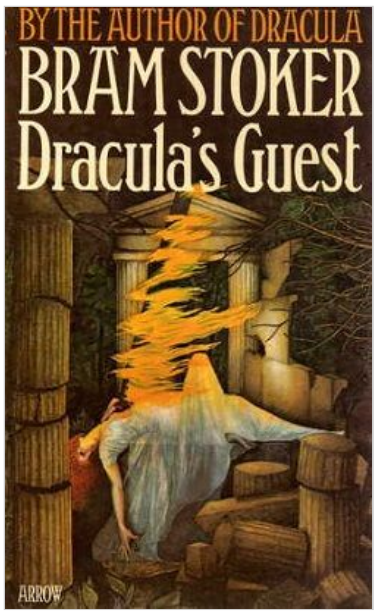

Dracula's Guest

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Dracula's Guest

When we started for our drive the sun was shining brightly on Munich,and the air was full of the joyousness of early summer. Just as wewere about to depart, Herr Delbrueck (the maitre d'hotel of the QuatreSaisons, where I was staying) came down, bareheaded, to the carriageand, after wishing me a pleasant drive, said to the coachman, stillholding his hand on the handle of the carriage door:

'Remember you are back by nightfall. The sky looks bright but there isa shiver in the north wind that says there may be a sudden storm. ButI am sure you will not be late.' Here he smiled, and added, 'for youknow what night it is.'

Johann answered with an emphatic, 'Ja, mein Herr,' and, touching hishat, drove off quickly. When we had cleared the town, I said, aftersignalling to him to stop:

'Tell me, Johann, what is tonight?'

He crossed himself, as he answered laconically: 'Walpurgis nacht.'Then he took out his watch, a great, old-fashioned German silver thingas big as a turnip, and looked at it, with his eyebrows gatheredtogether and a little impatient shrug of his shoulders. I realisedthat this was his way of respectfully protesting against theunnecessary delay, and sank back in the carriage, merely motioninghim to proceed. He started off rapidly, as if to make up for losttime. Every now and then the horses seemed to throw up their heads andsniffed the air suspiciously. On such occasions I often looked roundin alarm. The road was pretty bleak, for we were traversing a sort ofhigh, wind-swept plateau. As we drove, I saw a road that looked butlittle used, and which seemed to dip through a little, winding valley.It looked so inviting that, even at the risk of

offending him, Icalled Johann to stop--and when he had pulled up, I told him I wouldlike to drive down that road. He made all sorts of excuses, andfrequently crossed himself as he spoke. This somewhat piqued mycuriosity, so I asked him various questions. He answered fencingly,and repeatedly looked at his watch in protest. Finally I said:

'Well, Johann, I want to go down this road. I shall not ask you tocome unless you like; but tell me why you do not like to go, that isall I ask.' For answer he seemed to throw himself off the box, soquickly did he reach the ground. Then he stretched out his handsappealingly to me, and implored me not to go. There was just enough ofEnglish mixed with the German for me to understand the drift of histalk. He seemed always just about to tell me something--the very ideaof which evidently frightened him; but each time he pulled himself up,saying, as he crossed himself: 'Walpurgis-Nacht!'

I tried to argue with him, but it was difficult to argue with a manwhen I did not know his language. The advantage certainly rested withhim, for although he began to speak in English, of a very crude andbroken kind, he always got excited and broke into his nativetongue--and every time he did so, he looked at his watch. Then thehorses became restless and sniffed the air. At this he grew very pale,and, looking around in a frightened way, he suddenly jumped forward,took them by the bridles and led them on some twenty feet. I followed,and asked why he had done this. For answer he crossed himself, pointedto the spot we had left and drew his carriage in the direction of theother road, indicating a cross, and said, first in German, then inEnglish: 'Buried him--him what killed themselves.'

I remembered the old custom of burying suicides at cross-roads: 'Ah! Isee, a suicide. How interesting!' But for the life of me I could notmake out why the horses were frightened.

Whilst we were talking, we heard a sort of sound between a yelp and abark. It was far

away; but the horses got very restless, and it tookJohann all his time to quiet them. He was pale, and said, 'It soundslike a wolf--but yet there are no wolves here now.'

'No?' I said, questioning him; 'isn't it long since the wolves were sonear the city?'

'Long, long,' he answered, 'in the spring and summer; but with thesnow the wolves have been here not so long.'

Whilst he was petting the horses and trying to quiet them, dark cloudsdrifted rapidly across the sky. The sunshine passed away, and a breathof cold wind seemed to drift past us. It was only a breath, however,and more in the nature of a warning than a fact, for the sun came outbrightly again. Johann looked under his lifted hand at the horizon andsaid:

'The storm of snow, he comes before long time.' Then he looked at hiswatch again, and, straightway holding his reins firmly--for the horseswere still pawing the ground restlessly and shaking their heads--heclimbed to his box as though the time had come for proceeding on ourjourney.

I felt a little obstinate and did not at once get into the carriage.

'Tell me,' I said, 'about this place where the road leads,' and Ipointed down.

Again he crossed himself and mumbled a prayer, before he answered, 'Itis unholy.'

'What is unholy?' I enquired.

'The village.'

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'Then there is a village?'

'No, no. No one lives there hundreds of years.' My curiosity waspiqued, 'But you said there was a village.'

'There was.'

'Where is it now?'

Whereupon he burst out into a long story in German and English, somixed up that I could not quite understand exactly what he said, butroughly I gathered that long ago, hundreds of years, men had diedthere and been buried in their graves; and sounds were heard under theclay, and when the graves were opened, men and women were found rosywith life, and their mouths red with blood. And so, in haste to savetheir lives (aye, and their souls!--and here he crossed himself) thosewho were left fled away to other places, where the living lived, andthe dead were dead and not--not something. He was evidently afraid tospeak the last words. As he proceeded with his narration, he grew moreand more excited. It seemed as if his imagination had got hold of him,and he ended in a perfect paroxysm of fear--white-faced, perspiring,trembling and looking round him, as if expecting that some dreadfulpresence would manifest itself there in the bright sunshine on theopen plain. Finally, in an agony of desperation, he cried:

'Walpurgis nacht!' and pointed to the carriage for me to get in. Allmy English blood rose at this, and, standing back, I said:

'You are afraid, Johann--you are afraid. Go home; I shall returnalone; the walk will

do me good.' The carriage door was open. I tookfrom the seat my oak walking-stick--which I always carry on my holidayexcursions--and closed the door, pointing back to Munich, and said,'Go home, Johann--Walpurgis-nacht doesn't concern Englishmen.'

The horses were now more restive than ever, and Johann was trying tohold them in, while excitedly imploring me not to do anything sofoolish. I pitied the poor fellow, he was deeply in earnest; but allthe same I could not help laughing. His English was quite gone now. Inhis anxiety he had forgotten that his only means of making meunderstand was to talk my language, so he jabbered away in his nativeGerman. It began to be a little tedious. After giving the direction,'Home!' I turned to go down the cross-road into the valley.

With a despairing gesture, Johann turned his horses towards Munich. Ileaned on my stick and looked after him. He went slowly along the roadfor a while: then there came over the crest of the hill a man tall andthin. I could see so much in the distance. When he drew near thehorses, they began to jump and kick about, then to scream with terror.Johann could not hold them in; they bolted down the road, running awaymadly. I watched them out of sight, then looked for the stranger, butI found that he, too, was gone.

With a light heart I turned down the side road through the deepeningvalley to which Johann had objected. There was not the slightestreason, that I could see, for his objection; and I daresay I trampedfor a couple of hours without thinking of time or distance, andcertainly without seeing a person or a house. So far as the place wasconcerned, it was desolation itself. But I did not notice thisparticularly till, on turning a bend in the road, I came upon ascattered fringe of wood; then I recognised that I had been impresseduncons ciously by the desolation of the region through which I hadpassed.

I sat down to rest myself, and began to look around. It struck me thatit was considerably colder than it had been at the commencement of mywalk--a sort of

sighing sound seemed to be around me, with, now andthen, high overhead, a sort of muffled roar. Looking upwards I noticedthat great thick clouds were drifting rapidly across the sky fromNorth to South at a great height. There were signs of coming storm insome lofty stratum of the air. I was a little chilly, and, thinkingthat it was the sitting still after the exercise of walking, I resumedmy journey.

The ground I passed over was now much more picturesque. There were nostriking objects that the eye might single out; but in all there was acharm of beauty. I took little heed of time and it was only when thedeepening twilight forced itself upon me that I began to think of howI should find my way home. The brightness of the day had gone. The airwas cold, and the drifting of clouds high overhead was more marked.They were accompanied by a sort of far-away rushing sound, throughwhich seemed to come at intervals that mysterious cry which the driverhad said came from a wolf. For a while I hesitated. I had said I wouldsee the deserted village, so on I went, and presently came on a widestretch of open country, shut in by hills all around. Their sides werecovered with trees which spread down to the plain, dotting, in clumps,the gentler slopes and hollows which showed here and there. I followedwith my eye the winding of the road, and saw that it curved close toone of the densest of these clumps and was lost behind it.

As I looked there came a cold shiver in the air, and the snow began tofall. I thought of the miles and miles of bleak country I had passed,and then hurried on to seek the shelter of the wood in front. Darkerand darker grew the sky, and faster and heavier fell the snow, tillthe earth before and around me was a glistening white carpet thefurther edge of which was lost in misty vagueness. The road was herebut crude, and when on the level its boundaries were not so marked, aswhen it passed through the cuttings; and in a little while I foundthat I must have strayed from it, for I missed underfoot the hardsurface, and my feet sank deeper in the grass and moss. Then the windgrew stronger and blew with ever increasing force, till I was fain torun before it. The air became icy-cold, and in spite of my exercise Ibegan to suffer. The snow was now falling so thickly and whirlingaround me in such rapid eddies that I could hardly

keep my eyes open.Every now and then the heavens were torn asunder by vivid lightning,and in the flashes I could see ahead of me a great mass of trees,chiefly yew and cypress all heavily coated with snow.

I was soon amongst the shelter of the trees, and there, in comparativesilence, I could hear the rush of the wind high overhead. Presentlythe blackness of the storm had become merged in the darkness of thenight. By-and-by the storm seemed to be passing away: it now only camein fierce puffs or blasts. At such moments the weird sound of thewolf appeared to be echoed by many similar sounds around me.

Now and again, through the black mass of drifting cloud, came astraggling ray of moonlight, which lit up the expanse, and showed methat I was at the edge of a dense mass of cypress and yew trees. Asthe snow had ceased to fall, I walked out from the shelter and beganto investigate more closely. It appeared to me that, amongst so manyold foundations as I had passed, there might be still standing a housein which, though in ruins, I could find some sort of shelter for awhile. As I skirted the edge of the copse, I found that a low wallencircled it, and following this I presently found an opening. Herethe cypresses formed an alley leading up to a square mass of some kindof building. Just as I caught sight of this, however, the driftingclouds obscured the moon, and I passed up the path in darkness. Thewind must have grown colder, for I felt myself shiver as I walked; butthere was hope of shelter, and I groped my way blindly on.

I stopped, for there was a sudden stillness. The storm had passed;and, perhaps in sympathy with nature's silence, my heart seemed tocease to beat. But this was only momentarily; for suddenly themoonlight broke through the clouds, showing me that I was in agraveyard, and that the square object before me was a great massivetomb of marble, as white as the snow that lay on and all around it.With the moonlight there came a fierce sigh of the storm, whichappeared to resume its course with a long, low howl, as of many dogsor wolves. I was awed and shocked, and felt the cold perceptibly growupon me till it seemed to grip me by the heart. Then while the

floodof moonlight still fell on the marble tomb, the storm gave furtherevidence of renewing, as though it was returning on its track.Impelled by some sort of fascination, I approached the sepulchre tosee what it was, and why such a thing stood alone in such a place. Iwalked around it, and read, over the Doric door, in German:

COUNTESS DOLINGEN OF GRATZ IN STYRIA SOUGHT AND FOUND DEATH 1801

On the top of the tomb, seemingly driven through the solid marble--forthe structure was composed of a few vast blocks of stone--was a greatiron spike or stake. On going to the back I saw, graven in greatRussian letters:

'The dead travel fast.'

There was something so weird and uncanny about the whole thing that itgave me a turn and made me feel quite faint. I began to wish, for thefirst time, that I had taken Johann's advice. Here a thought struckme, which came under almost mysterious circumstances and with aterrible shock. This was Walpurgis Night!

Walpurgis Night, when, according to the belief of millions of people,the devil was abroad--when the graves were opened and the dead cameforth and walked. When all evil things of earth and air and water heldrevel. This very place the driver had specially shunned. This was thedepopulated village of centuries ago. This was where the suicide lay;and this was the place where I was alone--unmanned, shivering withcold in a shroud of snow with a wild storm gathering again upon me! Ittook all my philosophy, all the religion I had been taught, all mycourage, not to collapse in a paroxysm of fright.

And now a perfect tornado burst upon me. The ground shook as thoughthousands of horses thundered across it; and this time the storm boreon its icy wings, not snow, but great hailstones which drove with suchviolence that they might have come from the

thongs of Balearicslingers--hailstones that beat down leaf and branch and made theshelter of the cypresses of no more avail than though their stems werestanding-corn. At the first I had rushed to the nearest tree; but Iwas soon fain to leave it and seek the only spot that seemed to affordrefuge, the deep Doric doorway of the marble tomb. There, crouchingagainst the massive bronze door, I gained a certain amount ofprotection from the beating of the hailstones, for now they only droveagainst m

e as they ricocheted from the ground and the side of themarble.

As I leaned against the door, it moved slightly and opened inwards.The shelter of even a tomb was welcome in that pitiless tempest, and Iwas about to enter it when there came a flash of forked-lightning thatlit up the whole expanse of the heavens. In the instant, as I am aliving man, I saw, as my eyes were turned into the darkness of thetomb, a beautiful woman, with rounded cheeks and red lips, seeminglysleeping on a bier. As the thunder broke overhead, I was grasped as bythe hand of a giant and hurled out into the storm. The whole thing wasso sudden that, before I could realise the shock, moral as well asphysical, I found the hailstones beating me down. At the same time Ihad a strange, dominating feeling that I was not alone. I lookedtowards the tomb. Just then there came another blinding flash, whichseemed to strike the iron stake that surmounted the tomb and to pourthrough to the earth, blasting and crumbling the marble, as in a burstof flame. The dead woman rose for a moment of agony, while she waslapped in the flame, and her bitter scream of pain was drowned in thethundercrash. The last thing I heard was this mingling of dreadfulsound, as again I was seized in the giant-grasp and dragged away,while the hailstones beat on me, and the air around seemed reverberantwith the howling of wolves. The last sight that I remembered was avague, white, moving mass, as if all the graves around me had sent outthe phantoms of their sheeted-dead, and that they were closing in onme through the white cloudiness of the driving hail.

* * * * *

Gradually there came a sort of vague beginning of consciousness; thena sense of weariness that was dreadful. For a time I rememberednothing; but slowly my senses returned. My feet seemed positivelyracked with pain, yet I could not move them. They seemed to be numbed.There was an icy feeling at the back of my neck and all down my spine,and my ears, like my feet, were dead, yet in torment; but there was inmy breast a sense of warmth which was, by comparison, delicious. Itwas as a nightmare--a physical nightmare, if one may use such anexpression; for some heavy weight on my chest made it difficult for meto breathe.

This period of semi-lethargy seemed to remain a long time, and as itfaded away I must have slept or swooned. Then came a sort of loathing,like the first stage of sea-sickness, and a wild desire to be freefrom something--I knew not what. A vast stillness enveloped me, asthough all the world were asleep or dead--only broken by the lowpanting as of some animal close to me. I felt a warm rasping at mythroat, then came a consciousness of the awful truth, which chilled meto the heart and sent the blood surging up through my brain. Somegreat animal was lying on me and now licking my throat. I feared tostir, for some instinct of prudence bade me lie still; but the bruteseemed to realise that there was now some change in me, for it raisedits head. Through my eyelashes I saw above me the two great flamingeyes of a gigantic wolf. Its sharp white teeth gleamed in the gapingred mouth, and I could feel its hot breath fierce and acrid upon me.

For another spell of time I remembered no more. Then I becameconscious of a low growl, followed by a yelp, renewed again and again.Then, seemingly very far away, I heard a 'Holloa! holloa!' as of manyvoices calling in unison. Cautiously I raised my head and looked inthe direction whence the sound came; but the cemetery blocked my view.The wolf still continued to yelp in a strange way, and a red glarebegan to move round the grove of cypresses, as though following thesound. As the voices drew closer, the wolf yelped faster and louder. Ifeared to make either sound or motion. Nearer came the red glow, overthe white pall which stretched into the darkness around me. Then allat once from beyond the trees there came at a trot a

troop of horsemenbearing torches. The wolf rose from my breast and made for thecemetery. I saw one of the horsemen (soldiers by their caps and theirlong military cloaks) raise his carbine and take aim. A companionknocked up his arm, and I heard the ball whizz over my head. He hadevidently taken my body for that of the wolf. Another sighted theanimal as it slunk away, and a shot followed. Then, at a gallop, thetroop rode forward--some towards me, others following the wolf as itdisappeared amongst the snow-clad cypresses.

As they drew nearer I tried to move, but was powerless, although Icould see and hear all that went on around me. Two or three of thesoldiers jumped from their horses and knelt beside me. One of themraised my head, and placed his hand over my heart.

'Good news, comrades!' he cried. 'His heart still beats!'

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Then some brandy was poured down my throat; it put vigour into me, andI was able to open my eyes fully and look around. Lights and shadowswere moving among the trees, and I heard men call to one another. Theydrew together, uttering frightened exclamations; and the lightsflashed as the others came pouring out of the cemetery pell-mell, likemen possessed. When the further ones came close to us, those who werearound me asked them eagerly:

'Well, have you found him?'

The reply rang out hurriedly:

'No! no! Come away quick--quick! This is no place to stay, and on thisof all nights!'

'What was it?' was the question, asked in all manner of keys. Theanswer came variously and all indefinitely as though the men weremoved by some common impulse to speak, yet were restrained by somecommon fear from giving their thoughts.

'It--it--indeed!' gibbered one, whose wits had plainly given out forthe moment.

'A wolf--and yet not a wolf!' another put in shudderingly.

'No use trying for him without the sacred bullet,' a third remarked ina more ordinary manner.

'Serve us right for coming out on this night! Truly we have earnedour thousand marks!' were the ejaculations of a fourth.

'There was blood on the broken marble,' another said after apause--'the lightning never brought that there. And for him--is hesafe? Look at his throat! See, comrades, the wolf has been lying onhim and keeping his blood warm.'

The officer looked at my throat and replied:

'He is all right; the skin is not pierced. What does it all mean? Weshould never have found him but for the yelping of the wolf.'

'What became of it?' asked the man who was holding up my head, and whoseemed the least panic-stricken of the party, for his hands weresteady and without tremor. On his sleeve was the chevron of a pettyofficer.

'It went to its home,' answered the man, whose long face was pallid,and who actually shook with terror as he glanced around him fearfully.'There are graves enough there in which it may lie. Come,comrades--come quickly! Let us leave this cursed spot.'

The officer raised me to a sitting posture, as he uttered a word ofcommand; then several men placed me upon a horse. He sprang to thesaddle behind me, took me in his arms, gave the word to advance; and,turning our faces away from the cypresses, we rode away in swift,military order.

As yet my tongue refused its office, and I was perforce silent. I musthave fallen asleep; for the next thing I remembered was finding myselfstanding up, supported by a soldier on each side of me. It was almostbroad daylight, and to the north a red streak of sunlight wasreflected, like a path of blood, over the waste of snow. The officerwas telling the men to say nothing of what they had seen, except thatthey found an English stranger, guarded by a large dog.

'Dog! that was no dog,' cut in the man who had exhibited such fear. 'Ithink I know a wolf when I see one.'

The young officer answered calmly: 'I said a dog.'

'Dog!' reiterated the other ironically. It was evident that hiscourage was rising with the sun; and, pointing to me, he said, 'Lookat his throat. Is that the work of a dog, master?'

Instinctively I raised my hand to my throat, and as I touched it Icried out in pain. The men crowded round to look, some stooping downfrom their saddles; and again there came the calm voice of the youngofficer:

'A dog, as I said. If aught else were said we should only be laughedat.'

I was then mounted behind a trooper, and we rode on into the suburbsof Munich. Here we came across a stray carriage, into which I waslifted, and it was driven off to the Quatre Saisons--the young officeraccompanying me, whilst a trooper followed with his horse, and t

heothers rode off to their barracks.

When we arrived, Herr Delbrueck rushed so quickly down the steps tomeet me, that it was apparent he had been watching within. Taking meby both hands he solicitously led me in. The officer saluted me andwas turning to withdraw, when I recognised his purpose, and insistedthat he should come to my rooms. Over a glass of wine I warmly thankedhim and his brave comrades for saving me. He replied simply that hewas more than glad, and that Herr Delbrueck had at the first takensteps to make all the searching party pleased; at which ambiguousutterance the maitre d'hotel smiled, while the officer pleaded dutyand withdrew.

'But Herr Delbrueck,' I enquired, 'how and why was it that the soldierssearched for me?'

He shrugged his shoulders, as if in depreciation of his own deed, ashe replied:

'I was so fortunate as to obtain leave from the commander of theregiment in which I served, to ask for volunteers.'

'But how did you know I was lost?' I asked.

'The driver came hither with the remains of his carriage, which hadbeen upset when the horses ran away.'

'But surely you would not send a search-party of soldiers merely onthis account?'

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'Oh, no!' he answered; 'but even before the coachman arrived, I hadthis telegram from the Boyar whose guest you are,' and he took fromhis pocket a telegram which he handed to me, and I read:

Bistritz.

Be careful of my guest--his safety is most precious to me. Should aught happen to him, or if he be missed, spare nothing to find him and ensure his safety. He is English and therefore adventurous. There are often dangers from snow and wolves and night. Lose not a moment if you suspect harm to him. I answer your zeal with my fortune.--_Dracula_.

As I held the telegram in my hand, the room seemed to whirl around me;and, if the attentive maitre d'hotel had not caught me, I think Ishould have fallen. There was something so strange in all this,something so weird and impossible to imagine, that there grew on me asense of my being in some way the sport of opposite forces--the merevague idea of which seemed in a way to paralyse me. I was certainlyunder some form of mysterious protection. From a distant country hadcome, in the very nick of time, a message that took me out of thedanger of the snow-sleep and the jaws of the wolf.

The Judge's House

When the time for his examination drew near Malcolm Malcolmson made uphis mind to go somewhere to read by himself. He feared the attractionsof the seaside, and also he feared completely rural isolation, for ofold he knew it charms, and so he determined to find some unpretentiouslittle town where there would be nothing to

distract him. He refrainedfrom asking suggestions from any of his friends, for he argued thateach would recommend some place of which he had knowledge, and wherehe had already acquaintances. As Malcolmson wished to avoid friends hehad no wish to encumber himself with the attention of friends'friends, and so he determined to look out for a place for himself. Hepacked a portmanteau with some clothes and all the books he required,and then took ticket for the first name on the local time-table whichhe did not know.

When at the end of three hours' journey he alighted at Benchurch, hefelt satisfied that he had so far obliterated his tracks as to be sureof having a peaceful opportunity of pursuing his studies. He wentstraight to the one inn which the sleepy little place contained, andput up for the night. Benchurch was a market town, and once in threeweeks was crowded to excess, but for the remainder of the twenty-onedays it was as attractive as a desert. Malcolmson looked around theday after his arrival to try to find quarters more isolated than evenso quiet an inn as 'The Good Traveller' afforded. There was only oneplace which took his fancy, and it certainly satisfied his wildestideas regarding quiet; in fact, quiet was not the proper word to applyto it--desolation was the only term conveying any suitable idea of itsisolation. It was an old rambling, heavy-built house of the Jacobeanstyle, with heavy gables and windows, unusually small, and set higherthan was customary in such houses, and was surrounded with a highbrick wall massively built. Indeed, on examination, it looked morelike a fortified house than an ordinary dwelling. But all these thingspleased Malcolmson. 'Here,' he thought, 'is the very spot I have beenlooking for, and if I can get opportunity of using it I shall behappy.' His joy was increased when he realised beyond doubt that itwas not at present inhabited.

From the post-office he got the name of the agent, who was rarelysurprised at the application to rent a part of the old house. Mr.Carnford, the local lawyer and agent, was a genial old gentleman, andfrankly confessed his delight at anyone being willing to live in thehouse.

'To tell you the truth,' said he, 'I should be only too happy, onbehalf of the owners, to let anyone have the house rent free for aterm of years if only to accustom the people here to see it inhabited.It has been so long empty that some kind of absurd prejudice has grownup about it, and this can be best put down by its occupation--ifonly,' he added with a sly glance at Malcolmson, 'by a scholar likeyourself, who wants its quiet for a time.'

Malcolmson thought it needless to ask the agent about the 'absurdprejudice'; he knew he would get more information, if he shouldrequire it, on that subject from other quarters. He paid his threemonths' rent, got a receipt, and the name of an old woman who wouldprobably undertake to 'do' for him, and came away with the keys in hispocket. He then went to the landlady of the inn, who was a cheerfuland most kindly person, and asked her advice as to such stores andprovisions as he would be likely to require. She threw up her hands inamazement when he told her where he was going to settle himself.

'Not in the Judge's House!' she said, and grew pale as she spoke. Heexplained the locality of the house, saying that he did not know itsname. When he had finished she answered:

'Aye, sure enough--sure enough the very place! It is the Judge's Housesure enough.' He asked her to tell him about the place, why so called,and what there was against it. She told him that it was so calledlocally because it had been many years before--how long she could notsay, as she was herself from another part of the country, but shethought it must have been a hundred years or more--the abode of ajudge who was held in great terror on account of his harsh sentencesand his hostility to prisoners at Assizes. As to what there wasagainst the house itself she could not tell. She had often asked, butno one could inform her; but there was a general feeling that therewas _something_, and for her own part she would not take all the moneyin Drinkwater's Bank and stay in the house an hour by herself. Thenshe apologised to Malcolmson for her disturbing talk.

'It is too bad of me, sir, and you--and a young gentlemen, too--if youwill pardon me saying it, going to live there all alone. If you weremy boy--and you'll excuse me for saying it--you wouldn't sleep there anight, not if I had to go there myself and pull the big alarm bellthat's on the roof!' The good creature was so manifestly in earnest,and was so kindly in her intentions, that Malcolmson, although amused,was touched. He told her kindly how much he appreciated her interestin him, and added:

'But, my dear Mrs. Witham, indeed you need not be concerned about me!A man who is reading for the Mathematical Tripos has too much to thinkof to be disturbed by any of these mysterious "somethings", and hiswork is of too exact and prosaic a kind to allow of his having anycorner in his mind for mysteries of any kind. Harmonical Progression,Permutations and Combinations, and Elliptic Functions have sufficientmysteries for me!' Mrs. Witham kindly undertook to see after hiscommissions, and he went himself to look for the old woman who hadbeen recommended to him. When he returned to the Judge's House withher, after an interval of a couple of hours, he found Mrs. Withamherself waiting with several men and boys carrying parcels, and anupholsterer's man with a bed in a car, for she said, though tables andchairs might be all very well, a bed that hadn't been aired for mayhapfifty years was not proper for young bones to lie on. She wasevidently curious to see the inside of the house; and thoughmanifestly so afraid of the 'somethings' that at the slightest soundshe clutched on to Malcolmson, whom she never left for a moment, wentover the whole place.

After his examination of the house, Malcolmson decided to take up hisabode in the great dining-room, which was big enough to serve for allhis requirements; and Mrs. Witham, with the aid of the charwoman,Mrs. Dempster, proceeded to arrange matters. When the hampers werebrought in and unpacked, Malcolmson saw that with much kindforethought she had sent from her own kitchen sufficient provisions tolast for a few days. Before going she expressed all sorts of kindwishes; and at the door turned and said:

'And perhaps, sir, as the room is big and draughty it might be well tohave one of those big screens put round your bed at night--though,truth to tell, I would die myself if I were to be so shut in with allkinds of--of "things", that put their heads round the sides, or overthe top, and look on me!' The image which she had called up was toomuch for her nerves, and she fled incontinently.

Mrs. Dempster sniffed in a superior manner as the landladydisappeared, and remarked that for her own part she wasn't afraid ofall the bogies in the kingdom.

'I'll tell you what it is, sir,' she said; 'bogies is all kinds andsorts of things--except bogies! Rats and mice, and beetles; and creakydoors, and loose slates, and broken panes, and stiff drawer handles,that stay out when you pull them and then fall down in the middle ofthe night. Look at the wainscot of the room! It is old--hundreds ofyears old! Do you think there's no rats and beetles there! And do youimagine, sir, that you won't see none of them? Rats is bogies, I tellyou, and bogies is rats; and don't you get to think anything else!'

'Mrs. Dempster,' said Malcolmson gravely, making her a polite bow,'you know more than a Senior Wrangler! And let me say, that, as a markof esteem for your indubitable soundness of head and heart, I shall,when I go, give you possession of this house, and let you stay here byyourself for the last two months of my tenancy, for four weeks willserve my purpose.'

'Thank you kindly, sir!' she answered, 'but I couldn't sleep awayfrom home a night. I am in Greenhow's Charity, and if I slept a nightaway from my rooms I should lose all I have got to live on. The rulesis very strict; and there's too many watching for a vacancy for me torun any risks in the matter. Only for that, sir, I'd gladly come hereand attend on you altogether during your stay.'

'My good woman,' said Malcolmson hastily, 'I have come here on purposeto o

btain solitude; and believe me that I am grateful to the lateGreenhow for having so organised his admirable charity--whatever itis--that I am perforce denied the opportunity of suffering from such aform of temptation! Saint Anthony himself could not be more rigid onthe point!'

The old woman laughed harshly. 'Ah, you young gentlemen,' she said,'you don't fear for naught; and belike you'll get all the solitude youwant here.' She set to work with her cleaning; and by nightfall, whenMalcolmson returned from his walk--he always had one of his books tostudy as he walked--he found the room swept and tidied, a fire burningin the old hearth, the lamp lit, and the table spread for supper withMrs. Witham's excellent fare. 'This is comfort, indeed,' he said, ashe rubbed his hands.

When he had finished his supper, and lifted the tray to the other endof the great oak dining-table, he got out his books again, put freshwood on the fire, trimmed his lamp, and set himself down to a spell ofreal hard work. He went on without pause till about eleven o'clock,when he knocked off for a bit to fix his fire and lamp, and to makehimself a cup of tea. He had always been a tea-drinker, and during hiscollege life had sat late at work and had taken tea late. The restwas a great luxury to him, and he enjoyed it with a sense ofdelicious, voluptuous ease. The renewed fire leaped and sparkled, andthrew quaint shadows through the great old room; and as he sipped hishot tea he revelled in the sense of isolation from his kind. Then itwas that he began to notice for the first time what a noise the ratswere making.

'Surely,' he thought, 'they cannot have been at it all the time I wasreading. Had they been, I must have noticed it!' Presently, when thenoise increased, he satisfied himself that it was really new. It wasevident that at first the rats had been frightened at the presence ofa stranger, and the light of fire and lamp; but that as the time wenton they had grown bolder and were now disporting themselves as wastheir wont.

How busy they were! and hark to the strange noises! Up and down behindthe old wainscot, over the ceiling and under the floor they raced, andgnawed, and scratched!

Malcolmson smiled to himself as he recalled tomind the saying of Mrs. Dempster, 'Bogies is rats, and rats isbogies!' The tea began to have its effect of intellectual and nervousstimulus, he saw with joy another long spell of work to be done beforethe night was past, and in the sense of security which it gave him, heallowed himself the luxury of a good look round the room. He took hislamp in one hand, and went all around, wondering that so quaint andbeautiful an old house had been so long neglected. The carving of theoak on the panels of the wainscot was fine, and on and round the doorsand windows it was beautiful and of rare merit. There were some oldpictures on the walls, but they were coated so thick with dust anddirt that he could not distinguish any detail of them, though he heldhis lamp as high as he could over his head. Here and there as he wentround he saw some crack or hole blocked for a moment by the face of arat with its bright eyes glittering in the light, but in an instant itwas gone, and a squeak and a scamper followed. The thing that moststruck him, however, was the rope of the great alarm bell on the roof,which hung down in a corner of the room on the right-hand side of thefireplace. He pulled up close to the hearth a great high-backed carvedoak chair, and sat down to his last cup of tea. When this was done hemade up the fire, and went back to his work, sitting at the corner ofthe table, having the fire to his left. For a little while the ratsdisturbed him somewhat with their perpetual scampering, but he gotaccustomed to the noise as one does to the ticking of a clock or tothe roar of moving water; and he became so immersed in his work thateverything in the world, except the problem which he was trying tosolve, passed away from him.

He suddenly looked up, his problem was still unsolved, and there wasin the air that sense of the hour before the dawn, which is so dreadto doubtful life. The noise of the rats had ceased. Indeed it seemedto him that it must have ceased but lately and that it was the suddencessation which had disturbed him. The fire had fallen low, but stillit threw out a deep red glow. As he looked he started in spite of his_sang froid_.

There on the great high-backed carved oak chair by the right side ofthe fireplace sat an enormous rat, steadily glaring at him withbaleful eyes. He made a motion to it as

though to hunt it away, but itdid not stir. Then he made the motion of throwing something. Still itdid not stir, but showed its great white teeth angrily, and its crueleyes shone in the lamplight with an added vindictiveness.

Malcolmson felt amazed, and seizing the poker from the hearth ran atit to kill it. Before, however, he could strike it, the rat, with asqueak that sounded like the concentration of hate, jumped upon thefloor, and, running up the rope of the alarm bell, disappeared in thedarkness beyond the range of the green-shaded lamp. Instantly, strangeto say, the noisy scampering of the rats in the wainscot began again.

By this time Malcolmson's mind was quite off the problem; and as ashrill cock-crow outside told him of the approach of morning, he wentto bed and to sleep.

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He slept so sound that he was not even waked by Mrs. Dempster comingin to make up his room. It was only when she had tidied up the placeand got his breakfast ready and tapped on the screen which closed inhis bed that he woke. He was a little tired still after his night'shard work, but a strong cup of tea soon freshened him up and, takinghis book, he went out for his morning walk, bringing with him a fewsandwiches lest he should not care to return till dinner time. Hefound a quiet walk between high elms some way outside the town, andhere he spent the greater part of the day studying his Laplace. On hisreturn he looked in to see Mrs. Witham and to thank her for herkindness. When she saw him coming through the diamond-paned bay windowof her sanctum she came out to meet him and asked him in. She lookedat him searchingly and shook her head as she said:

'You must not overdo it, sir. You are paler this morning than youshould be. Too late hours and too hard work on the brain isn't goodfor any man! But tell me, sir, how did you pass the night? Well, Ihope? But my heart! sir, I was glad when Mrs. Dempster told me thismorning that you were all right and sleeping sound when she went in.'

'Oh, I was all right,' he answered smiling, 'the "somethings" didn'tworry me, as yet. Only the rats; and they had a circus, I tell you,all over the place. There was one wicked looking old devil that sat upon my own chair by the fire, and wouldn't go till I took the poker tohim, and then he ran up the rope of the alarm bell and got tosomewhere up the wall or the ceiling--I couldn't see where, it was sodark.'

'Mercy on us,' said Mrs. Witham, 'an old devil, and sitting on a chairby the fireside! Take care, sir! take care! There's many a true wordspoken in jest.'

'How do you mean? Pon my word I don't understand.'

'An old devil! The old devil, perhaps. There! sir, you needn't laugh,'for Malcolmson had broken into a hearty peal. 'You young folks thinksit easy to laugh at things that makes older ones shudder. Never mind,sir! never mind! Please God, you'll laugh all the time. It's what Iwish you myself!' and the good lady beamed all over in sympathy withhis enjoyment, her fears gone for a moment.

'Oh, forgive me!' said Malcolmson presently. 'Don't think me rude; butthe idea was too much for me--that the old devil himself was on thechair last night!' And at the thought he laughed again. Then he wenthome to dinner.

This evening the scampering of the rats began earlier; indeed it hadbeen going on before his arrival, and only ceased whilst his presenceby its freshness disturbed them. After dinner he sat by the fire for awhile and had a smoke; and then, having cleared his table, began towork as before. Tonight the rats disturbed him more than they had doneon the previous night. How they scampered up and down and under andover! How they squeaked, and scratched, and gnawed! How they, gettingbolder by degrees, came to the mouths of their holes and to the chinksand cracks and crannies in the wainscoting till their eyes shone liketiny lamps as the firelight rose and fell. But to him, now doubtlessaccustomed to them, their eyes were not wicked; only their playfulnesstouched him. Sometimes the boldest of them made sallies out on thefloor or along the mouldings of the wainscot. Now and again as theydisturbed him Malcolmson made a

sound to frighten them, smiting thetable with his hand or giving a fierce 'Hsh, hsh,' so that they fledstraightway to their holes.

And so the early part of the night wore on; and despite the noiseMalcolmson got more and more immersed in his work.

All at once he stopped, as on the previous night, being overcome by asudden sense of silence. There was not the faintest sound of gnaw, orscratch, or squeak. The silence

was as of the grave. He remembered theodd occurrence of the previous night, and instinctively he looked atthe chair standing close by the fireside. And then a very oddsensation thrilled through him.

There, on the great old high-backed carved oak chair beside thefireplace sat the same enormous rat, steadily glaring at him withbaleful eyes.

Instinctively he took the nearest thing to his hand, a book oflogarithms, and flung it at it. The book was badly aimed and the ratdid not stir, so again the poker performance of the previous night wasrepeated; and again the rat, being closely pursued, fled up the ropeof the alarm bell. Strangely too, the departure of this rat wasinstantly followed by the renewal of the noise made by the general ratcommunity. On this occasion, as on the previous one, Malcolmson couldnot see at what part of the room the rat disappeared, for the greenshade of his lamp left the upper part of the room in darkness, and thefire had burned low.

On looking at his watch he found it was close on midnight; and, notsorry for the _divertissement_, he made up his fire and made himselfhis nightly pot of tea. He had got through a good spell of work, andthought himself entitled to a cigarette; and so he sat on the greatoak chair before the fire and enjoyed it. Whilst smoking he began tothink that he would like to know where the rat disappeared to, for hehad certain ideas for the morrow not entirely disconnected with arat-trap. Accordingly he lit another lamp and placed it so that itwould shine well into the right-hand corner of the wall by thefireplace. Then he got all the books he had with him, and placed themhandy to throw at the vermin. Finally he lifted the rope of the alarmbell and placed the end of it on the table, fixing the extreme endunder the lamp. As he handled it he could not help noticing howpliable it was, especially for so strong a rope, and one not in use.'You could hang a man with it,' he thought to himself. When hispreparations were made he looked around, and said complacently:

'There now, my friend, I think we shall learn something of you thistime!' He began

his work again, and though as before somewhatdisturbed at first by the noise of the rats, soon lost himself in hispropositions and problems.

Again he was called to his immediate surroundings suddenly. This timeit might not have been the sudden silence only which took hisattention; there was a slight movement of the rope, and the lampmoved. Without stirring, he looked to see if his pile of books waswithin range, and then cast his eye along the rope. As he looked hesaw the great rat drop from the rope on the oak arm-chair and sitthere glaring at him. He raised a book in his right hand, and takingcareful aim, flung it at the rat. The latter, with a quick movement,sprang aside and dodged the missile. He then took another book, and athird, and flung them one after another at the rat, but each timeunsuccessfully. At last, as he stood with a book poised in his hand tothrow, the rat squeaked and seemed afraid. This made Malcolmson morethan ever eager to strike, and the book flew and struck the rat aresounding blow. It gave a terrified squeak, and turning on hispursuer a look of terrible malevolence, ran up the chair-back and madea great jump to the rope of the alarm bell and ran up it likelightning. The lamp rocked under the sudden strain, but it was a heavyone and did not topple over. Malcolmson kept his eyes on the rat, andsaw it by the light of the second lamp leap to a moulding of thewainscot and disappear through a hole in one of the great pictureswhich hung on the wall, obscured and invisible through its coating ofdirt and dust.

'I shall look up my friend's habitation in the morning,' said thestudent, as he went over to collect his books. 'The third picture fromthe fireplace; I shall not forget.' He picked up the books one by one,commenting on them as he lifted them. '_Conic Sections_ he does notmind, nor _Cycloidal Oscillations_, nor the _Principia_, nor_Quaternions_, nor _Thermodynamics_. Now for the book that fetchedhim!' Malcolmson took it up and looked at it. As he did so he started,and a sudden pallor overspread his face. He looked round uneasily andshivered slightly, as he murmured to himself:

'The Bible my mother gave me! What an odd coincidence.' He sat down towork again, and the rats in the wainscot renewed their gambols. Theydid not disturb him, however; somehow their presence gave him a senseof companionship. But he could not attend to his work, and afterstriving to master the subject on which he was engaged gave it up indespair, and went to bed as the first streak of dawn stole in throughthe eastern window.

He slept heavily but uneasily, and dreamed much; and when Mrs.Dempster woke him late in the morning he seemed ill at ease, and for afew minutes did not seem to realise exactly where he was. His firstrequest rather surprised the servant.

'Mrs. Dempster, when I am out to-day I wish you would get the stepsand dust or wash those pictures--specially that one the third from thefireplace--I want to see what they are.'

Late in the afternoon Malcolmson worked at his books in the shadedwalk, and the cheerfulness of the previous day came back to him as theday wore on, and he found that his reading was progressing well. Hehad worked out to a satisfactory conclusion all the problems which hadas yet baffled him, and it was in a state of jubilation that he paid avisit to Mrs. Witham at 'The Good Traveller'. He found a stranger inthe cosy sitting-room with the landlady, who was introduced to him asDr. Thornhill. She was not quite at ease, and this, combined with thedoctor's plunging at once into a series of questions, made Malcolmsoncome to the conclusion that his presence was not an accident, sowithout preliminary he said:

'Dr. Thornhill, I shall with pleasure answer you any question you maychoose to ask me if you will answer me one question first.'

The doctor seemed surprised, but he smiled and answered at once,'Done! What is it?'

'Did Mrs. Witham ask you to come here and see me and advise me?'

Dr. Thornhill for a moment was taken aback, and Mrs. Witham got fieryred and turned away; but the doctor was a frank and ready man, and heanswered at once and openly.

'She did: but she didn't intend you to know it. I suppose it was myclumsy haste that made you suspect. She told me that she did not likethe idea of your being in that house all by yourself, and that shethought you took too much strong tea. In fact, she wants me to adviseyou if possible to give up the tea and the very late hours. I was akeen student in my time, so I suppose I may take the liberty of acollege man, and without offence, advise you not quite as a stranger.'

Malcolmson with a bright smile held out his hand. 'Shake! as they sayin America,' he said. 'I must thank you for your kindness and Mrs.Witham too, and your kindness deserves a return on my part. I promiseto take no more strong tea--no tea at all till you let me--and I shallgo to bed tonight at one o'clock at latest. Will that do?'

'Capital,' said the doctor. 'Now tell us all that you noticed in theold house,' and so Malcolmson then and there told in minute detail allthat had happened in the last two nights. He was interrupted every nowand then by some exclamation from Mrs. Witham, till finally when hetold of the episode of the Bible the landlady's pent-up emotions foundvent in a shriek; and it was not till a stiff glass of brandy andwater had been administered that she grew composed again. Dr.Thornhill listened with a face of growing gravity, and when thenarrative was complete and Mrs. Witham had been restored he asked:

'The rat always went up the rope of the alarm bell?'

'Always.'

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'I suppose you know,' said the Doctor after a pause, 'what the ropeis?'

'No!'

'It is,' said the Doctor slowly, 'the very rope which the hangman usedfor all the victims of the Judge's judicial rancour!' Here he wasinterrupted by another scream from Mrs. Witham, and steps had to betaken for her recovery. Malcolmson having looked at his watch, andfound that it was close to his dinner hour, had gone home be

fore hercomplete recovery.

When Mrs. Witham was herself again she almost assailed the Doctor withangry questions as to what he meant by putting such horrible ideasinto the poor young man's mind. 'He has quite enough there already toupset him,' she added. Dr. Thornhill replied:

'My dear madam, I had a distinct purpose in it! I wanted to draw hisattention to the bell rope, and to fix it there. It may be that he isin a highly overwrought state, and has been studying too much,although I am bound to say that he seems as sound and healthy a youngman, mentally and bodily, as ever I saw--but then the rats--and thatsuggestion of the devil.' The doctor shook his head and went on. 'Iwould have offered to go and stay the first night with him but that Ifelt sure it would have been a cause of offence. He may get in thenight some strange fright or hallucination; and if he does I want himto pull that rope. All alone as he is it will give us warning, and wemay reach him in time to be of service. I shall be sitting up prettylate tonight and shall keep my ears open. Do not be alarmed ifBenchurch gets a surprise before morning.'

'Oh, Doctor, what do you mean? What do you mean?'

'I mean this; that possibly--nay, more probably--we shall hear thegreat alarm bell from the Judge's House tonight,' and the Doctor madeabout as effective an exit as could be thought of.

When Malcolmson arrived home he found that it was a little after hisusual time, and Mrs. Dempster had gone away--the rules of Greenhow'sCharity were not to be neglected. He was glad to see that the placewas bright and tidy with a cheerful fire and a well-trimmed lamp. Theevening was colder than might have been expected in April, and a heavywind was blowing with such rapidly-increasing strength that there wasevery promise of a storm during the night. For a few minutes after hisentrance the noise of the rats ceased; but so soon as they becameaccustomed to his presence they began again. He was glad to hear them,for he felt once more the feeling of companionship in their noise, andhis mind ran back to the strange fact that they only ceased tomanifest themselves when that other--the great rat with the balefuleyes--came upon the scene. The reading-lamp only was lit and its greenshade kept the ceiling and the upper part of the room in darkness, sothat the cheerful light from the hearth spreading over the floor andshining on the white cloth laid over the end of the table was warm andcheery. Malcolmson sat down to his dinner with a good appetite and abuoyant spirit. After his dinner and a cigarette he sat steadily downto work, determined not to let anything disturb him, for he rememberedhis promise to the doctor, and made up his mind to make the best ofthe time at his disposal.

For an hour or so he worked all right, and then his thoughts began towander from his books. The actual circumstances around him, the callson his physical attention, and his nervous susceptibility were not tobe denied. By this time the wind had become a gale, and the gale astorm. The old house, solid though it was, seemed to shake to itsfoundations, and the storm roared and raged through its many chimneysand its queer old gables, producing strange, unearthly sounds in theempty rooms and corridors. Even the great alarm bell on the roof musthave felt the force of the wind,

for the rope rose and fell slightly,as though the bell were moved a little from time to time and thelimber rope fell on the oak floor with a hard and hollow sound.

As Malcolmson listened to it he bethought himself of the doctor'swords, 'It is the rope which the hangman used for the victims of theJudge's judicial rancour,' and he went over to the corner of thefireplace and took it in his hand to look at it. There seemed a sortof deadly interest in it, and as he stood there he lost himself for amoment in speculation as to who these victims were, and the grim wishof the Judge to have such a ghastly relic ever under his eyes. As hestood there the swaying of the bell on the roof still lifted the ropenow and again; but presently there came a new sensation--a sort oftremor in the rope, as though something was moving along it.

Looking up instinctively Malcolmson saw the great rat coming slowlydown towards him, glaring at him steadily. He dropped the rope andstarted back with a muttered curse, and the rat turning ran up therope again and disappeared, and at the same instant Malcolmson becameconscious that the noise of the rats, which had ceased for a while,began again.

All this set him thinking, and it occurred to him that he had notinvestigated the lair of the rat or looked at the pictures, as he hadintended. He lit the other lamp without the shade, and, holding it upwent and stood opposite the third picture from the fireplace on theright-hand side where he had seen the rat disappear on the previousnight.

At the first glance he started back so suddenly that he almost droppedthe lamp, and a deadly pallor overspread his face. His knees shook,and heavy drops of sweat came on his forehead, and he trembled like anaspen. But he was young and plucky, and pulled himself together, andafter the pause of a few seconds stepped forward again, raised thelamp, and examined the picture which had been dusted and washed, andnow stood out clearly.

It was of a judge dressed in his robes of scarlet and ermine. His facewas strong and

merciless, evil, crafty, and vindictive, with a sensualmouth, hooked nose of ruddy colour, and shaped like the beak of a birdof prey. The rest of the face was of a cadaverous colour. The eyeswere of peculiar brilliance and with a terribly malignant expression.As he looked at them, Malcolmson grew cold, for he saw there the verycounterpart of the eyes of the great rat. The lamp almost fell fromhis hand, he saw the rat with its baleful eyes peering out through thehole in the corner of the picture, and noted the sudden cessation ofthe noise of the other rats. However, he pulled himself together, andwent on with his examination of the picture.

The Judge was seated in a great high-backed carved oak chair, on theright-hand side of a great stone fireplace where, in the corner, arope hung down from the ceiling, its end lying coiled on the floor.With a feeling of something like horror, Malcolmson recognised thescene of the room as it stood, and gazed around him in an awestruckmanner as though he expected to find some strange presence behind him.Then he looked over to the corner of the fireplace--and with a loudcry he let the lamp fall from his hand.

There, in the Judge's arm-chair, with the rope hanging behind, sat therat with the Judge's baleful eyes, now intensified and with a fiendishleer. Save for the howling of the storm without there was silence.

The fallen lamp recalled Malcolmson to himself. Fortunately it was ofmetal, and so the oil was not spilt. However, the practical need ofattending to it settled at once his nervous apprehensions. When he hadturned it out, he wiped his brow and thought for a moment.

'This will not do,' he said to himself. 'If I go on like this I shallbecome a crazy fool. This must stop! I promised the doctor I would nottake tea. Faith, he was pretty right! My nerves must have been gettinginto a queer state. Funny I did not notice it. I never felt better inmy life. However, it is all right now, and I shall not be such a foolagain.'

Then he mixed himself a good stiff glass of brandy and water andresolutely sat down to his work.

It was nearly an hour when he looked up from his book, disturbed bythe sudden stillness. Without, the wind howled and roared louder thanever, and the rain drove in sheets against the windows, beating likehail on the glass; but within there was no sound whatever save theecho of the wind as it roared in the great chimney, and now and then ahiss as a few raindrops found their way down the chimney in a lull ofthe storm. The fire had fallen low and had ceased to flame, though itthrew out a red glow. Malcolmson listened attentively, and presentlyheard a thin, squeaking noise, very faint. It came from the corner ofthe room where the rope hung down, and he thought it was the creakingof the rope on the floor as the swaying of the bell raised and loweredit. Looking up, however, he saw in the dim light the great ratclinging to the rope and gnawing it. The rope was already nearlygnawed through--he could see the lighter colour where the strands werelaid bare. As he looked the job was completed, and the severed end ofthe rope fell clattering on the oaken floor, whilst for an instant thegreat rat remained like a knob or tassel at the end of the rope, whichnow began to sway to and fro. Malcolmson felt for a moment anot

herpang of terror as he thought that now the possibility of calling theouter world to his assistance was cut off, but an intense anger tookits place, and seizing the book he was reading he hurled it at therat. The blow was well aimed, but before the missile could reach himthe rat dropped off and struck the floor with a soft thud. Malcolmsoninstantly rushed over towards him, but it darted away and disappearedin the darkness of the shadows of the room. Malcolmson felt that hiswork was over for the night, and determined then and there to vary themonotony of the proceedings by a hunt for the rat, and took off thegreen shade of the lamp so as to insure a wider spreading light. As hedid so the gloom of the upper part of the room was relieved, and inthe new flood of light, great by comparison with the previousdarkness, the pictures on the wall stood out boldly. From where hestood, Malcolmson saw right opposite to him the third picture on thewall from the right of the fireplace. He rubbed

his eyes in surprise,and then a great fear began to come upon him.

In the centre of the picture was a great irregular patch of browncanvas, as fresh as when it was stretched on the frame. The backgroundwas as before, with chair and chimney-corner and rope, but the figureof the Judge had disappeared.

Malcolmson, almost in a chill of horror, turned slowly round, and thenhe began to shake and tremble like a man in a palsy. His strengthseemed to have left him, and he was incapable of action or movement,hardly even of thought. He could only see and hear.

There, on the great high-backed carved oak chair sat the Judge in hisrobes of scarlet and ermine, with his baleful eyes glaringvindictively, and a smile of triumph on the resolute, cruel mouth, ashe lifted with his hands a _black cap_. Malcolmson felt as if theblood was running from his heart, as one does in moments of prolongedsuspense. There was a singing in his ears. Without, he could hear theroar and howl of the tempest, and through it, swept on the storm, camethe striking of midnight by the great chimes in the market place. Hestood for a space of time that seemed to him endless still as astatue, and with wide-open, horror-struck eyes, breathless. As theclock struck, so the smile of triumph on the Judge's face intensified,and at the last stroke of midnight he placed the black cap on hishead.

Slowly and deliberately the Judge rose from his chair and picked upthe piece of the rope of the alarm bell which lay on the floor, drewit through his hands as if he enjoyed its touch, and then deliberatelybegan to knot one end of it, fashioning it into a noose. This hetightened and tested with his foot, pulling hard at it till he wassatisfied and then making a running noose of it, which he held in hishand. Then he began to move along the table on the opposite side toMalcolmson keeping his eyes on him until he had passed him, when witha quick movement he stood in front of the door. Malcolmson then beganto feel that he was trapped, and tried to think of what he should do.There was some fascination in the Judge's eyes, which he never tookoff

him, and he had, perforce, to look. He saw the Judgeapproach--still keeping between him and the door--and raise the nooseand throw it towards him as if to entangle him. With a great effort hemade a quick movement to one side, and saw the rope fall beside him,and heard it strike the oaken floor. Again the Judge raised the nooseand tried to ensnare him, ever keeping his baleful eyes fixed on him,and each time by a mighty effort the student just managed to evade it.So this went on for many times, the Judge seeming never discouragednor discomposed at failure, but playing as a cat does with a mouse. Atlast in despair, which had reached its climax, Malcolmson cast a quickglance round him. The lamp seemed to have blazed up, and there was afairly good light in the room. At the many rat-holes and in the chinksand crannies of the wainscot he saw the rats' eyes; and this aspect,that was purely physical, gave him a gleam of comfort. He lookedaround and saw that the rope of the great alarm bell was laden withrats. Every inch of it was covered with them, and more and more werepouring through the small circular hole in the ceiling whence itemerged, so that with their weight the bell was beginning to sway.

Hark! it had swayed till the clapper had touched the bell. The soundwas but a tiny one, but the bell was only beginning to sway, and itwould increase.

At the sound the Judge, who had been keeping his eyes fixed onMalcolmson, looked up, and a scowl of diabolical anger overspread hisface. His eyes fairly glowed like hot coals, and he stamped his footwith a sound that seemed to make the house shake. A dreadful peal ofthunder broke overhead as he raised the rope again, whilst the ratskept running up and down the rope as though working against time. Thistime, instead of throwing it, he drew close to his victim, and heldopen the noose as he approached. As he came closer there seemedsomething paralysing in his very presence, and Malcolmson stood rigidas a corpse. He felt the Judge's icy fingers touch his throat as headjusted the rope. The noose tightened--tightened. Then the Judge,taking the rigid form of the student in his arms, carried him over andplaced him standing in the oak chair, and stepping up beside him, puthis hand up and caught the end of the swaying rope of the alarm bell.As he raised his hand the rats fled

squeaking, and disappeared throughthe hole in the ceiling. Taking the end of the noose which was roundMalcolmson's neck he tied it to the hanging-bell rope, and thendescending pulled away the chair.

* * * * *

When the alarm bell of the Judge's House began to sound a crowd soonassembled. Lights and torches of various kinds appeared, and soon asilent crowd was hurrying to the spot. They knocked loudly at thedoor, but there was no reply. Then they burst in the door, and pouredinto the great dining-room, the doctor at the head.

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There at the end of the rope of the great alarm bell hung the body ofthe student, and on the face of the Judge in the picture was amalignant smile.

The Squaw

Nurnberg at the time was not so much exploited as it has been sincethen. Irving had not been playing _Faust_, and the very name of theold town was hardly known to the great bulk of the travelling public.My wife and I being in the second week of our honeymoon, naturallywanted someone else to join our party, so that when the cheerystranger, Elias P. Hutcheson, hailing from Isthmian City, BleedingGulch, Maple Tree County, Neb. turned up at the station at Frankfort,and casually remarked that he was going on to see the most all-firedold Methuselah of a town in Yurrup, and that he guessed that so muchtravelling alone was enough to send an intelligent, active citizeninto the melancholy ward of a daft house, we took the pretty broadhint and suggested that we should join forces. We found, on comparingnotes afterwards, that we had each intended to speak with somediffidence or hesitation so as not to appear too eager, such not beinga good compliment to the success of our married life; but the effectwas entirely marred by our both beginning to speak at the sameinstant--stopping simultaneously and then going on together again.Anyhow, no matter how, it was done; and Elias P. Hutcheson became oneof our party. Straightway Amelia and I found the pleasant benefit;instead of quarrelling, as we had been doing, we found that therestraining influence of a third party was such that we now took everyopportunity of spooning in odd corners. Amelia declares that eversince she has, as the result of that experience, advised all herfriends to take a friend on the honeymoon. Well, we 'did' Nurnbergtogether, and much enjoyed the racy remarks of our Transatlanticfriend, who, from his quaint speech and his wonderful stock ofadventures, might have stepped out of a novel. We kept for the lastobject of interest

in the city to be visited the Burg, and on the dayappointed for the visit strolled round the outer wall of the city bythe eastern side.

The Burg is seated on a rock dominating the town and an immensely deepfosse guards it on the northern side. Nurnberg has been happy in thatit was never sacked; had it been it would certainly not be so spickand span perfect as it is at present. The ditch has not been used forcenturies, and now its base is spread with tea-gardens and orchards,of which some of the trees are of quite respectable growth. As wewandered round the wall, dawdling in the hot July sunshine, we oftenpaused to admire the views spread before us, and in especial the greatplain covered with towns and villages and bounded with a blue line ofhills, like a landscape of Claude Lorraine. From this we always turnedwith new delight to the city itself, with its myriad of quaint oldgables and acre-wide red roofs dotted with dormer windows, tier upontier. A little to our right rose the towers of the Burg, and nearerstill, standing grim, the Torture Tower, which was, and is, perhaps,the most interesting place in the city. For centuries the tradition ofthe Iron Virgin of Nurnberg has been handed down as an instance ofthe horrors of cruelty of which man is capable; we had long lookedforward to seeing it; and here at last was its home.

In one of our pauses we leaned over the wall of the moat and lookeddown. The garden seemed quite fifty or sixty feet below us, and thesun pouring into it with an intense, moveless heat like that of anoven. Beyond rose the grey, grim wall seemingly of endless height, andlosing itself right and left in the angles of bastion andcounterscarp. Trees and bushes crowned the wall, and above againtowered the lofty houses on whose massive beauty Time has only set thehand of approval. The sun was hot and we were lazy; time was our own,and we lingered, leaning on the wall. Just below us was a prettysight--a great black cat lying stretched in the sun, whilst round hergambolled prettily a tiny black kitten. The mother would wave her tailfor the kitten to play with, or would raise her feet and push away thelittle one as an encouragement to further play. They were just at thefoot of the wall, and Elias P. Hutcheson, in order to help the play,stooped and took from the walk a moderate sized

pebble.

'See!' he said, 'I will drop it near the kitten, and they will bothwonder where it came from.'

'Oh, be careful,' said my wife; 'you might hit the dear little thing!'

'Not me, ma'am,' said Elias P. 'Why, I'm as tender as a Mainecherry-tree. Lor, bless ye. I wouldn't hurt the poor pooty littlecritter more'n I'd scalp a baby. An' you may bet your variegated sockson that! See, I'll drop it fur away on the outside so's not to go nearher!' Thus saying, he leaned over and held his arm out at full lengthand dropped the stone. It may be that there is some attractive forcewhich draws lesser matters to greater; or more probably that the wallwas not plump but sloped to its base--we not noticing the inclinationfrom above; but the stone fell with a sickening thud that came up tous through the hot air, right on the kitten's head, and shattered outits little brains then and there. The black cat cast a swift upwardglance, and we saw her eyes like green fire fixed an instant on EliasP. Hutcheson; and then her attention was given to the kitten, whichlay still with just a quiver of her tiny limbs, whilst a thin redstream trickled from a gaping wound. With a muffled cry, such as ahuman being might give, she bent over the kitten licking its woundsand moaning. Suddenly she seemed to realise that it was dead, andagain threw her eyes up at us. I shall never forget the sight, for shelooked the perfect incarnation of hate. Her green eyes blazed withlurid fire, and the white, sharp teeth seemed to almost shine throughthe blood which dabbled her mouth and whiskers. She gnashed her teeth,and her claws stood out stark and at full length on every paw. Thenshe made a wild rush up the wall as if to reach us, but when themomentum ended fell back, and further added to her horrible appearancefor she fell on the kitten, and rose with her black fur smeared withits brains and blood. Amelia turned quite faint, and I had to lift herback from the wall. There was a seat close by in shade of a spreadingplane-tree, and here I placed her whilst she composed herself. Then Iwent back to Hutcheson, who stood without moving, looking down on theangry cat below.

As I joined him, he said:

'Wall, I guess that air the savagest beast I ever see--'cept once whenan Apache squaw had an edge on a half-breed what they nicknamed"Splinters" 'cos of the way he fixed up her papoose which he stole ona raid just to show that he appreciated the way they had given hismother the fire torture. She got that kinder look so set on her facethat it jest seemed to grow there. She followed Splinters mor'n threeyear till at last the braves got him and handed him over to her. Theydid say that no man, white or Injun, had ever been so long a-dyingunder the tortures of the Apaches. The only time I ever see her smilewas when I wiped her out. I kem on the camp just in time to seeSplinters pass in his checks, and he wasn't sorry to go either. He wasa hard citizen, and though I never could shake with him after thatpapoose business--for it was bitter bad, and he should have been awhite man, for he looked like one--I see he had got paid out in full.Durn me, but I took a piece of his hide from one of his skinnin' postsan' had it made into a pocket-book. It's here now!' and he slapped thebreast pocket of his coat.

Whilst he was speaking the cat was continuing her frantic efforts toget up the wall. She would take a run back and then charge up,sometimes reaching an incredible height. She did not seem to mind theheavy fall which she got each time but started with renewed vigour;and at every tumble her appearance became more horrible. Hutcheson wasa kind-hearted man--my wife and I had both noticed little acts ofkindness to animals as well as to persons--and he seemed concerned atthe state of fury to which the cat had wrought herself.

'Wall, now!' he said, 'I du declare that that poor critter seems quitedesperate. There! there! poor thing, it was all an accident--thoughthat won't bring back your little one to you. Say! I wouldn't have hadsuch a thing happen for a thousand! Just shows what a clumsy fool of aman can do when he tries to play! Seems I'm too darned slipperhandedto even play with a cat. Say Colonel!' it was a pleasant way he had tobestow titles freely--'I hope your wife don't hold no grudge againstme on account of this unpleasantness? Why, I wouldn't have had itoccur on no account.'

He came over to Amelia and apologised profusely, and she with herusual kindness of heart hastened to assure him that she quiteunderstood that it was an accident. Then we all went again to the walland looked over.

Th

e cat missing Hutcheson's face had drawn back across the moat, andwas sitting on her haunches as though ready to spring. Indeed, thevery instant she saw him she did spring, and with a blind unreasoningfury, which would have been grotesque, only that it was so frightfullyreal. She did not try to run up the wall, but simply launched herselfat him as though hate and fury could lend her wings to pass straightthrough the great distance between them. Amelia, womanlike, got quiteconcerned, and said to Elias P. in a warning voice:

'Oh! you must be very careful. That animal would try to kill you ifshe were here; her eyes look like positive murder.'

He laughed out jovially. 'Excuse me, ma'am,' he said, 'but I can'thelp laughin'. Fancy a man that has fought grizzlies an' Injuns bein'careful of bein' murdered by a cat!'

When the cat heard him laugh, her whole demeanour seemed to change.She no longer tried to jump or run up the wall, but went quietly over,and sitting again beside the dead kitten began to lick and fondle itas though it were alive.

'See!' said I, 'the effect of a really strong man. Even that animalin the midst of her fury recognises the voice of a master, and bows tohim!'

'Like a squaw!' was the only comment of Elias P. Hutcheson, as wemoved on our way round the city fosse. Every now and then we lookedover the wall and each time saw the cat following us. At first she hadkept going back to the dead kitten, and then as the distance grewgreater took it in her mouth and so followed. After a while,

however,she abandoned this, for we saw her following all alone; she hadevidently hidden the body somewhere. Amelia's alarm grew at the cat'spersistence, and more than once she repeated her warning; but theAmerican always laughed with amusement, till finally, seeing that shewas beginning to be worried, he said:

'I say, ma'am, you needn't be skeered over that cat. I go heeled, Idu!' Here he slapped his pistol pocket at the back of his lumbarregion. 'Why sooner'n have you worried, I'll shoot the critter, righthere, an' risk the police interferin' with a citizen of the UnitedStates for carryin' arms contrairy to reg'lations!' As he spoke helooked over the wall, but the cat on seeing him, retreated, with agrowl, into a bed of tall flowers, and was hidden. He went on: 'Blestif that ar critter ain't got more sense of what's good for her thanmost Christians. I guess we've seen the last of her! You bet, she'llgo back now to that busted kitten and have a private funeral of it,all to herself!'

Amelia did not like to say more, lest he might, in mistaken kindnessto her, fulfil his threat of shooting the cat: and so we went on andcrossed the little wooden bridge leading to the gateway whence ran thesteep paved roadway between the Burg and the pentagonal Torture Tower.As we crossed the bridge we saw the cat again down below us. When shesaw us her fury seemed to return, and she made frantic efforts to getup the steep wall. Hutcheson laughed as he looked down at her, andsaid:

'Goodbye, old girl. Sorry I injured your feelin's, but you'll get overit in time! So long!' And then we passed through the long, dim archwayand came to the gate of the Burg.

When we came out again after our survey of this most beautiful oldplace which not even the well-intentioned efforts of the Gothicrestorers of forty years ago have been able to spoil--though theirrestoration was then glaring white--we seemed to have quite forgottenthe unpleasant episode of the morning. The old lime tree with itsgreat trunk gnarled with the passing of nearly nine centuries, thedeep well cut through the heart of the rock by those captives of old,and the lovely view from the city wall whence we heard, spread overalmost a full quarter of an hour, the multitudinous

chimes of thecity, had all helped to wipe out from our minds the incident of theslain kitten.

We were the only visitors who had entered the Torture Tower thatmorning--so at least said the old custodian--and as we had the placeall to ourselves were able to make a minute and more satisfactorysurvey than would have otherwise been possible. The custodian, lookingto us as the sole source of his gains for the day, was willing to meetour wishes in any way. The Torture Tower is truly a grim place, evennow when many thousands of visitors have sent a stream of life, andthe joy that follows life, into the place; but at the time I mentionit wore its grimmest and most gruesome aspect. The dust of ages seemedto have settled on it, and the darkness and the horror of its memoriesseem to have become sentient in a way that would have satisfied thePantheistic souls of Philo or Spinoza. The lower chamber where weentered was seemingly, in its normal state, filled with incarnatedarkness; even the hot sunlight streaming in through the door seemedto be lost in the vast thickness of the walls, and only showed themasonry rough as when the builder's scaffolding had come down, butcoated with dust and marked here and there with patches of dark stainwhich, if walls could speak, could have given their own dread memoriesof fear and pain. We were glad to pass up the dusty wooden staircase,the custodian leaving the outer door open to light us somewhat on ourway; for to our eyes the one long-wick'd, evil-smelling candle stuckin a sconce on the wall gave an inadequate light. When we came upthrough the open trap in the corner of the chamber overhead, Ameliaheld on to me so tightly that I could actually feel her heart beat. Imust say for my own part that I was not surprised at her fear, forthis room was even more gruesome than that below. Here there wascertainly more light, but only just sufficient to realise the horriblesurroundings of the place. The builders of the tower had evidentlyintended that only they who should gain the top should have any of thejoys of light and prospect. There, as we had noticed from below, wereranges of windows, albeit of mediaeval smallness, but elsewhere in thetower were only a very few narrow slits such as were habitual inplaces of mediaeval defence. A few of these only lit the chamber, andthese so high up in the wall that from no part could the sky be

seenthrough the thickness of the walls. In racks, and leaning in disorderagainst the walls, were a number of headsmen's swords, greatdouble-handed weapons with broad blade and keen edge. Hard by wereseveral blocks whereon the necks of the victims had lain, with hereand there deep notches where the steel had bitten through the guard offlesh and shored into the wood. Round the chamber, placed in all sortsof irregular ways, were many implements of torture which made one'sheart ache to see--chairs full of spikes which gave instant andexcruciating pain; chairs and couches with dull knobs whose torturewas seemingly less, but which, though slower, were equallyefficacious; racks, belts, boots, gloves, collars, all made forcompressing at will; steel baskets in which the head could be slowlycrushed into a pulp if necessary; watchmen's hooks with long handleand knife that cut at resistance--this a speciality of the oldNurnberg police system; and many, many other devices for man's injuryto man. Amelia grew quite pale with the horror of the things, butfortunately did not faint, for being a little overcome she sat down ona torture chair, but jumped up again with a shriek, all tendency tofaint gone. We both pretended that it was the injury done to her dressby the dust of the chair, and the rusty spikes which had upset her,and Mr. Hutcheson acquiesced in accepting the explanation with akind-hearted laugh.

But the central object in the whole of this chamber of horrors was theengine known as the Iron Virgin, which stood near the centre of theroom. It was a rudely-shaped figure of a woman, something of the bellorder, or, to make a closer comparison, of the figure of Mrs. Noah inthe children's Ark, but without that slimness of waist and perfect_rondeur_ of hip which marks the aesthetic type of the Noah family.One would hardly have recognised it as intended for a human figure atall had not the founder shaped on the forehead a rude semblance of awoman's face. This machine was coated with rust without, and coveredwith dust; a rope was fastened to a ring in the front of the figure,about where the waist should have been, and was drawn through apulley, fastened on the wooden pillar which sustained the flooringabove. The custodian pulling this rope showed that a section of thefront was hinged like a door at one side; we then saw that the enginewas of considerable thickness, leaving just room enough inside for aman to be placed. The door was of equal thickness and

of great weight,for it took the custodian all his strength, aided though he was by thecontrivance of the pulley, to open it. This weight was partly due tothe f

act that the door was of manifest purpose hung so as to throw itsweight downwards, so that it might shut of its own accord when thestrain was released. The inside was honeycombed with rust--nay more,the rust alone that comes through time would hardly have eaten so deepinto the iron walls; the rust of the cruel stains was deep indeed! Itwas only, however, when we came to look at the inside of the door thatthe diabolical intention was manifest to the full. Here were severallong spikes, square and massive, broad at the base and sharp at thepoints, placed in such a position that when the door should close theupper ones would pierce the eyes of the victim, and the lower ones hisheart and vitals. The sight was too much for poor Amelia, and thistime she fainted dead off, and I had to carry her down the stairs, andplace her on a bench outside till she recovered. That she felt it tothe quick was afterwards shown by the fact that my eldest son bears tothis day a rude birthmark on his breast, which has, by familyconsent, been accepted as representing the Nurnberg Virgin.

When we got back to the chamber we found Hutcheson still opposite theIron Virgin; he had been evidently philosophising, and now gave us thebenefit of his thought in the shape of a sort of exordium.

'Wall, I guess I've been learnin' somethin' here while madam has beengettin' over her faint. 'Pears to me that we're a long way behind thetimes on our side of the big drink. We uster think out on the plainsthat the Injun could give us points in tryin' to make a manuncomfortable; but I guess your old mediaeval law-and-order partycould raise him every time. Splinters was pretty good in his bluff onthe squaw, but this here young miss held a straight flush all high onhim. The points of them spikes air sharp enough still, though even theedges air eaten out by what uster be on them. It'd be a good thing forour Indian section to get some specimens of this here play-toy to sendround to the Reservations jest to knock the stuffin' out of the bucks,and the squaws too, by showing them as how old civilisation lays overthem at their best.

Guess but I'll get in that box a minute jest tosee how it feels!'

'Oh no! no!' said Amelia. 'It is too terrible!'

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'Guess, ma'am, nothin's too terrible to the explorin' mind. I've beenin some queer places in my time. Spent a night inside a dead horsewhile a prairie fire swept over me in Montana Territory--an' anothertime slept inside a dead buffler when the Comanches was on the warpath an' I didn't keer to leave my kyard on them. I've been two daysin a caved-in tunnel in the Billy Broncho gold mine in New Mexico, an'was one of the four shut up for three parts of a day in the caissonwhat slid over on her side when we was settin' the foundations of theBuffalo Bridge. I've not funked an odd experience yet, an' I don'tpropose to begin now!'

We saw that he was set on the experiment, so I said: 'Well, hurry up,old man, and get through it quick!'

'All right, General,' said he, 'but I calculate we ain't quite readyyet. The gentlemen, my predecessors, what stood in that thar canister,didn't volunteer for the office--not much! And I guess there was someornamental tyin' up before the big stroke was made. I want to go intothis thing fair and square, so I must get fixed up proper first. Idare say this old galoot can rise some string and tie me up accordin'to sample?'

This was said interrogatively to the old custodian, but the latter,who understood the drift of his speech, though perhaps notappreciating to the full the niceties of dialect and imagery, shookhis head. His protest was, however, only formal and made to beovercome. The American thrust a gold piece into his hand, saying:'Take it, pard! it's your pot; and don't be skeer'd. This ain't nonecktie party that you're asked to assist in!' He produced some thinfrayed rope and proceeded to bind our companion with sufficientstrictness for the purpose. When the upper part of his body was bound,Hutcheson said:

'Hold on a moment, Judge. Guess I'm too heavy for you to tote into thecanister. You jest let me walk in, and then you can wash up regardin'my legs!'

Whilst speaking he had backed himself into the opening which was justenough to hold him. It was a close fit and no mistake. Amelia lookedon with fear in her eyes, but she evidently did not like to sayanything. Then the custodian completed his task by tying theAmerican's feet together so that he was now absolutely helpless andfixed in his voluntary prison. He seemed to really enjoy it, and theincipient smile which was habitual to his face blossomed intoactuality as he said:

'Guess this here Eve was made out of the rib of a dwarf! There ain'tmuch room for a full-grown citizen of the United States to hustle. Weuster make our coffins more roomier in Idaho territory. Now, Judge,you jest begin to let this door down, slow, on to me. I want to feelthe same pleasure as the other jays had when those spikes began tomove toward their eyes!'

'Oh no! no! no!' broke in Amelia hysterically. 'It is too terrible! Ican't bear to see it!--I can't! I can't!' But the American wasobdurate. 'Say, Colonel,' said he, 'why not take Madame for a littlepromenade? I wouldn't hurt her feelin's for the world; but now that Iam here, havin' kem eight thousand miles, wouldn't it be too hard togive up the very experience I've been pinin' an' pantin' fur? A mancan't get to feel like canned goods every time! Me and the Judgehere'll fix up this thing in no time, an' then you'll come back, an'we'll all laugh together!'

Once more the resolution that is born of curiosity triumphed, andAmelia stayed holding tight to my arm and shivering whilst thecustodian began to slacken slowly inch by inch the rope that held backthe iron door. Hutcheson's face was positively radiant as his eyesfollowed the first movement of the spikes.

'Wall!' he said, 'I guess I've not had enjoyment like this since Ileft Noo York. Bar a scrap with a French sailor at Wapping--an' thatwarn't much of a picnic neither--I've

not had a show fur real pleasurein this dod-rotted Continent, where there ain't no b'ars nor noInjuns, an' wheer nary man goes heeled. Slow there, Judge! Don't yourush this business! I want a show for my money this game--I du!'

The custodian must have had in him some of the blood of hispredecessors in that ghastly tower, for he worked the engine with adeliberate and excruciating slowness which after five minutes, inwhich the outer edge of the door had not moved half as many inches,began to overcome Amelia. I saw her lips whiten, and felt her holdupon my arm relax. I looked around an instant for a place whereon tolay her, and when I looked at her again found that her eye had becomefixed on the side of the Virgin. Following its direction I saw theblack cat crouching out of sight. Her green eyes shone like dangerlamps in the gloom of the place, and their colour was heightened bythe blood which still smeared her coat and reddened her mouth. I criedout:

'The cat! look out for the cat!' for even then she sprang out beforethe engine. At this moment she looked like a triumphant demon. Hereyes blazed with ferocity, her hair bristled out till she seemed twiceher normal size, and her tail lashed about as does a tiger's when thequarry is before it. Elias P. Hutcheson when he saw her was amused,and his eyes positively sparkled with fun as he said:

'Darned if the squaw hain't got on all her war paint! Jest give her ashove off if she comes any of her tricks on me, for I'm so fixedeverlastingly by the boss, that durn my skin if I can keep my eyesfrom her if she wants them! Easy there, Judge! don't you slack that arrope or I'm euchered!'

At this moment Amelia completed her faint, and I had to clutch hold ofher round the waist or she would have fallen to the floor. Whilstattending to her I saw the black cat crouching for a spring, andjumped up to turn the creature out.

But at that instant, with a sort of hellish scream, she hurledherself, not as we expected at Hutcheson, but straight at the face ofthe custodian. Her claws seemed to be tearing

wildly as one sees inthe Chinese drawings of the dragon rampant, and as I looked I saw oneof them light on the poor man's eye, and actually tear through it anddown his cheek, leaving a wide band of red where the blood seemed tospurt from every vein.

With a yell of sheer terror which came quicker than even his sense ofpain, the man leaped back, dropping as he did so the rope which heldback the iron door. I jumped for it, but was too late, for the cordran like lightning through the pulley-block, and the heavy mass fellforward from its own weight.

/> As the door closed I caught a glimpse of our poor companion's face. Heseemed frozen with terror. His eyes stared with a horrible anguish asif dazed, and no sound came from his lips.

And then the spikes did their work. Happily the end was quick, forwhen I wrenched open the door they had pierced so deep that they hadlocked in the bones of the skull through which they had crushed, andactually tore him--it--out of his iron prison till, bound as he was,he fell at full length with a sickly thud upon the floor, the faceturning upward as he fell.

I rushed to my wife, lifted her up and carried her out, for I fearedfor her very reason if she should wake from her faint to such a scene.I laid her on the bench outside and ran back. Leaning against thewooden column was the custodian moaning in pain whilst he held hisreddening handkerchief to his eyes. And sitting on the head of thepoor American was the cat, purring loudly as she licked the bloodwhich trickled through the gashed socket of his eyes.

I think no one will call me cruel because I seized one of the oldexecutioner's swords and shore her in two as she sat.

The Secret of the Growing Gold

When Margaret Delandre went to live at Brent's Rock the wholeneighbourhood awoke to the pleasure of an entirely new scandal.Scandals in connection with either the Delandre family or the Brentsof Brent's Rock, were not few; and if the secret history of the countyhad been written in full both names would have been found wellrepresented. It is true that the status of each was so different thatthey might have belonged to different continents--or to differentworlds for the matter of that--for hitherto their orbits had nevercrossed. The Brents were accorded by the whole section of the countrya unique social dominance, and had ever held themselves as high abovethe yeoman class to which Margaret Delandre belonged, as ablue-blooded Spanish hidalgo out-tops his peasant tenantry.

The Delandres had an ancient record and were proud of it in their wayas the Brents were of theirs. But the family had never risen aboveyeomanry; and although they had been once well-to-do in the good oldtimes of foreign wars and protection, their fortunes had witheredunder the scorching of the free trade sun and the 'piping times ofpeace.' They had, as the elder members used to assert, 'stuck to theland', with the result that they had taken root in it, body and soul.In fact, they, having chosen the life of vegetables, had flourishedas vegetation does--blossomed and thrived in the good season andsuffered in the bad. Their holding, Dander's Croft, seemed to havebeen worked out, and to be typical of the family which had inhabitedit. The latter had declined generation after generation, sending outnow and again some abortive shoot of unsatisfied energy in the shapeof a soldier or sailor, who had worked his way to the minor grades ofthe services and had there stopped, cut short either from unheedinggallantry in action or from that destroying cause to men withoutbreeding or youthful care--the recognition of a position above themwhich they feel unfitted to fill. So, little by little, the familydropped lower and lower, the men brooding and dissatisfied, anddrinking themselves into the grave, the women drudging at home, ormarrying beneath them--or worse. In process of time all disappeared,leaving only two in the Croft, Wykham Delandre and his sisterMargaret. The man and woman seemed to have inherited in masculine andfeminine form respectively the evil tendency of their race, sharing incommon the principles, though manifesting them in

different ways, ofsullen passion, voluptuousness and recklessness.

The history of the Brents had been something similar, but showing thecauses of decadence in their aristocratic and not their plebeianforms. They, too, had sent their shoots to the wars; but theirpositions had been different and they had often attained honour--forwithout flaw they were gallant, and brave deeds were done by thembefore the selfish dissipation which marked them had sapped theirvigour.

The present head of the family--if family it could now be called whenone remained of the direct line--was Geoffrey Brent. He was almost atype of worn out race, manifesting in some ways its most brilliantqualities, and in others its utter degradation. He might be fairlycompared with some of those antique Italian nobles whom the paintershave preserved to us with their courage, their unscrupulousness, theirrefinement of lust and cruelty--the voluptuary actual with the fiendpotential. He was certainly handsome, with that dark, aquiline,commanding beauty which women so generally recognise as dominant. Withmen he was distant and cold; but such a bearing never deterswomankind. The inscrutable laws of sex have so arranged that even atimid woman is not afraid of a fierce and haughty man. And so it wasthat there was hardly a woman of any kind or degree, who lived withinview of Brent's Rock, who did not cherish some form of secretadmiration for the handsome wastrel. The category was a wide one, forBrent's Rock rose up steeply from the midst of a level region and fora circuit of a hundred miles it lay on the horizon, with its high oldtowers and steep roofs cutting the level edge of wood and hamlet, andfar-scattered mansions.

So long as Geoffrey Brent confined his dissipations to London andParis and Vienna--anywhere out of sight and sound of his home--opinionwas silent. It is easy to listen to far off echoes unmoved, and we cantreat them with disbelief, or scorn, or disdain, or whatever attitudeof coldness may suit our purpose. But when the scandal came close homeit was another matter; and the feelings of independence and integritywhich is in people of every community which is not utterly spoiled,asserted itself and demanded

that condemnation should be expressed.Still there was a certain reticence in all, and no more notice wastaken of the existing facts than was absolutely necessary. MargaretDelandre bore herself so fearlessly and so openly--she accepted herposition as the justified companion of Geoffrey Brent so naturallythat people came to believe that she was secretly married to him, andtherefore thought it wiser to hold their tongues lest time shouldjustify her and also make her an active enemy.

The one person who, by his interference, could have settled all doubtswas debarred by circumstances from interfering in the matter. WykhamDelandre had quarrelled with his sister--or perhaps it was that shehad quarrelled with him--and they were on terms not merely of armedneutrality but of bitter hatred. The quarrel had been antecedent toMargaret going to Brent's Rock. She and Wykham had almost come toblows. There had certainly been threats on one side and on the other;and in the end Wykham, overcome with passion, had ordered his sisterto leave his house. She had risen straightway, and, without waiting topack up even her own personal belongings, had walked out of the house.On the threshold she had paused for a moment to hurl a bitter threatat Wykham that he would rue in shame and despair to the last hour ofhis life his act of that day. Some weeks had since passed; and it wasunderstood in the neighbourhood that Margaret had gone to London, whenshe suddenly appeared driving out with Geoffrey Brent, and the entireneighbourhood knew before nightfall that she had taken up her abode atthe Rock. It was no subject of surprise that Brent had come backunexpectedly, for such was his usual custom. Even his own servantsnever knew when to expect him, for there was a private door, of whichhe alone had the key, by which he sometimes entered without anyone inthe house being aware of his coming. This was his usual method ofappearing after a long absence.

Wykham Delandre was furious at the news. He vowed vengeance--and tokeep his mind level with his passion drank deeper than ever. He triedseveral times to see his sister, but she contemptuously refused tomeet him. He tried to have an interview with Brent and was refused byhim also. Then he tried to stop him in the road, but without avail,for Geoffrey was not a man to be stopped against his will. Severalactual

encounters took place between the two men, and many more werethreatened and avoided. At last Wykham Delandre settled down to amorose, vengeful acceptance of the situation.

Neither Margaret nor Geoffrey was of a pacific temperament, and it wasnot long before there began to be quarrels between them. One thingwould lead to another, and wine flowed freely at Brent's Rock. Now andagain the quarrels would assume a bitter aspect, and threats would beexchanged in uncompromising language that fairly awed the listeningservants. But such quarrels generally ended where domesticaltercations do, in reconciliation, and in a mutual respect for thefighting qualities proportionate to their manifestation. Fighting forits own sake is found by a certain class of persons, all the worldover, to be a matter of absorbing interest, and there is no reason tobelieve that domestic conditions minimise its potency. Geoffrey andMargaret made occasional absences from Brent's Rock, and on each ofthese occasions Wykham Delandre also absented himself; but as hegenerally heard of the absence too late to be of any service, hereturned home each time in a more bitter and discontented frame ofmind than before.

At last there came a time when the absence from Brent's Rock becamelonger than before. Only a few days earlier there had been a quarrel,exceeding in bitterness anything which had gone before; but this, too,had been made up, and a trip on the Continent had been mentionedbefore the servants. After a few days Wykham Delandre also went away,and it was some weeks before he returned. It was noticed that he wasfull of some new importance--satisfaction, exaltation--they hardlyknew how to call it. He went straightway to Brent's Rock, and demandedto see Geoffrey Brent, and on being told that he

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had not yet returned,said, with a grim decision which the servants noted:

'I shall come again. My news is solid--it can wait!' and turned away.Week after week went by, and month after month; and then there came arumour, certified later on, that an accident had occurred in theZermatt valley. Whilst crossing a dangerous pass the carriagecontaining an English lady and the driver had fallen over a precipice,the gentleman of the party, Mr. Geoffrey Brent, having beenfortunately saved as he had been walking up the hill to ease thehorses. He gave information, and search was made. The broken rail, theexcoriated roadway, the marks where the horses had struggled on thedecline before finally pitching over into the torrent--all told thesad tale. It was a wet season, and there had been much snow in thewinter, so that the river was swollen beyond its usual volume, and theeddies of the stream were packed with ice. All search was made, andfinally the wreck of the carriage and the body of one horse were foundin an eddy of the river. Later on the body of the driver was found onthe sandy, torrent-swept waste near Taesch; but the body of the lady,like that of the other horse, had quite disappeared, and was--whatwas left of it by that time--whirling amongst the eddies of the Rhoneon its way down to the Lake of Geneva.

Wykham Delandre made all the enquiries possible, but could not findany trace of the missing woman. He found, however, in the books of thevarious hotels the name of 'Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey Brent'. And he had astone erected at Zermatt to his sister's memory, under her marriedname, and a tablet put up in the church at Bretten, the parish inwhich both Brent's Rock and Dander's Croft were situated.

There was a lapse of nearly a year, after the excitement of the matterhad worn away, and the whole neighbourhood had gone on its accustomedway. Brent was still absent, and Delandre more drunken, more morose,and more revengeful than before.

Then there was a new excitement. Brent's Rock was being made ready fora new mistress. It was officially announced by Geoffrey himself in aletter to the Vicar, that he had been married some months before to anItalian lady, and that they were then on their way home. Then a smallarmy of workmen invaded the house; and hammer and plane sounded, and ageneral air of size and paint pervaded the atmosphere. One wing of theold house, the south, was entirely re-done; and then the great body ofthe workmen departed, leaving only materials for the doing of the oldhall when Geoffrey Brent should have returned, for he had directedthat the decoration was only to be done under his own eyes. He hadbrought with him accurate drawings of a hall in the house of hisbride's father, for he wished to reproduce for her the place to whichshe had been accustomed. As the moulding had all to be re-done, somescaffolding poles and boards were brought in and laid on one side ofthe great hall, and also a great wooden tank or box for mixing thelime, which was laid in bags beside it.

When the new mistress of Brent's Rock arrived the bells of the churchrang out, and there was a general jubilation. She was a beautifulcreature, full of the poetry and fire and passion of the South; andthe few English words which she had learned were spoken in such asweet and pretty broken way that she won the hearts of the peoplealmost as much by the music of her voice as by the melting beauty ofher dark eyes.

Geoffrey Brent seemed more happy than he had ever before appeared; butthere was a dark, anxious look on his face that was new to those whoknew him of old, and he started at times as though at some noise thatwas unheard by others.

And so months passed and the whisper grew that at last Brent's Rockwas to have an heir. Geoffrey was very tender to his wife, and the newbond between them seemed to soften him. He took more interest in histenants and their needs than he had ever done; and works of charity onhis part as well as on his sweet young wife's were not lacking. Heseemed to have set all his hopes on the child that was coming, and ashe looked deeper into the future the dark shadow that had come overhis face seemed to die

gradually away.

All the time Wykham Delandre nursed his revenge. Deep in his heart hadgrown up a purpose of vengeance which only waited an opportunity tocrystallise and take a definite shape. His vague idea was somehowcentred in the wife of Brent, for he knew that he could strike himbest through those he loved, and the coming time seemed to hold in itswomb the opportunity for which he longed. One night he sat alone inthe living-room of his house. It had once been a handsome room in itsway, but time and neglect had done their work and it was now littlebetter than a ruin, without dignity or picturesqueness of any kind. Hehad been drinking heavily for some time and was more than halfstupefied. He thought he heard a noise as of someone at the door andlooked up. Then he called half savagely to come in; but there was noresponse. With a muttered blasphemy he renewed his potations.Presently he forgot all around him, sank into a daze, but suddenlyawoke to see standing before him someone or something like a battered,ghostly edition of his sister. For a few moments there came upon him asort of fear. The woman before him, with distorted features andburning eyes seemed hardly human, and the only thing that seemed areality of his sister, as she had been, was her wealth of golden hair,and this was now streaked with grey. She eyed her brother with a long,cold stare; and he, too, as he looked and began to realise theactuality of her presence, found the hatred of her which he had had,once again surging up in his heart. All the brooding passion of thepast year seemed to find a voice at once as he asked her:

'Why are you here? You're dead and buried.'

'I am here, Wykham Delandre, for no love of you, but because I hateanother even more than I do you!' A great passion blazed in her eyes.

'Him?' he asked, in so fierce a whisper that even the woman was for aninstant startled till she regained her calm.

'Yes, him!' she answered. 'But make no mistake, my revenge is my own;and I merely use you to help me to it.' Wykham asked suddenly:

'Did he marry you?'

The woman's distorted face broadened out in a ghastly attempt at asmile. It was a hideous mockery, for the broken features and seamedscars took strange shapes and strange colours, and queer lines ofwhite showed out as the straining muscles pressed on the oldcicatrices.

'So you would like to know! It would please your pride to feel thatyour sister was truly married! Well, you shall not know. That was myrevenge on you, and I do not mean to change it by a hair's breadth. Ihave come here tonight simply to let you know that I am alive, so thatif any violence be done me where I am going there may be a witness.'

'Where are you going?' demanded her brother.

'That is my affair! and I have not the least intention of letting youknow!' Wykham stood up, but the drink was on him and he reeled andfell. As he lay on the floor he announced his intention of followinghis sister; and with an outburst of splenetic humour told her that hewould follow her through the darkness by the light of her hair, and ofher beauty. At this she turned on him, and said that there were othersbeside him that would rue her hair and her beauty too. 'As he will,'she hissed; 'for the hair remains though the beauty be gone. When hewithdrew the lynch-pin and sent us over the precipice into thetorrent, he had little thought of my beauty. Perhaps his beauty wouldbe scarred like mine were he whirled, as I was, among the rocks of theVisp, and frozen on the ice pack in the drift of the river. But lethim beware! His time is coming!' and with a fierce gesture she flungopen the door and passed out into the night.

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Later on that night, Mrs. Brent, who was but half-asleep, becamesuddenly awake and spoke to her husband:

'Geoffrey, was not that the click of a lock somewhere below ourwindow?'

But Geoffrey--though she thought that he, too, had started at thenoise--seemed sound asleep, and breathed heavily. Again Mrs. Brentdozed; but this time awoke to the fact that her husband had arisen andwas partially dressed. He was deadly pale, and when the light of thelamp which he had in his hand fell on his face, she was frightened atthe look in his eyes.

'What is it, Geoffrey? What dost thou?' she asked.

'Hush! little one,' he answered, in a strange, hoarse voice. 'Go tosleep. I am restless, and wish to finish some work I

left undone.'

'Bring it here, my husband,' she said; 'I am lonely and I fear whenthou art away.'

For reply he merely kissed her and went out, closing the door behindhim. She lay awake for awhile, and then nature asserted itself, andshe slept.

Suddenly she started broad awake with the memory in her ears of asmothered cry from somewhere not far off. She jumped up and ran to thedoor and listened, but there was no sound. She grew alarmed for herhusband, and called out: 'Geoffrey! Geoffrey!'

After a few moments the door of the great hall opened, and Geoffreyappeared at it,

but without his lamp.

'Hush!' he said, in a sort of whisper, and his voice was harsh andstern. 'Hush! Get to bed! I am working, and must not be disturbed. Goto sleep, and do not wake the house!'

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With a chill in her heart--for the harshness of her husband's voicewas new to her--she crept back to bed and lay there trembling, toofrightened to cry, and listened to every sound. There was a long pauseof silence, and then the sound of some iron implement striking muffledblows! Then there came a clang of a heavy stone falling, followed by amuffled curse. Then a dragging sound, and then more noise of stone onstone. She lay all the while in an agony of fear, and her heart beatdreadfully. She heard a curious sort of scraping sound; and then therewas silence. Presently the door opened gently, and Geoffrey appeared.His wife pretended to be asleep; but through her eyelashes she saw himwash from his hands something white that looked like lime.

In the morning he made no allusion to the previous night, and she wasafraid to ask any question.

From that day there seemed some shadow over Geoffrey Brent. He neitherate nor slept as he had been accustomed, and his former habit ofturning suddenly as though someone were speaking from behind himrevived. The old hall seemed to have some kind of fascination for him.He used to go there many times in the day, but grew impatient ifanyone, even his wife, entered it. When the builder's foreman came toinquire about continuing his work Geoffrey was out driving; the manwent into the hall, and when Geoffrey returned the servant told him ofhis arrival and where he was. With a frightful oath he pushed theservant aside and hurried up to the old hall. The workman met himalmost at the door; and as Geoffrey burst into the room he ran againsthim. The man apologised:

'Beg pardon, sir, but I was just going out to make some enquiries. Idirected twelve sacks of lime to be sent here, but I see there areonly ten.'

'Damn the ten sacks and the twelve too!' was the ungracious andincomprehensible rejoinder.

The workman looked surprised, and tried to turn the conversation.

'I see, sir, there is a little matter which our people must have done;but the governor will of course see it set right at his own cost.'

'What do you mean?'

'That 'ere 'arth-stone, sir: Some idiot must have put a scaffold poleon it and cracked it right down the middle, and it's thick enoughyou'd think to stand hanythink.' Geoffrey was silent for quite aminute, and then said in a constrained voice and with much gentlermanner:

'Tell your people that I am not going on with the work in the hall atpresent. I want to leave it as it is for a while longer.'

'All right sir. I'll send up a few of our chaps to take away thesepoles and lime bags and tidy the place up a bit.'

'No! No!' said Geoffrey, 'leave them where they are. I shall send andtell you when you are to get on with the work.' So the foreman wentaway, and his comment to his master was:

'I'd send in the bill, sir, for the work already done. 'Pears to methat money's a little shaky in that quarter.'

Once or twice Delandre tried to stop Brent on the road, and, at last,finding that he could not attain his object rode after the carriage,calling out:

'What has become of my sister, your wife?' Geoffrey lashed his horsesinto a gallop, and the other, seeing from his white face and from hiswife's collapse almost into a faint that his object was attained, rodeaway with a scowl and a laugh.

That night when Geoffrey went into the hall he passed over to thegreat fireplace, and all at once started back with a smothered cry.Then with an effort he pulled himself together and went away,returning with a light. He bent down over the broken hearth-stone tosee if the moonlight falling through the storied window had in any waydeceived him. Then with a groan of anguish he sank to his knees.

There, sure enough, through the crack in the broken stone wereprotruding a multitude of threads of golden hair just tinged withgrey!

He was disturbed by a noise at the door, and looking round, saw hiswife standing in the doorway. In the desperation of the moment he tookaction to prevent discovery, and lighting a match at the lamp, stoopeddown and burned away the hair that rose through the broken stone. Thenrising nonchalantly as he could, he pretended surprise at seeing hiswife beside him.

For the next week he lived in an agony; for, whether by accident ordesign, he could not find himself alone in the hall for any length oftime. At each visit the hair had grown afresh through the crack, andhe had to watch it carefully lest his terrible secret should bediscovered. He tried to find a receptacle for the body of the murderedwoman outside the house, but someone always interrupted him; and once,when he was coming out of the private doorway, he was met by his wife,who began to question him about it, and manifested surprise that sheshould not have before noticed the key which he now reluctantly showedher. Geoffrey dearly and passionately loved his wife, so that anypossibility of her discovering his dread secrets, or even of doubtinghim, filled him with anguish; and after a couple of days had passed,he could not help coming to the conclusion that, at least, shesuspected something.

That very evening she came into the hall after her drive and found himthere sitting moodily by the deserted fireplace. She spoke to himdirectly.

'Geoffrey, I have been spoken to by that fellow Delandre, and he sayshorrible things. He tells to me that a week ago his sister returned tohis house, the wreck and ruin of her former self, with only her goldenhair as of old, and announced some fell intention. He asked me whereshe is--and oh, Geoffrey, she is dead, she is dead! So how can shehave returned? Oh! I am in dread, and I know not where to turn!'

For answer, Geoffrey burst into a torrent of blasphemy which made hershudder. He cursed Delandre and his sister and all their kind, and inespecial he hurled curse after curse on her golden hair.

'Oh, hush! hush!' she said, and was then silent, for she feared herhusband when she saw the evil effect of his humour. Geoffrey in thetorrent of his anger stood up and moved away from the hearth; butsuddenly stopped as he saw a new look of terror in his wife's eyes. Hefollowed their glance, and then he too, shuddered--for there on thebroken hearth-stone lay a golden streak as the point of the hair rosethough the crack.

'Look, look!' she shrieked. 'Is it some ghost of the dead! Comeaway--come away!' and seizing her husband by the wrist with the frenzyof madness, she pulled him from the room.

That night she was in a raging fever. The doctor of the districtattended her at once, and special aid was telegraphed for to London.Geoffrey was in despair, and in his anguish at the danger of his youngwife almost forgot his own crime and its consequences. In the eveningthe doctor had to leave to attend to others; but he left Geoffrey incharge of his wife. His last words were:

'Remember, you must humour her till I come in the morning, or tillsome other doctor

has her case in hand. What you have to dread isanother attack of emotion. See that she is kept warm. Nothing more canbe done.'

Late in the evening, when the rest of the household had retired,Geoffrey's wife got up from her bed and called to her husband.

'Come!' she said. 'Come to the old hall! I know where the gold comesfrom! I want to see it grow!'

Geoffrey would fain have stopped her, but he feared for her life orreason on the one hand, and lest in a paroxysm she should shriek outher terrible suspicion, and seeing that it was useless to try toprevent her, wrapped a warm rug around her and went with her to theold hall. When they entered, she turned and shut the door and lockedit.

'We want no s

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trangers amongst us three tonight!' she whispered with awan smile.

'We three! nay we are but two,' said Geoffrey with a shudder; hefeared to say more.

'Sit here,' said his wife as she put out the light. 'Sit here by thehearth and watch the gold growing. The silver moonlight is jealous!See, it steals along the floor towards the gold--our gold!' Geoffreylooked with growing horror, and saw that during the hours that hadpassed the golden hair had protruded further through the brokenhearth-stone. He tried to hide it by placing his feet over the brokenplace; and his wife, drawing her chair beside him, leant over andlaid her head on his shoulder.

'Now do not stir, dear,' she said; 'let us sit still and watch. Weshall find the secret of the growing gold!' He passed his arm roundher and sat silent; and as the moonlight stole along the floor shesank to sleep.

He feared to wake her; and so sat silent and miserable as the hoursstole away.

Before his horror-struck eyes the golden-hair from the broken stonegrew and grew; and as it increased, so his heart got colder andcolder, till at last he had not power to stir, and sat with eyes fullof terror watching his doom.

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In the morning when the London doctor came, neither Geoffrey nor hiswife could be found. Search was made in all the rooms, but withoutavail. As a last resource the great door of the old hall was brokenopen, and those who entered saw a grim and sorry sight.

There by the deserted hearth Geoffrey Brent and his young wife satcold and white and dead. Her face was peaceful, and her eyes wereclosed in sleep; but his face was a sight that made all who saw itshudder, for there was on it a look of unutterable horror. The eyeswere open and stared glassily at his feet, which were twined withtresses of golden hair, streaked with grey, which came through thebroken hearth-stone.

The Gipsy Prophecy

'I really think,' said the Doctor, 'that, at any rate, one of usshould go and try whether or not the thing is an imposture.'

'Good!' said Considine. 'After dinner we will take our cigars andstroll over to the camp.'

Accordingly, when the dinner was over, and the _La Tour_ finished,Joshua Considine and his friend, Dr Burleigh, went over to the eastside of the moor, where the gipsy encampment lay. As they wereleaving, Mary Considine, who had walked as far as the end of thegarden where it opened into the laneway, called after her husband:

'Mind, Joshua, you are to give them a fair chance, but don't give themany clue to a fortune--and don't you get flirting with any of thegipsy maidens--and take care to keep Gerald out of harm.'

For answer Considine held up his hand, as if taking a stage oath, andwhistled the air of the old song, 'The Gipsy Countess.' Gerald joinedin the strain, and then, breaking into merry laughter, the two menpassed along the laneway to the common, turning now and then to wavetheir hands to Mary, who leaned over the gate, in the twilight,looking after them.

It was a lovely evening in the summer; the very air was full of restand quiet happiness, as though an outward type of the peacefulness andjoy which made a

heaven of the home of the young married folk.Considine's life had not been an eventful one. The only disturbingelement which he had ever known was in his wooing of Mary Winston, andthe long-continued objection of her ambitious parents, who expected abrilliant match for their only daughter. When Mr. and Mrs. Winston haddiscovered the attachment of the young barrister, they had tried tokeep the young people apart by sending their daughter away for a longround of visits, having made her promise not to correspond with herlover during her absence. Love, however, had stood the test. Neitherabsence nor neglect seemed to cool the passion of the young man, andjealousy seemed a thing unknown to his sanguine nature; so, after along period of waiting, the parents had given in, and the young folkwere married.

They had been living in the cottage a few months, and were justbeginning to feel at home. Gerald Burleigh, Joshua's old college chum,and himself a sometime victim of Mary's beauty, had arrived a weekbefore, to stay with them for as long a time as he could tear himselfaway from his work in London.

When her husband had quite disappeared Mary went into the house, and,sitting down at the piano, gave an hour to Mendelssohn.

It was but a short walk across the common, and before the cigarsrequired renewing the two men had reached the gipsy camp. The placewas as picturesque as gipsy camps--when in villages and when businessis good--usually are. There were some few persons round the fire,investing their money in prophecy, and a large number of others,poorer or more parsimonious, who stayed just outside the bounds butnear enough to see all that went on.

As the two gentlemen approached, the villagers, who knew Joshua, madeway a little, and a pretty, keen-eyed gipsy girl tripped up and askedto tell their fortunes. Joshua held out his hand, but the girl,without seeming to see it, stared at his face in a very odd manner.Gerald nudged him:

'You must cross her hand with silver,' he said. 'It is one of the mostimportant parts of the mystery.' Joshua took from his pocket ahalf-crown and held it out to her, but, without looking at it, sheanswered:

'You have to cross the gipsy's hand with gold.'

Gerald laughed. 'You are at a premium as a subject,' he said. Joshuawas of the kind of man--the universal kind--who can tolerate beingstared at by a pretty girl; so, with some little deliberation, heanswered:

'All right; here you are, my pretty girl; but you must give me a realgood fortune for it,' and he handed her a half sovereign, which shetook, saying:

'It is not for me to give good fortune or bad, but only to read whatthe Stars have said.' She took his right hand and turned it palmupward; but the instant her eyes met it she dropped it as though ithad been red hot, and, with a startled look, glided swiftly away.Lifting the curtain of the large tent, which occupied the centre ofthe camp, she disappeared within.

'Sold again!' said the cynical Gerald. Joshua stood a little amazed,and not altogether satisfied. They both watched the large tent. In afew moments there emerged from the opening not the young girl, but astately looking woman of middle age and commanding presence.

The instant she appeared the whole camp seemed to stand still. Theclamour of tongues, the laughter and noise of the work were, for asecond or two, arrested, and every man or woman who sat, or crouched,or lay, stood up and faced the imperial looking gipsy.

'The Queen, of course,' murmured Gerald. 'We are in luck tonight.' Thegipsy Queen threw a searching glance around the camp, and then,without hesitating an instant,

came straight over and stood beforeJoshua.

'Hold out your hand,' she said in a commanding tone.

Again Gerald spoke, _sotto voce_: 'I have not been spoken to in thatway since I was at school.'

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'Your hand must be crossed with gold.'

'A hundred per cent. at this game,' whispered Gerald, as Joshua laidanother half sovereign on his upturned palm.

The gipsy looked at the hand with knitted brows; then suddenly lookingup into his face, said:

'Have you a strong will--have you a true heart that can be brave forone you love?'

'I hope so; but I am afraid I have not vanity enough to say "yes".'

'Then I will answer for you; for I read resolution in yourface--resolution desperate and determined if need be. You have a wifeyou love?'

'Yes,' emphatically.

'Then leave her at once--never see her face again. Go from her now,while love is fresh and your heart is free from wicked intent. Goquick--go far, and never see her face again!'

Joshua drew away his hand quickly, and said, 'Thank you!' stiffly butsarcastically, as he began to move away.

'I say!' said Gerald, 'you're not going like that, old man; no use inbeing indignant with the Stars or their prophet--and, moreover, yoursovereign--what of it? At least, hear the matter out.'

'Silence, ribald!' commanded the Queen, 'you know not what you do. Lethim go--and go ignorant, if he will not be warned.'

Joshua immediately turned back. 'At all events, we will see this thingout,' he said. 'Now, madam, you have given me advice, but I paid for afortune.'

'Be warned!' said the gipsy. 'The Stars have been silent for long; letthe mystery still wrap them round.'

'My dear madam, I do not get within touch of a mystery every day, andI prefer for my money knowledge rather than ignorance. I can get thelatter commodity for nothing when I want any of it.'

Gerald echoed the sentiment. 'As for me I have a large and unsaleablestock on hand.'

The gipsy Queen eyed the two men sternly, and then said: 'As you wish.You have chosen for yourself, and have met warning with scorn, andappeal with levity. On your own heads be the doom!'

'Amen!' said Gerald.

With an imperious gesture the Queen took Joshua's hand again, andbegan to tell his fortune.

'I see here the flowing of blood; it will flow before long; it isrunning in my sight. It flows through the broken circle of a severedring.'

'Go on!' said Joshua, smiling. Gerald was silent.

'Must I speak plainer?'

'Certainly; we commonplace mortals want something definite. The Starsare a long way off, and their words get somewhat dulled in themessage.'

The gipsy shuddered, and then spoke impressively. 'This is the hand ofa murderer--the murderer of his wife!' She dropped the hand and turnedaway.

Joshua laughed. 'Do you know,' said he, 'I think if I were you Ishould prophesy some jurisprudence into my system. For instance, yousay "this hand is the hand of a murderer." Well, whatever it may be inthe future--or potentially--it is at present not one. You ought togive your prophecy in such terms as "the hand which will be amurderer's", or, rather, "the hand of one who will be the murderer ofhis wife". The Stars are really not good on technical questions.'

The gipsy made no reply of any kind, but, with drooping head anddespondent mien, walked slowly to

her tent, and, lifting the curtain,disappeared.

Without speaking the two men turned homewards, and walked across themoor. Presently, after some little hesitation, Gerald spoke.

'Of course, old man, this is all a joke; a ghastly one, but still ajoke. But would it not be well to keep it to ourselves?'

'How do you mean?'

'Well, not tell your wife. It might alarm her.'

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'Alarm her! My dear Gerald, what are you thinking of? Why, she wouldnot be alarmed or afraid of me if all the gipsies that ever didn'tcome from Bohemia agreed that I was to murder her, or even to have ahard thought of her, whilst so long as she was saying "JackRobinson."'

Gerald remonstrated. 'Old fellow, women are superstitious--far morethan we men are; and, also they are blessed--or cursed--with a nervoussystem to which we are strangers. I see too much of it in my work notto realise it. Take my advice and do not let her know, or you willfrighten her.'

Joshua's lips unconsciously hardened as he answered: 'My dear fellow,I would not have a secret from my wife. Why, it would be thebeginning of a new order of things between us. We have no secrets fromeach other. If we ever have, then you may begin to look out forsomething odd between us.'

'Still,' said Gerald, 'at the risk of unwelcome interference, I sayagain be warned in time.'

'The gipsy's very words,' said Joshua. 'You and she seem quite of oneaccord. Tell me, old man, is this a put-up thing? You told me of thegipsy camp--did you arrange it all with Her Majesty?' This was saidwith an air of bantering earnestness. Gerald assured him that he onlyheard of the camp that morning; but he made fun of every answer of hisfriend, and, in the process of this raillery, the time passed, andthey entered the cottage.

Mary was sitting at the piano but not playing. The dim twilight hadwaked some very tender feelings in her breast, and her eyes were fullof gentle tears. When the men

came in she stole over to her husband'sside and kissed him. Joshua struck a tragic attitude.

'Mary,' he said in a deep voice, 'before you approach me, listen tothe words of Fate. The Stars have spoken and the doom is sealed.'

'What is it, dear? Tell me the fortune, but do not frighten me.'

'Not at all, my dear; but there is a truth which it is well that youshould know. Nay, it is necessary so that all your arrangements can bemade beforehand, and everything be decently done and in order.'

'Go on, dear; I am listening.'

'Mary Considine, your effigy may yet be seen at Madame Tussaud's. Thejurisimprudent Stars have announced their fell tidings that this handis red with blood--your blood. Mary! Mary! my God!' He sprangforward, but too late to catch her as she fell fainting on the floor.

'I told you,' said Gerald. 'You don't know them as well as I do.'

After a little while Mary recovered from her swoon, but only to fallinto strong hysterics, in which she laughed and wept and raved andcried, 'Keep him from me--from me, Joshua, my husband,' and many otherwords of entreaty and of fear.

Joshua Considine was in a state of mind bordering on agony, and whenat last Mary became calm he knelt by her and kissed her feet and handsand hair and called her all the sweet names and said all the tenderthings his lips could frame. All that night he sat by her bedside andheld her hand. Far through the night and up to the early morning shekept waking from sleep and crying out as if in fear, till she wascomforted by the consciousness that her husband was watching besideher.

Breakfast was late the next morning, but during it Joshua received atelegram which required him to drive over to Withering, nearly twentymiles. He was loth to go; but Mary would not hear of his remaining,and so before noon he drove off in his dog-cart alone.

When he was gone Mary retired to her room. She did not appear atlunch, but when afternoon tea was served on the lawn under the greatweeping willow, she came to join her guest. She was looking quiterecovered from her illness of the evening before. After some casualremarks, she said to Gerald: 'Of course it was very silly about lastnight, but I could not help feeling frightened. Indeed I would feel sostill if I let myself think of it. But, after all these people mayonly imagine things, and I have got a test that can hardly fail toshow that the prediction is false--if indeed it be false,' she addedsadly.

'What is your plan?' asked Gerald.

'I shall go myself to the gipsy camp, and have my fortune told by theQueen.'

'Capital. May I go with you?'

'Oh, no! That would spoil it. She might know you and guess at me, andsuit her utterance accordingly. I shall go alone this afternoon.'

When the afternoon was gone Mary Considine took her way to the gipsyencampment. Gerald went with her as far as the near edge of thecommon, and returned alone.

Half-an-hour had hardly elapsed when Mary entered the drawing-room,where he lay on a sofa reading. She was ghastly pale and was in astate of extreme excitement. Hardly had she passed over the thresholdwhen she collapsed and sank moaning on the carpet. Gerald rushed toaid her, but by a great effort she controlled herself and motioned himto be silent. He waited, and his ready attention to her wish seemed tobe

her best help, for, in a few minutes, she had somewhat recovered,and was able to tell him what had passed.

'When I got to the camp,' she said, 'there did not seem to be a soulabout, I went into the centre and stood there. Suddenly a tall womanstood beside me. "Something told me I was wanted!" she said. I heldout my hand and laid a piece of silver on it. She took from her neck asmall golden trinket and laid it there also; and then, seizing thetwo, threw them into the stream that ran by. Then she took my hand inhers and spoke: "Naught but blood in this guilty place," and turnedaway. I caught hold of her and asked her to tell me more. After somehesitation, she said: "Alas! alas! I see you lying at your husband'sfeet, and his hands are red with blood."'

Gerald did not feel at all at ease, and tried to laugh it off.'Surely,' he said, 'this woman has a craze about murder.'

'Do not laugh,' said Mary, 'I cannot bear it,' and then, as if with asudden impulse, she left the room.

Not long after Joshua returned, bright and cheery, and as hungry as ahunter after his long drive. His presence cheered his wife, who seemedmuch brighter, but she did not mention the episode of the visit to thegipsy camp, so Gerald did not mention it either. As if by tacitconsent the subject was not alluded to during the evening. But therewas a strange, settled look on Mary's face, which Gerald could not butobserve.

In the morning Joshua came down to breakfast later than usual. Maryhad been up and about the house from an early hour; but as the timedrew on she seemed to get a little nervous and now and again threwaround an anxious look.

Gerald could not help noticing that none of those at breakfast couldget on satisfactorily with their food. It was not altogether that thechops were tough, but that the knives were all so blunt. Being aguest, he, of course, made no sign; but presently

saw Joshua draw histhumb across the edge of his knife in an unconscious sort of way. Atthe action Mary turned pale and almost fainted.

After breakfast they all went out on the lawn. Mary was making up abouquet, and said to her husband, 'Get me a few of the tea-roses,dear.'

Joshua pulled down a cluster from the front of the house. The stembent, but was too tough to break. He put his hand in his pocket to gethis knife; but in vain. 'Lend me your knife, Gerald,' he said. ButGerald had not got one, so he went into the breakfast room and tookone from the table. He came out feeling its edge and grumbling. 'Whaton earth has happened to all the knives--the edges seem all groundoff?' Mary turned away hurriedly and entered the house.

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Joshua tried to sever the stalk with the blunt knife as country cookssever the necks of fowl--as schoolboys cut twine. With a little efforthe finished the task. The cluster of roses grew thick, so hedetermined to gather a great bunch.

He could not find a single sharp knife in the sideboard where thecutlery was kept, so he called Mary, and when she came, told her thestate of things. She looked so agitated and so miserable that he couldnot help knowing the truth, and, as if astounded and hurt, asked h

er:

'Do you mean to say that _you_ have done it?'

She broke in, 'Oh, Joshua, I was so afraid.'

He paused, and a set, white look came over his face. 'Mary!' said he,'is this all the trust you have in me? I would not have believed it.'

'Oh, Joshua! Joshua!' she cried entreatingly, 'forgive me,' and weptbitterly.

Joshua thought a moment and then said: 'I see how it is. We shallbetter end this or we shall all go mad.'

He ran into the drawing-room.

'Where are you going?' almost screamed Mary.

Gerald saw what he meant--that he would not be tied to bluntinstruments by the force of a superstition, and was not surprised whenhe saw him come out through the French window, bearing in his hand alarge Ghourka knife, which usually lay on the centre table, and whichhis brother had sent him from Northern India. It was one of thosegreat hunting-knives which worked such havoc, at close quarters withthe enemies of the loyal Ghourkas during the mutiny, of great weightbut so evenly balanced in the hand as to seem light, and with an edgelike a razor. With one of these knives a Ghourka can cut a sheep intwo.

When Mary saw him come out of the room with the weapon in his hand shescreamed in an agony of fright, and the hysterics of last night werepromptly renewed.

Joshua ran toward her, and, seeing her falling, threw down the knifeand tried to catch her.

However, he was just a second too late, and the two men cried out inhorror simultaneously as they saw her fall upon the naked blade.

When Gerald rushed over he found that in falling her left hand hadstruck the blade, which lay partly upwards on the grass. Some of thesmall veins were cut through, and the blood gushed freely from thewound. As he was tying it up he pointed out to Joshua that the weddingring was severed by the steel.

They carried her fainting to the house. When, after a while, she cameout, with her arm in a sling, she was peaceful in her mind and happy.She said to her husband:

'The gipsy was wonderfully near the truth; too near for the real thingever to occur now, dear.'

Joshua bent over and kissed the wounded hand.

The Coming of Abel Behenna

The little Cornish port of Pencastle was bright in the early April,when the sun had seemingly come to stay after a long and bitterwinter. Boldly and blackly the rock stood out against a background ofshaded blue, where the sky fading into mist met the far horizon. Thesea was of true Cornish hue--sapphire, save where it became deepemerald green in the fathomless depths under the cliffs, where theseal caves opened their grim jaws. On the slopes the grass was parchedand brown. The spikes of furze bushes were ashy grey, but the goldenyellow of their flowers streamed along the hillside, dipping out inlines as the rock cropped up, and lessening into patches and dots tillfinally it died away all together where the sea winds swept round thejutting cliffs and cut short the vegetation as though with anever-working aerial shears. The whole hillside, with its body of brownand flashes of yellow, was just like a colossal yellow-hammer.

The little harbour opened from the sea between towering cliffs, andbehind a lonely rock, pierced with many caves and blow-holes throughwhich the sea in storm time sent its thunderous voice, together with afountain of drifting spume. Hence, it wound westwards in a serpentinecourse, guarded at its entrance by two little curving piers to leftand right. These were roughly built of dark slates placed endways andheld together with great beams bound with iron bands. Thence, itflowed up the rocky bed of the stream whose winter torrents had of oldcut out its way amongst the hills. This stream was deep at first, withhere and there, where it widened, patches of broken rock exposed atlow water, full of holes where crabs and lobsters were to be found atthe ebb of the tide. From amongst the rocks rose sturdy posts, usedfor warping in the little coasting vessels which frequented the port.Higher up, the stream still flowed deeply, for the tide ran farinland, but always calmly for all the force of the wildest storm wasbroken below. Some quarter mile inland the stream was deep at highwater, but at low tide there were at each side patches of the samebroken rock as lower down, through the chinks of which the sweet waterof the natural stream trickled and murmured after the tide had ebbedaway. Here, too, rose mooring posts for the

fishermen's boats. Ateither side of the river was a row of cottages down almost on thelevel of high tide. They were pretty cottages, strongly and snuglybuilt, with trim narrow gardens in front, full of old-fashionedplants, flowering currants, coloured primroses, wallflower, andstonecrop. Over the fronts of many of them climbed clematis andwisteria. The window sides and door posts of all were as white assnow, and the little pathway to each was paved with light colouredstones. At some of the doors were tiny porches, whilst at others wererustic seats cut from tree trunks or from old barrels; in nearly everycase the window ledges were filled with boxes or pots of flowers orfoliage plants.

Two men lived in cottages exactly opposite each other across thestream. Two men, both young, both good-looking, both prosperous, andwho had been companions and rivals from their boyhood. Abel Behennawas dark with the gypsy darkness which the Phoenician mining wanderersleft in their track; Eric Sanson--which the local antiquarian said wasa corruption of Sagamanson--was fair, with the ruddy hue which markedthe path of the wild Norseman. These two seemed to have singled outeach other from the very beginning to work and strive together, tofight for each other and to stand back to back in all endeavours. Theyhad now put the coping-stone on their Temple of Unity by falling inlove with the same girl. Sarah Trefusis was certainly the prettiestgirl in Pencastle, and there was many a young man who would gladlyhave tried his fortune with her, but that there were two to contendagainst, and each of these the strongest and most resolute man in theport--except the other. The average young man thought that this wasvery hard, and on account of it bore no good will to either of thethree principals: whilst the average young woman who had, lest worseshould befall, to put up with the grumbling of her sweetheart, and thesense of being only second best which it implied, did not either, besure, regard Sarah with friendly eye. Thus it came, in the course of ayear or so, for rustic courtship is a slow process, that the two menand woman found themselves thrown much together. They were allsatisfied, so it did not matter, and Sarah, who was vain and somethingfrivolous, took care to have her revenge on both men and women in aquiet way. When a young woman in her 'walking out' can only boast onenot-quite-satisfied young man, it is no

particular pleasure to her tosee her escort cast sheep's eyes at a better-looking girl supported bytwo devoted swains.

At length there came a time which Sarah dreaded, and which she hadtried to keep distant--the time when she had to make her choicebetween the two men. She liked them both, and, indeed, either of themmight have satisfied the ideas of even a more exacting girl. But hermind was so constituted that she thought more of what she might lose,than of what she might gain; and whenever she thought she had made upher mind she became instantly assailed with doubts as to the wisdom ofher choice. Always the man whom she had presumably lost became endowedafresh with a newer and more bountiful crop of advantages than hadever arisen from the possibility of his acceptance. She promised eachman that on her birthday she would give him his answer, and that day,the 11th of April, had now arrived. The promises had been given singlyand confidentially, but each was given to a man who was not likely toforget. Early in the morning she found both men hovering round herdoor. Neither had taken the other into his confidence, and each wassimply seeking an early opportunity of getting his answer, andadvancing his suit if necessary. Damon, as a rule, does not takePythias with him when making a proposal; and in the heart of each manhis own affairs had a claim far above any requirements of friendship.So, throughout the day, they kept seeing each other out. The positionwas doubtless somewhat embarrassing to Sarah, and though thesatisfaction of her vanity that she should be thus adored was verypleasing, yet there were moments when she was annoyed with both menfor being so persistent. Her only consolation at such moments was thatshe saw, through the elaborate smiles of the other girls when inpassing they noticed her door thus doubly guarded, the jealousy whichfilled their hearts. Sarah's mother was a person of commonplace andsordid ideas, and, seeing all along the state of affairs, her oneintention, persistently expressed to her daughter in the plainestwords, was to so arrange matters that Sarah should get all that waspossible out of both men. With this purpose she had cunningly keptherself as far as possible in the background in the matter of herdaughter's wooings, and watched in silence. At first Sarah had beenindignant with her for her sordid views; but, as usual, her weaknature gave way

before persistence, and she had now got to the stageof acceptance. She was not surprised when her mother whispered to herin the little yard behind the house:--

'Go up the hillside for a while; I want to talk to these two. They'reboth red-hot for ye, and now's the time to get things fixed!' Sarahbegan a feeble remonstrance, but her mother cut her short.

'I tell ye, girl, that my mind is made up! Both these men want ye, andonly one can have ye, but before ye choose it'll be so arranged thatye'll have all that both have got! Don't argy, child! Go up thehillside, and when ye come back I'll have it fixed--I see a way quiteeasy!' So Sarah went up the hillside through the narrow paths betweenthe golden furze, and Mrs. Trefusis joined the two men in theliving-room of the little house.

She opened the attack with the desperate courage which is in allmothers when they think for their children, howsoever mean thethoughts may be.

'Ye two men, ye're both in love with my Sarah!'

Their bashful silence gave consent to the barefaced proposition. Shewent on.

'Neither of ye has much!' Again they tacitly acquiesced in the softimpeachment.

'I don't know that either of ye could keep a wife!' Though neithersaid a word their looks and bearing expressed distinct dissent. Mrs.Trefusis went on:

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'But if ye'd put what ye both have together ye'd make a comfortablehome for one of ye--and Sarah!' She eyed the men keenly, with hercunning eyes half shut, as she spoke; then satisfied from her scrutinythat the idea was accepted she went on quickly, as if to preventargument:

'The girl likes ye both, and mayhap it's

hard for her to choose. Whydon't ye toss up for her? First put your money together--ye've eachgot a bit put by, I know. Let the lucky man take the lot and tradewith it a bit, and then come home and marry her. Neither of ye'safraid, I suppose! And neither of ye'll say that he won't do that muchfor the girl that ye both say ye love!'

Abel broke the silence:

'It don't seem the square thing to toss for the girl! She wouldn'tlike it herself, and it doesn't seem--seem respectful like to her--'Eric interrupted. He was conscious that his chance was not so good asAbel's in case Sarah should wish to choose between them:

'Are ye afraid of the hazard?'

'Not me!' said Abel, boldly. Mrs. Trefusis, seeing that her idea wasbeginning to work, followed up the advantage.

'It is settled that ye put yer money together to make a home for her,whether ye toss for her or leave it for her to choose?'

'Yes,' said Eric quickly, and Abel agreed with equal sturdiness. Mrs.Trefusis' little

cunning eyes twinkled. She heard Sarah's step in theyard, and said:

'Well! here she comes, and I leave it to her.' And she went out.

During her brief walk on the hillside Sarah had been trying to make upher mind. She was feeling almost angry with both men for being thecause of her difficulty, and as she came into the room said shortly:

'I want to have a word with you both--come to the Flagstaff Rock,where we can be alone.' She took her hat and went out of the house upthe winding path to the steep rock crowned with a high flagstaff,where once the wreckers' fire basket used to burn. This was the rockwhich formed the northern jaw of the little harbour. There was onlyroom on the path for two abreast, and it marked the state of thingspretty well when, by a sort of implied arrangement, Sarah went first,and the two men followed, walking abreast and keeping step. By thistime, each man's heart was boiling with jealousy. When they came tothe top of the rock, Sarah stood against the flagstaff, and the twoyoung men stood opposite her. She had chosen her position withknowledge and intention, for there was no room for anyone to standbeside her. They were all silent for a while; then Sarah began tolaugh and said:--

'I promised the both of you to give you an answer to-day. I've beenthinking and thinking and thinking, till I began to get angry with youboth for plaguing me so; and even now I don't seem any nearer thanever I was to making up my mind.' Eric said suddenly:

'Let us toss for it, lass!' Sarah showed no indignation whatever atthe proposition; her mother's eternal suggestion had schooled her tothe acceptance of something of the kind, and her weak nature made iteasy to her to grasp at any way out of the difficulty. She stood withdowncast eyes idly picking at the sleeve of her dress, seeming tohave tacitly acquiesced in the proposal. Both men instinctivelyrealising this pulled each a coin from his pocket, spun it in the air,and dropped his other hand over the palm on

which it lay. For a fewseconds they remained thus, all silent; then Abel, who was the morethoughtful of the men, spoke:

'Sarah! is this good?' As he spoke he removed the upper hand from thecoin and placed the latter back in his pocket. Sarah was nettled.

'Good or bad, it's good enough for me! Take it or leave it as youlike,' she said, to which he replied quickly:

'Nay lass! Aught that concerns you is good enow for me. I did butthink of you lest you might have pain or disappointment hereafter. Ifyou love Eric better nor me, in God's name say so, and I think I'm manenow to stand aside. Likewise, if I'm the one, don't make us bothmiserable for life!' Face to face with a difficulty, Sarah's weaknature proclaimed itself; she put her hands before her face and beganto cry, saying--

'It was my mother. She keeps telling me!' The silence which followedwas broken by Eric, who said hotly to Abel:

'Let the lass alone, can't you? If she wants to choose this way, lether. It's good enough for me--and for you, too! She's said it now, andmust abide by it!' Hereupon Sarah turned upon him in sudden fury, andcried:

'Hold your tongue! what is it to you, at any rate?' and she resumedher crying. Eric was so flabbergasted that he had not a word to say,but stood looking particularly foolish, with his mouth open and hishands held out with the coin still between them. All were silent tillSarah, taking her hands from her face laughed hysterically and said:

'As you two can't make up your minds, I'm going home!' and she turnedto go.

'Stop,' said Abel, in an authoritative voice. 'Eric, you hold thecoin, and I'll cry. Now,

before we settle it, let us clearlyunderstand: the man who wins takes all the money that we both havegot, brings it to Bristol and ships on a voyage and trades with it.Then he comes back and marries Sarah, and they two keep all, whateverthere may be, as the result of the trading. Is this what weunderstand?'

'Yes,' said Eric.

'I'll marry him on my next birthday,' said Sarah. Having said it theintolerably mercenary spirit of her action seemed to strike her, andimpulsively she turned away with a bright blush. Fire seemed tosparkle in the eyes of both men. Said Eric: 'A year so be! The manthat wins is to have one year.'

'Toss!' cried Abel, and the coin spun in the air. Eric caught it, andagain held it between his outstretched hands.

'Heads!' cried Abel, a pallor sweeping over his face as he spoke. Ashe leaned forward to look Sarah leaned forward too, and their headsalmost touched. He could feel her hair blowing on his cheek, and itthrilled through him like fire. Eric lifted his upper hand; the coinlay with its head up. Abel stepped forward and took Sarah in his arms.With a curse Eric hurled the coin far into the sea. Then he leanedagainst the flagstaff and scowled at the others with his hands thrustdeep into his pockets. Abel whispered wild words of passion anddelight into Sarah's ears, and as she listened she began to believethat fortune had rightly interpreted the wishes of her secret heart,and that she loved Abel best.

Presently Abel looked up and caught sight of Eric's face as the lastray of sunset struck it. The red light intensified the naturalruddiness of his complexion, and he looked as though he were steepedin blood. Abel did not mind his scowl, for now that his own heart wasat rest he could feel unalloyed pity for his friend. He stepped overmeaning to comfort him, and held out his hand, saying:

'It was my chance, old lad. Don't grudge it me. I'll try to make Saraha happy woman, and you shall be a brother to us both!'

'Brother be damned!' was all the answer Eric made, as he turned away.When he had gone a few steps down the rocky path he turned and cameback. Standing before Abel and Sarah, who had their arms round eachother, he said:

'You have a year. Make the most of it! And be sure you're in time toclaim your wife! Be back to have your banns up in time to be marriedon the 11th April. If you're not, I tell you I shall have my banns up,and you may get back too late.'

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'What do you mean, Eric? You are mad!'

'No more mad than you are, Abel Behenna. You go, that's your chance! Istay, that's mine! I don't mean to let the grass grow under my feet.Sarah cared no more for you than for me five minutes ago, and she maycome back to that five minutes after you're gone! You won by a pointonly--the game may change.'

'The game won't change!' said Abel shortly. 'Sarah, you'll be true tome? You won't marry till I return?'

'For a year!' added Eric, quickly, 'that's the bargain.'

'I promise for the year,' said Sarah. A dark look came over Abel'sface, and he was about to speak, but he mastered himself and smiled.

'I mustn't be too hard or get angry tonight! Come, Eric! we played andfought together. I won fairly. I played fairly all the game of ourwooing! You know that as well as I do; and now when I am going away, Ishall look to my old and true comrade to help me when I am gone!'

'I'll help you none,' said Eric, 'so help me God!'

'It was God helped me,' said Abel simply.

'Then let Him go on helping you,' said Eric angrily. 'The Devil isgood enough for me!' and without another word he rushed down the steeppath and disappeared behind the rocks.

When he had gone Abel hoped for some tender passage with Sarah, butthe first remark she made chilled him.

&n

bsp; 'How lonely it all seems without Eric!' and this note sounded till hehad left her at home--and after.

Early on the next morning Abel heard a noise at his door, and on goingout saw Eric walking rapidly away: a small canvas bag full of gold andsilver lay on the threshold; on a small slip of paper pinned to it waswritten:

'Take the money and go. I stay. God for you! The Devil for me!Remember the 11th of April.--ERIC SANSON.' That afternoon Abel wentoff to Bristol, and a week later sailed on the _Star of the Sea_ boundfor Pahang. His money--including that which had been Eric's--was onboard in the shape of a venture of cheap toys. He had been advised bya shrewd old mariner of Bristol whom he knew, and who knew the ways ofthe Chersonese, who predicted that every penny invested would bereturned with a shilling to boot.

As the year wore on Sarah became more and more disturbed in her mind.Eric was always at hand to make love to her in his own persistent,masterful manner, and to this she did not object. Only one letter camefrom Abel, to say that his venture had proved successful, and that hehad sent some two hundred pounds to the bank at Bristol, and wastrading with fifty pounds still remaining in goods for China, whitherthe _Star of the Sea_ was bound and whence she would return toBristol. He suggested that Eric's share of the venture should bereturned to him with his share of the profits. This proposition wastreated with anger by Eric, and as simply childish by Sarah's mother.

More than six months had since then elapsed, but no other letter hadcome, and Eric's hopes which had been dashed down by the letter fromPahang, began to rise again. He

perpetually assailed Sarah with an'if!' If Abel did not return, would she then marry him? If the 11thApril went by without Abel being in the port, would she give him over?If Abel had taken his fortune, and married another girl on the head ofit, would she marry him, Eric, as soon as the truth were known? And soon in an endless variety of possibilities. The power of the strongwill and the determined purpose over the woman's weaker nature becamein time manifest. Sarah began to lose her faith in Abel and to regardEric as a possible husband; and a possible husband is in a woman's eyedifferent to all other men. A new affection for him began to arise inher breast, and the daily familiarities of permitted courtshipfurthered the growing affection. Sarah began to regard Abel as rathera rock in the road of her life, and had it not been for her mother'sconstantly reminding her of the good fortune already laid by in theBristol Bank she would have tried to have shut her eyes altogether tothe fact of Abel's existence.

The 11th April was Saturday, so that in order to have the marriage onthat day it would be necessary that the banns should be called onSunday, 22nd March. From the beginning of that month Eric keptperpetually on the subject of Abel's absence, and his outspokenopinion that the latter was either dead or married began to become areality to the woman's mind. As the first half of the month wore onEric became more jubilant, and after church on the 15th he took Sarahfor a walk to the Flagstaff Rock. There he asserted himself strongly:

'I told Abel, and you too, that if he was not here to put up his bannsin time for the eleventh, I would put up mine for the twelfth. Now thetime has come when I mean to do it. He hasn't kept his word'--hereSarah struck in out of her weakness and indecision:

'He hasn't broken it yet!' Eric ground his teeth with anger.

'If you mean to stick up for him,' he said, as he smote his handssavagely on the flagstaff, which sent forth a shivering murmur, 'welland good. I'll keep my part of the

bargain. On Sunday I shall givenotice of the banns, and you can deny them in the church if you will.If Abel is in Pencastle on the eleventh, he can have them cancelled,and his own put up; but till then, I take my course, and woe to anyonewho stands in my way!' With that he flung himself down the rockypathway, and Sarah could not but admire his Viking strength andspirit, as, crossing the hill, he strode away along the cliffs towardsBude.

During the week no news was heard of Abel, and on Saturday Eric gavenotice of the banns of marriage between himself and Sarah Trefusis.The clergyman would have remonstrated with him, for although nothingformal had been told to the neighbours, it had been understood sinceAbel's departure that on his return he was to marry Sarah; but Ericwould not discuss the question.

'It is a painful subject, sir,' he said with a firmness which theparson, who was a very young man, could not but be swayed by. 'Surelythere is nothing against Sarah or me. Why should there be any bonesmade about the matter?' The parson said no more, and on the next dayhe read out the banns for the first time amidst an audible buzz fromthe congregation. Sarah was present, contrary to custom, and thoughshe blushed furiously enjoyed her triumph over the other girls whosebanns had not yet come. Before the week was over she began to make herwedding dress. Eric used to come and look at her at work and the sightthrilled through him. He used to say all sorts of pretty things to herat such times, and there were to both delicious moments oflove-making.

The banns were read a second time on the 29th, and Eric's hope grewmore and more fixed though there were to him moments of acute despairwhen he realised that the cup of happiness might be dashed from hislips at any moment, right up to the last. At such times he was full ofpassion--desperate and remorseless--and he ground his teeth andclenched his hands in a wild way as though some taint of the oldBerserker fury of his ancestors still lingered in his blood. On theThursday of that week he looked in on Sarah and found her, amid aflood of sunshine, putting finishing touches to her white

weddinggown. His own heart was full of gaiety, and the sight of the woman whowas so soon to be his own so occupied, filled him with a joyunspeakable, and he felt faint with languorous ecstasy. Bending overhe kissed Sarah on the mouth, and then whispered in her rosy ear--

'Your wedding dress, Sarah! And for me!' As he drew back to admire hershe looked up saucily, and said to him--

'Perhaps not for you. There is more than a week yet for Abel!' andthen cried out in dismay, for with a wild gesture and a fierce oathEric dashed out of the house, banging the door behind him. Theincident disturbed Sarah more than she could have thought possible,for it awoke all her fears and doubts and indecision afresh. She crieda little, and put by her dress, and to soothe herself went out to sitfor a while on the summit of the Flagstaff Rock. When she arrived shefound there a little group anxiously discussing the weather. The seawas calm and the sun bright, but across the sea were strange lines ofdarkness and light, and close in to shore the rocks were fringed withfoam, which spread out in great white curves and circles as thecurrents drifted. The wind had backed, and came in sharp, cold puffs.The blow-hole, which ran under the Flagstaff Rock, from the rocky baywithout to the harbour within, was booming at intervals, and theseagulls were screaming ceaselessly as they wheeled about the entranceof the port.

'It looks bad,' she heard an old fisherman say to the coastguard. 'Iseen it just like this once before, when the East Indiaman_Coromandel_ went to pieces in Dizzard Bay!' Sarah did not wait tohear more. She was of a timid nature where danger was concerned, andcould not bear to hear of wrecks and disasters. She went home andresumed the completion of her dress, secretly determined to appeaseEric when she should meet him with a sweet apology--and to take theearliest opportunity of being even with him after her marriage. Theold fisherman's weather prophecy was justified. That night at dusk awild storm came on. The sea rose and lashed the western coasts fromSkye to Scilly and left a tale of disaster everywhere. The sailors andfishermen of

Pencastle all turned out on the rocks and cliffs andwatched eagerly. Presently, by a flash of lightning, a 'ketch' wasseen drifting under only a jib about half-a-mile outside the port. Alleyes and all glasses were concentrated on her, waiting for the nextflash, and when it came a chorus went up that it was the _LovelyAlice_, trading between Bristol and Penzance, and touching at all thelittle ports between. 'God help them!' said the harbour-master, 'fornothing in this world can save them when they are between Bude andTintagel and the wind on shore!' The coastguards exerted themselves,and, aided by brave hearts and willing hands, they brought the rocketapparatus up on the summit of the Flagstaff Rock. Then they bur

nedblue lights so that those on board might see the harbour opening incase they could make any effort to reach it. They worked gallantlyenough on board; but no skill or strength of man could avail. Beforemany minutes were over the _Lovely Alice_ rushed to her doom on thegreat island rock that guarded the mouth of the port. The screams ofthose on board were faintly borne on the tempest as they flungthemselves into the sea in a last chance for life. The blue lightswere kept burning, and eager eyes peered into the depths of the watersin case any face could be seen; and ropes were held ready to fling outin aid. But never a face was seen, and the willing arms rested idle.Eric was there amongst his fellows. His old Icelandic origin wasnever more apparent than in that wild hour. He took a rope, andshouted in the ear of the harbour-master:

'I shall go down on the rock over the seal cave. The tide is runningup, and someone may drift in there!'

'Keep back, man!' came the answer. 'Are you mad? One slip on that rockand you are lost: and no man could keep his feet in the dark on such aplace in such a tempest!'

'Not a bit,' came the reply. 'You remember how Abel Behenna saved methere on a night like this when my boat went on the Gull Rock. Hedragged me up from the deep water in the seal cave, and now someonemay drift in there again as I did,' and he was

gone into the darkness.The projecting rock hid the light on the Flagstaff Rock, but he knewhis way too well to miss it. His boldness and sureness of footstanding to him, he shortly stood on the great round-topped rock cutaway beneath by the action of the waves over the entrance of the sealcave, where the water was fathomless. There he stood in comparativesafety, for the concave shape of the rock beat back the waves withtheir own force, and though the water below him seemed to boil like aseething cauldron, just beyond the spot there was a space of almostcalm. The rock, too, seemed here to shut off the sound of the gale,and he listened as well as watched. As he stood there ready, with hiscoil of rope poised to throw, he thought he heard below him, justbeyond the whirl of the water, a faint, despairing cry. He echoed itwith a shout that rang into the night. Then he waited for the flash oflightning, and as it passed flung his rope out into the darkness wherehe had seen a face rising through the swirl of the foam. The rope wascaught, for he felt a pull on it, and he shouted again in his mightyvoice:

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'Tie it round your waist, and I shall pull you up.' Then when he feltthat it was fast he moved along the rock to the far side of the seacave, where the deep water was something stiller, and where he couldget foothold secure enough to drag the rescued man on the overhangingrock. He began to pull, and shortly he knew from the rope taken inthat the man he was now rescuing must soon be close to the top of therock. He steadied himself for a moment, and drew a long breath, thathe might at the next effort complete the rescue. He had just bent hisback to the work when a flash of lightning revealed to each other thetwo men--the rescuer and the rescued.

Eric Sanson and Abel Behenna were face to face--and none knew of themeeting save themselves; and God.

On the instant a wave of passion swept through Eric's heart. All hishopes were shattered, and with the hatred of Cain his eyes looked out.He saw in the instant of recognition the joy in Abel's face that hiswas the hand to succour him, and this intensified his hate. Whilst thepassion was on him he started back, and the rope ran out between hishands. His moment of hate was followed by an impulse of his bettermanhood, but it was too late.

Before he could recover himself, Abel encumbered with the rope thatshould have aided him, was plunged with a despairing cry back into thedarkness of the devouring sea.

Then, feeling all the madness and the doom of Cain upon him, Ericrushed back over the rocks, heedless of the danger and eager only forone thing--to be amongst other people whose living noises would shutout that last cry which seemed to ring still in his ears. When heregained the Flagstaff Rock the men surrounded him, and through

thefury of the storm he heard the harbour-master say:--

'We feared you were lost when we heard a cry! How white you are! Whereis your rope? Was there anyone drifted in?'

'No one,' he shouted in answer, for he felt that he could neverexplain that he had let his old comrade slip back into the sea, and atthe very place and under the very circumstances in which that comradehad saved his own life. He hoped by one bold lie to set the matter atrest for ever. There was no one to bear witness--and if he should haveto carry that still white face in his eyes and that despairing cry inhis ears for evermore--at least none should know of it. 'No one,' hecried, more loudly still. 'I slipped on the rock, and the rope fellinto the sea!' So saying he left them, and, rushing down the steeppath, gained his own cottage and locked himself within.

The remainder of that night he passed lying on his bed--dressed andmotionless--staring upwards, and seeming to see through the darkness apale face gleaming wet in the lightning, with its glad recognitionturning to ghastly despair, and to hear a cry which never ceased toecho in his soul.

In the morning the storm was over and all was smiling again, exceptthat the sea was still boisterous with its unspent fury. Great piecesof wreck drifted into the port, and the sea around the island rock wasstrewn with others. Two bodies also drifted into the harbour--one themaster of the wrecked ketch, the other a strange seaman whom no oneknew.

Sarah saw nothing of Eric till the evening, and then he only lookedin for a minute. He did not come into the house, but simply put hishead in through the open window.

'Well, Sarah,' he called out in a loud voice, though to her it did notring truly, 'is the wedding dress done? Sunday week, mind! Sundayweek!'

Sarah was glad to have the reconciliation so easy; but, womanlike,when she saw the storm was over and her own fears groundless, she atonce repeated the cause of offence.

'Sunday so be it,' she said without looking up, 'if Abel isn't thereon Saturday!' Then she looked up saucily, though her heart was full offear of another outburst on the part of her impetuous lover. But thewindow was empty; Eric had taken himself off, and with a pout sheresumed her work. She saw Eric no more till Sunday afternoon, afterthe banns had been called the third time, when he came up to herbefore all the people with an air of proprietorship which half-pleasedand half-annoyed her.

'Not yet, mister!' she said, pushing him away, as the other girlsgiggled. 'Wait till Sunday next, if you please--the day afterSaturday!' she added, looking at him saucily. The girls giggled again,and the young men guffawed. They thought it was the snub that touchedhim so that he became as white as a sheet as he turned away. ButSarah, who knew more than they did, laughed, for she saw triumphthrough the spasm of pain that overspread his face.

The week passed uneventfully; however, as Saturday drew nigh Sarah hadoccasional moments of anxiety, and as to Eric he went about atnight-time like a man possessed. He restrained himself when otherswere by, but now and again he went down amongst the rocks and cavesand shouted aloud. This seemed to relieve him somewhat, and he wasbetter able to restrain himself for some time after. All Saturday hestayed in his own house and never left it. As he was to be married onthe morrow, the neighbours thought it was shyness on his part, and didnot trouble or notice him. Only once was he disturbed, and that waswhen the chief boatman came to him and sat down, and after a pausesaid:

'Eric, I was over in Bristol yesterday. I was in the ropemaker'sgetting a coil to replace the one you lost the night of the storm, andthere I saw Michael Heavens of this place, who is a salesman there. Hetold me that Abel Behenna had come home the week ere

last on the _Starof the Sea_ from Canton, and that he had lodged a sight of money inthe Bristol Bank in the name of Sarah Behenna. He told Michael sohimself--and that he had taken passage on the _Lovely Alice_ toPencastle. 'Bear up, man,' for Eric had with a groan dropped his headon his knees, with his face between his hands. 'He was your oldcomrade, I know, but you couldn't help him. He must have gone downwith the rest that awful night. I thought I'd better tell you, lest itmight come some other way, and you might keep Sarah Trefusis frombeing frightened. They were good friends once, and women take thesethings to heart. It would not do to

let her be pained with such athing on her wedding day!' Then he rose and went away, leaving Ericstill sitting disconsolately with his head on his knees.

'Poor fellow!' murmured the chief boatman to himself; 'he takes it toheart. Well, well! right enough! They were true comrades once, andAbel saved him!'

The afternoon of that day, when the children had left school, theystrayed as usual on half-holidays along' the quay and the paths by thecliffs. Presently some of them came running in a state of greatexcitement to the harbour, where a few men were unloading a coalketch, and a great many were superintending the operation. One of thechildren called out:

'There is a porpoise in the harbour mouth! We saw it come through theblow-hole! It had a long tail, and was deep under the water!'

'It was no porpoise,' said another; 'it was a seal; but it had a longtail! It came out of the seal cave!' The other children bore varioustestimony, but on two points they were unanimous--it, whatever 'it'was, had come through the blow-hole deep under the water, and had along, thin tail--a tail so long that they could not see the end of it.There was much unmerciful chaffing of the children by the men on thispoint, but as it was evident that they had seen something, quite anumber of persons, young and old, male and female, went along the highpaths on either side of the harbour mouth to

catch a glimpse of thisnew addition to the fauna of the sea, a long-tailed porpoise or seal.The tide was now coming in. There was a slight breeze, and the surfaceof the water was rippled so that it was only at moments that anyonecould see clearly into the deep water. After a spell of watching awoman called out that she saw something moving up the channel, justbelow where she was standing. There was a stampede to the spot, but bythe time the crowd had gathered the breeze had freshened, and it wasimpossible to see with any distinctness below the surface of thewater. On being questioned the woman described what she had seen, butin such an incoherent way that the whole thing was put down as aneffect of imagination; had it not been for the children's report shewould not have been credited at all. Her semi-hysterical statementthat what she saw was 'like a pig with the entrails out' was onlythought anything of by an old coastguard, who shook his head but didnot make any remark. For the remainder of the daylight this man wasseen always on the bank, looking into the water, but always withdisappointment manifest on his face.

Eric arose early on the next morning--he had not slept all night, andit was a relief to him to move about in the light. He shaved himselfwith a hand that did not tremble, and dressed himself in his weddingclothes. There was a haggard look on his face, and he seemed as thoughhe had grown years older in the last few days. Still there was a wild,uneasy light of triumph in his eyes, and he kept murmuring to himselfover and over again:

'This is my wedding-day! Abel cannot claim her now--living ordead!--living or dead! Living or dead!' He sat in his arm-chair,waiting with an uncanny quietness for the church hour to arrive. Whenthe bell began to ring he arose and passed out of his house, closingthe door behind him. He looked at the river and saw the tide had justturned. In the church he sat with Sarah and her mother, holdingSarah's hand tightly in his all the time, as though he feared to loseher. When the service was over they stood up together, and weremarried in the presence of the entire congregation; for no one leftthe church. Both made the responses clearly--Eric's being even on thedefiant side. When the wedding was over Sarah took her husband's arm,and they

walked away together, the boys and younger girls being cuffedby their elders into a decorous behaviour, for they would fain havefollowed close behind their heels.

The way from the church led down to the back of Eric's cottage, anarrow passage being between it and that of his next neighbour. Whenthe bridal couple had passed through this the remainder of thecongregation, who had followed them at a little distance, werestartled by a long, shrill scream from the bride. They rushed throughthe passage and found her on the bank with wild eyes, pointing to theriver bed opposite Eric Sanson's door.

The falling tide had deposited there the body of Abel Behenna starkupon the broken rocks. The rope trailing from its waist had beentwisted by the current round the mooring post, and had held it backwhilst the tide had ebbed away from it. The right elbow had fallen ina chink in the rock, leaving the hand outstretched toward Sarah, withthe open palm upward as though it were extended to receive hers, thepale drooping fingers open to the clasp.

All that happened afterwards was never quite known to Sarah Sanson.Whenever she would try to recollect there would become a buzzing inher ears and a dimness in her eyes, and all would pass away. The onlything that she could remember of it all--and this she neverforgot--was Eric's breathing heavily, with his face whiter than thatof the dead man, as he muttered under his breath:

'Devil's help! Devil's faith! Devil's price!'

The Burial of the Rats

Leaving Paris by the Orleans road, cross the Enceinte, and, turning tothe right, you find yourself in a somewhat wild and not at all savourydistrict. Right and left, before and behind, on every side rise greatheaps of dust and waste accumulated by the process of time.

Paris has its night as well as its day life, and the sojourner whoenters his hotel in the Rue de Rivoli or the Rue St. Honore late atnight or leaves it early in the morning, can guess, in coming nearMontrouge--if he has not done so already--the purpose of those greatwaggons that look like boilers on wheels which he finds haltingeverywhere as he passes.

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Every city has its peculiar institutions created out of its own needs;and one of the most notable institutions of Paris is its rag-pickingpopulation. In the early morning--and Parisian life commences at anearly hour--may be seen in most streets standing on the pathwayopposite every court and alley and between every few houses, as stillin some American cities, even in parts of New York, large wooden boxesinto which the domestics or tenement-holders empty the accumulateddust of the past day. Round these boxes gather and pass on, when thework is done, to fresh fields of labour and pastures new, squalidhungry-looking men and women, the implements of whose craft consistof a coarse bag or basket slung over the shoulder and a little rakewith which they turn over and probe and examine in the minutest mannerthe dustbins. They pick up and deposit in their baskets, by aid oftheir rakes, whatever they may find, with the same facility as aChinaman uses his chopsticks.

Paris is a city of centralisation--and centralisation andclassification are closely allied. In the early times, whencentralisation is becoming a fact, its forerunner is classification.All things which are similar or analogous become grouped together, andfrom the grouping of groups rises one whole or central point. We seeradiating many long arms with innumerable tentaculae, and in thecentre rises a gigantic head with a comprehensive brain and keen eyesto look on every side and ears sensitive to hear--and a voraciousmouth to swallow.

Other cities resemble all the birds and beasts and fishes whoseappetites and digestions are normal. Paris alone is the analogicalapotheosis of the octopus. Product of centralisation carried to an _adabsurdum_, it fairly represents the devil fish; and in no respects isthe resemblance more curious than in the similarity of the digestiveapparatus.

Those intelligent tourists who, having surrendered their individualityinto the hands of Messrs. Cook or Gaze, 'do' Paris in three days, areoften puzzled to know how it is that the dinner which in London wouldcost about six shillings, can be had for three francs in a cafe in thePalais Royal. They need have no more wonder if they will but considerthe classification which is a theoretic speciality of Parisian life,and adopt all round the fact from which the chiffonier has hisgenesis.

The Paris of 1850 was not like the Paris of to-day, and those who seethe Paris of Napoleon and Baron Hausseman can hardly realise theexistence of the state of things forty-five years ago.

Amongst other things, however, which have not changed are thosedistricts where the waste is gathered. Dust is dust all the worldover, in every age, and the family likeness of dust-heaps is perfect.The traveller, therefore, who visits the environs of Montrouge can gogo back in fancy without difficulty to the year 1850.

In this year I was making a prolonged stay in Paris. I was very muchin love with a young lady who, though she returned my passion, so faryielded to the wishes of her parents that she had promised not to seeme or to correspond with me for a year. I, too, had been compelled toaccede to these conditions under a vague hope of parental approval.During the term of probation I had promised to remain out of thecountry and not to write to my dear one until the expiration of theyear.

Naturally the time went heavily with me. There was not one of my ownfamily or circle who could tell me of Alice, and none of her own folkhad, I am sorry to say, sufficient generosity to send me even anoccasional word of comfort regarding her health and well-being. Ispent six months wandering about Europe, but as I could find nosatisfactory distraction in travel, I determined to come to Paris,where, at least, I would be within easy hail of London in case anygood fortune should call me thither before the appointed time. That'hope deferred maketh the heart sick' was never better exemplifiedthan in my case, for in addition to the perpetual longing to see theface I

loved there was always with me a harrowing anxiety lest someaccident should prevent me showing Alice in due time that I had,throughout the long period of probation, been faithful to her trustand my own love. Thus, every adventure which I undertook had a fiercepleasure of its own, for it was fraught with possible consequencesgreater than it would have ordinarily borne.

Like all travellers I exhausted the places of most interest in thefirst month of my stay, and was driven in the second month to look foramusement whithersoever I might. Having made sundry journeys to thebetter-known suburbs, I began to see that there was a _terraincognita_, in so far as the guide book was concerned, in the socialwilderness lying between these attractive points. Accordingly I beganto systematise my researches, and each day took up the thread of myexploration at the place where I had on the previous day dropped it.

In the process of time my wanderings led me near Montrouge, and I sawthat hereabouts lay the Ultima Thule of social exploration--a countryas little known as that round the source of the White Nile. And so Idetermined to investigate philosophically the chiffonier--his habitat,his life, and his means of life.

The job was an unsavoury one, difficult of accomplishment, and withlittle hope of adequate reward. However, despite reason, obstinacyprevailed, and I entered into my new investigation with a keenerenergy than I could have summoned to aid me in any investigationleading to any end, valuable or worthy.

One day, late in a fine afternoon, toward the end of September, Ientered the holy of holies of the city of dust. The place wasevidently the recognised abode of a number of chiffoniers, for somesort of arrangement was manifested in the formation of the dust heapsnear the road. I passed amongst these heaps, which stood like orderlysentries, determined to penetrate further and trace dust to itsultimate location.

As I passed along I saw behind the dust heaps a few forms that flittedto and fro,

evidently watching with interest the advent of anystranger to such a place. The district was like a small Switzerland,and as I went forward my tortuous course shut out the path behind me.

Presently I got into what seemed a small city or community ofchiffoniers. There were a number of shanties or huts, such as may bemet with in the remote parts of the Bog of Allan--rude places withwattled walls, plastered with mud and roofs of rude thatch made fromstable refuse--such places as one would not like to enter for anyconsideration, and which even in water-colour could only lookpicturesque if judiciously treated. In the midst of these huts was oneof the strangest adaptations--I cannot say habitations--I had everseen. An immense old wardrobe, the colossal remnant of some boudoir ofCharles VII, or Henry II, had been converted into a dwelling-house.The double doors lay open, so that the entire menage was open topublic view. In the open half of the wardrobe was a commonsitting-room of some four feet by six, in which sat, smoking theirpipes round a charcoal brazier, no fewer than six old soldiers of theFirst Republic, with their uniforms torn and worn threadbare.Evidently they were of the _mauvais sujet_ class; their bleary eyesand limp jaws told plainly of a common love of absinthe; and theireyes had that haggard, worn look of slumbering ferocity which followshard in the wake of drink. The other side stood as of old, with itsshelves intact, save that they were cut to half their depth, and ineach shelf of which there were six, was a bed made with rags andstraw. The half-dozen of worthies who inhabited this structure lookedat me curiously as I passed; and when I looked back after going alittle way I saw their heads together in a whispered conference. I didnot like the look of this at all, for the place was very lonely, andthe men looked very, very villainous. However, I did not see any causefor fear, and went on my way, penetrating further and further into theSahara. The way was tortuous to a degree

, and from going round in aseries of semi-circles, as one goes in skating with the Dutch roll, Igot rather confused with regard to the points of the compass.

When I had penetrated a little way I saw, as I turned the corner of ahalf-made heap, sitting on a heap of straw an old soldier withthreadbare coat.

'Hallo!' said I to myself; 'the First Republic is well representedhere in its soldiery.'

As I passed him the old man never even looked up at me, but gazed onthe ground with stolid persistency. Again I remarked to myself: 'Seewhat a life of rude warfare can do! This old man's curiosity is athing of the past.'

When I had gone a few steps, however, I looked back suddenly, and sawthat curiosity was not dead, for the veteran had raised his head andwas regarding me with a very queer expression. He seemed to me to lookvery like one of the six worthies in the press. When he saw me lookinghe dropped his head; and without thinking further of him I went on myway, satisfied that there was a strange likeness between these oldwarriors.

Presently I met another old soldier in a similar manner. He, too, didnot notice me whilst I was passing.

By this time it was getting late in the afternoon, and I began tothink of retracing my steps. Accordingly I turned to go back, butcould see a number of tracks leading between different mounds andcould not ascertain which of them I should take. In my perplexity Iwanted to see someone of whom to ask the way, but could see no one. Idetermined to go on a few mounds further and so try to seesomeone--not a veteran.

I gained my object, for after going a couple of hundred yards I sawbefore me a single shanty such as I had seen before--with, however,the difference that this was not one for living in, but merely a roofwith three walls open in front. From the evidences which theneighbourhood exhibited I took it to be a place for sorting. Within itwas an old woman wrinkled and bent with age; I approached her to askthe way.

She rose as I came close and I asked her my way. She immediatelycommenced a conversation; and it occurred to me that here in the verycentre of the Kingdom of Dust was the place to gather details of thehistory of Parisian rag-picking--particularly as I could do so fromthe lips of one who looked like the oldest inhabitant.

I began my inquiries, and the old woman gave me most interestinganswers--she had been one of the ceteuces who sat daily before theguillotine and had taken an active part among the women who signalisedthemselves by their violence in the revolution. While we were talkingshe said suddenly: 'But m'sieur must be tired standing,' and dusted arickety old stool for me to sit down. I hardly liked to do so for manyreasons; but the poor old woman was so civil that I did not like torun the risk of hurting her by refusing, and moreover the conversationof one who had been at the taking of the Bastille was so interestingthat I sat down and so our conversation went on.

While we were talking an old man--older and more bent and wrinkledeven than the woman--appeared from behind the shanty. 'Here isPierre,' said she. 'M'sieur can hear stories now if he wishes, forPierre was in everything, from the Bastille to Waterloo.' The old mantook another stool at my request and we plunged into a sea ofrevolutionary reminiscences. This old man, albeit clothed like ascarecrow, was like any one of the six veterans.

I was now sitting in the centre of the low hut with the woman on myleft hand and the man on my right, each of them being somewhat infront of me. The place was full of all sorts of curious objects oflumber, and of many things that I wished far away. In one corner was aheap of rags which seemed to move from the number of vermin itcontained, and in the other a heap of bones whose odour was somethingshocking. Every now and then, glancing at the heaps, I could see thegleaming eyes of some of the rats which infested the place. Theseloathsome objects were bad enough, but what looked even more dreadfulwas an old butcher's axe with an iron handle stained with clots ofblood leaning up against the wall on the right hand side. Still, thesethings did not give me much concern. The talk of the two old peoplewas so fascinating that I

stayed on and on, till the evening came andthe dust heaps threw dark shadows over the vales between them.

After a time I began to grow uneasy. I could not tell how or why, butsomehow I did not feel satisfied. Uneasiness is an instinct and meanswarning. The psychic faculties are often the sentries of theintellect, and when they sound alarm the reason begins to act,although perhaps not consciously.

This was so with me. I began to bethink me where I was and by whatsurrounded, and to wonder how I should fare in case I should beattacked; and then the thought suddenly burst upon me, althoughwithout any overt cause, that I was in danger. Prudence whispered: 'Bestill and make no sign,' and so I was still and made no sign, for Iknew that four cunning eyes were on me. 'Four eyes--if not more.' MyGod, what a horrible thought! The whole shanty might be surrounded onthree sides with villains! I might be in the midst of a band of suchdesperadoes as only half a century of periodic revolution can produce.

With a sense of danger my intellect and observation quickened, and Igrew more watchful than was my wont. I noticed that the old woman'seyes were constantly wandering towards my hands. I looked at them too,and saw the cause--my rings. On my left little finger I had a largesignet and on the right a good diamond.

I thought that if there was any danger my first care was to avertsuspicion. Accordingly I began to work the conversation round torag-picking--to the drains--of the things found there; and so by easystages to jewels. Then, seizing a favourable opportunity, I asked theold woman if she knew anything of such things. She answered that shedid, a little. I held out my right hand, and, showing her the diamond,asked her what she thought of that. She answered that her eyes werebad, and stooped over my hand. I said as nonchalantly as I could:'Pardon me! You will see better thus!' and taking it off handed it toher. An unholy light came into her withered old face, as she touchedit. She stole one glance at me swift and keen as a flash of

lightning.

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She bent over the ring for a moment, her face quite concealed asthough examining it. The old man looked straight out of the front ofthe shanty before him, at the same time fumbling in his pockets andproducing a screw of tobacco in a paper and a pipe, which he proceededto fill. I took advantage of the pause and the momentary rest from thesearching eyes on my face to look carefully round the place, now dimand shadowy in the gloaming. There still lay all the heaps of variedreeking foulness; there the terrible blood-stained axe leaning againstthe wall in the right hand corner, and everywhere, despite the gloom,the baleful glitter of the eyes of the rats. I could see them eventhrough some of the chinks of the boards at the back low down close tothe ground. But stay! these latter eyes seemed more than usually largeand bright and baleful!

For an instant my heart stood still, and I felt in that whirlingcondition of mind in which one feels a sort of spiritual drunkenness,and as though the body is only maintained erect in that there is notime for it to fall before recovery. Then, in another second, I wascalm--coldly calm, with all my energies in full vigour, with aself-control which I felt to be perfect and with all my feeling andinstincts alert.

Now I knew the full extent of my danger: I was watched and surroundedby desperate people! I could not even guess at how many of them werelying there on the ground behind the shanty, waiting for the moment tostrike. I knew that I was big and strong, and they knew it, too. Theyknew also, as I did, that I was an Englishman and would make a fightfor it; and so we waited. I had, I felt, gained an advantage in thelast few seconds, for I knew my danger and understood the situation.Now, I thought, is the test of my courage--the enduring test: thefighting test may come later!

The old woman raised her head and said to me in a satisfied kind ofway:

'A very fine ring, indeed--a beautiful ring! Oh, me! I once had suchrings, plenty of them, and bracelets and earrings! Oh! for in thosefine days I led the town a dance! But they've forgotten me now!They've forgotten me! They? Why they never heard of me! Perhaps theirgrandfathers remember me, some of them!' and she laughed a harsh,croaking laugh. And then I am bound to say that she astonished me, forshe handed me back the ring with a

certain suggestion of old-fashionedgrace which was not without its pathos.

The old man eyed her with a sort of sudden ferocity, half rising fromhis stool, and said to me suddenly and hoarsely:

'Let me see!'

I was about to hand the ring when the old woman said:

'No! no, do not give it to Pierre! Pierre is eccentric. He losesthings; and such a pretty ring!'

'Cat!' said the old man, savagely. Suddenly the old woman said, rathermore loudly than was necessary:

'Wait! I shall tell you something about a ring.' There was somethingin the sound of her voice that jarred upon me. Perhaps it was myhyper-sensitiveness, wrought up as I was to such a pitch of nervousexcitement, but I seemed to think that she was not addressing me. As Istole a glance round the place I saw the eyes of the rats in the boneheaps, but missed the eyes along the back. But even as I looked I sawthem again appear. The old woman's 'Wait!' had given me a respite fromattack, and the men had sunk back to their reclining posture.

'I once lost a ring--a beautiful diamond hoop that had belonged to aqueen, and which

was given to me by a farmer of the taxes, whoafterwards cut his throat because I sent him away. I thought it musthave been stolen, and taxed my people; but I could get no trace. Thepolice came and suggested that it had found its way to the drain. Wedescended--I in my fine clothes, for I would not trust them with mybeautiful ring! I know more of the drains since then, and of rats,too! but I shall never forget the horror of that place--alive withblazing eyes, a wall of them just outside the light of our torches.Well, we got beneath my house. We searched the outlet of the drain,and there in the filth found my ring, and we came out.

'But we found something else also before we came! As we were comingtoward the opening a lot of sewer rats--human ones this time--cametowards us. They told the police that one of their number had goneinto the drain, but had not returned. He had gone in only shortlybefore we had, and, if lost, could hardly be far off. They asked helpto seek him, so we turned back. They tried to prevent me going, but Iinsisted. It was a new excitement, and had I not recovered my ring?Not far did we go till we came on something. There was but littlewater, and the bottom of the drain was raised with brick, rubbish, andmuch matter of the kind. He had made a fight for it, even when historch had gone out. But they were too many for him! They had not beenlong about it! The bones were still warm; but they were picked clean.They had even eaten their own dead ones and there were bones of ratsas well as of the man. They took it cool enough those other--the humanones--and joked of their comrade when they found him dead, though theywould have helped him living. Bah! what matters it--life or death?'

'And had you no fear?' I asked her.

'Fear!' she said with a laugh. 'Me have fear? Ask Pierre! But I wasyounger then, and, as I came through that horrible drain with its wallof greedy eyes, always moving with the circle of the light from thetorches, I did not feel easy. I kept on before the men, though! It isa way I have! I never let the men get it before me. All I want is achance and a means! And they ate him up--took every trace away exceptthe bones; and no

one knew it, nor no sound of him was ever heard!'Here she broke into a chuckling fit of the ghastliest merriment whichit was ever my lot to hear and see. A great poetess describes herheroine singing: 'Oh! to see or hear her singing! Scarce I know whichis the divinest.'

And I can apply the same idea to the old crone--in all save thedivinity, for I scarce could tell which was the most hellish--theharsh, malicious, satisfied, cruel laugh, or the leering grin, and thehorrible square opening of the mouth like a tragic mask, and theyellow gleam of the few discoloured teeth in the shapeless gums. Inthat laugh and with that grin and the chuckling satisfaction I knew aswell as if it had been spoken to me in words of thunder that my murderwas settled, and the murderers only bided the proper time for itsaccomplishment. I could read between the lines of her gruesome storythe commands to her accomplices. 'Wait,' she seemed to say, 'bide yourtime. I shall strike the first blow. Find the weapon for me, and Ishall make the opportunity! He shall not escape! Keep him quiet, andthen no one will be wiser. There will be no outcry, and the rats willdo their work!'

It was growing darker and darker; the night was coming. I stole aglance round the shanty, still all the same! The bloody axe in thecorner, the heaps of filth, and the eyes on the bone heaps and in thecrannies of the floor.

Pierre had been still ostensibly filling his pipe; he now struck alight and began to puff away at it. The old woman said:

'Dear heart, how dark it is! Pierre, like a good lad, light the lamp!'

Pierre got up and with the lighted match in his hand touched the wickof a lamp which hung at one side of the entrance to the shanty, andwhich had a reflector that threw the light all over the place. It wasevidently that which was used for their sorting at night.

'Not that, stupid! Not that! the lantern!' she called out to him.

He immediately blew it out, saying: 'All right, mother I'll find it,'and he hustled about the left corner of the room--the old woman sayingthrough the darkness:

'The lantern! the lantern! Oh! That is the light that is most useful tous poor folks. The lantern was the friend of the revolution! It is thefriend of the chiffonier! It helps us when all else fails.'

Hardly had she said the word when there was a kind of creaking of thewhole place, and something was steadily dragged over the roof.

Again I seemed to read between the lines of her words. I knew thelesson of the lantern.

'One of you get on the roof with a noose and strangle him as he passesout if we fail within.'

As I looked out of the opening I saw the loop of a rope outlined blackagainst the lurid sky. I was now, indeed, beset!

Pierre was not long in finding the lantern. I kept my eyes fixedthrough the darkness on the old woman. Pierre struck his light, and byits flash I saw the old woman raise from the ground beside her whereit had mysteriously appeared, and then hide in the folds of her gown,a long sharp knife or dagger. It seemed to be like a butcher'ssharpening iron fined to a keen point.

The lantern was lit.

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'Bring it here, Pierre,' she said. 'Place it in the doorway where wecan see it. See how nice it is! It shuts out the darkness from us; itis just right!'

Just right for her and her purposes! It threw all its light on myface, leaving in gloom the faces of both Pierre and the woman, who satoutside of me on each side.

I felt that the time of action was approaching, but I knew now thatthe first signal and movement would come from the woman, and sowatched her.

I was all unarmed, but I had made up my mind what to do. At the firstmovement I would seize the butcher's axe in the right-hand corner andfight my way out. At least, I would die hard. I stole a glance roundto fix its exact locality so that I could not fail to seize it at thefirst effort, for then, if ever, time and accuracy would be precious.

Good God! It was gone! All the horror of the situation burst upon me;but the bitterest thought of all was that if the issue of the terribleposition should be against me Alice would infallibly suffer. Eithershe would believe me false--and any lover, or any one who has everbeen one, can imagine the bitterness of the thought--or else she wouldgo on loving long after I had been lost to her and to the world, sothat her life would be broken and embittered, shattered withdisappointment and despair. The very magnitude of the pain braced meup and nerved me to bear the dread scrutiny of the plotters.

I think I did not betray myself. The old woman was watching me as acat does a mouse; she had her right hand hidden in the folds of hergown, clutching, I knew, that long, cruel-looking dagger. Had she seenany disappointment in my face she would, I felt, have known that themoment had come, and would have sprung on me like a

tigress, certainof taking me unprepared.

I looked out into the night, and there I saw new cause for danger.Before and around the hut were at a little distance some shadowyforms; they were quite still, but I knew that they were all alert andon guard. Small chance for me now in that direction.

Again I sto

le a glance round the place. In moments of great excitementand of great danger, which is excitement, the mind works very quickly,and the keenness of the faculties which depend on the mind grows inproportion. I now felt this. In an instant I took in the wholesituation. I saw that the axe had been taken through a small hole madein one of the rotten boards. How rotten they must be to allow of sucha thing being done without a particle of noise.

The hut was a regular murder-trap, and was guarded all around. Agarroter lay on the roof ready to entangle me with his noose if Ishould escape the dagger of the old hag. In front the way was guardedby I know not how many watchers. And at the back was a row ofdesperate men--I had seen their eyes still through the crack in theboards of the floor, when last I looked--as they lay prone waiting forthe signal to start erect. If it was to be ever, now for it!

As nonchalantly as I could I turned slightly on my stool so as to getmy right leg well under me. Then with a sudden jump, turning my head,and guarding it with my hands, and with the fighting instinct of theknights of old, I breathed my lady's name, and hurled myself againstthe back wall of the hut.

Watchful as they were, the suddenness of my movement surprised bothPierre and the old woman. As I crashed through the rotten timbers Isaw the old woman rise with a leap like a tiger and heard her low gaspof baffled rage. My feet lit on something that moved, and as I jumpedaway I knew that I had stepped on the back of one of the row

of menlying on their faces outside the hut. I was torn with nails andsplinters, but otherwise unhurt. Breathless I rushed up the mound infront of me, hearing as I went the dull crash of the shanty as itcollapsed into a mass.

It was a nightmare climb. The mound, though but low, was awfullysteep, and with each step I took the mass of dust and cinders toredown with me and gave way under my feet. The dust rose and choked me;it was sickening, foetid, awful; but my climb was, I felt, for life ordeath, and I struggled on. The seconds seemed hours; but the fewmoments I had in starting, combined with my youth and strength, gaveme a great advantage, and, though several forms struggled after me indeadly silence which was more dreadful than any sound, I easilyreached the top. Since then I have climbed the cone of Vesuvius, andas I struggled up that dreary steep amid the sulphurous fumes thememory of that awful night at Montrouge came back to me so vividlythat I almost grew faint.

The mound was one of the tallest in the region of dust, and as Istruggled to the top, panting for breath and with my heart beatinglike a sledge-hammer, I saw away to my left the dull red gleam of thesky, and nearer still the flashing of lights. Thank God! I knew whereI was now and where lay the road to Paris!

For two or three seconds I paused and looked back. My pursuers werestill well behind me, but struggling up resolutely, and in deadlysilence. Beyond, the shanty was a wreck--a mass of timber and movingforms. I could see it well, for flames were already bursting out; therags and straw had evidently caught fire from the lantern. Stillsilence there! Not a sound! These old wretches could die game, anyhow.

I had no time for more than a passing glance, for as I cast an eyeround the mound preparatory to making my descent I saw several darkforms rushing round on either side to cut me off on my way. It was nowa race for life. They were trying to head me on my way to Paris, andwith the instinct of the moment I dashed down to the right-hand side.I was just in time, for, though I came as it seemed to me down thesteep in a

few steps, the wary old men who were watching me turnedback, and one, as I rushed by into the opening between the two moundsin front, almost struck me a blow with that terrible butcher's axe.There could surely not be two such weapons about!

Then began a really horrible chase. I easily ran ahead of the old men,and even when some younger ones and a few women joined in the hunt Ieasily distanced them. But I did not know the way, and I could noteven guide myself by the light in the sky, for I was running away fromit. I had heard that, unless of conscious purpose, hunted men turnalways to the left, and so I found it now; and so, I suppose, knewalso my pursuers, who were more animals than men, and with cunning orinstinct had found out such secrets for themselves: for on finishinga quick spurt, after which I intended to take a moment's breathingspace, I suddenly saw ahead of me two or three forms swiftly passingbehind a mound to the right.

I was in the spider's web now indeed! But with the thought of this newdanger came the resource of the hunted, and so I darted down the nextturning to the right. I continued in this direction for some hundredyards, and then, making a turn to the left again, felt certain that Ihad, at any rate, avoided the danger of being surrounded.

But not of pursuit, for on came the rabble after me, steady, dogged,relentless, and still in grim silence.

In the greater darkness the mounds seemed now to be somewhat smallerthan before, although--for the night was closing--they looked biggerin proportion. I was now well ahead of my pursuers, so I made a dartup the mound in front.

Oh joy of joys! I was close to the edge of this inferno of dustheaps.Away behind me the red light of Paris was in the sky, and towering upbehind rose the heights of Montmarte--a dim light, with here and therebrilliant points like stars.

Restored to vigour in a moment, I ran over the few remaining mounds ofdecreasing

size, and found myself on the level land beyond. Even then,however, the prospect was not inviting. All before me was dark anddismal, and I had evidently come on one of those dank, low-lying wasteplaces which are found here and there in the neighbourhood of greatcities. Places of waste and desolation, where the space is requiredfor the ultimate agglomeration of all that is noxious, and the groundis so poor as to create no desire of occupancy even in the lowestsquatter. With eyes accustomed to the gloom of the evening, and awaynow from the shadows of those dreadful dustheaps, I could see muchmore easily than I could a little while ago. It might have been, ofcourse, that the glare in the sky of the lights of Paris, though thecity was some miles away, was reflected here. Howsoever it was, I sawwell enough to take bearings for certainly some little distance aroundme.

In front was a bleak, flat waste that seemed almost dead level, withhere and there the dark shimmering of stagnant pools. Seemingly faroff on the right, amid a small cluster of scattered lights, rose adark mass of Fort Montrouge, and away to the left in the dim distance,pointed with stray gleams from cottage windows, the lights in the skyshowed the locality of Bicetre. A moment's thought decided me to taketo the right and try to reach Montrouge. There at least would be somesort of safety, and I might possibly long before come on some of thecross roads which I knew. Somewhere, not far off, must lie thestrategic road made to connect the outlying chain of forts circlingthe city.

Then I looked back. Coming over the mounds, and outlined black againstthe glare of the Parisian horizon, I saw several moving figures, andstill a way to the right several more deploying out between me and mydestination. They evidently meant to cut me off in this direction, andso my choice became constricted; it lay now between going straightahead or turning to the left. Stooping to the ground, so as to get theadvantage of the horizon as a line of sight, I looked carefully inthis direction, but could detect no sign of my enemies. I argued thatas they had not guarded or were not trying to guard that point, therewas evidently danger to me there already. So I made up my mind to gostraight on before me.

It was not an inviting prospect, and as I went on the reality grewworse. The ground became soft and oozy, and now and again gave waybeneath me in a sickening kind of way. I seemed somehow to be goingdown, for I saw round me places seemingly more elevated than where Iwas, and this in a place which from a little way back seemed deadlevel. I looked around, but could see none of my pursuers. This wasstrange, for all along these birds of the night had followed methrough the darkness as well as though it was broad daylight. How Iblamed myself for coming out in my light-coloured tourist suit oftweed. The silence, and my not being able to see my enemies, whilst Ifelt that they were watching me, grew appalling, and in the hope ofsome one not of this ghastly crew hearing me I raised my voice andshouted several times. There was not the slighte

st response; not evenan echo rewarded my efforts. For a while I stood stock still and keptmy eyes in one direction. On one of the rising places around me I sawsomething dark move along, then another, and another. This was to myleft, and seemingly moving to head me off.

I thought that again I might with my skill as a runner elude myenemies at this game, and so with all my speed darted forward.

Splash!

My feet had given way in a mass of slimy rubbish, and I had fallenheadlong into a reeking, stagnant pool. The water and the mud in whichmy arms sank up to the elbows was filthy and nauseous beyonddescription, and in the suddenness of my fall I had actually swallowedsome of the filthy stuff, which nearly choked me, and made me gaspfor breath. Never shall I forget the moments during which I stoodtrying to recover myself almost fainting from the foetid odour of thefilthy pool, whose white mist rose ghostlike around. Worst of all,with the acute despair of the hunted animal when he sees the pursuingpack closing on him, I saw before my eyes whilst I stood helpless thedark forms of my pursuers moving swiftly to surround me.

It is curious how our minds work on odd matters even when the energiesof thought are seemingly concentrated on some terrible and pressingneed. I was in momentary peril of my life: my safety depended on myaction, and my choice of alternatives coming now with almost everystep I took, and yet I could not but think of the strange doggedpersistency of these old men. Their silent resolution, theirsteadfast, grim, persistency even in such a cause commanded, as wellas fear, even a measure of respect. What must they have been in thevigour of their youth. I could understand now that whirlwind rush onthe bridge of Arcola, that scornful exclamation of the Old Guard atWaterloo! Unconscious cerebration has its own pleasures, even at suchmoments; but fortunately it does not in any way clash with the thoughtfrom which action springs.

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I realised at a glance that so far I was defeated in my object, myenemies as yet had won. They had succeeded in surrounding me on threesides, and were bent on driving me off to the left-hand, where therewas already some danger for me, for they had left no guard. I acceptedthe alternative--it was a case of Hobson's choice and run. I had tokeep the lower ground, for my pursuers were on the higher places.However, though the ooze and broken ground impeded me my youth andtraining made me able to hold my ground, and by keeping a diagonalline I not only kept them from gaining on me but even began todistance them. This gave me new heart and strength, and by this timehabitual training was beginning to tell and my second wind had come.Before me the ground rose slightly. I rushed up the slope and foundbefore me a waste of watery slime, with a low dyke or bank lookingblack and grim beyond. I felt that if I could but reach that dyke insafety I could there, with solid ground under my feet and some kind ofpath to guide me, find with comparative ease a way out of my troubles.After a glance right and left and seeing no one near, I kept my eyesfor a few minutes to their rightful work of aiding my feet whilst Icrossed the swamp. It was rough, hard work, but there was littledanger, merely toil; and a short time took me to the dyke. I rushed upthe slope exulting; but here again I met a new shock. On either sideof me rose a number of crouching figures. From right and left theyrushed at me. Each body held a rope.

The cordon was nearly complete. I could pass on neither side, and theend was near.

There was only one chance, and I took it. I hurled myself across thedyke, and escaping out of the very clutches of my foes threw myselfinto the stream.

At any other time I should have thought that water foul and filthy,but now it was as welcome as the most crystal stream to the parchedtraveller. It was a highway of

safety!

My pursuers rushed after me. Had only one of them held the rope itwould have been all up with me, for he could have entangled me beforeI had time to swim a stroke; but the many hands holding it embarrassedand delayed them, and when the rope struck the water I heard thesplash well behind me. A few minutes' hard swimming took me acrossthe stream. Refreshed with the immersion and encouraged by the escape,I climbed the dyke in comparative gaiety of spirits.

From the top I looked back. Through the darkness I saw my assailantsscattering up and down along the dyke. The pursuit was evidently notended, and again I had to choose my course. Beyond the dyke where Istood was a wild, swampy space very similar to that which I hadcrossed. I determined to shun such a place, and thought for a momentwhether I would take up or down the dyke. I thought I heard asound--the muffled sound of oars, so I listened, and then shouted.

No response; but the sound ceased. My enemies had evidently got a boatof some kind. As they were on the up side of me I took the down pathand began to run. As I passed to the left of where I had entered thewater I heard several splashes, soft and stealthy, like the sound arat makes as he plunges into the stream, but vastly greater; and as Ilooked I saw the dark sheen of the water broken by the ripples ofseveral advancing heads. Some of my enemies were swimming the streamalso.

And now behind me, up the stream, the silence was broken by the quickrattle and creak of oars; my enemies were in hot pursuit. I put mybest leg foremost and ran on. After a break of a couple of minutes Ilooked back, and by a gleam of light through the ragged clouds I sawseveral dark forms climbing the bank behind me. The wind had now begunto rise, and the water beside me was ruffled and beginning to break intiny waves on the bank. I had to keep my eyes pretty well on theground before me, lest I should stumble, for I knew that to stumblewas death. After a few minutes I looked back behind me. On the dykewere only a few dark figures, but crossing the

waste, swampy groundwere many more. What new danger this portended I did not know--couldonly guess. Then as I ran it seemed to me that my track kept eversloping away to the right. I looked up ahead and saw that the riverwas much wider than before, and that the dyke on which I stood fellquite away, and beyond it was another stream on whose near bank I sawsome of the dark forms now across the marsh. I was on an island ofsome kind.

My situation was now indeed terrible, for my enemies had hemmed me inon every side. Behind came the quickening roll of the oars, as thoughmy pursuers knew that the end was close. Around me on every side wasdesolation; there was not a roof or light, as far as I could see. Faroff to the right rose some dark mass, but what it was I knew not. Fora moment I paused to think what I should do, not for more, for mypursuers were drawing closer. Then my mind was made up. I slipped downthe bank and took to the water. I struck out straight ahead so as togain the current by clearing the backwater of the island, for such Ipresume it was, when I had passed into the stream. I waited till acloud came driving across the moon and leaving all in darkness. Then Itook off my hat and laid it softly on the water floating with thestream, and a second after dived to the right and struck out underwater with all my might. I was, I suppose, half a minute under water,and when I rose came up as softly as I could, and turning, lookedback. There went my light brown hat floating merrily away. Closebehind it came a rickety old boat, driven furiously by a pair of oars.The moon was still partly obscured by the drifting clouds, but in thepartial light I could see a man in the bows holding aloft ready tostrike what appeared to me to be that same dreadful pole-axe which Ihad before escaped. As I looked the boat drew closer, closer, and theman struck savagely. The hat disappeared. The man fell forward, almostout of the boat. His comrades dragged him in but without the axe, andthen as I turned with all my energies bent on reaching the furtherbank, I heard the fierce whirr of the muttered 'Sacre!' which markedthe anger of my baffled pursuers.

That was the first sound I had heard from human lips during all thisdreadful chase, and full as it was of menace and danger to me it was awelcome sound for it broke that

awful silence which shrouded andappalled me. It was as though an overt sign that my opponents were menand not ghosts, and that with them I had, at least, the chance of aman, though but one against many.

But now that the spell of silence was broken the sounds came thick andfast. From boat to shore and back from shore to boat came quickquestion and answer, all in the fiercest whispers. I looked back--afatal thing to do--for in the instant

someone caught sight of my face,which showed white on the dark water, and shouted. Hands pointed tome, and in a moment or two the boat was under weigh, and followinghard after me. I had but a little way to go, but quicker and quickercame the boat after me. A few more strokes and I would be on theshore, but I felt the oncoming of the boat, and expected each secondto feel the crash of an oar or other weapon on my head. Had I not seenthat dreadful axe disappear in the water I do not think that I couldhave won the shore. I heard the muttered curses of those not rowingand the laboured breath of the rowers. With one supreme effort forlife or liberty I touched the bank and sprang up it. There was not asingle second to spare, for hard behind me the boat grounded andseveral dark forms sprang after me. I gained the top of the dyke, andkeeping to the left ran on again. The boat put off and followed downthe stream. Seeing this I feared danger in this direction, and quicklyturning, ran down the dyke on the other side, and after passing ashort stretch of marshy ground gained a wild, open flat country andsped on.

Still behind me came on my relentless pursuers. Far away, below me, Isaw the same dark mass as before, but now grown closer and greater. Myheart gave a great thrill of delight, for I knew that it must be thefortress of Bicetre, and with new courage I ran on. I had heard thatbetween each and all of the protecting forts of Paris there arestrategic ways, deep sunk roads where soldiers marching should besheltered from an enemy. I knew that if I could gain this road I wouldbe safe, but in the darkness I could not see any sign of it, so, inblind hope of striking it, I ran on.

Presently I came to the edge of a deep cut, and found that down belowme ran a road guarded on each side by a ditch of water fenced oneither side by a straight, high wall.

Getting fainter and dizzier, I ran on; the ground got morebroken--more and more still, till I staggered and fell, and roseagain, and ran on in the blind anguish of the hunted. Again thethought of Alice nerved me. I would not be lost and wreck her life: Iwould fight and struggle for life to the bitter end. With a greateffort I caught the top of the wall. As, scrambling like a catamount,I drew myself up, I actually felt a hand touch the sole of my foot. Iwas now on a sort of causeway, and before me I saw a dim light. Blindand dizzy, I ran on, staggered, and fell, rising, covered with dustand blood.

'Halt la!'

The words sounded like a voice from heaven. A blaze of light seemed toenwrap me, and I shouted with joy.

'Qui va la?' The rattle of musketry, the flash of steel before myeyes. Instinctively I stopped, though close behind me came a rush ofmy pursuers.

Another word or two, and out from a gateway poured, as it seemed tome, a tide of red and blue, as the guard turned out. All around seemedblazing with light, and the flash of steel, the clink and rattle ofarms, and the loud, harsh voices of command. As I fell forward,utterly exhausted, a soldier caught me. I looked back in dreadfulexpectation, and saw the mass of dark forms disappearing into thenight. Then I must have fainted. When I recovered my senses I was inthe guard room. They gave me brandy, and after a while I was able totell them something of what had passed. Then a commissary of policeappeared, apparently out of the empty air, as is the way of theParisian police officer. He listened attentively, and then had amoment's consultation with the officer in command. Apparently theywere agreed, for they asked me if I were ready now to come with them.

'Where to?' I asked, rising to go.

'Back to the dust heaps. We shall, perhaps, catch them yet!'

'I shall try!' said I.

He eyed me for a moment keenly, and said suddenly:

'Would you like to wait a while or till tomorrow, young Englishman?'This touched me to the quick, as, perhaps, he intended, and I jumpedto my feet.

'Come now!' I said; 'now! now! An Englishman is always ready for hisduty!'

The commissary was a good fellow, as well as a shrewd one; he slappedmy shoulder kindly. 'Brave garcon!' he said. 'Forgive me, but I knewwhat would do you most good. The guard is ready. Come!'

And so, passing right through the guard room, and through a longvaulted passage, we were out into the night. A few of the men in fronthad powerful lanterns. Through courtyards and down a sloping way wepassed out through a low archway to a sunken road, the same that I hadseen in my flight. The order was given to get at the double, and witha quick, springing stride, half run, half walk, the soldiers wentswiftly along. I felt my strength renewed again--such is thedifference between hunter and hunted. A very short distance took us toa low-lying pontoon bridge across the stream, and evidently verylittle higher up than I had struck it. Some effort had evidently beenmade to damage it, for the ropes had all been cut, and one of thechains had been broken. I heard the officer say to the commissary:

'We are just in time! A few more minutes, and they would havedestroyed the bridge. Forward, quicker still!' and on we went. Againwe reached a pontoon on the winding stream; as we came up we heard thehollow boom of the metal drums as the efforts to

destroy the bridgewas again renewed. A word of command was given, and several men raisedtheir rifles.

'Fire!' A volley rang out. There was a muffled cry, and the dark formsdispersed. But the evil was done, and we saw the far end of thepontoon swing into the stream. This was a serious delay, and it wasnearly an hour before we had renewed ropes and restored the bridgesufficiently to allow us to cross.

We renewed the chase. Quicker, quicker we went towards the dustheaps.

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After a time we came to a place that I knew. There were the remains ofa fire--a few smouldering wood ashes still cast a red glow, but thebulk of the ashes were cold. I knew the site of the hut and the hillbehind it up which I had rushed, and in the flickering glow the eyesof the rats still shone with a sort of phosphorescence. The commissaryspoke a word to the officer, and he cried:

'Halt!'

The soldiers were ordered to spread around and watch, and then wecommenced to examine the ruins. The commissary himself began to liftaway the charred boards and rubbish. These the soldiers took and piledtogether. Presently he started back, then bent down and risingbeckoned me.

'See!' he said.

It was a gruesome sight. There lay a skeleton face downwards, a womanby the lines--an old woman by the coarse fibre of the bone. Betweenthe ribs rose a long spike-like dagger made from a butcher'ssharpening knife, its keen point buried in the spine.

'You will observe,' said the commissary to the officer and to me as hetook out his note book, 'that the woman must have fallen on herdagger. The rats are many here--see their eyes glistening among thatheap of bones--and you will also notice'--I shuddered as he placed hishand on the skeleton--'that but little time was lost by them, for thebones are scarcely cold!'

There was no other sign of any one near, living or dead; and sodeploying again into line the soldiers passed on. Presently we came tothe hut made of the old wardrobe.

We approached. In five of the sixcompartments was an old man sleeping--sleeping so soundly that eventhe glare of the lanterns did not wake them. Old and grim and grizzledthey looked, with their gaunt, wrinkled, bronzed faces and their whitemoustaches.

The officer called out harshly and loudly a word of command, and in aninstant each one of them was on his feet before us and standing at'attention!'

'What do you here?'

'We sleep,' was the answer.

'Where are the other chiffoniers?' asked the commissary.

'Gone to work.'

'And you?'

'We are on guard!'

'Peste!' laughed the officer grimly, as he looked at the old men oneafter the other in the face and added with cool deliberate cruelty:'Asleep on duty! Is this the manner of the Old Guard? No wonder, then,a Waterloo!'

By the gleam of the lantern I saw the grim old faces grow deadly pale,and almost shuddered at the look in the eyes of the old men as thelaugh of the soldiers echoed the grim pleasantry of the officer.

I felt in that moment that I was in some measure avenged.

For a moment they looked as if they would throw themselves on thetaunter, but years

of their life had schooled them

and they remainedstill.

'You are but five,' said the commissary; 'where is the sixth?' Theanswer came with a grim chuckle.

'He is there!' and the speaker pointed to the bottom of the wardrobe.'He died last night. You won't find much of him. The burial of therats is quick!'

The commissary stooped and looked in. Then he turned to the officerand said calmly:

'We may as well go back. No trace here now; nothing to prove that manwas the one wounded by your soldiers' bullets! Probably they murderedhim to cover up the trace. See!' again he stooped and placed his handson the skeleton. 'The rats work quickly and they are many. These bonesare warm!'

I shuddered, and so did many more of those around me.

'Form!' said the officer, and so in marching order, with the lanternsswinging in front and the manacled veterans in the midst, with steadytramp we took ourselves out of the dustheaps and turned backward tothe fortress of Bicetre.

* * * * *

My year of probation has long since ended, and Alice is my wife. Butwhen I look back upon that trying twelvemonth one of the most vividincidents that memory recalls is that associated with my visit to theCity of Dust.

A Dream of Red Hands

The first opinion given to me regarding Jacob Settle was a simpledescriptive statement, 'He's a down-in-the-mouth chap': but I foundthat it embodied the thoughts and ideas of all his fellow-workmen.There was in the phrase a certain easy tolerance, an absence ofpositive feeling of any kind, rather than any complete opinion, whichmarked pretty accurately the man's place in public esteem. Still,there was some dissimilarity between this and his appearance whichunconsciously set me thinking, and by degrees, as I saw more of theplace and the workmen, I came to have a special interest in him. Hewas, I found, for ever doing kindnesses, not involving money expensesbeyond his humble means, but in the manifold ways of forethought andforbearance and self-repression which are of the truer charities oflife. Women and children trusted him implicitly, though, strangelyenough, he rather shunned them, except when anyone was sick, and thenhe made his appearance to help if he could, timidly and awkwardly. Heled a very solitary life, keeping house by himself in a tiny cottage,or rather hut, of one room, far on the edge of the moorland. Hisexistence seemed so sad and solitary that I wished to cheer it up, andfor the purpose took the occasion when we had both been sitting upwith a child, injured by me through accident, to offer to lend himbooks. He gladly accepted, and as we parted in the grey of the dawn Ifelt that something of mutual confidence had been established betweenus.

The books were always most carefully and punctually returned, and intime Jacob Settle and I became quite friends. Once or twice as Icrossed the moorland on Sundays I looked in on him; but on suchoccasions he was shy and ill at ease so that I felt diffident aboutcalling to see him. He would never under any circumstances come intomy own lodgings.

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One Sunday afternoon, I was coming back from a long walk beyond themoor, and as I passed Settle's cottage stopped at the door to say 'Howdo you do?' to him. As the door was shut, I thought that he was out,and merely knocked for form's sake, or through habit, not expecting toget any answer. To my surprise, I heard a feeble voice from within,though what was said I could not hear. I entered at once, and foundJacob lying half-dressed upon his bed. He was as pale as death, andthe sweat was simply rolling off his face. His hands wereunconsciously gripping the bedclothes as a drowning man holds on towhatever he may grasp. As I came in he half arose, with a wild, huntedlook in his eyes, which were wide open and staring, as thoughsomething of horror had come before him; but when he recognised me hesank back on the couch with a smothered sob of relief and closed hiseyes. I stood by him for a while, quite a minute or two, while hegasped. Then he opened his eyes and looked at me, but with such adespairing, woeful expression that, as I am a living man, I would haverather seen that frozen look of horror. I sat down beside him andasked after his health. For a while he would not answer me except tosay that he was not ill; but then, after scrutinising me closely, hehalf arose on his elbow and said:

'I thank you kindly, sir, but I'm simply telling you the truth. I amnot ill, as men call it, though God knows whether there be not worsesicknesses than doctors know of. I'll tell you, as you are so kind,but I trust that you won't even mention such a thing to a living soul,for it might work me more and greater woe. I am suffering from a baddream.'

'A bad dream!' I said, hoping to cheer him; 'but dreams pass away withthe light--even with waking.' There I stopped, for before he spoke Isaw the answer in his desolate look round the little place.

'No! no! that's all well for people that live in comfort and withthose they love around them. It is a thousand times worse for thosewho live alone and have to do so. What cheer is there for me, wakinghere in the silence of the night, with the wide moor around me full ofvoices and full of faces that make my waking a worse dream than mysleep? Ah, young sir, you have no past that can send its legions topeople the darkness and the empty space, and I pray the good God thatyou may never have!' As he spoke, there was such an almostirresistible gravity of conviction in his manner that I abandoned myremonstrance about his solitary life. I felt that I was in thepresence of some secret influence which I could not fathom. To myrelief, for I knew not what to say, he went on:

'Two nights past have I dreamed it. It was hard enough the firstnight, but I came through it. Last night the expectation was in itselfalmost worse than the dream--until the dream came, and then it sweptaway every remembrance of lesser pain. I stayed awake till justbefore the dawn, and then it came again, and ever since I have been insuch an agony as I am sure the dying feel, and with it all the dreadof tonight.' Before he had got to the end of the sentence my mind wasmade up, and I felt that I could speak to him more cheerfully.

'Try and get to sleep early tonight--in fact, before the evening haspassed away. The sleep will refresh you, and I promise you there willnot be any bad dreams after tonight.' He shook his head hopelessly, soI sat a little longer and then left him.

When I got home I made my arrangements for the night, for I had madeup my mind to share Jacob Settle's lonely vigil in his cottage on themoor. I judged that if he got to sleep before sunset he would wakewell before midnight, and so, just as the bells of the city werestriking eleven, I stood opposite his door armed with a bag, in whichwere my supper, an extra large flask, a couple of candles, and a book.The moonlight was bright, and flooded the whole moor, till it wasalmost as light as day; but ever and anon black clouds drove acrossthe sky, and made a darkness which by comparison seemed almosttangible. I opened the door softly, and entered without

waking Jacob,who lay asleep with his white face upward. He was still, and againbathed in sweat. I tried to imagine what visions were passing beforethose closed eyes which could bring with them the misery and woe whichwere stamped on the face, but fancy failed me, and I waited for theawakening. It came suddenly, and in a fashion which touched me to thequick, for the hollow groan that broke from the man's white lips as hehalf arose and sank back was manifestly the realisation or completionof some train of thought which had gone before.

'If this be dreaming,' said I to myself, 'then it must be based onsome very terrible reality. What can have been that unhappy fact thathe spoke of?'

While I thus spoke, he realised that I was with him. It struck me asstrange that he had no period of that doubt as to whether dream orreality surrounded him which commonly marks an expected environment ofwaking men. With a positive cry of joy, he seized my hand and held itin his two wet, trembling hands, as a frightened child clings on tosomeone whom it loves. I tried to soothe him:

'There, there! it is all right. I have come to stay with you tonight,and together we will try to fight this evil dream.' He let go my handsuddenly, and sank back on his bed and covered his eyes with hishands.

'Fight it?--the evil dream! Ah! no, sir, no! No mortal power can fightthat dream, for it comes from God--and is burned in here;' and he beatupon his forehead. Then he went on:

'It is the same dream, ever the same, and yet it grows in its power totorture me every time it comes.'

'What is the dream?' I asked, thinking that the speaking of it mightgive him some relief, but he shrank away from me, and after a longpause said:

'No, I had better not tell it. It may not come again.'

There was manifestly something to conceal from me--something that laybehind the dream, so I answered:

'All right. I hope you have seen the last of it. But if it should comeagain, you will tell me, will you not? I ask, not out of curiosity,but because I think it may relieve you to speak.' He answered withwhat I thought was almost an undue amount of solemnity:

'If it comes again, I shall tell you all.'

Then I tried to get his mind away from the subject to more mundanethings, so I produced supper, and made him share it with me, includingthe contents of the flask. After a little he braced up, and when I litmy cigar, having given him another, we smoked a full hour, and talkedof many things. Little by little the comfort of his body stole overhis mind, and I could see sleep laying her gentle hands on hiseyelids. He felt it, too, and told me that now he felt all right, andI might safely leave him; but I told him that, ri

ght or wrong, I wasgoing to see in the daylight. So I lit my other candle, and began toread as he fell asleep.

By degrees I got interested in my book, so interested that presently Iwas startled by its dropping out of my hands. I looked and saw thatJacob was still asleep, and I was rejoiced to see that there was onhis face a look of unwonted happiness, while his lips seemed to movewith unspoken words. Then I turned to my work again, and again woke,but this time to feel chilled to my very marrow by hearing the voicefrom the bed beside me:

'Not with those red hands! Never! never!' On looking at him, I foundthat he was still asleep. He woke, however, in an instant, and did notseem surprised to see me; there

was again that strange apathy as tohis surroundings. Then I said:

'Settle, tell me your dream. You may speak freely, for I shall holdyour confidence sacred. While we both live I shall never mention whatyou may choose to tell me.'

He replied:

'I said I would; but I had better tell you first what goes before thedream, that you may understand. I was a schoolmaster when I was a veryyoung man; it was only a parish school in a little village in theWest Country. No need to mention any names. Better not. I was engagedto be married to a young girl whom I loved and almost reverenced. Itwas the old story. While we were waiting for the time when we couldafford to set up house together, another man came along. He was nearlyas young as I was, and handsome, and a gentleman, with all agentleman's attractive ways for a woman of our class. He would gofishing, and she would meet him while I was at my work in school. Ireasoned with her and implored her to give him up. I offered to getmarried at once and go away and begin the world in a strange country;but she would not listen to anything I could say, and I could see thatshe was infatuated with him. Then I took it on myself to meet the manand ask him to deal well with the girl, for I thought he might meanhonestly by her, so that there might be no talk or chance of talk onthe part of others. I went where I should meet him with none by, andwe met!' Here Jacob Settle had to pause, for something seemed to risein his throat, and he almost gasped for breath. Then he went on:

'Sir, as God is above us, there was no selfish thought in my heartthat day, I loved my pretty Mabel too well to be content with a partof her love, and I had thought of my own unhappiness too often not tohave come to realise that, whatever might come to her, my hope wasgone. He was insolent to me--you, sir, who are a gentleman, cannotknow, perhaps, how galling can be the insolence of one who is aboveyou in station--but I bore with that. I implored him to deal well withthe girl, for what might be only a pastime of an idle hour with himmight be the breaking of her heart. For I

never had a thought of hertruth, or that the worst of harm could come to her--it was only theunhappiness to her heart I feared. But when I asked him when heintended to marry her his laughter galled me so that I lost my temperand told him that I would not stand by and see her life made unhappy.Then he grew angry too, and in his anger said such cruel things of herthat then and there I swore he should not live to do her harm. Godknows how it came about, for in such moments of passion it is hard toremember the steps from a word to a blow, but I found myself standingover his dead body, with my hands crimson with the blood that welledfrom his torn throat. We were alone and he was a stranger, with noneof his kin to seek for him and murder does not always out--not all atonce. His bones may be whitening still, for all I know, in the pool ofthe river where I left him. No one suspected his absence, or why itwas, except my poor Mabel, and she dared not speak. But it was all invain, for when I came back again after an absence of months--for Icould not live in the place--I learned that her shame had come andthat she had died in it. Hitherto I had been borne up by the thoughtthat my ill deed had saved her future, but now, when I learned that Ihad been too late, and that my poor love was smirched with that man'ssin, I fled away with the sense of my useless guilt upon me moreheavily than I could bear. Ah! sir, you that have not done such a sindon't know what it is to carry it with you. You may think that custommakes it easy to you, but it is not so. It grows and grows with everyhour, till it becomes intolerable, and with it growing, too, thefeeling that you must for ever stand outside Heaven. You don't knowwhat that means, and I pray God that you never may. Ordinary men, towhom all things are possible, don't often, if ever, think of Heaven.It is a name, and nothing more, and they are content to wait and letthings be, but to those who are doomed to be shut out for ever youcannot think what it means, you cannot guess or measure the terribleendless longing to see the gates opened, and to be able to join thewhite figures within.

'And this brings me to my dream. It seemed that the portal was beforeme, with great gates of massive steel with bars of the thickness of amast, rising to the very clouds, and so close that between them wasjust a glimpse of a crystal grotto, on whose shining walls werefigured many white-clad forms with faces radiant with joy. When

Istood before the gate my heart and my soul were so full of rapture andlonging that I forgot. And there stood at the gate two mighty angelswith sweeping wings, and, oh! so stern of countenance. They held eachin one hand a flaming sword, and in the other the latchet, which movedto and fro at their lightest touch. Nearer were figures all draped inblack, with heads covered so that only the eyes were seen, and theyhanded to each who came white garments such as the angels wear. A lowmurmur came that told that all should put on their own robes, andwithout soil, or the angels would not pass them in, but would smitethem down with the flaming swords. I was eager to don my own garment,and hurriedly threw it over me and stepped swiftly to the gate; but itmoved not, and the angels, loosing the latchet, pointed to my dress, Ilooked down, and was aghast, for the whole robe was smeared withblood. My hands were red; they glittered with the blood that drippedfrom them as on that day by the river bank. And then the angels raisedtheir flaming swords to smite me down, and the horror was complete--Iawoke. Again, and again, and again, that awful dream comes to me. Inever learn from the experience, I never remember, but at thebeginning the hope is ever there to make the end more appalling; and Iknow that the dream does not come out of the common darkness where thedreams abide, but that it is sent from God as a punishment! Never,never shall I be able to pass the gate, for the soil on the angelgarments must ever come from these bloody hands!'

I listened as in a spell as Jacob Settle spoke. There was something sofar away in the tone of his voice--something so dreamy and mystic inthe eyes that looked as if through me at some spirit beyond--somethingso lofty in his very diction and in such marked contrast to hisworkworn clothes and his poor surroundings that I wondered if thewhole thing were not a dream.

We were both silent for a long time. I kept looking at the man beforeme in growing wonderment. Now that his confession had been made, hissoul, which had been crushed to the very earth, seemed to leap backagain to uprightness with some resilient force. I suppose I ought tohave been horrified with his story, but, strange to say, I was not. Itcertainly is not pleasant to be made the recipient of the confidenceof a

murderer, but this poor fellow seemed to have had, not only somuch provocation, but so much self-denying purpose in his deed ofblood that I did not feel called upon to pass judgment upon him. Mypurpose was to comfort, so I spoke out with what calmness I could, formy heart was beating fast and heavily:

'You need not despair, Jacob Settle. God is very good, and His mercyis great. Live on and work on in the hope that some day you may feelthat you have atoned for the past.' Here I paused, for I could seethat deep, natural sleep this time, was creeping upon him. 'Go tosleep,' I said; 'I shall watch with you here and we shall have no moreevil dreams tonight.'

He made an effort to pull himself together, and answered:

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'I don't know how to thank you for your goodness to me this night, butI think you had best leave me now. I'll try and sleep this out; I feela weight off my mind since I have told you all. If there's anything ofthe man left in me, I must try and fight out life alone.'

'I'll go tonight, as you wish it,' I said; 'but take my advice, and donot live in such a solitary way. Go among men and women; live amongthem. S

hare their joys and sorrows, and it will help you to forget.This solitude will make you melancholy mad.'

'I will!' he answered, half unconsciously, for sleep was overmasteringhim.

I turned to go, and he looked after me. When I had touched the latch Idropped it, and, coming back to the bed, held out my hand. He graspedit with both his as he rose to a sitting posture, and I said mygoodnight, trying to cheer him:

'Heart, man, heart! There is work in the world for you to do, JacobSettle. You can wear those white robes yet and pass through that gateof steel!'

Then I left him.

A week after I found his cottage deserted, and on asking at the workswas told that he had 'gone north', no one exactly knew whither.

Two years afterwards, I was staying for a few days with my friend Dr.Munro in Glasgow. He was a busy man, and could not spare much time forgoing about with

me, so I spent my days in excursions to the Trossachsand Loch Katrine and down the Clyde. On the second last evening of mystay I came back somewhat later than I had arranged, but found thatmy host was late too. The maid told me that he had been sent for tothe hospital--a case of accident at the gas-works, and the dinner waspostponed an hour; so telling her I would stroll down to find hermaster and walk back with him, I went out. At the hospital I found himwashing his hands preparatory to starting for home. Casually, I askedhim what his case was.

'Oh, the usual thing! A rotten rope and men's lives of no account. Twomen were working in a gasometer, when the rope that held theirscaffolding broke. It must have occurred just before the dinner hour,for no one noticed their absence till the men had returned. There wasabout seven feet of water in the gasometer, so they had a hard fightfor it, poor fellows. However, one of them was alive, just alive, butwe have had a hard job to pull him through. It seems that he owes hislife to his mate, for I have never heard of greater heroism. They swamtogether while their strength lasted, but at the end they were so doneup that even the lights above, and the men slung with ropes, comingdown to help them, could not keep them up. But one of them stood onthe bottom and held up his comrade over his head, and those fewbreaths made all the difference between life and death. They were ashocking sight when they were taken out, for that water is like apurple dye with the gas and the tar. The man upstairs looked as if hehad been washed in blood. Ugh!'

'And the other?'

'Oh, he's worse still. But he must have been a very noble fellow. Thatstruggle under the water must have been fearful; one can see that bythe way the blood has been drawn from the extremities. It makes theidea of the _Stigmata_ possible to look at him. Resolution like thiscould, you would think, do anything in the world. Ay! it might almostunbar the gates of Heaven. Look here, old man, it is not a verypleasant sight, especially just before dinner, but you are a writer,and this is an odd case. Here is something you would not like to miss,for in all human probability you will never

see anything like itagain.' While he was speaking he had brought me into the mortuary ofthe hospital.

On the bier lay a body covered with a white sheet, which was wrappedclose round it.

'Looks like a chrysalis, don't it? I say, Jack, if there be anythingin the old myth that a soul is typified by a butterfly, well, then theone that this chrysalis sent forth was a very noble specimen and tookall the sunlight on its wings. See here!' He uncovered the face.Horrible, indeed, it looked, as though stained with blood. But I knewhim at once, Jacob Settle! My friend pulled the winding sheet furtherdown.

The hands were crossed on the purple breast as they had beenreverently placed by some tender-hearted person. As I saw them myheart throbbed with a great exultation, for the memory of hisharrowing dream rushed across my mind. There was no stain now on thosepoor, brave hands, for they were blanched white as snow.

And somehow as I looked I felt that the evil dream was all over. Thatnoble soul had won a way through the gate at last. The white robe hadnow no stain from the hands that had put it on.

Crooken Sands

Mr Arthur Fernlee Markam, who took what was known as the Red Houseabove the Mains of Crooken, was a London merchant, and beingessentially a cockney, thought it necessary when he went for thesummer holidays to Scotland to provide an entire rig-out as a Highlandchieftain, as manifested in chromolithographs and on the music-hallstage. He had once seen in the Empire the Great Prince--'The BounderKing'--bring down the house by appearing as 'The MacSlogan of thatIlk,' and singing the celebrated Scotch song, 'There's naething likehaggis to mak a mon dry!' and he had ever since preserved in his minda faithful image of the picturesque and warlike appearance which hepresented. Indeed, if the true inwardness of Mr. Markam's mind

on thesubject of his selection of Aberdeenshire as a summer resort wereknown, it would be found that in the foreground of the holidaylocality which his fancy painted stalked the many hued figure of theMacSlogan of that Ilk. However, be this as it may, a very kindfortune--certainly so far as external beauty was concerned--led him tothe choice of Crooken Bay. It is a lovely spot, between Aberdeen andPeterhead, just under the rock-bound headland whence the long,dangerous reefs known as The Spurs run out into the North Sea.Between this and the 'Mains of Crooken'--a village sheltered by thenorthern cliffs--lies the deep bay, backed with a multitude ofbent-grown dunes where the rabbits are to be found in thousands. Thusat either end of the bay is a rocky promontory, and when the dawn orthe sunset falls on the rocks of red syenite the effect is verylovely. The bay itself is floored with level sand and the tide runsfar out, leaving a smooth waste of hard sand on which are dotted hereand there the stake nets and bag nets of the salmon fishers. At oneend of the bay there is a little group or cluster of rocks whose headsare raised something above high water, except when in rough weatherthe waves come over them green. At low tide they are exposed down tosand level; and here is perhaps the only little bit of dangerous sandon this part of the eastern coast. Between the rocks, which are apartabout some fifty feet, is a small quicksand, which, like the Goodwins,is dangerous only with the incoming tide. It extends outwards till itis lost in the sea, and inwards till it fades away in the hard sand ofthe upper beach. On the slope of the hill which rises beyond thedunes, midway between the Spurs and the Port of Crooken, is the RedHouse. It rises from the midst of a clump of fir-trees which protectit on three sides, leaving the whole sea front open. A trimold-fashioned garden stretches down to the roadway, on crossing whicha grassy path, which can be used for light vehicles, threads a way tothe shore, winding amongst the sand hills.

When the Markam family arrived at the Red House after their thirty-sixhours of pitching on the Aberdeen steamer _Ban Righ_ from Blackwall,with the subsequent train to Yellon and drive of a dozen miles, theyall agreed that they had never seen a more delightful spot. Thegeneral satisfaction was more marked as at that very time none of thefamily were, for several reasons, inclined to find favourable anythingor

any place over the Scottish border. Though the family was a largeone, the prosperity of the business allowed them all sorts of personalluxuries, amongst which was a wide latitude in the way of dress. Thefrequency of the Markam girls' new frocks was a source of envy totheir bosom friends and of joy to themselves.

Arthur Fernlee Markam had not taken his family into his confidenceregarding his new costume. He was not quite certain that he should befree from ridicule, or at least from sarcasm, and as he was sensitiveon the subject, he thought it better to be actually in the suitableenvironment before he allowed the full splendour to burst upon them.He had taken some pains, to insure the completeness of the Highlandcostume. For the purpose he had paid many visits to 'The ScotchAll-Wool Tartan Clothing Mart' which had been lately established inCopthall-court by the Messrs. MacCallum More and Roderick MacDhu. Hehad anxious consultations with the head of the firm--MacCallum as hecalled himself, resenting any such additions as 'Mr.' or 'Esquire.'The known stock of buckles, buttons, straps, brooches and ornaments ofall kinds were examined in critical detail; and at last an eagle'sfeather of sufficiently magnificent proportions was discovered, andthe equipment was complete. It was only when he saw the finishedcostume, with the vivid hues of the tartan seemingly modified intocomparative sobriety by the multitude of silver fittings, thecairngorm brooches, the philibeg, dirk and sporran that he was fullyand absolutely satisfied with his choice. At first he had thought ofthe Royal Stuart dress tartan, but abandoned it on the MacCallumpointing out that if he should happen to be in the neighbourhood ofBalmoral it might lead to complications. The MacCallum, who, by theway, spoke with a remarkable cockney accent, suggested other plaids inturn; but now that the other question of accuracy had been raised, Mr.Markam foresaw difficulties if he should by chance find himself in thelocality of the clan whose colours he had usurped. The MacCallum atlast undertook to have, at Markam's expense, a special pattern wovenwhich would not be exactly the same as any existing tartan, thoughpartaking of the characteristics of many. It was based on the RoyalStuart, but contained suggestions as to simplicity of pattern from theMacalister and Ogilvie clans, and as to neutrality of colour from theclans of Buchanan, Macbeth, Chief of

Macintosh and Macleod. When thespecimen had been shown to Markam he had feared somewhat lest itshould strike the eye of his domestic circle as gaudy; but as RoderickMacDhu fell into perfect ecstasies over its beauty he did not make anyobjection to the completion of the piece. He thought, and wisely, thatif a genuine Scotchman like MacDhu liked it, it must beright--especially as the junior partner was a man very much of his ownbuild and appearance. When the MacCallum was receiving hischeque--which, by the way, was a pretty stiff one--he remarked:

'I've taken the liberty of having some more of the stuff woven in caseyou or any of your friends should want it.' Markam was gratified, andtold him that he should be only too happy if the beautiful stuff whichthey had originated between them should become a favourite, as he hadno doubt it would in time. He might make and sell as much as he would.

Markam tried the dress on in his office one evening after the clerkshad all gone home. He was pleased, though a little frightened, at theresult. The MacCallum had done his work thoroughly, and there wasnothing omitted that could add to the martial dignity of the wearer.

'I shall not, of course, take the claymore and the pistols with me onordinary occasions,' said Markam to himself as he began to undress. Hedetermined that he would wear the dress for the first time on landingin Scotland, and accordingly on the morning when the _Ban Righ_ washanging off the Girdle Ness lighthouse, waiting for the tide to enterthe port of Aberdeen, he emerged from his cabin in all the gaudysplendour of his new costume. The first comment he heard was from oneof his own sons, who did not recognise him at first.

'Here's a guy! Great Scott! It's the governor!' And the boy fledforthwith and tried to bury his laughter under a cushion in thesaloon. Markam was a good sailor and had not suffered from thepitching of the boat, so that his naturally rubicund face was evenmore rosy by the conscious blush which suffused his cheeks when he hadfound

himself at once the cynosure of all eyes. He could have wishedthat he had not been so bold for he knew from the cold that there wasa big bare spot under one side of his jauntily worn Glengarry cap.However, he faced the group of strangers boldly. He was not,outwardly, upset even when some of the comments reached his ears.

'He's off his bloomin' chump,' said a cockney in a suit of exaggeratedplaid.

'There's flies on him,' said a tall thin Yankee, pale withsea-sickness, who was on his way to take up his residence for a timeas close as he could get to the gates of Balmoral.

'Happy thought! Let us fill our mulls; now's the chance!' said ayoung Oxford man on his way home to Inverness. But presently Mr.Markam heard the voice of his eldest daughter.

'Where is he? Where is he?' and she came tearing along the deck withher hat blowing behind her. Her face showed signs of agitation, forher mother had just been telling her of her father's condition; butwhen she saw him she instantly burst into laughter so violent that itended in a fit of hysterics. Something of the same kind happened toeach of the

other children. When they had all had their turn Mr.Markam went to his cabin and sent his wife's maid to tell each memberof the family that he wanted to see them at once. They all made theirappearance, suppressing their feelings as well as they could. He saidto them very quietly:

'My dears, don't I provide you all with ample allowances?'

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'Yes, father!' they all answered gravely, 'no one could be moregenerous!'

'Don't I let you dress as you please?'

'Yes, father!'--this a little sheepishly.

'Then, my dears, don't you think it would be nicer and kinder of younot to try and make me feel uncomfortable, even if I do assume a dresswhich is ridiculous in your eyes, though quite common enough in thecountry where we are about to sojourn?' There was no answer exceptthat which appeared in their hanging heads. He was a good father andthey all knew it. He was quite satisfied and went on:

'There, now, run away and enjoy yourselves! We shan't have anotherword about it.' Then he went on deck again and stood bravely the fireof ridicule which he recognised around him, though nothing more wassaid within his hearing.

The astonishment and the amusement which his get-up occasioned on the_Ban Righ_ was, however, nothing to that which it created in Aberdeen.The boys and loafers, and women with babies, who waited at the landingshed, followed _en masse_ as the Markam party took their way to therailway station; even the porters with their old-fashioned knots andtheir new-fashioned barrows, who await the traveller at the foot ofthe gang-plank, followed in wondering delight. Fortunately thePeterhead train was just about to start, so that the martyrdom was notunnecessarily prolonged. In the carriage the glorious Highland costumewas unseen, and as there were but few persons at the station atYellon, all went well there. When, however, the carriage drew near theMains of Crooken and the fisher folk had run to their doors to see whoit was that was passing, the excitement exceeded all bounds. Thechildren with one impulse

waved their bonnets and ran shouting behindthe carriage; the men forsook their nets and their baiting andfollowed; the women clutched their babies, and followed also. Thehorses were tired after their long journey to Yellon and back, and thehill was steep, so that there was ample time for the crowd to gatherand even to pass on ahead.

Mrs. Markam and the elder girls would have liked to make some protestor to do something to relieve their feelings of chagrin at theridicule which they saw on all faces, but there was a look of fixeddetermination on the face of the seeming Highlander which awed them alittle, and they were silent. It might have been that the eagle'sfeather, even when arising above the bald head, the cairngorm broocheven on the fat shoulder, and the claymore, dirk and pistols, evenwhen belted round the extensive paunch and protruding from thestocking on the sturdy calf, fulfilled their existence as symbols ofmartial and terrifying import! When the party arrived at the gate ofthe Red House there awaited them a crowd of Crooken inhabitants,hatless and respectfully silent; the remainder of the population waspainfully toiling up the hill. The silence was broken by only onesound, that of a man with a deep voice.

'Man! but he's forgotten the pipes!'

The servants had arrived some days before, and all things were inreadiness. In the glow consequent on a good lunch after a hard journeyall the disagreeables of travel and all the chagrin consequent on theadoption of the obnoxious costume were forgotten.

That afternoon Markam, still clad in full array, walked through theMains of Crooken. He was all alone, for, strange to say, his wife andboth daughters had sick headaches, and were, as he was told, lyingdown to rest after the fatigue of the journey. His eldest son, whoclaimed to be a young man, had gone out by himself to explore thesurroundings of the place, and one of the boys could not be found. Theother boy, on being told that his father had sent for him to come fora walk, had managed--by accident, of course--to fall into the waterbutt, and had to be dried and rigged out

afresh. His clothes nothaving been as yet unpacked this was of course impossible withoutdelay.

Mr. Markam was not quite satisfied with his walk. He could not meetany of his neighbours. It was not that there were not enough peopleabout, for every house and cottage seemed to be full; but the peoplewhen in the open were either in their doorways some distance behindhim, or on the roadway a long distance in front. As he passed hecould see the tops of heads and the whites of eyes in the windows orround the corners of doors. The only interview which he had wasanything but a pleasant one. This was with an odd sort of old man whowas hardly ever heard to speak except to join in the 'Amens' in themeeting-house. His sole occupation seemed to be to wait at the windowof the post-office from eight o'clock in the morning till the arrivalof the mail at one, when he carried the letter-bag to a neighbouringbaronial castle. The remainder of his day was spent on a seat in adraughty part of the port, where the offal of the fish, the refuse ofthe bait, and the house rubbish was thrown, and where the ducks wereaccustomed to hold high revel.

When Saft Tammie beheld him coming he raised his eyes, which weregenerally fixed on the nothing which lay on the roadway opposite hisseat, and, seeming dazzled as if by a burst of sunshine, rubbed themand shaded them with his hand. Then he started up and raised his handaloft in a denunciatory manner as he spoke:--

'"Vanity of vanities, saith the preacher. All is vanity." Mon, bewarned in time! "Behold the lilies of the field, they toil not,neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayedlike one of these." Mon! Mon! Thy vanity is as the quicksand whichswallows up all which comes within its spell. Beware vanity! Bewarethe quicksand, which yawneth for thee, and which will swallow thee up!See thyself! Learn thine own vanity! Meet thyself face to face, andthen in that moment thou shalt learn the fatal force of thy vanity.Learn it, know it, and repent ere the quicksand swallow thee!' Thenwithout another word he went back to his seat and sat there immovableand expressionless as before.

Markam could not but feel a little upset by this tirade. Only that itwas spoken by a seeming madman, he would have put it down to someeccentric exhibition of Scottish humour or impudence; but the gravityof the message--for it seemed nothing else--made such a readingimpossible. He was, however, determined not to give in to ridicule,and although he had not yet seen anything in Scotland to remind himeven of a kilt, he determined to wear his Highland dress. When hereturned home, in less than half-an-hour, he found that every memberof the family was, despite the headaches, out taking a walk. He tookthe opportunity afforded by their absence of locking himself in hisdressing-room, took off the Highland dress, and, putting on a suit offlannels, lit a cigar and had a snooze. He was awakened by the noiseof the family coming in, and at once donning his dress made hisappearance in the drawing-room for tea.

He did not go out again that afternoon; but after dinner he put on hisdress again--he had, of course dressed for dinner as usual--and wentby himself for a walk on the sea-shore. He had by this time come tothe conclusion that he would get by degrees accustomed to the Highlanddress before making it his ordinary wear. The moon was up and heeasily followed the path through the sand-hills, and shortly struckthe shore. The tide was out and the beach firm as a rock, so hestrolled southwards to nearly the end of the bay. Here he wasattracted by two isolated rocks some little way out from the edge ofthe dunes, so he strolled towards them. When he reached the nearestone he climbed it, and, sitting there elevated some fifteen or twentyfeet over the waste of sand, enjoyed the lovely, peaceful prospect.The moon was rising behind the headland of Pennyfold, and its lightwas just touching the top of the furthermost rock of the Spurs somethree-quarters of a mile out; the rest of the rocks were in darkshadow. As the moon rose over the headland, the rocks of the Spurs andthen the beach by degrees became flooded with light.

For a good while Mr. Markam sat and looked at the rising moon and thegrowing area of light which followed its rise. Then he turned andfaced eastwards and sat with his chin in his hand looking seawards,and revelling in the peace and beauty and freedom

of the scene. Theroar of London--the darkness and the strife and weariness of Londonlife--seemed to have passed quite aw

ay, and he lived at the moment afreer and higher life. He looked at the glistening water as it stoleits way over the flat waste of sand, coming closer and closerinsensibly--the tide had turned. Presently he heard a distant shoutingalong the beach very far off.

'The fishermen calling to each other,' he said to himself and lookedaround. As he did so he got a horrible shock, for though just then acloud sailed across the moon he saw, in spite of the sudden darknessaround him, his own image. For an instant, on the top of the oppositerock he could see the bald back of the head and the Glengarry cap withthe immense eagle's feather. As he staggered back his foot slipped,and he began to slide down towards the sand between the two rocks. Hetook no concern as to falling, for the sand was really only a few feetbelow him, and his mind was occupied with the figure or simulacrum ofhimself, which had already disappeared. As the easiest way of reaching_terra firma_ he prepared to jump the remainder of the distance. Allthis had taken but a second, but the brain works quickly, and even ashe gathered himself for the spring he saw the sand below him lying somarbly level shake and shiver in an odd way. A sudden fear overcamehim; his knees failed, and instead of jumping he slid miserably downthe rock, scratching his bare legs as he went. His feet touched thesand--went through it like water--and he was down below his kneesbefore he realised that he was in a quicksand. Wildly he grasped atthe rock to keep himself from sinking further, and fortunately therewas a jutting spur or edge which he was able to grasp instinctively.To this he clung in grim desperation. He tried to shout, but hisbreath would not come, till after a great effort his voice rang out.Again he shouted, and it seemed as if the sound of his own voice gavehim new courage, for he was able to hold on to the rock for a longertime than he thought possible--though he held on only in blinddesperation. He was, however, beginning to find his grasp weakening,when, joy of joys! his shout was answered by a rough voice from justabove him.

'God be thankit, I'm nae too late!' and a fisherman with greatthigh-boots came hurriedly climbing over the rock. In an instant herecognised the gravity of the danger, and with a cheering 'Haud fast,mon! I'm comin'!' scrambled down till he found a firm foothold. Thenwith one strong hand holding the rock above, he leaned down, andcatching Markam's wrist, called out to him, 'Haud to me, mon! Haud tome wi' ither hond!'

Then he lent his great strength, and with a steady, sturdy pull,dragged him out of the hungry quicksand and placed him safe upon therock. Hardly giving him time to draw breath, he pulled and pushedhim--never letting him go for an instant--over the rock into the firmsand beyond it, and finally deposited him, still shaking from themagnitude of his danger, high upon the beach. Then he began to speak:

'Mon! but I was just in time. If I had no laucht at yon foolish ladsand begun to rin at the first you'd a bin sinkin' doon to the bowelso' the airth be the noo! Wully Beagrie thocht you was a ghaist, andTom MacPhail swore ye was only like a goblin on a puddick-steel! "Na!"said I. "Yon's but the daft Englishman--the loony that had escapitfrae the waxwarks." I was thinkin' that bein' strange and silly--ifnot a whole-made feel--ye'd no ken the ways o' the quicksan'! Ishouted till warn ye, and then ran to drag ye aff, if need be. But Godbe thankit, be ye fule or only half-daft wi' yer vanity, that I was nothat late!' and he reverently lifted his cap as he spoke.

Mr. Markam was deeply touched and thankful for his escape from ahorrible death; but the sting of the charge of vanity thus made oncemore against him came through his humility. He was about to replyangrily, when suddenly a great awe fell upon him as he remembered thewarning words of the half-crazy letter-carrier: 'Meet thyself face toface, and repent ere the quicksand shall swallow thee!'

Here, too, he remembered the image of himself that he had seen and thesudden danger from the deadly quicksand that had followed. He wassilent a full minute, and then said:

'My good fellow, I owe you my life!'

The answer came with reverence from the hardy fisherman, 'Na! Na! Yeowe that to God; but, as for me, I'm only too glad till be the humbleinstrument o' His mercy.'

'But you will let me thank you,' said Mr. Markam, taking both thegreat hands of his deliverer in his and holding them tight. 'My heartis too full as yet, and my nerves are too much shaken to let me saymuch; but, believe me, I am very, very grateful!' It was quite evidentthat the poor old fellow was deeply touched, for the tears wererunning down his cheeks.

The fisherman said, with a rough but true courtesy:

'Ay, sir! thank me and ye will--if it'll do yer poor heart good. An'I'm thinking that if it were me I'd be thankful too. But, sir, as forme I need no thanks. I am glad, so I am!'

That Arthur Fernlee Markam was really thankful and grateful was shownpractically later on. Within a week's time there sailed into PortCrooken the finest fishing smack that had ever been seen in theharbour of Peterhead. She was fully found with sails and gear of allkinds, and with nets of the best. Her master and men went away by thecoach, after having left with the salmon-fisher's wife the paperswhich made her over to him.

As Mr. Markam and the salmon-fisher walked together along the shorethe former asked his companion not to mention the fact that he hadbeen in such imminent danger, for that it would only distress his dearwife and children. He said that he would warn them all of thequicksand, and for that purpose he, then and there, asked questionsabout it till he felt that his information on the subject wascomplete. Before they parted he asked his companion if he had happenedto see a second figure, dressed like himself on the other rock as hehad approached to succour him.

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'Na! Na!' came the answer, 'there is nae sic another fule in theseparts. Nor has there been since the time o' Jamie Fleeman--him thatwas fule to the Laird o' Udny. Why, mon! sic a heathenish dress as yehave on till ye has nae been seen in these pairts within the memory o'mon. An' I'm thinkin' that sic a dress never was for sittin' on thecauld rock, as ye done beyont. Mon! but do ye no fear the rheumatismor the lumbagy wi' floppin' doon on to the cauld stanes wi' yer bareflesh? I was thinking that it was daft ye waur when I see ye themornin' doon be the port, but it's fule or eediot ye maun be for thelike o' thot!' Mr. Markam did not care to argue the point, and as theywere now close to his own home he asked the salmon-fisher to have aglass of whisky--which he did--and they parted for the night. He tookgood care to warn all his family of the quicksand, telling them thathe had himself been in some danger from it.

All that night he never slept. He heard the hours strike one after theother; but try how he would he could not get to sleep. Over and overagain he went through the horrible episode of the quicksand, from thetime that Saft Tammie had broken his habitual silence to preach to himof the sin of vanity and to warn him. The question kept ever arisingin his mind: 'Am I then so vain as to be in the ranks of the foolish?'and the answer ever came in the words of the crazy prophet: '"Vanityof vanities! All is vanity." Meet thyself face to face, and repent erethe quicksand shall swallow thee!' Somehow a feeling of doom began toshape itself in his mind that he would yet perish in that samequicksand, for there he had already met himself face to face.

In the grey of the morning he dozed off, but it was evident that hecontinued the subject in his dreams, for he was fully awakened by hiswife, who said:

'Do sleep quietly! That blessed Highland suit has got on your brain.Don't talk in your sleep, if you can help it!' He was somehowconscious of a glad feeling, as if some

terrible weight had beenlifted from him, but he did not know any cause of it. He asked hiswife what he had said in his sleep, and she answered:

'You said it often enough, goodness knows, for one to rememberit--"Not face to face! I saw the eagle plume over the bald head! Thereis hope yet! Not face to face!" Go to sleep! Do!' And then he did goto sleep, for he seemed to realise that the prophecy of the crazy manhad not yet been fulfilled. He had not met himself face to face--asyet at all events.

He was awakened early by a maid who came to tell him that there was afisherman at the door who wanted to see him. He dressed himself asquickly as he could--for he was not yet expert with the Highlanddress--and hurried

down, not wishing to keep the salmon-fisherwaiting. He was surprised and not altogether pleased to find that hisvisitor was none other than Saft Tammie, who at once opened fire onhim:

'I maun gang awa' t' the post; but I thocht that I would waste an houron ye, and ca' roond just to see if ye waur still that fou wi' vanityas on the nicht gane by. An I see that ye've no learned the lesson.Well! the time is comin', sure eneucht! However I have all the time i'the marnins to my ain sel', so I'll aye look roond jist till see howye gang yer ain gait to the quicksan', and then to the de'il! I'm afftill ma wark the noo!' And he went straightway, leaving Mr. Markamconsiderably vexed, for the maids within earshot were vainly trying toconceal their giggles. He had fairly made up his mind to wear on thatday ordinary clothes, but the visit of Saft Tammie reversed hisdecision. He would show them all that he was not a coward, and hewould go on as he had begun--come what might. When he came tobreakfast in full martial panoply the children, one and all, held downtheir heads and the backs of their necks became very red indeed. As,however, none of them laughed--except Titus, the youngest boy, who wasseized with a fit of hysterical choking and was promptly banished fromthe room--he could not reprove them, but began to break his egg with asternly

determined air. It was unfortunate that as his wife washanding him a cup of tea one of the buttons of his sleeve caught inthe lace of her morning wrapper, with the result that the hot tea wasspilt over his bare knees. Not unnaturally, he made use of a swearword, whereupon his wife, somewhat nettled, spoke out:

'Well, Arthur, if you will make such an idiot of yourself with thatridiculous costume what else can you expect? You are not accustomed toit--and you never will be!' In answer he began an indignant speechwith: 'Madam!' but he got no further, for now that the subject wasbroached, Mrs. Markam intended to have her say out. It was not apleasant say, and, truth to tell, it was not said in a pleasantmanner. A wife's manner seldom is pleasant when she undertakes to tellwhat she considers 'truths' to her husband. The result was that ArthurFernlee Markam undertook, then and there, that during his stay inScotland he would wear no other costume than the one she abused.Woman-like his wife had the last word--given in this case with tears:

'Very well, Arthur! Of course you will do as you choose. Make me asridiculous as you can, and spoil the poor girls' chances in life.Young men don't seem to care, as a general rule, for an idiotfather-in-law! But I must warn you that your vanity will some day geta rude shock--if indeed you are not before then in an asylum or dead!'

It was manifest after a few days that Mr. Markam would have to takethe major part of his outdoor exercise by himself. The girls now andagain took a walk with him, chiefly in the early morning or late atnight, or on a wet day when there would be no one about; theyprofessed to be willing to go out at all times, but somehow somethingalways seemed to occur to prevent it. The boys could never be found atall on such occasions, and as to Mrs. Markam she sternly refused to goout with him on any consideration so long as he should continue tomake a fool of himself. On the Sunday he dressed himself in hishabitual broadcloth, for he rightly felt that church was not a placefor angry feelings; but on Monday morning he resumed his Highlandgarb. By this time he would have given a good deal if he had neverthought of the dress, but his British obstinacy was strong, and hewould not give in. Saft

Tammie called at his house every morning, and,not being able to see him nor to have any message taken to him, usedto call back in the afternoon when the letter-bag had been deliveredand watched for his going out. On such occasions he never failed towarn him against his vanity in the same words which he had used at thefirst. Before many days were over Mr. Markam had come to look upon himas little short of a scourge.

By the time the week was out the enforced partial solitude, theconstant chagrin, and the never-ending brooding which was thusengendered, began to make Mr. Markam quite ill. He was too proud totake any of his family into his confidence since they had in his viewtreated him very badly. Then he did not sleep well at night, and whenhe did sleep he had constantly bad dreams. Merely to assure himselfthat his pluck was not failing him he made it a practice to visit thequicksand at least once every day; he hardly ever failed to go therethe last thing at night. It was perhaps this habit that wrought thequicksand with its terrible experience so perpetually into his dreams.More and more vivid these became, till on waking at times he couldhardly realise that he had not been actually in the flesh to visit thefatal spot. He sometimes thought that he might have been walking inhis sleep.

One night his dream was so vivid that when he awoke he could notbelieve that it had only been a dream. He shut his eyes again andagain, but each time the vision, if it was a vision, or the reality,if it was a reality, would rise before him. The moon was shining fulland yellow over the quicksand as he approached it; he could see theexpanse of light shaken and disturbed and full of black shadows as theliquid sand quivered and trembled and wrinkled and eddied as was itswont between its pauses of marble calm. As he drew close to it anotherfigure came towards it from the opposite side with equal footsteps. Hesaw that it was his own figure, his very self, and in silent terror,compelled by what force he knew not, he advanced--charmed as the birdis by the snake, mesmerised or hypnotised--to meet this other self. Ashe felt the yielding sand closing over him he awoke in the agony ofdeath, trembling with fear, and, strange to say, with the silly man'sprophecy seeming to sound in his ears: '"Vanity of

vanities! All isvanity!" See thyself and repent ere the quicksand swallow thee!'

So convinced was he that this was no dream that he arose, early as itwas, and dressing himself without disturbing his wife took his way tothe shore. His heart fell when he came across a series of footsteps onthe sands, which he at once recognised as his own. There was the samewide heel, the same square toe; he had no doubt now that he hadactually been there, and half horrified, and half in a state of dreamystupor, he followed the footsteps, and found them lost in the edge ofthe yielding quicksand. This gave him a terrible shock, for there wereno return steps marked on the sand, and he felt that there was somedread mystery which he could not penetrate, and the penetration ofwhich would, he feared, undo him.

In this state of affairs he took two wrong courses. Firstly he kepthis trouble to himself, and, as none of his family had any clue to it,every innocent word or expression which they used supplied fuel to theconsuming fire of his imagination. Secondly he began to read booksprofessing to bear upon the mysteries of dreaming and of mentalphenomena generally, with the result that every wild imagination ofevery crank or half-crazy philosopher became a living germ of unrestin the fertilising soil of his disordered brain. Thus negatively andpositively all things began to work to a common end. Not the least ofhis disturbing causes was Saft Tammie, who had now become at certaintimes of the day a fixture at his gate. After a while, beinginterested in the previous state of this individual, he made inquiriesregarding his past with the following result.

Saft Tammie was popularly believed to be the son of a laird in one ofthe counties round the Firth of Forth. He had been partially educatedfor the ministry, but for some cause which no one ever knew threw uphis prospects suddenly, and, going to Peterhead in its days of whalingprosperity, had there taken service on a whaler. Here off and on hehad remained for some years, getting gradually more and more silent inhis habits, till finally his shipmates protested against so taciturn amate, and he had found service amongst the fishing smacks of thenorthern fleet. He had worked for

many years at the fishing withalways the reputation of being 'a wee bit daft,' till at length he hadgradually settled down at Crooken, where the laird, doubtless knowingsomething of his family history, had given him a job which practicallymade him a pensioner. The minister who gave the information finishedthus:--

'It is a very strange thing, but the man seems to have some odd kindof gift. Whether it be that "second sight" which we Scotch people areso prone to believe in, or some other occult form of knowledge, I knownot, but nothing of a disastrous tendency ever occurs in this placebut the men with whom he lives are able to quote after the event

somesaying of his which certainly appears to have foretold it. He getsuneasy or excited--wakes up, in fact--when death is in the air!'

This did not in any way tend to lessen Mr. Markam's concern, but onthe contrary seemed to impress the prophecy more deeply on his mind.Of all the books which he had read on his new subject of study noneinterested him so much as a German one _Die Doeppleganger_, by Dr.Heinrich von Aschenberg, formerly of Bonn. Here he learned for thefirst time of cases where men had led a double existence--each naturebeing quite apart from the other--the body being always a reality withone spirit, and a simulacrum with the other. Needless to say that Mr.Markam realised this theory as exactly suiting his own case. Theglimpse which he had of his own back the night of his escape from thequicksand--his own footmarks disappearing into the quicksand with noreturn steps visible--the prophecy of Saft Tammie about his meetinghimself and perishing in the quicksand--all lent aid to the convictionthat he was in his own person an instance of the doeppleganger. Beingthen conscious of a double life he took steps to prove its existenceto his own satisfaction. To this end on one night before going to bedhe wrote his name in chalk on the soles of his shoes. That night hedreamed of the quicksand, and of his visiting it--dreamed so vividlythat on walking in the grey of the dawn he could not believe that hehad not been there. Arising, without disturbing his wife, he soughthis shoes.

The chalk signatures were undisturbed! He dressed himself and stoleout softly. This time the tide was in, so he crossed the dunes andstruck the shore on the further side of the quicksand. There, oh,horror of horrors! he saw his own footprints dying into the abyss!

He went home a desperately sad man. It seemed incredible that he, anelderly commercial man, who had passed a long and uneventful life inthe pursuit of business in the midst of roaring, practical London,should thus find himself enmeshed in mystery and horror, and that heshould discover that he had two existences. He could not speak of histrouble even to his own wife, for well he knew that she would at oncerequire the fullest particulars of that other life--the one which shedid not know; and that she would at the start not only imagine butcharge him with all manner of infidelities on the head of it. And sohis brooding grew deeper and deeper still. One evening--the tide thengoing out and the moon being at the full--he was sitting waiting fordinner when the maid announced that Saft Tammie was making adisturbance outside because he would not be let in to see him. He wasvery indignant, but did not like the maid to think that he had anyfear on the subject, and so told her to bring him in. Tammie entered,walking more briskly than ever with his head up and a look of vigorousdecision in the eyes that were so generally cast down. As soon as heentered he said:

'I have come to see ye once again--once again; and there ye sit, stilljust like a cockatoo on a pairch. Weel, mon, I forgie ye! Mind yethat, I forgie ye!' And without a word more he turned and walked outof the house, leaving the master in speechless indignation.

After dinner he determined to pay another visit to the quicksand--hewould not allow even to himself that he was afraid to go. And so,about nine o'clock, in full array, he marched to the beach, andpassing over the sands sat on the skirt of the nearer rock. The fullmoon was behind him and its light lit up the bay so that its fringe offoam, the dark outline of the headland, and the stakes of thesalmon-nets were all emphasised. In

the brilliant yellow glow thelights in the windows of Port Crooken and in those of the distantcastle of the laird trembled like stars through the sky. For a longtime he sat and drank in the beauty of the scene, and his soul seemedto feel a peace that it had not known for many days. All the pettinessand annoyance and silly fears of the past weeks seemed blotted out,and a new holy calm took the vacant place. In this sweet and solemnmood he reviewed his late action calmly, and felt ashamed of himselffor his vanity and for the obstinacy which had followed it. And thenand there he made up his mind that the present would be the last timehe would wear the costume which had estranged him from those whom heloved, and which had caused him so many hours and days of chagrin,vexation, and pain.

But almost as soon as he arrived at this conclusion another voiceseemed to speak within him and mockingly to ask him if he should everget the chance to wear the suit again--that it was too late--he hadchosen his course and must now abide the issue.

'It is not too late,' came the quick answer of his better self; andfull of the thought, he rose up to go home and divest himself of thenow hateful costume right away. He paused for one look at thebeautiful scene. The light lay pale and mellow, softening everyoutline of rock and tree and house-top, and deepening the shadows intovelvety-black, and lighting, as with a pale flame, the incoming tide,that now crept fringe-like across the flat waste of sand. Then he leftthe rock and stepped out for the shore.

But as he did so a frightful spasm of horror shook him, and for aninstant the blood rushing to his head shut out all the light of thefull moon. Once more he saw that fatal image of himself moving beyondthe quicksand from the opposite rock to the shore. The shock was allthe greater for the contrast with the spell of peace which he had justenjoyed; and, almost paralysed in every sense, he stood and watchedthe fatal vision and the wrinkly, crawling quicksand that seemed towrithe and yearn for something that lay between. There could be nomistake this time, for though the moon behind threw the face intoshadow he could see there the same shaven cheeks as his own, and thesmall stubby moustache of a few weeks' growth. The light shone on

thebrilliant tartan, and on the eagle's plume. Even the bald space at oneside of the Glengarry cap glistened, as did the cairngorm brooch onthe shoulder and the tops of the silver buttons. As he looked he felthis feet slightly sinking, for he was still near the edge of the beltof quicksand, and he stepped back. As he did so the other figurestepped forward, so that the space between them was preserved.

So the two stood facing each other, as though in some weirdfascination; and in the rushing of the blood through his brain Markamseemed to hear the words of the prophecy: 'See thyself face to face,and repent ere the quicksand swallow thee.' He did stand face to facewith himself, he had repented--and now he was sinking in thequicksand! The warning and prophecy were coming true.

Above him the seagulls screamed, circling round the fringe of theincoming tide, and the sound being entirely mortal recalled him tohimself. On the instant he stepped back a few quick steps, for as yetonly his feet were merged in the soft sand. As he did so the otherfigure stepped forward, and coming within the deadly grip of thequicksand began to sink. It seemed to Markam that he was looking athimself going down to his doom, and on the instant the anguish of hissoul found vent in a terrible cry. There was at the same instant aterrible cry from the other figure, and as Markam threw up his handsthe figure did the same. With horror-struck eyes he saw him sinkdeeper into the quicksand; and then, impelled by what power he knewnot, he advanced again towards the sand to meet his fate. But as hismore forward foot began to sink he heard again the cries of theseagulls which seemed to restore his benumbed faculties. With a mightyeffort he drew his foot out of the sand which seemed to clutch it,leaving his shoe behind, and then in sheer terror he turned and ranfrom the place, never stopping till his breath and strength failedhim, and he sank half swooning on the grassy path through thesandhills.

* * * * *

Arthur Markam made up his mind not to tell his family of his terribleadventure--until

at least such time as he should be complete master ofhimself. Now that the fatal double--his other self--had been engulfedin the quicksand he felt something like his old peace of mind.

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That night he slept soundly and did not dream at all; and in themorning was quite his old self. It really seemed as though his newerand worser self had disappeared for ever; and strangely enough SaftTammie was absent from his post that morning and never appeared thereagain, but sat in his old place watching nothing, as of old, withlack-lustre eye. In accordance with his resolution he did not wear hisHighland suit again, but one evening tied it up in a bundle, claymore,dirk and philibeg and all, and bringing it secretly with him th

rew itinto the quicksand. With a feeling of intense pleasure he saw itsucked below the sand, which closed above it into marble smoothness.Then he went home and announced cheerily to his family assembled forevening prayers:

'Well! my dears, you will be glad to hear that I have abandoned myidea of wearing the Highland dress. I see now what a vain old fool Iwas and how ridiculous I made myself! You shall never see it again!'

'Where is it, father?' asked one of the girls, wishing to saysomething so that such a self-sacrificing announcement as her father'sshould not be passed in absolute silence. His answer was so sweetlygiven that the girl rose from her seat and came and kissed him. Itwas:

'In the quicksand, my dear! and I hope that my worser self is buriedthere along with it--for ever.'

* * * * *

The remainder of the summer was passed at Crooken with delight by allthe family,

and on his return to town Mr. Markam had almost forgottenthe whole of the incident of the quicksand, and all touching on it,when one day he got a letter from the MacCallum More which caused himmuch thought, though he said nothing of it to his family, and left it,for certain reasons, unanswered. It ran as follows:--

'The MacCallum More and Roderick MacDhu. 'The Scotch All-Wool Tartan Clothing Mart. Copthall Court, E.C., 30th September, 1892.

'Dear Sir,--I trust you will pardon the liberty which I take inwriting to you, but I am desirous of making an inquiry, and I aminformed that you have been sojourning during the summer inAberdeenshire (Scotland, N.B.). My partner, Mr. Roderick MacDhu--as heappears for business reasons on our bill-heads and in ouradvertisements, his real name being Emmanuel Moses Marks ofLondon--went early last month to Scotland (N.B.) for a tour, but as Ihave only once heard from him, shortly after his departure, I amanxious lest any misfortune may have befallen him. As I have beenunable to obtain any news of him on making all inquiries in my power,I venture to appeal to you. His letter was written in deep dejectionof spirit, and mentioned that he feared a judgment had come upon himfor wishing to appear as a Scotchman on Scottish soil, as he had onemoonlight night shortly after his arrival seen his 'wraith'. Heevidently alluded to the fact that before his departure he hadprocured for himself a Highland costume similar to that which we hadthe honour to supply to you, with which, as perhaps you will remember,he was much struck. He may, however, never have worn it, as he was, tomy own knowledge, diffident about putting it on, and even went so faras to tell me that he would at first only venture to wear it late atnight or very early in the morning, and then only in remote places,until such time as he should get accustomed to it. Unfortunately hedid not advise me of his route so that I am in complete ignorance ofhis whereabouts; and I venture to ask if you may have seen or heard ofa Highland costume similar to your own having been seen anywhere inthe neighbourhood in which I am told you have recently purchased theestate which you temporarily occupied. I shall not expect an answer tothis letter unless you can give me some information regarding myfriend and partner, so pray do not trouble to reply unless there because. I am encouraged to think that he may have

been in yourneighbourhood as, though his letter is not dated, the envelope ismarked with the postmark of "Yellon" which I find is in Aberdeenshire,and not far from the Mains of Crooken.

'I have the honour to be, dear sir, 'Yours very respectfully, 'JOSHUA SHEENY COHEN BENJAMIN '(The MacCallum More.)'