FAMOUS MYSTERY STORIES

EDITED BY

J. WALKER McSPADDEN

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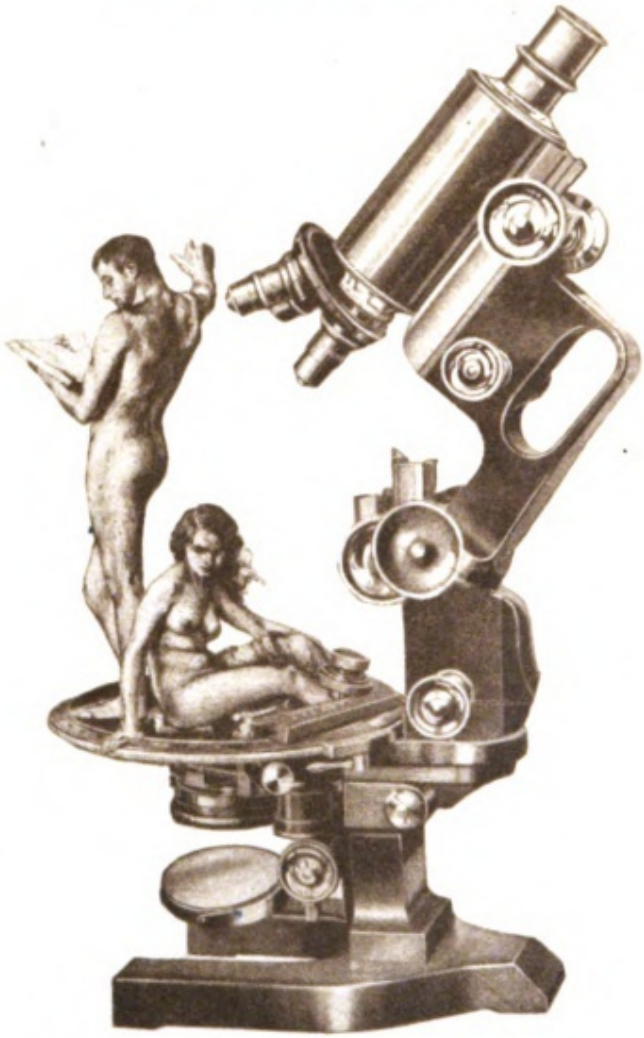

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The "Mystery" Library

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A Library of quite unusual tales culled from the most powerful writers, chiefly American, English, and French. Each book contains special introduction.

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FAMOUS MYSTERY STORIES

EDITED BY

J. WALKER McSPADDEN

Editor of "Famous Ghost Stories," "Famous Psychic Stories," "Famous Detective Stories," etc.

NEW YORK

THOMAS Y. CROWELL COMPANY

PUBLISHERS

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CONTENTS

		PAGE
THE SPECTRE OF TAPPINGTON	*Richard Harris Barham*	1
THE MYSTERIOUS SKETCH	*Erckmann-Chatrian*	34
THE DESERTED HOUSE	*Ernest T. W. Hoffmann*	58
THE ADELANTADO OF THE SEVEN CITIES	*Washington Irving*	86
THE PIPE	*Anonymous*	110
THE UPPER BERTH	*F. Marion Crawford*	139
THE DIAMOND LENS	*Fitz-James O'Brien*	172
THE HORLA	*Guy de Maupassant*	210
THE MUMMY'S FOOT	*Théophile Gautier*	248
THE THIEF	*Anna Katharine Green*	266

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INTRODUCTION

"Famous Mystery Stories" completes a tetralogy begun a few years ago with "Ghost Stories" and continued with "Detective" and "Psychic Stories." The responsive chord that each successive volume has struck has emboldened the editor to continue a line of research which has revealed many fascinating channels. A mass of enticing material has been brought to light, which would fill many books of the present size; and the problem has been one of selection and elimination. The group of four books now complete under the title of the "The Mystery Library," while in no sense an anthology of the subject, will be found to contain many typical examples of the bizarre and unusual, culled from the ablest pens of America and Europe.

It is interesting to note the different methods of approach to your true mystery story. Every such tale conceals a definite problem which may or may not be solved; and when tested in the crucible of widely divergent minds, the result is of value from more than one aspect.

In the present volume the reader will find representative stories from American, English, Irish, French and German writers. Aside from the individual merit of each tale, they afford a striking study in contrasts, both in style and method of approach. By way of illustration, no two stories could be more

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dissimilar in treatment than the French and German examples herewith included. "The Mysterious Sketch" by Erckmann-Chatrian, like its successor, "The Deserted House," by Hoffmann, is an excellent type of pure mystery tale, with the mystery unexplained; but there the resemblance ends. The French joint authors are concerned only with a hypothetical case. An artist draws a fanciful sketch which proves to be the depiction of an actual tragedy. Its effect upon the artist himself, rather than the how and why of the drawing, is the concern of the story. Hoffmann's tale also presents a definite problem which is only half explained. It is a fantasy with a touch of psychology, and affords its own raison d'être. "Hoffmann preferred to remain a riddle to himself," wrote a friend, "a riddle which he always dreaded to have solved."

Three stories involving a vein of humor are "The Spectre of Tappington," that delightful skit from "The Ingoldsby Legends"; Irving's tale of the Adelantado who sought the lost cities of the Spanish Main; and "The Pipe." Each may be commended as an after-dinner solace, "The Pipe" providing a pleasant "smoke" although not altogether harmless in its effects. It is by our old friend, Anonymous, who has given us some of the best examples of literature in every age. Irving on his part is always like a draught of ruddy wine; and in the adventures of the misguided Adelantado we are reminded of our old friend Rip Van Winkle. The author himself is not concerned with a mystery per se, but is

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indulging in a characteristic flight of fancy tinged with a quiet, ironical humor.

By way of contrast come a grisly tale of the sea from the masterly pen of F. Marion Crawford. In "The Upper Berth" he weaves a mystery of horror and haunting fear. It is redolent of stagnant sea-water and slimy sea-weeds. He is a hardened reader indeed who can read a yarn such as this without a shudder. And yet the reader is led deliberately on to the final climax. Unlike other mysteries it does not depend for its power upon the unexpected. The narrator says in effect, "Gentlemen, prepare for a shock!"—and his audience are shocked nevertheless.

"The Diamond Lens," by Fitz-James O'Brien, is a classic of imagination raised to the *nth* degree. Through the manufacture of a microscope of incalculable power, its possessor is enabled to discover worlds far beyond the ken of man, and to find therein lovely beings. The height of the fantastic is reached when the scientist falls in love with the tiny animalcule—truly a hopeless passion! On re-reading this story one is struck by the fact that even murder itself can be held subordinate to other elements in a piece of fiction.

De Maupassant's strange tale, "The Horla," carries with it more than a literary interest. It has a certain autobiographical flavor. De Maupassant wielded one of the most powerful and versatile pens in France of the last half century, and yet had a morbid, haunting fear of going mad—a fear which was actually realized. "The Horla" is one of the

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first vivid presentiments of a sinister personality overshadowing his own. In another story, "Lui," not here included, he also reveals evidences of this overmastering terror. "I am afraid of the walls, of the furniture, of the familiar objects which seem to me to assume a kind of animal life. Above all I fear the horrible confusion of my thought, of my reason escaping, entangled and scattered by an invisible and mysterious anguish."

A mystery story of more conventional type is that one by Anna Katharine Green, one of America's most prolific writers in this vein. In "The Thief," we have an example of circumstantial evidence, which wellnigh brings its victim to social and spiritual ruin. He is saved only by the faith of those who believe in him despite appearances.

"The Mummy's Foot," by Gautier, is a delightful example of Gallic humor. Nothing could be more fanciful than the picture of the long-dead Egyptian princess coming to reclaim her foot, which was being used as a paper weight, and the assumption of its owner that he was thereby entitled to claim her hand.

In the preparation of this work the editor has been constantly indebted to publishers and writers for the use of special material. Thanks are particularly due to The Macmillan Company and the heirs of F. Marion Crawford for permission to use his work; and to Dodd, Mead & Company and Anna Katharine Green, for the use of her story.

J. W. McS.

MONTCLAIR, N. J.
March 1, 1922.

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THE SPECTRE OF TAPPINGTON

By Richard Harris Barham

"It is very odd, though; what can have become of them?" said Charles Seaforth, as he peeped under the valance of an old-fashioned bedstead, in an old-fashioned apartment of a still more old-fashioned manor-house; "'tis confoundedly odd, and I can't make it out at all. Why, Barney, where are they?—and where the devil are you?"

No answer was returned to this appeal; and the lieutenant, who was, in the main, a reasonable person—at least as reasonable a person as any young gentleman of twenty-two in "the service" can fairly be expected to be—cooled when he reflected that his servant could scarcely reply extempore to a summons which it was impossible he should hear.

An application to the bell was the considerate result; and the footsteps of as tight a lad as ever put pipe-clay to belt, sounded along the gallery.

"Come in!" said his master. An ineffectual attempt upon the door reminded Mr. Seaforth that he had locked himself in. "By Heaven! this is the odd-

From "The Ingoldsby Legends, by Thomas Ingoldsby Esq."

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est thing of all," said he, as he turned the key and admitted Mr. Maguire into his dormitory.

"Barney, where are my pantaloons?"

"Is it the breeches?" asked the valet, casting an inquiring eye round the apartment—"is it the breeches, sir?"

"Yes; what have you done with them?"

"Sure then your honor had them on when you went to bed, and it's hereabout they'll be, I'll be bail;" and Barney lifted a fashionable tunic from a cane-backed arm-chair, proceeding in his examination. But the search was vain: there was the tunic aforesaid; there was a smart-looking kerseymere waistcoat; but the most important article of all in a gentleman's wardrobe was still wanting.

"Where can they be?" asked the master, with a strong accent on the auxiliary verb.

"Sorrow a know I knows," said the man.

"It must have been the devil, then, after all, who has been here and carried them off!" cried Seaforth, staring full into Barney's face.

Mr. Maguire was not devoid of the superstition of his countrymen, still he looked as if he did not quite subscribe to the *sequitur*.

His master read incredulity in his countenance. "Why, I tell you, Barney, I put them there, on that arm-chair, when I got into bed; and, by heaven! I distinctly saw the ghost of the old fellow they told me of, come in at midnight, put on my pantaloons, and walk away with them."

"May be so," was the cautious reply.

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"I thought, of course, it was a dream; but then—where the devil are the breeches?"

The question was more easily asked than answered. Barney renewed his search, while the lieutenant folded his arms, and, leaning against the toilet, sank into a reverie.

"After all, it must be some trick of my laughter-loving cousins," said Seaforth.

"Ah! then, the ladies!" chimed in Mr. Maguire, though the observation was not addressed to him; "and will it be Miss Caroline or Miss Fanny, that's stole your honor's things?"

"I hardly know what to think of it," pursued the bereaved lieutenant, still speaking in soliloquy, with his eye resting dubiously on the chamber-door. "I locked myself in, that's certain; and—but there must be some other entrance to the room—pooh! I remember—the private staircase; how could I be such a fool?" and he crossed the chamber to where a low oaken doorcase was dimly visible in a distant corner. He paused before it. Nothing now interfered to screen it from observation; but it bore tokens of having been at some earlier period concealed by tapestry, remains of which yet clothed the walls on either side the portal.

"This way they must have come," said Seaforth; "I wish with all my heart I had caught them!"

"Och! the kittens!" sighed Mr. Barney Maguire.

But the mystery was yet as far from being solved as before. True, there *was* the "other door"; but then that, too, on examination, was even more firmly

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secured than the one which opened on the gallery—two heavy bolts on the inside effectually prevented any coup de main on the lieutenant's bivouac from that quarter. He was more puzzled than ever; nor did the minutest inspection of the walls and floor throw any light upon the subject; one thing only was clear—the breeches were gone! "It is *very* singular," said the lieutenant.

Tappington (generally called Tapton) Everard is an antiquated but commodious manor-house in the eastern division of the county of Kent. A former proprietor had been high-sheriff in the days of Elizabeth, and many a dark and dismal tradition was yet extant of the licentiousness of his life, and the enormity of his offenses. The Glen, which the keeper's daughter was seen to enter, but never known to quit, still frowns darkly as of yore; while an ineradicable bloodstain on the oaken stair yet bids defiance to the united energies of soap and sand. But it is with one particular apartment that a deed of more especial atrocity is said to be connected. A stranger guest—so runs the legend—arrived unexpectedly at the mansion of the "bad Sir Giles." They met in apparent friendship; but the ill-concealed scowl on their master's brow told the domestics that the visit was not a welcome one; the banquet, however, was not spared; the wine cup circulated freely—too freely, perhaps, for sounds of discord at length reached the ears of even the excluded serving-men, as they were doing their best to imitate their betters in the lower

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hall. Alarmed, some of them ventured to approach the parlor; one an old and favored retainer of the house, went so far as to break in upon his master's privacy. Sir Giles, already high in oath, fiercely enjoined his absence, and he retired; not, however, before he had distinctly heard from the stranger's lips a menace that "there was that within his pockets which could disprove the knight's right to issue that or any other command within the walls of Tapton."

The intrusion, though momentary, seemed to have produced a beneficial effect; the voices of the disputants fell, and the conversation was carried on thenceforth in a more subdued tone, till, as evening closed in, the domestics, when summoned to attend with lights, found not only cordiality restored, but that a still deeper carouse was meditated. Fresh stoups, and from the choicest bins, were produced; nor was it till at a late, or rather early hour, that the revelers sought their chambers.

The one allotted to the stranger occupied the first floor of the eastern angle of the building, and had once been the favorite apartment of Sir Giles himself. Scandal ascribed this preference to the facility which a private staircase, communicating with the grounds, had afforded him, in the old knight's time, of following his wicked courses unchecked by parental observation; a consideration which ceased to be of weight when the death of his father left him uncontrolled master of his estate and actions. From that period Sir Giles had established himself in what were called the "state apartments," and the "oaken

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chamber" was rarely tenated, save on occasions of extraordinary festivity, or when the yule log drew an unusually large accession of guests around the Christmas hearth.

On this eventful night it was prepared for the unknown visitor, who sought his couch heated and inflamed from his midnight orgies, and in the morning was found in his bed a swollen and blackened corpse. No marks of violence appeared upon the body; but the livid hue of the lips, and certain dark-colored spots visible on the skin, aroused suspicions which those who entertained them were too timid to express. Apoplexy, induced by the excesses of the preceding night, Sir Giles's confidential leech pronounced to be the cause of his sudden dissolution. The body was buried in peace; and though some shook their heads as they witnessed the haste with which the funeral rites were hurried on, none ventured to murmur. Other events arose to distract the attention of the retainers; men's minds became occupied by the stirring politics of the day; while the near approach of that formidable armada, so vainly arrogating to itself a title which the very elements joined with human valor to disprove, soon interfered to weaken, if not obliterate, all remembrance of the nameless stranger who had died within the walls of Tapton Everard.

Years rolled on: the "bad Sir Giles" had himself long since gone to his account, the last, as it was believed, of his immediate line; though a few of the older tenants were sometimes heard to speak of an

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elder brother, who had disappeared in early life, and never inherited the estate. Rumors, too, of his having left a son in foreign lands, were at one time rife; but they died away, nothing occurring to support them; the property passed unchallenged to a collateral branch of the family, and the secret, if secret there were, was buried in Denton churchyard, in the lonely grave of the mysterious stranger. One circumstance alone occurred, after a long-intervening period, to revive the memory of these transactions. Some workmen employed in grubbing an old plantation, for the purpose of raising on its site a modern shrubbery, dug up, in the execution of their task, the mildewed remnants of what seemed to have been once a garment. On more minute inspection, enough remained of silken slashes and a coarse embroidery, to identify the relics as having once formed part of a pair of trunk hose; while a few papers which fell from them, altogether illegible from damp and age, were by the unlearned rustics conveyed to the then owner of the estate.

Whether the squire was more successful in deciphering them was never known; he certainly never alluded to their contents; and little would have been thought of the matter but for the inconvenient memory of an old woman, who declared she heard her grandfather say, that when the "stranger guest" was poisoned, though all the rest of his clothes were there, his breeches, the supposed repository of the supposed documents, could never be found. The master of Tapton Everard smiled when he heard

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Dame Jones's hint of deeds which might impeach the validity of his own title in favor of some unknown descendant of some unknown heir; and the story was rarely alluded to, save by one or two miracle-mongers, who had heard that others had seen the ghost of Old Sir Giles, in his night-cap, issue from the postern, enter the adjoining copse, and wring his shadowy hands in agony, as he seemed to search vainly for something hidden among the evergreens. The stranger's deathroom had, of course, been occasionally haunted from the time of his decease; but the periods of visitation had latterly become very rare—even Mrs. Botherby, the housekeeper, being forced to admit that during her long sojourn at the manor, she had never "met with anything worse than herself"; though, as the old lady afterwards added upon more mature reflection, "I must say I think I saw the devil once."

Such was the legend attached to Tapton Everard, and such the story which the lively Caroline Ingoldsby detailed to her equally mercurial cousin, Charles Seaforth, lieutenant in the Hon. East India Company's second regiment of Bombay Fencibles, as arm-in-arm they promenaded a gallery decked with some dozen grim-looking ancestral portraits, and, among others, with that of the redoubted Sir Giles himself. The gallant commander had that very morning paid his first visit to the house of his maternal uncle, after an absence of several years passed with his regiment on the arid plains of Hindoostan, whence he was now returned on a three years' fur-

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lough. He had gone out a boy—he returned a man; but the impression made upon his youthful fancy by his favorite cousin remained unimpaired, and to Tapton he directed his steps, even before he sought the home of his widowed mother—comforting himself in this breach of filial decorum by the reflection that, as the manor was so little out of his way, it would be unkind to pass, as it were, the door of his relatives, without just looking in for a few hours.

But he found his uncle as hospitable, and his cousin more charming than ever; and the looks of one, and the requests of the other, soon precluded the possibility of refusing to lengthen the "few hours" into a few days, though the house was at the moment full of visitors.

The Peterses were there from Ramsgate; and Mr., Mrs., and the two Miss Simpkinsons, from Bath, had come to pass a month with the family; and Tom Ingoldsby had brought down his college friend, the Honorable Augustus Sucklethumbkin, with his groom and pointers, to take a fortnight's shooting. And then there was Mrs. Ogleton, the rich young widow, with her large black eyes, who, people did say, was setting her cap at the young squire, though Mrs. Botherby did not believe it; and, above all, there was Mademoiselle Pauline, her femme de chambre, who "mon Dieu'd" everything and everybody, and cried "Quelle horreur!" at Mrs. Botherby's cap. In short, to use the last-named and much-respected lady's own expression, the house was

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"choke-full" to the very attics—all save the "oaken chamber," which, as the lieutenant expressed a most magnanimous disregard of ghosts, was forthwith appropriated to his particular accommodation. Mr. Maguire meanwhile was fain to share the apartment of Oliver Dobbs, the squire's own man; a jocular proposal of joint occupancy having been first indignantly rejected by "Mademoiselle," though preferred with the "laste taste in life" of Mr. Barney's most insinuating brogue.

"Come, Charles, the urn is absolutely getting cold; your breakfast will be quite spoiled; what can have made you so idle?" Such was the morning salutation of Miss Ingoldsby to the militaire as he entered the breakfast-room half-an-hour after the latest of the party.

"A pretty gentleman, truly, to make an appointment with," chimed in Miss Frances. "What is become of our ramble to the rocks before breakfast?"

"Oh! the young men never think of keeping a promise now," said Mrs. Peters, a little ferret-faced woman with underdone eyes.

"When I was a young man," said Mr. Peters, "I remember I always made a point of——"

"Pray, how long ago was that?" asked Mr. Simpkinson from Bath.

"Why, sir, when I married Mrs. Peters, I was—let me see—I was——"

"Do pray hold your tongue, P., and eat your

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breakfast!" interrupted his better half, who had a mortal horror of chronological references; "it's very rude to tease people with your family affairs."

The lieutenant had by this time taken his seat in silence—a good-humored nod, and a glance, half-smiling, half-inquisitive, being the extent of his salutation. Smitten as he was, and in the immediate presence of her who had made so large a hole in his heart, his manner was evidently distrait, which the fair Caroline in her secret soul attributed to his being solely occupied by her agrémens: how would she have bridled had she known that they only shared his meditations with a pair of breeches!

Charles drank his coffee and spiked some half-dozen eggs, darting occasionally a penetrating glance at the ladies, in hope of detecting the supposed waggery by the evidence of some furtive smile or conscious look. But in vain; not a dimple moved indicative of roguery, nor did the slightest elevation of eyebrow rise confirmative of his suspicions. Hints and insinuations passed unheeded—more particular inquiries were out of the question—the subject was unapproachable.

In the meantime, "patent cords" were just the thing for a morning's ride; and, breakfast ended, away cantered the party over the downs, till, every faculty absorbed by the beauties, animate and inanimate, which surrounded him, Lieutenant Seaforth of the Bombay Fencibles bestowed no more thought upon his breeches than if he had been born on the top of Ben Lomond.

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Another night had passed away; the sun rose brilliantly, forming with his level beams a splendid rainbow in the far-off west, whither the heavy cloud, which for the last two hours had been pouring its waters on the earth, was now flying before him.

"Ah! then, and it's little good it'll be the claning of ye," apostrophized Mr. Barney Maguire, as he deposited, in front of his master's toilet, a pair of "bran new" jockey boots, one of Hoby's primest fits, which the lieutenant had purchased in his way through town. On that very morning had they come for the first time under the valet's depurating hand, so little soiled, indeed, from the turfy ride of the preceding day, that a less scrupulous domestic might perhaps have considered the application of "Warren's Matchless," or oxalic acid, altogether superfluous. Not so, Barney: with the nicest care had he removed the slightest impurity from each polished surface, and there they stood, rejoicing in their sable radiance. No wonder a pang shot across Mr. Maguire's breast, as he thought on the work now cut out for them, so different from the light labors of the day before; no wonder he murmured with a sigh, as the scarce dried window-panes disclosed a road now inch deep in mud. "Ah! then, it's little good the claning of ye!"—for well had he learned in the hall below that eight miles of a stiff clay soil lay between the manor and Bolsover Abbey, whose picturesque ruins, "Like ancient Rome, majestic in decay," the party had determined to explore. The

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master had already commenced dressing, and the man was fitting straps upon a light pair of crane-necked spurs, when his hand was arrested by the old question—"Barney, where are the breeches?"

They were nowhere to be found!

Mr. Seaforth descended that morning, whip in hand, and equipped in a handsome green riding-frock, but no "breeches and boots to match" were there; loose jean trousers, surmounting a pair of diminutive Wellingtons, embraced, somewhat incongruously, his nether man, vice the "patent cords," returned, like yesterday's pantaloons, absent without leave. The "top-boots" had a holiday.

"A fine morning after the rain," said Mr. Simpkinson from Bath.

"Just the thing for the 'ops," said Mr. Peters. "I remember when I was a boy—"

"Do hold your tongue, P.," said Mrs. Peters—advice which that exemplary matron was in the constant habit of administering to "her P.," as she called him, whenever he prepared to vent his reminiscences. Her precise reason for this it would be difficult to determine, unless indeed, the story be true which a little bird had whispered into Mrs. Botherby's ear —Mr. Peters, though now a wealthy man, had received a liberal education at a charity school, and was apt to recur to the days of his muffin-cap and leathers. As usual, he took his wife's hint in good part, and "paused in his reply."

"A glorious day for the ruins!" said young In-

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goldsby. "But Charles, what the deuce are you about? you don't mean to ride through our lanes in such toggery as that?"

"Lassy me!" said Miss Julia Simpkinson, "won't you be very wet?"

"You had better take Tom's cab," quoth the squire.

But this proposition was at once overruled; Mrs. Ogleton had already nailed the cab, a vehicle of all others the best adapted for a snug flirtation.

"Or drive Miss Julia in the phaeton?" No; that was the post of Mr. Peters, who, indifferent as an equestrian, had acquired some fame as a whip while travelling through the midland countries for the firm of Bagshaw, Snivelby, and Grimes.

"Thank you, I shall ride with my cousins," said Charles, with as much nonchalance as he could assume—and he did so; Mr. Ingoldsby, Mrs. Peters, Mr. Simpkinson from Bath, and his eldest daughter with her album, following in the family coach. The gentleman-commoner "voted the affair d—d slow," and declined the party altogether in favor of the gamekeeper and a cigar. "There was 'no fun' in looking at old houses!" Mrs. Simpkinson preferred a short séjour in the still-room with Mrs. Botherby, who had promised to initiate her in that grand arcanum, the transmutation of gooseberry jam into Guava jelly.

But what had become of Seaforth and his fair Caroline all this while? Why, it so happened that they had been simultaneously stricken with the picturesque

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"Caroline," said Charles, "I have had some very odd dreams since I have been at Tappington."

"Dreams, have you?" smiled the young lady, arching her taper neck like a swan in pluming. "Dreams, have you?"

"Ay, dreams—or dream, perhaps, I should say; for, though repeated, it was still the same. And what do you imagine was its subject?"

"It is impossible for me to divine," said the tongue:—"I have not the least difficulty in guessing," said the eye, as plainly as ever eye spoke.

"I dreamt—of your great-grandfather."

There was a change in the glance—"My great-grandfather?"

"Yes, the old Sir Giles, or Sir John, you told me about the other day: he walked into my bedroom in his short cloak of murrey-colored velvet, his long rapier, and his Raleigh-looking hat and feather, just as the picture represents him; but with one exception."

"And what was that?"

"Why, his lower extremities, which were visible, were those of a skeleton."

"Well?"

"Well, after taking a turn or two about the room, and looking round him with a wistful air, he came to the bed's foot, stared at me in a manner impossible to describe—and then he—he laid hold of my pantaloons; whipped his long, bony legs into them in a twinkling; and, strutting up to the glass, seemed to view himself in it with great complacency. I tried

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to speak, but in vain. The effort, however, seemed to excite his attention; for, wheeling about, he showed me the grimmest-looking death's head you can well imagine, and with an indescribable grin strutted out of the room."

"Absurd! Charles. How can you talk such nonsense?"

"But, Caroline—the breeches are really gone."

On the following morning, contrary to his usual custom, Seaforth was the first person in the breakfast parlor. A serious, not to say anxious, expression was visible upon his good-humored countenance, and his mouth was fast buttoning itself up for an incipient whistle, when little Flo, a tiny spaniel of the Blenheim breed—the pet object of Miss Julia Simpkinson's affections—bounced out from beneath a sofa, and began to bark at—his pantaloons.

They were cleverly "built" of a light-gray mixture, a broad stripe of the most vivid scarlet traversing each seam in a perpendicular direction from hip to ankle—in short, the regimental costume of the Royal Bombay Fencibles. The animal, educated in the country, had never seen such a pair of breeches in her life—Omne ignotum pro magnifico! The scarlet streak, inflamed as it was by the reflection of the fire, seemed to act on Flora's nerves as the same color does on those of bulls and turkeys; she advanced at the pas de charge, and her vociferation, like her amazement, was unbounded. A sound kick from the disgusted officer changed its character, and induced

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a retreat at the very moment when the mistress of the pugnacious quadruped entered to the rescue.

"Lassy me! Flo, what *is* the matter?" cried the sympathizing lady, with a scrutinizing glance levelled at the gentleman.

It might as well have lighted on a feather bed. His air of imperturbable unconsciousness defied examination; and as he would not, and Flora could not, expound, that injured individual was compelled to pocket up her wrongs. Others of the household soon dropped in, and clustered round the board dedicated to the most sociable of meals; the urn was paraded "hissing hot," and the cups which "cheer, but not inebriate," steamed redolent of hyson and pekoe; muffins and marmalade, newspapers and finnan haddies, left little room for observation on the character of Charles's warlike "turn-out." At length a look from Caroline, followed by a smile that nearly ripened to a titter, caused him to turn abruptly and address his neighbor. It was Miss Simpkinson, who, was deeply engaged in sipping her tea and turning over her album. The entreaties of the company were of course urgent. Mr. Peters, "who liked verses," was especially persevering, and Sappho, at length compliant. After a preparatory hem, and a glance at the mirror to ascertain that her look was sufficiently sentimental, the poetess began:—

"There is a calm, a holy feeling,
Vulgar minds can never know,
O'er the bosom softly stealing,—
Chasten'd grief, delicious woe!

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Oh! how sweet at eve regaining
Yon lone tower's sequester'd shade—
Sadly mute and uncomplaining——"

—"Yow!—yeough!—yeough!—yow!—yow!" yelled a hapless sufferer from underneath the table. It was an unlucky hour for quadrupeds; and if "every dog will have his day," he could not have selected a more unpropitious one than this. Mrs. Ogleton, too, had a pet—a favorite pug—whose squab figure, black muzzle, and tortuosity of tail, that curled like a head of celery in a salad-bowl, bespoke his Dutch extraction. Yow! yow! yow! continued the brute—a chorus in which Flo instantly joined. Sooth to say, pug had more reason to express his dissatisfaction than was given him by the muse of Simpkinson; the other only barked for company. Scarcely had the poetess got through her first stanza, when Tom Ingoldsby, in the enthusiasm of the moment, became so lost in the material world, that, in his abstraction, he unwarily laid his hand on the cock of the urn. Quivering with emotion, he gave it such an unlucky twist, that the full stream of its scalding contents descended on the gingerbread hide of the unlucky Cupid. The confusion was complete; the whole economy of the table disarranged—the company broke up in the most admired disorder—and "vulgar minds will never know" anything more of Miss Simpkinson's ode till they peruse it in some forthcoming Annual.

Seaforth profited by the confusion to take the delinquent who had caused this "stramash" by the arm, and to lead him to the lawn, where he had a word

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or two for his private ear. The conference between the young gentlemen was neither brief in its duration nor unimportant in its results. The subject was what the lawyers call tripartite, embracing the information that Charles Seaforth was over head and ears in love with Tom Ingoldsby's sister; secondly, that the lady had referred him to "papa" for his sanction; thirdly and lastly, his nightly visitations, and consequent bereavement. At the two first items Tom smiled auspiciously; at the last he burst out into an absolute guffaw.

"Steal your breeches! Miss Bailey over again, by Jove," shouted Ingoldsby. "But a gentleman, you say—and Sir Giles too. I am not sure, Charles, whether I ought not to call you out for aspersing the honor of the family."

"Laugh as you will, Tom—be as incredulous as you please. One fact is incontestable—the breeches are gone! Look here—I am reduced to my regimentals; and if these go, to-morrow I must borrow of you!"

Rochefoucault says, there is something in the misfortunes of our very best friends that does not displease us; assuredly we can, most of us, laugh at their petty inconveniences, till called upon to supply them. Tom composed his feature on the instant, and replied with more gravity, as well as with an expletive, which, if my Lord Mayor had been within hearing, might have cost him five shillings.

"There is something very queer in this, after all. The clothes, you say, have positively disappeared.

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Somebody is playing you a trick; and, ten to one, your servant has a hand in it. By the way, I heard something yesterday of his kicking up a bobbery in the kitchen, and seeing a ghost, or something of that kind, himself. Depend upon it, Barney is in the plot."

It now struck the lieutenant at once, that the usually buoyant spirits of his attendant had of late been materially sobered down, his loquacity obviously circumscribed, and that he, the said lieutenant, had actually rung his bell three several times that very morning before he could procure his attendance. Mr. Maguire was forthwith summoned, and underwent a close examination. The "bobbery" was easily explained.

Mr. Barney had seen a ghost.

"A what? you blockhead!" asked Tom Ingoldsby.

"Sure then, and it's meself will tell your honor the rights of it," said the ghost-seer. "Meself and Miss Pauline, sir,—or Miss Pauline and meself, for the ladies comes first anyhow,—we got tired of the hobstroppylous scrimmaging among the ould servants, that didn't know a joke when they seen one; and we went out to look at the comet—that's the rorybory-alehouse, they calls him in this country—and we walked upon the lawn—and divil of any alehouse there was there at all; and Miss Pauline said it was bekase of the shrubbery maybe, and why wouldn't we see it better beyonst the trees? and so we went to the trees, but sorrow a comet did meself see there, barring a big ghost instead of it."

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"A ghost? And what sort of a ghost, Barney?"

"Och, then, divil a lie I'll tell your honor. A tall ould gentlemen he was, all in white, with a shovel on the shoulder of him, and a big torch in his fist—though what he wanted with that it's meself can't tell, for his eyes like gig-lamps, let alone the moon and the comet, which wasn't there at all—and 'Barney,' says he to me—'cause why he knew me—'Barney,' says he, 'what is it you're doing with the colleen there, Barney?'—Divil a word did I say. Miss Pauline screeched, and cried murther in French, and ran off with herself; and of course meself was in a mighty hurry after the lady, and had no time to stop palavering with him any way: so I dispersed at once, and the ghost vanished in a flame of fire!"

Mr. Maguire's account was received with avowed incredulity by both gentlemen; but Barney stuck to his text with unflinching pertinacity. A reference to Mademoiselle was suggested, but abandoned, as neither party had a taste for delicate investigations.

"I'll tell you what, Seaforth," said Ingoldsby, after Barney had received his dismissal, "that there is a trick here, is evident; and Barney's vision may possibly be a part of it. Whether he is most knave or fool, you best know. At all events, I will sit up with you to-night, and see if I can convert my ancestor into a visiting acquaintance. Meanwhile your finger on your lip!"

Gladly would I grace my tale with recent horror, and therefore I do beseech the "gentle reader" to

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believe, that if all the details to this mysterious narrative are not in strict keeping, he will ascribe it only to the disgraceful innovations of modern degeneracy upon the sober and dignified habits of our ancestors. I can introduce him, it is true, into an old and high-roofed chamber, its walls covered on three sides with black oak wainscoting, adorned with carvings of fruit and flowers long anterior to those of Grinling Gibbons; the fourth side is clothed with a curious remnant of dingy tapestry, once elucidatory of some Scriptural history, but of which not even Mrs. Botherby could determine. Mr. Simpkinson, who had examined it carefully, inclined to believe the principal figure to be either Bathsheba, or Daniel in the lion's den; while Tom Ingoldsby decided in favor of the King of Bashan. All, however, was conjecture, tradition being silent on the subject. A lofty arched portal led into, and a little arched portal led out of, this apartment; they were opposite each other, and each possessed the security of massy bolts on its interior. The bedstead, too, was not one of yesterday, but manifestly coeval with days ere Seddons was, and when a good four-post "article" was deemed worthy of being a royal bequest. The bed itself, with all the appurtenances of palliasse, mattresses, etc., was of far later date, and looked most incongruously comfortable; the casements, too, with their little diamond-shaped panes and iron binding, had given way to the modern heterodoxy of the sash-window. Nor was this all that conspired to ruin the costume, and render the room

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a meet haunt for such "mixed spirits" only as could condescend to don at the same time an Elizabethan doublet and Bond-Street inexpressibles.

With their green morocco slippers on a modern fender, in front of a disgracefully modern grate, sat two young gentlemen, clad in "shawl-pattern" dressing-gowns and black silk stocks, much at variance with the high cane-backed chairs which supported them. A bunch of abomination, called a cigar, reeked in the left-hand corner of the mouth of one, and in the right-hand corner of the mouth of the other—an arrangement happily adapted for the escape of the noxious fumes up the chimney, without that unmerciful "funking" each other which a less scientific disposition of the weed would have induced. A small pembroke table filled up the intervening space between them, sustaining, at each extremity, an elbow and a glass of toddy—thus in "lonely pensive contemplation" were the two worthies occupied, when the "iron tongue of midnight had tolled twelve."

"Ghost-time's come!" said Ingoldsby, taking from his waistcoat pocket a watch like a gold half-crown, and consulting it as though he suspected the turret-clock over the stables of mendacity.

"Hush!" said Charles; "did I not hear a footstep?"

There was a pause—there was a footstep—it sounded distinctly—it reached the door—it hesitated, stopped, and—passed on.

Tom darted across the room, threw open the door,

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and became aware of Mrs. Botherby toddling to her chamber, at the other end of the gallery, after dosing one of the housemaids with an approved julep from the Countess of Kent's *Choice Manual.*

"Good-night, sir!" said Mrs. Botherby.

"Go to the devil!" said the disappointed ghost-hunter.

An hour—two—rolled on, and still no spectral visitation; nor did aught intervene to make night hideous; and when the turret-clock sounded at length the hour of three, Ingoldsby, whose patience and grog were alike exhausted, sprang from his chair, saying—

"This is all infernal nonsense, my good fellow. Deuce of any ghost shall we see to-night; it's long past the canonical hour. I'm off to bed; and as to your breeches, I'll insure them for the next twenty-four hours at least, at the price of the buckram."

"Certainly.—Oh! thank'ee—to be sure!" stammered Charles, rousing himself from a reverie, which had degenerated into an absolute snooze.

"Good-night, my boy! Bolt the door behind me; and defy the Pope, the Devil, and the Pretender!"

Seaforth followed his friend's advice, and the next morning came down to breakfast dressed in the habiliments of the preceding day. The charm was broken, the demon defeated; the light grays with the red stripe down the seams were yet in rerum naturâ, and adorned the person of their lawful proprietor.

Tom felicitated himself and his partner of the

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watch on the result of their vigilance; but there is a rustic adage, which warns us against self-gratulation before we are quite "out of the wood."—Seaforth was yet within its verge.

A rap at Tom Ingoldsby's door the following morning startled him as he was shaving—he cut his chin.

"Come in and be damned to you!" said the martyr, pressing his thumb on the sacrificed epidermis. The door opened, and exhibited Mr. Barney Maguire.

"Well, Barney, what is it?" quoth the sufferer, adopting the vernacular of his visitant.

"The master, sir—"

"Well, what does he want?"

"The loanst of a breeches, plase your honor."

"Why, you don't mean to tell me—— By Heaven, this is too good!" shouted Tom, bursting into a fit of uncontrollable laughter. "Why, Barney, you don't mean to say the ghost has got them again?"

Mr. Maguire did not respond to the young squire's risibility; the cast of his countenance was decidedly serious.

"Faith, then, it's gone they are, sure enough! Hasn't meself been looking over the bed, and under the bed, and *in* the bed, for the matter of that, and divil a ha'p'orth of breeches is there to the fore at all:—I'm bothered entirely!"

"Hark'ee! Mr. Barney," said Tom, incautiously removing his thumb, and letting a crimson stream

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"incarnadine the multitudinous" lather that plastered his throat,—"this may be all very well with your master, but you don't humbug *me*, sir:—tell me instantly what have you done with the clothes?"

This abrupt transition from "lively to severe" certainly took Maguire by surprise, and he seemed for an instant as much disconcerted as it is possible to disconcert an Irish gentleman's gentleman.

"Me? is it meself, then, that's the ghost to your honor's thinking?" said he after a moment's pause, and with a slight shade of indignation in his tones: "is it I would stale the master's things—and what would I do with them?"

"That you best know:—what your purpose is I can't guess, for I don't think you mean to 'stale' them, as you call it; but that you are concerned in their disappearance, I am satisfied. Confound this blood!—give me a towel, Barney."

Maguire acquitted himself of the commission. "As I've a sowl, your honor," said he, solemnly, "little is it meself knows of the matter; and after what I seen——"

"What you've seen! Why, what *have* you seen? —Barney, I don't want to inquire into your flirtations; but don't suppose you can palm off your saucer eyes and gig-lamps upon me!"

"Then, as sure as your honor's standing there, I saw him: and why wouldn't I, when Miss Pauline was to the fore as well as meself, and——"

"Get along with your nonsense; leave the room, sir!"

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"But the master?" said Barney, imploringly; "and without a breeches?—sure he'll be catching cowld!——"

"Take that, rascal!" replied Ingoldsby, throwing a pair of pantaloons at, rather than to, him: "but don't suppose, sir, you shall carry on your tricks here with impunity; recollect there is such a thing as a treadmill, and that my father is a county magistrate."

Barney's eye flashed fire; he stood erect, and was about to speak; but, mastering himself, not without an effort, he took up the garment, and left the room as perpendicular as a Quaker.

"Ingoldsby," said Charles Seaforth, after breakfast,"this is now past a joke; to-day is the last of my stay; for, notwithstanding the ties which detain me, common decency obliges me to visit home after so long an absence. I shall come to an immediate explanation with your father on the subject nearest my heart, and depart while I have a change of dress left. On his answer will my return depend! In the meantime tell me candidly,—I ask it in all seriousness, and as a friend,—am I not a dupe to your well-known propensity to hoaxing? have you not a hand in——"

"No, by heaven, Seaforth; I see what you mean: on my honor, I am as much mystified as yourself; and if your servant——"

"Not he:—if there be a trick, he at least is not privy to it."

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"If there be a trick? why, Charles, do you think——"

"I know not what to think, Tom. As surely as you are a living man, so surely did that spectral anatomy visit my room again last night, grin in my face, and walk away with my trousers: nor was I able to spring from my bed, or break the chain which seemed to bind me to my pillow."

"Seaforth!" said Ingoldsby, after a short pause, "I will—— But hush! here are the girls and my father.—I will carry off the females, and leave you a clear field with the governor: carry your point with him, and we will talk about your breeches afterwards."

Tom's diversion was successful; he carried off the ladies en masse while Seaforth marched boldly up to the encounter, and carried "the governor's" outworks by a coup de main.

Seaforth was in the seventh heaven; he retired to his room that night as happy as if no such thing as a goblin had ever been heard of, and personal chattels were as well fenced in by law as real property. Not so Tom Ingoldsby: the mystery, for mystery there evidently was,—had not only piqued his curiosity, but ruffled his temper. The watch of the previous night had been unsuccessful, probably because it was undisguised. To-night he would "ensconce himself," not indeed "behind the arras,"—for the little that remained was, as we have seen, nailed to the wall,—but in a small closet which opened from one corner of the room, and by leaving the door ajar,

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would give to its occupant a view of all that might pass in the apartment. Here did the young ghost hunter take up a position, with a good stout sapling under his arm, a full half-hour before Seaforth retired for the night. Not even his friend did he let into his confidence, fully determined that if his plan did not succeed, the failure should be attributed to himself alone.

At the usual hour of separation for the night, Tom saw, from his concealment, the lieutenant enter his room, and after taking a few turns in it, with an expression so joyous as to betoken that his thoughts were mainly occupied by his approaching happiness, proceed slowly to disrobe himself. The coat, the waistcoat, happiness, the black silk stock, were gradually discarded; the green morocco slippers were kicked off, and then—ay, and then—his countenance grew grave; it seemed to occur to him all at once that this was his last stake,—nay, that the very breeches he had on were not his own,—that tomorrow morning was his last, and that if he lost them—— A glance showed that his mind was made up; he replaced the single button he had just subducted, and threw himself upon the bed in a state of transition,—half chrysalis, half grub.

Wearily did Tom Ingoldsby watch the sleeper by the flickering light of the night-lamp, till, the clock striking one, induced him to increase the narrow opening which he had left for the purpose of observation. The motion, slight as it was, seemed to attract Charles's attention; for he raised himself

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suddenly to a sitting posture, listened for a moment, and then stood upright upon the floor. Ingoldsby was on the point of discovering himself, when, the light flashing full upon his friend's countenance, he perceived that, though his eyes were open, "their sense was shut,"—that he was yet under the influence of sleep. Seaforth advanced slowly to the toilet, lit his candle at the lamp that stood on it, then, going back to the bed's foot, appeared to search eagerly for something which he could not find. For a few moments he seemed restless and uneasy, walking round the apartment and examining the chairs, till, coming fully in front of a large swing glass that flanked the dressing-table, he paused as if contemplating his figure in it. He now returned towards the bed; put on his slippers, and with cautious and stealthy steps, proceeded towards the little arched doorway that opened on the private staircase.

As he drew the bolt, Tom Ingoldsby emerged from his hiding-place; but the sleep-walker heard him not; he proceeded softly downstairs, followed at a due distance by his friend; opened the door which led out upon the gardens; and stood at once among the thickest of the shrubs, which there clustered round the base of a corner turret, and screened the postern from common observation. At this moment Ingoldsby had nearly spoiled all by making a false step: the sound attracted Seaforth's attention, —he paused and turned; and, as the full moon shed her light directly upon his pale and troubled features,

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Tom marked, almost with dismay, the fixed and rayless appearance of his eyes.

The perfect stillness preserved by his follower seemed to reassure him; he turned aside; and from the midst of a thicket laurustinus drew forth a gardener's spade, shouldering which he proceeded with greater rapidity into the midst of the shrubbery. Arrived at a certain point where the earth seemed to have been recently disturbed, he set himself heartily to the task of digging, till, having thrown up several shovelfuls of mould, he stopped, flung down his tool, and very composedly began to disencumber himself of his pantaloons.

Up to this moment Tom had watched him with a wary eye: he now advanced cautiously, and, as his friend was busily engaged in disentangling himself from his garment, made himself master of the spade. Seaforth, meanwhile, had accomplished his purpose: he stood for a moment with "his streamers waving in the wind," occupied in carefully rolling up the small-clothes into as compact a form as possible, and all heedless of the breath of heaven, which might certainly be supposed at such a moment, and in such a plight, to "visit his frame too roughly."

He was in the act of stooping low to deposit the pantaloons in the grave which he had been digging for them, when Tom Ingoldsby came close behind him, and with the flat side of the spade——

The shock was effectual—never again was Lieutenant Seaforth known to act the part of a somnambulist. One by one, his breeches,—his trousers,—

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his pantaloons,—his silk-net tights,—his patent cords,—his showy grays with the broad red stripe of the Bombay Fencibles were brought to light,—rescued from the grave in which they had been buried, like the strata of a Christmas pie; and after having been well aired by Mrs. Botherby, became once again effective.

The family, the ladies especially, laughed—the Peterses laughed—the Simpkinsons laughed—Barney Maguire cried "Botheration!" and Ma'm-selle Pauline, "Mon Dieu!"

Charles Seaforth, unable to face the quizzing which awaited him on all sides, started off two hours earlier than he had proposed:—he soon returned, however; and having, at his father-in-law's request, given up the occupation of Rajah-hunting and shooting Nabobs, led his blushing bride to the altar.

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THE MYSTERIOUS SKETCH

By ERCKMANN-CHATRIAN

I

OPPOSITE the chapel of Saint Sebalt in Nuremberg, at the corner of Trabaus Street, there stands a little tavern, tall and narrow, with a toothed gable and dusty windows, whose roof is surmounted by a plaster Virgin. It was there that I spent the unhappiest days of my life. I had gone to Nuremberg to study the old German masters; but in default of ready money, I had to paint portraits—and such portraits! Fat old women with their cats on their laps, big-wigged aldermen, burgomasters in three-cornered hats—all horribly bright with ochre and vermilion. From portraits I descended to sketches, and from sketches to silhouettes.

Nothing is more annoying than to have your landlord come to you every day with pinched lips, shrill voice, and impudent manner to say: "Well, sir, how soon are you going to pay me? Do you know how much your bill is? No; that doesn't worry you! You eat, drink, and sleep calmly enough. God feeds the sparrows. Your bill now amounts to two hun-

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dred florins and ten kreutzers—it is not worth talking about."

Those who have not heard any one talk in this way can form no idea of it; love of art, imagination, and the sacred enthusiasm for the beautiful are blasted by the breath of such an attack. You become awkward and timid; all your energy evaporates, as well as your feeling of personal dignity, and you bow respectfully at a distance to the burgomaster Schneegans.

One night, not having a sou, as usual, and threatened with imprisonment by this worthy Mister Rap, I determined to make him a bankrupt by cutting my throat. Seated on my narrow bed, opposite the window, in this agreeable mood, I gave myself up to a thousand philosophical reflections, more or less comforting.

"What is man?" I asked myself. "An omnivorous animal; his jaws, provided with canines, incisors, and molars, prove it. The canines are made to tear meat; the incisors to bite fruits; and the molars to masticate, grind, and triturate animal and vegetable substances that are pleasant to smell and to taste. But when he has nothing to masticate, this being is an absurdity in Nature, a superfluity, a fifth wheel to the coach."

Such were my reflections. I dared not open my razor for fear that the invincible force of my logic would inspire me with the courage to make an end of it all. After having argued so finely, I blew out my candle, postponing the sequel till the morrow.

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That abominable Rap had completely stupefied me. I could do nothing but silhouettes, and my sole desire was to have some money to rid myself of his odious presence. But on this night a singular change came over my mind. I awoke about one o'clock—I lit my lamp, and, enveloping myself in my grey gabardine, I drew upon the paper a rapid sketch after the Dutch school—something strange and bizarre, which had not the slightest resemblance to my ordinary conceptions.

Imagine a dreary courtyard enclosed by high dilapidated walls. These walls are furnished with hooks, seven or eight feet from the ground. You see, at a glance, that it is a butchery.

On the left, there extends a lattice structure; you perceive through it a quartered beef suspended from the roof by enormous pulleys. Great pools of blood run over the flagstones and unite in a ditch full of refuse.

The light falls above, between the chimneys where the weathercocks stand out from a bit of the sky the size of your hand, and the roofs of the neighboring houses throw bold shadows from story to story.

At the back of this place is a shed, beneath the shed a pile of wood, and upon the pile of wood some ladders, a few bundles of straw, some coils of rope, a chicken-coop, and an old dilapidated rabbit-hutch.

How did these heterogeneous details suggest themselves to my imagination? I don't know; I had no reminiscences, and yet every stroke of the pencil

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seemed the result of observation, and strange because it was all so true. Nothing was lacking.

But on the right, one corner of the sketch remained a blank. I did not know what to put there. . . . Something suddenly seemed to writhe there, to move. Then I saw a foot, the sole of a foot. Notwithstanding this improbable position, I followed my inspiration without reference to my own criticism. This foot was joined to a leg—over this leg, stretched out with effort, there soon floated the skirt of a dress. In short, there appeared by degrees an old woman, pale, dishevelled, and wasted, thrown down at the side of a well, and struggling to free herself from a hand that clutched her throat.

It was a murder scene that I was drawing. The pencil fell from my hand.

This woman, in the boldest attitude, with her thighs bent on the curb of the well, her face contracted by terror, and her two hands grasping the murderer's arm, frightened me. I could not look at her. But the man—he, the person to whom that arm belonged—I could not see him. It was impossible for me to finish the sketch.

"I am tired," I said, my forehead dripping with perspiration; "there is only this figure to do; I will finish it tomorrow. It will be easy then."

And again I went to bed, thoroughly frightened by my vision.

The next morning, I got up very early. I was dressing in order to resume my interrupted work, when two little knocks were heard on my door.

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"Come in!"

The door opened. An old man, tall, thin, and dressed in black, appeared on the threshold. This man's face, his eyes set close together and his large nose like the beak of an eagle, surmounted by a high bony forehead, had something severe about it. He bowed to me gravely.

"Mister Christian Vénius, the painter?" said he.

"That is my name, sir."

He bowed again, adding:

"The Baron Frederick Van Spreckdal."

The appearance of the rich amateur, Van Spreckdal, judge of the criminal court, in my poor lodging, greatly disturbed me. I could not help throwing a stealthy glance at my old worm-eaten furniture, my damp hangings and my dusty floor. I felt humiliated by such dilapidation; but Van Spreckdal did not seem to take any account of these details; and sitting down at my little table:

"Mister Vénius," he resumed, "I come——" But at this instant his glance fell upon the unfinished sketch —he did not finish his phrase.

I was sitting on the edge of my little bed; and the sudden attention that this personage bestowed upon one of my productions made my heart beat with an indefinable apprehension.

At the end of a minute, Van Spreckdal lifted his head:

"Are you the author of that sketch?" he asked me with an intent look.

"Yes, sir."

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"What is the price of it?"

"I never sell my sketches. It is the plan for a picture."

"Ah!" said he, picking up the paper with the tips of his long yellow fingers.

He took a lens from his waistcoat pocket and began to study the design in silence.

The sun was now shining obliquely into the garret. Van Spreckdal never said a word; the hook of his immense nose increased, his heavy eyebrows contracted, and his long pointed chin took a turn upward, making a thousand little wrinkles in his long, thin cheeks. The silence was so profound that I could distinctly hear the plaintive buzzing of a fly that had been caught in a spider's web.

"And the dimensions of this picture, Mister Vénius?" he said without looking at me.

"Three feet by four."

"The price?"

"Fifty ducats."

Van Spreckdal laid the sketch on the table, and drew from his pockets a large purse of green silk shaped like a pear; he drew the rings of it——

"Fifty ducats," said he, "here they are."

I was simply dazzled.

The Baron rose and bowed to me, and I heard his big ivory-headed cane resounding on each step until he reached the bottom of the stairs. Then recovering from my stupor, I suddenly remembered that I had not thanked him, and I flew down the five flights like lightning; but when I reached the

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bottom, I looked to the right and left; the street was deserted.

"Well," I said, "this is strange."

And I went upstairs again all out of breath.

II

The surprising way in which Van Spreckdal had appeared to me threw me into deep wonderment. "Yesterday," I said to myself, as I contemplated the pile of ducats glittering in the sun, "yesterday I formed the wicked intention of cutting my throat, all for the want of a few miserable florins, and now today Fortune has showered them from the clouds. Indeed it was fortunate that I did not open my razor; and, if the same intention ever comes to me again, I will take care to wait until the morrow."

After making these judicious reflections, I sat down to finish the sketch; four strokes of the pencil and it would be finished. But here an incomprehensible difficulty awaited me. It was impossible for me to take those four sweeps of the pencil; I had lost the thread of my inspiration, and the mysterious personage no longer stood out in my brain. I tried in vain to evoke him, to sketch him, and to recover him; he no more accorded with the surroundings than with a figure by Raphael in a Teniers inn-kitchen. I broke out into a profuse perspiration.

At this moment, Rap opened the door without knocking, according to his praiseworthy custom. His

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eyes fell upon my pile of ducats and in a shrill voice he cried:

"Eh! eh! so I catch. Will you persist in telling me, Mr. Painter, that you have no money?"

And his hooked fingers advanced with that nervous trembling that the sight of gold always produces in a miser.

For a few seconds I was stupefied.

The memory of all the indignities that this individual had inflicted upon me, his covetous look, and his impudent smile exasperated me. With a single bound, I caught hold of him, and pushed him out of the room, slamming the door in his face.

This was done with the crack and rapidity of a spring snuff-box.

But from outside the old usurer screamed like an eagle:

"My money, you thief, my money!"

The lodgers came out of their rooms, asking:

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

I opened the door suddenly and quickly gave Mister Rap a kick in the spine that sent him rolling down more than twenty steps.

"That's what's the matter!" I cried quite beside myself. Then I shut the door and bolted it, while bursts of laughter from the neighbors greeted Mister Rap in the passage.

I was satisfied with myself; I rubbed my hands together. This adventure had put new life into me; I resumed my work, and was about to finish the sketch when I heard an unusual noise.

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Butts of muskets were grounded on the pavement. I looked out of my window and saw three soldiers in full uniform with grounded arms in front of my door.

I said to myself in my terror: "Can it be that that scoundrel of a Rap has had any bones broken?"

And here is the strange peculiarity of the human mind: I, who the night before had wanted to cut my own throat, shook from head to foot, thinking that I might well be hanged if Rap were dead.

The stairway was filled with confused noises. It was an ascending flood of heavy footsteps, clanking arms, and short syllables.

Suddenly somebody tried to open my door. It was shut.

Then there was a general clamor.

"In the name of the law—open!"

I arose trembling, and weak in the knees.

"Open!" the same voice repeated.

I thought to escape over the roofs; but I had hardly put my head out of the little snuff-box window, when I drew back, seized with vertigo. I saw in a flash all the windows below with their shining panes, their flowerpots, their bird-cages, and their gratings. Lower, the balcony; still lower, the street-lamp; still lower again, the sign of the "Red Cask" framed in iron-work; and, finally three glittering bayonets, only awaiting my fall to run me through the body from the sole of my foot to the crown of my head. On the roof of the opposite house a tortoise-shell cat was crouching behind a chimney,

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watching a band of sparrows fighting and scolding in the gutter.

One cannot imagine to what clearness, intensity, and rapidity the human eye acquires when stimulated by fear.

At the third summons I heard:

"Open, or we shall force it!"

Seeing that flight was impossible, I staggered to the door and drew the bolt.

Two hands immediately fell upon my collar. A dumpy little man, smelling of wine, said:

"I arrest you!"

He wore a bottle-green redingote, buttoned to the chin, and a stovepipe hat. He had large brown whiskers, rings on every finger, and was named Passauf.

He was the chief of police.

Five bull-dogs with flat caps, noses like pistols, and lower jaws turning upward, observed me from outside.

"What do you want?" I asked Passauf.

"Come downstairs," he cried roughly, as he gave a sign to one of his men to seize me.

This man took hold of me, more dead than alive, while several other men turned my room upside down.

I went downstairs supported by the arms like a person in the last stages of consumption—with hair dishevelled and stumbling at every step.

They thrust me into a cab between two strong fellows, who charitably let me see the ends of their

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clubs, held to their wrists by a leather string—and then the carriage started off.

I heard behind us the feet of all the urchins of the town.

"What have I done?" I asked one of my keepers.

He looked at the other with a strange smile and said:

"Hans—he asks what he has done!"

That smile froze from my blood.

Soon a deep shadow enveloped the carriage; the horses' hoofs resounded under an archway. We were entering the Raspelhaus. Of this place one might say:

"Dans cet antre,
Je vois fort bien comme l'on entre,
Et ne vois point comme on en sort."

All is not rose-colored in this world; from the claws of Rap I fell into a dungeon, from which very few poor devils have a chance to escape.

Large dark courtyards and rows of windows like a hospital, and furnished with gratings; not a sprig of verdure, not a festoon of ivy, not even a weather-cock in perspective—such was my new lodging. It was enough to make one tear his hair out by the roots.

The police officers, accompanied by the jailer, took me temporarily to a lock-up.

The jailer, if I remember rightly, was named Kasper Schlosski with his grey woollen cap, his pipe between his teeth, and his bunch of keys at his belt,

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he reminded me of the Owl-God of the Caribs. He had the same golden yellow eyes, that see in the dark, a nose like a comma, and a neck that was sunk between the shoulders.

Schlüssel shut me up as calmly as one locks up his socks in a cupboard, while thinking of something else. As for me, I stood for more than ten minutes with my hands behind my back and my head bowed. At the end of that time I made the following reflection: "When falling, Rap cried out, 'I am assassinated,' but he did not say by whom. I will say it was my neighbor, the old merchant with the spectacles: he will be hanged in my place."

This idea comforted my heart, and I drew a long breath. Then I looked about my prison. It seemed to have been newly whitewashed, and the walls were bare of designs, except in one corner, where a gallows had been crudely sketched by my predecessor. The light was admitted through a bull's-eye about nine or ten feet from the floor; the furniture consisted of a bundle of straw and a tub.

I sat down upon the straw with my hands around my knees in deep despondency. It was with great difficulty that I could think clearly; but suddenly imagining that Rap, before dying, had denounced me, my legs began to tingle, and I jumped up coughing, as if the hempen cord were already tightening around my neck.

At the same moment, I heard Schlüssel walking down the corridor; he opened the lock-up, and told

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Opposite me, on an elevated seat, two men were sitting with their backs to the light, and consequently their faces were in shadow. However, I recognized Van Spreckdal by his aquiline profile, illuminated by an oblique reflection from the window. The other person was fat, he had round, chubby cheeks and short hands, and he wore a robe, like Van Spreckdal.

Below was the clerk of the court, Conrad; he was writing at a low table and was tickling the tip of his ear with the feather-end of his pen. When I entered, he stopped to look at me curiously.

They made me sit down, and Van Spreckdal, raising his voice, said to me:

"Christian Vénius, where did you get this sketch?"

He showed me the nocturnal sketch which was then in his possession. It was handed to me. After having examined it, I replied:

"I am the author of it."

A long silence followed; the clerk of the court, Conrad, wrote down my reply. I heard his pen scratch over the paper, and I thought: "Why did they ask me that question? That has nothing to do with the kick I gave Rap in the back."

"You are the author of it?" asked Van Spreckdal. "What is the subject?"

"It is a subject of pure fancy."

"You have not copied the details from some spot?"

"No, sir; I imagined it all."

"Accused Christian," said the judge in a severe tone, "I ask you to reflect. Do not lie."

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"I have spoken the truth."

"Write that down, clerk," said Van Spreckdal.

The pen scratched again.

"And this woman," continued the judge—"this woman who is being murdered at the side of the well—did you imagine her also?"

"Certainly."

"You have never seen her?"

"Never."

Van Spreckdal rose indignantly; then, sitting down again, he seemed to consult his companion in a low voice.

These two dark profiles silhouetted against the brightness of the window, and the three men standing behind me, the silence in the hall—everything made me shiver.

"What do you want with me? What have I done?" I murmured.

Suddenly Van Spreckdal said to my guardians:

"You can take the prisoner back to the carriage; we will go to Metzerstrasse."

Then, addressing me:

"Christian Vénius," he cried, "you are in a deplorable situation. Collect your thoughts and remember that if the law of man is inflexible, there still remains for you the mercy of God. This you can merit by confessing your crime."

These words stunned me like a blow from a hammer. I fell back with extended arms, crying:

"Ah! what a terrible dream!"

And I fainted.

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When I regained consciousness, the carriage was rolling slowly down the street; another one preceded us. The two officers were always with me. One of them on the way offered a pinch of snuff to his companion; mechanically I reached out my hand toward the snuff-box, but he withdrew it quickly.

My cheeks reddened with shame, and I turned away my head to conceal my emotion.

"If you look outside," said the man with the snuff-box, "we shall be obliged to put handcuffs on you."

"May the devil strangle you, you infernal scoundrel!" I said to myself. And as the carriage now stopped, one of them got out, while the other held me by the collar; then, seeing that his comrade was ready to receive me, he pushed me rudely to him.

These infinite precautions to hold possession of my person boded no good; but I was far from predicting the seriousness of the accusation that hung over my head until an alarming circumstance opened my eyes and threw me into despair.

They pushed me along a low alley, the pavement of which was unequal and broken; along the wall there ran a yellowish ooze, exhaling a fetid odor. I walked down this dark place with the two men behind me. A little further there appeared the chiaroscuro of an interior courtyard.

I grew more and more terror-stricken as I advanced. It was no natural feeling: it was a poignant anxiety, outside of nature—like a nightmare. I recoiled instinctively at each step.

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"Go on!" cried one of the policemen, laying his hand on my shoulder; "go on!"

But what was my astonishment when, at the end of the passage, I saw the courtyard that I had drawn the night before, with its walls furnished with hooks, its rubbish-heap of old iron, its chicken-coops, and its rabbit-hutch. Not a dormer window, high or low, not a broken pane, not the slightest detail had been omitted.

I was thunderstruck by this strange revelation.

Near the well were the two judges, Van Spreckdal and Richter. At their feet lay the old woman extended on her back, her long, thin, gray hair, her blue face, her eyes wide open, and her tongue between her teeth.

It was a horrible spectacle!

"Well," said Van Spreckdal, with solemn accents, "what have you to say?"

I did not reply.

"Do you remember having thrown this woman, Theresa Becker, into this well, after having strangled her to rob her of her money?"

"No," I cried, "no! I do not know this woman; I never saw her before. May God help me!"

"That will do," he replied in a dry voice. And without saying another word he went out with his companion.

The officers now believed that they had best put handcuffs on me. They took me back to the Raspelhaus, in a state of profound stupidity. I did not know what to think; my conscience itself troubled

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me; I even asked myself if I really had murdered the old woman!

In the eyes of the officers I was condemned.

I will not tell you of my emotions that night in the Raspelhaus, when, seated on my straw bed with the window opposite me and the gallows in perspective, I heard the watchmen cry in the silence of the night: "Sleep, people of Nuremberg; the Lord watches over you. One o'clock! Two o'clock! Three o'clock!"

Every one may form his own idea of such a night. There is a fine saying that it is better to be hanged innocent than guilty. For the soul, yes; but for the body, it makes no difference; on the contrary, it kicks, it curses its lot, it tries to escape, knowing well enough that its rôle ends with the rope. Add to this, that it repents not having sufficiently enjoyed life and at having listened to the soul when it preached abstinence.

"Ah! if I had only known!" it cried, "you would not have led me around by a string with your big words, your beautiful phrases, and your magnificent sentences! You would not have allured me with your fine promises. I should have had many happy moments that are now lost forever. Everything is over! You said to me: 'Control your passions.' Very well! I did control them. Here I am now. They are going to hang me, and you—later they will speak of you as a sublime soul, a stoical soul, a martyr to the errors of Justice. They will never think about me!"

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Such were the sad reflections of my poor body.

Day broke; at first, dull and undecided, it threw an uncertain light on my bull's-eye window with its crossbars; then it blazed against the wall at the back. Outside the street became lively. This was a market-day; it was Friday. I heard the vegetable wagons pass and also the country people with their baskets. Some chickens cackled in their coops in passing and some butter sellers chattered together. The market opposite opened, and they began to arrange the stalls.

Finally it was broad daylight and the vast murmur of the increasing crowd, housekeepers who assembled with baskets on their arms, coming and going, discussing and marketing, told me that it was eight o'clock.

With the light, my heart gained a little courage. Some of my black thoughts disappeared. I desired to see what was going on outside.

Other prisoners before me had managed to climb up to the bull's-eye; they had dug some holes in the wall to mount more easily. I climbed in my turn, and, when seated in the oval edge of the window, with my legs bent and my head bowed, I could see the crowd, and all the life and movement. Tears ran freely down my cheeks. I thought no longer of suicide—I experienced a need to live and breathe, which was really extraordinary.

"Ah!" I said, "to live what happiness! Let them harness me to a wheelbarrow—let them put a ball

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and chain around my leg—nothing matters if I may only live!"

The old market, with its roof shaped like an extinguisher, supported on heavy pillars, made a superb picture: old women seated before their panniers of vegetables, their cages of poultry and their baskets of eggs; behind them the Jews, dealers in old clothes, their faces the color of old boxwood; butchers with bare arms, cutting up meat on their stalls; countrymen, with large hats on the backs of their heads, calm and grave with their hands behind their backs and resting on their sticks of hollywood, and tranquilly smoking their pipes. Then the tumult and noise of the crowd—those screaming, shrill, grave, high, and short words—those expressive gestures—those sudden attitudes that show from a distance the progress of a discussion and depict so well the character of the individual—in short, all this captivated my mind, and notwithstanding my sad condition, I felt happy to be still of the world.

Now, while I looked about in this manner, a man—a butcher—passed, inclining forward and carrying an enormous quarter of beef on his shoulders; his arms were bare, his elbows were raised upward and his head was bent under them. His long hair, like that of Salvator's Sicambrian, hid his face from me; and yet, at the first glance, I trembled.

"It is he!" I said.

All the blood in my body rushed to my heart. I got down from the window trembling to the ends of my fingers, feeling my cheeks quiver, and the pallor

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spread over my face, stammering in a choked voice:

"It is he! he is there—there—and I, I have to die to expiate his crime. Oh, God! what shall I do? What shall I do?"

A sudden idea, an inspiration from Heaven, flashed across my mind. I put my hand in the pocket of my coat—my box of crayons was there!

Then rushing to the wall, I began to trace the scene of the murder with superhuman energy. No uncertainty, no hesitation! I knew the man! I had seen him! He was there before me!

At ten o'clock the jailer came to my cell. His owl-like impassibility gave place to admiration.

"Is it possible?" he cried, standing at the threshold.

"Go, bring me my judges," I said to him, pursuing my work with an increasing exultation.

Schlüssel answered:

"They are waiting for you in the trial-room."

"I wish to make a revelation," I cried, as I put the finishing touches to the mysterious personage.

He lived; he was frightful to see. His full-faced figure, foreshortened upon the wall, stood out from the white background with an astonishing vitality.

The jailer went away.

A few minutes afterward the two judges appeared. They were stupefied. I, trembling, with extended hand, said to them:

"There is the murderer!"

After a few minutes of silence, Van Spreckdal asked me:

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"What is his name?"

"I don't know; but he is at this moment in the market; he is cutting up meat in the third stall to the left as you enter from Trabaus Street."

"What do you think?" said he, leaning toward his colleague.

"Send for the man," he replied in a grave tone.

Several officers retained in the corridor obeyed this order. The judges stood, examining the sketch. As for me, I had dropped [redacted]y bed of straw, my head between my knees, p[redacted]y exhausted.

Soon steps were heard echoing under the archway. Those who have never awaited the hour of deliverance and counted the minutes, which seem like centuries—those who have never experienced the sharp emotions of outrage, terror, hope, and doubt—can have no conception of the inward chills that I experienced at that moment. I should have distinguished the step of the murderer, walking between the guards, among a thousand others. They approached. The judges themselves seemed moved. I raised up my head, my heart feeling as if an iron hand had clutched it, and I fixed my eyes upon the closed door. It opened. The man entered. His cheeks were red and swollen, the muscles in his large contracted jaws twitched as far as his ears, and his little restless eyes, yellow like a wolf's, gleamed beneath his heavy yellowish red eyebrows.

Van Spreckdal showed him the sketch in silence.

Then that murderous man, with the large shoulders, having looked, grew pale—then, giving a roar

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which thrilled us all with terror, he waved his enormous arms, and jumped backward to overthrow the guards. There was a terrible struggle in the corridor; you could hear nothing but the panting breath of the butcher, his muttered imprecations, and the short words and the shuffling feet of the guard, upon the flagstones.

This lasted only about a minute.

Finally the assassin re-entered, with his head hanging down, his eyes bloods[illegible]nd his hands fastened behind his back. He look[illegible]gain at the picture of the murderer; he seemed to reflect, and then, in a low voice, as if talking to himself:

"Who could have seen me," he said, "at midnight?"

I was saved!

Many years have passed since that terrible adventure. Thank Heaven! I make silhouettes no longer, nor portraits of burgomasters. Through hard work and perseverance, I have conquered my place in the world, and I earn my living honorably by painting works of art—the sole end, in my opinion, to which a true artist should aspire. But the memory of that nocturnal sketch has always remained in my mind. Sometim[illegible] in the midst of work, the thought of it recurs. [illegible]en I lay down my palette and dream for hours.

How could a crime committed by a man that I did not know—at a place that I had never seen—have

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been reproduced by my pencil, in all its smallest details?

Was it chance? No! And moreover, what is chance but the effect of a cause of which we are ignorant?

Was Schiller right when he said: "The immortal soul does not participate in the weaknesses of matter; during the sleep of the body, it spreads its radiant wings and travels, God knows where! What it then does, no one can say, but inspiration sometimes betrays the secret of its nocturnal wanderings."

Who knows? Nature is more audacious in her realities than man in his most fantastic imagining.

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THE DESERTED HOUSE

By Ernest T. W. Hoffmann

You know already that I spent the greater part of last summer in X——, began Theodore. The many old friends and acquaintances I found there, the free, jovial life, the manifold artistic and intellectual interests—all these combined to keep me in that city. I was happy as never before, and found rich nourishment for my old fondness for wandering alone through the streets, stopping to enjoy every picture in the shop windows, every placard on the walls, or watching the passers-by and choosing some one or the other of them to cast his horoscope secretly to myself.

There is one broad avenue leading to the —— Gate and lined with handsome buildings of all descriptions, which is the meeting place of the rich and fashionable world. The shops which occupy the ground floor of the tall palaces are devoted to the trade in articles of luxury, and the apartments above are the dwellings of people of wealth and position. The aristocratic hotels are to be found in this avenue, the palaces of the foreign ambassadors are there, and you can easily imagine that such a street would be the centre of the city's life and gaiety.

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I had wandered through the avenue several times, when one day my attention was caught by a house which contrasted strangely with the others surrounding it. Picture to yourselves a low building but four windows broad, crowded in between two tall, handsome structures. Its one upper story was a little higher than the tops of the ground-floor windows of its neighbors, its roof was dilapidated, its windows patched with paper, its discolored walls spoke of years of neglect. You can imagine how strange such a house must have looked in this street of wealth and fashion. Looking at it more attentively I perceived that the windows of the upper story were tightly closed and curtained, and that a wall had been built to hide the windows of the ground floor. The entrance gate, a little to one side, served also as a doorway for the building, but I could find no sign of latch, lock, or even a bell on this gate. I was convinced that the house must be unoccupied, for at whatever hour of the day I happened to be passing I had never seen the faintest signs of life about it.

You all, the good comrades of my youth, know that I have been prone to consider myself a sort of clairvoyant, claiming to have glimpses of a strange world of wonders, a world which you, with your hard common sense, would attempt to deny or laugh away. I confess that I have often lost myself in mysteries which after all turned out to be no mysteries at all. And it looked at first as if this was to happen to me in the matter of the deserted house, that strange house which drew my steps and my

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thoughts to itself with a power that surprised me. But the point of my story will prove to you that I am right in asserting that I know more than you do. Listen now to what I am about to tell you.

One day, at the hour in which the fashionable world is accustomed to promenade up and down the avenue, I stood as usual before the deserted house, lost in thought. Suddenly I felt, without looking up, that some one had stopped beside me, fixing his eyes on me. It was Count P——, who told me that the old house contained nothing more mysterious than a cake bakery belonging to the pastry cook whose handsome shop adjoined the old structure. The windows of the ground floor were walled up to give protection to the ovens, and the heavy curtains of the upper story were to keep the sunlight from the wares laid out there. When the Count informed me of this I felt as if a bucket of cold water had been suddenly thrown over me. But I could not believe in this story of the cake and candy factory. Through some strange freak of the imagination I felt as a child feels when some fairy tale has been told it to conceal the truth it suspects. I scolded myself for a silly fool; the house remained unaltered in its appearance, and the visions faded in my brain, until one day a chance incident woke them to life again.

I was wandering through the avenue as usual, and as I passed the deserted house I could not resist a hasty glance at its close-curtained upper windows. But as I looked at it, the curtain on the last window near the pastry shop began to move. A hand, an

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