection to each other, many of the people of St Yrieux, and especially the worthy conclave mentioned at the beginning of this history, were almost eternally convened at the Chevalier Bayard's Arms, talking over their nightly terrors, and filling each other with such affright, by the repetition of many a lying old tale upon the same subject, that, too much alarmed to part, they often agreed to pass the night over Nicole Bonvarlet's wine flask and blazing faggots. Upon a theme so intimately connected with a magical lore as is the history of Wehr-Wolves, Dr Antoine du Pilon discoursed like a Solomon; citing, to the great edification and wonder of his hearers, such hosts of authors, both sacred and profane, that he who should have hinted, that the Wehr-Wolves of St Yrieux were simply like other

wolves, would have found as little gentleness in his hearers as he would have experienced from the animals themselves.

"Well, my masters?" began Bonvarlet, one evening when they were met, "I would not, for a tun of malmsey wine now, be in the Limousin forest tonight; for do ye hear how it blusters and pours? By the ship of St. Mildred, in a wild night like this, there is no place in the world like your hearthside in a goodly submerge, with a merry host and good liquor; both of which, neighbours, ye have to admiration."

"Ay, Nicole," replied Courbouilli, "it is a foul night, truly, either for man or cattle; and yet I'll warrant ye that the Wehr-Wolves will be out in 't, for their skin is said to be the same as that the fiend himself wears, and that would shut you out water, and storm, and wind, like a castle wall. Mass, now! but it would be simply the making of my fortune, an I could but get one of their hides."

"Truly, for a churl," began Dr. Du Pilon, "an unlettered artizan, thy wish showeth a pretty wit; for a cloak made of a Wehr-Wolf would for ever defend the wearer from all other Wolves, and all animals that your Wolves feed upon; even as Pythagoras writeth, that one holding the eye of a Wolf in his hand, shall scare away from him all weaker craatures; for like as the sight of a Wolf doth terrify —"

"Hark, neighbours, did ye hear that cry? It is a Wehr-Wolf's bark!" exclaimed Jérôme Malbois, starting from his settle.

"Ay, by the bull of St Luke, did I, friend, Jérôme," returned Bonvarlet; "surely the great fiend himself can make no worse a howling; I even thought 'twould split the very rafters last night, though I deem they're of good seasoned fir."

"There thou errest again," said the Doctor in a pompous tone, to the last speaker. "Oh! ye rustics, whom I live with as Orpheus did with the savages of Thracia, whence is it that ye possess such boundless stupidity? Thou sayest, Jérôme Malbois, that they bark; and I could imagine, that shooting in the dark thou hadst hit on the Greekish phrase Νυξτερι υοι Κυες, or Dogs of the Night, I could say thou hadst said wisely; but now I declare that thou hast spoken full ignorantly, right woodenly, Jérôme Malbois; thou art beyond thy square, friend joiner; thou hast overstepped thy rule, good carpenter. Doth not the great Albertus bear testimony, Oh, most illiterate! that Wolves bark not when he saith:—

'Ast Lupus Ipse *ululat*, frendit agrestis aper,"

which, for thine edification is, in the vulgar tongue,

'But the Wolf doth loudly howl, and the boar
his teeth doth grind,

Where the wildest plains are spread before,
and forests rise behind.'

"*Et idem Auctor*, and the same author also saith, which maketh yet more against thee, *O mentis inops!*

'Per noctem resonare Lupus, *ululantibus* urbes,"

which in the common is

'The wolf by night through silent cities prowls,
And makes the streets resound with hideous howls.'

"And doth not Servius say the like in a verse wherein I opine he hints at Wehr-Wolves? '*Ululare*, canem est furiare'—to howl is the voice of dogs and furies:—thus findest thou, *Faber sciolus!* that here we have an agreement touching the voices of wolves, which is low and mournful, and therefore the word *Ululatus* is fitly applied to the imitation thereof. Your Almaine say *Heulen*; the Frenchman *Hurler*; and the Englishman, with a conglomeration of sounds as bad as the Wolf's own, calleth it howling.

"By the holy Dog of Tobias!" ejaculated Bonvarlet, "and I think our Doctor speaketh all languages, as he had had his head broken with a brick from the Tower of Babel, and all the tongues had got in at once. But where, think ye, Monsieur, that these cursed Loups Garoux come from? Are they like unto other wolves, or what breed be they?"

"Nicole Bonvarlet," again began the untired Doctor, after taking a long draught of the flask, "Nicole Bonvarlet, I perceive thou hast more of good literature than thy fellows; for not only dost thou mar erudition when it is set before thee, but thou also wisely distrustest thine own knowledge, and questionest of those who are more learned than thou. Touching thy demand of what breed are the Wehr-Wolves, be this mine answer. Thou knowest, that if ye ask of a shepherd how he can distinguish one sheep from another, he tells you that even in their faces he sees a *distinctio secretio*, the which to a common observer is not visible; and thus, when the vulgar see a wolf, they can but say it is a wolf, and there endeth their cunning. But, by the Lion of St. Mark! if ye ask one skilled in the knowledge of four-footed animals, he shall presently discourse to you of the genus and species thereof; make known it's haunts and history, display it's occult properties, and give you a lection upon all that your ancient and modern authors have said concerning it."

"By the Mass now!" interrupted La Jaquette," and I would fain know the habit in which your Loup Garoux vests him when he is not in his wolfish shape; whether he have slashed cuishes, and—"

"Peace, I pray you peace, good Tailleur," said Doctor Antoine; "it is but rarely that I speak, and even then my discourse is brief, and therefore I beseech you not to mar the words of wisdom which are seldom heard, with thy folly which men may listen to hourly. Touching your Wolves, honest friends, as I was saying, there are five kinds, as Oppianus noteth in his Admonition to Shepherds; of the which, two sorts that rove in the countries of Swecia and the Visigoth, are called Acmone, but of these I will not now speak, but turn me unto those of whose species is the Wehr-Wolf. The first is named Τοξευτερ, or the Shooter, for that he runneth fast, is very bold, howleth fearfully—"

"There is the cry again!" exclaimed Malbois, and as the sounds drew nearer, the doctor's audience evinced symptoms of alarm, which were rapidly increasing, when a still louder shriek was heard close to the house.

"What ho, within there!" cried a voice, evidently of one in an agony of terror, "an ye be men, open the door," and the next moment it was burst from its fastenings by the force of a human body falling against it, which dropped without motion upon the floor.

The confusion which this accident created may well be imagined; the doctor, greatly alarmed, retreated into the fireplace, whence he cried out to the equally scared rustics, "It's a Wehr-Wolf in a human shape; don't touch him, I tell you, but strike him with a fire fork between the eyes, and he'll turn to a wolf and run away."

"Peace, Doctor," said Bonvarlet, the only one of the party who had ventured near the stranger; "he breathes yet, for he's a Christian man like as we are."

"Don't you be too sure of that," replied Du Pilon; "ask him to say his Creed, and his Pater-Noster in Latin."

"Nay, good my master, "returned the humane host, pouring some wine down the stranger's throat, and bearing his reviving body to the hearth, "he can scarce speak his mother-tongue, and therefore he's no stomach for Latin, so come, you prince of all chirurgeons, and bleed him; and when he comes to, why school him yourself."

The doctor advanced from his retreat, with considerable reluctance, to attend upon his patient, who was richly habited in the luxuriant fashion of the court of Francis, and appeared to be a middle-aged man, of handsome features, and commanding presence. As the doctor, somewhat reassured, began to remove the short cloak to find out the stranger's arm, he started back with affright, and actually roared with pain at receiving a deep scratch from the huge paw of a wolf, which apparently grew out from his shoulder.

"Avaunt thee, Sathanas!" ejaculated the doctor, "I told thee how it would be, my masters, that this cursed Wehr-Wolf would bleed us first. By the porker of St. Anthony! Blessed beast! See he hath clawed me from the *Biceps Flexor Cubiti*, down to the *Os Lunare*, even as a peasant would plough over a furrow!"

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed Bonvarlet, holding up the dreaded wolf's paw, which was yet bleeding, as if it had been recently separated from the animal. "Here is no Wehr-Wolf, but a brave hunter, who hath cut off his goodly forepaw in the forest, with his couteau-de-chasse; but soft," he added, throwing it aside, "he recovers!"

"Pierre!—Henri!" said the stranger, recovering, "where are ye? How far is the king behind us? Ha, what place is this? And who are ye?" he continued, looking round.

"This, your good worship, is the Chevalier Bayard's Arms, in the town of St Yrieux, where your honour fell, through loss of blood, as I guess, by this wound. We were fain to keep the door barred for fear of the Wehr-Wolves; and we half deemed your lordship to be one, at first sight of the great paw you carried, but now I judge you brought it from the forest."

"Ay! yes, thou art in the right on't," said the stranger, recollecting himself. "I was in the forest! I tell thee, host, that I have this night looked upon the arch demon himself!"

"*Apage*, Lucifer!" ejaculated the doctor, devoutly crossing his breast; "and have I received a claw from his fore-foot? I feel the enchantment of Lycanthropy coming over me; I shall be a Wehr-Wolf myself, shortly; for what saith Hornhoofius, in his Treatise de Diabolus, lib. xiv. cap. xxiii.—they who are torn by a Wehr-Wolf—Oh me!—Oh me!—*Libera nos, Domine*. Look to yourselves, neighbours, or I shall raven upon ye all."

"I pray you, Master Doctor," said Bonvarlet, "to let his lordship tell us his story first, and then we'll hear yours.—How was it, fair sir?—but take another cup of wine first."

"My tale is brief," answered the stranger: "The king is passing to-night through the Limousin, and with two of his attendants I rode forward to prepare for his coming; when, in the darkness of the wood, we were separated, and, as I galloped on alone, an enormous wolf, with fiery flashing eyes, leaped out of a brake before me, with the most fearful howlings, and rushed on me with the speed of lightning."

"Aye," interrupted Du Pilon," as I told ye, they are called, in the Greekish phrase Νυξτερι υοι Κυες, Dogs of the Night, because of their howlings, and Τοξευτερ, for that they shoot along."

"Now I pray your honour to proceed, and heed not the Doctor," said Bonvarlet.

"As the wolf leaped upon my horse, I drew my couteau-de-chasse, and severed that huge paw which you found upon me: but as the violence of the blow made the weapon fall, I caught up a large forked branch of a tree, and struck the animal upon the forehead: upon which, my horse began to rear and plunge; for, where the wolf stood, I saw by a momentary glimpse of moonlight the form of an ancient enemy, who had long since been banished from France, and whom I believed to have died of famine in the Hartz Forest."

"Lo you there now," said du Pilon, "a blow between the eyes with a forked stick—said I not so from Philo-Diamones, lib. xcii? Oh, I'm condemned to be a Wehr-Wolf of a verity, and I shall eat those of my most intimate acquaintances the first. Masters look to yourselves:—*O dies infelix!* Oh unhappy man that I am!"—and with these words he rushed out of the cottage.

"I think the very fiend is in Monsieur the Doctor, tonight," cried the host, "for here he's gone off without dressing his honour's wounds."

"Heed not that, friend, but do thou provide torches and assistance to meet the king; my wound is but small; but when my horse saw the apparition I told you of, he bounded forward like a wild Russian colt, dragged me through all the briars of the forest—for there seemed a troop of a thousand wolves howling behind us—and at the verge of it he dropped lifeless, and left me, still pursued, to gain the town, weak and wounded as I was."

"St Dennis be praised now!" said Bonvarlet, "you showed a good heart, my lord; but we'll at once set out to meet the king; so neighbours take each of ye a good pine faggot off the hearth, and call up more help as you go; and Nicolette and Madeline will prepare for our return."

"But," asked the stranger, "where's the wolf's paw that I brought from the forest?"

"I cast it aside, my lord," answered Bonvarlet, "till you had recovered; but I would fain beg it of you as a gift, for I will hang it over my fireplace, and have its story made into a song by Rowland the minstrel—and, mother of God! What is this?" continued he, putting into his guest's hand a human arm, cut off at the elbow, vested in the worn-out sleeve of a hunter's coat, and bleeding freshly at the part where it was dissevered.

"Holy St Mary!" exclaimed the stranger, regarding the hand attentively, "this is the arm of Gaspar de Marcanville, yet bearing the

executioner's brand burnt in his flesh; and he is a Wehr-Wolf!"

"Why," said Bonvarlet, "that's the habit worn by the melancholy hunter, whose daughter lives at the Château yonder. He rarely comes to St Yrieux, but when he does, he brings more game than any ten of your gentlemen huntsmen ever did. Come, we'll go seek the daughter of this man-wolf, and then on to the forest, for this fellow deserves a stake and a bundle of faggots, as well as ever Jeanne d'Arc did, in my simple thinking."

They then proceeded to Adèle, at the dilapidated Château; and her distress at the foregoing story may better be conceived than described; yet she offered not the slightest resistance to accompanying them to the forest; but when one of the party mentioned their expected meeting with the king, her eyes became suddenly lighted up, and retiring for a moment, she expressed herself in readiness to attend them. At the skirts of the forest they found an elderly man, of a strange, quaint appearance, crouching in the fern like a hare, who called out to them, in a squeaking voice, that was at once familiar to all, "Take care of yourselves, good people, for I am a Wehr-Wolf, and shall speedily spring upon ye."

"Why, that's our doctor, as I am a sinful man," cried Bonvarlet; "let's try his own cure upon him. Neighbour Malbois, give me a tough forked branch, and I'll disenchant him, I warrant; and you, Courbouilli, out with your knife, as though you would skin him"—and then he continued aloud, "Oh, honest friend, you're a Wehr-Wolf, are you? Why, then, I'll disposses the devil that's in you. You shall be flayed, and then burnt for a wizard."

With that the rustics of St Yrieux, who enjoyed the jest, fell upon the unhappy doctor, and, by a sound beating, and other rough usage, so convinced him that he was not a Wehr-Wolf, that he cried out, "Praised be St Gregory, I am a whole man again. Lo, I am healed, but my bones feel wondrous sore! Who is he that hath cured me?—By the mass, I am grievously bruised!—Thanks to the seraphical Father Francis, the devil hath gone out of me!"

Whilst the peasants were engaged in searching for the king's party and the mutilated wolf, the stranger who was left with Adèle de Marcanville, fainted through loss of blood; and, as she bent over him, and stanched his wounds with her scarf, he said, with a faint voice—"Fair one, who is it, thinkest thou, whom thou art so blessedly attending?"

"I wot not," answered she, "but that thou art a man."

"Hear me, then, and throw aside these bandages for my dagger, for I am thy father's ancient enemy, the Count de Saintefleur."

"Heaven forgive you then," returned Adèle, "for the time of vengeance belongs to it only."

"And it is come!" cried a loud hoarse voice, as a large wolf, wounded by the loss of a forepaw, leaped upon the count and put an end to his existence. At the same moment, the royal train, which the peasants had discovered, rode up with flambeaux, and a knight, with a large partisan, made a blow at the wolf, whom Adèle vainly endeavoured to preserve, since the stroke was of sufficient power to destroy both. The wolf gave one terrific howl, and fell backwards in the form of a tall gaunt man, in a hunting dress; whilst Adèle, drawing a packet from her bosom, and offering it to the king, sank lifeless upon the body of her father, Gaspar de Marcanville, the Wehr-Wolf of Limousin.

THE END

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with a reprint of "The Tale of a Gas-light Ghost"

THE TALE OF A GAS-LIGHT GHOST

'TIS an easy thing for me to tell you a story of ghosts, for from my childhood I have been accustomed to hear of them; from my infancy I was taught to believe in them. Not the old nurses' tales of white-draped spectres, of grinning skulls and ghastly goblins; but the well-authenticated appearances after death of those known upon earth, in the dress they wore when toiling in the world.

Ghosts ran in the Dale family, people said jeeringly—insanity too, they added; and from time to time we have been made the butts for jokes of those would-be wags, who refuse to believe anything which does not happen to have come under their own narrow experience. I could tell you a story of my great-grandfather, who was haunted by the spirit of a man he slew in a duel, who followed him in the spirit form wherever he went, beckoning to him from the midst of a crowd at times; at others visiting him in the solitude of his chamber, till my great- grandfather, driven to frenzy, one day drew his sword and nearly ran his butler through the body for denying the ghost of the murdered man stood by him. The constant terror of this continual appearance drove my ancestor out of his mind though, of course, there were people who declared he was out of his mind in the first instance.

So of Roderick Dale, his son, who was haunted by an unknown figure, and finished his days in a lunatic asylum; so of Charles Mervyn, his nephew, who was again and again surprised by the apparition of his father, starting as it were from out the wall upon him. I could tell you all these stories, but you would not even pretend to listen to them.

The story I am about to tell you is quite different from these. It happened less than two years ago. There are a dozen men alive at the present day to vouch for its truth; and it does not depend on any of the usual ghost properties for its effect. In it there is no dismal ruined mansion, no desolate churchyard, no bell tolling the hour of midnight, no rattling of chains or hollow groanings; in short, it is a matter-of-fact ghost story, with none of the ordinary paraphernalia generally supposed to appertain to the spirit world. In order, however, that you may understand it properly, I must give you a short description of the parish of Mapleton, and a few of its inhabitants some twenty months since.

Mapleton is an essentially agricultural parish; its acreage is large, and so are its tillers; its population is small, and so are its wants; its politics are conservative, its society is exclusive, and its ignorance of the other parts of the world is great. Furthermore, its landowners are few and wealthy, and its tenant-farmers well-to-do and contented. It was on record that only one farmer had ever been dissatisfied with the state of things at Mapleton—a young man who had considered the old house in which generations of his ancestors had been born and died too gloomy for him, and had built himself a brand new house, of a mixture of the cottage and villa style, on the outskirts of the village, and had immediately afterwards gone to the dogs, and had been forced to seek a living away from his native place.

Thus it came about that there was a house to let in Mapleton; but how Gregory Barnstake came to know of it, and how, knowing it, he came to take it, after it had remained empty several years, was never understood. Where he came from nobody knew—who he was no one could find out. He was a severely handsome man, by which I mean that his face in marble would have been called superb, but in flesh and blood it was too hard and too expressionless; he was neither young nor old; he had no friends who came to see him, and he appeared to be well off. Society at Mapleton settled that from such a man it would be well to keep aloof until something was known of his antecedents, but Gregory Barnstake never gave society an opportunity of showing its feelings, for he avoided as much as possible even necessary intercourse with his neighbours, and, as the villagers put it, "kept himself to himself".

The doctor was the only man in the parish who had ever entered his house. Gregory Barnstake one afternoon fell down in a fit, and his servant ran to Dr. Sweetman and brought him in all haste to where the new inhabitant of Mapleton lay stretched on a couch, with his limbs cold and stiff and his eyes fixed and glassy, looking more like a corpse than a man.

In an hour's time the rigidity left his limbs, and his eyes assumed their ordinary expression. Sitting up, his glance rested somewhat angrily on the doctor.

"Who are you?" he asked abruptly.

"Doctor Sweetman. I heard from your servant that you were ill, and came to see if I could be of any service."

"Thank you. When I want physic I will send for you."

The doctor, who was as merry and good-natured a little round man as you could wish to meet with, took this, of course, as a dismissal, and not a very polite one. He was not prone to take offence, but he could not feel pleased with such a reception.

"Good day, sir," he said, opening the door.

"Stay a moment, doctor, I beg," said Mr. Barnstake; "I fear I have offended you. Let me explain to you that these fits of mine come upon me at intervals. I can never tell when to expect them. They seize me and leave me in a state of torpor for one, two, or sometimes three hours, during which time no doctor's skill could benefit me. When they have passed I recover at once, as you see I have done now."

"Is your mind unconscious at the time?" asked Dr. Sweetman.

"Unconscious of the present, but living in the past," was the answer with a weary sigh.

"Have you any pain when you are attacked in the first instance?"

"Yes. I feel as if a hand of ice were laid over my heart; then that its hold tightens, causing me exquisite pain, till at last I fall senseless."

"Hum!" said the doctor; "a curious but not an unprecedented case. If you would allow me to send you something I fancy I could alleviate your sufferings."

"Quite a mistake. You doctors go on prescribing medicine till you believe in their efficacy."

"You have a bad opinion of the profession," responded the doctor.

"Not of the profession so much; perhaps, as of those who practise it. The world is composed of knaves and fools; the fools take the medicines, the knaves prescribe."

Retorted the doctor hotly:

"Then, sir, I am to conclude that you alone are superior to the world at large, as you are neither knave enough to prescribe, nor fool enough to take, prescriptions."

"You are to conclude nothing of the sort, but to see in me an unfortunate man whose love of playing the knave led him on to play the fool, and reduced him to what he now is. If you knew the story of my life you—"

"Well, sir?"

"You would know the story of a miserable man."

The doctor had to be content with that ending to the sentence, and took his leave, puzzling his head to make out whether he had been talking to a man whose brains were a little touched, or whether his conversation had been with one of those dark and mysterious heroes so often met with in books and melodramas, but so seldom in real life.

The months went by at Mapleton, the crops were gathered in and sown again, and Gregory Barnstake remained as great a mystery as ever. With the doctor he had had on one or two occasions short conversations, but with no one else had he interchanged more than a few words of abrupt courtesy.

A time came, however, when he was driven to consort with his neighbours. An enterprising railway company, having discovered there was no iron road near Mapleton, sent out its staff of surveyors to walk over the farms and inspect the country, with a view to making a branch line from Overbury through Mapleton to Harstone Heath, and the landowners rose in a body to repel the intrusive steam engines.

Gregory Barnstake received a letter to inform him of these facts, and that a meeting, commencing with a dinner, was to be held at the "Seven Stars" on a certain day for the purpose of remonstrating, petitioning, and doing anything that might be necessary to stop the proposed railway. To this letter he returned no answer.

A second was sent, repeating the substance of the first and adding the information that his house was the proposed site of the station. To this he rejoined that he was sorry to hear it, as he should certainly leave the place in the event of a railroad coming there, but that at the same time he must decline to attend the dinner.

However, still further pressure was put upon him, till at last, in an interview with Dr. Sweetman, he said angrily:

"Well, well, to save further words I will attend, but bear in mind whatever may happen I am not responsible."

There were many reasons why his presence was so much desired at the meeting, the principal being that he was a person much interested, as the whole of the land he held on lease would be required by the railway company. Another, that it was whispered that he was very clever; that he read Latin and Greek books for amusement; and that mysterious volumes of matter incomprehensible, save to the learned, lay generally on the table by his side. Now the Mapletonians, as a rule, knew more of farming than of literature, and it was deemed that to have a man amongst them who would polish up any petition they might send forward, and to see to the correctness of expression in such letters as they might consider it incumbent on them to write, would be of the greatest advantage; and so it was that Gregory Barnstake was worried into a reluctant assent to attend the meeting.

The day, big with fate for the Mapletonians, arrived. The land-owners and the majority of tenant-farmers met in the largest room of the "Seven Stars", and, punctual to the minute, Gregory Barnstake entered. As the door opened to give him admission, he happened to be the subject of the conversation, and an awkward silence ensued as he came forward; but one or two speedily advanced towards him and gave him a hearty welcome, thanking him for breaking through his rule of never mixing with his neighbours, and hoping that, now he had commenced, they might often have the pleasure of seeing him, to all of which he answered, gravely and seriously, that it was no pleasure to him to mix in what was called society; but, as they had pressed him so much to be present on this occasion, he had felt he must do as they desired, "but," he added, speaking loudly enough for the whole room to hear, "in accepting your invitation, I omitted to state that it would be impossible for me to come alone, and, therefore, I must beg that a chair may be set apart for another guest."

Everyone was astonished, for never had Gregory Barnstake been seen talking familiarly with anyone, never had he been supposed to have any intimate; and yet there was some one from whom he could not be separated himself even for a few hours.

"Is your friend in any way interested in this proposed railway encroachment?" asked the squire.

"Not in the least."

"Has he any property about here?"

"None whatever."

"We have not expected anyone here today," stammered the squire, getting very red in the face, "who was not in some way connected or, at all events, interested in the subject we have met to discuss, but, of course—"

"If you have any objection I will at once withdraw."

"No, no; on no account. I was about to add that any friend of yours we would accept."

There was a silence, then a short desultory conversation, and in the middle of it dinner was announced.

"Has your friend arrived?" asked the squire of his strange acquaintance. "I see no unfamiliar face amongst us."

"He is not here, yet, but he is sure to come. If I may keep this seat next to me vacant for him, it is all I require."

No objection was made, the party took their seats, leaving that one chair unoccupied; the covers were removed, and the dinner commenced.

There was not much conversation then, for the Mapletonians held that to dine was one of the chief duties of man; but ere the first course was at an end the entire party, with one accord, raised their eyes from their plates and fixed them on a figure sitting in the chair that had been left vacant. Gregor Barnstake alone seemed quiet and unsurprised. In the chair by his side sat a man, remarkable more for his aristocratic appearance than for any beauty of feature. His age, apparently, was between forty and fifty; his hair and whiskers were iron grey, and arranged with scrupulous neatness and precision; but the most extraordinary thing about him was his complexion, which was of a pale ash hue, such as to cause more than one to shudder and wonder. Another peculiarity about him was his attire. He was in full evening dress. His black coat and spotless shirt front, his sparkling studs and snowy cravat, contrasted strangely with the farmers' shooting jackets and the squire's bird's-eye neckerchief.

Quietly he sat at table, eating nothing, but trifling with the fork laid beside his plate. No one had seen him enter, no one had observed him take his seat, but there he sat as calmly and unconcernedly as if he were a bidden guest, known to the whole company.

As he played with the fork with his left hand another fact was apparent, which was that the second and third fingers on that hand were wanting.

It was strange that, while the whole table paused to regard the stranger the only person who seemed unconscious of his presence was he who sat by his side, and through whose agency he was in the room. There was a great awkwardness about it, the squire thought, for Gregory Barnstake had apparently no intention of introducing him, and not one of the company

seated in that warm gas-lighted room, with a good dinner on the table before them, but felt a sensation of uneasiness, for which they were totally unable to account.

"Come, gentlemen," said the squire, feeling it incumbent upon some one to break the silence, "there's no occasion for so much solemnity, I hope. Mr. Parkhurst, pleasure of a glass of wine with you."

Mr. Parkhurst filled his glass.

"Ah," continued the squire, "I remember old Tony buying this wine—very good it is, too—let me see when was it; '44, I think."

"No," said the stranger, "'48."

"I beg your pardon sir. Did you know Tony Bean?"

The stranger shook his head.

"Anyhow it was in the year Jem Hales was transported for poaching. His time's up now; he'll be coming home soon, I suppose."

"Jem Hales will never come home," said the stranger.

"Do you know him then?"

"I saw him a short time since."

"Indeed. In England?"

"No."

"Where is he now?"

"In his grave."

The squire gazed, not without a certain amount of fear, on the uninvited guest, and pursued the matter no further.

The conversation at the dinner-table languished, and, in spite of one or two attempts to revive it, finally died into confidential whisperings between those sitting next each other.

With the removal of the cloth the spirits of the company revived, and the squire, getting on his legs, inveighed with all the eloquence of which he was master against all the railway companies, and that one in particular which threatened to destroy the primitive innocence of Mapleton. Everybody spoke at once, and the meeting had like to have proved a failure, but Gregory Barnstake, rousing himself, made a speech such as had never been heard in Mapleton, putting all the facts before them clearly and concisely, and urging the immediate drawing up and signing of the proposed petition.

All this time the stranger sat calm and immovable, but when preparations were being made for framing the petition he spoke.

"You may spare yourself trouble," he said; "your petition will be of no avail."

"How do you know that?" asked the squire sharply.

"I state a fact."

"Perhaps you are a shareholder in the company," said a farmer, in a tone meant to be sarcastic.

"This day nineteen months," said the stranger, "a train will pass through Mapleton."

"I hope you are a false prophet, sir," said the squire.

"I am not," rejoined the other.

In spite of his prediction, the petition was drawn up and signed, and the meeting broke up.

"You see we persevere in our plan, although you predict failure," said the squire, putting on his hat.

The stranger bowed.

"Good evening, sir."

"We shall meet again. In eight weeks."

"You are certainly a very circumstantial prophet," answered the squire, and with a slight bow he left the room.

Said Dr. Sweetman, taking Gregory Barnstake by the button, "an extraordinary-looking man, your friend."

"Very."

"Excuse me, I don't wish to be impertinent, but, in the interest of my profession, do you know if he is suffering from any internal disease?"

"He is not. I can answer for it," said Gregory with a slight shudder.

"It is strange. I never saw a living man with such a complexion."

"He is not a living man," was the reply, and the speaker walked away, leaving the little doctor gazing after him in frightened astonishment.

Eight weeks after this dinner the squire was out with the hounds, and his horse, in taking a hedge, stumbled, and pitched his rider over his head. The squire was not hurt, neither was the horse, for he trotted away, leaving his owner to follow as best he might, and over fields and hedges he went, till, on emerging from a small copse, he saw his steed standing by a pond, and near to him the figure of a man. The man was dressed in spotless evening attire, and was without a hat and the squire in a moment identified him as the stranger at the dinner two months before.

His appearance had been singular enough within the walls of the "Seven Stars", but now to meet him in a precisely similar dress in the open coun-

try was much more startling, and the squire, though a brave man, would have avoided him if possible; he would have given a well-filled purse to have been able to reach his horse without passing by the motionless figure, but it was an impossibility, so, raising his hat and putting as bold a face on it as he could, he thanked the stranger for catching his beast, but received not a syllable in response. Only, at last, when he had remounted his horse did the figure move, then it turned towards him, and, stretching out the hand on which the two fingers were missing, pointed to the water.

The squire set spurs to his horse and rode away.

The days became weeks, and the weeks months, the railway company got permission to make their line through Mapleton, and some hundred navvies were busily employed in making an embankment. In draining the pond which was memorable to the squire they found something which induced them to leave off work for the time, and send for the authorities to the spot, and that something was the skeleton of a man half-buried in the mud.

Dr. Sweetman was, of course, amongst those summoned. The bones were left untouched for his inspection.

"It's strange," he said, when he had finished his inspection, "but there are two fingers wanting."

There was nothing to be done after the inquiry but to place the bones in a coffin and inter them in the churchyard; but an idea had come into the doctor's head—a fancy—that Gregory Barnstake might know something of the skeleton. Had not that mysterious friend of his lacked two fingers of his left hand? So the doctor, on his way home, called at the house at the end of the village.

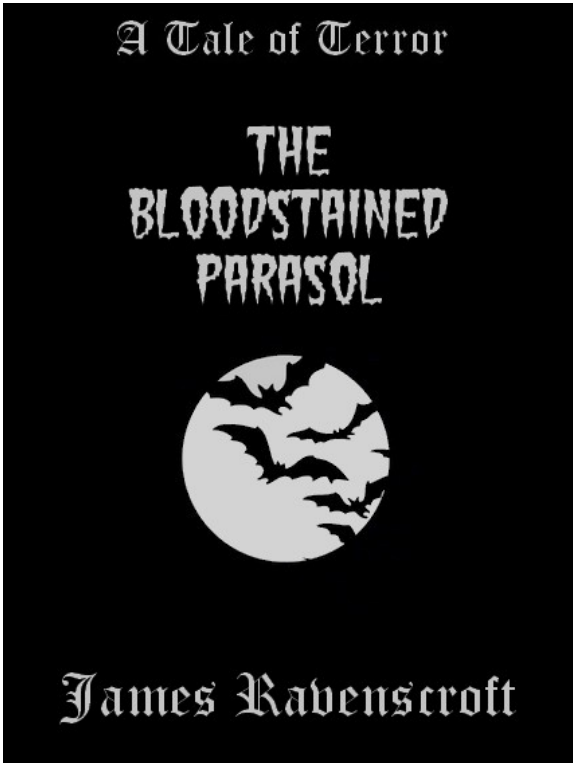
He rapped at the door with his knuckles, but received no answer. The door was on the latch and he pushed it open. He entered the sitting-room where he had had his first interview with its strange occupant, and the first thing that met his eyes was Gregory Barnstake stretched on the floor, his handsome face terribly distorted with pain—dead!

Was he really dead, or was it only one of those strange fits to which he was subject? The little doctor tried every test, and decided it was really death that had come upon him; that the agony of one of those fits had killed him. For the rest, I hardly dare tell you; but nevertheless it is true that, when the body came to be examined, over the heart were distinctly discernible the livid marks as of a hand pressed tightly there, but of a hand of which the second and third fingers were wanting.

That is the story I had to tell you. You are welcome to put what interpretation on it you please. It was a mystery, and a mystery it will always remain. I cannot attempt to give you a clue to one of the strangest stories it has ever been my lot to hear and know to be true.

In conclusion, I can only add that there are now at least a dozen men alive who can vouch for the accuracy of the facts I have stated, but who, like myself, whatever may be their opinions, forbear to attempt an explanation of this strange occurrence to which I, perhaps without sufficient reason, have given the name of "The Tale of a Gas-light Ghost."

THE END



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WITHIN the room were sounds that were unpleasant to hear. They were dreadful maniacal shouts of command, shrill cries of terror, the more awful because constantly broken by hoarseness, and moanings of infinite tenderness and sadness.

"He is in one of his spells," the attendant said. "Perhaps it would be just as well not to see him now. It is not a picture that you would want to carry with you."

The attendant's voice was one of gentle solicitude and pathos. Doubtless long service in the place had made it so. It was a private sanitarium in the National Capital, for the hopelessly insane, to which my profession as specialist and alienist gained me admittance.

The sounds hypnotized me: I could not turn away. The small iron grating in the upper part of the door drew me like a magnet, and I went and looked into the room.

A pale-faced, emaciated, wild-looking man, standing in the middle of a bare mattress on a heavy iron bedstand, was yelling and gesticulating madly at some imaginary object at the bottom of the door.

"Get away, curse you, get away!" he cried frantically. "Begone, you brute! Out of my sight! Would to God I had burned you as fine as ashes! Oh-h-h-h-h! Oh-h-h-h-h!"

The groans which ended the fury cannot be described; they were those of a soul in agony. His whole appearance was that of one convulsed with a terror as of death.

At first he did not see me as I peered through the grating; his eyes bright with the glitter of madness, were fixed in a fearful stare at the bottom of the door.

"It is over for a while," said the attendant.

The words roused the man and he raised his eyes to the grating. A wan smile of relief broke the expression of horror on his face, and he at once stepped off the bed and came to the door. A beady sweat, not the kind caused by heat, though the day was sultry, was on his brow and upper lip, and his body relaxing from the tension of the spell, was shaking with a nervous palsy. He was clad in pajamas of some coarse white material and his feet were bare.

"Pardon me," he spoke in low tones and with an accent of breeding, "but that infernal dog distracted my attention and I didn't see you. I'm glad you came. I remember you quite well, indeed. You were doing interne work, were you not?"

I yielded to his humor, grateful that I could help to ease his tortured spirit, and nodded affirmatively.

The glitter in his eyes seemed to be intensified, and putting his face almost against the grating, as though he meant his speech to be confidential, he said:

"Perhaps you saw her?" His voice was almost a whisper. "She came in when I was dissecting. I was always dissecting then, always dissecting. Understand? I cut things up, alive and dead, dead and alive. That was the beginning of the hell."

He said it so sanely, so remorsefully that I, startled, looked closely at him. Reason appeared to be reinstated on her throne. Then he broke out again.

"I cut them to pieces, but I didn't burn the pieces and they escaped, out of the windows, through the keyhole. They even hid in the pockets of my clothes until I was on the street, and then they would leap out and dart away."

He moistened his thin, dry lips with his tongue and took hold of the bars of the grating and went on:

"No, I didn't burn the pieces and they escaped. That dog follows me in pieces. At night its feet scratch the bottom of the door and its eyes look in between the bars of this window. Its red, dripping tongue lies on the bed beside me and its hot, horrible breath smothers me. Its footsteps trot up and down the floor and its hellish moans and whines drive me crazy. Listen! It was alive. That's why she struck me! A soft, white thing it was, and I threw up my hand and caught it. She dropped it and I took it and kept it. That's it, standing in the corner over there."

Involuntarily I shuddered and looked toward the corner designated by his gesture. There was nothing in any of the corners.

"And after the dog is gone, she comes. She comes, slipping, slipping. I can't hear her, I can't see her. She comes to get her parasol. But when she sees the bloodstains on it she turns to a ghost. I try to wash the stains out, but I can't. Every time I put water on them, they spread."

He leaned closer to the bars, and with one eye cautiously on the attendant, he whispered:

"I'm working on a solution that will entirely remove the bloodstains, so she will take the parasol, for when she does the dog will leave, and then I can get a long, quiet rest."

He paused and looked furtively around the room, and then began his awful babblings again.

He called piteously after me as the attendant took my arm and drew me away. I remembered little else that I saw in the sanitarium.

"Tell me about him," I implored, as soon as we were out of hearing of his cries. "Who is he? How did he come to be here?"The attendant hesitated.

"Not every one should hear that story," he remarked, thoughtfully, as if half talking to himself, "but, of course, with you, a specialist, it is different."

He took me to a chair on a porch. From there I could see into a section of the grounds of the inmates, where benighted beings were engaging in assuming their various and fantastic roles of madness.

"His name I shall not tell you," he began, "for that is a secret and very properly so. I shall only relate briefly what happened to him, as it came to me from his mother. His people are prominent and wealthy. It wrecked his mother's life, but the only thing that could be done was to give him up to this place. When they come here to see him they wait until he is comparatively free from symptoms of an attack, and then they go look in at the grat-

ing, as you did. Strange to tell, he recognizes only one of them, a sister, but he believes her to be a sister who died some two or three years before he became insane.

"Every possible care is given him and every famous specialist in the country has examined him. They say it is useless to hope; that he will be raving mad to the end of his days. When the fury seizes him he will hurl at his imaginary tormentors anything he can lift. That is why his room has nothing in it but a bed, and that is fastened to the floor with heavy cleats. The mattress, made of material that resists his nails, is securely attached to steel slats riveted to the bed frame, and there is no covering. Blankets, spreads, pillows and sheets were given him at first and he rent them to tatters fighting the 'dog'. In the winter his room is kept so warm that covering is not needed.

"His was accounted one of the brightest minds at the medical college in which he was a professor. It was predicted that he would do great things in surgery. He was making a special research in the field of vivisection. As he himself says, every time he can get some one to listen, that was the beginning of the hell.

"He was engaged to marry one of the loveliest young women of his city. From what I was told, she was as lovely in spirit as she was in person. The woman, it was said, was the real force that moved his work at such amazing strides. He was eager to give her of the very best of his energies and talents.

"As a quiet and close observer of life, I am sometimes almost persuaded to believe in fate. The story is that a whim possessed his fiancée to 'go through' the medical college, just, I presume, as a whim possessed you to go through this place. She said nothing to him of her intention for she wanted to surprise him.

"Two girl friends accompanied her, and together they explored. An attendant, who must have been exceedingly careless, was directing them, and at a certain place in their adventure fate willed that he should be called elsewhere for a few minutes. In those few minutes a man was doomed to madness, a woman's heart was broken, and several lives were made desolate.

"The place where the attendant left them was a corridor by the laboratory where dissecting and other experimental work was done. The doctor's fiancée opened the door of the room and peeped in. At the opposite side a man with his back to her was working over some object. She at once recognized the familiar figure, and, as fate would have it, she was seized with the caprice to steal up behind him. Telling her companions who he was, and bidding them wait in the corridor for the attendant, she went in, softly closed the door and noiselessly tiptoed along the aisle between benches.

"If there had been more light—but why say 'if,' other than if fate had not taken her there that day? Her lightly- slippered feet made no sound and she stood behind him unnoticed. He might have heard, but he was deeply engrossed in his work.

"She tilted slightly on one foot to look past him at the object which so held his attention. She gazed a moment, and then, as though forgetting his presence, she sprang to his side. A dog was stretched on the dissecting board. How she discovered the fact is a mystery, unless she saw with the inner and more penetrating vision, but she did see evidences of life in an animal that had been carefully prepared, by all the modern methods, as a subject for the dissector.

"The doctor dropped his instrument and stood staring at her, speechless. Had she dropped from above he could not have been more amazed and startled.

"'It is alive!' the girl gasped.

"'Yes,' he admitted. 'You had better not look at it. Please come away. How did you get here?'

"The girl never moved nor took her eyes from him.

"'It is in the interest of science of saving and preserving human life.' he began to explain. No doubt a cold fear was creeping into his heart at the sight of her. 'It is done in nearly all colleges and hospitals, you know. The animal is under a powerful anesthetic and does not feel pain.'

"A moment more she stood, so the tale goes, as though transfixed, and then—

"'You fiend, you coward!' she screamed, as she struck him in the face with her parasol. She swung it with all her strength for a second blow and he threw up his hands to ward it off. There were red smears where he touched it, and when she saw them she flung the parasol from her and swooned.

"Her companions, from where they were waiting in the corridor, heard the scream and the commotion, and rushed in just as the doctor was picking her up, and ran after him as he carried her to another room. He told them that she had fainted at the sight of the dissecting table.

"It was a fatal day for the doctor. In his excitement he had forgotten to wipe his hands before he lifted the girl, and there were red finger marks on her white dress. Almost as soon as she revived she saw them, and swooned again. And when she again revived she began trying to tear off the dress, like she had lost her reason. One of her companions telephoned to her home and fresh clothes were brought. It was perhaps all of an hour later when, sick and too weak to walk, she was carried from the room to which the doctor had taken her.

"That was the end. The doctor pleaded with the girl's father and mother, but in vain. She never again permitted him to see her. She said she would as soon marry a murdered. Night after night he paced the sidewalk in front of her home, and went away only when the lateness of the hour and the vacancy of the street made him conspicuous.

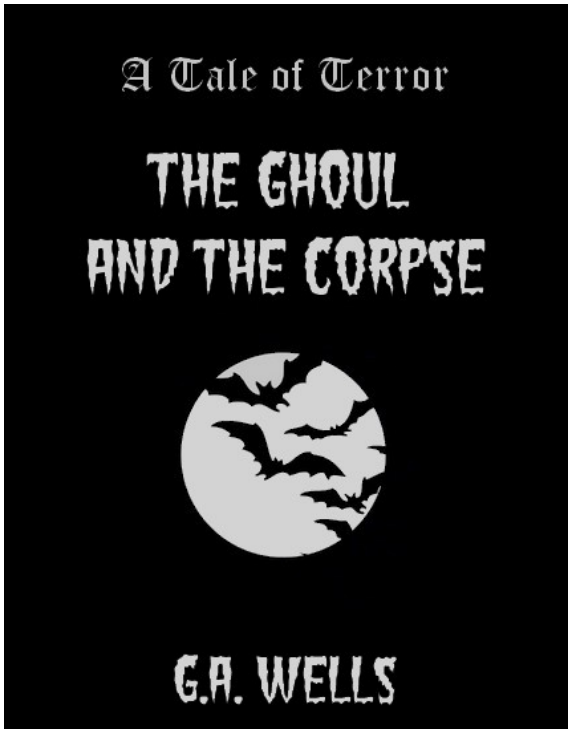
"He gave up his college work, neglected his personal appearance, and at last became like a haunted man. Many dark tales of what happened were whispered among friends and acquaintances of the two families. The girl became a nervous wreck and finally her people broke up their home and moved to a distant city.

"Then something in the doctor's brain cracked, and, well—you have seen for yourself."

He rose, a gentle reminder that he could not then spare me more of his time. As we shook hands in parting, he said:

"Vivisection may, possibly, be of service to medical and surgical science, but it has nothing to do with love."

THE END



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Here's An Extraordinary Yarn—

The Ghoul and the Corpse

By G. A. WELLS

THIS is Chris Bonner's tale, not mine. Please remember that I positively will not stand sponsor for it. I used to have a deal of faith in Chris Bonner's veracity, but that is a thing of the past. He is a liar; a liar without conscience. I as good as told him so to his face. I wonder what kind of fool be thinks I am!

Attend, now, and you shall hear that remarkable tale he told me. It was, and is, a lie. I shall always think so.

He came marching into my igloo up there at Aurora Bay. That is in Alaska, you know, on the Arctic sea. I had been in the back- country trading for pelts for a New York concern, and due to bad luck I didn't reach the coast until the third day after the last steamer out had cone. And there I was marooned for the winter, without chance of getting out until spring, with a few dozen ignorant Indians for companions. Thank heaven I had plenty of white man's grub in tins!

As I said, here came Chris Bonner marching in on me the same as you would go down the block a few doors to call on a neighbor.

"And where the devil did you drop in from?" I demanded, helping him off with his stiff parka.

"Down there," he answered, jerking an elbow toward the south. "Let's have something to eat, MacNeal. I'm hungry as hell. Look at the pack, will you?"

I had already looked at the pack he had cast off his shoulders to the fur-covered floor of the igloo. It was as lean as a starved hound. I heated a can of beef bouillon and some beans, and made a pot of coffee over the blubber-fat fire that served for both heat and light, and put these and some crackers before my guest. He tore into his meal wolfishly.

"Now a pipe and some tobac, MacNeal," he ordered, pushing the empty dishes aside.

I gave him one of my pipes and my tobacco-pouch. He filled and lighted up. He seemed to relish the smoke; I imagined he hadn't had one for some time. He sat silent for a while staring into the flickering flame.

"Say, MacNeal," he spoke at length; "what do you know about a theory that says once on a time this old world of ours revolved on its axis in a different plane? I've heard it said the earth tipped up about seventy degrees. What d'you know about it?"

That was a queer thing for Chris Bonner to ask. He was simon- pure prospector and I had never known him to get far away from the subject of mining and prospecting. He had been hunting gold from Panama to the Arctic Circle for the past thirty years.

"No more than you do, probably," I answered his question. "I've heard of that theory, too. I'd say it is any man's guess."

"This theory holds that the North Pole used to be where the Equator is now," he said. "Do you believe that?"

"I don't know anything about it, Chris," I replied. "But I do know that they have found things up this way that are now generally recognized as being peculiarly tropical in nature."

"What, for instance?"

"Palms and ferns, a species of parrot, saber-tooth tigers; and also mastodons, members of the elephant family. All fossils and parts of skeletons, you understand."

"No human beings, MacNeal? Any skeletons or fossils of those up this way?"

"Never heard of it. Prehistoric people are being found in England and France, however."

"Huh," he said.

He pondered, puffing at his pipe, his eyes on the fire. He looked perplexed about something.

"Look here, MacNeal," he said suddenly. "Say a man dies. He's dead, ain't he?"

"No doubt of it," I laughed, wondering.

"Couldn't come to life again, eh?"

"Hardly. Not if he were really dead. I've heard of cases of suspended animation. The heart, apparently, quits beating for one, two or possibly ten minutes. It doesn't in fact, though; it's simply that its beating can't be detected. When a man's heart stops beating he's dead."

Bonner nodded.

"'Suspended animation,'" he muttered, more to himself than to me. "That must be it. That's the only thing that'll explain it; nothing else will. If it could cover a period of ten minutes, why not a period of twenty or even a hundred thousand years—"

"If you'd like to turn in and get some rest, Chris, I'll fix you up," I broke in.

He caught the significance of my tone and grinned.

"You think I'm crazy, eh?" he said. "I'm not. It's a wonder, though, considering what I've seen and what I—here, let me show you something!"

He thrust a hand into his lean pack and brought forth an object that at first glance I thought to be a butcher's knife.

He handed it to me and I at once saw that it was not a butcher's knife as I knew such knives. It was a curious sort of knife, and one for which a collector of the antique would have paid good money.

It was a very dark color, almost black; corroded, it seemed to me, as if it had lain for a long time in a damp cellar. It was in one piece, the handle about five inches long and the blade perhaps ten inches. Both edges of the blade were sharp and the end was pointed like a dagger. And it certainly wasn't steel. I scratched one side of the blade with my thumbnail and exposed a creamy yellow under the veneer of black.

"Part of that's blood you scraped away, MacNeal," Bonner said. "Now what's that knife made of?"

I examined the yellow spot closely. The knife was made of ivory. Not the kind of ivory I was acquainted with, however; it was a very much coarser grain than any ivory I had ever seen.

"That came out of a mastodon's tusk, MacNeal," Bonner said.

I looked at him. He was nodding, seriously. He apparently believed what he said, at any rate.

"Nice curio, Chris," I commented, handing the thing back to him. "Heirloom, no doubt. Picked it up in one of the Indian villages, eh?"

He did not speak at once. He sat puffing, looking at the fire. Once he puckered his brows in a deep frown. I waited.

"I've been prospecting, as usual," he said at length. "Down there around the headwaters of the Tukuvuk. It's in awful place; nobody ever goes there. The Indians tell me the spirits of the dead live there. I can believe it; it's an ideal place for imps and devils. And I was right through the heart of it. I believe I'm the first. No matter how I got there; I came up from the south last summer. You see, I had idea there was gold in that country.

"The place where I finally settled down was in a little valley on one of the branches of the Tukuvuk between two ranges of hills running from five hundred to maybe three thousand feet high. Messy-looking place, it was; all lit-

tered up, as if the Lord had a few sizable chunks of stuff left over and just threw 'em down there to be out of the way.

"But the gold was there; I could almost smell it. I'd been getting some mighty nice color in my pan; that's what made me decide to stay there. I got there about the middle of July, and spent the rest of the summer sinking holes in the edge of the creek and along the benches above. What I found indicated that there was a mighty rich vein of the yellow metal thereabouts, with one end of it laying in a pocket of the stuff. If I could locate that pocket, I thought, I'd have the United States treasury backed off the map. But I wasn't able to run the pocket down by taking bearings from my holes, because the holes didn't line up in any particular direction.

"What with my interest in trying to get a line on that pocket, I didn't notice that the season was getting late. But I'd brought in enough grub to last the winter through, so that didn't matter. Just the same it was up to me to get some sort of shelter over my head, so I hustled up a one-room shack about twelve by twelve. I cut from the timber on the slopes with my hand-ax. Nothing fancy, but tight enough. I put in a fireplace and cut and stacked a lot of wood outside.

"That done, winter was on me; I simply couldn't resist the temptation to have one more try at finding the pocket that spewed the yellow metal all around there. As I said, I got no information from the holes sunk, and it was pure guesswork. I guessed I'd find my pocket on the side of a certain hill, about two hundred feet above creek-level. A glacier flowed down the side of that hill through a little gulley, and my idea was that the ice ground away at the pocket and brought the metal down to the creek, and the creek scattered it This theory was borne out to some extent by the fact that my best showings of color always came from a point a little below the conjunction of the creek and glacier.

"It was snowing the morning I took my pan and shovel and started up the side of the hill, keeping to the edge of the glacier. It wasn't much of a glacier for sure; say, about fifteen feet wide. I could see it winding up the side of the hill until it went out of sight through a cleft about a thousand feet up. Fed by a lake up there, probably.

"I had climbed the hill maybe a hundred feet, following the edge of the glacier, when I caught sight of a dark blotch in the edge of the ice. It was about two feet under the surface. I brushed away the film of snow to have a look. The ice was as clear as a crystal, of a blue color. And what d'you think, MacNeal? It was a man's body!"

He paused and gave me a quick glance. He wanted to see how I took that, I presume.

"The body of a man," he went on. "And the queerest-looking man I ever saw in my life. He was lying on his belly and I didn't get a look at the front of him just then, but I knew it was a man all right. He was covered all over with long hair like a—well, like a bear, say. Not a stitch of clothes."

"What did you do?" I asked.

"Why. I was that surprised I let my pan and shovel drop and stared at the damn thing with the eyes near popping out of my head. What would anybody do, finding a hair-covered thing like that frozen in a glacier? I won't deny I was a bit scared, MacNeal.

"Well, I stood there staring at the thing for I don't know how long. It didn't occur to me, then, to ask myself how the thing got there. Certainly the idea of fossils or prehistoric men didn't enter my head. I didn't think much about anything; I just stood there gaping.

"You know me, MacNeal; I guess I'm pretty soft-hearted in some respects. I'd stop to bury a dead dog I found in the road. I knew I wouldn't rest easy until I'd cut that thing out of the glacier and given it decent burial. Moreover, I didn't want it where I'd be seeing it when I went to work on that hillside in the spring, because I imagine that glacier didn't move an inch a year.

"So I went back to the shack and got my ax, and with none too good a heart for the job turned to and made the chips fly. It took me about three hours to get the thing out of the glacier. You see, as I came down to it I went slow; I don't care to hack even a dead man.

"Say, MacNeal, can you imagine what it meant to me, digging a corpse out of a glacier down there on the side of a hill in that devil-ridden country? No, you can't, and that's the truth. You'd have to go through it to know. It was hell. I don't want any more of it in mine. Nor what followed, either."

"What was that?" I asked when he deliberated.

"You'll hear," he answered, and went on: "I got the thing out at last, little chunks of ice clinging to it, and dragged it ashore, if a glacier has a shore. It froze me to look at the thing with those little chunks of ice sticking to the long hair. Once, at Dawson, I'd seen a man pulled out of the Yukon, ice clinging to him. That was different, though; at Dawson there was a crowd to sort of buck a man up. I turned the thing over on its back to see what it looked like in front."

"Well?" said I.

"You've seen apes, MacNeal?"

"This thing looked like that?" I countered, beginning to connect up his first queer questions with what he was telling me. "You don't mean it, Chris!"

"I'm telling you," he nodded solemnly. "An ape man, that's what it was. More man than ape, if you ask me. For instance, the face was flatter than an ape's, and the forehead and chin were more pronounced. The nose was flat, but it wasn't an ape's nose. And the hands and feet were like those of a man. Oh, it was a man, all right. The thing that convinced me, I think, was the knife gripped in its hand."

"The knife you have there?" I inquired.

"This very knife," he answered.

"What then, Chris?" I urged him to go on.

"I had a good look at that thing and then started for my shack. Yes, MacNeal, I ran, and I'm not ashamed to say so. It scared me. Ugliest thing I ever saw. Eyes wide open, glaring and glinting, and the thick lips parted to show the nastiest set of fangs I ever saw in the mouth of man or beast Why, I tell you the damned thing looked *alive*. No wonder I scooted. You would have done the same. Anybody would.

"Back in the shack, I sat down on my bunk to think it over. And it was while I sat there trying to puzzle it out that I remembered that theory about the earth tipping over. That gave me a hint of what I had run up against. Of course, I'd heard about fossils and parts of the skeletons of prehistoric men being found. Had I found, not a fossil or part of a skeleton, but the prehistoric man himself? That knocked the wind out of me. If that were the case my name would go down in history and I would be asked to give lectures before the scientific societies and such. Consider it, MacNeal.

"I tell you, I couldn't quite grasp the thing. It was incredible. There I was in this year of our Lord, with the intact corpse of a man who had lived God only knows how many centuries ago. That body, understand, could well be the key to the mystery of the origin of mankind. It might possibly settle the Darwinian theory forever, one way or the other. It was a pretty serious business for me, don't you see?

"Well, I decided to preserve the thing until I could get out and make a report of the find. But how to preserve it? Of course if I had left it in the glacier it would have kept indefinitely, like a side of beef in cold storage. I was afraid to put it back in the hole in the glacier and freeze it in again with water I carried from the creek; the creek water might exert some chemical action that would ruin the thing. And if I let it lay where it was the snow would cover it, form a warm blanket, and probably cause it to decompose, then I'd have nothing left but the skeleton. I wanted to save the thing just as I'd found it; maybe the scientists would find a way to embalm it.

"I finally hit on the plan of keeping it in an ice pack. That would turn the trick until the weather took on the job. It hadn't turned bitter cold yet. I tell you, it was a nasty job keeping that thing iced with chunks I chopped from the glacier, and to make it worse the weather stayed moderate for a couple of weeks. Then, suddenly, the mercury in my little thermometer went down with a rush and it got stinging cold. I carried the thing to the shack and stood it up against the wall outside where it couldn't be covered with snow, and lashed it there.

"Can you imagine me going to sleep in my bunk in the shack every night after that, with that thing standing against the wall outside not two feet away? Of course you can't. It frazzled my nerves, and more than once I was tempted to cut a hole in the ice on the creek and chuck the damn thing in where I'd never see it again. But no, I had to save it for the scientists and get

my name in history; that idea got to be an obsession with me. I knew well enough that if ever I told people the tale I'm telling you now, without some proof of it, I'd get laughed at."

"No doubt of it," I sneered.

"The days went by," he continued, ignoring my sneer, "and more and more that thing outside kept getting on my nerves. The sun went south, and from one day to another I never saw it The never- ending night was bad enough, but when you add the northern lights and the howling of the wolves you've got a condition that breaks a man if he's not careful. Furthermore, there was that ugly- looking devil outside to think about.

"I was thinking about that thing constantly, and got so I couldn't sleep. If I shut my eyes I'd see it, anyhow, and if I went to sleep I'd have a nightmare over it Now and then I'd go out and stand there in the starlight or the aurora looking at it. It fascinated me, yet the sight of the thing save me the creeps. Finally I began taking a club or my rifle along when I went to look at it; got afraid the thing would come alive and try to murder me with that knife.

"And that's the way of things for maybe three months and more. My thoughts all the time on that thing outside.

"Well, that couldn't go on, you know. One morning I woke up with the worst headache a man ever had. I thought my head would split wide open. My blood was like molten iron flowing through my veins. I knew what it was. *Fever*. I had thought and worried about that thing outside until it got me, and I was in for a brain-storm. I was as weak as a cat, but managed to build up a good fire and pack my bunk with all the blankets and furs I had and crawl in. I only hoped I wouldn't freeze to death when the fire went out.

"I no sooner got all set in the bunk than things let go; I went completely off. I can't say positively what happened for a few days after that. Seems like I remember, though, periods when I was semi-rational. I think once I got up to put more wood on the fire. Another time I saw that thing standing in the doorway grinning at me like the devil it was. I shot at it with my rifle and later found a bullet in the door. My shooting couldn't have been a delusion, at any rate. But the door was still fastened against the wolves and there were no tracks in the snow outside."

Bonner paused to light his pipe, and then went on:

"I don't know exactly how long I was out of my head. I'd wound my watch before I crawled into the bunk the first time, and I half remember I wound it again when I got up to put wood on the fire, and it was pretty well run down. It goes forty hours without winding, yet when my head cleared it had stopped. I must have been off my nut about four days.

"Well, you can lay your bottom dollar I'd had enough of prehistoric men hanging around the shack by that time. Let the scientist be damned; I was determined to get rid of that thing the quickest way possible. The quickest

way, I thought, would be to get the corpse warm so it would decompose rapidly, then I'd put it outside where the wolves and ravens would pick the bones clean. The scientists would have to be satisfied with the skeleton.

"So I made a big fire in the fireplace and got the shack good and hot, then went out and brought in the corpse. I got sick at the stomach on that job, but that was the only way. I didn't have the heart to leave the thing outside and build a fire over it out there. I try to respect the dead, even if the corpse is that of a man who had been dead several thousand years and looked more like an animal than a human being.

"I laid the thing on the floor before the fireplace, then sat down on the bunk to wait. I watched it pretty close, because, being dead so long, I thought when it got warm and started to decompose it would go like butter; I didn't want the shack to be all smelled up with the stink of it. Probably half an hour went by, then all of a sudden *I saw the thing quiver*—"

"Your brain-storm returning," I interposed.

"Wait," said Bonner sharply. "It quivered; not much, but enough to notice. That sort of got me, then I reasoned that anything thawing out like that would naturally quiver a little. Maybe another fifteen or twenty minutes passed, then one of the legs moved. Jerked, sort of. It startled me. Remember, there I was down there in those hills alone with that thing. I was pretty susceptible to weird influences, understand. Anyhow, the leg moved, and—"

"It sat up and asked for a drink of water." I could not help putting in.

Bonner continued, paying no attention to my sarcasm. He seemed to be talking aloud to himself:

"I watched it like a hawk for some time after that, then as I didn't see it move any more I stepped outside to get some more wood for the fire and to pull a few good breaths of cold air into my lungs. That shack was like the inside of an oven.

"When I went in again I saw that the damned thing *had turned over on its back*.

"Turned over on its back, I say. And there was a change in the eyes, too; they had a half-awake sort of look in them; a more *alive* look, understand. And breathing! Yes, sir, *breathing!* Why the thing didn't see me when I came in and shut the door I don't know, but apparently it didn't. And, believe me or not, the hand that had held the knife was open and the knife was lying on the floor apart from the body.

"Crazy? I tell you *no!* I was as sane as I am now. I tell you I saw these things with my own two eyes; saw them just as plain as I see you now. I see you don't believe me, MacNeal. Oh, well, I don't blame you; I hardly believe it myself sometimes."

He uttered a little laugh.

"But there it was, just as I'm telling you. And I was that gone when I saw that the thing had turned over on its back that I dropped the wood I had in my arm. The crash of it on the floor brought the thing to its feet on the jump. You needn't look at me like that; I tell you it did. I take my oath it did! There it was, crouched like a panther ready for the spring, the eyes of it flashing like fire, its lips pulled back tight across the gums and the yellow fangs showing. Can you see that? No, you can't."

Bonner made an expressive gesture with one hand.

"Remarkable, but the thing hadn't seen me yet. It was looking at the fire; it was half turned toward me so I could see that. Suddenly it screamed in an outlandish gibberish and leaped to the fireplace and tried to gather in an armful of flames. I take it the thing had never seen fire before; didn't know what it was; probably imagined it some kind of wild animal. Naturally the only thing it got out of that play was burned arms and bands, and the long hair sizzled and curled. It leaped back with a snarl, spitting that funny gibberish. Talk, I guess it was; it came from way down in the belly and sounded like pigs grunting.

"I tell you, MacNeal, I was fair dazed. But I had the sense left to try to help myself. My rifle was leaning against the bunk and I made a quick dive for it Then, apparently, the thing saw me for the first time. The way it glared at me with those glittering eyes was a caution. I didn't stop to argue; I snatched up the rifle, cocked it and made a snap shot. The bullet caught the thing in the left breast and the blood gushed. Of course you don't believe it. But blood, I tell you, gushed from the breast of a thing that had been frozen in a glacier for thousands of years!

"Well, here it came like a cyclone. I didn't have time to shoot again. Smell? That thing smelled like carrion; almost strangled me. Maybe you know how the cage of a wild animal stinks if it ain't cleaned out for a week or two. This thing smelled like that, only worse. I can smell it yet. Lord!"

Bonner wrinkled his nose and shivered.

"But there we were at grips, the thing making those belly noises and smelling like a thousand garbage piles. It had the strength of ten men; I sensed that. It jerked the rifle from me and bent the barrel of it double with a twist of the wrists. The barrel of a thirty-eight caliber Winchester rifle—bent it as easy as you or I would bend a piece of copper wire.

"Then we were at it, fighting like a couple of wild cats all over the shack. I'm no slouch of a man myself, MacNeal, when it comes to a rough-and-tumble; but that thing handled me like a baby. I could see my finish. We threshed about the floor, me fighting like a devil, it fighting like forty devils. We kicked into the fire and out again and scattered live coals all over the place, and the shack took fire.

"I was just about gone when my hand accidentally fell on the handle of the knife the thing had dropped on the floor. I hung on to it and poked away

at that thing for all I was worth, driving the blade clean up to the hilt with every punch."

"That knife?" I broke in.

"This knife," answered Bonner. "There's the dried blood on it yet But I think it was really the bullet that did the work. It must have cut an artery. Anyhow, the blood kept gushing out of the thing's breast; it got on my hands and made 'em slippery. I knew the thing couldn't pour out blood like that and keep going; that's what put the heart in me to keep on fighting. And, as I say, I think it was the bullet that did the work in the long run. A lucky shot, otherwise I wouldn't be here now.

"I felt the thing sagging and going limp in my hands, and its grip began to relax. I saw my chance and put up a knee and broke the grip and kicked it away. It staggered around a moment or two, clutching its breast with its bloody paws, gnashing its fangs and staring murder at me; then it crashed own to the floor and fell smack into the flames.

"I saw plain enough there was no chance of saving the shack, so I snatched up what I could lay my hands on in the way of food and clothing and blankets, and tore out. I don't remember putting the knife in my pocket, but that's where I found it later. The shack burned down to nothing, and that thing burned with it; probably not a bone of it left. The scientists were out of luck and the mystery of mankind would remain unsolved.

"I didn't stop to investigate, of course; my job was to make tracks. I knew about this village and came on. How I got here I don't know; this is a terrible country to cross afoot in the winter. I'd turned my ten huskies adrift to shift for themselves when I reached the valley where all this happened; I didn't have the grub to keep them going. I had to walk here.

"And that's all, MacNeal. You can say what you please; I know what I saw with my own eyes and you can't change my mind about it. Suspended animation? Yes, for a period covering many centuries. It would be a mighty fine thing if we could picture what happened away back there when this old earth tipped over.

"Perhaps we'd see a man, a man that was half ape, crossing a creek with a knife in his hand on the way to murder an enemy sleeping on the opposite bank. Then suddenly the earth tipped over—climatic conditions in those days were such as to freeze things up in a flash—things are held in the grip of the ice just as the dust and lava held 'em in the days of Pompeii, and—

"Well, who's to say what happened? Anything was possible. We don't know the conditions of those days. Anyhow, here I come thousands of years later and dig a man, with a knife in his hand, out of a glacier. I heat his body in order to decompose the flesh. Instead of decomposing, he comes to life and I have to kill him. He's been hibernating in a glacier for centuries. I don't know what to think about it."

Bonner refilled and lighted his pipe, then looked at me questioningly.

"Chris," I said, "I tell you frankly that I don't believe a word you have said. You tell me you were out of your head for a few days. That accounts for it. You had the jim-jams and imagined all that, then try to spring it on me as actual fact."

He looked hurt. He looked at the knife in his hand steadily for several long moments, then thrust it toward me, his eyes boring into mine.

"Then where in hell," he demanded, "did I get this knife?"

THE END