

"Ay, your *body* was there," I said.

With that he laughed angrily, and mingling with the crowd passed on his way.

You may believe there was a great stir; the theory put abroad was that Ann Leete had been kept a prisoner in a solitary, ruined hut there was by the river, and then, fury or fear, slain by her jailer and cast into the river.

To me all this is black. I only know that she was murdered by Rob Patterson.

He was arrested and tried on the circuit.

He there proved, beyond all cavil, that he had been in the church from the beginning of the service to the end of it; his alibi was perfect. But the two inspectors never wavered in their tale of seeing him on the Green, of his self-accusation in his exclamation; he was very well known to them, and they showed his name written in their books.

He was acquitted by the tribunal of man, but a higher power condemned him.

Shortly after he died by his own hand, which God armed and turned against him.

This mystery, as it was called, was never solved to the public satisfaction, but I know that I sent Rob Patterson's soul out of his body to betray his guilt, and to procure my darling Christian burial.

This was the tale Eneas Bretton, that ancient man, told me, on the old terrace, as he sat opposite the picture of Ann Leete.

"You must think what you will," he concluded. "They will tell you that the shock unsettled my wits, or even that I was always crazed. As they would tell you that I dream when I say that I see Ann Leete now, and babble when I talk of my happiness with her for fifty years."

He smiled faintly; a deeper glory than that of the autumn sunshine seemed to rest on him.

"Explain it yourself, sir. *What was it those inspectors saw on the Green?*"

He slightly raised himself in his chair and peered over my shoulder.

"*And what is this,*" he asked triumphantly, in the voice of a young man, "*coming towards us now?*"

I rose; I looked over my shoulder.

Through the gloom I saw a dark green silk gown, a woman's form, a pale hand beckoning.

My impulse was to fly from the spot, but a happy sigh from my companion reproved my cowardice. I looked at the ancient man whose whole figure appeared lapped in warm light, and as the apparition of the woman moved into this glow, which seemed too glorious for the fading sunshine, I heard his last breath flow from his body with a glad cry. I had not answered his questions ; I never can.

J. F. Sullivan

THE MAN WITH A MALADY

from THE QUEER SIDE OF THINGS

“Strand Magazine,” 1894

The only silent person at our table d'hôte was a very tall, care-worn man, who passed nearly every dish offered to him, and played with such scraps as he did take as if unaware of their presence on his plate. He sat with knitted brows, painfully pre-occupied and obviously brooding. The comfortable German next to him, who sat with both elbows on the table, picking his teeth with one hand and ladling spoonfuls of chopped-up meat into his mouth with the other, tried to draw him into conversation in well-masticated English, but the thin man replied either monosyllabically or not at all.

But suddenly, while the German, with many snorts and gurgles, was sucking in an ice from a spoon, the bowl of which rested in the palm of his hand—his elbow being, of course, always on the table—the silent man suddenly turned to him and said :

“I think you had better begin to see about packing your port-manteau—you will have to do it in such a hurry after the telegram arrives.”

“Telechram ? ” said the German, the words, the ice, and a gulp of wine all struggling for mastery in his throat. “Vwat telechram ? Vwiche telechram ? ”

“Oh ! about your warehouse in Hamburg, you know—the fire

in it——” Then he broke off suddenly, and said : “ Ah—I forgot—I was only thinking aloud.”

The German choked, gulped, snorted, and sputtered—even more than he had during the meal ; but his ejaculatory inquiries failed to elicit anything more from his neighbour ; and at length, stuffing a fig, a piece of cheese, some bread, and some wine all at once into his mouth, he tore the table-napkin from his collar, and choked indignantly out of the room.

During the next day I did not come across the thin man. In the middle of the night following I was violently waked by a heavy stamping and a stentorian shouting in the corridors ; this was followed by loud chokes and gurgles, which died away down the stairs and were heard again on the front steps—and I knew the German was departing by the night train. Next morning, at breakfast, I heard from the waiter that the German had gone to Hamburg in consequence of a telegram he had received. He had appeared greatly excited and upset, and the “ boots ” had heard him talking excitedly to himself about a fire.

That evening, as in duty bound, I stepped over to the Casino ; in the peristyle I found the thin man, with his arms behind him, walking very slowly backwards and forwards ; the cigar between his teeth being hopelessly out, and unnoticed. Suddenly he flung away the cigar and hurried into the theatre ; but he did not seem to hear the concert, and as the music ceased he started up, muttering to himself, “ Let’s go and see that fellow lose his seven thousand pounds ! ” and hurried away feverishly to the tables. He walked straight to the second roulette table on the right, where a visitor was engaged in staking little piles of gold pieces—twenty little piles at a time. That time he won on his tallest pile, staked on a full number, making a considerable addition to the heap he had already won.

“ I should advise you to stop *now*,” murmured the thin man, standing by his chair ; but the plunger merely stared at him and resumed his placing of little piles all over the table.

“ Hum ! of course, if you *will* do it,” muttered the thin man. “ But don’t say I didn’t warn you ! ”

Zero turned up ; and the plunger (who despised the even chances) lost all his little piles : but on he went again—full numbers, full transversals, carré, à cheval ; and again zero turned up, and away went the little piles. Then the plunger placed a very tall pile on zero—and zero did *not* turn up ; and so he went on

until his heap had disappeared, and he had changed note after note, and lost all the change. Then he slowly rose, glared at the thin man, grinned a ghastly grin at the nearest croupier, and disappeared. (I subsequently heard that he had lost seven thousand pounds.)

The thin man was becoming interesting to me. He placed a 5f. piece on "manque" : "manque" won ; twice more on the same, which won ; then twice on "passe," which won. Fifteen or twenty times he staked on the even chances, and never failed to win. Then he placed on black the fifteen or twenty 5f. pieces he had won, saying to a croupier, "I'll lose those" : and black lost. He then placed his original piece on a full number—15 : 15 won. He left the 175f. he had won on the table and placed his 5f. piece on 9 : and 9 turned up.

By this time the other players had begun to notice him. He placed a limit stake on the 1 ; several persons followed him and staked there : 1 turned up. Twice he repeated the action on other numbers—and others followed him—and the numbers won. The croupiers interchanged glances, and said a few words to one another. Then one of the chefs got off his high chair, and went round to speak to the winner : but the winner was not there ; his stakes and winnings, however, were still on the table, where he had left them. The chef went round the rooms to look for the thin man, but he was nowhere to be found. I had seen him quietly retire as the croupier had cried "One !" and quietly walk out of the rooms.

Next morning, after breakfast, the thin man was smoking a cigar on the hotel terrace, and an irresistible curiosity forced me to speak to him.

"I must congratulate you on your luck last night," I said.

"Luck, sir !" repeated the thin man, without removing his gaze from the pavement. His voice was hollow and dismal in the extreme—utterly without hope. "No luck about it at all, except bad luck—deuced bad luck, sir !"

"You certainly did not appear to attach much value to your success, to judge by your leaving your stakes and winnings as you did. I presume you are *aware* that you won a considerable sum ?"

"Aware ? Oh, perfectly."

"And you do not call that luck ?"

"I do not call it luck, simply because it is *not* luck, and luck has

nothing to do with it," replied the thin man, turning his gaze gloomily on me. "It is certainty, that's all. I happen, I am very sorry to say, to *know* what number will turn up."

"What, always?"

"Yes, always—confound it! That's what's the matter with me, sir! Do you think I should have left my comfortable home and come among a lot of jabbering foreigners if my confounded doctor hadn't ordered me to? Do I look like it, sir?"

"Well, no; I must admit you don't. I trust your health will be speedily re-established, at any rate."

"Not it, sir. When one's fool enough to go and get one of these symptoms which the doctors haven't come across before, one doesn't easily get rid of it. I shouldn't wonder if this beastly knowledge of the future were to hang about me for——"

"Knowledge of the future? Surely that can hardly be classed as a disease?" I said.

"Oh, can't it, though? The deuce it can't, sir! It's abnormal, isn't it? Very well, what's abnormal's a disease, isn't it?"

"But," I said, "it—is it not a very—an extraordinarily unusual ailment to suffer from?"

"Of course it is," replied the thin man; "and doesn't that make it all the worse?"

"But what does it spring from?"

"Why, from the fashionable, up-to-date complaint—nervous exhaustion. Overwork, sir, resulting in super-excitation of the cerebral tissues—or some jargon of that sort. I tell you it's a disease, sir; the ancient seers suffered from it, I suppose: anyhow, *I* do and that's enough for *me*! And I came away to get rid of it by change of air."

"Pray forgive me," I said, "but your case is so very peculiar and interesting that I am impelled to ask how this ailment first manifested itself."

"Oh!—usual thing. I felt tired and depressed—couldn't sleep—had no energy—couldn't fix my thoughts. Then one day, when somebody asked me whether I thought the fine weather was likely to last, I surprised myself by saying 'No; it will begin to rain at three o'clock to-morrow afternoon, and keep on all night.' I *knew* it would, sir; and when my prophecy turned out correct, my feelings were mixed, sir."

"First I was surprised—then frightened—then glad; but on the whole fright prevailed. It wasn't comfortable, sir; and I tried to

believe it was all nonsense ; but events *would* turn out as I foresaw, and conviction was forced upon me.

“ Now, sir, I daresay you think, ‘ What a wonderful power to possess ! What a magnificent advantage ! ’ *Is it ?* Take my word for it, you’d have a different opinion if you actually suffered from it. Advantage, sir ! Do you consider it an advantage to foresee a lot of miserable and horrible things which are destined to happen to you years hence, and to look forward to them and brood upon them all the time until they happen ? It’s bad enough to remember a past misfortune if its effects continue, but it’s a confounded deal worse to foresee one, and see it getting bigger and bigger like an express train advancing from the distance to smash you like a fly !

“ Eh—what ? ‘ Certain worldly advantages attached to the disease.’ What’s the good of them, sir, when you know what’s going to happen to you ? *I don’t want wealth, sir ; shouldn’t know what to do with it if I had it. I’m well enough off for all my requirements : and I don’t want power, sir—nor influence ; I want to be quiet and jog along—and how the deuce can a man afflicted with the gift of prophecy be quiet and jog along ? I tell you, my knowledge of my future is like a nightmare ; and it makes me nasty and vindictive ; and the only use I care to put my ailment to is to worry people out of their wits. You, sir, for instance, would be deuced uncomfortable—and that’s putting it pretty mildly—if I were to tell you what will happen to you just about this date three years hence. I’ll spare you that ; and you have reason to be very thankful to me.*”

I began a smile of amused incredulity : but somehow it would not work ! I tilted my hat a little to one side, and gave my cigar a jaunty cock to show my indifference ; but I very soon put my hat straight again and allowed my cigar to fall into its usual serious position. I turned away from the thin man and sauntered into the reading-room, took up *Galignani*, and sat down ; and it took five minutes to reveal to me the fact that I was holding the newspaper upside down.

Then I got up resolutely and went out again to the thin man, and, staring boldly at him, began : “ I shall take it as a favour if you will tell me,” but here my voice somehow seemed to die of inanition, and I finished up with “ the time.”

The thin man chuckled inside him in a Mephistophelean way which told me he knew well enough that I had not come to ask

the time. With a sudden violent resolve not to be a fool, I began to talk again about his affair at the table.

"You must have puzzled them considerably over there," I said.

"I have," he replied. "The administration fellows are talking the matter over now in a pretty state of mind! One of them will call on me here this afternoon with a cheque for my winnings, and an inquiry as to what I propose to do. Of course they've long ago grasped the fact that I can smash the entire concern if I choose; but my conduct has puzzled them. I could have broken the bank at every table if I had liked last night—but that's not my object. I want to tease them. If you're curious, you may as well be present at our interview."

I accepted eagerly—anything to distract my mind. After lunch I went up with the thin man to his room; and within fifteen minutes the porter came to say that a gentleman wished to speak with the thin man.

"Show him up," said the latter.

The visitor entered.

"You are anxious—very anxious—to have a chat with me?" said the thin man, settling himself luxuriously in his chair. "Pray go on—my friend here does not matter at all—you can speak quite freely in his presence."

The visitor hesitated; then proceeded:

"I have brought to Monsieur his winnings which he forgot to take last night at the table. This cheque——"

"Ah, many thanks," said the thin man; "but I'm not in need of it just at present. If you would like to put it aside for me—or, better still, if you would like to devote it to the good of the poor hereabouts—eh?"

The Casino official looked bewildered, and fidgeted and stroked his beard. There was a silence—awkward on the part of the official; employed in suppressed chuckles by the thin man.

"Monsieur proposes to make a stay in Monte Carlo?" asked the official, very uneasily.

"Well—I really haven't decided," said the thin man, cheerfully.

"Ah!—then—Monsieur proposes to continue towards us the honour of visiting the tables?"

"Why, I haven't made any plans about that, either."

The official stroked his beard in a desolated way: the expression of anxiety on his brow was obvious and painful. He glanced from the thin man to me.

“Monsieur might—ah!—might perhaps be disposed to acquiesce in some little arrangement touching his departure?” he said at length, somewhat hoarsely. “The administration are always liberal, and——”

“Oh, I’m not in want of money,” said the thin man, cheerfully. “You might glean that from my leaving my winnings last night.”

“That is true, my faith!” said the official. “But—the truth is—Monsieur appears to enjoy extraordinary good fortune—wonderful chance!”

“Luck, you mean, of course. It is not luck, however, my dear sir: it is simply a knowledge of the future—that is all. Will you kindly keep your eye on the corner of that house on the sea-front there, while I tell you about the persons who will pass from behind it on the pavement? A fat man in a brown coat—there he is, you see; three ladies and a little dog—there they are; a policeman and a gendarme carrying a white parcel; next, a white dog; now a woman with a large basket.”

There was no possibility of the thin man having seen the pedestrians before they appeared from behind the house. The Casino official turned pale and scratched his nose.

“You perceive—there’s no ‘luck’ about it,” continued the thin man; “I wish there were, confound it! Well, it may have occurred to you that it is in my power to foretell every coup in the play-rooms?”—he kept his twinkling eye fixed on the official, whose jaw had dropped in despair, and chuckled inwardly all the time he spoke—“to communicate the knowledge to others—to everyone in the rooms, in fact. I might break every bank, every day, until the place simply had to be shut up; think of that, my dear sir—*shut up!* I could simply sweep away the whole place; just turn that over in your mind! But perhaps you *have?*”

There was little doubt that the official *had*: he was ghastly pale, and his eyes were staring like a madman’s; while the thin man, grinning cheerfully, sat up in his chair and looked straight into the other’s eyes.

“But—surely—Monsieur—*mon Dieu*—Monsieur has not the hardness of heart to propose to himself so terrible a plan? We have not offended Monsieur in any way? We are at Monsieur’s commands. Anything we can do to make him pleasure—all our possible—is at his disposition! Monsieur would like to accept a share in the undertaking—a very large share? Even a quarter—

a half? Monsieur will do the honour of joining the administration?"

The thin man laughed softly.

"Oh, dear, no!" he said, pleasantly; "I have no ambition in that direction. Really, I haven't decided on any plan. I may amuse myself at the tables"—(the official winced, and his teeth chattered)—"or, on the other hand, I may never enter again. Goodness knows."

"But—at least—Monsieur will give me his promise to abstain from communicating his terrible knowledge to persons—to the crowd? He will be so gentle as to promise——"

"Oh—I really can't make any promises, you know. Why should I?"

"But—reflect—you do not hate us, Monsieur?"

"Oh, dear, no," said the thin man, agreeably. "Not a bit of it. You have amused me with splendid concerts, and all that, all for nothing. I am inclined to like the administration. Whatever I do will simply be to amuse myself—of course, it *may* be bad for you—I don't say it *will*, you know."

The official rose, pale and bewildered. He passed his hand across his forehead, damp with drops. He went towards the door—hesitated and turned back—then bowed and went slowly out.

"Now, you know, this affair will tease those fellows. They'll be in an awful state of mind, eh? That's what I want—I shall leave them in perplexity—see? Hang over them like a sword—they'll always be on the tremble for fear I'm going to turn up, or set up an establishment to give people tips about the winning numbers!" He chuckled consumedly; then he added:

"As a matter of fact, I'm off to-night; but I shall tell the landlord that I may return very shortly; *they'll* find that out over there; and they will have a time of it!"

I could eat no dinner that day; I could not keep my pipe alight that evening; I could not listen to the concert at the Casino; the thin man's words to me, "I'll spare you that, and you have reason to be very thankful to me!" buzzed in my head until I felt giddy. Three or four times I went to his door to seek him and beg him to tell me at once *what* was to happen to me; but I could not screw up my courage to hear it. I loathed him; but that did no good. He was going away that night—could I let him go, carrying that secret with him, and perhaps never see him again? Then I said to myself: "Don't be a fool! Treat it all as a stupid imposture,

or a dream!" and I actually undressed and got into bed; and immediately got out again and dressed. He was going westward by the midnight train; I went down and got my bill and told them to put my luggage on the omnibus for that train.

He chuckled again when I got into the omnibus with him, and said: "You've decided to depart very suddenly, haven't you? No bad news of any kind, I hope?"

Twenty times in the train I opened my mouth to ask him *what* it was that was to happen to me just about three years hence, and at last the question did burst out wildly.

"Oh—that?" he said; "you haven't forgotten those chance words of mine? Oh, dear; let's forget them; we won't bother ourselves about that. You'll find out in good time, *I* can tell you!" He grinned and nodded his head several times. "Now, shall I tell you what I'm going to do? It will amuse you. There's an American millionaire in Paris who has just been operating tremendously—plunging heels over head in a certain speculation.

"I happened to get this information in a letter from a friend of mine in Paris; I don't know what's happening synchronously around me except in the ordinary way of knowing it; it's only the future that this confounded ailment of mine causes me to see—hang the thing! Well, I foresee that that speculation will come to the most disastrous smash unless the American fellow takes a certain course; and I'm going to tell him that, but keep him in the dark as to the course he ought to choose—see? It will turn his hair grey, eh?"

"You really seem very vindictive!" I exclaimed, in spite of myself.

His whole expression changed suddenly—he seemed to become suddenly haggard, the victim of an overpowering horror, as he replied:

"It is about two months now since the foreknowledge of the hideous thing which is to happen to me seven years hence first darted into my brain. The thing in store for me at that time is about as awful as anything I have ever imagined—and *it will happen!* I've brooded on it now for these two months, until I wonder I am not mad. I was a stoutish man before this horrible ailment of mine—look at me now!

"Well, this foreknowledge has embittered me—soured me. I lie awake all night brooding on that thing which is to come, until I scream sometimes.

“ It has made me ill-natured—my only diversion is to give other people a touch of what I feel myself. I try to keep my mind off my own misery by that amusement. There’s *your* case, for instance—there’s the thing which is to happen to *you* on the 19th of March three years hence—the 19th of March ; don’t forget ! It is not quite so horrible as *my* fate—but in all conscience it is enough to make one shudder, my dear sir ! You can’t avert it : it’s sure to come—but, there ; it’s one of those things which it is best not to dwell upon ; so let’s forget it, and talk about other things. Look at that station-master there—there’s a nice thing to happen to him in three weeks’ time ; egad, I should like to get down and tell him about it, only I can’t speak French well enough. Dear, dear ; now I regret that I can’t ; what a drawback it is to be unable to speak a language ! ”

I let him rattle on, and ceased to hear what he said. Should I refuse to hear what my fate was to be—get out at the next station and hurry off ? Or should I beg him to tell me, for mercy’s sake ? Or should I *make* him reveal it—threaten to kill him unless— ? Pooh ! He *knew* I could not kill him : he *knew* he had to live seven years at least—until that calamity came upon him.

So I determined to keep touch with him ; travel with him to Paris, and never lose sight of him : and I went to the same hotel with him at Marseilles. I overheard him tell the porter of his intention to leave by the train on the following night : but next day I found he had gone by the morning train. I took the next train to Paris, and used every plan I could think of to find him—for three weeks I was on his track : but I had lost him.

So there was that 19th of March three years hence hanging over me ! I struggled hard to thrust the thing from my mind, taking up all kinds of occupations to drive it away ; but the thought would come upon me at intervals with such force that I could get no sleep for weeks together. My hair began to turn prematurely grey, and my face became wan and furrowed.

I was told by friends that I was a ghastly sight ; and my unconquerable gloom drove them from my society.

And one day I was travelling on the District Railway, face to face with the only other occupant of the compartment. He was a plump, contented-looking man ; and there was something in his manner which I seemed to recognise. Suddenly he began to stare at me ; then an expression of great mental distress passed over his face ; and he said : “ Were you ever at Monte Carlo ? ”

A conviction was growing in my mind as I replied, "Yes—unfortunately for me!"

He placed his hand on mine, nervously, as if in great pity.

"In March—two years ago?" he asked.

"Yes—curse the time!"

"Do you know me?" he said, in a trembling voice.

"Yes!" I almost screamed, starting up. "You are the fiend who—*Will* you tell me *now* what is to happen to me—a year hence—the 19th of next March?"

He was silent; he passed his hand over his brow as if in a strained effort to remember; and he looked at me in a way so helpless, so remorseful, so beseeching, that I felt my expression of deadly hate relax and my clenched fists open. Again he laid his hand on mine, and said, in a faltering voice:

"I can recollect nothing—*nothing*—of the things I foresaw during my ailment. When I returned to London I recovered from my abnormal condition of mind, and all the future faded from me. I can remember that I foretold something which was to happen to you at some date or other, but that is all." He looked at me and shuddered; there was no need for him to *tell* me how changed I was.

"Try!" I said, hoarsely. Again he tried—it was useless.

Then, suddenly, it came over me that *now* had arrived my opportunity for revenge; he had evidently forgotten that a horrible fate was to overtake *him* five years from then. I chuckled inwardly in a demoniac way, and thought over the words in which to remind him of the coming catastrophe—but he was still looking at me with that crushed look of remorse and pity; and I could not say the thing. He covered his face with his hands, and tears trickled from between his fingers. I was silent. "Why don't you kill me?" he said.

"Perhaps," he said, suddenly brightening—"perhaps that foreknowledge of mine was all nonsense—merely a mental hallucination. It must have been—the thing is impossible!"

"Do you recollect the numbers on the roulette table?" I said, "and the people passing along the sea-front? and the German's telegram?"

"I will try my hardest, day and night, to recollect!" he said. "Here is my address.—Come and stay with me, so that if, at any moment, the recollection comes upon me, you may be at hand to hear. What a demon I must have been at that time—*why?* I

wonder. What can have changed me so then? It is not my nature!"

Here was the opportunity to enlighten him—and I was silent.

He has tried for a year, now, to recollect—tried incessantly. He has grown careworn again—nearly as much so as when I first knew him.

For the last three months I have been always at his side, watching his face for the first gleam of memory; but it has never come. Again and again, in my moments of horror, I have almost told him of the fate hanging over *him*, and due in a little over four years—but I have not done it. I feel half mad at times. I am very ill, and have become an old man of thirty-four. He is sitting by me, holding my hand, and reading to me.

Now and again a shudder passes over him, and he ceases to read, and passes his hand across his knitted brow. The sun is setting in a bank of clouds. It is March 18th!

W. F. Harvey

AUGUST HEAT

from MIDNIGHT HOUSE AND OTHER TALES

Dent, 1910

PENISTONE ROAD, CLAPHAM,

August 20th, 190—.

I have had what I believe to be the most remarkable day in my life, and while the events are still fresh in my mind, I wish to put them down on paper as clearly as possible.

Let me say at the outset that my name is James Clarence Withencroft.

I am forty years old, in perfect health, never having known a day's illness.

By profession I am an artist, not a very successful one, but I earn enough money by my black-and-white work to satisfy my necessary wants.

My only near relative, a sister, died five years ago, so that I am independent.

I breakfasted this morning at nine, and after glancing through the morning paper I lighted my pipe and proceeded to let my mind wander in the hope that I might chance upon some subject for my pencil.

The room, though door and windows were open, was oppressively hot, and I had just made up my mind that the coolest and most comfortable place in the neighbourhood would be the deep end of the public swimming bath, when the idea came.

I began to draw. So intent was I on my work that I left my lunch untouched, only stopping work when the clock of St. Jude's struck four.

The final result, for a hurried sketch, was, I felt sure, the best thing I had done.

It showed a criminal in the dock immediately after the judge had pronounced sentence. The man was fat—enormously fat. The flesh hung in rolls about his chin; it creased his huge, stumpy neck. He was clean shaven (perhaps I should say a few days before he must have been clean shaven) and almost bald. He stood in the dock, his short, clumsy fingers clasping the rail, looking straight in front of him. The feeling that his expression conveyed was not so much one of horror as of utter, absolute collapse.

There seemed nothing in the man strong enough to sustain that mountain of flesh.

I rolled up the sketch, and without quite knowing why, placed it in my pocket. Then with the rare sense of happiness which the knowledge of a good thing well done gives, I left the house.

I believe that I set out with the idea of calling upon Trenton, for I remember walking along Lytton Street and turning to the right along Gilchrist Road at the bottom of the hill where the men were at work on the new tram lines.

From there onwards I have only the vaguest recollection of where I went. The one thing of which I was fully conscious was the awful heat, that came up from the dusty asphalt pavement as an almost palpable wave. I longed for the thunder promised by the great banks of copper-coloured cloud that hung low over the western sky.

I must have walked five or six miles, when a small boy roused me from my reverie by asking the time.

It was twenty minutes to seven.

When he left me I began to take stock of my bearings. I found myself standing before a gate that led into a yard bordered by a

strip of thirsty earth, where there were flowers, purple stock and scarlet geranium. Above the entrance was a board with the inscription—

CHS. ATKINSON. MONUMENTAL MASON.
WORKER IN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN MARBLES.

From the yard itself came a cheery whistle, the noise of hammer blows, and the cold sound of steel meeting stone.

A sudden impulse made me enter.

A man was sitting with his back towards me, busy at work on a slab of curiously veined marble. He turned round as he heard my steps and I stopped short.

It was the man I had been drawing, whose portrait lay in my pocket.

He sat there, huge and elephantine, the sweat pouring from his scalp, which he wiped with a red silk handkerchief. But though the face was the same, the expression was absolutely different.

He greeted me smiling, as if we were old friends, and shook my hand.

I apologised for my intrusion.

“Everything is hot and glary outside,” I said. “This seems an oasis in the wilderness.”

“I don’t know about the oasis,” he replied, “but it certainly is hot, as hot as hell. Take a seat, sir!”

He pointed to the end of the gravestone on which he was at work, and I sat down.

“That’s a beautiful piece of stone you’ve got hold of,” I said.

He shook his head. “In a way it is,” he answered; “the surface here is as fine as anything you could wish, but there’s a big flaw at the back, though I don’t expect you’d ever notice it. I could never make really a good job of a bit of marble like that. It would be all right in a summer like this; it wouldn’t mind the blasted heat. But wait till the winter comes. There’s nothing quite like frost to find out the weak points in stone.”

“Then what’s it for?” I asked.

The man burst out laughing.

“You’d hardly believe me if I was to tell you it’s for an exhibition, but it’s the truth. Artists have exhibitions: so do grocers and butchers; we have them too. All the latest little things in headstones, you know.”

He went on to talk of marbles, which sort best withstood wind and rain, and which were easiest to work ; then of his garden and a new sort of carnation he had bought. At the end of every other minute he would drop his tools, wipe his shining head, and curse the heat.

I said little, for I felt uneasy. There was something unnatural, uncanny, in meeting this man.

I tried at first to persuade myself that I had seen him before, that his face, unknown to me, had found a place in some out-of-the-way corner of my memory, but I knew that I was practising little more than a plausible piece of self-deception.

Mr. Atkinson finished his work, spat on the ground, and got up with a sigh of relief.

“ There ! what do you think of that ? ” he said, with an air of evident pride.

The inscription which I read for the first time was this—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY
OF
JAMES CLARENCE WITHENCROFT.

BORN JAN. 18TH, 1860.

HE PASSED AWAY VERY SUDDENLY

ON AUGUST 20TH, 190—

“ *In the midst of life we are in death.* ”

For some time I sat in silence. Then a cold shudder ran down my spine. I asked him where he had seen the name.

“ Oh, I didn't see it anywhere, ” replied Mr. Atkinson. “ I wanted some name, and I put down the first that came into my head. Why do you want to know ? ”

“ It's a strange coincidence, but it happens to be mine. ”

He gave a long, low whistle.

“ And the dates ? ”

“ I can only answer for one of them, and that's correct. ”

“ It's a rum go ! ” he said.

But he knew less than I did. I told him of my morning's work. I took the sketch from my pocket and showed it to him. As he looked, the expression of his face altered until it became more and more like that of the man I had drawn.

“ And it was only the day before yesterday, ” he said, “ that I told Maria there were no such things as ghosts ! ”

Neither of us had seen a ghost, but I knew what he meant.

"You probably heard my name," I said.

"And you must have seen me somewhere and have forgotten it! Were you at Clacton-on-Sea last July?"

I had never been to Clacton in my life. We were silent for some time. We were both looking at the same thing, the two dates on the gravestone, and one was right.

"Come inside and have some supper," said Mr. Atkinson.

His wife is a cheerful little woman, with the flaky red cheeks of the country-bred. Her husband introduced me as a friend of his who was an artist. The result was unfortunate, for after the sardines and watercress had been removed, she brought out a Doré Bible, and I had to sit and express my admiration for nearly half an hour.

I went outside, and found Atkinson sitting on the gravestone smoking.

We resumed the conversation at the point we had left off.

"You must excuse my asking," I said, "but do you know of anything you've done for which you could be put on trial?"

He shook his head.

"I'm not a bankrupt, the business is prosperous enough. Three years ago I gave turkeys to some of the guardians at Christmas, but that's all I can think of. And they were small ones, too," he added as an afterthought.

He got up, fetched a can from the porch, and began to water the flowers. "Twice a day regular in the hot weather," he said, "and then the heat sometimes gets the better of the delicate ones. And ferns, good Lord! they could never stand it. Where do you live?"

I told him my address. It would take an hour's quick walk to get back home.

"It's like this," he said. "We'll look at the matter straight. If you go back home to-night, you take your chance of accidents. A cart may run over you, and there's always banana skins and orange peel, to say nothing of falling ladders."

He spoke of the improbable with an intense seriousness that would have been laughable six hours before. But I did not laugh.

"The best thing we can do," he continued, "is for you to stay here till twelve o'clock. We'll go upstairs and smoke; it may be cooler inside."

To my surprise I agreed.

We are sitting now in a long, low room beneath the eaves. Atkinson has sent his wife to bed. He himself is busy sharpening some tools at a little oilstone, smoking one of my cigars the while.

The air seems charged with thunder. I am writing this at a shaky table before the open window. The leg is cracked, and Atkinson, who seems a handy man with his tools, is going to mend it as soon as he has finished putting an edge on his chisel.

It is after eleven now. I shall be gone in less than an hour.

But the heat is stifling.

It is enough to send a man mad.

Morley Roberts

THE ANTICIPATOR

from THE GRINDER'S WHEEL

Nelson, 1907

“Of course, I admit it isn't plagiarism,” said Carter Esplan, savagely; “it's fate, it's the devil, but is it the less irritating on that account? No, no!”

And he ran his hand through his hair till it stood on end. He shook with febrile excitement, a red spot burned on either cheek, and his bitten lip quivered.

“Confound Burford and his parents and his ancestors! The tools to him that can handle them,” he added after a pause, during which his friend Vincent curiously considered him.

“It's your own fault, my dear wild man,” said he; “you are too lazy. Besides, remember these things—these notions, motives—are in the air. Originality is only the art of catching early worms. Why don't you do the things as soon as you invent them?”

“Now you talk like a bourgeois, like a commercial traveller,” returned Esplan, angrily. “Why doesn't an apple-tree yield apples when the blossoms are fertilized? Why wait for summer, and the influences of wind and sky? Why don't live chickens burst new-laid eggs? Shall parturition tread sudden on conception? Didn't the mountain labour to bring forth a mouse? And shall——”

“Your works of genius not require a portion of the eternity to which they are destined?”

“ Stuff ! ” snarled Esplan ; “ but you know my method. I catch the suggestion, the floating thistledown of thought, the title, maybe ; and then I leave it, perhaps without a note, to the brain, to the subliminal consciousness, the sub-conscious self. The story grows in the dark of the inner, perpetual, sleepless soul. It may be rejected by the artistic tribunal sitting there ; it may be bidden to stand aside. I, the outer I, the husk-case of heredities, know nothing of it, but one day I take the pen and the hand writes it. This is the automatism of art, and I—I am nothing, the last only of the concealed individualities within me. Perhaps a dumb ancestor attains speech, and yet the Complex Ego Esplan must be anticipated in this way ! ”

He rose and paced the lonely club-smoking-room with irregular steps. His nerves were evidently quivering, his brain was wild. But Vincent, who was a physician, saw deeper. For Esplan's speech was jerky, at times he missed the right word ; the speech centres were not under control.

“ What of morphine ? ” he thought. “ I wonder if he's at it again, and is to-day without his quantum.” But Esplan burst out once more.

“ I should not care so much if Burford did them well, but he doesn't know how to write a story. Look at this last thing of mine—of his. I saw it leaping and alive ; it rang and sang, a very Maenad ; it had red blood. With him it wasn't even born dead ; it squeaks puppetry, and leaks sawdust, and moves like a lay figure, and smells of most manifest manufacture. But I can't do it now. He has spoilt it for ever. It's the third time. Curse him, and my luck ! I work when I must.”

“ Your calling is very serious to you,” said Vincent, lazily. “ After all, what does it matter ? What are stories ? Are they not opiates for cowards' lives ? I would rather invent some little instrument, or build a plank bridge across a muddy stream, than write the best of them.”

Esplan turned on him.

“ Well, well,” he almost shouted ; “ the man who invented chloroform was great, and the makers of it are useful. Call stories chloral, morphia, bromides, if you will, but we give ease.”

“ When it might be better to use blisters.”

“ Rot ! ” answered Esplan, rudely. “ In any case, your talk is idle. I am I, writers are writers—small, if you will, but a result and a force. Give me a rest. Don't talk ideal poppycock ! ”

He ordered liqueur brandy. After drinking it his aspect changed a little, and he smiled.

"Perhaps it won't occur again. If it does, I shall feel that Burford is very much in my way. I shall have to——"

"Remove him?" asked Vincent.

"No, but work quicker. I have something to write soon. It would just suit him to spoil."

The talk changed, and soon afterwards the friends parted. Esplan went to his chambers in Bloomsbury. He paced his sitting-room idly for a few minutes, but after a while he began to feel the impulse in his brain; his fingers itched, the semi-automatic mood came on. He sat down and wrote, at first slowly, then quicker, and at last furiously.

It was three in the afternoon when he commenced work. At ten o'clock he was still at his desk, and the big table on which it stood was strewn with tobacco-ashes and many pipes. His hair again stood on end, for at intervals he ran his damp hands through it. His eyes altered like opals; at times they sparkled and almost blazed, and then grew dim. He changed at each sentence; he mouthed his written talk audibly; each thought was reflected in his pale mobile face. He laughed and then groaned; at the crisis, tears ran down and blurred the already undecipherable script. But at eleven he rose, stiff in every limb, and staggering. With difficulty he picked the unpagged leaves from the floor, and sorted them in due order. He fell into his chair.

"It's good, it's good!" he said, chuckling; "what a queer devil I am! My dumb ancestors pipe oddly in me. It's strange, devilish strange; man's but a mouthpiece, and crazy at that. How long has this last thing been hatching? The story is old, yet new. Gibbon shall have it. It will just suit him. Little beast, little horror, little hog, with a divine gold ring of appreciation in his grubbing snout."

He drank half a tumbler of whisky, and tumbled into bed. His mind ran riot.

"My ego's a bit fissured," he said. "I ought to be careful."

And ere he fell asleep he talked conscious nonsense. Incongruous ideas linked themselves together; he sneered at his brain's folly, and yet he was afraid. He used morphine at last in such a big dose that it touched the optic centre and subjective lightnings flashed in his dark room. He dreamed of an "At Home," where he met big, brutal Burford wearing a great diamond in his shirt-front.

“Bought by my conveyed thoughts,” he said. But looking down he perceived that he had yet a greater jewel of his own, and soon his soul melted in the contemplation of its rays, till his consciousness was dissipated by a divine absorption into the very Nirvana of Light.

When he woke the next day, it was already late in the afternoon. He was overcome by yesterday's labour, and, though much less irritable, he walked feebly. The trouble of posting his story to Gibbon seemed almost too much for him; but he sent it, and took a cab to his club, where he sat almost comatose for many hours.

Two days afterwards he received a note from the editor, returning his story. It was good, but—

“Burford sent me a tale with the same motive weeks ago, and I accepted it.”

Esplan smashed his thin white hand on his mantelpiece, and made it bleed. That night he got drunk on champagne, and the brilliant wine seemed to nip and bite and twist every nerve and brain cell. His irritability grew so extreme that he lay in wait for subtle, unconceived insults, and meditated morbidly on the aspect of innocent strangers. He gave the waiter double what was necessary, not because it was particularly deserved, but because he felt that the slightest sign of discontent on the man's part might lead to an uncontrollable outburst of anger on his own.

Next day, he met Burford in Piccadilly, and cut him dead with a bitter sneer.

“I daren't speak to him—I daren't!” he muttered.

And Burford, who could not quite understand, felt outraged. He himself hated Esplan with the hatred of an outpaced, out-sailed rival. He knew his own work lacked the diabolical certainty of Esplan's—it wanted the fine phrase, the right red word of colour, the rush and onward march to due finality, the bitter, exact conviction, the knowledge of humanity that lies in inheritance, the exalted experience that proves received intuitions. He was, he knew, a successful failure, and his ambition was greater even than Esplan's. For he was greedy, grasping, esurient, and his hollowness was obvious even before Esplan proved it with his ringing touch.

“He takes what I have done, and does it better. It's malice, malice,” he urged to himself.

And when Esplan placed his last story, and the world remembered, only to forget in its white-hot brilliance, the cold paste of

Burford's Paris jewel, he felt hell surge within him. But he beat his thoughts down for a while, and went on his little, laboured way.

The success of the story and Burford's bitter eclipse helped Esplan greatly, and he might have got saner if other influences working for misery in his life had not hurt him. For a certain woman died, one whom none knew to be his friend, and he clung to morphine, which, in its increase, helped to throw him later.

And at last the crash did come, for Burford had two stories, better far than his usual work, in a magazine that Esplan looked on as his own. They were on Esplan's very motives; he had them almost ready to write. The sting of this last bitter blow drove him off his tottering balance; he conceived murder, and plotted it brutally, and then subtly, and became dominated by it, till his life was the flower of the insane motive. It altered nothing that a reviewer pointed out the close resemblance between the two men's work, and, exalting Esplan's genius, placed one writer beyond all cavil, the other below all place.

But that drove Burford crazy. It was so bitterly true. He ground his teeth, and hating his own work, hated worse the man who destroyed his own conceit. He wanted to do harm. How should he do it?

Esplan had long since gone under. He was a homicidal maniac, with one man before him. He conceived and wrote schemes. His stories ran to murder. He read and imagined means. At times he was in danger of believing he had already done the deed. One wild day he almost gave himself up for this proleptic death. Thus his imagination burnt and flamed before his conceived path.

"I'll do it, I'll do it," he muttered; and at the club the men talked about him.

"To-morrow," he said, and then he put it off. He must consider the art of it. He left it to bourgeon in his fertile brain. And at last, just as he wrote, action, lighted up by strange circumstances, began to loom big before him. Such a murder would wake a vivid world, and be an epoch in crime. If the red earth were convulsed in war, even then would it stay to hear that incredible, true story, and, soliciting deeper knowledge, seek out the method and growth of means and motive. He chuckled audibly in the street, and laughed thin laughter in his room of fleeting visions. At night he walked the lonely streets near at hand, considering eagerly the rush of his own divided thoughts, and leaning against the railings of the leafy gardens, he saw ghosts in the moon shadows and

beckoned them to converse. He became a nightbird and was rarely seen.

“To-morrow,” he said at last. To-morrow he would really take the first step. He rubbed his hands and laughed as he pondered near home, in his own lonely square, the finer last details which his imagination multiplied.

“Stay, enough, enough!” he cried to his separate mad mind; “it is already done.”

And the shadows were very dark about him. He turned to go home.

Then came immortality to him in strange shape. For it seemed as though his ardent and confined soul burst out of his narrow brain and sparkled marvellously. Lights showered about him, and from a rose sky lightnings flashed, and he heard awful thunder. The heavens opened in a white blaze, and he saw unimaginable things. He reeled, put his hand to his stricken head, and fell heavily in a pool of his own blood.

And the Anticipator, horribly afraid, ran down a by-street.

Joseph Conrad

THE BRUTE

from A SET OF SIX

Methuen, 1908

Dodging in from the rain-swept street, I exchanged a smile and a glance with Miss Blank in the bar of the Three Crows. This exchange was effected with extreme propriety. It is a shock to think that, if still alive, Miss Blank must be something over sixty now. How time passes!

Noticing my gaze directed inquiringly at the partition of glass and varnished wood, Miss Blank was good enough to say, encouragingly:

“Only Mr. Jermyn and Mr. Stonor in the parlour, with another gentleman I’ve never seen before.”

I moved towards the parlour door. A voice discoursing on the other side (it was but a matchboard partition) rose so loudly that the concluding words became quite plain in all their atrocity:

“That fellow Wilmot fairly dashed her brains out, and a good job too!”

This inhuman sentiment, since there was nothing profane or improper in it, failed to do as much as to check the slight yawn Miss Blank was achieving behind her hand. And she remained gazing fixedly at the window-panes, which streamed with rain.

As I opened the parlour door the same voice went on in the same cruel strain :

“I was glad when I heard she got the knock from somebody at last. Sorry enough for poor Wilmot, though. That man and I used to be chums at one time. Of course that was the end of him. A clear case if there ever was one. No way out of it. None at all.”

The voice belonged to the gentleman Miss Blank had never seen before. He straddled his long legs on the hearthrug. Jermyn, leaning forward, held his pocket-handkerchief spread out before the grate. He looked back dismally over his shoulder, and as I slipped behind one of the little wooden tables, I nodded to him. On the other side of the fire, imposingly calm and large, sat Mr. Stonor, jammed tight into a capacious Windsor arm-chair. There was nothing small about him but his short, white side-whiskers. Yards and yards of extra superfine blue cloth (made up into an overcoat) reposed on a chair by his side. And he must just have brought some liner from sea, because another chair was smothered under his black waterproof, ample as a pall, and made of three-fold oiled silk, double-stitched throughout. A man's handbag of the usual size looked like a child's toy on the floor near his feet.

I did not nod to him. He was too big to be nodded to in that parlour. He was a senior Trinity pilot and condescended to take his turn in the cutter only during the summer months. He had been many times in charge of royal yachts in and out of Port Victoria. Besides, it's no use nodding to a monument. And he was like one. He didn't speak, he didn't budge. He just sat there, holding his handsome old head up, immovable, and almost bigger than life. It was extremely fine. Mr. Stonor's presence reduced old Jermyn to a mere shabby wisp of a man, and made the talkative stranger in tweeds on the hearthrug look absurdly boyish. The latter must have been a few years over thirty, and was certainly not the sort of individual that gets abashed at the sound of his own voice, because gathering me in, as it were, by a friendly glance, he kept it going without a check :

“I was glad of it,” he repeated emphatically. “You may be

surprised at it, but then you haven't gone through the experience I've had of her. I can tell you, it was something to remember. Of course, I got off scot free myself—as you can see. She did her best to break up my pluck for me tho'. She jolly near drove as fine a fellow as ever lived into a madhouse. What do you say to that—eh?"

Not an eyelid twitched in Mr. Stonor's enormous face. Monumental! The speaker looked straight into my eyes.

"It used to make me sick to think of her going about the world murdering people."

Jermyn approached the handkerchief a little nearer to the grate and groaned. It was simply a habit he had.

"I've seen her once," he declared, with mournful indifference. "She had a house——"

The stranger in tweeds turned to stare down at him surprised.

"She had three houses," he corrected authoritatively. But Jermyn was not to be contradicted.

"She had a house, I say," he repeated, with dismal obstinacy. "A great big, ugly, white thing. You could see it from miles away—sticking up."

"So you could," assented the other readily. "It was old Colchester's notion, though he was always threatening to give her up. He couldn't stand her racket any more, he declared; it was too much of a good thing for him; he would wash his hands of her, if he never got hold of another—and so on. I dare say he would have chucked her, only—it may surprise you—his missus wouldn't hear of it. Funny, eh? But with women, you never know how they will take a thing, and Mrs. Colchester, with her moustaches and big eyebrows, set up for being as strong-minded as they make them. She used to walk about in a brown silk dress, with a great gold cable flopping about her bosom. You should have heard her snapping out: 'Rubbish!' or 'Stuff and nonsense!' I daresay she knew when she was well off. They had no children, and had never set up a home anywhere. When in England she just made shift to hang out anyhow in some cheap hotel or boarding-house. I daresay she liked to get back to the comforts she was used to. She knew very well she couldn't gain by any change. And, moreover, Colchester, though a first-rate man, was not what you may call in his first youth, and, perhaps, she may have thought that he wouldn't be able to get hold of another (as he used to say) so easily. Anyhow, for one reason or another, it was 'Rubbish'

and 'Stuff and nonsense' for the good lady. I overheard once young Mr. Apse himself say to her confidentially: 'I assure you, Mrs. Colchester, I am beginning to feel quite unhappy about the name she's getting for herself.' 'Oh,' says she, with her deep little hoarse laugh, 'if one took notice of all the silly talk,' and she showed Apse all her ugly false teeth at once. 'It would take more than that to make me lose my confidence in her, I assure you,' says she."

At this point, without any change of facial expression, Mr. Stonor emitted a short sardonic laugh. It was very impressive, but I didn't see the fun. I looked from one to another. The stranger on the hearthrug had an ugly smile.

"And Mr. Apse shook both Mrs. Colchester's hands, he was so pleased to hear a good word said for their favourite. All these Apses, young and old you know, were perfectly infatuated with that abominable, dangerous——"

"I beg your pardon," I interrupted, for he seemed to be addressing himself exclusively to me, "but who on earth are you talking about?"

"I am talking of the Apse family," he answered, courteously.

I nearly let out a damn at this. But just then the respected Miss Blank put her head in, and said that the cab was at the door, if Mr. Stonor wanted to catch the eleven-three up.

At once the senior pilot arose in his mighty bulk and began to struggle into his coat, with awe-inspiring upheavals. The stranger and I hurried impulsively to his assistance, and directly we laid our hands on him he became perfectly quiescent. We had to raise our arms very high, and to make efforts. It was like caparisoning a docile elephant. With a "Thanks, gentlemen," he dived under and squeezed himself through the door in a great hurry.

We smiled at each other in a friendly way.

"I wonder how he manages to hoist himself up a ship's side-ladder," said the man in tweeds; and poor Jermyn, who was a mere North Sea pilot, without official status or recognition of any sort, pilot only by courtesy, groaned.

"He makes eight hundred a year."

"Are you a sailor?" I asked the stranger, who had gone back to his position on the rug.

"I used to be till a couple of years ago when I got married," answered this communicative individual. "I even went to sea first in that very ship we were speaking of when you came in."

“What ship?” I asked, puzzled. “I never heard you mention a ship.”

“I’ve just told you her name, my dear sir,” he replied. “The *Apse Family*. Surely you’ve heard of the great firm of Apse & Sons, shipowners. They had a pretty big fleet. There was the *Lucy Apse*, and the *Harold Apse*, and *Anne*, *John*, *Malcolm*, *Clara*, *Juliet*, and so on—no end of *Apses*. Every brother, sister, aunt, cousin, wife—and grandmother too, for all I know—of the firm had a ship named after them. Good, solid, old-fashioned craft they were too, built to carry and to last. None of your new-fangled, labour-saving appliances in them, but plenty of men and plenty of good salt beef and hard tack put aboard—and off you go to fight your way out and home again.”

The miserable Jermyn made a sound of approval, which sounded like a groan of pain. Those were the ships for him. He pointed out in doleful tones that you couldn’t say to labour-saving appliances: “Jump lively now, my hearties.” No labour-saving appliance would go aloft on a dirty night with the sands under your lee.

“No,” assented the stranger, with a wink at me. “The *Apses* didn’t believe in them either, apparently. They treated their people well—as people don’t get treated nowadays, and they were awfully proud of their ships. Nothing ever happened to them. This last one, the *Apse Family*, was to be like the others, only she was to be still stronger, still safer, still more roomy and comfortable. I believe they meant her to last for ever. They had her built composite—iron, teak-wood, and greenheart, and her scantling was something fabulous. If ever an order was given for a ship in a spirit of pride this one was. Everything of the best. The commodore captain of the employ was to command her, and they planned the accommodation for him like a house on shore under a big, tall poop that went nearly to the mainmast. No wonder Mrs. Colchester wouldn’t let the old man give her up. Why, it was the best home she ever had in all her married days. She had a nerve, that woman.

“The fuss that was made while that ship was building! Let’s have this a little stronger, and that a little heavier; and hadn’t that other thing better be changed for something a little thicker. The builders entered into the spirit of the game, and there she was, growing into the clumsiest, heaviest ship of her size right before all their eyes, without anybody becoming aware of it somehow. She

was to be 2,000 tons register, or a little over ; no less on any account. But see what happens. When they came to measure her she turned out 1,999 tons and a fraction. General consternation ! And they say old Mr. Apse was so annoyed, when they told him, that he took to his bed and died. The old gentleman had retired from the firm twenty-five years before, and was ninety-six years old if a day, so his death wasn't, perhaps, so surprising. Still Mr. Lucian Apse was convinced that his father would have lived to a hundred. So we may put him at the head of the list. Next comes the poor devil of a shipwright that brute caught and squashed as she went off the ways. They called it the launch of a ship, but I've heard people say that, from the wailing and yelling and scrambling out of the way, it was more like letting a devil loose upon the river. She snapped all her checks like pack-thread, and went for the tugs in attendance like a fury. Before anybody could see what she was up to she sent one of them to the bottom, and laid up another for three months' repairs. One of her cables parted, and then, suddenly—you couldn't tell why—she let herself be brought up with the other as quiet as a lamb.

“ That's how she was. You could never be sure what she would be up to next. There are ships difficult to handle, but generally you can depend on them behaving rationally. With *that* ship, whatever you did with her, you never knew how it would end. She was a wicked beast. Or, perhaps, she was only just insane.”

He uttered this supposition in so earnest a tone that I could not refrain from smiling. He left off biting his lower lip to apostrophize me.

“ Eh ! Why not ? Why couldn't there be something in her build, in her lines corresponding to—What's madness ? Only something just a tiny bit wrong in the make of your brain. Why shouldn't there be a mad ship—I mean mad in a ship-like way, so that under no circumstances could you be sure she would do what any other sensible ship would naturally do for you. There are ships that steer wildly, and ships that can't be quite trusted always to stay ; others want careful watching when running in a gale ; and, again, there may be a ship that will make heavy weather of it in every little blow. But then you expect her to be always so. You take it as part of her character, as a ship, just as you take account of a man's peculiarities of temper when you deal with him. But with her you couldn't. She was unaccountable. If she wasn't mad, then she was the most evil-minded, underhand,

savage brute that ever went afloat. I've seen her run in a heavy gale beautifully for two days, and on the third broach to twice in the same afternoon. The first time she flung the helmsman clean over the wheel, but as she didn't quite manage to kill him she had another try about three hours afterwards. She swamped herself fore and aft, burst all the canvas we had set, scared all hands into a panic, and even frightened Mrs. Colchester down there in these beautiful stern cabins that she was so proud of. When we mustered the crew there was one man missing. Swept overboard, of course, without being either seen or heard, poor devil ! and I only wonder more of us didn't go.

"Always something like that. Always. I heard an old mate tell Captain Colchester once that it had come to this with him, that he was afraid to open his mouth to give any sort of order. She was as much of a terror in harbour as at sea. You could never be certain what would hold her. On the slightest provocation she would start snapping ropes, cables, wire hawsers, like carrots. She was heavy, clumsy, unhandy—but that does not quite explain that power for mischief she had. You know, somehow, when I think of her I can't help remembering what we hear of incurable lunatics breaking loose now and then."

He looked at me inquisitively. But, of course, I couldn't admit that a ship could be mad.

"In the ports where she was known," he went on, "they dreaded the sight of her. She thought nothing of knocking away twenty feet or so of solid stone facing off a quay or wiping off the end of a wooden wharf. She must have lost miles of chain and hundreds of tons of anchors in her time. When she fell aboard some poor offending ship it was the very devil of a job to haul her off again. And she never got hurt herself—just a few scratches or so, perhaps. They had wanted to have her strong. And so she was. Strong enough to ram Polar ice with. And as she began so she went on. From the day she was launched she never let a year pass without murdering somebody. I think the owners got very worried about it. But they were a stiff-necked generation all these Apses ; they wouldn't admit there could be anything wrong with the *Apse Family*. They wouldn't even change her name. 'Stuff and nonsense,' as Mrs. Colchester used to say. They ought at least to have shut her up for life in some dry dock or other, away up the river, and never let her smell salt water again. I assure you, my dear sir, that she invariably did kill some one every voyage she

made. It was perfectly well known. She got a name for it, far and wide."

I expressed my surprise that a ship with such a deadly reputation could ever get a crew.

"Then, you don't know what sailors are, my dear sir. Let me just show you by an instance. One day in dock at home, while loafing on the forecastle head, I noticed two respectable salts come along, one a middle-aged, competent, steady man, evidently, the other a smart, youngish chap. They read the name on the bows and stopped to look at her. Says the elder man: '*Apse Family*. That's the sanguinary female dog' (I'm putting it in that way) 'of a ship, Jack, that kills a man every voyage. I wouldn't sign in her—not for Joe, I wouldn't.' And the other says: 'If she were mine, I'd have her towed on the mud and set on fire, blamme if I wouldn't.' Then the first man chimes in: 'Much do they care! Men are cheap, God knows.' The younger one spat in the water alongside. 'They won't have me—not for double wages.'

"They hung about for some time and then walked up the dock. Half an hour later I saw them both on our deck looking about for the mate, and apparently very anxious to be taken on. And they were."

"How do you account for this?" I asked.

"What would you say?" he retorted. "Recklessness! The vanity of boasting in the evening to all their chums: 'We've just shipped in that there *Apse Family*. Blow her. She ain't going to scare us.' Sheer sailor-like perversity! A sort of curiosity. Well—a little of all that, no doubt. I put the question to them in the course of the voyage. The answer of the elderly chap was:

"'A man can die but once.' The younger assured me in a mocking tone that he wanted to see 'how she would do it this time.' But I tell you what; there was a sort of fascination about the brute."

Jermyn, who seemed to have seen every ship in the world, broke in sulkily:

"I saw her once out of this very window towing up the river; a great black ugly thing, going along like a big hearse."

"Something sinister about her looks, wasn't there?" said the man in tweeds, looking down at old Jermyn with a friendly eye.

"I always had a sort of horror of her. She gave me a beastly shock when I was no more than fourteen, the very first day—nay, hour—I joined her. Father came up to see me off, and was to go

down to Gravesend with us. I was his second boy to go to sea. My big brother was already an officer then. We got on board about eleven in the morning, and found the ship ready to drop out of the basin, stern first. She had not moved three times her own length when, at a little pluck the tug gave her to enter the dock gates, she made one of her rampaging starts, and put such a weight on the check rope—a new six-inch hawser—that forward there they had no chance to ease it round in time, and it parted. I saw the broken end fly up high in the air, and the next moment that brute brought her quarter against the pier-head with a jar that staggered everybody about her decks. She didn't hurt herself. Not she ! But one of the boys the mate had sent aloft on the mizzen to do something, came down on the poop-deck—thump—right in front of me. He was not much older than myself. We had been grinning at each other only a few minutes before. He must have been handling himself carelessly, not expecting to get such a jerk. I heard his startled cry—Oh !—in a high treble as he felt himself going, and looked up in time to see him go limp all over as he fell. Ough ! Poor father was remarkably white about the gills when we shook hands in Gravesend. 'Are you all right?' he says, looking hard at me. 'Yes, father.' 'Quite sure?' 'Yes, father.' 'Well, then, good-bye, my boy.' He told me afterwards that for half a word he would have carried me off home with him there and then. I am the baby of the family—you know," added the man in tweeds, stroking his moustache with an ingenuous smile.

I acknowledged this interesting communication by a sympathetic murmur. He waved his hand carelessly.

"This might have utterly spoiled a chap's nerve for going aloft, you know—utterly. He fell within two feet of me, cracking his head on a mooring-bitt. Never moved. Stone dead. Nice looking little fellow, he was. I had just been thinking we would be great chums. However, that wasn't yet the worst that brute of a ship could do. I served in her three years of my time, and then I got transferred to the *Lucy Apse*, for a year. The sailmaker we had in the *Apse Family* turned up there, too, and I remember him saying to me one evening, after we had been a week at sea: 'Isn't she a meek little ship?' No wonder we thought the *Lucy Apse* a dear, meek, little ship after getting clear of that big rampaging savage brute. It was like heaven. Her officers seemed to me the restfullest lot of men on earth. To me who had known no ship but the *Apse Family*, the *Lucy* was like a sort of magic craft that did what you

wanted her to do of her own accord. One evening we got caught aback pretty sharply from right ahead. In about ten minutes we had her full again, sheets aft, tacks down, decks cleared, and the officer of the watch leaning against the weather rail peacefully. It seemed simply marvellous to me. The other would have stuck for half-an-hour in irons, rolling her decks full of water, knocking the men about—spars cracking, braces snapping, yards taking charge, and a confounded scare going on aft because of her beastly rudder, which she had a way of flapping about fit to raise your hair on end. I couldn't get over my wonder for days.

“ Well, I finished my last year of apprenticeship in that jolly little ship—she wasn't so little either, but after that other heavy devil she seemed but a plaything to handle. I finished my time and passed ; and then just as I was thinking of having three weeks of real good time on shore I got at breakfast a letter asking me the earliest day I could be ready to join the *Apse Family* as third mate. I gave my plate a shove that shot it into the middle of the table ; dad looked up over his paper ; mother raised her hands in astonishment, and I went out bare-headed into our bit of garden, where I walked round and round for an hour.

“ When I came in again mother was out of the dining-room, and dad had shifted berth into his big armchair. The letter was lying on the mantelpiece.

“ ‘ It's very creditable to you to get the offer, and very kind of them to make it,’ he said. ‘ And I see also that Charles has been appointed chief mate of that ship for one voyage.’

“ There was overleaf a PS. to that effect in Mr. Apse's own handwriting, which I had overlooked. Charley was my big brother.

“ ‘ I don't like very much to have two of my boys together in one ship,’ father goes on, in his deliberate solemn way. ‘ And I may tell you that I would not mind writing Mr. Apse a letter to that effect.’

“ Dear old dad ! He was a wonderful father. What would you have done ? The mere notion of going back (and as an officer, too), to be worried and bothered, and kept on the jump night and day by that brute, made me feel sick. But she wasn't a ship you could afford to fight shy of. Besides, the most genuine excuse could not be given without mortally offending Apse & Sons. The firm, and I believe the whole family down to the old unmarried aunts in Lancashire, had grown desperately touchy about that accursed

ship's character. This was the case for answering 'Ready now' from your very death-bed if you wished to die in their good grace. And that's precisely what I did answer—by wire, to have it over and done with at once.

"The prospect of being shipmates with my big brother cheered me up considerably, though it made me a bit anxious, too. Ever since I remember myself as a little chap he had been very good to me, and I looked upon him as the finest fellow in the world. And so he was. No better officer ever walked the deck of a merchant ship. And that's a fact. He was a fine, strong, upstanding, sun-tanned young fellow, with his brown hair curling a little, and an eye like a hawk. He was just splendid. We hadn't seen each other for many years, and even this time, though he had been in England three weeks already, he hadn't showed up at home yet, but had spent his spare time in Surrey somewhere making up to Maggie Colchester, old Captain Colchester's niece. Her father, a great friend of dad's, was in the sugar-broking business, and Charley made a sort of second home of their house. I wondered what my big brother would think of me. There was a sort of sternness about Charley's face which never left it, not even when he was larking in his rather wild fashion.

"He received me with a great shout of laughter. He seemed to think my joining as an officer the greatest joke in the world. There was a difference of ten years between us, and I suppose he remembered me best in pinafores. I was a kid of four when he first went to sea. It surprised me to find how boisterous he could be.

"'Now we shall see what you are made of,' he cried. And he held me off by the shoulders, and punched my ribs, and hustled me into his berth. 'Sit down, Ned. I am glad of the chance of having you with me. I'll put the finishing touch to you, my young officer, providing you're worth the trouble. And, first of all, get it well into your head that we are not going to let this brute kill anybody this voyage. We'll stop her racket.'

"I perceived he was in dead earnest about it. He talked grimly of the ship, and how we must be careful and never allow this ugly beast to catch us napping with any of her damned tricks.

He gave me a regular lecture on special seamanship for the use of the *Apse Family*; then changing his tone, he began to talk at large, rattling off the wildest, funniest nonsense, till my sides

ached with laughing. I could see very well he was a bit above himself with high spirits. It couldn't be because of my coming. Not to that extent. But, of course, I wouldn't have dreamt of asking what was the matter. I had a proper respect for my big brother, I can tell you. But it was all made plain enough a day or two afterwards, when I heard that Miss Maggie Colchester was coming for the voyage. Uncle was giving her a sea-trip for the benefit of her health.

"I don't know what could have been wrong with her health. She had a beautiful colour, and a deuce of a lot of fair hair. She didn't care a rap for wind, or rain, or spray, or sun, or green seas, or anything. She was a blue-eyed, jolly girl of the very best sort, but the way she cheeked my big brother used to frighten me. I always expected it to end in an awful row. However, nothing decisive happened till after we had been in Sydney for a week. One day, in the men's dinner hour, Charley sticks his head into my cabin. I was stretched out on my back on the settee, smoking in peace.

" 'Come ashore with me, Ned,' he says, in his curt way.

"I jumped up, of course, and away after him down the gangway and up George Street. He strode along like a giant, and I at his elbow, panting. It was confoundedly hot. 'Where on earth are you rushing me to, Charley?' I made bold to ask.

" 'Here,' he says.

" 'Here' was a jeweller's shop. I couldn't imagine what he could want there. It seemed a sort of mad freak. He thrusts under my nose three rings, which looked very tiny on his big, brown palm, growling out—

" 'For Maggie! Which!'

"I got a kind of scare at this. I couldn't make a sound, but I pointed at the one that sparkled white and blue. He put it in his waistcoat pocket, paid for it with a lot of sovereigns, and bolted out. When we got on board I was quite out of breath. 'Shake hands, old chap,' I gasped out. He gave me a thump on the back. 'Give what orders you like to the boatswain when the hands turn-to,' says he; 'I am off duty this afternoon.'

"Then he vanished from the deck for a while, but presently he came out of the cabin with Maggie, and these two went over the gangway publicly, before all hands, going for a walk together on that awful, blazing, hot day, with clouds of dust flying about. They came back after a few hours looking very staid, but didn't

seem to have the slightest idea where they had been. Anyway, that's the answer they both made to Mrs. Colchester's question at tea-time.

"And didn't she turn on Charley, with her voice like an old night cabman's. 'Rubbish. Don't know where you've been! Stuff and nonsense. You've walked the girl off her legs. Don't do it again.'

"It's surprising how meek Charley could be with that old woman. Only on one occasion he whispered to me, 'I'm jolly glad she isn't Maggie's aunt, except by marriage. That's no sort of relationship.' But I think he let Maggie have too much of her own way. She was hopping all over that ship in her yachting skirt and a red tam-o'-shanter like a bright bird on a dead black tree. The old salts used to grin to themselves when they saw her coming along, and offered to teach her knots or splices. I believe she liked the men, for Charley's sake, I suppose.

"As you may imagine, the diabolic propensities of that cursed ship were never spoken of on board. Not in the cabin, at any rate. Only once on the homeward passage Charley said, incautiously, something about bringing all her crew home this time. Captain Colchester began to look uncomfortable at once, and that silly, hard-bitten old woman flew out at Charley as though he had said something indecent. I was quite confounded myself; as to Maggie, she sat completely mystified, opening her blue eyes very wide. Of course, before she was a day older she wormed it all out of me. She was a very difficult person to lie to.

"'How awful,' she said, quite solemn. 'So many poor fellows. I am glad the voyage is nearly over. I won't have a moment's peace about Charley now.'

"I assured her Charley was all right. It took more than that ship knew to get over a seaman like Charley. And she agreed with me.

"Next day we got the tug off Dungeness; and when the tow-rope was fast Charley rubbed his hands and said to me in an undertone—

"'We've baffled her, Ned.'

"'Looks like it,' I said, with a grin at him. It was beautiful weather, and the sea as smooth as a millpond. We went up the river without a shadow of trouble except once, when off Hole Haven, the brute took a sudden sheer and nearly had a barge anchored just clear of the fairway. But I was aft, looking after the

steering, and she did not catch me napping that time. Charley came up on the poop, looking very concerned. 'Close shave,' says he.

" 'Never mind, Charley,' I answered, cheerily. 'You've tamed her.'

" We were to tow right up to the dock. The river pilot boarded us below Gravesend, and the first words I heard him say were: 'You may just as well take your port anchor inboard at once, Mr. Mate.'

" This had been done when I went forward. I saw Maggie on the forecastle head enjoying the bustle, and I begged her to go aft, but she took no notice of me, of course. Then Charley, who was very busy with the head gear, caught sight of her and shouted in his biggest voice: 'Get off the forecastle head, Maggie. You're in the way here.' For all answer she made a funny face at him, and I saw poor Charley turn away, hiding a smile. She was flushed with the excitement of getting home again, and her blue eyes seemed to snap electric sparks as she looked at the river. A collier brig had gone round just ahead of us, and our tug had to stop her engines in a hurry to avoid running into her.

" In a moment, as is usually the case, all the shipping in the reach seemed to get into a hopeless tangle. A schooner and a ketch got up a small collision all to themselves right in the middle of the river. It was exciting to watch, and, meantime, our tug remained stopped. Any other ship than that brute could have been coaxed to keep straight for a couple of minutes—but not she! Her head fell off at once, and she began to drift down, taking her tug along with her. I noticed a cluster of coasters at anchor within a quarter of a mile of us, and I thought I had better speak to the pilot. "If you let her get amongst that lot," I said, quietly, "she will grind some of them to bits before we get her out again."

" 'Don't I know her!' cries he, stamping his foot in a perfect fury. And he out with his whistle to make that bothered tug get the ship's head up again as quick as possible. He blew like mad, waving his arm to port, and presently we could see that the tug's engines had been set going ahead. Her paddles churned the water, but it was as if she had been trying to tow a rock—she couldn't get an inch out of that ship. Again the pilot blew his whistle, and waved his arm to port. We could see the tug's paddles turning faster and faster away, broad on our bow.

" For a moment tug and ship hung motionless in a crowd of

moving shipping, and then the terrific strain that evil, stony-hearted brute would always put on everything, tore the towing-chock clean out. The tow-rope surged over, snapping the iron stanchions of the head-rail one after another as if they had been sticks of sealing-wax. It was only then I noticed that in order to have a better view over our heads, Maggie had stepped upon the port anchor as it lay flat on the forecastle deck.

"It had been lowered properly into its hardwood beds, but there had been no time to take a turn with it. Anyway, it was quite secure as it was, for going into dock ; but I could see directly that the tow-rope would sweep under the fluke in another second. My heart flew up right into my throat, but not before I had time to yell out : ' Jump clear of that anchor ! '

But I hadn't time to shriek out her name. I don't suppose she heard me at all. The first touch of the hawser against the fluke threw her down ; she was up on her feet again as quick as lightning, but she was up on the wrong side. I heard a horrid, scraping sound, and then that anchor, tipping over, rose up like something alive ; its great, rough iron arm caught Maggie round the waist, seemed to clasp her close with a dreadful hug, and flung itself with her over and down in a terrific clang of iron, followed by heavy ringing blows that shook the ship from stern to stem—because the ring stopper held ! "

"How horrible ! " I exclaimed.

"I used to dream for years afterwards of anchors catching hold of girls," said the man in tweeds, a little wildly. He shuddered. "With a most pitiful howl Charley was over after her almost on the instant. But, Lord ! he didn't see as much as a gleam of her red tam-o-shanter in the water. Nothing ! nothing whatever ! In a moment there were half-a-dozen boats around us, and he got pulled into one. I, with the boatswain and the carpenter, let go the other anchor in a hurry and brought the ship up somehow. The pilot had gone silly. He walked up and down the forecastle head wringing his hands and muttering to himself : ' Killing women, now ! Killing women now ! ' Not another word could you get out of him.

"Dusk fell, then a night black as pitch ; and peering upon the river I heard a low, mournful hail, ' Ship, ahoy ! ' Two Gravesend watermen came alongside. They had a lantern in their wherry, and looked up the ship's side, holding on to the ladder without a word. I saw in the patch of light a lot of loose, fair hair down there."

He shuddered again.

"After the tide turned poor Maggie's body had floated clear of one of them big mooring buoys," he explained. "I crept aft, feeling half-dead and managed to send a rocket up—to let the other searchers know, on the river. And then I slunk away forward like a cur, and spent the night sitting on the heel of the bowsprit so as to be as far as possible out of Charley's way."

"Poor fellow!" I murmured.

"Yes. Poor fellow," he repeated musingly. "That brute wouldn't let him—not even him—cheat her of her prey. But he made her fast in dock next morning. He did. We hadn't exchanged a word—not a single look for that matter. I didn't want to look at him. When the last rope was fast he put his hands to his head and stood gazing down at his feet as if trying to remember something. The men waited on the main deck for the words that end the voyage. Perhaps that is what he was trying to remember. I spoke for him. 'That'll do, men.'

"I never saw a crew leave a ship so quietly. They sneaked over the rail one after another, taking care not to bang their sea chests too heavily. They looked our way, but not one had the stomach to come up and offer to shake hands with the mate as is usual.

"I followed him all over the empty ship to and fro, here and there, with no living soul about but the two of us, because the old ship-keeper had locked himself up in the galley—both doors. Suddenly poor Charley mutters, in a crazy voice: 'I'm done here,' and strides down the gangway with me at his heels, up the dock, out at the gate, on towards Tower Hill. He used to take rooms with a decent old landlady in America Square, to be near his work.

"All at once he stops short, turns round, and comes back straight at me. 'Ned,' says he, 'I am going home.' I had the good luck to sight a four-wheeler and got him in just in time. His legs were beginning to give way. In our hall he fell down on a chair, and I'll never forget father's and mother's amazed, perfectly still faces as they stood over him. They couldn't understand what had happened to him till I blubbered out 'Maggie got drowned, yesterday, in the river.'

"Mother let out a little cry. Father looks from him to me, and from me to him, as if comparing our faces—for, upon my soul, Charley did not resemble himself at all. Nobody moved: and the poor fellow raises his big brown hands slowly to his throat, and

with one single tug rips everything open—collar, shirt, waistcoat,—a perfect wreck and ruin of a man. Father and I got him upstairs somehow, and mother pretty nearly killed herself nursing him through a brain fever.”

The man in tweeds nodded at me significantly.

“Ah! there was nothing that could be done with that brute. She had a devil in her.”

“Where’s your brother?” I asked, expecting to hear he was dead. But he was commanding a smart steamer on the China coast, and never came home now.

Jermyn fetched a heavy sigh, and the handkerchief being now sufficiently dry, put it up tenderly to his red and lamentable nose.

“She was a ravening beast,” the man in tweeds started again. “Old Colchester put his foot down and resigned. And would you believe it? Apse & Sons wrote to ask whether he wouldn’t reconsider his decision! Anything to save the good name of the *Apse Family*! Old Colchester went to the office then and said that he would take charge again but only to sail her out into the North Sea and scuttle her there. He was nearly off his chump. He used to be darkish iron-grey, but his hair went snow-white in a fortnight. And Mr. Lucian Apse (they had known each other as young men) pretended not to notice it. Eh? Here’s infatuation if you like! Here’s pride for you!

“They jumped at the first man they could get to take her, for fear of the scandal of the *Apse Family* not being able to find a skipper. He was a festive soul, I believe, but he stuck to her grim and hard. Wilmot was his second mate. A harum-scarum fellow, and pretending to a great scorn for all the girls. The fact is he was really timid. But let only one of them do as much as lift her little finger in encouragement, and there was nothing that could hold the beggar. As apprentice, once, he deserted abroad after a petticoat, and would have gone to the dogs then if his skipper hadn’t taken the trouble to find him and lug him by the ears out of some house of perdition or other.

“It was said that one of the firm had been heard once to express a hope that this brute of a ship would get lost soon. I can hardly credit the tale, unless it might have been Mr. Alfred Apse, whom the family didn’t think much of. They had him in the office, but he was considered a bad egg altogether, always flying off to race meetings and coming home drunk. You would have thought that

a ship so full of deadly tricks would run herself ashore some day out of sheer cussedness. But not she! She was going to last for ever. She had a nose to keep off the bottom."

Jermyn made a grunt of approval.

"A ship after a pilot's own heart, eh?" jeered the man in tweeds. "Well, Wilmot managed it. He was the man for it, but even he, perhaps, couldn't have done the trick without that green-eyed governess, or nurse, or whatever she was to the children of Mr. and Mrs. Pamphilius.

"Those people were passengers in her from Port Adelaide to the Cape. Well, the ship went out and anchored outside for the day. The skipper—hospitable soul—had a lot of guests from town to a farewell lunch—as usual with him. It was five in the evening before the last shore boat left the side, and the weather looked ugly and dark in the gulf. There was no reason for him to get under way. However, as he had told everybody he was going that day, he imagined it was proper to do so anyhow. But as he had no mind after all these festivities to tackle the straits in the dark, with a scant wind, he gave orders to keep the ship under lower topsails and foresail as close as she would lie, dodging along the land till the morning. Then he sought his virtuous couch. The mate was on deck, having his face washed very clean with hard rain squalls. Wilmot relieved him at midnight.

"The *Apse Family* had, as you observed, a house on her poop . . ."

"A big, ugly white thing, sticking up," Jermyn murmured sadly, at the fire.

"That's it: a companion for the cabin stairs and a sort of chart-room combined. The rain drove in gusts on the sleepy Wilmot. The ship was then surging slowly to the southward, close hauled, with the coast within three miles or so to windward. There was nothing to look out for in that part of the gulf, and Wilmot went round to dodge the squalls under the lee of that chartroom, whose door on that side was open. The night was black, like a barrel of coal-tar. And then he heard a woman's voice whispering to him.

"That confounded green-eyed girl of the Pamphilius people had put the kids to bed a long time ago, of course, but it seems couldn't get to sleep herself. She heard eight bells struck, and the chief mate come below to turn in. She waited a bit, then got into her dressing-gown and stole across the empty saloon and up the

stairs into the chart-room. She sat down on the settee near the open door to cool herself, I daresay.

“ I suppose when she whispered to Wilmot it was as if somebody had struck a match in the fellow’s brain. I don’t know how it was they had got so very thick. I fancy he had met her ashore a few times before. I couldn’t make it out, because, when telling the story, Wilmot would break off to swear something awful at every second word. We had met on the quay in Sydney, and he had an apron of sacking up to his chin, a big whip in his hand. A wagon-driver. Glad to do anything not to starve. That’s what he had come down to.

“ However, there he was, with his head inside the door, on the girl’s shoulder as likely as not—officer of the watch ! The helmsman, on giving his evidence afterwards, said that he shouted several times that the binnacle lamp had gone out. It didn’t matter to him, because his orders were to ‘ sail her close.’ ‘ I thought it funny,’ he said, ‘ that the ship should keep on falling off in squalls, but I luffed her up every time as close as I was able. It was so dark I couldn’t see my hand before my face, and the rain came in bucketsful on my head.’

“ The truth was that at every squall the wind hauled aft a little, till gradually the ship came to be heading straight for the coast, without a single soul in her being aware of it. Wilmot himself confessed that he had not been near the standard compass for an hour. He might well have confessed ! The first thing he knew was the man on the look-out shouting blue murder forward there.

“ He tore his neck free, he says, and yelled back at him : ‘ What do you say ? ’

“ ‘ I think I hear breakers ahead, sir,’ howled the man and came rushing aft with the rest of the watch, in the ‘ awfulest blinding deluge that ever fell from the sky,’ Wilmot says. For a second or so he was so scared and bewildered that he could not remember on which side of the gulf the ship was. He wasn’t a good officer, but he was a seaman all the same. He pulled himself together in a second, and the right orders sprang to his lips without thinking. They were to hard up with the helm and shiver the main and mizzen-topsails.

“ It seems that the sails actually fluttered. He couldn’t see them, but he heard them rattling and banging above his head. ‘ No use ! She was too slow in going off,’ he went on, his dirty face twitching, and the damn’d carter’s whip shaking in his hand.

'She seemed to stick fast.' And then the flutter of the canvas above his head ceased. At this critical moment the wind hauled aft again with a gust, filling the sails, and sending the ship with a great way upon the rocks on her lee bow. She had overreached herself in her last little game. Her time had come—the hour, the man, the black night, the treacherous gust of wind—the right woman to put an end to her. The brute deserved nothing better. Strange are the instruments of Providence. There's a sort of poetical justice——"

The man in tweeds looked hard at me.

"The first ledge she went over stripped the false keel off her. Rip! The skipper, rushing out of his berth, found a crazy woman, in a red flannel dressing-gown, flying round and round the cuddy, screeching like a cockatoo.

"The next bump knocked her clean under the cabin table. It also started the stern-post and carried away the rudder, and then that brute ran up a shelving, rocky shore, tearing her bottom out, till she stopped short, and the foremast dropped over the bows like a gangway."

"Anybody lost?" I asked.

"No one, unless that fellow Wilmot," answered the gentleman, unknown to Miss Blank, looking round for his cap. "And his case was worse than drowning for a man. Everybody got ashore all right. Gale didn't come on till next day, dead from the West, and broke up that brute in a surprisingly short time. It was as though she had been rotten at heart." . . . He changed his tone. "Rain left off. I must get my bike and rush home to dinner. I live in Herne Bay—came out for a spin this morning."

He nodded at me in a friendly way, and went out with a swagger.

"Do you know who he is, Jermyn?" I asked.

The North Sea pilot shook his head, dismally. "Fancy losing a ship in that silly fashion! Oh dear! oh dear!" he groaned in lugubrious tones, spreading his damp handkerchief again like a curtain before the glowing grate.

On going out I exchanged a glance and a smile (strictly proper) with the respectable Miss Blank, barmaid of the Three Crows.

May Sinclair

WHERE THEIR FIRE IS NOT QUENCHED

from UNCANNY STORIES

Hutchinson, 1923

There was nobody in the orchard. Harriott Leigh went out, carefully, through the iron gate into the field. She had made the latch slip into its notch without a sound.

The path slanted widely up the field from the orchard gate to the stile under the elder tree. George Waring waited for her there.

Years afterwards, when she thought of George Waring she smelt the sweet, hot, wine-scent of the elder flowers. Years afterwards, when she smelt elder flowers she saw George Waring, with his beautiful, gentle face, like a poet's or a musician's, his black-blue eyes, and sleek, olive-brown hair. He was a naval lieutenant.

Yesterday he had asked her to marry him and she had consented. But her father hadn't, and she had come to tell him that and say good-bye before he left her. His ship was to sail the next day.

He was eager and excited. He couldn't believe that anything could stop their happiness, that anything he didn't want to happen could happen.

"Well?" he said.

"He's a perfect beast, George. He won't let us. He says we're too young."

"I was twenty last August," he said, aggrieved.

"And I shall be seventeen in September."

"And this is June. We're quite old, really. How long does he mean us to wait?"

"Three years."

"Three years before we can be engaged even—Why, we might be dead."

She put her arms round him to make him feel safe. They kissed; and the sweet, hot, wine-scent of the elder flowers mixed with their kisses. They stood, pressed close together, under the elder tree.

Across the yellow fields of charlock they heard the village clock strike seven. Up in the house a gong clanged.

"Darling, I must go," she said.

“ Oh stay—Stay *five* minutes.”

He pressed her close. It lasted five minutes, and five more. Then he was running fast down the road to the station, while Harriott went along the field-path, slowly, struggling with her tears.

“ He’ll be back in three months,” she said. “ I can live through three months.”

But he never came back. There was something wrong with the engines of his ship, the *Alexandra*. Three weeks later she went down in the Mediterranean, and George with her.

Harriott said she didn’t care how soon she died now. She was quite sure it would be soon, because she couldn’t live without him.

Five years passed.

The two lines of beech trees stretched on and on, the whole length of the Park, a broad green drive between. When you came to the middle they branched off right and left in the form of a cross, and at the end of the right arm there was a white stucco pavilion with pillars and a three-cornered pediment like a Greek temple. At the end of the left arm, the west entrance to the Park, double gates and a side door.

Harriott, on her stone seat at the back of the pavilion, could see Stephen Philpotts the very minute he came through the side door.

He had asked her to wait for him there. It was the place he always chose to read his poems aloud in. The poems were a pretext. She knew what he was going to say. And she knew what she would answer.

There were elder bushes in flower at the back of the pavilion, and Harriott thought of George Waring. She told herself that George was nearer to her now than he could ever have been, living. If she married Stephen she would not be unfaithful, because she loved him with another part of herself. It was not as though Stephen were taking George’s place. She loved Stephen with her soul, in an unearthly way.

But her body quivered like a stretched wire when the door opened and the young man came towards her down the drive under the beech trees.

She loved him ; she loved his slenderness, his darkness and sallow whiteness, his black eyes lighting up with the intellectual flame, the way his black hair swept back from his forehead, the way he walked, tiptoe, as if his feet were lifted with wings.

He sat down beside her. She could see his hands tremble. She felt that her moment was coming ; it had come.

"I wanted to see you alone because there's something I must say to you. I don't quite know how to begin. . . ."

Her lips parted. She panted lightly.

"You've heard me speak of Sybill Foster?"

Her voice came stammering, "N-no, Stephen. Did you?"

"Well, I didn't mean to, till I knew it was all right. I only heard yesterday."

"Heard what?"

"Why, that she'll have me. Oh, Harriott—do you know what it's like to be terribly happy?"

She knew. She had known just now, the moment before he told her. She sat there, stone-cold and stiff, listening to his raptures, listening to her own voice saying she was glad.

Ten years passed.

Harriott Leigh sat waiting in the drawing-room of a small house in Maida Vale. She had lived there ever since her father's death two years before.

She was restless. She kept on looking at the clock to see if it was four, the hour that Oscar Wade had appointed. She was not sure that he would come, after she had sent him away yesterday.

She now asked herself, why, when she had sent him away yesterday, she had let him come to-day. Her motives were not altogether clear. If she really meant what she had said then, she oughtn't to let him come to her again. Never again.

She had shown him plainly what she meant. She could see herself, sitting very straight in her chair, uplifted by a passionate integrity, while he stood before her, hanging his head, ashamed and beaten; she could feel again the throb in her voice as she kept on saying that she couldn't, she couldn't; he must see that she couldn't; that no, nothing would make her change her mind; she couldn't forget he had a wife; that he must think of Muriel.

To which he had answered savagely: "I needn't. That's all over. We only live together for the look of the thing."

And she, serenely, with great dignity: "And for the look of the thing, Oscar, we must leave off seeing each other. Please go."

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes. We must never see each other again."

And he had gone then, ashamed and beaten.

She could see him, squaring his broad shoulders to meet the blow. And she was sorry for him. She told herself she had been unnecessarily hard. Why shouldn't they see each other again, now

he understood where they must draw the line? Until yesterday the line had never been very clearly drawn. To-day she meant to ask him to forget what he had said to her. Once it was forgotten, they could go on being friends as if nothing had happened.

It was four o'clock. Half-past. Five. She had finished tea and given him up when, between the half-hour and six o'clock, he came.

He came as he had come a dozen times, with his measured, deliberate, thoughtful tread, carrying himself well braced, with a sort of held-in arrogance, his great shoulders heaving. He was a man of about forty, broad and tall, lean-flanked and short-necked, his straight, handsome features showing small and even in the big square face and in the flush that swamped it. The close-clipped, reddish-brown moustache bristled forwards from the pushed-out upper lip. His small, flat eyes shone, reddish-brown, eager and animal.

She liked to think of him when he was not there, but always at the first sight of him she felt a slight shock. Physically, he was very far from her admired ideal. So different from George Waring and Stephen Philpotts.

He sat down, facing her.

There was an embarrassed silence, broken by Oscar Wade.

"Well, Harriott, you said I could come." He seemed to be throwing the responsibility on her.

"So I suppose you've forgiven me," he said.

"Oh, yes, Oscar, I've forgiven you."

He said she'd better show it by coming to dine with him somewhere that evening.

She could give no reason to herself for going. She simply went.

He took her to a restaurant in Soho. Oscar Wade dined well, even extravagantly, giving each dish its importance. She liked his extravagance. He had none of the mean virtues.

It was over. His flushed, embarrassed silence told her what he was thinking. But when he had seen her home, he left her at her garden gate. He had thought better of it.

She was not sure whether she were glad or sorry. She had had her moment of righteous exaltation and she had enjoyed it. But there was no joy in the weeks that followed it. She had given up Oscar Wade because she didn't want him very much; and now she wanted him furiously, perversely, because she had given him

up. Though he had no resemblance to her ideal, she couldn't live without him.

She dined with him again and again, till she knew Schnebler's Restaurant by heart, the white panelled walls picked out with gold; the white pillars, and the curling gold fronds of their capitals; the Turkey carpets, blue and crimson, soft under her feet; the thick crimson velvet cushions, that clung to her skirts; the glitter of silver and glass on the innumerable white circles of the tables. And the faces of the diners, red, white, pink, brown, grey and sallow, distorted and excited; the curled mouths that twisted as they ate; the convoluted electric bulbs pointing, pointing down at them, under the red, crinkled shades. All shimmering in a thick air that the red light stained as wine stains water.

And Oscar's face, flushed with his dinner. Always, when he leaned back from the table and brooded in silence she knew what he was thinking. His heavy eyelids would lift; she would find his eyes fixed on hers, wondering, considering.

She knew now what the end would be. She thought of George Waring, and Stephen Philpotts, and of her life, cheated. She hadn't chosen Oscar, she hadn't really wanted him; but now he had forced himself on her she couldn't afford to let him go. Since George died no man had loved her, no other man ever would. And she was sorry for him when she thought of him going from her, beaten and ashamed.

She was certain, before he was, of the end. Only she didn't know when and where and how it would come. That was what Oscar knew.

It came at the close of one of their evenings when they had dined in a private sitting-room. He said he couldn't stand the heat and noise of the public restaurant.

She went before him, up a steep, red-carpeted stair to a white door on the second landing.

From time to time they repeated the furtive, hidden adventure. Sometimes she met him in the room above Schnebler's. Sometimes, when her maid was out, she received him at her house in Maida Vale. But that was dangerous, not to be risked too often.

Oscar declared himself unspeakably happy. Harriott was not quite sure. This was love, the thing she had never had, that she had dreamed of, hungered and thirsted for; but now she had it she was not satisfied. Always she looked for something just beyond

it, some mystic, heavenly rapture, always beginning to come, that never came. There was something about Oscar that repelled her. But because she had taken him for her lover, she couldn't bring herself to admit that it was a certain coarseness. She looked another way and pretended it wasn't there. To justify herself, she fixed her mind on his good qualities, his generosity, his strength, the way he had built up his engineering business. She made him take her over his works, and show her his great dynamos. She made him lend her the books he read. But always, when she tried to talk to him, he let her see that *that* wasn't what she was there for.

"My dear girl, we haven't time," he said. "It's waste of our priceless moments."

She persisted. "There's something wrong about it all if we can't talk to each other."

He was irritated. "Women never seem to consider that a man can get all the talk he wants from other men. What's wrong is our meeting in this unsatisfactory way. We ought to live together. It's the only sane thing. I would, only I don't want to break up Muriel's home and make her miserable."

"I thought you said she wouldn't care."

"My dear, she cares for her home and her position and the children. You forget the children."

Yes. She had forgotten the children. She had forgotten Muriel. She had left off thinking of Oscar as a man with a wife and children and a home.

He had a plan. His mother-in-law was coming to stay with Muriel in October and he would get away. He would go to Paris, and Harriott should come to him there. He could say he went on business. No need to lie about it ; he *had* business in Paris.

He engaged rooms in an hotel in the rue de Rivoli. They spent two weeks there.

For three days Oscar was madly in love with Harriott and Harriott with him. As she lay awake she would turn on the light and look at him as he slept at her side. Sleep made him beautiful and innocent ; it laid a fine, smooth tissue over his coarseness ; it made his mouth gentle ; it entirely hid his eyes.

In six days reaction had set in. At the end of the tenth day, Harriott, returning with Oscar from Montmartre, burst into a fit of crying. When questioned, she answered wildly that the Hotel Saint Pierre was too hideously ugly ; it was getting on her

nerves. Mercifully Oscar explained her state as fatigue following excitement. She tried hard to believe that she was miserable because her love was purer and more spiritual than Oscar's ; but all the time she knew perfectly well she had cried from pure boredom. She was in love with Oscar, and Oscar bored her. Oscar was in love with her, and she bored him. At close quarters, day in and day out, each was revealed to the other as an incredible bore.

At the end of the second week she began to doubt whether she had ever been really in love with him.

Her passion returned for a little while after they got back to London. Freed from the unnatural strain which Paris had put on them, they persuaded themselves that their romantic temperaments were better fitted to the old life of casual adventure.

Then, gradually, the sense of danger began to wake in them. They lived in perpetual fear, face to face with all the chances of discovery. They tormented themselves and each other by imagining possibilities that they would never have considered in their first fine moments. It was as though they were beginning to ask themselves if it were, after all, worth while running such awful risks, for all they got out of it. Oscar still swore that if he had been free he would have married her. He pointed out that his intentions at any rate were regular. But she asked herself : Would I marry *him* ? Marriage would be the Hotel Saint Pierre all over again, without any possibility of escape. But, if she wouldn't marry him, was she in love with him ? That was the test. Perhaps it was a good thing he wasn't free. Then she told herself that these doubts were morbid, and that the question wouldn't arise.

One evening Oscar called to see her. He had come to tell her that Muriel was ill.

" Seriously ill ? "

" I'm afraid so. It's pleurisy. May turn to pneumonia. We shall know one way or another in the next few days. "

A terrible fear seized upon Harriott. Muriel might die of her pleurisy ; and if Muriel died, she would have to marry Oscar. He was looking at her queerly, as if he knew what she was thinking, and she could see that the same thought had occurred to him and that he was frightened too.

Muriel got well again ; but their danger had enlightened them. Muriel's life was now inconceivably precious to them both ; she

stood between them and that permanent union, which they dreaded and yet would not have the courage to refuse.

After enlightenment the rupture.

It came from Oscar, one evening when he sat with her in her drawing-room.

"Harriott," he said, "do you know I'm thinking seriously of settling down?"

"How do you mean, settling down?"

"Patching it up with Muriel, poor girl. . . . Has it never occurred to you that this little affair of ours can't go on for ever?"

"You don't want it to go on?"

"I don't want to have any humbug about it. For God's sake, let's be straight. If it's done, it's done. Let's end it decently."

"I see. You want to get rid of me."

"That's a beastly way of putting it."

"Is there any way that isn't beastly? The whole thing's beastly. I should have thought you'd have stuck to it now you've made it what you wanted. When I haven't an ideal, I haven't a single illusion, when you've destroyed everything you didn't want."

"What didn't I want?"

"The clean, beautiful part of it. The part *I* wanted."

"My part at least was real. It was cleaner and more beautiful than all that putrid stuff you wrapped it up in. You were a hypocrite, Harriott, and I wasn't. You're a hypocrite now if you say you weren't happy with me."

"I was never really happy. Never for one moment. There was always something I missed. Something you didn't give me. Perhaps you couldn't."

"No. I wasn't spiritual enough," he sneered.

"You were not. And you made me what you were."

"Oh, I noticed that you were always very spiritual *after* you'd got what you wanted."

"What I wanted?" she cried. "Oh, my God——"

"If you ever knew what you wanted."

"What—I—wanted," she repeated, drawing out her bitterness.

"Come," he said, "why not be honest? Face facts. I was awfully gone on you. You were awfully gone on me—once. We got tired of each other and it's over. But at least you might own we had a good time while it lasted."

"A good time?"

"Good enough for me."

“For you, because for you love only means one thing. Everything that’s high and noble in it you dragged down to that, till there’s nothing left for us but that. *That’s* what you made of love.”

Twenty years passed.

It was Oscar who died first, three years after the rupture. He did it suddenly one evening, falling down in a fit of apoplexy.

His death was an immense relief to Harriott. Perfect security had been impossible as long as he was alive. But now there wasn’t a living soul who knew her secret.

Still, in the first moment of shock Harriott told herself that Oscar dead would be nearer to her than ever. She forgot how little she had wanted him to be near her, alive. And long before the twenty years had passed she had contrived to persuade herself that he had never been near to her at all. It was incredible that she had ever known such a person as Oscar Wade. As for their affair, she couldn’t think of Harriott Leigh as the sort of woman to whom such a thing could happen. Schnebler’s and the Hotel Saint Pierre ceased to figure among prominent images of her past. Her memories, if she had allowed herself to remember, would have clashed disagreeably with the reputation for sanctity which she had now acquired.

For Harriott at fifty-two was the friend and helper of the Reverend Clement Farmer, Vicar of St. Mary the Virgin’s, Maida Vale. She worked as a deaconess in his parish, wearing the uniform of a deaconess, the semi-religious gown, the cloak, the bonnet and veil, the cross and rosary, the holy smile. She was also secretary to the Maida Vale and Kilburn Home for Fallen Girls.

Her moments of excitement came when Clement Farmer, the lean, austere likeness of Stephen Philpotts, in his cassock and lace-bordered surplice, issued from the vestry, when he mounted the pulpit, when he stood before the altar rails and lifted up his arms in the Benediction ; her moments of ecstasy when she received the Sacrament from his hands. And she had moments of calm happiness when his study door closed on their communion. All these moments were saturated with a solemn holiness.

And they were insignificant compared with the moment of her dying.

She lay dozing in her white bed under the black crucifix with the ivory Christ. The basins and medicine bottles had been

cleared from the table by her pillow ; it was spread for the last rites. The priest moved quietly about the room, arranging the candles, the Prayer Book and the Holy Sacrament. Then he drew a chair to her bedside and watched with her, waiting for her to come up out of her doze.

She woke suddenly. Her eyes were fixed upon him. She had a flash of lucidity. She was dying, and her dying made her supremely important to Clement Farmer.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Not yet. I think I'm afraid. Make me not afraid."

He rose and lit the two candles on the altar. He took down the crucifix from the wall and stood it against the foot-rail of the bed.

She sighed. That was not what she had wanted.

"You will not be afraid now," he said.

"I'm not afraid of the hereafter. I suppose you get used to it. Only it may be terrible just at first."

"Our first state will depend very much on what we are thinking of at our last hour."

"There'll be my—confession," she said.

"And after it you will receive the Sacrament. Then you will have your mind fixed firmly upon God and your Redeemer. . . . Do you feel able to make your confession now, Sister? Everything is ready."

Her mind went back over her past and found Oscar Wade there. She wondered: Should she confess to him about Oscar Wade? One moment she thought it was possible; the next she knew that she couldn't. She could not. It wasn't necessary. For twenty years he had not been part of her life. No. She wouldn't confess about Oscar Wade. She had been guilty of other sins.

She made a careful selection.

"I have cared too much for the beauty of this world. . . . I have failed in charity to my poor girls. Because of my intense repugnance to their sin. . . . I have thought, often, about—people I love, when I should have been thinking about God."

After that she received the Sacrament.

"Now," he said, "there is nothing to be afraid of."

"I won't be afraid if—if you would hold my hand."

He held it. And she lay still a long time, with her eyes shut. Then he heard her murmuring something. He stooped close.

"This—is—dying. I thought it would be horrible. And it's bliss. . . . Bliss."

The priest's hand slackened, as if at the bidding of some wonder. She gave a weak cry.

"Oh—don't let me go."

His grasp tightened.

"Try," he said, "to think about God. Keep on looking at the crucifix."

"If I look," she whispered, "you won't let go my hand?"

"I will not let you go."

He held it till it was wrenched from him in the last agony.

She lingered for some hours in the room where these things had happened.

Its aspect was familiar and yet unfamiliar, and slightly repugnant to her. The altar, the crucifix, the lighted candles, suggested some tremendous and awful experience the details of which she was not able to recall. She seemed to remember that they had been connected in some way with the sheeted body on the bed; but the nature of the connection was not clear; and she did not associate the dead body with herself. When the nurse came in and laid it out, she saw that it was the body of a middle-aged woman. Her own living body was that of a young woman of about thirty-two.

Her mind had no past and no future, no sharp-edged, coherent memories, and no idea of anything to be done next.

Then, suddenly, the room began to come apart before her eyes, to split into shafts of floor and furniture and ceiling that shifted and were thrown by their commotion into different planes. They leaned slanting at every possible angle; they crossed and overlaid each other with a transparent mingling of dislocated perspectives, like reflections fallen on an interior seen behind glass.

The bed and the sheeted body slid away somewhere out of sight. She was standing by the door that still remained in position.

She opened it and found herself in the street, outside a building of yellowish-grey brick and freestone, with a tall slated spire. Her mind came together with a palpable click of recognition. This object was the Church of St. Mary the Virgin, Maida Vale. She could hear the droning of the organ. She opened the door and slipped in.

She had gone back into a definite space and time, and recovered a certain limited section of coherent memory. She remembered the rows of pitch-pine benches, with their Gothic peaks and mouldings; the stone-coloured walls and pillars with their chocolate

stencilling ; the hanging rings of lights along the aisles of the nave ; the high altar with its lighted candles, and the polished brass cross, twinkling. These things were somehow permanent and real, adjusted to the image that now took possession of her.

She knew what she had come there for. The service was over. The choir had gone from the chancel ; the sacristan moved before the altar, putting out the candles. She walked up the middle aisle to a seat that she knew under the pulpit. She knelt down and covered her face with her hands. Peeping sideways through her fingers, she could see the door of the vestry on her left at the end of the north aisle. She watched it steadily.

Up in the organ loft the organist drew out the Recessional, slowly and softly, to its end in the two solemn, vibrating chords.

The vestry door opened and Clement Farmer came out, dressed in his black cassock. He passed before her, close, close outside the bench where she knelt. He paused at the opening. He was waiting for her. There was something he had to say.

She stood up and went towards him. He still waited. He didn't move to make way for her. She came close, closer than she had ever come to him, so close that his features grew indistinct. She bent her head back, peering short-sightedly, and found herself looking into Oscar Wade's face.

He stood still, horribly still, and close, barring her passage.

She drew back ; his heaving shoulders followed her. He leaned forward, covering her with his eyes. She opened her mouth to scream and no sound came.

She was afraid to move lest he should move with her. The heaving of his shoulders terrified her.

One by one the lights in the side aisles were going out. The lights in the middle aisle would go next. They had gone. If she didn't get away she would be shut up with him there, in the appalling darkness.

She turned and moved towards the north aisle, groping, steady-ing herself by the book ledge.

When she looked back, Oscar Wade was not there.

Then she remembered that Oscar Wade was dead. Therefore, what she had seen was not Oscar ; it was his ghost. He was dead ; dead seventeen years ago. She was safe from him for ever.

When she came out on to the steps of the church she saw that the road it stood in had changed. It was not the road she remembered.

The pavement on this side was raised slightly and covered in. It ran under a succession of arches. It was a long gallery walled with glittering shop windows on one side ; on the other a line of tall grey columns divided it from the street.

She was going along the arcades of the rue de Rivoli. Ahead of her she could see the edge of an immense grey pillar jutting out. That was the porch of the Hotel Saint Pierre. The revolving glass doors swung forward to receive her ; she crossed the grey, sultry vestibule under the pillared arches. She knew it. She knew the porter's shining, wine-coloured, mahogany pen on her left, and the shining, wine-coloured, mahogany barrier of the clerk's bureau on her right ; she made straight for the great grey carpeted staircase ; she climbed the endless flights that turned round and round the caged-in shaft of the well, past the latticed doors of the lift, and came up on to a landing that she knew, and into the long, ash-grey, foreign corridor lit by a dull window at one end.

It was there that the horror of the place came on her. She had no longer any memory of St. Mary's Church, so that she was unaware of her backward course through time. All space and time were here.

She remembered she had to go to the left, the left.

But there was something there ; where the corridor turned by the window ; at the end of all the corridors. If she went the other way she would escape it.

The corridor stopped there. A blank wall. She was driven back past the stairhead to the left.

At the corner, by the window, she turned down another long ash-grey corridor on her right, and to the right again where the night-light sputtered on the table-flap at the turn.

This third corridor was dark and secret and depraved. She knew the soiled walls, and the warped door at the end. There was a sharp-pointed streak of light at the top. She could see the number on it now, 107.

Something had happened there. If she went in it would happen again.

Oscar Wade was in the room waiting for her behind the closed door. She felt him moving about in there. She leaned forward, her ear to the key-hole, and listened. She could hear the measured, deliberate, thoughtful footsteps. They were coming from the bed to the door.

She turned and ran ; her knees gave way under her ; she sank

and ran on, down the long grey corridors and the stairs, quick and blind, a hunted beast seeking for cover, hearing his feet coming after her.

The revolving doors caught her and pushed her out into the street.

The strange quality of her state was this, that it had no time. She remembered dimly that there had once been a thing called time ; but she had forgotten altogether what it was like. She was aware of things happening and about to happen ; she fixed them by the place they occupied, and measured their duration by the space she went through.

So now she thought : If I could only go back and get to the place where it hadn't happened.

To get back farther——

She was walking now on a white road that went between broad grass borders. To the right and left were the long raking lines of the hills, curve after curve, shimmering in a thin mist.

The road dropped to the green valley. It mounted the humped bridge over the river. Beyond it she saw the twin gables of the grey house pricked up over the high, grey garden wall. The tall iron gate stood in front of it between the ball-topped stone pillars.

And now she was in a large, low-ceilinged room with drawn blinds. She was standing before the wide double bed. It was her father's bed. The dead body, stretched out in the middle under the drawn white sheet, was her father's body.

The outline of the sheet sank from the peak of the upturned toes to the shin bone, and from the high bridge of the nose to the chin.

She lifted the sheet and folded it back across the breast of the dead man. The face she saw then was Oscar Wade's face, stilled and smoothed in the innocence of sleep, the supreme innocence of death. She stared at it, fascinated, in a cold, pitiless joy.

Oscar was dead.

She remembered how he used to lie like that beside her in the room in the Hotel Saint Pierre, on his back with his hands folded on his waist, his mouth half open, his big chest rising and falling. If he was dead, it would never happen again. She would be safe.

The dead face frightened her, and she was about to cover it up again when she was aware of a light heaving, a rhythmical rise and fall. As she drew the sheet up tighter, the hands under it began to struggle convulsively, the broad ends of the fingers appeared

above the edge, clutching it to keep it down. The mouth opened ; the eyes opened ; the whole face stared back at her in a look of agony and horror.

Then the body drew itself forwards from the hips and sat up, its eyes peering into her eyes ; he and she remained for an instant motionless, each held there by the other's fear.

Suddenly she broke away, turned and ran, out of the room, out of the house.

She stood at the gate, looking up and down the road, not knowing by which way she must go to escape Oscar. To the right, over the bridge and up the hill and across the downs she would come to the arcades of the rue de Rivoli and the dreadful grey corridors of the hotel. To the left the road went through the village.

If she could get further back she would be safe, out of Oscar's reach. Standing by her father's death-bed she had been young, but not young enough. She must get back to the place where she was younger still, to the Park and the green drive under the beech trees and the white pavilion at the cross. She knew how to find it. At the end of the village the high road ran right and left, east and west, under the Park walls ; the south gate stood there at the top looking down the narrow street.

She ran towards it through the village, past the long grey barns of Goodyer's farm, past the grocer's shop, past the yellow front and blue sign of the " Queen's Head," past the post office, with its one black window blinking under its vine, past the church and the yew-trees in the churchyard, to where the south gate made a delicate black pattern on the green grass.

These things appeared insubstantial, drawn back behind a sheet of air that shimmered over them like thin glass. They opened out, floated past and away from her ; and instead of the high road and park walls she saw a London street of dingy white façades, and instead of the south gate the swinging glass doors of Schnebler's Restaurant.

The glass doors swung open and she passed into the restaurant. The scene beat on her with the hard impact of reality : the white and gold panels, the white pillars and their curling gold capitals, the white circles of the tables, glittering, the flushed faces of the diners, moving mechanically.

She was driven forward by some irresistible compulsion to a

table in the corner, where a man sat alone. The table napkin he was using hid his mouth, and jaw, and chest; and she was not sure of the upper part of the face above the straight, drawn edge. It dropped; and she saw Oscar Wade's face. She came to him, dragged, without power to resist; she sat down beside him, and he leaned to her over the table; she could feel the warmth of his red, congested face; the smell of wine floated towards her on his thick whisper.

"I knew you would come."

She ate and drank with him in silence, nibbling and sipping slowly, staving off the abominable moment it would end in.

At last they got up and faced each other. His long bulk stood before her, above her; she could almost feel the vibration of its power.

"Come," he said. "Come."

And she went before him, slowly, slipping out through the maze of the tables, hearing behind her Oscar's measured, deliberate, thoughtful tread. The steep, red-carpeted staircase rose up before her.

She swerved from it, but he turned her back.

"You know the way," he said.

At the top of the flight she found the white door of the room she knew. She knew the long windows guarded by drawn muslin blinds; the gilt looking-glass over the chimney-piece that reflected Oscar's head and shoulders grotesquely between two white porcelain babies with bulbous limbs and garlanded loins, she knew the sprawling stain on the drab carpet by the table, the shabby, infamous couch behind the screen.

They moved about the room, turning and turning in it like beasts in a cage, uneasy, inimical, avoiding each other.

At last they stood still, he at the window, she at the door, the length of the room between.

"It's no good your getting away like that," he said. "There couldn't be any other end to it—to what we did."

"But that *was* ended."

"Ended there, but not here."

"Ended for ever. We've done with it for ever."

"We haven't. We've got to begin again. And go on. And go on."

"Oh, no. No. Anything but that."

"There isn't anything else."

"We can't. We can't. Don't you remember how it bored us?"

"Remember? Do you suppose I'd touch you if I could help it . . . That's what we're here for. We must. We must."

"No. No. I shall get away—now."

She turned to the door to open it.

"You can't," he said. "The door's locked."

"Oscar—what did you do that for?"

"We always did it. Don't you remember?"

She turned to the door again and shook it; she beat on it with her hands.

"It's no use, Harriott. If you got out now you'd only have to come back again. You might stave it off for an hour or so, but what's that in an immortality?"

"Immortality?"

"That's what we're in for."

"Time enough to talk about immortality when we're dead. . . . Ah——"

They were being drawn towards each other across the room, moving slowly, like figures in some monstrous and appalling dance, their heads thrown back over their shoulders, their faces turned from the horrible approach. Their arms rose slowly, heavy with intolerable reluctance; they stretched them out towards each other, aching, as if they held up an overpowering weight. Their feet dragged and were drawn.

Suddenly her knees sank under her; she shut her eyes; all her being went down before him in darkness and terror.

It was over. She had got away, she was going back, back, to the green drive of the Park, between the beech trees, where Oscar had never been, where he would never find her. When she passed through the south gate her memory became suddenly young and clean. She forgot the rue de Rivoli and the Hotel Saint Pierre; she forgot Schnebler's Restaurant and the room at the top of the stairs. She was back in her youth. She was Harriott Leigh going to wait for Stephen Philpotts in the pavilion opposite the west gate. She could feel herself, a slender figure moving fast over the grass between the lines of the great beech trees. The freshness of her youth was upon her.

She came to the heart of the drive where it branched right and left in the form of a cross. At the end of the right arm the white Greek temple, with its pediment and pillars, gleamed against the wood.

She was sitting on their seat at the back of the pavilion, watching the side door that Stephen would come in by.

The door was pushed open; he came towards her, light and young, skimming between the beech trees with his eager, tiptoeing stride. She rose up to meet him. She gave a cry.

“Stephen!”

It had been Stephen. She had seen him coming. But the man who stood before her between the pillars of the pavilion was Oscar Wade.

And now she was walking along the field-path that slanted from the orchard door to the stile; further and further back, to where young George Waring waited for her under the elder tree. The smell of the elder flowers came to her over the field. She could feel on her lips and in all her body the sweet, innocent excitement of her youth.

“George, oh, George?”

As she went along the field-path she had seen him. But the man who stood waiting for her under the elder tree was Oscar Wade.

“I told you it’s no use getting away, Harriott. Every path brings you back to me. You’ll find me at every turn.”

“But how did you get *here*?”

“As I got into the pavilion. As I got into your father’s room, on to his death bed. Because I *was* there. I am in all your memories.”

“My memories are innocent. How could you take my father’s place, and Stephen’s, and George Waring’s? You?”

“Because I did take them.”

“Never. My love for *them* was innocent.”

“Your love for me was part of it. You think the past affects the future. Has it never struck you that the future may affect the past? In your innocence there was the beginning of your sin. You *were* what you *were to be*.”

“I shall get away,” she said.

“And, this time, I shall go with you.”

The stile, the elder tree, and the field floated away from her. She was going under the beech trees down the Park drive towards the south gate and the village, slinking close to the right-hand row of trees. She was aware that Oscar Wade was going with her under the left-hand row, keeping even with her, step by step, and tree by tree. And presently there was grey pavement under her feet

and a row of grey pillars on her right hand. They were walking side by side down the rue de Rivoli towards the hotel.

They were sitting together now on the edge of the dingy white bed. Their arms hung by their sides, heavy and limp, their heads drooped, averted. Their passion weighed on them with the unbearable, unescapable boredom of immortality.

“Oscar—how long will it last?”

“I can’t tell you. I don’t know whether *this* is one moment of eternity, or the eternity of one moment.”

“It must end some time,” she said. “Life doesn’t go on forever. We shall die.”

“Die? We *have* died. Don’t you know what this is? Don’t you know where you are? This is death. We’re dead, Harriott. We’re in hell.”

“Yes. There can’t be anything worse than this.”

“This isn’t the worst. We’re not quite dead yet, as long as we’ve life in us to turn and run and get away from each other; as long as we can escape into our memories. But when you’ve got back to the farthest memory of all and there’s nothing beyond it—When there’s no memory but this—

“In the last hell we shall not run away any longer; we shall find no more roads, no more passages, no more open doors. We shall have no need to look for each other.

“In the last death we shall be shut up in this room, behind that locked door, together. We shall lie here together, for ever and ever, joined so fast that even God can’t put us asunder. We shall be one flesh and one spirit, one sin repeated for ever, and ever; spirit loathing flesh, flesh loathing spirit; you and I loathing each other.”

“Why? Why?” she cried.

“Because that’s all that’s left us. That’s what you made of love.”

The darkness came down swamping, it blotted out the room. She was walking along a garden path between high borders of phlox and larkspur and lupin. They were taller than she was, their flowers swayed and nodded above her head. She tugged at the tall stems and had no strength to break them. She was a little thing.

She said to herself then that she was safe. She had gone back so far that she was a child again; she had the blank innocence of

childhood. To be a child, to go small under the heads of the lupins, to be blank and innocent, without memory, was to be safe.

The walk led her out through a yew hedge on to a bright green lawn. In the middle of the lawn there was a shallow round pond in a ring of rockery cushioned with small flowers, yellow and white and purple. Gold-fish swam in the olive brown water. She would be safe when she saw the gold-fish swimming towards her. The old one with the white scales would come up first, pushing up his nose, making bubbles in the water.

At the bottom of the lawn there was a privet hedge cut by a broad path that went through the orchard. She knew what she would find there ; her mother was in the orchard. She would lift her up in her arms to play with the hard red balls of the apples that hung from the tree. She had got back to the farthest memory of all ; there was nothing beyond it.

There would be an iron gate in the wall of the orchard. It would lead into a field.

Something was different here, something that frightened her. An ash-grey door instead of an iron gate.

She pushed it open and came into the last corridor of the Hotel Saint Pierre.

J. Sheridan Le Fanu

GREEN TEA

from IN A GLASS DARKLY

Bentley, 1872

PROLOGUE

MARTIN HESSELIUS, THE GERMAN PHYSICIAN

Though carefully educated in medicine and surgery, I have never practised either. The study of each continues, nevertheless, to interest me profoundly. Neither idleness nor caprice caused my secession from the honourable calling which I had just entered. The cause was a very trifling scratch inflicted by a dissecting knife. This trifle cost me the loss of two fingers, amputated promptly, and the more painful loss of my health, for I have never been quite

well since, and have seldom been twelve months together in the same place.

In my wanderings I became acquainted with Dr. Martin Hesselius, a wanderer like myself, like me a physician, and like me an enthusiast in his profession. Unlike me in this, that his wanderings were voluntary, and he a man, if not of fortune, as we estimate fortune in England, at least in what our forefathers used to term "easy circumstances." He was an old man when I first saw him; nearly five-and-thirty years my senior.

In Dr. Martin Hesselius, I found my master. His knowledge was immense, his grasp of a case was an intuition. He was the very man to inspire a young enthusiast, like me, with awe and delight. My admiration has stood the test of time and survived the separation of death. I am sure it was well-founded.

For nearly twenty years I acted as his medical secretary. His immense collection of papers he has left in my care, to be arranged, indexed and bound. His treatment of some of these cases is curious. He writes in two distinct characters. He describes what he saw and heard as an intelligent layman might, and when in this style of narrative he had seen the patient either through his own hall-door, to the light of day, or through the gates of darkness to the caverns of the dead, he returns upon the narrative, and in the terms of his art, and with all the force and originality of genius, proceeds to the work of analysis, diagnosis and illustration.

Here and there a case strikes me as of a kind to amuse or horrify a lay reader with an interest quite different from the peculiar one which it may possess for an expert. With slight modifications, chiefly of language, and of course a change of names, I copy the following. The narrator is Dr. Martin Hesselius. I find it among the voluminous notes of cases which he made during a tour in England about sixty-four years ago.

It is related in a series of letters to his friend Professor Van Loo of Leyden. The professor was not a physician, but a chemist, and a man who read history and metaphysics and medicine, and had, in his day, written a play.

The narrative is therefore, if somewhat less valuable as a medical record, necessarily written in a manner more likely to interest an unlearned reader.

These letters, from a memorandum attached, appear to have been returned on the death of the professor, in 1819, to Dr. Hesselius. They are written, some in English, some in French, but the

greater part in German. I am a faithful, though, I am conscious, by no means a graceful translator, and although here and there I omit some passages, and shorten others, and disguised names, I have interpolated nothing.

CHAPTER I

DR. HESSELIUS RELATES HOW HE MET
THE REV. MR. JENNINGS

The Rev. Mr. Jennings is tall and thin. He is middle-aged, and dresses with a natty, old-fashioned, high-church precision. He is naturally a little stately, but not at all stiff. His features, without being handsome, are well formed, and their expression extremely kind, but also shy.

I met him one evening at Lady Mary Heyduke's. The modesty and benevolence of his countenance are extremely prepossessing.

We were but a small party, and he joined agreeably enough in the conversation. He seems to enjoy listening very much more than contributing to the talk ; but what he says is always to the purpose and well said. He is a great favourite of Lady Mary's, who it seems, consults him upon many things, and thinks him the most happy and blessed person on earth. Little knows she about him.

The Rev. Mr. Jennings is a bachelor, and has, they say, sixty thousand pounds in the funds. He is a charitable man. He is most anxious to be actively employed in his sacred profession, and yet though always tolerably well elsewhere, when he goes down to his vicarage in Warwickshire, to engage in the actual duties of his sacred calling, his health soon fails him, and in a very strange way. So says Lady Mary.

There is no doubt that Mr. Jennings' health does break down in, generally, a sudden and mysterious way, sometimes in the very act of officiating in his old and pretty church at Kenlis. It may be his heart, it may be his brain. But so it has happened three or four times, or oftener, that after proceeding a certain way in the service, he has on a sudden stopped short, and after a silence, apparently quite unable to resume, he has fallen into solitary, inaudible prayer, his hands and his eyes uplifted, and then pale as death, and in the agitation of a strange shame and horror, descended trembling, and got into the vestry-room, leaving his congregation,

without explanation, to themselves. This occurred when his curate was absent. When he goes down to Kenlis now, he always takes care to provide a clergyman to share his duty, and to supply his place on the instant should he become thus suddenly incapacitated.

When Mr. Jennings breaks down quite, and beats a retreat from the vicarage, and returns to London, where, in a dark street off Piccadilly, he inhabits a very narrow house, Lady Mary says that he is always perfectly well. I have my own opinion about that. There are degrees of course. We shall see.

Mr. Jennings is a perfectly gentlemanlike man. People, however, remark something odd. There is an impression a little ambiguous. One thing which certainly contributes to it, people, I think, don't remember; or, perhaps, distinctly remark. But I did, almost immediately. Mr. Jennings has a way of looking sidelong upon the carpet, as if his eye followed the movements of something there. This, of course, is not always. It occurs only now and then. But often enough to give a certain oddity, as I have said, to his manner, and in this glance travelling along the floor there is something both shy and anxious.

A medical philosopher, as you are good enough to call me, elaborating theories by the aid of cases sought out by himself, and by him watched and scrutinised with more time at command, and consequently infinitely more minuteness than the ordinary practitioner can afford, falls insensibly into habits of observation, which accompany him everywhere, and are exercised, as some people would say, impertinently, upon every subject that presents itself with the least likelihood of rewarding inquiry.

There was a promise of this kind in the slight timid, kindly, but reserved gentleman, whom I met for the first time at this agreeable little evening gathering. I observed, of course, more than I here set down; but I reserve all that borders on the technical for a strictly scientific paper.

I may remark, that when I here speak of medical science, I do so, as I hope some day to see it more generally understood, in a much more comprehensive sense than its generally material treatment would warrant. I believe the entire natural world is but the ultimate expression of that spiritual world from which, and in which alone, it has its life. I believe that the essential man is a spirit, that the spirit is an organised substance, but as different in point of material from what we ordinarily understand by matter, as light or electricity is; that the material body is, in the most

literal sense, a vesture, and death consequently no interruption of the living man's existence, but simply his extrication from the natural body—a process which commences at the moment of what we term death, and the completion of which, at furthest a few days later, is the resurrection “in power.”

The person who weighs the consequences of these positions will probably see their practical bearing upon medical science. This is, however, by no means the proper place for displaying the proofs and discussing the consequences of this too generally unrecognized state of facts.

In pursuance of my habit, I was covertly observing Mr. Jennings, with all my caution—I think he perceived it—and I saw plainly that he was as cautiously observing me. Lady Mary happening to address me by my name, as Dr. Hesselius, I saw that he glanced at me more sharply, and then became thoughtful for a few minutes.

After this, as I conversed with a gentleman at the other end of the room, I saw him look at me more steadily, and with an interest which I thought I understood. I then saw him take an opportunity of chatting with Lady Mary, and was, as one always is, perfectly aware of being the subject of a distant inquiry and answer.

This tall clergyman approached me by-and-by ; and in a little time we had got into conversation. When two people, who like reading, and know books and places, having travelled, wish to discourse, it is very strange if they can't find topics. It was not accident that brought him near me, and led him into conversation. He knew German, and had read my *Essays on Metaphysical Medicine* which suggest more than they actually say.

This courteous man, gentle, shy, plainly a man of thought and reading, who moving and talking among us, was not altogether of us, and whom I already suspected of leading a life whose transactions and alarms were carefully concealed, with an impenetrable reserve from, not only the world, but his best beloved friends—was cautiously weighing in his own mind the idea of taking a certain step with regard to me.

I penetrated his thoughts without his being aware of it, and was careful to say nothing which could betray to his sensitive vigilance my suspicions respecting his position, or my surmises about his plans respecting myself.

We chatted upon indifferent subjects for a time but at last he said :

“ I was very much interested by some papers of yours, Dr. Hesselius, upon what you term Metaphysical Medicine—I read them in German, ten or twelve years ago—have they been translated ? ”

“ No, I’m sure they have not—I should have heard. They would have asked my leave, I think.”

“ I asked the publishers here, a few months ago, to get the book for me in the original German ; but they tell me it is out of print.”

“ So it is, and has been for some years ; but it flatters me as an author to find that you have not forgotten my little book, although,” I added, laughing, “ ten or twelve years is a considerable time to have managed without it ; but I suppose you have been turning the subject over again in your mind, or something has happened lately to revive your interest in it.”

At this remark, accompanied by a glance of inquiry, a sudden embarrassment disturbed Mr. Jennings, analogous to that which makes a young lady blush and look foolish. He dropped his eyes, and folded his hands together uneasily, and looked oddly, and you would have said, guiltily, for a moment.

I helped him out of his awkwardness in the best way, by appearing not to observe it, and going straight on, I said : “ Those revivals of interest in a subject happen to me often ; one book suggests another, and often sends me back a wild-goose chase over an interval of twenty years. But if you still care to possess a copy, I shall be only too happy to provide you ; I have still got two or three by me—and if you allow me to present one I shall be very much honoured.”

“ You are very good indeed,” he said, quite at his ease again, in a moment : “ I almost despaired—I don’t know how to thank you.”

“ Pray don’t say a word ; the thing is really so little worth that I am only ashamed of having offered it, and if you thank me any more I shall throw it into the fire in a fit of modesty.”

Mr. Jennings laughed. He inquired where I was staying in London, and after a little more conversation on a variety of subjects, he took his departure.

CHAPTER II

THE DOCTOR QUESTIONS LADY MARY,
AND SHE ANSWERS

"I like your vicar so much, Lady Mary," said I, as soon as he was gone. "He has read, travelled, and thought, and having also suffered, he ought to be an accomplished companion."

"So he is, and, better still, he is a really good man," said she. "His advice is invaluable about my schools, and all my little undertakings at Dawlbridge, and he's so painstaking, he takes so much trouble—you have no idea—wherever he thinks he can be of use : he's so good-natured and so sensible."

"It is pleasant to hear so good an account of his neighbourly virtues. I can only testify to his being an agreeable and gentle companion, and in addition to what you have told me, I think I can tell you two or three things about him," said I.

"Really !"

"Yes, to begin with, he's unmarried."

"Yes, that's right—go on."

"He has been writing, that is he *was*, but for two or three years perhaps, he has not gone on with his work, and the book was upon some rather abstract subject—perhaps theology."

"Well, he was writing a book, as you say ; I'm not quite sure what it was about, but only that it was nothing that I cared for ; very likely you are right, and he certainly did stop—yes."

"And although he only drank a little coffee here to-night, he likes tea, at least, did like it, extravagantly."

"Yes, that's *quite* true."

"He drank green tea, a good deal, didn't he ?" I pursued.

"Well, that's very odd ! Green tea was a subject on which we used almost to quarrel."

"But he has quite given that up," said I.

"So he has."

"And, now, one more fact. His mother or his father, did you know them ?"

"Yes, both ; his father is only ten years dead, and their place is near Dawlbridge. We knew them very well," she answered.

"Well, either his mother or his father—I should rather think his father, saw a ghost," said I.

"Well, you really are a conjurer, Dr. Hesselius."

“Conjurer or no, haven’t I said right?” I answered merrily.

“You certainly have, and it *was* his father: he was a silent, whimsical man, and he used to bore my father about his dreams, and at last he told him a story about a ghost he had seen and talked with, and a very odd story it was. I remember it particularly, because I was so afraid of him. This story was long before he died—when I was quite a child—and his ways were so silent and moping, and he used to drop in sometimes, in the dusk, when I was alone in the drawing-room, and I used to fancy there were ghosts about him.”

I smiled and nodded.

“And now, having established my character as a conjurer, I think I must say good-night,” said I.

“But how *did* you find it out?”

“By the planets, of course, as the gipsies do,” I answered, and so, gaily, we said good-night.

Next morning I sent the little book he had been inquiring after, and a note to Mr. Jennings, and on returning late that evening, I found that he had called at my lodgings, and left his card. He asked whether I was at home, and asked at what hour he would be most likely to find me.

Does he intend opening his case, and consulting me “professionally,” as they say. I hope so. I have already conceived a theory about him. It is supported by Lady Mary’s answers to my parting questions. I should like much to ascertain from his own lips. But what can I do consistently with good breeding to invite a confession? Nothing. I rather think he meditates one. At all events, my dear Van L., I shan’t make myself difficult of access; I mean to return his visit to-morrow. It will be only civil in return for his politeness, to ask to see him. Perhaps something may come of it. Whether much, little, or nothing, my dear Van L., you shall hear.

CHAPTER III

DR. HESSELIUS PICKS UP SOMETHING IN LATIN BOOKS

Well, I have called at Blank Street.

On inquiring at the door, the servant told me that Mr. Jennings was engaged very particularly with a gentleman, a clergyman from Kenlis, his parish in the country. Intending to reserve my privilege, and to call again, I merely intimated that I should try

another time, and had turned to go, when the servant begged my pardon, and asked me, looking at me a little more attentively than well-bred persons of his order usually do, whether I was Dr. Hesselius ; and, on learning that I was, he said, " Perhaps then, sir, you would allow me to mention it to Mr. Jennings, for I am sure he wishes to see you."

The servant returned in a moment, with a message from Mr. Jennings, asking me to go into his study, which was in effect his back drawing-room, promising to be with me in a very few minutes.

This was really a study—almost a library. The room was lofty, with two tall, slender windows, and rich dark curtains. It was much larger than I had expected, and stored with books on every side, from the floor to the ceiling. The upper carpet—for to my tread it felt that there were two or three—was a Turkey carpet. My steps fell noiselessly. The book-cases standing out, placed the windows, particularly narrow ones, in deep recesses. The effect of the room was, although extremely comfortable, and even luxurious, decidedly gloomy, and aided by the silence, almost oppressive. Perhaps, however, I ought to have allowed something for association. My mind had connected peculiar ideas with Mr. Jennings. I stepped into this perfectly silent room, of a very silent house, with a peculiar foreboding ; and its darkness, and solemn clothing of books, for except where two narrow looking-glasses were set in the wall, they were everywhere, helped this sombre feeling.

While awaiting Mr. Jennings' arrival, I amused myself by looking into some of the books with which his shelves were laden. Not among these, but immediately under them, with their backs upward, on the floor, I lighted upon a complete set of Swedenborg's *Arcana Cælestia*, in the original Latin, a very fine folio set, bound in the natty livery which theology affects, pure vellum, namely, gold letters, and carmine edges. There were paper markers in several of these volumes, I raised and placed them, one after the other, upon the table, and opening where these papers were placed, I read in the solemn Latin phraseology, a series of sentences indicated by a pencilled line at the margin. Of these I copy here a few, translating them into English.

" When man's interior sight is opened, which is that of his spirit, then there appear the things of another life, which cannot possibly be made visible to the bodily sight. . . ."

“ By the internal sight it has been granted me to see the things that are in the other life, more clearly than I see those that are in the world. From these considerations, it is evident that external vision exists from interior vision, and this from a vision still more interior, and so on. . . .”

“ There are with every man at least two evil spirits. . . .”

“ With wicked genii there is also a fluent speech, but harsh and grating. There is also among them a speech which is not fluent, wherein the dissent of the thoughts is perceived as something secretly creeping along within it.”

“ The evil spirits associated with man are, indeed from the hells, but when with man they are not then in hell, but are taken out thence. The place where they then are, is in the midst between heaven and hell, and is called the world of spirits—when the evil spirits who are with man, are in that world, they are not in any infernal torment, but in every thought and affection of the man, and so, in all that the man himself enjoys. But when they are remitted into their hell, they return to their former state. . . .”

“ If evil spirits could perceive that they were associated with man, and yet that they were spirits separate from him, and if they could flow in into the things of his body, they would attempt by a thousand means to destroy him ; for they hate man with a deadly hatred. . . .”

“ Knowing, therefore, that I was a man in the body, they were continually striving to destroy me, not as to the body only, but especially as to the soul ; for to destroy any man or spirit is the very delight of the life of all who are in hell ; but I have been continually protected by the Lord. Hence it appears how dangerous it is for man to be in a living consort with spirits, unless he be in the good of faith. . . .”

“ Nothing is more carefully guarded from the knowledge of associate spirits than their being thus conjoint with a man, for if they knew it they would speak to him, with the intention to destroy him. . . .”

“ The delight of hell is to do evil to man, and to hasten his eternal ruin.”

A long note, written with a very sharp and fine pencil, in Mr. Jennings' neat hand, at the foot of the page, caught my eye. Expecting his criticism upon the text, I read a word or two, and stopped, for it was something quite different, and began with these words, *Deus misereatur mei*—“ May God compassionate me.” Thus

warned of its private nature, I averted my eyes, and shut the book, replacing all the volumes as I had found them, except one which interested me, and in which, as men studious and solitary in their habits will do, I grew so absorbed as to take no cognisance of the outer world, nor to remember where I was.

I was reading some pages which refer to "representatives" and "correspondents," in the technical language of Swedenborg, and had arrived at a passage, the substance of which is, that evil spirits, when seen by other eyes than those of their infernal associates, present themselves, by "correspondence," in the shape of the beast (*fera*) which represents their particular lust and life, in aspect direful and atrocious. This is a long passage, and particularises a number of those bestial forms.

CHAPTER IV

FOUR EYES WERE READING THE PASSAGE

I was running the head of my pencil-case along the line as I read it, and something caused me to raise my eyes.

Directly before me was one of the mirrors I have mentioned, in which I saw reflected the tall shape of my friend, Mr. Jennings, leaning over my shoulder, and reading the page at which I was busy, and with a face so dark and wild that I should hardly have known him.

I turned and rose. He stood erect also, and with an effort laughed a little, saying :

"I came in and asked you how you did, but without succeeding in awaking you from your book ; so I could not restrain my curiosity, and very impertinently, I'm afraid, peeped over your shoulder. This is not your first time of looking into those pages. You have looked into Swedenborg, no doubt, long ago ?"

"Oh dear, yes ! I owe Swedenborg a great deal ; you will discover traces of him in the little book on Metaphysical Medicine, which you were so good as to remember."

Although my friend affected a gaiety of manner, there was a slight flush in his face, and I could perceive that he was inwardly much perturbed.

"I'm scarcely yet qualified, I know so little of Swedenborg. I've only had them a fortnight," he answered, "and I think they are rather likely to make a solitary man nervous—that is, judging

from the very little I have read—I don't say that they have made me so," he laughed ; " and I'm so very much obliged for the book. I hope you got my note ? "

I made all proper acknowledgments and modest disclaimers.

" I never read a book that I go with, so entirely, as that of yours," he continued. " I saw at once there is more in it than is quite unfolded. Do you know Dr. Harley ? " he asked, rather abruptly.

In passing, the editor remarks that the physician here named was one of the most eminent who had ever practised in England.

I did, having had letters to him, and had experienced from him great courtesy and considerable assistance during my visit to England.

" I think that man one of the very greatest fools I ever met in my life," said Mr. Jennings.

This was the first time I had ever heard him say a sharp thing of anybody, and such a term applied to so high a name a little startled me.

" Really ! and in what way ? " I asked.

" In his profession," he answered.

I smiled.

" I mean this," he said : " he seems to me, one half, blind—I mean one half of all he looks at is dark—preternaturally bright and vivid all the rest ; and the worst of it is, it seems *wilful*. I can't get him—I mean he won't—I've had some experience of him as a physician, but I look on him as, in that sense, no better than a paralytic mind, an intellect half dead. I'll tell you—I know I shall some time—all about it," he said, with a little agitation. " You stay some months longer in England. If I should be out of town during your stay for a little time, would you allow me to trouble you with a letter ? "

" I should be only too happy," I assured him.

" Very good of you. I am so utterly dissatisfied with Harley."

" A little leaning to the materialistic school," I said.

" A *mere* materialist," he corrected me ; " you can't think how that sort of thing worries one who knows better. You won't tell any one—any of my friends who know—that I am hippish ; now, for instance, no one knows—not even Lady Mary—that I have seen Dr. Harley, or any other doctor. So pray don't mention it ; and, if I should have any threatening of an attack, you'll kindly let me write, or, should I be in town, have a little talk with you."

I was full of conjecture, and unconsciously I found I had fixed my eyes gravely on him, for he lowered his for a moment, and he said :

“ I see you think I might as well tell you now, or else you are forming a conjecture ; but you may as well give it up. If you were guessing all the rest of your life, you will never hit on it.”

He shook his head smiling, and over that wintry sunshine a black cloud suddenly came down, and he drew his breath in through his teeth, as men do in pain.

“ Sorry, of course, to learn that you apprehend occasion to consult any of us ; but command me when and how you like, and I need not assure you that your confidence is sacred.”

He then talked of quite other things, and in a comparatively cheerful way and after a little time, I took my leave.

CHAPTER V

DOCTOR HESSELIUS IS SUMMONED TO RICHMOND

We parted cheerfully, but he was not cheerful, nor was I. There are certain expressions of that powerful organ of spirit—the human face—which, although I have seen them often, and possess a doctor’s nerve, yet disturb me profoundly. One look of Mr. Jennings haunted me. It had seized my imagination with so dismal a power that I changed my plans for the evening, and went to the opera, feeling that I wanted a change of ideas.

I heard nothing of or from him for two or three days, when a note in his hand reached me. It was cheerful, and full of hope. He said that he had been for some little time so much better—quite well, in fact—that he was going to make a little experiment, and run down for a month or so to his parish, to try whether a little work might not quite set him up. There was in it a fervent religious expression of gratitude for his restoration, as he now almost hoped he might call it.

A day or two later I saw Lady Mary, who repeated what his note had announced, and told me that he was actually in Warwickshire, having resumed his clerical duties at Kenlis ; and she added, “ I begin to think that he is really perfectly well, and that there never was anything the matter, more than nerves and fancy ; we are all nervous, but I fancy there is nothing like a little hard work for that kind of weakness, and he has made up his mind to

try it. I should not be surprised if he did not come back for a year." Notwithstanding all this confidence, only two days later I had this note, dated from his house off Piccadilly :

"DEAR SIR,—I have returned disappointed. If I should feel at all able to see you, I shall write to ask you kindly to call. At present, I am too low, and, in fact, simply unable to say all I wish to say. Pray don't mention my name to my friends. I can see no one. By-and-by, please God, you shall hear from me. I mean to take a run into Shropshire, where some of my people are. God bless you! May we, on my return, meet more happily than I can now write."

About a week after this I saw Lady Mary at her own house, the last person, she said, left in town, and just on the wing for Brighton, for the London season was quite over. She told me that she had heard from Mr. Jennings' niece, Martha, in Shropshire. There was nothing to be gathered from her letter, more than that he was low and nervous. In those words, of which healthy people think so lightly, what a world of suffering is sometimes hidden!

Nearly five weeks had passed without any further news of Mr. Jennings. At the end of that time I received a note from him. He wrote :

"I have been in the country, and have had change of air, change of scene, change of faces, change of everything and in everything—but *myself*. I have made up my mind, so far as the most irresolute creature on earth can do it, to tell my case fully to you. If your engagements will permit, pray come to me to-day, to-morrow, or the next day ; but, pray defer as little as possible. You know not how much I need help. I have a quiet house at Richmond, where I now am. Perhaps you can manage to come to dinner, or to luncheon, or even to tea. You shall have no trouble in finding me out. The servant at Blank Street, who takes this note, will have a carriage at your door at any hour you please ; and I am always to be found. You will say that I ought not to be alone. I have tried everything. Come and see."

I called up the servant, and decided on going out the same evening, which accordingly I did.

He would have been much better in a lodging-house, or hotel, I thought, as I drove up through a short double row of sombre