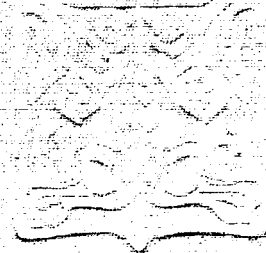
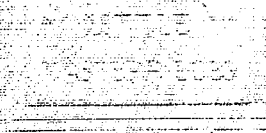
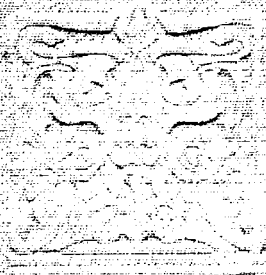
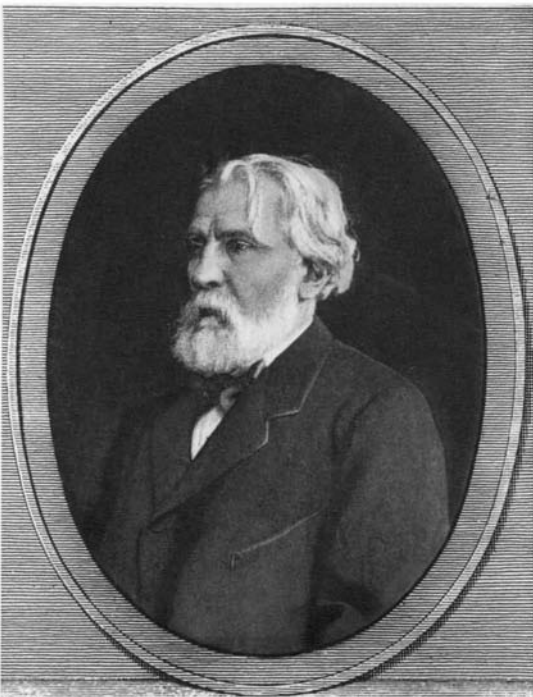


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Library of
Little Masterpieces



Dr. Jurgensen

Library of
Little Masterpieces
In Forty-four Volumes

FICTION

Edited by
HAMILTON W. MABIE



VOLUME XXXVII

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Introduction

INTRODUCTION

STORY-TELLING had become an art long before men knew what art was; for experience antedates art, and as soon as men and women began to see the world about them, to live with one another, to act, to feel, to imagine, and to suffer, they began to dramatise their relations with the world and with their fellows, and their thoughts, feelings, and imaginations as well. The man or woman who could describe an incident, work up a situation so as to secure a climax, bring out the contrasts of character where two or more persons have been concerned in any occurrence or transaction, has been surrounded by eager listeners from the beginnings of spoken language. The story is probably the oldest literary form.

Epic poetry, which also dates back to the far beginnings of civilisation, owed its popular interest largely to the prominence of the story element in it. There are no greater stories than those which are told in the "Iliad" and "Odyssey," the "Shāh-Nāmāh" or "Book of Kings," the "Mahabharata," the "Ramayana," the "Kalevala," and the "Nibelungenlied." The epic was a form of long story; the ballad, a form of short story. The chief and permanent interest of the theatre lies in the vividness and

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power with which experience, actual or imaginary, is presented in the story form; for the greatest and most impressive plays are short stories dramatised and acted, instead of being told or written in narrative form. "King Lear," "Hamlet," "Hernani," and "Tartuffe" are stories in every sense of the word quite as truly as "Vanity Fair," "Adam Bede," "Père Goriot" and "The Scarlet Letter." One of the deepest sources of the power exercised over the imaginations and lives of vast numbers of people by the sixty-six books which make up the Bible has been the rootage of this noble literature in life, its profound significance as a story of spiritual experience. And it may be noted, in passing, that it contains some of the most beautiful and striking short stories in the whole range of literature. The stories of the Patriarchs are notable, not only for narrative interest of an unusual kind, but for strong, distinct, and impartial character drawing; while the tenderness and pastoral beauty of the idyl of Ruth have given it a place by itself in the literature of the world.

It is clear that a form of writing of an origin so ancient and of an interest so universal must bear a very vital relation to the lives of men and possess a permanent importance as a disclosure of what is the soul of humanity and of what most deeply interests it. Before the art of writing was invented, there were story-tellers in the Eastern cities whose function it was to make

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men forget the heat of the summer nights, and to bring the imagination to the aid of those upon whom the realities of life pressed heavily; and to-day story-tellers are still weaving their spells in the bazaars of Damascus and the Hindu cities, and a vast literature in many languages has been produced in the West, to meet the same deep needs and to serve the same universal ends. For men do not live by bread alone; the mind needs play as truly as it needs work; the spirit must have its outing; the realities of life must be compassed about with spiritualities; and, out of the noise and heat of the great workshop in which men toil and endure, windows must be opened to let in the air and to make a vision of the landscape and of the far horizons possible.

The story brings within every man's reach the vast range of life from which circumstances have shut him off; it takes him to remote ages and to far countries; it shows him men like himself in all forms of action and adventure, in all possible combinations of circumstance; it sets before him the three great typical figures whose experience sums up the experience of the race: the adventurer, like Ulysses and D'Artagnan; the man of achievement, like Henry V.; the sufferer, like Hamlet, Maggie Tulliver, Père Goriot; the lover, like Romeo and John Ridd.

This love of the story, often instructive rather than intelligent, has stimulated the publication

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of an immense mass of worthless fiction, some of which is demoralising, because it sets forth false standards of character and misstates the facts of experience, and most of which is vulgar in tone and lacking in integrity of workmanship. It lays the foundation, also, for the success of the sensational newspaper, which is sold in vast quantities, and the success of which is inexplicable to those who fail to see that its interest lies in the thoroughness with which the story element is wrought into its structure. No form of writing is so personal as that contained in what is known as the "yellow journal"; because in no other publication of kindred magnitude is the love of the story among uneducated men so definitely taken into account as a factor that may be turned to financial profit. The sensational newspaper is a miscellaneous collection of short stories, told in the boldest, most condensed, and vivid style; representing the crudest kind of art—the art of catching the attention abruptly and holding it for the briefest time. But the success of the sensational newspapers, however disastrous to journalism as a profession, and to the taste and intelligence of its readers, is based on a normal instinct in human nature, and is a striking evidence of the reality and power of the dramatic element in life.

The story rarely offers any explanation of the events or incidents which it narrates; its function is to present a coherent narrative, to show

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relationship between character and happenings, not to suggest a philosophy of life. But, in simply indicating the effect of character on character, of the reaction of things done on those who do them, of the return of the deed on the doer, the story satisfies a great craving of the human spirit: the craving for order and significance in life. Nothing is more intolerable to the normal mind than the idea that life is a mere accidental series of happenings, that there is no connection between character and destiny, that a man's life in this world is "sound and fury, signifying nothing." The instinct which led the earliest men to dramatise Nature, and, in the great myths, to personify the forces of the world, was an expression of the craving to discover rational order, relationship with humanity, spiritual meaning, in the external show of things. The story in the form of the myth preceded science as an explanation of the universe.

A story involves a certain connection between a person and the circumstances that surround him; if these circumstances are more powerful than his will, and shape him to ends which are abhorrent to him, and so establish the idea of fatalism, nevertheless a logical order is disclosed, and the mind finds something to rest on in its endeavour to understand a group of events or a baffling situation. If men and women are carried to tragic fates by currents too powerful to be opposed, as they sometimes are in novels

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of a high order, their defeat is invested with a certain dignity that appeals to the imagination, and robs failure of ignobility. As any hardship in life is more tolerable than emptiness and inanity, so heroic defeat often yields more satisfaction to the imagination than well-won success, because it brings into clear light the force in the man which makes him an original power in the world, not a mere apparition of authority. In any story, there is some kind of sequence or order of events, some working out of character modifying or creating events, some expression of personal power which affects others, some exhibition of groups of men and women in situations which have arisen because of influences set in motion by themselves or others. In short, the story, which always involves a beginning, an unfolding, and an ending, implies rational, intelligible, significant relations in the world and among men; and is the oldest and, for most men, the most significant and interesting literary form, because it expresses the need of the spirit to discover or read some kind of meaning into life, and the need to make life interesting.

Art, which is always and everywhere the best way of doing a thing, has not been slow to discern the immense resources of the story and to develop them in a great variety of ways. There were artists among the earliest, as among the latest, story-tellers; men who saw at a glance what was important and what unimportant in

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the material which came to their hand; who knew how, with a few strong or with many delicate lines, to draw a character and make it live; who understood how to set events in striking relation and give the narrative rapidity of movement, novelty of arrangement, dramatic moments, which the reader or hearer came upon unexpectedly, as one comes upon a striking bit of scenery by a sudden turn of the road; who had a feeling for the order and beauty of words which we call style. The foremost of these artists—Boccaccio, Scott, Dumas, Smollett, Fielding, Turgenieff, Balzac, George Sand, Thackeray, Dickens, George Eliot, Hardy, Tolstoi, Hawthorne—have enriched modern literature beyond any other group of writers, and have given fiction prominence as a literary form. What the drama was to English and French literature during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, fiction was to the same literatures during the nineteenth century—the most deeply felt, artistically used, and widely popular of all the forms of literature. “The Heart of Midlothian,” “The Three Guardsmen,” “Tom Jones,” “Smoke,” and “Liza,” “Père Goriot,” “Vanity Fair,” “David Copperfield,” “Adam Bede,” “Far From the Madding Crowd,” “Anna Karenina,” and “The Scarlet Letter,” are not only masterpieces of the literary art, but they are in the highest sense representative of the most vital literary interest of their time.

The short story, as a distinct variety of

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fiction, is at once the oldest and the newest form of the art. It was practised with skill as long ago as the creation of the tales known as "The Arabian Nights"; it had been told by countless unknown raconteurs for centuries when these ancient tales were born; it was employed by classic writers, and Boccaccio improved upon what the mediæval story-tellers had been doing during the long period of the Middle Ages. But the perfection of the short story as a literary form, and its sharp differentiation from the long story, are the achievement of very recent times.

The tales collected in these volumes have been selected because of their intrinsic interest, their literary quality, and their representative character. It is significant that, with the exception of "Ali Baba," Boccaccio's "The Falcon," and Voltaire's "Jeannot and Colin," they were all written in the nineteenth century. They are, in a peculiar sense, the product of one time; they register its art, and they interpret its spirit. Its interest in psychology is expressed in "The Minister's Black Veil" and "The Piece of String," its liking for the problems of ratiocination in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," its humour in "The Pope's Mule," "The Comet," "Providence and the Guitar," its passion for "all sorts and conditions of men" in "The Outcasts of Poker Flat," its love of the mysterious in "Peter Schlemihl" and "The Spectre Bridegroom," its passion for adventure in "The Man Who Would Be King" and

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"A Fight for the Tsarina," its sense of the tragedy of life in "Without Benefit of Clergy" and "The Necklace," its curiosity in "A Passion in the Desert" and "The Death of Olivier Bécaille."

The novelist has a larger canvas, room for a more elaborate plot, time for a more extensive unfolding of motives, space for handling a larger number of characters; but he has no more exacting and difficult task than falls to the writer of the short story. The latter has to make as definite and as deep an impression on the imagination, and he has far less time in which to accomplish his purpose. He must invest his story with an atmosphere which shall enfold his reader and lay a spell on his senses as Poe has done in "The Pit and the Pendulum," or compress the tragedy of a lifetime into a few pages, as De Maupassant does in "The Necklace," or secure all the force and swiftness of a tumultuous current of narrative, as Mr. Kipling has done in "The Man Who Would Be King," or stir the deepest emotions in a tale of love, as he has done in "Without Benefit of Clergy," which an American critic of high standing has declared to be the best short story in English.

In the short story of the first rank, power, skill, and invention combine to produce, with few materials, an effect similar in definiteness and intensity to that which lies within reach of the masters of fiction alone. The work of the

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writer of the short story differs from theirs neither in quality nor in completeness; it differs only in magnitude. It involves, if possible, a firmer grasp of situations, a surer touch, a more sensitive feeling for dramatic values. It deals, as a rule, with an episode rather than a complete movement of experience; with a situation rather than with a series of events; with a single character or a striking contrast of character rather than with a group; it must be condensed without sacrifice of shading or atmosphere; it must move swiftly to its climax, without any appearance of haste; it must omit the great mass of details, and yet leave nothing essential unsaid. It is not a study for a longer tale, nor is it a long story abbreviated; it is a work of art which has its own laws, its special qualities, its individual sources of charm; it must stand complete in itself.

In this collection, the endeavour has been made to bring together a group of short stories sufficient in number to illustrate the broadest diversity of manner, substance, and method, while preserving the unity of art in quality and workmanship; to show the different temperaments and points of different races as revealed in this form of literature; and, above all, to put into the hands of intelligent readers a series of tales full of human interest and penetrated by that spirit of beauty which is one of the prime sources of joy in life.

HAMILTON WRIGHT MABIE.

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**Library of
Little Masterpieces**

THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

BY

EDGAR ALLAN POE

THE mental features discoursed of as the analytical are, in themselves, but little susceptible of analysis. We appreciate them only in their effects. We know of them, among other things, that they are always to their possessor, when inordinately possessed, a source of the liveliest enjoyment. As the strong man exults in his physical ability, delighting in such exercises as call his muscles into action, so glories the analyst in that moral activity which *disentangles*. He derives pleasure from even the most trivial occupations bringing his talent into play. He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.

The faculty of re-solution is possibly much invigorated by mathematical study, and especially by that highest branch of it which, unjustly, and merely on account of its retrograde

operations, has been called, as if *par excellence*, analysis. Yet to calculate is not in itself to analyse. A chess-player, for example, does the one, without effort at the other. It follows that the game of chess, in its effects upon mental character, is greatly misunderstood. I am not now writing a treatise, but simply prefacing a somewhat peculiar narrative by observations very much at random; I will, therefore, take occasion to assert that the higher powers of the reflective intellect are more decidedly and more usefully tasked by the unostentatious game of draughts than by all the elaborate frivolity of chess. In this latter, where the pieces have different and bizarre motions, with various and variable values, what is only complex is mistaken (a not unusual error) for what is profound. The *attention* is here called powerfully into play. If it flag for an instant, an oversight is committed, resulting in injury or defeat. The possible moves being not only manifold, but involute, the chances of such oversights are multiplied; and, in nine cases out of ten, it is the more concentrative rather than the more acute player who conquers. In draughts, on the contrary, where the moves are unique, and have but little variation, the probabilities of inadvertence are diminished, and the mere attention being left comparatively unemployed, what advantages are obtained by either party are obtained by superior acumen. To be less abstract: Let us suppose a game of draughts where the pieces

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are reduced to four kings, and where, of course, no oversight is to be expected. It is obvious that here the victory can be decided (the players being at all equal) only by some *recherche* movement, the result of some strong exertion of the intellect. Deprived of ordinary resources, the analyst throws himself into the spirit of his opponent, identifies himself therewith, and not unfrequently sees thus, at a glance, the sole methods (sometimes, indeed, absurdly simple ones) by which he may seduce into error or hurry into miscalculation.

Whist has long been noted for its influence upon what is termed the calculating power; and men of the highest order of intellect have been known to take an apparently unaccountable delight in it, while eschewing chess as frivolous. Beyond doubt, there is nothing of a similar nature so greatly tasking the faculty of analysis. The best chess-player in Christendom may be little more than the best player of chess; but proficiency in whist implies capacity for success in all these more important undertakings where mind struggles with mind. When I say proficiency, I mean that perfection in the game which includes a comprehension of *all* the sources whence legitimate advantage may be derived. These are not only manifold, but multiform, and lie frequently among the recesses of thought altogether inaccessible to the ordinary understanding. To observe attentively is to remember distinctly; and, so far, the concentrative

chess-player will do very well at whist; while the rules of Hoyle (themselves based upon the mere mechanism of the game) are sufficiently and generally comprehensible. Thus, to have a retentive memory, and to proceed by "the book," are points commonly regarded as the sum total of good playing. But it is in matters beyond the limits of mere rule that the skill of the analyst is evinced. He makes, in silence, a host of observations and inferences. So, perhaps, do his companions; and the difference in the extent of the information obtained lies not so much in the validity of the inference as in the quality of the observation. The necessary knowledge is that of *what* to observe. Our player confines himself not at all; nor, because the game is the object, does he reject deductions from things external to the game. He examines the countenance of his partner, comparing it carefully with that of each of his opponents. He considers the mode of assorting the cards in each hand; often counting trump by trump, and honour by honour, through the glances bestowed by their holders upon each. He notes every variation of face as the play progresses, gathering a fund of thought from the differences in the expression of certainty, of surprise, of triumph, or chagrin. From the manner of gathering up a trick, he judges whether the person taking it can make another in the suit. He recognises what is played through feint, by the air with which it is thrown upon the table. A cas-

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ual or inadvertent word; the accidental dropping or turning of a card, with the accompanying anxiety or carelessness in regard to its concealment; the counting of the tricks, with the order of their arrangement; embarrassment, hesitation, eagerness, or trepidation—all afford, to his apparently intuitive perception, indications of the true state of affairs. The first two or three rounds having been played, he is in full possession of the contents of each hand, and thenceforward puts down his cards with as absolute a precision of purpose as if the rest of the party had turned outward the faces of their own.

The analytical power should not be confounded with simple ingenuity; for, while the analyst is necessarily ingenious, the ingenious man is often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and to which the phrenologists (I believe erroneously) have assigned a separate organ, supposing it a primitive faculty, has been so frequently seen in those whose intellect bordered otherwise upon idiocy, as to have attracted general observation among writers on morals. Between ingenuity and the analytic ability there exists a difference far greater, indeed, than that between the fancy and the imagination, but of a character very strictly analogous. It will be found, in fact, that the ingenious are always fanciful, and the truly imaginative never otherwise than analytic.

The narrative which follows will appear to the

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reader somewhat in the light of a commentary upon the propositions just advanced.

Residing in Paris during the spring and part of the summer of 18—, I there became acquainted with a Monsieur C. Auguste Dupin. This young gentleman was of an excellent—indeed of an illustrious—family, but, by a variety of untoward events, had been reduced to such poverty that the energy of his character succumbed beneath it, and he ceased to bestir himself in the world or to care for the retrieval of his fortunes. By courtesy of his creditors, there still remained in his possession a small remnant of his patrimony; and upon the income arising from this he managed, by means of a rigorous economy, to procure the necessaries of life, without troubling himself about its superfluities. Books, indeed, were his sole luxuries, and in Paris these are easily obtained.

Our first meeting was at an obscure library in the Rue Montmartre, where the accident of our both being in search of the same very rare and very remarkable volume brought us into closer communion. We saw each other again and again. I was deeply interested in the little family history which he detailed to me with all that candour which a Frenchman indulges whenever mere self is the theme. I was astonished, too, at the vast extent of his reading; and, above all, I felt my soul enkindled within me by the wild fervour and the vivid freshness of his imagination. Seeking in Paris the objects I then sought,

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I felt that the society of such a man would be to me a treasure beyond price; and this feeling I frankly confided to him. It was at length arranged that we should live together during my stay in the city; and, as my worldly circumstances were somewhat less embarrassed than his own, I was permitted to be at the expense of renting and furnishing, in a style which suited the rather fantastic gloom of our common temper, a time-eaten and grotesque mansion, long deserted through superstitions into which we did not inquire, and tottering to its fall, in a retired and desolate portion of the Faubourg St. Germain.

Had the routine of our life at this place been known to the world, we should have been regarded as madmen—although, perhaps, as madmen of a harmless nature. Our seclusion was perfect. We admitted no visitors. Indeed, the locality of our retirement had been carefully kept a secret from my own former associates; and it had been many years since Dupin had ceased to know or be known in Paris. We existed within ourselves alone.

It was a freak of fancy in my friend (for what else shall I call it?) to be enamoured of the night for her own sake; and into this *bizarrerie*, as into all his others, I quietly fell; giving myself up to his wild whims with a perfect abandon. The sable divinity would not herself dwell with us always; but we could counterfeit her presence. At the first dawn of the morning we

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closed all the massy shutters of our old building, lighting a couple of tapers which, strongly perfumed, threw out only the ghastliest and feeblest of rays. By the aid of these, we then busied our souls in dreams—reading, writing, or conversing, until warned by the clock of the advent of the true Darkness. Then we sallied forth into the streets, arm and arm, continuing the topics of the day, or roaming far and wide until a late hour, seeking amid the wild lights and shadows of the populous city that infinity of mental excitement which quiet observation can afford.

At such times I could not help remarking and admiring (although from his rich ideality I had been prepared to expect it) a peculiar analytic ability in Dupin. He seemed, too, to take an eager delight in its exercise—if not exactly in its display—and did not hesitate to confess the pleasure thus derived. He boasted to me, with a low chuckling laugh, that most men, in respect to himself, wore windows in their bosoms, and was wont to follow up such assertions by direct and very startling proofs of his intimate knowledge of my own. His manner at these moments was frigid and abstract; his eyes were vacant in expression; while his voice, usually a rich tenor, rose into a treble which would have sounded petulantly but for the deliberateness and entire distinctness of the enunciation. Observing him in these moods, I often dwelt meditatively upon the old philosophy of the Bi-Part

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Soul, and amused myself with the fancy of a double Dupin—the creative and the resolvent.

Let it not be supposed, from what I have just said, that I am detailing any mystery or penning any romance. What I have described in the Frenchman was merely the result of an excited, or perhaps of a diseased, intelligence. But of the character of his remarks at the period in question an example will best convey the idea.

We were strolling one night down a long, dirty street, in the vicinity of the Palais Royal. Being both apparently occupied with thought, neither of us had spoken a syllable for fifteen minutes at least. All at once Dupin broke forth with these words:

“He is a very little fellow, that’s true, and would do better for the *Théâtre des Variétés*.”

“There can be no doubt of that,” I replied unwittingly, and not at first observing (so much had I been absorbed in reflection) the extraordinary manner in which the speaker had chimed in with my meditations. In an instant afterward I recollected myself, and my astonishment was profound.

“Dupin,” said I, gravely, “this is beyond my comprehension. I do not hesitate to say that I am amazed, and can scarcely credit my senses. How was it possible you should know I was thinking of——?” Here I paused, to ascertain beyond a doubt whether he really knew of whom I thought.

—“of Chantilly,” said he; “why do you pause?”

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You were remarking to yourself that his diminutive figure unfitted him for tragedy."

This was precisely what had formed the subject of my reflections. Chantilly was a quondam cobbler of the Rue St. Denis, who, becoming stage-mad, had attempted the rôle of Xerxes, in Crébillon's tragedy so called, and been notoriously pasquinaded for his pains.

"Tell me, for Heaven's sake," I exclaimed, "the method—if method there is—by which you have been enabled to fathom my soul in this matter." In fact, I was even more startled than I would have been willing to express.

"It was the fruiterer," replied my friend, "who brought you to the conclusion that the mender of soles was not of sufficient height for Xerxes *et id genus omne*."

"The fruiterer!—you astonish me—I know no fruiterer whomsoever."

"The man who ran up against you as we entered the street—it may have been fifteen minutes ago."

I now remembered that, in fact, a fruiterer, carrying upon his head a large basket of apples, had nearly thrown me down, by accident, as we passed from the Rue C—— into the thoroughfare where we stood; but what this had to do with Chantilly I could not possibly understand.

There was not a particle of *charlatanerie* about Dupin. "I will explain," he said; "and, that you may comprehend all clearly, we will first retrace the course of your meditations, from the

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moment in which I spoke to you until that of the *rencontre* with the fruiterer in question. The larger links of the chain run thus—Chantilly, Orion, Dr. Nichols, Epicurus, Stereotomy, the street stones, the fruiterer.”

There are few persons who have not, at some period of their lives, amused themselves in retracing the steps by which particular conclusions of their own minds have been attained. The occupation is often full of interest; and he who attempts it for the first time is astonished by the apparently illimitable distance and incoherence between the starting-point and the goal. What, then, must have been my amazement when I heard the Frenchman speak what he had just spoken, and when I could not help acknowledging that he had spoken the truth. He continued:

“We had been talking of horses, if I remember aright, just before leaving the Rue C——. This was the last subject we discussed. As we crossed into this street, a fruiterer, with a large basket upon his head, brushing quickly past us, thrust you upon a pile of paving-stones collected at a spot where the causeway is undergoing repair. You stepped upon one of the loose fragments, slipped, slightly strained your ankle, appeared vexed or sulky, muttered a few words, turned to look at the pile, and then proceeded in silence. I was not particularly attentive to what you did; but observation has become with me, of late, a species of necessity.

“You kept your eyes upon the ground—glanc-

ing with a petulant expression at the holes and ruts in the pavement (so that I saw you were still thinking of the stones), until we reached the little alley called Lamartine, which has been paved, by way of experiment, with the overlapping and riveted blocks. Here your countenance brightened up, and, perceiving your lips move, I could not doubt that you murmured the word 'stereotomy,' a term very affectedly applied to this species of pavement. I knew that you could not say to yourself 'stereotomy' without being brought to think of atomies, and thus of the theories of Epicurus; and since, when we discussed this subject not very long ago, I mentioned to you how singularly, yet with how little notice, the vague guesses of that noble Greek had met with confirmation in the late nebular cosmogony, I felt that you could not avoid casting your eyes upward to the great nebula in Orion, and I certainly expected you would do so. You did look up; and I was now assured that I had correctly followed your steps. But in that bitter tirade upon Chantilly, which appeared in yesterday's *Musée*, the satirist, making some disgraceful allusions to the cobbler's change of name upon assuming the buskin, quoted a Latin line about which we have often conversed. I mean the line,

“ ‘ Perdidit antiquum litera prima sonum.’ ”

I had told you that this was in reference to Orion, formerly written Urion; and, from certain pun-

gencies connected with this explanation, I was aware that you could not have forgotten it. It was clear, therefore, that you would not fail to combine the two ideas of Orion and Chantilly. That you did combine them, I saw by the character of the smile which passed over your lips. You thought of the poor cobbler's immolation. So far, you had been stooping in your gait; but now I saw you draw yourself up to your full height. I was then sure that you reflected upon the diminutive figure of Chantilly. At this point I interrupted your meditations to remark that as, in fact, he *was* a very little fellow—that Chantilly—he would do better at the *Théâtre des Variétés*."

Not long after this, we were looking over an evening edition of the *Gazette des Tribunaux* when the following paragraphs arrested our attention:

"EXTRAORDINARY MURDERS.—This morning, about three o'clock, the inhabitants of the Quartier St. Roch were aroused from sleep by a succession of terrific shrieks, issuing apparently from the fourth story of a house in the Rue Morgue, known to be in the sole occupancy of one Madame L'Espanaye, and her daughter, Mademoiselle Camille L'Espanaye. After some delay, occasioned by a fruitless attempt to procure admission in the usual manner, the gateway was broken in with a crowbar, and eight or ten of the neighbours entered, accompanied by two gendarmes. By this time the cries had ceased; but, as the party rushed up the first flight of stairs, two or more rough voices, in

angry contention, were distinguished, and seemed to proceed from the upper part of the house. As the second landing was reached, these sounds also had ceased, and everything remained perfectly quiet. The party spread themselves, and hurried from room to room. Upon arriving at a large back chamber in the fourth story (the door of which, being found locked, with the key inside, was forced open), a spectacle presented itself which struck every one present not less with horror than with astonishment.

"The apartment was in the wildest disorder—the furniture broken and thrown about in all directions. There was only one bedstead, and from this the bed had been removed and thrown into the middle of the floor. On a chair lay a razor, besmeared with blood. On the hearth were two or three long and thick tresses of gray human hair, also dabbled in blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots. Upon the floor were found four Napoleons, an earring of topaz, three large silver spoons, three smaller of *métal d'Alger*, and two bags containing nearly four thousand francs in gold. The drawers of a bureau, which stood in one corner, were open, and had been, apparently, rifled, although many articles still remained in them. A small iron safe was discovered under the *bed* (not under the bedstead). It was open, with the key still in the door. It had no contents beyond a few old letters, and other papers of little consequence.

"Of Madame L'Espanaye no traces were here seen; but, an unusual quantity of soot being observed in the fireplace, a search was made in the chimney, and (horrible to relate!) the corpse of the daughter, head downward, was dragged therefrom; it having been thus forced up the narrow aperture for a considerable distance

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The body was quite warm. Upon examining it, many excoriations were perceived, no doubt occasioned by the violence with which it had been thrust up and disengaged. Upon the face were many severe scratches, and upon the throat, dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger-nails, as if the deceased had been throttled to death.

"After a thorough investigation of every portion of the house, without further discovery, the party made its way into a small paved yard in the rear of the building, where lay the corpse of the old lady, with her throat so entirely cut, that, upon an attempt to raise her, the head fell off. The body, as well as the head, was fearfully mutilated—the former so much so as scarcely to retain any semblance of humanity.

"To this horrible mystery there is not as yet, we believe, the slightest clew."

The next day's paper had these additional particulars:

"*The Tragedy in the Rue Morgue.* Many individuals have been examined in relation to this most extraordinary and frightful affair" [the word "*affaire*" has not yet, in France, that levity of import which it conveys with us], "but nothing whatever has transpired to throw light upon it. We give below all the material testimony elicited.

"*Pauline Dubourg*, laundress, deposes that she has known both the deceased for three years, having washed for them during that period. The old lady and her daughter seemed on good terms—very affectionate toward each other. They were excellent pay. Could not speak in regard to their mode or means of living. Believed that Madame L. told fortunes for a living. Was reputed to have money put by. Never met any

persons in the house when she called for the clothes or took them home. Was sure that they had no servant in employ. There appeared to be no furniture in any part of the building except in the fourth story.

"*Pierre Moreau*, tobacconist, deposes that he has been in the habit of selling small quantities of tobacco and snuff to Madame L'Espanaye for nearly four years. Was born in the neighbourhood, and has always resided there. The deceased and her daughter had occupied the house in which the corpses were found, for more than six years. It was formerly occupied by a jeweller, who underlet the upper rooms to various persons. The house was the property of Madame L. She became dissatisfied with the abuse of the premises by her tenant, and moved into them herself, refusing to let any portion. The old lady was childish. Witness had seen the daughter some five or six times during the six years. The two lived an exceedingly retired life—were reputed to have money. Had heard it said among the neighbours that Madame L. told fortunes. Did not believe it. Had never seen any person enter the door except the old lady and her daughter, a porter once or twice, and a physician some eight or ten times.

"Many other persons, neighbours, gave evidence to the same effect. No one was spoken of as frequenting the house. It was not known whether there were any living connections of Madame L. and her daughter. The shutters of the front windows were seldom opened. Those in the rear were always closed, with the exception of the large back room, fourth story. The house was a good house—not very old.

"*Isidore Muset*, gendarme, deposes that he was called to the house about three o'clock in the morning, and found some twenty or thirty persons at the gateway, endeavouring to gain

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admittance. Forced it open at length, with a bayonet—not with a crowbar. Had but little difficulty in getting it open, on account of its being a double or folding-gate, and bolted neither at bottom nor top. The shrieks were continued until the gate was forced—and then suddenly ceased. They seemed to be screams of some person (or persons) in great agony—were loud and drawn out, not short and quick. Witness led the way upstairs. Upon reaching the first landing, heard two voices in loud and angry contention: the one a gruff voice, the other much shriller—a very strange voice. Could distinguish some words of the former, which was that of a Frenchman. Was positive that it was not a woman's voice. Could distinguish the words '*sacré*' and '*diable*.' The shrill voice was that of a foreigner. Could not be sure whether it was the voice of a man or of a woman. Could not make out what was said, but believed the language to be Spanish. The state of the room and of the bodies was described by this witness as we described them yesterday.

"*Henri Duval*, a neighbour, and by trade a silversmith, deposed that he was one of the party who first entered the house. Corroborates the testimony of Muset in general. As soon as they forced an entrance, they reclosed the door, to keep out the crowd, which collected very fast, notwithstanding the lateness of the hour. The shrill voice, this witness thinks, was that of an Italian. Was certain it was not French. Could not be sure that it was a man's voice. It might have been a woman's. Was not acquainted with the Italian language. Could not distinguish the words, but was convinced, by the intonation, that the speaker was an Italian. Knew Madame L. and her daughter. Had conversed with both frequently. Was sure that the shrill voice was not that of either of the deceased.

“—— *Odenheimer, restaurateur*. This witness volunteered his testimony. Not speaking French, was examined through an interpreter. Is a native of Amsterdam. Was passing the house at the time of the shrieks. They lasted for several minutes—probably ten. They were long and loud—very awful and distressing. Was one of those who entered the building. Corroborated the previous evidence in every respect but one. Was sure that the shrill voice was that of a man—of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish the words uttered. They were loud and quick—unequal—spoken apparently in fear as well as in anger. The voice was harsh—not so much shrill as harsh. Could not call it a shrill voice. The gruff voice said repeatedly, ‘*sacré*,’ ‘*diable*,’ and once ‘*mon Dieu*.’

“*Jules Mignaud*, banker, of the firm of Mignaud et Fils, Rue Deloraine. Is the elder Mignaud. Madame L’Espanaye had some property. Had opened an account with his banking house in the spring of the year —— (eight years previously). Made frequent deposits in small sums. Had checked for nothing until the third day before her death, when she took out in person the sum of 4,000 francs. This sum was paid in gold, and a clerk sent home with the money.

“*Adolphe Le Bon*, clerk to Mignaud et Fils, deposes that on the day in question, about noon, he accompanied Madame L’Espanaye to her residence with the 4,000 francs, put up in two bags. Upon the door being opened, Mademoiselle L. appeared, and took from his hands one of the bags, while the old lady relieved him of the other. He then bowed, and departed. Did not see any person in the street at the time. It is a by-street—very lonely.

“*William Bird*, tailor, deposes that he was one of the party who entered the house. Is an

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Englishman. Has lived in Paris two years. Was one of the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could make out several words, but cannot now remember all. Heard distinctly '*sacré*' and '*mon Dieu*.' There was a sound at the moment as if of several persons struggling—a scraping and scuffling sound. The shrill voice was very loud—louder than the gruff one. Is sure that it was not the voice of an Englishman. Appeared to be that of a German. Might have been a woman's voice. Does not understand German.

"Four of the above-named witnesses, being recalled, deposed that the door of the chamber in which was found the body of Mademoiselle L. was locked on the inside when the party reached it. Everything was perfectly silent—no groans or noises of any kind. Upon forcing the door, no person was seen. The windows, both of the back and front room, were down and firmly fastened from within. A door between the two rooms was closed. The door leading from the front room into the passage was locked, with the key on the inside. A small room in the front of the house, on the fourth story, at the head of the passage, was open, the door being ajar. This room was crowded with old beds, boxes, and so forth. These were carefully removed and searched. There was not an inch of any portion of the house which was not carefully searched. Sweeps were sent up and down the chimneys. The house was a four-story one, with garrets (*mansardes*). A trap-door on the roof was nailed down very securely—did not appear to have been opened for years. The time elapsing between the hearing of the voices in contention and the breaking open of the room door was variously stated by the witnesses. Some made it as short as three minutes—some

as long as five. The door was opened with difficulty.

"*Alfonzo Garcia*, undertaker, deposes that he resides in the Rue Morgue. Is a native of Spain. Was one of the party who entered the house. Did not proceed upstairs. Is nervous, and was apprehensive of the consequences of agitation. Heard the voices in contention. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Could not distinguish what was said. The shrill voice was that of an Englishman—is sure of this. Does not understand the English language, but judges by the intonation.

"*Alberto Montani*, confectioner, deposes that he was among the first to ascend the stairs. Heard the voices in question. The gruff voice was that of a Frenchman. Distinguished several words. The speaker appeared to be expostulating. Could not make out the words of the shrill voice. Spoke quick and unevenly. Thinks it the voice of a Russian. Corroborates the general testimony. Is an Italian. Never conversed with a native of Russia.

"Several witnesses, recalled, here testified that the chimneys of all the rooms on the fourth story were too narrow to admit the passage of a human being. By 'sweeps' were meant cylindrical sweeping-brushes, such as are employed by those who clean chimneys. These brushes were passed up and down every flue in the house. There was no back passage by which any one could have descended while the party proceeded upstairs. The body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye was so firmly wedged in the chimney that it could not be got down until four or five of the party united their strength.

"*Paul Dumas*, physician, deposes that he was called to view the bodies about daybreak. They were both then lying on the sacking of the bedstead in the chamber where Mademoiselle L.

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was found. The corpse of the young lady was much bruised and excoriated. The fact that it had been thrust up the chimney would sufficiently account for these appearances. The throat was greatly chafed. There were several deep scratches just below the chin, together with a series of livid spots which were evidently the impression of fingers. The face was fearfully discoloured, and the eyeballs protruded. The tongue had been partially bitten through. A large bruise was discovered upon the pit of the stomach, produced apparently by the pressure of a knee. In the opinion of M. Dumas, Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been throttled to death by some person or persons unknown. The corpse of the mother was horribly mutilated. All the bones of the right leg and arm were more or less shattered. The left *tibia* much splintered, as well as all the ribs of the left side. Whole body dreadfully bruised and discoloured. It was not possible to say how the injuries had been inflicted. A heavy club of wood, or a broad bar of iron—a chair—any large, heavy, and obtuse weapon would have produced such results, if wielded by the hands of a very powerful man. No woman could have inflicted the blows with any weapon. The head of the deceased, when seen by witness, was entirely separated from the body, and was also greatly shattered. The throat had evidently been cut with some very sharp instrument—probably with a razor.

"*Alexandre Etienne*, surgeon, was called with M. Dumas to view the bodies. Corroborated the testimony and the opinions of M. Dumas.

"Nothing further of importance was elicited, although several other persons were examined. A murder so mysterious, and so perplexing in all its particulars, was never before committed in Paris—if, indeed, a murder has been committed at all. The police are entirely at fault—an

unusual occurrence in affairs of this nature. There is not, however, the shadow of a clew apparent."

The evening edition of the paper stated that the greatest excitement still continued in the Quartier St. Roch—that the premises in question had been carefully re-searched, and fresh examinations of witnesses instituted, but all to no purpose. A postscript, however, mentioned that Adolphe Le Bon had been arrested and imprisoned, although nothing appeared to criminate him, beyond the facts already detailed.

Dupin seemed singularly interested in the progress of this affair—at least so I judged from his manner, for he made no comments. It was only after the announcement that Le Bon had been imprisoned that he asked me my opinion respecting the murders.

I could merely agree with all Paris in considering them an insoluble mystery. I saw no means by which it would be possible to trace the murderer.

"We must not judge of the means," said Dupin, "by this shell of an examination. The Parisian police, so much extolled for acumen, are cunning, but no more. There is no method in their proceedings, beyond the method of the moment. They make a vast parade of measures; but, not unfrequently, these are so ill adapted to the objects proposed, as to put us in mind of Monsieur Jourdain's calling for his *robe de chambre*—*pour mieux entendre la musique*. The

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results attained by them are not unfrequently surprising, but, for the most part, are brought about by simple diligence and activity. When these qualities are unavailing, their schemes fail. Vidocq, for example, was a good guesser and a persevering man. But, without educated thought, he erred continually by the very intensity of his investigations. He impaired his vision by holding the object too close. He might see, perhaps, one or two points with unusual clearness, but in so doing he necessarily lost sight of the matter as a whole. Thus there is such a thing as being too profound. Truth is not always in a well. In fact, as regards the more important knowledge, I do believe that she is invariably superficial. The depth lies in the valleys where we seek her, and not upon the mountain-tops where she is found. The modes and sources of this kind of error are well typified in the contemplation of the heavenly bodies. To look at a star by glances—to view it in a sidelong way, by turning toward it the exterior portions of the retina (more susceptible of feeble impressions of light than the interior), is to behold the star distinctly—is to have the best appreciation of its lustre; a lustre which grows dim just in proportion as we turn our vision *fully* upon it. A greater number of rays actually fall upon the eye in the latter case, but, in the former, there is the more refined capacity for comprehension. By undue profundity we perplex and enfeeble thought; and it is possible to

make even Venus herself vanish from the firmament by a scrutiny too sustained, too concentrated, or too direct.

“As for these murders, let us enter into some examinations for ourselves, before we make up an opinion respecting them. An inquiry will afford us amusement” [I thought this an odd term, so applied, but said nothing], “and, besides, Le Bon once rendered me a service for which I am not ungrateful. We will go and see the premises with our own eyes. I know G——, the Prefect of Police, and shall have no difficulty in obtaining the necessary permission.”

The permission was obtained, and we proceeded at once to the Rue Morgue. This is one of those miserable thoroughfares which intervene between the Rue Richelieu and the Rue St. Roch. It was late in the afternoon when we reached it, as this quarter is at a great distance from that in which we resided. The house was readily found; for there were still many persons gazing up at the closed shutters, with an objectless curiosity, from the opposite side of the way. It was an ordinary Parisian house, with a gateway on one side of which was a glazed watch-box, with a sliding panel in the window, indicating a *loge de concierge*. Before going in we walked up the street, turned down an alley, and then, again turning, passed in the rear of the building—Dupin, meanwhile, examining the whole neighbourhood, as well as the house,

with a minuteness of attention for which I could see no possible object.

Retracing our steps, we came again to the front of the dwelling, rang, and, having shown our credentials, were admitted by the agents in charge. We went upstairs—into the chamber where the body of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye had been found, and where both the deceased still lay. The disorders of the room had, as usual, been suffered to exist. I saw nothing beyond what had been stated in the *Gazette des Tribunaux*. Dupin scrutinised everything, not excepting the bodies of the victims. We then went into the other rooms, and into the yard; a gendarme accompanying us throughout. The examination occupied us until dark, when we took our departure. On our way home my companion stepped in for a moment at the office of one of the daily papers.

I have said that the whims of my friend were manifold, and that *Je les ménagais*:—for this phrase there is no English equivalent. It was his humour, now, to decline all conversation on the subject of the murder until about noon the next day. He then asked me if I had observed anything *peculiar* at the scene of the atrocity.

There was something in his manner of emphasising the word “peculiar” which caused me to shudder, without knowing why.

“No, nothing *peculiar*,” I said; “nothing more, at least, than we both saw stated in the paper.”

“The *Gazette*,” he replied, “has not entered, I

fear, into the unusual horror of the thing. But dismiss the idle opinions of this print. It appears to me that this mystery is considered insoluble, for the very reason which should cause it to be regarded as easy of solution—I mean, for the *outré* character of its features. The police are confounded by the seeming absence of motive: not for the murder itself, but for the atrocity of the murder. They are puzzled, too, by the seeming impossibility of reconciling the voices heard in contention with the facts that no one was discovered upstairs but the assassinated Mademoiselle L’Espanaye, and that there were no means of egress without the notice of the party ascending. The wild disorder of the room; the corpse thrust, with the head downward, up the chimney; the frightful mutilation of the body of the old lady—these considerations, with those just mentioned, and others which I need not mention, have sufficed to paralyse the powers, by putting completely at fault the boasted acumen, of the government agents. They have fallen into the gross but common error of confounding the unusual with the abstruse. But it is by these deviations from the plane of the ordinary that reason feels its way, if at all, in its search for the true. In investigations such as we are now pursuing, it should not be so much asked ‘what has occurred,’ as ‘what has occurred that has never occurred before.’ In fact, the facility with which I shall arrive, or have arrived, at the solution of this mystery, is in the

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direct ratio of its apparent insolubility in the eyes of the police."

I stared at the speaker in mute astonishment.

"I am now awaiting," continued he, looking toward the door of our apartment—"I am now awaiting a person who, although perhaps not the perpetrator of these butcheries, must have been in some measure implicated in their perpetration. Of the worst portion of the crimes committed it is probable that he is innocent. I hope that I am right in this supposition; for upon it I build my expectation of reading the entire riddle. I look for the man here—in this room—every moment. It is true that he may not arrive; but the probability is that he will. Should he come, it will be necessary to detain him. Here are pistols; and we both know how to use them when occasion demands their use."

I took the pistols, scarcely knowing what I did, or believing what I heard, while Dupin went on, very much as if in a soliloquy. I have already spoken of his abstract manner at such times. His discourse was addressed to myself; but his voice, although by no means loud, had that intonation which is commonly employed in speaking to some one at a great distance. His eyes, vacant in expression, regarded only the wall.

"That the voices heard in contention," he said, "by the party upon the stairs, were not the voices of the women themselves, was fully proved by the evidence. This relieves us of all doubt upon the question whether the old lady could have first

destroyed the daughter, and afterward have committed suicide. I speak of this point chiefly for the sake of method; for the strength of Madame L'Espanaye would have been utterly unequal to the task of thrusting her daughter's corpse up the chimney as it was found; and the nature of the wounds upon her own person entirely preclude the idea of self-destruction. Murder, then, has been committed by some third party; and the voices of this third party were those heard in contention. Let me now advert—not to the whole testimony respecting these voices—but to what was *peculiar* in that testimony. Did you observe anything peculiar about it?"

I remarked that, while all the witnesses agreed in supposing the gruff voice to be that of a Frenchman, there was much disagreement in regard to the shrill, or, as one individual termed it, the harsh voice.

"That was the evidence itself," said Dupin, "but it was not the peculiarity of the evidence. You have observed nothing distinctive. Yet there *was* something to be observed. The witnesses, as you remark, agreed about the gruff voice; they were here unanimous. But in regard to the shrill voice, the peculiarity is—not that they disagreed—but that, while an Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, a Hollander, and a Frenchman attempted to describe it, each one spoke of it as that of a *foreigner*. Each is sure that it was not the voice of one of his own countrymen. Each likens it—not to the voice of an

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individual of any nation with whose language he is conversant—but the converse. The Frenchman supposes it the voice of a Spaniard, and ‘might have distinguished some words, *had he been acquainted with the Spanish.*’ The Dutchman maintains it to have been that of a Frenchman; but we find it stated that, ‘*not understanding French, this witness was examined through an interpreter.*’ The Englishman thinks it the voice of a German, and ‘*does not understand German.*’ The Spaniard ‘is sure’ that it was that of an Englishman, but ‘judges by the intonation’ altogether, ‘*as he has no knowledge of the English.*’ The Italian believes in the voice of a Russian, but ‘*has never conversed with a native of Russia.*’ A second Frenchman differs, moreover, with the first, and is positive that the voice was that of an Italian; but, *not being cognisant of that tongue*, is, like the Spaniard, ‘convinced by the intonation.’ Now, how strangely unusual must that voice have really been, about which such testimony as this *could* have been elicited!—in whose *tones*, even, denizens of the five great divisions of Europe could recognise nothing familiar! You will say that it might have been the voice of an Asiatic—of an African. Neither Asiatics nor Africans abound in Paris; but, without denying the inference, I will now merely call your attention to three points. The voice is termed by one witness ‘harsh rather than shrill.’ It is represented by two others to have been ‘quick and *unequal.*’ No words—no sounds resembling

words—were by any witness mentioned as distinguishable.

“I know not,” continued Dupin, “what impression I may have made, so far, upon your own understanding; but I do not hesitate to say that legitimate deductions even from this portion of the testimony—the portion respecting the gruff and shrill voices—are in themselves sufficient to engender a suspicion which should give direction to all farther progress in the investigation of the mystery. I said ‘legitimate deductions’; but my meaning is not thus fully expressed. I designed to imply that the deductions are the *sole* proper ones, and that the suspicion arises *inevitably* from them as the single result. What the suspicion is, however, I will not say just yet. I merely wish you to bear in mind that, with myself, it was sufficiently forcible to give a definite form, a certain tendency, to my inquiries in the chamber.

“Let us now transport ourselves, in fancy, to this chamber. What shall we first seek here? The means of egress employed by the murderers. It is not too much to say that neither of us believes in preternatural events. Madame and Mademoiselle L’Espanaye were not destroyed by spirits. The doers of the deed were material, and escaped materially. Then, how? Fortunately, there is but one mode of reasoning upon the point, and that mode *must* lead us to a definite decision. Let us examine, each by each, the possible means of egress. It is clear that the assassins were in the room where Mademoiselle L’Espanaye was

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found, or at least in the room adjoining, when the party ascended the stairs. It is then only from these two apartments that we have to seek issues. The police have laid bare the floors, the ceilings, and the masonry of the walls, in every direction. No *secret* issues could have escaped their vigilance. But, not trusting to their eyes, I examined with my own. There were, then, *no* secret issues. Both doors leading from the rooms into the passage were securely locked, with the keys inside. Let us turn to the chimneys. These, although of ordinary width for some eight or ten feet above the hearths, will not admit, throughout their extent, the body of a large cat. The impossibility of egress, by the means already stated, being thus absolute, we are reduced to the windows. Through those of the front room, no one could have escaped without notice from the crowd in the street. The murderers *must* have passed, then, through those of the back room. Now, brought to this conclusion in so unequivocal a manner as we are, it is our part, as reasoners, to reject it on account of apparent impossibilities. It is only left for us to prove that these apparent 'impossibilities' are, in reality, not such.

"There are two windows in the chamber. One of them is unobstructed by furniture, and is wholly visible. The lower portion of the other is hidden from view by the head of the unwieldy bedstead, which is thrust close up against it. The former was found securely fastened from

within. It resisted the utmost force of those who endeavoured to raise it. A large gimlet-hole had been pierced in its frame to the left, and a very stout nail was found fitted therein, nearly to the head. Upon examining the other window, a similar nail was seen similarly fitted in it; and a vigorous attempt to raise this sash failed also. The police were now entirely satisfied that egress had not been in these directions. And, *therefore*, it was thought a matter of supererogation to withdraw the nails and open the windows.

“My own examination was somewhat more particular, and was so for the reason I have just given; because here it was, I knew, that all apparent impossibilities *must* be proved to be not such in reality.

“I proceeded to think thus—*à posteriori*. The murderers *did* escape from one of these windows. This being so, they could not have refastened the sashes from the inside, as they were found fastened: the consideration which put a stop, through its obviousness, to the scrutiny of the police in this quarter. Yet the sashes *were* fastened. They *must*, then, have the power of fastening themselves. There was no escape from this conclusion. I stepped to the unobstructed case-ment, withdrew the nail with some difficulty, and attempted to raise the sash. It resisted all my efforts, as I had anticipated. A concealed spring must, I now knew, exist; and this corroboration of my idea convinced me that my premises, at least, were correct, however mys-

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terious still appeared the circumstances attending the nails. A careful search soon brought to light the hidden spring. I pressed it, and, satisfied with the discovery, forbore to upraise the sash.

"I now replaced the nail, and regarded it attentively. A person passing out through this window might have reclosed it, and the spring would have caught—but the nail could not have been replaced. The conclusion was plain, and again narrowed in the field of my investigations. The assassins *must* have escaped through the other window. Supposing, then, the springs upon each sash to be the same—as was probable—there *must* be found a difference between the nails, or at least between the modes of their fixture. Getting upon the sacking of the bedstead, I looked over the head-board minutely at the second casement. Passing my hand down behind the board, I readily discovered and pressed the spring, which was, as I had supposed, identical in character with its neighbour. I now looked at the nail. It was as stout as the other, and apparently fitted in the same manner—driven in nearly up to the head.

"You will say that I was puzzled; but, if you think so, you must have misunderstood the nature of the inductions. To use a sporting phrase, I had not been once 'at fault.' The scent had never for an instant been lost. There was no flaw in any link of the chain. I had traced the secret to its ultimate result—and that

result was *the nail*. It had, I say, in every respect, the appearance of its fellow in the other window; but this fact was an absolute nullity (conclusive as it might seem to be) when compared with the consideration that here, at this point, terminated the clew. 'There *must* be something wrong,' I said, 'about the nail.' I touched it; and the head, with about a quarter of an inch of the shank, came off in my fingers. The rest of the shank was in the gimlet-hole, where it had been broken off. The fracture was an old one (for its edges were incrustated with rust), and had apparently been accomplished by the blow of a hammer, which had partially embedded, in the top of the bottom sash, the head portion of the nail. I now carefully replaced this head portion in the indentation whence I had taken it, and the resemblance to a perfect nail was complete—the fissure was invisible. Pressing the spring, I gently raised the sash for a few inches; the head went up with it, remaining firm in its bed. I closed the window, and the semblance of the whole nail was again perfect.

"The riddle, so far, was now unriddled. The assassin had escaped through the window which looked upon the bed. Dropping of its own accord upon his exit (or perhaps purposely closed), it had become fastened by the spring; and it was the retention of this spring which had been mistaken by the police for that of the nail—further inquiry being thus considered unnecessary.

"The next question is that of the mode of

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descent. Upon this point I had been satisfied in my walk with you around the building. About five feet and a half from the casement in question there runs a lightning-rod. From this rod it would have been impossible for any one to reach the window itself, to say nothing of entering it. I observed, however, that the shutters of the fourth story were of the peculiar kind called by Parisian carpenters *ferrades*—a kind rarely employed at the present day, but frequently seen upon very old mansions at Lyons and Bordeaux. They are in the form of an ordinary door (a single, not a folding door), except that the upper half is latticed or worked in open trellis—thus affording an excellent hold for the hands. In the present instance these shutters are fully three feet and a half broad. When we saw them from the rear of the house, they were both about half open—that is to say, they stood off at right angles from the wall. It is probable that the police, as well as myself, examined the back of the tenement; but, if so, in looking at these *ferrades* in the line of their breadth (as they must have done), they did not perceive this great breadth itself, or, at all events, failed to take it into due consideration. In fact, having once satisfied themselves that no egress could have been made in this quarter, they would naturally bestow here a very cursory examination. It was clear to me, however, that the shutter belonging to the window at the head of the bed would, if swung fully back to the wall, reach to within two feet of the lightning-rod. It

was also evident that, by exertion of a very unusual degree of activity and courage, an entrance into the window, from the rod, might have been thus effected. By reaching to the distance of two feet and a half (we now suppose the shutter open to its whole extent), a robber might have taken a firm grasp upon the trellis-work. Letting go, then, his hold upon the rod, placing his feet securely against the wall, and springing boldly from it, he might have swung the shutter so as to close it, and, if we imagine the window open at the time, might even have swung himself into the room.

"I wish you to bear especially in mind that I have spoken of a *very* unusual degree of activity as requisite to success in so hazardous and so difficult a feat. It is my design to show you, first, that the thing might possibly have been accomplished; but, secondly and *chiefly*, I wish to impress upon your understanding the *very extraordinary*, the almost preternatural, character of that agility which could have accomplished it.

"You will say, no doubt, using the language of the law, that 'to make out my case' I should rather undervalue than insist upon a full estimation of the activity required in this matter. This may be the practice in law, but it is not the usage of reason. My ultimate object is only the truth. My immediate purpose is to lead you to place in juxtaposition that *very unusual* activity, of which I have just spoken, with that *very peculiar*

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shrill (or harsh) and *unequal* voice, about whose nationality no two persons could be found to agree, and in whose utterance no syllabification could be detected."

At these words a vague and half-formed conception of the meaning of Dupin flitted over my mind. I seemed to be upon the verge of comprehension, without power to comprehend; as men, at times, find themselves upon the brink of remembrance, without being able, in the end, to remember. My friend went on with his discourse.

"You will see," he said, "that I have shifted the question from the mode of egress to that of ingress. It was my design to suggest that both were effected in the same manner, at the same point. Let us now revert to the interior of the room. Let us survey the appearances here. The drawers of the bureau, it is said, had been rifled, although many articles of apparel still remained within them. The conclusion here is absurd. It is a mere guess—a very silly one—and no more. How are we to know that the articles found in the drawers were not all these drawers had originally contained? Madame L'Esplanaye and her daughter lived an exceedingly retired life—saw no company, seldom went out, had little use for numerous changes of habili-ment. Those found were at least of as good quality as any likely to be possessed by these ladies. If a thief had taken any, why did he not take the best—why did he not take all? In a

word, why did he abandon four thousand francs in gold to encumber himself with a bundle of linen? The gold *was* abandoned. Nearly the whole sum mentioned by Monsieur Mignaud, the banker, was discovered, in bags, upon the floor. I wish you, therefore, to discard from your thoughts the blundering idea of a *motive*, engendered in the brains of the police by that portion of the evidence which speaks of money delivered at the door of the house. Coincidences ten times as remarkable as this (the delivery of the money, and murder committed within three days upon the party receiving it) happen to all of us every hour of our lives, without attracting even momentary notice. Coincidences, in general, are great stumbling-blocks in the way of that class of thinkers who have been educated to know nothing of the theory of probabilities: that theory to which the most glorious objects of human research are indebted for the most glorious of illustration. In the present instance, had the gold been gone, the fact of its delivery three days before would have formed something more than a coincidence. It would have been corroborative of this idea of motive. But, under the real circumstances of the case, if we are to suppose gold the motive of this outrage, we must also imagine the perpetrator so vacillating an idiot as to have abandoned his gold and his motive together.

“Keeping now steadily in mind the points to which I have drawn your attention—that peculiar voice, that unusual agility, and that startling

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absence of motive in a murder so singularly atrocious as this—let us glance at the butchery itself. Here is a woman strangled to death by manual strength, and thrust up a chimney, head downward. Ordinary assassins employ no such modes of murder as this. Least of all, do they thus dispose of the murdered. In the manner of thrusting the corpse up the chimney, you will admit that there was something *excessively outré*—something altogether irreconcilable with our common notions of human action, even when we suppose the actors the most depraved of men. Think, too, how great must have been that strength which could have thrust the body *up* such an aperture so forcibly that the united vigour of several persons was found barely sufficient to drag it *down*!

“Turn, now, to other indications of the employment of a vigour most marvellous. On the hearth were thick tresses—very thick tresses—of gray human hair. These had been torn out by the roots. You are aware of the great force necessary in tearing thus from the head even twenty or thirty hairs together. You saw the locks in question as well as myself. Their roots (a hideous sight!) were clotted with fragments of the flesh of the scalp: sure token of the prodigious power which had been exerted in uprooting perhaps half a million of hairs at a time. The throat of the old lady was not merely cut, but the head absolutely severed from the body: the instrument was a mere razor. I wish you also

to look at the *brutal* ferocity of these deeds. Of the bruises upon the body of Madame L'Esplanaye I do not speak. Monsieur Dumas, and his worthy coadjutor Monsieur Étienne, have pronounced that they were inflicted by some obtuse instrument; and so far these gentlemen are very correct. The obtuse instrument was clearly the stone pavement in the yard, upon which the victim had fallen from the window which looked in upon the bed. This idea, however simple it may now seem, escaped the police for the same reason that the breadth of the shutters escaped them—because, by the affair of the nails, their perceptions had been hermetically sealed against the possibility of the windows having ever been opened at all.

“If now, in addition to all these things, you have properly reflected upon the odd disorder of the chamber, we have gone so far as to combine the ideas of an agility astounding, a strength superhuman, a ferocity brutal, a butchery without motive, a *grotesquerie* in horror absolutely alien from humanity, and a voice foreign in tone to the ears of men of many nations, and devoid of all distinct or intelligible syllabification. What result, then, has ensued? What impression have I made upon your fancy?”

I felt a creeping of the flesh as Dupin asked me the question. “A madman,” I said, “has done this deed—some raving maniac, escaped from a neighbouring *Maison de Santé*.”

“In some respects,” he replied, “your idea is

not irrelevant. But the voices of madmen, even in their wildest paroxysms, are never found to tally with that peculiar voice heard upon the stairs. Madmen are of some nation, and their language, however incoherent in its words, has always the coherence of syllabification. Besides, the hair of a madman is not such as I now hold in my hand. I disentangled this little tuft from the rigidly clutched fingers of Madame L'Espanaye. Tell me what you can make of it."

"Dupin!" I said, completely unnerved; "this hair is most unusual—this is no *human* hair."

"I have not asserted that it is," said he; "but, before we decide this point, I wish you to glance at the little sketch I have here traced upon this paper. It is a facsimile drawing of what has been described in one portion of the testimony as 'dark bruises, and deep indentations of finger-nails,' upon the throat of Mademoiselle L'Espanaye, and in another (by Messrs. Dumas and Étienne) as a 'series of livid spots, evidently the impression of fingers.'

"You will perceive," continued my friend, spreading out the paper upon the table before us, "that this drawing gives the idea of a firm and fixed hold. There is no *slipping* apparent. Each finger has retained—possibly until the death of the victim—the fearful grasp by which it originally imbedded itself. Attempt, now, to place all your fingers, at the same time, in the respective impressions as you see them."

I made the attempt in vain.

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"We are possibly not giving this matter a fair trial," he said. "The paper is spread out upon a plane surface; but the human throat is cylindrical. Here is a billet of wood, the circumference of which is about that of the throat. Wrap the drawing around it, and try the experiment again."

I did so; but the difficulty was even more obvious than before. "This," I said, "is the mark of no human hand."

"Read now," replied Dupin, "this passage from Cuvier."

It was a minute anatomical and generally descriptive account of the large fulvous Orang-Outang of the East Indian Islands. The gigantic stature, the prodigious strength and activity, the wild ferocity, and the imitative propensities of these mammalia are sufficiently well known to all. I understood the full horrors of the murder at once.

"The description of the digits," said I, as I made an end of reading, "is in exact accordance with this drawing. I see that no animal but an Orang-Outang, of the species here mentioned, could have impressed the indentations as you have traced them. This tuft of tawny hair, too, is identical in character with that of the beast of Cuvier. But I cannot possibly comprehend the particulars of this frightful mystery. Besides, there were *two* voices heard in contention, and one of them was unquestionably the voice of a Frenchman."

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“True; and you will remember an expression attributed almost unanimously, by the evidence, to this voice—the expression, ‘*mon Dieu!*’ This, under the circumstances, has been justly characterised by one of the witnesses (Montani, the confectioner) as an expression of remonstrance or expostulation. Upon these two words, therefore, I have mainly built my hopes of a full solution of the riddle. A Frenchman was cognisant of the murder. It is possible—indeed, it is far more than probable—that he was innocent of all participation in the bloody transactions which took place. The Orang-Outang may have escaped from him. He may have traced it to the chamber; but, under the agitating circumstances which ensued, he could never have recaptured it. It is still at large. I will not pursue these guesses—for I have no right to call them more—since the shades of reflection upon which they are based are scarcely of sufficient depth to be appreciable by my own intellect, and since I could not pretend to make them intelligible to the understanding of another. We will call them guesses, then, and speak of them as such. If the Frenchman in question is indeed, as I suppose, innocent of this atrocity, this advertisement, which I left last night, upon our return home, at the office of *Le Monde* (a paper devoted to the shipping interest, and much sought by sailors), will bring him to our residence.”

He handed me a paper, and I read thus:

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"CAUGHT—*In the Bois de Boulogne, early in the morning of the — inst. [the morning of the murder], a very large, tawny Orang-Outang of the Borneese species. The owner (who is ascertained to be a sailor, belonging to a Maltese vessel) may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfactorily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No. —, Rue —, Faubourg St. Germain—au troisième.*"

"How was it possible," I asked, "that you should know the man to be a sailor, and belonging to a Maltese vessel?"

"I do *not* know it," said Dupin. "I am not *sure* of it. Here, however, is a small piece of ribbon, which, from its form, and from its greasy appearance, has evidently been used in tying the hair in one of those long *queues* of which sailors are so fond. Moreover, this knot is one which few besides sailors can tie, and is peculiar to the Maltese. I picked the ribbon up at the foot of the lightning-rod. It could not have belonged to either of the deceased. Now if, after all, I am wrong in my induction from this ribbon, that the Frenchman was a sailor belonging to a Maltese vessel, still I can have done no harm in saying what I did in the advertisement. If I am in error, he will merely suppose that I have been misled by some circumstance into which he will not take the trouble to inquire. But if I am right, a great point is gained. Cognisant although innocent of the murder, the Frenchman will naturally hesitate about replying to the adver-

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tisement—about demanding the Orang-Outang. He will reason thus: 'I am innocent; I am poor; my Orang-Outang is of great value — to one in my circumstances a fortune of itself—why should I lose it through idle apprehensions of danger? Here it is, within my grasp. It was found in the Bois de Boulogne—at a vast distance from the scene of that butchery. How can it ever be suspected that a brute beast should have done the deed? The police are at fault; they have failed to procure the slightest clew. Should they even trace the animal, it would be impossible to prove me cognisant of the murder, or to implicate me in guilt on account of that cognisance. Above all, *I am known*. The advertiser designates me as the possessor of the beast. I am not sure to what limit his knowledge may extend. Should I avoid claiming a property so of great value, which it is known that I possess, I will render the animal, at least, liable to suspicion. It is not my policy to attract attention either to myself or to the beast. I will answer the advertisement, get the Orang-Outang, and keep it close until this matter has blown over.'"

At this moment we heard a step upon the stairs.

"Be ready," said Dupin, "with your pistols, but neither use them nor show them until at a signal from myself."

The front door of the house had been left open, and the visitor had entered, without ringing, and advanced several steps upon the staircase.

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Now, however, he seemed to hesitate. Presently we heard him descending. Dupin was moving quickly to the door, when we again heard him coming up. He did not turn back a second time, but stepped up with decision, and rapped at the door of our chamber.

"Come in," said Dupin, in a cheerful and hearty tone.

A man entered. He was a sailor, evidently—a tall, stout, and muscular-looking person, with a certain dare-devil expression of countenance, not altogether unprepossessing. His face, greatly sunburnt, was more than half hidden by whisker and *mustachio*. He had with him a huge oaken cudgel, but appeared to be otherwise unarmed. He bowed awkwardly, and bade us "good-evening," in French accents, which, although somewhat Neuchâtelish, were still sufficiently indicative of a Parisian origin.

"Sit down, my friend," said Dupin. "I suppose you have called about the Orang-Outang. Upon my word, I almost envy you the possession of him; a remarkably fine, and no doubt a very valuable animal. How old do you suppose him to be?"

The sailor drew a long breath, with the air of a man relieved of some intolerable burden, and then replied, in an assured tone:

"I have no way of telling—but he can't be more than four or five years old. Have you got him here?"

"Oh, no; we had no conveniences for keeping

him here. He is at a livery stable in the Rue Dubourg, just by. You can get him in the morning. Of course, you are prepared to identify the property?"

"To be sure I am, sir."

"I shall be sorry to part with him," said Dupin.

"I don't mean that you should be at all this trouble for nothing, sir," said the man. "Couldn't expect it. Am very willing to pay a reward for the finding of the animal—that is to say, anything in reason."

"Well," replied my friend, "that is all very fair, to be sure. Let me think!—what should I have? Oh! I will tell you. My reward shall be this: You shall give me all the information in your power about those murders in the Rue Morgue."

Dupin said the last words in a very low tone, and very quietly. Just as quietly, too, he walked toward the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket. He then drew a pistol from his bosom and placed it, without the least flurry, upon the table.

The sailor's face flushed up as if he were struggling with suffocation. He started to his feet, and grasped his cudgel; but the next moment he fell back into his seat, trembling violently, and with the countenance of death itself. He spoke not a word. I pitied him from the bottom of my heart.

"My friend," said Dupin, in a kind tone, "you are alarming yourself unnecessarily—you are

indeed. We mean you no harm whatever. I pledge you the honour of a gentleman, and of a Frenchman, that we intend you no injury. I perfectly well know that you are innocent of the atrocities in the Rue Morgue. It will not do, however, to deny that you are in some measure implicated in them. From what I have already said, you must know that I have had means of information about this matter—means of which you could never have dreamed. Now the thing stands thus. You have done nothing which you could have avoided—nothing, certainly, which renders you culpable. You were not even guilty of robbery, when you might have robbed with impunity. You have nothing to conceal. You have no reason for concealment. On the other hand, you are bound by every principle of honour to confess all you know. An innocent man is now imprisoned, charged with that crime of which you can point out the perpetrator.”

The sailor had recovered his presence of mind in a great measure, while Dupin uttered these words; but his original boldness of bearing was all gone.

“So help me God,” said he, after a brief pause, “I *will* tell you all I know about this affair; but I do not expect you to believe one-half I say—I would be a fool indeed if I did. Still, I *am* innocent, and I will make a clean breast if I die for it.”

What he stated was, in substance, this: He had lately made a voyage to the Indian Archipelago.

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A party, of which he formed one, landed at Borneo, and passed into the interior on an excursion of pleasure. Himself and a companion had captured the Orang-Outang. This companion dying, the animal fell into his own exclusive possession. After great trouble, occasioned by the intractable ferocity of his captive during the home voyage, he at length succeeded in lodging it safely at his own residence at Paris, where, not to attract toward himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbours, he kept it carefully secluded, until such time as it should recover from a wound in the foot, received from a splinter on board ship. His ultimate design was to sell it.

Returning home from some sailors' frolic on the night, or rather in the morning, of the murder, he found the beast occupying his own bedroom, into which it had broken from a closet adjoining, where it had been, as was thought, securely confined. Razor in hand, and fully lathered, it was sitting before a looking-glass, attempting the operation of shaving, in which it had no doubt previously watched its master through the keyhole of the closet. Terrified at the sight of so dangerous a weapon in the possession of an animal so ferocious, and so well able to use it, the man for some moments was at a loss what to do. He had been accustomed, however, to quiet the creature, even in its fiercest moods, by the use of a whip, and to this he now resorted. Upon sight of it, the Orang-Outang sprang at once through the door of the chamber,

down the stairs, and thence, through a window, unfortunately open, into the street.

The Frenchman followed in despair; the ape, razor still in hand, occasionally stopping to look back and gesticulating at its pursuer, until the latter had nearly come up with it. It then again made off. In this manner the chase continued for a long time. The streets were profoundly quiet, as it was nearly three o'clock in the morning. In passing down an alley in the rear of the Rue Morgue, the fugitive's attention was arrested by a light gleaming from the open window of Madame L'Espanaye's chamber, in the fourth story of her house. Rushing to the building, it perceived the lightning-rod, clambered up with inconceivable agility, grasped the shutter, which was thrown fully back against the wall, and, by its means, swung itself directly upon the head-board of the bed. The whole feat did not occupy a minute. The shutter was kicked open again by the Orang-Outang as it entered the room.

The sailor, in the meantime, was both rejoiced and perplexed. He had strong hopes of now recapturing the brute, as it could scarcely escape from the trap into which it had ventured, except by the rod, where it might be intercepted as it came down. On the other hand, there was much cause for anxiety as to what it might do in the house. This latter reflection urged the man still to follow the fugitive. A lightning-rod is ascended without difficulty, especially by a sailor; but, when he had arrived as high as the window, which

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lay far to his left, his career was stopped; the most that he could accomplish was to reach over so as to obtain a glimpse of the interior of the room. At this glimpse he nearly fell from his hold through excess of horror. Now it was that those hideous shrieks arose upon the night, which had startled from slumber the inmates of the Rue Morgue. Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter, habited in their night-clothes, had apparently been occupied in arranging some papers in the iron chest already mentioned, which had been wheeled into the middle of the room. It was open, and its contents lay beside it on the floor. The victims must have been sitting with their backs toward the window; and, from the time elapsing between the ingress of the beast and the screams, it seems probable that it was not immediately perceived. The flapping-to of the shutter would naturally have been attributed to the wind.

As the sailor looked in, the gigantic animal had seized Madame L'Espanaye by the hair (which was loose, as she had been combing it), and was flourishing the razor about her face, in imitation of the motions of a barber. The daughter lay prostrate and motionless; she had swooned. The screams and struggles of the old lady (during which her hair was torn from her head) had the effect of changing the probably pacific purposes of the Orang-Outang into those of wrath. With one determined sweep of its muscular arm, it nearly severed her head from her body. The

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sight of blood inflamed its anger into frenzy. Gnashing its teeth, and flashing fire from its eyes, it flew upon the body of the girl, and embedded its fearful talons in her throat, retaining its grasp until she expired. Its wandering and wild glances fell at this moment upon the head of the bed, over which the face of its master, rigid with horror, was just discernible. The fury of the beast, who no doubt bore still in mind the dreaded whip, was instantly converted into fear. Conscious of having deserved punishment, it seemed desirous of concealing its bloody deeds, and skipped about the chamber in an agony of nervous agitation; throwing down and breaking the furniture as it moved, and dragging the bed from the bedstead. In conclusion, it seized first the corpse of the daughter, and thrust it up the chimney, as it was found; then that of the old lady, which it immediately hurled through the window headlong.

As the ape approached the casement with its mutilated burden, the sailor shrank aghast to the rod, and, rather gliding than clambering down it, hurried at once home—dreading the consequences of the butchery, and gladly abandoning, in his terror, all solicitude about the fate of the Orang-Outang. The words heard by the party upon the staircase were the Frenchman's exclamation of horror and affright, commingled with the fiendish jabberings of the brute.

I have scarcely anything to add. The Orang-Outang must have escaped from the chamber by

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the rod, just before the breaking of the door. It must have closed the window as it passed through it. It was subsequently caught by the owner himself, who obtained for it a very large sum at the *Jardin des Plantes*. Le Bon was instantly released, upon our narration of the circumstances (with some comments from Dupin) at the Bureau of the Prefect of Police. This functionary, however well disposed to my friend, could not altogether conceal his chagrin at the turn which affairs had taken, and was fain to indulge in a sarcasm or two, about the propriety of every person's minding his own business.

"Let him talk," said Dupin, who had not thought it necessary to reply. "Let him discourse; it will ease his conscience. I am satisfied with having defeated him in his own castle. Nevertheless, that he failed in the solution of this mystery is by no means that matter for wonder which he supposes it; for, in truth, our friend the Prefect is somewhat too cunning to be profound. In his wisdom is no *stamen*. It is all head and no body, like the pictures of the Goddess Laverna—or, at best, all head and shoulders, like a codfish. But he is a good creature, after all. I like him especially for one master-stroke of cant, by which he has attained his reputation for ingenuity. I mean the way he has '*de nier ce qu'est et d'expliquer ce que n'est pas*.'"

THE POPE'S MULE

BY

ALPHONSE DAUDET

OF all the pleasant sayings, proverbs, or adages which our Provençal peasants weave into their discourse, I know none more picturesque or curious than this. In all the country about my mill, fifteen leagues in every direction, when people speak of a spiteful, vindictive man, they say, "Look out for that fellow! He is like the Pope's mule, that saved up a kick for seven years."

For a long time, I sought the origin of this proverb. What could it be—this papal mule and the kick saved up the length of seven years? No one here has been able to give me any information on this subject, not even Francet Mamai, my piper, although he has all the legends of Provence at his fingers' ends. Francet agrees with me in thinking that, at the bottom of it all, there must be some ancient chronicle of the Avignon country; yet he has heard it mentioned nowhere but in the proverb. "You will find that only in the grasshoppers' library," said the old piper to me, laughing. The idea seemed a good one, and, as the grasshoppers' library is at

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my door, I went to shut myself up in it for a week.

A marvellous library is this, admirably arranged, open to poets day and night, and officered by little librarians with cymbals who play for you at all times. There I passed some delightful days, and after a week of research—on my back—I ended by discovering what I wished, the story, namely, of the mule and of the famous kick which it saved up for seven years. Although a trifle innocent, the story is a pretty one, and I shall try to tell it you even as I read it yesterday morning in a sky-coloured manuscript, which was fragrant with lavender and sewn together with gossamer.

Any one who has not seen the Avignon of the Popes has seen nothing. Never was there a city like it for gaiety, for life, for animation, for a continual succession of feasts. From morning to night, there were processions, pilgrimages; the streets were strewn with flowers and hung with long lists; there were cardinals arriving by the Rhône on tapestried galleys with flying banners, papal soldiers who sang in Latin in the public squares, the rattles of mendicant friars; then, there were humming houses clustered against the grand papal palace as bees pressing about their hive. In them ran the constant buzz of the ribbon looms, the flying shuttles weaving golden chasubles, the little hammers of the sculptors of vases, the harmonical tables

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being attuned at the musical instrument makers, the canticles of the weavers. Accompanying all was the peal of chimes, and the far-off tinkle of tambourines down beside the river. For in our country, when the people are glad, they will ever be dancing, and because, in those days, the streets of the town were too narrow for the farandole, fifes and tambourines were stationed on the bridge of Avignon, in the fresh breezes of the Rhône, and night and day there was dancing, dancing, dancing! It was a happy time, and a happy town. There were halberds which harmed no one; the state-prisons were used to cool wine in; there was neither want nor war. Thus it was that the Popes ruled their people, and that is why their people regretted them so deeply.

There was one above all, a good old gentleman named Boniface. How many tears, alas, were shed in Avignon when he died! He was a lovable and charming prince. He would smile down at you so kindly from his mule, and if you happened to meet him—it mattered not whether you were a poor little grower of madder or the grand provost of the town—he gave you his blessing so courteously! A genuine Yvetot Pope, but of an Yvetot in Provence, with something delicate in his laughter, a sprig of sweet marjoram on his cap, and not the least Jeanneton. The only Jeanneton one ever knew him to have was the good father's vineyard—a little vineyard which he himself had planted,

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three miles from Avignon, amid the myrtles of Châteauneuf.

Every Sunday when he came from vespers, the worthy man would go to hold his court there; and when seated in the goodly sun, his mule near him, his cardinals stretched out around him at the foot of the vines, then he had a flagon of wine opened—a flagon of that exquisite, ruby-coloured wine called, ever since, Château-Neuf of the Popes—and he drank it by little sips, and regarded his vineyard with a tender look. Then, when the bottle was empty and the day at its setting, he returned cheerfully to the city, followed by his whole chapter; and, after passing the bridge of Avignon in the midst of drummers and farandoles, his mule, set going by the music, changed its gait to a little jumping trot, while the Pope himself kept time with the step of the dance by means of his cap, so that his cardinals were shocked. But the people said, "What a kind master! What a good Pope!"

Now the thing which this amiable Pope loved most in the world next to his vineyard was his mule. The dear old gentleman doted on this beast. Every night, before going to bed, he went to see if its stable had been tightly locked, if nothing was lacking in its manger, and he would never rise from the table without having prepared under his own eyes a large bowl of French wine well sweetened and spiced, which he himself carried out to the mule, in spite of the remarks of his cardinals. But

the animal, it must be noted, was well worth the trouble: a beautiful black she-mule, speckled with red, sure of foot, glossy of skin, broad and full of back, proudly bearing her small neat head, hung with tassels, with bows, with little silver bells. She was, moreover, gentle as an angel, having an innocent eye, and two long waving ears which gave her the character of gentleness. All Avignon respected her, and when she went through the streets there was no courtesy which she did not receive. And that was because every one knew this to be the surest way of gaining favour at court, and that, for all her innocent air, the Pope's mule had raised many a one to fortune—as the story of Tistet Védène and his wonderful adventure will prove.

This Tistet Védène began life as a saucy good-for-nothing whom his father Guy Védène, the carver in gold, was obliged to drive from his house, because he refused to work and demoralized the apprentices. For six months he could be seen dangling his jacket over all the gutters of Avignon, especially in the neighbourhood of the papal palace; and that was because for a long time the rascal had his eye on the Pope's mule, and you will see what a villainous scheme it was. One day, when his Holiness was taking a lonely walk on the ramparts with his beast, Tistet Védène came up to him, and, clasping his hands together, and with his eyes full of admiration, said: "Heavens, Holy Father, what a fine mule

The Pope's Mule

you have there! Do let me look at it a little. Ah, dear Pope, what a lovely mule! The Emperor of Germany has not its equal." And then he patted it, and spoke sweetly to it as though it had been a young damsel: "Come here, my jewel, my treasure, my pearl!" And the good Pope, moved thereat, said to himself: "What a good little fellow! How gently he treats my mule!" And do you know what happened the next day? Tistet Védène exchanged his old yellow jacket for a beautiful laced one, a cloak of violet silk, and buckled shoes, and he entered into the Pope's service, where, before that, no one had ever been received but the sons of the nobility and the nephews of cardinals. There is scheming for you! But Tistet did not stop at that.

Once in the service of the Pope, the rascal continued the game in which he had succeeded so well. Insolent toward every one, he was all kindness and attention to the mule, and one was ever meeting him in the courts of the palace with a handful of oats or a bundle of French grass whose pink clusters he shook gently. He would glance up at the Holy Father's balcony with a look that seemed to say, "For whom do you think this is?" So things went on until finally the good Pope, who felt himself growing old, ended by leaving to him the duty of watching over the stable, and of taking the mule her bowl of French wine—all of which was no laughing matter to the cardinals.

Nor to the mule either. For now, at her hour for drinking, she always saw five or six little clerics come to her who hid themselves in the straw with their cloaks and their laces. Then presently a lovely warm odour of caramel and of spices would fill the stable, and Tistet Védène appeared carefully balancing the bowl of French wine. Then it was that the poor beast's martyrdom commenced.

This perfumed wine which she loved so well, which kept her warm, which gave her wings—this wine they had the cruelty to bring to her manger, to let her sniff at, and then, when her nostrils were full of the fragrance—it was gone. All the beautiful, rosy, fiery fluid passed down the throats of these wretches. If they had only stopped at stealing her wine. But these little clerics were veritable imps when they had drunk it! One pulled her ears, another her tail, Quiquet mounted on her back, Beluguet tried his cap on her, and not a one of them dreamed of the fact that, with one good kick, the worthy beast could have sent them beyond the polar star. But no; it is not in vain that one is the Pope's mule, the mule of blessings and indulgences. The boys had their trouble for nothing; she did not get angry, and it was only against Tistet Védène that she bore malice. As for this fellow, indeed, when she felt him behind her, her hoof itched, and that for good reasons. This scamp of a Tistet played her the

The Pope's Mule

most villainous tricks, invented the most cruel devices, after he had been drinking.

One day he took it into his head to make her ascend into the belfry with him, high, high up, to the very top of the palace. And it is no fairy tale that I tell you, for two hundred thousand people of Provence saw it. You can imagine the terror of this poor mule when, after having crawled blindly for a whole hour like a snail up a staircase, and having crept up goodness knows how many steps, she found herself suddenly on a glittering platform, and saw, a thousand feet beneath her, a fantastic Avignon: the barracks at the market-place no larger than hazelnuts, the papal soldiers before their barracks like red ants, and farther down, over a silver thread, a tiny bridge on which the people were still dancing. Alas for the poor beast! how terrified she was! Every window-pane in the palace trembled at the loud venting of her distress.

"What is the matter with her? What are they doing to her?" cried the good Pope, and hastened upon the balcony.

Tistet Védène was already in the courtyard, pretending to weep and tear out his hair: "Ah, Holy Father, what is the matter! Why, your mule—Heavens, what will become of us!—your mule has gone up into the belfry."

"All alone?"

"Yes, Holy Father, quite alone. Stay, look

up there. Do you see the tips of her two ears? They look like two swallows!"

"Mercy on us," said the poor Pope when he raised his eyes, "has she gone mad? She will kill herself. Will you come down, you wretch!"

Forsooth, she would have asked for nothing better than to come down! But how? The staircase was not to be thought of: one may get up a thing of that kind, but as for coming down, one might break one's legs a hundred times. The poor mule was disconsolate, and, while prowling about the platform with her great eyes full of fear, she thought of Tistet Védène: "Ah, villain, if I escape from this—what a kick to-morrow morning!" The thought of that kick gave her a little heart and strength; without it, she would never have been able to keep up.

At last they succeeded in hauling her down from there, but it was no small matter. They had to use a barrow, and ropes, and a derrick. And you may imagine what a humiliation it was for that poor papal mule to see herself hanging at that height, afloat with her legs in the empty air like a cockchafer at the end of a string! And all Avignon staring at her!

The unhappy beast did not sleep that night. It seemed to her as if she were forever turning on that accursed platform, with the laughter of the whole town below. Then she thought of that infamous Tistet Védène, and of that mighty kick! As far as Pampeluna, people should see

the dust it would raise. But, while this handsome reception was being prepared for him in the stable, do you know what Tistet Védène did? Singing, he sailed down the Rhône on a papal galley, and went to the court of Naples with a crowd of young nobles whom the city sent annually to Queen Joan, to be trained in diplomacy and fine manners. Tistet was not of noble birth, but the Pope was determined to reward him for the care he had bestowed on his mule, and especially for the activity which he had displayed on the day of the relief expedition.

So it was the mule who was disappointed the next day. "Ah, the scamp, he suspected something!" she thought, furiously shaking her little bells. "But it matters not; go, rascal; you will find your kick waiting for you when you return. I'll keep it for you." And she did.

After the departure of Tistet, the Pope's mule recovered her peace, and resumed the even tenor of her former way. Neither Quiquet nor Beluguet visited the stable. The happy days of French wine had returned, and with them good humour, long naps, and the little measure trod when she passed the bridge of Avignon. For all that, since her adventure she was always shown a slight coldness in the town. There were whispers along the road; the old people shook their heads, the children laughed and pointed out the belfry to each other. The good Pope himself had no longer the same confidence

in his friend; and when of a Sunday, going home from his vineyard, he allowed himself to nod a little on her back, the thought would always obtrude itself: "What if I were to wake up and find myself in the belfry?" The mule observed all this, and suffered under it in silence. Only, if any one uttered the name Tistet Védène in her presence, her long ears trembled, and, with a little smile, she sharpened the iron of her shoes on the pavement.

Thus seven years passed. Then, at the end of these years, Tistet Védène returned from the court of Naples. His time there was not yet quite over; but he had learned that the Pope's first mustard-maker had just died suddenly at Avignon, and, as the place seemed a good one to him, he had arrived in hot haste in order to present himself as an applicant for it.

Now, when this schemer entered the great hall of the palace, the Holy Father could scarcely recognise him, so much had he grown and taken on flesh. Then, too, the good Pope had not grown younger either, and did not see well without his spectacles. Tistet was unabashed.

"How! Holy Father, you do not recognise me? It is I, Tistet Védène!"

"Védène?"

"Surely, you must know. The same who used to take the French wine to your mule."

"Ah, yes—yes—I remember. A good little fellow was that Tistet Védène. And now, what does he desire of us?"

The Pope's Mule

"Oh, such a little thing, Holy Father! I have come to ask—But your mule, to be sure, have you got her still? And is she well?—Ah, so much the better!—Yes, I came to ask for the place of the first mustard-maker, who has just died."

"You, first mustard-maker! But you are too young. How old are you?"

"Twenty years and two months, illustrious Pontiff; exactly five years older than your mule. That sweet animal! That mule, how I used to love her—and how I longed for her in Italy! Will you not let me see her?"

"Yes, my child, you shall see her," said the good Pope with emotion, "and, since you love the good beast so much, I would not have you live at a distance from her. From this day, I attach you to my person as first mustard-maker. My cardinals will cry out against it, but so much the worse for them; I'm used to that. Tomorrow when we come from vespers, meet us, and we will invest you with the insignia of your office in the presence of our chapter, and then I will take you to see the mule, and you will go to the vineyard with the two of us."

Tistet Védène was serenely happy when he came out of the great hall, and I need not tell you with what impatience he awaited the ceremony of the morrow. But there was some one in the palace who was even happier and more impatient—and that was the mule. From the moment of Védène's return, to the vesper service of the next day, that terrible beast did not

cease stuffing herself with straw and aiming at the wall with the hoofs of her hind legs. She, too, was preparing for the ceremony.

And so on the next day, when vespers were said, Tistet Védène made his entry into the court of the papal palace. All the upper clergy were there, the cardinals in red robes, the devil's advocate in black velvet, the abbots of the convents in their little mitres, the churchwardens of Saint Agricola. And the lower clergy were there too, the soldiers of the Pope in full uniform, the three penitential brotherhoods, the hermits of Mount Ventoux with their fierce countenances, the little cleric who walks behind and carries the bell, the flagellant brothers, bare to the girdle, the sacristans gay in their judicial robes, everybody, everybody, down to the dispensers of holy water, and those who light and extinguish the tapers: no one was lacking. Ah, that was a beautiful ordination! Chimes, sunshine, and music, and ever the sound of those mad tambourines that led the dance, down below on the bridge of Avignon.

When Védène appeared in the midst of the assembly his imposing deportment and elegant air raised a general murmur of admiration. He was a magnificent Provençal, of the fair type, with long hair curled at the end, and a little coquettish beard which seemed made of the shavings of precious metal fallen under the graving-tool of his father, the carver in gold. Indeed, the report went about that the fingers

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of Queen Joan had sometimes played in this yellow beard. Master Védène had, in fact, the proud bearing and the absent look of men whom queens have loved. On that day he had, in honour of his nation, exchanged his Neapolitan garb for a jacket tipped with red in the Provençal style, and on his cap quivered a large ibis feather.

As soon as he entered, the first mustard-maker bowed with a gallant air, and directed his steps to the high platform where the Pope was waiting to invest him with the insignia of his office: the ladle of yellow box-wood and the saffron cloak. The mule stood at the bottom of the stairs, harnessed, ready to start. When he passed near her, Tistet Védène smiled pleasantly, and stopped to give her two or three friendly little pats on the back, while he glanced out of the corner of his eye to see if the Pope was looking. The situation was complete. The mule made ready. "There, you are caught, rascal! Seven years have I saved it for you!" And she kicked him a kick, a kick so terrible that as far as Pampeluna people saw the dust that it raised: a whirl of blond dust from which fluttered out an ibis feather—all that remained of the unhappy Tistet Védène.

The kicks of mules are not usually so appalling; but then, this was a papal mule, and remember that she had saved it up for seven years. There is no better instance of clerical spite on record.

WITHOUT BENEFIT OF CLERGY*

BY

RUDYARD KIPLING

I

"But if it be a girl?"

"Lord of my life, it cannot be! I have prayed for so many nights, and sent gifts to Sheikh Badl's shrine so often, that I know God will give us a son—a man-child that shall grow into a man. Think of this and be glad. My mother shall be his mother till I can take him again, and the mullah of the Pattan Mosque shall cast his nativity—God send he be born in an auspicious hour!—and then, and then thou wilt never weary of me, thy slave."

"Since when hast thou been a slave, my queen?"

"Since the beginning—till this mercy came to me. How could I be sure of thy love when I knew that I had been bought with silver?"

"Nay, that was the dowry. I paid it to thy mother."

"And she has buried it, and sits upon it all day long like a hen. What talk is yours of dowry?"

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I was bought as though I had been a Lucknow dancing-girl instead of a child."

"Art thou sorry for the sale?"

"I have sorrowed; but to-day I am glad. Thou wilt never cease to love me now? Answer, my king."

"Never—never. No."

"Not even though the *mem-log*—the white women of thy own blood—love thee? And remember, I have watched them driving in the evening; they are very fair."

"I have seen fire-balloons by the hundred, I have seen the moon, and—then I saw no more fire-balloons."

Ameera clapped her hands and laughed. "Very good talk," she said. Then, with an assumption of great stateliness: "It is enough. Thou hast permission to depart—if thou wilt."

The man did not move. He was sitting on a low red-lacquered couch in a room furnished only with a blue-and-white floor-cloth, some rugs, and a very complete collection of native cushions. At his feet sat a woman of sixteen, and she was all but all the world in his eyes. By every rule and law she should have been otherwise, for he was an Englishman and she a Mussulman's daughter, bought two years before from her mother, who, being left without money, would have sold Ameera, shrieking, to the Prince of Darkness, if the price had been sufficient.

It was a contract entered into with a light heart. But even before the girl had reached her

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bloom she came to fill the greater portion of John Holden's life. For her and the withered hag her mother he had taken a little house overlooking the great red-walled city, and found, when the marigolds had sprung up by the well in the courtyard, and Ameera had established herself according to her own ideas of comfort, and her mother had ceased grumbling at the inadequacy of the cooking-places, the distance from the daily market, and matters of house-keeping in general, that the house was to him his home. Any one could enter his bachelor's bungalow by day or night, and the life that he led there was an unlovely one. In the house in the city his feet only could pass beyond the outer courtyard to the women's rooms; and when the big wooden gate was bolted behind him he was king in his own territory, with Ameera for queen. And there was going to be added to this kingdom a third person, whose arrival Holden felt inclined to resent. It interfered with his perfect happiness. It disarranged the orderly peace of the house that was his own. But Ameera was wild with delight at the thought of it, and her mother not less so. The love of a man, and particularly a white man, was at the best an inconstant affair, but it might, both women argued, be held fast by a baby's hands. "And then," Ameera would always say—"then he will never care for the white *mem-log*. I hate them all—I hate them all!"

"He will go back to his own people in time,"

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said the mother, "but, by the blessing of God, that time is yet afar off."

Holden sat silent on the couch, thinking of the future, and his thoughts were not pleasant. The drawbacks of a double life are manifold. The government, with singular care, had ordered him out of the station for a fortnight on special duty, in the place of a man who was watching by the bedside of a sick wife. The verbal notification of the transfer had been edged by a cheerful remark that Holden ought to think himself lucky in being a bachelor and a freeman. He came to break the news to Ameera.

"It is not good," she said, slowly, "but it is not all bad. There is my mother here, and no harm will come to me—unless, indeed, I die of pure joy. Go thou to thy work, and think no troublesome thoughts. When the days are done, I believe, nay, I am sure. And—and then I shall lay *him* in thy arms, and thou wilt love me forever. The train goes to-night—at midnight, is it not? Go now, and do not let thy heart be heavy by cause of me. But thou wilt not delay in returning! Thou wilt not stay on the road to talk to the bold white *mem-log*! Come back to me swiftly, my life!"

As he left the courtyard to reach his horse that was tethered to the gate-post, Holden spoke to the white-haired old watchman who guarded the house, and bid him under certain contingencies dispatch the filled-up telegraph

form that Holden gave him. It was all that could be done, and, with the sensations of a man who has attended his own funeral, Holden went away by the night mail to his exile. Every hour of the day he dreaded the arrival of the telegram, and every hour of the night he pictured to himself the death of Ameera. In consequence, his work for the state was not of first-rate quality, nor was his temper toward his colleagues of the most amiable. The fortnight ended without a sign from his home, and, torn to pieces by his anxieties, Holden returned to be swallowed up for two precious hours by a dinner at the club, wherein he heard, as a man hears in a swoon, voices telling him how execrably he had performed the other man's duties, and how he had endeared himself to all his associates. Then he fled on horseback through the night with his heart in his mouth. There was no answer at first to his blows on the gate, and he had just wheeled his horse round to kick it in, when Pir Khan appeared with a lantern and held his stirrup.

"Has aught occurred?" said Holden.

"The news does not come from my mouth, Protector of the Poor, but——" He held out his shaking hand, as befitted the bearer of good news who is entitled to a reward.

Holden hurried through the courtyard. A light burned in the upper room. His horse neighed in the gateway, and he heard a pin-pointed wail that sent all the blood into the

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apple of his throat. It was a new voice, but it did not prove that Ameera was alive.

"Who is there?" he called up the narrow brick staircase.

There was a cry of delight from Ameera, and then the voice of her mother, tremulous with old age and pride: "We be two women, and—the—man—thy son."

On the threshold of the room Holden stepped on a naked dagger that was laid there to avert ill-luck, and it broke at the hilt under his impatient heel.

"God is great!" cooed Ameera in the half-light. "Thou hast taken his misfortunes on thy head."

"Ay, but how is it with thee, life of my life? Old woman, how is it with her?"

"She has forgotten her sufferings for joy that the child is born. There is no harm; but speak softly," said the mother.

"It only needed thy presence to make me all well," said Ameera. "My king, thou hast been very long away. What gifts hast thou for me? Ah! ah! It is I that bring gifts this time. Look, my life, look! Was there ever such a babe? Nay, I am too weak even to clear my arm from him."

"Rest, then, and do not talk. I am here, *bachheri*" [little woman].

"Well said, for there is a bond and a heel-rope [*peecharree*] between us now that nothing can break. Look—canst thou see in this light?

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He is without spot or blemish. Never was such a man-child. *Ya illah!* he shall be a pundit—no, a trooper of the queen. And, my life, dost thou love me as well as ever, though I am faint and sick and worn? Answer truly."

"Yea. I love as I have loved, with all my soul. Lie still, pearl, and rest."

"Then do not go. Sit by my side here—so. Mother, the lord of this house needs a cushion. Bring it." There was an almost imperceptible movement on the part of the new life that lay in the hollow of Ameera's arm. "*Aho!*" she said, her voice breaking with love. "The babe is a champion from his birth. He is kicking me in the side with mighty kicks. Was there ever such a babe? And he is ours to us—thine and mine. Put thy hand on his head, but carefully, for he is very young, and men are unskilled in such matters."

Very cautiously Holden touched with the tips of his fingers the downy head.

"He is of the Faith," said Ameera; "for, lying here in the night-watches, I whispered the Call to Prayer and the Profession of Faith into his ears. And it is most marvellous that he was born upon a Friday, as I was born. Be careful of him, my life; but he can almost grip with his hands."

Holden found one helpless little hand that closed feebly on his finger. And the clutch ran through his limbs till it settled about his heart.

Till then his sole thought had been for Ameera. He began to realise that there was some one else in the world, but he could not feel that it was a veritable son with a soul. He sat down to think, and Ameera dozed lightly.

"Get hence, sahib," said her mother, under her breath. "It is not good that she should find you here on waking. She must be still."

"I go," said Holden, submissively. "Here be rupees. See that my *baba* gets fat and finds all that he needs."

The chink of the silver roused Ameera. "I am his mother, and no hireling," she said, weakly. "Shall I look to him more or less for the sake of money? Mother, give it back. I have borne my lord a son."

The deep sleep of weakness came upon her almost before the sentence was completed. Holden went down to the courtyard very softly, with his heart at ease. Pir Khan, the old watchman, was chuckling with delight.

"This house is now complete," he said, and without further comment thrust into Holden's hands the hilt of a saber worn many years ago, when Pir Khan served the queen in the police. The bleat of a tethered goat came from the well-curb.

"There be two," said Pir Khan—"two goats of the best. I bought them, and they cost much money; and since there is no birth-party assembled, their flesh will be all mine. Strike craftily, sahib. 'Tis an ill-balanced saber at the

best. Wait till they raise their heads from cropping the marigolds."

"And why?" said Holden, bewildered.

"For the birth sacrifice. What else? Otherwise the child, being unguarded from fate, may die. The Protector of the Poor knows the fitting words to be said."

Holden had learned them once, with little thought that he would ever say them in earnest. The touch of the cold saber-hilt in his palm turned suddenly to the clinging grip of the child upstairs—the child that was his own son—and a dread of loss filled him.

"Strike!" said Pir Khan. "Never life came into the world but life was paid for it. See, the goats have raised their heads. Now! With a drawing cut!"

Hardly knowing what he did, Holden cut twice as he muttered the Mohammedan prayer that runs: "Almighty! In place of this my son I offer life for life, blood for blood, head for head, bone for bone, hair for hair, skin for skin." The waiting horse snorted and bounded in his pickets at the smell of the raw blood that spurted over Holden's riding-boots.

"Well smitten!" said Pir Khan, wiping the saber. "A swordsman was lost in thee. Go with a light heart, heaven born. I am thy servant and the servant of thy son. May the Presence live a thousand years, and—the flesh of the goats is all mine?"

Pir Khan drew back richer by a month's

pay. Holden swung himself into the saddle and rode off through the low-hanging wood smoke of the evening. He was full of riotous exultation, alternating with a vast vague tenderness directed toward no particular object that made him choke as he bent over the neck of his uneasy horse. "I never felt like this in my life," he thought. "I'll go to the club and pull myself together."

A game of pool was beginning, and the room was full of men. Holden entered, eager to get to the light and the company of his fellows singing at the top of his voice:

"'In Baltimore a-walking, a lady I did meet.'"

"Did you?" said the club secretary from his corner. "Did she happen to tell you that your boots were wringing wet. Great goodness, man, it's blood!"

"Bosh!" said Holden, picking his cue from the rack. "May I cut in? It's dew. I've been riding through high crops. My faith! my boots are in a mess, though!"

"'And if it be a girl, she shall wear a wedding-ring;
And if it be a boy, he shall fight for his king;
With his dirk and his cap and his little jacket
blue,
He shall walk the quarter-deck——' "

"Yellow and blue—green next player," said the marker, monotonously.

“‘He shall walk the quarter-deck’—am I green, marker?—‘he shall walk the quarter-deck—ouch! that’s a bad shot!’—‘as his daddy used to do!’”

“I don’t see that you have anything to crow about,” said a zealous junior civilian, acidly. “The government is not exactly pleased with your work when you relieved Sanders.”

“Does that mean a wiggling from headquarters?” said Holden, with an abstracted smile. “I think I can stand it.”

The talk beat up round the ever-fresh subject of each man’s work, and steadied Holden till it was time to go to his dark, empty bungalow, where his butler received him as one who knew all his affairs. Holden remained awake for the greater part of the night, and his dreams were pleasant ones.

II

“How old is he now?”

“*Ya illah!* What a man’s question! He is all but six weeks old; and on this night I go up to the house-top with thee, my life, to count the stars. For that is auspicious. And he was born on a Friday, under the sign of the Sun, and it has been told to me that he will outlive us both and get wealth. Can we wish for aught better, beloved?”

“There is nothing better. Let us go up to the roof, and thou shalt count the stars—but a few only, for the sky is heavy with cloud.”

"The winter rains are late, and maybe they come out of season. Come, before all the stars are hid. I have put on my richest jewels."

"Thou hast forgotten the best of all."

"*Ahi! Ours.* He comes also. He has never yet seen the skies."

Ameera climbed the narrow staircase that led to the flat roof. The child, placid and unwinking, lay in the hollow of her right arm, gorgeous in silver-fringed muslin, with a small skull-cap on his head. Ameera wore all that she valued most: the diamond nose-stud that takes the place of the Western patch in drawing attention to the curve of the nostril, the gold ornament in the centre of the forehead studded with tallow-drop emeralds and flawed rubies, the heavy circlet of beaten gold that was fastened round her neck by the softness of the pure metal, and the chinking curb-patterned silver anklets hanging low over the rosy ankle-bone. She was dressed in jade-green muslin, as befitted a daughter of the Faith, and from shoulder to elbow and elbow to wrist ran bracelets of silver tied with floss silk, frail glass bangles slipped over the wrist in proof of the slenderness of the hand, and certain heavy gold bracelets that had no part in her country's ornaments, but since they were Holden's gift, and fastened with a cunning European snap, delighted her immensely.

They sat down by the low white parapet of the roof, overlooking the city and its lights.

"They are happy down there," said Ameera.

"But I do not think that they are as happy as we. Nor do I think the white *mem-log* are as happy. And thou?"

"I know they are not."

"How dost thou know?"

"They give their children over to the nurses."

"I have never seen that," said Ameera, with a sigh; "nor do I wish to see. *Ahi!*"—she dropped her head on Holden's shoulder—"I have counted forty stars, and I am tired. Look at the child, love of my life. He is counting, too."

The baby was staring with round eyes at the dark of the heavens. Ameera placed him in Holden's arms, and he lay there without a cry.

"What shall we call him among ourselves?" she said. "Look! Art thou ever tired of looking? He carries thy very eyes! But the mouth——"

"Is thine, most dear. Who should know better than I?"

"'Tis such a feeble mouth. Oh, so small! And yet it holds my heart between its lips. Give him to me now. He has been too long away."

"Nay, let him lie; he has not yet begun to cry."

"When he cries thou wilt give him back, eh? What a man of mankind thou art! If he cried, he were only the dearer to me. But, my life, what little name shall we give him?"

The small body lay close to Holden's heart.

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It was utterly helpless and very soft. He scarcely dared to breathe for fear of crushing it. The caged green parrot, that is regarded as a sort of guardian spirit in most native households, moved on its perch and fluttered a drowsy wing.

"There is the answer," said Holden. "Mian Mittu has spoken. He shall be the parrot. When he is ready he will talk mightily, and run about. Mian Mittu is the parrot in thy—in the Mussulman tongue, is it not?"

"Why put me so far off?" said Ameera, fretfully. "Let it be like unto some English name—but not wholly. For he is mine."

"Then call him Tota, for that is likest English."

"Ay, Tota; and that is still the parrot. Forgive me, my lord, for a minute ago; but, in truth, he is too little to wear all the weight of Mian Mittu for name. He shall be Tota—our Tota to us. Hearest thou, oh small one? Littlest, thou art Tota."

She touched the child's cheek, and he, waking, wailed, and it was necessary to return him to his mother, who soothed him with the wonderful rhyme of "*Are koko, Ja re koko!*" which says:

"Oh, crow! Go crow! Baby's sleeping sound,
And the wild plums grow in the jungle, only a
penny a pound—
Only a penny a pound, *Baba*—only a penny a
pound."

Reassured many times as to the price of those plums, Tota cuddled himself down to sleep. The

two sleek white well-bullocks in the courtyard were steadily chewing the cud of their evening meal; old Pir Khan squatted at the head of Holden's horse, his police sabre across his knees, pulling drowsily at a big water-pipe that croaked like a bull-frog in a pond. Ameera's mother sat spinning in the lower veranda, and the wooden gate was shut and barred. The music of a marriage procession came to the roof above the gentle hum of the city, and a string of flying-foxes crossed the face of the low moon.

"I have prayed," said Ameera, after a long pause, with her chin in her hand—"I have prayed for two things. First, that I may die in thy stead, if thy death is demanded; and in the second, that I may die in the place of the child. I have prayed to the Prophet and to Beebee Miriam [the Virgin Mary]. Thinkest thou either will hear?"

"From thy lips who would not hear the lightest word?"

"I asked for straight talk, and thou has given me sweet talk. Will my prayers be heard?"

"How can I say? God is very good."

"Of that I am not sure. Listen now. When I die or the child dies, what is thy fate? Living, thou wilt return to the bold white *mem-log*, for kind calls to kind."

"Not always."

"With a woman, no. With a man it is otherwise. Thou wilt in this life, later on, go back to thine own folk. That I could almost endure,

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for I should be dead. But in thy very death thou wilt be taken away to a strange place and a paradise that I do not know."

"Will it be paradise?"

"Surely; for what God would harm thee? But we two—I and the child—shall be elsewhere, and we cannot come to thee, nor canst thou come to us. In the old days, before the child was born, I did not think of these things; but now I think of them perpetually. It is very hard talk."

"It will fall as it will fall. To-morrow we do not know, but to-day and love we know well. Surely we are happy now."

"So happy that it were well to make our happiness assured. And thy Beebee Miriam should listen to me; for she is also a woman. But then she would envy me. It is not seemly for men to worship a woman."

Holden laughed aloud at Ameera's little spasm of jealousy.

"Is it not seemly? Why didst thou not turn me from worship of thee, then?"

"Thou a worshipper! And of me! My king, for all thy sweet words, well I know that I am thy servant and thy slave, and the dust under thy feet. And I would not have it otherwise. See!"

Before Holden could prevent her she stooped forward and touched his feet; recovering herself with a little laugh, she hugged Tota closer to her bosom. Then, almost savagely:

"Is it true that the bold white *mem-log* live for three times the length of my life? Is it true that they make their marriages not before they are old women?"

"They marry as do others—when they are women."

"That I know, but they wed when they are twenty-five. Is that true?"

"That is true."

"*Ya illah!* At twenty-five! Who would of his own will take a wife even of eighteen? She is a woman—aging every hour. Twenty-five! I shall be an old woman at that age, and—Those *mem-log* remain young forever. How I hate them!"

"What have they to do with us?"

"I cannot tell. I know only that there may now be alive on this earth a woman ten years older than I who may come to thee and take thy love ten years after I am an old woman, gray-headed, and the nurse of Tota's son. That is unjust and evil. They should die too."

"Now, for all thy years thou art a child, and shalt be picked up and carried down the staircase."

"Tota! Have a care for Tota, my lord! Thou at least art as foolish as any babe!" Ameera tucked Tota out of harm's way in the hollow in her neck, and was carried downstairs, laughing, in Holden's arms, while Tota opened his eyes and smiled, after the manner of the lesser angels.

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He was a silent infant, and almost before Holden could realise that he was in the world, developed into a small gold-coloured godling and unquestioned despot of the house overlooking the city. Those were months of absolute happiness to Holden and Ameera—happiness withdrawn from the world, shut in behind the wooden gate that Pir Khan guarded. By day Holden did his work, with an immense pity for such as were not so fortunate as himself, and a sympathy for small children that amazed and amused many mothers at the little station gatherings. At nightfall he returned to Ameera—Ameera full of the wondrous doings of Tota: how he had been seen to clap his hands together and move his fingers with intention and purpose, which was manifestly a miracle; how, later, he had of his own initiative crawled out of his low bedstead on to the floor, and swayed on both feet for the space of three breaths. “And they were long breaths, for my heart stood still with delight,” said Ameera.

Then he took the beasts into his councils—the well-bullocks, the little gray squirrels, the mongoose that lived in a hole near the well, and especially Mian Mittu, the parrot, whose tail he grievously pulled, and Mian Mittu screamed till Ameera and Holden arrived.

“Oh, villain! child of strength! This to thy brother on the house-top! *Tobah, tobah!* Fie! fie! But I know a charm to make him wise as Suleiman and Aflatoun [Solomon and Plato].

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Now look," said Ameera. She drew from an embroidered bag a handful of almonds. "See! we count seven. In the name of God!" She placed Mian Mittu, very angry and rumped, on the top of his cage, and, seating herself between the babe and the bird, cracked and peeled an almond less white than her teeth. "This is a true charm, my life; and do not laugh. See! I give the parrot one half and Tota the other." Mian Mittu, with careful beak, took his share from between Ameera's lips, and she kissed the other half into the mouth of the child, who ate it slowly, with wondering eyes. "This I will do each day of seven, and without doubt he who is ours will be a bold speaker and wise. Eh, Tota, what wilt thou be when thou art a man and I am gray-headed?" Tota tucked his fat legs into adorable creases. He could crawl, but he was not going to waste the spring of his youth in idle speech. He wanted Mian Mittu's tail to tweak.

When he was advanced to the dignity of a silver belt—which, with a magic square engraved on silver and hung round his neck, made up the greater part of his clothing—he staggered on a perilous journey down the garden to Pir Khan and proffered him all his jewels in exchange for one little ride on Holden's horse. He had seen his mother's mother chaffering with peddlers in the veranda. Pir Khan wept, set the untried feet on his own gray head in sign of fealty, and brought the bold adventurer to his mother's

arms, vowing that Tota would be a leader of men ere his beard was grown.

One hot evening, while he sat on the roof between his father and mother, watching the never-ending warfare of the kites that the city boys flew, he demanded a kite of his own, with Pir Khan to fly it, because he had a fear of dealing with anything larger than himself; and when Holden called him a "spark," he rose to his feet and answered slowly, in defence of his new-found individuality, "*Hum 'park nahin hai. Hum admi hai.*" [I am no spark, but a man.]

The protest made Holden choke, and devote himself very seriously to a consideration of Tota's future.

He need hardly have taken the trouble. The delight of that life was too perfect to endure. Therefore it was taken away, as many things are taken away in India, suddenly and without warning. The little lord of the house, as Pir Khan called him, grew sorrowful and complained of pains, who had never known the meaning of pain. Ameera, wild with terror, watched him through the night, and in the dawning of the second day the life was shaken out of him by fever—the seasonal autumn fever. It seemed altogether impossible that he could die, and neither Ameera nor Holden at first believed the evidence of the body on the bedstead. Then Ameera beat her head against the wall, and would have flung herself down the

well in the garden had Holden not restrained her by main force.

One mercy only was granted to Holden. He rode to his office in broad daylight, and found awaiting him an unusually heavy mail that demanded concentrated attention and hard work. He was not, however, alive to this kindness of the gods.

III

THE first shock of a bullet is no more than a brisk pinch. The wrecked body does not send in its protest to the soul till ten or fifteen seconds later. Then comes thirst, throbbing, and agony, and a ridiculous amount of screaming. Holden realised his pain slowly, exactly as he had realised his happiness, and with the same imperious necessity for hiding all trace of it. In the beginning he only felt that there had been a loss, and that Ameera needed comforting where she sat with her head on her knees, shivering as Mian Mittu, from the house-top, called "Tota! Tota! Tota!" Later all his world and the daily life of it rose up to hurt him. It was an outrage that any one of the children at the band-stand in the evening should be alive and clamorous when his own child lay dead. It was more than mere pain when one of them touched him, and stories told by overfond fathers of their children's latest performances cut him to the quick. He could not declare his pain. He had neither help, comfort,

nor sympathy, and Ameera, at the end of each weary day, would lead him through the hell of self-questioning reproach which is reserved for those who have lost a child, and believe that with a little—just a little—more care it might have been saved. There are not many hells worse than this, but he knows one who has sat down temporarily to consider whether he is or is not responsible for the death of his wife.

"Perhaps," Ameera would say, "I did not take sufficient heed. Did I, or did I not? The sun on the roof that day when he played so long alone, and I was—*ahi!* braiding my hair—it may be that the sun then bred the fever. If I had warned him from the sun he might have lived. But oh, my life, say that I am guiltless! Thou knowest that I loved him as I love thee! Say that there is no blame on me, or I shall die—I shall die!"

"There is no blame. Before God, none. It was written, and how could we do aught to save? What has been, has been. Let it go, beloved."

"He was all my heart to me. How can I let the thought go when my arm tells me every night that he is not here? *Ahi! ahi!* Oh, Tota, come back to me—come back again, and let us be all together as it was before!"

"Peace! peace! For thine own sake, and for mine also, if thou lovest me, rest."

"By this I know thou dost not care; and how

shouldst thou? The white men have hearts of stone and souls of iron. Oh that I had married a man of mine own people—though he beat me—and had never eaten the bread of an alien!”

“Am I an alien, mother of my son?”

“What else, sahib——? Oh, forgive me—forgive! The death has driven me mad. Thou art the life of my heart, and the light of my eyes, and the breath of my life, and—and I have put thee from me, though it was but for a moment. If thou goest away, to whom shall I look for help? Do not be angry. Indeed, it was the pain that spoke, and not thy slave.”

“I know—I know. We be two who were three. The greater need, therefore, that we should be one.”

They were sitting on the roof, as of custom. The night was a warm one in early spring, and sheet-lightning was dancing on the horizon to a broken tune played by far-off thunder.

Ameera settled herself in Holden’s arms.

“The dry earth is lowing like a cow for the rain, and I—I am afraid. It was not like this when we counted the stars. But thou lovest me as much as before, though a bond is taken away? Answer.”

“I love more, because a new bond has come out of the sorrow that we have eaten together; and that thou knowest.”

“Yea, I know,” said Ameera, in a very small whisper. “But it is good to hear thee say so, my life, who art so strong to help. I will

be a child no more, but a woman and an aid to thee. Listen. Give me my *sitar*, and I will sing bravely."

She took the light silver-studded *sitar*, and began a song of the great hero Rajá Rasalu. The hand failed on the strings, the tune halted, checked, and at a low note turned off to the poor little nursery-rhyme about the wicked crow:

" 'And the wild plums grow in the jungle—
Only a penny a pound,
Only a penny a pound, *Baba*—only—' "

Then came the tears and the piteous rebellion against fate, till she slept, moaning a little in her sleep, with the right arm thrown clear of the body, as though it protected something that was not there.

It was after this night that life became a little easier for Holden. The ever-present pain of loss drove him into his work, and the work repaid him by filling up his mind for eight or nine hours a day. Ameera sat alone in the house and brooded, but grew happier when she understood that Holden was more at ease, according to the custom of women. They touched happiness again, but this time with caution.

"It was because we loved Tota that he died. The jealousy of God was upon us," said Ameera. "I have hung up a large black jar before our window to turn the Evil Eye from us, and

we must make no protestations of delight, but go softly underneath the stars, lest God find us out. Is that not good talk, worthless one?"

She had shifted the accent of the word that means "beloved," in proof of the sincerity of her purpose. But the kiss that followed the new christening was a thing that any deity might have envied. They went about henceforth saying: "It is naught—it is naught," and hoping that all the powers heard.

The powers were busy on other things. They had allowed thirty million people four years of plenty, wherein men fed well and the crops were certain and the birth-rate rose year by year; the districts reported a purely agricultural population varying from nine hundred to two thousand to the square mile of the overburdened earth. It was time to make room. And the Member of the Lower Tooting, wandering about India in top-hat and frock-coat, talked largely of the benefits of British rule, and suggested as the one thing needful the establishment of a duly qualified electoral system and a general bestowal of the franchise. His long-suffering hosts smiled and made him welcome, and when he paused to admire, with pretty picked words, the blossom of the blood-red dhak-tree, that had flowered untimely for a sign of the sickness that was coming, they smiled more than ever.

It was the Deputy Commissioner of Kot-Kumharsen, staying at the club for a day, who

lightly told a tale that made Holden's blood run cold as he overheard the end.

"He won't bother anyone any more. Never saw a man so astonished in my life. By Jove! I thought he meant to ask a question in the House about it. Fellow-passenger in his ship—dined next him—bowled over by cholera, and died in eighteen hours. You needn't laugh, you fellows. The Member for Lower Tooting is awfully angry about it; but he's more scared. I think he's going to take his enlightened self out of India."

"I'd give a good deal if he were knocked over. It might keep a few vestrymen of his kidney to their parish. But what's this about cholera? It's full early for anything of that kind," said a warden of an unprofitable salt-lick.

"Dunno," said the deputy commissioner, reflectively. "We've got locusts with us. There's sporadic cholera all along the north—at least, we're calling it sporadic for decency's sake. The spring crops are short in five districts, and nobody seems to know where the winter rains are. It's nearly March now. I don't want to scare anybody, but it seems to me that Nature's going to audit her accounts with a big red pencil this summer."

"Just when I wanted to take leave, too," said a voice across the room.

"There won't be much leave this year, but there ought to be a great deal of promotion. I've come in to persuade the government to

put my pet canal on the list of famine-relief works. It's an ill wind that blows no good. I shall get that canal finished at last."

"Is it the old programme, then," said Holden—famine, fever, and cholera?"

"Oh, no! Only local scarcity and an unusual prevalence of seasonal sickness. You'll find it all in the reports if you live till next year. You're a lucky chap. You haven't got a wife to put out of harm's way. The hill-stations ought to be full of women this year."

"I think you're inclined to exaggerate the talk in the bazaars," said a young civilian in the secretariat. "Now, I have observed——"

"I daresay you have," said the deputy commissioner, "but you've a great deal more to observe, my son. In the meantime, I wish to observe to you——" And he drew him aside to discuss the construction of the canal that was so dear to his heart.

Holden went to his bungalow, and began to understand that he was not alone in the world, and also that he was afraid for the sake of another, which is the most soul-satisfying fear known to man.

Two months later, as the deputy had foretold, Nature began to audit her accounts with a red pencil. On the heels of the spring reapings came a cry for bread, and the government, which had decreed that no man should die of want, sent wheat. Then came the cholera from all

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four quarters of the compass. It struck a pilgrim gathering of half a million at a sacred shrine. Many died at the feet of their god, the others broke and ran over the face of the land, carrying the pestilence with them. It smote a walled city and killed two hundred a day. The people crowded the trains, hanging on to the foot-boards and squatting on the roofs of the carriages; and the cholera followed them, for at each station they dragged out the dead and the dying on the platforms reeking of lime-wash and carbolic acid. They died by the roadside, and the horses of the Englishmen shied at the corpses in the grass. The rains did not come, and the earth turned to iron lest man should escape by hiding in her. The English sent their wives away to the Hills, and went about their work, coming forward as they were bidden to fill the gaps in the fighting line. Holden, sick with fear of losing his chiefest treasure on earth, had done his best to persuade Ameera to go away with her mother to the Himalayas.

"Why should I go?" said she one evening on the roof.

"There is sickness, and the people are dying, and all the white *mem-log* have gone."

"All of them?"

"All—unless, perhaps, there remain some old scald-head who vexes her husband's heart by running risk of death."

"Nay; who stays is my sister, and thou must

not abuse her, for I will be a scald-head too. I am glad all the bold white *mem-log* are gone."

"Do I speak to a woman or a babe? Go to the Hills, and I will see to it that thou goest like a queen's daughter. Think, child! In a red-lacquered bullock-cart, veiled and curtained, with brass peacocks upon the pole and red-cloth hangings. I will send two orderlies for guard, and——"

"Peace! Thou art the babe in speaking thus. What use are those toys to me? *He* would have patted the bullocks and played with the housings. For his sake, perhaps—thou hast made me very English—I might have gone. Now I will not. Let the *mem-log* run."

"Their husbands are sending them, beloved."

"Very good talk. Since when hast thou been my husband to tell me what to do? I have but borne thee a son. Thou art only all the desire of my soul to me. How shall I depart when I know that if evil befall thee by the breadth of so much as my littlest finger-nail—is that not small?—I should be aware of it though I were in Paradise? And here, this summer thou mayest die—*ahi, janee*, die!—and in dying they might call to tend thee a white woman, and she would rob me in the last of thy love."

"But love is not born in a moment, or on a death-bed."

"What dost thou know of love, stone-heart? She would take thy thanks at least, and, by God and the Prophet and Beebee Miriam, the

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mother of thy Prophet, that I will never endure. My lord and my love, let there be no more foolish talk of going away. Where thou art, I am. It is enough." She put an arm round his neck and a hand on his mouth.

There are not many happinesses so complete as those that are snatched under the shadow of the sword. They sat together and laughed, calling each other openly by every pet name that could move the wrath of the gods. The city below them was locked up in its own torments. Sulphur-fires blazed in the streets; the conches in the Hindu temples screamed and bellowed, for the gods were inattentive in those days. There was a service in the great Mohammedan shrine, and the call to prayer from the minarets was almost unceasing. They heard the wailing in the houses of the dead, and once the shriek of a mother who had lost a child and was calling for its return. In the gray dawn they saw the dead borne out through the city gates, each litter with its own little knot of mourners. Wherefore they kissed each other and shivered.

It was a red and heavy audit, for the land was very sick and needed a little breathing-space ere the torrent of cheap life should flood it anew. The children of immature fathers and undeveloped mothers made no resistance. They were cowed and sat still, waiting till the sword should be sheathed in November, if it were so willed. There were gaps among the English,

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but the gaps were filled. The work of superintending famine relief, cholera-sheds, medicine distribution, and what little sanitation was possible, went forward because it was so ordered.

Holden had been told to hold himself in readiness to move to replace the next man who should fall. There were twelve hours in each day when he could not see Ameera, and she might die in three. He was considering what his pain would be if he could not see her for three months, or if she died out of his sight. He was absolutely certain that her death would be demanded—so certain that, when he looked up from the telegram and saw Pir Khan breathless in the doorway, he laughed aloud, "And?" said he.

"When there is a cry in the night and the spirit flutters into the throat, who has a charm that will restore? Come swiftly, heaven born. It is the black cholera."

Holden galloped to his home. The sky was heavy with clouds, for the long-deferred rains were at hand, and the heat was stifling. Ameera's mother met him in the court-yard, whimpering: "She is dying. She is nursing herself into death. She is all but dead. What shall I do, sahib?"

Ameera was lying in the room in which Tota had been born. She made no sign when Holden entered, because the human soul is a very lonely thing, and when it is getting ready to go away hides itself in a misty borderland where the living may not follow. The black cholera does

its work quietly and without explanation. Ameera was being thrust out of life as though the Angel of Death had himself put his hand upon her. The quick breathing seemed to show that she was either afraid or in pain, but neither eyes nor mouth gave any answer to Holden's kisses. There was nothing to be said or done. Holden could only wait and suffer. The first drops of the rain began to fall on the roof, and he could hear shouts of joy in the parched city.

The soul came back a little and the lips moved. Holden bent down to listen. "Keep nothing of mine," said Ameera. "Take no hair from my head. *She* would make thee burn it later on. That flame I should feel. Lower! Stoop lower! Remember only that I was thine and bore thee a son. Though thou wed a white woman to-morrow, the pleasure of taking in thy arms thy first son is taken from thee forever. Remember me when thy son is born—the one that shall carry thy name before all men. His misfortunes be on my head. I bear witness—I bear witness"—the lips were forming the words on his ear—"that there is no God but—thee, beloved."

Then she died. Holden sat still, and thought of any kind was taken from him till he heard Ameera's mother lift the curtain.

"Is she dead, sahib?"

"She is dead."

"Then I will mourn, and afterward take an inventory of the furniture in this house; for that

will be mine. The sahib does not mean to resume it. It is so little, so very little, sahib, and I am an old woman. I would like to lie softly."

"For the mercy of God, be silent a while! Go out and mourn where I cannot hear."

"Sahib, she will be buried in four hours."

"I know the custom. I shall go ere she is taken away. That matter is in thy hands. Look to it that the bed—on which—on which—she lies—"

"Aha! That beautiful red-lacquered bed. I have long desired——"

"—That the bed is left here untouched for my disposal. All else in the house is thine. Hire a cart, take everything, go hence, and before sunrise let there be nothing in this house but that which I have ordered thee to respect."

"I am an old woman. I would stay at least for the days of mourning, and the rains have just broken. Whither shall I go?"

"What is that to me? My order is that there is a going. The house-gear is worth a thousand rupees, and my orderly shall bring thee a hundred rupees to-night."

"That is very little. Think of the cart-hire."

"It shall be nothing unless thou goest, and with speed. Oh, woman, get hence, and leave me to my dead!"

The mother shuffled down the staircase, and in her anxiety to take stock of the house-fittings

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forgot to mourn. Holden stayed by Ameera's side, and the rain roared on the roof. He could not think connectedly by reason of the noise, though he made many attempts to do so. Then four sheeted ghosts glided dripping into the room and stared at him through their veils. They were the washers of the dead. Holden left the room and went out to his horse. He had come in a dead, stifling calm, through ankle-deep dust. He found the courtyard a rain-lashed pond alive with frogs, a torrent of yellow water ran under the gate, and a roaring wind drove the bolts of the rain like buckshot against the mud walls. Pir Khan was shivering in his little hut by the gate, and the horse was stamping uneasily in the water.

"I have been told the sahib's order," said he. "It is well. This house is now desolate. I go also, for my monkey face would be a reminder of that which has been. Concerning the bed, I will bring that to thy house yonder in the morning. But remember, sahib, it will be to thee as a knife turned in a green wound. I go upon a pilgrimage and I will take no money. I have grown fat in the protection of the Presence, whose sorrow is my sorrow. For the last time I hold his stirrup."

He touched Holden's foot with both hands, and the horse sprung out into the road, where the creaking bamboos were whipping the sky and all the frogs were chuckling. Holden could not see for the rain in his face. He put his

hands before his eyes and muttered: "Oh, you brute! You utter brute!"

The news of his trouble was already in his bungalow. He read the knowledge in his butler's eyes when Ahmed Khan brought in food, and for the first and last time in his life laid a hand upon his master's shoulder, saying: "Eat, sahib, eat. Meat is good against sorrow. I also have known. Moreover, the shadows come and go, sahib. These be curried eggs."

Holden could neither eat nor sleep. The heavens sent down eight inches of rain in that night and scoured the earth clean. The waters tore down walls, broke roads, and washed open the shallow graves in the Mohammedan burying-ground. All next day it rained, and Holden sat still in his house considering his sorrow. On the morning of the third day he received a telegram which said only: "Ricketts, Myndonie. Dying. Holden. Relieve. Immediate." Then he thought that before he departed he would look at the house wherein he had been master and lord. There was a break in the weather. The rank earth steamed with vapor, and Holden was vermilion from head to heel with the prickly-heat born of sultry moisture.

He found that the rains had torn down the mud-pillars of the gateway, and the heavy wooden gate that had guarded his life hung drunkenly from one hinge. There was grass three inches high in the courtyard; Pir Khan's lodge was empty, and the sodden thatch sagged

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between the beams. A gray squirrel was in possession of the veranda, as if the house had been untenanted for thirty years instead of three days. Ameera's mother had removed everything except some mildewed matting. The *tick-tick* of the little scorpions as they hurried across the floor was the only sound in the house. Ameera's room and that other one where Tota had lived were heavy with mildew, and the narrow staircase leading to the roof was streaked and stained with rain-borne mud. Holden saw all these things, and came out again to meet in the road Durga Dass, his landlord—portly, affable, clothed in white muslin, and driving a C-spring buggy. He was overlooking his property, to see how the roofs withstood the beat of the first rains.

"I have heard," said he, "you will not take this place any more, sahib?"

"What are you going to do with it?"

"Perhaps I shall let it again."

"Then I will keep it on while I am away."

Durga Dass was silent for some time. "You shall not take it on, sahib," he said. "When I was a young man I also— But to-day I am a member of the municipality. Ho! ho! No! When the birds have gone, what need to keep the nest? I will have it pulled down; the timber will sell for something always. It shall be pulled down, and the municipality shall make a road across, as they desire, from the burning-ghat to the city wall. So that no man may say where this house stood."

THE MUMMY'S FOOT*

BY

THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

I HAD entered, in an idle mood, the shop of one of those curiosity-venders who are called *mar-chands de bric-à-brac* in that Parisian *argot* which is so perfectly unintelligible elsewhere in France.

You have doubtless glanced occasionally through the windows of some of these shops, which have become so numerous now that it is fashionable to buy antiquated furniture, and that every petty stockbroker thinks he must have his *chambre au moyen age*.

There is one thing there which clings alike to the shop of the dealer in old iron, the wareroom of the tapestry-maker, the laboratory of the chemist, and the studio of the painter: in all those gloomy dens where a furtive daylight filters in through the window-shutters, the most manifestly ancient thing is dust; the cobwebs are more authentic than the guimp laces; and the old pear-tree furniture on exhibition is actually younger than the mahogany which arrived but yesterday from America.

The warehouse of my *bric-à-brac* dealer was a

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veritable Capharnaum; all ages and all nations seemed to have made their rendezvous there; an Etruscan lamp of red clay stood upon a Boule cabinet, with ebony panels, brightly striped by lines of inlaid brass; a duchess of the court of Louis XV. nonchalantly extended her fawn-like feet under a massive table of the time of Louis XIII. with heavy spiral supports of oak, and carven designs of chimeras and foliage intermingled.

Upon the denticulated shelves of several sideboards glittered immense Japanese dishes with red and blue designs relieved by gilded hatching, side by side with enamelled works by Bernard Palissy, representing serpents, frogs, and lizards in relief.

From disembowelled cabinets escaped cascades of silver-lustrous Chinese silks and waves of tinsel, which an oblique sunbeam shot through with luminous beads; while portraits of every era, in frames more or less tarnished, smiled through their yellow varnish.

The striped breastplate of a damascened suit of Milanese armour glittered in one corner; Loves and Nymphs of porcelain; Chinese grotesques, vases of *celadon* and crackle-ware; Saxon and old Sèvres cups, encumbered the shelves and nooks of the apartment.

The dealer followed me closely through the tortuous way contrived between the piles of furniture; warding off with his hand the hazardous sweep of my coat-skirts; watching my elbows

with the uneasy attention of an antiquarian and a usurer.

It was a singular face, that of the merchant—an immense skull, polished like a knee, and surrounded by a thin aureole of white hair, which brought out the clear salmon tint of his complexion all the more strikingly, lent him a false aspect of patriarchal *bonhomie*, counteracted, however, by the scintillation of two little yellow eyes which trembled in their orbits like two *louis d'or* upon quicksilver. The curve of his nose presented an aquiline silhouette, which suggested the Oriental or Jewish type. His hands—thin, slender, full of nerves which projected like strings upon the finger-board of a violin, and armed with claws like those on the terminations of bats' wings—shook with senile trembling; but those convulsively agitated hands became firmer than steel pincers or lobsters' claws when they lifted any precious article—an onyx cup, a Venetian glass, or a dish of Bohemian crystal. This strange old man had an aspect so thoroughly rabbinical and cabalistic that he would have been burnt on the mere testimony of his face three centuries ago.

“Will you not buy something from me to-day, sir? Here is a Malay krese with a blade undulating like flame: look at those grooves contrived for the blood to run along, those teeth set backward so as to tear out the entrails in withdrawing the weapon; it is a fine character of ferocious arm, and will look well in your collection: this

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two-handed sword is very beautiful—it is the work of Josepe de la Hera; and this *coliche-marde*, with its fenestrated guard—what a superb specimen of handicraft!”

“No; I have quite enough weapons and instruments of carnage; I want a small figure—something which will suit me as a paper-weight; for I cannot endure those trumpery bronzes which the stationers sell, and which may be found on everybody's desk.

The old gnome foraged among his ancient wares and finally arranged before me some antique bronzes—so-called, at least; fragments of malachite; little Hindoo or Chinese idols—a kind of poussah toys in jade-stone, representing the incarnations of Brahma or Vishnoo, and wonderfully appropriate as stays for papers or letters.

I was hesitating between a porcelain dragon, all constellated with warts—its mouth formidable with bristling tusks and ranges of teeth—and an abominable little Mexican fetish, representing the god Vitziliputzili *au naturel*, when I caught sight of a charming foot, which I at first took for a fragment of some antique Venus.

It had those beautiful ruddy and tawny tints that lend to Florentine bronze that warm, living look so much preferable to the gray-green aspect of common bronzes, which might easily be mistaken for statues in a state of putrefaction: satiny gleams played over its rounded forms, doubtless polished by the amorous kisses of twenty centuries; for it seemed a Corinthian bronze, a

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work of the best era of art—perhaps moulded by Lysippus himself.

“That foot will be my choice,” I said to the merchant, who regarded me with an ironical and saturnine air, and held out the object desired that I might examine it more fully.

I was surprised at its lightness; it was not a foot of metal, but in sooth a foot of flesh—an embalmed foot—a mummy’s foot: on examining it still more closely the very grain of the skin, and the almost imperceptible lines impressed upon it by the texture of the bandages, became perceptible. The toes were slender and delicate, and terminated by perfectly formed nails, pure and transparent as agates; the great toe, slightly separated from the rest, afforded a happy contrast, in the antique style, to the position of the other toes, and lent it an aerial lightness—the grace of a bird’s foot; the sole, scarcely streaked by a few almost imperceptible cross lines, afforded evidence that it had never touched the bare ground, and had only come in contact with the finest matting of Nile rushes and the softest carpets of panther skin.

“Ha, ha! You want the foot of the Princess Hermonthis,” exclaimed the merchant, with a strange giggle, fixing his owlish eyes upon me. “Ha, ha, ha!—for a paper-weight!—an original idea!—artistic idea! Old Pharaoh would certainly have been surprised had some one told him that the foot of his adored daughter would be used for a paper-weight after he had had

a mountain of granite hollowed out as a receptacle for the triple coffin, painted and gilded, covered with hieroglyphics and beautiful paintings of the Judgment of Souls," continued the queer little merchant, half audibly, as though talking to himself!

"How much will you charge me for this mummy fragment?"

"Ah, the highest price I can get; for it is a superb piece: if I had the match of it you could not have it for less than five hundred francs—the daughter of a Pharaoh! nothing is more rare."

"Assuredly that is not a common article; but still, how much do you want? In the first place, let me warn you that all my wealth consists of just five louis: I can buy anything that costs five louis, but nothing dearer. You might search my vest pockets and most secret drawers without even finding one poor five-franc piece more."

"Five louis for the foot of the Princess Hermonthis! that is very little, very little indeed; 't is an authentic foot," muttered the merchant, shaking his head, and imparting a peculiar rotary motion to his eyes. "Well, take it, and I will give you the bandages into the bargain," he added, wrapping the foot in an ancient damask rag—"very fine! real damask—Indian damask which has never been redyed; it is strong, and yet it is soft," he mumbled, stroking the frayed tissue with his fingers, through the trade-acquired habit which moved him to praise even an object

of so little value that he himself deemed it only worth the giving away.

He poured the gold coins into a sort of mediæval alms - purse hanging at his belt, repeating:

"The foot of the Princess Hermonthis, to be used for a paper-weight!"

Then turning his phosphorescent eyes upon me, he exclaimed in a voice strident as the crying of a cat which has swallowed a fish-bone:

"Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased; he loved his daughter—the dear man!"

"You speak as if you were a contemporary of his: you are old enough, goodness knows! but you do not date back to the Pyramids of Egypt," I answered, laughingly, from the threshold.

I went home, delighted with my acquisition.

With the idea of putting it to profitable use as soon as possible, I placed the foot of the divine Princess Hermonthis upon a heap of papers scribbled over with verses, in themselves an undecipherable mosaic work of erasures; articles freshly begun; letters forgotten, and posted in the table-drawer instead of the letter-box—an error to which absent-minded people are peculiarly liable. The effect was charming, *bizarre*, and romantic.

Well satisfied with this embellishment, I went out with the gravity and pride becoming one who feels that he has the ineffable advantage over all the passers-by whom he elbows, of possessing a

piece of the Princess Hermonthis, daughter of Pharaoh.

I looked upon all who did not possess, like myself, a paper-weight so authentically Egyptian, as very ridiculous people; and it seemed to me that the proper occupation of every sensible man should consist in the mere fact of having a mummy's foot upon his desk.

Happily I met some friends, whose presence distracted me in my infatuation with this new acquisition: I went to dinner with them; for I could not very well have dined with myself.

When I came back that evening, with my brain slightly confused by a few glasses of wine, a vague whiff of Oriental perfume delicately titillated my olfactory nerves: the heat of the room had warmed the natron, bitumen, and myrrh in which the *paraschistes*, who cut open the bodies of the dead, had bathed the corpse of the princess; it was a perfume at once sweet and penetrating—a perfume that four thousand years had not been able to dissipate.

The Dream of Egypt was Eternity: her odours have the solidity of granite, and endure as long.

I soon drank deeply from the black cup of sleep: for a few hours all remained opaque to me; Oblivion and Nothingness inundated me with their sombre waves.

Yet light gradually dawned upon the darkness of my mind; dreams commenced to touch me softly in their silent flight.

The eyes of my soul were opened; and I beheld

my chamber as it actually was; I might have believed myself awake, but for a vague consciousness which assured me that I slept, and that something fantastic was about to take place.

The odour of the myrrh had augmented in intensity: and I felt a slight headache, which I very naturally attributed to several glasses of champagne that we had drunk to the unknown gods and our future fortunes.

I peered through my room with a feeling of expectation which I saw nothing to justify: every article of furniture was in its proper place; the lamp, softly shaded by its globe of ground crystal, burned upon its bracket; the water-colour sketches shone under their Bohemian glass; the curtains hung down languidly; everything wore an aspect of tranquil slumber.

After a few moments, however, all this calm interior appeared to become disturbed; the woodwork cracked stealthily; the ash-covered log suddenly emitted a jet of blue flame; and the disks of the pateras seemed like great metallic eyes, watching, like myself, for the things which were about to happen.

My eyes accidentally fell upon the desk where I had placed the foot of the Princess Hermonthis.

Instead of remaining quiet, as behooved a foot which had been embalmed for four thousand years, it commenced to act in a nervous manner; contracted itself, and leaped over the papers like a startled frog; one would have imagined that it had suddenly been brought into contact

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with a galvanic battery: I could distinctly hear the dry sound made by its little heel, hard as the hoof of a gazelle.

I became rather discontented with my acquisition, inasmuch as I wished my paper-weights to be of a sedentary disposition, and thought it very unnatural that feet should walk about without legs; and I commenced to experience a feeling closely akin to fear.

Suddenly I saw the folds of my bed-curtain stir; and heard a bumping sound, like that caused by some person hopping on one foot across the floor. I must confess I became alternately hot and cold; that I felt a strange wind chill my back; and that my suddenly rising hair caused my nightcap to execute a leap of several yards.

The bed-curtains opened and I beheld the strangest figure imaginable before me.

It was a young girl of a very deep coffee-brown complexion, like the bayadere Amani, and possessing the purest Egyptian type of perfect beauty: her eyes were almond-shaped and oblique, with eyebrows so black that they seemed blue; her nose was exquisitely chiselled, almost Greek in its delicacy of outline; and she might indeed have been taken for a Corinthian statue of bronze but for the prominence of her cheek-bones and the slightly African fulness of her lips, which compelled one to recognise her as belonging beyond all doubt to the hieroglyphic race which dwelt upon the banks of the Nile.

Her arms, slender and spindle-shaped, like

those of very young girls, were encircled by a peculiar kind of metal bands and bracelets of glass beads; her hair was all twisted into little cords; and she wore upon her bosom a little idol-figure of green paste, bearing a whip with seven lashes, which proved it to be an image of Isis; her brow was adorned with a shining plate of gold, and a few traces of paint relieved the coppery tint of her cheeks.

As for her costume, it was very odd indeed.

Fancy a *pagne* or skirt all formed of little strips of material bedizened with red and black hieroglyphics, stiffened with bitumen, and apparently belonging to a freshly unbandaged mummy.

In one of those sudden flights of thought so common in dreams I heard the hoarse falsetto of the *bric-à-brac* dealer, repeating like a monotonous refrain the phrase he had uttered in his shop with so enigmatical an intonation:

“Old Pharaoh will not be well pleased: he loved his daughter, the dear man!”

One strange circumstance, which was not at all calculated to restore my equanimity, was that the apparition had but one foot; the other was broken off at the ankle!

She approached the table where the foot was starting and fidgeting about more than ever, and there supported herself upon the edge of the desk. I saw her eyes fill with pearly gleaming tears.

Although she had not as yet spoken, I fully comprehended the thoughts which agitated her:

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she looked at her foot—for it was indeed her own—with an exquisitely graceful expression of coquettish sadness; but the foot leaped and ran hither and thither, as though impelled on steel springs.

Twice or thrice she extended her hand to seize it, but could not succeed.

Then commenced between the Princess Hermonthis and her foot—which appeared to be endowed with a special life of its own—a very fantastic dialogue in a most ancient Coptic tongue, such as might have been spoken thirty centuries ago in the syrinxes of the land of Ser: luckily, I understood Coptic perfectly well that night.

The Princess Hermonthis cried, in a voice sweet and vibrant as the tones of a crystal bell:

“Well, my dear little foot, you always flee from me; yet I always took good care of you. I bathed you with perfumed water in a bowl of alabaster; I smoothed your heel with pumice-stone mixed with palm oil; your nails were cut with golden scissors and polished with a hippopotamus tooth; I was careful to select *tatbebs* for you, painted and embroidered and turned up at the toes, which were the envy of all the young girls in Egypt: you wore on your great toe rings bearing the device of the sacred Scarabæus; and you supported one of the lightest bodies that a lazy foot could sustain.”

The foot replied, in a pouting and chagrined tone:

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"You know well that I do not belong to myself any longer; I have been bought and paid for; the old merchant knew what he was about; he bore you a grudge for having refused to espouse him; this is an ill turn which he has done you. The Arab who violated your royal coffin in the subterranean pits of the necropolis of Thebes was sent thither by him: he desired to prevent you from being present at the reunion of the shadowy nations in the cities below. Have you five pieces of gold for my ransom?"

"Alas, no! My jewels, my rings, my purses of gold and silver, were all stolen from me," answered the Princess Hermonthis, with a sob.

"Princess," I then exclaimed, "I never retained anybody's foot unjustly; even though you have not got the five louis which it cost me, I present it to you gladly: I should feel unutterably wretched to think that I were the cause of so amiable a person as the Princess Hermonthis being lame."

I delivered this discourse in a royally gallant troubadour tone, which must have astonished the beautiful Egyptian girl.

She turned a look of deepest gratitude upon me; and her eyes shone with bluish gleams of light.

She took her foot—which surrendered itself willingly this time—like a woman about to put on her little shoe, and adjusted it to her leg with much skill.

This operation over, she took a few steps about

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the room, as though to assure herself that she was really no longer lame.

"Ah, how pleased my father will be!—he who was so unhappy because of my mutilation, and who from the moment of my birth set a whole nation at work to hollow me out a tomb so deep that he might preserve me intact until that last day, when souls must be weighed in the balance of Amenthi! Come with me to my father; he will receive you kindly; for you have given me back my foot."

I thought this proposition natural enough. I arrayed myself in a dressing-gown of large-flowered pattern, which lent me a very Pharaonic aspect; hurriedly put on a pair of Turkish slippers, and informed the Princess Hermonthis that I was ready to follow her.

Before starting, Hermonthis took from her neck the little idol of green paste and laid it on the scattered sheets of paper which covered the table.

"It is only fair," she observed smilingly, "that I should replace your paper-weight."

She gave me her hand, which felt soft and cold, like the skin of a serpent; and we departed.

We passed for some time with the velocity of an arrow through a fluid of grayish expanse, in which half-formed silhouettes flitted swiftly by us, to right and left.

For an instant we saw only sky and sea.

A few moments later obelisks commenced to tower in the distance: pylons and vast flights of

steps guarded by sphinxes became clearly outlined against the horizon.

We had reached our destination.

The princess conducted me to the mountain of rose-coloured granite, in the face of which appeared an opening so narrow and low that it would have been difficult to distinguish it from the fissures in the rock, had not its location been marked by two stelæ wrought with sculptures.

Hermionthis kindled a torch and led the way before me.

We traversed corridors hewn through the living rock; their walls, covered with hieroglyphics and paintings of allegorical processions, might well have occupied thousands of arms for thousands of years in their formation; these corridors, of interminable length, opened into square chambers, in the midst of which pits had been contrived, through which we descended by cramp-irons or spiral stairways; these pits again conducted us into other chambers, opening into other corridors, likewise decorated with painted sparrow-hawks, serpents coiled in circles, the symbols of the *tau* and *pedum*—prodigious works of art which no living eye can ever examine; interminable legends of granite which only the dead have time to read through all eternity.

At last we found ourselves in a hall so vast, so enormous, so immeasurable, that the eye could not reach the limits; files of monstrous columns stretched far out of sight on every side, between which twinkled livid stars of yellowish flame—

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points of light which revealed further depths incalculable in the darkness beyond.

The Princess Hermonthis still held my hand, and graciously saluted the mummies of her acquaintance.

My eyes became accustomed to the dim twilight, and objects became discernible.

I beheld the kings of the subterranean races seated upon thrones—grand old men, though dry, withered, wrinkled like parchment, and blackened with naphtha and bitumen—all wearing *pshents* of gold, and breastplates and gorgets glittering with precious stones; their eyes immovably fixed like the eyes of sphinxes, and their long beards whitened by the snow of centuries. Behind them stood their peoples, in the stiff and constrained posture enjoined by Egyptian art, all eternally preserving the attitude prescribed by the hieratic code. Behind these nations, the cats, ibises, and crocodiles contemporary with them—rendered monstrous of aspect by their swathing bands—mewed, flapped their wings, or extended their jaws in a saurian giggle.

All the Pharaohs were there—Cheops, Chephrenes, Psammetichus, Sesostris, Amenotaph—all the dark rulers of the pyramids and syringes: on yet higher thrones sat Chronos and Xixouthros, the latter contemporary with the deluge; and Tubal Cain, who reigned before it.

The beard of King Xixouthros had grown seven times around the granite table, upon which he leaned, lost in deep reverie, and buried in dreams.

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Further back, through a dusty cloud, I beheld dimly the seventy-two Pre-adamite Kings, with their seventy-two peoples — forever passed away.

After permitting me to gaze upon this bewildering spectacle a few moments, the Princess Hermonthis presented me to her father Pharaoh, who favoured me with a most gracious nod.

"I have found my foot again! I have found my foot!" cried the Princess, clapping her little hands together with every sign of frantic joy: "it was this gentleman who restored it to me."

The races of Kemi, the races of Nahasi—all the black, bronzed, and copper-coloured nations repeated in chorus:

"The Princess Hermonthis has found her foot again!"

Even Xixouthros himself was visibly affected.

He raised his heavy eyelids, stroked his moustache with his fingers, and turned upon me a glance weighty with centuries.

"By Oms, the dog of Hell, and Tmei, daughter of the Sun and of Truth! this is a brave and worthy lad!" exclaimed Pharaoh, pointing to me with his sceptre, which was terminated with a lotus-flower.

"What recompense do you desire?"

Filled with that daring inspired by dreams in which nothing seems impossible, I asked him for the hand of the Princess Hermonthis—the hand seemed to me a very proper antithetic recompense for the foot.

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Pharaoh opened wide his great eyes of glass in astonishment at my witty request.

"What country do you come from? and what is your age?"

"I am a Frenchman; and I am twenty-seven years old, venerable Pharaoh."

"Twenty-seven years old! and he wishes to espouse the Princess Hermonthis, who is thirty centuries old!" cried out at once all the Thrones and all the Circles of Nations.

Only Hermonthis herself did not seem to think my request unreasonable.

"If you were even only two thousand years old," replied the ancient King, "I would willingly give you the Princess; but the disproportion is too great; and, besides, we must give our daughters husbands who will last well: you do not know how to preserve yourselves any longer; even those who died only fifteen centuries ago are already no more than a handful of dust. Behold! my flesh is solid as basalt; my bones are bars of steel!

"I shall be present on the last day of the world, with the same body and the same features which I had during my lifetime: my daughter Hermonthis will last longer than a statue of bronze.

"Then the last particles of your dust will have been scattered abroad by the winds; and even Isis herself, who was able to find the atoms of Osiris, would scarce be able to recompose your being.

"See how vigorous I yet remain, and how

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mighty is my grasp," he added, shaking my hand in the English fashion with a strength that buried my rings in the flesh of my fingers.

He squeezed me so hard that I awoke, and found my friend Alfred shaking me by the arm to make me get up.

"O you everlasting sleeper! Must I have you carried out into the middle of the street, and fireworks exploded in your ears? It is after noon; don't you recollect your promise to take me with you to see M. Aguado's Spanish pictures?"

"God! I forgot all, all about it," I answered, dressing myself hurriedly; "we will go there at once; I have the permit lying there on my desk."

I started to find it; but fancy my astonishment when I beheld, instead of the mummy's foot I had purchased the evening before, the little green paste idol left in its place by the Princess Hermonthis!

THE SONG OF TRIUMPHANT LOVE

BY

IVAN SERGEYEVITCH TURGENIEFF

THIS is what I read in an old Italian manuscript:

About the middle of the sixteenth century, there were living in Ferrara (it was at that time flourishing under the sceptre of its magnificent archdukes, the patrons of art and poetry) two young men named Fabio and Muzzio. They were of the same age, and of near kinship, and were scarcely ever apart; the warmest affections had united them from early childhood; the similarity of their positions strengthened the bond. Both belonged to old families; both were rich, independent, and without family ties; tastes and inclinations were alike in both. Muzzio was devoted to music; Fabio to painting. They were looked upon with pride by the whole of Ferrara, as ornaments of the court, society, and city. In appearance, however, they were not alike, though both were distinguished by a graceful, youthful beauty. Fabio was taller, fair of face, and flaxen of hair, and he had blue eyes. Muzzio, on the other hand, had a swarthy face and black hair, and in his dark-brown eyes there was not the merry light, nor on his lips the

genial smile of Fabio; his thick eyebrows overhung narrow eyelids, while Fabio's golden eyebrows formed delicate half-circles on his pure, smooth brow. In conversation, too, Muzzio was less animated. For all that, the two friends were alike looked upon with favour by ladies, as well they might be, being models of chivalrous courtliness and generosity.

At the same time there was living in Ferrara a girl named Valeria. She was considered one of the greatest beauties in the town, though it was very seldom possible to see her, as she led a retired life, and never went out except to church, and on great holidays for a walk. She lived with her mother, a widow of noble family though of small fortune, who had no other children. In every one whom Valeria met she inspired a sensation of involuntary admiration, and an equally involuntary tenderness and respect, so modest was her mien, so little, it seemed, was she aware of all the power of her own charms. Some, it is true, found her a little pale; her eyes, almost always cast down, expressed a certain shyness, even timidity; her lips rarely smiled, and then only faintly; her voice scarcely any one had heard. But the rumour went that it was most beautiful, and that, shut up in her own room, in the early morning when everything still slumbered in the town, she loved to sing old songs to the sound of the lute, on which she herself used to play. In spite of her pallor, Valeria was blooming with health; and even old people, as

they gazed on her, could not but think, "Oh, how happy the youth for whom that pure maiden bud, still enfolded in its petals, will one day open into full flower!"

Fabio and Muzzio saw Valeria for the first time at a magnificent public festival, celebrated at the command of the Archduke of Ferrara, Ercole, son of the celebrated Lucrezia Borgia, in honour of some illustrious grandees who had come from Paris on the invitation of the Archduchess, daughter of the French king, Louis XII. Valeria was sitting beside her mother on an elegant tribune, built after a design of Palladio, in the principal square of Ferrara, for the most honourable ladies in the town. Both Fabio and Muzzio fell passionately in love with her on that day; and as they never had any secrets from each other, each of them soon knew what was passing in his friend's heart. They agreed together that both should try to get to know Valeria; and if she should deign to choose one of them, the other should submit without a murmur to her decision. A few weeks later, thanks to the excellent repute they deservedly enjoyed, they succeeded in penetrating into the widow's house; difficult though it was to obtain an entry into it, she permitted them to visit her.

From that time forward, they were able to see Valeria almost every day, and to converse with her; and every day the passion kindled in the hearts of both young men grew stronger and stronger. Valeria, however, showed no

preference for either of them, though their society was obviously agreeable to her. With Muzzio, she occupied herself with music; but she talked more with Fabio, and with him she was less timid. At last they resolved once for all to learn their fate, and sent a letter to Valeria, in which they begged her to be open with them, and to say to which she would be ready to give her hand. Valeria showed this letter to her mother, and declared that she was willing to remain unmarried, but, if her mother considered it time for her to enter upon matrimony, then she would marry whichever her mother's choice should fix upon. The excellent widow shed a few tears at the thought of parting from her beloved child; there was, however, no good ground for refusing the suitors, as she considered either of them equally worthy of her daughter's hand. But as she secretly preferred Fabio, and suspected that Valeria liked him the better, she fixed upon him. The next day Fabio heard of his happy fate, while all that was left for Muzzio was to keep his word, and submit.

And this he did; but to be the witness of the triumph of his friend and rival was more than he could bear. He promptly sold the greater part of his property, and, collecting some thousands of ducats, he set off on a far journey to the East. As he said farewell to Fabio, he told him that he should not return till he felt that the last traces of passion had vanished from his heart. It was painful to Fabio to part from the friend

of his childhood and youth; but the joyous anticipation of approaching bliss soon swallowed up all other sensations, and he gave himself up wholly to the transports of successful love.

Shortly after, he celebrated his nuptials with Valeria, and only then learned the full worth of the treasure it had been his fortune to obtain. He had a charming villa, shut in by a shady garden, a short distance from Ferrara; he moved thither with his wife and her mother. Then a time of happiness began for them. Married life brought out in a new and enchanting light all the perfections of Valeria. Fabio became an artist of distinction—no longer an amateur, but a real master. Valeria's mother rejoiced, and thanked God as she looked upon the happy pair. Four years flew by unperceived, like a happy dream. One thing only was wanting to the young couple, one lack they mourned over as a sorrow: they had no children. But they had not given up all hope of them. At the end of the fourth year, they were overtaken by a great, this time a real sorrow: Valeria's mother died after an illness of a few days.

Many tears were shed by Valeria; for a long time she could not accustom herself to the loss. But another year went by; life again asserted its rights, and flowed along its former channels. And behold! one fine summer evening, unexpectedly to every one, Muzzio returned to Ferrara.

During the whole space of five years that had elapsed since his departure, no one had heard anything of him; all talk about him had died away, as if he had vanished from the face of the earth. When Fabio met his friend in one of the streets of Ferrara, he almost cried out aloud, first in alarm and then in delight, and he at once invited him to his villa. There happened to be in his garden there a spacious pavilion, apart from the house, and he proposed to his friend that he should establish himself in this pavilion. Muzzio agreed, and moved thither the same day together with his servant, a dumb Malay—dumb, but not deaf, and indeed, to judge by the alertness of his expression, a very intelligent man. His tongue had been cut out. Muzzio brought with him dozens of boxes, filled with treasures of all sorts collected by him in the course of his prolonged travels. Valeria was delighted with Muzzio's return; and he greeted her with cheerful friendliness, but composure. It could be seen in every action that he had kept the promise given to Fabio. During the day, he arranged everything in complete order in his pavilion; aided by his Malay, he unpacked the curiosities he had brought—rugs, silken stuffs, velvet and brocaded garments, weapons, goblets, dishes and bowls decorated with enamel, things made of gold and silver, and inlaid with pearl and turquoise, carved boxes of jasper and ivory, cut bottles, spices, incense, skins of wild beasts and feathers of unknown birds, and a number

of other things the very use of which seemed mysterious and incomprehensible.

Among all these precious things there was a rich pearl necklace, bestowed upon Muzzio by the King of Persia for some great and secret service; he asked permission of Valeria to put this necklace with his own hand about her neck; she was struck by its great weight and a sort of strange heat in it—it seemed to burn her skin. In the evening after dinner, as they sat on the terrace of the villa in the shade of the oleanders and laurels, Muzzio began to relate his adventures. He told of distant lands he had seen, of cloud-topped mountains and deserts, rivers, lakes, seas; he told of immense buildings and temples, of trees a thousand years old, of birds and flowers of the colours of the rainbow; he named the cities and the peoples he had visited—their very names seemed like a fairy tale. The whole East was familiar to Muzzio; he had traversed Persia, Arabia, where the horses are nobler and more beautiful than any living creature; he had penetrated into the very heart of India, where the race of men grow like stately trees; he had reached the boundaries of China and Thibet, where the living god, called the Grand Lama, dwells on earth in the guise of a silent man with narrow eyes.

Marvellous were his tales. Both Fabio and Valeria listened to him as if enchanted. Muzzio's features had really changed very little; his face, swarthy from childhood, burned under the rays

of a hotter sun, had grown darker still, his eyes seemed more deep-set than before—and that was all; but the expression of his face had become different: concentrated and dignified, it showed no added vivacity when he recounted the dangers he had met by night in forests that resounded with the roar of tigers, or by day on solitary ways where savage fanatics lay in wait for travellers, to slay them in honour of their iron goddess who demands human sacrifices. And Muzzio's voice had grown deeper and more even; his hands, his whole body, had lost the freedom of gesture peculiar to the Italian race. With the aid of his servant, the obsequiously alert Malay, he showed his hosts a few of the feats he had learned from Indian Brahmans. Thus, for instance, having first hidden himself behind a curtain, he suddenly appeared sitting in the air cross-legged, the tips of his fingers pressed lightly on a bamboo cane placed vertically, which astonished Fabio not a little and positively alarmed Valeria. "Isn't he a sorcerer?" was her thought. When he proceeded, piping on a little flute, to call some tame snakes out of a covered basket, where their dark flat heads with quivering tongues appeared under a parti-coloured cloth, Valeria was terrified, and begged Muzzio to put away those loathsome horrors as soon as possible. At supper, from a long, round-necked flagon, Muzzio regaled his friends with wine of Shiraz; it was of extraordinary fragrance and thickness, of a golden colour

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with a shade of green in it, and it shone with a strange brightness as it was poured into the tiny jasper goblets. In taste, it was unlike European wines: it was very sweet and spicy, and, drunk slowly in small draughts, produced a sensation of pleasant drowsiness in all the limbs. Muzzio made both Fabio and Valeria drink a goblet of it, and he drank one himself. Bending over her goblet, he murmured something, moving his fingers as he did so. Valeria noticed this; but as in all Muzzio's doings, in his whole behaviour, there was something strange and out of common, she only thought, "Can he have adopted some new faith in India, or is that the custom there?" Then, after a short silence, she asked him whether he had persevered with music during his travels? Muzzio, in reply, bade the Malay bring his Indian violin. It was like those of to-day, but instead of four strings it had only three; the upper part of it was covered with a bluish snake-skin, and the slender bow of reed was in the form of a half-moon, and on its extreme end glittered a pointed diamond.

Muzzio played first some mournful airs, national songs as he called them, strange and even barbarous to an Italian ear; the sound of the metallic strings was plaintive and feeble. But when Muzzio began the last song, it suddenly gained force, and rang out under the wide sweeps of the bow—flowed out, exquisitely twisting and coiling like the snake that covered the violin-top; and such fire, such triumphant

bliss, glowed and burned in this melody that Fabio and Valeria felt wrung to the heart, and tears came into their eyes—while Muzzio, his head bent and pressed close to the violin, his cheeks pale, his eyebrows drawn together into a single straight line, seemed still more concentrated and solemn; and the diamond at the end of the bow flashed sparks of light as if it, too, were kindled by the fire of the divine song. When Muzzio had finished, still keeping fast the violin between his chin and his shoulder, he dropped the hand that held the bow—"What is that? What is that you have been playing to us?" cried Fabio. Valeria uttered not a word, but her whole being seemed to echo her husband's question. Muzzio laid the violin on the table, and, slightly tossing back his hair, he said with a polite smile, "That—that melody, that song, I heard once in the island of Ceylon. That song is known there among the people as 'The Song of Happy, Triumphant Love.'"

"Play it again," Fabio was murmuring.

"No, it can't be played again," answered Muzzio. "Besides, it is now too late. Signora Valeria ought to be at rest; and it's time for me too—I am weary." During the whole day Muzzio had treated Valeria with respectful simplicity, as a friend of former days; but as he went out he clasped her hand very tightly, squeezing his fingers on her palm, and looking so intently into her face that, though she did not raise her eyelids, she yet felt the look on her

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suddenly flaming cheeks. She said nothing to Muzzio, but jerked away her hand, and, when he was gone, she gazed at the door through which he had passed out. She remembered how she had been afraid of him a little even in the old days, and now she was overcome by perplexity. Muzzio went off to his pavilion: the husband and wife retired to their bedroom.

Valeria did not quickly fall asleep; there was a faint and languid fever in her blood and a slight ringing in her ears—from that strange wine, as she supposed, and perhaps, too, from Muzzio's stories, from his playing the violin. Towards morning she did at last fall asleep, and she had an extraordinary dream.

She dreamed that she was going into a large room with a low ceiling. Such a room she had never seen in her life. All the walls were covered with tiny blue tiles with gold lines on them; slender carved pillars of alabaster supported the marble ceiling; the ceiling itself and the pillars seemed half transparent. A pale, rosy glow penetrated from all sides into the room, throwing a mysterious and uniform light on all the objects in it; brocaded cushions lay on a narrow rug in the very middle of the floor, which was smooth as a mirror. In the corners, almost unseen, were smoking lofty censers of the shape of monstrous beasts; there was no window anywhere; a door hung with a velvet curtain stood dark and silent in a recess in the wall. And suddenly this curtain slowly glided,

moved aside—and in came Muzzio. He bowed, opened his arms, laughed. His fierce arms enfolded Valeria's waist; his parched lips burned her all over—she fell backward on the cushions.

Moaning with horror, after long struggles Valeria awoke. Still not realising where she was and what was happening to her, she raised herself on her bed and looked around. A tremor ran over her whole body. Fabio was lying beside her. He was asleep; but his face, in the light of the brilliant full moon looking in at the window, was pale as a corpse's—it was sadder than the face of death. Valeria wakened her husband, and instantly he looked at her.

"What is the matter?" he cried.

"I had—I had—a fearful dream," she whispered, still shuddering all over.

But at that instant came floating powerful sounds from the direction of the pavilion, and both Fabio and Valeria recognised the melody that Muzzio had played to them, calling it the song of blissful, triumphant love. Fabio looked in perplexity at Valeria. She closed her eyes, turned away, and both holding their breath heard the song out to the end. As the last note died away, the moon passed behind a cloud, and it was suddenly dark in the room. Both the young people let their heads sink on the pillows without exchanging a word, and neither of them noticed when the other fell asleep.

The next morning Muzzio came in to breakfast; he seemed happy, and greeted Valeria

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cheerfully. She answered him in confusion—stole a glance at him, and felt frightened at the sight of that serene, happy face, those piercing, inquisitive eyes. Muzzio was beginning again to tell a story, but Fabio interrupted him at the first word.

"You could not sleep, I see, in your new quarters. My wife and I heard you playing last night's song."

"Yes! Did you hear it?" said Muzzio. "I played it, indeed; but I had been asleep before that, and I had a wonderful dream, too."

Valeria was on the alert. "What sort of a dream?" asked Fabio.

"I dreamed," answered Muzzio, not taking his eyes off Valeria, "that I was entering a spacious apartment with a ceiling decorated in oriental fashion. Carved columns supported the roof, the walls were covered with tiles, and, though there were neither windows nor skylights, the whole room was filled with a rosy light, just as if it were built of transparent stone. In the corners, Chinese censers were smoking, on the floor lay brocaded cushions along a narrow rug. I went in through a door covered with a curtain, and at another door, just opposite, appeared a woman whom I once loved. And so beautiful she seemed to me that I was all aflame with my old love——"

Muzzio broke off significantly. Valeria sat motionless, and only gradually she turned white—and then she drew her breath more slowly.

"Then," continued Muzzio, "I awoke, and played that song."

"But who was the woman?" asked Fabio.

"Who was she? The wife of an Indian. I met her in the town of Delhi. She is not alive now. She died."

"And her husband?" asked Fabio, not knowing why he asked the question.

"Her husband, too, they say, is dead. I soon lost sight of them both."

"Strangel!" observed Fabio. "My wife, too, had an extraordinary dream last night"—Muzzio gazed intently at Valeria—"which she did not tell me," added Fabio.

But at this point Valeria got up, and went out of the room. Immediately after breakfast, Muzzio, too, went away, explaining that he had to be in Ferrara on business, and that he would not be back before evening.

A few weeks before Muzzio's return, Fabio had begun a portrait of his wife, depicting her with the attributes of Saint Cecilia. He had made considerable advance in his art; the renowned Luini, a pupil of Leonardo da Vinci, used to come to him at Ferrara, and, while aiding him with his own counsels, would also pass on the precepts of the great master. The portrait was almost completely finished; all that was left was to add a few strokes to the face, and Fabio might well be proud of his creation. After seeing Muzzio off on his way to Ferrara,

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he turned into his studio, where Valeria was usually waiting for him; but he did not find her there; he called her, but she did not respond. Fabio was overcome by a secret uneasiness, and began looking for her. She was nowhere in the house; Fabio ran into the garden, and there, in one of the more secluded walks, he caught sight of Valeria. She was sitting on a seat, her head drooping upon her bosom, and her hands folded on her knees; while behind her, peeping out of the dark green of a cypress, a marble satyr, with a distorted, malignant grin on his face, was putting his pouting lips to a Pan's pipe. Valeria was visibly relieved at her husband's appearance, and to his agitated questions she replied that she had a slight headache, but that it was of no consequence, and she was ready to come to him. Fabio led her to the studio, posed her, and took up his brush; but, to his great vexation, he could not finish the face as he would have liked to. And not because Valeria merely looked somewhat pale and exhausted—no; but the pure, saintly expression in her face, which he liked so well, and which had given him the idea of painting her as Saint Cecilia, he could not find in it that day. He flung down the brush at last, told his wife that he was not in the mood for work, and that he would not prevent her from lying down, as she did not look at all well, and put the canvas with its face to the wall. Valeria agreed with him that she ought to rest, and, repeating her

complaints of a headache, withdrew into her bedroom.

Fabio remained in the studio. He felt a strange, confused sensation incomprehensible to himself. Muzzio's stay under his roof, to which he, Fabio, had himself urgently invited him, had become irksome to him. And not that he was jealous—could any one have been jealous of Valeria?—but he did not recognise his former comrade in his friend. All that was strange, unknown, and new which Muzzio had brought with him from those distant lands—and which seemed to have entered into his very flesh and blood—all these magical feats, songs, strange drinks, this dumb Malay, even the spicy fragrance diffused by Muzzio's garments, hair, breath—all this inspired in Fabio a sensation akin to distrust, possibly even to timidity. And why did that Malay, while waiting at the table, stare with such disagreeable intentness at him, Fabio? Really, one might suppose that he understood Italian. Muzzio had said of him that, in losing his tongue, this Malay had made a great sacrifice, and in return he was now possessed of great power. What sort of power? And how could he have obtained it at the cost of his tongue? All this was very strange, very incomprehensible!

Fabio went into his wife's room; she was lying on the bed, dressed, but was not asleep. Hearing his steps, she started, then again seemed delighted to see him, just as in the garden.

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Fabio sat down beside the bed, took Valeria by the hand, and, after a short silence, asked her what was the extraordinary dream that had frightened her so the previous night? And was it of the same sort at all as the dream that Muzzio had described? Valeria crimsoned, and said hurriedly, "Oh, no, no! I saw—a sort of monster that was trying to tear me to pieces." "A monster in the shape of a man?" asked Fabio. "No, a beast, a beast!" Valeria turned away, and hid her burning face in the pillows. Fabio held his wife's hand some time longer; then silently he raised it to his lips and withdrew.

Both the young people passed the day with heavy hearts. Something seemed hanging over their heads, but what it was they could not tell. They wanted to be together, as if some danger threatened them; but what to say to one another they did not know. Fabio made an effort to take up the portrait, and to read Ariosto, whose poem had appeared not long before in Ferrara, and was now making much noise all over Italy; but nothing was of any use. Late in the evening, just at supper-time, Muzzio returned.

He seemed composed and cheerful, but he told them little; he devoted himself rather to questioning Fabio about their common acquaintances, about the German war, and the Emperor Charles; he spoke of his own desire to visit

Rome, to see the new Pope. He again offered Valeria some Shiraz wine, and, on her refusal, observed as if to himself, "No, it's not needed, to be sure." Going back with his wife to his room, Fabio soon fell asleep; and, waking up an hour later, felt a conviction that no one was sharing his bed; Valeria was not beside him. He got up quickly, and at the same moment saw his wife in her night attire coming out of the garden into the room. The moon was shining brightly, though not long before a light rain had been falling. With eyes closed, with a look of mysterious horror on her immovable face, Valeria approached the bed, and, feeling for it with her hands stretched out before her, lay down hurriedly and in silence. Fabio turned to her with a question, but she made no reply; she seemed to be asleep. He touched her, and felt on her dress and on her hair drops of rain, and, on the soles of her bare feet, little grains of sand. Then he leaped up, and ran into the garden through the half-open door. The crude brilliance of the moon wrapped every object in light. Fabio looked about him, and perceived on the sand of the path prints of two pairs of feet—one pair was bare; and these prints led to a bower of jasmine, on one side, between the pavilion and the house. He stood still in perplexity, when, suddenly, once more he heard the strains of the song he had listened to the night before. Fabio shuddered, ran into the pavilion—Muzzio was standing in the middle

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of the room, playing on the violin. Fabio rushed up to him.

"You have been in the garden; your clothes are wet with rain!"

"No — I don't know — I think I have not been out——" Muzzio answered slowly, seemingly amazed at Fabio's entrance and excitement.

Fabio seized him by the hand. "And why are you playing that melody again? Have you had a dream again?"

Muzzio glanced at Fabio with the same look of amazement, and said nothing.

"Answer me!"

"The moon stood high like a round shield—
Like a snake, the river shines—
The friend's awake, the foe's asleep—
The bird is in the falcon's clutches—Help!"

muttered Muzzio, humming to himself as if in delirium.

Fabio stepped back a couple of paces, stared at Muzzio, pondered a moment, and went back to the house, to his bedroom.

Valeria, her head sunk on her shoulder, and her hands hanging lifelessly, was in a heavy sleep. He could not quickly awaken her, but the moment she saw him she flung herself on his neck, and embraced him convulsively; she was trembling all over. "What is the matter, my precious, what is it?" Fabio kept repeating, trying to soothe her. But she still lay lifeless

on his breast. "Ah, what fearful dreams I have!" she whispered, hiding her face against him. Fabio would have questioned her, but she only shuddered. The window-panes were flushed with the light of dawn, when at last she fell asleep in his arms.

The next day Muzzio disappeared at early morning, while Valeria informed her husband that she intended to go away to a neighbouring monastery, where lived her spiritual father, an old and austere monk, in whom she placed unbounded confidence. To Fabio's inquiries, she replied that she wanted by confession to relieve her soul, which was weighed down by the exceptional impressions of the last few days. As he looked upon Valeria's sunken face and listened to her faint voice, Fabio approved of her plan; the worthy Father Lorenzo might give her valuable advice, and might disperse her doubts. Under the escort of four attendants, Valeria set out for the monastery, while Fabio remained at home, and wandered about the garden until his wife's return, trying to comprehend what had happened to her, a victim to constant fear and wrath, and to the pain of undefined suspicion. More than once he went up to the pavilion; but Muzzio had not returned, and the Malay gazed at Fabio like a statue, obsequiously bowing his head, with a well-dissembled—so at least it seemed to Fabio—smile on his bronzed face. Meanwhile Valeria had, in confession, told everything to her priest, not so

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much with shame as with horror. The priest heard her attentively, gave her his blessing, absolved her from her involuntary sin, but to himself he thought: "Sorcery—the arts of the devil—the matter can't be left so"; and he returned with Valeria to her villa, as if with the aim of completely pacifying and reassuring her. At the sight of the priest, Fabio was thrown into some agitation; but the experienced old man had thought out beforehand how he must treat him.

When he was left alone with Fabio he did not, of course, betray the secrets of the confessional, but he advised him, if possible, to get rid of the guest they had invited to their house, since by his stories, his songs, and his whole behaviour, he was troubling the imagination of Valeria. Moreover, in the old man's opinion, Muzzio had not, he remembered, been very firm in the faith in former days, and, having spent so long a time in lands unenlightened by the truths of Christianity, he might well have brought thence the contagion of false doctrine, indeed, might even have become conversant with secret magic arts; and therefore, though long friendship had indeed its claim, still a wise prudence pointed to the necessity of separation. Fabio fully agreed with the excellent monk. Valeria was even joyful when her husband communicated to her the priest's counsel; and, sent on his way with the cordial good-will of both the young people, loaded with rich gifts

for the monastery and the poor, Father Lorenzo returned home.

Fabio intended to have an explanation with Muzzio immediately after supper; but his strange guest did not return to supper. Then Fabio decided to defer his conversation with Muzzio until the following day; and both the young people retired to rest.

Valeria soon fell asleep; but Fabio could not sleep. In the stillness of the night, everything he had seen, everything he had felt, presented itself more vividly; he put to himself still more insistently questions to which, as before, he could find no answer. Had Muzzio really become a sorcerer, and had he already poisoned Valeria? She was ill—but what was her disease? While he lay, his head in his hand, holding his feverish breath, and given up to painful reflection, the moon rose again upon a cloudless sky; and, together with the beams through the half-transparent window-panes, there began, from the direction of the pavilion—or was it Fabio's fancy?—to come a breath, like a light, fragrant current—then an urgent, passionate whisper was heard—and at that instant he observed that Valeria was beginning faintly to stir. He started, looked; she rose up, slid first one foot, then the other, out of the bed, and like one bewitched of the moon, her sightless eyes fixed lifelessly before her, her hands stretched out, she began moving toward the garden! Fabio instantly ran out of the other

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door of the room, and, running quickly around the corner of the house, bolted the door that led into the garden. He had scarcely time to grasp at the bolt, when he felt some one trying to open the door from the inside, pressing against it again and again, and then there was the sound of piteous, passionate moans.

"But Muzzio has not come back from the town!" flashed through Fabio's head, and he rushed into the pavilion.

What did he see?

Coming toward him, along the path dazzlingly lighted by the moon's rays, was Muzzio—he, too, moving like one moonstruck, his hands held out before him, his eyes open but unseeing. Fabio ran up to him, but he, not heeding him, moved on, treading evenly, step by step, and his rigid face smiled in the moonlight like the Malay's. Fabio would have called him by his name—but at that instant he heard behind him in the house the creaking of a window. He looked around.

Yes, the window of the bedroom was open from top to bottom, and putting one foot over the sill, Valeria stood in the window—her hands seemed to be seeking Muzzio—she seemed striving all over toward him.

With a sudden inrush, unutterable fury filled Fabio's breast. "Accursed sorcerer!" he shrieked furiously, and seizing Muzzio by the throat with one hand, with the other he felt for

the dagger in his girdle, and plunged the blade into his side up to the hilt.

Muzzio uttered a shrill scream, and clapping his hand to the wound ran back to the pavilion. But at the very same instant when Fabio stabbed him, Valeria screamed just as shrilly, and fell to the earth like grass before the scythe.

Fabio flew to her, raised her up, carried her to the bed, and began to speak to her. She lay a long time motionless, but at last she opened her eyes, heaved a deep, broken, blissful sigh, like one just rescued from imminent death, saw her husband, and twining her arms about his neck, crept close to him. "You, you, it is you!" she faltered. Gradually her hands loosened their hold, her head sank back, and murmuring with a blissful smile, "Thank God, it is all over—but how weary I am!" she fell into a sound but not heavy sleep.

Fabio sank down beside her bed, and never taking his eyes from off her pale and sunken but already calmer face, began reflecting on what had happened, and also how he ought to act now. What steps was he to take? If he had killed Muzzio—and, remembering how deeply the dagger had gone in, he could have no doubt of it—it could not be hidden. He would have to bring it to the knowledge of the archduke, of the judges—but how explain, how describe, such an incomprehensible affair? He, Fabio, had killed in his own house his own kinsman, his dearest friend! They will inquire,

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what for, on what grounds?—But if Muzzio were not dead? Fabio could not bear to remain longer in uncertainty, and satisfying himself that Valeria was asleep, he cautiously got up from his chair, went out of the house, and made his way to the pavilion. Everything was still in it; only, in one window, a light was visible. With a sinking heart, he opened the outer door (there was still the print of blood-stained fingers on it, and there were black drops of gore on the sand of the path), passed through the first dark room—and stood still on the threshold, overwhelmed with amazement.

In the middle of the room, on a Persian rug, with a brocaded cushion under his head, and all his limbs stretched out straight, lay Muzzio, covered with a wide, red shawl, with a black pattern on it. His face, yellow as wax, with closed eyes and bluish eyelids, was turned toward the ceiling; no breathing could be discerned: he seemed a corpse. At his feet knelt the Malay, also wrapped in a red shawl. He was holding in his left hand the branch of some unknown plant, like a fern, and, bending slightly forward, was gazing fixedly at his master. A small torch, fixed on the floor, burned with a greenish flame, and was the only light in the room. The flame did not flicker or smoke. The Malay did not stir at Fabio's entrance; he merely turned his eyes upon him, and again bent them upon Muzzio. From time to time he raised and lowered the branch, and waved it in the air,

and his dumb lips slowly parted and moved, as if uttering soundless words. On the floor between the Malay and Muzzio lay the dagger with which Fabio had stabbed his friend; the Malay struck one blow with the branch on the blood-stained blade. A minute passed—then another. Fabio approached the Malay, and, stooping down to him, asked in an undertone, "Is he dead?" The Malay bent his head from above downward, and, disentangling his right hand from his shawl, he pointed imperiously to the door. Fabio would have repeated his question, but the gesture of the commanding hand was repeated, and Fabio went out, indignant and wondering, but obedient.

He found Valeria sleeping as before, and with an even more tranquil expression on her face. He did not undress, but seated himself by the window, his head in his hand, and once more sank into thought. The rising sun found him still in the same place. Valeria was not yet awake.

Fabio intended to wait till she awakened, and then to set off to Ferrara, when suddenly some one tapped lightly on the bedroom door. Fabio went out, and saw his old steward Antonio.

"Signor," began the old man, "the Malay has just informed me that Signor Muzzio has been taken ill, and wishes to be moved with all his belongings to the town; and that he begs you to let him have servants to assist in packing his things; and that, at dinner-time, you would

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send packhorses and saddle-horses, and a few attendants for the journey. Do you permit it?" "The Malay informed you of this?" asked Fabio. "In what manner? Why, he is dumb." "Here, Signor, is the paper on which he wrote all this in our language, and very correctly, too." "And Muzzio, you say, is ill?" "Yes, he is very ill, and can see no one." "Have they sent for a doctor?" "No; the Malay forbade it." "And was it the Malay who wrote you this?" "Yes, it was he." Fabio did not speak for a moment. "Well, then, arrange it all," he said at last. Antonio withdrew.

Fabio looked after his servant in bewilderment. "Then he is not dead?" he thought—and he did not know whether to rejoice or be sorry. "Ill?" But a few hours ago it was a corpse he had looked upon!

Fabio returned to Valeria. She waked up, and raised her head. The husband and wife exchanged a long look full of significance. "He is gone?" Valeria said suddenly. Fabio shuddered. "How gone? Do you mean——" "Is he gone away?" she continued. A load fell from Fabio's heart. "Not yet, but he is going to-day." "And I shall never, never see him again?" "Never." "And these dreams will not come again?" "No." Valeria heaved a sigh of relief; a blissful smile once more appeared on her lips. She held out both hands to her husband. "And we will never speak of him—never; do you hear, my dear one? And

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I will not leave my room till he is gone. And do you now send my maids to me—but stay: take away that thing!" She pointed to the pearl necklace lying on a little bedside table, the necklace given her by Muzzio. Throw it at once into our deepest well. Embrace me. I am your Valeria; and do not come to me—till he has gone." Fabio took the necklace—the pearls, he fancied, looked tarnished—and did as his wife had directed. Then he fell to wandering about the garden, looking from a distance at the pavilion, about which the bustle of preparation for departure was beginning. Servants were bringing out boxes and loading the horses—but the Malay was not among them. An irresistible impulse drew Fabio to look once more upon what was going on inside of the pavilion. He recollected that there was at the back a secret door, by which he could reach the inner room where Muzzio had been lying in the morning. He stole round to the door, found it unlocked, and, parting the folds of a heavy curtain, turned a faltering glance upon the room within.

Muzzio was not now lying on the rug. Dressed as if for a journey, he sat in an armchair, but seemed a corpse, just as on Fabio's first visit. His torpid head fell back on the chair, and his outstretched hands hung lifeless, yellow, and rigid on his knees. His breast did not heave. Near his chair on the floor, which was strewn with dried herbs, stood some flat bowls of dark

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liquid, which exhaled a powerful, almost suffocating perfume, like the odour of musk. Around each bowl was coiled a small snake of brazen hue, with golden eyes that flashed from time to time; while directly facing Muzzio, two paces from him, rose the long figure of the Malay, wrapped in a mantle of many-coloured brocade, girt round the waist with a tiger's tail, with a high hat in the shape of a pointed tiara on his head. But he was not motionless; at one moment he bowed down reverently, and seemed to be praying; at the next, he drew himself up to his full height, even rose on tiptoe; then, with a rhythmic action, threw out wide his arms, moved them persistently in the direction of Muzzio, and seemed to threaten or command him, frowning and stamping with his foot. All these actions seemed to cost him great effort, even to cause him pain: he breathed heavily; the sweat poured down his face. All at once he sank down to the ground, and, drawing in a full breath, with knitted brows and immense effort, drew his clenched hands toward him, as if he were holding reins in them—when, to the indescribable horror of Fabio, Muzzio's head slowly left the back of the chair, and moved forward, following the Malay's hands. The Malay let them fall, and Muzzio's head fell back again. The Malay repeated his movements, and obediently the head repeated them after him. The dark liquid in the bowls began boiling; the bowls themselves began to resound

with a faint, bell-like note, and the brazen snakes coiled freely about each of them. Then the Malay took a step forward, and, raising his eyebrows and opening his eyes immensely wide, he bowed his head to Muzzio—and the eyelids of the dead man quivered, parted uncertainly, and under them could be seen the eyeballs, dull as lead. The Malay's face was radiant with triumphant pride and delight, a delight almost malignant: he opened his mouth wide, and from the depths of his chest there broke out with effort a prolonged howl; Muzzio's lips parted, too, and a faint moan quivered on them in response to that inhuman sound.

But at this point Fabio could endure it no longer: he conceived he was present at some devilish incantation! He, too, uttered a shriek, and rushed out, running home, as quick as possible, without looking round, repeating prayers and crossing himself as he ran.

Three hours later, Antonio came to him with the announcement that everything was ready, the things were packed, and Signor Muzzio was preparing to start. Without a word in answer to his servant, Fabio went out onto the terrace wherefrom the pavilion could be seen. The door of the pavilion opened, and, supported by the Malay, who wore once more his ordinary attire, appeared Muzzio! His face was deathlike, and his hands hung like a dead man's, but he walked—yes, positively walked; and, seated on the charger, he sat upright, and felt for and found

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the reins. The Malay put his feet in the stirrups, leaped up behind him on the saddle, put his arm round him, and the whole party started. The horses walked at a slow pace, and, when they turned about before the house, Fabio fancied that there gleamed in Muzzio's dark face two spots of white. Could it be he had turned his eyes upon him? Only, the Malay bowed to him as ironically as ever.

Did Valeria see all this? The blinds of her windows were drawn—but it may be she was standing behind them.

At dinner-time she came into the dining-room, and was very quiet and affectionate; she still complained, however, of weariness. But there was no agitation about her now, none of her former constant bewilderment and secret dread; and when, the day after Muzzio's departure, Fabio set to work again upon her portrait, he found in her features the pure expression the momentary eclipse of which had so troubled him—and his brush moved lightly and faithfully over the canvas.

The husband and wife took up their old life again. Muzzio vanished from them as if he had never existed. Fabio and Valeria were agreed, as it seemed, not to utter a syllable referring to him, not to learn anything of his later days; his fate remained, however, a mystery for all. Muzzio did actually disappear as if he had sunk into the earth. Fabio one day thought it his duty to tell Valeria exactly what

had taken place on that fatal night; but she probably divined his intention, and she held her breath, half-shutting her eyes, as if she were expecting a blow. And Fabio understood her; he did not inflict that blow upon her.

One fine autumn day, while Fabio was putting the last touches to his picture of his Cecilia, Valeria sat at the organ, her fingers straying at random over the keys. Suddenly, without her knowing it, from under her hands came the first notes of that song of triumphant love which Muzzio had once played; and at the same instant, for the first time since her marriage, she felt within her the throb of a new palpitating life. Valeria started—stopped——

What did it mean? Could it be——?

But here the manuscript ended.