PAST MASTERS 206

H. de Vere Stacpoole
Tod Robbins
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Ring Lardner
Jacques Futrelle
Edward Dyson
Fergus Hume
Ernest Favenc
Bret Harte
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and more

PAST MASTERS 206

Produced and Edited by Terry Walker from short stories in magazines, newspapers and other sources, and all in the Life + 70 years public domain.

10 March 2025

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1: The Ghost's Touch

Fergus Hume

1859-1932

Weekly Times (Melbourne) 17 Dec 1898

In: *The Dancer in Red* (and other stories), 1906

I SHALL never forget the terrible Christmas I spent at Ringshaw Grange in the year '93. As an army doctor I have met with strange adventures in far lands, and have seen some gruesome sights in the little wars which are constantly being waged on the frontiers of our empire; but it was reserved for an old country house in Hants to be the scene of the most noteworthy episode in my life. The experience was a painful one, and I hope it may never be repeated; but indeed so ghastly an event is not likely to occur again. If my story reads more like fiction than truth, I can only quote the well-worn saying, of the latter being stranger than the former. Many a time in my wandering life have I proved the truth of this proverb.

The whole affair rose out of the invitation which Frank Ringan sent me to spend Christmas with himself and his cousin Percy at the family seat near Christchurch. At that time I was home on leave from India; and shortly after my arrival I chanced to meet with Percy Ringan in Piccadilly. He was an Australian with whom I had been intimate some years before in Melbourne: a dapper little man with sleek fair hair and a transparent complexion: looking as fragile as a Dresden china image, yet with plenty of pluck and spirits. He suffered from heart disease; and was liable to faint on occasions; yet he fought against his mortal weakness with silent courage; and with certain precautions against over-excitement, he managed to enjoy life fairly well.

Notwithstanding his pronounced effeminacy, and somewhat truckling subserviency to rank and high birth, I liked the little man very well for his many good qualities. On the present occasion I was glad to see him, and expressed my pleasure.

"Although I did not expect to see you in England," said I, after the first greetings had passed.

"I have been in London these nine months, my dear Lascelles," he said, in his usual mincing way, "partly by way of a change and partly to see my cousin Frank,— who indeed invited me to come over from Australia."

"Is that the rich cousin you were always speaking about in Melbourne?"

"Yes. But Frank is not rich. I am the wealthy Ringan, but he is the head of the family. You see, doctor," continued Percy, taking my arm and pursuing the subject in a conversational manner, "my father, being a younger son, emigrated to Melbourne in the gold-digging days, and made his fortune out

there. His brother remained at home on the estates, with very little money to keep up the dignity of the family; so my father helped the head of his house from time to time. Five years ago both my uncle and father died, leaving Frank and me as heirs, the one to the family estate, the other to the Australian wealth. So—"

"So you assist your cousin to keep up the dignity of the family as your father did before you."

"Well, yes, I do," admitted Percy, frankly. "You see, we Ringans think a great deal of our birth and position. So much so, that we have made our wills in one another's favour."

"How do you mean?"

"Well, if I die Frank inherits my money; and if he dies, I become heir to the Ringan estates. It seems strange that I should tell you all this, Lascelles; but you were so intimate with me in the old days that you can understand my apparent rashness."

I could not forbear a chuckle at the reason assigned by Percy for his confidence, especially as it was such a weak one. The little man had a tongue like a town-crier, and could no more keep his private affairs to himself than a woman could guard a secret. Besides I saw very well that with his inherent snobbishness he desired to impress me with the position and antiquity of his family, and with the fact— undoubtedly true — that it ranked amongst the landed gentry of the kingdom.

However, the weakness, though in bad taste, was harmless enough, and I had no scorn for the confession of it. Still, I felt a trifle bored, as I took little interest in the chronicling of such small beer, and shortly parted from Percy after promising to dine with him the following week.

At this dinner, which took place at the Athenian Club, I met with the head of the Ringan family; or, to put it plainer, with Percy's cousin Frank. Like the Australian he was small and neat, but enjoyed much better health and lacked the effeminacy of the other. Yet on the whole I liked Percy the best, as there was a sly cast about Frank's countenance which I did not relish; and he patronised his colonial cousin in rather an offensive manner.

The latter looked up to his English kinsman with all deference, and would, I am sure, have willingly given his gold to regild the somewhat tarnished escutcheon of the Ringans. Outwardly, the two cousins were so alike as to remind one of Tweddledum and Tweddledee; but after due consideration I decided that Percy was the better-natured and more honourable of the two.

For some reason Frank Ringan seemed desirous of cultivating my acquaintance; and in one way and another I saw a good deal of him during my stay in London. Finally, when I was departing on a visit to some relatives in

Norfolk he invited me to spend Christmas at Ringshaw Grange— not, as it afterwards appeared, without an ulterior motive.

"I can take no refusal," said he, with a heartiness which sat ill on him. "Percy, as an old friend of yours, has set his heart on my having you down; and — if I may say so— I have set my heart on the same thing."

"Oh, you really must come, Lascelles," cried Percy, eagerly. "We are going to keep Christmas in the real old English fashion. Washington Irving's style, you know; holly, wassail-bowl, games, and mistletoe."

"And perhaps a ghost or so," finished Frank, laughing, yet with a side glance at his eager little cousin.

"Ah!" said I. "So your Grange is haunted."

"I should think so," said Percy, before his cousin could speak, "and with a good old Queen Anne ghost. Come down, Doctor, and Frank shall put you in the haunted chamber.

"No!" cried Frank, with a sharpness which rather surprised me, "I'll put no one in the Blue Room; the consequences might be fatal. You smile, Lascelles, but I assure you our ghost has been proved to exist!"

"That's a paradox; a ghost can't exist. But the story of your ghost—"

"Is too long to tell now," said Frank, laughing. "Come down to the Grange and you'll hear it."

"Very good," I replied, rather attracted by the idea of a haunted house, "you can count upon me for Christmas. But I warn you, Ringan, that I don't believe in spirits. Ghosts went out with gas."

"Then they must have come in again with electric light," retorted Frank Ringan, "for Lady Joan undoubtedly haunts the Grange. I don't mind; as it adds distinction to the house."

"All old families have a ghost," said Percy, importantly. "It is very natural when one has ancestors."

There was no more said on the subject for the time being, but the upshot of this conversation was that I presented myself at Ringshaw Grange two or three days before Christmas. To speak the truth, I came more on Percy's account than my own, as I knew the little man suffered from heart disease, and a sudden shock might prove fatal. If, in the unhealthy atmosphere of an old house, the inmates got talking of ghosts and goblins, it might be that the consequences would be dangerous to so highly strung and delicate a man as Percy Ringan.

For this reason, joined to a sneaking desire to see the ghost, I found myself a guest at Ringshaw Grange. In one way I regret the visit; yet in another I regard it as providential that I was on the spot. Had I been absent the

catastrophe might have been greater, although it could scarcely have been more terrible.

Ringshaw Grange was a quaint Elizabethan house, all gables and diamond casements, and oriel windows, and quaint terraces, looking like an illustration out of an old Christmas number. It was embowered in a large park, the trees of which came up almost to the doors, and when I saw it first in the moonlight— for it was by a late train that I came from London— it struck me as the very place for a ghost.

Here was a haunted house of the right quality if ever there was one, and I only hoped when I crossed the threshold that the local spectre would be worthy of its environment. In such an interesting house I did not think to pass a dull Christmas; but— God help me— I did not anticipate so tragic a Yule-tide as I spent.

As our host was a bachelor and had no female relative to do the honours of his house the guests were all of the masculine gender. It is true that there was a housekeeper— a distant cousin I understood— who was rather elderly but very juvenile as to dress and manner. She went by the name of Miss Laura, but no one saw much of her as, otherwise than attending to her duties, she remained mostly in her own rooms.

So our party was composed of young men— none save myself being over the age of thirty, and few being gifted with much intelligence. The talk was mostly of sport, of horse racings big game shooting and yacht-sailing: so that I grew tired at times of these subjects and retired to the library to read and write. The day after I arrived Frank showed me over the house.

It was a wonderful old barrack of a place, with broad passages, twisting interminably like the labyrinth of Daedalus; small bedrooms furnished in an old-fashioned manner, and vast reception apartments with polished floors and painted ceilings. Also there were the customary number of family portraits frowning from the walls; suits of tarnished armour; and ancient tapestries embroidered with grim and ghastly legends of the past.

The old house was crammed with treasures, rare enough to drive an antiquarian crazy; and filled with the flotsam and jetsam of many centuries, mellowed by time into one soft hue, which put them all in keeping with one another. I must say that I was charmed with Ringshaw Grange, and no longer wondered at the pride taken by Percy Ringan in his family and their past glories.

"That's all very well," said Frank, to whom I remarked as much; "Percy is rich, and had he this place could keep it up in proper style; but I am as poor as a rat, and unless I can make a rich marriage, or inherit a comfortable legacy, house and furniture park and timber may all come to the hammer."

He looked gloomy as he spoke; and, feeling that I had touched on a somewhat delicate matter, I hastened to change the subject, by asking to be shown the famous Blue Chamber, which was said to be haunted. This was the true Mecca of my pilgrimage into Hants.

"It is along this passage," said Frank, leading the way, "and not very far from your own quarters. There is nothing in its looks likely to hint at the ghost— at all events by day— but it is haunted for all that."

Thus speaking he led me into a large room with a low ceiling, and a broad casement looking out on to the untrimmed park, where the woodland was most sylvan. The walls were hung with blue cloth embroidered with grotesque figures in black braid or thread, I know not which. There was a large old-fashioned bed with tester and figured curtains and a quantity of cumbersome furniture of the early Georgian epoch. Not having been inhabited for many years the room had a desolate and silent look — if one may use such an expression— and to my mind looked gruesome enough to conjure up a battalion of ghosts, let alone one.

"I don't agree with you!" said I, in reply to my host's remark. "To my mind this is the very model of a haunted chamber. What is the legend?"

"I'll tell it to you on Christmas Eve," replied Rigan, as we left the room. "It is rather a bloodcurdling tale."

"Do you believe it?" said I, struck by the solemn air of the speaker.

"I have had evidence to make me credulous," he replied dryly, and closed the subject for the time being.

It was renewed on Christmas Eve when all our company were gathered round a huge wood fire in the library. Outside, the snow lay thick on the ground, and the gaunt trees stood up black and leafless out of the white expanse. The sky was of a frosty blue with sharply-twinkling stars, and a hard-looking moon. On the snow the shadows of interlacing boughs were traced blackly as in Indian ink, and the cold was of Arctic severity.

But seated in the holly-decked apartment before a noble fire which roared bravely up the wide chimney we cared nothing for the frozen world out of doors. We laughed and talked, sang songs and recalled adventures, until somewhere about ten o'clock we fell into a ghostly vein quite in keeping with the goblin-haunted season. It was then that Frank Ringan was called upon to chill our blood with his local legend. This he did without much pressing.

"In the reign of good Queen Anne," said he, with a gravity befitting the subject, "my ancestor Hugh Ringan, was the owner of this house. He was a silent misanthropic man, having been soured early in life by the treachery of a woman. Mistrusting the sex he refused to marry for many years; and it was not until he was fifty years of age that he was beguiled by the arts of a pretty girl

into the toils of matrimony. The lady was Joan Challoner, the daughter of the Earl of Branscourt; and she was esteemed one of the beauties of Queen Anne's court.

"It was in London that Hugh met her, and thinking from her innocent and child-like appearance that she would make him a true-hearted wife, he married her after a six months' courtship and brought her with all honour to Ringshaw Grange. After his marriage he became more cheerful and less distrustful of his fellow-creatures. Lady Joan was all to him that a wife could be, and seemed devoted to her husband and child— for she early became a mother— when one Christmas Eve all this happiness came to an end."

"Oh!" said I, rather cynically. "So Lady Joan proved to be no better than the rest of her sex."

"So Hugh Ringan thought, Doctor; but he was as mistaken as you are. Lady Joan occupied the Blue Room, which I showed you the other day; and on Christmas Eve, when riding home late, Hugh saw a man descend from the window. Thunderstruck by the sight, he galloped after the man and caught him before he could mount a horse which was waiting for him. The cavalier was a handsome young fellow of twenty-five, who refused to answer Hugh's questions. Thinking, naturally enough, that he had to do with a lover of his wife's, Hugh fought a duel with the stranger and killed him after a hard fight.

"Leaving him dead on the snow he rode back to the Grange, and burst in on his wife to accuse her of perfidy. It was in vain that Lady Joan tried to defend herself by stating that the visitor was her brother, who was engaged in plots for the restoration of James II., and on that account wished to keep secret the fact of his presence in England. Hugh did not believe her, and told her plainly that he had killed her lover; whereupon Lady Joan burst out into a volley of reproaches and cursed her husband. Furious at what he deemed was her boldness Hugh at first attempted to kill her, but not thinking the punishment sufficient, he cut off her right hand."

"Why?" asked everyone, quite unprepared for this information.

"Because in the first place Lady Joan was very proud of her beautiful white hands, and in the second Hugh had seen the stranger kiss her hand— her right hand— before he descended from the window. For these reasons he mutilated her thus terribly."

"And she died."

"Yes, a week after her hand was cut off. And she swore that she would come back to touch all those in the Blue Room— that is who slept in it— who were foredoomed to death. She kept her promise, for many people who have slept in that fatal room have been touched by the dead hand of Lady Joan, and have subsequently died."

"Did Hugh find out that his wife was innocent?"

"He did," replied Ringan, "and within a month after her death. The stranger was really her brother, plotting for James II., as she had stated. Hugh was not punished by man for his crime, but within a year he slept in the Blue Chamber and was found dead next morning with the mark of three fingers on his right wrist. It was thought that in his remorse he had courted death by sleeping in the room cursed by his wife."

"And there was a mark on him?"

"On his right wrist red marks like a burn; the impression of three fingers. Since that time the room has been haunted,"

"Does everyone who sleeps in it die?" I asked.

"No. Many people have risen well and hearty in the morning. Only those who are doomed to an early death are thus touched!"

"When did the last case occur?"

"Three years ago," was Frank's unexpected reply. "A friend of mine called Herbert Spencer would sleep in that room. He saw the ghost and was touched. He showed me the marks next morning— three red finger marks."

"Did the omen hold good?"

"Yes. Spencer died three months afterwards. He was thrown from his horse."

I was about to put further questions in a sceptical vein, when we heard shouts outside, and we all sprang to our feet as the door was thrown open to admit Miss Laura in a state of excitement.

"Fire! fire!" she cried, almost distracted. "Oh! Mr. Ringan," addressing herself to Percy, "your room is on fire! I—"

We waited to hear no more, but in a body rushed up to Percy's room. Volumes of smoke were rolling out of the door, and flames were flashing within. Frank Ringan, however, was prompt and coolheaded. He had the alarm bell rung, summoned the servants, grooms, and stable hands, and in twenty minutes the fire was extinguished.

On asking how the fire had started, Miss Laura, with much hysterical sobbing, stated that she had gone into Percy's room to see that all was ready and comfortable for the night. Unfortunately the wind wafted one of the bed-curtains towards the candle she was carrying, and in a moment the room was in a blaze. After pacifying Miss Laura, who could not help the accident, Frank turned to his cousin. By this time we were back again in the library.

"My dear fellow," he said, "your room is swimming in water, and is charred with fire. I'm afraid you can't stay there to-night; but I don't know where to put you unless you take the Blue Room."

"The Blue Room!" we all cried. "What! the haunted chamber?"

"Yes; all the other rooms are full. Still, if Percy is afraid—"

"Afraid!" cried Percy indignantly. "I'm not afraid at all. I'll sleep in the Blue Room with the greatest of pleasure."

"But the ghost—"

"I don't care for the ghost," interrupted the Australian, with a nervous laugh. "We have no ghosts in our part of the world, and as I have not seen one, I do not believe there is such a thing."

We all tried to dissuade him from sleeping in the haunted room, and several of us offered to give up our apartments for the night— Frank among the number. But Percy's dignity was touched, and he was resolute to keep his word. He had plenty of pluck, as I said before, and the fancy that we might think him a coward spurred him on to resist our entreaties.

The end of it was that shortly before midnight he went off to the Blue Room, and declared his intention of sleeping in it. There was nothing more to be said in the face of such obstinacy, so one by one we retired, quite unaware of the events to happen before the morning. So on that Christmas Eve the Blue Room had an unexpected tenant.

On going to my bedroom I could not sleep. The tale told by Frank Ringan haunted my fancy, and the idea of Percy sleeping in that ill-omened room made me nervous. I did not believe in ghosts myself, nor, so far as I knew, did Percy, but the little man suffered from heart disease— he was strung up to a high nervous pitch by our ghost stories— and if anything out of the common— even from natural causes— happened in that room, the shock might be fatal to its occupant.

I knew well enough that Percy, out of pride, would refuse to give up the room, yet I was determined that he should not sleep in it; so, failing persuasion, I employed stratagem. I had my medicine chest with me, and taking it from my portmanteau I prepared a powerful narcotic. I left this on the table and went along to the Blue Room, which, as I have said before, was not very far from mine.

A knock brought Percy to the door, clothed in pyjamas, and at a glance I could see that the ghostly atmosphere of the place was already telling on his nerves. He looked pale and disturbed, but his mouth was firmly set with an obstinate expression likely to resist my proposals. However, out of diplomacy, I made none, but blandly stated my errand, with more roughness, indeed, than was necessary.

"Come to my room, Percy," I said, when he appeared, "and let me give you something to calm your nerves."

"I'm not afraid!" he said, defiantly.

"Who said you were?" I rejoined, tartly. "You believe in ghosts no more than I do, so why should you be afraid? But after the alarm of fire your nerves are upset, and I want to give you something to put them right. Otherwise, you'll get no sleep."

"I shouldn't mind a composing draught, certainly," said the little man. "Have you it here?"

"No, it's in my room, a few yards off. Come along."

Quite deluded by my speech and manner, Percy followed me into my bedroom, and obediently enough swallowed the medicine. Then I made him sit down in a comfortable arm-chair, on the plea that he must not walk immediately after the draught. The result of my experiment was justified, for in less than ten minutes the poor little man was fast asleep under the influence of the narcotic. When thus helpless, I placed him on my bed, quite satisfied that he would not awaken until late the next day. My task accomplished, I extinguished the light, and went off myself to the Blue Room, intending to remain there for the night.

It may be asked why I did so, as I could easily have taken my rest on the sofa in my own room; but the fact is, I was anxious to sleep in a haunted chamber. I did not believe in ghosts, as I had never seen one, but as there was a chance of meeting here with an authentic phantom I did not wish to lose the opportunity.

Therefore when I saw that Percy was safe for the night, I took up my quarters in the ghostly territory, with much curiosity, but— as I can safely aver— no fear. All the same, in case of practical jokes on the part of the feather-headed young men in the house, I took my revolver with me. Thus prepared, I locked the door of the Blue Room and slipped into bed, leaving the light burning. The revolver I kept under my pillow ready to my hand in case of necessity.

"Now," said I grimly, as I made myself comfortable, "I'm ready for ghosts, or goblins, or practical jokers."

I lay awake for a long time, staring at the queer figures on the blue draperies of the apartment. In the pale flame of the candle they looked ghostly enough to disturb the nerves of anyone: and when the draught fluttered the tapestries the figures seemed to move as though alive. For this sight alone I was glad that Percy had not slept in that room. I could fancy the poor man lying in that vast bed with blanched face and beating heart, listening to every creak, and watching the fantastic embroideries waving on the walls. Brave as he was, I am sure the sounds and sights of that room would have shaken his nerves, I did not feel very comfortable myself, sceptic as I was.

When the candle had burned down pretty low I fell asleep. How long I slumbered I know not: but I woke up with the impression that something or some one was in the room. The candle had wasted nearly to the socket and the flame was flickering and leaping fitfully, so as to display the room one moment and leave it almost in darkness the next. I heard a soft step crossing the room, and as it drew near a sudden spurt of flame from the candle showed me a little woman standing by the side of the bed. She was dressed in a gown of flowered brocade, and wore the towering head dress of the Queen Anne epoch. Her face I could scarcely see, as the flash of flame was only momentary; but I felt what the Scotch call a deadly grue as I realized that this was the veritable phantom of Lady Joan.

For the moment the natural dread of the supernatural quite overpowered me, and with my hands and arms lying outside the counterpane I rested inert and chilled with fear. This sensation of helplessness in the presence of evil, was like what one experiences in a nightmare of the worst kind.

When again the flame of the expiring candle shot up, I beheld the ghost close at hand, and— as I felt rather than saw— knew that it was bending over me. A faint odour of musk was in the air, and I heard the soft rustle of the brocaded skirts echo through the semi-darkness. The next moment I felt my right wrist gripped in a burning grasp, and the sudden pain roused my nerves from their paralysis.

With a yell I rolled over, away from the ghost, wrenching my wrist from that horrible clasp, and, almost mad with pain I groped with my left hand for the revolver. As I seized it the candle flared up for the last time, and I saw the ghost gliding back towards the tapestries. In a second I raised the revolver and fired. The next moment there was a wild cry of terror and agony, the fall of a heavy body on the floor, and almost before I knew where I was I found myself outside the door of the haunted room. To attract attention I fired another shot from my revolver, while the Thing on the floor moaned in the darkness most horribly.

In a few moments guests and servants, all in various stages of undress, came rushing along the passage bearing lights. A babel of voices arose, and I managed to babble some incoherent explanation, and led the way into the room. There on the floor lay the ghost, and we lowered the candles to look at its face. I sprang up with a cry on recognising who it was.

"Frank Ringan!"

It was indeed Frank Ringan disguised as a woman in wig and brocades. He looked at me with a ghostly face, his mouth working nervously. With an effort he raised himself on his hands and tried to speak— whether in confession or

exculpation, I know not. But the attempt was too much for him, a choking cry escaped his lips, a jet of blood burst from his mouth, and he fell back dead.

Over the rest of the events of that terrible night I draw a veil. There are some things it is as well not to speak of. Only I may state that all through the horror and confusion Percy Ringan, thanks to my strong sleeping draught, slumbered as peacefully as a child, thereby saving his life.

With the morning's light came discoveries and explanations. We found one of the panels behind the tapestry of the Blue Room open, and it gave admittance into a passage which on examination proved to lead into Frank Ringan's bedroom. On the floor we discovered a delicate hand formed of steel, and which bore marks of having been in the fire. On my right wrist were three distinct burns, which I have no hesitation in declaring, were caused by the mechanical hand which we picked up near the dead man. And the explanation of these things came from Miss Laura, who was wild with terror at the death of her master, and said in her first outburst of grief and fear, what I am sure she regretted in her calmer moments.

"It's all Frank's fault," she wept. "He was poor and wished to be rich. He got Percy to make his will in his favour, and wanted to kill him by a shock. He knew that Percy had heart disease and that a shock might prove fatal; so he contrived that his cousin should sleep in the Blue Room on Christmas Eve; and he himself played the ghost of Lady Joan with the burning hand. It was a steel hand, which he heated in his own room so as to mark with a scar those it touched."

"Whose idea was this?" I asked, horrified by the devilish ingenuity of the scheme.

"Frank's!" said Miss Laura, candidly. "He promised to marry me if I helped him to get the money by Percy's death. We found that there was a secret passage leading to the Blue Room; so some years ago we invented the story that it was haunted."

"Why, in God's name?"

"Because Frank was always poor. He knew that his cousin in Australia had heart disease, and invited him home to kill him with fright. To make things safe he was always talking about the haunted room and telling the story so that everything should be ready for Percy on his arrival. Our plans were all carried out. Percy arrived and Frank got him to make the will in his favour. Then he was told the story of Lady Joan and her hand, and by setting fire to Percy's room last night I got him to sleep in the Blue Chamber without any suspicion being aroused."

" You wicked woman!" I cried. "Did you fire Percy's room on purpose?"

"Yes. Frank promised to marry me if I helped him. We had to get Percy to sleep in the Blue Chamber, and I managed it by setting fire to his bedroom. He would have died with fright when Frank, as Lady Joan, touched him with the steel hand, and no one would have been the wiser. Your sleeping in that haunted room saved Percy's life, Dr. Lascelles: yet Frank invited you down as part of his scheme, that you might examine the body: and declare the death to be a natural one."

"Was it Frank who burnt the wrist of Herbert Spence some years ago?" I asked.

"Yes!" replied Miss Laura, wiping her red eyes. "We thought if the ghost appeared to a few other people, that Percy's death might seem more natural. It was a mere coincidence that Mr. Spence died three months after the ghost touched him."

"Do you know you are a very wicked woman, Miss Laura?"

"I am a very unhappy one," she retorted. "I have lost the only man I ever loved; and his miserable cousin survives to step into his shoes as the master of Ringshaw Grange."

That was the sole conversation I had with the wretched woman, for shortly afterwards she disappeared, and I fancy must have gone abroad, as she was never more heard of. At the inquest held on the body of Frank the whole strange story came out, and was reported at full length by the London press to the dismay of ghost-seers: for the fame of Ringshaw Grange as a haunted mansion had been great in the land.

I was afraid lest the jury should bring in a verdict of manslaughter against me, but the peculiar features of the case being taken into consideration I was acquitted of blame, and shortly afterwards returned to India with an unblemished character. Percy Ringan was terribly distressed on hearing of his cousin's death, and shocked by the discovery of his treachery. However, he was consoled by becoming the head of the family, and as he lives a quiet life at Ringshaw Grange there is not much chance of his early death from heart disease— at all events from a ghostly point of view.

The blue chamber is shut up, for it is haunted now by a worse spectre than that of Lady Joan, whose legend (purely fictitious) was so ingeniously set forth by Frank. It is haunted by the ghost of the cold-blooded scoundrel who fell into his own trap; and who met with his death in the very moment he was contriving that of another man. As to myself, I have given up ghost-hunting and sleeping in haunted rooms. Nothing will ever tempt me to experiment in that way again. One adventure of that sort is enough to last me a lifetime.

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2: Mrs Brown at the Royal Academy

Arthur Sketchley

George Rose, 1817-1882

In: *The Brown Papers*, 1870

The Brown Papers *contains 31 of Mrs Brown's encounters with such aspects of London life in the 1860s as The Opera, The Old Bailey, the Lord Mayor's Show, and other events. They were originally published in a magazine called "Fun", a short-lived rival to "Punch" though aimed at the lower middle class rather than "Punch's" upper-middle readership.*

WELL, they may call it a academy if they likes, but it is no more like Mr. Spanker's as I used to wash for as had a blue board and gold letters in the Bow-road than nothing, and as for me going it was only thro' Mrs. Simmons a-wishing to consult one of them West-end doctors about her throat, and feeling nervous says, "Would you mind for to accompany me, Mrs. Brown, now?"

So I says as I would with pleasure thro' her being far from strong, and her own mother being gone to nurse another daughter as is married out at Rotherhithe. So we went in a cab as was the joltingest as ever I got into, with both windows up, tho' Mrs. Simmons's throat, as a draught might have laid hold on.

When we gets to the doctor's, and was showed into a elegant room as had picters round about as seemed to speak like, one gent had a eye like a hawk as seemed to foller you all over the room. I couldn't a-set in that room alone with that picter was it ever so, and was glad when the gentleman as let us in as I took for the doctor, and began a-telling about Mrs. Simmons, as checked me—too rude, but never mind, and certainly I never see such kindness as that octor, never, tho' I was surprised as he should a-took me for Mrs. Simmons's mother, as must be sixty if she's a day.

It give me a dreadful turn when I see that doctor a-ramming of drum-sticks, as I should call 'em, down Mrs. Summons's throat, and am certain as would haw choked me as couldn't even bear a herring-bone as was near my death. But it did wonders, for, law! she spoke quite clear. So I says, "If ever my throat is bad he's the man as I'll go to, and that liberal as wouldn't take her money," and away we goes.

So we walks on slow, for I says,

"Mrs. Simmons, mum," I says, "Cabs is cabs, and runs into money," so I says, "I don't see why a omblibus shouldn't do."

So she was agreeable, and we wanders on, and took a bun, as is choking work if it hadn't been for a glass of ale, and I must say them West-end streets is wide and shady ; and when we come near Charing-cross I see parties going up some steps, so I says to the policeman, "Whatever is a-going on here?"

"Oh," he says, "it's the Royal 'Cademy!"

"Oh," I says, "indeed! What, where," I says, "the young princes goes to school, I presumes?"

Well, he seemed to smile, and says, "No, as it were all picters."

"What!" I says, "Royal picters?"

"Yes," says he.

"Oh, indeed!" I says. "Well," I says, "can any one go in?"

"Yes," he says, "any one as pays a shilling."

''Well," I says, "that ain't much for to see the Royal picters, as must be awful grand."

So Mrs. Simmons and me agrees to go up, and there was sentries a-standing guard, so we pays the money and goes in; not as I held with my umbrella being took away, and there's more stairs outside and in than I cares for; but certainly the picters was lovely with their gold frames a-gleaming, as the saying is.

"Why," I says, "they must be worth millions. No doubt that's the reason they has soldiers to guard them."

Mrs. Simmons she bought a book all about 'em as she would have read to me, only parties kep' a-shoving and a-driving, and me not having my glasses couldn't read for myself.

I suppose as there ain't no one but ladies and gentlemen as goes to them picters, but of all the shoving and driving sets as ever I came a-near they beat 'em.

I says, "Wherever are you a-coming to?"

"We wants to see the Royal picters," says a young gal.

"So do I," I says, "so wherever is the use of driving any one in the back like that?" and certainly that Royal picter was lovely, for all the world exactly like the waxwork as I see at the Baker's bazaar, as is reg'lar life all but breathing.

Well, this "Royal Marriage" is very near as handsome, tho' it don't look so grand thro' being small.

Mrs. Simmons says to me, "In my opinion the Queen didn't ought to have gone like that." I says,

"Wherever is the Queen?"

''Why," says she, "the widow lady up in the window."

"Go along," I says, "why she ain't got no crown on."

"No," she says, "that's her way, she always is in weeds."

"Ah!" I says, "some does go on like that. I'm sure if anything was to happen to Brown, weeds would be my constant potion; not as I holds with weeds at a wedding; that's the reason, p'raps, as she have put on that bit of blue for to take off the black."

"Oh," says a young chap as was a-standing there "that's the garter."

I says, "Young man," I says, "however dare you mention such a thing afore ladies. You did ought to be ashamed of yourself."

But he only giggled like a jackass, as I see he was.

Well, I was a-standing looking at a picter, tho' I'd seen one just like it all but the colours afore in the *Lustrous Penny Paper* as we takes in. I says to Mrs. Simmons, "Did ever you see such 'eaps of parsons? One would think it was a misshnery meetin." I says, "They can't have much to do."

Well, a stout party as was standing near says to one of them very parsons, "As she couldn't see nothing, cos of this fat old woman as has been sticking here all the morning."

I says, "Who are you a calling fat? I'm sure you'd better look at home for fat."

So the parson he says, "My good woman, don't be offensive."

I says, "Offensive," I says, "I scorns your words;" and I says, "As to sticking, I shall stick here as long as I please ; and I think if you was at home a-preaching of your sermons you'd be better employed than a-idling away your time here." I says, "Offensive! if you come to that you're none so agreeable," and I walks off in a huff.

"Well," I says, "Mrs. Simmons, I don't think much of these picters ; give me wax-work as is more natural."

She says, "Oh, I wants to see the Prince of Wales!" So we goes to where he was a-'anging, and I never did— not a bit like the beautiful young gentleman in the velvet and whiskers as was being married, but a poor sick thing, as I says to Mrs. Simmons, "If he was a child of mine, asses' milk would be the word with me."

Then there was horses and dogs all over the place, and picters of ladies and gentlemen as wore frill and velvets, with their boots a-shining like anything, and there was bishops as looked as tho' in pain, pertikler one as they call the Bishop of London, as will be apoplexy very shortly if he will wear that stock, and there was another bishop as I took for a lady, thro' having of a red gownd and no crinoline, with clean muslin sleeves. And we met a lady as was very friendly, and knowd all about the picters and them as painted 'em.

I says, "It's very tiring," I says, "to the eye to have to look up. Why ever do they hang 'em up there ?"

"Oh," she says, "them picters isn't 'Cademicians."

"Oh," I says, "I suppose done by the day boys?"

She only laughs and says as "There is many as tries all their lives to get hung and can't."

I says, "You may well say that; but," I says, "they hardly ever hangs any-one now-a-days."

Well, we sat down, we talked quite pleasant, for my feet was that shooting like jobbing daggers, and I really felt quite of a whirl, and was that sorry as I hadn't no refreshments with me, for picters is dry work, and then Mrs. Simmons got in a fidget to be getting home, so we hadn't time for to study them like, but see one as give me quite a turn. Mrs. Simmons said as it was a sacred one, but I should say it was the old gentleman with a pair of yellow horns a-branching out each side; so I was a-pointing 'em out to Mrs. Simmons when up come a Jack-in-office of a policeman and says,

"If I see you do it again you'll have to step it."

"Step what?" I says.

"Why," says he, "I've been a-watching you a-poking and a-pointing all the way round the room."

Well, just then a lady hollers out, "Oh, I'm robbed!" It give me such a turn. She says, "My portmoney is gone, and this old woman's been a-following me everywhere."

I thought I should have dropped, for the policeman takes hold of me, and poor Mrs. Simmons she was ready to faint, and there was such confusion, and they was a-talking of searching me, and I don't know what, when all of a sudden the party as said she was robbed hollers out, "No. I've got it."

"Well," I says, "you did ought to be ashamed of yourself," I says; "I won't stop in such a den of wagabones. It's my opinion as you looks more like a thief than a horse yourself, mum," and so I bounced out of the place, and, bless ye, if I hadn't been and dropped the ticket for my umbrella, and they wouldn't give it me, as in my opinion is all part of their swindling ways; and when we got out we was both that faint as we couldn't move a step, so was compelled to have a cab home, and all I've got to say, its my belief as that 'Cademy is a humbug altogether, and I'm sure they don't learn no manners there; and as to their picters, I'd rather see 'em quiet in the lustrous papers as I can enjoy in my own house.

3: Some Women and a Rotter

Thomas Bailey Clegg

1857-1945

The Bulletin (Sydney) 11 Dec 1926

"I RANG you up three times."

"I was in court all the morning, then lunch; but now I've half an hour."

John Clitheroe filled a pipe leisurely before shaking himself comfortably into his chair. His much younger brother George, seated on the opposite side of the writing-table, was the working-partner of the firm of Gellatly and Clitheroe, solicitors; the senior member had been invalided for some years past. He was master of all the detail of a large and long-established business. Should any difficulty present unusual features he came to John for consultation, the elder brother, after many years striving, being established in a lucrative practice at the Bar.

"About ten o'clock this morning," said George, "Mrs. Barstow called at the office."

"Was Dorrie with her?" He used the familiar shortened name of Dorothea Barstow, his brother's fiancee.

"Oh no. You see the trouble is about her father. It didn't surprise me, for I can't say I like the fellow."

"Barstow plays a good game of golf," interjected John. "Don't know anything else about him."

"For the past two or three months he's been very erratic in his movements. You know, they don't run too well in harness, and lately he's been getting a bit over the odds. The mater—as she will be soon— got a bit ratty over it. Too many week-ends fishing and motoring, with late nights at his club— bridge, poker and the rest of it. The usual put-up stuff. Then some old cats threw out hints served up with the usual sauces. Finally the two had a scene. He denied any woman and tried to bluff it off. The mater is shrewd enough in her way, and got an obliging friend to do a little amateur detective work. The upshot is that she has enough information to satisfy her that there is a woman in the case. She let Barstow know and asked him to give up this woman, if not for her sake at least for Dorrie's, and so avoid a scandal. Of course Dorrie knows nothing, but her mother contemplates a divorce if Barstow is not amenable. She told him so."

"Well, what did he say?"

"Oh, took it without turning a hair. Said in effect that she could do as she bally well pleased. So that's how it stands."

"Couldn't she put the screw on? He hasn't a penny to his name, has he?"

"Very little of his own. The mater, who has a better head for bridge than business, years ago left her affairs practically in his hands. Even authorised her bank to accept his signature to cheques."

"Well, she'd better cancel it; probably her money is keeping up the second establishment."

"You often see Barstow on the links. Couldn't you contrive a talk with him?— this is the mater's suggestion. She's determined to have a divorce if he doesn't cut out the woman at once, and she wants you, as a friend of the family, to impress that on him— thinks it would come with more force if he knew you were behind her. He must see that if she succeeds it means boot-uppers for him; and she will only hold her hand to save publicity and mud."

"I'll try. George, but it's a dashed unpleasant job. Lays one open to a straight-out snub, of course."

A week later, George Clitheroe was called to the 'phone by John, who fixed noon to see him at the latter's chambers.

"Well, I inveigled Barstow here after a diplomatic luncheon at the club-rooms," he said, picking up the story. "Having got him I opened out in the role of the family friend and in view of your approaching marriage to his daughter. I asked him what he proposed to do; said the publicity of divorce proceedings would be hateful to all concerned on our side, but they would have to go on if he didn't quit the woman at once. The rotter was sitting opposite to me, just as you are, a cigarette in his month and as cool as a cucumber. He drew a long whiff from the fag, threw it away and remarked almost cheerfully: 'My dear Clitheroe, you can't do it. Where's your proof of adultery, to start with?' I told him we had ample proof— a bit of bluff, by the way, but no doubt we could get it—and he then went on to say that even if I had what we thought convincing proof he could blow our case out like a match. Then he winked at me— probably the effect of my generosity in drinks —and said. 'Look here, Clitheroe, a man can't commit adultery with his wife, can he?' I couldn't for the moment make sense of it— could you? Then he went on:

'You have brought me here to talk about my private affairs— even threatened divorce. That may be a professional matter, but I'm not your client. If I tell you the facts— and, in confidence, I have no objection to do so, as it may possibly save you and my wife some trouble— it must be on the pledge of your honor not to use them against me in any legal process.' I agreed provided that you also, under the same undertaking, could be apprised of what he stated."

"It won't pass my lips, John.''

"Now this is what he told me. In 1897, when living in London, he married a woman whom he referred to as Emily. They seem to have been an unhappily

mated pair. She was handsome but passionate, self-willed and subject to prolonged fits of moroseness. Twice she left him, but subsequently they were reconciled. They had no children, and in 1900, in one of her recurrent fits, she left him for the third time. On that occasion he took no steps to bridge the gap between them. They went separate ways. She had from her father's estate a small annuity barely sufficient to maintain her, and he was doing a bit in what he called 'outside brokerage.' For five years he heard nothing of or from her, though she could have ascertained his address.

"On a vacation trip he met Mary Stevens— as she then was. He was apparently, in those youthful days, a type of man attractive to women. They were engaged, and married a few months later. The same year they came to Sydney, where Mary had been born, and early in the following year she had a daughter. They were very comfortably fixed, if not wealthy, as Mrs. Barstow had then come into her slice of the family property. All went well till a few months ago. Barstow seems to have managed his wife's affairs with some success— though she never made any settlement on him. One day he was in a tram when he noticed a woman, seated opposite, staring at him very intently. Her face was in some way familiar, but he could not at the moment place it. He left the tram. She followed and on the footway drew abreast of him and touching his arm, said, 'Ned, don't you know me?' Then it came to him in a flash— she was his wife, Emily.

"They crossed the roadway into Hyde Park and walked together. About half an hour later they parted, to meet afterwards and renew their broken marital life. 'The position, as it seems to me,' said the Rotter, 'is this: If my second wife— to call her so— goes on with the divorce she will come up against the bigamy. That's Emily's threat, not mine. Then on conviction and sentence Mary will be left neither wife nor widow and Dorrie will be the child of an illegitimate marriage. There is a name for such a child. So Mary, if she goes on with her divorce, will drive a knife into her own heart and into Dorrie's. You can picture for yourself the headings in the evening newspapers and their snapshots. Not too pleasant, is it?' "

"Well— I— I'm damned!" ejaculated George, choking with indignation.

"That's how it stands —just where he left it. The question is, What are we going to do?"

George first broke silence. "The only thing that suggests itself to me is to buy off the woman— if she is to be bought."

"Who's going to do it? What's the woman's position?"

"Not too well off, I should say. Came out as a nurse to some children. Perhaps she had information— that I don't know. At present she seems to be kept by him."

"Well, I must be off," said John rising hurriedly and taking his gown from its peg. "Think it over and let me know."

A week later, about 4.30, as the afternoon light of a winter day was waning, John Clitheroe switched on the shaded lamp at his table and started to read-up a report he needed for reference the following morning. Tommy, the boy in whose miscellaneous services he had a fifth share, interrupted him to announce that a lady was waiting to see him. She had not sent in a card or given a name.

"What does she look like, Tommy?" The boy had been well primed not to admit philanthropic beggars of either sex.

"Don't look like a orspital lady— just or'nary lady."

"Oh, well, send her in."

Tommy opened the door and she entered. John rose and placed a chair. The shaded light gave him but a blurred impression of a face that suggested pugnacity rather than amiability, the face of one who could hold her own—yet with a certain pathetic wistfulness about it.

"Mr. Barstow has spoken to me of an interview he recently had with you," she said, taking the proffered chair.

"Oh yes, we are well acquainted— his daughter is my brother's fiancee."

"So I understand; and that, I suppose, accounts for your interest in our affairs?"

"In his, certainly."

The situation was strained. The visitor, however, quickly relieved it. "I wish to speak to you in confidence, if I may?"

"Anything you wish to say will be between ourselves— and, of course, my brother, who is equally concerned."

"So Mr. Barstow said. I suppose he told you the whole story?"

"Well, he told me what he thought fit, whether the whole or not I can't, of course, say."

To this she made no reply and a brief silence followed; then clearly and emphatically came the words: "You want to get rid of me."

"That's rather an abrupt way of putting it. But you see the position is—"

"Yes, I see all that. But have you thought of me— my position?"

"That, too, is difficult."

"Look, Mr. Clitheroe," and she put her elbow on the table, resting her cheek against the upraised hand, her eyes staring straight into his. "I am not a girl and am past romance. All that ended long ago. But I am a woman, and in my own way I want the rights I am entitled to— what the law gives me. I am not so old that I should be a passionless clod, or a piece of marble, Mr. Clitheroe. I'm— I'm just a human being, a woman."

John nodded his head gravely; all situations cannot be covered by words.

"We never had a child, though I dearly wanted one. She has what should have been given to me if— if— if God had played fair. Now she wants him too, all to herself, though he's mine, not hers. Even if we didn't always pull together, still we— we belonged. You understand! It wasn't so deadly lonely then as it has been since— and I can't stand it for ever. One grows older, and even quarrelling— well, even that's a sort of company. It's better than to belong to no one, to have no earthly soul belonging to you. I wonder— I wonder if you understand what it means— means to a woman. Why should she have my man— and the girl, too, that ought to have been mine? Don't you see how one-sided it is, Mr Clitheroe: and she has money too, and friends. My God, has she a right to have everything, and me— nothing!" and for a moment passion flared into her face. "Yet, you don't care so long as you can save her and her girl."

"But you must see what will happen if the facts come out and Barstow is convicted and imprisoned— what becomes of you?"

"What's a year, perhaps, and it may not be half that. I can wait; he'll still be mine. She can't get him; there's the girl— that's her share."

Clitheroe stared at the printed pages before him, searching desperately for some solution to this problem of two women and a rotter.

She rose. "I just thought you ought to see the other side— my side, that's why I came."

"Yes, there's your side and hers. What about his? Is he man enough to stick by you—cut his easy life and share your poverty? Will he leave the country if, say, some financial arrangement can be made? Couldn't it be fixed up some way? What good can it do you to ruin two absolutely innocent lives? Then, later on, a divorce can be arranged quietly, just as if no previous marriage existed. You have only thought of yourself; couldn't you give a little thought, a little sympathy to this young girl just on the eve of marriage? It is no fault of hers nor of her mother that she should be branded as illegitimate and be the butt of spiteful tongues. Think it over."

He opened the door for her. "After all, it doesn't pay really to be cruel, does it?"

She went out into the dimly-lit passage-way. A lonely figure, it struck him. Perhaps there was something in belonging to someone, and someone belonging to you.

THREE DAYS LATER Clitheroe, turning over his morning's correspondence, came upon a letter addressed to him in the angular characters of a departed school, he opened it with a sense of curiosity and read: —

Dear Mr. Clitheroe, —You may remember what you said when I left that afternoon. I've been thinking it over, trying to put myself in the girl's place, if you can understand, for I don't want to be cruel, if I was sure, for some girls mightn't care. If I was sure, it might make a difference. Couldn't I find out for myself what she'd really think. I don't know that I ought to give up everything, though it isn't money I'm thinking of.

It was signed "Emily Barstow" and gave as address the G.P.O.

"One damn problem after another!" muttered Clitheroe. Then he lit his pipe, the consoler, the fount of wisdom, and with hands clasped behind his head stared at the yellow ceiling. In a corner a spider scuttled across its web to seize an entangled fly. His face wrinkled —wasn't life just one big cobweb?

Then his thoughts turned inward. Yes, perhaps it could be done. He scribbled a note: "I shall be free to-morrow afternoon; call here at three o'clock," and, addressing it, handed it to Tommy for the post.

A few minutes later he rang up George.

"Could you arrange with Dorrie to call here at 3.30 to-morrow afternoon? I want to see her about the mater's settlement on her marriage. Oh no, I just want her to understand. What? Yes, of course. Get her to come sharp on time."

At three o'clock the following afternoon, Tommy again ushered in the or'nary lady. "It's very good of you, Mr. Clitheroe, to bother about me. Perhaps I oughtn't to have worried you with my note. I suppose you think me— funny?"

"Not at all. I don't pretend to understand ladies— lawyers never do, and I'm a bachelor, too. Now, let's get to business. You want to know what Miss Dorrie thinks about it. Perhaps we can fix that up. This door behind my chair opens into a sort of lumber-room where I stow old papers It is very dusty and rather dark. I've arranged for Miss Dorrie to call here in— yes, about ten minutes. If you will sit very quietly in that room, I'll leave the door a bit open so that you can hear all she says. I'll put her chair on this side. You can't see her, but when she leaves you can watch her from my window as she goes into the street."

She consented, and when Dorrie entered, the chambers were apparently unoccupied save by Clitheroe.

"Well, Dorrie, sorry to worry you over legal affairs, but I want to have everything straight before your marriage— not long to wait now, eh? Now about the mater. She wants to settle something on you that will give you a little independence— that's what women like nowadays, isn't it?" Then he plunged into the middle of affairs. His suggestions were brief and to the point and had her assent. Running his fingers through some papers, he picked up one.

"No, that's not it! But— why, Dorrie you might give me a woman's view about a little matter involved here— I think I can recall the facts. What do you think of this? A woman, middle aged, but still attractive and still loving what life can give, isso placed that she can, by doing a certain thing, ensure her own ends— getting something out of life she didn't get in her youth, but wanted; say some sort of companionship. To do it she may risk the happiness of a very much younger woman— a girl, in fact— by casting a slur upon her name and on the name of her mother. Just when life is opening out to this girl. That will hit her hard. I feel for the two of them and I don't know what to advise. What would you do if you were that woman? Do you think she ought to grasp at what she considers the little left to her at the price of the girl's happiness? She would be quite within her rights in doing it."

Dorrie's young face grew sober. Then over it came a look— a light, a suffused radiance; a something hard to fit with words.

"I think," she said slowly— "I think— that if I'd lost what my own youth should have given, I'd try—though it would be very hard, very hard indeed— I'd try to just make the best of what was left without hurting the other woman— in the way you say. You see John, you couldn't spoil another life like that and really regain your happiness. It would be always coming back like like a sort of ghost. Now could you?"

"My dear, that's sheer sentiment, this woman has rights. The law gives them to her, and like us, she's human."

"Yes. John. I know; but being a woman she might think other things counted more— things like— like— What's that?"

"What?"

"I thought I heard a noise. It sounded like—"

"Well, what?"

"Like a sob, John, though it couldn't be."

"No, my dear, how could it? I suppose it's Tommy sniffling outside— he sniffles from May to October. Now, my learned counsellor, off you go, and— thank you for a woman's help."

As Tommy closed one door, Clitheroe opened another. He led Emily to the window. She saw the young figure come out of the shadow of the building into the light, graceful, dainty, sweet as a tall-stalked flower lifting its pure face to the sun. It was youth.

"Mr. Clitheroe, could you arrange for my passage to England?"

"Alone?"

"Yes."

"Of course I could, and, more—"

"I want nothing more, but I can't pay the passage money. I haven't got it. And soon, please."

She moved towards the door. As they reached it John took her hand.

"Will you pardon me?" and he raised it to his lips. "Just to remind me-what we forget these days— there is still the fire of sacrifice in women." And he bent as she passed through into the empty corridor.

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4: No Flowers

Gordon Arthur Smith

1886-1944

Harper's Magazine May 1920

STEVE DEMPSEY was a conspicuously ingenious chief machinist's mate— one of the most ingenious in the Naval Aviation Forces, Foreign Service, and he was ingenious not only with his hands, but with his tongue. That is why I cannot guarantee the veracity of what follows; I can but guarantee that he guaranteed it.

Steve had had a varied and highly coloured career, and I think that the war, or so much of it as he was permitted to see, seemed to him a comparatively tame affair— something all in the year's work. When he was fifteen years old he was conducting his father's public garage in a town not far from Denver; at that age he knew as much about motors as the men who built them, and he had, moreover, the invaluable knack of putting his finger immediately on a piece of erring mechanism and, with the aid of a bit of wire and a pair of pliers, setting it to rights. Given enough wire and a pair of pliers, I believe that he could have built the Eiffel Tower.

Becoming restless in the garage, he determined to make his fortune quickly, and accordingly went out prospecting in the vicinity of the Little Annie mine. He bought himself a small patch of promising ground and he and another fellow shovelled away until they had no money left. So then he took up aviation.

He was one of the pioneers of the flying-men in this country. He used to fly at country fairs in an old ramshackle bus of the Wright model— a thing of sticks and canvas and wires precariously hung together. But he flew it. And he rehabilitated his finances.

When war was declared he enlisted as a gob and was sent on sea duty. He knew, of course, nothing of sea duty, but lack of knowledge of a subject had never daunted him, for he had the faculty of learning things quickly by himself and for himself. His mechanical ability asserting itself, he was made a machinist's mate, second class, and transferred over to the Aviation. When I knew him he had proved so valuable at the various air stations that he had been advanced to chief machinist's mate and was an assistant in the Technical Division at Paris headquarters.

He was a very friendly soul, always respectful enough, even when outspoken, and no more in fear of an admiral than of— well, he would have said than of a marine. During his year of service, you see, he had absorbed most of the navy traditions. He spoke the navy speech like an old-timer, and

undoubtedly amplified the regular navy vocabulary with picturesque expressions of his own. Of course he was very profane….

Sunday morning at headquarters was apt to be a slack morning, with not much work to do; but in intervals of idleness one could always be certain of finding something of interest to see or hear in Steve's office. Usually he would be in front of his drafting-board working on a new design for a muffler or a machine-gun turret or a self-starter, or figuring out the possibility of flying *through* the Arc de Triomphe, which, he claimed could be done with six feet to spare at each wing-tip. This, and climbing the Eiffel Tower on its girders, were two of his pet projects.

On a Sunday in August of 1918 there were assembled around his drafting-board an interested and receptive audience of four— Peters, an ensign attached to the "lighter-than-air" section; Madden, a pilot on his way up from Italy to the Northern Bombing Group; Erskine, a lieutenant in the Operations Division; and Matthews, a chief yeoman.

"Yes," Dempsey was saying, "I'm *beaucoup* sorry for these here frawgs. They're just bein' massacred— that's all it is— *massacred*. And there don't anybody take much notice, either. Say, somebody was tellin' me the other day just how many the French has lost since the beginnin' of the war. Just about one million. I wouldn't believe it, but it's straight. It was a French colonel that was tellin' me out to the Hispano factory day before yesterday, and he'd oughta know because he was through the battle of the Marne and the Soam, and everything."

"Did he tell you in French?" inquired Ensign Peters, meaningly, for Dempsey's French was admittedly limited.

"Pardon?" said Dempsey, and then, grasping the innuendo: "No, sir, he did *not*. Why, he talks English as good as you and me. That's another thing about these frawgs— they can all *parlez-vous* any language. I never yet seen a Frenchie I couldn't talk to yet."

"Did you ever see anybody you couldn't talk to yet, Steve?" suggested the chief yeoman.

"Here, you, how d'ya get that way? Who was it I seen th' other night out walking in the Boy de Bullone with a skirt? And I guess you wasn't talkin'— why, you was talkin' so fast you had to help out with your hands, just like a frawg…. No, as I say, I feel sorry for these French in more ways than one."

"Just how do you display that sorrow?" asked Ensign Madden.

Dempsey hesitated an instant, scratched his head, and very carefully drew a line on the tracing-paper in front of him.

"Well, sir," he said, finally, "I displayed it last Sunday."

Then he relapsed into silence, and resumed work on the drawing. But as he worked he grinned quietly— a provocative grin which inspired curiosity.

"What did you do last Sunday?" prodded Peters.

The grin widened as Steve glanced up from the board. He laid aside his instruments, tilted back in his chair, and said: "Well, it wasn't very regular, what I done last Sunday, but I'll tell you if you don't have me up before a court…. You remember last Sunday was a swell day? Spring in the air, I guess, and everything, and everybody was out walking like Matthews, here, with a Jane. I 'ain't got a Jane, of course—"

"What!" roared Matthews.

"I 'ain't got a Jane, of course, so I decides to take a little look around all by myself. Well, I goes down the Chomps-Eleezy feelin' pretty good and sorta peppy and lookin' for trouble. I see all them army heroes—the vets and the dentists and the S O S— each with a skirt, and I passes Matthews, here, with *his* skirt clingin' to him like a cootie."

"Cut it out, you big stiff," interposed Matthews.

"Like a cootie," continued Steve, "and I got sorta de-pressed. So I sez, me for the quiet, unfrequented streets over acrost the river. Well, sir, I was just passin' the Loover— that big museum, or whatever it is— when I see a hearse comin' in the opposite direction. It was a pretty sick-lookin' hearse, too. It had a coupla animals hitched to it that was probably called horses when they was young, and that didn't have a steak minoot left on 'em. But they was all covered with mangy black plumes and tassels and things—you know, the way they rig 'em up when the corpse is takin' his last drive. And there was an old bird sittin' up on the box-seat with a hat like Napoleon One.

"Well, at first it looked to me like it was just the regular frawg funeral, and I didn't pay no special attention, only I give it the salute when I got opposite. Then I see that there weren't no flowers nor tin wreaths on the coffin—except there was one little buncha pinks, and they was a pretty sad-lookin' buncha pinks, too, sir. Then I see that there weren't no procession walkin' along behind— except there was one little old woman all in black and lookin' sorta sick and scared. Yes, sir, there she was walkin' all by herself and lookin' lonelier 'n hell.

"So I sez to myself: 'It's all wrong, Steve, it's all wrong. Here's a poor dead frawg, the only son of his mother and her a widow'— that's Bible stuff, sir— 'goin' out to be planted with none of the gang around. It's tough,' I sez. 'I'll say it is.' Well, I told you I didn't have nothin' much to do, so I sez, 'Laffyette, cheeri-o,' and steps up beside the old lady. That makes two mourners, anyhow.

"Well, the old lady give me the once over and seen Mr. Daniels's uniform and the rooster on my sleeve, and I guess decides that I'm eligible to the club.

Anyway, she sorta nodded at me and pretty soon begun to snuffle and look for her handkerchief. It wasn't no use, though, for she didn't have any.

"Meanwhile we was crossin' one of them bridges— just crawlin' along like one of the motors had quit and the other was hittin' only on three. If we'd been in the air we'd stalled sure and gone into a tail-spin. All the time I was thinkin' how to say 'Cheer up' to the old dame in French, but all I could think of at first was 'Bravo' and '*Vous-ate tray jolee*!' Still it was sorta stupid walkin' along and no conversation, so I guess I musta had an inspiration or something, and I sez, pointing ahead at the coffin, '*Mort avec mon Dieu*.' The old lady lost her step at that, because I suppose she was surprised by a Yank speakin' good French, most of 'em relyin', like Matthews here, on the sign language, although I'll say that Matthews gets plenty far enough with that. Why, they're four girls and a widow at home that if they knew how far Matthews was gettin' with the sign language they'd be gray-headed to-day…. Aw, well, Matthews, quit spoilin' this drawin'. Do you wanta get me and Admiral Sims into trouble with the department?"

"Go ahead with your funeral, Steve," said Lieutenant Erskine— "unless your power of invention has failed you."

Dempsey looked up with a hurt and innocent expression on his face.

"Oh, lootenant," he exclaimed, "what I'm tellin' is gospel. It's as true—it's as true as the communikays."

"All right," said Erskine, "issue another, then."

"Well," Steve continued, "where was I? Oh yes, we was on the bridge and I'd just told the old lady that the dead soldier was in heaven by now."

"Soldier?" repeated Erskine. "What made you believe he was a soldier?"

"Why, ain't every frawg a soldier now, sir."

"How did you know, even, that it was a male frog?"

"I'm comin' to that, sir," replied Steve. "That comes next. You see, once the old lady knew I could *parlez-vous* with the best of 'em, she continued the conversation and sez, '*Mon pover fees*.' Get that? '*Mon pover fees*.' Well, that means, translated, 'My poor son.'"

At this revelation of startling linguistic ability Steve paused to receive felicitations. When they were forthcoming he proceeded.

"So, of course, I know then that the corpse is a dead soldier, and I decides to see him through until he's made a safe landing somewhere. Well, just as we was acrost the bridge, the two ex-horses doin' fine on the down grade, I seen a marine standin' on the corner tellin' a buncha girls all about Château-Teery. Well, I thought that maybe it 'ud be a good thing if he joined the funeral, because, anyway, the girls could hear all about Chateau-Teery the next marine

they saw. So I yell out at him: 'Hey, you! Come and join the navy and see the world!'

"Well, he looks around, and, although I guess he didn't much wanta leave them girls, he decides that he'll come and see what the big game is. So he salutes the corpse and steps in beside me and whispers, 'Say, chief, what's the idea?'

"'Whadd 'ya think, you poor cheese?' I sez. 'D'ya think it's a weddin'? Get in step. We're goin' to bury a French *poiloo*.'

"'Is that so?' he sez."

"'Yes, that's so,' I sez. 'Get over acrost on the other side of the widowed mother and say somethin' cheerful to her in French— if you know any.'"

"'If I know any!' sez he. 'Wasn't I at Château-Teery?'"

"'Well,' I sez, 'don't tell her about that. Tell her somethin' she ain't heard already.'"

"'You go to blazes!' he sez, and crosses over like I told him. And pretty soon I seen him gettin' all red and I knew he was goin' to shoot some French at the old lady, and, sure enough, out he come with, '*Madame je swee enchantay*.'"

"Well, sir, I like to 've died tryin' to keep from laughin' at that, because what it means translated is, 'Madam, I'm deelighted.' Trust them marines to say the right thing at the wrong time— I'll say they do."

"By the time I get under control we're opposite the French Aviation Headquarters— you know, the Service Technique on the Bullyvard Saint-Germain. Well, there was a lot of doughboys hangin' around there wastin' time, and I see one on a motor-cycle with a sergeant sittin' in the side-car. So I step out of the ranks and sez to the sergeant, 'What ya doin'?' And he sez, 'Waitin'— but there's nobody home at all, at all.' So I sez: 'Well, you and your side-car is commandeered for this funeral. We're buryin' a frawg and we need some more mourners. The old lady is his widowed mother, and the corpse, he's her only son and her a widow.' He sez: 'Shure, Oi'll come, an' Oi'll be afther gettin' some o' thim other divvles to jine. Me name is Roilly.' 'Right-o, old dear,' I sez. 'I didn't think it was Moses and Straus.'"

"Well, sir, Reilly was a good scout, and inside of a minute he had six doughboys lined up behind the hearse and him bringin' up the rear in the side-car. The side-car kept backfirin', and it sounded like we was firin' salutes to the dead all the way to the park.

"I wanta tell ya, that old lady was tickled. Why, there we was already ten strong, with more to come, because I drafted three gobs at the Bullyvard Raspail. They wasn't quite sober, but I kep' my eye on 'em and they behaved fine. I sez to them: 'You drunken bums, you! You join this funeral or I'll see

you're put in the brig to-night.' But to make sure they'd not disgrace Mr. Daniels's uniform I put 'em right behind the widow and the marine and me.

"Well, it appears that one of 'em talks French good— real good, I mean, sir— like a frawg waiter or a coacher."

"Or a what?" interjected Erskine.

"Or a coacher," repeated Steve, with dignity. "The fact is, he talked it so good that—well, never mind that yet. He's a smart fellow, though, Mr. Erskine, by the name of Rathbone. Well, never mind— only he's a good fellow and 'ud be pretty useful here, with his French and everything.

"Well, anyway, I begun to wonder after a while where that fellow driving the hearse was takin' us to. We'd gone out the old Bullyvard Raspail a deuce of a way, and Napoleon One showed no signs of stoppin' them horses, and I didn't see no cemetery.

"I sez to the marine, 'I guess we're not goin' to stop till we get to Château-Teery,' and he sez, 'You go to hell and stop *there*.' So I sez, 'I hope the poor old lady don't understand your English.'

"The old dame, I could see, was beginnin' to get weak in the knees and was walkin' about as unsteady as the three gobs behind us. So me and the marine each grabbed an arm and she sez, '*Mercy*,' and tried to start a smile. I guess it was pretty hard goin', because the smile didn't get far.

"Well, anyway, we kep' right on and passed that stone lion out there and went right through the gates, the boys all marchin' strong and the motor-bike makin' one hell of a noise aft. When we get through the gates I fall back and I sez to the gob, 'Rathbone,' I sez, 'ask the lady where we're headed and if she trusts the driver.' So Rathbone moves up and has quite a *parlez-vous* with her.

" 'Well,' I sez, 'what's she say?'

" 'She sez,' sez Rathbone, 'that we're goin' to bury him in a field out here, and that there ain't no priest will bury him and there ain't no cemetery she can bury him in.'

" 'That's funny,' I sez— 'too poor, I guess. Well, anyway, it's a shame— I'll say it is— it's a shame.'

" 'Yes,' sez Rathbone, slowly, as if he was thinkin'— 'yes, it's a damn shame!' "

"And the other two gobs who wasn't as sober as Rathbone, they sez, too, 'Yes, it's a damn shame.' "

"'That makes the navy unanimous,' I sez, and then I begin to work my bean. I was still workin' it and it was respondin' about as well as one of them black Kabyles that are pretendin' to help build our station at Lacanau—I was still workin' it, when the old hearse swings to the right through a gate in a stone wall and brings up short in a field. There was grass in the field and daisies and

things, and a lotta tin crosses stuck on mounds that I guessed was graves. It woulda been a pretty cheerful old field, I guess, if they'd let it alone, but them tin crosses looked pretty sick and the paint was peelin' off the tin flowers that people had stuck on the graves, and I guess the head gardener wasn't much of a hand at weedin'."

"Well, anyway, we all line up in a sorta circle and every one looks pretty downhearted and the three gobs gets perfectly sober, which was a relief. Then Napoleon One climbs down from his box and says somethin' in French to the old widow and points to two birds who're diggin' a hole half-way acrost the field. Rathbone sez that he sez that that is the grave and that the two birds is the grave-diggers and pall-bearers combined."

" 'They are, are they?' I sez. 'This is a military funeral, ain't it? A military funeral conducted by the navy with the army for pall-bearers. And I call on Sergeant Reilly to back me up.'

" 'Shure,' sez Reilly, 'but who'll be providin' the priest?'

"Well, when he sez that my old bean give a sort of throb, and I sez: 'Don't bother your nut about the priest. He'll be forthcomin' when and if needed.'

"So, while Reilly was explainin' to his six doughboys and Rathbone was bringin' Napoleon One up to date, me and the widow and the marine goes over to superintend the two birds diggin' the grave. They was two funny-lookin' old birds, too— I'll say they was. They was about a hundred years old apiece and had long white whiskers like St. Peter, and, say, they talked a whole lot more than they dug. I guess they musta been workin' on that grave for a coupla weeks—you know, ten minutes *parlez-vous* and then one shovela dirt. Me and the marine had to grab their shovels and finish the job or there wouldn't 'a' been no funeral *that* day.

"When we get back the six doughboys is all ready to give first aid to the coffin, and Rathbone is talkin' to Napoleon One like they was brothers. So I go up to them and I sez to Rathbone:

" 'Looka here, Rathbone. I'm the priest at this party. See?'

" 'What's that?' sez Rathbone. 'Come again.'

" 'I say I'm the priest. This dead *poiloo* ain't gotta priest nor nothin' and there's his poor mother and her a widow. So I'm that missin' priest, and I'm not too proud to perform free and gratis. Get that?'

" 'Hold on, chief,' sez Rathbone. 'You ain't got nothin' to wear.'

" 'Nothin' to wear!' I sez. 'You poor cheese, I'm a navy chaplain.'

" 'You look more like a Charlie Chaplin,' sez Rathbone.

"I guess that bird wasn't sober yet, after all, because he thought he was funny.

" 'Can the comedy,' I sez, 'and you go tell the widow that Father Dempsey, the head chaplain of the U.S. Navy, has consented to perform this afternoon. Now, get it straight, and for Gawd's sake don't go and laugh or I'll put you in the brig.'

"Well, Rathbone looks at me like I was goin' to my death.

" 'Good-by, chief,' he sez. 'Wait till the admiral hears of this.'

" 'Haw,' I sez— 'if he does I'll get decorated.'

"Well, I give Reilly the high sign and out comes the coffin on the doughboys' shoulders. Napoleon One leads the way, and Rathbone and the widow step in after the coffin, and I see that they is talkin' together *beaucoup* earnestly.

"When we get to the grave the doughboys set down the coffin beside it and all forms in a circle with me and the widow facin' each other. And then there's an anxious silence. I'll say right here that I was the most anxious, and I was sweatin' more than I guess any chaplain oughta sweat. But, by luck, I happen to think that I have my old logarithm-book in my pocket— you know, the one that's bound in black patent-leather. Looks sorta as if it might be a prayer-book or somethin' like that. Anyway, the widow, bein' a frawg widow, I figgered how she'd think maybe it was a Yank Bible issued special to the A.E.F. and condensed like malted milk or somethin'.

"So I draw the old logarithm-book outa my coat and ease up gently to the edge of the grave. The doughboys and the gobs, all except Rathbone, who is wise, acourse, begin to nudge each other and snicker. I oughta warned 'em what was comin', but I didn't have no time, it come to me so quick. So I pretended to read from the book, and sez, in a low voice and very solemn, like I was openin' the funeral, 'If any you birds here starts laughin' I'll see him after the show and I'll knock the daylight outa him.'

" 'Amen,' sez Rathbone, very piously.

" 'We've come here to-day,' I sez, always like I was readin' from the book— 'we've come here to-day to plant a frawg soldier who's the only son of his mother and her a widow. And she's so broke that there ain't no regular priest or no regular cemetery that'll offer their services. So I'm the priest, and it's goin' to make a lotta difference to that poor widow's feelin's when she thinks her son's got a swell U. S. Navy priest administering the rites. Now, get that straight and don't start whinnyin' like a buncha horses and gum the game.'

"Well, I stop there for breath, and Rathbone, who's right on the job, comes across with another 'Amen,' and Reilly, who's a good Catholic, sez, *'Pax vobiscum*.'

"So that's all right, and I give her the gun and go ahead.

" 'This here *poiloo*,' I sez, 'I don't know much about him, but he was a regular fellow and a good old bird and treated his mother swell and everything, and I guess if we was wise to everything he'd done we'd be proud to be here and we'd 'a' brung a lotta flowers and things. He most likely was at the battle of the Marne and the Soam and Verdun, and maybe he was at Château-Teery. Anyway, he was a grand fighter, and done his bit all the time and kep' the Huns from passin'."

" 'And I wanta tell you that we gotta hand it to these French, because they may be little guys, but they carry the longest bayonets I ever see in any man's army.'

" 'Amen,' sez all the doughboys and the gobs, except one that yells, 'Alleluia!' He musta been from the South or somewheres.

" 'And so,' I sez, 'we're proud to give this frawg a good send-off, and even if we ain't got a real chaplain and the guns to fire a salute with, we're doin' the poor widow a lotta good, and that's somethin'— I'll say it is.'

" 'Amen,' sez the audience.

"Then I sez, 'Glory be,' and cross myself and signal the doughboys to lower away on the coffin, and I flung a handfula dirt in on top like I see 'em do always.

"Well, the poor old widow near collapsed and Rathbone and the marine had to hold hard to keep her on her pins. But Reilly created a diversion by startin' up the motor-bike, and it back-fired like a buncha rookies tryin' to fire a volley. If we'd hadda bugle we coulda sounded taps, and the musical accompaniment woulda been complete.

"Napoleon One come up and shake hands with me like I'd won the Medeye Militaire, and, before I could side-step, the widow had her arms round my neck and was kissin' me on both cheeks. Napoleon sez it was a '*Beau geste*' which I thought meant a fine joke, and I was afraid the bird was wise, but Rathbone sez no, that it meant a swell action; and the widow sez, over and over again, '*Ces braves Americains— ces braves Americains*!' The cordial entente was pretty cordial on the whole! I'll say it was."

At this point Steve Dempsey paused and glanced about as who should say, "Are there any comments or questions?" For a while there was none forthcoming, but finally Lieutenant Erskine ventured a remark.

"This occurred last Sunday?" he inquired, mildly.

"Yes, sir," said Steve— "last Sunday."

"Um," said Erskine, and without further remarks left the office.

On his return he bore a copy of *Le Matin* in his hand. He sat down and leisurely and silently unfolded the sheet. Steve had resumed his work, but I noticed that he kept an eye on Erskine.

"I wonder," said Erskine, smoothing out the newspaper on his knees— "I wonder, Steve, if you happened to see this very interesting article."

"No, sir," said Steve. "I don't read French like I speak it."

"Well," said Erskine, "I'll translate. This paper is dated last Monday, and on page two occurs the following announcement:"

"*American soldiers, sailors, and marines attend funeral of notorious apache. Jean the Rat, convicted murderer and suicide and denied the offices of the Catholic Church, is buried by stalwart Americans.*

Department of Foreign Affairs reluctant to file protest at present time. Strange demonstration believed to be unofficial and without U.S. government sanction, although U. S. Navy chaplain delivers eloquent peroration in English."

Erskine put aside the paper in silence, and we all turned to watch Steve. He was very red, even to his ears.

"Gawd!" he spluttered. "Does it really say that, sir? Honest?"

Erskine nodded. "Yes," he said. "We'll be lucky if we avoid international complications."

"An apache murderer," Steve groaned— "and me thinkin' it was a frawg hero. Will I get a court martial for it, sir?"

"I doubt it," said Erskine, "but I don't think you'll get the Congressional Medal or the Legion of Honour, either. Maybe, though, the President, in recognition of your services toward cementing the *entente*, will appoint you the next ambassador to France."

"Well, anyway," said Steve, still violently red about the face and ears— "well, anyway, I don't care. Even if it weren't a first-class corpse, it was a first-class funeral."

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5: The Mad Hatter

Ernest Favenc

1845-1908

Australian Town and Country Journal 26 Nov 1898

THE MAN was squatting by the edge of the pretty little stream that gurgled and rippled along, and, to my astonishment, as I rode closer, I saw that he was gold-washing, or apparently so. Now, as the country round about did not appear at all auriferous; nor did I know of any diggings in the neighborhood, I felt considerably astonished.

He did not move when I came close.

"How are you getting along?" I asked, for the sake of opening a conversation. "An ounce to the dish?"

He twisted his head around to look at me, and said: "Not now, but it don't run bad. Three and four pennyweights."

He was a solemn-looking old fellow, and he made this statement so seriously that he rather staggered me. Then he went on quietly finishing the last of the dish, while I leant on my horse's neck and watched him. When he had finished he straightened himself up, and, with a satisfied smile, handed me the dish. I took it and inspected it. There was a little black sand, such as you can find anywhere in Australia; beyond that, nothing. I gave him back the dish without a remark, for I concluded it was a joke of some sort he was playing off on me.

Taking the dish back, he remarked, "You wouldn't think stuff ran like that about here, would you?"

"No, I should not,'' I replied. "How is it that the place is not rushed?" I

The old man looked at me with a cunning grin.

" 'Cos they can't. All this land about here once belonged to me; but I was swindled out of it. But not all— not all. I was too sharp for them. They didn't know that there was gold on this bit of land, so the swindlers left me that as worthless and now I'm working it. Listen," and he came close; "I've got nearly enough to buy back everything. I've been sticking at it now tor years, and as soon as I've got all I want I mean to buy everything back."

I didn't know quite what to make of it, but the little township to which I was bound was just ahead; and I wished him luck and pushed on, leaving him filling up another dish from a bag of dirt that lay beside him.

SEATED in the verandah of the hotel that evening, I mentioned to the landlord my meeting with the old man.

"Old Forsyth, the mad hatter," he said. "Yes, the old fellow's a character, isn't he?"

"He told me he owned all the country about here once?"

"Partly true; he had a big station once; and got a lot of land purchased, but he lost it all."

"He said he was swindled."

"Ah! that's part of his madness. He played the fool, and, of course, others took advantage of him. I'll tell you the old man's story, if you like; it's a queer one."

"Naturally," I agreed, and the landlord commenced.

"OLD Forsyth originally made his money on the gold fields, but that was before my time. When I came here he had a good bit of land, and leased a fair-sized station, and was a hard-working fellow with a capital bank account. He was a widower, with no children, and married a young wife. She was a good-looking fool, who married him for his money, and hadn't the sense to know when she was well off. She finally eloped with a flash overseer he had, and that settled poor Forsyth.

"He drank and muddled away all he had in about eight years. Of course, he was swindled to a certain extent; unscrupulous people took advantage of his state to make good bargains out of him. No one would have believed that a man like him could have been so fond of the woman; but there is no mistake, it broke him right up. That's his story. He wound up with a bad attack of brain fever, and since then he's been a harmless lunatic, possessed with an idea that he has a private gold mine, and has panned out a fortune, in that creek. Of course there's no gold in this part, I need not tell you that."

"How does he exist?" I asked.

"That's where the romance comes in. When his wife ran away, she left him. a year-old baby daughter, and when this child was born he was so delighted that he insisted on settling on her a birthday gift of a small farm, and it was tied up so tight that when the drink softened his brain, he could not make ducks and drakes of that; though many tried to get it from him. It's not of very much value, but that deserted girl has grown up a regular wonder. Smart and pretty. She keeps a lot of poultry, and runs the farm as a dairy. She's between 18 and 19 now, and could have married well half a dozen times; but no, she runs the place, and looks after the old man. Not that he wants much looking after, for as long as he's allowed to fill his bag up with what he thinks is wash-dirt, and take it down to the creek and wash it, he's happy."

The landlord stopped and lit a fresh cigar.

"There's one thing," he went on, "which none of us can make out. No one stops on the place at night but the old man and the girl, and a queer-looking servant woman they have there. Nobody's ever asked there. Two or three

parsons have tried, in that familiar way they can put on when they like, but all they've got's a snubbing for their pains. No, there's no reason why the girl shouldn't marry and have a home and family of her own, for the old man is no hindrance; he's harmless; but there's something behind. But it's nothing bad, mind you," said the landlord, getting up, when I proposed an adjournment to the bar. "Nobody here would believe anything bad of Miss Forsyth, the mad hatter's daughter."

IT WAS years, but not many years, afterwards that I went back again to the little township where I had met the "mad hatter." To my surprise, the first man I met was an old friend, a doctor, who had settled down in Yungellalla in hopes to pick up a practice. From him I learned the sequel of old Forsyth's story. I was introduced to Mrs. Lofell, the wife of the doctor. Her maiden name was Miss Forsyth.

"I was called in to see old Forsyth," said Lofell, when he explained matters. "He was sick unto death. It necessitated my being there night and morning, and I found out the little mystery that surrounded the small household.

"That girl— my wife— how instinct had taught her, I know not; nor would I seek to pry in that great mystery that means the charity of femininity, was shielding her unhappy mother. She was the woman who was the disfigured servant. Oh! that farce the girl kept on.

"Every night the woman, who appeared occasionally before the working men on the farm as the disfigured servant, came and took her place as Forsyth's wife. Not the disgraced wife! That had all been lost and obscured in Forsyth's clouded brain. He retained one idea, that was the restoration of his vanished wealth. In the evening his wife appeared in the dress of her youth, and the old man was happy and contented. That was the secret of the girl's life. She kept her mother in the same guise, as far as the husband was concerned, as when she was the young bride he wooed and won. That is all. But it was such a deed of devotion that it won my love, and you know the rest."

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6: The Demon

Christopher Blayre

Edward Heron-Allen
1861–1943
In: *The Purple Sapphire and other posthumous papers*, 1920

The book contains an eccentric series of stories set in the fictional University of Cosmpoli, purportedly written by "Christopher Blayre, Regius Professor of Medicine".

DR-R-R-R-R! Dr-r-r-r-r! and so on.

"Bless the Telephone!" said the Regius Professor of Medicine.

I make use of a conventional euphuism— it was not a blessing that the Regius Professor invoked in favour of the National Telephone Company, the mention of which dates the events which I am about to relate— it was before a Paternal Government had assumed that Control, which enabled it to provide the last straw, which gave the hump to that patient animal, the British Public.

Dr-r-r-r-r! Dr-r-r-r-r!

"Yes— Yes— Hullo!— Hullo!" Sir George Amboyne was in the middle of writing an important paragraph in an important paper, and he felt as if someone had suddenly thrust a marlinespike between the spokes of the flywheel of his mind, and had brought the machinery of thought to a crashing and dislocating stop. It was a law, both written and unwritten, that he was not to be "rung up" by his friends during the working hours of the morning. He was prepared to be nasty.

"Is that you, Reggie?"

A guttural laugh rattled the microphone.

"Who do you want?" asked the Professor, with that lapse from grammar which is universal in the circumstances.

A contralto voice replied "I want Sir George Amboyne, Bart., F.R.S., etcetera. Don't you know me, Reggie? It's me, Cynthia." Again the grammar of telephonic speech.

A wave of disgust and disquiet surged over the Professor. "Reggie!" There was only one person in the world— the most unexpected person in the world— who had, on the last occasion on which he had seen her, suggested that this would be a humorous and affectionate name for him, an echo— or contraction— of his title "Regius Professor of Medicine." It had made him shudder with disgust, the more so as the authoress of this solecism had been for long years his most dainty, refined and delicate friend— Cynthia Carlyon. He had hoped that the manner in which he had received the suggestion had made the occasion unique— a "joke" never to be repeated.

"I am George Amboyne," he replied, with as much severity as one can assume over the telephone wire.

"That's all right, Reggie dear. I know you don't like it but you've got to put up with it."

"I don't like it, Cynthia. What do you want? I am very much occupied."

"I know you are— that's why I thought it would be fun to ring you up." Again the guttural laugh. It seemed a pity that the laugher could not see his face as he heard it.

"Will you *please* tell me what you want?"

"I'm feeling dissipated and devilish— I want you to come and play with me. You might take me out to lunch."

"I am sorry, but it is quite impossible."

"Oh! damn!"

"Please— *please*, Cynthia— *don't*. It's horrible. If you want to see me particularly I will come to you after four."

"No good today, old chap, I've got a bran new Johnnie coming to tea, and I want him all to myself."

He went back to his desk and sat down, but he could not go on with his work. He sat staring out of the window. It was horrible. That this vulgar, slangy creature could possibly be Cynthia, absolutely stunned his senses. The most dainty— the most delicate— the flowerlike— . He gave it up, and leaning his forehead upon his hands, he groaned aloud.

SOME YEARS— less than a decade before the date of this unpleasant incident— Cynthia Carlyon occupied the position of Queen of a Cult. She stood out in the literary, the artistic, and the scientific society of Cosmopoli, as it were, an object of reverent and affectionate worship. She was beautiful in the manner of a Titian Madonna, a reddish-gold woman of infinite grace and perfect taste. A poetess, an essayist, a musician, a painter, she met the men of literature, science and art on their own ground. As a bachelor-girl (to use a phrase which was invented, I think, long afterwards) of independent means, she had a real "Salon," where one met everybody worth meeting from an intellectual point of view. She was popularly supposed to have refused to marry every man who had ever come under the spell of her curious crooked smile— it was the probationary stage through which he who would join her charmed and charming circle had to pass. This formality satisfactorily accomplished, and the period of convalescence— or quarantine— safely negotiated, you settled down into your place in her studio. No one ever resumed the Quest of Cynthia— he merely adopted the Cult.

And then, to the horror of all of us, she came back from Florence one fatal spring day, married to Max Carlyon.

Carlyon was a blackguard; he was an adventurer of the subtle type, not the flamboyant— he had tried that and it had proved a miss. He also drank. And— as Herodotus would put it— this is all that we shall say about Max Carlyon; excepting that he curdled the coterie, and Cynthia's salon was reduced to the faithful few who put up with him when he was present, rejoiced when he was absent, and melted away when he came home drunk.

Among these Sir George Amboyne (who was appointed to the Regius Professorship of Medicine in the University of Cosmopoli about two years later) was one of the most faithful. In the events which followed he was also the last. But this is to anticipate.

ABOUT two years after her disastrous marriage Cynthia faded; indeed she obviously became very ill. Her condition became so alarming that Amboyne insisted that he should merge the friend in the surgeon, and he, with a no less eminent colleague, after a careful and heartbreaking examination, pronounced upon Cynthia Carlyon sentence of death— humanly speaking. She underwent a terrible operation, and took up her abode in a charming nursing home, a little way outside the town. And so we waited for the end.

But whether by reason of some hidden force of vitality, or of her determination not to give up, the end did not come. A year passed, and "The Death-bed of Cynthia" became an institution— indeed it may be said to have become a social function. Her friends rallied round her, and each of them had his or her appointed hour, when they met round the bed, where she lay like a bright and cheerful Madonna, told her the news, brought her their books and pictures, played to her (she had a "baby grand" in her room), and by degrees, a new and highly selective Salon gathered again by her bedside.

During the second year of this strange existence, the disease woke up again. Since that time the scourge of cancer has surrendered to the besieging forces of Science, and now we know what to do to eradicate it, but in those days, the cure, persistently sought, had eluded the vigilance of its untiring pursuers. I walked away from her bedside one day with George Amboyne, through the as yet undesecrated lanes of Bromley, and I asked him:

"Is this the end?"

"Humanly speaking," he replied, "yes. Unless a miracle were to happen. And miracles do not happen in the clinics of cancer."

"How long will she live?"

"Perhaps a month— possibly longer— but I hope not."

Two days after this I was astonished to receive a note from the Matron of the nursing home, couched in the following terms:

"Sir,— I am instructed by Mrs. Carlyon's medical attendant to request you to discontinue your visits until further notice. He hopes that in a week or two you will be able to resume them."

Mrs. Carlyon's medical attendant— George Amboyne!— what the—!

I jumped into a hansom cab and was at Amboyne's house in less than a quarter of an hour. I found him at breakfast. I had not breakfasted.

"What is the meaning of this?" I said, putting the Matron's letter before him.

"What it says," he replied.

"But you—?"

"I am no longer 'Mrs. Carlyon's medical attendant.'"

"For heaven's sake, explain!" said I. "Carlyon called upon me yesterday morning—"

"Was he sober?"

"Partially. He asked me what hope I had of his wife's life. I told him none. He said: 'Then you will not be surprised if I call in another opinion.' I said 'Not at all— I shall be happy to meet any other medical man that you may call in.' He smiled his beastly unctuous smile and said 'I don't think you will be troubled.' And so he left me."

"Well— what next?"

Amboyne handed me a letter which had been lying open by his plate. It read: "Dear Dr. Amboyne, Mr. Carlyon's visit to you will have prepared you to hear that at his request I have taken over the treatment of his wife. I shall be happy to meet you on the case, if you can time your visit to coincide with mine. Yours faithfully, Erasmus Quayle."

"???"

"Erasmus Quayle is a quack. He advertises in provincial and clerical papers 'Cancer cured by an infallible treatment. Payment by results. No cure, no charge.' "

"Good God! and are you going to meet him?"

"On a first impulse, no— of course not. And yet, Cynthia! I don't know what to do— I don't know what to say."

"He'll kill her."

"No— that is predestined— but this man— (he is an Honorary M.D. of some Middle West American Institution which sells Degrees)— keeps his patients alive for a bit by some preparation of his own— sometimes for months. He announces a cure, gets paid— enormously— and then clears out. The patient then dies."

"What's to be done?"

"I don't know. Excuse me; there's the telephone."

In a few minutes he returned, very pale and obviously very much distressed.

"Well— that settles it," he said quietly. "Carlyon on the telephone. He says that Dr. (Doctor!) Quayle thinks it unnecessary to trouble me, and that his wife would rather I did not call until I hear from her."

"There's only one gleam of light in the murk," I said. "I hear that the Matron exercises her authority, and does not let Carlyon see his wife when he is too drunk."

"Yes— that's something," replied Amboyne.

TWO YEARS passed by. Three weeks after the conversation I have recorded with George (now Sir George) Amboyne, I, in common with others of her "intimates," received a letter from Cynthia asking me to come and see her. I went, of course, at once. Frankly, I was amazed.

"Come in, dear man," she called out, as I opened the door. "Come in! what do you think of me? I am cured!"

I cannot describe what I felt. The room seemed to spin round me. All I could say was "Thank God, dear Cynthia."

"And Dr. Quayle," replied she, rather wistfully, "I know I must not say too much about him to you people. Fortunately he refuses to meet any of my friends. But look at the result!"

I could only murmur commonplaces. The foundations of my belief in medical science were being shaken. But there it was. Cynthia seemed to be quite her old self. Amboyne came in whilst I was there. It was not a very comfortable meeting— indeed we were both relieved when Cynthia told us that for a few weeks she must cut her interviews shorter than she would like; and we left her.

We went into the Matron's sanctum, and after the ordinary greetings, Amboyne said to her:

"This is very remarkable, Matron. What does it all mean?"

"I don't know," she replied, with an air of visible distress. "It passes everyone's comprehension. This Mr. Quayle—"

"Yes?" said Amboyne, encouragingly; "can you tell me?"

"No," she replied, "it's all mysterious. He cooks things in a little pot behind a screen— he brings the materials, and takes them away again. We merely give his medicines as he directs. It is most extraordinary— and unsatisfactory."

And with that we left her. Amboyne was silent all the way back to town. Like the parrot of folklore.

And then the two years went by. Cynthia received her friends as before Carlyon kept in the background, but I gathered indirectly from the Matron that at intervals he made scenes about money. Cynthia spoke of moving to a less expensive room. I remembered grimly the legend in gold on some of the fancy mugs at Schwalbach "*Mann ärgere deine Frau nicht; das Kur kostet viel Geld*."

At the end of the two years, I went one day to the home for my bi-weekly visit, and met Amboyne in the hall.

"You can't go in," he said. "Cynthia is dying."

"Dying?"

"Yes— Quayle has given up the case— made all he can, I suppose. Says she grew over-confident and disobeyed orders. I was sent for this morning. She is quite unconscious— she will not regain consciousness. It is the end."

We came away. Outside, Carlyon, speechlessly drunk, was being led firmly away by a policeman.

BUT CYNTHIA did not die. I called next morning and the Matron told me that after being dead as they all supposed for two hours, her eyelids suddenly flickered and she regained consciousness. In the morning she seemed much stronger and asked for food.

"You had better not see her," said the good woman; "she is very fretful, and uneasy. So unlike herself— quite disagreeable. I am very worried over it all. I rang up Mr. Quayle and he refused to come— so this morning I sent for Sir George Amboyne. He seemed very shocked."

For several weeks there was no fresh development in this astonishing case. I had a note from Cynthia merely saying "Don't come till I let you know. I'm growing stronger every day."

I saw Amboyne. He could give me no news, beyond that she seemed to gain strength every day, according to the report of the nurses— he had not seen her since the first day. He had received the same note as I had. He hesitated a moment and then said:

"I am afraid that you will experience— and so shall I— a shock, when we see her again. From what the Matron tells me she is woefully changed— for the worse. They say she is 'a trying patient' and they will be glad to get rid of her."

"Get *rid* of her?"

"Yes— she talks of leaving the home in about a fortnight."

"*Leaving* the home?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Yes— that's it. All we can do is to wait."

WE WAITED three weeks, and then, on the morning of an unforgettable day, I received a letter from Cynthia, dated from a second-rate hotel in the S.W. district, asking me to call upon her! She told me not to call till the afternoon "as I am going on a jamboree to a music hall tonight, and don't get up very early anyhow. I've been here ten days, but didn't tell any of you good, serious old fogies. I wanted to have a fling around before I encounter your solemn mugs, and high-flown ideas, and have to become serious and respectable again, after all these wasted years."

I took the note round to Harley Street, and thence to the University where Amboyne was lecturing, and I waited for him. I showed him the note, and for all reply he took another from his pocket and handed it to me. It said:

"Here I am, you see, in spite of your determination to kill me. What price Infallibility 'for the Mortuary Stakes? But come along and see your little Cynthia and make up for a lot of lost time. You have become no end of a swell since I 'took ill' as the servants say. 'Regius Professor'— I bow! But what a mouthful! I think I shall call you 'Reggie' in future."

I handed it back and looked at him, speechless.

"Isn't it horrible?" he said in a low tone. "What do you make of it?"

"Let us go and see," I replied.

We went that afternoon, and were shown into a tawdry sitting room, which smelt of dust and patchouhi. Cynthia was lolling on a green "rep" sofa— smoking a cigarette. Carlyon was sitting by her side, and got up sheepishly as we entered.

"Well, so long, old girl," he said huskily; "I'll leave you with your intellectual friends." He gave a short laugh as he turned to us and said, "You'll find the old girl a bit different to what she was, and a jolly good thing too. She's woken up— fine!"

We sat down and for a moment we simply could not utter a sound. *Was* this Cynthia? Yes— it was the same willowy figure, the brown eyes, the fine long hands and feet— but her hair! In place of her red-gold aureole was a short thick crop of black curly stubble. The expression in her eyes was that of an animal gathering itself together to spring. She was the first to break the silence.

"Good Lord, how glum you both look. You look as if you had never seen me before. Have a cigarette, or a drink— or both— and lets be jolly."

"Are you sure," said Amboyne, "that you are not overtaxing your strength? I should hardly—"

"Oh! for heavens' sake, don't preach at me, Reggie—"

"I beg your pardon!"

"Yes— Reggie— don't you think it's rather nice for a Regius Professor? Much nicer than George— a dull, solemn name. But don't be dull and solemn with me, I've kicked free and I'm going to have a good time. Be jolly— or stop away. If you are going to look at me like that, I prefer Max— he's a sportsman."

The interview was a short one. To this day I don't know how we got through it. She was dreadful— when we got up to go she did not try to detain us, nor did she ask when we would come again. We got into the street somehow.

I found that I could hardly speak above a whisper. But I said:

"What is it?"

"I don't know— I don't know— but I *think* it is a Demon."

"Amboyne!— pull yourself together."

"Do it yourself!— you are shaking all over— it's difficult. But"— and he stopped dead and looked straight at me— "didn't you see IT lurking behind the eyes that used to be Cynthia's, watching us to see whether we recognised It?"

"Yes— I did." (But I was glad that the Regius Professor of Medicine had mentioned it first.)

AND THIS brings us to the morning with which I opened this record, when Cynthia Carlyon rang up the Regius Professor— for fun.

He got through the routine of the day— consultations, a lecture at the University, a committee at the Royal Society, and arrived home exhausted with work which had been made painful and difficult by a suppressed emotion of horror. He was just sitting down to the simulacrum of dinner when the telephone rang again. A woman's voice, in a flutter of excitement.

"Is that Dr. Reginald Burgoyne?"

"Amboyne is my name, Sir George Amboyne."

"Beg pardon, I didn't know whether to say George or Reginald. You are the doctor?"

"Yes."

"Please come at once to the Hotel— A lady, Mrs. Carlyon is calling out for you something awful."

"What has happened?"

"I don't know, sir, I'm the manageress. The lady had a gent to tea, and when he had gone I heard a screech and went in to her. She was in a fit seemingly. Screaming something awful. I got her to bed and called in the doctor. She keeps calling for you, he says. I thought he said name of Burgoyne. She called out 'Reggie' and 'George.' Will you come, sir? Please do, the doctor says so."

"At once," replied Amboyne.

In the tawdry sitting room he met a harassed looking young practitioner, obviously paralyzed at finding himself face to face with the world-renowned Regius Professor.

"Epilepsy, I suppose, sir— with submission— but I don't know. I never saw anything like it before. And her language, it is frightful. Like sometimes— in puerpural fever. Will you see her?"

They went in. Cynthia— the old placid Cynthia, save for the short black hair, was lying in bed, as the woman of the house had left her. The old tender half-humorous eyes were open, and as Amboyne leaned over her she said softly "It was good of you to come, George. Don't let them take me away again."

"Of course not, dear. I'll look after you."

"Can you, do you think? I have been in Hell."

But as she spoke the Demon flashed into her eyes, and she sprang to a sitting position with a wild cry— like an animal in pain.

The Regius Professor put his arm round her, and she clawed at his face. But only for a moment. Then she sank in his arm, and he laid her gently back upon the bed.

That was all.

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7: The Motor Boat

Jacques Futrelle

1875-1912

Sunday Magazine, 9 Sep 1906

One of the many tragedies linked with the sinking of the Titanic was the death of author Jacques Futrelle (1875-1912). Futrelle was the creator of Professor S.F.X. Van Dusen, better known as "The Thinking Machine" because of his remarkable grasp of logic and deduction in solving apparently impossible crimes. Van Dusen came to prominence in one of the best known of all locked-room mysteries, "The Problem of Cell 13", serialised in The Boston American *in 1905. Dusen claimed that he could escape from a locked cell in the strongest prison kept under constant watch. The story was run as a contest to see if anyone could come up with the solution. The way in which Futrelle achieves his escape is perhaps the most ingenious in all fiction. I have not selected that story here, partly because it is almost constantly in print in some book or another, but mostly because it is not a crime story, but an extremely clever challenge. After this story Dusen is consulted, usually by newspaper reporter Hutchinson Hatch, on all manner of bizarre and seemingly impossible crimes. The following story, which first appeared in the* Sunday Magazine (*9 September 1906*) *is much less well known, though it is wonderfully bizarre.*

CAPTAIN HANK BARBER, master mariner, gripped the bow-rail of the *Liddy Ann* and peered off through the semi-fog of the early morning at a dark streak slashing along through the grey-green waters. It was a motor boat of long, graceful lines; and a single figure, that of a man, sat upright at her helm staring uncompromisingly ahead. She nosed through a roller, staggered a little, righted herself and sped on as a sheet of spray swept over her. The helmsman sat motionless, heedless of the stinging splash of wind-driven water in his face.

"She sure is a-goin' some," remarked Captain Hank, reflectively. "By Ginger! If she keeps it up into Boston Harbor, she won't stop this side o' the Public Gardens."

Captain Hank watched the boat curiously until she was swallowed up, lost in the mist, then turned to his own affairs. He was a couple of miles out of Boston Harbor, going in; it was six o'clock of a grey morning. A few minutes after the disappearance of the motor boat Captain Hank's attention was attracted by the hoarse shriek of a whistle two hundred yards away. He dimly traced through the mist the gigantic lines of a great vessel— it seemed to be a ship of war.

It was only a few minutes after Captain Hank lost sight of the motor boat that she was again sighted, this time as she flashed into Boston Harbor at full speed. She fled past, almost under the prow of a pilot boat, going out, and was hailed. At the mess table later the pilot's man on watch made a remark about her.

"Goin'! Well, wasn't she though! Never saw one thing pass so close to another in my life without scrubbin' the paint offen it. She was so close up I could spit in her, and when I spoke the feller didn't even look up— just kept a-goin'. I told *him* a few things that was good for his soul."

Inside Boston Harbor the motor boat performed a miracle. Pursuing a course which was singularly erratic and at a speed more than dangerous she reeled on through the surge of the sea regardless alike of fog, the proximity of other vessels and the heavy wash from larger craft. Here she narrowly missed a tug; there she skimmed by a slow-moving tramp and a warning shout was raised; a fisherman swore at her as only a fisherman can. And finally when she passed into a clear space, seemingly headed for a dock at top speed, she was the most unanimously damned craft that ever came into Boston Harbor.

"Guess that's a through boat," remarked an aged salt, facetiously as he gazed at her from a dock. "If that durned fool don't take some o'the speed offen her she'll go through all right— wharf an' all."

Still the man in the boat made no motion; the whizz of her motor, plainly heard in a sudden silence, was undiminished. Suddenly the tumult of warning was renewed. Only a chance would prevent a smash. Then Big John Dawson appeared on the string piece of the dock. Big John had a voice that was noted from Newfoundland to Norfolk for its depth and width, and possessed objurgatory powers which were at once the awe and admiration of the fishing fleet.

"You ijit!" he bellowed at the impassive helmsman. "Shut off that power an' throw yer hellum."

There was no response; the boat came on directly toward the dock where Big John and his fellows were gathered. The fishermen and loungers saw that a crash was coming and scattered from the string piece.

"The *durned* fool," said Big John, resignedly.

Then came the crash, the rending of timbers, and silence save for the grinding whir of the motor. Big John ran to the end of the wharf and peered down. The speed of the motor had driven the boat half way upon a float which careened perilously. The man had been thrown forward and lay huddled up face downward and motionless on the float. The dirty water lapped at him greedily.

Big John was the first man on the float. He crept cautiously to the huddled figure and turned it face upward. He gazed for an instant into wide staring eyes then turned to the curious ones peering down from the dock.

"No wonder he didn't stop," he said in an awed tone. "The durned fool is dead."

Willing hands gave aid and after a minute the lifeless figure lay on the dock. It was that of a man in uniform— the uniform of a foreign navy. He was apparently forty-five years old, large and powerful of frame with the sun-browned face of a seaman. The jet black of moustache and goatee was startling against the dead colour of the face. The hair was tinged with grey; and on the back of the left hand was a single letter— "D"— tattooed in blue.

"He's French," said Big John authoritatively, "an' that's the uniform of a Cap'n in the French Navy." He looked puzzled a moment as he stared at the figure. "An' they ain't been a French man-o'-war in Boston Harbor for six months."

After awhile the police came and with them Detective Mallory, the big man of the Bureau of Criminal Investigation; and finally Dr Clough, Medical Examiner. While the detective questioned the fishermen and those who had witnessed the crash, Dr Clough examined the body.

"An autopsy will be necessary," he announced as he arose.

"How long has he been dead?" asked the detective.

"Eight or ten hours, I should say. The cause of death doesn't appear. There is no shot or knife wound so far as I can see."

Detective Mallory closely examined the dead man's clothing. There was no name or tailor mark; the linen was new; the name of the maker of the shoes had been ripped out with a knife. There was nothing in the pockets, not a piece of paper or even a vagrant coin.

Then Detective Mallory turned his attention to the boat. Both hull and motor were of French manufacture. Long, deep scratches on each side showed how the name had been removed. Inside the boat the detective saw something white and picked it up. It was a handkerchief— a woman's handkerchief, with the initials "E.M.B." in a corner.

"Ah, a woman's in it!" he soliloquized.

Then the body was removed and carefully secluded from the prying eyes of the press. Thus no picture of the dead man appeared. Hutchinson Hatch, reporter, and others asked many questions. Detective Mallory hinted vaguely at international questions— the dead man was a French officer, he said, and there might be something back of it.

"I can't tell you all of it," he said wisely, "but my theory is complete. It is murder. The victim was captain of a French man-of-war. His body was placed in a motor boat, possibly a part of the fittings of the warship and the boat set adrift. I can say no more."

"Your theory is complete then," Hatch remarked casually, "except the name of the man, the manner of death, the motive, the name of his ship, the

presence of the handkerchief and the precise reason why the body should be disposed of in this fashion instead of being cast into the sea."

The detective snorted. Hatch went away to make some inquiries on his own account. Within half a dozen hours he had satisfied himself by telegraph that no French was craft had been within five hundred miles of Boston for six months. Thus the mystery grew deeper; a thousand questions to which there seemed no answer arose.

At this point, the day following the events related, the problem of the motor boat came to the attention of Professor Augustus S.F.X. Van Dusen, The Thinking Machine. The scientist listened closely but petulantly to the story Hatch told.

"Has there been an autopsy yet?" he asked at last.

"It is set for eleven o'clock today," replied the reporter. "It is now after ten."

"I shall attend it," said the scientist.

Medical Examiner Clough welcomed the eminent Professor Van Dusen's proffer of assistance in his capacity of MD, while Hatch and other reporters impatiently cooled their toes on the curb. In two hours the autopsy had been completed. The Thinking Machine amused himself by studying the insignia on the dead man's uniform, leaving it to Dr Clough to make a startling statement to the press. The man had not been murdered; he had died of heart failure. There was no poison in the stomach, nor was there a knife or pistol wound.

Then the inquisitive press poured in a flood of questions. Who had scratched off the name of the boat? Dr Clough didn't know. Why had it been scratched off? Still he didn't know. How did it happen that the name of the maker of the shoes had been ripped out? He shrugged his shoulders. What did the handkerchief have to do with it? Really he couldn't conjecture. Was there any inkling of the dead man's identity? Not so far as he knew. Any scar on the body which might lead to identification? No.

Hatch made a few mental comments on officials in general and skilfully steered The Thinking Machine away from the other reporters.

"Did that man die of heart failure?" he asked, flatly.

"He did not," was the curt reply. "It was poison."

"But the Medical Examiner specifically stated that there was no poison in the stomach," persisted the reporter.

The scientist did not reply. Hatch struggled with and suppressed a desire to ask more questions. On reaching home the scientist's first act was to consult an encyclopedia. After several minutes he turned to the reporter with an inscrutable face.

"Of course the idea of a natural death in this case is absurd," he said, shortly. "Every fact is against it. Now, Mr Hatch, please get for me all the local and New York newspapers of the day the body was found— not the day after. Send or bring them to me, then come again at five this afternoon."

"But— but—" Hatch blurted.

"I can say nothing until I know all the facts," interrupted The Thinking Machine.

Hatch personally delivered the specified newspapers into the hands of The Thinking Machine— this man who never read newspapers— and went away. It was an afternoon of agony; an agony of impatience. Promptly at five o'clock he was ushered into Professor Van Dusen's laboratory. The scientist sat half smothered in newspapers, and popped up out of the heap aggressively.

"It was murder, Mr Hatch," he exclaimed, suddenly. "Murder by an extraordinary method."

"Who— who is the man? How was he killed?" asked Hatch.

"His name is—" the scientist began, then paused. "I presume your office has the book *Who's Who In America*? Please 'phone and ask them to give you the record of Langham Dudley."

"Is he the dead man?" Hatch demanded quickly.

"I don't know," was the reply.

Hatch went to the telephone. Ten minutes later he returned to find The Thinking Machine dressed to go out.

"Langham Dudley is a ship owner, fifty-one years old," the reporter read from notes he had taken. "He was once a sailor before the mast and later became a ship owner in a small way. He was successful in his small undertakings and for fifteen years has been a millionaire. He has a certain social position, partly through his wife whom he married a year and a half ago. She was Edith Marston Belding, a daughter of the famous Belding family. He has an estate on the North Shore."

"Very good," commented the scientist. "Now we will find out something about how this man was killed."

At North Station they took train for a small place on the North Shore, thirty-five miles from Boston. There The Thinking Machine made some inquiries and finally they entered a lumber-some carry-all. After a drive of half an hour through the dark they saw the lights of what seemed to be a pretentious country place. Somewhere off to the right Hatch heard the roar of the restless ocean.

"Wait for us," commanded The Thinking Machine as the carry-all stopped.

The Thinking Machine ascended the steps, followed by Hatch, and rang. After a minute or so the door was opened and the light flooded out. Standing

before them was a Japanese— a man of indeterminate age with the graven face of his race.

"Is Mr Dudley in?" asked The Thinking Machine.

"He has not that pleasure," replied the Japanese, and Hatch smiled at the queerly turned phrase.

"Mrs Dudley?" asked the scientist.

"Mrs Dudley is attiring herself in clothing," replied the Japanese. "If you will be pleased to enter."

The Thinking Machine handed him a card and was shown into a reception room. The Japanese placed chairs for them with courteous precision and disappeared. After a short pause there was a rustle of silken skirts on the stairs, and a woman— Mrs Dudley— entered. She was not pretty; she was stunning rather, tall, of superb figure and crowned with a glory of black hair.

"Mr Van Dusen?" she asked as she glanced at the card.

The Thinking Machine bowed low, albeit awkwardly. Mrs Dudley sank down on a couch and the two men resumed their seats. There was a little pause; Mr Dudley broke the silence at last.

"Well, Mr Van Dusen, if you —" she began.

"You have not seen a newspaper for several days?" asked The Thinking Machine, abruptly.

"No," she replied, wonderingly, almost smiling. "Why?"

"Can you tell me just where your husband is?"

The Thinking Machine squinted at her in that aggressive way which was habitual. A quick flush crept into her face, and grew deeper at the sharp scrutiny. Inquiry lay in her eyes.

"I don't know," she replied at last. "In Boston, I presume."

"You haven't seen him since the night of the ball?"

"No. I think it was half past one o'clock that night."

"Is his motor boat here?"

"Really, I don't know. I presume it is. May I ask the purpose of this questioning?"

The Thinking Machine squinted hard at her for half a minute. Hatch was uncomfortable, half resentful even, at the agitation of the woman and the sharp, cold tone of his companion.

"On the night of the ball," the scientist went on, passing the question, "Mr Dudley cut his left arm just above the wrist. It was only a slight wound. A piece of court plaster was put on it. Do you know if he put it on himself? If not, who did?"

"I put it on," replied Mrs Dudley, unhesitatingly, wonderingly.

"And whose court plaster was it?"

"Mine— some I had in my dressing room. Why?"

The scientist arose and paced across the floor, glancing once out the hall door. Mrs Dudley looked at Hatch inquiringly and was about to speak when The Thinking Machine stopped beside her and placed his slim fingers on her wrist. She did not resent the action; was only curious if one might judge from her eyes.

"Are you prepared for a shock?" the scientist asked.

"What is it?" she demanded in sudden terror. "This suspense—"

"Your husband is dead— murdered— poisoned!" said the scientist with sudden brutality. His fingers still lay on her pulse. "The court plaster which you put on his arm and which came from your room was covered with a virulent poison which was instantly transfused into his blood."

Mrs. Dudley did not start or scream. Instead she stared up at The Thinking Machine a moment, her face became pallid, a little shiver passed over her. Then she fell back on the couch in a dead faint.

"Good!" remarked The Thinking Machine complacently. And then as Hatch started up suddenly: "Shut that door," he commanded.

The reporter did so. When he turned back, his companion was leaning over the unconscious woman. After a moment he left her and went to a window where he stood looking out. As Hatch watched he saw the color coming back into Mrs Dudley's face. At last she opened her eyes.

"Don't get hysterical," The Thinking Machine directed calmly. "I know you had nothing whatever to do with your husband's death. I want only a little assistance to find out who killed him."

"Oh, my God!" exclaimed Mrs Dudley. "Dead! Dead!"

Suddenly tears leaped from her eyes and for several minutes the two men respected her grief. When at last she raised her face her eyes were red, but there was a rigid expression about the mouth.

"If I can be of any service—" she began.

"Is this the boat house I see from this window?" asked The Thinking Machine. "That long, low building with the light over the door?"

"Yes," replied Mrs Dudley.

"You say you don't know if the motor boat is there now?"

"No, I don't."

"Will you ask your Japanese servant, and if he doesn't know, let him go see, please?"

Mrs Dudley arose and touched an electric button. After a moment the Japanese appeared at the door.

"Osaka, do you know if Mr Dudley's motor boat is in the boat house?" she asked.

"No, honourable lady."

"Will you go yourself and see?"

Osaka bowed low and left the room, closing the door gently behind him. The Thinking Machine again crossed to the window and sat down staring out into the night. Mrs Dudley asked questions, scores of them, and he answered them in order until she knew the details of the finding of her husband's body—that is, the details the public knew. She was interrupted by the reappearance of Osaka.

"I do not find the motor boat in the house, honourable lady."

"That is all," said the scientist.

Again Osaka bowed and retired.

"Now, Mrs Dudley," resumed The Thinking Machine almost gently, "we know your husband wore a French naval costume at the masked ball. May I ask what you wore?"

"It was a Queen Elizabeth costume," replied Mrs Dudley, "very heavy with a long train."

"And if you could give me a photograph of Mr Dudley?"

Mrs Dudley left the room an instant and returned with a cabinet photograph. Hatch and the scientist looked at it together; it was unmistakably the man in the motor boat.

"You can do nothing yourself," said The Thinking Machine at last, and he moved as if to go. "Within a few hours we will have the guilty person. You may rest assured that your name will be in no way brought into the matter unpleasantly."

Hatch glanced at his companion; he thought he detected a sinister note in the soothing voice, but the face expressed nothing. Mrs Dudley ushered them into the hall; Osaka stood at the front door. They passed out and the door closed behind them.

Hatch started down the steps but The Thinking Machine stopped at the door and tramped up and down. The reporter turned back in astonishment. In the dim reflected light he saw the scientist's finger raised, enjoining silence, then saw him lean forward suddenly with his ear pressed to the door. After a little he rapped gently. The door was opened by Osaka, who obeyed a beckoning motion of the scientist's hand and came out. Silently he was led off the veranda into the yard; he appeared in no way surprised.

"Your master, Mr Dudley, has been murdered," declared The Thinking Machine quietly, to Osaka. "We know that Mrs Dudley killed him," he went on as Hatch stared, "but I have told her she is not suspected. We are not officers and cannot arrest her. Can you go with us to Boston, without the knowledge of

anyone here and tell what you know of the quarrel between husband and wife to the police?"

Osaka looked placidly into the eager face.

"I had the honour to believe that the circumstances would not be recognized," he said finally. "Since you know, I will go."

"We will drive down a little way and wait for you."

The Japanese disappeared into the house again. Hatch was too astounded to speak, but followed The Thinking Machine into the carry-all. It drove away a hundred yards and stopped. After a few minutes an impalpable shadow came toward them through the night. The scientist peered out as it came up.

"Osaka?" he asked softly.

"Yes."

An hour later the three men were on a train, Boston bound. Once comfortably settled the scientist turned to the Japanese.

"Now if you will please tell me just what happened the night of the ball?" he asked, "and the incidents leading up to the disagreement between Mr and Mrs Dudley?"

"He drank elaborately," Osaka explained reluctantly, in his quaint English, "and when drinking he was brutal to the honourable lady. Twice with my own eyes I saw him strike her— once in Japan where I entered his service while they were on a wedding journey, and once here. On the night of the ball he was immeasurably intoxicated, and when he danced, he fell down to the floor. The honourable lady was chagrined and angry— she had been angry before. There was some quarrel which I am not comprehensive of. They had been widely divergent for several months. It was, of course, not prominent in the presence of others."

"And the cut on his arm where the court plaster was applied?" asked the scientist. "Just how did he get that?"

"It was when he fell down," continued the Japanese. "He reached to embrace a carved chair and the carved wood cut his arm. I assisted him to his feet and the honourable lady sent me to her room to get court plaster. I acquired it from her dressing table and she placed it on the cut."

"That makes the evidence against her absolutely conclusive," remarked The Thinking Machine, as if finally. There was a little pause, and then: "Do you happen to know just how Mrs Dudley placed the body in the boat?"

"I have not that honour," said Osaka. "Indeed I am not comprehensive of anything that happened after the court plaster was put on except that Mr Dudley was affected some way and went out of the house. Mrs Dudley, too, was not in the ball room for ten minutes or so afterwards."

Hutchinson Hatch stared frankly into the face of The Thinking Machine; there was nothing to be read there. Still deeply thoughtful Hatch heard the brakeman bawl "Boston" and mechanically followed the scientist and Osaka out of the station into a cab. They were driven immediately to Police Headquarters. Detective Mallory was just about to go home when they entered his office.

"It may enlighten you, Mr Mallory," announced the scientist coldly, "to know that the man in the motor boat was not a French naval officer who died of natural causes— he was Langham Dudley, a millionaire ship owner. He was murdered. It just happens that I know the person who did it."

The detective arose in astonishment and stared at the slight figure before him inquiringly; he knew the man too well to dispute any assertion he might make.

"Who is the murderer?" he asked.

The Thinking Machine closed the door and the spring lock clicked.

"That man there," he remarked calmly, turning on Osaka.

For one brief moment there was a pause and silence; then the detective advanced upon the Japanese with hand outstretched. The agile Osaka leapt suddenly, as a snake strikes; there was a quick, fierce struggle and Detective Mallory sprawled on the floor. There had been just a twist of the wrist— a trick of jiu jitsu— and Osaka had flung himself at the locked door. As he fumbled there, Hatch, deliberately and without compunction, raised a chair and brought it down on his head. Osaka sank down without a sound.

It was an hour before they brought him around again. Meanwhile the detective had patted and petted half a dozen suddenly acquired bruises, and had then searched Osaka. He found nothing to interest him save a small bottle. He uncorked it and started to smell it when The Thinking Machine snatched it away.

"You fool, that'll kill you!" he exclaimed.

Osaka sat, lashed hand and foot to a chair, in Detective Mallory's office— so placed by the detective for safe keeping. His face was no longer expressionless; there were fear and treachery and cunning there. So he listened, perforce, to the statement of the case by The Thinking Machine who leaned back in his chair, squinting steadily upward and with his long, slender fingers pressed together.

"Two and two make four, not *some*times but *all* the time," he began at last as if disputing some previous assertion. "As the figure 'two,' wholly disconnected from any other, gives small indication of a result, so is an isolated fact of little consequence. Yet that fact added to another, and the resulting fact added to a third, and so on, will give a final result. That result, if every fact is

considered, *must* be correct. Thus any problem may be solved by logic; logic is inevitable.

"In this case the facts, considered singly, might have been compatible with either a natural death, suicide or murder— considered together they proved murder. The climax of this proof was the removal of the maker's name from the dead man's shoes, and a fact strongly contributory was the attempt to destroy the identity of the boat. A subtle mind lay back of it all."

"I so regarded it," said Detective Mallory. "I was confident of murder until the Medical Examiner—"

"We prove a murder," The Thinking Machine went on serenely. "The method? I was with Dr Clough at the autopsy. There was no shot, or knife wound, no poison in the stomach. Knowing there was murder I sought further. Then I found the method in a slight, jagged wound on the left arm. It had been covered with court plaster. The heart showed constriction without apparent cause, and while Dr Clough examined it I took off this court plaster. Its odour, an unusual one, told me that poison had been transfused into the blood through the wound. So two and two had made four.

"Then— what poison? A knowledge of botany aided me. I recognized faintly the trace of an odour of an herb which is not only indigenous to, but grows exclusively in Japan. Thus a Japanese poison. Analysis later in my laboratory proved it was a Japanese poison, virulent, and necessarily slow to act unless it is placed directly in an artery. The poison on the court plaster and that you took from Osaka is identical."

The scientist uncorked the bottle and permitted a single drop of a green liquid to fall on his handkerchief. He allowed a minute or more for evaporation then handed it to Detective Mallory who sniffed at it from a respectful distance. Then The Thinking Machine produced the bit of court plaster he had taken from the dead man's arm, and again the detective sniffed.

"The same," the scientist resumed as he touched a lighted match to the handkerchief and watched it crumble to ashes, "and so powerful that in its pure state mere inhalation is fatal. I permitted Dr Clough to make public his opinion— heart failure— after the autopsy for obvious reasons. It would reassure the murderer for instance if he saw it printed, and besides Dudley did die from heart failure; the poison caused it.

"Next came identification. Mr Hatch learned that no French warship had been within hundreds of miles of Boston for months. The one seen by Captain Barber might have been one of our own. This man was supposed to be a French naval officer, and had been dead less than eight hours. Obviously he did not come from a ship of his own country. Then from where?

"I know nothing of uniforms, yet I examined the insignia on the arms and shoulders closely after which I consulted my encyclopedia. I learned that while the uniform was more French than anything else, it was really the uniform of *no country*, because it was not correct. The insignia were mixed.

"Then what? There were several possibilities, among them a fancy dress ball was probable. Absolute accuracy would not be essential there. Where had there been a fancy dress ball? I trusted to the newspapers to tell me that. They did. A short dispatch from a place on the North Shore stated that on the night before the man was found dead there had been a fancy dress ball at the Langham Dudley estate.

"Now it is as necessary to remember *every* fact in solving a problem as it is to consider every figure in arithmetic. Dudley! Here was the 'D' tattooed on the dead man's hand. *Who's Who* showed that Langham Dudley married Edith Marston Belding. Here was the 'E.M.B.' on the handkerchief in the boat. Langham Dudley was a ship owner had been a sailor, was a millionaire. Possibly this was his own boat built in France."

Detective Mallory was staring into the eyes of The Thinking Machine in frank admiration; Osaka to whom the narrative had thus far been impersonal, gazed, gazed as if fascinated. Hutchinson Hatch, reporter, was drinking in every word greedily.

"We went to the Dudley place," the scientist resumed after a moment. "This Japanese opened the door. Japanese poison! Two and two were still making four. But I was first interested in Mrs Dudley. She showed no agitation and told me frankly that she placed the court plaster on her husband's arm, and that it came from her room. There was instantly a doubt as to her connection with the murder; her immediate frankness aroused it.

"Finally, with my hand on her pulse— which was normal— I told her as brutally as I could that her husband had been murdered. Her pulse jumped frightfully and as I told her the cause of death it wavered, weakened and she fainted. Now if she had known her husband was dead— even if she had killed him— a mere statement of his death would not have caused that pulse. Further I doubt if she could have disposed of her husband's body in the motor boat. He was a large man and the manner of her dress even, was against this. Therefore she was innocent.

"And then? The Japanese, Osaka, here. I could see the door of the boat house from the room where we were. Mrs Dudley asked Osaka if Mr Dudley's boat were in the house. He said he didn't know. Then she sent him to see. He returned and said the boat was not there, *yet he had not gone to the boat house at all.* Ergo, he knew the boat was not there. He may have learned it from another servant, still it was a point against him."

Again the scientist paused and squinted at the Japanese. For a moment Osaka withstood the gaze, then his eyes shifted and he moved uncomfortably.

"I tricked Osaka into coming here by a ludicrously simple expedient," The Thinking Machine went on steadily. "On the train I asked if he knew just how Mrs Dudley got the body of her husband into the boat. Remember at this point he was not supposed to know that the body had been in a boat at all. He said he didn't know and by that very answer admitted that he knew the body had been placed in the boat. He knew because he put it there himself. He didn't merely throw it in the water because he had sense enough to know if the tide didn't take it out, it would rise, and possibly be found.

"After the slight injury Mr Dudley evidently wandered out toward the boat house. The poison was working, and perhaps he fell. Then this man removed all identifying marks, even to the name in the shoes, put the body in the boat and turned on full power. He had a right to assume that the boat would be lost, or that the dead man would be thrown out. Wind and tide and a loose rudder brought it into Boston Harbor. I do not attempt to account for the presence of Mrs Dudley's handkerchief in the boat. It might have gotten there in one of a hundred ways."

"How did you know husband and wife had quarrelled?" asked Hatch.

"Surmise to account for her not knowing where he was," replied The Thinking Machine. "If they had had a violent disagreement it was possible that he would have gone away without telling her, and she would not have been particularly worried, at least up to the time we saw her. As it was, she presumed he was in Boston; perhaps Osaka here gave her that impression?"

The Thinking Machine turned and stared at the Japanese curiously.

"Is that correct?" he asked.

Osaka did not answer.

"And the motive?" asked Detective Mallory, at last.

"Will you tell us just why you killed Mr Dudley?" asked The Thinking Machine of the Japanese.

"I will not," exclaimed Osaka, suddenly. It was the first time he had spoken.

"It probably had to do with a girl in Japan," explained The Thinking Machine, easily. "The murder had been a long cherished project, such a one as revenge through love would have inspired."

It was a day or so later that Hutchinson Hatch called to inform The Thinking Machine that Osaka had confessed and had given the motive for the murder. It was not a nice story.

"One of the most astonishing things to me," Hatch added, "is the complete case of circumstantial evidence against Mrs Dudley, beginning with the quarrel and leading to the application of the poison with her own hands. I believe she

would have been convicted on the actual circumstantial evidence had you not shown conclusively that Osaka did it."

"Circumstantial fiddlesticks!" snapped The Thinking Machine. "I wouldn't convict a dog of stealing jam on circumstantial evidence alone, even if he had jam all over his nose." He squinted truculently at Hatch for a moment. "In the first place well behaved dogs don't eat jam," he added more mildly.

8: The Chronic Argonauts

H. G. Wells

1866-1946

The Science School Journal, April and May 1888

1: Being the Account of Dr. Nebogipfel's Sojourn in Llyddwdd

ABOUT HALF-a-mile outside the village of Llyddwdd by the road that goes up over the eastern flank of the mountain called Pen-y-pwll to Rwstog is a large farm-building known as the Manse. It derives this title from the fact that it was at one time the residence of the minister of the Calvinistic Methodists. It is a quaint, low, irregular erection, lying back some hundred yards from the railway, and now fast passing into a ruinous state.

Since its construction in the latter half of the last century this house has undergone many changes of fortune, having been abandoned long since by the farmer of the surrounding acres for less pretentious and more commodious headquarters. Among others Miss Carnot, "the Gallic Sappho" at one time made it her home, and later on an old man named Williams became its occupier. The foul murder of this tenant by his two sons was the cause of its remaining for some considerable period uninhabited; with the inevitable consequence of its undergoing very extensive dilapidation.

The house had got a bad name, and adolescent man and Nature combined to bring swift desolation upon it. The fear of the Williamses which kept the Llyddwdd lads from gratifying their propensity to invade its deserted interior, manifested itself in unusually destructive resentment against its external breakables. The missiles with which they at once confessed and defied their spiritual dread, left scarcely a splinter of glass, and only battered relics of the old-fashioned leaden frames, in its narrow windows, while numberless shattered tiles about the house, and four or five black apertures yawning behind the naked rafters in the roof, also witnessed vividly to the energy of their rejection. Rain and wind thus had free way to enter the empty rooms and work their will there, old Time aiding and abetting. Alternately soaked and desiccated, the planks of flooring and wainscot warped apart strangely, split here and there, and tore themselves away in paroxysms of rheumatic pain from the rust-devoured nails that had once held them firm. The plaster of walls and ceiling, growing green-black with a rain-fed crust of lowly life, parted slowly from the fermenting laths; and large fragments thereof falling down inexplicably in tranquil hours, with loud concussion and clatter, gave strength to the popular superstition that old Williams and his sons were fated to re-enact their fearful tragedy until the final judgment. White roses and daedal creepers, that Miss Carnot had first adorned the walls with, spread now

luxuriantly over the lichen-filmed tiles of the roof, and in slender graceful sprays timidly invaded the ghostly cobweb-draped apartments. Fungi, sickly pale, began to displace and uplift the bricks in the cellar floor; while on the rotting wood everywhere they clustered, in all the glory of the purple and mottled crimson, yellow-brown and hepatite. Woodlice and ants, beetles and moths, winged and creeping things innumerable, found each day a more congenial home among the ruins; and after them in ever-increasing multitudes swarmed the blotchy toads. Swallows and martins built every year more thickly in the silent, airy, upper chambers. Bats and owls struggled for the crepuscular corners of the lower rooms. Thus, in the Spring of the year eighteen hundred and eighty-seven, was Nature taking over, gradually but certainly, the tenancy of the old Manse. "The house was falling into decay," as men who do not appreciate the application of human derelicts to other beings' use would say, "surely and swiftly." But it was destined nevertheless to shelter another human tenant before its final dissolution.

There was no intelligence of the advent of a new inhabitant in quiet Llyddwdd. He came without a solitary premonition out of the vast unknown into the sphere of minute village observation and gossip. He fell into the Llyddwdd world, as it were, like a thunderbolt falling in the daytime. Suddenly, out of nothingness, he was. Rumour, indeed, vaguely averred that he was seen to arrive by a certain train from London, and to walk straight without hesitation to the old Manse, giving neither explanatory word nor sign to mortal as to his purpose there: but then the same fertile source of information also hinted that he was first beheld skimming down the slopes of steep Pen-y-pwll with exceeding swiftness, riding, as it appeared to the intelligent observer, upon an instrument not unlike a sieve and that he entered the house by the chimney. Of these conflicting reports, the former was the first to be generally circulated, but the latter, in view of the bizarre presence and eccentric ways of the newest inhabitant, obtained wider credence. By whatever means he arrived, there can be no doubt that he was in, and in possession of the Manse, on the first of May; because on the morning of that day he was inspected by Mrs. Morgan ap Lloyd Jones, and subsequently by the numerous persons her report brought up the mountain slope, engaged in the curious occupation of nailing sheet-tin across the void window sockets of his new domicile—"blinding his house", as Mrs. Morgan ap Lloyd Jones not inaptly termed it.

He was a small-bodied, sallow faced little man, clad in a closefitting garment of some stiff, dark material, which Mr. Parry Davies the Llyddwdd shoemaker, opined was leather. His aquiline nose, thin lips, high cheek-ridges, and pointed chin, were all small and mutually well proportioned; but the bones and muscles of his face were rendered excessively prominent and distinct by

his extreme leanness. The same cause contributed to the sunken appearance of the large eager-looking grey eyes, that gazed forth from under his phenomenally wide and high forehead. It was this latter feature that most powerfully attracted the attention of an observer. It seemed to be great beyond all preconceived ratio to the rest of his countenance. Dimensions, corrugations, wrinkles, venation, were alike abnormally exaggerated. Below it his eyes glowed like lights in some cave at a cliff's foot. It so over-powered and suppressed the rest of his face as to give an unhuman appearance almost, to what would otherwise have been an unquestionably handsome profile. The lank black hair that hung unkempt before his eyes served to increase rather than conceal this effect, by adding to unnatural altitude a suggestion of hydrocephalic projection and the idea of something ultra human was furthermore accentuated by the temporal arteries that pulsated visibly through his transparent yellow skin. No wonder, in view even of these things, that among the highly and over-poetical Cymric of Llyddwdd the sieve theory of arrival found considerable favour.

It was his bearing and actions, however, much more than his personality, that won over believers to the warlock notion of matters. In almost every circumstance of life the observant villagers soon found his ways were not only not their ways, but altogether inexplicable upon any theory of motives they could conceive. Thus, in a small matter at the beginning, when Arthur Price Williams, eminent and famous in every tavern in Caernarvonshire for his social gifts, endeavoured, in choicest Welsh and even choicer English, to inveigle the stranger into conversation over the sheet-tin performance, he failed utterly. Inquisitional supposition, straightforward enquiry, offer of assistance, suggestion of method, sarcasm, irony, abuse, and at last, gage of battle, though shouted with much effort from the road hedge, went unanswered and apparently unheard. Missile weapons, Arthur Price Williams found, were equally unavailing for the purpose of introduction, and the gathered crowd dispersed with unappeased curiosity and suspicion. Later in the day, the swarth apparition was seen striding down the mountain road towards the village, hatless, and with such swift width of step and set resolution of countenance, that Arthur Price Williams, beholding him from afar from the Pig and Whistle doorway was seized with dire consternation, and hid behind the Dutch oven in the kitchen till he was past. Wild panic also smote the school-house as the children were coming out, and drove them indoors like leaves before a gale. He was merely seeking the provision shop, however, and erupted thencefrom after a prolonged stay, loaded with a various armful of blue parcels, a loaf, herrings, pigs' trotters, salt pork, and a black battle, with which he returned in the same swift projectile gait to the Manse. His way of

shopping was to name, and to name simply, without solitary other word of explanation, civility or request, the article he required.

The shopkeeper's crude meteorological superstitions and inquisitive commonplaces, he seemed not to hear, and he might have been esteemed deaf if he had not evinced the promptest attention to the faintest relevant remark. Consequently it was speedily rumoured that he was determined to avoid all but the most necessary human intercourse. He lived altogether mysteriously, in the decaying manse, without mortal service or companionship, presumably sleeping on planks or litter, and either preparing his own food or eating it raw. This, coupled with the popular conception of the haunting patricides, did much to strengthen the popular supposition of some vast gulf between the newcomer and common humanity. The only thing that was inharmonious with this idea of severance from mankind was a constant flux of crates filled with grotesquely contorted glassware, cases of brazen and steel instruments, huge coils of wire, vast iron and fire-clay implements, of inconceivable purpose, jars and phials labelled in black and scarlet— POISON, huge packages of books, and gargantuan rolls of cartridge paper, which set in towards his Llyddwdd quarters from the outer world. The apparently hieroglyphic inscriptions on these various consignments revealed at the profound scrutiny of Pugh Jones that the style and title of the new inhabitant was Dr. Moses Nebogipfel, Ph.D., F.R.S., N.W.R., PAID: at which discovery much edification was felt, especially among the purely Welsh-speaking community. Further than this, these arrivals, by their evident unfitness for any allowable mortal use, and inferential diabolicalness, filled the neighbourhood with a vague horror and lively curiosity, which were greatly augmented by the extraordinary phenomena, and still more extraordinary accounts thereof, that followed their reception in the Manse.

The first of these was on Wednesday, the fifteenth of May, when the Calvinistic Methodists of Llyddwdd had their annual commemoration festival; on which occasion, in accordance with custom, dwellers in the surrounding parishes of Rwstog, Pen-y-garn, Caergyllwdd, Llanrdd, and even distant Llanrwst flocked into the village. Popular thanks to Providence were materialised in the usual way, by means of plum-bread and butter, mixed tea, terza, consecrated flirtations, kiss-in-the-ring, rough-and-tumble football, and vituperative political speechmaking. About half-past eight the fun began to tarnish, and the assembly to break up; and by nine numerous couples and occasional groups were wending their way in the darkling along the hilly Llyddwdd and Rwstog road. It was a calm warm night; one of those nights when lamps, gas and heavy sleep seem stupid ingratitude to the Creator. The zenith sky was an ineffable deep lucent blue, and the evening star hung golden

in the liquid darkness of the west. In the north-north-west, a faint phosphorescence marked the sunken day. The moon was just rising, pallid and gibbous over the huge haze-dimmed shoulder of Pen-y-pwll. Against the wan eastern sky, from the vague outline of the mountain slope, the Manse stood out black, clear and solitary. The stillness of the twilight had hushed the myriad murmurs of the day. Only the sounds of footsteps and voices and laughter, that came fitfully rising and falling from the roadway, and an intermittent hammering in the darkened dwelling, broke the silence. Suddenly a strange whizzing, buzzing whirr filled the night air, and a bright flicker glanced across the dim path of the wayfarers. All eyes were turned in astonishment to the old Manse. The house no longer loomed a black featureless block but was filled to overflowing with light. From the gaping holes in the roof, from chinks and fissures amid tiles and brickwork, from every gap which Nature or man had pierced in the crumbling old shell, a blinding blue-white glare was streaming, beside which the rising moon seemed a disc of opaque sulphur. The thin mist of the dewy night had caught the violet glow and hung, unearthly smoke, over the colourless blaze. A strange turmoil and outcrying in the old Manse now began, and grew ever more audible to the clustering spectators, and therewith came clanging loud impacts against the window-guarding tin. Then from the gleaming roof-gaps of the house suddenly vomited forth a wonderous swarm of heteromerous living things— swallows, sparrows, martins, owls, bats, insects in visible multitudes, to hang for many minutes a noisy, gyring, spreading cloud over the black gables and chimneys... and then slowly to thin out and vanish away in the night.

As this tumult died away the throbbing humming that had first arrested attention grew once more in the listener's hearing, until at last it was the only sound in the long stillness. Presently, however, the road gradually awoke again to the beating and shuffling of feet, as the knots of Rwstog people, one by one, turned their blinking eyes from the dazzling whiteness and, pondering deeply, continued their homeward way.

The cultivated reader will have already discerned that this phenomenon, which sowed a whole crop of uncanny thoughts in the minds of these worthy folk, was simply the installation of the electric light in the Manse. Truly, this last vicissitude of the old house was its strangest one. Its revival to mortal life was like the raising of Lazarus. From that hour forth, by night and day, behind the tin-blinded windows, the tamed lightning illuminated every corner of its quickly changing interior. The almost frenzied energy of the lank-haired, leather-clad little doctor swept away into obscure holes and corners and common destruction, creeper sprays, toadstools, rose leaves, birds' nests, birds' eggs, cobwebs, and all the coatings and lovingly fanciful trimmings with

which that maternal old dotard, Dame Nature, had tricked out the decaying house for its lying in state. The magneto-electric apparatus whirred incessantly amid the vestiges of the wainscoted dining-room, where once the eighteenth-century tenant had piously read morning prayer and eaten his Sunday dinner; and in the place of his sacred symbolical sideboard was a nasty heap of coke. The oven of the bakehouse supplied substratum and material for a forge, whose snorting, panting bellows, and intermittent, ruddy spark-laden blast made the benighted, but Bible-lit Welsh women murmur in liquid Cymric, as they hurried by: "Whose breath kindleth coals, and out of his mouth is a flame of fire." For the idea these good people formed of it was that a tame, but occasionally restive, leviathan had been added to the terrors of the haunted house. The constantly increasing accumulation of pieces of machinery, big brass castings, block tin, casks, crates, and packages of innumerable articles, by their demands for space, necessitated the sacrifice of most of the slighter partitions of the house, and the beams and flooring of the upper chambers were also mercilessly sawn away by the tireless scientist in such a way as to convert them into mere shelves and corner brackets of the atrial space between cellars and rafters. Some of the sounder planking was utilised in the making of a rude broad table, upon which files and heaps of geometrical diagrams speedily accumulated. The production of these latter seemed to be the object upon which the mind of Dr. Nebogipfel was so inflexibly set. All other circumstances of his life were made entirely subsidiary to this one occupation. Strangely complicated traceries of lines they were— plans, elevations, sections by surfaces and solids, that, with the help of logarithmic mechanical apparatus and involved curvigraphical machines, spread swiftly under his expert hands over yard after yard of paper. Some of these symbolised shapes he despatched to London, and they presently returned, realised, in forms of brass and ivory, and nickel and mahogany. Some of them he himself translated into solid models of metal and wood; occasionally casting the metallic ones in moulds of sand, but often laboriously hewing them out of the block for greater precision of dimension. In this second process, among other appliances, he employed a steel circular saw set with diamond powder and made to rotate with extraordinary swiftness, by means of steam and multiplying gear. It was this latter thing, more than all else, that filled Llyddwdd with a sickly loathing of the Doctor as a man of blood and darkness. Often in the silence of midnight— for the newest inhabitant heeded the sun but little in his incessant research— the awakened dwellers around Pen-y-pwll would hear, what was at first a complaining murmur, like the groaning of a wounded man, "gurr-urrurr-URR", rising by slow gradations in pitch and intensity to the likeness of a voice in despairing passionate protest, and at last ending abruptly

in a sharp piercing shriek that rang in the ears for hours afterwards and begot numberless gruesome dreams.

The mystery of all these unearthly noises and inexplicable phenomena, the Doctor's inhumanly brusque bearing and evident uneasiness when away from his absorbing occupation, his entire and jealous seclusion, and his terrifying behaviour to certain officious intruders, roused popular resentment and curiously to the highest, and a plot was already on foot to make some sort of popular inquisition (probably accompanied by an experimental ducking) into his proceedings, when the sudden death of the hunchback Hughes in a fit, brought matters to an unexpected crisis. It happened in broad daylight, in the roadway just opposite the Manse. Half a dozen people witnessed it. The unfortunate creature was seen to fall suddenly and roll about on the pathway, struggling violently, as it appeared to the spectators, with some invisible assailant. When assistance reached him he was purple in the face and his blue lips were covered with a glairy foam. He died almost as soon as they laid hands on him.

Owen Thomas, the general practitioner, vainly assured the excited crowd which speedily gathered outside the Pig and Whistle, whither the body had been carried, that death was unquestionably natural. A horrible zymotic suspicion had gone forth that the deceased was the victim of Dr. Nebogipfel's imputed aerial powers. The contagion was with the news that passed like a flash through the village and set all Llyddwdd seething with a fierce desire for action against the worker of this iniquity. Downright superstition, which had previously walked somewhat modestly about the village, in the fear of ridicule and the Doctor, now appeared boldly before the sight of all men, clad in the terrible majesty of truth. People who had hitherto kept entire silence as to their fears of the imp-like philosopher suddenly discovered a fearsome pleasure in whispering dread possibilities to kindred souls, and from whispers of possibilities their sympathy-fostered utterances soon developed into unhesitating asserverations in laud and even high-pitched tones. The fancy of a captive leviathan, already alluded to, which had up to now been the horrid but secret joy of a certain conclave of ignorant old women, was published to all the world as indisputable fact; it being stated, on her own authority, that the animal had, on one occasion, chased Mrs. Morgan ap Lloyd Jones almost into Rwstog. The story that Nebogipfel had been heard within the Manse chanting, in conjunction with the Williamses, horrible blasphemy, and that a "black flapping thing, of the size of a young calf", had thereupon entered the gap in the roof, was universally believed in. A grisly anecdote, that owed its origination to a stumble in the churchyard, was circulated, to the effect that the Doctor had been caught ghoulishly tearing with his long white fingers at a

new-made grave. The numerously attested declaration that Nebogipfel and the murdered Williams had been seen hanging the sons on a ghostly gibbet, at the back of the house, was due to the electric illumination of a fitfully wind-shaken tree. A hundred like stories hurtled thickly about the village and darkened the moral atmosphere. The Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook, hearing of the tumult, sallied forth to allay it, and narrowly escaped drawing on himself the gathering lightning.

By eight o'clock (it was Monday the twenty-second of July) a grand demonstration had organised itself against the "necromancer". A number of bolder hearts among the men formed the nucleus of the gathering, and at nightfall Arthur Price Williams, John Peters, and others brought torches and raised their spark-raining flames aloft with curt ominous suggestions. The less adventurous village manhood came straggling late to the rendezvous, and with them the married women came in groups of four or five, greatly increasing the excitement of the assembly with their shrill hysterical talk and active imaginations. After these the children and young girls, overcome by undefinable dread, crept quietly out of the too silent and shadowy houses into the yellow glare of the pine knots, and the tumultuary noise of the thickening people. By nine, nearly half the Llyddwdd population was massed before the Pig and Whistle. There was a confused murmur of many tongues, but above all the stir and chatter of the growing crowd could be heard the coarse, cracked voice of the blood-thirsty old fanatic, Pritchard, drawing a congenial lesson from the fate of the four hundred and fifty idolators of Carmel.

Just as the church clock was beating out the hour, an occultly originated movement up hill began, and soon the whole assembly, men, women, and children, was moving in a fear-compacted mass, towards the ill-fated doctor's abode. As they left the brightly-lit public house behind them, a quavering female voice began singing one of those grim-sounding canticles that so satisfy the Calvinistic ear. In a wonderfully short time, the tune had been caught up, first by two or three, and then by the whole procession, and the manifold shuffling of heavy shoon grew swiftly into rhythm with the beats of the hymn. When, however, their goal rose, like a blazing star, over the undulation of the road, the volume of the chanting suddenly died away, leaving only the voices of the ringleaders, shouting indeed now somewhat out of tune, but, if anything, more vigorously than before. Their persistence and example nevertheless failed to prevent a perceptible breaking and slackening of the pace, as the Manse was neared, and when the gate was reached, the whole crowd came to a dead halt. Vague fear for the future had begotten the courage that had brought the villagers thus far: fear for the present now smothered its kindred birth. The intense blaze from the gaps in the death-like silent pile lit up

rows of livid, hesitating faces: and a smothered, frightened sobbing broke out among the children. "Well," said Arthur Price Williams, addressing Jack Peters, with an expert assumption of the modest discipleship, "what do we do now, Jack?" But Peters was regarding the Manse with manifest dubiety, and ignored the question. The Llyddwdd witch-find seemed to be suddenly aborting.

At this juncture old Pritchard suddenly pushed his way forward, gesticulating weirdly with his bony hands and long arms. "What!" he shouted, in broken notes, "fear ye to smite when the Lord hateth? Burn the warlock!" And seizing a flambeau from Peters, he flung open the rickety gate and strode on down the drive, his torch leaving a coiling trail of scintillant sparks on the night wind. "Burn the warlock," screamed a shrill voice from the wavering crowd, and in a moment the gregarious human instinct had prevailed. With an outburst of incoherent, threatening voice, the mob poured after the fanatic.

Woe betide the Philosopher now! They expected barricaded doors; but with a groan of a conscious insufficiency, the hinge-rusted portals swung at the push of Pritchard. Blinded by the light, he hesitated for a second on the threshold, while his followers came crowding up behind him.

Those who were there say that they saw Dr. Nebogipfel, standing in the toneless electric glare, on a peculiar erection of brass and ebony and ivory; and that he seemed to be smiling at them, half pityingly and half scornfully, as it is said martyrs are wont to smile. Some assert, moreover, that by his side was sitting a tall man, clad in ravenswing, and some even aver that this second man— whom others deny— bore on his face the likeness of the Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook, while others declare that he resembled the description of the murdered Williams. Be that as it may, it must now go unproven for ever, for suddenly a wonderous thing smote the crowd as it swarmed in through the entrance. Pritchard pitched headlong on the floor senseless. While shouts and shrieks of anger, changed in mid utterance to yells of agonising fear, or to the mute gasp of heart-stopping horror: and then a frantic rush was made for the doorway.

For the calm, smiling doctor, and his quiet, black-clad companion, and the polished platform which upbore them, had vanished before their eyes!

2: How an Esoteric Story Became Possible

A SILVERY-FOLIAGED willow by the side of a mere. Out of the cress-spangled waters below, rise clumps of sedge-blades, and among them glows the purple fleur-de-lys, and sapphire vapour of forget-me-nots. Beyond is a sluggish stream of water reflecting the intense blue of the moist Fenland sky; and beyond that a low osier-fringed eyot. This limits all the visible universe, save

some scattered pollards and spear-like poplars showing against the violet distance. At the foot of the willow reclines the Author watching a copper butterfly fluttering from iris to iris.

Who can fix the colours of the sunset? Who can take a cast of flame? Let him essay to register the mutations of mortal thought as it wanders from a copper butterfly to the disembodied soul, and thence passes to spiritual motions and the vanishing of Dr. Moses Nebogipfel and the Rev. Elijah Ulysses Cook from the world of sense.

As the author lay basking there and speculating, as another once did under the Budh tree, on mystic transmutations, a presence became apparent. There was a somewhat on the eyot between him and the purple horizon— an opaque reflecting entity, making itself dimly perceptible by reflection in the water to his averted eyes. He raised them in curious surprise.

What was it?

He stared in stupefied astonishment at the apparition, doubted, blinked, rubbed his eyes, stared again, and believed. It was solid, it cast a shadow, and it upbore two men. There was white metal in it that blazed in the noontide sun like incandescent magnesium, ebony bars that drank in the light, and white parts that gleamed like polished ivory. Yet withal it seemed unreal. The thing was not square as a machine ought to be, but all awry: it was twisted and seemed falling over, hanging in two directions, as those queer crystals called triclinic hang; it seemed like a machine that had been crushed or warped; it was suggestive and not confirmatory, like the machine of a disordered dream. The men, too, were dreamlike. One was short, intensely sallow, with a strangely-shaped head, and clad in a garment of dark olive green, the other was, grotesquely out of place, evidently a clergyman of the Established Church, a fair-haired, pale-faced respectable-looking man.

Once more doubt came rushing in on the author. He sprawled back and stared at the sky, rubbed his eyes, stared at the willow wands that hung between him and the blue, closely examined his hands to see if his eyes had any new things to relate about them, and then sat up again and stared at the eyot. A gentle breeze stirred the osiers; a white bird was flapping its way through the lower sky. The machine of the vision had vanished! It was an illusion— a projection of the subjective— an assertion of the immateriality of mind. "Yes," interpolated the sceptic faculty, "but how comes it that the clergyman is still there?"

The clergyman had not vanished. In intense perplexity the author examined this black-coated phenomenon as he stood regarding the world with hand-shaded eyes. The author knew the periphery of that eyot by heart, and the question that troubled him was, "Whence?" The clergyman looked as

Frenchmen look when they land at Newhaven— intensely travel-worn; his clothes showed rubbed and seamy in the bright day. When he came to the edge of the island and shouted a question to the author, his voice was broken and trembled. "Yes," answered the author, "it is an island. How did you get there?"

But the clergyman, instead of replying to this asked a very strange question.

He said "Are you in the nineteenth century?" The author made him repeat that question before he replied. "Thank heaven," cried the clergyman rapturously. Then he asked very eagerly for the exact date.

"August the ninth, eighteen hundred and eighty-seven," he repeated after the author. "Heaven be praised!" and sinking down on the eyot so that the sedges hid him, he audibly burst into tears.

Now the author was mightily surprised at all this, and going a certain distance along the mere, he obtained a punt, and getting into it he hastily poled to the eyot where he had last seen the clergyman. He found him lying insensible among the reeds, and carried him in his punt to the house where he lived, and the clergyman lay there insensible for ten days.

Meanwhile, it became known that he was the Rev. Elijah Cook, who had disappeared from Llyddwdd with Dr. Moses Nebogipfel three weeks before.

On August 19th, the nurse called the author out of his study to speak to the invalid. He found him perfectly sensible, but his eyes were strangely bright, and his face was deadly pale. "Have you found out who I am?" he asked.

"You are the Rev. Elijah Ulysses Cook, Master of Arts, of Pembroke College, Oxford, and Rector of Llyddwdd, near Rwstog, in Caernarvon."

He bowed his head. "Have you been told anything of how I came here?"

"I found you among the reeds," I said. He was silent and thoughtful for a while. "I have a deposition to make. Will you take it? It concerns the murder of an old man named Williams, which occurred in 1862, this disappearance of Dr. Moses Nebogipfel, the abduction of a ward in the year 4003— — "

The author stared.

"The year of our Lord 4003," he corrected. "She would come. Also several assaults on public officials in the years 17,901 and 2."

The author coughed.

"The years 17,901 and 2, and valuable medical, social, and physiographical data for all time."

After a consultation with the doctor, it was decided to have the deposition taken down, and this is which constitutes the remainder of the story of the Chronic Argonauts.

On August 28th, 1887, the Rev Elijah Cook died. His body was conveyed to Llyddwdd, and buried in the churchyard there.

3: The Esoteric Story Based On The Clergyman's Depositions: The Anachronic Man

INCIDENTALLY it has been remarked in the first part, how the Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook attempted and failed to quiet the superstitious excitement of the villagers on the afternoon of the memorable twenty-second of July. His next proceeding was to try and warn the unsocial philosopher of the dangers which impended. With this intent he made his way from the rumour-pelted village, through the silent, slumbrous heat of the July afternoon, up the slopes of Pen-y-pwll, to the old Manse. His loud knocking at the heavy door called forth dull resonance from the interior, and produced a shower of lumps of plaster and fragments of decaying touchwood from the rickety porch, but beyond this the dreamy stillness of the summer mid-day remained unbroken. Everything was so quiet as he stood there expectant, that the occasional speech of the haymakers a mile away in the fields, over towards Rwstog, could be distinctly heard. The reverend gentleman waited, then knocked again, and waited again, and listened, until the echoes and the patter of rubbish had melted away into the deep silence, and the creeping in the blood-vessels of his ears had become oppressively audible, swelling and sinking with sounds like the confused murmuring of a distant crowd, and causing a suggestion of anxious discomfort to spread slowly over his mind.

Again he knocked, this time loud, quick blows with his stick, and almost immediately afterwards, leaning his hand against the door, he kicked the panels vigorously. There was a shouting of echoes, a protesting jarring of hinges, and then the oaken door yawned and displayed, in the blue blaze of the electric light, vestiges of partitions, piles of planking and straw, masses of metal, heaps of papers and overthrown apparatus, to the rector's astonished eyes. "Doctor Nebogipfel, excuse my intruding," he called out, but the only response was a reverberation among the black beams and shadows that hung dimly above. For almost a minute he stood there, leaning forward over the threshold, staring at the glittering mechanisms, diagrams, books, scattered indiscriminately with broken food, packing cases, heaps of coke, hay, and microcosmic lumber, about the undivided house cavity; and then, removing his hat and treading stealthily, as if the silence were a sacred thing, he stepped into the apparently deserted shelter of the Doctor.

His eyes sought everywhere, as he cautiously made his way through the confusion, with a strange anticipation of finding Nebogipfel hidden somewhere in the sharp black shadows among the litter, so strong in him was an

indescribable sense of perceiving presence. This feeling was so vivid that, when, after an abortive exploration, he seated himself upon Nebogipfel's diagram-covered bench, it made him explain in a forced hoarse voice to the stillness— "He is not here. I have something to say to him. I must wait for him." It was so vivid, too, that the trickling of some grit down the wall in the vacant corner behind him made him start round in a sudden perspiration. There was nothing visible there, but turning his head back, he was stricken rigid with horror by the swift, noiseless apparition of Nebogipfel, ghastly pale, and with red stained hands, crouching upon a strange-looking metallic platform, and with his deep grey eyes looking intently into the visitor's face.

Cook's first impulse was to yell out his fear, but his throat was paralysed, and he could only stare fascinated at the bizarre countenance that had thus clashed suddenly into visibility. The lips were quivering and the breath came in short convulsive sobs. The un-human forehead was wet with perspiration, while the veins were swollen, knotted and purple. The Doctor's red hands, too, he noticed, were trembling, as the hands of slight people tremble after intense muscular exertion, and his lips closed and opened as if he, too, had a difficulty in speaking as he gasped, "Who— what do you do here?"

Cook answered not a word, but stared with hair erect, open mouth, and dilated eyes, at the dark red unmistakeable smear that streaked the pure ivory and gleaming nickel and shining ebony of the platform.

"What are you doing here?" repeated the doctor, raising himself. "What do you want?"

Cook gave a convulsive effort. "In Heaven's name, what are you?" he gasped; and then black curtains came closing in from every side, sweeping the squatting dwarfish phantasm that reeled before him into rayless, voiceless night.

The Reverend Elijah Ulysses Cook recovered his perceptions to find himself lying on the floor of the old Manse, and Doctor Nebogipfel, no longer blood-stained and with all trace of his agitation gone, kneeling by his side and bending over him with a glass of brandy in his hand. "Do not be alarmed, sir," said the philosopher with a faint smile, as the clergyman opened his eyes. "I have not treated you to a disembodied spirit, or anything nearly so extraordinary... may I offer you this?"

The clergyman submitted quietly to the brandy, and then stared perplexed into Nebogipfel's face, vainly searching his memory for what occurrences had preceded his insensibility. Raising himself at last, into a sitting posture, he saw the oblique mass of metals that had appeared with the doctor, and immediately all that happened flashed back upon his mind. He looked from this structure to the recluse, and from the recluse to the structure.

"There is absolutely no deception, sir," said Nebogipfel with the slightest trace of mockery in his voice. "I lay no claim to work in matters spiritual. It is a bona fide mechanical contrivance, a thing emphatically of this sordid world. Excuse me— just one minute." He rose from his knees, stepped upon the mahogany platform, took a curiously curved lever in his hand and pulled it over. Cook rubbed his eyes. There certainly was no deception. The doctor and the machine had vanished.

The reverend gentleman felt no horror this time, only a slight nervous shock, to see the doctor presently re-appear "in the twinkling of an eye" and get down from the machine. From that he walked in a straight line with his hands behind his back and his face downcast, until his progress was stopped by the intervention of a circular saw; then, turning round sharply on his heel, he said:

"I was thinking while I was... away... Would you like to come? I should greatly value a companion."

The clergyman was still sitting, hatless, on the floor. "I am afraid," he said slowly, "you will think me stupid— — "

"Not at all," interrupted the doctor. "The stupidity is mine. You desire to have all this explained... wish to know where I am going first. I have spoken so little with men of this age for the last ten years or more that I have ceased to make due allowances and concessions for other minds. I will do my best, but that I fear will be very unsatisfactory. It is a long story... do you find that floor comfortable to sit on? If not, there is a nice packing case over there, or some straw behind you, or this bench— the diagrams are done with now, but I am afraid of the drawing pins. You may sit on the Chronic Argo!"

"No, thank you," slowly replied the clergyman, eyeing that deformed structure thus indicated, suspiciously; "I am quite comfortable here."

"Then I will begin. Do you read fables? Modern ones?"

"I am afraid I must confess to a good deal of fiction," said the clergyman deprecatingly. "In Wales the ordained ministers of the sacraments of the Church have perhaps too large a share of leisure— — "

"Have you read the Ugly Duckling?"

"Hans Christian Andersen's— yes— in my childhood."

"A wonderful story— a story that has ever been full of tears and heart swelling hopes for me, since first it came to me in my lonely boyhood and saved me from unspeakable things. That story, if you understand it well, will tell you almost all that you should know of me to comprehend how that machine came to be thought of in a mortal brain... Even when I read that simple narrative for the first time, a thousand bitter experiences had begun the teaching of my isolation among the people of my birth— I knew the story was

for me. The ugly duckling that proved to be a swan, that lived through all contempt and bitterness, to float at last sublime. From that hour forth, I dreamt of meeting with my kind, dreamt of encountering that sympathy I knew was my profoundest need. Twenty years I lived in that hope, lived and worked, lived and wandered, loved even, and at last, despaired. Only once among all those millions of wondering, astonished, indifferent, contemptuous, and insidious faces that I met with in that passionate wandering, looked one upon me as I desired... looked— — "

He paused. The Reverend Cook glanced up into his face, expecting some indication of the deep feeling that had sounded in his last words. It was downcast, clouded, and thoughtful, but the mouth was rigidly firm.

"In short, Mr. Cook, I discovered that I was one of those superior Cagots called a genius— a man born out of my time— a man thinking the thoughts of a wiser age, doing things and believing things that men now cannot understand, and that in the years ordained to me there was nothing but silence and suffering for my soul— unbroken solitude, man's bitterest pain. I knew I was an Anachronic Man; my age was still to come. One filmy hope alone held me to life, a hope to which I clung until it had become a certain thing. Thirty years of unremitting toil and deepest thought among the hidden things of matter and form and life, and then that, the Chronic Argo, the ship that sails through time, and now I go to join my generation, to journey through the ages till my time has come.

4: The Chronic Argo

DR. NEBOGIPFEL paused, looked in sudden doubt at the clergyman's perplexed face. "You think that sounds mad," he said, "to travel through time?"

"It certainly jars with accepted opinions," said the clergyman, allowing the faintest suggestion of controversy to appear in his intonation, and speaking apparently to the Chronic Argo. Even a clergyman of the Church of England you see can have a suspicion of illusions at times.

"It certainly does jar with accepted opinions," agreed the philosopher cordially. "It does more than that— it defies accepted opinions to mortal combat. Opinions of all sorts, Mr. Cook— Scientific Theories, Laws, Articles of Belief, or, to come to elements, Logical Premises, Ideas, or whatever you like to call them— all are, from the infinite nature of things, so many diagrammatic caricatures of the ineffable— caricatures altogether to be avoided save where they are necessary in the shaping of results— as chalk outlines are necessary to the painter and plans and sections to the engineer. Men, from the exigencies of their being, find this hard to believe."

The Rev. Elijah Ulysses Cook nodded his head with the quiet smile of one whose opponent has unwittingly given a point.

"It is as easy to come to regard ideas as complete reproductions of entities as it is to roll off a log. Hence it is that almost all civilised men believe in the reality of the Greek geometrical conceptions."

"Oh! pardon me, sir," interrupted Cook. "Most men know that a geometrical point has no existence in matter, and the same with a geometrical line. I think you underrate..."

"Yes, yes, those things are recognised," said Nebogipfel calmly; "but now... a cube. Does that exist in the material universe?"

"Certainly."

"An instantaneous cube?"

"I don't know what you intend by that expression."

"Without any other sort of extension; a body having length, breadth, and thickness, exists?"

"What other sort of extension can there be?" asked Cook, with raised eyebrows.

"Has it never occurred to you that no form can exist in the material universe that has no extension in time?... Has it never glimmered upon your consciousness that nothing stood between men and a geometry of four dimensions— length, breadth, thickness, and duration— but the inertia of opinion, the impulse from the Levantine philosophers of the bronze age?"

"Putting it that way," said the clergyman, "it does look as though there was a flaw somewhere in the notion of tridimensional being; but"... He became silent, leaving that sufficiently eloquent "but" to convey all the prejudice and distrust that filled his mind.

"When we take up this new light of a fourth dimension and reexamine our physical science in its illumination," continued Nebogipfel, after a pause, "we find ourselves no longer limited by hopeless restriction to a certain beat of time— to our own generation. Locomotion along lines of duration— chronic navigation comes within the range, first, of geometrical theory, and then of practical mechanics. There was a time when men could only move horizontally and in their appointed country. The clouds floated above them, unattainable things, mysterious chariots of those fearful gods who dwelt among the mountain summits. Speaking practically, men in those days were restricted to motion in two dimensions; and even there circumambient ocean and hypoborean fear bound him in. But those times were to pass away. First, the keel of Jason cut its way between the Symplegades, and then in the fulness of time, Columbus dropped anchor in a bay of Atlantis. Then man burst his bidimensional limits, and invaded the third dimension, soaring with

Montgolfier into the clouds, and sinking with a diving bell into the purple treasure-caves of the waters. And now another step, and the hidden past and unknown future are before us. We stand upon a mountain summit with the plains of the ages spread below."

Nebogipfel paused and looked down at his hearer.

The Reverend Elijah Cook was sitting with an expression of strong distrust on his face. Preaching much had brought home certain truths to him very vividly, and he always suspected rhetoric. "Are those things figures of speech," he asked; "or am I to take them as precise statements? Do you speak of travelling through time in the same way as one might speak of Omnipotence making His pathway on the storm, or do you— a— mean what you say?"

Dr. Nebogipfel smiled quietly. "Come and look at these diagrams," he said, and then with elaborate simplicity he commenced to explain again to the clergyman the new quadridimensional geometry. Insensibly Cook's aversion passed away, and seeming impossibility grew possible, now that such tangible things as diagrams and models could be brought forward in evidence. Presently he found himself asking questions, and his interest grew deeper and deeper as Nebogipfel slowly and with precise clearness unfolded the beautiful order of his strange invention. The moments slipped away unchecked, as the Doctor passed on to the narrative of his research, and it was with a start of surprise that the clergyman noticed the deep blue of the dying twilight through the open doorway.

"The voyage," said Nebogipfel concluding his history, "will be full of undreamt-of dangers— already in one brief essay I have stood in the very jaws of death— but it is also full of the divines' promise of undreamt-of joy. Will you come? Will you walk among the people of the Golden Years? ..."

But the mention of death by the philosopher had brought flooding back to the mind of Cook, all the horrible sensations of that first apparition.

"Dr. Nebogipfel... one question?" He hesitated. "On your hands... Was it blood?"

Nebogipfel's countenance fell. He spoke slowly.

"When I had stopped my machine, I found myself in this room as it used to be. Hark!"

"It is the wind in the trees towards Rwstog."

"It sounded like the voices of a multitude of people singing... when I had stopped I found myself in this room as it used to be. An old man, a young man, and a lad were sitting at a table— reading some book together. I stood behind them unsuspected. 'Evil spirits assailed him,' read the old man; 'but it is written, "to him that overcometh shall be given life eternal". They came as entreating friends, but he endured through all their snares. They came as

principalities and powers, but he defied them in the name of the King of Kings. Once even it is told that in his study, while he was translating the *New Testament* into German, the Evil One himself appeared before him...' Just then the lad glanced timorously round, and with a fearful wail fainted away...

"The others sprang at me... It was a fearful grapple... The old man clung to my throat, screaming 'Man or Devil, I defy thee...'

"I could not help it. We rolled together on the floor... the knife his trembling son had dropped came to my hand... Hark!"

He paused and listened, but Cook remained staring at him in the same horror-stricken attitude he had assumed when the memory of the blood-stained hands had rushed back over his mind.

"Do you hear what they are crying? Hark!"

Burn the warlock! Burn the murderer!

"Do you hear? There is no time to be lost."

Slay the murderer of cripples. Kill the devil's claw!

"Come! Come!"

Cook, with a convulsive effort, made a gesture of repugnance and strode to the doorway. A crowd of black figures roaring towards him in the red torchlight made him recoil. He shut the door and faced Nebogipfel.

The thin lips of the Doctor curled with a contemptuous sneer. "They will kill you if you stay," he said; and seizing his unresisting vistor by the wrist, he forced him towards the glittering machine. Cook sat down and covered his face with his hands.

In another moment the door was flung open, and old Pritchard stood blinking on the threshold.

A pause. A hoarse shout changing suddenly into a sharp shrill shriek.

A thunderous roar like the bursting forth of a great fountain of water.

The voyage of the Chronic Argonauts had begun.

9: Luck

Dy Edwardson

Edward Dyson, 1865-1931
Punch (Melbourne) 5 Nov 1914

"LUCK is pictured as a woman," said Hastings, "because you never know what she means to do next. I don't think there's a man living Luck's played such pranks with as she has played with me.

"I thought Luck my direst enemy. She and Fortune (which includes Misfortune) had combined to make my lot on earth as miserable as possible; and it always seemed to me that her tricks were deliberately malicious.

"My mother died when I was born. My father drank. I wasn't reared. I sort of fought my way up through a sea of misfortunes. At twenty-five I was working in a tannery, and not in the most pleasing branch of the business either. I'd managed to learn to read and write, I can hardly tell how, the knowledge having been picked up in scraps here and there. I was getting thirty-five shillings a week, and hated the work like the deuce and all.

"It was part of my ill-luck not to be able to reconcile myself to my lowly station and my somewhat malodorous line of business. Other fellows did the work, and took the money, and didn't worry. I, in addition to the work, had to struggle with my fierce disinclination. I was always hoping and yearning for better things and pleasanter ways of earning a crust than puddling in a tan pit or mauling rawhides, but could never see a way out.

"Then one night I got in some good work at a fire at an hotel opposite to the house at which I was lodging. I knew there was a rather gouty old gent living in the room facing mine, and I went up after him, found him helpless m his bed, and humped him downstairs through the smoke.

"We were burning a bit when we came out, and the firemen put a hose on us, which just about finished the old bloke. He had to be put to bed; but he sent for me next day.

" 'Look here, my lad,' he said, 'you did me a great good turn last night. Is there anything you'd like me to do for you?'

" 'Well,' I said, 'I don't want to trade on having given a man a helping hand in a tight place, but I've got the rottenest billet on earth, and if you can get me a better one. I'll reckon you've more than evened matters up.'

" 'You're modest,' said he, 'and that ought not to he hard. Look here, I'm fairly fixed financially, but the dashed gout gets me down. How would you like to take charge of me, help me about, and be a sort of valet?'

" 'I'd jump at it,' I said, 'and I'll swear you won't get anyone to do you better than I would.'

" 'I'll chance that, youngster. Two pounds ten a week, and your keep, and you can come on to-day.'

"It seemed a godsend. He'd taken rooms in another hotel, and was bedridden, the dosing from the hose having just about outed him I was with him five days, and he'd taken to me like a father, when rheumatic fever took hold and finished him.

"I was out of a grip again, and Luck was grinning vindictively wherever I turned. Listen. That old chap proved to be my own uncle, my dead mother's brother, and he left thirty-five thousand pounds to ten charitable institutions. I swear that if he'd only guessed my identity every penny would have been mine. But Luck had me set.

"Picture me now right down to it. I'd lost my billet, I'd lost my home, and having bought decent clothes suitable for my position as companion to a gentleman of leisure I hadn't a bean left.

"Of course, it was a tough time. The country was right down to it. There was a wolfish drove of unemployed tramping round Melbourne, and a thick, black drought had settled on the country. Nobody wanted to take me on, most business people being in the act of putting hands off.

"Right there began the perish of my life. I'd been in a perish before, but this was the worst ever. Looking for work ceased to be an occupation. I'd dropped to the uselessness of it after three weeks' desolate tramping, and now I sat miserable, thinking of my finish, or mooned about at night, trying to walk away from the dreary task of contemplating my woeful lot.

"These are the times when a man gets in solid thinking, and running my life over I saw it as nothing but a succession of strokes of ill-luck, each a little worse than the other. Even the episodes that had seemed turns of good fortune proved to be bad turns in disguise. I was always entertaining devils unawares.

"I'd been something of a gambler from the start. When I had a bit by me I was always willing to venture in the hope that the ghastly fate that pursued me was not chronic. I'd invested in scores and scores of tickets in Tatt's at one time or another, always with the same miserable result. I never won a bean. Then came the conviction that I never would win anything— that it was hopeless to try, that so far as the good things of this world were concerned I was down and out.

"Sitting round starving, these piquant ideas come to you to cheer you up. All my misfortunes and failures paraded before me in a dreary procession, and I came to the point of wondering whether the easiest way out was by drowning or hanging. I remember I favoured hanging, but was compelled to

admit that I must be content with drowning, since I couldn't afford a rope. The river was free to all.

"There had been a girl when I was about twenty-two— a nice, mild-mannered, gentle-eyed girl named Alice. I met her when working on a Riverina farm one harvest, and she admitted a fondness for me. I was wholly in love with her, but couldn't see how I was going to give a nice girl anything like a fair show for happiness as my wife. Her father settled the problem by shooting three ounces of sparrow shot into my left leg, and carrying the girl off while I was in the hospital, having the pellets picked out.

"I thought a great deal about Alice as I starved. She, too, stood for a stroke of bad luck; but I was compelled to admit her old man was right. The luck might have been worse; she might have been there to share my misfortunes.

"You've never starved? I don't mean just hungered. Being merely hungry is rather pleasant, especially with the assurance of a fat dinner just ahead. Starving is a totally different matter, the sick, sinking feeling accompanied by sharp pains, the long animal craving that makes you bare your fangs like a wolf at the thought of meat—that's the thing to take the conventional prettinesses and the niceties of civilisation out of you.

"I had reached that stage— a stage when a few scraps of broken food would have been received with keener gratitude than is bestowed on his saviour by a wretch snatched from a dreadful death. I'd begged twice during the day, but my luck pursued me even in this. Once I was refused point-blank; a second time a policeman caught me at it, threatened me with arrest, and helped me on my way with a punt.

"Thoughts of thieving were busy in my brain, and I was still prowling when it struck midnight. About half-an-hour later I came suddenly on a squabble in the street. Three lads were attacking a stout gent in evening clothes. Pulling a picket from a fence I got among them, laid one out, lamed another, and started the third on a brilliant sprint.

"They were thieves, and had been after the gent's small valuables. He was drunk. He leaned against the fence, and looked at me gravely.

" 'Shanks," he said. "Shanks, old f'ler, you shaved my life.' He went through his pockets, and hope sprang in my heart. 'Awful shorry,' he said, 'got no money.' Then his face brightened. 'Here,' he said, 'here, take thish ash spression of gratitude;' and he gave me a piece of paper, and went lurching on his way.

"The piece of paper was a five-shilling ticket in Tatt's. Conceive my feelings. I started to tear it across in my rage, but thought better of. it, and crumpling it up stuck it in my vest pocket. However, it meant nothing to me. I had bought

sweep tickets in the past, till the belief in my ill-luck became an absolute conviction.

"I starved that night through, and in the morning, utterly desperate, stole a small loaf a baker had left on a cottage verandah, took a jug of milk from another verandah, and ate and drank.

"In this way I lived for nearly a fortnight. Then I realised at noon one day that it was the first Tuesday in November— Cup Day. It concerned me little. I had drifted to Heidelberg, and had breakfasted very poorly on stolen fruit. I wandered to the river bank, and lay in the shade of a tree to sleep the day away.

"I was, I admit, a deplorable object. The nearest thing to a shave I could get was a close clip with an old pair of scissors I had found. I cut my own hair after a fashion with the same implement, and I had a soapless wash in the river. My clothes were wretched, my boots had to be tied together with twine to keep them on my feet, I was thin to the bone, and. if I did not look like a man ready to pray on his kind my looks belied me.

"At noon I was famishing again, but tried to fill my stomach with sleep and lavish dreams of gorgeous, seven-course dinners, such as I had read of.

"When I awoke from a drowse at about two o'clock there was a small picnic party, consisting of a young lady in a white dress and a neat black hat and two children, camped on the other side of the shrub that concealed me.

They had a basket of food and bottles of lemonade, and were very gay.

"Surely they would give me a mouthful. I arose, and took a detour so as not to come upon them too suddenly.

"It was she! Yes, Alice. I knew her at once, and she knew me, although she stared as if I had been some fearful monster risen from the depths of the stream.

"George!" she said.

"I wanted to run, but it was too late. Besides, my legs were in no condition for running.

" 'Yes,' I answered, 'George.'

" 'What are you doing ?'

" 'Just now I am busy starving. I was going to ask you to give me a little food.'

"She tumbled all she had before me in a sort of feverish agitation. She poured a drink for me, and sat with clasped hands and eager eyes, watching.

" 'Oh, you poor fellow!' she said.

" 'Do you know, that beat me. I'd kept something like a stiff upper lip till then, but those words, the light in her eye, the sympathy in her heart,

combined with my miserable weakness, beat me. I went on my face in the grass, and cried like a kid.

"She hovered over me, condoling, pleading, her little hands touching me like flowers. God, she was good! She had me all right again in a while, and before we parted I was almost a man.

"Alice had left her father largely on my account. She had come from Sydney to Melbourne thinking she might find me, and was now nursery governess at a lawyer's home in Heidelberg. She filled me with strength and hope, and my love for her came back in a great surge. She was improved, better grown, more handsome, with a quiet, serious manner.

"When my tale was told, she said she could get me work if I was willing to take a rouseabout billet. I was willing to take anything, and told her so.

" 'Perhaps in a while,' she said, 'you may get something better.'

" 'Yes,' I said, mad with a new hope, 'I shall get something better. I feel like a man born again.'

"She let me kiss her.

"I got the billet all right, and worked at it for three weeks, when I'd pulled myself round, and got into a decent suit, and was something like a sane, sound human creature again.

"We saw each other quietly. I insisted in this, as there would have been some chance of endangering her place had she been seen with a man looking as near to a beat as I was.

" 'And you have kept your love for me all this time?' I said one night.

" 'Yes,' she answered simply, 'that I shall always keep.'

"I took her in my arms, and kissed her closely. That, I think, was the best moment of my life. I don't believe there is a sweet or generous emotion possible to a man that had not a place in my breast. My luck, it seemed, had turned.

"The next morning, going through my old suit before discarding it I found the forgotten Tatt's ticket in the vest pocket.

"You know the rest, boys. That ticket was a winner. I drew close upon six thousand pounds, and was married within a month.

"Luck was a bad enemy; as a friend she has been a marvellous sticker. Every investment I've had a hand in since that old November has tumbled money into me, and here is my mascot," concluded Hastings, as his pretty wife came smiling into the room.

10: A Yellow Dog

Bret Harte

1836-1902

McClure's Magazine, Aug 1895

I NEVER KNEW why in the Western States of America a yellow dog should be proverbially considered the acme of canine degradation and incompetency, nor why the possession of one should seriously affect the social standing of its possessor. But the fact being established, I think we accepted it at Rattlers Ridge without question. The matter of ownership was more difficult to settle; and although the dog I have in my mind at the present writing attached himself impartially and equally to everyone in camp, no one ventured to exclusively claim him; while, after the perpetration of any canine atrocity, everybody repudiated him with indecent haste.

"Well, I can swear he hasn't been near our shanty for weeks," or the retort, "He was last seen comin' out of your cabin," expressed the eagerness with which Rattlers Ridge washed its hands of any responsibility. Yet he was by no means a common dog, nor even an unhandsome dog; and it was a singular fact that his severest critics vied with each other in narrating instances of his sagacity, insight, and agility which they themselves had witnessed.

He had been seen crossing the "flume" that spanned Grizzly Canyon at a height of nine hundred feet, on a plank six inches wide. He had tumbled down the "shoot" to the South Fork, a thousand feet below, and was found sitting on the riverbank "without a scratch, 'cept that he was lazily givin' himself with his off hind paw." He had been forgotten in a snowdrift on a Sierran shelf, and had come home in the early spring with the conceited complacency of an Alpine traveler and a plumpness alleged to have been the result of an exclusive diet of buried mail bags and their contents. He was generally believed to read the advance election posters, and disappear a day or two before the candidates and the brass band— which he hated— came to the Ridge. He was suspected of having overlooked Colonel Johnson's hand at poker, and of having conveyed to the Colonel's adversary, by a succession of barks, the danger of betting against four kings.

While these statements were supplied by wholly unsupported witnesses, it was a very human weakness of Rattlers Ridge that the responsibility of corroboration was passed to the dog himself, and *he* was looked upon as a consummate liar.

"Snoopin' round yere, and *callin*' yourself a poker sharp, are ye! Scoot, you yaller pizin!" was a common adjuration whenever the unfortunate animal intruded upon a card party. "Ef thar was a spark, an *atom* of truth in *that dog*,

I'd believe my own eyes that I saw him sittin' up and trying to magnetize a jay bird off a tree. But wot are ye goin' to do with a yaller equivocator like that?"

I have said that he was yellow— or, to use the ordinary expression, "yaller." Indeed, I am inclined to believe that much of the ignominy attached to the epithet lay in this favorite pronunciation. Men who habitually spoke of a "*yellow* bird," a "*yellow*-hammer," a "*yellow* leaf," always alluded to him as a "*yaller* dog."

He certainly *was* yellow. After a bath— usually compulsory— he presented a decided gamboge streak down his back, from the top of his forehead to the stump of his tail, fading in his sides and flank to a delicate straw color. His breast, legs, and feet— when not reddened by "slumgullion," in which he was fond of wading— were white. A few attempts at ornamental decoration from the India-ink pot of the storekeeper failed, partly through the yellow dog's excessive agility, which would never give the paint time to dry on him, and partly through his success in transferring his markings to the trousers and blankets of the camp.

The size and shape of his tail— which had been cut off before his introduction to Rattlers Ridge— were favorite sources of speculation to the miners, as determining both his breed and his moral responsibility in coming into camp in that defective condition. There was a general opinion that he couldn't have looked worse with a tail, and its removal was therefore a gratuitous effrontery.

His best feature was his eyes, which were a lustrous Vandyke brown, and sparkling with intelligence; but here again he suffered from evolution through environment, and their original trustful openness was marred by the experience of watching for flying stones, sods, and passing kicks from the rear, so that the pupils were continually reverting to the outer angle of the eyelid.

Nevertheless, none of these characteristics decided the vexed question of his *breed*. His speed and scent pointed to a "hound," and it is related that on one occasion he was laid on the trail of a wildcat with such success that he followed it apparently out of the State, returning at the end of two weeks footsore, but blandly contented.

Attaching himself to a prospecting party, he was sent under the same belief, "into the brush" to drive off a bear, who was supposed to be haunting the campfire. He returned in a few minutes *with* the bear, *driving it into* the unarmed circle and scattering the whole party. After this the theory of his being a hunting dog was abandoned. Yet it was said— on the usual uncorroborated evidence— that he had "put up" a quail; and his qualities as a retriever were for a long time accepted, until, during a shooting expedition for wild ducks, it was discovered that the one he had brought back had never been

shot, and the party were obliged to compound damages with an adjacent settler.

His fondness for paddling in the ditches and "slumgullion" at one time suggested a water spaniel. He could swim, and would occasionally bring out of the river sticks and pieces of bark that had been thrown in; but as HE always had to be thrown in with them, and was a good-sized dog, his aquatic reputation faded also. He remained simply "a yaller dog." What more could be said? His actual name was "Bones"— given to him, no doubt, through the provincial custom of confounding the occupation of the individual with his quality, for which it was pointed out precedent could be found in some old English family names.

But if Bones generally exhibited no preference for any particular individual in camp, he always made an exception in favor of drunkards. Even an ordinary roistering bacchanalian party brought him out from under a tree or a shed in the keenest satisfaction. He would accompany them through the long straggling street of the settlement, barking his delight at every step or misstep of the revelers, and exhibiting none of that mistrust of eye which marked his attendance upon the sane and the respectable. He accepted even their uncouth play without a snarl or a yelp, hypocritically pretending even to like it; and I conscientiously believe would have allowed a tin can to be attached to his tail if the hand that tied it on were only unsteady, and the voice that bade him "lie still" were husky with liquor. He would "see" the party cheerfully into a saloon, wait outside the door— his tongue fairly lolling from his mouth in enjoyment— until they reappeared, permit them even to tumble over him with pleasure, and then gambol away before them, heedless of awkwardly projected stones and epithets. He would afterward accompany them separately home, or lie with them at crossroads until they were assisted to their cabins. Then he would trot rakishly to his own haunt by the saloon stove, with the slightly conscious air of having been a bad dog, yet of having had a good time.

We never could satisfy ourselves whether his enjoyment arose from some merely selfish conviction that he was more *secure* with the physically and mentally incompetent, from some active sympathy with active wickedness, or from a grim sense of his own mental superiority at such moments. But the general belief leant toward his kindred sympathy as a "yaller dog" with all that was disreputable. And this was supported by another very singular canine manifestation— the "sincere flattery" of simulation or imitation.

"Uncle Billy" Riley for a short time enjoyed the position of being the camp drunkard, and at once became an object of Bones' greatest solicitude. He not only accompanied him everywhere, curled at his feet or head according to

Uncle Billy's attitude at the moment, but, it was noticed, began presently to undergo a singular alteration in his own habits and appearance. From being an active, tireless scout and forager, a bold and unovertakable marauder, he became lazy and apathetic; allowed gophers to burrow under him without endeavoring to undermine the settlement in his frantic endeavors to dig them out, permitted squirrels to flash their tails at him a hundred yards away, forgot his usual caches, and left his favorite bones unburied and bleaching in the sun. His eyes grew dull, his coat lusterless, in proportion as his companion became blear-eyed and ragged; in running, his usual arrowlike directness began to deviate, and it was not unusual to meet the pair together, zigzagging up the hill. Indeed, Uncle Billy's condition could be predetermined by Bones' appearance at times when his temporary master was invisible. "The old man must have an awful jag on today," was casually remarked when an extra fluffiness and imbecility was noticeable in the passing Bones. At first it was believed that he drank also, but when careful investigation proved this hypothesis untenable, he was freely called a "derned time-servin', yaller hypocrite." Not a few advanced the opinion that if Bones did not actually lead Uncle Billy astray, he at least "slavered him over and coddled him until the old man got conceited in his wickedness." This undoubtedly led to a compulsory divorce between them, and Uncle Billy was happily dispatched to a neighboring town and a doctor.

Bones seemed to miss him greatly, ran away for two days, and was supposed to have visited him, to have been shocked at his convalescence, and to have been "cut" by Uncle Billy in his reformed character; and he returned to his old active life again, and buried his past with his forgotten bones. It was said that he was afterward detected in trying to lead an intoxicated tramp into camp after the methods employed by a blind man's dog, but was discovered in time by the— of course— uncorroborated narrator.

I should be tempted to leave him thus in his original and picturesque sin, but the same veracity which compelled me to transcribe his faults and iniquities obliges me to describe his ultimate and somewhat monotonous reformation, which came from no fault of his own.

It was a joyous day at Rattlers Ridge that was equally the advent of his change of heart and the first stagecoach that had been induced to diverge from the highroad and stop regularly at our settlement. Flags were flying from the post office and Polka saloon, and Bones was flying before the brass band that he detested, when the sweetest girl in the county— Pinkey Preston— daughter of the county judge and hopelessly beloved by all Rattlers Ridge, stepped from the coach which she had glorified by occupying as an invited guest.

"What makes him run away?" she asked quickly, opening her lovely eyes in a possibly innocent wonder that anything could be found to run away from her.

"He don't like the brass band," we explained eagerly.

"How funny," murmured the girl; "is it as out of tune as all that?"

This irresistible witticism alone would have been enough to satisfy us— we did nothing but repeat it to each other all the next day— but we were positively transported when we saw her suddenly gather her dainty skirts in one hand and trip off through the red dust toward Bones, who, with his eyes over his yellow shoulder, had halted in the road, and half-turned in mingled disgust and rage at the spectacle of the descending trombone. We held our breath as she approached him. Would Bones evade her as he did us at such moments, or would he save our reputation, and consent, for the moment, to accept her as a new kind of inebriate? She came nearer; he saw her; he began to slowly quiver with excitement— his stump of a tail vibrating with such rapidity that the loss of the missing portion was scarcely noticeable. Suddenly she stopped before him, took his yellow head between her little hands, lifted it, and looked down in his handsome brown eyes with her two lovely blue ones. What passed between them in that magnetic glance no one ever knew. She returned with him; said to him casually: "We're not afraid of brass bands, are we?" to which he apparently acquiesced, at least stifling his disgust of them while he was near her— which was nearly all the time.

During the speech-making her gloved hand and his yellow head were always near together, and at the crowning ceremony— her public checking of Yuba Bill's "waybill" on behalf of the township, with a gold pencil presented to her by the Stage Company— Bones' joy, far from knowing no bounds, seemed to know nothing but them, and he witnessed it apparently in the air. No one dared to interfere. For the first time a local pride in Bones sprang up in our hearts— and we lied to each other in his praises openly and shamelessly.

Then the time came for parting. We were standing by the door of the coach, hats in hand, as Miss Pinkey was about to step into it; Bones was waiting by her side, confidently looking into the interior, and apparently selecting his own seat on the lap of Judge Preston in the corner, when Miss Pinkey held up the sweetest of admonitory fingers. Then, taking his head between her two hands, she again looked into his brimming eyes, and said, simply, "*Good* dog," with the gentlest of emphasis on the adjective, and popped into the coach.

The six bay horses started as one, the gorgeous green and gold vehicle bounded forward, the red dust rose behind, and the yellow dog danced in and out of it to the very outskirts of the settlement. And then he soberly returned.

A day or two later he was missed— but the fact was afterward known that he was at Spring Valley, the county town where Miss Preston lived, and he was forgiven. A week afterward he was missed again, but this time for a longer period, and then a pathetic letter arrived from Sacramento for the storekeeper's wife.

"Would you mind," wrote Miss Pinkey Preston, "asking some of your boys to come over here to Sacramento and bring back Bones? I don't mind having the dear dog walk out with me at Spring Valley, where everyone knows me; but here he *does* make one so noticeable, on account of *his color*. I've got scarcely a frock that he agrees with. He don't go with my pink muslin, and that lovely buff tint he makes three shades lighter. You know yellow is *so* trying."

A consultation was quickly held by the whole settlement, and a deputation sent to Sacramento to relieve the unfortunate girl. We were all quite indignant with Bones— but, oddly enough, I think it was greatly tempered with our new pride in him. While he was with us alone, his peculiarities had been scarcely appreciated, but the recurrent phrase "that yellow dog that they keep at the Rattlers" gave us a mysterious importance along the countryside, as if we had secured a "mascot" in some zoological curiosity.

This was further indicated by a singular occurrence. A new church had been built at the crossroads, and an eminent divine had come from San Francisco to preach the opening sermon. After a careful examination of the camp's wardrobe, and some felicitous exchange of apparel, a few of us were deputed to represent "Rattlers" at the Sunday service. In our white ducks, straw hats, and flannel blouses, we were sufficiently picturesque and distinctive as "honest miners" to be shown off in one of the front pews.

Seated near the prettiest girls, who offered us their hymn books— in the cleanly odor of fresh pine shavings, and ironed muslin, and blown over by the spices of our own woods through the open windows, a deep sense of the abiding peace of Christian communion settled upon us. At this supreme moment someone murmured in an awe-stricken whisper:

"*Will* you look at Bones?"

We looked. Bones had entered the church and gone up in the gallery through a pardonable ignorance and modesty; but, perceiving his mistake, was now calmly walking along the gallery rail before the astounded worshipers. Reaching the end, he paused for a moment, and carelessly looked down. It was about fifteen feet to the floor below— the simplest jump in the world for the mountain-bred Bones. Daintily, gingerly, lazily, and yet with a conceited airiness of manner, as if, humanly speaking, he had one leg in his pocket and were doing it on three, he cleared the distance, dropping just in front of the

chancel, without a sound, turned himself around three times, and then lay comfortably down.

Three deacons were instantly in the aisle, coming up before the eminent divine, who, we fancied, wore a restrained smile. We heard the hurried whispers: "Belongs to them." "Quite a local institution here, you know." "Don't like to offend sensibilities;" and the minister's prompt "By no means," as he went on with his service.

A short month ago we would have repudiated Bones; today we sat there in slightly supercilious attitudes, as if to indicate that any affront offered to Bones would be an insult to ourselves, and followed by our instantaneous withdrawal in a body.

All went well, however, until the minister, lifting the large Bible from the communion table and holding it in both hands before him, walked toward a reading stand by the altar rails. Bones uttered a distinct growl. The minister stopped.

We, and we alone, comprehended in a flash the whole situation. The Bible was nearly the size and shape of one of those soft clods of sod which we were in the playful habit of launching at Bones when he lay half-asleep in the sun, in order to see him cleverly evade it.

We held our breath. What was to be done? But the opportunity belonged to our leader, Jeff Briggs— a confoundedly good-looking fellow, with the golden mustache of a northern viking and the curls of an Apollo. Secure in his beauty and bland in his self-conceit, he rose from the pew, and stepped before the chancel rails.

"I would wait a moment, if I were you, sir," he said, respectfully, "and you will see that he will go out quietly."

"What is wrong?" whispered the minister in some concern.

"He thinks you are going to heave that book at him, sir, without giving him a fair show, as we do."

The minister looked perplexed, but remained motionless, with the book in his hands. Bones arose, walked halfway down the aisle, and vanished like a yellow flash!

With this justification of his reputation, Bones disappeared for a week. At the end of that time we received a polite note from Judge Preston, saying that the dog had become quite domiciled in their house, and begged that the camp, without yielding up their valuable *property* in him, would allow him to remain at Spring Valley for an indefinite time; that both the judge and his daughter— with whom Bones was already an old friend— would be glad if the members of the camp would visit their old favorite whenever they desired, to assure themselves that he was well cared for.

I am afraid that the bait thus ingenuously thrown out had a good deal to do with our ultimate yielding. However, the reports of those who visited Bones were wonderful and marvelous. He was residing there in state, lying on rugs in the drawing-room, coiled up under the judicial desk in the judge's study, sleeping regularly on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's bedroom door, or lazily snapping at flies on the judge's lawn.

"He's as yaller as ever," said one of our informants, "but it don't somehow seem to be the same back that we used to break clods over in the old time, just to see him scoot out of the dust."

And now I must record a fact which I am aware all lovers of dogs will indignantly deny, and which will be furiously bayed at by every faithful hound since the days of Ulysses. Bones not only *forgot*, but absolutely *cut us*! Those who called upon the judge in "store clothes" he would perhaps casually notice, but he would sniff at them as if detecting and resenting them under their superficial exterior. The rest he simply paid no attention to. The more familiar term of "Bonesy"— formerly applied to him, as in our rare moments of endearment— produced no response. This pained, I think, some of the more youthful of us; but, through some strange human weakness, it also increased the camp's respect for him. Nevertheless, we spoke of him familiarly to strangers at the very moment he ignored us. I am afraid that we also took some pains to point out that he was getting fat and unwieldy, and losing his elasticity, implying covertly that his choice was a mistake and his life a failure.

A year after, he died, in the odor of sanctity and respectability, being found one morning coiled up and stiff on the mat outside Miss Pinkey's door. When the news was conveyed to us, we asked permission, the camp being in a prosperous condition, to erect a stone over his grave. But when it came to the inscription we could only think of the two words murmured to him by Miss Pinkey, which we always believe effected his conversion:

"*Good* Dog!"

———————

11: According To His Lights

John Galsworthy

1867-1933

In: *From the Four Winds*, 1897

"From the Four Winds" was the first book John Galsworthy published, a collection of nine short stories, for which he used the pseudonym "John Sinjohn."

'Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone;
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.'
— Adam Lindsay Gordon.

'PREVENTION is better than cure,' they say. Quite probably; anyway that must be the reason why our system of imprisonment is so popular, for whoever knew anyone cured by it?

What the exact state of Eugene Rattray's moral sentiments were upon the day that he was released from Rochester Gaol, it would be difficult to say.

Judging from the following record, I very much doubt whether the term of his imprisonment had materially affected his view of things.

What was his offence? The law called it by an awkward name having consequences; these consequences the law applied to a man who had come back of his own accord from Australia to 'face the music,' as he phrased it. I myself could never see that the offence was more than a chance effect of circumstances upon a formed character. It seemed to me futile to punish a chance effect, seeing that it was the formed character you wanted to get at; but anyway, 'they done it,' as Huck Finn has it.

When I went to see him in Pentonville, where he was known as 'that there tall /talian with the strong beard, wot carries 'is 'ead so 'igh' (certainly Eugene's origin was half Greek, but then it was *all* Greek to the warders— hence the /talian), he talked cheerfully enough, poor chap, and without any bitterness as to the past. As to the future, he put it away; he had to 'face the music,' and in doing that he was hard enough put to it to 'carry 'is 'ead 'igh' in the present, without thinking of the future. I suppose he realised to a certain degree what it would be like to 'come out,' but not greatly, for he told me that he felt exactly like a wrecked man flung on a desert island, when, on a February morning, with his certificate of discharge in his pocket, he walked out of Rochester Gaol into the world.

So feeling, he strolled to the end of the street, and there the sense of having lived his life pressed so strongly upon him that he stood debating

dazedly whether he would not go back, and ask to be taken in again. He even took some steps in the direction of the prison, till the absurdity of the idea presented itself to his mind. He shook himself like a dog, and, pulling up before a shop window, looked long and critically at his image in the plate-glass. It was a presentable reflection, tall, straight, well-clothed; he took off his hat, and replaced it quickly with a shudder; he registered a mental vow not to remove his gloves for some days; he gazed at his upper lip blankly, it did not seem to fit in with his surroundings; finally he turned out his pockets— one pound fifteen shillings and sixpence.

This pantomime he went through mechanically, with the feeling that he must do something rational, something practical, however trifling, to save him from thought; and the next moment, the black waves of despair came rolling in over his flimsy breakwater one after the other, driving him with head down and huge strides anywhere away from his fellows. *This* was the tug; anything that had gone before was child's play to *this*. Out into a world that could look, and point and whisper the words 'Convicted felon!' to which there was no answer. It had been different in there; what were the words but the common property of all? It was easy enough to hold one's head up in that dim world; but outside it, where everything was so clear and bright, where the light was strong— he cursed the sun; where everyone could and would read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest his shame; where he was branded like any poor devil of a sheep on a bush run. He flung himself down in a field, and— well, there are some things that are best left alone, and the full tide of a strong man's humiliation is one of them.

Two hours later, Eugene walked into Rochester Station, his brow knit and his head thrown back, and cursing his fate silently in his heart. He took a first single to London.

'As long as I have a sou,' he thought, 'I'll give it for the only luxury left me— solitude;' and he jingled the few remaining coins in his pocket.

They say an habitual criminal turned loose again upon society goes back to the scene of his offence— there is also a saying about a dog. Eugene was not an habitual criminal, he was only a victim of circumstances, playing on a formed character, yet he experienced a vague desire to return to the circumstances. He has told me that on that short but divinely lonely journey he was able to think his position over rationally. Item— he had no money, but many relations and friends, possibly, nay probably, willing to help him. Item— he was of the leisured class, unfitted for, *and*— a large *and*— disqualified for anything, except the merest manual labour. Item— he was physically strong, but happily, so he had been told, not unlikely to die at any minute. Item— he loved the best of everything. Finally, item— he had no reputation, and

therefore no self-respect. He cast about in agony for any foundation on which to base a self-respect, and he found one, whether good or bad, who knows? In the circumstances, to the man, the only one. 'Face the music; keep your head up; society has dealt you hard measure, treat it with the contempt with which it will undoubtedly treat you; if you let go the plank of your pride for but a minute, you drown.'

Nobody knew that he was free; his discharge had come a month earlier than expected, for some reason connected with certain services to the internal economy of the dim world. So far, good. The practical sum of his reflections came to this: '*Let* no one know, avoid acquaintances, work in the docks till you have earned a passage to the diggings, and then'— he thought almost cheerfully of the 'then.'

He stepped out of the carriage serenely; after all it was only his friends and acquaintances that mattered, a tiny eddy in the huge whirlpool of existence; easy enough to keep out of that eddy. He was always of a sanguine disposition; it had been very hard, I remember, at school to persuade him that he would infallibly miss his remove. It is the sanguine people upon whom circumstances play their pranks; luckily the payment of the piper is not to them so severe a tax as it is to the others— the pendulum swings very evenly. He lunched, to fortify the reaction; he lunched well; it was the first meal he had had for fourteen months— those in the dim world did not count. A cup of coffee and a cigar completing the fortification, he walked out of the station and along the crowded streets, enjoying the stir and bustle around him.

Mechanically he moved westwards. Presently he found himself opposite one of his favourite haunts— he would go in and read the papers. He stopped at the steps with a jerk, the waves came rolling back on him again, he gripped his plank and strode on. Some vague idea of seeking the docks directed his steps eastwards again through the heart and centre of the hum. He caught himself gazing with an indifferent, almost a callous eye at places and objects which were as the very pivot upon which had turned the whirling wheel of circumstances that now forced him to walk among his fellows a branded outcast. As he passed the London and Westminster Bank in Lothbury, a grey-haired man, hurrying from the door, ran against him, and without apology hastened past westwards. Eugene, in no mood to be jostled, turned angrily, but something familiar in the man's back arrested his attention; the close, humping set of the shoulders, the head set stiffly forward, the walk of a man who goes straight to his object, and that object, money. Eugene looked after him undecided, then crossed the street, and hurrying on, took up a position that enabled him to see the face.

As he thought— his Uncle Stephen; no mistaking the shark's mouth between the close-cut white moustache and beard, the light grey eyes under thick lids, looking neither to the right nor left, mechanically summing up the price of the man's coat in front of him.

'Not a day older, the same amiable Uncle Stephen; you old beast!' muttered Eugene between his clenched teeth. He followed him, at first mechanically, then with a steadily growing resolve.

The one man who had had it in his power in the first place to check, in the second to annul circumstances— and yet not a hand raised, not even the kink of the crooked, grasping little finger unbent. The words, in the saw-like voice, dinned in his ears:

'You're a black sheep, sir, I'll do nothing for you.'

To-day he was bidding farewell to his identity and to his former life, but he meant to have a word with that man first; merely an expression of opinion. How he hated that back threading the mazes of Cheapside and Ludgate Hill, stopping every now and then before a picture or a china shop, 'bargain' in its every line.

'Four miles a day, and seventy,' thought Eugene disgustedly; 'he'll live to be a hundred.' The back threaded its way unwearyingly through the Strand and Charing Cross, and down the now gas-lighted Piccadilly, towards the Park, unconscious of the tall shadow that, dogging it grimly, waited for a less crowded thoroughfare. So journeying, they neared Hyde Park corner, and the back wavered; a slight drizzling rain had begun to fall.

'It's a cab fare against the gloss of that hat,' thought Eugene; 'um! thought so; the fare has it,' for the back had turned into the Park, and was being borne swiftly along under an umbrella in the direction of Kensington. Eugene turned up his coat collar, and crossing over to the opposite side, drew slightly nearer to the chase. As he intended the opinion to be a strong one, he preferred to have a fair field and no favour, and waited his chance quietly, knowing his Uncle's usual route would lead him through a sufficiently deserted region.

To speak his mind!— A very empty satisfaction, but still, some sort of salve to the bitterness of his feelings.

A nursemaid and her charge pressing homewards in the dim distance were now the only people in sight, and Eugene was on the point of ranging alongside, when something white lying in the pathway where his Uncle had just passed caught his eye. Stooping, he picked it up, and stopped mechanically to examine the contents of the packet. The light was dim, and he read the heading words on the covering with difficulty: 'Seabright Trust.'

He rubbed his eyes, and read it again. No mistake about the words: 'Seabright Trust,' the Trust of which himself and his respected Uncle were, or rather had been, the co-trustees; he tore open the covering.

Quite so; documents of importance, notes, gold, dropped, undoubtedly dropped by his Uncle. A fierce joy leapt up in his heart; he took one look at the fast disappearing figure, then drew quickly back into the shelter of some trees, and turned again to the contents of the packet.

His *co*-trustee— well, not exactly, now— possibly it might have been better for that gentleman, he thought with a bitter sneer, if he were still so. Over this Trust he had come to grief, over this Trust that man— his co-trustee— had shown him no mercy, no saving grace, not even the grace of a two days' silence. Hard measure, hardly dealt, 'black sheep— black sheep'— that was all. Well, things square themselves: over this Trust the black sheep would be quits; the documents were *most* important; the bottom of the Serpentine was quite an admirable place for them.

What construction the law would put upon their disappearance, really— he reflected with a grim smile— he couldn't say; his Uncle would doubtless know; he knew the consequences of everything so accurately. The memory of that fourteen months in the dim world pressed like lead upon his brain; the revengeful Southern blood leaped in his veins, and he ground his teeth and laughed aloud. He hoped it might be held *criminal* negligence, the documents were *so* important; it was, moreover, quite unfortunate for his co-trustee that it was at all events indirectly to the latter's interest that they should cease to exist. This would be better than speaking his mind. He leapt a paling and looked about him for stones suitable to weld the canvas covering and its contents to their new abode. Let him think; there were also notes and gold, *these* most certainly, whatever else happened, *that man* would have to restore, therefore by taking them he robbed nobody.

'By God! What I take from him is my due; he has taken everything from me; shall there be no exchange?'

'The notes may go,' he thought, 'they're risky. I'll give society no more chances, but the gold will give me a fresh start. Uncle Stephen! Uncle Stephen! this isn't your day out, it's mine, and by heaven I'll make the most of it.'

Now, in this matter, as he said when he told me of it afterwards, he acted with conviction; there was no struggle in him as to the right or the wrong of the thing— it was so plain— no single qualm of hesitation or regret tempered the seething delight in the coming revenge, only he was forced to stamp his feet and grind his teeth to get back a clear power of thinking to his whirling brain.

He filled the bag with scientific care, first taking out the roll of gold; then tying the strings, he leapt back across the paling. The nearest way to the Serpentine led him across the path where the packet had been dropped. As he crossed it he saw a figure approaching slowly through the dusk, from the direction in which his Uncle had disappeared; he shrank behind a tree and watched. If it should be that old shark, and he were seen— well— a blow neatly given secured the necessary amount of silence, and did no great harm.

'He's an old man, and I don't want to hurt him, but by heaven I won't be stopped— .'

The figure advanced very slowly, and Eugene watched it anxiously in the fast waning light. It seemed to move forwards down the path a few feet with a jerk, and then to stop suddenly. It was bent almost double, so that no glimpse of the face could be seen, but a curious, indistinct, shrill murmur like the 'goo-gooing' of a dumb man came down to Eugene's ears.

'What the devil is it?' he thought, and as if for answer, one intelligible word 'Trust' came in a half-scream through the chill evening air, and then the 'goo-gooing' began again. Suddenly, when only some few yards away, the figure straightened itself as if animated by a spring, and Eugene saw his Uncle.

The right arm hung stiffened at his side, the left gesticulated wildly, pointing down the path and then to his mouth, out of one side of which came that weird and curious mumbling. Eugene shuddered; whatever else, there could be no *fear* of this pitiable being— he stepped from behind the tree and moved forward.

The figure continued to advance, dragging itself painfully along— as it seemed the left leg alone moving— and the eyes fixed on Eugene's advancing form had an intense look of agonised appeal. There was no recognition in them, only an unasked question; the mouth mumbled, the man's left hand alternately pointed down the path, and clutched the breast of his overcoat. It seemed to Eugene that the piteous searching in the eyes must pierce the covering which his buttoned coat formed over the lost bag, and with an involuntary movement he threw it open. The figure staggered, and with an inarticulate cry thrust out its hand for the bag. Eugene drew back— he must have time to think. His Uncle, a dim look of recognition struggling through the film of agonised entreaty, crouched almost double again before him. The drizzling mist shrouded the rest of the world, and these two figures stood alone.

A thousand thoughts and feelings surged in the nephew's mind. Gratified revenge, reluctant pity, and a growing railing at the fates. In a whirl of disgust he found that the thing he had in his heart to do was no longer in his power. Why had he lingered that minute to gloat over his revenge? Why turned his

head as he was taking his road *to* that revenge? A minute sooner, this miserable, crouching, smitten figure, with its dumb, despairing look, and its dumb, despairing voice, would not have been cringing in supplication before him. What had befallen the man, hale a few minutes before, did not trouble him; he was bitterly raging at the failure of his revenge, and disgusted with the stroke of fate which had caused it, tearing from him his fresh start in life.

'If I could,'— he swung the bag doubtfully in his hand, and felt the gold in his pocket; '*if* I only could,— but I can't, and there's an end of it. The old brute— he's down, and I *can't* kick him.' All feeling of pity for the miserable object before him was swallowed up in an amazing regret. He even cursed the training which caused him to feel the impossibility of that kick.

'A good many of my late friends would have been on in this piece,' he thought bitterly, 'and glad of the chance.'

He plucked the bag from under his coat, and opening it, dropped the stones out one by one.

'I suppose this'll have to go back too,' he muttered, and replaced the gold, with a sigh of disgust. The stricken man's eyes gleamed, and he put out his left hand feebly. Eugene put the bag into it, but the grasp was uncertain, and it fell again to the ground. The shock of seemingly losing it a second time was too much for the disordered intellect, and in a dead swoon, Stephen Rattray fell stiffly forward on to his nephew's shoulder.

Eugene laid him on the ground, carefully buttoned the packet into the inner pocket of his Uncle's coat, and then drew himself away to think. He couldn't get a clear grasp of things with that hated figure touching his. Leaning apart against a tree, and looking down at the helpless form, he dealt grimly and despitefully in his heart with the feeling that troubled him; let it stand for want of better phrasing at 'common humanity.' He railed at it; he even took some steps of retreat; he reasoned with himself.

This man, when a nod of the head might have saved, had reduced him to the level of the brute beasts— what duty then lay upon him to act but upon that level? This man lay there, dependent on him for a chance perhaps of further life. Yes, but there had been a bitter hour, when their positions had been reversed, and the closing of that hour, with its depths of horror and degradation, its blotting out of all hope and life, was vividly before him. This, too, was an old man, at the end of things, and he had been a young man at the beginning— that was but an aggravation. As things now were he had done him no wrong, taken no revenge; the packet was found; it was even himself that had restored it: the stroke had come through a visitation of the fates, through no dealing of his.

He searched, and he failed to see any reason why he should lift a finger to give back life to this hulk. It was adding insult to injury indeed to expect him to carry his enemy perhaps a mile in search of help. Leave him here?— and get help?— he would certainly die before it came. No, either all or nothing; and it should be, by heaven, *nothing*!

He turned on his heel,— and straightway it came upon him that these things were not done. Just as impossible as kicking a fellow on the ground, or shooting an unarmed man.

'By Gad! the other thing's got to be done! When I've lived a few years in Borneo or some such place, I shall know better how to deal with you, my friend; in the meantime— ' he lifted him, and with wearily slow steps bore him disgustedly in the direction of the Alexandria Gate.

Now that he had begun, he meant to see it through; and with many a halt, for his Uncle was a heavy man, he got him through the fast closing fog to the crossing of Rotten Row.

'I don't want any fuss,' he thought, as he put his burden down and paused for breath; 'can't afford to have it advertised that I played the good Samaritan. Evening paper paragraphs— "The Admirable Convict," "Rattray Repents," "Remarkable occurrence in connection with a scandal in high life, showing the beneficial influences of our prison system— Nephew and Uncle"— Good Lord!'

He wiped his brow, and propping his Uncle's motionless form against a rail, went in search of a cab. He found a four-wheeler at the gate of the Park, and drove back in it.

'Now, my friend, bear a hand,' he said to the driver; 'this gentleman's had a stroke; we must get him home at once. Double fare, and look sharp— it's the only chance.' He gave the astonished man the address, and between them they lifted the helpless form into the cab.

When they drew up at the house, Eugene leapt out and rang the bell.

'Hope it's Ashton,' he thought. The old butler, a man who had known him from his youth up, opened the door, and recoiled in blank astonishment when he saw who was there.

'Master Eugene!' he said.

'All right, Ashton, don't make a row. Look here, my Uncle's had a stroke; he's in that cab; I came across him in the Park walking home; better get him in-doors at once. And look here, Ashton,' he lifted his hat significantly, and said grimly, 'you know all about me, I suppose; well, see that my name doesn't come out in this business.'

He held out his hand to the old man.

'Thank you, sir,' said the butler, taking it, 'always proud to take your hand, sir, believe me. I'll make it all right,— say I picked him up myself, if necessary; you can depend on me, sir.'

'Thank you, Ashton,' said Eugene; 'and look here, give that chap a sovereign,' he pointed to the cabman waiting at the door, 'and lend me another, there's a good fellow.'

The butler pulled two sovereigns out of his pocket.

'Proud to be of any use to you, sir,' he said.

Eugene, with a choke in his throat, helped them carry his Uncle into the house; and as the door closed, turned to the cabman.

'You haven't earned that sovereign yet,' he said, handing him one, 'it's all right, but you've got to shut your head— d'ye see? Now go on to the docks, and drive like Hell.'

He sat back in the cab that rattled eastwards through the fog, and he ground his teeth.

'That's over; and the Lord do so to me, and more also, if I'd do it again,' he said between them; and with those words, Eugene Rattray disappeared from among his fellows, and the place thereof knew him no more.

12: The Shadows on the Wall

Mary E. Wilkins Freeman

1852-1930

Everybody's Magazine, March 1903

"HENRY HAD WORDS with Edward in the study the night before Edward died," said Caroline Glynn.

She spoke not with acrimony, but with grave severity. Rebecca Ann Glynn gasped by way of assent. She sat in a wide flounce of black silk in the corner of the sofa, and rolled terrified eyes from her sister Caroline to her sister Mrs. Stephen Brigham, who had been Emma Glynn, the one beauty of the family. The latter was beautiful still, with a large, splendid, full-blown beauty, she filled a great rocking-chair with her superb bulk of femininity, and swayed gently back and forth, her black silks whispering and her black frills fluttering. Even the shock of death— for her brother Edward lay dead in the house— could not disturb her outward serenity of demeanor.

But even her expression of masterly placidity changed before her sister Caroline's announcement and her sister Rebecca Ann's gasp of terror and distress in response.

"I think Henry might have controlled his temper, when poor Edward was so near his end," she said with an asperity which disturbed slightly the roseate curves of her beautiful mouth.

"Of course he did not *know*," murmured Rebecca Ann in a faint tone.

"Of course he did not know it," said Caroline quickly. She turned on her sister with a strange, sharp look of suspicion. Then she shrank as if from the other's possible answer.

Rebecca gasped again. The married sister, Mrs. Emma Brigham, was now sitting up straight in her chair; she had ceased rocking, and was eyeing them both intently with a sudden accentuation of family likeness in her face.

"What do you mean?" said she impartially to them both. Then she, too, seemed to shrink before a possible answer. She even laughed an evasive sort of laugh.

"Nobody means anything," said Caroline firmly. She rose and crossed the room toward the door with grim decisiveness.

"Where are you going?" asked Mrs. Brigham.

"I have something to see to," replied Caroline, and the others at once knew by her tone that she had some solemn and sad duty to perform in the chamber of death.

"Oh," said Mrs. Brigham.

After the door had closed behind Caroline, she turned to Rebecca.

"Did Henry have many words with him?" she asked.

"They were talking very loud," replied Rebecca evasively.

Mrs. Brigham looked at her. She had not resumed rocking. She still sat up straight, with a slight knitting of intensity on her fair forehead, between the pretty rippling curves of her auburn hair.

"Did you— ever hear anything?" she asked in a low voice with a glance toward the door.

"I was just across the hall in the south parlor, and that door was open and this door ajar," replied Rebecca with a slight flush.

"Then you must have—"

"I couldn't help it."

"Everything?"

"Most of it."

"What was it?"

"The old story."

"I suppose Henry was mad, as he always was, because Edward was living on here for nothing, when he had wasted all the money father left him."

Rebecca nodded, with a fearful glance at the door.

When Emma spoke again her voice was still more hushed. "I know how he felt," said she. "It must have looked to him as if Edward was living at his expense, but he wasn't."

"No, he wasn't."

"And Edward had a right here according to the terms of father's will, and Henry ought to have remembered it."

"Yes, he ought."

"Did he say hard things?"

"Pretty hard, from what I heard."

"What?"

"I heard him tell Edward that he had no business here at all, and he thought he had better go away."

"What did Edward say?"

"That he would stay here as long as he lived and afterward, too, if he was a mind to, and he would like to see Henry get him out; and then—"

"What?"

"Then he laughed."

"What did Henry say?"

"I didn't hear him say anything, but—"

"But what?"

"I saw him when he came out of this room."

"He looked mad?"

"You've seen him when he looked so."

Emma nodded. The expression of horror on her face had deepened.

"Do you remember that time he killed the cat because she had scratched him?"

"Yes. Don't!"

Then Caroline re-entered the room; she went up to the stove, in which a wood fire was burning— it was a cold, gloomy day of fall— and she warmed her hands, which were reddened from recent washing in cold water.

Mrs. Brigham looked at her and hesitated. She glanced at the door, which was still ajar; it did not easily shut, being still swollen with the damp weather of the summer. She rose and pushed it together with a sharp thud, which jarred the house. Rebecca started painfully with a half-exclamation. Caroline looked at her disapprovingly.

"It is time you controlled your nerves, Rebecca," she said.

Mrs. Brigham, returning from the closed door, said imperiously that it ought to be fixed, it shut so hard.

"It will shrink enough after we have had the fire a few days," replied Caroline.

"I think Henry ought to be ashamed of himself for talking as he did to Edward," said Mrs. Brigham abruptly, but in an almost inaudible voice.

"Hush," said Caroline, with a glance of actual fear at the closed door.

"Nobody can hear with the door shut. I say again I think Henry ought to be ashamed of himself. I shouldn't think he'd ever get over it, having words with poor Edward the very night before he died. Edward was enough sight better disposition than Henry, with all his faults."

"I never heard him speak a cross word, unless he spoke cross to Henry that last night. I don't know but he did from what Rebecca overheard."

"Not so much cross, as sort of soft, and sweet, and aggravating," sniffed Rebecca.

"What do you really think ailed Edward?" asked Emma in hardly more than a whisper. She did not look at her sister.

"I know you said that he had terrible pains in his stomach, and had spasms, but what do you think made him have them?"

"Henry called it gastric trouble. You know Edward has always had dyspepsia."

Mrs. Brigham hesitated a moment. "Was there any talk of an— examination?" said she.

Then Caroline turned on her fiercely.

"No," said she in a terrible voice. "No."

The three sisters' souls seemed to meet on one common ground of terrified understanding through their eyes.

The old-fashioned latch of the door was heard to rattle, and a push from without made the door shake ineffectually. "It's Henry," Rebecca sighed rather than whispered. Mrs. Brigham settled herself, after a noiseless rush across the floor, into her rocking-chair again, and was swaying back and forth with her head comfortably leaning back, when the door at last yielded and Henry Glynn entered. He cast a covertly sharp, comprehensive glance at Mrs. Brigham with her elaborate calm; at Rebecca quietly huddled in the corner of the sofa with her handkerchief to her face and only one small uncovered reddened ear as attentive as a dog's, and at Caroline sitting with a strained composure in her armchair by the stove. She met his eyes quite firmly with a look of inscrutable fear, and defiance of the fear and of him.

Henry Glynn looked more like this sister than the others. Both had the same hard delicacy of form and aquilinity of feature. They confronted each other with the pitiless immovability of two statues in whose marble lineaments emotions were fixed for all eternity.

Then Henry Glynn smiled and the smile transformed his face. He looked suddenly years younger, and an almost boyish recklessness appeared in his face. He flung himself into a chair with a gesture which was bewildering from its incongruity with his general appearance. He leaned his head back, flung one leg over the other, and looked laughingly at Mrs. Brigham.

"I declare, Emma, you grow younger every year," he said.

She flushed a little, and her placid mouth widened at the corners. She was susceptible to praise.

"Our thoughts to-day ought to belong to the one of us who will *never* grow older," said Caroline in a hard voice.

Henry looked at her, still smiling. "Of course, we none of us forget that," said he, in a deep, gentle voice; "but we have to speak to the living, Caroline, and I have not seen Emma for a long time, and the living are as dear as the dead."

"Not to me," said Caroline.

She rose and went abruptly out of the room again. Rebecca also rose and hurried after her, sobbing loudly.

Henry looked slowly after them.

"Caroline is completely unstrung," said he.

Mrs. Brigham rocked. A confidence in him inspired by his manner was stealing over her. Out of that confidence she spoke quite easily and naturally.

"His death was very sudden," said she.

Henry's eyelids quivered slightly but his gaze was unswerving.

"Yes," said he, "it was very sudden. He was sick only a few hours."

"What did you call it?"

"Gastric."

"You did not think of an examination?"

"There was no need. I am perfectly certain as to the cause of his death."

Suddenly Mrs. Brigham felt a creep as of some live horror over her very soul. Her flesh prickled with cold, before an inflection of his voice. She rose, tottering on weak knees.

"Where are you going?" asked Henry in a strange, breathless voice.

Mrs. Brigham said something incoherent about some sewing which she had to do— some black for the funeral— and was out of the room. She went up to the front chamber which she occupied. Caroline was there. She went close to her and took her hands, and the two sisters looked at each other.

"Don't speak, don't, I won't have it!" said Caroline finally in an awful whisper.

"I won't," replied Emma.

That afternoon the three sisters were in the study.

Mrs. Brigham was hemming some black material. At last she laid her work on her lap.

"It's no use, I cannot see to sew another stitch until we have a light," said she.

Caroline, who was writing some letters at the table, turned to Rebecca, in her usual place on the sofa.

"Rebecca, you had better get a lamp," she said.

Rebecca started up; even in the dusk her face showed her agitation.

"It doesn't seem to me that we need a lamp quite yet," she said in a piteous, pleading voice like a child's.

"Yes, we do," returned Mrs. Brigham peremptorily. "I can't see to sew another stitch."

Rebecca rose and left the room. Presently she entered with a lamp. She set it on the table, an old-fashioned card-table which was placed against the opposite wall from the window. That opposite wall was taken up with three doors; the one small space was occupied by the table.

"What have you put that lamp over there for?" asked Mrs. Brigham, with more of impatience than her voice usually revealed. "Why didn't you set it in the hall, and have done with it? Neither Caroline nor I can see if it is on that table."

"I thought perhaps you would move," replied Rebecca hoarsely.

"If I do move, we can't both sit at that table. Caroline has her paper all spread around. Why don't you set the lamp on the study table in the middle of the room, then we can both see?"

Rebecca hesitated. Her face was very pale. She looked with an appeal that was fairly agonizing at her sister Caroline.

"Why don't you put the lamp on this table, as she says?" asked Caroline, almost fiercely. "Why do you act so, Rebecca?"

Rebecca took the lamp and set it on the table in the middle of the room without another word. Then she seated herself on the sofa and placed a hand over her eyes as if to shade them, and remained so.

"Does the light hurt your eyes, and is that the reason why you didn't want the lamp?" asked Mrs. Brigham kindly.

"I always like to sit in the dark," replied Rebecca chokingly. Then she snatched her handkerchief hastily from her pocket and began to weep. Caroline continued to write, Mrs. Brigham to sew.

Suddenly Mrs. Brigham as she sewed glanced at the opposite wall. The glance became a steady stare. She looked intently, her work suspended in her hands. Then she looked away again and took a few more stitches, then she looked again, and again turned to her task. At last she laid her work in her lap and stared concentratedly. She looked from the wall round the room, taking note of the various objects. Then she turned to her sisters.

"What *is* that?" said she.

"What?" asked Caroline harshly.

"That strange shadow on the wall," replied Mrs. Brigham.

Rebecca sat with her face hidden; Caroline dipped her pen in the inkstand.

"Why don't you turn around and look?" asked Mrs. Brigham in a wondering and somewhat aggrieved way.

"I am in a hurry to finish this letter," replied Caroline shortly.

Mrs. Brigham rose, her work slipping to the floor, and began walking round the room, moving various articles of furniture, with her eyes on the shadow.

Then suddenly she shrieked out:

"Look at this awful shadow! What is it? Caroline, look, look! Rebecca, look! What is it?"

All Mrs. Brigham's triumphant placidity was gone. Her handsome face was livid with horror. She stood stiffly pointing at the shadow.

Then after a shuddering glance at the wall Rebecca burst out in a wild wail.

"Oh, Caroline, there it is again, there it is again!"

"Caroline Glynn, you look!" said Mrs. Brigham. "Look! What is that dreadful shadow?"

Caroline rose, turned, and stood confronting the wall.

"How should I know?" she said.

"It has been there every night since he died!" cried Rebecca.

"Every night?"

"Yes; he died Thursday and this is Saturday; that makes three nights," said Caroline rigidly. She stood as if holding her calm with a vise of concentrated will.

"It— it looks like— like—" stammered Mrs. Brigham in a tone of intense horror.

"I know what it looks like well enough," said Caroline. "I've got eyes in my head."

"It looks like Edward," burst out Rebecca in a sort of frenzy of fear. "Only— "

"Yes, it does," assented Mrs. Brigham, whose horror-stricken tone matched her sisters', "only— Oh, it is awful! What is it, Caroline?"

"I ask you again, how should I know?" replied Caroline. "I see it there like you. How should I know any more than you?"

"It *must* be something in the room," said Mrs. Brigham, staring wildly around.

"We moved everything in the room the first night it came," said Rebecca; "it is not anything in the room."

Caroline turned upon her with a sort of fury. "Of course it is something in the room," said she. "How you act! What do you mean talking so? Of course it is something in the room."

"Of course it is," agreed Mrs. Brigham, looking at Caroline suspiciously. "It must be something in the room."

"It is not anything in the room," repeated Rebecca with obstinate horror.

The door opened suddenly and Henry Glynn entered. He began to speak, then his eyes followed the direction of the others. He stood staring at the shadow on the wall.

"What is that?" he demanded in a strange voice.

"It must be due to something in the room," Mrs. Brigham said faintly.

Henry Glynn stood and stared a moment longer. His face showed a gamut of emotions. Horror, conviction, then furious incredulity. Suddenly he began hastening hither and thither about the room. He moved the furniture with fierce jerks, turning ever to see the effect upon the shadow on the wall. Not a line of its terrible outlines wavered.

"It must be something in the room!" he declared in a voice which seemed to snap like a lash.

His face changed, the inmost secrecy of his nature seemed evident upon his face, until one almost lost sight of his lineaments. Rebecca stood close to her sofa, regarding him with woeful, fascinated eyes. Mrs. Brigham clutched Caroline's hand. They both stood in a corner out of his way. For a few moments he raged about the room like a caged wild animal. He moved every piece of

furniture; when the moving of a piece did not affect the shadow he flung it to the floor.

Then suddenly he desisted. He laughed.

"What an absurdity," he said easily. "Such a to-do about a shadow."

"That's so," assented Mrs. Brigham, in a scared voice which she tried to make natural. As she spoke she lifted a chair near her.

"I think you have broken the chair that Edward was fond of," said Caroline.

Terror and wrath were struggling for expression on her face. Her mouth was set, her eyes shrinking. Henry lifted the chair with a show of anxiety.

"Just as good as ever," he said pleasantly. He laughed again, looking at his sisters. "Did I scare you?" he said. "I should think you might be used to me by this time. You know my way of wanting to leap to the bottom of a mystery, and that shadow does look— queer, like— and I thought if there was any way of accounting for it I would like to without any delay."

"You don't seem to have succeeded," remarked Caroline dryly, with a slight glance at the wall.

Henry's eyes followed hers and he quivered perceptibly.

"Oh, there is no accounting for shadows," he said, and he laughed again. "A man is a fool to try to account for shadows."

Then the supper bell rang, and they all left the room, but Henry kept his back to the wall— as did, indeed, the others.

Henry led the way with an alert motion like a boy; Rebecca brought up the rear. She could scarcely walk, her knees trembled so.

"I can't sit in that room again this evening," she whispered to Caroline after supper.

"Very well; we will sit in the south room," replied Caroline. "I think we will sit in the south parlor," she said aloud; "it isn't as damp as the study, and I have a cold."

So they all sat in the south room with their sewing. Henry read the newspaper, his chair drawn close to the lamp on the table. About nine o'clock he rose abruptly and crossed the hall to the study. The three sisters looked at one another. Mrs. Brigham rose, folded her rustling skirts compactly round her, and began tiptoeing toward the door.

"What are you going to do?" inquired Rebecca agitatedly.

"I am going to see what he is about," replied Mrs. Brigham cautiously.

As she spoke she pointed to the study door across the hall; it was ajar. Henry had striven to pull it together behind him, but it had somehow swollen beyond the limit with curious speed. It was still ajar and a streak of light showed from top to bottom.

Mrs. Brigham folded her skirts so tightly that her bulk with its swelling curves was revealed in a black silk sheath, and she went with a slow toddle across the hall to the study door. She stood there, her eye at the crack.

In the south room Rebecca stopped sewing and sat watching with dilated eyes. Caroline sewed steadily. What Mrs. Brigham, standing at the crack in the study door, saw was this:

Henry Glynn, evidently reasoning that the source of the strange shadow must be between the table on which the lamp stood and the wall, was making systematic passes and thrusts with an old sword which had belonged to his father all over and through the intervening space. Not an inch was left unpierced. He seemed to have divided the space into mathematical sections. He brandished the sword with a sort of cold fury and calculation; the blade gave out flashes of light, the shadow remained unmoved. Mrs. Brigham, watching, felt herself cold with horror.

Finally Henry ceased and stood with the sword in hand and raised as if to strike, surveying the shadow on the wall threateningly. Mrs. Brigham toddled back across the hall and shut the south room door behind her before she related what she had seen.

"He looked like a demon," she said again. "Have you got any of that old wine in the house, Caroline? I don't feel as if I could stand much more."

"Yes, there's plenty," said Caroline; "you can have some when you go to bed."

"I think we had all better take some," said Mrs. Brigham. "Oh, Caroline, what—"

"Don't ask; don't speak," said Caroline.

"No, I'm not going to," replied Mrs. Brigham; "but—"

Soon the three sisters went to their chambers and the south parlor was deserted. Caroline called to Henry in the study to put out the light before he came upstairs. They had been gone about an hour when he came into the room bringing the lamp which had stood in the study. He set it on the table, and waited a few minutes, pacing up and down. His face was terrible, his fair complexion showed livid, and his blue eyes seemed dark blanks of awful reflections.

Then he took up the lamp and returned to the library. He set the lamp on the center table and the shadow sprang out on the wall. Again he studied the furniture and moved it about, but deliberately, with none of his former frenzy. Nothing affected the shadow. Then he returned to the south room with the lamp and again waited. Again he returned to the study and placed the lamp on the table, and the shadow sprang out upon the wall. It was midnight before he

went upstairs. Mrs. Brigham and the other sisters, who could not sleep, heard him.

The next day was the funeral. That evening the family sat in the south room. Some relatives were with them. Nobody entered the study until Henry carried a lamp in there after the others had retired for the night. He saw again the shadow on the wall leap to an awful life before the light.

The next morning at breakfast Henry Glynn announced that he had to go to the city for three days. The sisters looked at him with surprise. He very seldom left home, and just now his practice had been neglected on account of Edward's death.

"How can you leave your patients now?" asked Mrs. Brigham wonderingly.

"I don't know how to, but there is no other way," replied Henry easily. "I have had a telegram from Dr. Mitford."

"Consultation?" inquired Mrs. Brigham.

"I have business," replied Henry.

Doctor Mitford was an old classmate of his who lived in a neighboring city and who occasionally called upon him in the case of a consultation.

After he had gone, Mrs. Brigham said to Caroline that, after all, Henry had not said that he was going to consult with Doctor Mitford, and she thought it very strange.

"Everything is very strange," said Rebecca with a shudder.

"What do you mean?" inquired Caroline.

"Nothing," replied Rebecca.

Nobody entered the study that day, nor the next. The third day Henry was expected home, but he did not arrive and the last train from the city had come.

"I call it pretty queer work," said Mrs. Brigham. "The idea of a doctor leaving his patients at such a time as this, and the idea of a consultation lasting three days! There is no sense in it, and *now* he has not come. I don't understand it, for my part."

"I don't either," said Rebecca.

They were all in the south parlor. There was no light in the study; the door was ajar.

Presently Mrs. Brigham rose— she could not have told why; something seemed to impel her— some will outside her own. She went out of the room, again wrapping her rustling skirts round that she might pass noiselessly, and began pushing at the swollen door of the study.

"She has not got any lamp," said Rebecca in a shaking voice.

Caroline, who was writing letters, rose again, took the only remaining lamp in the room, and followed her sister. Rebecca had risen, but she stood trembling, not venturing to follow.

The doorbell rang, but the others did not hear it; it was on the south door on the other side of the house from the study. Rebecca, after hesitating until the bell rang the second time, went to the door; she remembered that the servant was out.

Caroline and her sister Emma entered the study. Caroline set the lamp on the table. They looked at the wall, and there were two shadows. The sisters stood clutching each other, staring at the awful things on the wall. Then Rebecca came in, staggering, with a telegram in her hand. "Here is— a telegram," she gasped. "Henry is— dead."

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13: The Coin of Dionysius

Ernest Brahmah

1868-1942

In: *Max Carrados*, 1914

This is the first story of Max Carrados, the blind detective.

IT WAS eight o'clock at night and raining, scarcely a time when a business so limited in its clientele as that of a coin dealer could hope to attract any customer, but a light was still showing in the small shop that bore over its window the name of Baxter, and in the even smaller office at the back the proprietor himself sat reading the latest Pall Mall. His enterprise seemed to be justified, for presently the door bell gave its announcement, and throwing down his paper Mr Baxter went forward.

As a matter of fact the dealer had been expecting someone and his manner as he passed into the shop was unmistakably suggestive of a caller of importance. But at the first glance towards his visitor the excess of deference melted out of his bearing, leaving the urbane, self-possessed shopman in the presence of the casual customer.

"Mr Baxter, I think?" said the latter. He had laid aside his dripping umbrella and was unbuttoning overcoat and coat to reach an inner pocket. "You hardly remember me, I suppose? Mr Carlyle— two years ago I took up a case for you—"

"To be sure. Mr Carlyle, the private detective—"

"Inquiry agent," corrected Mr Carlyle precisely.

"Well," smiled Mr Baxter, "for that matter I am a coin dealer and not an antiquarian or a numismatist. Is there anything in that way that I can do for you?"

"Yes," replied his visitor; "it is my turn to consult you." He had taken a small wash-leather bag from the inner pocket and now turned something carefully out upon the counter. "What can you tell me about that?"

The dealer gave the coin a moment's scrutiny.

"There is no question about this," he replied. "It is a Sicilian tetradrachm of Dionysius."

"Yes, I know that— I have it on the label out of the cabinet. I can tell you further that it's supposed to be one that Lord Seastoke gave two hundred and fifty pounds for at the Brice sale in '94."

"It seems to me that you can tell me more about it than I can tell you," remarked Mr Baxter. "What is it that you really want to know?"

"I want to know," replied Mr Carlyle, "whether it is genuine or not."

"Has any doubt been cast upon it?"

"Certain circumstances raised a suspicion— that is all."

The dealer took another look at the tetradrachm through his magnifying glass, holding it by the edge with the careful touch of an expert. Then he shook his head slowly in a confession of ignorance.

"Of course I could make a guess—"

"No, don't," interrupted Mr Carlyle hastily. "An arrest hangs on it and nothing short of certainty is any good to me."

"Is that so, Mr Carlyle?" said Mr Baxter, with increased interest. "Well, to be quite candid, the thing is out of my line. Now if it was a rare Saxon penny or a doubtful noble I'd stake my reputation on my opinion, but I do very little in the classical series."

Mr Carlyle did not attempt to conceal his disappointment as he returned the coin to the bag and replaced the bag in the inner pocket.

"I had been relying on you," he grumbled reproachfully. "Where on earth am I to go now?"

"There is always the British Museum."

"Ah, to be sure, thanks. But will anyone who can tell me be there now?"

"Now? No fear!" replied Mr Baxter. "Go round in the morning— "

"But I must know to-night," explained the visitor, reduced to despair again. "To-morrow will be too late for the purpose."

Mr Baxter did not hold out much encouragement in the circumstances.

"You can scarcely expect to find anyone at business now," he remarked. "I should have been gone these two hours myself only I happened to have an appointment with an American millionaire who fixed his own time." Something indistinguishable from a wink slid off Mr Baxter's right eye. "Offmunson he's called, and a bright young pedigree-hunter has traced his descent from Offa, King of Mercia. So he— quite naturally— wants a set of Offas as a sort of collateral proof."

"Very interesting," murmured Mr Carlyle, fidgeting with his watch. "I should love an hour's chat with you about your millionaire customers— some other time. Just now— look here, Baxter, can't you give me a line of introduction to some dealer in this sort of thing who happens to live in town? You must know dozens of experts."

"Why, bless my soul, Mr Carlyle, I don't know a man of them away from his business," said Mr Baxter, staring. "They may live in Park Lane or they may live in Petticoat Lane for all I know. Besides, there aren't so many experts as you seem to imagine. And the two best will very likely quarrel over it. You've had to do with 'expert witnesses,' I suppose?"

"I don't want a witness; there will be no need to give evidence. All I want is an absolutely authoritative pronouncement that I can act on. Is there no one who can really say whether the thing is genuine or not?"

Mr Baxter's meaning silence became cynical in its implication as he continued to look at his visitor across the counter. Then he relaxed.

"Stay a bit; there is a man— an amateur— I remember hearing wonderful things about some time ago. They say he really does know."

"There you are," exclaimed Mr Carlyle, much relieved. "There always is someone. Who is he?"

"Funny name," replied Baxter. "Something Wynn or Wynn something." He craned his neck to catch sight of an important motor car that was drawing to the kerb before his window. "Wynn Carrados! You'll excuse me now, Mr Carlyle, won't you? This looks like Mr Offmunson."

Mr Carlyle hastily scribbled the name down on his cuff.

"Wynn Carrados, right. Where does he live?"

"Haven't the remotest idea," replied Baxter, referring the arrangement of his tie to the judgment of the wall mirror. "I have never seen the man myself. Now, Mr Carlyle, I'm sorry I can't do any more for you. You won't mind, will you?"

Mr Carlyle could not pretend to misunderstand. He enjoyed the distinction of holding open the door for the transatlantic representative of the line of Offa as he went out, and then made his way through the muddy streets back to his office. There was only one way of tracing a private individual at such short notice— through the pages of the directories, and the gentleman did not flatter himself by a very high estimate of his chances.

Fortune favoured him, however. He very soon discovered a Wynn Carrados living at Richmond, and, better still, further search failed to unearth another. There was, apparently, only one householder at all events of that name in the neighbourhood of London. He jotted down the address and set out for Richmond.

THE HOUSE was some distance from the station, Mr Carlyle learned. He took a taxicab and drove, dismissing the vehicle at the gate. He prided himself on his power of observation and the accuracy of the deductions which resulted from it— a detail of his business. "It's nothing more than using one's eyes and putting two and two together," he would modestly declare, when he wished to be deprecatory rather than impressive, and by the time he had reached the front door of "The Turrets" he had formed some opinion of the position and tastes of the man who lived there.

A man-servant admitted Mr Carlyle and took in his card— his private card with the bare request for an interview that would not detain Mr Carrados for ten minutes. Luck still favoured him; Mr Carrados was at home and would see him at once. The servant, the hall through which they passed, and the room into which he was shown, all contributed something to the deductions which the quietly observant gentleman was half unconsciously recording.

"Mr Carlyle," announced the servant.

The room was a library or study. The only occupant, a man of about Carlyle's own age, had been using a typewriter up to the moment of his visitor's entrance. He now turned and stood up with an expression of formal courtesy.

"It's very good of you to see me at this hour," apologized the caller.

The conventional expression of Mr Carrados's face changed a little.

"Surely my man has got your name wrong?" he exclaimed. "Isn't it Louis Calling?"

The visitor stopped short and his agreeable smile gave place to a sudden flash of anger or annoyance.

"No, sir," he replied stiffly. "My name is on the card which you have before you."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr Carrados, with perfect good-humour. "I hadn't seen it. But I used to know a Calling some years ago— at St Michael's."

"St Michael's!" Mr Carlyle's features underwent another change, no less instant and sweeping than before. "St Michael's! Wynn Carrados? Good heavens! it isn't Max Wynn— old 'Winning' Wynn?"

"A little older and a little fatter— yes," replied Carrados. "I have changed my name, you see."

"Extraordinary thing meeting like this," said his visitor, dropping into a chair and staring hard at Mr Carrados. "I have changed more than my name. How did you recognize me?"

"The voice," replied Carrados. "It took me back to that little smoke-dried attic den of yours where we—"

"My God!" exclaimed Carlyle bitterly, "don't remind me of what we were going to do in those days." He looked round the well-furnished, handsome room and recalled the other signs of wealth that he had noticed. "At all events, you seem fairly comfortable, Wynn."

"I am alternately envied and pitied," replied Carrados, with a placid tolerance of circumstance that seemed characteristic of him. "Still, as you say, I am fairly comfortable."

"Envied, I can understand. But why are you pitied?"

"Because I am blind," was the tranquil reply.

"Blind!" exclaimed Mr Carlyle, using his own eyes superlatively. "Do you mean— literally blind?"

"Literally.... I was riding along a bridle-path through a wood about a dozen years ago with a friend. He was in front. At one point a twig sprang back— you know how easily a thing like that happens. It just flicked my eye— nothing to think twice about."

"And that blinded you?"

"Yes, ultimately. It's called amaurosis."

"I can scarcely believe it. You seem so sure and self-reliant. Your eyes are full of expression— only a little quieter than they used to be. I believe you were typing when I came.... Aren't you having me?"

"You miss the dog and the stick?" smiled Carrados. "No; it's a fact."

"What an awful infliction for you, Max. You were always such an impulsive, reckless sort of fellow— never quiet. You must miss such a fearful lot."

"Has anyone else recognized you?" asked Carrados quietly.

"Ah, that was the voice, you said," replied Carlyle.

"Yes; but other people heard the voice as well. Only I had no blundering, self-confident eyes to be hoodwinked."

"That's a rum way of putting it," said Carlyle. "Are your ears never hoodwinked, may I ask?"

"Not now. Nor my fingers. Nor any of my other senses that have to look out for themselves."

"Well, well," murmured Mr Carlyle, cut short in his sympathetic emotions. "I'm glad you take it so well. Of course, if you find it an advantage to be blind, old man— " He stopped and reddened. "I beg your pardon," he concluded stiffly.

"Not an advantage perhaps," replied the other thoughtfully. "Still it has compensations that one might not think of. A new world to explore, new experiences, new powers awakening; strange new perceptions; life in the fourth dimension. But why do you beg my pardon, Louis?"

"I am an ex-solicitor, struck off in connexion with the falsifying of a trust account, Mr Carrados," replied Carlyle, rising.

"Sit down, Louis," said Carrados suavely. His face, even his incredibly living eyes, beamed placid good-nature. "The chair on which you will sit, the roof above you, all the comfortable surroundings to which you have so amiably alluded, are the direct result of falsifying a trust account. But do I call you 'Mr Carlyle' in consequence? Certainly not, Louis."

"I did not falsify the account," cried Carlyle hotly. He sat down, however, and added more quietly: "But why do I tell you all this? I have never spoken of it before."

"Blindness invites confidence," replied Carrados. "We are out of the running— human rivalry ceases to exist. Besides, why shouldn't you? In my case the account was falsified."

"Of course that's all bunkum, Max," commented Carlyle. "Still, I appreciate your motive."

"Practically everything I possess was left to me by an American cousin, on the condition that I took the name of Carrados. He made his fortune by an ingenious conspiracy of doctoring the crop reports and unloading favourably in consequence. And I need hardly remind you that the receiver is equally guilty with the thief."

"But twice as safe. I know something of that, Max.... Have you any idea what my business is?"

"You shall tell me," replied Carrados.

"I run a private inquiry agency. When I lost my profession I had to do something for a living. This occurred. I dropped my name, changed my appearance and opened an office. I knew the legal side down to the ground and I got a retired Scotland Yard man to organize the outside work."

"Excellent!" cried Carrados. "Do you unearth many murders?"

"No," admitted Mr Carlyle; "our business lies mostly on the conventional lines among divorce and defalcation."

"That's a pity," remarked Carrados. "Do you know, Louis, I always had a secret ambition to be a detective myself. I have even thought lately that I might still be able to do something at it if the chance came my way. That makes you smile?"

"Well, certainly, the idea—"

"Yes, the idea of a blind detective— the blind tracking the alert— "

"Of course, as you say, certain faculties are no doubt quickened," Mr Carlyle hastened to add considerately, "but, seriously, with the exception of an artist, I don't suppose there is any man who is more utterly dependent on his eyes."

Whatever opinion Carrados might have held privately, his genial exterior did not betray a shadow of dissent. For a full minute he continued to smoke as though he derived an actual visual enjoyment from the blue sprays that travelled and dispersed across the room. He had already placed before his visitor a box containing cigars of a brand which that gentleman keenly appreciated but generally regarded as unattainable, and the matter-of-fact ease and certainty with which the blind man had brought the box and put it before him had sent a questioning flicker through Carlyle's mind.

"You used to be rather fond of art yourself, Louis," he remarked presently. "Give me your opinion of my latest purchase— the bronze lion on the cabinet

there." Then, as Carlyle's gaze went about the room, he added quickly: "No, not that cabinet— the one on your left."

Carlyle shot a sharp glance at his host as he got up, but Carrados's expression was merely benignly complacent. Then he strolled across to the figure.

"Very nice," he admitted. "Late Flemish, isn't it?"

"No. It is a copy of Vidal's 'Roaring lion.'"

"Vidal?"

"A French artist." The voice became indescribably flat. "He, also, had the misfortune to be blind, by the way."

"You old humbug, Max!" shrieked Carlyle, "you've been thinking that out for the last five minutes." Then the unfortunate man bit his lip and turned his back towards his host.

"Do you remember how we used to pile it up on that obtuse ass Sanders and then roast him?" asked Carrados, ignoring the half-smothered exclamation with which the other man had recalled himself.

"Yes," replied Carlyle quietly. "This is very good," he continued, addressing himself to the bronze again. "How ever did he do it?"

"With his hands."

"Naturally. But, I mean, how did he study his model?"

"Also with his hands. He called it 'seeing near.' "

"Even with a lion— handled it?"

"In such cases he required the services of a keeper, who brought the animal to bay while Vidal exercised his own particular gifts.... You don't feel inclined to put me on the track of a mystery, Louis?"

Unable to regard this request as anything but one of old Max's unquenchable pleasantries, Mr Carlyle was on the point of making a suitable reply when a sudden thought caused him to smile knowingly. Up to that point he had, indeed, completely forgotten the object of his visit. Now that he remembered the doubtful Dionysius and Mr Baxter's recommendation he immediately assumed that some mistake had been made. Either Max was not the Wynn Carrados he had been seeking or else the dealer had been misinformed; for although his host was wonderfully expert in the face of his misfortune, it was inconceivable that he could decide the genuineness of a coin without seeing it. The opportunity seemed a good one of getting even with Carrados by taking him at his word.

"Yes," he accordingly replied, with crisp deliberation, as he recrossed the room; "yes, I will, Max. Here is the clue to what seems to be a rather remarkable fraud." He put the tetradrachm into his host's hand. "What do you make of it?"

For a few seconds Carrados handled the piece with the delicate manipulation of his finger-tips while Carlyle looked on with a self-appreciative grin. Then with equal gravity the blind man weighed the coin in the balance of his hand. Finally he touched it with his tongue.

"Well?" demanded the other.

"Of course I have not much to go on, and if I was more fully in your confidence I might come to another conclusion—"

"Yes, yes," interposed Carlyle, with amused encouragement.

"Then I should advise you to arrest the parlourmaid, Nina Brun, communicate with the police authorities of Padua for particulars of the career of Helene Brunesi, and suggest to Lord Seastoke that he should return to London to see what further depredations have been made in his cabinet."

Mr Carlyle's groping hand sought and found a chair, on to which he dropped blankly. His eyes were unable to detach themselves for a single moment from the very ordinary spectacle of Mr Carrados's mildly benevolent face, while the sterilized ghost of his now forgotten amusement still lingered about his features.

"Good heavens!" he managed to articulate, "how do you know?"

"Isn't that what you wanted of me?" asked Carrados suavely.

"Don't humbug, Max," said Carlyle severely. "This is no joke." An undefined mistrust of his own powers suddenly possessed him in the presence of this mystery. "How do you come to know of Nina Brun and Lord Seastoke?"

"You are a detective, Louis," replied Carrados. "How does one know these things? By using one's eyes and putting two and two together."

Carlyle groaned and flung out an arm petulantly.

"Is it all bunkum, Max? Do you really see all the time— though that doesn't go very far towards explaining it."

"Like Vidal, I see very well— at close quarters," replied Carrados, lightly running a forefinger along the inscription on the tetradrachm. "For longer range I keep another pair of eyes. Would you like to test them?"

Mr Carlyle's assent was not very gracious; it was, in fact, faintly sulky. He was suffering the annoyance of feeling distinctly unimpressive in his own department; but he was also curious.

"The bell is just behind you, if you don't mind," said his host. "Parkinson will appear. You might take note of him while he is in."

The man who had admitted Mr Carlyle proved to be Parkinson.

"This gentleman is Mr Carlyle, Parkinson," explained Carrados the moment the man entered. "You will remember him for the future?"

Parkinson's apologetic eye swept the visitor from head to foot, but so lightly and swiftly that it conveyed to that gentleman the comparison of being very deftly dusted.

"I will endeavour to do so, sir," replied Parkinson, turning again to his master.

"I shall be at home to Mr Carlyle whenever he calls. That is all."

"Very well, sir."

"Now, Louis," remarked Mr Carrados briskly, when the door had closed again, "you have had a good opportunity of studying Parkinson. What is he like?"

"In what way?"

"I mean as a matter of description. I am a blind man— I haven't seen my servant for twelve years— what idea can you give me of him? I asked you to notice."

"I know you did, but your Parkinson is the sort of man who has very little about him to describe. He is the embodiment of the ordinary. His height is about average—"

"Five feet nine," murmured Carrados. "Slightly above the mean."

"Scarcely noticeably so. Clean-shaven. Medium brown hair. No particularly marked features. Dark eyes. Good teeth."

"False," interposed Carrados. "The teeth— not the statement."

"Possibly," admitted Mr Carlyle. "I am not a dental expert and I had no opportunity of examining Mr Parkinson's mouth in detail. But what is the drift of all this?"

"His clothes?"

"Oh, just the ordinary evening dress of a valet. There is not much room for variety in that."

"You noticed, in fact, nothing special by which Parkinson could be identified?"

"Well, he wore an unusually broad gold ring on the little finger of the left hand."

"But that is removable. And yet Parkinson has an ineradicable mole— a small one, I admit— on his chin. And you a human sleuth-hound. Oh, Louis!"

"At all events," retorted Carlyle, writhing a little under this good-humoured satire, although it was easy enough to see in it Carrados's affectionate intention— "at all events, I dare say I can give as good a description of Parkinson as he can give of me."

"That is what we are going to test. Ring the bell again."

"Seriously?"

"Quite. I am trying my eyes against yours. If I can't give you fifty out of a hundred I'll renounce my private detectorial ambition for ever."

"It isn't quite the same," objected Carlyle, but he rang the bell.

"Come in and close the door, Parkinson," said Carrados when the man appeared. "Don't look at Mr Carlyle again— in fact, you had better stand with your back towards him, he won't mind. Now describe to me his appearance as you observed it."

Parkinson tendered his respectful apologies to Mr Carlyle for the liberty he was compelled to take, by the deferential quality of his voice.

"Mr Carlyle, sir, wears patent leather boots of about size seven and very little used. There are five buttons, but on the left boot one button— the third up— is missing, leaving loose threads and not the more usual metal fastener. Mr Carlyle's trousers, sir, are of a dark material, a dark grey line of about a quarter of an inch width on a darker ground. The bottoms are turned permanently up and are, just now, a little muddy, if I may say so."

"Very muddy," interposed Mr Carlyle generously. "It is a wet night, Parkinson."

"Yes, sir; very unpleasant weather. If you will allow me, sir, I will brush you in the hall. The mud is dry now, I notice. Then, sir," continued Parkinson, reverting to the business in hand, "there are dark green cashmere hose. A curb-pattern key-chain passes into the left-hand trouser pocket."

From the visitor's nether garments the photographic-eyed Parkinson proceeded to higher ground, and with increasing wonder Mr Carlyle listened to the faithful catalogue of his possessions. His fetter-and-link albert of gold and platinum was minutely described. His spotted blue ascot, with its gentlemanly pearl scarfpin, was set forth, and the fact that the buttonhole in the left lapel of his morning coat showed signs of use was duly noted. What Parkinson saw he recorded but he made no deductions. A handkerchief carried in the cuff of the right sleeve was simply that to him and not an indication that Mr Carlyle was, indeed, left-handed.

But a more delicate part of Parkinson's undertaking remained. He approached it with a double cough.

"As regards Mr Carlyle's personal appearance; sir— "

"No, enough!" cried the gentleman concerned hastily. "I am more than satisfied. You are a keen observer, Parkinson."

"I have trained myself to suit my master's requirements, sir," replied the man. He looked towards Mr Carrados, received a nod and withdrew.

Mr Carlyle was the first to speak.

"That man of yours would be worth five pounds a week to me, Max," he remarked thoughtfully. "But, of course—"

"I don't think that he would take it," replied Carrados, in a voice of equally detached speculation. "He suits me very well. But you have the chance of using his services— indirectly."

"You still mean that— seriously?"

"I notice in you a chronic disinclination to take me seriously, Louis. It is really— to an Englishman— almost painful. Is there something inherently comic about me or the atmosphere of The Turrets?"

"No, my friend," replied Mr Carlyle, "but there is something essentially prosperous. That is what points to the improbable. Now what is it?"

"It might be merely a whim, but it is more than that," replied Carrados. "It is, well, partly vanity, partly ennui, partly"— certainly there was something more nearly tragic in his voice than comic now— "partly hope."

Mr Carlyle was too tactful to pursue the subject.

"Those are three tolerable motives," he acquiesced. "I'll do anything you want, Max, on one condition."

"Agreed. And it is?"

"That you tell me how you knew so much of this affair." He tapped the silver coin which lay on the table near them. "I am not easily flabbergasted," he added.

"You won't believe that there is nothing to explain— that it was purely second-sight?"

"No," replied Carlyle tersely; "I won't."

"You are quite right. And yet the thing is very simple."

"They always are— when you know," soliloquized the other. "That's what makes them so confoundedly difficult when you don't."

"Here is this one then. In Padua, which seems to be regaining its old reputation as the birthplace of spurious antiques, by the way, there lives an ingenious craftsman named Pietro Stelli. This simple soul, who possesses a talent not inferior to that of Cavino at his best, has for many years turned his hand to the not unprofitable occupation of forging rare Greek and Roman coins. As a collector and student of certain Greek colonials and a specialist in forgeries I have been familiar with Stelli's workmanship for years. Latterly he seems to have come under the influence of an international crook called— at the moment— Dompierre, who soon saw a way of utilizing Stelli's genius on a royal scale. Helene Brunesi, who in private life is— and really is, I believe— Madame Dompierre, readily lent her services to the enterprise."

"Quite so," nodded Mr Carlyle, as his host paused.

"You see the whole sequence, of course?"

"Not exactly— not in detail," confessed Mr Carlyle.

"Dompierre's idea was to gain access to some of the most celebrated cabinets of Europe and substitute Stelli's fabrications for the genuine coins. The princely collection of rarities that he would thus amass might be difficult to dispose of safely but I have no doubt that he had matured his plans. Helene, in the person of Nina Bran, an Anglicised French parlourmaid— a part which she fills to perfection— was to obtain wax impressions of the most valuable pieces and to make the exchange when the counterfeits reached her. In this way it was obviously hoped that the fraud would not come to light until long after the real coins had been sold, and I gather that she has already done her work successfully in several houses. Then, impressed by her excellent references and capable manner, my housekeeper engaged her, and for a few weeks she went about her duties here. It was fatal to this detail of the scheme, however, that I have the misfortune to be blind. I am told that Helene has so innocently angelic a face as to disarm suspicion, but I was incapable of being impressed and that good material was thrown away. But one morning my material fingers— which, of course, knew nothing of Helene's angelic face— discovered an unfamiliar touch about the surface of my favourite Euclideas, and, although there was doubtless nothing to be seen, my critical sense of smell reported that wax had been recently pressed against it. I began to make discreet inquiries and in the meantime my cabinets went to the local bank for safety. Helene countered by receiving a telegram from Angiers, calling her to the death-bed of her aged mother. The aged mother succumbed; duty compelled Helene to remain at the side of her stricken patriarchal father, and doubtless The Turrets was written off the syndicate's operations as a bad debt."

"Very interesting," admitted Mr Carlyle; "but at the risk of seeming obtuse"— his manner had become delicately chastened— "I must say that I fail to trace the inevitable connexion between Nina Brun and this particular forgery— assuming that it is a forgery."

"Set your mind at rest about that, Louis," replied Carrados. "It is a forgery, and it is a forgery that none but Pietro Stelli could have achieved. That is the essential connexion. Of course, there are accessories. A private detective coming urgently to see me with a notable tetradrachm in his pocket, which he announces to be the clue to a remarkable fraud— well, really, Louis, one scarcely needs to be blind to see through that."

"And Lord Seastoke? I suppose you happened to discover that Nina Brun had gone there?"

"No, I cannot claim to have discovered that, or I should certainly have warned him at once when I found out— only recently— about the gang. As a matter of fact, the last information I had of Lord Seastoke was a line in yesterday's *Morning Post* to the effect that he was still at Cairo. But many of

these pieces—" He brushed his finger almost lovingly across the vivid chariot race that embellished the reverse of the coin, and broke off to remark: "You really ought to take up the subject, Louis. You have no idea how useful it might prove to you some day."

"I really think I must," replied Carlyle grimly. "Two hundred and fifty pounds the original of this cost, I believe."

"Cheap, too; it would make five hundred pounds in New York to-day. As I was saying, many are literally unique. This gem by Kimon is— here is his signature, you see; Peter is particularly good at lettering— and as I handled the genuine tetradrachm about two years ago, when Lord Seastoke exhibited it at a meeting of our society in Albemarle Street, there is nothing at all wonderful in my being able to fix the locale of your mystery. Indeed, I feel that I ought to apologize for it all being so simple."

"I think," remarked Mr Carlyle, critically examining the loose threads on his left boot, "that the apology on that head would be more appropriate from me."

14: Pausodyne

A Great Chemical Discovery

Grant Allen

1848-1899

The Belgravia Annual, Christmas 1881, as by J. Arbuthnot Wilson

WALKING ALONG the Strand one evening last year towards Pall Mall, I was accosted near Charing Cross Station by a strange-looking, middle-aged man in a poor suit of clothes, who surprised and startled me by asking if I could tell him from what inn the coach usually started for York.

"Dear me!" I said, a little puzzled. "I didn't know there was a coach to York. Indeed, I'm almost certain there isn't one."

The man looked puzzled and surprised in turn. "No coach to York?" he muttered to himself, half inarticulately. "No coach to York? How things have changed! I wonder whether nobody ever goes to York nowadays!"

"Pardon me," I said, anxious to discover what could be his meaning; "many people go to York every day, but of course they go by rail."

"Ah, yes," he answered softly, "I see. Yes, of course, they go by rail. They go by rail, no doubt. How very stupid of me!" And he turned on his heel as if to get away from me as quickly as possible.

I can't exactly say why, but I felt instinctively that this curious stranger was trying to conceal from me his ignorance of what a railway really was. I was quite certain from the way in which he spoke that he had not the slightest conception what I meant, and that he was doing his best to hide his confusion by pretending to understand me. Here was indeed a strange mystery. In the latter end of this nineteenth century, in the metropolis of industrial England, within a stone's-throw of Charing Cross terminus, I had met an adult Englishman who apparently did not know of the existence of railways. My curiosity was too much piqued to let the matter rest there. I must find out what he meant by it. I walked after him hastily, as he tried to disappear among the crowd, and laid my hand upon his shoulder, to his evident chagrin.

"Excuse me," I said, drawing him aside down the corner of Craven Street; "you did not understand what I meant when I said people went to York by rail?"

He looked in my face steadily, and then, instead of replying to my remark, he said slowly, "Your name is Spottiswood, I believe?"

Again I gave a start of surprise. "It is," I answered; "but I never remember to have seen you before."

"No," he replied dreamily; "no, we have never met till now, no doubt; but I knew your father, I'm sure; or perhaps it may have been your grandfather."

"Not my grandfather, certainly," said I, "for he was killed at Waterloo."

"At Waterloo! Indeed! How long since, pray?"

I could not refrain from laughing outright. "Why, of course," I answered, "in 1815. There has been nothing particular to kill off any large number of Englishmen at Waterloo since the year of the battle, I suppose."

"True," he muttered, "quite true; so I should have fancied." But I saw again from the cloud of doubt and bewilderment which came over his intelligent face that the name of Waterloo conveyed no idea whatsoever to his mind.

Never in my life had I felt so utterly confused and astonished. In spite of his poor dress, I could easily see from the clear-cut face and the refined accent of my strange acquaintance that he was an educated gentleman— a man accustomed to mix in cultivated society. Yet he clearly knew nothing whatsoever about railways, and was ignorant of the most salient facts in English history. Had I suddenly come across some Caspar Hauser, immured for years in a private prison, and just let loose upon the world by his gaolers? or was my mysterious stranger one of the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus, turned out unexpectedly in modern costume on the streets of London? I don't suppose there exists on earth a man more utterly free than I am from any tinge of superstition, any lingering touch of a love for the miraculous; but I confess for a moment I felt half inclined to suppose that the man before me must have drunk the elixir of life, or must have dropped suddenly upon earth from some distant planet.

The impulse to fathom this mystery was irresistible. I drew my arm through his. "If you knew my father," I said, "you will not object to come into my chambers and take a glass of wine with me."

"Thank you," he answered half suspiciously; "thank you very much. I think you look like a man who can be trusted, and I will go with you."

We walked along the Embankment to Adelphi Terrace, where I took him up to my rooms, and seated him in my easy-chair near the window. As he sat down, one of the trains on the Metropolitan line whirred past the Terrace, snorting steam and whistling shrilly, after the fashion of Metropolitan engines generally. My mysterious stranger jumped back in alarm, and seemed to be afraid of some immediate catastrophe. There was absolutely no possibility of doubting it. The man had obviously never seen a locomotive before.

"Evidently," I said, "you do not know London. I suppose you are a colonist from some remote district, perhaps an Australian from the interior somewhere, just landed at the Tower?"

"No, not an Austrian"— I noted his misapprehension—"but a Londoner born and bred."

"How is it, then, that you seem never to have seen an engine before?"

"Can I trust you?" he asked in a piteously plaintive, half-terrified tone. "If I tell you all about it, will you at least not aid in persecuting and imprisoning me?"

I was touched by his evident grief and terror. "No," I answered, "you may trust me implicitly. I feel sure there is something in your history which entitles you to sympathy and protection."

"Well," he replied, grasping my hand warmly, "I will tell you all my story; but you must be prepared for something almost too startling to be credible."

"My name is Jonathan Spottiswood," he began calmly.

Again I experienced a marvellous start: Jonathan Spottiswood was the name of my great-great-uncle, whose unaccountable disappearance from London just a century since had involved our family in so much protracted litigation as to the succession to his property. In fact, it was Jonathan Spottiswood's money which at that moment formed the bulk of my little fortune. But I would not interrupt him, so great was my anxiety to hear the story of his life.

"I was born in London," he went on, "in 1750. If you can hear me say that and yet believe that possibly I am not a madman, I will tell you the rest of my tale; if not, I shall go at once and for ever."

"I suspend judgment for the present," I answered. "What you say is extraordinary, but not more extraordinary perhaps than the clear anachronism of your ignorance about locomotives in the midst of the present century."

"So be it, then. Well, I will tell you the facts briefly in as few words as I can. I was always much given to experimental philosophy, and I spent most of my time in the little laboratory which I had built for myself behind my father's house in the Strand. I had a small independent fortune of my own, left me by an uncle who had made successful ventures in the China trade; and as I was indisposed to follow my father's profession of solicitor, I gave myself up almost entirely to the pursuit of natural philosophy, following the researches of the great Mr. Cavendish, our chief English thinker in this kind, as well as of Monsieur Lavoisier, the ingenious French chemist, and of my friend Dr. Priestley, the Birmingham philosopher, whose new theory of phlogiston I have been much concerned to consider and to promulgate. But the especial subject to which I devoted myself was the elucidation of the nature of fixed air. I do not know how far you yourself may happen to have heard respecting these late discoveries in chemical science, but I dare venture to say that you are at least acquainted with the nature of the body to which I refer."

"Perfectly," I answered with a smile, "though your terminology is now a little out of date. Fixed air was, I believe, the old-fashioned name for carbonic acid gas."

"Ah," he cried vehemently, "that accursed word again! Carbonic acid has undone me, clearly. Yes, if you will have it so, that seems to be what they call it in this extraordinary century; but fixed air was the name we used to give it in our time, and fixed air is what I must call it, of course, in telling you my story. Well, I was deeply interested in this curious question, and also in some of the results which I obtained from working with fixed air in combination with a substance I had produced from the essential oil of a weed known to us in England as lady's mantle, but which the learned Mr. Carl Linnæus describes in his system as *Alchemilla vulgaris*. From that weed I obtained an oil which I combined with a certain decoction of fixed air into a remarkable compound; and to this compound, from its singular properties, I proposed to give the name of Pausodyne. For some years I was almost wholly engaged in investigating the conduct of this remarkable agent; and lest I should weary you by entering into too much detail, I may as well say at once that it possessed the singular power of entirely suspending animation in men or animals for several hours together. It is a highly volatile oil, like ammonia in smell, but much thicker in gravity; and when held to the nose of an animal, it causes immediate stoppage of the heart's action, making the body seem quite dead for long periods at a time. But the moment a mixture of the pausodyne with oil of vitriol and gum resin is presented to the nostrils, the animal instantaneously revives exactly as before, showing no evil effects whatsoever from its temporary simulation of death. To the reviving mixture I have given the appropriate name of Anegeiric.

"Of course you will instantly see the valuable medical applications which may be made of such an agent. I used it at first for experimenting upon the amputation of limbs and other surgical operations. It succeeded admirably. I found that a dog under the influence of pausodyne suffered his leg, which had been broken in a street accident, to be set and spliced without the slightest symptom of feeling or discomfort. A cat, shot with a pistol by a cruel boy, had the bullet extracted without moving a muscle. My assistant, having allowed his little finger to mortify from neglect of a burn, permitted me to try the effect of my discovery upon himself; and I removed the injured joints while he remained in a state of complete insensibility, so that he could hardly believe afterwards in the actual truth of their removal. I felt certain that I had invented a medical process of the very highest and greatest utility.

"All this took place in or before the year 1781. How long ago that may be according to your modern reckoning I cannot say; but to me it seems hardly more than a few months since. Perhaps you would not mind telling me the date of the current year. I have never been able to ascertain it."

"This is 1881," I said, growing every moment more interested in his tale.

"Thank you. I gathered that we must now be somewhere near the close of the nineteenth century, though I could not learn the exact date with certainty. Well, I should tell you, my dear sir, that I had contracted an engagement about the year 1779 with a young lady of most remarkable beauty and attractive mental gifts, a Miss Amelia Spragg, daughter of the well-known General Sir Thomas Spragg, with whose achievements you are doubtless familiar. Pardon me, my friend of another age, pardon me, I beg of you, if I cannot allude to this subject without emotion after a lapse of time which to you doubtless seems like a century, but is to me a matter of some few months only at the utmost. I feel towards her as towards one whom I have but recently lost, though I now find that she has been dead for more than eighty years." As he spoke, the tears came into his eyes profusely; and I could see that under the external calmness and quaintness of his eighteenth century language and demeanour his whole nature was profoundly stirred at the thought of his lost love.

"Look here," he continued, taking from his breast a large, old-fashioned gold locket containing a miniature; "that is her portrait, by Mr. Walker, and a very truthful likeness indeed. They left me that when they took away my clothes at the Asylum, for I would not consent to part with it, and the physician in attendance observed that to deprive me of it might only increase the frequency and violence of my paroxysms. For I will not conceal from you the fact that I have just escaped from a pauper lunatic establishment."

I took the miniature which he handed me, and looked at it closely. It was the picture of a young and beautiful girl, with the features and costume of a Sir Joshua. I recognized the face at once as that of a lady whose portrait by Gainsborough hangs on the walls of my uncle's dining-room at Whittingham Abbey. It was strange indeed to hear a living man speak of himself as the former lover of this, to me, historic personage.

"Sir Thomas, however," he went on, "was much opposed to our union, on the ground of some real or fancied social disparity in our positions; but I at last obtained his conditional consent, if only I could succeed in obtaining the Fellowship of the Royal Society, which might, he thought, be accepted as a passport into that fashionable circle of which he was a member. Spurred on by this ambition, and by the encouragement of my Amelia, I worked day and night at the perfectioning of my great discovery, which I was assured would bring not only honour and dignity to myself, but also the alleviation and assuagement of pain to countless thousands of my fellow-creatures. I concealed the nature of my experiments, however, lest any rival investigator should enter the field with me prematurely, and share the credit to which I alone was really entitled. For some months I was successful in my efforts at concealment; but in March of this year— I mistake; of the year 1781, I should

say— an unfortunate circumstance caused me to take special and exceptional precautions against intrusion.

"I was then conducting my experiments upon living animals, and especially upon the extirpation of certain painful internal diseases to which they are subject. I had a number of suffering cats in my laboratory, which I had treated with pausodyne, and stretched out on boards for the purpose of removing the tumours with which they were afflicted. I had no doubt that in this manner, while directly benefiting the animal creation, I should indirectly obtain the necessary skill to operate successfully upon human beings in similar circumstances. Already I had completely cured several cats without any pain whatsoever, and I was anxious to proceed to the human subject. Walking one morning in the Strand, I found a beggar woman outside a gin-shop, quite drunk, with a small, ill-clad child by her side, suffering the most excruciating torments from a perfectly remediable cause. I induced the mother to accompany me to my laboratory, and there I treated the poor little creature with pausodyne, and began to operate upon her with perfect confidence of success.

"Unhappily, my laboratory had excited the suspicion of many ill-disposed persons among the low mob of the neighbourhood. It was whispered abroad that I was what they called a vivisectionist; and these people, who would willingly have attended a bull-baiting or a prize fight, found themselves of a sudden wondrous humane when scientific procedure was under consideration. Besides, I had made myself unpopular by receiving visits from my friend Dr. Priestley, whose religious opinions were not satisfactory to the strict orthodoxy of St. Giles's. I was rumoured to be a philosopher, a torturer of live animals, and an atheist. Whether the former accusation were true or not, let others decide; the two latter, heaven be my witness, were wholly unfounded. However, when the neighbouring rabble saw a drunken woman with a little girl entering my door, a report got abroad at once that I was going to vivisect a Christian child. The mob soon collected in force, and broke into the laboratory. At that moment I was engaged, with my assistant, in operating upon the girl, while several cats, all completely anæstheticised, were bound down on the boards around, awaiting the healing of their wounds after the removal of tumours. At the sight of such apparent tortures the people grew wild with rage, and happening in their transports to fling down a large bottle of the anegeiric, or reviving mixture, the child and the animals all at once recovered consciousness, and began of course to writhe and scream with acute pain. I need not describe to you the scene that ensued. My laboratory was wrecked, my assistant severely injured, and I myself barely escaped with my life.

"After this *contretemps* I determined to be more cautious. I took the lease of a new house at Hampstead, and in the garden I determined to build myself a subterranean laboratory where I might be absolutely free from intrusion. I hired some labourers from Bath for this purpose, and I explained to them the nature of my wishes, and the absolute necessity of secrecy. A high wall surrounded the garden, and here the workmen worked securely and unseen. I concealed my design even from my dear brother— whose grandson or great-grandson I suppose you must be— and when the building was finished, I sent my men back to Bath, with strict injunctions never to mention the matter to any one. A trap-door in the cellar, artfully concealed, gave access to the passage; a large oak portal, bound with iron, shut me securely in; and my air supply was obtained by means of pipes communicating through blank spaces in the brick wall of the garden with the outer atmosphere. Every arrangement for concealment was perfect; and I resolved in future, till my results were perfectly established, that I would dispense with the aid of an assistant.

"I was in high spirits when I went to visit my Amelia that evening, and I told her confidently that before the end of the year I expected to gain the gold medal of the Royal Society. The dear girl was pleased at my glowing prospects, and gave me every assurance of the delight with which she hailed the probability of our approaching union.

"Next day I began my experiments afresh in my new quarters. I bolted myself into the laboratory, and set to work with renewed vigour. I was experimenting upon an injured dog, and I placed a large bottle of pausodyne beside me as I administered the drug to his nostrils. The rising fumes seemed to affect my head more than usual in that confined space, and I tottered a little as I worked. My arm grew weaker, and at last fell powerless to my side. As it fell it knocked down the large bottle of pausodyne, and I saw the liquid spreading over the floor. That was almost the last thing that I knew. I staggered toward the door, but did not reach it; and then I remember nothing more for a considerable period."

He wiped his forehead with his sleeve— he had no handkerchief— and then proceeded.

"When I woke up again the effects of the pausodyne had worn themselves out, and I felt that I must have remained unconscious for at least a week or a fortnight. My candle had gone out, and I could not find my tinder-box. I rose up slowly and with difficulty, for the air of the room was close and filled with fumes, and made my way in the dark towards the door. To my surprise, the bolt was so stiff with rust that it would hardly move. I opened it after a struggle, and found myself in the passage. Groping my way towards the trap-door of the cellar, I felt it was obstructed by some heavy body. With an

immense effort, for my strength seemed but feeble, I pushed it up, and discovered that a heap of sea-coals lay on top of it. I extricated myself into the cellar, and there a fresh surprise awaited me. A new entrance had been made into the front, so that I walked out at once upon the open road, instead of up the stairs into the kitchen. Looking up at the exterior of my house, my brain reeled with bewilderment when I saw that it had disappeared almost entirely, and that a different porch and wholly unfamiliar windows occupied its façade. I must have slept far longer than I at first imagined— perhaps a whole year or more. A vague terror prevented me from walking up the steps of my own home. Possibly my brother, thinking me dead, might have sold the lease; possibly some stranger might resent my intrusion into the house that was now his own. At any rate, I thought it safer to walk into the road. I would go towards London, to my brother's house in St. Mary le Bone. I turned into the Hampstead Road, and directed my steps thitherward.

"Again, another surprise began to affect me with a horrible and ill-defined sense of awe. Not a single object that I saw was really familiar to me. I recognized that I was in the Hampstead Road, but it was not the Hampstead Road which I used to know before my fatal experiments. The houses were far more numerous, the trees were bigger and older. A year, nay, even a few years would not have sufficed for such a change. I began to fear that I had slept away a whole decade.

"It was early morning, and few people were yet abroad. But the costume of those whom I met seemed strange and fantastic to me. Moreover, I noticed that they all turned and looked after me with evident surprise, as though my dress caused them quite as much astonishment as theirs caused me. I was quietly attired in my snuff-coloured suit of small-clothes, with silk stockings and simple buckle shoes, and I had of course no hat; but I gathered that my appearance caused universal amazement and concern, far more than could be justified by the mere accidental absence of head-gear. A dread began to oppress me that I might actually have slept out my whole age and generation. Was my Amelia alive? and if so, would she be still the same Amelia I had known a week or two before? Should I find her an aged woman, still cherishing a reminiscence of her former love; or might she herself perhaps be dead and forgotten, while I remained, alone and solitary, in a world which knew me not?

"I walked along unmolested, but with reeling brain, through streets more and more unfamiliar, till I came near the St. Mary le Bone Road. There, as I hesitated a little and staggered at the crossing, a man in a curious suit of dark blue clothes, with a grotesque felt helmet on his head, whom I afterwards found to be a constable, came up and touched me on the shoulder.

" 'Look here,' he said to me in a rough voice, 'what are you a-doin' in this 'ere fancy-dress at this hour in the mornin'? You've lost your way home, I take it.'

" 'I was going,' I answered, 'to the St. Mary le Bone Road.'

" 'Why, you image,' says he rudely, 'if you mean Marribon, why don't you say Marribon? What house are you a-lookin' for, eh?'

" 'My brother lives,' I replied, 'at the Lamb, near St. Mary's Church, and I was going to his residence.'

" 'The Lamb!' says he, with a rude laugh; 'there ain't no public of that name in the road. It's my belief,' he goes on after a moment, 'that you're drunk, or mad, or else you've stole them clothes. Any way, you've got to go along with me to the station, so walk it, will you?'

" 'Pardon me,' I said, 'I suppose you are an officer of the law, and I would not attempt to resist your authority'— 'You'd better not,' says he, half to himself— 'but I should like to go to my brother's house, where I could show you that I am a respectable person.'

" 'Well,' says my fellow insolently, 'I'll go along of you if you like, and if it's all right, I suppose you won't mind standing a bob?'

" 'A what?' said I.

" 'A bob,' says he, laughing; 'a shillin', you know.'

"To get rid of his insolence for a while, I pulled out my purse and handed him a shilling. It was a George II. with milled edges, not like the things I see you use now. He held it up and looked at it, and then he said again, 'Look here, you know, this isn't good. You'd better come along with me straight to the station, and not make a fuss about it. There's three charges against you, that's all. One is, that you're drunk. The second is, that you're mad. And the third is, that you've been trying to utter false coin. Any one of 'em's quite enough to justify me in takin' you into custody.'

"I saw it was no use to resist, and I went along with him.

"I won't trouble you with the whole of the details, but the upshot of it all was, they took me before a magistrate. By this time I had begun to realize the full terror of the situation, and I saw clearly that the real danger lay in the inevitable suspicion of madness under which I must labour. When I got into the court I told the magistrate my story very shortly and simply, as I have told it to you now. He listened to me without a word, and at the end he turned round to his clerk and said, 'This is clearly a case for Dr. Fitz-Jenkins, I think.'

" 'Sir,' I said, 'before you send me to a madhouse, which I suppose is what you mean by these words, I trust you will at least examine the evidences of my story. Look at my clothing, look at these coins, look at everything about me.' And I handed him my purse to see for himself.

"He looked at it for a minute, and then he turned towards me very sternly. 'Mr. Spottiswood,' he said, 'or whatever else your real name may be, if this is a joke, it is a very foolish and unbecoming one. Your dress is no doubt very well designed; your small collection of coins is interesting and well-selected; and you have got up your character remarkably well. If you are really sane, which I suspect to be the case, then your studied attempt to waste the time of this court and to make a laughing-stock of its magistrate will meet with the punishment it deserves. I shall remit your case for consideration to our medical officer. If you consent to give him your real name and address, you will be liberated after his examination. Otherwise, it will be necessary to satisfy ourselves as to your identity. Not a word more, sir,' he continued, as I tried to speak on behalf of my story. 'Inspector, remove the prisoner.'

"They took me away, and the surgeon examined me. To cut things short, I was pronounced mad, and three days later the commissioners passed me for a pauper asylum. When I came to be examined, they said I showed no recollection of most subjects of ordinary education.

" 'I am a chemist,' said I; 'try me with some chemical questions. You will see that I can answer sanely enough.'

" 'How do you mix a grey powder?' said the commissioner.

" 'Excuse me,' I said, 'I mean a chemical philosopher, not an apothecary.'

" 'Oh, very well, then; what is carbonic acid?'

" 'I never heard of it,' I answered in despair. 'It must be something which has come into use since— since I left off learning chemistry.' For I had discovered that my only chance now was to avoid all reference to my past life and the extraordinary calamity which had thus unexpectedly overtaken me. 'Please try me with something else.'

" 'Oh, certainly. What is the atomic weight of chlorine?'

"I could only answer that I did not know.

" 'This is a very clear case,' said the commissioner. 'Evidently he is a gentleman by birth and education, but he can give no very satisfactory account of his friends, and till they come forward to claim him we can only send him for a time to North Street.'

" 'For Heaven's sake, gentlemen,' I cried, 'before you consign me to an asylum, give me one more chance. I am perfectly sane; I remember all I ever knew; but you are asking me questions about subjects on which I never had any information. Ask me anything historical, and see whether I have forgotten or confused any of my facts."

"I will do the commissioner the justice to say that he seemed anxious not to decide upon the case without full consideration. 'Tell me what you can recollect,' he said, 'as to the reign of George IV.'

" 'I know nothing at all about it,' I answered, terror-stricken, 'but oh, do pray ask me anything up to the time of George III.'

" 'Then please say what you think of the French Revolution.'

"I was thunderstruck. I could make no reply, and the commissioners shortly signed the papers to send me to North Street pauper asylum. They hurried me into the street, and I walked beside my captors towards the prison to which they had consigned me. Yet I did not give up all hope even so of ultimately regaining my freedom. I thought the rationality of my demeanour and the obvious soundness of all my reasoning powers would suffice in time to satisfy the medical attendant as to my perfect sanity. I felt sure that people could never long mistake a man so clear-headed and collected as myself for a madman.

"On our way, however, we happened to pass a churchyard where some workmen were engaged in removing a number of old tombstones from the crowded area. Even in my existing agitated condition, I could not help catching the name and date on one mouldering slab which a labourer had just placed upon the edge of the pavement. It ran something like this: 'Sacred to the memory of Amelia, second daughter of the late Sir Thomas Spragg, knight, and beloved wife of Henry McAlister, Esq., by whom this stone is erected. Died May 20, 1799, aged 44 years.' Though I had gathered already that my dear girl must probably have long been dead, yet the reality of the fact had not yet had time to fix itself upon my mind. You must remember, my dear sir, that I had but awaked a few days earlier from my long slumber, and that during those days I had been harassed and agitated by such a flood of incomprehensible complications, that I could not really grasp in all its fulness the complete isolation of my present position. When I saw the tombstone of one whom, as it seemed to me, I had loved passionately but a week or two before, I could not refrain from rushing to embrace it, and covering the insensible stone with my boiling tears. 'Oh, my Amelia, my Amelia,' I cried, 'I shall never again behold thee, then! I shall never again press thee to my heart, or hear thy dear lips pronounce my name!'

"But the unfeeling wretches who had charge of me were far from being moved to sympathy by my bitter grief. 'Died in 1799,' said one of them with a sneer. 'Why, this madman's blubbering over the grave of an old lady who has been buried for about a hundred years!' And the workmen joined in their laughter as my gaolers tore me away to the prison where I was to spend the remainder of my days.

"When we arrived at the asylum, the surgeon in attendance was informed of this circumstance, and the opinion that I was hopelessly mad thus became ingrained in his whole conceptions of my case. I remained five months or more

in the asylum, but I never saw any chance of creating a more favourable impression on the minds of the authorities. Mixing as I did only with other patients, I could gain no clear ideas of what had happened since I had taken my fatal sleep; and whenever I endeavoured to question the keepers, they amused themselves by giving me evidently false and inconsistent answers, in order to enjoy my chagrin and confusion. I could not even learn the actual date of the present year, for one keeper would laugh and say it was 2001, while another would confidentially advise me to date my petition to the Commissioners, "Jan. 1, A.D. one million." The surgeon, who never played me any such pranks, yet refused to aid me in any way, lest, as he said, he should strengthen me in my sad delusion. He was convinced that I must be an historical student, whose reason had broken down through too close study of the eighteenth century; and he felt certain that sooner or later my friends would come to claim me. He is a gentle and humane man, against whom I have no personal complaint to make; but his initial misconception prevented him and everybody else from ever paying the least attention to my story. I could not even induce them to make inquiries at my house at Hampstead, where the discovery of the subterranean laboratory would have partially proved the truth of my account.

"Many visitors came to the asylum from time to time, and they were always told that I possessed a minute and remarkable acquaintance with the history of the eighteenth century. They questioned me about facts which are as vivid in my memory as those of the present month, and were much surprised at the accuracy of my replies. But they only thought it strange that so clever a man should be so very mad, and that my information should be so full as to past events, while my notions about the modern world were so utterly chaotic. The surgeon, however, always believed that my reticence about all events posterior to 1781 was a part of my insanity. I had studied the early part of the eighteenth century so fully, he said, that I fancied I had lived in it; and I had persuaded myself that I knew nothing at all about the subsequent state of the world."

The poor fellow stopped a while, and again drew his sleeve across his forehead. It was impossible to look at him and believe for a moment that he was a madman.

"And how did you make your escape from the asylum?" I asked.

"Now, this very evening," he answered; "I simply broke away from the door and ran down toward the Strand, till I came to a place that looked a little like St. Martin's Fields, with a great column and some fountains, and near there I met you. It seemed to me that the best thing to do was to catch the York coach and get away from the town as soon as possible. You met me, and your look

and name inspired me with confidence. I believe you must be a descendant of my dear brother."

"I have not the slightest doubt," I answered solemnly, "that every word of your story is true, and that you are really my great-great-uncle. My own knowledge of our family history exactly tallies with what you tell me. I shall spare no endeavour to clear up this extraordinary matter, and to put you once more in your true position."

"And you will protect me?" he cried fervently, clasping my hand in both his own with intense eagerness. "You will not give me up once more to the asylum people?"

"I will do everything on earth that is possible for you," I replied.

He lifted my hand to his lips and kissed it several times, while I felt hot tears falling upon it as he bent over me. It was a strange position, look at it how you will. Grant that I was but the dupe of a madman, yet even to believe for a moment that I, a man of well-nigh fifty, stood there in face of my own great-grandfather's brother, to all appearance some twenty years my junior, was in itself an extraordinary and marvellous thing. Both of us were too overcome to speak. It was a few minutes before we said anything, and then a loud knock at the door made my hunted stranger rise up hastily in terror from his chair.

"Gracious Heavens!" he cried, "they have tracked me hither. They are coming to fetch me. Oh, hide me, hide me, anywhere from these wretches!"

As he spoke, the door opened, and two keepers with a policeman entered my room.

"Ah, here he is!" said one of them, advancing towards the fugitive, who shrank away towards the window as he approached.

"Do not touch him," I exclaimed, throwing myself in the way. "Every word of what he says is true, and he is no more insane than I am."

The keeper laughed a low laugh of vulgar incredulity. "Why, there's a pair of you, I do believe," he said. "You're just as mad yourself as t'other one." And he pushed me aside roughly to get at his charge.

But the poor fellow, seeing him come towards him, seemed suddenly to grow instinct with a terrible vigour, and hurled off the keeper with one hand, as a strong man might do with a little terrier. Then, before we could see what he was meditating, he jumped upon the ledge of the open window, shouted out loudly, "Farewell, farewell!" and leapt with a spring on to the embankment beneath.

All four of us rushed hastily down the three flights of steps to the bottom, and came below upon a crushed and mangled mass on the spattered pavement. He was quite dead. Even the policeman was shocked and horrified

at the dreadful way in which the body had been crushed and mutilated in its fall, and at the suddenness and unexpectedness of the tragedy. We took him up and laid him out in my room; and from that room he was interred after the inquest, with all the respect which I should have paid to an undoubted relative. On his grave in Kensal Green Cemetery I have placed a stone bearing the simple inscription, "Jonathan Spottiswood. Died 1881." The hint I had received from the keeper prevented me from saying anything as to my belief in his story, but I asked for leave to undertake the duty of his interment on the ground that he bore my own surname, and that no other person was forthcoming to assume the task. The parochial authorities were glad enough to rid the ratepayers of the expense.

At the inquest I gave my evidence simply and briefly, dwelling mainly upon the accidental nature of our meeting, and the facts as to his fatal leap. I said nothing about the known disappearance of Jonathan Spottiswood in 1781, nor the other points which gave credibility to his strange tale. But from this day forward I give myself up to proving the truth of his story, and realizing the splendid chemical discovery which promises so much benefit to mankind. For the first purpose, I have offered a large reward for the discovery of a trap-door in a coal-cellar at Hampstead, leading into a subterranean passage and laboratory; since, unfortunately, my unhappy visitor did not happen to mention the position of his house. For the second purpose, I have begun a series of experiments upon the properties of the essential oil of alchemilla, and the possibility of successfully treating it with carbonic anhydride; since, unfortunately, he was equally vague as to the nature of his process and the proportions of either constituent. Many people will conclude at once, no doubt, that I myself have become infected with the monomania of my miserable namesake, but I am determined at any rate not to allow so extraordinary an anæsthetic to go unacknowledged, if there be even a remote chance of actually proving its useful nature. Meanwhile, I say nothing even to my dearest friends with regard to the researches upon which I am engaged.

15: Crimson Flowers

Tod Robbins

1888-1949

The Thrill Book, 1 Oct 1919

I normally have a lower limit of around 1,000 words for stories, but since I make the rule I can break it for this one.

JOHN CAREWE was working in his garden. Far away, over the distant hilltops, the dying sun hung like a huge paper lantern on an invisible wire. Against this lurid background the small, bent figure of the old man resembled a spider weaving its web before the open grate.

Leaning on the hedge, I spoke to him. "So you are at work again, Mr. Carewe. How are your flowers progressing?"

Dropping his shovel nervously, he turned his yellow, shrunken face toward me. From the midst of the roses it looked like a misplaced sunflower.

"So you have been watching me," he cried in a shrill, quavering voice. "That is good for people— to watch me at work. It may teach them other things than gardening."

"What, for instance?"

"Why, life itself. The mind is a garden, my friend. What lies hidden there must spring to life. These flowers are crimson thoughts. See how quickly they grow — grow into deeds if I do not cut them each day. So must all men do if they would live in the sunlight; they must cut the crimson thoughts out of their gardens, even as I."

Once more he bent over his flowers. Picking up the shears with grim satisfaction, he began cutting off their languid, drooping heads.

"But this must be a very wicked garden," I said. "What is buried here?"

"Ah," said he, "you would like to know that, eh? What a man my son was! You can have no idea— such a sly one, such a cruel one, such a bloodthirsty one! Crimson thoughts were in his head continually, but now they grow nicely in my garden. He ruined me; he tortured me; he made my head revolve on my shoulders— yes, actually revolve like a wheel.

"But now I have him here, and he supports me in my old age. Each day I sell his thoughts— his evil, crimson thoughts. What a revenge that is! He lies there, grinding his teeth because of it, and he can do nothing— nothing.

"When the hangman was through with him they gave me what was left for my garden. But have a thought, lady; have a crimson thought for a remembrance."

So saying, he rose and hobbled toward me with a single flower in his hand— a flower that glowed like a handful of the bloody sunset in the west.

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16: Rosemonde

H. de Vere Stacpoole

1863-1951

Britannia and Eve, Jan 1930

I WAS IN ST. PIERRE a year or so before that fatal day when Pelée erupted, destroying the city utterly and all but one of the ships at anchor in the bay.

It was the season of the *renouveau*, the magic season of the tropic spring, and Pelée sat with his head turbaned in cloud presiding over a land filled with the music of waters and the beauty and freshness of growing things.

Life in the little coloured city in those early days of the new season was more than pleasant. The clapping back of the green window shutters to let in the freshness of morning, the sea wind blowing in the angelins and palms, the smell of coffee, snatches of song, voices, street cries, laughter of children— it all comes back to me with a blaze of sunlight and— between the lemon-tinted houses a hint of the blinding blueness of the sea.

And the face of Monsieur Belchambre.

He was the handsomest old man I have ever met, of the type that Imperial Rome bequeathed as a legacy to the Latin races, courtly, amiable and lovable.

It is not often you meet all that in one personality.

Always exquisitely dressed but seemingly by some tailor of another day, he belonged by suggestion to Paris, the Paris of Tortonis and the Boulevard de Gand, yet he was a Martiniquan born and bred.

The Belchambres had been rooted in the island long before the terrible revolution of the blacks, their sugar plantations had made them rich and fortunately a good deal of their money had been invested in English securities by Pierre Louis Belchambre, my friend's grandfather. He had no estates now, but an income that enabled him to live comfortably in a house with a terraced garden just above St. Pierre, where the road that leads to Morne Rouge began.

HERE AFTER DINNer one night, as we sat drinking our coffee and smoking, with the fireflies lighting up above the flowers in answer to the lamps of St. Pierre lighting up below, M. Belchambre said all at once, apropos of the forms of a man and a girl linked and walking on the road just visible below:

"Still it goes on!"

I laughed and agreed. It was going on from the high woods to the sea, and would be going on beneath the children and great-grandchildren of those garden palms and those balisiers of the high woods up there where the tree frogs were singing beneath the moon.

But M. Belchambre was not thinking of the eternity of love, but of the strangeness of lovers, and he had in his mind to tell me the strangest love story I have ever heard.

"Those cold whites," said he, "all those people over there in your America and Europe, know little about love. Lust, yes, and affection, yes; but Love as it can sometimes grow in these enchanted islands, no. How could they imagine the flowers of the *grands bois*, the wickedness of the fer de lance, those centipedes half as long as one's arm, those passions of the mind exotic and extraordinary as the reptiles and the flowers?" He paused for a moment, and went on: "I will tell you a story; confide it, rather, for one of the actors in it is still alive and living in St. Pierre. It has to do with the past, and the old La Fontaine plantation that still lies up there beyond the Morne Rouge, but gone to decay, the cornfields no longer tilled, the sugar mills silent, and haunted only by lizards, and scorpions as large as your hand.

"MANY YEARS AGO a young man, whom we will call Louis, lived over at the other side of the island near Grande Anse; he was an only son and his father was a landowner, one of the old French stock, belonging to a family settled in the island long before the French Revolution.

"Their estates ran by the Rivière Falaise, and Louis, who managed for his father, had not much idle time on his hands. The growing of sugar cane is not a simple business, and that was only part of the work calling for his attention; there was the cutting and crushing and sugar refining to say nothing of the rum making. The estate also produced cocoa and chocolate and maize— a big affair which was, however, not too big for his hands owing to the fact that he had two very efficient overseers.

"He never looked at the women. There were beautiful girls to be had for the asking, chabines, quarteronnes, griffes, either on the estate or at La Grande Anse, but Louis had no eyes for them; that sort of love was not his way, he had, in fact, no ideas at all of love, no more than has the angelin, which is the male palmiste.

"Yet just as in the angelin, which is a man-tree, there was that in Louis which only awaited opportunity for development, and when he was twenty-three years of age one day it came.

"One day, called by business to St. Pierre, he mounted his horse and took the great national road La Trace. You know that road, perhaps of all roads in the world the most wonderful, mounting to the purple mornes, falling to the valleys and the cane fields, here showing glimpses of the blue sea and again marching through the high woods with their great cedars and torrential shadows above which the acomats and towering mahoganys find the sky.

"Nearing Morne Rouge he reached the La Fontaine plantation.

"The road here takes a bend, blue-black gommiers, and giant tree ferns line it on the right, and the razie creeps out from the trees like a carpet, ground vines and heaven knows what in the way of low-growing things trying to fight and kill the road.

"Rounding the bend Louis came on a picture suddenly revealed, tragic and unforgettable. A girl in white on a black rearing horse, a yellow snake curled around the horse's off fore-leg, the head of the snake thrown back ready to strike with the awful mouth wide open like the jaws of a pincers.

"The girl was hitting at the snake with a whip.

"Next moment Louis was beside her, he swept her from the saddle in the bend of his arm, just as, maddened by the fangs of the fer de lance that had got home near the shoulder, her horse bent at the withers before straightening like a bow to dash away.

"The snake flicked away amidst the razie like a yellow whip thong, the hoof beats of the maddened horse ceased as it broke from the high road to the shelter of the woods.

"Above in the delicate frondage of the balisiers, a siffleur de montagne broke into song.

"It was thus that Louis met Rosemonde La Fontaine, a tragic meeting in a setting of tragedy and beauty.

"SHE WAS LOVELY. She was youth. A creature that it seemed impossible age should ever touch. Also she was miraculous in a way which I shall presently explain.

"Did Louis love her? Does a stone fall to the ground when you release it from your hand? Yes, it was just as though they had been born one for the other, and the La Fontaines were well content.

"Of that family there was only Rosemonde, her father, her grandmother and her sister Celestine.

"Celestine at that time was staying with a relation at Fort de France, and during the first weeks of the courtship when Celestine was mentioned there would be a laugh.

"There was something mysterious about Celestine, something they seemed hiding from him.

"Once the grandmother, speaking of the beauty of Rosemonde, said, 'Ah, but you should see Celestine.'

" 'She cannot be more beautiful,' said Louis.

" 'No, but she is as beautiful,' replied the old lady.

"When he approached Rosemonde on the subject, she only gave him a dark glance with half a smile in it. The thought of Celestine seemed to cast a shadow over her. She would only say, 'You will see.'

"ONE DAY, it was the end of the hivernage and the new spring was in sight— one day Louis, calling at the La Fontaine house, found an atmosphere of stir and pleasant confusion.

"In the great drawing-room with its furniture of the time of the fourteenth Louis, a girl's hat lay cast upon a couch, and a little travelling bag of violet-coloured leather stood half-open by the table, where stood a great bowl filled with the flowers of the Lossiele bois.

"The grandmother was seated in her chair by one of the windows, and the first thing she said was 'Celestine has arrived.'

" 'Ah,' said Louis, laughing, 'Mademoiselle Celestine has arrived, well, now we shall see,' and as he spoke the words the door opened and Rosemonde came in.

" 'Celestine,' said the old lady, 'this is he, look at him, is he not good to look upon— your future brother-in-law.'

"Then it all came out. The unspeakable, absolute, absurd likeness. They were twins— and that was the joke!

"TWINS, YES, but they were one, at least in no little detail did they differ.

"I must tell you that the La Fontaines were not pure stock. Pierre Ambrose, the great grandfather, had married a quadroon, and from her came a touch of strangeness, a tropical fire and softness that was a thing in itself, an essence permeating form and manner and voice. They showed it equally, their voices were the same, and if there was any difference between them it was only that Celestine was a shade more sedate, more serious than Rosemonde.

"But, mark you, there was a difference between the two girls. No two things in the world are exactly alike. But it was a difference masked for the eyes of a white man by the tropical something which lay in their touch of coloured blood. You know to a white all Chinese faces seem the same owing to the race bar, and so, in a way, the coloured touch makes for similarity between two people of the race.

"All the same to the grandmother before she became half-blind the difference was clear, much clearer than to the father, a man of unobservant nature who was always mistaking the girls one for the other owing to what he called 'This jest of Nature.'

"But this jest of Nature which the family took in good part was not a laughing matter for Louis. After the first shock, and his recovery from it, things went on, it is true, as before, but, all the same, there was a difference.

"It was as though the woman he loved had divided herself into two.

"The appalling similarity between the two girls had produced a situation absolutely unique, but far from damping his ardour the fact seemed to feed the flame of his passion, filling his mind with the strangest ideas.

"But things were moving in another direction. He saw or thought he saw a change in Rosemonde. It seemed to him that she had grown jealous of Celestine, and now came to his mind like the shadow of future trouble the thought of what might happen in the future owing to the jealousy of Rosemonde.

"The most extraordinary jealousy in the world, for it was jealousy of the likeness.

" 'If Louis loves me, then he must love her, because she is me— at all events to his eyes.'

"That seemed her train of reasoning, also she fancied that Celestine had fallen in love with Louis. She said nothing of all this, but he could tell her thoughts.

"However, the marriage day was drawing near, a day that would resolve many things.

"YOU CAN scarcely picture an old-time marriage in Martinique. Day by day we have changed, and many old customs have gone.

"Even after the terrible rebellion of the blacks, and the freeing of the slaves, many plantations like that of La Fontaine, still held to some of their traditions, and the hands retained many of their faithful and lovable qualities; this was so at the time I am speaking of, and the marriage of Louis and Rosemonde La Fontaine promised to be not only brilliant but also one of those family affairs where the family includes the whole of the workers and retainers of a large estate.

"There was to be a holiday for all, a dinner for the hands, games and fireworks in the evening, to send off the bride and bridegroom, whose wedding night would be spent at the house a relation had lent them in St. Pierre.

"These happy plans were born, however, only to be wrecked. Fate intervened.

"You must know that near the La Fontaine mansion, hidden from the house by a belt of trees, there was a lake.

"A lake like a lost sapphire, lonely and blue and beautiful, innocent-seeming yet deadly, because of springs that towards the centre sent up

eruptions of ice-cold water; inshore and washing the marble steps of the bathing place, which stood shadowed by a great balisier, the water was tepid, and there were seasons when the whole of the water was of an equable temperature, but one never knew when the cold springs were playing, and when a swimmer swimming too far out might not be seized by cramp or receive a chill deathly in this climate.... Well, on the day before the marriage of Louis and Rosemonde she came here to bathe with Celestine. The two girls were alone.

"What happened there was told by Rosemonde, returning home, running, breathless, still in her bathing dress covered only with a wrap, told only in these terrible words, 'She is drowned.'

"It seems from the details she gave later, that the girls, having amused themselves for a while swimming close to the shore, struck out further across the blue smiling water. Celestine went too far, and Rosemonde, who had turned towards the shore, heard her cry for help.

"It was too late.

"A hand showed above the water surface, then there was nothing but a ripple marking where the struggle had been.

"Louis, who was at home over at Grande Anse making his last preparations for the marriage, received the news almost at once; one of the plantation hands mounted on a swift horse brought it to him. You can imagine!

"Well, well, it is always the unexpected that comes in this life.

"The marriage was, of course, postponed, and to postpone a marriage is always unlucky.

"It took place two months later without any ceremony or rejoicing; all the same Louis was happy, the stain on the past had almost died away for him, and Rosemonde giving herself up entirely to his love seemed like a being re-born.

"Yes, there seemed no cloud on their future.

"But the human mind is a thing ever questing, never satisfied, and to the mind of Louis one day came a thought as he watched his wife in the garden playing with a little dog that he had bought for her.

" 'Did she really care for Celestine?'

"That was the thought, and it was born not only of the happy figure before his eyes but of the recollection of how she had appeared the day after the tragedy, so calm, so quiet, as if stunned— and yet now looking back not only at that day but at the intervening time was there evidence of real grief? He remembered her jealousy owing to the likeness.

"He had let his imagination stray so far when he pulled it back sharply. Such a doubt was disloyalty to the woman he loved. He hated himself for the thought.

"A woman who could not feel real grief for the death of a sister under such circumstances— what would she be?

"Louis had brought her home to the house of his father on the estate near Grande Anse, the house had been redecorated in part, but a great deal remained to be done, and he had left it so purposefully, that his wife might have a say in the matter. The gardens were the same, very old-fashioned and rather neglected they awaited his wife's decision as to the redisposition of the beds and so forth.

"She was not slow in taking charge of these matters. In her new environment and vested with the power he gave her over affairs, her character developed. It is often so in marriage.

"Marriage, in fact, is a house of incubation in which the egg of a young girl's character brings to life qualities often surprising to the husband.

"In Rosemonde harder characteristics than he had suspected seemed to show themselves, especially in her dealings with the servants and hands, also a determination and self-will that might have made for unhappiness between them had his character been harder and more resistant.

"As things were he gave way, and so they went on for five years without a ripple on the surface of affairs, just as on the La Fontaine lake there is nothing to show of the deathly springs that play beneath the mirror of the still blue water.

"The marriage was childless.

"JUST AS ON the La Fontaine lake periodically the clouds cast a shadow on the water, so in these five years periodically a gloom seemed to take possession of Rosemonde. It was always at the same season and time— that is to say, shortly before the anniversary of their marriage day, that is to say, at the time of the tragedy of the lake.

"One night, just at this season, Louis was aroused from sleep by a voice from his wife's room.

"The two rooms were adjoining, and the door between them was open.

"The voice seemed raised in dispute.

"He left his bed, and coming to the open door saw in the vague light of the moon shining through the jalousies Rosemonde, half-raised in her bed, and seeming to thrust something away from her. Then came her voice again: 'You shall not have him— no, you shall not, never— never— Ah— there.'

"She raised herself fully, then sank back as if exhausted.

"He returned to his room.

"He knew that she had been talking in her sleep to Celestine.

"And now came back to him the old question of her jealousy, followed by a more terrible question that he dared scarcely envisage. What had happened on that fatal day?

"The antagonism in the voice of the sleeper, her action in pushing some unseen thing away, the remembrance of her jealousy and that fact which he knew full well from their marriage life, that jealousy, with her, was a brooding passion— all this came to him, joined with the terrible question that none could answer but Rosemonde herself.

"And he could not ask.

"With the daylight his mind returned to itself. It was nothing. Without doubt in the dream state she had harked back to that time before her marriage and picked up the old mind condition due to the fatal likeness.

"That was quite enough. No doubt in those pre-marriage days she had often been troubled with the thought of his love for her being possibly attenuated by the resemblance to her of Celestine. The dream condition which distorts as well as recalls had made her cry out as though in dispute or anger.

"That was all.

"Yes, but the logical mind of man does not live alone, it lives with a mind that is illogical.

"This infernal partnership it is that will always prevent Reason from preventing War, Love from overcoming Suspicion and Hate.

"Despite what Louis told himself there remained in his mind a stain that could not be removed, a stain that coloured everything.

"You know in the tropics fancy grows with the fierce rapidity of the Lossiele Vine. The negro mind will tell you that; this weed, which can be terrible and out of all proportion to the seeds it grows from, was trying to take possession of the mind of Louis, he would cut it and stamp on it only to find it sprouting again. He saw pictures of Celestine drowning and of Rosemonde pushing her down, and every little bad point in Rosemonde, her self-will, her hardness at times, her seeming inability to find sympathy for the servants and hands, all fed by the weed of fancy, seemed to point to that picture.

"He was unhappy, but things were moving, and Fate preparing to speak.

"ONE DAY, getting on for the sixth anniversary of their marriage, Rosemonde, who had gone for a drive on the road that leads towards the sea, was caught in one of those sudden storms which sometimes come just after the season of the north-east winds. Despite the cover of the carriage, which the coachman raised, she was drenched.

"That night she was seized with a shivering fit, by dawn she was in a high fever, and a man was sent riding at all speed to Grande Anse for the doctor.

"The doctor's name was Perrichaud, an old man wise in the diseases of the island and the tricks of its climate.

"When he had seen the patient he took Louis aside.

"It was pneumonia, a grave case affecting both lungs. 'But she has youth on her side,' said the doctor, 'so we must hope for the best.' Ah, that was terrible.

" 'We must hope for the best!'

"Then day came after day till at last came an evening that was to be the end of it all. She had awakened from a moment of drowsiness, and had sent for Louis, and as he knelt beside her she said:

" 'I am dying. I know it— I want to say— listen. From the first moment I loved you as I love you now. I was jealous of her— I saw her drown, I tried to reach and help her, I could not, but I could not find grief in my heart for her.'

"The words were torture to the unhappy man. She was innocent of what he had imagined, the tears ran down his face. She went on:

" 'I could not grieve for her— because she loved you.'

"Ah! that was new. So Celestine had loved him— what a fatality! he had never suspected that the dead girl had felt like that for him. No wonder that Rosemonde, discovering the fact, had felt jealousy.

" 'Then,' she went on with her dying voice, 'I was guilty of deceit. I had to pretend grief and a greater deceit for the love of you, for all these years I have had to keep it up.'

" 'But, Rosemonde,' said the unhappy man. 'You could not help it, it was not your fault that for the love of me you have done anything; that which you have done for love can never be wicked. Love makes beautiful all things.'

"A light came into her eyes almost of happiness.

" 'Rosemonde,' he murmured. She gazed at him, her lips moved, and across the void of death that had opened between them, faint like an echo came the whisper:

" 'I am not Rosemonde— I am Celestine!'

"AND I," finished Monsieur Belchambre, "was Louis— but all that was many years ago."

He ceased, and through the warm night and the wind in the angelins and palms came from below the far-off whisper of the city and the sea.

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17: The Dead That Wept

Edgar Jepson

1863-1938

Telegraph (Brisbane) 25 Oct 1898

I ALWAYS had a hearty contempt for my cousin George, and for his part he had a very lively hatred of me. When relations are thus affected towards one another, they seem to go to greater lengths than those united by no tie of blood. George, too, had a great capacity for hating; all the force of his nature seemed to centre in it; and in our case the ill-feelings were strengthened by our seeing so much of one another, for his estate— he was an orphan— marched with my father's.

How our enmity arose I cannot remember; it seems to me to have always existed. The first thing I can recall at all is his pushing me— from behind, of course, that was George's way— into the content tank by the boiling-house. I think his ways of showing his hatred for me first aroused my contempt. As small boys we fought with varying success. At school we did not fight; for one reason, fighting was abhorrent to the spirit of our Barbadian schoolfellows; for another, when once aroused to take the trouble to fight, I could not have enough of it.

But we became rivals at cricket. It is our one game out there, and we played it all the year round. He grow up a magnificent bat; a big, broad-shouldered follow with a tremendous reach. Even on those fast treacherous wickets he could collar the fast bowling. I could bowl more than a little, and I could bowl George. He hated me the worse for it. Cautious against other howling, his inveterate passion for scoring off me turned him into one of those players who will have their hit, when playing mine. I knew his weakness, and kept one unvarying ball for him, medium pace, straight, and pitched a little short. If need were I bowled it to him over after over, but he generally put the ball into the hands of the long-field about the middle of the second. In the end he grew to dread my bowling: fancied, I believe, that there was a fatality about it, and that rendered him an easy victim.

He vented his hatred on me in a number of mean tricks. If he could got hold of anything he thought I prized, he would spoil or destroy it, and lie about it afterwards. Once he let my pony down and cut its knees.

Outwardly, indeed, we were on good terms. I could not take tho trouble to be on terms of open hostility, I did not care enough about him. He, I think, was of the opinion that he could do me more harm by keeping up the appearance of friendliness. As boys we drove every morning into Bridgetown to school together; and I had to keep a sharp lookout on my books, or he would contrive to drop them out of the buggy. When he succeeded he lied about it. When the

masters or the boys looked shyly upon me I know that George had been at work behind my back. It was scarcely worth the trouble of inquiring into; they came round after a while. My more intimate friends, between whom and me he was always trying to provoke quarrels, after a while grow to disbelieve him.

He tried to provoke me, too, by outshining me in every way. He was never happy unless he had smarter clothes, a better pony, and finer bats than I. He had much more money, because his estate was larger than my father's, a hundred acres larger. It does not seem much to English people, but in Barbadoes, where the largest estate is about five hundred acres, it is a great difference. Besides, a hundred acres in sugar meant, in the good times, between fifteen hundred and two thousand a year. In this effort he failed signally; I did not care whether his possessions wore better than mine or not. But one way or another, he made my school life far more disagreeable than it might have been.

He had a pretty turn for cruelty. I have known him in the holidays take overseer's work, for a day purely for the pleasure of cowhiding the little negroes. He always took the third gang, the little boys and girls who do odds and ends of work about the estate, being too weak for the heavier field labour. I have not much sympathy for the negroes, having lived amongst them; but, riding out one day, I came upon him by a cane piece mercilessly lashing a wretched little negro girl for some trifling fault or other. I stopped him quickly enough; we had one of our rare open quarrels, and I thrashed George.

He used to beat his servants, too, till he was fined ten pounds for knocking down his groom. His horses and dogs he treated shamefully. Still he was popular with his neighbours, for he was open-handed and full of animal spirits.

Above all, he was a great favourite with women. There was a masterfulness about him that they liked. He was good-looking, too, dark, with regular features, and a devil-may-care expression. He exercised, as well as I could make it out, a physical fascination upon them that they could not resist. Women seem to like men who look as though they would maltreat them. They spoiled him, and he despised them.

One woman he did not despise, and that was his sister Margaret. He feared and hated her. He feared her because when as a boy he tried to bully her, her finer and more fearless spirit had mastered him, and he had never freed himself from that mastery.

My fondness for her was reason enough for his hatred. I had always loved Margaret, and always shall love her. Afterwards he hated her more, because, whatever the yield was, he had to pay her five hundred a year out of his estate. She had, too, a valuable little estate of a hundred and fifty acres on the opposite side of my father's, and was reckoned an heiress. I know well enough

that he would do everything he could to prevent my marrying her, for if the estates were joined I should be in the better position. But I had such implicit trust in Margaret that I did not fear anything he might do.

As children Margaret and I were always together, and in the holidays during my school years. Indeed, I am inclined to think that Margaret was the chief factor in the formation of my character. Certainly I should never have thought half the things worth taking trouble about that I do, had it not been for her power of inspiring me.

We played together and quarrelled together— at least she did. I believe she found me a disappointing person to quarrel with, I could not, except on rare occasions, take the trouble. She had fits of rage of amazing intensity. She would tug at my hair, till I got hold of her hands and hold them firmly. Then she would kick my shins, whereupon I would lay her on the ground, still holding her hands till she grew quiet. Elsie used to stand by, looking scared out of her life, saying, "Don't hurt her, Tristram, she can't help it."

I, too, had an idea she could not help it, and used to sit patiently holding her. Site was ashamed of these fits; I think the contrast of my coolness shamed her, and they grow less frequent as she grew older. However angry she was, she never hurt Elsie.

Elsie McClaren, the daughter of our Scotch overseer, was my foster-sister, and our companion and pet, being a year younger than Margaret, and three years younger than I.

My mother died a few days after I was born, and Mrs. McClaren reared me along with her little boy. By way of return my father arranged for Elsie to share Margaret s governess. Playmates as children, when I was at school the girls never left me alone. After I had got home, and had my tea, in the middle of my evening debate as to whether it was not too much trouble to prepare my lessons for the next day, I used to hear a scurry of footsteps, and in they ran, demanding help in their evening work. I had to help them, and then Margaret would insist on my doing my own.

EIsie was thus always our companion. She was a pretty, fragile little thing, and we mode a great pet of her; the best of everything was for Elsie. In return, I am afraid we made her the butt of our youthful wit. she took it in excellent part, she never thought we could do wrong, and was entirely dominated by our stronger natures.

George rarely joined us. When he did, there was sure to be a quarrel; he would bully Elsie. I am pleased to remember it was the one thing I always thrashed him for. So we all grew up together, Margaret into a beautiful girl of a fine high spirit, Elsie into a pretty dreamy girl with a passion for music, and I into their very obedient servant.

When she was fourteen Margaret went to England to school, and spent all but three months of the cool season every year there. Every year she returned prettier and more charming, with a colour in her cheeks which was all that was needed to make her ravishing, and my boy's passion for her grew stronger and stronger. It was now she who became the teacher, having so many things to tell me, and at sixteen she began to develop ideas; then it was she began to teach me how many things were worth taking trouble about. One of them was Elsie's education. I had my doubts about the use of it, for Elsie was not bright, but she worked patiently at what she was told.

AT LAST the time came for me to go to the university. George, being my older, went six months before me to Cambridge, as I was going to Oxford. Those six months were the happiest of my life, I think, for Margaret was at home, we were always together, and I was bowling better than ever. Margaret went over with me to England to stay with friends in London. To my surprise I got a scholarship at one of the smaller colleges; and it procured my entrance into a congenial set. I did a certain amount of work, read a great deal that was more interesting to me, played my cricket, and became a noted speaker on colonial matters at the union.

Of George I saw a good deal in the vacations. Margaret had another idea, the idea of making us friends. I had the strongest doubts as to its being worth while. I heard of him us living a very fast life at the university. Only his cricket prevented its being faster— he got his blue in his second year— and I knew that he went the pace in town. He had got into a set of men with money, whose occupation was to put it to a bad use. He could stand the pace very well. He had the accumulations of a long minority to spend, and he spent them.

Two years after I had gone to Oxford my father died, and when all the affairs were settled I bethought myself of doing something for Elsie. I knew that she was dull and unhappy in Barbadoes, when both Margaret and I were in England, and I determined to bring her over, and let her cultivate her musical talent.

I wrote out to her parents, the arrangements were soon made, and she came. George sneered at the scheme once or twice, but was disregarded. She was placed at a good school in Kilburn, and made excellent progress. In the vacations I took her to concerts, and she taught me a finer appreciation of music than all the critical dissertations of my Oxford friends. I had a protecting, brotherly fondness for her, greater indeed than the fondness of most brothers for their sisters. Everyone, indeed, was fond of her; for she was a creature of an innocent gentleness of nature that charmed her way into their hearts.

In the next year I got my blue. Our chance of beating Cambridge was small. George had been in splendid form all the summer, had made four centuries, and carried out his bat twice. On the way up to town we were discussing our chances; and I happened to say I had taken his wicket scores of times. It seemed to set the captain thinking. I knew he did not think much of my bowling; indeed, I think he underrated it. I had got my blue for my fielding; and I was a useful bat. However, he said nothing.

Cambridge made fifty for no wicket, George had hit five fours, and had the bowling collared. To my surprise, I was put on to bowl. I began to bowl him the old ball. The first over was a maiden, the first in the match. The second over George faced me again, and it was a maiden. The third over he hit me for two, and the other man hit me for two. The third ball of the fourth over he put into the hands of cover point. His score was sixty-seven short of the century. I got three more wickets, and made a painstaking thirty-five.

I opened the second innings with a ball which George drove into the hands of the man over my head in the long field; and we just won the match. After it was over, and we were all in the pavilion, he said with a pleasant smile which did not reach his eyes, "I'll be even with you, old man, for taking my wicket in both innings," and I believed he would do his best.

At the end of the year, owing to the development of the beet-sugar industry, the price of cane-sugar, which had been steadily falling, fell very low indeed, and our incomes fell with it. I had plenty of money in English investments, so I did not mind very much. George, who had had much more, had spent most of it.

WE WERE both living in town now, having left the universities, and he began to say he would have to live in Barbadoes. Margaret had gone out there for a few months, and wrote to say that the prospect was alarming; and my attorney urged me to come out, and look into things for myself. I was leading a very pleasant life among my friends in town and was going to marry Margaret in the summer. I thought it hardly worth the trouble.

One morning I was startled by a telegram from Elsie's school saying she had disappeared, having gone to her master in town the day before and never returner. Of late she had gone by herself, being old enough and knowing her way very well. I was in it state of great dismay; but it seemed no very difficult thing to find her, and I set the usual agencies to work, keeping the matter very quiet.

But the days went by and they proved useless. I set others to work, and threw myself into the search with an energy that surprised me. I wouldn't for worlds have had any harm befall the dear child, and I was responsible for her.

Even George, when he heard of it, showed a greater concern than I had ever known him show about anything that did not immediately affect him; and it was all the more strange since he had always treated her with a contemptuous indifference, while she had shrunk from him and avoided him.

He helped me greatly in my search, and was fertile in excellent suggestions. But it was all in vain; whoever had arranged the disappearance was a master hand, and had taken precautious that effectually baffled discovery. It was so well done that it was impossible she could have arranged it herself. But there was no clue either to anyone who could have helped her in the matter or to her motive. All I could think of was that at the last concert I had taken her to she had been rather absent minded, and there was a light in her eyes I had never seen in them before. George's hypothesis that there was a man at the bottom of it was the only tenable one; even Margaret said as much in her letters.

I was grieved, amazed, and angry. Months rolled on, and I never abandoned the search though every fresh effort grow sickening in its hopelessness. My marriage with Margaret was postponed, and she went out again to Barbadoes with George, to keep house for him. She had an idea that she had her duties to her brother and her negroes. Further than asking her what good she expected do to either, knowing them as she did, I didn't reason against her purpose, having learnt by experience that reasoning was useless; but if I told her my way of thinking and left her alone she would work around. Then I went on with my search, and began to see more of my friends again.

SIX MONTHS later Margaret's letters all at once ceased. Six weeks, three mails that is, passed by and no letters. When the third mail had come, and I was again disappointed, I said goodbye to my friends, shut up my rooms, and started for Barbadoes. I had not been in the island for five years, and my old friends were very glad to see me. But on all sides I was met by the cry of "ruin."

Sugar had fallen to the lowest, and would never rise again. However, it seemed to me that there was at any rate a living to be made out of it still.

I found George grown a thorough Barbadian. He had always been more of a Barbadian than myself, though both of us were English by birth and parentage. He had always been more proficient than I in that curious corruption of English, the Barbadian language, and now he spoke it habitually. His old hatred of me, which I thought had lessened somewhat in England, had, under the influence of old associations, recovered its old virulence. His first act was to stick me with a bad horse, and great was his joy.

But what was my distress and dismay to find that Margaret would have nothing to do with me; treated me with icy, contemptuous coldness; was

barely civil to me when it was necessary; but otherwise avoided or ignored me. I could get no opportunity to speak to her alone, so I wrote and asked her to explain. She wrote back, "I know all."— not a word more.

It was certain that it was George's doing. He had borrowed large sums of her to increase his plant of machinery. That was a good reason for his trying to separate us. But what possible means could he have employed? I could not guess; I had believed that nothing could separate us.

After a month I began to despair, and to eat my heart out. My life was wasting under my eyes. Life without Margaret was hardly worth while; she had been my life all through the years. My only consolation, and selfish enough, God knows, was that she was growing listless and hollow eyed.

ONE EVENING as I sat brooding, after my lonely dinner, my anger and wretchedness rose to the pitch of desperation. I made up my mind to have it out of George that night, if I had to go near killing him in the process. I knew that Margaret was out; for I had met her at tennis that afternoon, and heard her agree to spend the evening with our hosts. I was eager for a quarrel, and all the injuries he had ever done me kept rising in my memory, and aggravating my dangerous mood. It was only half a mile, and calling my terrier, Nipper, I set out to walk. It was a still, stifling night, at the end of the hot season; the moonlight was an intense silver blaze that silhouetted everything in black and the air rang with the shrill notes of hundreds of whistling frogs.

I walked deliberately enough. My purpose was too set for hurry. I was pondering my plan of action. The way lay along intervals, as the paths between the canefields are called. About midway the ground dipped, and the interval narrowed till the canes brushed the wayfarer on either side, and here and there met overhead.

I had gone a few yards down it when I missed Nipper. Looking back I saw him on the edge of the dip, and gave him a whistle. But he stood stook still. I gave him a call; he came a few steps towards me, then with a whine turned and bolted for home with his tail between his legs.

I had never known him do such a thing before. Going on, I presently noticed that there was something curious about the path, and all at once it struck me that it was strangely silent. There were no whistling frogs near it; I could not hear a single note. Speculating on the reasons for this I had almost reached the bottom of the dip when the low wail of a baby broke upon the stillness; and it had not died, when there came a burst of a woman's weeping, a storm of heartrending, heart-broken sobs.

I have always thought a woman's weeping a dreadful sound , but this was full of so intense a misery, so inexpressible, so hopeless a despair, that it

absolutely unmanned me. An inexplicable terror kept me unable to move. The conviction that it was no human weeping filled me. There was the peculiar quality in it that it rang in the air all round me, and I could by no means fix the spot whence it came.

It seemed that it would never stop, and when at last it died away in the same low baby's wail among the cane's on the left, the cold sweat was streaming from my pores. I make no pretence to be a man of extraordinary courage, and it was minutes before I could collect my spirit, and master my trembling lips to call out.

There was no reply. I dashed in among the dense cane growth on the left, pushed backwards and forwards among the stiff plants, and found no one. I did not expect to. I narrowly escaped falling into one of those great dry wells, thirty or forty feet deep, that drain the canes in the heavy rainfall. The shock restored me to myself, and I came out of them.

The silence was over; the air was vibrant with the whistling of the frogs. I set off for George's as hard us I could walk. The horrible feeling of someone being behind me was strong upon me, sending cold shivers up and down my spine. Several times I thought I heard the weeping behind me, and stopped to listen. It was my imagination. The worst of it was that tho voice of the weeping woman was known to me, but I could not recall whose it was. It was not a negro woman's.

I fairly ran up George's drive, and into tho veranda, where he sat drinking whisky and soda.

"Hullo!" he said. "What the devil's the matter? Seen a duppy?"

"Practising sprinting," I said, falling into a chair and reaching for the whisky.

I talked to him for an hour of sugar boiling. I had no heart left in me for a quarrel. I was struggling all the while to recall whose voice it was. I went home round by the road. Nipper came scampering down the drive and yelped and barked round me in extravagant joy.

I passed a horrible night; every time I closed my eyes the weeping awoke me. There seemed to have passed into its sorrow a tone of plaintive remonstrance at my not recalling whose voice it was.

At breakfast I made cautious inquiries of the butler, who knew everything that happened for miles round. No strange sound had been heard in the dip.

That day I had to drive into town, and all along, the weary white road, there and back, the weeping haunted my imagination. I even fancied I heard it above the din of Broad street. I knew the voice so well, but I could not recall whose it was.

I returned to dinner, and after dinner I felt I must have society, or it would drive me mad. I walked to the neighbour's on the opposite side to George's,

and us I drew near the house, I heard Margaret's ringing laugh in the veranda. I had not heard it for months; and she never laughed again that evening. Irritable as I was from harass and want of sleep, this angered me greatly. About eleven our hostess was called away mid came back with a vexed air.

"A message from your brother to say your horse is lame, and the buggy can't come. I'm awfully sorry, my dear, I'm. afraid I can't put you up; the house is full with all the children home from school, and our grooms are all gone home," she said to Margaret.

"Oh, I shouldn't think of such a thing," said Margaret. "I can walk perfectly well. Why, it isn't a mile."

"Will you? Don' t you mind? And Tristram will see you home. Your ways are the same."

"No, I don't mind at all; I shall enjoy it in the delicious moonlight," said Margaret; but she frowned. I know it was at the thought of my seeing her home, and grow angrier still. Presently we set out, and went on our way saying very little. If she was afraid I was going to pester her for an explanation, she need have no fear. I was far too angry.

When we came to the path through the intervals I said; "Hadn't you better go home by the road?"

"No!" she said.

"You may get a nasty fright going this way," said I.

"I prefer it," she said, in the tone she would use to a disobedient dog.

"Very well, have your own way," I said, angrily.

When we came to the edge of the dip I led tho way into the narrow path, pushing aside the canes for her.

It was deathly still. There was no sound of the whistling frogs, no sound but the brushing of the canes against us; then in, the middle the baby's wail rang out, and the weeping began.

Margaret sprang to my side with, a low, frightened cry of "Tristram!" and clasped my arm. I slipped it round her and drew her close to me. The hopeless unhuman weeping rang round us as we stood, rising and falling and eddying through the air; and died away its before in the child's wail on the left. I was not so utterly terrified this time, but Margaret was a dead weight on my arm. I half carried, half dragged her out of the dip, and paused where the path widened again.

She recovered herself with a deep gasp; then tore herself from me, and panting, her face a blaze of scorn and anger, cried, "You cruel coward! Wasn't it enough for you to spoil my life by your faithlessness, but you must expose me to this!"

"Softly," I said, coldly, my anger had left me as her's rose. "It may be that my faithlessness has spoiled your life, though it seems to me that it is rather yours spoiling mine. But I warned you against this. Whose was the voice?"

"Whose was the voice? Who but you ever heard Elsie cry like that?" she cried.

"Of course, of course. I haven't heard Elsie sob since she was a child, or I should have known it at once," I said, more to myself than to her.

"It is no use your affecting ignorance," said Margaret scornfully. "George showed me her letter to him, telling of your treachery to her and your faithlessness to me, three months ago."

"George showed you a letter from Elsie telling him of my treachery to her and my faithlessness to you, three months ago?" I repeated, dumbfounded.

"Yes, and you've met her here on her way to you, and killed her. Oh, Tristram, you've broken my heart!"

"Margaret," I said, "I swear I've been as faithful to you as ever man was to woman, and I cannot conceive how Elsie can have been induced to write such a lie. But if she were coming to *me*, how comes she here? It's a mile out of her way from the road to town, the short cut to *your* house, not mine,"

It was a poor argument, but it told as no more striking one could have done. She was silent a minute, then breathed rather than uttered the word "George."

"George, of course!" I cried, as everything flashed clear to my mind. "He was the scoundrel who enticed Elsie away, to spite me! He made her write the letter accusing me, to keep us apart and get your money! He could always make a woman do anything he liked. Poor little girl! I'd hoped a better fate for her than to fall into his hands."

"Oh, why didn't I ask her what she was weeping so dreadfully for?" said Margaret, beginning to sob. I was near sobbing myself. Then her mood changed, and taking my arm, she hurried along towards the house.

WE BURST IN upon George as he sat smoking in the dining-room.

"There's somebody calling you from the well in the dip!" said Margaret, in a clear, cold voice.

"What the —— do you mean?" he shouted, springing up.

"Elsie is calling you from the well in the dip," said Margaret.

He faced us with his clear pallor going slowly leaden and livid, and his lips trembling.

"I don't understand," he muttered. "It was an accident— she fell in."

It was a palpable, miserable lie.

We turned and left the house.

Next day they drew up from the well the skeleton, picked clean by the ants, of a girl, and the yellow hair was Elsie's.

How she came there we could never learn. George has sold his estate, and lives in Paris. He is about to marry a rich young American.

18: The Splendid Quest

Edward Dyson

1865-1931

Punch (Melbourne) 21 Oct 1909

APPLETON AND LEES, peripatetic entertainers, proprietors of the justly celebrated bear, raconteurs, comedians and vocalists, lay weatherbound on the west bank of Teel River. It was a frizzling hot day. You might have grilled a bullock on the barbed-wire fence which skirted the track behind them. The firm was short of rations and in danger of perishing from thirst. Further progress under a sun that swathed the weary pedestrian in thin flame was not to be thought of.

The three artists— Eric, Ephraim and the bear— sprawled in the shadow of a clump of odorous gum saplings. They were all afflicted, and the great bear kept up a pitiful complaining. He mopped his head with his feet and rolled on the crisp grass, vainly seeking ease. He sprawled with his paws turned upward; he sat up limply, gasping, a pale purple tongue hanging from his mighty mouth. He rolled on his back again, paws up. There was no comfort anywhere or anyhow for an unfortunate Russian bear in an Australian temperature of 105 degrees in the shade.

"Eric," gasped the fat partner, "dip my poor Bruno a hatful of water, won't you ?''

Appleton was lying on his back, his bony knees in the air, chewing a blade of grass. "See yeh jiggered first," he said. "Whose bear is 'he, anyhow? Tend to the needs of yer own fam'ly if yer a man an' not what yeh look, a stranded sperm whale."

"But, Eric, consider me figure— my infirmities!"

"So, because yer fed up like a Zoo walrus, I gotter be wet-nurse to a blighted bear all me days?"

Eric had arisen, however, and was selecting the better of the firm's two hats.

" 'Tain't no good, anyhow. Cold water won't touch his complaint. How'd yeh like it yerself?"

Ephraim groaned. His thirst was virulent, but waterproof.

Appleton dipped a hatful of river water and carried it to Bruno. The bear nuzzled into it, and then threw it over his back with his nose, but he did not drink.

"What 'id I tell yeh ?" growled Eric. "Lot o' good offerin' water to a bear whose taste has bin vitiated be long indulgence in cheap wine. Ephraim, this 'ere animal 's a shockin' example; that's wot he is, 'n' it's all your doin'. Yiv indulged him in demented 'n' unmerited liquors till he's first cousin to a

jimjam, 'n' a draught from the crystal spring ain't no more use to him than a Bible in perdition."

"Appleton, I'd give me soul for a bottle of beer," groaned Ephraim Lees.

"It ud be a fraud on the publican," answered Eric; "but I lend meself to it for a sniff of the cork."

Eric was down with his head pillowed on a root watching the river between his knees. There had been heavy rains, and the Teel was almost at flood. Occasional scraps of wreckage passed by indicative of trouble up stream. The bear was rocking to and fro all the time, and swearing in the Russian language.

"I say, Perfesser," said Appleton, dreamily, "did yeh ever have visions iv rivers iv beer— whole bloomin' streams iv hop-juice flowin' through a barren land, hot as the stokehole in Tophet?"

Professor Lees heaved a profound sigh. The bear embraced his own muzzle and grunted his anguish.

"Yer travellin' over a sandy plain," continued Eric in a poetic vein. "The sun curls up yer whiskers, 'n' raises blisters wherever he hits yeh, 'n' yer that parched yer inner traps 'n' wares rattles in yer dried hide like peas in a tin. Then, sudden like, veil strikes the river. It's a beautiful river. The green cool banks is deep in fresh rum shrub, 'n' the peppermint gums overhang the stream like weepin' willers. First yeh think it's jest water, 'n' yer pleased, but not wot we'd call profoundly moved. Yeh gets down to take a temp'rance drink. All iv a sudden yeh know ye've struck a river iv beer— a broad, deep, steady stream of fresh ale. Yeh see it, glowin' amber 'n' gold, with chance junks iv ice floatin' in it. It's a Niagerer iv grateful booze. Yfoh follow it t' where it goes slidin' over the granite walls inter the white marble basin a mile below, 'n' yeh sees clouds iv snow-white foam boilin' and sparklin'. Up, up, up, in fleecy mountains, an' yell stands for a moment there, teazin' yer thirst. Then yeh dives— dives straight down through them billers 'n' billers iv foam inter the bottomless pool iv beer, 'n' then yer wake up."

"Eric, fer pity's sake, stop," moaned Lees. "You harrow my feelings. You distress the poor bear. Stop; I really cannot endure it. Stop, I implore."

Appleton had stopped. He had jerked himself into a sitting position, and was staring hard at the river.

"Ellen Tommy!" he said, "wot's that?"

And he pointed at a dark object bobbing gaily down stream. Ephraim Lees could not raise himself at a moment's notice. The process was difficult. He rolled on to his face, and then propped his great bulk on his hands, and looked eagerly in the direction indicated.

"It looks like a barrel, Appleton," he said. "Very like a beer barrel, I think."

Bruno lifted his head and cried miserably. Bruno knew the name of beer in ten languages, including Austrian.

"It is a bar'l!" said Appleton. "But it's empty. Iv course it's empty."

"It's very low in the water, Eric!"

"To be sure, 'coz it's half full of water. Who'd let a bar'l iv beer escape this weather?"

The idea was preposterous. The three entertainers watched the derelict go by. It was interesting if only for the sake of fond associations. Then all subsided on the grass again. Eric and Ephraim tried to sleep; the bear resumed his lamentations.

Eric was awakened ten minutes later by a shout. A horseman from the track was endeavouring to force his nag in their direction; but the animal's eyes were fixed on Bruno, and with flattened ears and distended nostrils he hung back.

"Is that beast dangerous?" asked the horseman.

" 'Bout ez savage ez a rabbit," said the lean showman, the stubble on whose face was like flaking rust on an old keg. Eric was fanning himself with an ancient straw hat that looked as though it had been sampled by goats.

"What's yer trouble?" he asked.

"I suppose you fellows haven't seen a barrel go down the river?"

Ephraim Lees was about to reply, when Appleton's fierce, covert kick cracked his shinbone, and he became inarticulate in his agony.

"No," said Eric, thoughtfully. "Was this here jist a hordinary bar'l?"

"It was a barrel half full of beer. My pub up at the Pole Bridge was flooded last night, and a barrel is missing."

"It's a sad loss to you, I daresay," said Eric with some sympathy. "All the same, I'm a temp'rance man meself, I don't hold with beer."

"That be blowed for a yarn," said the incredulous stranger. "It saps the vitals 'n' brings man to the level iv the beasts what perish," Eric continued. He swept a hand over the river.

" 'Ere I have sufficient fer me simple needs."

"And you haven't seen a barrel?"

"No barrel has passed this way. I've bin sittin' here watchin the crystal tide fer ever flowin' this hour, 'n' I can swear to it. Maybe it's snagged higher up, or bin stranded on one iv the flats."

"Very likely."

"Let us 'ope," said Appleton, earnestly, as the stranger turned his horse's head, "that it ain't fallen inter the hands iv some misguided swaffman what ud put it to evil uste. I tremble to think, iv a 'ole bar'l iv beer runnin' wild in this 'ere peaceful solitude seekin' whom it may devour."

"Oh, take a fit!" called the contemptuous publican.

Eric Appleton placed his thumb to his nose, and wriggled his four fingers at the back view of the horseman.

Relieved of the necessity for disguising his feelings, the portly blonde was tenderly chafing his damaged shin, and the breath drawn sharply between his set teeth made an elegant symphony of pain.

"Appleton, this is a cruel outrage," said Epliraim, fretfully. "My poor shin, it is shockingly bruised, and I was already grievously afflicted. Upon my soul, I could weep!"

"Forget it," retorted Eric. "Ain't I told you a 'undred times to leave diplomatic matters to me. Little Ephie has the brain power iv a babblin' babe; it's fer him to resign business negotiation to the 'ardened sinner. Another gasp 'n' you'd 'ave wrecked 'n' ruined a noble opportunity. As it is that beer's ours."

"Ours! The whole barrel?" The fat partner was transformed. He was suddenly electric with hope; his bin was forgotten.

"Ours— meanin' mine. Mine to have and to hold."

"But, Eric, we must hasten. What is to be done, my "dear Annleton ?" "Load the whole bag iv tricks on the bear, 'n' get down stream licketty-split. There's a punt chained to a gum butt at the bend."

Never had Bruno been loaded with such expedition. He complained broken-heartedly as he loped down the riverside track under his burden, but the fat man tugged at the nose-ring in his feverish haste. That was an exhausting run that nearly prostrated Lees, but the prospect of refreshment upheld him. Bruno's great strength was utilised to tear the punt chain from its staple, and then Eric Appleton put out into the stream, and with a pair of rough-hewn naling-poles for oars commenced the heroic chase.

No man knows what splendid valour and tremendous endurance he is capable of till strung to his task by a glorious aim. Eric Appleton was a born loafer, and had aggravated his natural tendencies by a life of studied indolence. Ephraim Lees was a fat sloth who never stood where he could lie, and to whom movement of any kind was repellent.

Yet, under the stimulus of a high purpose, Eric was struggling with strenuous zeal out under a furious sun, his hands blistering on the rough paddles, the perspiration streaming from his aching limbs. And in even more pitiful stress Ephraim forged through the dust along the river hank, towing the anguished bear. You favoured ones to whom the curse of Adam is no s vious infliction, are not fitted to judge more sensitive and delicately-constituted natures on which labour bears with unremitting torture..

Not even remotely can you appreciate the splendid endurance under weariness and pain displayed by the poor showmen, Eric Appleton and

Ephraim Lees, in their never-to-be-forgotten pursuit of the missing beer. Ephraim stumbled along, and the sweat of his brow sprinkled the track; his feet, pie-shaped in their old canvas shoes, slapped the roadway, like the flappers of a huge seal; the bear shuffled by his side. Between them they raised as much dust as a flock of sheep. On the river, which flittered like polished steel in the falling sun, Eric tugged at his ineffective oars, throwing an occasional eager glance over his shoulder in quest of the quarry.

Oh, the agony of that run.

A yell from the rower informed Ephraim that the barrel was sighted. Eric was paddling his hardest now. Lees put his last reserve of energy into a marvellous sprint. Even Bruno seemed to be infected with the spirit of the chase, and was silent, waddling gamely under his load.

The cask was captured. Eric secured it to the punt-chain with a stout nail, and towed it to the most convenient bit of shore in sight under cover of a clump of scrub. And now, utterly exhausted, the wanderers collapsed in the shade, and lay panting, their greedy eyes fixed on the prize.

"We've got no time to waste," said Eric after a few minutes. "That bloke on the neddy may chance along at any moment."

A severe task lay before them. It was necessary to get the heavy cask out of the water and up the bank. The job would have been an easy one for Bruno if his strength could have been properly directed; but, excited by the prospect of drink, the bear became fidgetty, almost hysterical. He would witharaw his tremendous head at a crucial moment to go fussing about sniffing thirstily, and uttering impatient grunts and yelps. When he did this the barrel rolled back on Eric, flattening him into the river mud, and then there was a cessation of operations while the victim gave expression to his sentiments.

Lifting, pushing, groaning, sweating and cursing, the two showmen struggled with their booty. Once, when it was almost secured, Bruno withdrew suddenly. The barrel rolled back, jumped from a projecting root, and striking the fat man in the middle pitched him heels over head into the water, where he floated helplessly like a balloon. Ephraim was rescued with difficulty, and spread out in the sun to recover.

Half-an-hour was spent before he was again fit to direct the operations of the bear. But Bruno was more reasonable now. He clung to his post, too, and, behold, the barrel was landed, end on, high and dry; and once more the heroes rested from their labour.

"Open it, in pity's name, Eric, my friend," groaned Epliraim; and while Appleton sought a rock Lees dug a pint pannikin out of the company's bundle. Eric's rock was not big enough, but after three tries the impatient bear came to

the rescue. The second blow of his paw smashed the cask-head like matchwood. It was three parts full.

"Wine!" yelled Eric. He seized the pannikin, dipped it full, and carried the liquor to his lips. He took one gulp. Then he backed away, spitting, spluttering and coughing.

"Eric, Eric," shrieked Ephraim in dire apprehension, "oh, what is it? Speak to me—"

Then he snatched the pannikin, dipped hurriedly, and drank; and he, too, spat and spluttered. The bear dabbled his paws in the liquid and sucked them, and his keen disappointment was expressed in human cries.

"Vinegar"' said Appleton. His intonation was that of a man who had lost his last shred of faith in Providence.

"Vinegar!" said Lees. He sat down, muddy, sun-blistered, and worn, a blighted man. And the hot tears coursed down his muddy cheeks. Eric Appleton opened his lips to swear. It was like attacking a bush fire with a penny squirt. He said nothing but rolled down on the grass without a hop e in life.

The cask contained river water flavoured with vinegar. The Splendid Quest had been all in vain.

It was thus that Bryson and Morgan, the mounted policemen from Three Trees, found them two hours later. Bryson was furious over his stolen boat. Alas! they had neglected to tether the punt, and it was gone. There followed a long, dreary march to the lock-up at the township of Three Trees.

"Someone's been pulling your leg, my man," said Morgan when he heard the sad story. "There's no pub at the Pole Bridge. Maybe ye'll remimber it's the first iv April."

The charge was one of feloniously removing.

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19: The Reformation

Mark Hellinger

1903-1947

The Daily Telegraph (Sydney) 8 May 1939

IT was late in a Summer afternoon. A damp coolness settled deep in the cup of the hills and a whisper of a breeze came from the West, where the sun hung like an embarrassed fat man, staring red-faced over a fence.

On the porch two women sat, rocking back and forth. Their coats were thrown over their shoulders to guard against the evening chill, and they talked desultorily about the weather, and children, and husbands.

'If only,' observed Mrs. Adams, 'if only people would mind their own business and let a girl pick her own husband. Until you decide to marry, you, never hear how awful your man is.

'Everybody tells you he's no good. They tell you he gambles, he drinks, he's headed for perdition, he's a criminal, a thief— oh, they fill your head with dreadful things.'

Mrs. Adams continued to rock. She squinted her eyes against the dying red of the sun. 'The things they told me!' She shook her head. 'My own father and mother didn't even attend my own wedding! Imagine such a thing!'

Mrs. Bergen shrugged. 'That's because people are hot-headed,' she stated. 'My people got sore at my sister just exactly like that— and they never spoke to her again until the day she died.' She shrugged again. 'People are sure funny,' she added.

'Well,' said Mrs. Adams, 'you know my George. He's a nice-looking man, and he makes a neat appearance. But when he first came to our house, my father put him out. Right, smack out."Get out," he says. "I haven't got room in my house for gambling loafers!" And he slammed the door in my George's face.'

'People are funny,' said Mrs. Bergen.

'Of course,' Mrs. Adams went on, 'I didn't blame my father in a way. He was a strict man and he lived a strict life. And he was very strict with us children, too. He had heard that George Adams was a high-lifer who gambled and drank, and he didn't want me to be seen with a man like that.' She stopped rocking and tapped Mrs. Bergen's wrist for emphasis.

'I told them that George loved me and that I would reform him. But do you think they believed me? You bet they didn't. They laughed and said I was crazy. And they assured me that, if a man didn't retorm for a girl before the marriage took place, he certainly wouldn't do it afterwards.'

She smiled grimly. 'I wish they could see him now. He hasn't touched a drink for over two years. He never stays out late any more. And as for gambling— well, you can't even get him to play a game of casino or checkers.' Her eyes were hard. 'Oh, I'd like to tell them a thing or two!'

Mrs. Bergen sighed. 'People are funny,' she murmured. 'You take my Aunt Addie, for example. She never took a drink in her whole blessed life, until one day a doctor told her to take a swallow of gin every now and then for her gallstones. And so, for the next, twenty years, she was as stiff as a board.'

'Did it cure her gallstones?' asked Mrs. Adams politely.

'I don't think so,' said Mrs. Bergen sadly. 'She died from alcoholism in the end.'

Mrs. Adams coughed slightly and returned to her favourite topic. 'My George wasn't a bad drinker.' she mused, 'but he was a. steady one. Every day he'd have a few, and every night he wanted to sit with the boys and play poker.

'He never used to get to bed before two— and when we were first married. I really despaired of ever reforming him.' She looked smug. 'But I did it. And he admits he feels a hundred per cent better since he stopped all that carrying on. And he looks better, too '

'I'll bet he does,' agreed Mrs Bergen. 'But people sure are funny. My brother Mickey used to play the horses. Nobody could keep him away. And one day, when he didn't have any money, he put up father's cuff links on a horse.

'The horse won, and those whaddya-call-it fellers who who take bets gave my brother Mickey the cuff links and five dollars. When my father heard about it, he got hopping mad and said the cuff links were worth fifty dollars. So he went out and beat up the bet man. The judge gave papa ten days for doing such a thing.'

Mrs. Adams sniffed. 'Well, my George never got into scrapes like that.' she said, somewhat haughtily. 'But, as I was saying, the whole world was against our marriage. Even my own bridesmaid told me I was a fool. But I showed them. I showed them what a woman can do if she makes up her mind to help her man.'

'Maybe your man was different,' suggested Mrs. Bergen. 'People are funny. Some men you can reform; some you can't. Your man was a good man underneath. All he needed was a good woman to put him on the right track.'

'I wish some of my relatives thought that way,' observed Mrs. Adams. 'Only a handful bothered to come to the wedding. And when they kissed me after the ceremony was over, they cried as though I had just died.'

'People are funny,' said Mrs Bergen sagely.

'Naturally. I could see George's true worth,' Mrs. Adams rambled on, 'but nobody else could. After the wedding, he kissed me and promised he'd never card nor drink a drop again.

'Of course, he broke that promise many times before he got the will power to keep it. But keep it he eventually did.'

The sun had modestly retired from the scene, and purple filled the valley before the porch. The women continued to rock and talk, and Mrs. Bergen finally repeated the story about her aunt Addie and the gallstones.

This caused Mrs. Adams to say she'd have to be going in soon to see whether George had awakened from his nap.

'What a blessing it is,' she murmured happily, 'to know that he hasn't touched liquor in two years, and that he's in bed every night by ten o'clock!'

'You're lucky, all right,' said Mrs. Bergen. 'But tell me— whatever made him reform two years ago?'

Mrs. Adams looked very modest indeed. 'It was undoubtedly his great love for me,' she explained shyly. 'But I don't like to say so. All I know is that he's been a model man— ever since we came here to the Old Folks Home two years ago.'

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20: The Indian Summer of Dry Valley Johnson

O. Henry

1862-1910

The American Magazine, Feb 1907

DRY VALLEY Johnson shook the bottle. You have to shake the bottle before using; for sulphur will not dissolve. Then Dry Valley saturated a small sponge with the liquid and rubbed it carefully into the roots of his hair. Besides sulphur there was sugar of lead in it and tincture of nux vomica and bay rum. Dry Valley found the recipe in a Sunday newspaper. You must next be told why a strong man came to fall a victim to a Beauty Hint.

Dry Valley had been a sheepman. His real name was Hector, but he had been rechristened after his range to distinguish him from "Elm Creek" Johnson, who ran sheep further down the Frio.

Many years of living face to face with sheep on their own terms wearied Dry Valley Johnson. So, he sold his ranch for eighteen thousand dollars and moved to Santa Rosa to live a life of gentlemanly ease. Being a silent and melancholy person of thirty-five— or perhaps thirty-eight— he soon became that cursed and earth-cumbering thing— an elderlyish bachelor with a hobby. Some one gave him his first strawberry to eat, and he was done for.

Dry Valley bought a four-room cottage in the village, and a library on strawberry culture. Behind the cottage was a garden of which he made a strawberry patch. In his old grey woolen shirt, his brown duck trousers, and high-heeled boots he sprawled all day on a canvas cot under a live-oak tree at his back door studying the history of the seductive, scarlet berry.

The school teacher, Miss De Witt, spoke of him as "a fine, presentable man, for all his middle age." But, the focus of Dry Valley's eyes embraced no women. They were merely beings who flew skirts as a signal for him to lift awkwardly his heavy, round-crowned, broad-brimmed felt Stetson whenever he met them, and then hurry past to get back to his beloved berries.

And all this recitative by the chorus is only to bring us to the point where you may be told why Dry Valley shook up the insoluble sulphur in the bottle. So long-drawn and inconsequential a thing is history— the anamorphous shadow of a milestone reaching down the road between us and the setting sun.

When his strawberries were beginning to ripen Dry Valley bought the heaviest buggy whip in the Santa Rosa store. He sat for many hours under the live oak tree plaiting and weaving in an extension to its lash. When it was done he could snip a leaf from a bush twenty feet away with the cracker. For the bright, predatory eyes of Santa Rosa youth were watching the ripening berries, and Dry Valley was arming himself against their expected raids. No greater care

had he taken of his tender lambs during his ranching days than he did of his cherished fruit, warding it from the hungry wolves that whistled and howled and shot their marbles and peered through the fence that surrounded his property.

In the house next to Dry Valley's lived a widow with a pack of children that gave the husbandman frequent anxious misgivings. In the woman there was a strain of the Spanish. She had wedded one of the name of O'Brien. Dry Valley was a connoisseur in cross strains; and he foresaw trouble in the offspring of this union.

Between the two homesteads ran a crazy picket fence overgrown with morning glory and wild gourd vines. Often he could see little heads with mops of black hair and flashing dark eyes dodging in and out between the pickets, keeping tabs on the reddening berries.

Late one afternoon Dry Valley went to the post office. When he came back, like Mother Hubbard he found the deuce to pay. The descendants of Iberian bandits and Hibernian cattle raiders had swooped down upon his strawberry patch. To the outraged vision of Dry Valley there seemed to be a sheep corral full of them; perhaps they numbered five or six. Between the rows of green plants they were stooped, hopping about like toads, gobbling silently and voraciously his finest fruit.

Dry Valley slipped into the house, got his whip, and charged the marauders. The lash curled about the legs of the nearest— a greedy ten-year-old— before they knew they were discovered. His screech gave warning; and the flock scampered for the fence like a drove of *javelis* flushed in the chaparral. Dry Valley's whip drew a toll of two more elfin shrieks before they dived through the vine-clad fence and disappeared.

Dry Valley, less fleet, followed them nearly to the pickets. Checking his useless pursuit, he rounded a bush, dropped his whip and stood, voiceless, motionless, the capacity of his powers consumed by the act of breathing and preserving the perpendicular.

Behind the bush stood Panchita O'Brien, scorning to fly. She was nineteen, the oldest of the raiders. Her night-black hair was gathered back in a wild mass and tied with a scarlet ribbon. She stood, with reluctant feet, yet nearer the brook than to the river; for childhood had environed and detained her.

She looked at Dry Valley Johnson for a moment with magnificent insolence, and before his eyes slowly crunched a luscious berry between her white teeth. Then she turned and walked slowly to the fence with a swaying, conscious motion, such as a duchess might make use of in leading a promenade. There she turned again and grilled Dry Valley Johnson once more in the dark flame of her audacious eyes, laughed a trifle school-girlishly, and twisted herself with

pantherish quickness between the pickets to the O'Brien side of the wild gourd vine.

Dry Valley picked up his whip and went into his house. He stumbled as he went up the two wooden steps. The old Mexican woman who cooked his meals and swept his house called him to supper as he went through the rooms. Dry Valley went on, stumbled down the front steps, out the gate and down the road into a mesquite thicket at the edge of town. He sat down in the grass and laboriously plucked the spines from a prickly pear, one by one. This was his attitude of thought, acquired in the days when his problems were only those of wind and wool and water.

A thing had happened to the man— a thing that, if you are eligible, you must pray may pass you by. He had become enveloped in the Indian Summer of the Soul.

Dry Valley had had no youth. Even his childhood had been one of dignity and seriousness. At six he had viewed the frivolous gambols of the lambs on his father's ranch with silent disapproval. His life as a young man had been wasted. The divine fires and impulses, the glorious exaltations and despairs, the glow and enchantment of youth had passed above his head. Never a thrill of Romeo had he known; he was but a melancholy Jaques of the forest with a ruder philosophy, lacking the bitter-sweet flavour of experience that tempered the veteran years of the rugged ranger of Arden. And now in his sere and yellow leaf one scornful look from the eyes of Panchita O'Brien had flooded the autumnal landscape with a tardy and delusive summer heat.

But a sheepman is a hardy animal. Dry Valley Johnson had weathered too many northers to turn his back on a late summer, spiritual or real. Old? He would show them.

By the next mail went an order to San Antonio for an outfit of the latest clothes, colours and styles and prices no object. The next day went the recipe for the hair restorer clipped from a newspaper; for Dry Valley's sunburned auburn hair was beginning to turn silvery above his ears.

Dry Valley kept indoors closely for a week except for frequent sallies after youthful strawberry snatchers. Then, a few days later, he suddenly emerged brilliantly radiant in the hectic glow of his belated midsummer madness.

A jay-bird-blue tennis suit covered him outwardly, almost as far as his wrists and ankles. His shirt was ox-blood; his collar winged and tall; his necktie a floating oriflamme; his shoes a venomous bright tan, pointed and shaped on penitential lasts. A little flat straw hat with a striped band desecrated his weather-beaten head. Lemon-coloured kid gloves protected his oak-tough hands from the benignant May sunshine. This sad and optic-smiting creature teetered out of its den, smiling foolishly and smoothing its gloves for men and

angels to see. To such a pass had Dry Valley Johnson been brought by Cupid, who always shoots game that is out of season with an arrow from the quiver of Momus. Reconstructing mythology, he had risen, a prismatic macaw, from the ashes of the grey-brown phoenix that had folded its tired wings to roost under the trees of Santa Rosa.

Dry Valley paused in the street to allow Santa Rosans within sight of him to be stunned; and then deliberately and slowly, as his shoes required, entered Mrs. O'Brien's gate.

Not until the eleven months' drought did Santa Rosa cease talking about Dry Valley Johnson's courtship of Panchita O'Brien. It was an unclassifiable procedure; something like a combination of cake- walking, deaf-and-dumb oratory, postage stamp flirtation and parlour charades. It lasted two weeks and then came to a sudden end.

Of course Mrs. O'Brien favoured the match as soon as Dry Valley's intentions were disclosed. Being the mother of a woman child, and therefore a charter member of the Ancient Order of the Rat-trap, she joyfully decked out Panchita for the sacrifice. The girl was temporarily dazzled by having her dresses lengthened and her hair piled up on her head, and came near forgetting that she was only a slice of cheese. It was nice, too, to have as good a match as Mr. Johnson paying you attentions and to see the other girls fluttering the curtains at their windows to see you go by with him.

Dry Valley bought a buggy with yellow wheels and a fine trotter in San Antonio. Every day he drove out with Panchita. He was never seen to speak to her when they were walking or driving. The consciousness of his clothes kept his mind busy; the knowledge that he could say nothing of interest kept him dumb; the feeling that Panchita was there kept him happy.

He took her to parties and dances, and to church. He tried— oh, no man ever tried so hard to be young as Dry Valley did. He could not dance; but he invented a smile which he wore on these joyous occasions, a smile that, in him, was as great a concession to mirth and gaiety as turning hand-springs would be in another. He began to seek the company of the young men in the town— even of the boys. They accepted him as a decided damper, for his attempts at sportiveness were so forced that they might as well have essayed their games in a cathedral. Neither he nor any other could estimate what progress he had made with Panchita.

The end came suddenly in one day, as often disappears the false afterglow before a November sky and wind.

Dry Valley was to call for the girl one afternoon at six for a walk. An afternoon walk in Santa Rosa was a feature of social life that called for the pink of one's wardrobe. So Dry Valley began gorgeously to array himself; and so

early that he finished early, and went over to the O'Brien cottage. As he neared the porch on the crooked walk from the gate he heard sounds of revelry within. He stopped and looked through the honeysuckle vines in the open door.

Panchita was amusing her younger brothers and sisters. She wore a man's clothes— no doubt those of the late Mr. O'Brien. On her head was the smallest brother's straw hat decorated with an ink-striped paper band. On her hands were flapping yellow cloth gloves, roughly cut out and sewn for the masquerade. The same material covered her shoes, giving them the semblance of tan leather. High collar and flowing necktie were not omitted.

Panchita was an actress. Dry Valley saw his affectedly youthful gait, his limp where the right shoe hurt him, his forced smile, his awkward simulation of a gallant air, all reproduced with startling fidelity. For the first time a mirror had been held up to him. The corroboration of one of the youngsters calling, "Mamma, come and see Pancha do like Mr. Johnson," was not needed.

As softly as the caricatured tans would permit, Dry Valley tiptoed back to the gate and home again.

Twenty minutes after the time appointed for the walk Panchita tripped demurely out of her gate in a thin, trim white lawn and sailor hat. She strolled up the sidewalk and slowed her steps at Dry Valley's gate, her manner expressing wonder at his unusual delinquency.

Then out of his door and down the walk strode— not the polychromatic victim of a lost summertime, but the sheepman, rehabilitated. He wore his old grey woolen shirt, open at the throat, his brown duck trousers stuffed into his run-over boots, and his white felt sombrero on the back of his head. Twenty years or fifty he might look; Dry Valley cared not. His light blue eyes met Panchita's dark ones with a cold flash in them. He came as far as the gate. He pointed with his long arm to her house.

"Go home," said Dry Valley. "Go home to your mother. I wonder lightnin' don't strike a fool like me. Go home and play in the sand. What business have you got cavortin' around with grown men? I reckon I was locoed to be makin' a he poll-parrot out of myself for a kid like you. Go home and don't let me see you no more. Why I done it, will somebody tell me? Go home, and let me try and forget it."

Panchita obeyed and walked slowly toward her home, saying nothing. For some distance she kept her head turned and her large eyes fixed intrepidly upon Dry Valley's. At her gate she stood for a moment looking back at him, then ran suddenly and swiftly into the house.

Old Antonia was building a fire in the kitchen stove. Dry Valley stopped at the door and laughed harshly.

"I'm a pretty looking old rhinoceros to be gettin' stuck on a kid, ain't I, 'Tonia?" said he.

"Not verree good thing," agreed Antonia, sagely, "for too much old man to likee *muchacha*."

"You bet it ain't," said Dry Valley, grimly. "It's dum foolishness; and, besides, it hurts."

He brought at one armful the regalia of his aberration— the blue tennis suit, shoes, hat, gloves and all, and threw them in a pile at Antonia's feet.

"Give them to your old man," said he, "to hunt antelope in."

Just as the first star presided palely over the twilight Dry Valley got his biggest strawberry book and sat on the back steps to catch the last of the reading light. He thought he saw the figure of someone in his strawberry patch. He laid aside the book, got his whip and hurried forth to see.

It was Panchita. She had slipped through the picket fence and was half-way across the patch. She stopped when she saw him and looked at him without wavering.

A sudden rage— a humiliating flush of unreasoning wrath— came over Dry Valley. For this child he had made himself a motley to the view. He had tried to bribe Time to turn backward for himself; he had— been made a fool of. At last he had seen his folly. There was a gulf between him and youth over which he could not build a bridge even with yellow gloves to protect his hands. And the sight of his torment coming to pester him with her elfin pranks— coming to plunder his strawberry vines like a mischievous schoolboy— roused all his anger.

"I told you to keep away from here," said Dry Valley. "Go back to your home."

Panchita moved slowly toward him.

Dry Valley cracked his whip.

"Go back home," said Dry Valley, savagely, "and play theatricals some more. You'd make a fine man. You've made a fine one of me."

She came a step nearer, silent, and with that strange, defiant, steady shine in her eyes that had always puzzled him. Now it stirred his wrath.

His whiplash whistled through the air. He saw a red streak suddenly come out through her white dress above her knee where it had struck.

Without flinching and with the same unchanging dark glow in her eyes, Panchita came steadily toward him through the strawberry vines. Dry Valley's trembling hand released his whip handle. When within a yard of him Panchita stretched out her arms.

"God, kid!" stammered Dry Valley, "do you mean—?"

But the seasons are versatile; and it may have been Springtime, after all, instead of Indian Summer, that struck Dry Valley Johnson.

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21: White Feathers

F. A. M. Webster

(as by Michael Annesley)

1886-1949

Sunday Mail (Brisbane) 6 Aug 1939

SIDNEY CHARTRES come for the duck shooting, and the inhabitants of that tiny village on the coast, after a brief preliminary inspection, took him to their hearts.

This was unusual, for by nature they were suspicious of strangers, but Chartres had a way with him. He told them pithy stories sufficiently simple for them to appreciate, and could lower more beer at the local inn, without its having any appreciable effect, than could the local champion, Nobby Clark, who was visibly, and also disastrously, moved when he tried to outdo the newcomer.

The Vicar liked Chartres. although he was never quite sure whether or not his calling permitted him to see the point of some of his stories. The Vicar's two daughters decided that Chartres, with his lean, tanned face and keen blue eyes, was a wicked man, and alternately they were drawn by curiosity and repelled by nervous apprehension. The Squire approved of the stranger, and his daughter, Marion Stanton, who often met Chartres on her walks abroad, discovered that she was thinking about him rather wore than was usual with a casual acquaintance.

In fact, everyone liked Chartres, except Horace Blent, who lived alone in a big house near the sea-wall, and who was reported to be a miser. It was Marion who saw most of Sidney Chartres. They took long walks together, and occasionally she would go to the inn to fetch him, for he had instructed the landlord in the delicate art of mixing cocktails. The Vicar, who disliked running anybody down, pursed his lips, his daughters professed to be scandalised, though secretly consumed with envy. But the Squire only chuckled and declared that, if Marion did not know how to take care of herself, it was high lime she learnt.

When spring came round Chartres decided to stay on at the village, professing to be interested in ornithology. Marion was glad, and wondered if his decision to remain was really due to the fact that he had fallen in love with her.

Spring passed into summer, but Chartres had not spoken. Marion was puzzled, and the Victor's daughters preened themselves and declared that not only did it serve Marion right for throwing herself at him, but they had known all alone that Chartres was a ne'er-do-well.

That year, seeding-time brought a strange phenomenon. The long belt of waste land that lay between the village and the sea-wall, and on the edge of which stood Horace Blent's house, was covered with an enormous crop of weeds. Thistles and dandelions were by far the most numerous, and all day the fluffy white seed-carriers were blown hither and thither in the wind. None of the inhabitants could remember such a profusion.

One evening Marion and Chartres were strolling along the sea-wall in the fading light. It was calm, and in distance the sea looked like greenish-grey metal. A few sea birds circled curiously over the mud flats, and in the stillness the sound of a train a mile or two inland sounded clear and distinct. Horace Blent's house was lit up by the pale yellow glow of the setting sun, and, as they walked towards it. Marion and Chartres saw the man himself come out into his untidy garden. He had a large metal container strapped to his back and connected to a length of tubing, the end of which he held in his hand. It was the kind of apparatus with which orchards are sprayed with insecticides, and some sinister idea seemed to be in the old man's mind, for he climbed to the narrow wall which separated his garden from the waste land, and began to spray the ground.

As Marion and Chartres drew near they could hear the hissing as a line brown spray was forced through the nozzle of the hose. Horace Blent slowly traversed the strip of land by the garden wall, his movements releasing hundreds of fluffy thistledown and dandelion heads. He saw Marion. and nodded to her, studiously ignoring Chartres.

'If I don't do something to kill these weeds, my garden will be smothered in them,' he called out. 'But don't come near, Miss Stanton. There's arsenic in this weed killer, and it may not agree with you.'

Marion and Chartres walked on.

'Rum old cove.' commented Chartres. 'Anyone would think his garden was. the joy of his life, and it's obvious that no one has done a hands turn in it for years.'

'Elderly people get funny ideas,' said Marion, and glanced back over her shoulder. 'Good heavens! Look!'

Blent had finished his spraying, and returned to his house, but from the place where he had been walking huge clouds of thistledown were floating. They were rising almost vertically into the evening sky.

'How extraordinary,' said Chartres. 'Looks like a snow storm going up instead of coming down.'

They watched the peculiar sight for some time. The sun sank lower, the seagulls mewed plaintively far out over the saltings, and from sea-ward came the faint insistent roar of an aeroplane.

There it is.' cried Marion, pointing to a tiny silver speck in the sky. picked out by the rays of the dying sun. The machine was high up. a lone thing in all that vast canopy of blue-green sky.

Suddenly, the note of the engine changed, there was a succession of reports, followed by puffs of whitish smoke at the tail of the machine, then the engine picked up again, popped several times, spluttered and stopped. The aeroplane began to lose height. Twice the engine restarted, as if the pilot was trying to coax it into life again, but each time it cut out. With the sunlight glinting on its wings the monoplane, which had R.A.F. markings, turned this way and that, like a thing in torment.

'He's in trouble,' cried Marion. He's coming down.'

'So it seems,' said Chartres. He lit a cigarette while staring upwards, and Marion noticed that the hand which held the match shook a little.

'What can we do?' she appealed to him.

'Nothing until he lands.'

The monoplane seemed suddenly to get out of control, for it banked steeply to the left, and then side slipped with sickening speed towards the earth. It hit the ground, with a heart-shaking crash a quarter of a mile away.

Immediately Marion and Chartres ran towards it, and at their heels came Horace Blent, shouting in coherently. and red in the face. In the distance some labourers could be seen running across the fields, and several people in the village also had seen the crash. The mass of twisted wreckage had scored the ground for many yards round, but there was no sign of the pilot; Marion, white faced, began to peer among the torn fabric, but Chartres pushed her away.

'Get back, get back!' he commanded.

'But there must be someone in there, cried Marion, and made towards the wreckage again.

'Go away,' Chartres ordered, and in such a curious manner that Marion shot him an anxious glance. But she did not obey, and Chartres, throwing down his cigarette, picked her up and carried her off bodily. '

Behind him there was a sudden crackle, followed by a fierce roar. A sheet of flame shot up. and great waves of black, oily smoke billowed up into the evening air.

'Oh, the man, the man in it,' sobbed Marion, covering her face with her hands. Chartres stood with his arm about her, and said nothing. Nor was there anything to be done, for no one could now get near that roaring holocaust.

By this time the labourers were only a short distance away, and Blent, panting and yet more red in the face, arrived. In a few minutes a crowd had gathered round the blazing machine, but. since there was nothing to be done. Chartres took Marion home.

Late that night an R.A.F. tender arrived. The debris was cleared away on the following day and all that remained of the disaster was the blackened grass.

An ugly rumour began to spread round the village It was said that Sidney Chartres had made no attempt to extricate the pilot from the wrecked machine, that he had also lost his head and prevented Marion Stanton from being of any assistance, and that he had become so panicky that he dropped his cigarette into a stream of petrol. All kinds of stories were circulated, for the accident was an event in that quiet spot, and some even went so far as to say that Chartres had fired the machine deliberately.

The village became divided into camps. Nobby Clark, who sided with Chartres, became involved in a heated argument at the inn, and was nearly arrested. The Vicar tried to lake a charitable view of the matter, but because of his daughters' active dislike of Chartres, found it difficult. He contented himself with a brief nod when they met.

The squire, having heard the first-hand evidence of Marion, came to the conclusion that Charters had indeed behaved like a coward. Horace Blent retired to his house, and refused to discuss the matter, which was promptly interpreted as additional evidence against Chartres. He himself said nothing, but he wondered what Marion thought, for he had not seen her since the day of the disaster.

Within a week he knew. A small box arrived by post, and in it were half a dozen white feathers. He smiled wryly at them, and automatically began to identify them. A hen's feather, probably White Sussex, picked up at the home farm, another from a gull gathered on the sea-wall where he had walked so often with Marion. Then he shrugged his shoulders and went to the inn to drink beer.

The next day Marion cut him in the village street. Chartres had grown accustomed to the silence of former friends when he entered the inn, the non-committal attitude of the landlord, and the reluctance of several of the rustics lo meet him, but that action of Marion's hurt. Yet he stayed on in the village when many a man would have left.

Curiously enough, it was Horace Blent who went away. No one quite understood what happened, but it seemed that a motor-cruiser came close to the sea-wall one night and landed some men who went to Blent 's house. There they were met unexpectedly by Chartres, his friend Nobby Clark, and the village constable. There was trouble for certain, for next day Chartres had skinned knuckles and a bruised cheek. Nobby had lost two teeth, and the constable had sprained his wrist. But not even the influence of lashings of free

beer would loosen Nobby's tongue, and all the village knew was that the men were removed in a police car, and charged with making an unauthorised landing. They were a sorry and badly knocked about bunch. Nobby having done himself proud with an empty bottle. Left to draw their own conclusions the village, which included the vicar, and the squire, though they pretended to be above such vulgar curiosity, decided that Horace Blent had been engaged in a smuggling enterprise.

When he shut up his house and vanished they were certain that he, too, had been arrested. Sidney Chartres stayed on. an enigma which even the brightest wits in the village failed to understand. He continued his lonely walks along the sea-wall, find thus it was inevitable that he should meet Marion.

It was just such an evening as that on which they had seen the monoplane crash. Marion tried to avoid Chartres, but he refused to step off the narrow path. She looked at him coldly, and was surprised to see that he was smiling. That angered her.

'Let me pass,' she demanded.

'When you have answered a question.' replied Chartres. 'Marion, will you marry me?'

'After your despicable behaviour?' she queried, when she had recovered from her astonishment.

'When I have explained it?'

'Can you explain how you allowed the pilot of that machine to be burnt without making any effort to see if he was alive?'

Chartres nodded. 'I think so,' he said 'You see, I knew old Blent was going to kill his weeds that evening I knew the machine was coming in from the sea, and I hoped it would crash.'

Marion stared at him speechlessly.

'If it did, I intended to set it on fire,' continued this amazing man.

'Then it was true what they said. You did drop that cigarette on purpose.'

'I did.'

'And callously burnt the pilot to death,' said Marion evenly.

'There was no pilot. It was a wireless controlled machine.'

Marion gazed at him, but it was plain that he was telling the truth. He was not the sort of man to lie to the girl he loved.

'But what had Horace Blent to do with it?'

'Blent was perfecting a new type of gas which would stifle aero engines. When sprayed on the ground, it generates heat, and rises to a great altitude. It was arranged that evening to test it. Everything went off beautifully, except that the machine did not catch fire of itself when it crashed.

'If it became generally known that a wireless controlled machine had crashed here foreign agents who were searching for Blent would have become suspicious. So I fired it to destroy evidence, and the villagers got precious little out of the R.A.F. people.

'As it happened, foreign agents did get wind of the affair. Hence the arrival of the motor-cruiser, and the dust-up at Blent's House. Now Blent has finished his experimenting and has departed.

'That's the true story. Marion. I was sent here to watch over our Horace. If you don't believe me come up to the Foreign Office and see my chief.'

'There's no need for that,' said Marion softly, and for the first time failed to meet his gaze.

'Still, I think you'd better,' chuckled Chartres, 'I'm going to resign, and I want him to see the reason, I'm certain he'll approve, but one can't do this sort of work and be a loving husband.'

22: Unlighted Lamps

Sherwood Anderson

1876-1941

In: *The Triumph of the Egg*, 1921

MARY COCHRAN went out of the rooms where she lived with her father, Doctor Lester Cochran, at seven o'clock on a Sunday evening. It was June of the year nineteen hundred and eight and Mary was eighteen years old. She walked along Tremont to Main Street and across the railroad tracks to Upper Main, lined with small shops and shoddy houses, a rather quiet cheerless place on Sundays when there were few people about. She had told her father she was going to church but did not intend doing anything of the kind. She did not know what she wanted to do. "I'll get off by myself and think," she told herself as she walked slowly along. The night she thought promised to be too fine to be spent sitting in a stuffy church and hearing a man talk of things that had apparently nothing to do with her own problem. Her own affairs were approaching a crisis and it was time for her to begin thinking seriously of her future.

The thoughtful serious state of mind in which Mary found herself had been induced in her by a conversation had with her father on the evening before. Without any preliminary talk and quite suddenly and abruptly he had told her that he was a victim of heart disease and might die at any moment. He had made the announcement as they stood together in the Doctor's office, back of which were the rooms in which the father and daughter lived.

It was growing dark outside when she came into the office and found him sitting alone. The office and living rooms were on the second floor of an old frame building in the town of Huntersburg, Illinois, and as the Doctor talked he stood beside his daughter near one of the windows that looked down into Tremont Street. The hushed murmur of the town's Saturday night life went on in Main Street just around a corner, and the evening train, bound to Chicago fifty miles to the east, had just passed. The hotel bus came rattling out of Lincoln Street and went through Tremont toward the hotel on Lower Main. A cloud of dust kicked up by the horses' hoofs floated on the quiet air. A straggling group of people followed the bus and the row of hitching posts on Tremont Street was already lined with buggies in which farmers and their wives had driven into town for the evening of shopping and gossip.

After the station bus had passed three or four more buggies were driven into the street. From one of them a young man helped his sweetheart to alight. He took hold of her arm with a certain air of tenderness, and a hunger to be touched thus tenderly by a man's hand, that had come to Mary many times

before, returned at almost the same moment her father made the announcement of his approaching death.

As the Doctor began to speak Barney Smithfield, who owned a livery barn that opened into Tremont Street directly opposite the building in which the Cochrans lived, came back to his place of business from his evening meal. He stopped to tell a story to a group of men gathered before the barn door and a shout of laughter arose. One of the loungers in the street, a strongly built young man in a checkered suit, stepped away from the others and stood before the liveryman. Having seen Mary he was trying to attract her attention. He also began to tell a story and as he talked he gesticulated, waved his arms and from time to time looked over his shoulder to see if the girl still stood by the window and if she were watching.

Doctor Cochran had told his daughter of his approaching death in a cold quiet voice. To the girl it had seemed that everything concerning her father must be cold and quiet. "I have a disease of the heart," he said flatly, "have long suspected there was something of the sort the matter with me and on Thursday when I went into Chicago I had myself examined. The truth is I may die at any moment. I would not tell you but for one reason-I will leave little money and you must be making plans for the future."

The Doctor stepped nearer the window where his daughter stood with her hand on the frame. The announcement had made her a little pale and her hand trembled. In spite of his apparent coldness he was touched and wanted to reassure her. "There now," he said hesitatingly, "it'll likely be all right after all. Don't worry. I haven't been a doctor for thirty years without knowing there's a great deal of nonsense about these pronouncements on the part of experts. In a matter like this, that is to say when a man has a disease of the heart, he may putter about for years." He laughed uncomfortably. "I've even heard it said that the best way to insure a long life is to contract a disease of the heart."

With these words the Doctor had turned and walked out of his office, going down a wooden stairway to the street. He had wanted to put his arm about his daughter's shoulder as he talked to her, but never having shown any feeling in his relations with her could not sufficiently release some tight thing in himself.

Mary had stood for a long time looking down into the street. The young man in the checkered suit, whose name was Duke Yetter, had finished telling his tale and a shout of laughter arose. She turned to look toward the door through which her father had passed and dread took possession of her. In all her life there had never been anything warm and close. She shivered although the night was warm and with a quick girlish gesture passed her hand over her eyes.

The gesture was but an expression of a desire to brush away the cloud of fear that had settled down upon her but it was misinterpreted by Duke Yetter who now stood a little apart from the other men before the livery barn. When he saw Mary's hand go up he smiled and turning quickly to be sure he was unobserved began jerking his head and making motions with his hand as a sign that he wished her to come down into the street where he would have an opportunity to join her.

ON THE SUNDAY evening Mary, having walked through Upper Main, turned into Wilmott, a street of workmens' houses. During that year the first sign of the march of factories westward from Chicago into the prairie towns had come to Huntersburg. A Chicago manufacturer of furniture had built a plant in the sleepy little farming town, hoping thus to escape the labor organizations that had begun to give him trouble in the city. At the upper end of town, in Wilmott, Swift, Harrison and Chestnut Streets and in cheap, badly-constructed frame houses, most of the factory workers lived. On the warm summer evening they were gathered on the porches at the front of the houses and a mob of children played in the dusty streets. Red-faced men in white shirts and without collars and coats slept in chairs or lay sprawled on strips of grass or on the hard earth before the doors of the houses. The laborers' wives had gathered in groups and stood gossiping by the fences that separated the yards. Occasionally the voice of one of the women arose sharp and distinct above the steady flow of voices that ran like a murmuring river through the hot little streets.

In the roadway two children had got into a fight. A thick-shouldered red-haired boy struck another boy who had a pale sharp-featured face, a blow on the shoulder. Other children came running. The mother of the red-haired boy brought the promised fight to an end. "Stop it Johnny, I tell you to stop it. I'll break your neck if you don't," the woman screamed.

The pale boy turned and walked away from his antagonist. As he went slinking along the sidewalk past Mary Cochran his sharp little eyes, burning with hatred, looked up at her.

Mary went quickly along. The strange new part of her native town with the hubbub of life always stirring and asserting itself had a strong fascination for her. There was something dark and resentful in her own nature that made her feel at home in the crowded place where life carried itself off darkly, with a blow and an oath. The habitual silence of her father and the mystery concerning the unhappy married life of her father and mother, that had affected the attitude toward her of the people of the town, had made her own life a lonely one and had encouraged in her a rather dogged determination to

in some way think her own way through the things of life she could not understand.

And back of Mary's thinking there was an intense curiosity and a courageous determination toward adventure. She was like a little animal of the forest that has been robbed of its mother by the gun of a sportsman and has been driven by hunger to go forth and seek food. Twenty times during the year she had walked alone at evening in the new and fast growing factory district of her town. She was eighteen and had begun to look like a woman, and she felt that other girls of the town of her own age would not have dared to walk in such a place alone. The feeling made her somewhat proud and as she went along she looked boldly about.

Among the workers in Wilmott Street, men and women who had been brought to town by the furniture manufacturer, were many who spoke in foreign tongues. Mary walked among them and liked the sound of the strange voices. To be in the street made her feel that she had gone out of her town and on a voyage into a strange land. In Lower Main Street or in the residence streets in the eastern part of town where lived the young men and women she had always known and where lived also the merchants, the clerks, the lawyers and the more well-to-do American workmen of Huntersburg, she felt always a secret antagonism to herself. The antagonism was not due to anything in her own character. She was sure of that. She had kept so much to herself that she was in fact but little known. "It is because I am the daughter of my mother," she told herself and did not walk often in the part of town where other girls of her class lived.

Mary had been so often in Wilmott Street that many of the people had begun to feel acquainted with her. "She is the daughter of some farmer and has got into the habit of walking into town," they said. A red- haired, broad-hipped woman who came out at the front door of one of the houses nodded to her. On a narrow strip of grass beside another house sat a young man with his back against a tree. He was smoking a pipe, but when he looked up and saw her he took the pipe from his mouth. She decided he must be an Italian, his hair and eyes were so black. "Ne bella! si fai un onore a passare di qua," he called waving his hand and smiling.

Mary went to the end of Wilmott Street and came out upon a country road. It seemed to her that a long time must have passed since she left her father's presence although the walk had in fact occupied but a few minutes. By the side of the road and on top of a small hill there was a ruined barn, and before the barn a great hole filled with the charred timbers of what had once been a farmhouse. A pile of stones lay beside the hole and these were covered

with creeping vines. Between the site of the house and the barn there was an old orchard in which grew a mass of tangled weeds.

Pushing her way in among the weeds, many of which were covered with blossoms, Mary found herself a seat on a rock that had been rolled against the trunk of an old apple tree. The weeds half concealed her and from the road only her head was visible. Buried away thus in the weeds she looked like a quail that runs in the tall grass and that on hearing some unusual sound, stops, throws up its head and looks sharply about.

The doctor's daughter had been to the decayed old orchard many times before. At the foot of the hill on which it stood the streets of the town began, and as she sat on the rock she could hear faint shouts and cries coming out of Wilmott Street. A hedge separated the orchard from the fields on the hillside. Mary intended to sit by the tree until darkness came creeping over the land and to try to think out some plan regarding her future. The notion that her father was soon to die seemed both true and untrue, but her mind was unable to take hold of the thought of him as physically dead. For the moment death in relation to her father did not take the form of a cold inanimate body that was to be buried in the ground, instead it seemed to her that her father was not to die but to go away somewhere on a journey. Long ago her mother had done that. There was a strange hesitating sense of relief in the thought. "Well," she told herself, "when the time comes I also shall be setting out, I shall get out of here and into the world." On several occasions Mary had gone to spend a day with her father in Chicago and she was fascinated by the thought that soon she might be going there to live. Before her mind's eye floated a vision of long streets filled with thousands of people all strangers to herself. To go into such streets and to live her life among strangers would be like coming out of a waterless desert and into a cool forest carpeted with tender young grass.

In Huntersburg she had always lived under a cloud and now she was becoming a woman and the close stuffy atmosphere she had always breathed was becoming constantly more and more oppressive. It was true no direct question had ever been raised touching her own standing in the community life, but she felt that a kind of prejudice against her existed. While she was still a baby there had been a scandal involving her father and mother. The town of Huntersburg had rocked with it and when she was a child people had sometimes looked at her with mocking sympathetic eyes. "Poor child! It's too bad," they said. Once, on a cloudy summer evening when her father had driven off to the country and she sat alone in the darkness by his office window, she heard a man and woman in the street mention her name. The couple stumbled along in the darkness on the sidewalk below the office window. "That daughter of Doc Cochran's is a nice girl," said the man. The woman laughed. "She's

growing up and attracting men's attention now. Better keep your eyes in your head. She'll turn out bad. Like mother, like daughter," the woman replied.

For ten or fifteen minutes Mary sat on the stone beneath the tree in the orchard and thought of the attitude of the town toward herself and her father. "It should have drawn us together," she told herself, and wondered if the approach of death would do what the cloud that had for years hung over them had not done. It did not at the moment seem to her cruel that the figure of death was soon to visit her father. In a way Death had become for her and for the time a lovely and gracious figure intent upon good. The hand of death was to open the door out of her father's house and into life. With the cruelty of youth she thought first of the adventurous possibilities of the new life.

Mary sat very still. In the long weeds the insects that had been disturbed in their evening song began to sing again. A robin flew into the tree beneath which she sat and struck a clear sharp note of alarm. The voices of people in the town's new factory district came softly up the hillside. They were like bells of distant cathedrals calling people to worship. Something within the girl's breast seemed to break and putting her head into her hands she rocked slowly back and forth. Tears came accompanied by a warm tender impulse toward the living men and women of Huntersburg.

And then from the road came a call. "Hello there kid," shouted a voice, and Mary sprang quickly to her feet. Her mellow mood passed like a puff of wind and in its place hot anger came.

In the road stood Duke Yetter who from his loafing place before the livery barn had seen her set out for the Sunday evening walk and had followed. When she went through Upper Main Street and into the new factory district he was sure of his conquest. "She doesn't want to be seen walking with me," he had told himself, "that's all right. She knows well enough I'll follow but doesn't want me to put in an appearance until she is well out of sight of her friends. She's a little stuck up and needs to be brought down a peg, but what do I care— She's gone out of her way to give me this chance and maybe she's only afraid of her dad."

Duke climbed the little incline out of the road and came into the orchard, but when he reached the pile of stones covered by vines he stumbled and fell. He arose and laughed. Mary had not waited for him to reach her but had started toward him, and when his laugh broke the silence that lay over the orchard she sprang forward and with her open hand struck him a sharp blow on the cheek. Then she turned and as he stood with his feet tangled in the vines ran out to the road. "If you follow or speak to me I'll get someone to kill you," she shouted.

Mary walked along the road and down the hill toward Wilmott Street. Broken bits of the story concerning her mother that had for years circulated in town had reached her ears. Her mother, it was said, had disappeared on a summer night long ago and a young town rough, who had been in the habit of loitering before Barney Smithfield's Livery Barn, had gone away with her. Now another young rough was trying to make up to her. The thought made her furious.

Her mind groped about striving to lay hold of some weapon with which she could strike a more telling blow at Duke Yetter. In desperation it lit upon the figure of her father already broken in health and now about to die. "My father just wants the chance to kill some such fellow as you," she shouted, turning to face the young man, who having got clear of the mass of vines in the orchard, had followed her into the road. "My father just wants to kill someone because of the lies that have been told in this town about mother."

Having given way to the impulse to threaten Duke Yetter Mary was instantly ashamed of her outburst and walked rapidly along, the tears running from her eyes. With hanging head Duke walked at her heels. "I didn't mean no harm, Miss Cochran," he pleaded. "I didn't mean no harm. Don't tell your father. I was only funning with you. I tell you I didn't mean no harm."

THE LIGHT of the summer evening had begun to fall and the faces of the people made soft little ovals of light as they stood grouped under the dark porches or by the fences in Wilmott Street. The voices of the children had become subdued and they also stood in groups. They became silent as Mary passed and stood with upturned faces and staring eyes. "The lady doesn't live very far. She must be almost a neighbor," she heard a woman's voice saying in English. When she turned her head she saw only a crowd of dark-skinned men standing before a house. From within the house came the sound of a woman's voice singing a child to sleep.

The young Italian, who had called to her earlier in the evening and who was now apparently setting out of his own Sunday evening's adventures, came along the sidewalk and walked quickly away into the darkness. He had dressed himself in his Sunday clothes and had put on a black derby hat and a stiff white collar, set off by a red necktie. The shining whiteness of the collar made his brown skin look almost black. He smiled boyishly and raised his hat awkwardly but did not speak.

Mary kept looking back along the street to be sure Duke Yetter had not followed but in the dim light could see nothing of him. Her angry excited mood went away.

She did not want to go home and decided it was too late to go to church. From Upper Main Street there was a short street that ran eastward and fell rather sharply down a hillside to a creek and a bridge that marked the end of the town's growth in that direction. She went down along the street to the bridge and stood in the failing light watching two boys who were fishing in the creek.

A broad-shouldered man dressed in rough clothes came down along the street and stopping on the bridge spoke to her. It was the first time she had ever heard a citizen of her home town speak with feeling of her father. "You are Doctor Cochran's daughter—" he asked hesitatingly. "I guess you don't know who I am but your father does." He pointed toward the two boys who sat with fishpoles in their hands on the weed-grown bank of the creek. "Those are my boys and I have four other children," he explained. "There is another boy and I have three girls. One of my daughters has a job in a store. She is as old as yourself." The man explained his relations with Doctor Cochran. He had been a farm laborer, he said, and had but recently moved to town to work in the furniture factory. During the previous winter he had been ill for a long time and had no money. While he lay in bed one of his boys fell out of a barn loft and there was a terrible cut in his head.

"Your father came every day to see us and he sewed up my Tom's head." The laborer turned away from Mary and stood with his cap in his hand looking toward the boys. "I was down and out and your father not only took care of me and the boys but he gave my old woman money to buy the things we had to have from the stores in town here, groceries and medicines." The man spoke in such low tones that Mary had to lean forward to hear his words. Her face almost touched the laborer's shoulder. "Your father is a good man and I don't think he is very happy," he went on. "The boy and I got well and I got work here in town but he wouldn't take any money from me. 'You know how to live with your children and with your wife. You know how to make them happy. Keep your money and spend it on them,' that's what he said to me."

The laborer went on across the bridge and along the creek bank toward the spot where his two sons sat fishing and Mary leaned on the railing of the bridge and looked at the slow moving water. It was almost black in the shadows under the bridge and she thought that it was thus her father's life had been lived. "It has been like a stream running always in shadows and never coming out into the sunlight," she thought, and fear that her own life would run on in darkness gripped her. A great new love for her father swept over her and in fancy she felt his arms about her. As a child she had continually dreamed of caresses received at her father's hands and now the dream came back. For a long time she stood looking at the stream and she resolved that the

night should not pass without an effort on her part to make the old dream come true. When she again looked up the laborer had built a little fire of sticks at the edge of the stream. "We catch bullheads here," he called. "The light of the fire draws them close to the shore. If you want to come and try your hand at fishing the boys will lend you one of the poles."

"O, I thank you, I won't do it tonight," Mary said, and then fearing she might suddenly begin weeping and that if the man spoke to her again she would find herself unable to answer, she hurried away. "Good bye!" shouted the man and the two boys. The words came quite spontaneously out of the three throats and created a sharp trumpet-like effect that rang like a glad cry across the heaviness of her mood.

WHEN HIS DAUGHTER Mary went out for her evening walk Doctor Cochran sat for an hour alone in his office. It began to grow dark and the men who all afternoon had been sitting on chairs and boxes before the livery barn across the street went home for the evening meal. The noise of voices grew faint and sometimes for five or ten minutes there was silence. Then from some distant street came a child's cry. Presently church bells began to ring.

The Doctor was not a very neat man and sometimes for several days he forgot to shave. With a long lean hand he stroked his half grown beard. His illness had struck deeper than he had admitted even to himself and his mind had an inclination to float out of his body. Often when he sat thus his hands lay in his lap and he looked at them with a child's absorption. It seemed to him they must belong to someone else. He grew philosophic. "It's an odd thing about my body. Here I've lived in it all these years and how little use I have had of it. Now it's going to die and decay never having been used. I wonder why it did not get another tenant." He smiled sadly over this fancy but went on with it. "Well I've had thoughts enough concerning people and I've had the use of these lips and a tongue but I've let them lie idle. When my Ellen was here living with me I let her think me cold and unfeeling while something within me was straining and straining trying to tear itself loose."

He remembered how often, as a young man, he had sat in the evening in silence beside his wife in this same office and how his hands had ached to reach across the narrow space that separated them and touch her hands, her face, her hair.

Well, everyone in town had predicted his marriage would turn out badly! His wife had been an actress with a company that came to Huntersburg and got stranded there. At the same time the girl became ill and had no money to pay for her room at the hotel. The young doctor had attended to that and when the girl was convalescent took her to ride about the country in his buggy.

Her life had been a hard one and the notion of leading a quiet existence in the little town appealed to her.

And then after the marriage and after the child was born she had suddenly found herself unable to go on living with the silent cold man. There had been a story of her having run away with a young sport, the son of a saloon keeper who had disappeared from town at the same time, but the story was untrue. Lester Cochran had himself taken her to Chicago where she got work with a company going into the far western states. Then he had taken her to the door of her hotel, had put money into her hands and in silence and without even a farewell kiss had turned and walked away.

The Doctor sat in his office living over that moment and other intense moments when he had been deeply stirred and had been on the surface so cool and quiet. He wondered if the woman had known. How many times he had asked himself that question. After he left her that night at the hotel door she never wrote. "Perhaps she is dead," he thought for the thousandth time.

A thing happened that had been happening at odd moments for more than a year. In Doctor Cochran's mind the remembered figure of his wife became confused with the figure of his daughter. When at such moments he tried to separate the two figures, to make them stand out distinct from each other, he was unsuccessful. Turning his head slightly he imagined he saw a white girlish figure coming through a door out of the rooms in which he and his daughter lived. The door was painted white and swung slowly in a light breeze that came in at an open window. The wind ran softly and quietly through the room and played over some papers lying on a desk in a corner. There was a soft swishing sound as of a woman's skirts. The doctor arose and stood trembling. "Which is it— Is it you Mary or is it Ellen—" he asked huskily.

On the stairway leading up from the street there was the sound of heavy feet and the outer door opened. The doctor's weak heart fluttered and he dropped heavily back into his chair.

A man came into the room. He was a farmer, one of the doctor's patients, and coming to the centre of the room he struck a match, held it above his head and shouted. "Hello!" he called. When the doctor arose from his chair and answered he was so startled that the match fell from his hand and lay burning faintly at his feet.

The young farmer had sturdy legs that were like two pillars of stone supporting a heavy building, and the little flame of the match that burned and fluttered in the light breeze on the floor between his feet threw dancing shadows along the walls of the room. The doctor's confused mind refused to clear itself of his fancies that now began to feed upon this new situation.

He forgot the presence of the farmer and his mind raced back over his life as a married man. The flickering light on the wall recalled another dancing light. One afternoon in the summer during the first year after his marriage his wife Ellen had driven with him into the country. They were then furnishing their rooms and at a farmer's house Ellen had seen an old mirror, no longer in use, standing against a wall in a shed. Because of something quaint in the design the mirror had taken her fancy and the farmer's wife had given it to her. On the drive home the young wife had told her husband of her pregnancy and the doctor had been stirred as never before. He sat holding the mirror on his knees while his wife drove and when she announced the coming of the child she looked away across the fields.

How deeply etched, that scene in the sick man's mind! The sun was going down over young corn and oat fields beside the road. The prairie land was black and occasionally the road ran through short lanes of trees that also looked black in the waning light.

The mirror on his knees caught the rays of the departing sun and sent a great ball of golden light dancing across the fields and among the branches of trees. Now as he stood in the presence of the farmer and as the little light from the burning match on the floor recalled that other evening of dancing lights, he thought he understood the failure of his marriage and of his life. On that evening long ago when Ellen had told him of the coming of the great adventure of their marriage he had remained silent because he had thought no words he could utter would express what he felt. There had been a defense for himself built up. "I told myself she should have understood without words and I've all my life been telling myself the same thing about Mary. I've been a fool and a coward. I've always been silent because I've been afraid of expressing myself-like a blundering fool. I've been a proud man and a coward.

"Tonight I'll do it. If it kills me I'll make myself talk to the girl," he said aloud, his mind coming back to the figure of his daughter.

"Hey! What's that—" asked the farmer who stood with his hat in his hand waiting to tell of his mission.

The doctor got his horse from Barney Smithfield's livery and drove off to the country to attend the farmer's wife who was about to give birth to her first child. She was a slender narrow-hipped woman and the child was large, but the doctor was feverishly strong. He worked desperately and the woman, who was frightened, groaned and struggled. Her husband kept coming in and going out of the room and two neighbor women appeared and stood silently about waiting to be of service. It was past ten o'clock when everything was done and the doctor was ready to depart for town.

The farmer hitched his horse and brought it to the door and the doctor drove off feeling strangely weak and at the same time strong. How simple now seemed the thing he had yet to do. Perhaps when he got home his daughter would have gone to bed but he would ask her to get up and come into the office. Then he would tell the whole story of his marriage and its failure sparing himself no humiliation. "There was something very dear and beautiful in my Ellen and I must make Mary understand that. It will help her to be a beautiful woman," he thought, full of confidence in the strength of his resolution.

He got to the door of the livery barn at eleven o'clock and Barney Smithfield with young Duke Yetter and two other men sat talking there. The liveryman took his horse away into the darkness of the barn and the doctor stood for a moment leaning against the wall of the building. The town's night watchman stood with the group by the barn door and a quarrel broke out between him and Duke Yetter, but the doctor did not hear the hot words that flew back and forth or Duke's loud laughter at the night watchman's anger. A queer hesitating mood had taken possession of him.

There was something he passionately desired to do but could not remember. Did it have to do with his wife Ellen or Mary his daughter— The figures of the two women were again confused in his mind and to add to the confusion there was a third figure, that of the woman he had just assisted through child birth. Everything was confusion. He started across the street toward the entrance of the stairway leading to his office and then stopped in the road and stared about. Barney Smithfield having returned from putting his horse in the stall shut the door of the barn and a hanging lantern over the door swung back and forth. It threw grotesque dancing shadows down over the faces and forms of the men standing and quarreling beside the wall of the barn.

MARY SAT by a window in the doctor's office awaiting his return. So absorbed was she in her own thoughts that she was unconscious of the voice of Duke Yetter talking with the men in the street.

When Duke had come into the street the hot anger of the early part of the evening had returned and she again saw him advancing toward her in the orchard with the look of arrogant male confidence in his eyes but presently she forgot him and thought only of her father. An incident of her childhood returned to haunt her. One afternoon in the month of May when she was fifteen her father had asked her to accompany him on an evening drive into the country. The doctor went to visit a sick woman at a farmhouse five miles from town and as there had been a great deal of rain the roads were heavy. It was dark when they reached the farmer's house and they went into the

kitchen and ate cold food off a kitchen table. For some reason her father had, on that evening, appeared boyish and almost gay. On the road he had talked a little. Even at that early age Mary had grown tall and her figure was becoming womanly. After the cold supper in the farm kitchen he walked with her around the house and she sat on a narrow porch. For a moment her father stood before her. He put his hands into his trouser pockets and throwing back his head laughed almost heartily. "It seems strange to think you will soon be a woman," he said. "When you do become a woman what do you suppose is going to happen, eh— What kind of a life will you lead— What will happen to you—"

The doctor sat on the porch beside the child and for a moment she had thought he was about to put his arm around her. Then he jumped up and went into the house leaving her to sit alone in the darkness.

As she remembered the incident Mary remembered also that on that evening of her childhood she had met her father's advances in silence. It seemed to her that she, not her father, was to blame for the life they had led together. The farm laborer she had met on the bridge had not felt her father's coldness. That was because he had himself been warm and generous in his attitude toward the man who had cared for him in his hour of sickness and misfortune. Her father had said that the laborer knew how to be a father and Mary remembered with what warmth the two boys fishing by the creek had called to her as she went away into the darkness. "Their father has known how to be a father because his children have known how to give themselves," she thought guiltily. She also would give herself. Before the night had passed she would do that. On that evening long ago and as she rode home beside her father he had made another unsuccessful effort to break through the wall that separated them. The heavy rains had swollen the streams they had to cross and when they had almost reached town he had stopped the horse on a wooden bridge. The horse danced nervously about and her father held the reins firmly and occasionally spoke to him. Beneath the bridge the swollen stream made a great roaring sound and beside the road in a long flat field there was a lake of flood water. At that moment the moon had come out from behind clouds and the wind that blew across the water made little waves. The lake of flood water was covered with dancing lights. "I'm going to tell you about your mother and myself," her father said huskily, but at that moment the timbers of the bridge began to crack dangerously and the horse plunged forward. When her father had regained control of the frightened beast they were in the streets of the town and his diffident silent nature had reasserted itself.

Mary sat in the darkness by the office window and saw her father drive into the street. When his horse had been put away he did not, as was his custom, come at once up the stairway to the office but lingered in the darkness before the barn door. Once he started to cross the street and then returned into the darkness.

Among the men who for two hours had been sitting and talking quietly a quarrel broke out. Jack Fisher the town nightwatchman had been telling the others the story of a battle in which he had fought during the Civil War and Duke Yetter had begun bantering him. The nightwatchman grew angry. Grasping his nightstick he limped up and down. The loud voice of Duke Yetter cut across the shrill angry voice of the victim of his wit. "You ought to a flanked the fellow, I tell you Jack. Yes sir 'ee, you ought to a flanked that reb and then when you got him flanked you ought to a knocked the stuffings out of the cuss. That's what I would a done," Duke shouted, laughing boisterously. "You would a raised hell, you would," the night watchman answered, filled with ineffectual wrath.

The old soldier went off along the street followed by the laughter of Duke and his companions and Barney Smithfield, having put the doctor's horse away, came out and closed the barn door. A lantern hanging above the door swung back and forth. Doctor Cochran again started across the street and when he had reached the foot of the stairway turned and shouted to the men. "Good night," he called cheerfully. A strand of hair was blown by the light summer breeze across Mary's cheek and she jumped to her feet as though she had been touched by a hand reached out to her from the darkness. A hundred times she had seen her father return from drives in the evening but never before had he said anything at all to the loiterers by the barn door. She became half convinced that not her father but some other man was now coming up the stairway.

The heavy dragging footsteps rang loudly on the wooden stairs and Mary heard her father set down the little square medicine case he always carried. The strange cheerful hearty mood of the man continued but his mind was in a confused riot. Mary imagined she could see his dark form in the doorway. "The woman has had a baby," said the hearty voice from the landing outside the door. "Who did that happen to— Was it Ellen or that other woman or my little Mary—"

A stream of words, a protest came from the man's lips. "Who's been having a baby— I want to know. Who's been having a baby— Life doesn't work out. Why are babies always being born—" he asked.

A laugh broke from the doctor's lips and his daughter leaned forward and gripped the arms of her chair. "A babe has been born," he said again. "It's

strange eh, that my hands should have helped a baby be born while all the time death stood at my elbow—"

Doctor Cochran stamped upon the floor of the landing. "My feet are cold and numb from waiting for life to come out of life," he said heavily. "The woman struggled and now I must struggle."

Silence followed the stamping of feet and the tired heavy declaration from the sick man's lips. From the street below came another loud shout of laughter from Duke Yetter.

And then Doctor Cochran fell backward down the narrow stairs to the street. There was no cry from him, just the clatter of his shoes upon the stairs and the terrible subdued sound of the body falling.

Mary did not move from her chair. With closed eyes she waited. Her heart pounded. A weakness complete and overmastering had possession of her and from feet to head ran little waves of feeling as though tiny creatures with soft hair-like feet were playing upon her body.

It was Duke Yetter who carried the dead man up the stairs and laid him on a bed in one of the rooms back of the office. One of the men who had been sitting with him before the door of the barn followed lifting his hands and dropping them nervously. Between his fingers he held a forgotten cigarette the light from which danced up and down in the darkness.

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23: Dreadful Night

Edwin L. Arnold

1857-1935

Belgravia May 1894

ONLY HE who has been haunted by a dream, a black horror of the night so real and terrible that many days of repugnance and effort are needed to purge the mind of its ugly details, can understand how a dream that was a fact— a horrible waking fantasy, grotesque and weird, a repetition in hard actuality of the ingenious terrors of sleep— clings to him who, with his faculties about him, and all his senses on the alert, has experienced it.

Some five years ago I was hunting in the south-west corner of Colorado, where the great mountain-spurs slope down in rocky ravines and gullies from the inland ranges towards the green plains along the course of the Rio San Juan. I had left my camp, late one afternoon, in charge of my trusty comrade, Will Hartland— a braver or more faithful little fellow, by the way, never put foot into a Mexican stirrup— and had wandered off alone into the scrub. Some five or six miles from the tents I stalked and wounded a prong-buck. He was so hard hit that I already smelt venison in the supper-pot, and followed the broad trail he had left with the utmost eagerness. He crossed a couple of stony ridges with their deep intervening hollows, and came at last into a wild desolate gorge, full of loose rocks and bushes, and ribboned with game tracks, but otherwise a most desolate and God-forsaken place, where no man had been, or might come for fifty years. Here I sighted my venison staggering down the glen, and dashed after him as fast as I could foot it, through the bushy tangled, and the dry, slippery, summer grass. In a few hundred yards the valley became a pass, and in a score more the steep, bare sides had drawn in until they were walls on either hand, and the way trailed along the bottom of what was little better than a knife-cleft in the hills. I was a good runner, and the hunter blood was hot within me ; my moccasins flashed through the yellow herbage ; my cheeks burnt with excitement; I dropped my gun to be the freer— the quarry was plunging along only ten yards ahead, and seemed a certain victim! In front was the outing of that narrow ravine— long reaches of the silver San Juan twining in countless threads through interminable leagues of green pasture and forest— I saw it all like a beautiful picture in the narrow black frame of the rocks; the evening wind was blowing softly up the cafion, and the sky was already gorgeous and livid with the streaks of sunset. Another ten yards and we were flying down the narrowest part of the defile, the beast-path under our feet hardly a foot wide, and almost hidden by long, wiry, dead grass. Suddenly the wounded buck, now within my grasp, staggered up on to its hind legs, in a mad fit of terror, just as, with a shout of triumph, I leapt up to it, and in half a

breathing space— in less time than it takes to write, but too late to stop my fatal rush— I and the stag were reeling on the very brink of a horrible funnel— a slippery yellow slope that had opened suddenly before us, leading down to a cavernous mouth gaping dark and dreadful in the heart of the earth. With a scream louder than my shout of triumph, staring at that horrible place, I threw up my hands and tried to stop ; it was too late ; I felt my feet slip from under me, and the horrible attraction of that cruel trap draw me away, and in a second, shouting and plunging, and clutching at the rotten herbage, I was flying downwards. I. caught a last glimpse of the San Juan twining pearly-pink under the sunset, through leagues of green velvet verdure, and the blaze of the sky overhead crimson and green and sapphire, and then I was spinning into darkness, horrible Egyptian darkness, through which I fell for a giddy, senseless moment or two, and then landed with a thud which ought to have killed me but did not, bruised and nearly senseless, on a soft quaggy mound of something that seemed to sink under me like a feather bed.

So impossible does it seem to give an adequate idea, in honest black and white, of what followed, that I am half inclined to leave the task unattempted. Yet I will try, for my experiences were so strange and terrible, that they deserve telling, however poorly. My first sensation on recovering consciousness was that of an overpowering smell, a sickly, deadly taint in the air that there was no growing accustomed to, and which, after a few gasps, seemed to have run its deadly venom into every corner of my frame, and, turning my blood yellow, to have transformed my constitution into keeping with its own accursed nature. It was a damp, musty, charnel-house smell, sickly and wicked, with the breath of the slaughter-pit in it— an aroma of blood and corruption infinitely discomposing. I sat up and glared, gasped about in the gloom, and then I carefully felt my limbs up and down. All were safe and sound, and I was unhurt, though as sore and bruised as though my body had stood a long day's pummelling. Then I groped about me in the pitchy dark, and soon touched the still warm body of the dead buck I had shot, and on which indeed I was sitting. Still feeling about, on the other side was something soft and furry too. I touched and patted it, and in a minute recognised with a little start that my fingers were deep in the curly mane of a bull bison. I pulled, and the curly mane came off in stinking tufts, for that bull bison had been lying there six months or more. All about me, wherever I felt, was cold, clammy fur and hair and hoofs and bare ribs and bones mixed in wild confusion, and as that wilderness of death unfolded itself in the darkness to me, and the fetid, close atmosphere mounted to my head, my strong nerves began to tremble like harp-strings in a storm, and my heart, that I had always thought terror-proof, to patter like a girl's.

Plunging and slipping I got upon my feet, and then became conscious of a dim circle of twilight far above, representing the hole through which my luckless self had fallen. It was fading in the twilight outside every moment, and was already so faintly luminous that my hand, held in front of me, looked ghostly and scarcely discernible. With a groan I began to explore slowly round the walls of my prison, and with a heart that grew sicker and sicker, and sensations that you can imagine better than I can describe, I traced the jagged but unbroken circle of a great chamber in the underground, a hundred feet long, perhaps, by fifty across, with cruel, remorseless walls that rose sloping gently inwards from an uneven horrible floor of hides and bones to that narrow neck far overhead, where the stars were already twinkling in a cloudless sky. By this time I was fairly frightened, and, alas that it should be written, the cold perspiration of dread began to stand in beads upon my forehead.

A fancy then seized me that some one might be within hearing above. I shouted again and again, and listening acutely each time as the echoes of my shout died away, I could have sworn something like the clash of ghostly teeth on teeth, something like the rattle of jaws in an ague fit, fell on the silence behind with beating heart, and an unfamiliar dread creeping over me, I crouched down in the gloom and listened. There was water dripping out in the dark, monotonous and dismal, and something like the breath from a husky throat away in the distance of the cavern came fitfully to my ears, though so uncertain that at first I thought it might have been only the rustle of the wind in the grass far overhead. It was cowardly to be scared at one's own fancies, and again mastering all my resolution, I shouted until the darkness rang, then listened eagerly with every faculty on stretch; and again from the dim came that tremulous gnashing of teeth, and that wavering, long-drawn breath with something infinitely woeful and pathetic in it. Then my hair fairly stood on end, and in a minute my eyes were fixed with breathless wonder in front of me, for out of the remotest gloom, where the corruption of the floor was already beginning to glow with pale blue wavering phosphorescent light as the night fell, rose glimmering itself with that ghastly lustre, something slim and tall and tremulous, that was full of life and yet was not quite of human form, and reared itself against the dark wall, all agleam, until its top, set with hollow eyes, was nine or ten feet from the ground, and oscillated and wavered, and seemed to feel about, as I had done, for an opening— and then on a sudden collapsed in a writhing heap upon the ground, and I distinctly heard the fall of its heavy body as it disappeared into the blue inferno that burnt below.

Again that spectral thing rose laboriously, this time many paces nearer to me, to twice the height of a man, and wavered and felt about, and then sank

down with a fall like the fall of heavy draperies, as though the energy that had lifted it suddenly expired. Nearer and nearer it came, travelling round the circuit of the walls in that strange way, and awed and bewildered I crept out into the open to let that dreadful thing go by. And presently, to my infinite relief, it travelled away, still wavering and writhing, in what looked like discontent, and I breathed again.

As that luminous shadow faded into the remote, I shouted once more, for the pleasure, it must have been, of hearing my own voice— again there was that gnashing of teeth— and the instant afterwards such a hideous chorus of yells from the other side of the cavern, such a commingled howl of lost spirits, such an infernal moan of sorrow and shame and misery, that rose and fell on the stillness of the night, that, for an instant, lost to everything but that dreadful sound, I leapt to my feet, with the stagnant blood cold as ice within me, my body pulseless for the moment, and mingled my mad shouting with the voices of those unseen devils in a hideous chorus. Then my manhood came back with a rush upon me, and judgment and sense, and I recognised in the trembling echoes a cry that I had often listened to in happier circumstances, and knew that uproar came from the throats of wolves that had been trapped like myself. But, "Were they alive?" I asked in fascinated wonder— how could they be in this horrible pit? and if they were not, picture oneself cornered in such a trap with a pack of wolfish spirits— it would not bear thinking of ; already my fancy saw constellations of fierce yellow eyes everywhere, and herds of wicked grey backs racing to and fro in the shadows, and with a tremulous hand I felt in my pocket for a match, and found I had two— and two only!

By this time the moon was up and a great disc of silver light, broad and bright, was creeping down the walls of our prison, but I would not wait for it. I struck the match with feverish eagerness, and held it overhead. It burnt brightly for a moment, and I saw I was in a great natural crypt, with no outlet anywhere but by the narrow neck above, and all chance of reaching that was impossible, as the walls sloped inwards everywhere as they rose to it. All the floor on every hand was piled thigh-deep with a ghastly tangle of animal remains, in every state of return to their native earth, from the bare bones, that would have crumbled at a touch, to the hide, still glossy and sleek, of the stag that had fallen in only a week or two before. Such a carnage place I never saw— such furs, such trophies, such heads and horns there were all round, as raised the envy of my hunter spirit even in that emergency.

But what held me spell-bound and rooted my eyes into the shadows was— twenty paces off, lying full stretch along the glossy, undulating path which the incessant feet of new victims had worn, month after month, over the hill and

valley of dead bodies under the walls— was a splendid eighteen-foot python— he whose ghostly rambles and ineffectual attempts to scale the walls had first scared me in that place of horrors. I turned round, for the match was short, and scarcely noticing a score or two of dejected rats, who squeaked and scrambled amongst lesser snakes and strange reptiles, looked hard across the cave. There, on their haunches, in a huddle against the far wall, staring at me with dull cold eyes, were five of the biggest, ugliest wolves ever mortal saw. I had often seen wolves, but never any like those. All the pluck and grace and savage vigour of their kind had gone from them; their bodies, gorged with carrion, were vast, swollen, and hideous; their shaggy fur was hanging in tatters from their red and mangy skins, the saliva streamed from their jaws in yellow ribbons, their blear eyes were drowsy and dull, their great throats, as they opened them to howl in sad chorus at the handful of purple night above, were dry and yellow, and there was about them such an air of disgusting misery and woebegoneness, that, with a shudder and a cry I could not suppress, I let the last embers of the burning match fall to the ground

How long I crouched in the darkness against the wall, with those hideous serenaders grinding their foam-flecked teeth and bemoaning our common fate in hideous unison, I do not know. Nor have I space to tell the wild horrible visions which filled my mind for the next hour or two, but presently the moonlight had come down off the wall, and was spread at my feet in a silver carpet, and as I sullenly watched the completion of that arena of light, I was aware that the wolves were moving. Very slowly they came forward out of the darkness, led by the biggest and ugliest, until they were all in the silver circle, gaunt, spectral, and vile, every mangy tuft of loose hair upon their sore-speckled backs clear as daylight. Then those pot-bellied phosphorescent undertakers began the strangest movements, and after watching them for a moment or two in fascinated wonder, I saw they had come to me in their despair to solicit my companionship and countenance, and I could not have believed it possible dumb brutes could have made their meaning so clear, as those poor shaggy scoundrels did. They halted ten yards off, and with humble heads sagged down, and averted eyes, slowly wagged their mud-locked tails. Then they came a few steps further and whined and fawned, and then another pace, and lay down upon their stomachs, putting their noses between their paws like dogs who watch and doze, while they regarded me steadfastly with sad, great eyes, forlorn and terrible.

Foot by foot, grey and silver in the moonlight, they advanced with the offer of their dreadful friendship, until at last I was fairly bewitched, and when the big wolf came forward till he was reeking at my knees, a horrible epitome of corruption, and licked my hand with his great burning tongue, I submitted to

the caress as readily as though he were my favourite hound, and henceforth the pack seemed to think the compact was sealed, and thrust their odious company upon me, trotting at my heels, howling when I shouted, and muzzling down to me, putting their heavy paws upon my feet, and their great steaming jaws upon my chest whenever in despair and weariness I tried to snatch a moment's sleep.

But it would be impossible to go step by step through the infinitely painful hours of that night. Not only was the place full of spectral forms and strange cries, but presently legions of unclean things of a hundred kinds, that had lived on those dead beasts when they too were living, swarmed in thousands and assailed us, adding a new terror to the inferno, ravaging us who still kept body and soul together, till our flesh seemed burning on our bones.

There was no rest for man or brute; the light was a mockery and the silence hideous. Round and round we pattered, I and the gaunt wolves, over the dim tracks worn by the feet of disappointment and suffering; wading knee-deep through a wavering sea of steamy blue flame, that rose from the remains and bespattered us from head to heel, stumbling and tripping ahd groping, and cursing our fates, each in his separate tongue, while the night waned, the dew fell clammy and cold into our prison, and the great yellow Stars, who looked down in turn upon us from the free purple sky overhead, made a dim twilight in our cell. I was blundering and staggering round the walls for the hundredth time, feeling about with my hands in a hopeless search for some cleft or opening, when the grimmest thing of the whole evening happened. In a lonely corner of the den, in a little recess not searched before, pattering about in the dark, I suddenly touched with my hand— think with what an electric shock it thrilled me— the cloth-clad shoulder of a man! With a gasp and a cry I leapt back, and stood trembling and staring into the shadows, scarcely daring to breathe Much as I had suffered in that hideous place, nothing affected me half so much as, with all my nerves already stretched to their utmost, dropping my hand like that upon that dreadful shoulder. Heaven knows we were all cowards down there, but for a minute I was the biggest coward of us, and felt to the full those strange throes of superstitious terror that I had often wondered before to hear weaker men describe. Then I mustered my wavering spirit, and with the gaunt wolves squatting in a luminous circle around me, went into the recess again, and put my hand once more upon my grim companion. The coat upon him was dry and rough with age, and beneath it— I could tell by the touch— there was nothing but bare, rattling bones! I stood still, grimly waiting for the flutter of my physical cowardice to subside, and then I bethought me of that second match, and in a moment of keen intensity, with such care as you may imagine, struck it against the wall. It lit, and at my feet, in ragged miner

garb, sitting against the wall with his knees drawn up and his chin upon them, was the skeleton of a man so bleached and dry, that it must have been like that for fifty years at least. At his side lay his miner's pick and pannikin, an old dusty pocket-Bible, the fragments of a felt hat, and a pair of heavy boots, still neatly side by side, just as the luckless fellow had placed the well-worn things when, for some reason, he last took them off.

And overhead something scratched upon a flat face of the rock. Hastily I snatched a scrap of paper from my pocket and, lighting it at the expiring match, read on the stone—

"Monday,"

"Tuesday,"

"Wednesd—"

—there was nothing but that, and even the "Wednesday" was unfinished, dying away in a shaky, uncertain scratch, that spoke infinitely more plainly than many words would have done, of the growing feebleness of the hand that traced it— and then all was darkness again.

I crept back to my distant corner, and crouched like the dead man against the wall, with my chin upon my knees, and kept repeating to myself the horrible simplicity of that diary— "Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday!" "Poor nameless Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday! And was this to be my fate?" I laughed bitterly— I would begin such another record with the first streak of dawn, and in the meantime I would sleep, whatever befell, and sleep I did, with those restless blue wolves cantering round the well-worn paths of the charnel-house, to their own hideous music, the silent unknown away in the distance, and the opal eyes of the great serpent staring at me like baleful planets, cold, sullen, and cruel, from between the dead man's feet

It was a shout that woke me next morning, a clear ringing shout, that thrilled me down to my innermost fibre, and jerked me from dreadful dreams like a stone from a catapult. I scrambled to my feet and saw from the bright pavement of light about me that it was day above, and while I still staggered and wandered stupidly, again came that shout. I stared up overhead where the sunlight was making the neck of the trap a disc of intolerable brightness and there, when my eyes grew accustomed to that shine, was a round something that presently resolved itself into the blessed face of my steadfast chum, Will Hartland— "Trusty English Will" they called him on the plains.

There is little need to say more. With the help of his strong cow-rope, at his saddle-bow, and a round point of earth-embedded rock as purchase, he had me out of that accursed hole in an incredibly, ridiculously short space of time. And there I was, leaning on his shoulder, free again, in the first flush of as glorious a morning as you could wish for, with the San Juan away in the

distance, winding in a sapphire streak through miles ot emerald forests, a sweet blue sky above, and underfoot the earth wet with morning mist, smelling like a wine cooler, and every bent and twig underfoot gemmed with glittering prismatic dewdrops. I sat down on a stone, and after a long pull at Will's flask, told him something like the narrative I have just given. And when the tale was done I paused a minute, and then said somewhat shyly, "And now I am going back, Will, old man! back for those poor devils down yonder, who haven't a chance for their lives unless I do." Will, who had listened to my narrative with horror and wonder flitting across his honest brown face, started up at this as though he thought the night's adventure had fairly turned my head. But he was a good fellow, chivalrous and tender of heart under his Mexican jacket, and speedily acknowledging that I was right, set to work to help me.

Down I went back into the pit, the very sight and shadow of which now made me sick, and with the noose end of Will's lasso (he holding the other end above) set to work to secure those poor beasts, who whinned and crowded round my legs in hideous glee to have me back again amongst them. Twas easy work; they were stupid and heavy, and seemed to have some idea of my intentions, and thus I noosed them one at a time, and when a wolf was fast, shouted to Will, who hauled away with scant ceremony, and up the grey ghoul went into that sunshine he had not seen for many weeks, until he and all his comrades were free once more, spinning, and struggling, and yelping— truly a wonderful sight. But nothing would move the python. I followed him round and round, trying all I knew to get his cruel, cynical head through the noose, and then, when he had refused it a dozen times, I grew wroth and cursed him in the name of the ancient Mother, and gathering up all the tortoises, lizards, and lesser beasts I could find into my waist-band, ascended into the sweet outer air once more.

A very few hours afterwards a heavy blasting-charge, fetched from a neighbouring mine, was dangling by a string just inside the mouth of the detestable trap, with its fuse burning brightly. A few minutes of suspense, a mighty crash, and a cloud of white smoke hanging over the green hill-top, and one of the most treacherous places that ever marred the face of nature's sweet earth was a harmless heap of dust and tumbled stones.

24: Symptoms of Being 35

Ring Lardner

Ringgold Wilmer Lardner, 1885-1933

Published by Bobbs-Merrill, NY, as a small book, with silhouette illustrations, in 1921

THE OTHER NIGHT one of my friends whose name is Legion got me on the telephone some way another and wanted I should come over and call, but that is all I done the last 3 or 4 times I had went over there and it costs a lot of money even in a 4 bit limit. So I said no that I was busy on a book which I had promised my publisher I would write it.

"What is it about" says Legion.

So I told him "How it feels to be 35."

"That guy must think you got a good memory" says Legion and hung up on me.

Well friends 35 is how young I am no matter how old I look, but I am so use to haveing smart Alex make wise cracks when I tell them my age that it don't have no more effect on me now than the 6 day bicycle race. Only I can't figure why they think I would lie about it like I was trying to pose as a boy chess marvel or something. When a man has got a legal wife and 4 and no one hundredths children what does he care if he is 35 or double that amt. Besides which they claim that 35 is about the average of all the grown ups in the world. If I was above the average would I keep it a secret? Don't be silly.

And don't judge a person by their hair gents. Many a man that can remember the first Ford has got more foliage on their egg than myself and also I know several ball players in the big league to-day that is anywheres from 5 to 30 yrs. younger than the present writer that when the fish applauds them for makeing a 2 handed catch with 1 hand, you wonder why they don't take off their cap. Personly I am not sensitive about my plummage. When my features got to the decision that one of them would half to retract all I done was thank God they picked the forehead and not the chin. The only hardship connected with pyorrhea of the scalp is trying to act supprised when the barber says you are looseing your hair.

But I guess it ain't only the loss of a few ebony ringlets that makes me look senile. It seems like I was over estimated long before I begin to molt. For inst. I can recall when I was 16 and had a thatch on my dome like a virtuoso and I used to pal around with a boy who we will call Geo. Dougan because that was his name and Geo. was going on 21. Well this was in Niles, Mich., in the days when they sold 6 7/8 beer in vases and for $.20 you could get enough to patrol 4th St. serenading true music lovers of the opposing sex. In them hellcyon days 1 of the few things that was vs. the law was selling it to minors and 2 or 3 of the retail mchts. around town was pretty strick and time and again I and Geo.

would be out shopping and go in a store and order 2 vats and Dave or Punk or who ever it happened to be would set one up for me to knock over and then give Geo. a wise cracking smile and ask him would he like a bottle of white pop. Incidentally I had a taste of that lucius ambrosia at a ball game once and if the penalty for selling honest old beer to minors was a $100 fine why 2 to 14 yrs. in a meat grinder would be mild for a guy that sells white pop on the theory that its a drink.

Well Geo. would say "Aw come on Dave I am older than him." But you couldn't fool Dave and the result was that we would half to take our custom down to Pigeon's where everybody that had a dime was the same age and the only minors was the boys that tried to start a charge acct.

I must hand it to Geo. for one thing. No matter how sore it made him to get turned down he never told them the truth about me. And they wouldn't of believed him if he had of. No more than you birds believe me now.

But now in regards to this book: When the publisher asked me to write it up I said I didn't see how more than only a few people would be interested because they was only a few that is this old. So he told me that as a matter of fact pretty near everybody in the world that can read is either 35 or a few mos. one way or the other and if I didn't think that was so to go and look it up in a book. So I looked up in the encyclopedia and they was nothing in there like he said but I found out a whole lot of other things that was news to me and maybe the reader don't know them neither so I will write them down.

In the 1st. place it says that most people dies when they are 1 yr. old and the 1st. 10 yrs. is the most fatalist. But if they's a 100 thousand people that can manage to get to be 10 yrs. old why then 749 of them is pretty libel to die the next yr. After that the older you get the longer you live up to when you are 59 and then you can just about count on liveing 14 and seven-tenths yrs. more. In other wds. if you ain't one of the 749 that crokes between 10 and 11 why you are safe till about June of the yr. when you are 73. So a person is a sucker to try and take care of themself at my age and from now on I am going to be a loose fish and run wild.

Out in Benton Harbor, Mich. however, near where I use to live, they have got a sex that calls themselfs the Holy Terrors or something that claims you live as long as you are good and as soon as you do wrong you die. But I notice that they all wear a beard so as the encyclopedia can't tell if they are 73 or 21.

Another thing it says in the book is that figures compiled in Norway and Sweden shows the death rate amongst bachelors is a lot more than amongst married men even includeing murder. So anybody that is between 11 and 73 yrs. old and got a wife is practically death proof especially if you are a Swede.

But all that is either here or there. The idear is to tell how it feels to be my age and I may as well get to it. Well in the 1st. place I am speaking for myself only. I don't know how the other 35 yr. olders feels about it and don't care. Probably the most of them don't feel near as old as the writer. Laughter is supposed to keep a man young but if its forced laughter it works the opp. When a guy is named Ring W. and is expected to split their sides when ever somebody asks if your middle name is Worm which is an average of 365 times per annum over a period of 35 annums, why it can't help from telling on you. Or it don't lighten the wgt. of the yrs. none to half to snicker every time they say Ring give me a ring or Ring why ain't you a ring master in Ringling Bros. And yet a number of birds has asked me if that was my real name or did I assume it. They would probably ask the kaiser if he moved to Holland to be near the tulips.

I suppose that on the morning of their 21st. birthday the right kind of a American citizen wakes up full of excitement and says to themself "Now I am of age and can vote and everything." And when they come to what I often call the 35th. mile stone they are even more smoked up with the thought that now they are eligible to be President and go around all day stoop shouldered with the new responsibility.

Well I don't recall how I woke up the day I was 21 if at all but my last birthday is still green and sour in my memory. I spent the most of it in Mineola signing mortgages and if I thought of the White House it was just to wonder if it would do any good to write and tell President Wilson about the Long Island R. R.

At the present writeing I have got so use to being 35 that I don't know if it feels any different from 34 or 33. But I can at lease state that being 35 don't feel nothing like being under 30. For inst. when the telephone rings now days I am scared to death that its somebody asking us to go somewheres for dinner or somewheres. Six yrs. ago I was afraid it wasn't. At 29 home was like they say on the vaudeville stage, a place to go when all the other joints was closed up. At 35 its a place you never leave without a loud squawk.

A man don't appreciate their home till you are up around par for 9 holes. Under 30 you think of it as a dump where you can't pick out what you want to eat like roast Vt. turkey or a filet mignon or some of that prune fed muskrat a la Biltmore. If Kathleen decides in the A. M. that you are going to crave spare ribs at night why you can either crave spare ribs at night or put on a hunger strike that won't get you no more sympathy than the hiccups.

In them ribald days home is just a kind of a pest where you half to choke down breakfast or they will think something ails you and talk about sending for a Dr. And 1 or 2 evenings per wk. when you can't think of no reason to go out,

its where you half to set around and wait for 9 o'clock so as you begin to talk about going to bed and sometimes things gets so desperate that you half to read a book or something.

But at 35 you spell it with a big H. Its where you can take off your shoes. Its where you can have more soup. Its where you don't half to say nothing when they's nothing to say. Its where they don't wait till the meal is all over and then give you a eye dropper full of coffee raw. Its where you don't half to listen. Its where they don't smear everything with cheese dressing. Its where you can pan everybody without it going no further. Its where they know you like doughnuts and what you think about a banana.

When you was 29 you didn't care for the band to play Home sweet Home. It was old stuff and a rotten tune any way. Now you hope they won't play it neither. Its a pretty tune but it makes you bust out crying.

Bud Holland that lives over to Port Washington wrote a piece for a magazine a wile ago where he said in it that it kind of shocked him to find out that young people didn't act like he was one of them no more. Well he ain't but it took the old gaffer a long time to find it out. Here he is pretty near 39 and I guess the old Methuselum wants folks to hide I Mary Mac Lane when he comes in the rm.

Well it was 5 or 6 yrs. ago when I realized that I was past my nonages as they say. It come to me all of a sudden that the only compliments I had for a long wile was what a pretty tie you got or something. Nothing about my natural charms no more. It was an egg's age since anybody had called me to 1 side and whispered "I got a T. L. for you. Gertie thinks your ears is immense."

I seen then that I wasn't no longer a larva and I guess maybe it hurt at first. But its like falling hair or the telephone service or anything else. When you have lived with it a wile you don't mind. Which is just as well because they ain't a wk. passes when you wouldn't get touched on the raw if they was any raw left.

Like for inst. a few wks. back I was up in Boston where I got a young and beautiful sister in law. When it come time to part from she and her husband she kissed me 6 times which was suppose to be once for me and once apiece for the Mrs. and 4 kiddies. Well I thought it was pretty nice and got kind of excited about it till I looked at her husband to see how he took it. He took it without batting an eye. To him it was like as if she was kissing an old cab horse on a bet for the benefit of the Red Cross. And when I had left and they was alone together, instead of lepping at her throat with a terrible curse he probably says "Janey, you're a good game gal," and she give him a kiss that meant something.

Now an incidence like this would of spoilt my whole trip if I didn't look at it in a sensible way which is to say to yourself, "Well if I wasn't in the Sears and yellow I wouldn't of got them 6 kisses. And 6 kisses is 1/2 a dozen kisses in any language."

Or for inst. out on the golf course. Suppose I and Grant Rice is playing with some young whipper snapper like say Jack Wheeler and they's only 1 caddy for the 3 of us. "Take them two" says Jack pointing to my and Grant's bags but the caddy has all ready took them any way as soon as he found out which ones belonged to which. Or when one of my young brother in laws is around the house and I come in the rm. and they are setting in the easy chair, why they jump up like food shot from guns and say "Here take this chair."

All and all when you get hardened to it they's many advantages in reaching your dottage. When they's 7 passengers for a 7 passenger car its never you that has to take one of them little torture seats. When your brother in law is here on a visit and the Mrs. thinks it would be nice to have a fire in the fire place, you ain't the one that has got to ruin his clothes. Yes friends the benefits is many fold but if them 1/2 dozen kisses and a few stray others pretty near as good was all, why you could still think to yourself Youth may get good service, but 35 ain't makeing no complaints to the management neither.

As for the gen. symptoms of 35 and vicinity as I have found them and not speaking for nobody only myself you understand, the following points may interest science:

1. The patient sometimes finds himself and one lady the only people left at the table and all the others is danceing. They seems to be nothing for it but to get up and dance. You start and the music stops and the young buddies on the flr. claps their hands for a encore. The patient claps his hands too but not very loud and he hopes to high heaven the leader will take it in a jokeing way.

2. For some reason another its necessary to find some old papers and in going through the trunk the patient runs acrost a bunch of souvenirs and keep sakes like a note a gal wrote him in high school, a picture of himself in a dirty football suit, a program of the 1907 May festival in South Bend and etc. "Why keep this junk" he says and dumps them all in the waste basket.

3. The case develops nausea in the presents of all story tellers except maybe Irvin Cobb and Riley Wilson and Bert Williams. Any others has to work pretty fast to get him cornered. Violent chills attends the sound of those saddest wds. of tongue or pen "I don't know if you heard this one or not but it struck me funny. It seems they was a woman went in a drygoods store in Detroit to buy some towels. Stop me if you heard it before." You couldn't stop them with big Bertha. The best funny storys is Balzac's because they are in a book and you don't half to buy it. But when you get up vs. one of these here

voluntary stag entertainers you either got to listen and laugh or they put you down as a dumb bell.

4. The invalid goes to a ball game and along comes the last 1/2 of the 14th. innings and the score is 1 and 1 and the 1st. guy up makes a base hit. The patient happens to look at his watch and it says 11 minutes to 6 and if he leaves the park right away he can make the 6:27 home where as if he waits a few min. he will half to take the 6:54. Without no hesitation he leaves the park right away and makes the 6:27.

5. The subject is woke up at 3 A. M. by the fire whistle. He sniffles but can't smell no smoke. He thinks well it ain't our house and goes back to sleep.

6. He sets down after breakfast to read the paper. The mail man comes and brings him 3 letters. One of them looks like it was a gal's writeing. He reads the paper.

7. He buys a magazine in April and reads the first instalment of a misery serial. The instalment winds up with the servants finding their master's body in bed and his head in the ash tray. Everything pts. to the young wife. Our patient forgets to buy the May number.

8. Somebody calls up and says they are giveing a party Thursday night for Mabel Normand and can you come. Our hero says he is sorry but he will be in Washington on business. He hasn't no more business in Washington than Gov. Cox.

9. They's a show in town that you got to see like Frank Craven or "Mecca." "It's a dandy night" says the Mrs. "Shall we drive in or take the train?" "We will take the train" says our hero.

These is a few of the symptoms as I have observed them and as I say I am speaking for just myself and maybe I am a peculiar case. They may not be another 35 yr. older in the world that is affected the same way and in fact I know several suffers about that age which I am as different than as day and night. Take Jess Willard for inst. He was somewheres around 35 in July 1919 and Dempsey knocked him down 7 times in one rd. He wouldn't do that to me, not 7 times he wouldn't. Or look at Ty Cobb. Do you think they would get me to play center field and manage a ball club for $30,000? Or would Jim Thorpe's brother in law look on him as too frail to hobble down in the basement and get a few sticks of wood?

On the other hand they might be 2 or 3 brother eagles in the mediocer 30s that is even more mildewed than me, but I am afraid they's a whole lot more of them feels like a colt. They take care of themselfs. When they get up in the A. M. they take a cold plunge and then hang by their eye teeth on a hook in the closet while they count 50 in Squinch. And noons when they come back

from their lunch of hot milk and ferns, they roll over on the office rug 10 times without bending their shin.

I can't compete with these babies. I slice a few golf balls in season but bet. Nov. and May the only exercise I get or want to get is twice a wk. when I take the buttons out of shirt A and stick them in shirt B.

They's still another crowd yet that renews their youth by going back every yr. to commencement or a class reunion or something. Well I don't know if I want to renew my youth or not. Leave bad enough alone is my slogum. And in the 2d. place I don't half to go nowheres to a class reunion. I could hold it in the bath tub. I was the only one that graduated when I did as it was in March of my freshman yr. and they didn't seem to be haveing no commencement exercises for nobody else. I guess I must have been one of these here infantile proteges like that 11 mos. old junior they got up to Columbia.

No book of this kind would be complete without shooting a few wds. of unwanted advice at my youngers and betters. For inst. John D. tells the boys how to build up a fortune and John Jones tells them how to rise from a white wings to a steeple jack. So it looks like it was up to me to tell them how to get to be what I am, 35 yrs. old.

Well my lads they's 4 rules that I made and have stuck to them and I think you will find they'll bring you the same results. The 1st. rule is don't die the 1st. yr. The 2nd. rule is don't be one of the 749 that dies when they are 11. The 3rd rule is don't pick a quarrel with a man like Dempsey. And the 4th and last rule is marry a girl like Sue.

In explanations of that last rule I will say that the one I married ain't Sue but the name don't make no differents if she is the right kind of a gal. And the reason I say that is because its customary in these intimate *capital I* talks to throw in a paragraph of blurb about the little woman. What ever success a man has had he has got to pretend he owes it to Her. So if they's any glory to be gleaned out of my success in reaching 35 and looking even older why she can have it.

** I have changed the original* 2d *and* 3d *in the second last paragraph to* 2nd *and* 3rd*; otherwise the original spelling is retained.*

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25: The Man With a Grouch

H. De Vere Stacpoole

1863-1951

The Popular Magazine, Second January Number, 1929

AT LEVUA, even today there are to be found square miles of old forest. The true high woods of the tropics; trees fetched from Heaven knows where to shoulder one another and shudder in the sea wind and thrust at each other in the great storms when the coconuts of the beach palms are flying like cannon balls.

Here in this island there are redwoods, though smaller than the California giants, and mahoganies such as you see in the woods of Martinique; in the old days sandalwood was the chief export, but today it is all copra with a hint of pineapples, if they succeed with the new grounds that they are trying out beyond Mayano.

Just at the time of this story, Flexner was running the trade station at Levua and making a mess of the business. Lombard, Drex & Co., of San Francisco, owned the station. It wasn't their fault that things were not going well; it wasn't the fault of the market, for prices were ruling high; it wasn't the fault of the trees that were bearing well; and it seemingly wasn't the fault of Flexner, for he didn't drink to excess and he was by all accounts and seeming a straight man and honest as day.

Old Reuben Lombard, puzzling over this matter, came to Levua to investigate matters for himself. He was a wise old man with a profound, and one might say appalling, knowledge of human nature.

Employees are mostly compounded of human nature. Especially on the Pacific coast and in the Islands.

Reuben had come across all varieties of it, from the stark naked and quietly drunk to the murderous and violent, from the incompetent and lazy to the competent and thriving. He spent a month at Levua making a holiday of the business and absorbing Flexner and the whole situation; then he returned to San Francisco and told his partner Drex that he was going to fire Flexner.

"He's a bad character," said Reuben. "I don't mean drink, women, cards or anything of that sort; I'm talking of him as a business man. He's never satisfied; that's what it amounts to. I got his past history out of him in talk. He started in life with some money safely invested in high-class stuff, but wasn't satisfied with five and a half per cent, so turned it into wildcat and went bust. At Levua he wasn't satisfied with the old trader's house, and built another in a better situation, with the result that the first hurricane took it and laid it all over the reefs. He wasn't satisfied with the way Sru, the headman on the west side, was doing his work and ruling his people, so he kept butting in till Sru began to see

red and went for Sipi of the east side. Flexner had pointed out Sipi as an example; Sru went for the example and laid it out with a club. Then there was hell's shines between the two sides of the island till the missionaries stepped in and patched things up.

"That's only a bit; there were lots of other little things.

"You know, the sort of man that messes about at home mending the window blinds, nagging the servants, and interfering with the wife's arrangements. Never satisfied, that's Flexner. It's mostly an American disease, but Flexner has put English additions to it— he's an Englishman. Sitting smoking on the veranda with him night before I left, I said to him, 'Now, ain't that perfect! Look at that lagoon full of stars and those lights on the reef where they're spearing the fish. Smell of the air!' 'Yes,' he says, 'but have you ever seen the Thames above Richmond on a fine summer's night?'

"Well, I reckon he'll see it soon."

"But look here," said Drex. "Dissatisfaction with things as they are ought to be the soul of progress in art and commerce."

"Oh, gosh!" said Lombard. "I'm not talking of things as they are; I'm only getting at the mentality that's always grousing because things aren't what they aren't— dissatisfaction as a matter of mind principle. If you gave this chap a ticket for Jerusalem with free drinks 'n' hotel expenses he'd ten to one grumble that it wasn't the New Jerusalem the booking was for. Anyhow, he's fired. I'm writing him tonight and I'm going to send Arrow in his place."

ONE MORNING toward the end of December, Flexner came out on his veranda in pajamas. The old trader's house which he was reoccupying stood on a bay of the groves facing the white sands of the beach and the blue water separating the beach from the reefs.

The outer sea beyond the reefs stretched like a sheet of lazulite to where above the far horizon the white trade clouds showed like a procession of ghosts born of distance and summer. On the beach were some Kanaka canoemen who had just come in with a take of fish; also a naked nut-brown child full of the joy of life and beating with a lump of coral on a tin can. It was like a scene from "Floradora", a picture that might have been born from the brain of Basil Dean in one of his southern or eastern moods. Only Flexner did not fit the surroundings, a ginger-colored man in striped blue-and-purple pajamas sitting now drinking his coffee, smoking a cigarette and reading a letter.

The letter was a month old. It was from Lombard, Drex & Co., telling him he was fired, had come by the mail brigantine, and informed him that his

successor, Mr. George Arrow, was coming to Levua by the company's schooner, the *Golden Hope*.

Half an hour ago Kepi, Flexner's personal servant and man of all work, had roused him with the news that a schooner had been sighted from the bluff. "That's her," said Flexner, tumbling out of bed. He tubbed and resumed his pajamas and, taking the letter from his bureau, came out to wait the arrival of the newcomer and drink his coffee. He was quite unperturbed.

He was a good-natured man, even though, as Lombard said, he was never satisfied with things as they were. A man who took disaster as the natural expression of a world that was mainly all wrong.

When his house had been blown away he just said, "Well, that's that," and came back to live in the old trader's house; and now, waiting for his successor, he felt no animosity or irritation.

It was one of the things that ought to have been different, that was all.

His position was serious from a worldly point of view. He had saved scarcely any money, not more than seventy pounds all told, and what on earth he was to do for a job when he got back to San Francisco he didn't know. Another thing that ought to have been different, that was all.

He was finishing his coffee when the fore canvas of a schooner showed beyond the reef; when the rest of her, hidden by the bluff, came into view, she revealed herself as the *Golden Hope*.

There are ships that seem to have been built for beauty as well as use and the *Golden Hope* was one of them; one of the old-time fleet that included the *Mary Rose* and *Dancing Wave*, creatures rather than things, born, like the gulls, to live in harmony with the sea and in fellowship with the wind.

She formed a pretty picture as she came in with a snow of gulls astern of her, rounding with all her canvas ashiver and dropping anchor in ten fathoms of water, a couple of cable lengths from the beach.

Flexner, pajamas and all, came down to the water's edge to greet the boat that was pulling ashore.

Captain Bartells was steering, and Arrow, the new trader, was seated beside him, a young and pleasant-looking man for whom Flexner at once felt a liking.

They all tramped up to the house, and after soft drinks and cigarettes on the veranda, Bartells, putting back to the schooner to superintend the unloading of trade, left Flexner and his successor to get acquainted.

They went over the house, the godown where trade goods were stored, and the copra sheds. Then they had dinner, and that evening on the veranda they talked very freely of the whole position, copra trade and what not.

Old Lombard had told Arrow his opinion of Flexner, and Arrow was on the lookout for Flexner's weak spot, but in all their conversation not one grumble was uttered by the latter. Flexner was supposed to be a man always dissatisfied, yet he showed no sign of dissatisfaction with anything. He talked quite openly of his own rather desperate financial condition, but he didn't grumble. Was Lombard wrong?

"It's funny to think that day after tomorrow is Christmas Day," said Arrow. "At least to me, for I was born north of N' York and Christmas has always meant six inches of snow 'n' holly berries and so on. I reckon I'm an out-and-out Christmaser of the good old type, and I'm not ashamed of it."

"Same here," said Flexner. "I was born and brought up at Maltby in Kent — my father lives there still— and Christmas always brings me back to old times. We didn't have much snow— haven't had much in England of late years— but there was holly and ivy and good will all round, not to speak of presents and the old folks in the village coming up for packets of tea and so on. I reckon England is a good place and it never looks better than when you see it from twenty thousand miles away. And Christmas is the best thing in England. Last time I was there was five years ago and the old governor gave a children's party. He's seventy-five but seems to grow younger every year. Hasn't lost a tooth in his head. And I bet this year he'll be giving another party— and twenty years hence it will be the same. We're a long-lived family, and he reckons to live to be a hundred."

"My poor old governor died six years ago," said Arrow. "He wasn't more than sixty-nine. We aren't a long-lived family by a long chalk. I'm the only one left, and it's a pretty lonesome world when it gets to that."

"Well, cheer up," said Flexner, and produced a bottle of whisky.

Yes, decidedly old Lombard must have been wrong.

IN THE TROPICS, and especially among the Islands, Fortune plays strange tricks with men, and often in short time. Fifteen minutes and a sufficient hurricane will lay down a plantation of thirty thousand trees worth anything from fifteen hundred to three thousand a year, according to the price of copra— or, in the old days, a shift of the helm at sight of a distant atoll might have landed you in an uncharted pearl lagoon.

While Flexner slept tonight the sleep of the just in his blue-and-purple-striped pajamas, Fate, landing at Levua and putting on the crown of Fortune, turned up her sleeves. She had fixed on Flexner as her man and she was going to do the thing royally and with gorgeous settings in two acts. And, getting toward three in the morning, with the stage lit up by a gorgeous moon, up went the curtain to a sound like the clamor of sea gulls on the beach.

Flexner sprang from his bed and ran out on the veranda. Arrow came after him. The beach was alive with Kanakas running about and shouting and pointing to the inshore waters beyond the schooner, where, monstrous in the light of the moon, a great black bulk was dashing through the water, flinging huge arms to the air like a drowning giant or a—

Crash!

The foam shot fathoms high and the woods echoed to the concussion.

"Cachalot!" cried Flexner. "Cachalot fighting a squid! Gosh! look at them!"

The sight was phenomenal, for the cachalot was in a flurry.

Now the cachalot is fond of grazing on the great squid. Sometimes he lugs one up to the surface and you see something that looks like a fight, the sixty-foot tentacles of the squid thrashing about with tremendous sound and fury; but the cachalot is not fighting, he is just eating, quietly chewing like a cow and quite regardless of the emotions of the chewed.

But this thing was different. Something was wrong with the dinner. Either it had turned out poisonous in some way or the great beak of the squid had managed to get home somehow in an unpleasant manner.

Driving through the water like a torpedo boat, the cachalot made a quarter of a mile toward the west, sank, rose, sprang, crashed in a smother of foam, and came racing back, close to the beach now, the great arms of the squid moving hilariously and the Kanakas cheering on the runner.

"They'll foul the schooner! They'll foul the schooner!" cried Arrow. "Look! they're making straight for it!"

"No," said Flexner, "there's a sunk reef in the way. They're too close inshore. It runs out for two hundred yards, and there's no more than ten feet of water on it. They'll beach— done it!"

There was more than ten feet of water on the reef, for it was high tide. All the same, the reef did the business: for a moment the great bulk of the whale seemed to roll on it in a storm of foam, next it was free and making away for the reef opening and a life on the ocean wave.

The gallery gods on the beach hooted, howled and whistled— prematurely, for the first act was not over.

"Look!" said Arrow. "What's that?"

Something showed on the water this side of the reef, something like a half deflated balloon. It was the squid.

The tentacles were no longer thrashing the air, they were submerged and otherwise engaged. But the form was not idly drifting, it was moving here and there with a steady trend toward the shore, so close now that two great luminous disks in it showed, disks paling and glowing like lamps now fully lit, now fading. They were the eyes.

"What on earth is the matter with it?" asked Arrow, a chill at his heart.

"Tiger sharks," said Flexner. "They're driving it ashore and eating it."

The Kanakas, drawn back a bit, were dead silent in full enjoyment of the spectacle. Just as you may see a bit of bread pushed about on the surface of the water by struggling fish, so the great form of the squid was driven here and there. It vanished to bob up again like a wet balloon; but now only one luminous disk showed, the other was gone. Then it slowly submerged to appear no more; but the water was troubled by the struggle still going on and the little waves breaking on the salt white sands left a stain dark as ink.

Flexner and his companion turned back to the house.

"Do you often have that sort of thing here?" said Arrow after he had asked for and received a tot of whisky.

"I have never seen a cachalot in the lagoon waters before," said Flexner. "The boys often catch big squids, but nothing to compare with that one. Interesting, wasn't it?"

Arrow went back to his couch for another couple of hours' sleep— risking nightmare.

The cheeriness of Flexner over this three o'clock in the morning interruption of an honest and decent man's sleep crowned everything.

"Interesting, wasn't it?"

Decidedly, old Lombard had mismeasured his man. Arrow did not know that Flexner's main intellectual support at Levua had been nature study. Not a scientific naturalist, he was still one of those men— and there are many of them— to whom wild life makes an intense appeal; and, though the Thames above Richmond on a fine summer's evening might hold more attraction for him than a star-shot lagoon, the land of colored coral and the perfumed wilderness of the woods had saved him time and again from the ennui that leads to drink.

Fortune, who often uses men's better qualities just as Fate often uses their worse, depended on this fact in staging the second act of that little play which might have been entitled, "How Good Luck Came to Christopher Flexner."

The curtain rose again on the veranda of the old trader's house with Flexner and Arrow sitting at breakfast.

The inshore waters, emerald deepening into blue, showed no trace of the tragedy of a few hours ago— of the squid that was being digested by half a dozen tiger sharks, or the cachalot safely escaped into the violet ocean beyond the purple reefs. The schooner, swinging bow to the shore, made a ripple marking the outgoing tide, and on her deck was the burly form of Captain Bartells, busy superintending the unloading of some boxes.

"Cap said he'd be ready to start tomorrow," said Flexner. "Looks like it — the trade stuff will be loaded today, and it won't take more than a couple of hours to get the water on board."

"Christmas Day tomorrow," said Arrow, "but that won't hold him. Anyhow, I have time to write the couple of letters I want taken back to be posted at San Francisco— I forget whether you said you were going east from Frisco or sticking on the Pacific coast."

"I haven't decided yet," said Flexner; "it just depends how things turn out."

"Poor devil," thought Arrow. He did not pursue the subject of Flexner's immediate future and indeed he had business enough of his own to talk of, for in taking up or dropping a trade station there are a hundred little things to be discussed, so that it was getting on for ten and the sun of a perfect morning high above the bluff before they had finished.

Leaving the new trader to go over the accounts and make himself familiar with the store book and papers, Flexner came down to the water's edge, where the station boat was lying beside some beached canoes.

She was a white-painted, carvel-built twelve-footer. He had often taken her out for fishing, and there was still in the bows a tub of line, also the grains he had used the other day when he had gone after a school of small rays that had come into the shore waters.

Helped by one of the Kanakas he got her half afloat, stepped in, and pushed out alone.

He wanted to look at Levua from the sea for the last time. He would see it from the schooner tomorrow when they were putting out, but that would not be the same. He would not be alone and able to think and reflect and measure up things and reminisce.

He passed the schooner anchored over her own shadow on the coral floor. The hands had knocked off work for a spell and she lay like a thing deserted, the tide rippling at her anchor chain and the gulls flighting round her on the lookout for scraps. Beyond, and halfway to the reefs, he paused rowing and looked down at what perhaps he would never see again— down through the water clear as air at the colored parterres of coral and the sand patches where great shells crawled, the home of the Haliotis, the branch coral and sea fan.

It was extraordinary to think that this submarine land of brilliancy and color existed in a world that at the same moment held London, fogbound perhaps, and Maltby with its leafless trees and sure-to-be-clouded skies; a submarine world that knew nothing of Father Christmas or the delights of the season that appealed to the exiled soul of Flexner.

Flexner was thinking something like this— he was a man whose reflections were, if not cheap, sometimes secondhand. Having brooded for a while and

drifted fifty yards or so, he took to his sculls again and, turning the boat's nose, pushed out through the reefs to the open sea.

It was from here that he could see the island properly, and as he had so often seen it when fishing for palu or sailing for pleasure. A wonderful sight, either by the light of the moon or the full light of day, as now.

Broad-based, beyond the foaming reefs it lay, rising from the beach palms in a tempest of trees all blown by the wind to the heights where once the sandalwood grew, and showing clear from out here the cliff fall where a torrent tumbled, a white plume against the green. Ceiba, breadfruit palm, tree fern and lesser redwood all blowing and tossing to the trade wind; and there, a mushroom brown break in the foliage, the village of Sru, headman of the west side— the same who had laid out Sipi with a club in the good old island fashion.

The tide was still on the ebb, and out here the southward-running current was strengthened by the tide. Flexner, drifting and dreaming and fighting his trade battles over again, had let the boat go as it wished and as a result the break in the reefs was no longer visible. He might have drifted farther had not his eye been caught by something away on the water to starboard.

He thought at first that it was a dead fish floating just awash. Then he knew it wasn't, for there were no gulls about. Besides, sharks don't allow dead fish to float for long. He turned the boat and pulled toward the thing, urged not so much by simple curiosity as by the instinct of the naturalist, for something told him that this was not wreckage or driftwood from some island. Close to it now, it showed to be a great mass of some whitish substance, lumpy and mottled and veined with red. Gruesome, somehow, and repellent to the eye, but striking. No one could see that piece of flotsam without pausing to ask, "What on earth is it?"

The boat's nose came up against it with a gentle *dunch*, and Flexner, who had drawn in his sculls, leaned over and handled the stuff. It was as big as a big man and its shape was roughly that of a man wrapped in sacking. The end he had hold of was rounded like a head; there was a neck; then the mass swelled to the form of shoulders and tapered gently to the other extremity.

Just as a potato or flint takes a human or other form, so had this thing obeyed the law which rules over the world of freaks.

He tried its weight and found that, though he could raise the head a bit from the water, it would be impossible to get the thing on board. He desisted, and, kneeling on the grating in the bow, wiped the sweat from his forehead. His lips had gone dry as pumice stone, and his heart was now cleaving to his ribs like a bat to a wall, and now fluttering, batlike, before making another cleave.

He thought for a moment he would die, for the smashing news had come to him from the void that he had struck ambergris.

What settled the business was a thing like a tiger's claw sticking on the mass. It was one of the hooks from the suckers of a great squid's immense and powerful tentacles.

He had never seen ambergris before, but he knew it by description; and now as his heart recovered itself and he could think before taking action, he saw clearly that this was no chance business but had to do with the drama of the night before.

The cachalot, evidently wounded either by the squid or the reef, had got clear and made north, swimming against the Kiro Shiwo. Up north it had spat out the ambergris, which had floated down on the current. A mathematician might have told from the flow of the current and the speed of the cachalot in its flight exactly where the stuff had been voided, but this was a matter of indifference to Flexner.

He had to salvage the stuff. How? He had heard enough from Pacific men's talk to know that it was worth many thousands of pounds; the breaking away of any part of it would be a heavy loss. He had the grains and a bucket half full of line. The grains were useless ; it was impossible to tell the result of digging a fish spear into that mass of stuff— it might mean cleavage. Difficult enough to deal with as it was, it would be impossible to salvage it altogether if it were in two parts.

He brought the line from the bow to the stern, fastened a bight round the "neck" of the thing and the line to the after-thwart, then he tested the pull, took the sculls, and started.

He was south of the island a good way.

The Kiro Shiwo had carried him along with it and the tremendous question arose as to how he would be able to make enough way against it with the heavy tow?

Would the thing that had brought him fortune deny him fortune?

Every now and then he turned his head to see how Levua lay and if he were making progress; between whiles the towrope held his eye. He could see whether it was taut or not, but a towrope is never uniformly taut— a movement of the water, a slight diminution of the speed of the towing craft will slacken it; there is no uniformity of pull.

Sometimes he stopped rowing and, getting to the stern, hauled the tow closer to see how the rope held. After one of these examinations and with infinite difficulty he shifted the rope from the neck-shaped depression to below the bulge of the shoulders and did it so well that the pull of the rope

was still fore and aft with the thing; had it been otherwise the mass would have been towed sidewise and would have made progress impossible.

But all this took time, and as he stood up from the job and looked toward Levua his heart half sank. He had made very little way. Fortunately the wind had died with noon and slack tide was due, but one could never tell in these seas what was coming from moment to moment, and if a squall were to rise or even if the wind were to wake up and blow from the north— well, good-by to Fortune. He took up the sculls again.

A burgomaster gull passed him with a cry that cut his nerves like a steel whip, and now from the sea to starboard *pop-pop-pop*, breaking from the water in one particular spot as if fired from a machine gun, came silver arrowheads, flying fish with black, staring, sightless eyes, flittering into the water to starboard and right athwart the course of the boat. If some great fish were following them close to the surface and were to foul the ambergris—

He drove the thought away and pulled.

Yes, he was making way; the change from slack had occurred and the tide was now running into the lagoon of Levua.

An hour later he was inside the reefs. The fellows on board the *Golden Hope* were getting the last of the trade stuff and provisions over into the boat alongside, and Bartells, superintending the business, came to the rail as Flexner drew alongside.

"Hello!" cried Bartells. "What are you towin'?"

"Shy us a rope," said Flexner.

He brought the boat alongside just aft of the provision boat, which was loading from the fore hatch.

Bartells, leaning on the rail, looked over down at the stuff that was now lifting to the swell of the incoming tide and duddering against the boat side.

"Ambergris," said Flexner.

"Gosh Almighty!" said Bartells. He had been in the whaling business and could measure the full size of the business at a glance.

Bartells was a friend of Flexner's, liked him, and regretted his having been fired. Bartells had his own opinion of old Lombard, who, according to Bartells, would skin the devil and sell the hoofs for glue— if he could get the chance.

"A moment," said Bartells. "You ain't in the company's employ no longer. Was your discharge dating from when?"

"From yesterday, when Mr. Arrow took over," replied Flexner, vaguely wondering but somehow guessing what the other was driving at.

"But it's on the contract you are to get a free passage home if so be you want it?"

"Yes."

"You found that stuff outside the three-mile limit," went on the captain, "for I was watching you. Consequentially it's yours."

"Yes."

"Well, we're open to take cargo for private owners; that's my instructions. You, being no longer in the company's employ, come to me asking me to take your stuff to Frisco at ordinary freight rates— is that your meaning?"

"Yes," said Flexner.

Here was a man thinking of his interests and safeguarding him from the rapacity of the company, so that there would be no bother at all about landing and disposing of his treasure. It is good to have a friend like that. He wanted to speak, but words failed him and indeed Bartells gave him no time.

The captain, with a pull of his whiskers and another glance at the floating gray mass, turned to Jarvis, the mate.

"Rig a tackle and get that stuff on board for Mr. Flexner," he said.

An hour later in the cabin, he said, "I'm a judge of weights, and that stuff weighs all two hundred pounds and a bit more, and amber-grease is worth twenty-five dollars an ounce in the market. That's five pounds of your money. You can add it up; it's a tidy fortune. Well, here's luck and chin-chin."

THAT NIGHT on the veranda of the old trader's house Flexner and Arrow sat smoking and talking. Flexner would sleep ashore that night, as the *Golden Hope* was not due to start till noon.

In the few tremendous hours since morning Flexner had been changed from a man without prospects to a man of substance, and he had risen to the business and the enjoyment of it. The whisky in the bottle on the cane table was several inches lower. Not that either man had exceeded; they were quite sober— and because of this, perhaps, it was that a reaction came in Flexner's mood.

He fell suddenly silent and sad. He seemed contemplating something at a long distance from the old trader's house, then he made a noise in his throat that meant recognition of a fact and disapproval of it.

"What's wrong with you now?" asked Arrow, pausing in the act of pouring himself out some more whisky.

"Nothing," said Flexner, "only I was thinking that all the ambergris in the world wouldn't get me home for Christmas Day."

He spoke with an edge to his voice— an edge that indicated a distinct grouch.

"My God!" said Arrow to himself, putting down the bottle. "Old Lombard was right."

He went into the house to fetch his tobacco pouch. A cane chair got in his way and he kicked it viciously.

He felt like that.

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