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Nathaniel Hawthorne and the Puritans

Historical Context: The Puritans

“Puritanism: the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, may be happy.” – H. L. Mencken

The Puritans were a group of English Protestants (primarily Calvinists) who, in the 16th and 17th centuries, wanted to purify the Church of England of its Roman Catholic influence. They advocated the simplification of worship and church organization, as well as personal piety.

The term “Puritan” was originally a pejorative term, meant as an insult by opponents of the Puritans. Because they refused to conform to the state church’s beliefs and practices, the Puritans were also known as “Nonconformists” or “Dissenters.” Since the time of King Henry VIII, the English church had been virtually inseparable from the government; the Puritans thus represented a threat to the political stability of the nation.

As a result, many Puritans suffered persecution. They were barred, by law, from certain professions, and they were ostracized by society. It was this lack of freedom that drove them out of England and to America, among other places. The Great Migration of Puritans to New England was primarily an exodus of families. Between 1630 and 1640 over 13,000 men, women, and children sailed to Massachusetts.

Once the Puritans got here, however, they fell into the same habits from which they were fleeing: Puritan oppression, including the torture and imprisonment of some leaders of non-Puritan Christian sects, led to the (voluntary or involuntary) “banishment” of many Christian leaders and their followers from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. This negative impact of Puritanism on many new colonists had a positive result on American history in that it led to the founding of many new colonies—Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, New Hampshire, and others—as religious havens that were created for devout Christians who wanted to live outside the oppressive reach of Puritan theocracy.

Why study the Puritans?

• The Puritans had a profound influence on the course of early American literature and the formation of the American imagination. In fact, much of what we now identify as “American” comes from the moral, ethical, and
religious convictions of that small group of early New England settlers who landed, in 1620, on the tip of Cape Cod, just before Christmas.

- Despite having lived after the collapse of Puritanism, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) set many of his stories in a Puritan village where he could explore the darker elements of human nature, particularly the way that secret sin and guilt affect our lives—or even control them. To understand fully Hawthorne’s Puritan stories, a brief overview of the Puritan world view is helpful.

- The Puritan vision of a just and pious “Nation under God” is still a major driving spirit in America today.

- Some have suggested that it is a “Puritan spirit” in the United States’ political culture that creates a tendency to oppose such supposed indecency as alcohol and open sexuality.

**Puritan Beliefs**

At the center of Puritan theology was a mixture of certainty and doubt.

- The certainty: **Natural Depravity.** Because of Adam and Eve’s sin of disobedience, most of humanity would be damned for all eternity. The Puritans believed, as a popular Puritan Primer taught, that “in Adam’s fall, we sinned all.”

- Interesting note: While both sexes carried the stain of original sin, for a girl it was more serious: Eve’s corruption, in Puritan eyes, extended to all women, and justified marginalizing them within churches’ hierarchical structures.

- The doubt: **Predestination and Election.** A person’s fate was determined by God; before you were even born, you were predetermined to go to Heaven or Hell. But the thing is, the Puritans didn’t know if they were a part of the Elect or not.

  Q: So why bother leading a good life?
  A: Because the inner arrival of God’s grace was demonstrated in a person’s outward behavior. They also believed in God’s **Providences**—the belief that God manifests himself in nature and bestows physical favors on the Elect, such as relief from disease or a good harvest. Likewise, God could strike down a heathen.

The Puritans believed the Bible was the literal **word of God.** Reading the Bible was a necessity for all Puritans, as was the ability to understand closely reasoned theological debates. Hence, each believer should be able to read the word of God without the agency of a priest. Clear translations of the Bible were an early prod-
uct of the Protestant Reformation. Puritan writings, like sermons, appealed to the readers= accurate and detailed knowledge of the Bible. For this reason, the Puritans placed great emphasis on:

**Education:** Harvard College was founded in 1636, just six years after the Massachusetts Bay Colony was established and only 16 years after the first Pilgrims had landed, making it the oldest college in the United States. (William and Mary, in Virginia, is the second oldest, having been chartered in 1693.)

**Self-Government:** Because the Puritans rejected the authority of bishops and popes, they distrusted hierarchy of any kind and urged that each congregation make decisions concerning the conduct of the church. This decentralization of authority contributed to the development of democratic government.

**Social and Psychological Aspects of Puritan Beliefs**

- Intolerance and scapegoating. Because the Puritan congregation was supposed to represent God’s elect, any deviation from the strictest standards of personal morality could cast doubt on the entire group. Could, for example, a church who produced an out-of-wedlock birth be logically of the elect?

- Protestant Work Ethic. God’s providence was thought often to take the form of worldly success and wealth, though these were never theologically considered to be essential proofs of salvation. However, the receiver of God’s favor should not take pleasure in the riches and power themselves, only in God’s loving generosity. In typical Puritan manner, then, hard work and the resulting success were powerful signs of grace.

- Calling. If God predetermines the life of each person, God may also ordain the kind of work, the role in the world, best suited to each person. During the adolescent years, the Puritan youth was encouraged to search his mind and heart for signs of the work that God had set for him. Since God was the source of this vocation, it could only be to the benefit of the Puritan congregation and the immediate society.

- Spiritual self-examination. Uncertainty as to whether one truly belonged among the elect gave rise to the habit of setting aside time at the end of each day to reflect on the day’s events and one’s own feelings, continually searching for signs that God’s grace was present in one’s life. This habit of serious introspection was a further spur to real moral conduct and to very intense literary expression, such as we find (often to our great surprise) in actual Puritan writers.
Fun and games. Because Satan easily crept into the revels and no spiritual gain could be seen in playing games of any kind, the most rigorous Puritans opposed entertainment and sport, even music in church. When Puritans gained control of town councils, for example they banned sports, games, and plays. Oddly enough, these same Saints evidently saw no danger in alcohol. The manufacture and drinking of rum, for example, was an important factor in New England economy.

**Characteristics of Puritan Literature**

- Strenuous and serious literature because their writing attempted to represent life truly
- Aimed to be rational and orderly because God’s creation was logical and harmonious
- Truth should be expressed plainly (William Bradford said: write in a “plain style with singular regard to the simple truth in all things”)
- Distrusted an ornate and embellished style; such a style adulterated plain truth
- Tropes (figures of speech) and elaborate images were like false idols

**The Plain Style**

- Content over style: use the “words of wisdom” before wisdom of words
- Used scriptural analogies and examples, and syllogisms and other logical devices
- Avoided sensuous and ornamental figures and used rhetorical and formal sentence patterns
- Employed homely expressions: fishing, farming, Indian warfare, travel on land and sea and Biblical allusions
Excerpts from Puritan Literature

Jonathan Edwards

From “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God”

Jonathan Edwards was a Puritan preacher, a major figure in the “Great Awakening,” a religious revival that spread throughout the Eastern seaboard in the 1730s. The following is an excerpt from one of his sermons.

Therefore natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, His anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of His wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger; neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment: the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and are eager to grab hold of them, and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator; there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unoblized patience, of an incensed God. . . .

The use of this awful subject may be for awakening unconverted persons in this congregation. This you have heard is the case of every one of you that are without Christ. That world of misery, that lake of burning fire, is stretched out wide under you. There is the dreadful pit of the glowing flames of the wrath of God; there is hell’s wide gaping mouth open; and you have nothing to stand upon, nor anything to take hold of; there is nothing between you and hell but the air; it is only the power and mere pleasure of God that holds you up.

You probably are not cognizant of this; you find that you are kept out of hell, but do not see the hand of God in it; but look at other things, like your good health, your care of your own life, and the means you use for your own preservation. But indeed these things are nothing; if God should withdraw His hand, they would no more keep you from falling, than thin air would hold a person up that is suspended in it.

Your wickedness makes you as heavy as lead, and adds a downwards tendency with great weight and pressure towards hell; and if God should let you go, you would immediately sink and swiftly descend and plunge into the bottomless gulf; and your good health, and your own care and prudence, and best plans for salvation, and all your righteousness, would have no more influence to uphold you and keep you out of hell, than a spider’s web would have to stop a falling rock. Were it
not for the sovereign pleasure of God, the earth would not bear you for one mo-
ment; for you are a burden to it: the creation groans with you; the animal is made
subject to the bondage of your corruption, not willingly; the sun does not willingly
shine upon you to give you light to serve sin and Satan; the earth does not willingly
yield her fruits to satisfy your lusts; nor is it willingly a stage for your wickedness to
be acted upon; the air does not willingly serve you for breath to maintain the flame
of life in your vitals, while you spend your life in the service of God’s enemies.

God’s animals are good, and were made for men to serve God with and do not
willingly serve any other purpose, and groan when they are abused to purposes so
directly contrary to their nature and end. And the world would spit you out, were
it not for the sovereign hand of Him who has subjected it in hope. There are the
black clouds of God’s wrath now hanging directly over your heads, full of the dread-
ful storm, and big with thunder; and were it not for the restraining hand of God, it
would immediately burst forth upon you. The sovereign pleasure of God, for the
present, halts His destroying wind; otherwise it would come with fury, and your
destruction would come like a whirlwind, and you would be like the chaff of the
summer.

The wrath of God is like great waters that are dammed for the present; they in-
crease more and more, and rise higher and higher, till an outlet is given; and the
longer the stream is stopped, the more rapid and mighty is its course, when it is
once let loose. It is true, that judgment against your evil works has not been execut-
ed before; the floods of God’s vengeance have been withheld; but your guilt in the
meantime is constantly increasing, and you are every day storing up more wrath;
the waters are constantly rising, and growing more and more mighty; and there is
nothing but the mere pleasure of God that holds the waters back, that are unwilling
to be stopped, and press hard to go forward. If God should only withdraw His hand
from the floodgate, it would immediately fly open, and the fiery floods of the fierc-
eness and wrath of God would rush forth with inconceivable fury, and would come
upon you with omnipotent power; and if your strength were ten thousand times
greater than it is, yes, ten thousand times greater than the strength of the stoutest,
sturdiest devil in hell, it would never be able to withstand or endure it.

The bow of God’s wrath is bent, and the arrow made ready on the string, and
justice points the arrow at your heart, and strains the bow, and it is nothing but the
mere pleasure of God, and that of an angry God, without any promise or obligation
at all, that keeps the arrow one second from being made drunk with your blood.
Thus all of you that never had the great change of heart, by the mighty power of the
Spirit of God upon your souls; all of you that were never born again, and made new
creatures, and raised from being dead in sin, to a new state, and never experienced
light and life, are in the hands of an angry God.

However, you may have reformed your life in many things, and may have had reli-
gious feelings, and may keep up a form of religion in your families and secret prayer
closets, and in your churches, it is nothing but His mere pleasure that keeps you
from being this moment swallowed up in everlasting destruction. However, you may now be unconvinced of the truth that you now hear; in time you will be fully convinced of it. Those that were in similar circumstances as you are, are now gone and destruction came suddenly upon most of them; when they expected nothing to happen, and while they were saying, Peace and safety: now they see, that those things on which they depended for peace and safety, were nothing but thin air and empty shadows.

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some detestable insect, over the fire, detests you, and is dreadfully provoked: His wrath towards you burns like fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be thrown into the fire; He eyes are too pure than to bear to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes, than the most hateful venomous snake is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince: and yet, it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell last night; that you were allowed to awake up again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose this morning, but God’s hand has held you up. There is no other reason to be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in this church, provoking His pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending His solemn worship. Yes, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

O sinner! consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it apart; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.
Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672)

Anne Bradstreet arrived in America on June 14, 1630 at what is now Pioneer Village (Salem, Massachusetts) with her husband Simon, her parents and other voyagers, part of the Migration to New England (1620-1640). Both Anne’s father and her husband were instrumental in the founding of Harvard in 1636. Despite poor health, she had eight children and achieved a comfortable social standing.

On July 10, 1666, Bradstreet’s North Andover family home burned in a fire that left the Bradstreets homeless. By then, Anne’s health was slowly failing. She suffered from tuberculosis and had already lost a daughter-in-law and several grandchildren.

Despite the traditional attitude toward women of the time, Bradstreet clearly valued knowledge and intellect. She was a free thinker whom some consider an early feminist, though her poetry demonstrates, with strains of conflict, the beliefs of the traditional Puritan mind and motherhood. In 1647 Bradstreet’s brother-in-law, Rev. John Woodbridge, sailed to England, carrying her manuscript of poetry without her knowledge. Anne’s first work was published in London as “The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America, by a Gentlewoman of those Parts,” making Bradstreet the first female poet ever published in both England and the New World.

The purpose of the publication appears to have been an attempt by devout Puritan men to show that a godly and educated woman could elevate the position held by a wife and mother, without necessarily placing her in competition with men. Very few men of that time agreed with that belief. Mistress Bradstreet endured and ignored much gender bias during her life in the New World. In 1678 her self-revised “Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning” was posthumously published in America, and included one of her most famous poems, “To My Dear and Loving Husband.”

A quotation from Bradstreet can be found on a plaque at the Bradstreet Gate in Harvard Yard: “I came into this Country, where I found a new World and new manners at which my heart rose.” Unfortunately the plaque seems to be based on a misinterpretation; the following sentence is “But after I was convinced it was the way of God, I submitted to it and joined to the church at Boston.” This suggests that her heart rose up in protest rather than in joy.

Bradstreet tells us in one of the “Meditations” written for her children that she was troubled many times about the truth of the Scriptures, that she never saw any convincing miracles, and that she always wondered if those of which she read “were feigned.” What finally proved to her the existence of God was not her reading but the evidence of her own eyes. She is the first in a long line of American poets who took their consolation not from theology but from the “wondrous works,” as she wrote, “that I see, the vast frame of the heaven and the earth, the order of all things, night and day, summer and winter, spring and autumn, the daily providing for this
great household upon the earth, the preserving and directing of all to its proper end.” (Note: this biography was taken mostly from Wikipedia and The Norton Anthology of Poetry website.)

“Here followes some verses upon the burning of our house, July 10th, 1666.”

In silent night when rest I took,  
For sorrow neer I did not look,  
I waken'd was with thundring nois  
And Piteous shreiks of dreadfull voice.  
That fearful sound of fire and fire,  
Let no man know is my Desire.

I, starting up, the light did spye,  
And to my God my heart did cry  
To strengthen me in my Distresse,  
And not to leave me succourlesse.  
Then coming out beheld a space,  
The flame consume my dwelling place.

And when I could no longer look,  
I blest his Name that gave and took,  
That layd my goods now in the dust:  
Yea so it was, and so ‘twas just.  
It was his own: it was not mine;  
Far be it that I should repine.

He might of All justly bereft,  
But yet sufficient for us left.  
When by the Ruines oft I past,  
My sorrowing eye aside did cast,  
And here and there the places spye  
Where oft I sate, and long did lye.

Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest;  
There lay that store I counted best:  
My pleasant things in ashes lye,  
And them behold no more shall I.  
Under thy roof no guest shall sitt,  
Nor at thy Table eat a bitt.
No pleasant tale shall ‘ere be told,
Nor things recounted done of old.
No Candle ‘ere shall shine in Thee,
Nor bridegroom’s voice ere heard shall be.
In silence ever shalt thou lye;
Adeiu, Adeiu; All’s vanity.

Then streight I ‘gin my heart to chide,
And did thy wealth on earth abide?
Didst fix thy hope on mouldring dust,
The arm of flesh didst make thy trust?
Raise up thy thoughts above the skye
That dunghill mists away may flie.

Thou hast an house on high erect,
Fram’d by that mighty Architect,
With glory richly furnished,
Stands permanent though this bee fled.
It’s purchased, and paid for too
By him who hath enough to doe.

A Prise so vast as is unknown,
Yet, by his Gift, is made thine own.
Ther’s wealth enough, I need no more;
Farewell my Pelf, farewell my Store.
The world no longer let me Love,
My hope and Treasure lyes Above.
“To My Dear and Loving Husband” (1678)

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were loved by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me ye women if you can.

5     I prize thy love more than whole mines of gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee give recompense.

Thy love is such I can no way repay;

10 The heavens reward thee manifold, I pray.
Then while we live, in love let’s so persever,
That when we live no more we may live ever.

For more commentary on Bradstreet and this poem see this website: http://www.wwnorton.com/college/english/nap/To_My_Dear_and_Loving_Husband_Anne.htm
Edward Taylor (1642-1729)

The son of a non-Conformist yeoman farmer, Taylor was born in 1642 at Sketchley, Leicestershire, England. Following restoration of the monarchy and the Act of Uniformity under Charles II, which cost Taylor his teaching position, he emigrated in 1668 to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in America. He chronicled his Atlantic crossing and early years in America (from April 26, 1668, to July 5, 1671) in his now-published Diary. He was admitted to Harvard College as a second year student soon after arriving in America and upon graduation in 1671 became pastor and physician at Westfield, on the remote western frontier of Massachusetts, where he remained until his death on June 29, 1729. He was twice married, first to Elizabeth Fitch, by whom he had eight children, five of whom died in childhood, and at her death to Ruth Wyllys, who bore six more children.

Taylor’s poems, in leather bindings of his own manufacture, survived him, but he had left instructions that his heirs should “never publish any of his writings,” and the poems remained all but forgotten for more than 200 years. In 1937 Thomas H. Johnson discovered a 400-page quarto manuscript of Taylor’s poetry in the library of Yale University and published a selection from it in *The New England Quarterly*. His complete poems, however, were not published until 1960. He is the only major American poet to have written in the metaphysical style.

Taylor’s poems were an expression of his deeply held religious views, acquired during a strict upbringing and shaped in adulthood by New England Congregationalist Puritans, who developed during the 1630s and 1640s rules far more demanding than those of their co-religionists in England. Alarmed by a perceived lapse in piety, they concluded that professing belief and leading a scandal free life were insufficient for full participation in the local assembly. To become communing participants, “halfway members” were required to relate by testimony some personal experience of God’s saving grace leading to conversion, thus affirming that they were, in their own opinion and that of the church, assured of salvation. This requirement, expressed in the famous Halfway Covenant of 1662, was defended by such prominent churchmen as Increase and Cotton Mather and was readily embraced by Taylor, who became one of its most vocal advocates.

“To modern eyes,” noted Donald E. Stanford, the editor of Taylor’s major writings, “Calvinism is a grim theology, and partly because of its grimness, partly because of its internal inconsistencies (man cannot save himself yet should exert every effort to lead a good life and achieve saving faith), the kind of Calvinism in which Taylor believed gradually broke down.” Though not for the most part identifiable sectarian, Taylor’s poems nonetheless are marked by a robust spiritual content, characteristically conveyed by means of homely and vivid imagery derived from everyday Puritan surroundings. “Taylor transcended his frontier circumstances,” biographer Grabo observed, “not by leaving them behind, but by transforming them into intellectual, aesthetic, and spiritual universals.” (Biography taken from Wikipedia)
“Upon a Spider Catching a Fly”

Thou sorrow, venom Elfe:
    Is this thy play,
To spin a web out of thyselfe
    To Catch a Fly?
    For Why?

I saw a pettish wasp
    Fall foule therein:
Whom yet thy Whorle pins did not clasp
    Lest he should fling
    His sting.

But as afraid, remote
    Didst stand hereat,
And with thy little fingers stroke
    And gently tap
    His back.

Thus gently him didst treate
    Lest he should pet,
And in a froppish, waspish heate
    Should greatly fret
    Thy net.

Whereas the silly Fly,
    Caught by its leg
Thou by the throate tookst hastily
    And ‘hinde the head
    Bite Dead.

This goes to pot, that not
    Nature doth call.
Strive not above what strength hath got,
    Lest in the brawle
    Thou fall.

This Frey seems thus to us.
    Hells Spider gets
His intrails spun to whip Cords thus
    And wove to nets
    And sets.
To tangle Adams race  
   In’s strategems  
To their Destruotions, spoil’d, made base  
   By venom things,  
   Damn’d Sins.

But mighty, Gracious Lord  
   Communicate  
Thy Grace to breake the Cord, afford  
   Us Glorys Gate  
   And State.

We’ll Nightingaile sing like  
   When pearcht on high  
In Glories Cage, thy glory, bright,  
   And thankfully,  
   For joy.

“Upon a Wasp Chilled With Cold”

The bear that breathes the northern blast  
Did numb, torpedo-like, a wasp  
Whose stiffened limbs encramped, lay bathing  
In Sol’s warm breath and shine as saving,  
Which with her hands she chafes and stands  
Rubbing her legs, shanks, thighs, and hands.  
Her pretty toes, and fingers’ ends  
Nipped with this breath, she out extends  
Unto the sun, in great desire  
To warm her digits at that fire.  
Doth hold her temples in this state  
Where pulse doth beat, and head doth ache.  
Doth turn, and stretch her body small,  
Doth comb her velvet capital.  
As if her little brain pan were  
A volume of choice precepts clear.  
As if her satin jacket hot  
Contained apothecary’s shop  
Of nature’s receipts, that prevails  
To remedy all her sad ails,  
As if her velvet helmet high
Did turret rationality.
She fans her wing up to the wind
As if her pettycoat were lined,
With reason’s fleece, and hoists sails
And humming flies in thankful gales
Unto her dun curled palace hall
Her warm thanks offering for all.

Lord, clear my misted sight that I
May hence view Thy divinity,
Some sparks whereof thou up dost hasp
Within this little downy wasp
In whose small corporation we
A school and a schoolmaster see,
Where we may learn, and easily find
A nimble spirit bravely mind
Her work in every limb: and lace
It up neat with a vital grace,
Acting each part though ne’er so small
Here of this fustian animal.
Till I enravished climb into
The Godhead on this ladder do,
Where all my pipes inspired upraise
An heavenly music furred with praise.
Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864)

Born on the Fourth of July in 1804, Nathaniel Hawthorne seems destined from birth to chronicle the evolution of his native New England from its Puritan roots. For nearly two centuries, as Hawthorne describes in his preface to The Scarlet Letter, his ancestors had “mingled their earthy substance with the soil, until no small portion of it must necessarily be akin to the mortal frame wherewith, for a little while, I walk the streets.” From his youth, Hawthorne was haunted by “the figure of that first ancestor,” Major William Hathorne, who came to Salem in 1636 to join the Massachusetts Bay Colony and distinguished himself first as a ruthless warrior in the campaign against the Wampanoag Indians known as “King Philip’s War” (1675-1676) and, later, as “a bitter persecutor” of Quakers whose cruelties “will last longer,” Hawthorne lamented, “than any record of his better deeds.” Similarly, the Major’s son (Nathaniel’s great-great-grandfather) “inherited the persecuting spirit”: a prominent Judge in the Salem Witch Trials (1692-1693), Judge John Hathorne “made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him.” The guilt of his forbearers’ cruelty weighed heavily on Hawthorne. “I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being,” he wrote. “At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them . . . may be now and henceforth removed.” And yet, despite his renunciation of the deeds of his “great-grandsires,” Hawthorne acknowledged that “strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine”—traits clearly manifest in the ambiguous themes of his fiction, which reflect persistent tensions between the past and the present, tradition and progress, repression and romance.

Though born into a notoriously prominent family, Hawthorne’s early life was defined by dependence and isolation. His father, a sea captain, died of yellow fever in Suriname when Hawthorne was only four; young Nathaniel, his mother, and his two sisters were supported by his maternal grandparents and his uncles, who built the family a home near Lake Sebago in Maine and who paid Hawthorne’s tuition at Bowdoin College. At Bowdoin, Hawthorne made a lasting friendship with Franklin W. Pierce, who eventually became the fourteenth President of the United States (Hawthorne wrote Pierce’s campaign biography in 1852, and was repaid after Pierce’s election with an appointment as US Consul in Liverpool, England). By his own description an “idle” and “negligent” student, Hawthorne graduated from Bowdoin in 1825 and spent the next twelve years living with his mother in Salem, where, in relative seclusion, he devoted himself to the craft of fiction, writing and anonymously publishing the numerous stories eventually collected in Twice-Told Tales (1837), among them “The Minister’s Black Veil,” “Dr. Heidegger’s Experiment,” and “Wakefield.”
Not long after emerging from his lengthy self-imposed apprenticeship, Hawthorne became engaged to Sophia Peabody, an accomplished artist with strong family ties to the Unitarian Church and the New England Transcendentalists. Through Sophia, Hawthorne became acquainted with major figures in a variety of progressive social movements. Sophia’s sister Elizabeth Peabody was a prominent Transcendentalist, and, along with her close friend and contemporary Margaret Fuller, an early champion of women’s rights; Sophia’s sister Mary was wed to US Congressman, Massachusetts State Senator, and legendary education reformer Horace Mann. Before marrying, Hawthorne lived for a time at Brook Farm, a Utopian experiment in communal living inspired by Transcendentalism and the teachings of French socialist philosopher Charles Fourier. Hawthorne himself remained skeptical of Transcendentalism; he moved to Brook Farm only in the hope that he might make enough money there to finance his life with Sophia, and later gave the commune a gently critical portrait in his novel *The Blithedale Romance* (1852).

While at Brook Farm, Hawthorne met Ralph Waldo Emerson; after marrying, the Hawthornes moved to Concord, Massachusetts, where for three years they lived in a mansion owned by the Emerson family known as The Old Manse. In Concord, Hawthorne socialized with Emerson and Henry David Thoreau, and wrote most of the tales in *Mosses from an Old Manse*, including “The Birthmark” and “Rappaccini’s Daughter” (though included in *Mosses*, “Young Goodman Brown” and “Roger Malvin’s Burial” were written in the early 1830s during Hawthorne’s apprenticeship years in Salem). Published in 1846, *Mosses* established Hawthorne as a master of moral allegory fixated on the dark side of human nature, and earned the praise of the young Walt Whitman and Herman Melville, whose anonymous review “Hawthorne and His *Mosses*” compared Hawthorne to Shakespeare.

In 1846, Hawthorne was appointed Surveyor of the Customs House for the Port of Salem, a position gained through political connections which, for the first time in his life, afforded the financial stability he needed to support his growing family (three children—Una, Julian, and Rose—were born between 1844 and 1851). Though Hawthorne resented the tedium of the job and the lack of time it afforded for his writing, when he lost the appointment in 1848 after a change in political administrations, he took the dismissal badly. A few months later, Hawthorne also lost his beloved mother. His frustration and despair inspired the composition of his masterpiece, *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), a dark romance depicting a doomed love affair between a young woman cast out from Puritan Salem for the sin of adultery and the clergyman who has secretly fathered the woman’s child.

In mid-1850, the Hawthornes moved to Lenox, a rural town in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. There, Hawthorne met and formed an intense friendship with Herman Melville, whose laudatory review of *Mosses from an Old Manse* had recently been published. Melville was then at work on his own masterpiece, *Moby-Dick* (1851), which he dedicated to Hawthorne, “in token for my admiration of his genius.” While living in Lenox, Hawthorne wrote two more novels: *The Blithe-
*Dale Romance* and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), a Gothic novel in which Hawthorne resumed his obsessions with guilt and retribution for past sins.

In 1852, the Hawthornes returned to Concord, where Hawthorne resumed his acquaintances with Emerson and Thoreau and set to writing his friend Franklin Pierce’s biography. After Pierce’s election to the Presidency, the Hawthornes moved to Liverpool, and, when Pierce left office in 1857, the family traveled to Italy, living briefly in Rome and Florence. In 1860, they returned to Concord. That same year, Hawthorne published his last novel, *The Marble Faun*. Soon after, Hawthorne began to suffer from a variety of physical ailments that prevented him from writing. In 1864, while traveling with his old friend Franklin Pierce in New Hampshire, he died in his sleep. (Dr. Ed Tarkington)

**Hawthorne and American Romanticism**

It’s useful to think of Hawthorne as part of the literary movement known as *Romanticism*, an artistic and intellectual movement that stressed the importance of emotion, imagination, the individual, and rebellion against social conventions. Romantic authors often explored the supernatural/occult, mysticism, primitivism, and human psychology.

Romanticism originated in Western Europe in the 1700s as a reaction against the Enlightenment; it reached America in the early nineteenth century and reached its height with such writers as Hawthorne, Poe, Whitman, Emerson, and Thoreau.

Hawthorne’s works belong more specifically to dark romanticism, cautionary tales that suggest guilt, sin, and evil are the most inherent natural qualities of humanity. Many of his works are inspired by Puritan New England, combining historical romance loaded with symbolism, *allegory*, and psychological themes, bordering on surrealism. His depictions of the past are a version of historical fiction used only as a vehicle to express common themes of ancestral sin, guilt and retribution. (adapted from Wikipedia)

**Themes/Issues**

- Hawthorne’s vision of “the human heart as a lurking place for the secrets of past violence” (connection to his own ancestors’ past, perhaps?)
- Isolation
- Secret sin/natural depravity
- Allegory
- Ambivalent treatment of women
Guiding Questions

• How do we see the Puritan influence expressed in Hawthorne’s works? Does he seem to uphold Puritan values or to criticize them?
• How has Puritanism informed our national identity?
• Is human nature defined by natural depravity, the notion that we know what is right but still do what is wrong?
• Does covering up secret sins lead to isolation and the destructive qualities of guilt, suspicion, and self-righteousness?
THE MINISTER’S BLACK VEIL
A PARABLE

The sexton stood in the porch of Milford meeting-house, pulling busily at the bell-rope. The old people of the village came stooping along the street. Children, with bright faces, tripped merrily beside their parents, or mimicked a graver gait, in the conscious dignity of their Sunday clothes. Spruce bachelors looked sidelong at the pretty maidens, and fancied that the Sabbath sunshine made them prettier than on week days. When the throng had mostly streamed into the porch, the sexton began to toll the bell, keeping his eye on the Reverend Mr. Hooper’s door. The first glimpse of the clergyman’s figure was the signal for the bell to cease its summons.

“But what has good Parson Hooper got upon his face?” cried the sexton in astonishment.

All within hearing immediately turned about, and beheld the semblance of Mr. Hooper, pacing slowly his meditative way towards the meeting-house. With one accord they started, expressing more wonder than if some strange minister were coming to dust the cushions of Mr. Hooper’s pulpit.

“Are you sure it is our parson?” inquired Goodman Gray of the sexton.

“Of a certainty it is good Mr. Hooper;” replied the sexton. “He was to have exchanged pulpits with Parson Shute, of Westbury; but Parson Shute sent to excuse himself yesterday, being to preach a funeral sermon.”

The cause of so much amazement may appear sufficiently slight. Mr. Hooper, a gentlemanly person, of about thirty, though still a bachelor, was dressed with due clerical neatness, as if a careful wife had starched his band, and brushed the weekly dust from his Sunday’s garb. There was but one thing remarkable in his appearance. Swathed about his forehead, and hanging down over his face, so low as to be shaken by his breath, Mr. Hooper had on a black veil. On a nearer view it seemed to consist of two folds of crape, which entirely concealed his features, except the mouth and chin, but probably did not intercept his sight, further than to give a darkened aspect to all living and inanimate things. With this gloomy shade before him, good Mr. Hooper walked onward, at a slow and quiet pace,

[1] Another clergyman in New England, Mr. Joseph Moody, of York, Maine, who died about eighty years since, made himself remarkable by the same eccentricity that is here related of the Reverend Mr. Hooper. In his case, however, the symbol had a different import. In early life he had accidentally killed a beloved friend, and from that day till the hour of his own death, he hid his face from men.
stooping somewhat, and looking on the ground, as is customary with abstracted men, yet nodding kindly to those of his parishioners who still waited on the meeting-house steps. But so wonder-struck were they that his greeting hardly met with a return.

"I can't really feel as if good Mr. Hooper's face was behind that piece of crape," said the sexton.

"I don't like it," muttered an old woman, as she hobbled into the meeting-house. "He has changed himself into something awful, only by hiding his face."

"Our parson has gone mad!" cried Goodman Gray, following him across the threshold.

A rumor of some unaccountable phenomenon had preceded Mr. Hooper into the meeting-house, and set all the congregation astir. Few could refrain from twisting their heads towards the door; many stood upright, and turned directly about; while several little boys clambered upon the seats, and came down again with a terrible racket. There was a general bustle, a rustling of the women's gowns and shuffling of the men's feet, greatly at variance with that hushed repose which should attend the entrance of the minister. But Mr. Hooper appeared not to notice the perturbation of his people. He entered with an almost noiseless step, bent his head mildly to the pews on each side, and bowed as he passed his oldest parishioner; a white-haired great grandsire, who occupied an arm-chair in the centre of the aisle. It was strange to observe how slowly this venerable man became conscious of something singular in the appearance of his pastor. He seemed not fully to partake of the prevailing wonder, till Mr. Hooper had ascended the stairs, and showed himself in the pulpit, face to face with his congregation, except for the black veil. That mysterious emblem was never once withdrawn. It shook with his measured breath, as he gave out the psalm; it threw its obscurity between him and the holy page, as he read the Scriptures; and while he prayed, the veil lay heavily on his uplifted countenance. Did he seek to hide it from the dread Being whom he was addressing?

Such was the effect of this simple piece of crape, that more than one woman of delicate nerves was forced to leave the meeting-house. Yet perhaps the pale-faced congregation was almost as fearful a sight to the minister, as his black veil to them.

Mr. Hooper had the reputation of a good preacher, but not an energetic one: he strove to win his people heavenward by mild, persuasive influences, rather than to drive them thither by the thunders of the Word. The sermon which he now delivered was marked by the same characteristics of style and manner as the general series of his pulpit oratory. But there was something, either in the sentiment of the discourse itself, or in the imagination of the auditors, which made it greatly the most powerful effort that they had ever heard from their pastor's lips. It was tinged, rather more darkly than usual, with the gentle gloom of Mr. Hooper's temperament. The subject had reference to secret sin, and those sad mysteries which we hide from our nearest and dearest, and would fain conceal from our own consciousness, even forgetting
that the Omniscient can detect them. A subtle power was breathed into his words. Each member of the congregation, the most innocent girl, and the man of hardened breast, felt as if the preacher had crept upon them, behind his awful veil, and discovered their hoarded iniquity of deed or thought. Many spread their clasped hands on their bosoms. There was nothing terrible in what Mr. Hooper said, at least, no violence; and yet, with every tremor of his melancholy voice, the hearers quaked. An unsought pathos came hand in hand with awe. So sensible were the audience of some unwonted attribute in their minister, that they longed for a breath of wind to blow aside the veil, almost believing that a stranger’s visage would be discovered, though the form, gesture, and voice were those of Mr. Hooper.

At the close of the services, the people hurried out with indecorous confusion, eager to communicate their pent-up amazement, and conscious of lighter spirits the moment they lost sight of the black veil. Some gathered in little circles, huddled closely together, with their mouths all whispering in the centre; some went homeward alone, wrapt in silent meditation; some talked loudly, and profaned the Sabbath day with ostentatious laughter. A few shook their sagacious heads, intimating that they could penetrate the mystery; while one or two affirmed that there was no mystery at all, but only that Mr. Hooper’s eyes were so weakened by the midnight lamp, as to require a shade. After a brief interval, forth came good Mr. Hooper also, in the rear of his flock. Turning his veiled face from one group to another, he paid due reverence to the hoary heads, saluted the middle aged with kind dignity as their friend and spiritual guide, greeted the young with mingled authority and love, and laid his hands on the little children’s heads to bless them. Such was always his custom on the Sabbath day. Strange and bewildered looks repaid him for his courtesy. None; as on former occasions, aspired to the honor of walking by their pastor’s side. Old Squire Saunders, doubtless by an accidental lapse of memory, neglected to invite Mr. Hooper to his table, where the good clergyman had been wont to bless the food, almost every Sunday since his settlement. He returned, therefore, to the parsonage, and, at the moment of closing the door, was observed to look back upon the people, all of whom had their eyes fixed upon the minister. A sad smile gleamed faintly from beneath the black veil, and flickered about his mouth, glimmering as he disappeared.

“How strange,” said a lady, “that a simple black veil, such as any woman might wear on her bonnet, should become such a terrible thing on Mr. Hooper’s face!”

“Something must surely be amiss with Mr. Hooper’s intellects,” observed her husband, the physician of the village. “But the strangest part of the affair is the effect of this vagary, even on a sober-minded man like myself. The black veil, though it covers only our pastor’s face, throws its influence over his whole person, and makes him ghostlike from head to foot. Do you not feel it so?”

“Truly do I,” replied the lady; “and I would not be alone with him for the world. I wonder he is not afraid to be alone with himself!”
``Men sometimes are so,''' said her husband.

The afternoon service was attended with similar circumstances. At its conclusion, the bell tolled for the funeral of a young lady. The relatives and friends were assembled in the house, and the more distant acquaintances stood about the door, speaking of the good qualities of the deceased, when their talk was interrupted by the appearance of Mr. Hooper, still covered with his black veil. It was now an appropriate emblem. The clergyman stepped into the room where the corpse was laid, and bent over the coffin, to take a last farewell of his deceased parishioner. As he stooped, the veil hung straight down from his forehead, so that, if her eye-lids had not been closed forever, the dead maiden might have seen his face. Could Mr. Hooper be fearful of her glance, that he so hastily caught back the black veil? A person who watched the interview between the dead and living, scrupled not to affirm, that, at the instant when the clergyman’s features were disclosed, the corpse had slightly shuddered, rustling the shroud and muslin cap, though the countenance retained the composure of death. A superstitious old woman was the only witness of this prodigy. From the coffin Mr. Hooper passed into the chamber of the mourners, and thence to the head of the staircase, to make the funeral prayer. It was a tender and heart-dissolving prayer, full of sorrow, yet so imbued with celestial hopes, that the music of a heavenly harp, swept by the fingers of the dead, seemed faintly to be heard among the saddest accents of the minister. The people trembled, though they but darkly understood him when he prayed that they, and himself, and all of mortal race, might be ready, as he trusted this young maiden had been, for the dreadful hour that should snatch the veil from their faces. The bearers went heavily forth, and the mourners followed, saddening all the street, with the dead before them, and Mr. Hooper in his black veil behind.

``Why do you look back?'' said one in the procession to his partner.  ``I had a fancy,'' replied she, ``that the minister and the maiden’s spirit were walking hand in hand."

``And so had I, at the same moment,'' said the other.

That night, the handsomest couple in Milford village were to be joined in wedlock. Though reckoned a melancholy man, Mr. Hooper had a placid cheerfulness for such occasions, which often excited a sympathetic smile where livelier merriment would have been thrown away. There was no quality of his disposition which made him more beloved than this. The company at the wedding awaited his arrival with impatience, trusting that the strange awe, which had gathered over him throughout the day, would now be dispelled. But such was not the result. When Mr. Hooper came, the first thing that their eyes rested on was the same horrible black veil, which had added deeper gloom to the funeral, and could portend nothing but evil to the wedding. Such was its immediate effect on the guests that a cloud seemed to have rolled duskily from beneath the black crape, and dimmed the light of the candles. The bridal pair stood up before the minister. But the bride’s cold fingers quivered in the tremulous hand of the bridegroom, and her deathlike pale-
ness caused a whisper that the maiden who had been buried a few hours before was come from her grave to be married. If ever another wedding were so dismal, it was that famous one where they tolled the wedding knell. After performing the ceremony, Mr. Hooper raised a glass of wine to his lips, wishing happiness to the new-married couple in a strain of mild pleasantry that ought to have brightened the features of the guests, like a cheerful gleam from the hearth. At that instant, catching a glimpse of his figure in the looking-glass, the black veil involved his own spirit in the horror with which it overwhelmed all others. His frame shuddered, his lips grew white, he spilt the untasted wine upon the carpet, and rushed forth into the darkness. For the Earth, too, had on her Black Veil.

The next day, the whole village of Milford talked of little else than Parson Hooper's black veil. That, and the mystery concealed behind it, supplied a topic for discussion between acquaintances meeting in the street, and good women gossiping at their open windows. It was the first item of news that the tavern-keeper told to his guests. The children babbled of it on their way to school. One imitative little imp covered his face with an old black handkerchief, thereby so affrighting his playmates that the panic seized himself, and he well-nigh lost his wits by his own waggery. It was remarkable that all of the busybodies and impertinent people in the parish, not one ventured to put the plain question to Mr. Hooper; wherefore he did this thing. Hitherto, whenever there appeared the slightest call for such interference, he had never lacked advisers, nor shown himself averse to be guided by their judgment. If he erred at all, it was by so painful a degree of self-distrust, that even the mildest censure would lead him to consider an indifferent action as a crime. Yet, though so well acquainted with this amiable weakness, no individual among his parishioners chose to make the black veil a subject of friendly remonstrance. There was a feeling of dread, neither plainly confessed nor carefully concealed, which caused each to shift the responsibility upon another, till at length it was found expedient to send a deputation of the church, in order to deal with Mr. Hooper about the mystery, before it should grow into a scandal. Never did an embassy so ill discharge its duties. The minister received then with friendly courtesy, but became silent, after they were seated, leaving to his visitors the whole burden of introducing their important business. The topic, it might be supposed, was obvious enough. There was the black veil swathed round Mr. Hooper’s forehead, and concealing every feature above his placid mouth, on which, at times, they could perceive the glimmering of a melancholy smile. But that piece of crape, to their imagination, seemed to hang down before his heart, the symbol of a fearful secret between him and them. Were the veil but cast aside, they might speak freely of it, but not till then. Thus they sat a considerable time, speechless, confused, and shrinking uneasily from Mr. Hooper’s eye, which they felt to be fixed upon them with an invisible glance. Finally, the deputes returned abashed to their constituents, pronouncing the matter too weighty to be handled, except by a council of the churches, if, indeed, it might not require a general synod.
But there was one person in the village unappalled by the awe with which the black veil had impressed all beside herself. When the deputies returned without an explanation, or even venturing to demand one, she, with the calm energy of her character, determined to chase away the strange cloud that appeared to be settling round Mr. Hooper, every moment more darkly than before. As his plighted wife, it should be her privilege to know what the black veil concealed. At the minister’s first visit, therefore, she entered upon the subject with a direct simplicity, which made the task easier both for him and her. After he had seated himself, she fixed her eyes steadfastly upon the veil, but could discern nothing of the dreadful gloom that had so overawed the multitude: it was but a double fold of crape, hanging down from his forehead to his mouth, and slightly stirring with his breath.

“No,” said she aloud, and smiling, “there is nothing terrible in this piece of crape, except that it hides a face which I am always glad to look upon. Come, good sir, let the sun shine from behind the cloud. First lay-aside your black veil: then tell me why you put it on.”

Mr. Hooper’s smile glimmered faintly.

“There is an hour to come,” said he, “when all of us shall cast aside our veils. Take it not amiss, beloved friend, if I wear this piece of crape till then.”

“Your words are a mystery, too,” returned the young lady. “Take away the veil from them, at least.”

“Elizabeth, I will,” said he, “so far as my vow may suffer me. Know, then, this veil is a type and a symbol, and I am bound to wear it ever, both in light and darkness, in solitude and before the gaze of multitudes, and as with strangers, so with my familiar friends. No mortal eye will see it withdrawn. This dismal shade must separate me from the world: even you, Elizabeth, can never come behind it!”

“What grievous affliction hath befallen you,” she earnestly inquired, “that you should thus darken your eyes forever?”

“If it be a sign of mourning,” replied Mr. Hooper, “I, perhaps, like most other mortals, have sorrows dark enough to be typified by a black veil.”

“But what if the world will not believe that it is the type of an innocent sorrow?” urged Elizabeth. “Beloved and respected as you are, there may be whispers that you hide your face under the consciousness of secret sin. For the sake of your holy office, do away this scandal!”

The color rose into her cheeks as she intimated the nature of the rumors that were already abroad in the village. But Mr. Hooper’s mildness did not forsake him. He even smiled again — that same sad smile, which always appeared like a faint glimmering of light, proceeding from the obscurity beneath the veil.
``If I hide my face for sorrow, there is cause enough," he merely replied; ``and if I cover it for secret sin, what mortal might not do the same?"

And with this gentle, but unconquerable obstinacy did he resist all her entreaties. At length Elizabeth sat silent. For a few moments she appeared lost in thought, considering, probably, what new methods might be tried to withdraw her lover from so dark a fantasy, which, if it had no other meaning, was perhaps a symptom of mental disease. Though of a firmer character than his own, the tears rolled down her cheeks. But, in an instant, as it were, a new feeling took the place of sorrow: her eyes were fixed insensibly on the black veil, when, like a sudden twilight in the air, its terrors fell around her. She arose, and stood trembling before him.

``And do you feel it then, at last?" said he mournfully.

She made no reply, but covered her eyes with her hand, and turned to leave the room. He rushed forward and caught her arm.

``Have patience with me, Elizabeth!" cried he, passionately. "Do not desert me, though this veil must be between us here on earth. Be mine, and hereafter there shall be no veil over my face, no darkness between our souls! It is but a mortal veil -- it is not for eternity! O! you know not how lonely I am, and how frightened, to be alone behind my black veil. Do not leave me in this miserable obscurity forever!"

``Lift the veil but once, and look me in the face," said she.

``Never! It cannot be!" replied Mr. Hooper.

``Then farewell!" said Elizabeth.

She withdrew her arm from his grasp, and slowly departed, pausing at the door, to give one long shuddering gaze, that seemed almost to penetrate the mystery of the black veil. But, even amid his grief, Mr. Hooper smiled to think that only a material emblem had separated him from happiness, though the horrors, which it shadowed forth, must be drawn darkly between the fondest of lovers.

From that time no attempts were made to remove Mr. Hooper's black veil, or, by a direct appeal, to discover the secret which it was supposed to hide. By persons who claimed a superiority to popular prejudice, it was reckoned merely an eccentric whim, such as often mingle with the sober actions of men otherwise rational, and tinges them all with its own semblance of insanity. But with the multitude, good Mr. Hooper was irreparably a bugbear. He could not walk the street with any peace of mind, so conscious was he that the gentle and timid would turn aside to avoid him, and that others would make it a point of hardihood to throw themselves in his way. The impertinence of the latter class compelled him to give up his customary walk at sunset to the burial ground; for when he leaned pensively over the gate, there would always be faces behind the gravestones, peeping at his black veil. A fable went the rounds that the stare of the dead people drove him thence. It grieved
him, to the very depth of his kind heart, to observe how the children fled from his
approach, breaking up their merriest sports, while his melancholy figure was yet
afar off. Their instinctive dread caused him to feel more strongly than aught else,
that a preternatural horror was interwoven with the threads of the black crape. In
truth, his own antipathy to the veil was known to be so great, that he never willingly
passed before a mirror; nor stooped to drink at a still fountain, lest, in its peace-
ful bosom, he should be affrighted by himself. This was what gave plausibility to
the whispers, that Mr. Hooper’s conscience tortured him for some great crime too
horrible to be entirely concealed, or otherwise than so obscurely intimated. Thus,
from beneath the black veil, there rolled a cloud into the sunshine, an ambiguity of
sin or sorrow, which enveloped the poor minister, so that love or sympathy could
never reach him. It was said that ghost and fiend consorted with him there. With
self-shudderings and outward terrors, he walked continually in its shadow, groping
darkly within his own soul, or gazing through a medium that saddened the whole
world. Even the lawless wind, it was believed, respected his dreadful secret, and
never blew aside the veil. But still good Mr. Hooper sadly smiled at the pale visages
of the worldly throng as he passed by.

Among all its bad influences, the black veil had the one desirable effect, of mak-
ing its wearer a very efficient clergyman. By the aid of his mysterious emblem --
for there was no other apparent cause -- he became a man of awful power over
souls that were in agony for sin. His converts always regarded him with a dread
peculiar to themselves, affirming, though but figuratively, that, before he brought
them to celestial light, they had been with him behind the black veil. Its gloom, in-
deed, enabled him to sympathize with all dark affections. Dying sinners cried aloud
for Mr. Hooper, and would not yield their breath till he appeared; though ever, as
he stooped to whisper consolation, they shuddered at the veiled face so near their
own. Such were the terrors of the black veil, even when Death had bared his visage!
Strangers came long distances to attend service at his church, with the mere idle
purpose of gazing at his figure, because it was forbidden them to behold his face.
But many were made to quake ere they departed! Once, during Governor Belcher’s
administration, Mr. Hooper was appointed to preach the election sermon. Covered
with his black veil, he stood before the chief magistrate, the council, and the repre-
sentatives, and wrought so deep an impression, that the legislative measures of that
year were characterized by all the gloom and piety of our earliest ancestral sway.

In this manner Mr. Hooper spent a long life, irreproachable in outward act, yet
shrouded in dismal suspicions; kind and loving, though unloved, and dimly feared;
a man apart from men, shunned in their health and joy, but ever summoned to their
aid in mortal anguish. As years wore on, shedding their snows above his sable veil,
he acquired a name throughout the New England churches, and they called him
Father Hooper. Nearly all his parishioners, who were of mature age when he was
settled, had been borne away by many a funeral: he had one congregation in the
church, and a more crowded one in the churchyard; and having wrought so late
into the evening, and done his work so well, it was now good Father Hooper’s turn to rest.

Several persons were visible by the shaded candlelight, in the death chamber of the old clergyman. Natural connections he had none. But there was the decorously grave, though unmoved physician, seeking only to mitigate the last pangs of the patient whom he could not save. There were the deacons, and other eminently pious members of his church. There, also, was the Reverend Mr. Clark, of Westbury, a young and zealous divine, who had ridden in haste to pray by the bedside of the expiring minister. There was the nurse, no hired handmaiden of death, but one whose calm affection had endured thus long in secrecy, in solitude, amid the chill of age, and would not perish, even at the dying hour. Who, but Elizabeth! And there lay the hoary head of good Father Hooper upon the death pillow, with the black veil still swathed about his brow, and reaching down over his face, so that each more difficult	gasp	of	this	faint	breath	caused	it
to	stir.	All	through	life	that	piece	of
crape	had	hung	between	him	and	the	world:	it	had	separated	him	from	cheerful	brother-
hood and woman’s love, and kept him in that saddest of all prisons, his own heart; and still it lay upon his face, as if to deepen the gloom of his darksome chamber; and shade him from the sunshine of eternity.

For some time previous, his mind had been confused, wavering doubtfully between the past and the present, and hovering forward, as it were, at intervals, into the indistinctness of the world to come. There had been feverish turns, which tossed him from side to side, and wore away what little strength he had. But in his most convulsive struggles, and in the wildest vagaries of his intellect, when no other thought retained its sober influence, he still showed an awful solicitude lest the black veil should slip aside. Even if his bewildered soul could have forgotten, there was a faithful woman at this pillow, who, with averted eyes, would have covered that aged face, which she had last beheld in the comeliness of manhood. At length the death-stricken old man lay quietly in the torpor of mental and bodily exhaustion, with an imperceptible pulse, and breath that grew fainter and fainter, except when a long, deep, and irregular inspiration seemed to prelude the flight of his spirit.

The minister of Westbury approached the bedside.

``Venerable Father Hooper,’’ said he, ‘‘the moment of your release is at hand. Are you ready for the lifting of the veil that shuts in time from eternity?’’

Father Hooper at first replied merely by a feeble motion of his head; then, apprehensive, perhaps, that his meaning might be doubted, he exerted himself to speak.

``Yea,’’ said he, in faint accents, ‘‘my soul hath a patient weariness until that veil be lifted.’’

``And is it fitting,’’ resumed the Reverend Mr. Clark, ‘‘that a man so given to prayer, of such a blameless example, holy in deed and thought, so far as mortal judgment
may pronounce; is it fitting that a father in the church should leave a shadow on his memory, that may seem to blacken a life so pure? I pray you, my venerable brother, let not this thing be! Suffer us to be gladdened by your triumphant aspect as you go to your reward. Before the veil of eternity be lifted, let me cast aside this black veil from your face!”

And thus speaking, the Reverend Mr. Clark bent forward to reveal the mystery of so many years. But, exerting a sudden energy, that made all the beholders stand aghast, Father Hooper snatched both his hands from beneath the bedclothes, and pressed them strongly on the black veil, resolute to struggle, if the minister of Westbury would contend with a dying man.

``Never!’' cried the veiled clergyman. ``On earth, never!’'

``Dark old man!’’ exclaimed the affrighted minister; ``with what horrible crime upon your soul are you now passing to the judgment?’’

Father Hooper’s breath heaved; it rattled in his throat; but, with a mighty effort, grasping forward with his hands, he caught hold of life, and held it back till he should speak. He even raised himself in bed; and there he sat, shivering with the arms of death around him, while the black veil hung down, awful, at that last moment, in the gathered terrors of a life-time. And yet the faint, sad smile, so often there, now seemed to glimmer from its obscurity, and linger on Father Hooper’s lips.

``Why do you tremble at me alone?’’ cried he, turning his veiled face round the circle of pale spectators. ``Tremble also at each other! Have men avoided me, and women shown no pity, and children screamed and fled, only for my black veil? What, but the mystery which it obscurely typifies, has made this piece of crape so awful? When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend; the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin; then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived, and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!’’

While his auditors shrank from one another, in mutual affright, Father Hooper fell back upon his pillow, a veiled corpse, with a faint smile lingering on the lips. Still veiled, they laid him in his coffin, and a veiled corpse they bore him to the grave. The grass of many years has sprung up and withered on that grave, the burial stone is moss-grown, and good Mr. Hooper’s face is dust; but awful is still the thought that it mouldered beneath the Black Veil!
YOUNG GOODMAN BROWN

YOUNG Goodman Brown came forth at sunset into the street at Salem village; but put his head back, after crossing the threshold, to exchange a parting kiss with his young wife. And Faith, as the wife was aptly named, thrust her own pretty head into the street, letting the wind play with the pink ribbons of her cap while she called to Goodman Brown.

"Dearest heart," whispered she, softly and rather sadly, when her lips were close to his ear; "prithee put off your journey until sunrise and sleep in your own bed tonight. A lone woman is troubled with such dreams and such thoughts that she's afraid of herself sometimes. Pray tarry with me this night, dear husband, of all nights in the year."

"My love and my Faith," replied young Goodman Brown, "of all nights in the year, this one night must I tarry away from thee. My journey, as thou callest it, forth and back again, must needs be done 'twixt now and sunrise. What, my sweet, pretty wife, dost thou doubt me already, and we but three months married?"

"Then God bless you!" said Faith, with the pink ribbons; "and may you find all well when you come back."

"Amen!" cried Goodman Brown. "Say thy prayers, dear Faith, and go to bed at dusk, and no harm will come to thee."

So they parted; and the young man pursued his way until, being about to turn the corner by the meeting-house, he looked back and saw the head of Faith still peeping after him with a melancholy air, in spite of her pink ribbons.

"Poor little Faith!" thought he, for his heart smote him. "What a wretch am I to leave her on such an errand! She talks of dreams, too. Methought as she spoke there was trouble in her face, as if a dream had warned her what work is to be done tonight. But no, no; 't would kill her to think it. Well, she's a blessed angel on earth; and after this one night I'll cling to her skirts and follow her to heaven."

With this excellent resolve for the future, Goodman Brown felt himself justified in making more haste on his present evil purpose. He had taken a dreary road, darkened by all the gloomiest trees of the forest, which barely stood aside to let the narrow path creep through, and closed immediately behind. It was all as lonely as could be; and there is this peculiarity in such a solitude, that the traveller knows not who may be concealed by the innumerable trunks and the thick boughs overhead; so that with lonely footsteps he may yet be passing through an unseen multitude.

"There may be a devilish Indian behind every tree," said Goodman Brown to himself; and he glanced fearfully behind him as he added, "What if the devil himself should be at my very elbow!"
His head being turned back, he passed a crook of the road, and, looking forward again, beheld the figure of a man, in grave and decent attire, seated at the foot of an old tree. He arose at Goodman Brown's approach and walked onward side by side with him.

``You are late, Goodman Brown,'' said he. ``The clock of the Old South was striking as I came through Boston, and that is full fifteen minutes agone.''

``Faith kept me back a while,'' replied the young man, with a tremor in his voice, caused by the sudden appearance of his companion, though not wholly unexpected.

It was now deep dusk in the forest, and deepest in that part of it where these two were journeying. As nearly as could be discerned, the second traveller was about fifty years old, apparently in the same rank of life as Goodman Brown, and bearing a considerable resemblance to him, though perhaps more in expression than features. Still they might have been taken for father and son. And yet, though the elder person was as simply clad as the younger, and as simple in manner too, he had an indescribable air of one who knew the world, and who would not have felt abashed at the governor's dinner table or in King William's court, were it possible that his affairs should call him thither. But the only thing about him that could be fixed upon as remarkable was this staff, which bore the likeness of a great black snake, so curiously wrought that it might almost be seen to twist and wriggle itself like a living serpent. This, of course, must have been an ocular deception, assisted by the uncertain light.

``Come, Goodman Brown,'' cried his fellow-traveller, ``this is a dull pace for the beginning of a journey. Take my staff, if you are so soon weary.''

``Friend,'' said the other, exchanging his slow pace for a full stop, ``having kept covenant by meeting thee here, it is my purpose now to return whence I came. I have scruples touching the matter thou wot'st of.''

``Sayest thou so?'' replied he of the serpent, smiling apart. ``Let us walk on, nevertheless, reasoning as we go; and if I convince thee not thou shalt turn back. We are but a little way in the forest yet.''

``Too far! too far!'’ exclaimed the goodman, unconsciously resuming his walk. “My father never went into the woods on such an errand, nor his father before him. We have been a race of honest men and good Christians since the days of the martyrs; and shall I be the first of the name of Brown that ever took this path and kept”

``Such company, thou wouldst say,” observed the elder person, interpreting his pause. “Well said, Goodman Brown! I have been as well acquainted with your family as with ever a one among the Puritans; and that’s no trifle to say. I helped your grandfather, the constable, when he lashed the Quaker woman so smartly through the streets of Salem; and it was I that brought your father a pitch-pine knot, kindled
at my own hearth, to set fire to an Indian village, in King Philip’s war. They were my good friends, both; and many a pleasant walk have we had along this path, and returned merrily after midnight. I would fain be friends with you for their sake.”

“If it be as thou sayest,” replied Goodman Brown, “I marvel they never spoke of these matters; or, verily, I marvel not, seeing that the least rumor of the sort would have driven them from New England. We are a people of prayer, and good works to boot, and abide no such wickedness.”

“Wickedness or not,” said the traveller with the twisted staff, “I have a very general acquaintance here in New England. The deacons of many a church have drunk the communion wine with me; the selectmen of divers towns make me their chairman; and a majority of the Great and General Court are firm supporters of my interest. The governor and I, too -- But these are state secrets.”

“Can this be so?” cried Goodman Brown, with a stare of amazement at his undisturbed companion. “Howbeit, I have nothing to do with the governor and council; they have their own ways, and are no rule for a simple husbandman like me. But, were I to go on with thee, how should I meet the eye of that good old man, our minister, at Salem village? Oh, his voice would make me tremble both Sabbath day and lecture day.”

Thus far the elder traveller had listened with due gravity; but now burst into a fit of irrepressible mirth, shaking himself so violently that his snake-like staff actually seemed to wriggle in sympathy.

“Ha! ha! ha!” shouted he again and again; then composing himself, “Well, go on, Goodman Brown, go on; but, prithee, don’t kill me with laughing.”

“Well, then, to end the matter at once,” said Goodman Brown, considerably nettled, “there is my wife, Faith. It would break her dear little heart; and I’d rather break my own.”

“Nay, if that be the case,” answered the other, “e’en go thy ways, Goodman Brown. I would not for twenty old women like the one hobbling before us that Faith should come to any harm.”

As he spoke he pointed his staff at a female figure on the path, in whom Goodman Brown recognized a very pious and exemplary dame, who had taught him his catechism in youth, and was still his moral and spiritual adviser, jointly with the minister and Deacon Gookin.

“A marvel, truly, that Goody Cloyse should be so far in the wilderness at nightfall,” said he. “But with your leave, friend, I shall take a cut through the woods until we have left this Christian woman behind. Being a stranger to you, she might ask whom I was consorting with and whither I was going.”
“Be it so,” said his fellow-traveller. “Betake you to the woods, and let me keep the path.”

Accordingly the young man turned aside, but took care to watch his companion, who advanced softly along the road until he had come within a staff’s length of the old dame. She, meanwhile, was making the best of her way, with singular speed for so aged a woman, and mumbling some indistinct words -- a prayer, doubtless -- as she went. The traveller put forth his staff and touched her withered neck with what seemed the serpent’s tail.

“The devil!” screamed the pious old lady.

“Then Goody Cloyse knows her old friend?” observed the traveller, confronting her and leaning on his writhing stick.

“Ah, forsooth, and is it your worship indeed?” cried the good dame. “Yea, truly is it, and in the very image of my old gossip, Goodman Brown, the grandfather of the silly fellow that now is. But -- would your worship believe it? -- my broomstick hath strangely disappeared, stolen, as I suspect, by that unhanged witch, Goody Cory, and that, too, when I was all anointed with the juice of smallage, and cinquefoil, and wolf’s bane” --

“Mingled with fine wheat and the fat of a new-born babe,” said the shape of old Goodman Brown.

“Ah, your worship knows the recipe,” cried the old lady, cackling aloud. “So, as I was saying, being all ready for the meeting, and no horse to ride on, I made up my mind to foot it; for they tell me there is a nice young man to be taken into communion to-night. But now your good worship will lend me your arm, and we shall be there in a twinkling.

“That can hardly be,” answered her friend. “I may not spare you my arm, Goody Cloyse; but here is my staff, if you will.”

So saying, he threw it down at her feet, where, perhaps, it assumed life, being one of the rods which its owner had formerly lent to the Egyptian magi. Of this fact, however, Goodman Brown could not take cognizance. He had cast up his eyes in astonishment, and, looking down again, beheld neither Goody Cloyse nor the serpentine staff, but his fellow-traveller alone, who waited for him as calmly as if nothing had happened.

“That old woman taught me my catechism,” said the young man; and there was a world of meaning in this simple comment.

They continued to walk onward, while the elder traveller exhorted his companion to make good speed and persevere in the path, discoursing so aptly that his arguments seemed rather to spring up in the bosom of his auditor than to be suggested by himself. As they went, he plucked a branch of maple to serve for a walking
stick, and began to strip it of the twigs and little boughs, which were wet with evening dew. The moment his fingers touched them they became strangely withered and dried up as with a week’s sunshine. Thus the pair proceeded, at a good free pace, until suddenly, in a gloomy hollow of the road, Goodman Brown sat himself down on the stump of a tree and refused to go any farther.

“Friend,” said he, stubbornly, “my mind is made up. Not another step will I budge on this errand. What if a wretched old woman do choose to go to the devil when I thought she was going to heaven: is that any reason why I should quit my dear Faith and go after her?”

“You will think better of this by and by,” said his acquaintance, composedly. “Sit here and rest yourself a while; and when you feel like moving again, there is my staff to help you along.”

Without more words, he threw his companion the maple stick, and was as speedily out of sight as if he had vanished into the deepening gloom. The young man sat a few moments by the roadside, applauding himself greatly, and thinking with how clear a conscience he should meet the minister in his morning walk, nor shrink from the eye of good old Deacon Gookin. And what calm sleep would be his that very night, which was to have been spent so wickedly, but so purely and sweetly now, in the arms of Faith! Amidst these pleasant and praiseworthy meditations, Goodman Brown heard the tramp of horses along the road, and deemed it advisable to conceal himself within the verge of the forest, conscious of the guilty purpose that had brought him thither, though now so happily turned from it.

On came the hoof tramps and the voices of the riders, two grave old voices, conversing soberly as they drew near: These mingled sounds appeared to pass along the road, within a few yards of the young man’s hiding-place; but, owing doubtless to the depth of the gloom at that particular spot, neither the travellers nor their steeds were visible. Though their figures brushed the small boughs by the wayside, it could not be seen that they intercepted, even for a moment, the faint gleam from the strip of bright sky athwart which they must have passed. Goodman Brown alternately crouched and stood on tiptoe, pulling aside the branches and thrusting forth his head as far as he durst without discerning so much as a shadow. It vexed him the more, because he could have sworn, were such a thing possible, that he recognized the voices of the minister and Deacon Gookin, jogging along quietly, as they were wont to do, when bound to some ordination or ecclesiastical council. While yet within hearing, one of the riders stopped to pluck a switch.

“Of the two, reverend sir,” said the voice like the deacon’s, “I had rather miss an ordination dinner than to-night’s meeting. They tell me that some of our community are to be here from Falmouth and beyond, and others from Connecticut and Rhode Island, besides several of the Indian powwows, who, after their fashion, know almost as much deviltry as the best of us. Moreover, there is a goodly young woman to be taken into communion.”
``Mighty well, Deacon Gookin!'' replied the solemn old tones of the minister. 
``Spur up, or we shall be late. Nothing can be done, you know, until I get on the 
ground.''

The hoofs clattered again; and the voices, talking so strangely in the empty air; 
passed on through the forest, where no church had ever been gathered or solitary 
Christian prayed. Whither, then, could these holy men be journeying so deep into 
the heathen wilderness? Young Goodman Brown caught hold of a tree for support, 
being ready to sink down on the ground, faint and overburdened with the heavy 
sickness of his heart. He looked up to the sky, doubting whether there really was a 
heaven above him. Yet there was the blue arch, and the stars brightening in it.

``With heaven above and Faith below, I will yet stand firm against the devil!'' 
cried Goodman Brown.

While he still gazed upward into the deep arch of the firmament and had lifted 
his hands to pray, a cloud, though no wind was stirring, hurried across the zenith 
and hid the brightening stars. The blue sky was still visible, except directly over-
head, where this black mass of cloud was sweeping swiftly northward. Aloft in the 
air, as if from the depths of the cloud, came a confused and doubtful sound of voic-
es. Once the listener fancied that he could distinguish the accents of towns-people 
of his own, men and women, both pious and ungodly, many of whom he had met 
at the communion table, and had seen others rioting at the tavern. The next mo-
ment, so indistinct were the sounds, he doubted whether he had heard aught but 
the murmur of the old forest, whispering without a wind. Then came a stronger 
swell of those familiar tones, heard daily in the sunshine at Salem village, but never 
until now from a cloud of night. There was one voice of a young woman, uttering 
lamentations, yet with an uncertain sorrow, and entreating for some favor, which, 
perhaps, it would grieve her to obtain; and all the unseen multitude, both saints and 
sinners, seemed to encourage her onward.

``Faith!'' shouted Goodman Brown, in a voice of agony and desperation; and the 
echoes of the forest mocked him, crying, ``Faith! Faith!'' as if bewildered wretches 
were seeking her all through the wilderness.

The cry of grief, rage, and terror was yet piercing the night, when the unhappy 
husband held his breath for a response. There was a scream, drowned immediately 
in a louder murmur of voices, fading into far-off laughter, as the dark cloud swept 
away, leaving the clear and silent sky above Goodman Brown. But something flut-
tered lightly down through the air and caught on the branch of a tree. The young 
man seized it, and beheld a pink ribbon. 

``My Faith is gone!'' cried he, after one stupefied moment. ``There is no good on 
earth; and sin is but a name. Come, devil; for to thee is this world given.''

And, maddened with despair; so that he laughed loud and long, did Goodman 
Brown grasp his staff and set forth again, at such a rate that he seemed to fly along
the forest path rather than to walk or run. The road grew wilder and drearier and more faintly traced, and vanished at length, leaving him in the heart of the dark wilderness, still rushing onward with the instinct that guides mortal man to evil.

The whole forest was peopled with frightful sounds -- the creaking of the trees, the howling of wild beasts, and the yell of Indians; while sometimes the wind tolled like a distant church bell, and sometimes gave a broad roar around the traveller, as if all Nature were laughing him to scorn. But he was himself the chief horror of the scene, and shrank not from its other horrors.

``Ha! ha! ha!'' roared Goodman Brown when the wind laughed at him.

``Let us hear which will laugh loudest. Think not to frighten me with your deviltry. Come witch, come wizard, come Indian powwow, come devil himself, and here comes Goodman Brown. You may as well fear him as he fear you."

In truth, all through the haunted forest there could be nothing more frightful than the figure of Goodman Brown. On he flew among the black pines, brandishing his staff with frenzied gestures, now giving vent to an inspiration of horrid blasphemy, and now shouting forth such laughter as set all the echoes of the forest laughing like demons around him. The fiend in his own shape is less hideous than when he rages in the breast of man. Thus sped the demoniac on his course, until, quivering among the trees, he saw a red light before him, as when the felled trunks and branches of a clearing have been set on fire, and throw up their lurid blaze against the sky, at the hour of midnight. He paused, in a lull of the tempest that had driven him onward, and heard the swell of what seemed a hymn, rolling solemnly from a distance with the weight of many voices. He knew the tune; it was a familiar one in the choir of the village meeting-house. The verse died heavily away, and was lengthened by a chorus, not of human voices, but of all the sounds of the benighted wilderness pealing in awful harmony together. Goodman Brown cried out, and his cry was lost to his own ear by its unison with the cry of the desert.

In the interval of silence he stole forward until the light glared full upon his eyes. At one extremity of an open space, hemmed in by the dark wall of the forest, arose a rock, bearing some rude, natural resemblance either to an alter or a pulpit, and surrounded by four blazing pines, their tops aflame, their stems untouched, like candles at an evening meeting. The mass of foliage that had overgrown the summit of the rock was all on fire, blazing high into the night and fitfully illuminating the whole field. Each pendent twig and leafy festoon was in a blaze. As the red light arose and fell, a numerous congregation alternately shone forth, then disappeared in shadow, and again grew, as it were, out of the darkness, peopling the heart of the solitary woods at once.

``A grave and dark-clad company,'' quoth Goodman Brown.

In truth they were such. Among them, quivering to and fro between gloom and splendor, appeared faces that would be seen next day at the council board of the province, and others which, Sabbath after Sabbath, looked devoutly heavenward,
and benignantly over the crowded pews, from the holiest pulpits in the land. Some affirm that the lady of the governor was there. At least there were high dames well known to her, and wives of honored husbands, and widows, a great multitude, and ancient maidens, all of excellent repute, and fair young girls, who trembled lest their mothers should espy them. Either the sudden gleams of light flashing over the obscure field bedazzled Goodman Brown, or he recognized a score of the church members of Salem village famous for their especial sanctity. Good old Deacon Gookin had arrived, and waited at the skirts of that venerable saint, his revered pastor. But, irreverently consorting with these grave, reputable, and pious people, these elders of the church, these chaste dames and dewy virgins, there were men of dissolute lives and women of spotted fame, wretches given over to all mean and filthy vice, and suspected even of horrid crimes. It was strange to see that the good shrank not from the wicked, nor were the sinners abashed by the saints. Scattered also among their pale-faced enemies were the Indian priests, or powwows, who had often scared their native forest with more hideous incantations than any known to English witchcraft.

``But where is Faith?'' thought Goodman Brown; and, as hope came into his heart, he trembled.

Another verse of the hymn arose, a slow and mournful strain, such as the pious love, but joined to words which expressed all that our nature can conceive of sin, and darkly hinted at far more. Unfathomable to mere mortals is the lore of fiends. Verse after verse was sung; and still the chorus of the desert swelled between like the deepest tone of a mighty organ; and with the final peal of that dreadful anthem there came a sound, as if the roaring wind, the rushing streams, the howling beasts, and every other voice of the uncourted wilderness were mingling and according with the voice of guilty man in homage to the prince of all. The four blazing pines threw up a loftier flame, and obscurely discovered shapes and visages of horror on the smoke wreaths above the impious assembly. At the same moment the fire on the rock shot redly forth and formed a glowing arch above its base, where now appeared a figure. With reverence be it spoken, the figure bore no slight similitude, both in garb and manner, to some grave divine of the New England churches.

``Bring forth the converts!'' cried a voice that echoed through the field and rolled into the forest.

At the word, Goodman Brown stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and approached the congregation, with whom he felt a loathful brotherhood by the sympathy of all that was wicked in his heart. He could have well-nigh sworn that the shape of his own dead father beckoned him to advance, looking downward from a smoke wreath, while a woman, with dim features of despair; threw out her hand to warn him back. Was it his mother? But he had no power to retreat one step, nor to resist, even in thought, when the minister and good old Deacon Gookin seized his arms and led him to the blazing rock. Thither came also the slender form of a veiled female, led between Goody Cloyse, that pious teacher of the catechism, and Martha
Carrier, who had received the devil’s promise to be queen of hell. A rampant hag was she. And there stood the proselytes beneath the canopy of fire.

``Welcome, my children,” said the dark figure, “to the communion of your race. Ye have found thus young your nature and your destiny. My children, look behind you!”

They turned; and flashing forth, as it were, in a sheet of flame, the fiend worshippers were seen; the smile of welcome gleamed darkly on every visage.

``There,” resumed the sable form, “are all whom ye have reverenced from youth. Ye deemed them holier than yourselves, and shrank from your own sin, contrasting it with their lives of righteousness and prayerful aspirations heavenward. Yet here are they all in my worshipping assembly. This night it shall be granted you to know their secret deeds: how hoary-bearded elders of the church have whispered wanton words to the young maids of their households; how many a woman, eager for widows’ weeds, has given her husband a drink at bedtime and let him sleep his last sleep in her bosom; how beardless youths have made haste to inherit their fathers’ wealth; and how fair damsels -- blush not, sweet ones -- have dug little graves in the garden, and bidden me, the sole guest to an infant’s funeral. By the sympathy of your human hearts for sin ye shall scent out all the places -- whether in church, bedchamber, street, field, or forest -- where crime has been committed, and shall exult to behold the whole earth one stain of guilt, one mighty blood spot. Far more than this. It shall be yours to penetrate, in every bosom, the deep mystery of sin, the fountain of all wicked arts, and which inexhaustibly supplies more evil impulses than human power -- than my power at its utmost -- can make manifest in deeds. And now, my children, look upon each other.”

They did so; and, by the blaze of the hell-kindled torches, the wretched man beheld his Faith, and the wife her husband, trembling before that unhallowed altar.

``Lo, there ye stand, my children,” said the figure, in a deep and solemn tone, almost sad with its despairing awfulness, as if his once angelic nature could yet mourn for our miserable race. ``Depending upon one another’s hearts, ye had still hoped that virtue were not all a dream. Now are ye undeceived. Evil is the nature of mankind. Evil must be your only happiness. Welcome again, my children, to the communion of your race.”

``Welcome,” repeated the fiend worshippers, in one cry of despair and triumph.

And there they stood, the only pair; as it seemed, who were yet hesitating on the verge of wickedness in this dark world. A basin was hollowed, naturally, in the rock. Did it contain water, reddened by the lurid light? or was it blood? or, perchance, a liquid flame? Herein did the shape of evil dip his hand and prepare to lay the mark of baptism upon their foreheads, that they might be partakers of the mystery of sin, more conscious of the secret guilt of others, both in deed and thought, than they could now be of their own. The husband cast one look at his pale wife, and Faith at
him. What polluted wretches would the next glance show them to each other, shudder-
ing alike at what they disclosed and what they saw!

``Faith! Faith!'' cried the husband, ``look up to heaven, and resist the wicked one.''

Whether Faith obeyed he knew not. Hardly had he spoken when he found him-
sel amid calm night and solitude, listening to a roar of the wind which died heavily
away through the forest. He staggered against the rock, and felt it chill and damp;
while a hanging twig, that had been all on fire, besprinkled his cheek with the cold-
est dew.

The next morning young Goodman Brown came slowly into the street of Salem
village, staring around him like a bewildered man. The good old minister was tak-
ing a walk along the graveyard to get an appetite for breakfast and meditate his ser-
mon, and bestowed a blessing, as he passed, on Goodman Brown. He shrank from
the venerable saint as if to avoid an anathema. Old Deacon Gookin was at domestic
worship, and the holy words of his prayer were heard through the open window.
``What God doth the wizard pray to?'' quoth Goodman Brown. Goody Cloyse, that
excellent old Christian, stood in the early sunshine at her own lattice, catechizing a
little girl who had brought her a pint of morning’s milk. Goodman Brown snatched
away the child as from the grasp of the fiend himself. Turning the corner by the
meeting-house, he spied the head of Faith, with the pink ribbons, gazing anxiously
forth, and bursting into such joy at sight of him that she skipped along the street and
almost kissed her husband before the whole village. But Goodman Brown looked
sternly and sadly into her face, and passed on without a greeting.

Had Goodman Brown fallen asleep in the forest and only dreamed a wild dream
of a witch-meeting?

Be it so if you will; but, alas! it was a dream of evil omen for young Goodman
Brown. A stern, a sad, a darkly meditative, a distrustful, if not a desperate man did
he become from the night of that fearful dream. On the Sabbath day, when the con-
cgregation were singing a holy psalm, he could not listen because an anthem of sin
rushed loudly upon his ear and drowned all the blessed strain. When the minister
spoke from the pulpit with power and fervid eloquence, and, with his hand on the
open Bible, of the sacred truths of our religion, and of saint-like lives and trium-
phant deaths, and of future bliss or misery unutterable, then did Goodman Brown
turn pale, dreading lest the roof should thunder down upon the gray blasphemer
and his hearers. Often, waking suddenly at midnight, he shrank from the bosom of
Faith; and at morning or eventide, when the family knelt down at prayer, he scowled
and muttered to himself, and gazed sternly at his wife, and turned away. And when
he had lived long, and was borne to his grave a hoary corpse, followed by Faith, an
aged woman, and children and grandchildren, a goodly procession, besides neigh-
bors not a few, they carved no hopeful verse upon his tombstone, for his dying hour
was gloom.
ROGER MALVIN’S BURIAL

ONE of the few incidents of Indian warfare naturally susceptible of the moonlight of romance was that expedition undertaken for the defence of the frontiers in the year 1725, which resulted in the well-remembered “Lovell’s Fight.” Imagination, by casting certain circumstances judicially into the shade, may see much to admire in the heroism of a little band who gave battle to twice their number in the heart of the enemy’s country. The open bravery displayed by both parties was in accordance with civilized ideas of valor; and chivalry itself might not blush to record the deeds of one or two individuals. The battle, though so fatal to those who fought, was not unfortunate in its consequences to the country; for it broke the strength of a tribe and conducd to the peace which subsisted during several ensuing years. History and tradition are unusually minute in their memorials of their affair; and the captain of a scouting party of frontier men has acquired as actual a military renown as many a victorious leader of thousands. Some of the incidents contained in the following pages will be recognized, notwithstanding the substitution of fictitious names, by such as have heard, from old men’s lips, the fate of the few combatants who were in a condition to retreat after “Lovell’s Fight.”

* * *

The early sunbeams hovered cheerfully upon the tree-tops, beneath which two weary and wounded men had stretched their limbs the night before. Their bed of withered oak leaves was strewn upon the small level space, at the foot of a rock, situated near the summit of one of the gentle swells by which the face of the country is there diversified. The mass of granite, rearing its smooth, flat surface fifteen or twenty feet above their heads, was not unlike a gigantic gravestone, upon which the veins seemed to form an inscription in forgotten characters. On a tract of several acres around this rock, oaks and other hard-wood trees had supplied the place of the pines, which were the usual growth of the land; and a young and vigorous sapling stood close beside the travellers.

The severe wound of the elder man had probably deprived him of sleep; for, so soon as the first ray of sunshine rested on the top of the highest tree, he reared himself painfully from his recumbent posture and sat erect. The deep lines of his countenance and the scattered gray of his hair marked him as past the middle age; but his muscular frame would, but for the effect of his wound, have been as capable of sustaining fatigue as in the early vigor of life. Languor and exhaustion now sat upon his haggard features; and the despairing glance which he sent forward through the depths of the forest proved his own conviction that his pilgrimage was at an end. He next turned his eyes to the companion who reclined by his side. The youth -- for he had scarcely attained the years of manhood -- lay, with his head upon his arm, in the embrace of an unquiet sleep, which a thrill of pain from his wounds seemed each moment on the point of breaking. His right hand grasped a musket; and, to judge from the violent action of his features, his slumbers were bringing back a vision of the conflict of which he was one of the few survivors. A shout -- deep and
loud in his dreaming fancy -- found its way in an imperfect murmur to his lips; and, starting even at the slight sound of his own voice, he suddenly awoke. The first act of reviving recollection was to make anxious inquiries respecting the condition of his wounded fellow-traveller. The latter shook his head.

``Reuben, my boy,'' said he, ``this rock beneath which we sit will serve for an old hunter's gravestone. There is many and many a long mile of howling wilderness before us yet; nor would it avail me anything if the smoke of my own chimney were but on the other side of that swell of land. The Indian bullet was deadlier than I thought.''

``You are weary with our three days' travel,'' replied the youth, ``and a little longer rest will recruit you. Sit you here while I search the woods for the herbs and roots that must be our sustenance; and, having eaten, you shall lean on me, and we will turn our faces homeward. I doubt not that, with my help, you can attain to some one of the frontier garrisons.''

``There is not two days' life in me, Reuben,'' said the other, calmly, ``and I will no longer burden you with my useless body, when you can scarcely support your own. Your wounds are deep and your strength is failing fast; yet, if you hasten onward alone, you may be preserved. For me there is no hope, and I will await death here.''

``If it must be so, I will remain and watch by you,'' said Reuben, resolutely

``No, my son, no,'' rejoined his companion. ``Let the wish of a dying man have weight with you; give me one grasp of your hand, and get you hence. Think you that my last moments will be eased by the thought that I leave you to die a more lingering death? I have loved you like a father, Reuben; and at a time like this I should have something of a father's authority. I charge you to be gone that I may die in peace.''

``And because you have been a father to me, should I therefore leave you to perish and to lie unburied in the wilderness?'' exclaimed the youth. ``No; if your end be in truth approaching, I will watch by you and receive your parting words. I will dig a grave here by the rock, in which, if my weakness overcome me, we will rest together; or, if Heaven gives me strength, I will seek my way home.''

``In the cities and wherever men dwell,'' replied the other, ``they bury their dead in the earth; they hide them from the sight of the living; but here, where no step may pass perhaps for a hundred years, wherefore should I not rest beneath the open sky, covered only by the oak leaves when the autumn winds shall strew them? And for a monument, here is this gray rock, on which my dying hand shall carve the name of Roger Malvin, and the traveller in days to come will know that here sleeps a hunter and a warrior. Tarry not, then, for a folly like this, but hasten away, if not for your own sake, for hers who will else be desolate.''

Malvin spoke the last few words in a faltering voice, and their effect upon his companion was strongly visible. They reminded him that there were other and less
questionable duties than that of sharing the fate of a man whom his death could not benefit. Nor can it be affirmed that no selfish feeling strove to enter Reuben's heart, though the consciousness made him more earnestly resist his companion's entreaties.

"How terrible to wait the slow approach of death in this solitude!" exclaimed he. "A brave man does not shrink in the battle; and, when friends stand round the bed, even women may die composedly; but here"

"I shall not shrink even here, Reuben Bourne," interrupted Malvin.

I am a man of no weak heart, and, if I were, there is a surer support than that of earthly friends. You are young, and life is dear to you. Your last moments will need comfort far more than mine; and when you have laid me in the earth, and are alone, and night is settling on the forest, you will feel all the bitterness of the death that may now be escaped. But I will urge no selfish motive to your generous nature. Leave me for my sake, that, having said a prayer for your safety, I may have space to settle my account undisturbed by worldly sorrows."

"And your daughter; -- how shall I dare to meet her eye?" exclaimed Reuben. "She will ask the fate of her father, whose life I vowed to defend with my own. Must I tell her that he travelled three days' march with me from the field of battle and that then I left him to perish in the wilderness? Were it not better to lie down and die by your side than to return safe and say this to Dorcas?"

"Tell my daughter," said Roger Malvin, "that, though yourself sore wounded, and weak, and weary, you led my tottering footsteps many a mile, and left me only at my earnest entreaty, because I would not have your blood upon my soul. Tell her that through pain and danger you were faithful, and that, if your lifeblood could have saved me, it would have flowed to its last drop; and tell her that you will be something dearer than a father, and that my blessing is with you both, and that my dying eyes can see a long and pleasant path in which you will journey together."

As Malvin spoke he almost raised himself from the ground, and the energy of his concluding words seemed to fill the wild and lonely forest with a vision of happiness; but, when he sank exhausted upon his bed of oak leaves, the light which had kindled in Reuben's eye was quenched. He felt as if it were both sin and folly to think of happiness at such a moment. His companion watched his changing countenance, and sought with generous art to wile him to his own good.

"Perhaps I deceive myself in regard to the time I have to live," he resumed. "It may be that, with speedy assistance, I might recover of my wound. The foremost fugitives must, ere this, have carried tidings of our fatal battle to the frontiers, and parties will be out to succor those in like condition with ourselves. Should you meet one of these and guide them hither, who can tell but that I may sit by my own fireside again?"
A mournful smile strayed across the features of the dying man as he insinuated that unfounded hope, -- which, however, was not without its effect on Reuben. No merely selfish motive, nor even the desolate condition of Dorcas, could have induced him to desert his companion at such a moment -- but his wishes seized on the thought that Malvin’s life might be preserved, and his sanguine nature heightened almost to certainty the remote possibility of procuring human aid.

“Surely there is reason, weighty reason, to hope that friends are not far distant,” he said, half aloud. “There fled one coward, unwounded, in the beginning of the fight, and most probably he made good speed. Every true man on the frontier would shoulder his musket at the news; and, though no party may range so far into the woods as this, I shall perhaps encounter them in one day’s march. Counsel me faithfully,” he added, turning to Malvin, in distrust of his own motives. “Were your situation mine, would you desert me while life remained?”

“It is now twenty years,” replied Roger Malvin, -- sighing, however; as he secretly acknowledged the wide dissimilarity between the two cases, -- “it is now twenty years since I escaped with one dear friend from Indian captivity near Montreal. We journeyed many days through the woods, till at length overcome with hunger and weariness, my friend lay down and besought me to leave him; for he knew that, if I remained, we both must perish; and, with but little hope of obtaining succor; I heaped a pillow of dry leaves beneath his head and hastened on.”

“And did you return in time to save him?” asked Reuben, hanging on Malvin’s words as if they were to be prophetic of his own success.

“I did,” answered the other. “I came upon the camp of a hunting party before sunset of the same day. I guided them to the spot where my comrade was expecting death; and he is now a hale and hearty man upon his own farm, far within the frontiers, while I lie wounded here in the depths of the wilderness.”

This example, powerful in affecting Reuben’s decision, was aided, unconsciously to himself, by the hidden strength of many another motive. Roger Malvin perceived that the victory was nearly won.

“Now, go, my son, and Heaven prosper you!” he said. “Turn not back with your friends when you meet them, lest your wounds and weariness overcome you; but send hitherward two or three, that may be spared, to search for me; and believe me, Reuben, my heart will be lighter with every step you take towards home.” Yet there was, perhaps, a change both in his countenance and voice as he spoke thus; for, after all, it was a ghastly fate to be left expiring in the wilderness.

Reuben Bourne, but half convinced that he was acting rightly, at length raised himself from the ground and prepared himself for his departure. And first, though contrary to Malvin’s wishes, he collected a stock of roots and herbs, which had been their only food during the last two days. This useless supply he placed within reach of the dying man, for whom, also, he swept together a bed of dry oak leaves.
Then climbing to the summit of the rock, which on one side was rough and broken, he bent the oak sapling downward, and bound his handkerchief to the topmost branch. This precaution was not unnecessary to direct any who might come in search of Malvin; for every part of the rock, except its broad, smooth front, was concealed at a little distance by the dense undergrowth of the forest. The handkerchief had been the bandage of a wound upon Reuben's arm; and, as he bound it to the tree, he vowed by the blood that stained it that he would return, either to save his companion's life or to lay his body in the grave. He then descended, and stood, with downcast eyes, to receive Roger Malvin's parting words.

The experience of the latter suggested much and minute advice respecting the youth's journey through the trackless forest. Upon this subject he spoke with calm earnestness, as if he were sending Reuben to the battle or the chase while he himself remained secure at home, and not as if the human countenance that was about to leave him were the last he would ever behold. But his firmness was shaken before he concluded.

``Carry my blessing to Dorcas, and say that my last prayer shall be for her and you. Bid her to have no hard thoughts because you left me here,'' -- Reuben's heart smote him, -- ``for that your life would not have weighed with you if its sacrifice could have done me good. She will marry you after she has mourned a little while for her father; and Heaven grant you long and happy days, and may your children's children stand round your death bed! And, Reuben,'' added he, as the weakness of mortality made its way at last, ``return, when your wounds are healed and your weariness refreshed, -- return to this wild rock, and lay my bones in the grave, and say a prayer over them.''

An almost superstitious regard, arising perhaps from the customs of the Indians, whose war was with the dead as well as the living, was paid by the frontier inhabitants to the rites of sepulture; and there are many instances of the sacrifice of life in the attempt to bury those who had fallen by the "sword of the wilderness." Reuben, therefore, felt the full importance of the promise which he most solemnly made to return and perform Roger Malvin's obsequies. It was remarkable that the latter, speaking his whole heart in his parting words, no longer endeavored to persuade the youth that even the speediest succor might avail to the preservation of his life. Reuben was internally convinced that he should see Malvin's living face no more. His generous nature would fain have delayed him, at whatever risk, till the dying scene were past; but the desire of existence and the hope of happiness had strengthened in his heart, and he was unable to resist them.

``It is enough,'' said Roger Malvin, having listened to Reuben's promise. ``Go, and God speed you!''

The youth pressed his hand in silence, turned, and was departing. His slow and faltering steps, however, had borne him but a little way before Malvin's voice recalled him.
"Reuben, Reuben," said he, faintly; and Reuben returned and knelt down by the dying man.

"Raise me, and let me lean against the rock," was his last request. "My face will be turned towards home, and I shall see you a moment longer as you pass among the trees."

Reuben, having made the desired alteration in his companion's posture, again began his solitary pilgrimage. He walked more hastily at first than was consistent with his strength; for a sort of guilty feeling, which sometimes torments men in their most justifiable acts, caused him to seek concealment from Malvin's eyes; but after he had trodden far upon the rustling forest leaves he crept back, impelled by a wild and painful curiosity, and, sheltered by the earthy roots of an upturn tree, gazed earnestly at the desolate man. The morning sun was unclouded, and the trees and shrubs imbibed the sweet air of the month of May; yet there seemed a gloom on Nature's face, as if she sympathized with mortal pain and sorrow Roger Malvin's hands were uplifted in a fervent prayer, some of the words of which stole through the stillness of the woods and entered Reuben's heart, torturing it with an unutterable pang. They were the broken accents of a petition for his own happiness and that of Dorcas; and, as the youth listened, conscience, or something in its similitude, pleaded strongly with him to return and lie down again by the rock. He felt how hard was the doom of the kind and generous being whom he had deserted in his extremity. Death would come like the slow approach of a corpse, stealing gradually towards him through the forest, and showing its ghastly and motionless features from behind a nearer and yet a nearer tree. But such must have been Reuben's own fate had he tarried another sunset; and who shall impute blame to him if he shrink from so useless a sacrifice? As he gave a parting look, a breeze waved the little banner upon the sapling oak and reminded Reuben of his vow.

* * *

Many circumstances combined to retard the wounded traveller in his way to the frontiers. On the second day the clouds, gathering densely over the sky, precluded the possibility of regulating his course by the position of the sun; and he knew not but that every effort of his almost exhausted strength was removing him farther from the home he sought. His scanty sustenance was supplied by the berries and other spontaneous products of the forest. Herds of deer, it is true, sometimes bounded past him, and partridges frequently whirred up before his footsteps; but his ammunition had been expended in the fight, and he had no means of slaying them. His wounds, irritated by the constant exertion in which lay the only hope of life, wore away his strength and at intervals confused his reason. But, even in the wanderings of intellect, Reuben's young heart clung strongly to existence; and it was only through absolute incapacity of motion that he at last sank down beneath a tree, compelled there to await death.
In this situation he was discovered by a party who, upon the first intelligence of the fight, had been despatched to the relief of the survivors. They conveyed him to the nearest settlement, which chanced to be that of his own residence.

Dorcas, in the simplicity of the olden time, watched by the bedside of her wounded lover, and administered all those comforts that are in the sole gift of woman's heart and hand. During several days Reuben's recollection strayed drowsily among the perils and hardships through which he had passed, and he was incapable of returning definite answers to the inquiries with which many were eager to harass him. No authentic particulars of the battle had yet been circulated; nor could mothers, wives, and children tell whether their loved ones were detained by captivity or by the stronger chain of death. Dorcas nourished her apprehensions in silence till one afternoon when Reuben awoke from an unquiet sleep, and seemed to recognize her more perfectly than at any previous time. She saw that his intellect had become composed, and she could no longer restrain her filial anxiety.

``My father, Reuben?'' she began; but the change in her lover's countenance made her pause.

The youth shrank as if with a bitter pain, and the blood gushed vividly into his wan and hollow cheeks. His first impulse was to cover his face; but, apparently with a desperate effort, he half raised himself and spoke vehemently, defending himself against an imaginary accusation.

``Your father was sore wounded in the battle, Dorcas; and he bade me not burden myself with him, but only to lead him to the lakeside, that he might quench his thirst and die. But I would not desert the old man in his extremity, and, though bleeding myself, I supported him; I gave him half my strength, and led him away with me. For three days we journeyed on together, and your father was sustained beyond my hopes, but, awaking at sunrise on the fourth day, I found him faint and exhausted; he was unable to proceed; his life had ebbed away fast; and'' -- --

``He died!'' exclaimed Dorcas, faintly.

Reuben felt it impossible to acknowledge that his selfish love of life had hurried him away before her father's fate was decided. He spoke not; he only bowed his head; and, between shame and exhaustion, sank back and hid his face in the pillow. Dorcas wept when her fears were thus confirmed; but the shock, as it had been long anticipated. was on that account the less violent.

``You dug a grave for my poor father in the wilderness, Reuben?'' was the question by which her filial piety manifested itself.

``My hands were weak; but I did what I could,'' replied the youth in a smothered tone. ``There stands a noble tombstone above his head; and I would to Heaven I slept as soundly as he!''
Dorcas, perceiving the wildness of his latter words, inquired no further at the time; but her heart found ease in the thought that Roger Malvin had not lacked such funeral rites as it was possible to bestow. The tale of Reuben's courage and fidelity lost nothing when she communicated it to her friends; and the poor youth, tottering from his sick chamber to breathe the sunny air; experienced from every tongue the miserable and humiliating torture of unmerited praise. All acknowledged that he might worthily demand the hand of the fair maiden to whose father he had been "faithful unto death;" and, as my tale is not of love, it shall suffice to say that in the space of a few months Reuben became the husband of Dorcas Malvin. During the marriage ceremony the bride was covered with blushes, but the bridegroom's face was pale.

There was now in the breast of Reuben Bourne an incommunicable thought -- something which he was to conceal most heedfully from her whom he most loved and trusted. He regretted, deeply and bitterly, the moral cowardice that had restrained his words when he was about to disclose the truth to Dorcas; but pride, the fear of losing her affection, the dread of universal scorn, forbade him to rectify this falsehood. He felt that for leaving Roger Malvin he deserved no censure. His presence, the gratuitous sacrifice of his own life, would have added only another and a needless agony to the last moments of the dying man; but concealment had imparted to a justifiable act much of the secret effect of guilt; and Reuben, while reason told him that he had done right, experienced in no small degree the mental horrors which punish the perpetrator of undiscovered crime. By a certain association of ideas, he at times almost imagined himself a murderer. For years, also, a thought would occasionally recur, which, though he perceived all its folly and extravagance, he had not power to banish from his mind. It was a haunting and torturing fancy that his father-in-law was yet sitting at the foot of the rock, on the withered forest leaves, alive, and awaiting his pledged assistance. These mental deceptions, however, came and went, nor did he ever mistake them for realities: but in the calmest and clearest moods of his mind he was conscious that he had a deep vow unredeemed, and that an unburied corpse was calling to him out of the wilderness. Yet such was the consequence of his prevarication that he could not obey the call. It was now too late to require the assistance of Roger Malvin's friends in performing his long-deferred sepulture; and superstitious fears, of which none were more susceptible than the people of the outward settlements, forbade Reuben to go alone. Neither did he know where in the pathless and illimitable forest to seek that smooth and lettered rock at the base of which the body lay: his remembrance of every portion of his travel thence was indistinct, and the latter part had left no impression upon his mind. There was, however, a continual impulse, a voice audible only to himself, commanding him to go forth and redeem his vow; and he had a strange impression that, were he to make the trial, he would be led straight to Malvin's bones. But year after year that summons, unheard but felt, was disobeyed. His one secret thought became like a chain binding down his spirit and like a serpent gnawing into his heart; and he was transformed into a sad and downcast yet irritable man.
In the course of a few years after their marriage changes began to be visible in the external prosperity of Reuben and Dorcas. The only riches of the former had been his stout heart and strong arm; but the latter, her father’s sole heiress, had made her husband master of a farm, under older cultivation, larger; and better stocked than most of the frontier establishments. Reuben Bourne, however; was a neglectful husbandman; and, while the lands of the other settlers became annually more fruitful, his deteriorated in the same proportion. The discouragements to agriculture were greatly lessened by the cessation of Indian war, during which men held the plough in one hand and the musket in the other; and were fortunate if the products of their dangerous labor were not destroyed, either in the field or in the barn, by the savage enemy. But Reuben did not profit by the altered condition of the country; nor can it be denied that his intervals of industrious attention to his affairs were but scantily rewarded with success. The irritability by which he had recently become distinguished was another cause of his declining prosperity, as it occasioned frequent quarrels in his unavoidable intercourse with the neighboring settlers. The results of these were innumerable lawsuits; for the people of New England, in the earliest stages and wildest circumstances of the country, adopted, whenever attainable, the legal mode of deciding their differences. To be brief, the world did not go well with Reuben Bourne; and, though not till many years after his marriage, he was finally a ruined man, with but one remaining expedient against the evil fate that had pursued him. He was to throw sunlight into some deep recess of the forest, and seek subsistence from the virgin bosom of the wilderness.

The only child of Reuben and Dorcas was a son, now arrived at the age of fifteen years, beautiful in youth, and giving promise of a glorious manhood. He was peculiarly qualified for, and already began to excel in, the wild accomplishments of frontier life. His foot was fleet, his aim true, his apprehension quick, his heart glad and high; and all who anticipated the return of Indian war spoke of Cyrus Bourne as a future leader in the land. The boy was loved by his father with a deep and silent strength, as if whatever was good and happy in his own nature had been transferred to his child, carrying his affections with it. Even Dorcas, though loving and beloved, was far less dear to him; for Reuben’s secret thoughts and insulated emotions had gradually made him a selfish man, and he could no longer love deeply except where he saw or imagined some reflection or likeness of his own mind. In Cyrus he recognized what he had himself been in other days; and at intervals he seemed to partake of the boy’s spirit, and to be revived with a fresh and happy life. Reuben was accompanied by his son in the expedition, for the purpose of selecting a tract of land and felling and burning the timber, which necessarily preceded the removal of the household gods. Two months of autumn were thus occupied, after which Reuben Bourne and his young hunter returned to spend their last winter in the settlements.

*  *  *

It was early in the month of May that the little family snapped asunder whatever tendrils of affections had clung to inanimate objects, and bade farewell to the
few who, in the blight of fortune, called themselves their friends. The sadness of
the parting moment had, to each of the pilgrims, its peculiar alleviations. Reuben,
a moody man, and misanthropic because unhappy, strode onward with his usual
stern brow and downcast eye, feeling few regrets and disdaining to acknowledge
any. Dorcas, while she wept abundantly over the broken ties by which her simple
and affectionate nature had bound itself to everything, felt that the inhabitants of
her inmost heart moved on with her, and that all else would be supplied wherever
she might go. And the boy dashed one tear-drop from his eye, and thought of the
adventurous pleasures of the untrodden forest.

Oh, who, in the enthusiasm of a daydream, has not wished that he were a wan-
derer in a world of summer wilderness, with one fair and gentle being hanging
lightly on his arm? In youth his free and exulting step would know no barrier but
the rolling ocean or the snow-topped mountains; calmer manhood would choose
a home where Nature had strewn a double wealth in the vale of some transparent
stream; and when hoary age, after long, long years of that pure life, stole on and
found him there, it would find him the father of a race, the patriarch of a people, the
founder of a mighty nation yet to be. When death, like the sweet sleep which we
welcome after a day of happiness, came over him, his far descendants would mourn
over the venerated dust. Enveloped by tradition in mysterious attributes, the men
of future generations would call him godlike; and remote posterity would see him
standing, dimly glorious, far up the valley of a hundred centuries.

The tangled and gloomy forest through which the personages of my tale were
wandering differed widely from the dreamer’s land of fantasy; yet there was some-
thing in their way of life that Nature asserted as her own, and the gnawing cares
which went with them from the world were all that now obstructed their happi-
ness. One stout and shaggy steed, the bearer of all their wealth, did not shrink from
the added weight of Dorcas; although her hardy breeding sustained her, during the
latter part of each day’s journey, by her husband’s side. Reuben and his son, their
muskets on their shoulders and their axes slung behind them, kept an unwearied
pace, each watching with a hunter’s eye for the game that supplied their food. When
hunger bade, they halted and prepared their meal on the bank of some unpollut-
ed forest brook, which, as they knelt down with thirsty lips to drink, murmured a
sweet unwillingness, like a maiden at love’s first kiss. They slept beneath a hut of
branches, and awoke at peep of light refreshed for the toils of another day. Dorcas
and the boy went on joyously, and even Reuben’s spirit shone at intervals with an
outward gladness; but inwardly there was a cold cold sorrow, which he compared
to the snowdrifts lying deep in the glens and hollows of the rivulets while the leaves
were brightly green above.

Cyrus Bourne was sufficiently skilled in the travel of the woods to observe that
his father did not adhere to the course they had pursued in their expedition of the
preceding autumn. They were now keeping farther to the north, striking out more
directly from the settlements, and into a region of which savage beasts and savage
men were as yet the sole possessors. The boy sometimes hinted his opinions upon
the subject, and Reuben listened attentively, and once or twice altered the direction of their march in accordance with his son's counsel; but, having so done, he seemed ill at ease. His quick and wandering glances were sent forward apparently in search of enemies lurking behind the tree trunks, and, seeing nothing there, he would cast his eyes backwards as if in fear of some pursuer. Cyrus, perceiving that his father gradually resumed the old direction, forbore to interfere; nor, though something began to weigh upon his heart, did his adventurous nature permit him to regret the increased length and the mystery of their way.

On the afternoon of the fifth day they halted, and made their simple encampment nearly an hour before sunset. The face of the country, for the last few miles, had been diversified by swells of land resembling huge waves of a petrified sea; and in one of the corresponding hollows, a wild and romantic spot, had the family reared their hut and kindled their fire. There is something chilling, and yet heart-warming, in the thought of these three, united by strong bands of love and insulated from all that breathe beside. The dark and gloomy pines looked down upon them, and, as the wind swept through their tops, a pitying sound was heard in the forest; or did those old trees groan in fear that men were come to lay the axe to their roots at last? Reuben and his son, while Dorcas made ready their meal, proposed to wander out in search of game, of which that day's march had afforded no supply. The boy, promising not to quit the vicinity of the encampment, bounded off with a step as light and elastic as that of the deer he hoped to slay; while his father, feeling a transient happiness as he gazed after him, was about to pursue an opposite direction. Dorcas in the meanwhile, had seated herself near their fire of fallen branches upon the mossgrown and mouldering trunk of a tree uprooted years before. Her employment, diversified by an occasional glance at the pot, now beginning to simmer over the blaze, was the perusal of the current year's Massachusetts Almanac, which, with the exception of an old black-letter Bible, comprised all the literary wealth of the family. None pay a greater regard to arbitrary divisions of time than those who are excluded from society; and Dorcas mentioned, as if the information were of importance, that it was now the twelfth of May. Her husband started.

``The twelfth of May! I should remember it well,'' muttered he, while many thoughts occasioned a momentary confusion in his mind. ``Where am I? Whither am I wandering? Where did I leave him?"

Dorcas, too well accustomed to her husband's wayward moods to note any peculiarity of demeanor, now laid aside the almanac and addressed him in that mournful tone which the tender hearted appropriate to griefs long cold and dead.

``It was near this time of the month, eighteen years ago, that my poor father left this world for a better. He had a kind arm to hold his head and a kind voice to cheer him, Reuben, in his last moments; and the thought of the faithful care you took of him has comforted me many a time since. Oh, death would have been awful to a solitary man in a wild place like this!"
Pray Heaven, Dorcas," said Reuben, in a broken voice, -- "pray Heaven that neither of us three dies solitary and lies unburied in this howling wilderness!" And he hastened away, leaving her to watch the fire beneath the gloomy pines.

Reuben Bourne’s rapid pace gradually slackened as the pang, unintentionally inflicted by the words of Dorcas, became less acute. Many strange reflections, however, thronged upon him; and, straying onward rather like a sleep walker than a hunter, it was attributable to no care of his own that his devious course kept him in the vicinity of the encampment. His steps were imperceptibly led almost in a circle; nor did he observe that he was on the verge of a tract of land heavily timbered, but not with pine-trees. The place of the latter was here supplied by oaks and other of the harder woods; and around their roots clustered a dense and bushy under-growth, leaving, however, barren spaces between the trees, thick strewn with withered leaves. Whenever the rustling of the branches or the creaking of the trunks made a sound, as if the forest were waking from slumber; Reuben instinctively raised the musket that rested on his arm, and cast a quick, sharp glance on every side; but, convinced by a partial observation that no animal was near; he would again give himself up to his thoughts. He was musing on the strange influence that had led him away from his premeditated course, and so far into the depths of the wilderness. Unable to penetrate to the secret place of his soul where his motives lay hidden, he believed that a supernatural voice had called him onward, and that a supernatural power had obstructed his retreat. He trusted that it was Heaven’s intent to afford him an opportunity of expiating this sin; he hoped that he might find the bones so long unburied; and that, having laid the earth over them, peace would throw its sunlight into the sepulchre of his heart. From these thoughts he was aroused by a rustling in the forest at some distance from the spot to which he had wandered. Perceiving the motion of some object behind a thick veil of undergrowth, he fired, with the instinct of a hunter and the aim of a practised marksman. A low moan, which told his success, and by which even animals cars express their dying agony, was unheeded by Reuben Bourne. What were the recollections now breaking upon him?

The thicket into which Reuben had fired was near the summit of a swell of land, and was clustered around the base of a rock, which, in the shape and smoothness of one of its surfaces, was not unlike a gigantic gravestone. As if reflected in a mirror; its likeness was in Reuben’s memory. He even recognized the veins which seemed to form an inscription in forgotten characters: everything remained the same, except that a thick covert of bushes shrouded the lower part of the rock, and would have hidden Roger Malvin had he still been sitting there. Yet in the next moment Reuben’s eye was caught by another change that time had effected since he last stood where he was now standing again behind the earthy roots of the upturned tree. The sapling to which he had bound the bloodstained symbol of his vow had increased and strengthened into an oak, far indeed from its maturity, but with no mean spread of shadowy branches. There was one singularity observable in this tree which made Reuben tremble. The middle and lower branches were in luxuriant life, and an excess of vegetation had fringed the trunk almost to the ground; but
a blight had apparently stricken the upper part of the oak, and the very topmost bough was withered, sapless, and utterly dead. Reuben remembered how the little banner had fluttered on that topmost bough, when it was green and lovely, eighteen years before. Whose guilt had blasted it?

*   *   *

Dorcas, after the departure of the two hunters, continued her preparations for their evening repast. Her sylvan table was the moss-covered trunk of a large fallen tree, on the broadest part of which she had spread a snow-white cloth and arranged what were left of the bright pewter vessels that had been her pride in the settlements. It had a strange aspect that one little spot of homely comfort in the desolate heart of Nature. The sunshine yet lingered upon the higher branches of the trees that grew on rising ground; but the shadows of evening had deepened into the hollow where the encampment was made, and the firelight began to redden as it gleamed up the tall trunks of the pines or hovered on the dense and obscure mass of foliage that circled round the spot. The heart of Dorcas was not sad; for she felt that it was better to journey in the wilderness with two whom she loved than to be a lonely woman in a crowd that cared not for her. As she busied herself in arranging seats of mouldering wood, covered with leaves, for Reuben and her son, her voice danced through the gloomy forest in the measure of a song that she had learned in youth. The rude melody, the production of a bard who won no name, was descriptive of a winter evening in a frontier cottage, when, secured from savage inroad by the high-piled snow-drifts, the family rejoiced by their own fireside. The whole song possessed the nameless charm peculiar to unborrowed thought, but four continually-recurring lines shone out from the rest like the blaze of the hearth whose joys they celebrated. Into them, working magic with a few simple words, the poet had instilled the very essence of domestic love and household happiness, and they were poetry and picture joined in one. As Dorcas sang, the walls of her forsaken home seemed to encircle her; she no longer saw the gloomy pines, nor heard the wind which still, as she began each verse, sent a heavy breath through the branches, and died away in a hollow moan from the burden of the song. She was aroused by the report of a gun in the vicinity of the encampment; and either the sudden sound, or her loneliness by the glowing fire, caused her to tremble violently. The next moment she laughed in the pride of a mother’s heart.

``My beautiful young hunter! My boy has slain a deer!’’ she exclaimed, recollecting that in the direction whence the shot proceeded Cyrus had gone to the chase.

She waited a reasonable time to hear her son’s light step bounding over the rustling leaves to tell of his success. But he did not immediately appear; and she sent her cheerful voice among the trees in search of him.

``Cyrus! Cyrus!’’

His coming was still delayed; and she determined, as the report had apparently been very near, to seek for him in person. Her assistance, also, might be neces-
sary in bringing home the venison which she flattered herself he had obtained. She therefore set forward, directing her steps by the long-past sound, and singing as she went, in order that the boy might be aware of her approach and run to meet her. From behind the trunk of every tree, and from every hiding-place in the thick foliage of the undergrowth, she hoped to discover the countenance of her son, laughing with the sportive mischief that is born of affection. The sun was now beneath the horizon, and the light that came down among the leaves was sufficiently dim to create many illusions in her expecting fancy. Several times she seemed indistinctly to see his face gazing out from among the leaves; and once she imagined that he stood beckoning to her at the base of a craggy rock. Keeping her eyes on this object, however, it proved to be no more than the trunk of an oak fringed to the very ground with little branches, one of which, thrust out farther than the rest, was shaken by the breeze. Making her way round the foot of the rock, she suddenly found herself close to her husband, who had approached in another direction. Leaning upon the butt of his gun, the muzzle of which rested upon the withered leaves, he was apparently absorbed in the contemplation of some object at his feet.

``How is this, Reuben? Have you slain the deer and fallen asleep over him?'' exclaimed Dorcas, laughing cheerfully, on her first slight observation of his posture and appearance.

He stirred not, neither did he turn his eyes towards her; and a cold, shuddering fear, indefinite in its source and object, began to creep into her blood. She now perceived that her husband’s face was ghastly pale, and his features were rigid, as if incapable of assuming any other expression than the strong despair which had hardened upon them. He gave not the slightest evidence that he was aware of her approach.

``For the love of Heaven, Reuben, speak to me!'' cried Dorcas; and the strange sound of her own voice affrighted her even more than the dead silence.

Her husband started, stared into her face, drew her to the front of the rock, and pointed with his finger.

Oh, there lay the boy, asleep, but dreamless, upon the fallen forest leaves! His cheek rested upon his arm -- his curled locks were thrown back from his brow -- his limbs were slightly relaxed. Had a sudden weariness overcome the youthful hunter? Would his mother’s voice arouse him? She knew that it was death.

``This broad rock is the gravestone of your near kindred, Dorcas,'' said her husband. ``Your tears will fall at once over your father and your son.''

She heard him not. With one wild shriek, that seemed to force its way from the sufferer’s inmost soul, she sank insensible by the side of her dead boy. At that moment the withered topmost bough of the oak loosened itself in the stilly air, and fell in soft, light fragments upon the rock, upon the leaves, upon Reuben, upon his wife and child, and upon Roger Malvin’s bones. Then Reuben’s heart was stricken, and
the tears gushed out like water from a rock. The vow that the wounded youth had made the blighted man had come to redeem. His sin was expiated, -- the curse was gone from him; and in the hour when he had shed blood dearer to him than his own, a prayer, the first for years, went up to Heaven from the lips of Reuben Bourne.
A young man, named Giovanni Guasconti, came, very long ago, from the more southern region of Italy, to pursue his studies at the University of Padua. Giovanni, who had but a scanty supply of gold ducats in his pocket, took lodgings in a high and gloomy chamber of an old edifice, which looked not unworthy to have been the palace of a Paduan noble, and which, in fact, exhibited over its entrance the armorial bearings of a family long since extinct. The young stranger, who was not unstudied in the great poem of his country, recollected that one of the ancestors of this family, and perhaps an occupant of this very mansion, had been pictured by Dante as a partaker of the immortal agonies of his Inferno. These reminiscences and associations, together with the tendency to heart-break natural to a young man for the first time out of his native sphere, caused Giovanni to sigh heavily, as he looked around the desolate and ill-furnished apartment.

"Holy Virgin, signor," cried old dame Lisabetta, who, won by the youth’s remarkable beauty of person, was kindly endeavoring to give the chamber a habitable air; "what a sigh was that to come out of a young man’s heart! Do you find this old mansion gloomy? For the love of heaven, then, put your head out of the window, and you will see as bright sunshine as you have left in Naples."

Guasconti mechanically did as the old woman advised, but could not quite agree with her that the Lombard sunshine was as cheerful as that of southern Italy. Such as it was, however, it fell upon a garden beneath the window, and expended its fostering influences on a variety of plants, which seemed to have been cultivated with exceeding care.

"Does this garden belong to the house?" asked Giovanni.

"Heaven forbid, signor!—unless it were fruitful of better pot-herbs than any that grow there now," answered old Lisabetta. "No; that garden is cultivated by the own hands of Signor Giacomo Rappaccini, the famous Doctor, who, I warrant him, has been heard of as far as Naples. It is said he distils these plants into medicines that are as potent as a charm. Oftentimes you may see the Signor Doctor at work, and perchance the Signora his daughter, too, gathering the strange flowers that grow in the garden."

The old woman had now done what she could for the aspect of the chamber, and, commending the young man to the protection of the saints, took her departure.

Giovanni still found no better occupation than to look down into the garden beneath his window. From its appearance, he judged it to be one of those botanic gardens, which were of earlier date in Padua than elsewhere in Italy, or in the world. Or, not improbably, it might once have been the pleasure-place of an opulent family; for there was the ruin of a marble fountain in the centre, sculptured with rare art, but so wofully shattered that it was impossible to trace the original design from the chaos
of remaining fragments. The water, however, continued to gush and sparkle into the sunbeams as cheerfully as ever. A little gurgling sound ascended to the young man’s window, and made him feel as if a fountain were an immortal spirit, that sung its song unceasingly, and without heeding the vicissitudes around it; while one century embodied it in marble, and another scattered the perishable garniture on the soil. All about the pool into which the water subsided, grew various plants, that seemed to require a plentiful supply of moisture for the nourishment of gigantic leaves, and, in some instances, flowers gorgeously magnificent. There was one shrub in particular, set in a marble vase in the midst of the pool, that bore a profusion of purple blossoms, each of which had the lustre and richness of a gem; and the whole together made a show so resplendent that it seemed enough to illuminate the garden, even there been no sunshine. Every portion of the soil was peopled with plants and herbs, which, if less beautiful, still bore tokens of assiduous care; as if all had their individual virtues, known to the scientific mind that fostered them. Some were placed in urns, rich with old carving, and others in common garden-pots; some crept serpent-like along the ground, or climbed on high, using whatever means of ascent was offered them. One plant had wreathed itself round a statue of Vertumnus, which was thus quite veiled and shrouded in a drapery of hanging foliage, so happily arranged that it might have served a sculptor for a study.

While Giovanni stood at the window, he heard a rustling behind a screen of leaves, and became aware that a person was at work in the garden. His figure soon emerged into view, and showed itself to be that of no common laborer; but a tall, emaciated, sallow, and sickly looking man, dressed in a scholar’s garb of black. He was beyond the middle term of life, with gray hair, a thin gray beard, and a face singularly marked with intellect and cultivation, but which could never, even in his more youthful days, have expressed much warmth of heart.

Nothing could exceed the intentness with which this scientific gardener examined every shrub which grew in his path; it seemed as if he was looking into their inmost nature, making observations in regard to their creative essence, and discovering why one leaf grew in this shape, and another in that, and wherefore such and such flowers differed among themselves in hue and perfume. Nevertheless, in spite of the deep intelligence on his part, there was no approach to intimacy between himself and these vegetable existences. On the contrary, he avoided their actual touch, or the direct inhaling of their odors, with a caution that impressed Giovanni most disagreeably; for the man’s demeanor was that of one walking among malignant influences, such as savage beasts, or deadly snakes, or evil spirits, which, should he allow them one moment of license, would wreak upon him some terrible fatality. It was strangely frightful to the young man’s imagination, to see this air of insecurity in a person cultivating a garden, that most simple and innocent of human toils, and which had been alike the joy and labor of the unfallen parents of the race. Was this garden, then, the Eden of the present world?--and this man, with such a perception of harm in what his own hands caused to grow, was he the Adam?
The distrustful gardener, while plucking away the dead leaves or pruning the too luxuriant growth of the shrubs, defended his hands with a pair of thick gloves. Nor were these his only armor. When, in his walk through the garden, he came to the magnificent plant that hung its purple gems beside the marble fountain, he placed a kind of mask over his mouth and nostrils, as if all this beauty did but conceal a deadlier malice. But finding his task still too dangerous, he drew back, removed the mask, and called loudly, but in the infirm voice of a person affected with inward disease:

“Beatrice!—Beatrice!”

“Here am I, my father! What would you?” cried a rich and youthful voice from the window of the opposite house; a voice as rich as a tropical sunset, and which made Giovanni, though he knew not why, think of deep hues of purple or crimson, and of perfumes heavily delectable.——“Are you in the garden?”

“Yes, Beatrice,” answered the gardener, “and I need your help.”

Soon there emerged from under a sculptured portal the figure of a young girl, arrayed with as much richness of taste as the most splendid of the flowers, beautiful as the day, and with a bloom so deep and vivid that one shade more would have been too much. She looked redundant with life, health, and energy; all of which attributes were bound down and compressed, as it were, and girdled tensely, in their luxuriance, by her virgin zone. Yet Giovanni’s fancy must have grown morbid, while he looked down into the garden; for the impression which the fair stranger made upon him was as if here were another flower; the human sister of those vegetable ones, as beautiful as they—more beautiful than the richest of them—but still to be touched only with a glove, nor to be approached without a mask. As Beatrice came down the garden-path, it was observable that she handled and inhaled the odor of several of the plants, which her father had most sedulously avoided.

“Here, Beatrice,” said the latter;—“see how many needful offices require to be done to our chief treasure. Yet, shattered as I am, my life might pay the penalty of approaching it so closely as circumstances demand. Henceforth, I fear, this plant must be consigned to your sole charge.”

“And gladly will I undertake it,” cried again the rich tones of the young lady, as she bent towards the magnificent plant, and opened her arms as if to embrace it. “Yes, my sister; my splendor; it shall be Beatrice’s task to nurse and serve thee; and thou shalt reward her with thy kisses and perfume breath, which to her is as the breath of life!”

Then, with all the tenderness in her manner that was so strikingly expressed in her words, she busied herself with such attentions as the plant seemed to require; and Giovanni, at his lofty window, rubbed his eyes, and almost doubted whether it were a girl tending her favorite flower; or one sister performing the duties of affection to another. The scene soon terminated. Whether Doctor Rappaccini had fin-
ished his labors in the garden, or that his watchful eye had caught the stranger’s face, he now took his daughter’s arm and retired. Night was already closing in; oppressive exhalations seemed to proceed from the plants, and steal upward past the open window; and Giovanni, closing the lattice, went to his couch, and dreamed of a rich flower and beautiful girl. Flower and maiden were different and yet the same, and fraught with some strange peril in either shape.

But there is an influence in the light of morning that tends to rectify whatever errors of fancy, or even of judgment, we may have incurred during the sun’s decline, or among the shadows of the night, or in the less wholesome glow of moonshine. Giovanni’s first movement on starting from sleep, was to throw open the window, and gaze down into the garden which his dreams had made so fertile of mysteries. He was surprised, and a little ashamed, to find how real and matter-of-fact an affair it proved to be, in the first rays of the sun, which gilded the dew-drops that hung upon leaf and blossom, and, while giving a brighter beauty to each rare flower, brought everything within the limits of ordinary experience. The young man rejoiced, that, in the heart of the barren city, he had the privilege of overlooking this spot of lovely and luxuriant vegetation. It would serve, he said to himself, as a symbolic language, to keep him in communion with Nature. Neither the sickly and thought-worn Doctor Giacomo Rappaccini, it is true, nor his brilliant daughter, were now visible; so that Giovanni could not determine how much of the singularity which he attributed to both, was due to their own qualities, and how much to his wonder-working fancy. But he was inclined to take a most rational view of theln the course of the day, he paid his respects to Signor Pietro Baglioni, Professor of Medicine in the University, a physician of eminent repute, to whom Giovanni had brought a letter of introduction. The Professor was an elderly personage, apparently of genial nature, and habits that might almost be called jovial; he kept the young man to dinner, and made himself very agreeable by the freedom and liveliness of his conversation, especially when warmed by a flask or two of Tuscan wine. Giovanni, conceiving that men of science, inhabitants of the same city, must needs be on familiar terms with one another, took an opportunity to mention the name of Doctor Rappaccini. But the Professor did not respond with so much cordiality as he had anticipated.

“Ill would it become a teacher of the divine art of medicine,” said Professor Pietro Baglioni, in answer to a question of Giovanni, “to withhold due and well-considered praise of a physician so eminently skilled as Rappaccini. But, on the other hand, I should answer it but scantily to my conscience, were I to permit a worthy youth like yourself, Signor Giovanni, the son of an ancient friend, to imbibe erroneous ideas respecting a man who might hereafter chance to hold your life and death in his hands. The truth is, our worshipful Doctor Rappaccini has as much science as any member of the faculty--with perhaps one single exception--in Padua, or all Italy. But there are certain grave objections to his professional character.”

“And what are they?” asked the young man.
“Has my friend Giovanni any disease of body or heart, that he is so inquisitive about physicians?” said the Professor, with a smile. “But as for Rappaccini, it is said of him--and I, who know the man well, can answer for its truth--that he cares infinitely more for science than for mankind. His patients are interesting to him only as subjects for some new experiment. He would sacrifice human life, his own among the rest, or whatever else was dearest to him, for the sake of adding so much as a grain of mustard-seed to the great heap of his accumulated knowledge.”

“Methinks he is an awful man, indeed,” remarked Guascoconti, mentally recalling the cold and purely intellectual aspect of Rappaccini. “And yet, worshipful Professor, is it not a noble spirit? Are there many men capable of so spiritual a love of science?”

“God forbid,” answered the Professor, somewhat testily--”at least, unless they take sounder views of the healing art than those adopted by Rappaccini. It is his theory, that all medicinal virtues are comprised within those substances which we term vegetable poisons. These he cultivates with his own hands, and is said even to have produced new varieties of poison, more horribly deleterious than Nature, without the assistance of this learned person, would ever have plagued the world withal. That the Signor Doctor does less mischief than might be expected, with such dangerous substances, is undeniable. Now and then, it must be owned, he has effected—or seemed to effect—a marvellous cure. But, to tell you my private mind, Signor Giovanni, he should receive little credit for such instances of success—they being probably the work of chance—but should be held strictly accountable for his failures, which may justly be considered his own work.”

The youth might have taken Baglioni’s opinions with many grains of allowance, had he known that there was a professional warfare of long continuance between him and Doctor Rappaccini, in which the latter was generally thought to have gained the advantage. If the reader be inclined to judge for himself, we refer him to certain black-letter tracts on both sides, preserved in the medical department of the University of Padua.

“I know not, most learned Professor,” returned Giovanni, after musing on what had been said of Rappaccini’s exclusive zeal for science—”I know not how dearly this physician may love his art; but surely there is one object more dear to him. He has a daughter.”

“Aha!” cried the Professor with a laugh. “So now our friend Giovanni’s secret is out. You have heard of this daughter, whom all the young men in Padua are wild about, though not half a dozen have ever had the good hap to see her face. I know little of the Signora Beatrice, save that Rappaccini is said to have instructed her deeply in his science, and that, young and beautiful as fame reports her, she is already qualified to fill a professor’s chair. Perchance her father destines her for mine! Other absurd rumors there be, not worth talking about, or listening to. So now, Signor Giovanni, drink off your glass of Lacryma.”
Guasconti returned to his lodgings somewhat heated with the wine he had quaffed, and which caused his brain to swim with strange fantasies in reference to Doctor Rappaccini and the beautiful Beatrice. On his way, happening to pass by a florist's, he bought a fresh bouquet of flowers.

Ascending to his chamber, he seated himself near the window, but within the shadow thrown by the depth of the wall, so that he could look down into the garden with little risk of being discovered. All beneath his eye was a solitude. The strange plants were basking in the sunshine, and now and then nodding gently to one another, as if in acknowledgment of sympathy and kindred. In the midst, by the shattered fountain, grew the magnificent shrub, with its purple gems clustering all over it; they glowed in the air, and gleamed back again out of the depths of the pool, which thus seemed to overflow with colored radiance from the rich reflection that was steeped in it. At first, as we have said, the garden was a solitude. Soon, however;--as Giovanni had half hoped, half feared, would be the case,--a figure appeared beneath the antique sculptured portal, and came down between the rows of plants, inhaling their various perfumes, as if she were one of those beings of old classic fable, that lived upon sweet odors. On again beholding Beatrice, the young man was even startled to perceive how much her beauty exceeded his recollection of it; so brilliant, so vivid in its character, that she glowed amid the sunlight, and, as Giovanni whispered to himself, positively illuminated the more shadowy intervals of the garden path. Her face being now more revealed than on the former occasion, he was struck by its expression of simplicity and sweetness; qualities that had not entered into his idea of her character, and which made him ask anew, what manner of mortal she might be. Nor did he fail again to observe, or imagine, an analogy between the beautiful girl and the gorgeous shrub that hung its gem-like flowers over the fountain; a resemblance which Beatrice seemed to have indulged a fantastic humor in heightening, both by the arrangement of her dress and the selection of its hues.

Approaching the shrub, she threw open her arms, as with a passionate ardor, and drew its branches into an intimate embrace; so intimate, that her features were hidden in its leafy bosom, and her glistening ringlets all intermingled with the flowers.

"Give me thy breath, my sister," exclaimed Beatrice; "for I am faint with common air! And give me this flower of thine, which I separate with gentlest fingers from the stem, and place it close beside my heart."

With these words, the beautiful daughter of Rappaccini plucked one of the richest blossoms of the shrub, and was about to fasten it in her bosom. But now, unless Giovanni's draughts of wine had bewildered his senses, a singular incident occurred. A small orange colored reptile, of the lizard or chameleon species, chanced to be creeping along the path, just at the feet of Beatrice. It appeared to Giovanni--but, at the distance from which he gazed, he could scarcely have seen anything so minute--it appeared to him, however, that a drop or two of moisture from the broken stem of the flower descended upon the lizard's head. For an instant, the
reptile contorted itself violently, and then lay motionless in the sunshine. Beatrice observed this remarkable phenomenon, and crossed herself, sadly, but without surprise; nor did she therefore hesitate to arrange the fatal flower in her bosom. There it blushed, and almost glimmered with the dazzling effect of a precious stone, adding to her dress and aspect the one appropriate charm, which nothing else in the world could have supplied. But Giovanni, out of the shadow of his window, bent forward and shrank back, and murmured and trembled.

“Am I awake? Have I my senses?” said he to himself. “What is this being?--beautiful, shall I call her?--or inexpressibly terrible?”

Beatrice now strayed carelessly through the garden, approaching closer beneath Giovanni’s window, so that he was compelled to thrust his head quite out of its concealment, in order to gratify the intense and painful curiosity which she excited. At this moment, there came a beautiful insect over the garden wall; it had perhaps wandered through the city and found no flowers nor verdure among those antique haunts of men, until the heavy perfumes of Doctor Rappaccini’s shrubs had lured it from afar. Without alighting on the flowers, this winged brightness seemed to be attracted by Beatrice, and lingered in the air and fluttered about her head. Now here it could not be but that Giovanni Guasconti’s eyes deceived him. Be that as it might, he fancied that while Beatrice was gazing at the insect with childish delight, it grew faint and fell at her feet;--its bright wings shivered; it was dead--from no cause that he could discern, unless it were the atmosphere of her breath. Again Beatrice crossed herself and sighed heavily, as she bent over the dead insect.

An impulsive movement of Giovanni drew her eyes to the window. There she beheld the beautiful head of the young man--rather a Grecian than an Italian head, with fair, regular features, and a glistening of gold among his ringlets--gazing down upon her like a being that hovered in mid-air. Scarcely knowing what he did, Giovanni threw down the bouquet which he had hitherto held in his hand.

“Signora,” said he, “there are pure and healthful flowers. Wear them for the sake of Giovanni Guasconti!”

“Thanks, Signor;” replied Beatrice, with her rich voice that came forth as it were like a gush of music; and with a mirthful expression half childish and half woman-like. “I accept your gift, and would fain recompense it with this precious purple flower; but if I toss it into the air, it will not reach you. So Signor Guasconti must even content himself with my thanks.”

She lifted the bouquet from the ground, and then as if inwardly ashamed at having stepped aside from her maidenly reserve to respond to a stranger’s greeting, passed swiftly homeward through the garden. But, few as the moments were, it seemed to Giovanni when she was on the point of vanishing beneath the sculptured portal, that his beautiful bouquet was already beginning to wither in her grasp. It was an idle thought; there could be no possibility of distinguishing a faded flower from a fresh one, at so great a distance.
For many days after this incident, the young man avoided the window that looked into Doctor Rappaccini’s garden, as if something ugly and monstrous would have blasted his eye-sight, had he been betrayed into a glance. He felt conscious of having put himself, to a certain extent, within the influence of an unintelligible power, by the communication which he had opened with Beatrice. The wisest course would have been, if his heart were in any real danger, to quit his lodgings and Padua itself, at once; the next wiser, to have accustomed himself, as far as possible, to the familiar and day-light view of Beatrice; thus bringing her rigidly and systematically within the limits of ordinary experience. Least of all, while avoiding her sight, should Giovanni have remained so near this extraordinary being, that the proximity and possibility even of intercourse, should give a kind of substance and reality to the wild vagaries which his imagination ran riot continually in producing. Guasconti had not a deep heart—or at all events, its depths were not sounded now—but he had a quick fancy, and an ardent southern temperament, which rose every instant to a higher fever-pitch. Whether or no Beatrice possessed those terrible attributes—that fatal breath—the affinity with those so beautiful and deadly flowers—which were indicated by what Giovanni had witnessed, she had at least instilled a fierce and subtle poison into his system. It was not love, although her rich beauty was a madness to him; nor horror, even while he fancied her spirit to be imbued with the same baneful essence that seemed to pervade her physical frame; but a wild offspring of both love and horror that had each parent in it, and burned like one and shivered like the other. Giovanni knew not what to dread; still less did he know what to hope; yet hope and dread kept a continual warfare in his breast, alternately vanquishing one another and starting up afresh to renew the contest. Blessed are all simple emotions, be they dark or bright! It is the lurid intermixture of the two that produces the illuminating blaze of the infernal regions.

Sometimes he endeavored to assuage the fever of his spirit by a rapid walk through the streets of Padua, or beyond its gates; his footsteps kept time with the throbblings of his brain, so that the walk was apt to accelerate itself to a race. One day, he found himself arrested; his arm was seized by a portly personage who had turned back on recognizing the young man, and expended much breath in overtaking him.

“Signor Giovanni!—stay, my young friend!”—cried he. “Have you forgotten me? That might well be the case, if I were as much altered as yourself.”

It was Baglioni, whom Giovanni had avoided, ever since their first meeting, from a doubt that the Professor’s sagacity would look too deeply into his secrets. Endeavoring to recover himself, he stared forth wildly from his inner world into the outer one, and spoke like a man in a dream.

“Yes; I am Giovanni Guasconti. You are Professor Pietro Baglioni. Now let me pass!”

“Not yet—not yet, Signor Giovanni Guasconti,” said the Professor, smiling, but at the same time scrutinizing the youth with an earnest glance. “What, did I grow up
side by side with your father; and shall his son pass me like a stranger, in these old streets of Padua? Stand still, Signor Giovanni; for we must have a word or two before we part."

“Speedily, then, most worshipful Professor; speedily!” said Giovanni, with feverish impatience. “Does not your worship see that I am in haste?”

Now, while he was speaking, there came a man in black along the street, stooping and moving feebly, like a person in inferior health. His face was all overspread with a most sickly and sallow hue, but yet so pervaded with an expression of piercing and active intellect, that an observer might easily have overlooked the merely physical attributes, and have seen only this wonderful energy. As he passed, this person exchanged a cold and distant salutation with Baglioni, but fixed his eyes upon Giovanni with an intentness that seemed to bring out whatever was within him worthy of notice. Nevertheless, there was a peculiar quietness in the look, as if taking merely a speculative, not a human interest, in the young man.

“It is Doctor Rappaccini!” whispered the Professor, when the stranger had passed.---"Has he ever seen your face before?"

“Not that I know,” answered Giovanni, starting at the name.

“He has seen you!--he must have seen you!” said Baglioni, hastily. “For some purpose or other, this man of science is making a study of you. I know that look of his! It is the same that coldly illuminates his face, as he bends over a bird, a mouse, or a butterfly, which, in pursuance of some experiment, he has killed by the perfume of a flower;--a look as deep as Nature itself, but without Nature’s warmth of love. Signor Giovanni, I will stake my life upon it, you are the subject of one of Rappaccini’s experiments!”

“Will you make a fool of me?” cried Giovanni, passionately. “That, Signor Professor, were an untoward experiment.”

“Patience, patience!” replied the imperturbable Professor. “I tell thee, my poor Giovanni, that Rappaccini has a scientific interest in thee. Thou hast fallen into fearful hands! And the Signora Beatrice? What part does she act in this mystery?”

But Guasconti, finding Baglioni’s pertinacity intolerable, here broke away, and was gone before the Professor could again seize his arm. He looked after the young man intently, and shook his head.

“This must not be,” said Baglioni to himself. “The youth is the son of my old friend, and shall not come to any harm from which the arcana of medical science can preserve him. Besides, it is too insufferable an impertinence in Rappaccini thus to snatch the lad out of my own hands, as I may say, and make use of him for his infernal experiments. This daughter of his! It shall be looked to. Perchance, most learned Rappaccini, I may foil you where you little dream of it!”
Meanwhile, Giovanni had pursued a circuitous route, and at length found himself at the door of his lodgings. As he crossed the threshold, he was met by old Lisabetta, who smirked and smiled, and was evidently desirous to attract his attention; vainly, however, as the ebullition of his feelings had momentarily subsided into a cold and dull vacuity. He turned his eyes full upon the withered face that was puckering itself into a smile, but seemed to behold it not. The old dame, therefore, laid her grasp upon his cloak.

“Signor!--Signor!” whispered she, still with a smile over the whole breadth of her visage, so that it looked not unlike a grotesque carving in wood, darkened by centuries--“Listen, Signor! There is a private entrance into the garden!”

“What do you say?” exclaimed Giovanni, turning quickly about, as if an inanimate thing should start into feverish life.--“A private entrance into Doctor Rappaccini’s garden!”

“Hush! hush!--not so loud!” whispered Lisabetta, putting her hand over his mouth. “Yes; into the worshipful Doctor’s garden, where you may see all his fine shrubbery. Many a young man in Padua would give gold to be admitted among those flowers.”

Giovanni put a piece of gold into her hand.

“Show me the way,” said he.

A surmise, probably excited by his conversation with Baglioni, crossed his mind, that this interposition of old Lisabetta might perchance be connected with the intrigue, whatever were its nature, in which the Professor seemed to suppose that Doctor Rappaccini was involving him. But such a suspicion, though it disturbed Giovanni, was inadequate to restrain him. The instant he was aware of the possibility of approaching Beatrice, it seemed an absolute necessity of his existence to do so. It mattered not whether she were angel or demon; he was irrevocably within her sphere, and must obey the law that whirled him onward, in ever lessening circles, towards a result which he did not attempt to foreshadow. And yet, strange to say, there came across him a sudden doubt, whether this intense interest on his part were not delusory--whether it were really of so deep and positive a nature as to justify him in now thrusting himself into an incalculable position--whether it were not merely the fantasy of a young man's brain, only slightly, or not at all, connected with his heart!

He paused--hesitated--turned half about--but again went on. His withered guide led him along several obscure passages, and finally undid a door; through which, as it was opened, there came the sight and sound of rustling leaves, with the broken sunshine glimmering among them. Giovanni stepped forth, and forcing himself through the entanglement of a shrub that wreathed its tendrils over the hidden entrance, he stood beneath his own window, in the open area of Doctor Rappaccini’s garden.
How often is it the case, that, when impossibilities have come to pass, and dreams have condensed their misty substance into tangible realities, we find ourselves calm, and even coldly self-possessed, amid circumstances which it would have been a delirium of joy or agony to anticipate! Fate delights to thwart us thus. Passion will choose his own time to rush upon the scene, and lingers sluggishly behind, when an appropriate adjustment of events would seem to summon his appearance. So was it now with Giovanni. Day after day, his pulses had throbbed with feverish blood, at the improbable idea of an interview with Beatrice, and of standing with her, face to face, in this very garden, basking in the oriental sunshine of her beauty, and snatching from her full gaze the mystery which he deemed the riddle of his own existence. But now there was a singular and untimely equanimity within his breast. He threw a glance around the garden to discover if Beatrice or her father were present, and perceiving that he was alone, began a critical observation of the plants.

The aspect of one and all of them dissatisfied him; their gorgeousness seemed fierce, passionate, and even unnatural. There was hardly an individual shrub which a wanderer, straying by himself through a forest, would not have been startled to find growing wild, as if an unearthly face had glared at him out of the thicket. Several, also, would have shocked a delicate instinct by an appearance of artificialness, indicating that there had been such commixture, and, as it were, adultery of various vegetable species, that the production was no longer of God's making, but the monstrous offspring of man's depraved fancy, glowing with only an evil mockery of beauty. They were probably the result of experiment, which, in one or two cases, had succeeded in mingling plants individually lovely into a compound possessing the questionable and ominous character that distinguished the whole growth of the garden. In fine, Giovanni recognized but two or three plants in the collection, and those of a kind that he well knew to be poisonous. While busy with these contemplations, he heard the rustling of a silken garment, and turning, beheld Beatrice. Giovanni had not considered with himself what should be his deportment; whether he should apologize for his intrusion into the garden, or assume that he was there with the privity, at least, if not by the desire, of Doctor Rappaccini or his daughter. But Beatrice's manner placed him at his ease, though leaving him still in doubt by what agency he had gained admittance. She came lightly along the path, and met him near the broken fountain. There was surprise in her face, but brightened by a simple and kind expression of pleasure.

"You are a connoisseur in flowers, Signor," said Beatrice with a smile, alluding to the bouquet which he had flung her from the window. "It is no marvel, therefore, if the sight of my father's rare collection has tempted you to take a nearer view. If he were here, he could tell you many strange and interesting facts as to the nature and habits of these shrubs, for he has spent a life-time in such studies, and this garden is his world."

"And yourself, lady"--observed Giovanni--"if fame says true--you, likewise, are deeply skilled in the virtues indicated by these rich blossoms, and these spicy per-
fumes. Would you deign to be my instructress, I should prove an apter scholar than under Signor Rappaccini himself.”

“And must I believe all that I have seen with my own eyes?” asked Giovanni pointedly, while the recollection of former scenes made him shrink. “No, Signora, you demand too little of me. Bid me believe nothing, save what comes from your own lips.”

It would appear that Beatrice understood him. There came a deep flush to her cheek; but she looked full into Giovanni’s eyes, and responded to his gaze of uneasy suspicion with a queen-like haughtiness.

“I do so bid you, Signor!” she replied. “Forget whatever you may have fancied in regard to me. If true to the outward senses, still it may be false in its essence. But the words of Beatrice Rappaccini’s lips are true from the heart outward. Those you may believe!”

A fervor glowed in her whole aspect, and beamed upon Giovanni’s consciousness like the light of truth itself. But while she spoke, there was a fragrance in the atmosphere around her rich and delightful, though evanescent, yet which the young man, from an indefinable reluctance, scarcely dared to draw into his lungs. It might be the odor of the flowers. Could it be Beatrice’s breath, which thus embalmed her words with a strange richness, as if by steeping them in her heart? A faintness passed like a shadow over Giovanni, and flitted away; he seemed to gaze through the beautiful girl’s eyes into her transparent soul, and felt no more doubt or fear.

The tinge of passion that had colored Beatrice’s manner vanished; she became gay, and appeared to derive a pure delight from her communion with the youth, not unlike what the maiden of a lonely island might have felt, conversing with a voyager from the civilized world. Evidently her experience of life had been confined within the limits of that garden. She talked now about matters as simple as the day-light or summer-clouds, and now asked questions in reference to the city, or Giovanni’s distant home, his friends, his mother, and his sisters; questions indicating such seclusion, and such lack of familiarity with modes and forms, that Giovanni responded as if to an infant. Her spirit gushed out before him like a fresh rill, that was just catching its first glimpse of the sunlight, and wondering, at the reflections of earth and sky which were flung into its bosom. There came thoughts, too, from a deep source, and fantasies of a gem-like brilliancy, as if diamonds and rubies sparkled upward among the bubbles of the fountain. Ever and anon, there gleamed across
the young man's mind a sense of wonder, that he should be walking side by side with the being who had so wrought upon his imagination--whom he had idealized in such hues of terror--in whom he had positively witnessed such manifestations of dreadful attributes--that he should be conversing with Beatrice like a brother; and should find her so human and so maiden-like. But such reflections were only momentary; the effect of her character was too real, not to make itself familiar at once.

In this free intercourse, they had strayed through the garden, and now, after many turns among its avenues, were come to the shattered fountain, beside which grew the magnificent shrub with its treasury of glowing blossoms. A fragrance was diffused from it, which Giovanni recognized as identical with that which he had attributed to Beatrice's breath, but incomparably more powerful. As her eyes fell upon it, Giovanni beheld her press her hand to her bosom, as if her heart were throbbing suddenly and painfully.

“For the first time in my life,” murmured she, addressing the shrub, “I had forgotten thee!”

“I remember, Signora,” said Giovanni, “that you once promised to reward me with one of these living gems for the bouquet, which I had the happy boldness to fling to your feet. Permit me now to pluck it as a memorial of this interview.”

He made a step towards the shrub, with extended hand. But Beatrice darted forward, uttering a shriek that went through his heart like a dagger. She caught his hand, and drew it back with the whole force of her slender figure. Giovanni felt her touch thrilling through his fibres.

“Touch it not!” exclaimed she, in a voice of agony. “Not for thy life! It is fatal!”

Then, hiding her face, she fled from him, and vanished beneath the sculptured portal. As Giovanni followed her with his eyes, he beheld the emaciated figure and pale intelligence of Doctor Rappaccini, who had been watching the scene, he knew not how long, within the shadow of the entrance.

No sooner was Guasconti alone in his chamber, than the image of Beatrice came back to his passionate musings, invested with all the witchery that had been gathering around it ever since his first glimpse of her; and now likewise imbued with a tender warmth of girlish womanhood. She was human: her nature was endowed with all gentle and feminine qualities; she was worthiest to be worshipped; she was capable, surely, on her part, of the height and heroism of love. Those tokens, which he had hitherto considered as proofs of a frightful peculiarity in her physical and moral system, were now either forgotten, or, by the subtle sophistry of passion, transmuted into a golden crown of enchantment, rendering Beatrice the more admirable, by so much as she was the more unique. Whatever had looked ugly, was now beautiful; or, if incapable of such a change, it stole away and hid itself among those shapeless half-ideas, which throng the dim region beyond the daylight of our perfect consciousness. Thus did Giovanni spend the night, nor fell asleep, un-
til the dawn had begun to awake the slumbering flowers in Doctor Rappaccini’s
garden, whither his dreams doubtless led him. Up rose the sun in his due season,
and flinging his beams upon the young man’s eyelids, awoke him to a sense of pain.
When thoroughly aroused, he became sensible of a burning and tingling agony in
his hand—in his right hand—the very hand which Beatrice had grasped in her own,
when he was on the point of plucking one of the gem-like flowers. On the back of
that hand there was now a purple print, like that of four small fingers, and the likeness
of a slender thumb upon his wrist.

Oh, how stubbornly does love—or even that cunning semblance of love which
flourishes in the imagination, but strikes no depth of root into the heart—how stub-
bornly does it hold its faith, until the moment come, when it is doomed to vanish
into thin mist! Giovanni wrapt a handkerchief about his hand, and wondered what
evil thing had stung him, and soon forgot his pain in a reverie of Beatrice.

After the first interview, a second was in the inevitable course of what we call fate.
A third; a fourth; and a meeting with Beatrice in the garden was no longer an inci-
dent in Giovanni’s daily life, but the whole space in which he might be said to live; for
the anticipation and memory of that ecstatic hour made up the remainder. Nor was
it otherwise with the daughter of Rappaccini. She watched for the youth’s appear-
ance, and flew to his side with confidence as unreserved as if they had been play-
mates from early infancy—as if they were such playmates still. If, by any unwonted
chance, he failed to come at the appointed moment, she stood beneath the window,
and sent up the rich sweetness of her tones to float around him in his chamber,
and echo and reverberate throughout his heart—"Giovanni! Giovanni! Why tarriest
thou? Come down!" And down he hastened into that Eden of poisonous flowers.

But, with all this intimate familiarity, there was still a reserve in Beatrice’s de-
meanor; so rigidly and invariably sustained, that the idea of infringing it scarcely oc-
curred to his imagination. By all appreciable signs, they loved; they had looked love,
with eyes that conveyed the holy secret from the depths of one soul into the depths
of the other, as if it were too sacred to be whispered by the way; they had even spo-
ken love, in those gushes of passion when their spirits darted forth in articulated
breath, like tongues of long-hidden flame; and yet there had been no seal of lips,
no clasp of hands, nor any slightest caress, such as love claims and hallows. He had
never touched one of the gleaming ringlets of her hair; her garment—so marked
was the physical barrier between them—had never been waved against him by a
breeze. On the few occasions when Giovanni had seemed tempted to overstep the
limit, Beatrice grew so sad, so stern, and withal wore such a look of desolate sepa-
ration, shuddering at itself, that not a spoken word was requisite to repel him. At
such times, he was startled at the horrible suspicions that rose, monster-like, out of
the caverns of his heart, and stared him in the face; his love grew thin and faint as
the morning-mist; his doubts alone had substance. But when Beatrice’s face bright-
ened again, after the momentary shadow, she was transformed at once from the
mysterious, questionable being, whom he had watched with so much awe and hor-
ror; she was now the beautiful and unsophisticated girl, whom he felt that his spirit
knew with a certainty beyond all other knowledge.

A considerable time had now passed since Giovanni’s last meeting with Baglioni. One morning, however, he was disagreeably surprised by a visit from the Professor, whom he had scarcely thought of for whole weeks, and would willingly have forgotten still longer. Given up, as he had long been, to a pervading excitement, he could tolerate no companions, except upon condition of their perfect sympathy with his present state of feeling. Such sympathy was not to be expected from Professor Baglioni.

The visitor chatted carelessly, for a few moments, about the gossip of the city and the University, and then took up another topic.

“I have been reading an old classic author lately,” said he, “and met with a story that strangely interested me. Possibly you may remember it. It is of an Indian prince, who sent a beautiful woman as a present to Alexander the Great. She was as lovely as the dawn, and gorgeous as the sunset; but what especially distinguished her was a certain rich perfume in her breath--richer than a garden of Persian roses. Alexander, as was natural to a youthful conqueror, fell in love at first sight with this magnificent stranger. But a certain sage physician, happening to be present, discovered a terrible secret in regard to her.”

“And what was that?” asked Giovanni, turning his eyes downward to avoid those of the Professor:

“That this lovely woman,” continued Baglioni, with emphasis, “had been nourished with poisons from her birth upward, until her whole nature was so imbued with them, that she herself had become the deadliest poison in existence. Poison was her element of life. With that rich perfume of her breath, she blasted the very air. Her love would have been poison!--her embrace death! Is not this a marvellous tale?”

“A childish fable,” answered Giovanni, nervously starting from his chair. “I marvel how your worship finds time to read such nonsense, among your graver studies.”

“By the bye,” said the Professor, looking uneasily about him, “what singular fragrance is this in your apartment? Is it the perfume of your gloves? It is faint, but delicious, and yet, after all, by no means agreeable. Were I to breathe it long, me-thinks it would make me ill. It is like the breath of a flower--but I see no flowers in the chamber.”

“Nor are there any,” replied Giovanni, who had turned pale as the Professor spoke; “nor, I think, is there any fragrance, except in your worship’s imagination. Odors, being a sort of element combined of the sensual and the spiritual, are apt to deceive us in this manner. The recollection of a perfume--the bare idea of it--may easily be mistaken for a present reality.”
“Aye; but my sober imagination does not often play such tricks,” said Baglioni; “and were I to fancy any kind of odor; it would be that of some vile apothecary drug, wherewith my fingers are likely enough to be imbued. Our worshipful friend Rappaccini, as I have heard, tinctures his medicaments with odors richer than those of Araby. Doubtless, likewise, the fair and learned Signora Beatrice would minister to her patients with draughts as sweet as a maiden’s breath. But wo to him that sips them!”

Giovanni’s face evinced many contending emotions. The tone in which the Professor alluded to the pure and lovely daughter of Rappaccini was a torture to his soul; and yet, the intimation of a view of her character, opposite to his own, gave instantaneous distinctness to a thousand dim suspicions, which now grinned at him like so many demons. But he strove hard to quell them, and to respond to Baglioni with a true lover’s perfect faith.

“Signor Professor,” said he, “you were my father’s friend—perchance, too, it is your purpose to act a friendly part towards his son. I would fain feel nothing towards you save respect and deference. But I pray you to observe, Signor; that there is one subject on which we must not speak. You know not the Signora Beatrice. You cannot, therefore, estimate the wrong—the blasphemy, I may even say—that is offered to her character by a light or injurious word.”

“Giovanni!—my poor Giovanni!” answered the Professor, with a calm expression of pity, “I know this wretched girl far better than yourself. You shall hear the truth in respect to the poisoner Rappaccini, and his poisonous daughter. Yes; poisonous as she is beautiful! Listen; for even should you do violence to my gray hairs, it shall not silence me. That old fable of the Indian woman has become a truth, by the deep and deadly science of Rappaccini, and in the person of the lovely Beatrice!”

Giovanni groaned and hid his face.

“Her father,” continued Baglioni, “was not restrained by natural affection from offering up his child, in this horrible manner, as the victim of his insane zeal for science. For—let us do him justice—he is as true a man of science as ever distilled his own heart in an alembic. What, then, will be your fate? Beyond a doubt, you are selected as the material of some new experiment. Perhaps the result is to be death—perhaps a fate more awful still! Rappaccini, with what he calls the interest of science before his eyes, will hesitate at nothing.”

“It is a dream!” muttered Giovanni to himself, “surely it is a dream!”

“But,” resumed the Professor; “be of good cheer; son of my friend! It is not yet too late for the rescue. Possibly, we may even succeed in bringing back this miserable child within the limits of ordinary nature, from which her father’s madness has estranged her. Behold this little silver vase! It was wrought by the hands of the renowned Benvenuto Cellini, and is well worthy to be a love-gift to the fairest dame in Italy. But its contents are invaluable. One little sip of this antidote would have ren-
dered the most virulent poisons of the Borgias innocuous. Doubt not that it will be as efficacious against those of Rappaccini. Bestow the vase, and the precious liquid within it, on your Beatrice, and hopefully await the result.”

Baglioni laid a small, exquisitely wrought silver phial on the table, and withdrew, leaving what he had said to produce its effect upon the young man’s mind.

“We will thwart Rappaccini yet!” thought he, chuckling to himself, as he descended the stairs. “But, let us confess the truth of him, he is a wonderful man!—a wonderful man indeed! A vile empiric, however, in his practice, and therefore not to be tolerated by those who respect the good old rules of the medical profession!”

Throughout Giovanni’s whole acquaintance with Beatrice, he had occasionally, as we have said, been haunted by dark surmises as to her character. Yet, so thoroughly had she made herself felt by him as a simple, natural, most affectionate and guileless creature, that the image now held up by Professor Baglioni, looked as strange and incredible, as if it were not in accordance with his own original conception. True, there were ugly recollections connected with this first glimpse of the beautiful girl; he could not quite forget the bouquet that withered in her grasp, and the insect that perished amid the sunny air, by no ostensible agency save the fragrance of her breath. These incidents, however, dissolving in the pure light of her character, had no longer the efficacy of facts, but were acknowledged as mistaken fantasies, by whatever testimony of the senses they might appear to be substantiated. There is something truer and more real, than what we can see with the eyes, and touch with the finger. On such better evidence, had Giovanni founded his confidence in Beatrice, though rather by the necessary force of her high attributes, than by any deep and generous faith on his part. But, now, his spirit was incapable of sustaining itself at the height to which the early enthusiasm of passion had exalted it; he fell down, grovelling among earthly doubts, and defiled therewith the pure whiteness of Beatrice’s image. Not that he gave her up; he did but distrust. He resolved to institute some decisive test that should satisfy him, once for all, whether there were those dreadful peculiarities in her physical nature, which could not be supposed to exist without some corresponding monstrosity of soul. His eyes, gazing down afar, might have deceived him as to the lizard, the insect, and the flowers. But if he could witness, at the distance of a few paces, the sudden blight of one fresh and healthful flower in Beatrice’s hand, there would be room for no further question. With this idea, he hastened to the florist’s, and purchased a bouquet that was still gemmed with the morning dew-drops.

It was now the customary hour of his daily interview with Beatrice. Before descending into the garden, Giovanni failed not to look at his figure in the mirror; a vanity to be expected in a beautiful young man, yet, as displaying itself at that troubled and feverish moment, the token of a certain shallowness of feeling and insincerity of character. He did gaze, however, and said to himself, that his features had never before possessed so rich a grace, nor his eyes such vivacity, nor his cheeks so warm a hue of superabundant life.
“At least,” thought he, “her poison has not yet insinuated itself into my system. I am no flower to perish in her grasp!”

With that thought, he turned his eyes on the bouquet, which he had never once laid aside from his hand. A thrill of indefinable horror shot through his frame, on perceiving that those dewy flowers were already beginning to droop; they wore the aspect of things that had been fresh and lovely, yesterday. Giovanni grew white as marble, and stood motionless before the mirror, staring at his own reflection there, as at the likeness of something frightful. He remembered Baglioni’s remark about the fragrance that seemed to pervade the chamber. It must have been the poison in his breath! Then he shuddered--shuddered at himself! Recovering from his stupor, he began to watch, with curious eye, a spider that was busily at work, hanging its web from the antique cornice of the apartment, crossing and re-crossing the artful system of interwoven lines, as vigorous and active a spider as ever dangled from an old ceiling. Giovanni bent towards the insect, and emitted a deep, long breath. The spider suddenly ceased its toil; the web vibrated with a tremor originating in the body of the small artizan. Again Giovanni sent forth a breath, deeper, longer, and imbued with a venomous feeling out of his heart; he knew not whether he were wicked or only desperate. The spider made a convulsive gripe with his” Accursed! Accursed!” muttered Giovanni, addressing himself. “Hast thou grown so poisonous, that this deadly insect perishes by thy breath?”

At that moment, a rich, sweet voice came floating up from the garden: “Giovanni! Giovanni! It is past the hour! Why tarriest thou! Come down!”

“Yes,” muttered Giovanni again. “She is the only being whom my breath may not slay! Would that it might!”

He rushed down, and in an instant, was standing before the bright and loving eyes of Beatrice. A moment ago, his wrath and despair had been so fierce that he could have desired nothing so much as to wither her by a glance. But, with her actual presence, there came influences which had too real an existence to be at once shaken off; recollections of the delicate and benign power of her feminine nature, which had so often enveloped him in a religious calm; recollections of many a holy and passionate outgush of her heart, when the pure fountain had been unsealed from its depths, and made visible in its transparency to his mental eye; recollections which, had Giovanni known how to estimate them, would have assured him that all this ugly mystery was but an earthly illusion, and that, whatever mist of evil might seem to have gathered over her, the real Beatrice was a heavenly angel. Incapable as he was of such high faith, still her presence had not utterly lost its magic. Giovanni’s rage was quelled into an aspect of sullen insensibility. Beatrice, with a quick spiritual sense, immediately felt that there was a gulf of blackness between them, which neither he nor she could pass. They walked on together, sad and silent, and came thus to the marble fountain, and to its pool of water on the ground, in the midst of which grew the shrub that bore gem-like blossoms. Giovanni was affright-
ed at the eager enjoyment—the appetite, as it were—with which he found himself inhaling the fragrance of the flowers.

“Beatrice,” asked he abruptly, “whence came this shrub!”

“My father created it,” answered she, with simplicity.

“Created it! created it!” repeated Giovanni. “What mean you, Beatrice?”

“He is a man fearfully acquainted with the secrets of nature,” replied Beatrice; “and, at the hour when I first drew breath, this plant sprang from the soil, the offspring of his science, of his intellect, while I was but his earthly child. Approach it not!” continued she, observing with terror that Giovanni was drawing nearer to the shrub. “It has qualities that you little dream of. But I, dearest Giovanni—I grew up and blossomed with the plant, and was nourished with its breath. It was my sister, and I loved it with a human affection: for—alas! hast thou not suspected it? there was an awful doom.”

Here Giovanni frowned so darkly upon her that Beatrice paused and trembled. But her faith in his tenderness reassured her, and made her blush that she had doubted for an instant.

“There was an awful doom,” she continued, “the effect of my father’s fatal love of science—which estranged me from all society of my kind. Until Heaven sent thee, dearest Giovanni, Oh! how lonely was thy poor Beatrice!”

“Was it a hard doom?” asked Giovanni, fixing his eyes upon her.

“Only of late have I known how hard it was,” answered she tenderly. “Oh, yes; but my heart was torpid, and therefore quiet.”

Giovanni’s rage broke forth from his sullen gloom like a lightning-flash out of a dark cloud.

“Accursed one!” cried he, with venomous scorn and anger. “And finding thy solitude wearisome, thou hast severed me, likewise, from all the warmth of life, and enticed me into thy region of unspeakable horror!”

“Giovanni!” exclaimed Beatrice, turning her large bright eyes upon his face. The force of his words had not found its way into her mind; she was merely thunder-struck.

“Yes, poisonous thing!” repeated Giovanni, beside himself with passion. “Thou hast done it! Thou hast blasted me! Thou hast filled my veins with poison! Thou hast made me as hateful, as ugly, as loathsome and deadly a creature as thyself—a world’s wonder of hideous monstrosity! Now—if our breath be happily as fatal to ourselves as to all others—let us join our lips in one kiss of unutterable hatred, and so die!”
"What has befallen me?" murmured Beatrice, with a low moan out of her heart. "Holy Virgin pity me, a poor heartbroken child!"

"Thou! Dost thou pray?" cried Giovanni, still with the same fiendish scorn. "Thy very prayers, as they come from thy lips, taint the atmosphere with death. Yes, yes; let us pray! Let us to church, and dip our fingers in the holy water at the portal! They that come after us will perish as by a pestilence. Let us sign crosses in the air! It will be scattering curses abroad in the likeness of holy symbols!"

"Giovanni," said Beatrice calmly, for her grief was beyond passion, "Why dost thou join thyself with me thus in those terrible words? I, it is true, am the horrible thing thou namest me. But thou!--what hast thou to do, save with one other shudder at my hideous misery, to go forth out of the garden and mingle with thy race, and forget that there ever crawled on earth such a monster as poor Beatrice?"

"Dost thou pretend ignorance?" asked Giovanni, scowling upon her. "Behold! This power have I gained from the pure daughter of Rappaccini!"

There was a swarm of summer-insects flitting through the air, in search of the food promised by the flower-odors of the fatal garden. They circled round Giovanni’s head, and were evidently attracted towards him by the same influence which had drawn them, for an instant, within the sphere of several of the shrubs. He sent forth a breath among them, and smiled bitterly at Beatrice, as at least a score of the insects fell dead upon the ground.

"I see it! I see it!" shrieked Beatrice. "It is my father’s fatal science? No, no, Giovanni; it was not I! Never, never! I dreamed only to love thee, and be with thee a little time, and so to let thee pass away, leaving but thine image in mine heart. For, Giovanni--believe it--though my body be nourished with poison, my spirit is God’s creature, and craves love as its daily food. But my father!--he has united us in this fearful sympathy. Yes; spurn me!--tread upon me!--kill me! Oh, what is death, after such words as thine? But it was not I! Not for a world of bliss would I have done it!"

Giovanni’s passion had exhausted itself in its outburst from his lips. There now came across him a sense, mournful, and not without tenderness, of the intimate and peculiar relationship between Beatrice and himself. They stood, as it were, in an utter solitude, which would be made none the less solitary by the densest throng of human life. Ought not, then, the desert of humanity around them to press this insulated pair closer together? If they should be cruel to one another, who was there to be kind to them? Besides, thought Giovanni, might there not still be a hope of his returning within the limits of ordinary nature, and leading Beatrice--the redeemed Beatrice--by the hand? Oh, weak, and selfish, and unworthy spirit, that could dream of an earthly union and earthly happiness as possible, after such deep love had been so bitterly wronged as was Beatrice’s love by Giovanni’s blighting words! No, no; there could be no such hope. She must pass heavily, with that broken heart, across the borders of Time--she must bathe her hurts in some fount of Paradise, and forget her grief in the light of immortality--and there be well!
But Giovanni did not know it.

“Dear Beatrice,” said he, approaching her, while she shrank away, as always at his approach, but now with a different impulse—“dearest Beatrice, our fate is not yet so desperate. Behold! There is a medicine, potent, as a wise physician has assured me, and almost divine in its efficacy. It is composed of ingredients the most opposite to those by which thy awful father has brought this calamity upon thee and me. It is distilled of blessed herbs. Shall we not quaff it together, and thus be purified from evil?”

“Give it me!” said Beatrice, extending her hand to receive the little silver phial which Giovanni took from his bosom. She added, with a peculiar emphasis: “I will drink—but do thou await the result.”

She put Baglioni’s antidote to her lips; and, at the same moment, the figure of Rappaccini emerged from the portal, and came slowly towards the marble fountain. As he drew near, the pale man of science seemed to gaze with a triumphant expression at the beautiful youth and maiden, as might an artist who should spend his life in achieving a picture or a group of statuary, and finally be satisfied with his success. He paused—his bent form grew erect with conscious power; he spread out his hand over them, in the attitude of a father imploring a blessing upon his children. But those were the same hands that had thrown poison into the stream of their lives! Giovanni trembled. Beatrice shuddered very nervously, and pressed her hand upon her heart.

“My daughter,” said Rappaccini, “thou art no longer lonely in the world! Pluck one of those precious gems from thy sister shrub, and bid thy bridegroom wear it in his bosom. It will not harm him now! My science, and the sympathy between thee and him, have so wrought within his system, that he now stands apart from common men, as thou dost, daughter of my pride and triumph, from ordinary women. Pass on, then, through the world, most dear to one another, and dreadful to all besides!”

“My father,” said Beatrice, feebly—and still, as she spoke, she kept her hand upon her heart—“wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?”

“Miserable!” exclaimed Rappaccini. “What mean you, foolish girl? Dost thou deem it misery to be endowed with marvellous gifts, against which no power nor strength could avail an enemy? Misery, to be able to quell the mightiest with a breath? Misery, to be as terrible as thou art beautiful? Wouldst thou, then, have preferred the condition of a weak woman, exposed to all evil, and capable of none?”

“I would fain have been loved, not feared,” murmured Beatrice, sinking down upon the ground—“But now it matters not; I am going, father, where the evil, which thou hast striven to mingle with my being, will pass away like a dream—like the fragrance of these poisonous flowers, which will no longer taint my breath among the flowers of Eden. Farewell, Giovanni! Thy words of hatred are like lead within my
heart—but they, too, will fall away as I ascend. Oh, was there not, from the first, more poison in thy nature than in mine?”

To Beatrice—so radically had her earthly part been wrought upon by Rappaccini’s skill—as poison had been life, so the powerful antidote was death. And thus the poor victim of man’s ingenuity and of thwarted nature, and of the fatality that attends all such efforts of perverted wisdom, perished there, at the feet of her father and Giovanni. Just at that moment, Professor Pietro Baglioni looked forth from the window, and called loudly, in a tone of triumph mixed with horror, to the thunder-stricken man of science: “Rappaccini! Rappaccini! And is this the upshot of your experiment?”
IN the latter part of the last century there lived a man of science, an eminent pro-
cficient in every branch of natural philosophy, who not long before our story opens
had made experience of a spiritual affinity more attractive than any chemical one.
He had left his laboratory to the care of an assistant, cleared his fine countenance
from the furnace smoke, washed the stain of acids from his fingers, and persuaded
a beautiful woman to become his wife. In those days when the comparatively re-
cent discovery of electricity and other kindred mysteries of Nature seemed to open
paths into the region of miracle, it was not unusual for the love of science to rival the
love of woman in its depth and absorbing energy. The higher intellect, the imagina-
tion, the spirit, and even the heart might all find their congenial aliment in pursuits
which, as some of their ardent votaries believed, would ascend from one step of
powerful intelligence to another, until the philosopher should lay his hand on the
secret of creative force and perhaps make new worlds for himself. We know not
whether Aylmer possessed this degree of faith in man's ultimate control over Na-
ture. He had devoted himself, however, too unreservedly to scientific studies ever
to be weaned from them by any second passion. His love for his young wife might
prove the stronger of the two; but it could only be by intertwining itself with his
love of science, and uniting the strength of the latter to his own.

Such a union accordingly took place, and was attended with truly remarkable
consequences and a deeply impressive moral. One day, very soon after their mar-
riage, Aylmer sat gazing at his wife with a trouble in his countenance that grew
stronger until he spoke.

``Georgiana,'' said he, ``has it never occurred to you that the mark upon your
cheek might be removed?''

``No, indeed,'' said she, smiling; but perceiving the seriousness of his manner, she
blushed deeply. ``To tell you the truth it has been so often called a charm that I was
simple enough to imagine it might be so.''

``Ah, upon another face perhaps it might,'' replied her husband; ``but never on
yours. No, dearest Georgiana, you came so nearly perfect from the hand of Nature
that this slightest possible defect, which we hesitate whether to term a defect or a
beauty, shocks me, as being the visible mark of earthly imperfection.''

``Shocks you, my husband!'' cried Georgiana, deeply hurt; at first reddening with
momentary anger; but then bursting into tears. ``Then why did you take me from
my mother's side? You cannot love what shocks you!''

To explain this conversation it must be mentioned that in the centre of Geor-
giana's left cheek there was a singular mark, deeply interwoven, as it were, with the
texture and substance of her face. In the usual state of her complexion -- a healthy
though delicate bloom -- the mark wore a tint of deeper crimson, which imperfectly
defined its shape amid the surrounding rosiness. When she blushed it gradually be-
came more indistinct, and finally vanished amid the triumphant rush of blood that
bathed the whole cheek with its brilliant glow. But if any shifting motion caused
her to turn pale there was the mark again, a crimson stain upon the snow, in what
Aylmer sometimes deemed an almost fearful distinctness. Its shape bore not a little
similarity to the human hand, though of the smallest pygmy size. Georgiana’s lovers
were wont to say that some fairy at her birth hour had laid her tiny hand upon the
infant’s cheek, and left this impress there in token of the magic endowments that
were to give her such sway over all hearts. Many a desperate swain would have
risked life for the privilege of pressing his lips to the mysterious hand. It must not
be concealed, however, that the impression wrought by this fairy sign manual var-
ied exceedingly, according to the difference of temperament in the beholders. Some
fastidious persons -- but they were exclusively of her own sex -- affirmed that the
bloody hand, as they chose to call it, quite destroyed the effect of Georgiana’s beauty,
and rendered her countenance even hideous. But it would be as reasonable to say
that one of those small blue stains which sometimes occur in the purest statuary
marble would convert the Eve of Powers to a monster. Masculine observers, if the
birthmark did not heighten their admiration, contented themselves with wishing it
away, that the world might possess one living specimen of ideal loveliness without
the semblance of a flaw. After his marriage, -- for he thought little or nothing of the
matter before, -- Aylmer discovered that this was the case with himself.

Had she been less beautiful, -- if Envy’s self could have found aught else to sneer
at, -- he might have felt his affection heightened by the prettiness of this mimic hand,
now vaguely portrayed, now lost, now stealing forth again and glimmering to and
fro with every pulse of emotion that throbbed within her heart; but seeing her oth-
erwise so perfect, he found this one defect grow more and more intolerable with
every moment of their united lives. It was the fatal flaw of humanity which Nature,
in one shape or another, stamps ineffaceably on all her productions, either to im-
ply that they are temporary and finite, or that their perfection must be wrought by
toil and pain. The crimson hand expressed the ineludible gripe in which mortality
clutches the highest and purest of earthly mould, degrading them into kindred with
the lowest, and even with the very brutes, like whom their visible frames return to
dust. In this manner, selecting it as the symbol of his wife’s liability to sin, sorrow,
decay, and death, Aylmer’s sombre imagination was not long in rendering the birth-
mark a frightful object, causing him more trouble and horror than ever Georgiana’s
beauty, whether of soul or sense, had given him delight.

At all the seasons which should have been their happiest, he invariably and with-
out intending it, nay, in spite of a purpose to the contrary, reverted to this one disas-
trous topic. Trifling as it at first appeared, it so connected itself with innumerable
trains of thought and modes of feeling that it became the central point of all. With
the morning twilight Aylmer opened his eyes upon his wife’s face and recognized
the symbol of imperfection; and when they sat together at the evening hearth his
eyes wandered stealthily to her cheek, and beheld, flickering with the blaze of the wood fire, the spectral hand that wrote mortality where he would fain have worshipped. Georgiana soon learned to shudder at his gaze. It needed but a glance with the peculiar expression that his face often wore to change the roses of her cheek into a deathlike paleness, amid which the crimson hand was brought strongly out, like a bass-relief of ruby on the whitest marble.

Late one night when the lights were growing dim, so as hardly to betray the stain on the poor wife’s cheek, she herself, for the first time, voluntarily took up the subject.

``Do you remember, my dear Aylmer,’’ said she, with a feeble attempt at a smile, “have you any recollection of a dream last night about this odious hand?’’

“None! none whatever!’’ replied Aylmer; starting; but then he added, in a dry, cold tone, affected for the sake of concealing the real depth of his emotion, “I might well dream of it; for before I fell asleep it had taken a pretty firm hold of my fancy.”

“And you did dream of it?’’ continued Georgiana, hastily; for she dreaded lest a gush of tears should interrupt what she had to say. “‘A terrible dream! I wonder that you can forget it. Is it possible to forget this one expression? -- ‘It is in her heart now; we must have it out!’ Reflect, my husband; for by all means I would have you recall that dream.’’

The mind is in a sad state when Sleep, the all-involving, cannot confine her spectres within the dim region of her sway, but suffers them to break forth, affrighting this actual life with secrets that perchance belong to a deeper one. Aylmer now remembered his dream. He had fancied himself with his servant Aminadab, attempting an operation for the removal of the birthmark; but the deeper went the knife, the deeper sank the hand, until at length its tiny grasp appeared to have caught hold of Georgiana’s heart; whence, however, her husband was inexorably resolved to cut or wrench it away.

When the dream had shaped itself perfectly in his memory, Aylmer sat in his wife’s presence with a guilty feeling. Truth often finds its way to the mind close muffled in robes of sleep, and then speaks with uncompromising directness of matters in regard to which we practise an unconscious self-deception during our waking moments. Until now he had not been aware of the tyrannizing influence acquired by one idea over his mind, and of the lengths which he might find in his heart to go for the sake of giving himself peace.

``Aylmer,’’ resumed Georgiana, solemnly, “I know not what may be the cost to both of us to rid me of this fatal birthmark. Perhaps its removal may cause cureless deformity; or it may be the stain goes as deep as life itself. Again: do we know that there is a possibility, on any terms, of unclasping the firm gripe of this little hand which was laid upon me b “Dearest Georgiana, I have spent much thought upon
the subject,” hastily interrupted Aylmer. “I am convinced of the perfect practicability of its removal.”

“If there be the remotest possibility of it,” continued Georgiana, “let the attempt be made at whatever risk. Danger is nothing to me; for life, while this hateful mark makes me the object of your horror and disgust, -- life is a burden which I would fling down with joy. Either remove this dreadful hand, or take my wretched life! You have deep science. All the world bears witness of it. You have achieved great wonders. Cannot you remove this little, little mark, which I cover with the tips of two small fingers? Is this beyond your power, for the sake of your own peace, and to save your poor wife from madness?”

“Noblest, dearest, tenderest wife,” cried Aylmer, rapturously, “doubt not my power. I have already given this matter the deepest thought -- thought which might almost have enlightened me to create a being less perfect than yourself. Georgiana, you have led me deeper than ever into the heart of science. I feel myself fully competent to render this dear cheek as faultless as its fellow; and then, most beloved, what will be my triumph when I shall have corrected what Nature left imperfect in her fairest work! Even Pygmalion, when his sculptured woman assumed life, felt not greater ecstasy than mine will be.”

“It is resolved, then,” said Georgiana, faintly smiling. “And, Aylmer, spare me not, though you should find the birthmark take refuge in my heart at last.”

Her husband tenderly kissed her cheek -- her right cheek -- not that which bore the impress of the crimson hand.

The next day Aylmer apprised his wife of a plan that he had formed whereby he might have opportunity for the intense thought and constant watchfulness which the proposed operation would require; while Georgiana, likewise, would enjoy the perfect repose essential to its success. They were to seclude themselves in the extensive apartments occupied by Aylmer as a laboratory, and where, during his toilsome youth, he had made discoveries in the elemental powers of Nature that had roused the admiration of all the learned societies in Europe. Seated calmly in this laboratory, the pale philosopher had investigated the secrets of the highest cloud region and of the profoundest mines; he had satisfied himself of the causes that kindled and kept alive the fires of the volcano; and had explained the mystery of fountains, and how it is that they gush forth, some so bright and pure, and others with such rich medicinal virtues, from the dark bosom of the earth. Here, too, at an earlier period, he had studied the wonders of the human frame, and attempted to fathom the very process by which Nature assimilates all her precious influences from earth and air, and from the spiritual world, to create and foster man, her masterpiece. The latter pursuit, however, Aylmer had long laid aside in unwilling recognition of the truth -- against which all seekers sooner or later stumble -- that our great creative Mother, while she amuses us with apparently working in the broadest sunshine, is yet severely careful to keep her own secrets, and, in spite of her pre-
tended openness, shows us nothing but results. She permits us, indeed, to mar, but seldom to mend, and, like a jealous patentee, on no account to make. Now, however, Aylmer resumed these half-forgotten investigations; not, of course, with such hopes or wishes as first suggested them; but because they involved much physiological truth and lay in the path of his proposed scheme for the treatment of Georgiana.

As he led her over the threshold of the laboratory, Georgiana was cold and tremulous. Aylmer looked cheerfully into her face, with intent to reassure her; but was so startled with the intense glow of the birthmark upon the whiteness of her cheek that he could not restrain a strong convulsive shudder. His wife fainted.

``Aminadab! Aminadab!'' shouted Aylmer, stamping violently on the floor.

Forthwith there issued from an inner apartment a man of low stature, but bulky frame, with shaggy hair hanging about his visage, which was grimed with the vapors of the furnace. This personage had been Aylmer’s underworker during his whole scientific career; and was admirably fitted for that office by his great mechanical readiness, and the skill with which, while incapable of comprehending a single principle, he executed all the details of his master’s experiments. With his vast strength, his shaggy hair, his smoky aspect, and the indescribable earthiness that incrusted him, he seemed to represent man’s physical nature; while Aylmer’s slender figure, and pale, intellectual face, were no less apt a type of the spiritual element.

``Throw open the door of the boudoir, Aminadab,’’ said Aylmer, ``and burn a pastil.’’

``Yes, master,’’ answered Aminadab, looking intently at the lifeless form of Georgiana; and then he muttered to himself, ``If she were my wife, I’d never part with that birthmark.’’

When Georgiana recovered consciousness she found herself breathing an atmosphere of penetrating fragrance, the gentle potency of which had recalled her from her deathlike faintness. The scene around her looked like enchantment. Aylmer had converted those smoky, dingy, sombre rooms, where he had spent his brightest years in recondite pursuits, into a series of beautiful apartments not unfit to be the secluded abode of a lovely woman. The walls were hung with gorgeous curtains, which imparted the combination of grandeur and grace that no other species of adornment can achieve; and as they fell from the ceiling to the floor, their rich and ponderous folds, concealing all angles and straight lines, appeared to shut in the scene from infinite space. For aught Georgiana knew, it might be a pavilion among the clouds. And Aylmer, excluding the sunshine, which would have interfered with his chemical processes, had supplied its place with perfumed lamps, emitting flames of various hue, but all uniting in a soft, impurpled radiance. He now knelt by his wife’s side, watching her earnestly, but without alarm; for he was confident in his science, and felt that he could draw a magic circle round her within which no evil might intrude.
``Where am I? Ah, I remember;'' said Georgiana, faintly; and she placed her hand over her cheek to hide the terrible mark from her husband's eyes.

``Fear not, dearest!'' exclaimed he. ``Do not shrink from me! Believe me, Georgiana, I even rejoice in this single imperfection, since it will be such a rapture to remove it.''

``Oh, spare me!'' sadly replied his wife. ``Pray do not look at it again. I never can forget that convulsive shudder.''

In order to soothe Georgiana, and, as it were, to release her mind from the burden of actual things, Aylmer now put in practice some of the light and playful secrets which science had taught him among its profounder lore. Airy figures, absolutely bodiless ideas, and forms of unsubstantial beauty came and danced before her, imprinting their momentary footsteps on beams of light. Though she had some indistinct idea of the method of these optical phenomena, still the illusion was almost perfect enough to warrant the belief that her husband possessed sway over the spiritual world. Then again, when she felt a wish to look forth from her seclusion, immediately, as if her thoughts were answered, the procession of external existence flitted across a screen. The scenery and the figures of actual life were perfectly represented, but with that bewitching, yet indescribable difference which always makes a picture, an image, or a shadow so much more attractive than the original. When wearied of this, Aylmer bade her cast her eyes upon a vessel containing a quantity of earth. She did so, with little interest at first; but was soon startled to perceive the germ of a plant shooting upward from the soil. Then came the slender stalk; the leaves gradually unfolded themselves; and amid them was a perfect and lovely flower.

``It is magical!'' cried Georgiana. ``I dare not touch it.''

``Nay, pluck it,'' answered Aylmer, -- ``pluck it, and inhale its brief perfume while you may. The flower will wither in a few moments and leave nothing save its brown seed vessels; but thence may be perpetuated a race as ephemeral as itself.''

But Georgiana had no sooner touched the flower than the whole plant suffered a blight, its leaves turning coal-black as if by the agency of fire.

``There was too powerful a stimulus,'' said Aylmer, thoughtfully.

To make up for this abortive experiment, he proposed to take her portrait by a scientific process of his own invention. It was to be effected by rays of light striking upon a polished plate of metal. Georgiana assented; but, on looking at the result, was affrighted to find the features of the portrait blurred and indefinable; while the minute figure of a hand appeared where the cheek should have been. Aylmer snatched the metallic plate and threw it into a jar of corrosive acid.
Soon, however, he forgot these mortifying failures. In the intervals of study and chemical experiment he came to her flushed and exhausted, but seemed invigorated by her presence, and spoke in glowing language of the resources of his art. He gave a history of the long dynasty of the alchemists, who spent so many ages in quest of the universal solvent by which the golden principle might be elicited from all things vile and base. Aylmer appeared to believe that, by the plainest scientific logic, it was altogether within the limits of possibility to discover this long-sought medium; “but,” he added, “a philosopher who should go deep enough to acquire the power would attain too lofty a wisdom to stoop to the exercise of it.” Not less singular were his opinions in regard to the elixir vitæ. He more than intimated that it was at his option to concoct a liquid that should prolong life for years, perhaps interminably; but that it would produce a discord in Nature which all the world, and chiefly the quaffer of the immortal nostrum, would find cause to curse.

“Aylmer, are you in earnest?” asked Georgiana, looking at him with amazement and fear. “It is terrible to possess such power, or even to dream of possessing it.”

“Oh, do not tremble, my love,” said her husband. “I would not wrong either you or myself by working such inharmonious effects upon our lives; but I would have you consider how trifling, in comparison, is the skill requisite to remove this little hand.”

At the mention of the birthmark, Georgiana, as usual, shrank as if a redhot iron had touched her cheek.

Again Aylmer applied himself to his labors. She could hear his voice in the distant furnace room giving directions to Aminadab, whose harsh, uncouth, misshapen tones were audible in response, more like the grunt or growl of a brute than human speech. After hours of absence, Aylmer reappeared and proposed that she should now examine his cabinet of chemical products and natural treasures of the earth. Among the former he showed her a small vial, in which, he remarked, was contained a gentle yet most powerful fragrance, capable of impregnating all the breezes that blow across a kingdom. They were of inestimable value, the contents of that little vial; and, as he said so, he threw some of the perfume into the air and filled the room with piercing and invigorating delight.

“And what is this?” asked Georgiana, pointing to a small crystal globe containing a gold-colored liquid. “It is so beautiful to the eye that I could imagine it the elixir of life.”

“In one sense it is;” replied Aylmer; “or, rather, the elixir of immortality. It is the most precious poison that ever was concocted in this world. By its aid I could apportion the lifetime of any mortal at whom you might point your finger. The strength of the dose would determine whether he were to linger out years, or drop dead in the midst of a breath. No king on his guarded throne could keep his life if I, in my private station, should deem that the welfare of millions justified me in depriving him of it.”
``Why do you keep such a terrific drug?'' inquired Georgiana in horror.

``Do not mistrust me, dearest,'' said her husband, smiling; ``its virtuous potency is yet greater than its harmful one. But see! here is a powerful cosmetic. With a few drops of this in a vase of water, freckles may be washed away as easily as the hands are cleansed. A stronger infusion would take the blood out of the cheek, and leave the rosiest beauty a pale ghost.''

``Is it with this lotion that you intend to bathe my cheek?'' asked Georgiana, anxiously.

``Oh, no,'' hastily replied her husband; ``this is merely superficial. Your case demands a remedy that shall go deeper.''

In his interviews with Georgiana, Aylmer generally made minute inquiries as to her sensations and whether the confinement of the rooms and the temperature of the atmosphere agreed with her. These questions had such a particular drift that Georgiana began to conjecture that she was already subjected to certain physical influences, either breathed in with the fragrant air or taken with her food. She fancied likewise, but it might be altogether fancy, that there was a stirring up of her system -- a strange, indefinite sensation creeping through her veins, and tingling, half painfully, half pleasurably, at her heart. Still, whenever she dared to look into the mirror, there she beheld herself pale as a white rose and with the crimson birthmark stamped upon her cheek. Not even Aylmer now hated it so much as she.

To dispel the tedium of the hours which her husband found it necessary to devote to the processes of combination and analysis, Georgiana turned over the volumes of his scientific library. In many dark old tomes she met with chapters full of romance and poetry. They were the works of philosophers of the middle ages, such as Albertus Magnus, Cornelius Agrippa, Paracelsus, and the famous friar who created the prophetic Brazen Head. All these antique naturalists stood in advance of their centuries, yet were imbued with some of their credulity, and therefore were believed, and perhaps imagined themselves to have acquired from the investigation of Nature a power above Nature, and from physics a sway over the spiritual world. Hardly less curious and imaginative were the early volumes of the Transactions of the Royal Society, in which the members, knowing little of the limits of natural possibility, were continually recording wonders or proposing methods whereby wonders might be wrought.

But to Georgiana the most engrossing volume was a large folio from her husband's own hand, in which he had recorded every experiment of his scientific career; its original aim, the methods adopted for its development, and its final success or failure, with the circumstances to which either event was attributable. The book, in truth, was both the history and emblem of his ardent, ambitious, imaginative, yet practical and laborious life. He handled physical details as if there were nothing beyond them; yet spiritualized them all, and redeemed himself from materialism by his strong and eager aspiration towards the infinite. In his grasp the veriest clod
of earth assumed a soul. Georgiana, as she read, reverenced Aylmer and loved him more profoundly than ever, but with a less entire dependence on his judgment than heretofore. Much as he had accomplished, she could not but observe that his most splendid successes were almost invariably failures, if compared with the ideal at which he aimed. His brightest diamonds were the merest pebbles, and felt to be so by himself, in comparison with the inestimable gems which lay hidden beyond his reach. The volume, rich with achievements that had won renown for its author, was yet as melancholy a record as ever mortal hand had penned. It was the sad confession and continual exemplification of the shortcomings of the composite man, the spirit burdened with clay and working in matter; and of the despair that assails the higher nature at finding itself so miserably thwarted by the earthly part. Perhaps every man of genius in whatever sphere might recognize the image of his own experience in Aylmer's journal.

So deeply did these reflections affect Georgiana that she laid her face upon the open volume and burst into tears. In this situation she was found by her husband.

``It is dangerous to read in a sorcerer's books,'' said he with a smile, though his countenance was uneasy and displeased. ``Georgiana, there are pages in that volume which I can scarcely glance over and keep my senses. Take heed lest it prove as detrimental to you.''

``It has made me worship you more than ever,'' said she.

``Ah, wait for this one success,'' rejoined he, ``then worship me if you will. I shall deem myself hardly unworthy of it. But come, I have sought you for the luxury of your voice. Sing to me, dearest.''

So she poured out the liquid music of her voice to quench the thirst of his spirit. He then took his leave with a boyish exuberance of gayety, assuring her that her seclusion would endure but a little longer, and that the result was already certain. Scarcely had he departed when Georgiana felt irresistibly impelled to follow him. She had forgotten to inform Aylmer of a symptom which for two or three hours past had begun to excite her attention. It was a sensation in the fatal birthmark, not painful, but which induced a restlessness throughout her system. Hastening after her husband, she intruded for the first time into the laboratory.

The first thing that struck her eye was the furnace, that hot and feverish worker, with the intense glow of its fire, which by the quantities of soot clustered above it seemed to have been burning for ages. There was a distilling apparatus in full operation. Around the room were retorts, tubes, cylinders, crucibles, and other apparatus of chemical research. An electrical machine stood ready for immediate use. The atmosphere felt oppressively close, and was tainted with gaseous odors which had been tormented forth by the processes of science. The severe and homely simplicity of the apartment, with its naked walls and brick pavement, looked strange, accustomed as Georgiana had become to the fantastic elegance of her boudoir. But
what chiefly, indeed almost solely, drew her attention, was the aspect of Aylmer himself.

He was pale as death, anxious and absorbed, and hung over the furnace as if it depended upon his utmost watchfulness whether the liquid which it was distilling should be the draught of immortal happiness or misery. How different from the sanguine and joyous mien that he had assumed for Georgiana’s encouragement!

“Carefully now, Aminadab; carefully, thou human machine; carefully, thou man of clay!” muttered Aylmer, more to himself than his assistant. “Now, if there be a thought too much or too little, it is all over.”

“Ho! ho!” mumbled Aminadab. “Look, master! Look!”

Aylmer raised his eyes hastily, and at first reddened, then grew paler than ever, on beholding Georgiana. He rushed towards her and seized her arm with a gripe that left the print of his fingers upon it.

“Why do you come hither? Have you no trust in your husband?” cried he, impetuously. “Would you throw the blight of that fatal birthmark over my labors? It is not well done. Go, prying woman, go!”

“Nay, Aylmer,” said Georgiana with the firmness of which she possessed no stinted endowment, “it is not you that have a right to complain. You mistrust your wife; you have concealed the anxiety with which you watch the development of this experiment. Think not so unworthily of me, my husband. Tell me all the risk we run, and fear not that I shall shrink; for my share in it is far less than your own.”

“No, no, Georgiana!” said Aylmer, impatiently; “it must not be.”

“I submit,” replied she calmly. “And, Aylmer, I shall quaff whatever draught you bring me; but it will be on the same principle that would induce me to take a dose of poison if offered by your hand.”

“My noble wife,” said Aylmer, deeply moved, “I knew not the height and depth of your nature until now. Nothing shall be concealed. Know, then, that this crimson hand, superficial as it seems, has clutched its grasp into your being with a strength of which I had no previous conception. I have already administered agents powerful enough to do aught except to change your entire physical system. Only one thing remains to be tried. If that fail us we are ruined.”

“Why did you hesitate to tell me this?” asked she.

“Because, Georgiana,” said Aylmer, in a low voice, “there is danger.”

“Danger? There is but one danger -- that this horrible stigma shall be left upon my cheek!” cried Georgiana. “Remove it, remove it, whatever be the cost, or we shall both go mad!”
``Heaven knows your words are too true,'' said Aylmer, sadly. ``And now, dearest, return to your boudoir. In a little while all will be tested.''

He conducted her back and took leave of her with a solemn tenderness which spoke far more than his words how much was now at stake. After his departure Georgiana became rapt in musings. She considered the character of Aylmer, and did it completer justice than at any previous moment. Her heart exulted, while it trembled, at his honorable love -- so pure and lofty that it would accept nothing less than perfection nor miserably make itself contented with an earthlier nature than he had dreamed of. She felt how much more precious was such a sentiment than that meaner kind which would have borne with the imperfection for her sake, and have been guilty of treason to holy love by degrading its perfect idea to the level of the actual; and with her whole spirit she prayed that, for a single moment, she might satisfy his highest and deepest conception. Longer than one moment she well knew it could not be; for his spirit was ever on the march, ever ascending, and each instant required something that was beyond the scope of the instant before.

The sound of her husband’s footsteps aroused her. He bore a crystal goblet containing a liquor colorless as water, but bright enough to be the draught of immortality. Aylmer was pale; but it seemed rather the consequence of a highly-wrought state of mind and tension of spirit than of fear or doubt.

``The concoction of the draught has been perfect,'' said he, in answer to Georgiana’s look. ``Unless all my science have deceived me, it cannot fail.''

``Save on your account, my dearest Aylmer,'' observed his wife, ``I might wish to put off this birthmark of mortality by relinquishing mortality itself in preference to any other mode. Life is but a sad possession to those who have attained precisely the degree of moral advancement at which I stand. Were I weaker and blinder it might be happiness. Were I stronger, it might be endured hopefully. But, being what I find myself, methinks I am of all mortals the most fit to die.''

``You are fit for heaven without tasting death!'' replied her husband. ``But why do we speak of dying? The draught cannot fail. Behold its effect upon this plant.''

On the window seat there stood a geranium diseased with yellow blotches, which had overspread all its leaves. Aylmer poured a small quantity of the liquid upon the soil in which it grew. In a little time, when the roots of the plant had taken up the moisture, the unsightly blotches began to be extinguished in a living verdure.

``There needed no proof,'' said Georgiana, quietly. ``Give me the goblet I joyfully stake all upon your word.''

``Drink, then, thou lofty creature!'' exclaimed Aylmer, with fervid admiration. ``There is no taint of imperfection on thy spirit. Thy sensible frame, too, shall soon be all perfect.''

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She quaffed the liquid and returned the goblet to his hand.

``It is grateful,'' said she with a placid smile. ``Methinks it is like water from a heavenly fountain; for it contains I know not what of unobtrusive fragrance and deliciousness. It allays a feverish thirst that had parched me for many days. Now, dearest, let me sleep. My earthly senses are closing over my spirit like the leaves around the heart of a rose at sunset’’

She spoke the last words with a gentle reluctance, as if it required almost more energy than she could command to pronounce the faint and lingering syllables. Scarcely had they loitered through her lips ere she was lost in slumber. Aylmer sat by her side, watching her aspect with the emotions proper to a man the whole value of whose existence was involved in the process now to be tested. Mingled with this mood, however, was the philosophic investigation characteristic of the man of science. Not the minutest symptom escaped him. A heightened flush of the cheek, a slight irregularity of breath, a quiver of the eyelid, a hardly perceptible tremor through the frame, -- such were the details which, as the moments passed, he wrote down in his folio volume. Intense thought had set its stamp upon every previous page of that volume, but the thoughts of years were all concentrated upon the last.

While thus employed, he failed not to gaze often at the fatal hand, and not without a shudder. Yet once, by a strange and unaccountable impulse he pressed it with his lips. His spirit recoiled, however; in the very act, and Georgiana, out of the midst of her deep sleep, moved uneasily and murmured as if in remonstrance. Again Aylmer resumed his watch. Nor was it without avail. The crimson hand, which at first had been strongly visible upon the marble paleness of Georgiana's cheek, now grew more faintly outlined. She remained not less pale than ever; but the birthmark with every breath that came and went, lost somewhat of its former distinctness. Its presence had been awful; its departure was more awful still. Watch the stain of the rainbow fading out the sky, and you will know how that mysterious symbol passed away.

``By Heaven! it is well-nigh gone!’’ said Aylmer to himself, in almost irrepressible ecstasy. ``I can scarcely trace it now. Success! success! And now it is like the faintest rose color. The lightest flush of blood across her cheek would overcome it. But she is so pale!’’

He drew aside the window curtain and suffered the light of natural day to fall into the room and rest upon her cheek. At the same time he heard a gross, hoarse chuckle, which he had long known as his servant Aminadab's expression of delight.

``Ah, clod! ah, earthly mass!’’ cried Aylmer, laughing in a sort of frenzy, ``you have served me well! Matter and spirit -- earth and heaven -- have both done their part in this! Laugh, thing of the senses! You have earned the right to laugh.’’

These exclamations broke Georgiana’s sleep. She slowly unclosed her eyes and gazed into the mirror which her husband had arranged for that purpose. A faint
smile flitted over her lips when she recognized how barely perceptible was now
that crimson hand which had once blazed forth with such disastrous brilliancy as
to scare away all their happiness. But then her eyes sought Aylmer’s face with a
trouble and anxiety that he could by no means account for.

``My poor Aylmer!’’ murmured she.

``Poor? Nay, richest, happiest, most favored!’’ exclaimed he. ```My peerless bride,
it is successful! You are perfect!’’

``My poor Aylmer,’’ she repeated, with a more than human tenderness, you have
aimed loftily; you have done nobly. Do not repent that with so high and pure a feel-
ing, you have rejected the best the earth could offer. Aylmer, dearest Aylmer, I am
dying!’’

Alas! it was too true! The fatal hand had grappled with the mystery of life, and
was the bond by which an angelic spirit kept itself in union with a mortal frame.
As the last crimson tint of the birthmark -- that sole token of human imperfection
-- faded from her cheek, the parting breath of the now perfect woman passed into
the atmosphere, and her soul, lingering a moment near her husband, took its heav-
enward flight. Then a hoarse, chuckling laugh was heard again! Thus ever does the
gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence
which, in this dim sphere of half development, demands the completeness of a
higher state. Yet, had Alymer reached a profounder wisdom, he need not thus have
flung away the happiness which would have woven his mortal life of the selfsame
texture with the celestial. The momentary circumstance was too strong for him; he
failed to look beyond the shadowy scope of time, and, living once for all in eternity,
to find the perfect future in the present.
THAT very singular man, old Dr. Heidegger, once invited four venerable friends to meet him in his study. There were three white-bearded gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, and a withered gentlewoman, whose name was the Widow Wycherly. They were all melancholy old creatures, who had been unfortunate in life, and whose greatest misfortune it was that they were not long ago in their graves. Mr. Medbourne, in the vigor of his age, had been a prosperous merchant, but had lost his all by a frantic speculation, and was now little better than a mendicant. Colonel Killigrew had wasted his best years, and his health and substance, in the pursuit of sinful pleasures, which had given birth to a brood of pains, such as the gout, and divers other torments of soul and body. Mr. Gascoigne was a ruined politician, a man of evil fame, or at least had been so till time had buried him from the knowledge of the present generation, and made him obscure instead of infamous. As for the Widow Wycherly, tradition tells us that she was a great beauty in her day; but, for a long while past, she had lived in deep seclusion, on account of certain scandalous stories which had prejudiced the gentry of the town against her. It is a circumstance worth mentioning that each of these three old gentlemen, Mr. Medbourne, Colonel Killigrew, and Mr. Gascoigne, were early lovers of the Widow Wycherly, and had once been on the point of cutting each other’s throats for her sake. And, before proceeding further, I will merely hint that Dr. Heidegger and all his foul guests were sometimes thought to be a little beside themselves, -- as is not unfrequently the case with old people, when worried either by present troubles or woful recollections.

“My dear old friends,” said Dr. Heidegger, motioning them to be seated, “I am desirous of your assistance in one of those little experiments with which I amuse myself here in my study.”

If all stories were true, Dr. Heidegger’s study must have been a very curious place. It was a dim, old-fashioned chamber; festooned with cobwebs, and besprinkled with antique dust. Around the walls stood several oaken bookcases, the lower shelves of which were filled with rows of gigantic folios and black-letter quartos, and the upper with little parchment-covered duodecimos. Over the central bookcase was a bronze bust of Hippocrates, with which, according to some authorities, Dr. Heidegger was accustomed to hold consultations in all difficult cases of his practice. In the obscurest corner of the room stood a tall and narrow oaken closet, with its door ajar, within which doubtfully appeared a skeleton. Between two of the bookcases hung a looking-glass, presenting its high and dusty plate within a tarnished gilt frame. Among many wonderful stories related of this mirror, it was fabled that the spirits of all the doctor’s deceased patients dwelt within its verge, and would stare him in the face whenever he looked thitherward. The opposite side of the chamber was ornamented with the full-length portrait of a young lady, arrayed in the faded magnificence of silk, satin, and brocade, and with a visage as faded as her dress. Above half a century ago, Dr. Heidegger had been on the point
of marriage with this young lady; but, being affected with some slight disorder, she had swallowed one of her lover’s prescriptions, and died on the bridal evening. The greatest curiosity of the study remains to be mentioned; it was a ponderous folio volume, bound in black leather; with massive silver clasps. There were no letters on the back, and nobody could tell the title of the book. But it was well known to be a book of magic; and once, when a chambermaid had lifted it, merely to brush away the dust, the skeleton had rattled in its closet, the picture of the young lady had stepped one foot upon the floor; and several ghastly faces had peeped forth from the mirror; while the brazen head of Hippocrates frowned, and said, -- “Forbear!”

Such was Dr. Heidegger’s study. On the summer afternoon of our tale a small round table, as black as ebony, stood in the centre of the room, sustaining a cut-glass vase of beautiful form and elaborate workmanship. The sunshine came through the window, between the heavy festoons of two faded damask curtains, and fell directly across this vase; so that a mild splendor was reflected from it on the ashen visages of the five old people who sat around. Four champagne glasses were also on the table.

“My dear old friends,” repeated Dr. Heidegger, “may I reckon on your aid in performing an exceedingly curious experiment?”

Now Dr. Heidegger was a very strange old gentleman, whose eccentricity had become the nucleus for a thousand fantastic stories. Some of these fables, to my shame be it spoken, might possibly be traced back to my own veracious self; and if any passages of the present tale should startle the reader’s faith, I must be content to bear the stigma of a fiction monger.

When the doctor’s four guests heard him talk of his proposed experiment, they anticipated nothing more wonderful than the murder of a mouse in an air pump, or the examination of a cobweb by the microscope, or some similar nonsense, with which he was constantly in the habit of pestering his intimates. But without waiting for a reply, Dr. Heidegger hobbled across the chamber, and returned with the same ponderous folio, bound in black leather, which common report affirmed to be a book of magic. Undoing the silver clasps, he opened the volume, and took from among its black-letter pages a rose, or what was once a rose, though now the green leaves and crimson petals had assumed one brownish hue, and the ancient flower seemed ready to crumble to dust in the doctor’s hands.

“This rose,” said Dr. Heidegger, with a sigh, “this same withered and crumbling flower, blossomed five and fifty years ago. It was given me by Sylvia Ward, whose portrait hangs yonder; and I meant to wear it in my bosom at our wedding. Five and fifty years it has been treasured between the leaves of this old volume. Now, would you deem it possible that this rose of half a century could ever bloom again?”

“Nonsense!” said the Widow Wycherly, with a peevish toss of her head. “You might as well ask whether an old woman’s wrinkled face could ever bloom again.”
``See!'' answered Dr. Heidegger.

He uncovered the vase, and threw the faded rose into the water which it contained. At first, it lay lightly on the surface of the fluid, appearing to imbibe none of its moisture. Soon, however, a singular change began to be visible. The crushed and dried petals stirred, and assumed a deepening tinge of crimson, as if the flower were reviving from a deathlike slumber; the slender stalk and twigs of foliage became green; and there was the rose of half a century, looking as fresh as when Sylvia Ward had first given it to her lover. It was scarcely full blown; for some of its delicate red leaves curled modestly around its moist bosom, within which two or three dewdrops were sparkling.

``That is certainly a very pretty deception,'' said the doctor's friends; carelessly, however, for they had witnessed greater miracles at a conjurer's show; ``pray how was it effected?''

``Did you never hear of the 'Fountain of Youth?''' asked Dr. Heidegger, ``which Ponce De Leon, the Spanish adventurer, went in search of two or three centuries ago?''

``But did Ponce De Leon ever find it?'' said the Widow Wycherly.

``No,'' answered Dr. Heidegger, ``for he never sought it in the right place. The famous Fountain of Youth, if I am rightly informed, is situated in the southern part of the Floridian peninsula, not far from Lake Macaco. Its source is overshadowed by several gigantic magnolias, which, though numberless centuries old, have been kept as fresh as violets by the virtues of this wonderful water. An acquaintance of mine, knowing my curiosity in such matters, has sent me what you see in the vase.''

``Ahem!'' said Colonel Killigrew, who believed not a word of the doctor's story; ``and what may be the effect of this fluid on the human frame?''

``You shall judge for yourself, my dear colonel,'' replied Dr. Heidegger; ``and all of you, my respected friends, are welcome to so much of this admirable fluid as may restore to you the bloom of youth. For my own part, having had much trouble in growing old, I am in no hurry to grow young again. With your permission, therefore, I will merely watch the progress of the experiment.''

While he spoke, Dr. Heidegger had been filling the four champagne glasses with the water of the Fountain of Youth. It was apparently impregnated with an effervescent gas, for little bubbles were continually ascending from the depths of the glasses, and bursting in silvery spray at the surface. As the liquor diffused a pleasant perfume, the old people doubted not that it possessed cordial and comfortable properties; and though utter sceptics as to its rejuvenescent power, they were inclined to swallow it at once. But Dr. Heidegger besought them to stay a moment.
“Before you drink, my respectable old friends,” said he, “it would be well that, with the experience of a lifetime to direct you, you should draw up a few general rules for your guidance, in passing a second time through the perils of youth. Think what a sin and shame it would be, if, with your peculiar advantages, you should not become patterns of virtue and wisdom to all the young people of the age!”

The doctor’s four venerable friends made him no answer; except by a feeble and tremulous laugh; so very ridiculous was the idea that, knowing how closely repentance treads behind the steps of error, they should ever go astray again.

“Drink, then,” said the doctor, bowing: “I rejoice that I have so well selected the subjects of my experiment.”

With palsied hands, they raised the glasses to their lips. The liquor, if it really possessed such virtues as Dr. Heidegger imputed to it, could not have been bestowed on four human beings who needed it more wofully. They looked as if they had never known what youth or pleasure was, but had been the offspring of Nature’s dotage, and always the gray, decrepit, sapless, miserable creatures, who now sat stooping round the doctor’s table, without life enough in their souls or bodies to be animated even by the prospect of growing young again. They drank off the water, and replaced their glasses on the table.

Assuredly there was an almost immediate improvement in the aspect of the party, not unlike what might have been produced by a glass of generous wine, together with a sudden glow of cheerful sunshine brightening over all their visages at once. There was a healthful suffusion on their cheeks, instead of the ashen hue that had made them look so corpse-like. They gazed at one another, and fancied that some magic power had really begun to smooth away the deep and sad inscriptions which Father Time had been so long engraving on their brows. The Widow Wycherly adjusted her cap, for she felt almost like a woman again.

“Give us more of this wondrous water!” cried they, eagerly. “We are younger -- but we are still too old! Quick -- give us more!”

“Patience, patience!” quoth Dr. Heidegger, who sat watching the experiment with philosophic coolness. “You have been a long time growing old. Surely, you might be content to grow young in half an hour! But the water is at your service.”

Again he filled their glasses with the liquor of youth, enough of which still remained in the vase to turn half the old people in the city to the age of their own grandchildren. While the bubbles were yet sparkling on the brim, the doctor’s four guests snatched their glasses from the table, and swallowed the contents at a single gulp. Was it delusion? even while the draught was passing down their throats, it seemed to have wrought a change on their whole systems. Their eyes grew clear and bright; a dark shade deepened among their silvery locks, they sat around the table, three gentlemen of middle age, and a woman, hardly beyond her buxom prime.
``My dear widow, you are charming!'' cried Colonel Killigrew, whose eyes had been fixed upon her face, while the shadows of age were flitting from it like darkness from the crimson daybreak.

The fair widow knew, of old, that Colonel Killigrew's compliments were not always measured by sober truth; so she started up and ran to the mirror, still dreading that the ugly visage of an old woman would meet her gaze. Meanwhile, the three gentlemen behaved in such a manner as proved that the water of the Fountain of Youth possessed some intoxicating qualities; unless, indeed, their exhilaration of spirits were merely a lightsome dizziness caused by the sudden removal of the weight of years. Mr. Gascoigne's mind seemed to run on political topics, but whether relating to the past, present, or future, could not easily be determined, since the same ideas and phrases have been in vogue these fifty years. Now he rattled forth full-throated sentences about patriotism, national glory, and the people's right; now he muttered some perilous stuff or other, in a sly and doubtful whisper, so cautiously that even his own conscience could scarcely catch the secret; and now, again, he spoke in measured accents, and a deeply deferential tone, as if a royal ear were listening to his well-turned periods. Colonel Killigrew all this time had been trolling forth a jolly bottle song, and ringing his glass in symphony with the chorus, while his eyes wandered toward the buxom figure of the Widow Wycherly. On the other side of the table, Mr. Medbourne was involved in a calculation of dollars and cents, with which was strangely intermingled a project for supplying the East Indies with ice, by harnessing a team of whales to the polar icebergs.

As for the Widow Wycherly, she stood before the mirror courtesying and simpering to her own image, and greeting it as the friend whom she loved better than all the world beside. She thrust her face close to the glass, to see whether some long-remembered wrinkle or crow's foot had indeed vanished. She examined whether the snow had so entirely melted from her hair that the venerable cap could be safely thrown aside. At last, turning briskly away, she came with a sort of dancing step to the table.

``My dear old doctor,'' cried she, ``pray favor me with another glass!''

``Certainly, my dear madam, certainly!'' replied the complaisant doctor; ``see! I have already filled the glasses."

There, in fact, stood the four glasses, brimful of this wonderful water; the delicate spray of which, as it effervesced from the surface, resembled the tremulous glitter of diamonds. It was now so nearly sunset that the chamber had grown duskier than ever; but a mild and moonlike splendor gleamed from within the vase, and rested alike on the four guests and on the doctor's venerable figure. He sat in a high-backed, elaborately-carved, oaken arm-chair, with a gray dignity of aspect that might have well befitted that very Father Time, whose power had never been disputed, save by this fortunate company. Even while quaffing the third draught of the Fountain of Youth, they were almost awed by the expression of his mysterious visage.
But, the next moment, the exhilarating gush of young life shot through their veins. They were now in the happy prime of youth. Age, with its miserable train of cares and sorrows and diseases, was remembered only as the trouble of a dream, from which they had joyously awoke. The fresh gloss of the soul, so early lost, and without which the world’s successive scenes had been but a gallery of faded pictures, again threw its enchantment over all their prospects. They felt like new-created beings in a new-created universe.

"We are young! We are young!" they cried exultingly.

Youth, like the extremity of age, had effaced the strongly-marked characteristics of middle life, and mutually assimilated them all. They were a group of merry youngsters, almost maddened with the exuberant frolicsomeness of their years. The most singular effect of their gayety was an impulse to mock the infirmity and decrepitude of which they had so lately been the victims. They laughed loudly at their old-fashioned attire, the wide-skirted coats and flapped waistcoats of the young men, and the ancient cap and gown of the blooming girl. One limped across the floor like a gouty grandfather; one set a pair of spectacles astride of his nose, and pretended to pore over the black-letter pages of the book of magic; a third seated himself in an arm-chair, and strove to imitate the venerable dignity of Dr. Heidegger. Then all shouted mirthfully, and leaped about the room. The Widow Wycherly -- if so fresh a damsels could be called a widow-tripped up to the doctor’s chair, with a mischievous merriment in her rosy face.

"Doctor, you dear old soul," cried she, "get up and dance with me!" And then the four young people laughed louder than ever, to think what a queer figure the poor old doctor would cut.

"Pray excuse me," answered the doctor quietly. "I am old and rheumatic, and my dancing days were over long ago. But either of these gay young gentlemen will be glad of so pretty a partner."

"Dance with me, Clara!" cried Colonel Killigrew.

"No, no, I will be her partner!" shouted Mr. Gascoigne.

"She promised me her hand, fifty years ago!" exclaimed Mr. Medbourne.

They all gathered round her. One caught both her hands in his passionate grasp another threw his arm about her waist -- the third buried his hand among the glossy curls that clustered beneath the widow’s cap. Blushing, panting, struggling, chiding, laughing, her warm breath fanning each of their faces by turns, she strove to disengage herself, yet still remained in their triple embrace. Never was there a livelier picture of youthful rivalship, with bewitching beauty for the prize. Yet, by a strange deception, owing to the duskykness of the chamber; and the antique dresses which they still wore, the tall mirror is said to have reflected the figures of the three
old, gray, withered grandsires, ridiculously contending for the skinny ugliness of a shrivelled grandam.

But they were young: their burning passions proved them so. Inflamed to madness by the coquetry of the girl-widow, who neither granted nor quite withheld her favors, the three rivals began to interchange threatening glances. Still keeping hold of the fair prize, they grappled fiercely at one another’s throats. As they struggled to and fro, the table was over-turned, and the vase dashed into a thousand fragments. The precious Water of Youth flowed in a bright stream across the floor, moistening the wings of a butterfly, which, grown old in the decline of summer, had alighted there to die. The insect fluttered lightly through the chamber, and settled on the snowy head of Dr. Heidegger.

``Come, come, gentlemen! -- come, Madam Wycherly,’’ exclaimed the doctor; ``I really must protest against this riot.’’

They stood still and shivered; for it seemed as if gray Time were calling them back from their sunny youth, far down into the chill and darksome vale of years. They looked at old Dr. Heidegger, who sat in his carved arm-chair, holding the rose of half a century, which he had rescued from among the fragments of the shattered vase. At the motion of his hand, the four rioters resumed their seats; the more readily, because their violent exertions had wearied them, youthful though they were.

``My poor Sylvia’s rose!’” ejaculated Dr. Heidegger, holding it in the light of the sunset clouds; “it appears to be fading again.”

And so it was. Even while the party were looking at it, the flower continued to shrivel up, till it became as dry and fragile as when the doctor had first thrown it into the vase. He shook off the few drops of moisture which clung to its petals.

``I love it as well thus as in its dewy freshness,’’ observed he, pressing the withered rose to his withered lips. While he spoke, the butterfly fluttered down from the doctor’s snowy head, and fell upon the floor.

His guests shivered again. A strange chillness, whether of the body or spirit they could not tell, was creeping gradually over them all. They gazed at one another, and fancied that each fleeting moment snatched away a charm, and left a deepening furrow where none had been before. Was it an illusion? Had the changes of a lifetime been crowded into so brief a space, and were they now four aged people, sitting with their old friend, Dr. Heidegger?

``Are we grown old again, so soon?’” cried they, dolefully.

In truth they had. The Water of Youth possessed merely a virtue more transient than that of wine. The delirium which it created had effervesced away. Yes! they were old again. With a shuddering impulse, that showed her a woman still,
the widow clasped her skinny hands before her face, and wished that the coffin lid were over it, since it could be no longer beautiful.

“Yes, friends, ye are old again,” said Dr. Heidegger; “and lo! the Water of Youth is all lavished on the ground. Well -- I bemoan it not; for if the fountain gushed at my very doorstep, I would not stoop to bathe my lips in it -- no, though its delirium were for years instead of moments. Such is the lesson ye have taught me!”

But the doctor’s four friends had taught no such lesson to themselves. They resolved forthwith to make a pilgrimage to Florida, and quaff at morning, noon, and night, from the Fountain of Youth.

Note: In an English review, not long since I have been accused of plagiarizing the idea of this story from a chapter in one of the novels of Alexandre Dumas. There has undoubtedly been a plagiarism on one side or the other; but as my story was written a good deal more than twenty years ago, and as the novel is of considerably more recent date, I take pleasure in thinking that M. Dumas has done me the honor to appropriate one of the fanciful conceptions of my earlier days. He is heartily welcome to it; nor is it the only instance, by many, in which the great French romancer has exercised the privilege of commanding genius by confiscating the intellectual property of less famous people to his own use and behoof. September, 1860.
In some old magazine or newspaper I recollect a story, told as truth, of a man--let us call him Wakefield--who absented himself for a long time from his wife. The fact, thus abstractedly stated, is not very uncommon, nor--without a proper distinction of circumstances--to be condemned either as naughty or nonsensical. Howbeit, this, though far from the most aggravated, is perhaps the strangest, instance on record, of marital delinquency; and, moreover, as remarkable a freak as may be found in the whole list of human oddities. The wedded couple lived in London. The man, under pretence of going a journey, took lodgings in the next street to his own house, and there, unheard of by his wife or friends, and without the shadow of a reason for such self-banishment, dwelt upwards of twenty years. During that period, he beheld his home every day, and frequently the forlorn Mrs. Wakefield. And after so great a gap in his matrimonial felicity--when his death was reckoned certain, his estate settled, his name dismissed from memory, and his wife, long, long ago, resigned to her autumnal widowhood--he entered the door one evening, quietly, as from a day’s absence, and became a loving spouse till death.

This outline is all that I remember. But the incident, though of the purest originality, unexampled, and probably never to be repeated, is one, I think, which appeals to the generous sympathies of mankind. We know, each for himself, that none of us would perpetrate such a folly, yet feel as if some other might. To my own contemplations, at least, it has often recurred, always exciting wonder, but with a sense that the story must be true, and a conception of its hero’s character. Whenever any subject so forcibly affects the mind, time is well spent in thinking of it. If the reader choose, let him do his own meditation; or if he prefer to ramble with me through the twenty years of Wakefield’s vagary, I bid him welcome; trusting that there will be a pervading spirit and a moral, even should we fail to find them, done up neatly, and condensed into the final sentence. Thought has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral.

What sort of a man was Wakefield? We are free to shape out our own idea, and call it by his name. He was now in the meridian of life; his matrimonial affections, never violent, were sobered into a calm, habitual sentiment; of all husbands, he was likely to be the most constant, because a certain sluggishness would keep his heart at rest, wherever it might be placed. He was intellectual, but not actively so; his mind occupied itself in long and lazy musings, that ended to no purpose, or had not vigor to attain it; his thoughts were seldom so energetic as to seize hold of words. Imagination, in the proper meaning of the term, made no part of Wakefield’s gifts. With a cold but not depraved nor wandering heart, and a mind never feverish with riotous thoughts, nor perplexed with originality, who could have anticipated that our friend would entitle himself to a foremost place among the doers of eccentric deeds? Had his acquaintances been asked, who was the man in London the sur-
est to perform nothing today which should be remembered on the morrow, they would have thought of Wakefield. Only the wife of his bosom might have hesitated. She, without having analyzed his character, was partly aware of a quiet selfishness, that had rusted into his inactive mind; of a peculiar sort of vanity, the most uneasy attribute about him; of a disposition to craft which had seldom produced more positive effects than the keeping of petty secrets, hardly worth revealing; and, lastly, of what she called a little strangeness, sometimes, in the good man. This latter quality is indefinable, and perhaps non-existent.

Let us now imagine Wakefield bidding adieu to his wife. It is the dusk of an October evening. His equipment is a drab great-coat, a hat covered with an oilcloth, top-boots, an umbrella in one hand and a small portmanteau in the other. He has informed Mrs. Wakefield that he is to take the night coach into the country. She would fain inquire the length of his journey, its object, and the probable time of his return; but, indulgent to his harmless love of mystery, interrogates him only by a look. He tells her not to expect him positively by the return coach, nor to be alarmed should he tarry three or four days; but, at all events, to look for him at supper on Friday evening. Wakefield himself, be it considered, has no suspicion of what is before him. He holds out his hand, she gives her own, and meets his parting kiss in the matter-of-course way of a ten years’ matrimony; and forth goes the middle-aged Mr. Wakefield, almost resolved to perplex his good lady by a whole week’s absence. After the door has closed behind him, she perceives it thrust partly open, and a vision of her husband’s face, through the aperture, smiling on her, and gone in a moment. For the time, this little incident is dismissed without a thought. But, long afterwards, when she has been more years a widow than a wife, that smile recurs, and flickers across all her reminiscences of Wakefield’s visage. In her many musings, she surrounds the original smile with a multitude of fantasies, which make it strange and awful: as, for instance, if she imagines him in a coffin, that parting look is frozen on his pale features; or, if she dreams of him in heaven, still his blessed spirit wears a quiet and crafty smile. Yet, for its sake, when all others have given him up for dead, she sometimes doubts whether she is a widow.

But our business is with the husband. We must hurry after him along the street, ere he lose his individuality, and melt into the great mass of London life. It would be vain searching for him there. Let us follow close at his heels, therefore, until, after several superfluous turns and doublings, we find him comfortably established by the fireside of a small apartment, previously bespoken. He is in the next street to his own, and at his journey’s end. He can scarcely trust his good fortune, in having got thither unperceived—recollecting that, at one time, he was delayed by the throng, in the very focus of a lighted lantern; and, again, there were footsteps that seemed to tread behind his own, distinct from the multitudinous tramp around him; and, anon, he heard a voice shouting afar, and fancied that it called his name. Doubtless, a dozen busybodies had been watching him, and told his wife the whole affair. Poor Wakefield! Little knowest thou thine own insignificance in this great world! No mortal eye but mine has traced thee. Go quietly to thy bed, foolish man: and, on the
morning, if thou wilt be wise, get thee home to good Mrs. Wakefield, and tell her the truth. Remove not thyself, even for a little week, from thy place in her chaste bosom. Were she, for a single moment, to deem thee dead, or lost, or lastingly divided from her, thou wouldst be woefully conscious of a change in thy true wife forever after. It is perilous to make a chasm in human affections; not that they gape so long and wide—-but so quickly close again!

Almost repenting of his frolic, or whatever it may be termed, Wakefield lies down betimes, and starting from his first nap, spreads forth his arms into the wide and solitary waste of the unaccustomed bed. “No,”—thinks he, gathering the bedclothes about him,—“I will not sleep alone another night.”

In the morning he rises earlier than usual, and sets himself to consider what he really means to do. Such are his loose and rambling modes of thought that he has taken this very singular step with the consciousness of a purpose, indeed, but without being able to define it sufficiently for his own contemplation. The vagueness of the project, and the convulsive effort with which he plunges into the execution of it, are equally characteristic of a feeble-minded man. Wakefield sifts his ideas, however, as minutely as he may, and finds himself curious to know the progress of matters at home—how his exemplary wife will endure her widowhood of a week; and, briefly, how the little sphere of creatures and circumstances, in which he was a central object, will be affected by his removal. A morbid vanity, therefore, lies nearest the bottom of the affair. But, how is he to attain his ends? Not, certainly, by keeping close in this comfortable lodging, where, though he slept and awoke in the next street to his home, he is as effectually abroad as if the stage-coach had been whirling him away all night. Yet, should he reappear, the whole project is knocked in the head. His poor brains being hopelessly puzzled with this dilemma, he at length ventures out, partly resolving to cross the head of the street, and send one hasty glance towards his forsaken domicile. Habit—for he is a man of habits—takes him by the hand, and guides him, wholly unaware, to his own door, where, just at the critical moment, he is aroused by the scraping of his foot upon the step. Wakefield! whither are you going?

At that instant his fate was turning on the pivot. Little dreaming of the doom to which his first backward step devotes him, he hurries away, breathless with agitation hitherto unfelt, and hardly dares turn his head at the distant corner. Can it be that nobody caught sight of him? Will not the whole household—-the decent Mrs. Wakefield, the smart maid servant, and the dirty little footboy—raise a hue and cry, through London streets, in pursuit of their fugitive lord and master? Wonderful escape! He gathers courage to pause and look homeward, but is perplexed with a sense of change about the familiar edifice, such as affects us all, when, after a separation of months or years, we again see some hill or lake, or work of art, with which we were friends of old. In ordinary cases, this indescribable impression is caused by the comparison and contrast between our imperfect reminiscences and the reality. In Wakefield, the magic of a single night has wrought a similar transformation, because, in that brief period, a great moral change has been effected. But this is a se-
cret from himself. Before leaving the spot, he catches a far and momentary glimpse of his wife, passing athwart the front window, with her face turned towards the head of the street. The crafty nincompoop takes to his heels, scared with the idea that, among a thousand such atoms of mortality, her eye must have detected him. Right glad is his heart, though his brain be somewhat dizzy, when he finds himself by the coal fire of his lodgings.

So much for the commencement of this long whimwham. After the initial conception, and the stirring up of the man’s sluggish temperament to put it in practice, the whole matter evolves itself in a natural train. We may suppose him, as the result of deep deliberation, buying a new wig, of reddish hair, and selecting sundry garments, in a fashion unlike his customary suit of brown, from a Jew’s old-clothes bag. It is accomplished. Wakefield is another man. The new system being now established, a retrograde movement to the old would be almost as difficult as the step that placed him in his unparalleled position. Furthermore, he is rendered obstinate by a sulkiness occasionally incident to his temper, and brought on at present by the inadequate sensation which he conceives to have been produced in the bosom of Mrs. Wakefield. He will not go back until she be frightened half to death. Well; twice or thrice has she passed before his sight, each time with a heavier step, a paler cheek, and more anxious brow; and in the third week of his non-appearance he detects a portent of evil entering the house, in the guise of an apothecary. Next day the knocker is muffled. Towards nightfall comes the chariot of a physician, and deposits its big-wigged and solemn burden at Wakefield’s door; whence, after a quarter of an hour’s visit, he emerges, perchance the herald of a funeral. Dear woman! Will she die? By this time, Wakefield is excited to something like energy of feeling, but still lingers away from his wife’s bedside, pleading with his conscience that she must not be disturbed at such a juncture. If aught else restrains him, he does not know it. In the course of a few weeks she gradually recovers; the crisis is over; her heart is sad, perhaps, but quiet; and, let him return soon or late, it will never be feverish for him again. Such ideas glimmer through the midst of Wakefield’s mind, and render him indistinctly conscious that an almost impassable gulf divides his hired apartment from his former home. “It is but in the next street!” he sometimes says. Fool! it is in another world. Hitherto, he has put off his return from one particular day to another; henceforward, he leaves the precise time undetermined. Not tomorrow—probably next week—pretty soon. Poor man! The dead have nearly as much chance of revisiting their earthly homes as the self-banished Wakefield.

Would that I had a folio to write, instead of an article of a dozen pages! Then might I exemplify how an influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity. Wakefield is spell-bound. We must leave him for ten years or so, to haunt around his house, without once crossing the threshold, and to be faithful to his wife, with all the affection of which his heart is capable, while he is slowly fading out of hers. Long since, it must be remarked, he had lost the perception of singularity in his conduct.
Now for a scene! Amind the throng of a London street we distinguish a man, now waxing elderly, with few characteristics to attract careless observers, yet bearing, in his whole aspect, the handwriting of no common fate, for such as have the skill to read it. He is meagre; his low and narrow forehead is deeply wrinkled; his eyes, small and lustreless, sometimes wander apprehensively about him, but oftener seem to look inward. He bends his head, and moves with an indescribable obliquity of gait, as if unwilling to display his full front to the world. Watch him long enough to see what we have described, and you will allow that circumstances—which often produce remarkable men from nature’s ordinary handiwork—have produced one such here. Next, leaving him to sidle along the footwalk, cast your eyes in the opposite direction, where a portly female, considerably in the wane of life, with a prayer-book in her hand, is proceeding to yonder church. She has the placid mien of settled widowhood. Her regrets have either died away, or have become so essential to her heart, that they would be poorly exchanged for joy. Just as the lean man and well-conditioned woman are passing, a slight obstruction occurs, and brings these two figures directly in contact. Their hands touch; the pressure of the crowd forces her bosom against his shoulder; they stand, face to face, staring into each other’s eyes. After a ten years’ separation, thus Wakefield meets his wife!

The throng eddies away, and carries them asunder. The sober widow, resuming her former pace, proceeds to church, but pauses in the portal, and throws a perplexed glance along the street. She passes in, however, opening her prayer-book as she goes. And the man! with so wild a face that busy and selfish London stands to gaze after him, he hurries to his lodgings, bolts the door, and throws himself upon the bed. The latent feelings of years break out; his feeble mind acquires a brief energy from their strength; all the miserable strangeness of his life is revealed to him at a glance: and he cries out, passionately, “Wakefield! Wakefield! You are mad!”

Perhaps he was so. The singularity of his situation must have so moulded him to himself, that, considered in regard to his fellow-creatures and the business of life, he could not be said to possess his right mind. He had contrived, or rather he had happened, to dissever himself from the world—to vanish—to give up his place and privileges with living men, without being admitted among the dead. The life of a hermit is nowise parallel to his. He was in the bustle of the city, as of old; but the crowd swept by and saw him not; he was, we may figuratively say, always beside his wife and at his hearth, yet must never feel the warmth of the one nor the affection of the other. It was Wakefield’s unprecedented fate to retain his original share of human sympathies, and to be still involved in human interests, while he had lost his reciprocal influence on them. It would be a most curious speculation to trace out the effect of such circumstances on his heart and intellect, separately, and in unison. Yet, changed as he was, he would seldom be conscious of it, but deem himself the same man as ever; glimpses of the truth indeed would come, but only for the moment; and still he would keep saying, “I shall soon go back!”—nor reflect that he had been saying so for twenty years.
I conceive, also, that these twenty years would appear, in the retrospect, scarcely longer than the week to which Wakefield had at first limited his absence. He would look on the affair as no more than an interlude in the main business of his life. When, after a little while more, he should deem it time to reenter his parlor, his wife would clap her hands for joy, on beholding the middle-aged Mr. Wakefield. Alas, what a mistake! Would Time but await the close of our favorite follies, we should be young men, all of us, and till Doomsday.

One evening, in the twentieth year since he vanished, Wakefield is taking his customary walk towards the dwelling which he still calls his own. It is a gusty night of autumn, with frequent showers that patter down upon the pavement, and are gone before a man can put up his umbrella. Pausing near the house, Wakefield discerns, through the parlor windows of the second floor, the red glow and the glimmer and fitful flash of a comfortable fire. On the ceiling appears a grotesque shadow of good Mrs. Wakefield. The cap, the nose and chin, and the broad waist, form an admirable caricature, which dances, moreover, with the up-flickering and down-sinking blaze, almost too merrily for the shade of an elderly widow. At this instant a shower chances to fall, and is driven, by the unmannerly gust, full into Wakefield’s face and bosom. He is quite penetrated with its autumnal chill. Shall he stand, wet and shivering here, when his own hearth has a good fire to warm him, and his own wife will run to fetch the gray coat and small-clothes, which, doubtless, she has kept carefully in the closet of their bed chamber? No! Wakefield is no such fool. He ascends the steps—heavily!—for twenty years have stiffened his legs since he came down—but he knows it not. Stay, Wakefield! Would you go to the sole home that is left you? Then step into your grave! The door opens. As he passes in, we have a parting glimpse of his visage, and recognize the crafty smile, which was the precursor of the little joke that he has ever since been playing off at his wife’s expense. How unmercifully has he quizzed the poor woman! Well, a good night’s rest to Wakefield!

This happy event—supposing it to be such—could only have occurred at an unpremeditated moment. We will not follow our friend across the threshold. He has left us much food for thought, a portion of which shall lend its wisdom to a moral, and be shaped into a figure. Amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever. Like Wakefield, he may become, as it were, the Outcast of the Universe.
Historical Context: Romanticism and the Gothic

Romanticism is a key concept for understanding American literature. Beginning in France and Germany in the 1700’s, this body of related ideas and values became widespread, first as philosophy and later as literature, migrating to England and the United States by the 1790’s.

Some basic features of literary romanticism are as follows:

- **Importance of the individual.** To the romantic, the individual man or woman is always the center of the universe, more important than the group or society. Often, the individual is unfairly restricted by the group and its demands, whether conventionaal or legal in form.

- **Importance of sensibility and imagination.** Following from and reinforcing individualism, the romantics believed that these qualities were more important and more truthful than reason.

- **Importance of beauty and mystery.** The romantic writer strove to give his reader a sensation of wonder in the face of beauty and mystery, not to persuade by force of rational argument. Primitivism. To the romantic, society is likely to be bad, often a corrupt and corrupting influence on the individual. To many romantics, human nature is inherently good. The noble savage is the result of this belief in primitive man’s superiority to civilized man. Sometimes this feature takes the form of nostalgia, a longing for a simpler, better life believed to have existed in the past.

- **Love of nature.** For the most part, romantics viewed nature as a source of truth and beauty, inspiration and revelation. Nature, made by God, is immune to the corruption seen in man’s society. Man can be purified by returning to nature.

- **Mysticism.** Romantics sought ultimate truth, not practical benefits. Spiritual awareness is more important than facts. Truth is to be
found through the individual, nature, beauty, mystery, imagination, and avoidance of corrupt society or civilization.

Note that these features are interrelated. Also note that many of these ideas are present in our contemporary culture, in such areas as advertising and popular movies. American writers, however, differ in the specific ways in which they approached and expressed romanticism. You will need to know differences and similarities. Note also the difference between this term and the modern usage of the words romance and romantic, which generally refer to erotic attractions, fantasies, and wish-fulfilment of an adolescent kind.

With Poe we see the application of romantic theories to create his characteristic effects, as well as in his own theories of the short story. Poe was especially interested in the mystery and terror to be experienced through use of the imagination. Too, some of his protagonists seek a fulfillment which they cannot find—romantically driven to attain a forbidden or impossible satisfaction or knowledge.

**Gothic**

**Gothic fiction** (sometimes referred to as Gothic horror) is a genre of literature that combines elements of both horror and romance. As a genre, it is generally believed to have been invented by the English author Horace Walpole, with his 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*.

The effect of Gothic fiction depends on a pleasing sort of terror, an extension of essentially Romantic literacy pleasures that were relatively new at the time of Walpole’s novel. Melodrama and parody (including self-parody) were other long-standing features of the Gothic initiated by Walpole. Gothic literature is intimately associated with the Gothic Revival architecture of the same era. In a way similar to the gothic revivalists’ rejection of the clarity and rationalism of the neoclassical style of the Enlightened Establishment, the literary Gothic embodies an appreciation of the joys of extreme emotion, the thrills of fearfulness and awe inherent in the sublime, and a quest for *atmosphere*. The ruins of gothic buildings gave rise to multiple linked emotions by representing the inevitable decay and collapse of human creations—thus the urge to add fake ruins as eyecatchers in English landscape parks. English Protestants often associated medieval buildings with what they saw as a dark and terrifying period, characterized by harsh laws enforced by torture, and with mysterious, fantastic and superstitious rituals. In literature such Anti-Catholicism had a European dimension featuring Roman Catholic excesses such as the Inquisition (in southern European countries such as Italy and Spain).
Features of Gothic Fiction

• Prominent features of Gothic fiction include: terror (both psychological and physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and Gothic architecture, castles, darkness, death, decay, doubles, madness, secrets and hereditary curses.

• The stock characters of Gothic fiction include: tyrants, villans, bandits, maniacs, Byronic heroes, persecuted maidens, femmes fatales, madwomen, magicians, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, revenants, ghosts, perambulating skeletons, the ‘Wandering Jew,’ and the Devil himself.

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1847)

Born Edgar Poe to a pair of itinerant actors in January of 1809, Edgar Allan Poe’s life seemed marked from the beginning for tragedy and macabre circumstances. Poe’s mother, Elizabeth Arnold Poe, was first married at 15 and widowed at 18. At a performance in Baltimore, David Poe, a law student, became smitten with Eliza and, abandoning his plans to become a lawyer, joined Eliza’s theater troupe and wooed her. Edgar was born when Eliza was 21. When Edgar was only three, his father abandoned the family, never to be heard from again. Later that year, his mother was hit with an acute bout of tuberculosis and died in Richmond, Virginia, where the theater troupe had been performing. Her painful and prolonged death—spitting blood and essentially drowning over a period of weeks from the fluid buildup in her lungs—had a profound effect on young Edgar and is clearly present in several motifs of his work.

For a short time, Edgar and his siblings (a brother and sister) were looked after by the Usher family of Richmond (which likely inspired the use of the name in the story). Eventually, Edgar was adopted by John and Frances Allan, a prosperous Richmond family. Edgar and his adoptive father were in perpetual conflict, particularly when Edgar came of age and began gambling and drinking. He was briefly a student at the University of Virginia until he was expelled for being unable to repay gambling debts or pay tuition. After withdrawing, his father helped him gain an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, but eventually he was expelled there as well. Poe did, however, begin to write while at West Point, and shortly after leaving the Academy, he published his first volume, Tamerlane and Other Poems.

Poe switched his focus to prose and spent the next several years working for literary journals and periodicals, becoming known for his own style of literary criticism. His work forced him to move between several cities, including Baltimore, Phila-
delphia, Pennsylvania and New York City. In Baltimore in 1835, he married Virginia Clemm, his 13-year-old cousin. In January 1845, Poe published his poem “The Raven” to instant success. His wife died of tuberculosis two years later. He began planning to produce his own journal, The Penn (later renamed The Stylus), though he died before it could be produced. Poe’s life was marked by financial difficulties and constant struggles to survive, but, despite a historical reputation for drunkenness and insanity, he was a remarkably disciplined and productive writer and editor. Nevertheless, the strange circumstances of his death have become legendary. On October 3, 1847, Poe was found delirious on the streets of Baltimore, Maryland, “in great distress, and ... in need of immediate assistance”, according to the man who found him, Joseph W. Walker. He was taken to the Washington College Hospital, where he died at 5 a.m. on Sunday, October 7. Poe was never coherent enough to explain how he came to be in this condition.

All medical records and documents, including Poe’s death certificate, have been lost, if they ever existed. The precise cause of Poe’s death is disputed, but many theories exist. Many biographers have addressed the issue and reached different conclusions, ranging from Jeffrey Meyers’s assertion that it was hypoglycemia to John Evangelist Walsh’s conspiratorial murder plot theory. It has also been suggested that Poe’s death might have resulted from suicide related to depression. Numerous other causes of death have been proposed over the years, including several forms of rare brain disease or a brain tumor, diabetes, various types of enzyme deficiency, syphilis, apoplexy, delirium tremens, heart disease, epilepsy and meningeal inflammation. A 2006 test of Poe’s hairs disproved the possibility of lead poisoning, mercury poisoning, and similar toxic heavy-metal exposures. Cholera has also been suggested.

Because Poe was found on the day of an election, it was suggested as early as 1872 that he was the victim of cooping. This was a ballot-box-stuffing scam in which victims were shanghaied, drugged, and used as a pawn to vote for a political party at multiple locations. Cooping has become the standard explanation for Poe’s death in most of his biographies for several decades, though his status in Baltimore may have made him too recognizable for this scam to have worked. More recently, credible evidence that Poe’s death resulted from rabies has been presented.

(adapted from Wikipedia)

Poe’s Detective Stories

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” set a milestone in literature as the first detective story ever written. It is sometimes referred to as a tale of ratiocination, the process of using cold, objective logic—including deduction and induction—to solve a problem or a mystery. However, the central character of the story—the brilliant amateur detective C. Auguste Dupin—relies as much on intuition as on logic. As Richard Wilbur
observes, “Dupin, although Poe describes his mental operations as ‘analytic’ and as based on a psychological calculus of probabilities, is actually representative of a pure poetic intuition bordering on omniscience.” Later writers used the detective-story ingredients Poe introduced, including a seemingly insoluble mystery, stymied police, and a superior thinker who solves the mystery and explains in detail how he did it. (adapted from Wikipedia)

**Conventions of the Detective Story Genre**

- Intrepid, Eccentric, Morally Ambiguous Private Detective
- Intelligent, Articulate Sidekick/Narrator (audience surrogate)
- Suspense and Mystery
- Frequent Presence of a ‘Nemesis’ or ‘Arch-Villain’
- Truth discovered through Logic/Intuition
- Frequent Employment of ‘Locked Room’ Convention

**Poe’s Theory of “Unity of Effect”**

One of Poe’s most important contributions to American literature was his body of criticism, which has been a model and basis for future modes of interpretation and literary theory. Chiefly, Poe stands out for his disciplined approach to creation and a unique attitude about the uses and purposes of poetry and prose fiction. Poe differed from the other great American Romantics such as Hawthorne and Melville mainly in that he did not believe literature should embody a theme or critique society. Instead, Poe believed that literature should be purely aesthetic—that it be built on the principle of ‘art of art’s sake.’ (Dr. Ed Tarkington)

**“The Philosophy of Composition”**

In 1846, in the wake of the popular success of “The Raven,” Poe published “The Philosophy of Composition” in *Graham’s Magazine*, an essay which details his creative method. Though largely published to capitalize on the popularity of “The Raven” and perhaps written as an ironic commentary to the purported “spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings” Wordsworth described as the appropriate method of invention for English Romanticism as well as a reactionary retort to the growing public perception of himself as a deranged genius who wrote in intoxicated fits of torment, Poe’s essay nevertheless offers meaningful insight into his work as a critic and his belief that literary art should be consciously crafted and calculated toward a specific emotional effect on its audience.

The three central elements of Poe’s philosophy of composition are:
• **Length:** Poe believed that all works should be short, with the exception of novels. “There is,” he writes, “a distinct limit ... to all works of literary art - the limit of one sitting.” He especially emphasized this “rule” with regards to poetry, but also noted that the short story is superior to the novel for this reason.

• **Method:** Poe dismissed the notion of artistic intuition and argued that writing is methodical and analytical, not spontaneous. He writes that no other author has yet admitted this because most writers would “positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes ... at the fully matured fancies discarded in despair ... at the cautious selections and rejections.”

• **“Unity of effect”:** The essay states Poe’s conviction that a work of fiction should be written only after the author has decided how it is to end and which emotional response, or “effect,” he wishes to create, commonly known as the “unity of effect.” Once this effect has been determined, the writer should decide all other matters pertaining to the composition of the work, including tone, theme, setting, characters, conflict, and plot. In this case, Poe logically decides on “the death... of a beautiful woman” as it “is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.” Some commentators have taken this to imply that pure poetry can only be attained by the eradication of female beauty. Biographers and critics have often suggested that Poe’s obsession with this theme stems from the repeated loss of women throughout his life, including his mother Eliza Poe and his foster mother Frances Allan and, later, his wife Virginia. (adapted from Wikipedia)

**Major Themes and Issues:**

• The dark side of human nature
• Life, death, and life-in-death (e.g., premature burial)
• Love and hate
• Duality
  – Doubling, doppelgangers, twin characters, mirror images
  – Two sides of the self
• Irony
  – **Dramatic:** When the audience knows something that the characters do not.
- **Verbal**: When one thing is said but another is meant. (note that verbal irony can be quite subtle, as in understatement, sarcasm, or hyperbole)

- **Situational**: When one thing is expected but something else happens.
DURING the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was -- but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me -- upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain -- upon the bleak walls -- upon the vacant eye-like windows -- upon a few rank sedges -- and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees -- with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium -- the bitter lapse into everyday life -- the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart -- an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into the sublime. What was it -- I paused to think -- what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? It was a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond our depth. It was possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression; and, acting upon this idea, I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down -- but with a shudder even more thrilling than before -- upon the remodelled and inverted images of the gray sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country -- a letter from him -- which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS. gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness -- of a mental disorder which oppressed him -- and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by
the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said -- it the apparent heart that went with his request -- which allowed me no room for hesitation; and I accordingly obeyed forthwith what I still considered a very singular summons.

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisable beauties, of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency, I considered, while running over in thought the perfect keeping of the character of the premises with the accredited character of the people, and while speculating upon the possible influence which the one, in the long lapse of centuries, might have exercised upon the other -- it was this deficiency, perhaps, of collateral issue, and the consequent undeviating transmission, from sire to son, of the patrimony with the name, which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher” -- an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion.

I have said that the sole effect of my somewhat childish experiment -- that of looking down within the tarn -- had been to deepen the first singular impression. There can be no doubt that the consciousness of the rapid increase of my superstition -- for why should I not so term it? -- served mainly to accelerate the increase itself. Such, I have long known, is the paradoxical law of all sentiments having terror as a basis. And it might have been for this reason only, that, when I again uplifted my eyes to the house itself, from its image in the pool, there grew in my mind a strange fancy -- a fancy so ridiculous, indeed, that I but mention it to show the vivid force of the sensations which oppressed me. I had so worked upon my imagination as really to believe that about the whole mansion and domain there hung an atmosphere peculiar to themselves and their immediate vicinity -- an atmosphere which had no affinity with the air of heaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the gray wall, and the silent tarn -- a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued.

Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fall-
en; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adapta-
tion of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was
much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted
for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the
external air: Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however; the fabric gave little
token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinising observer might have discov-
ered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in
front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the
sullen waters of the tarn.

Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in wait-
ing took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy
step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages
in my progress to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on the way
contributed, I know not how, to heighten the vague sentiments of which I have al-
ready spoken. While the objects around me -- while the carvings of the ceilings, the
sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebon blackness of the floors, and the phantas-
magoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or
to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy -- while I hesitated not
to acknowledge how familiar was all this -- I still wondered to find how unfamiliar
were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On one of the staircases, I
met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expres-
sion of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on.
The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were
long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to
be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made
their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the
more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the re-
moter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark
draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, an-
tique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but
failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow.
An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full
length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first
thought, of an overdone cordiality -- of the constrained effort of the ennuyé man
of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect
sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon
him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly
altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could
bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion
of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable.
A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond com-
parison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; 
a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar 
formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want 
of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, 
with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether 
a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the 
prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to con-
vey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor 
of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and 
even awed me. The silken hair; too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, 
in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, 
even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple human-
ity.

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence -- an incon-
sistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to 
overcome an habitual trepidancy -- an excessive nervous agitation. For something 
of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminis-
cences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physi-
cal conformation and temperament. His action was alternately vivacious and sul-
len. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits 
seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision -- that abrupt, 
weighty, unhurried, and hollow-sounding enunciation -- that leaden, self-balanced 
and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which may be observed in the lost 
drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most in-
tense excitement.

It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, 
and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into 
what he conceived to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional 
and a family evil, and one for which he despaired to find a remedy -- a mere nervous 
affection, he immediately added, which would undoubtedly soon pass. It displayed 
itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed them, inter-
ested and bewildered me; although, perhaps, the terms, and the general manner of 
the narration had their weight. He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the 
senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of 
certain texture; the odours of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured 
by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed 
instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. “I shall perish,” 
said he, “I must perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall 
I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I 
shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate 
upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger; ex-
cept in its absolute effect -- in terror. In this unnerved -- in this pitiable condition --I
feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together; in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR."

I learned, moreover, at intervals, and through broken and equivocal hints, another singular feature of his mental condition. He was enchained by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the dwelling which he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never ventured forth -- in regard to an influence whose supposititious force was conveyed in terms too shadowy here to be re-stated -- an influence which some peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, had, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit -- an effect which the physique of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had, at length, brought about upon the morale of his existence.

He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin -- to the severe and long-continued illness -- indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution -- of a tenderly beloved sister -- his sole companion for long years -- his last and only relative on earth. "Her decease," he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, "would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers." While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread -- and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of stupor oppressed me, as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother -- but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary waness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled apathy, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical character, were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but, on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain -- that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself: and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavours to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which dark-
ness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom.

I shall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupations, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulphureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring forever in my ears. Among other things, I hold painfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch, into vaguenesses at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why; -- from these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educe more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By the utter simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever mortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least -- in the circumstances then surrounding me -- there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contrived to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I ever yet in the contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli.

One of the phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit of abstraction, may be shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior of an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, white, and without interruption or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth. No outlet was observed in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and bathed the whole in a ghastly and inappropriate splendour.

I have just spoken of that morbid condition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to the sufferer, with the exception of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narrow limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gave birth, in great measure, to the fantastic character of his performances. But the fervid facility of his impromptus could not be so accounted for: They must have been, and were, in the notes, as well as in the words of his wild fantasies (for he not unfrequently accompanied himself with rhymed verbal improvisations), the result of that intense mental collectedness and concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement. The words of one of these rhapsodies I have easily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic current of its meaning, I fancied that I perceived, and for the first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the tottering of his
lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, which were entitled “The Haunted Palace,” ran very nearly, if not accurately, thus:

I.

In the greenest of our valleys,

By good angels tenanted,

Once a fair and stately palace --

Radiant palace -- reared its head.

In the monarch Thought’s dominion --

It stood there!

Never seraph spread a pinion

Over fabric half so fair.

II.

Banners yellow, glorious, golden,

On its roof did float and flow;

(This -- all this -- was in the olden

Time long ago)

And every gentle air that dallied,

In that sweet day,

Along the ramparts plumed and pallid,

A winged odour went away.

III.

Wanderers in that happy valley

Through two luminous windows saw

Spirits moving musically

To a lute’s well-tunèd law,

Round about a throne, where sitting
(Porphyrogene!)

In state his glory well befitting,
   The ruler of the realm was seen.

IV.

And all with pearl and ruby glowing
   Was the fair palace door,
Through which came flowing, flowing, flowing,
   And sparkling evermore,
A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty
   Was but to sing,
In voices of surpassing beauty,
   The wit and wisdom of their king.

V.

But evil things, in robes of sorrow,
   Assailed the monarch's high estate;
(Ah, let us mourn, for never morrow
   Shall dawn upon him, desolate!)
And, round about his home, the glory
   That blushed and bloomed
Is but a dim-remembered story
   Of the old time entombed.

VI.

And travellers now within that valley,
   Through the red-litten windows, see
Vast forms that move fantastically
   To a discordant melody;
While, like a rapid ghastly river,
Through the pale door,
A hideous throng rush out forever,
And laugh -- but smile no more.

I well remember that suggestions arising from this ballad led us into a train of thought wherein there became manifest an opinion of Usher’s which I mention not so much on account of its novelty, (for other men have thought thus,) as on account of the pertinacity with which he maintained it. This opinion, in its general form, was that of the sentience of all vegetable things. But, in his disordered fancy, the idea had assumed a more daring character, and trespassed, under certain conditions, upon the kingdom of inorganization. I lack words to express the full extent, or the earnest abandon of his persuasion. The belief, however, was connected (as I have previously hinted) with the gray stones of the home of his forefathers. The conditions of the sentience had been here, he imagined, fulfilled in the method of collocation of these stones -- in the order of their arrangement, as well as in that of the many fungi which overspread them, and of the decayed trees which stood around -- above all, in the long undisturbed endurance of this arrangement, and in its reduplication in the still waters of the tarn. Its evidence -- the evidence of the sentience -- was to be seen, he said, (and I here started as he spoke,) in the gradual yet certain condensation of an atmosphere of their own about the waters and the walls. The result was discoverable, he added, in that silent, yet importunate and terrible influence which for centuries had moulded the destinies of his family, and which made him what I now saw him -- what he was. Such opinions need no comment, and I will make none.

Our books -- the books which, for years, had formed no small portion of the mental existence of the invalid -- were, as might be supposed, in strict keeping with this character of phantasm. We pored together over such works as the Ververt et Chartreuse of Gresset; the Belphegor of Machiavelli; the Heaven and Hell of Swedenborg; the Subterranean Voyage of Nicholas Klimm by Holberg; the Chiromancy of Robert Flud, of Jean D’Indaginé, and of De la Chambre; the Journey into the Blue Distance of Tieck; and the City of the Sun of Campanella. One favourite volume was a small octavo edition of the Directorium Inquisitorum, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and there were passages in Pomponius Mela, about the old African Sa- tyrs and OEgyptans, over which Usher would sit dreaming for hours. His chief delight, however, was found in the perusal of an exceedingly rare and curious book in quarto Gothic -- the manual of a forgotten church -- the Vigilae Mortuorum secun- dum Chorum Ecclesiae Maguntinae.

I could not help thinking of the wild ritual of this work, and of its probable influence upon the hypochondriac, when, one evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, (previously to its final interment,) in one of the numerous
vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. It had been used, apparently, in remote feudal times, for the worst purposes of a donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of deposit for powder, or some other highly combustible substance, as a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway through which we reached it, were carefully sheathed with copper. The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its immense weight caused an unusually sharp grating sound, as it moved upon its hinges.

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead -- for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue --but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated
mind was labouring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified -- that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch -- while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavoured to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room -- of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. An irrepressible tremour gradually pervaded my frame; and, at length, there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with a gasp and a struggle, I uplifted myself upon the pillows, and, peering earnestly within the intense darkness of the chamber, hearkened -- I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit prompted me -- to certain low and indefinite sounds which came, through the pauses of the storm, at long intervals, I knew not whence. Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavoured to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognised it as that of Usher. In an instant afterward he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door; and entered, bearing a lamp. His countenance was, as usual, cadaverously wan -- but, moreover, there was a species of mad hilarity in his eyes -- an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanour. His air appalled me -- but anything was preferable to the solitude which I had so long endured, and I even welcomed his presence as a relief.

"And you have not seen it?" he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence -- "you have not then seen it? -- but, stay! you shall." Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity; for there were frequent and violent alterations in the direction of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press upon the turrets of the house) did not prevent our perceiving the life-like velocity with which they
flew careering from all points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even their exceeding density did not prevent our perceiving this -- yet we had no glimpse of the moon or stars -- nor was there any flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapour; as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

“You must not -- you shall not behold this!” said I, shudderingly, to Usher; as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a seat. “These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon -- or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this case-ment; -- the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favourite romances. I will read, and you shall listen; -- and so we will pass away this terrible night together.”

The antique volume which I had taken up was the “Mad Trist” of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favourite of Usher’s more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild over-strained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkened, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated myself upon the success of my design.

I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

“And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and maliceful turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarummed and reverberated throughout the forest.”

At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me) -- it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and rip-
ping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

“But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the maliceful hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanour; and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten –

Who entereth herein, a conqueror hath bin;
Who slayeth the dragon, the shield he shall win;

And Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard.”

Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement -- for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound -- the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon’s unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of the second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question; although, assuredly, a strange alteration had, during the last few minutes, taken place in his demeanour. From a position fronting my own, he had gradually brought round his chair; so as to sit with his face to the door of the chamber; and thus I could but partially perceive his features, although I saw that his lips trembled as if he were murmurering inaudibly. His head had dropped upon his breast -- yet I knew that he was not asleep, from the wide and rigid opening of the eye as I caught a glance of it in profile. The motion of his body, too, was at variance with this idea -- for he rocked from side to side with a gentle yet constant and uniform sway. Having rapidly taken notice of all this, I resumed the narrative of Sir Launcelot, which thus proceeded:
“And now, the champion, having escaped from the terrible fury of the dragon, be-
thinking himself of the brazen shield, and of the breaking up of the enchantment
which was upon it, removed the carcass from out of the way before him, and ap-
proached valorously over the silver pavement of the castle to where the shield was
upon the wall; which in sooth tarried not for his full coming, but fell down at his feet
upon the silver floor, with a mighty great and terrible ringing sound.”

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than -- as if a shield of brass had
indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver -- I became aware of
a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation.
Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of
Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent
fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony ri-
gidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over
his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in
a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending
closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

“Not hear it? -- yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long -- long -- long -- many min-
utes, many hours, many days, have I heard it -- yet I dared not -- oh, pity me, miser-
able wretch that I am! -- I dared not -- I dared not speak! We have put her living in
the tomb! Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first
feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them -- many, many days ago -- yet I
dared not -- I dared not speak! And now -- to-night -- Ethelred -- ha! ha! -- the break-
ing of the hermit’s door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the
shield! -- say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of
her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither
shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my
haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy
and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!” -- here he sprang furiously to his feet,
and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul -- “Mad-
man! I tell you that she now stands without the door!”

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency
of a spell -- the huge antique pannels to which the speaker pointed, threw slowly
back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rush-
ing gust -- but then without those doors there did stand the lofty and enshrouded
figure of the lady Madeline of Usher: There was blood upon her white robes, and the
evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a
moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold -- then,
with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in
her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim
to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still
abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there
shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure, of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened -- there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind -- the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight -- my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder -- there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters -- and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “House of Usher.”
THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

What song the Syrens sang, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women, although puzzling questions are not beyond all conjecture.

--Sir Thomas Browne, Urn-Burial.

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 talents 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 analyze. 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 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 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 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 honor by honor, 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 recognizes what is played through feint, by the air with which it is thrown upon the table. A casual 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 often remarkably incapable of analysis. The constructive or combining power, by which ingenuity is usually manifested, and 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 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 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 candor 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 fervor, and the vivid freshness of his imagination. Seeking in Paris the objects I then sought, 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 enamored 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 closed all the massy shutters of our old building; lighted 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 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 periods 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 Theatre des Varietes."

"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? 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 role of Xerxes, in Crebillon’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 explain,” he said, “and that you may comprehend all clearly, we will first retrace the course of your meditations, from the 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 --glancing, 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 that 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 ‘Musee,’ 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 pungencies 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 ideas of Orion and Chantilly. That you did combine them I say 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 Theatre des Varietes.”

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, Made-moiselle 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 neighbors 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 grey human hair, also dabbled in blood, and seeming to have been pulled out by the roots. Upon the floor were found four Napoleons, an ear-ring of topaz, three large silver spoons, three smaller of metal 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 fire-place, 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. 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 farther 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 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 towards 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 neighborhood, 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 under-let 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 neighbors 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, neighbors, gave evidence to the same effect. No one was spoken of as frequenting the house. It was not known whether there were any living connexions 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, endeavoring to gain 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 up stairs. 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 ‘sacre’ 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 neighbor; and by trade a silversmith, deposes 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, the 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 ‘sacre,’ ‘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 baking 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 4000 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 4000 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 bye-street --very lonely.

William Bird, tailor, deposes that he was one of the party who entered the house. Is an 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 ‘sacre’ 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. Every thing 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, but not locked. 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 Garcio, 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 up stairs. 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 is no back passage by which any one could have descended while the party proceeded up stairs. 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. 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 discolored, 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 discolored. 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 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 farther 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 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 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 fall. 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 side-long 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 way, on one si 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 neighborhood, 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 up stairs -- 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 scrutinized every thing-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 stopped 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 Fe les menageais: -- for this phrase there is no English equivalent. It was his humor, now, to decline all conversation on the subject of the murder, until about noon the next day. He then asked me, suddenly, if I had observed any thing peculiar at the scene of the atrocity.

There was something in his manner of emphasizing 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 outre 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 up stairs 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 paralyze 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 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 pecu-
liar 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 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 Dutch-
man 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 Eng-
lishman 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 it 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 cognizant of that tongue, is, like the Spaniard, ‘convinced by the into-
nation.’ 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 distin-
guishable.

“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 di-
rection 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 believe in praeternatural 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 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 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 not 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 endeavored 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 —a posteriori. The murderers did escape from one of these windows. This being so, they could not have re-fastened 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 casement, 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 corrob-
ration of my idea convinced me that my premises, at least, were correct, however
mysterious still appeared the circumstances attending the nails. A careful search
soon brought to light the hidden spring. I pressed it, and, satisfied with the discov-
er, forebore 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 win-
dow. 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 neighbor. 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 misunder-
stood 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 incrusted with rust), and had apparently been accomplished by the
blow of a hammer, which had partially imbedded, in the top of the bottom sash, the
head portion of the nail. now carefully replaced this head portion in the indenta-
tion 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,
-- farther inquiry being thus considered unnecessary.

“The next question is that of the mode of 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 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 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 praeternatural 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 juxta-position that very unusual activity of which I have just spoken, with that very peculiar 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 con-
tained? Madame L'Espanaye and her daughter lived an exceedingly retired life--saw
no company --seldom went out --had little use for numerous changes of habiliment.
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 motive, en-
gendered 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 attract-
ing 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 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 that there was something excessively outre --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 vigor of several persons was found barely sufficient to drag it down!

“Turn, now, to other indications of the employment of a vigor most marvellous.
On the hearth were thick tresses --very thick tresses --of grey 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 ques-
tion 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’Espanaye I do not speak. Monsieur Dumas, and his worthy coadjutor Monsieur Etienne, 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 have 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 neighboring Maison de Sante.”

“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 fac-simile 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 Etienne,) 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.

“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 Ourang-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 Ourang-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.”

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 characterized 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 cognizant 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 Ourang-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 re-captured 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: Caught --In the Bois de Boulogne, early in the morning of the --inst., (the morning of the murder,) a very large, tawny Ourang-Outang of the Bornese species. The owner; (who is ascertained to be a sailor; belonging to a Maltese vessel,) may have the animal again, upon identifying it satisfac
torily, and paying a few charges arising from its capture and keeping. Call at No.--, Rue --, Faubourg St. Germain --au troisieme.

“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. Cognizant although innocent of the murder, the Frenchman will naturally hesitate about replying to the advertisement --about demanding the Ourang-Outang. He will reason thus: --’I am innocent; I am poor; my Ourang-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 cognizant of the murder, or to implicate me in guilt on account of that cognizance. 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 of so 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 Ourang-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. 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 unpre-
possessing. 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 Neufchatelish, were still sufficiently indicative of a Parisian origin.

Sit down, my friend," said Dupin. "I suppose you have called about the Ourang-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, any thing 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 these 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 honor 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 honor 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. 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 Ourang-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 in Paris, where, not to attract toward himself the unpleasant curiosity of his neighbors, 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 bed-room, 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 key-hole 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 Ourang-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 gesticulate 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 headboard of the bed. The whole feat did not occupy a minute. The shutter was kicked open again by the Ourang-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 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 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 the hair was torn from her head) had the effect of changing the probably pacific purposes of the Ourang-Outang into those of wrath. With one determined sweep of its muscular arm it nearly severed her head from her body. The sight of blood inflamed its anger into phrenzy. Gnashing its teeth, and flashing fire from its eves, it flew upon the body of the girl, and imbedded 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 Ourang-Outang. The words heard by the
party upon the staircase were the Frenchman's exclamations of horror and affright, commingled with the fiendish jabberings of the brute.

I have scarcely anything to add. The Ourang-Outang must have escaped from the chamber, by 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 minding his own business.

"Let them 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 qui est, et d'expliquer ce qui n'est pas.'*

-THE END-

* Rousseau, *Nouvelle Heloise.*
THE GOLD BUG

What ho! what ho! this fellow is dancing mad!

He hath been bitten by the Tarantula.

All in the Wrong.

MANY years ago, I contracted an intimacy with a Mr. William Legrand. He was of an ancient Huguenot family, and had once been wealthy; but a series of misfortunes had reduced him to want. To avoid the mortification consequent upon his disasters, he left New Orleans, the city of his forefathers, and took up his residence at Sullivan’s Island, near Charleston, South Carolina.

This Island is a very singular one. It consists of little else than the sea sand, and is about three miles long. Its breadth at no point exceeds a quarter of a mile. It is separated from the main land by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime, a favorite resort of the marsh-hen. The vegetation, as might be supposed, is scant, or at least dwarfish. No trees of any magnitude are to be seen. Near the western extremity, where Fort Moultrie stands, and where are some miserable frame buildings, tenanted, during summer, by the fugitives from Charleston dust and fever, may be found, indeed, the bristly palmetto; but the whole island, with the exception of this western point, and a line of hard, white beach on the seacoast, is covered with a dense undergrowth of the sweet myrtle, so much prized by the horticulturists of England. The shrub here often attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet, and forms an almost impenetrable coppice, burthening the air with its fragrance.

In the inmost recesses of this coppice, not far from the eastern or more remote end of the island, Legrand had built himself a small hut, which he occupied when I first, by mere accident, made his acquaintance. This soon ripened into friendship --for there was much in the recluse to excite interest and esteem. I found him well educated, with unusual powers of mind, but infected with misanthropy, and subject to perverse moods of alternate enthusiasm and melancholy. He had with him many books, but rarely employed them. His chief amusements were gunning and fishing, or sauntering along the beach and through the myrtles, in quest of shells or entomological specimens;--his collection of the latter might have been envied by a Swammerdamm. In these excursions he was usually accompanied by an old negro, called Jupiter, who had been manumitted before the reverses of the family, but who could be induced, neither by threats nor by promises, to abandon what he considered his right of attendance upon the footsteps of his young “Massa Will.” It is not improbable that the relatives of Legrand, conceiving him to be somewhat unsettled in intellect, had contrived to instil this obstinacy into Jupiter, with a view to the supervision and guardianship of the wanderer.
The winters in the latitude of Sullivan’s Island are seldom very severe, and in the fall of the year it is a rare event indeed when a fire is considered necessary. About the middle of October, 18--, there occurred, however, a day of remarkable chilliness. Just before sunset I scrambled my way through the evergreens to the hut of my friend, whom I had not visited for several weeks --my residence being, at that time, in Charleston, a distance of nine my miles from the Island, while the facilities of passage and re-passage were very far behind those of the present day. Upon reaching the hut I rapped, as was my custom, and getting no reply, sought for the key where I knew it was secreted, unlocked the door and went in. A fine fire was blazing upon the hearth. It was a novelty, and by no means an ungrateful one. I threw off an overcoat, took an arm-chair by the crackling logs, and awaited patiently the arrival of my hosts.

Soon after dark they arrived, and gave me a most cordial welcome. Jupiter, grinning from ear to ear, bustled about to prepare some marsh-hens for supper. Legrand was in one of his fits --how else shall I term them? --of enthusiasm. He had found an unknown bivalve, forming a new genus, and, more than this, he had hunted down and secured, with Jupiter’s assistance, a scarabaeus which he believed to be totally new, but in respect to which he wished to have my opinion on the morrow.

“And why not to-night?” I asked, rubbing my hands over the blaze, and wishing the whole tribe of scarabaei at the devil.

“Ah, if I had only known you were here!” said Legrand, “but it’s so long since I saw you; and how could I foresee that you would pay me a visit this very night of all others? As I was coming home I met Lieutenant G--, from the fort, and, very foolishly, I lent him the bug; so it will be impossible for you to see it until morning. Stay here tonight, and I will send Jup down for it at sunrise. It is the loveliest thing in creation!”

“What? --sunrise?”

“Nonsense! no! --the bug. It is of a brilliant gold color --about the size of a large hickory-nut --with two jet black spots near one extremity of the back, and another; somewhat longer, at the other. The antennae are --”

“Dey aint no tin in him, Massa Will, I keep a tellin on you,” here interrupted Jupiter; “de bug is a goole bug, solid, ebery bit of him, inside and all, sep him wing --neber feel half so hebby a bug in my life.”

“Well, suppose it is, Jup,” replied Legrand, somewhat more earnestly, it seemed to me, than the case demanded, “is that any reason for your letting the birds burn? The color” --here he turned to me --“is really almost enough to warrant Jupiter’s idea. You never saw a more brilliant metallic lustre than the scales emit --but of this you cannot judge till tomorrow. In the mean time I can give you some idea of the shape.” Saying this, he seated himself at a small table, on which were a pen and ink, but no paper. He looked for some in a drawer, but found none.
“Never mind,” said he at length, “this will answer”; and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a scrap of what I took to be very dirty foolscap, and made upon it a rough drawing with the pen. While he did this, I retained my seat by the fire, for I was still chilly. When the design was complete, he handed it to me without rising. As I received it, a loud growl was heard, succeeded by a scratching at the door. Jupiter opened it, and a large Newfoundland, belonging to Legrand, rushed in, leaped upon my shoulders, and loaded me with caresses; for I had shown him much attention during previous visits. When his gambols were over, I looked at the paper, and, to speak the truth, found myself not a little puzzled at what my friend had depicted.

“Well!” I said, after contemplating it for some minutes, “this is a strange scarabaeus, I must confess: new to me: never saw anything like it before --unless it was a skull, or a death’s-head --which it more nearly resembles than anything else that has come under my observation.”

“A death’s-head!” echoed Legrand --”Oh --yes --well, it has something of that appearance upon paper, no doubt. The two upper black spots look like eyes, eh? and the longer one at the bottom like a mouth --and then the shape of the whole is oval.”

“Perhaps so,” said I; “but, Legrand, I fear you are no artist. I must wait until I see the beetle itself, if I am to form any idea of its personal appearance.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said he, a little nettled, “I draw tolerably --should do it at least --have had good masters, and flatter myself that I am not quite a blockhead.”

“But, my dear fellow, you are joking then,” said I, “this is a very passable skull --indeed, I may say that it is a very excellent skull, according to the vulgar notions about such specimens of physiology --and your scarabaeus must be the queerest scarabaeus in the world if it resembles it. Why, we may get up a very thrilling bit of superstition upon this hint. I presume you will call the bug scarabaeus caput hominis, or something of that kind --there are many titles in the Natural Histories. But where are the antennae you spoke of?”

“The antennae!” said Legrand, who seemed to be getting unaccountably warm upon the subject; “I am sure you must see the antennae. I made them as distinct as they are in the original insect, and I presume that is sufficient.”

“Well, well,” I said, “perhaps you have --still I don’t see them;” and I handed him the paper without additional remark, not wishing to ruffle his temper; but I was much surprised at the turn affairs had taken; his ill humor puzzled me --and, as for the drawing of the beetle, there were positively no antennae visible, and the whole did bear a very close resemblance to the ordinary cuts of a death’s-head.

He received the paper very peevishly, and was about to crumple it, apparently to throw it in the fire, when a casual glance at the design seemed suddenly to rivet his attention. In an instant his face grew violently red --in another as excessively pale. For some minutes he continued to scrutinize the drawing minutely where he
sat. At length he arose, took a candle from the table, and proceeded to seat himself upon a sea-chest in the farthest corner of the room. Here again he made an anxious examination of the paper; turning it in all directions. He said nothing, however, and his conduct greatly astonished me; yet I thought it prudent not to exacerbate the growing moodiness of his temper by any comment. Presently he took from his coat pocket a wallet, placed the paper carefully in it, and deposited both in a writing-desk, which he locked. He now grew more composed in his demeanor; but his original air of enthusiasm had quite disappeared. Yet he seemed not so much sulky as abstracted. As the evening wore away he became more and more absorbed in reverie, from which no sallies of mine could arouse him. It had been my to pass the night at the hut, as I had frequently done before, but, seeing my host in this mood, I deemed it proper to take leave. He did not press me to remain, but, as I departed, he shook my hand with even more than his usual cordiality.

It was about a month after this (and during the interval I had seen nothing of Legrand) when I received a visit, at Charleston, from his man, Jupiter. I had never seen the good old negro look so dispirited, and I feared that some serious disaster had befallen my friend.

“Well, Jup,” said I, “what is the matter now? --how is your master?”

“Well, to speak de troof, massa, him not so berry well as mought be.”

“Not well! I am truly sorry to hear it. What does he complain of?”

Dar! dat’s it! --him neber plain of notin --but him berry sick for all dat.”

“Very sick, Jupiter! --why didn’t you say so at once? Is he confined to bed?”

“No, dat he ain’t! --he ain’t find nowhar --dat’s just whar de shoe pinch --my mind is got to be berry hebby bout poor Massa Will.”

“Jupiter, I should like to understand what it is you are talking about. You say your master is sick. Hasn’t he told you what ails him?”

“Why, massa, taint worf while for to git mad bout de matter --Massa Will say nofin at all ain’t de matter wid him --but den what make him go about looking dis here way, wid he head down and he soldiers up, and as white as a gose? And den he keep a syphon all de time --”

“Keeps a what, Jupiter?”

“Keeps a syphon wid de figgurs on de slate --de queerest figgurs I ebber did see. Ise gittin to be skeered, I tell you. Hab for to keep mighty tight eye pon him noovers. Todder day he gib me slip fore de sun up and was gone de whole ob de blessed day. I had a big stick ready cut for to gib him d–d good beating when he did come --but Ise sich a fool dat I hadn’t de heart arter all --he look so berry poorly.”
“Eh? --what? --ah yes! --upon the whole I think you had better not be too severe with the poor fellow --don’t flog him, Jupiter --he can’t very well stand it --but can you form no idea of what has occasioned this illness, or rather this change of conduct? Has anything unpleasant happened since I saw you?”

“No, massa, dey ain’t bin nofin unpleasant since den --’t was fore den I’m feared --’t was de berry day you was dare.”

“How? what do you mean?”

“Why, massa, I mean de bug --dare now.”

“The what?”

“De bug --I’m berry sartain dat Massa Will bin bit somewhere bout de head by dat goole-bug.”

“And what cause have you, Jupiter, for such a supposition?”

“Claws enoff, massa, and mouff too. I nabber did see sich a d--d bug --he kick and he bite ebery ting what cum near him. Massa Will cotch him fuss, but had for to let him go gin mighty quick, I tell you --den was de time he must ha got de bite. I didn’t like de look ob de bug mouff, myself, no how, so I wouldn’t take hold ob him wid my finger, but I cotch him wid a piece ob paper dat I found. I rap him up in de paper and stuff piece ob it in he mouff --dat was de way.”

“And you think, then, that your master was really bitten by the beetle, and that the bite made him sick?”

“I don’t tink nofin about it --I nose it. What make him dream bout de goole so much, if tain’t cause he bit by de goole-bug? Ise heerd bout dem goole-bugs fore dis.”

“But how do you know he dreams about gold?”

“How I know? why cause he talk about it in he sleep --dat’s how I nose.”

“Well, Jup, perhaps you are right; but to what fortunate circumstance am I to attribute the honor of a visit from you to-day?”

“What de matter, massa?”

“Did you bring any message from Mr. Legrand?”

“No, massa, I bring dis here pissel;” and here Jupiter handed me a note which ran thus:

My DEAR –

“Why have I not seen you for so long a time? I hope you have not been so foolish as to take offence at any little brusquerie of mine; but no, that is improbable.
Since I saw you I have had great cause for anxiety. I have something to tell you, yet scarcely know how to tell it, or whether I should tell it at all.

I have not been quite well for some days past, and poor old Jup annoys me, almost beyond endurance, by his well-meant attentions. Would you believe it? -- he had prepared a huge stick, the other day, with which to chastise me for giving him the slip, and spending the day, solus, among the hills on the main land. I verily believe that my ill looks alone saved me a flogging.

I have made no addition to my cabinet since we met.

If you can, in any way, make it convenient, come over with Jupiter. Do come. I wish to see you tonight, upon business of importance. I assure you that it is of the highest importance.

Ever yours,

WILLIAM LEGRAND.

There was something in the tone of this note which gave me great uneasiness. Its whole style differed materially from that of Legrand. What could he be dreaming of? What new crotchet possessed his excitable brain? What "business of the highest importance" could he possibly have to transact? Jupiter’s account of him boded no good. I dreaded lest the continued pressure of misfortune had, at length, fairly unsettled the reason of my friend. Without a moment’s hesitation, therefore, I prepared to accompany the negro.

Upon reaching the wharf, I noticed a scythe and three spades, all apparently new, lying in the bottom of the boat in which we were to embark.

“What is the meaning of all this, Jup?” I inquired.

“Him syfe, massa, and spade.”

“Very true; but what are they doing here?”

“Him de syfe and de spade what Massa Will sis pon my buying for him in de town, and de debbil’s own lot of money I had to gib for em.”

But what, in the name of all that is mysterious, is your ‘Massa Will’ going to do with scythes and spades?”

“Dat’s more dan I know, and debbil take me if I don’t blieve ‘tis more dan he know, too. But it’s all cum ob de bug.”

Finding that no satisfaction was to be obtained of Jupiter, whose whole intellect seemed to be absorbed by “de bug,” I now stepped into the boat and made sail. With a fair and strong breeze we soon ran into the little cove to the northward of Fort Moultrie, and a walk of some two miles brought us to the hut. It was about three
in the afternoon when we arrived. Legrand had been awaiting us in eager expecta-
tion. He grasped my hand with a nervous emprise which alarmed me and
strengthened the suspicions already entertained. His countenance was pale even
to ghastliness, and his deep-set eyes glared with unnatural lustre. After some inqui-
ries regarding his health, I asked him, not knowing what better to say, if he had yet
obtained the scarabaeus from Lieutenant G--.

“Oh, yes,” he replied, coloring violently, “I got it from him the next morning. Noth-
ing should tempt me to part with that scarabaeus. Do you know that Jupiter is quite
right about it?”

“In what way?” I asked, with a sad foreboding at heart.

“In supposing it to be a bug of real gold.” He said this with an air of profound seri-
ousness, and I felt inexpressibly shocked.

“This bug is to make my fortune,” he continued, with a triumphant smile, “to re-
instate me in my family possessions. Is it any wonder, then, that I prize it? Since
Fortune has thought fit to bestow it upon me, I have only to use it properly and I
shall arrive at the gold of which it is the index. Jupiter, bring me that scarabaeus!”

“What! de bug, massa? I’d rudder not go fer trubble dat bug -- you mus git him for
your own self.” Hereupon Legrand arose, with a grave and stately air, and brought
me the beetle from a glass case in which it was enclosed. It was a beautiful scaraba-
eus, and, at that time, unknown to naturalists -- of course a great prize in a scientific
point of view. There were two round, black spots near one extremity of the back,
and a long one near the other. The scales were exceedingly hard and glossy, with all
the appearance of burnished gold. The weight of the insect was very remarkable,
and, taking all things into consideration, I could hardly blame Jupiter for his opinion
respecting it; but what to make of Legrand’s agreement with that opinion, I could
not, for the life of me, tell.

“I sent for you,” said he, in a grandiloquent tone, when I had completed my exami-
nation of the beetle, “I sent for you, that I might have your counsel and assistance in
furthering the views of Fate and of the bug”—

“My dear Legrand,” I cried, interrupting him, “you are certainly unwell, and had
better use some little precautions. You shall go to bed, and I will remain with you a
few days, until you get over this. You are feverish and”—

“Feel my pulse,” said he.

I felt it, and, to say the truth, found not the slightest indication of fever.

“But you may be ill and yet have no fever. Allow me this once to prescribe for you.
In the first place, go to bed. In the next”—
“You are mistaken,” he interposed, “I am as well as I can expect to be under the excitement which I suffer. If you really wish me well, you will relieve this excitement.”

“And how is this to be done?”

“Very easily. Jupiter and myself are going upon an expedition into the hills, upon the main land, and, in this expedition, we shall need the aid of some person in whom we can confide. You are the only one we can trust. Whether we succeed or fail, the excitement which you now perceive in me will be equally allayed.”

“I am anxious to oblige you in any way,” I replied; “but do you mean to say that this infernal beetle has any connection with your expedition into the hills?”

“It has.”

“Then, Legrand, I can become a party to no such absurd proceeding.

“I am sorry --very sorry --for we shall have to try it by ourselves.”

“Try it by yourselves! The man is surely mad! --but stay! --how long do you propose to be absent?”

“Probably all night. We shall start immediately, and be back, at all events, by sunrise.”

“And will you promise me, upon your honor, that when this freak of yours is over, and the bug business (good God!) settled to your satisfaction, you will then return home and follow my advice implicitly, as that of your physician?”

“Yes; I promise; and now let us be off, for we have no time to lose.”

With a heavy heart I accompanied my friend. We started about four o’clock --Legrand, Jupiter, the dog, and myself. Jupiter had with him the scythe and spades --the whole of which he insisted upon carrying --more through fear, it seemed to me, of trusting either of the implements within reach of his master, than from any excess of industry or complaisance. His demeanor was dogged in the extreme, and “dat d--d bug” were the sole words which escaped his lips during the journey. For my own part, I had charge of a couple of dark lanterns, while Legrand contented himself with the scarabaeus, which he carried attached to the end of a bit of whip-cord; twirling it to and fro, with the air of a conjuror, as he went. When I observed this last, plain evidence of my friend’s aberration of mind, I could scarcely refrain from tears. I thought it best, however, to humor his fancy, at least for the present, or until I could adopt some more energetic measures with a chance of success. In the meantime I endeavored, but all in vain, to sound him in regard to the object of the expedition. Having succeeded in inducing me to accompany him, he seemed unwilling to hold conversation upon any topic of minor importance, and to all my questions vouchedsafed no other reply than “we shall see!”
We crossed the creek at the head of the island by means of a skiff, and, ascending the high grounds on the shore of the mainland, proceeded in a northwesterly direction, through a tract of country excessively wild and desolate, where no trace of a human footstep was to be seen. Legrand led the way with decision; pausing only for an instant, here and there, to consult what appeared to be certain landmarks of his own contrivance upon a former occasion.

In this manner we journeyed for about two hours, and the sun was just setting when we entered a region infinitely more dreary than any yet seen. It was a species of table land, near the summit of an almost inaccessible hill, densely wooded from base to pinnacle, and interspersed with huge crags that appeared to lie loosely upon the soil, and in many cases were prevented from precipitating themselves into the valleys below, merely by the support of the trees against which they reclined. Deep ravines, in various directions, gave an air of still sterner solemnity to the scene.

The natural platform to which we had clambered was thickly overgrown with brambles, through which we soon discovered that it would have been impossible to force our way but for the scythe; and Jupiter, by direction of his master, proceeded to clear for us a path to the foot of an enormously tall tulip-tree, which stood, with some eight or ten oaks, upon the level, and far surpassed them all, and all other trees which I had then ever seen, in the beauty of its foliage and form, in the wide spread of its branches, and in the general majesty of its appearance. When we reached this tree, Legrand turned to Jupiter, and asked him if he thought he could climb it. The old man seemed a little staggered by the question, and for some moments made no reply. At length he approached the huge trunk, walked slowly around it, and examined it with minute attention. When he had completed his scrutiny, he merely said,

“Yes, massa, Jup climb any tree he ebber see in he life.”

“Well, then up with you as soon as possible, for it will soon be too dark to see what we are about.”

“How far mus go up, massa?” inquired Jupiter.

“Get up the main trunk first, and then I will tell you which way to go --and here --stop! take this beetle with you.”

“De bug, Massa Will! --de goole bug!” cried the negro, drawing back in dismay --"what for mus tote de bug way up de tree? --d--n if I do!”

“If you are afraid, Jup, a great big negro like you, to take hold of a harmless little dead beetle, why you can carry it up by this string --but, if you do not take it up with you in some way, I shall be under the necessity of breaking your head with this shovel.”

“What de matter now, massa?” said Jup, evidently shamed into compliance; “always want for to raise fuss wid old nigger. Was only funnin’ anyhow. Me feered de
bug! what I keer for de bug?” Here he took cautiously hold of the extreme end of the string, and, maintaining the insect as far from his person as circumstances would permit, prepared to ascend the tree.

In youth, the tulip-tree, or Liriodendron Tulipferum, the most magnificent of American foresters, has a trunk peculiarly smooth, and often rises to a great height without lateral branches; but, in its riper age, the bark becomes gnarled and uneven, while many short limbs make their appearance on the stem. Thus the difficulty of ascension, in the present case, lay more in semblance than in reality. Embracing the huge cylinder, as closely as possible, with his arms and knees, seizing with his hands some projections, and resting his naked toes upon others, Jupiter, after one or two narrow escapes from falling, at length wriggled himself into the first great fork, and seemed to consider the whole business as virtually accomplished. The risk of the achievement was, in fact, now over; although the climber was some sixty or seventy feet from the ground.

“Which way mus go now, Massa Will?” he asked.

Keep up the largest branch --the one on this side,” said Legrand. The negro obeyed him promptly, and apparently with but little trouble; ascending higher and higher, until no glimpse of his squat figure could be obtained through the dense foliage which enveloped it. Presently his voice was heard in a sort of halloo.

“How much fudder is got for go?”

“How high up are you?” asked Legrand.

“Ebber so fur,” replied the negro; “can see de sky fru de top ob de tree.”

“Never mind the sky, but attend to what I say. Look down the trunk and count the limbs below you on this side. How many limbs have you passed?”

“One, two, tree, four, fibe --I done pass fibe big limb, massa, ‘pon dis side.”

“Then go one limb higher.”

In a few minutes the voice was heard again, announcing that the seventh limb was attained.

“No, Jup,” cried Legrand, evidently much excited, “I want you to work your way out upon that limb as far as you can. If you see anything strange, let me know.”

By this time what little doubt I might have entertained of my poor friend’s insan-ity, was put finally at rest. I had no alternative but to conclude him stricken with lunacy, and I became seriously anxious about getting him home. While I was pondering upon what was best to be done, Jupiter’s voice was again heard.

“Mos’ feerd for to ventur ‘pon dis limb berry far --‘tis dead limb putty much all de way.”
“Did you say it was a dead limb, Jupiter?” cried Legrand in a quavering voice.

“Yes, massa, him dead as de door-nail --done up for sartain --done departed dis here life.”

“What in the name of heaven shall I do?” asked Legrand, seemingly in the greatest distress.

“Do!” said I, glad of an opportunity to interpose a word, “why come home and go to bed. Come now! --that’s a fine fellow. It’s getting late, and, besides, you remember your promise.”

“Jupiter,” cried he, without heeding me in the least, “do you hear me?”

“Yes, Massa Will, hear you ebber so plain.”

“Try the wood well, then, with your knife, and see if you think it very rotten.”

“Him rotten, massa, sure nuff,” replied the negro in a few moments, “but not so berry rotten as mought be. Mought ventur out leetle way pon de limb by myself, dat’s true.”

“By yourself! --what do you mean?”

“Why I mean de bug. ‘Tis berry hebbby bug. Spose I drop him down fuss, and den de limb won’t break wid just de weight ob one nigger.”

“You infernal scoundrel!” cried Legrand, apparently much relieved, “what do you mean by telling me such nonsense as that? As sure as you let that beetle fall! --I’ll break your neck. Look here, Jupiter! do you hear me?”

“Yes, massa, needn’t hollo at poor nigger dat style.”

“Well! now listen! --if you will venture out on the limb as far as you think safe, and not let go the beetle, I’ll make you a present of a silver dollar as soon as you get down.”

“I’m gwine, Massa Will --deed I is,” replied the negro very promptly --”mos out to the eend now.”

“Out to the end!” here fairly screamed Legrand, “do you say you are out to the end of that limb?”

“Soon be to de eend, massa, --o-o-o-o-oh! Lor-gol-a-marcy! what is dis here pon de tree?”

“Well!” cried Legrand, highly delighted, “what is it?”

“Why taint noffin but a skull --somebody bin lef him head up de tree, and de crows done gobble ebery bit ob de meat off.”
“A skull, you say!--very well!--how is it fastened to the limb?--what holds it on?”

“Sure nuff, massa; mus look. Why dis berry curious circumstance, pon my word--dare’s a great big nail in de skull, what fastens ob it on to de tree.”

“Well now, Jupiter, do exactly as I tell you--do you hear?”

“Yes, massa.”

“Pay attention, then!--find the left eye of the skull.”

“Hum! hoo! dat’s good! why dar ain’t no eye lef’ at all.”

“Curse your stupidity! do you know your right hand from your left?”

“Yes, I nose dat --nose all bout dat --’tis my left hand what I chops de wood wid.”

“To be sure! you are left-handed; and your left eye is on the same side as your left hand. Now, I suppose, you can find the left eye of the skull, or the place where the left eye has been. Have you found it?”

Here was a long pause. At length the negro asked,

“Is de lef’ eye of de skull pon de same side as de lef’ hand of de skull, too?--cause de skull ain’t got not a bit ob a hand at all--nebber mind! I got de lef’ eye now--here de lef’ eye! what mus do wid it?”

“Let the beetle drop through it, as far as the string will reach--but be careful and not let go your hold of the string.”

“All dat done, Massa Will; mighty easy ting for to put de bug fru de hole--look out for him dar below?”

During this colloquy no portion of Jupiter’s person could be seen; but the beetle, which he had suffered to descend, was now visible at the end of the string, and glistened, like a globe of burnished gold, in the last rays of the setting sun, some of which still faintly illumined the eminence upon which we stood. The scarabaeus hung quite clear of any branches, and, if allowed to fall, would have fallen at our feet. Legrand immediately took the scythe, and cleared with it a circular space, three or four yards in diameter, just beneath the insect, and, having accomplished this, ordered Jupiter to let go the string and come down from the tree.

Driving a peg, with great nicety, into the ground, at the precise spot where the beetle fell, my friend now produced from his pocket a tape-measure. Fastening one end of this at that point of the trunk of the tree which was nearest the peg, he unrolled it till it reached the peg, and thence farther unrolled it, in the direction already established by the two points of the tree and the peg, for the distance of fifty feet--Jupiter clearing away the brambles with the scythe. At the spot thus attained a second peg was driven, and about this, as a centre, a rude circle, about four feet in
diameter, described. Taking now a spade himself, and giving one to Jupiter and one
to me, Legrand begged us to set about one to digging as quickly as possible.

To speak the truth, I had no especial relish for such amusement at any time, and,
at that particular moment, would most willingly have declined it; for the night was
coming on, and I felt much fatigued with the exercise already taken; but I saw no
mode of escape, and was fearful of disturbing my poor friend’s equanimity by a re-
fusion. Could I have depended, indeed, upon Jupiter’s aid, I would have had no hesita-
tion in attempting to get the lunatic home by force; but I was too well assured of the
old negro’s disposition, to hope that he would assist me, under any circumstances,
in a personal contest with his master. I made no doubt that the latter had been in-
fected with some of the innumerable Southern superstitions about money buried,
and that his phantasy had received confirmation by the finding of the scarabaeus,
or, perhaps, by Jupiter’s obstinacy in maintaining it to be “a bug of real gold.” A mind
disposed to lunacy would readily be led away by such suggestions --especially if
chiming in with favorite preconceived ideas --and then I called to mind the poor
fellow’s speech about the beetle’s being “the index of his fortune.” Upon the whole,
I was sadly vexed and puzzled, but, at length, I concluded to make a virtue of ne-
cessity --to dig with a good will, and thus the sooner to convince the visionary, by
ocular demonstration, of the fallacy of the opinions he entertained.

The lanterns having been lit, we all fell to work with a zeal worthy a more ratio-
nal cause; and, as the glare fell upon our persons and implements, I could not help
thinking how picturesque a group we composed, and how strange and suspicious
our labors must have appeared to any interloper who, by chance, might have stum-
bled upon our whereabouts.

We dug very steadily for two hours. Little was said; and our chief embarrassment
lay in the yelpings of the dog, who took exceeding interest in our proceedings. He, at
length, became so obstreperous that we grew fearful of his giving the alarm to some
stragglers in the vicinity; --or, rather, this was the apprehension of Legrand; --for
myself, I should have rejoiced at any interruption which might have enabled me to
get the wanderer home. The noise was, at length, very effectually silenced by Jupi-
ter, who, getting out of the hole with a dogged air of deliberation, tied the brute’s
mouth up with one of his suspenders, and then returned, with a grave chuckle, to
his task.

When the time mentioned had expired, we had reached a depth of five feet, and
yet no signs of any treasure became manifest. A general pause ensued, and I began
to hope that the farce was at an end. Legrand, however, although evidently much
disconcerted, wiped his brow thoughtfully and recommenced. We had excavated
the entire circle of four feet diameter, and now we slightly enlarged the limit, and
went to the farther depth of two feet. Still nothing appeared. The gold-seeker, whom
I sincerely pitied, at length clambered from the pit, with the bitterest disappoint-
ment imprinted upon every feature, and proceeded, slowly and reluctantly, to put
on his coat, which he had thrown off at the beginning of his labor. In the mean time
I made no remark. Jupiter, at a signal from his master, began to gather up his tools. This done, and the dog having been unmuzzled, we turned in profound silence towards home.

We had taken, perhaps, a dozen steps in this direction, when, with a loud oath, Legrand strode up to Jupiter, and seized him by the collar. The astonished negro opened his eyes and mouth to the fullest extent, let fall the spades, and fell upon his knees.

“You scoundrel,” said Legrand, hissing out the syllables from between his clenched teeth — “you infernal black villain! — speak, I tell you! — answer me this instant, without prevarication! which -- which is your left eye?”

“Oh, my golly, Massa Will! ain’t dis here my lef’ eye for sartain?” roared the terrified Jupiter, placing his hand upon his right organ of vision, and holding it there with a desperate pertinacity, as if in immediate dread of his master’s attempt at a gouge.

“I thought so! -- I knew it! -- hurrah!” vociferated Legrand, letting the negro go, and executing a series of curvets and caracols, much to the astonishment of his valet, who, arising from his knees, looked, mutely, from his master to myself, and then from myself to his master.

“Come! we must go back;” said the latter, “the game’s not up yet;” and he again led the way to the tulip-tree.

“Jupiter,” said he, when we reached its foot, come here! was the skull nailed to the limb with the face outward, or with the face to the limb?”

“De face was out, massa, so dat de crows could get at de eyes good, widout any trouble.”

“Well, then, was it this eye or that through which you let the beetle fall?” -- here Legrand touched each of Jupiter’s eyes.

“’Twas dis eye, massa -- de lef’ eye -- jis as you tell me,” and here it was his right eye that the negro indicated.

“That will do -- we must try it again.”

Here my friend, about whose madness I now saw, or fancied that I saw, certain indications of method, removed the peg which marked the spot where the beetle fell, to a spot about three inches to the westward of its former position. Taking, now, the tape-measure from the nearest point of the trunk to the peg, as before, and continuing the extension in a straight line to the distance of fifty feet, a spot was indicated, removed, by several yards, from the point at which we had been digging.

Around the new position a circle, somewhat larger than in the former instance, was now described, and we again set to work with the spades. I was dreadfully wea-
ry, but, scarcely understanding what had occasioned the change in my thoughts, I felt no longer any great aversion from the labor imposed. I had become most unaccountably interested --nay, even excited. Perhaps there was something, amid all the extravagant demeanor of Legrand --some air of forethought, or of deliberation, which impressed me. I dug eagerly, and now and then caught myself actually looking, with something that very much resembled expectation, for the fancied treasure, the vision of which had demented my unfortunate companion. At a period when such vagaries of thought most fully possessed me, and when we had been at work perhaps an hour and a half, we were again interrupted by the violent howlings of the dog. His uneasiness, in the first instance, had been, evidently, but the result of playfulness or caprice, but he now assumed a bitter and serious tone. Upon Jupiter’s again attempting to muzzle him, he made furious resistance, and, leaping into the hole, tore up the mould frantically with his claws. In a few seconds he had uncovered a mass of human bones, forming two complete skeletons, intermingled with several buttons of metal, and what appeared to be the dust of decayed woolen. One or two strokes of a spade upturned the blade of a large Spanish knife, and, as we dug farther, three or four loose pieces of gold and silver coin came to light.

At sight of these the joy of Jupiter could scarcely be restrained, but the countenance of his master wore an air of extreme disappointment. He urged us, however, to continue our exertions, and the words were hardly uttered when I stumbled and fell forward, having caught the toe of my boot in a large ring of iron that lay half buried in the loose earth.

We now worked in earnest, and never did I pass ten minutes of more intense excitement. During this interval we had fairly unearthed an oblong chest of wood, which, from its perfect preservation, and wonderful hardness, had plainly been subjected to some mineralizing process --perhaps that of the Bi-chloride of Mercury. This box was three feet and a half long, three feet broad, and two and a half feet deep. It was firmly secured by bands of wrought iron, riveted, and forming a kind of trellis-work over the whole. On each side of the chest, near the top, were three rings of iron --six in all --by means of which a firm hold could be obtained by six persons. Our utmost united endeavors served only to disturb the coffer very slightly in its bed. We at once saw the impossibility of removing so great a weight. Luckily, the sole fastenings of the lid consisted of two sliding bolts. These we drew back --trembling and panting with anxiety. In an instant, a treasure of incalculable value lay gleaming before us. As the rays of the lanterns fell within the pit, there flashed upwards, from a confused heap of gold and of jewels, a glow and a glare that absolutely dazzled our eyes.

I shall not pretend to describe the feelings with which I gazed. Amazement was, of course, predominant. Legrand appeared exhausted with excitement, and spoke very few words. Jupiter’s countenance wore, for some minutes, as deadly a pallor as it is possible, in the nature of things, for any negro’s visage to assume. He seemed stupefied --thunder-stricken. Presently he fell upon his knees in the pit, and, bury-
ing his naked arms up to the elbows in gold, let them there remain, as if enjoying the luxury of a bath. At length, with a deep sigh, he exclaimed, as if in a soliloquy.

“And dis all cum ob de goole-bug! de putty goole-bug! de poor little goole-bug, what I boosed in dat sabage kind ob style! Ain’t you shamed ob yourself, nigger? --answer me dat!”

It became necessary, at last, that I should arouse both master and valet to the expediency of removing the treasure. It was growing late, and it behooved us to make exertion, that we might get every thing housed before daylight. It was difficult to say what should be done; and much time was spent in deliberation --so confused were the ideas of all. We, finally, lightened the box by removing two thirds of its contents, when we were enabled, with some trouble, to raise it from the hole. The articles taken out were deposited among the brambles, and the dog left to guard them, with strict orders from Jupiter neither, upon any pretence, to stir from the spot, nor to open his mouth until our return. We then hurriedly made for home with the chest; reaching the hut in safety, but after excessive toil, at one o’clock in the morning. Worn out as we were, it was not in human nature to do more just then. We rested until two, and had supper; starting for the hills immediately afterwards, armed with three stout sacks, which, by good luck, were upon the premises. A little before four we arrived at the pit, divided the remainder of the booty, as equally as might be, among us, and, leaving the holes unfilled, again set out for the hut, at which, for the second time, we deposited our golden burthens, just as the first streaks of the dawn gleamed from over the tree-tops in the East.

We were now thoroughly broken down; but the intense excitement of the time denied us repose. After an unquiet slumber of some three or four hours’ duration, we arose, as if by preconcert, to make examination of our treasure.

The chest had been full to the brim, and we spent the whole day, and the greater part of the next night, in a scrutiny of its contents. There had been nothing like order or arrangement. Every thing had been heaped in promiscuously. Having assorted all with care, we found ourselves possessed of even vaster wealth than we had at first supposed. In coin there was rather more than four hundred and fifty thousand dollars --estimating the value of the pieces, as accurately as we could, by the tables of the period. There was not a particle of silver. All was gold of antique date and of great variety --French, Spanish, and German money, with a few English guineas, and some counters, of which we had never seen specimens before. There were several very large and heavy coins, so worn that we could make nothing of their inscriptions. There was no American money. The value of the jewels we found more difficulty in estimating. There were diamonds --some of them exceedingly large and fine --a hundred and ten in all, and not one of them small; eighteen rubies of remarkable brilliancy; --three hundred and ten emeralds, all very beautiful; and twenty-one sapphires, with an opal. These stones had all been broken from their settings and thrown loose in the chest. The settings themselves, which we picked out from among the other gold, appeared to have been beaten up with hammers,
as if to prevent identification. Besides all this, there was a vast quantity of solid gold ornaments; --nearly two hundred massive finger and ear rings; --rich chains --thirty of these, if I remember; --eighty-three very large and heavy crucifixes; --five gold censers of great value; --a prodigious golden punch-bowl, ornamented with richly chased vine-leaves and Bacchanalian figures; with two sword-handles exquisitely embossed, and many other smaller articles which I cannot recollect. The weight of these valuables exceeded three hundred and fifty pounds avoirdupois; and in this estimate I have not included one hundred and ninety-seven superb gold watches; three of the number being worth each five hundred dollars, if one. Many of them were very old, and as time keepers valueless; the works having suffered, more or less, from corrosion --but all were richly jewelled and in cases of great worth. We estimated the entire contents of the chest, that night, at a million and a half of dollars; and, upon the subsequent disposal of the trinkets and jewels (a few being retained for our own use), it was found that we had greatly undervalued the treasure.

When, at length, we had concluded our examination, and the intense excitement of the time had, in some measure, subsided, Legrand, who saw that I was dying with impatience for a solution of this most extraordinary riddle, entered into a full detail of all the circumstances connected with it.

"You remember," said he, "the night when I handed you the rough sketch I had made of the scarabaeus. You recollect also, that I became quite vexed at you for insisting that my drawing resembled a death’s-head. When you first made this assertion I thought you were jesting; but afterwards I called to mind the peculiar spots on the back of the insect, and admitted to myself that your remark had some little foundation in fact. Still, the sneer at my graphic powers irritated me --for I am considered a good artist --and, therefore, when you handed me the scrap of parchment, I was about to crumple it up and throw it angrily into the fire."

"The scrap of paper, you mean," said I.

"No; it had much of the appearance of paper; and at first I supposed it to be such, but when I came to draw upon it, I discovered it, at once, to be a piece of very thin parchment. It was quite dirty, you remember. Well, as I was in the very act of crumpling it up, my glance fell upon the sketch at which you had been looking, and you may imagine my astonishment when I perceived, in fact, the figure of a death’s-head just where, it seemed to me, I had made the drawing of the beetle. For a moment I was too much amazed to think with accuracy. I knew that my design was very different in detail from this --although there was a certain similarity in general outline. Presently I took a candle, and seating myself at the other end of the room, proceeded to scrutinize the parchment more closely. Upon turning it over, I saw my own sketch upon the reverse, just as I had made it. My first idea, now, was mere surprise at the really remarkable similarity of outline --at the singular coincidence involved in the fact, that unknown to me, there should have been a skull upon the other side of the parchment, immediately beneath my figure of the scarabaeus and that this skull, not only in outline, but in size, should so closely resemble my draw-
ing. I say the singularity of this coincidence absolutely stupefied me for a time. This is the usual effect of such coincidences. The mind struggles to establish a connection—a sequence of cause and effect—and, being unable to do so, suffers a species of temporary paralysis. But, when I recovered from this stupor, there dawned upon me gradually a conviction which startled me even far more than the coincidence. I began distinctly, positively, to remember that there had been no drawing on the parchment when I made my sketch of the scarabaeus. I became perfectly certain of this; for I recollected turning up first one side and then the other, in search of the cleanest spot. Had the skull been then there, of course I could not have failed to notice it. Here was indeed a mystery which I felt it impossible to explain; but, even at that early moment, there it seemed to glimmer, faintly, within the most remote and secret chambers of my intellect, a glow-worm-like conception of that truth which last night’s adventure brought to so magnificent a demonstration. I arose at once, and putting the parchment securely away, dismissed all farther reflection until I should be alone.

“When you had gone, and when Jupiter was fast asleep, I betook myself to a more methodical investigation of the affair. In the first place I considered the manner in which the parchment had come into my possession. The spot where we discovered the scarabaeus was on the coast of the main land, about a mile eastward of the island, and but a short distance above high water mark. Upon my taking hold of it, it gave me a sharp bite, which caused me to let it drop. Jupiter, with his accustomed caution, before seizing the insect, which had flown towards him, looked about him for a leaf, or something of that nature, by which to take hold of it. It was at this moment that his eyes, and mine also, fell upon the scrap of parchment, which I then supposed to be paper. It was lying half buried in the sand, a corner sticking up. Near the spot where we found it, I observed the remnants of the hull of what appeared to have been a ship’s long boat. The wreck seemed to have been there for a very great while; for the resemblance to boat timbers could scarcely be traced.

“Well, Jupiter picked up the parchment, wrapped the beetle in it, and gave it to me. Soon afterwards we turned to go home, and on the way met Lieutenant G--. I showed him the insect, and he begged me to let him take it to the fort. On my consenting, he thrust it forthwith into his waistcoat pocket, without the parchment in which it had been wrapped, and which I had continued to hold in my hand during his inspection. Perhaps he dreaded my changing my mind, and thought it best to make sure of the prize at once—you know how enthusiastic he is on all subjects connected with Natural History. At the same time without being conscious of it, I must have deposited the parchment in my own pocket.

“You remember that when I went to the table, for the purpose of making a sketch of the beetle, I found no paper where it was usually kept. I looked in the drawer; and found none there. I searched my pockets, hoping to find an old letter—and then my hand fell upon the parchment. I thus detail the precise mode in which it came into my possession; for the circumstances impressed me with peculiar force.
“No doubt you will think me fanciful --but I had already established a kind of connexion. I had put together two links of a great chain. There was a boat lying on a sea-coast, and not far from the boat was a parchment --not a paper--with a skull depicted on it. You will, of course, ask ‘where is the connexion?’ I reply that the skull, or death’s-head, is the well-known emblem of the pirate. The flag of the death’s-head is hoisted in all engagements.

“I have said that the scrap was parchment, and not paper. Parchment is durable --almost imperishable. Matters of little moment are rarely consigned to parchment; since, for the mere ordinary purposes of drawing or writing, it is not nearly so well adapted as paper. This reflection suggested some meaning --some relevancy --in the death’s-head. I did not fail to observe, also, the form of the parchment. Although one of its corners had been, by some accident, destroyed, it could be seen that the original form was oblong. It was just such a slip, indeed, as might have been chosen for a memorandum --for a record of something to be long remembered and carefully preserved.”

“But,” I interposed, “you say that the skull was not upon the parchment when you made the drawing of the beetle. How then do you trace any connexion between the boat and the skull --since this latter, according to your own admission, must have been designed (God only knows how or by whom) at some period subsequent to your sketching the scarabaeus?”

“Ah, hereupon turns the whole mystery; although the secret, at this point, I had comparatively little difficulty in solving. My steps were sure, and could afford but a single result. I reasoned, for example, thus: When I drew the scarabaeus, there was no skull apparent on the parchment. When I had completed the drawing, I gave it to you, and observed you narrowly until you returned it. You, therefore, did not design the skull, and no one else was present to do it. Then it was not done by human agency. And nevertheless it was done.

“At this stage of my reflections I endeavored to remember, and did remember, with entire distinctness, every incident which occurred about the period in question. The weather was chilly (oh rare and happy accident!), and a fire was blazing on the hearth. I was heated with exercise and sat near the table. You, however, had drawn a chair close to the chimney. Just as I placed the parchment in your hand, and as you were in the act of inspecting it, Wolf, the Newfoundland, entered, and leaped upon your shoulders. With your left hand you caressed him and kept him off, while your right, holding the parchment, was permitted to fall listlessly between your knees, and in close proximity to the fire. At one moment I thought the blaze had caught it, and was about to caution you, but, before I could speak, you had withdrawn it, and were engaged in its examination. When I considered all these particulars, I doubted not for a moment that heat had been the agent in bringing to light, on the parchment, the skull which I saw designed on it. You are well aware that chemical preparations exist, and have existed time out of mind, by means of which it is possible to write on either paper or vellum, so that the characters shall become
visible only when subjected to the action of fire. Zaire, digested in aqua regia, and diluted with four times its weight of water, is sometimes employed; a green tint results. The regulus of cobalt, dissolved in spirit of nitre, gives a red. These colors disappear at longer or shorter intervals after the material written on cools, but again become apparent upon the re-application of heat.

“I now scrutinized the death’s-head with care. Its outer edges --the edges of the drawing nearest the edge of the vellum --were far more distinct than the others. It was clear that the action of the caloric had been imperfect or unequal. I immediately kindled a fire, and subjected every portion of the parchment to a glowing heat. At first, the only effect was the strengthening of the faint lines in the skull; but, on persevering in the experiment, there became visible, at the corner of the slip, diagonally opposite to the spot in which the death’s-head was delineated, the figure of what I at first supposed to be a goat. A closer scrutiny, however, satisfied me that it was intended for a kid.”

“Ha! ha!” said I, “to be sure I have no right to laugh at you --a million and a half of money is too serious a matter for mirth --but you are not about to establish a third link in your chain --you will not find any especial connexion between your pirates and goat --pirates, you know, have nothing to do with goats; they appertain to the farming interest.”

“But I have just said that the figure was not that of a goat.”

“Well, a kid then --pretty much the same thing.”

“Pretty much, but not altogether,” said Legrand. “You may have heard of one Captain Kidd. I at once looked on the figure of the animal as a kind of punning or hieroglyphical signature. I say signature; because its position on the vellum suggested this idea. The death’s-head at the corner diagonally opposite, had, in the same manner, the air of a stamp, or seal. But I was sorely put out by the absence of all else --of the body to my imagined instrument --of the text for my context.”

“I presume you expected to find a letter between the stamp and the signature.”

“Something of that kind. The fact is, I felt irresistibly impressed with a presentiment of some vast good fortune impending. I can scarcely say why. Perhaps, after all, it was rather a desire than an actual belief; --but do you know that Jupiter’s silly words, about the bug being of solid gold, had a remarkable effect on my fancy? And then the series of accidents and coincidences --these were so very extraordinary. Do you observe how mere an accident it was that these events should have occurred on the sole day of all the year in which it has been, or may be, sufficiently cool for fire, and that without the fire, or without the intervention of the dog at the precise moment in which he appeared, I should never have become aware of the death’s-head, and so never the possessor of the treasure?”

“But proceed --I am all impatience.”
“Well; you have heard, of course, the many stories current --the thousand vague rumors afloat about money buried, somewhere on the Atlantic coast, by Kidd and his associates. These rumors must have had some foundation in fact. And that the rumors have existed so long and so continuously could have resulted, it appeared to me, only from the circumstance of the buried treasure still remaining entombed. Had Kidd concealed his plunder for a time, and afterwards reclaimed it, the rumors would scarcely have reached us in their present unvarying form. You will observe that the stories told are all about money-seekers, not about money-finders. Had the pirate recovered his money, there the affair would have dropped. It seemed to me that some accident --say the loss of a memorandum indicating its locality --had deprived him of the means of recovering it, and that this accident had become known to is followers, who otherwise might never have heard that treasure had been concealed at all, and who, busying themselves in vain, because unguided attempts, to regain it, had given first birth, and then universal currency, to the reports which are now so common. Have you ever heard of any important treasure being unearthed along the coast?”

“Never.”

“But that Kidd’s accumulations were immense, is well known. I took it for granted, therefore, that the earth still held them; and you will scarcely be surprised when I tell you that I felt a hope, nearly amounting to certainty, that the parchment so strangely found, involved a lost record of the place of deposit.”

“But how did you proceed?”

“I held the vellum again to the fire, after increasing the heat; but nothing appeared. I now thought it possible that the coating of dirt might have something to do with the failure; so I carefully rinsed the parchment by pouring warm water over it, and, having done this, I placed it in a tin pan, with the skull downwards, and put the pan upon a furnace of lighted charcoal. In a few minutes, the pan having become thoroughly heated, I removed the slip, and, to my inexpressible joy, found it spotted, in several places, with what appeared to be figures arranged in lines. Again I placed it in the pan, and suffered it to remain another minute. On taking it off, the whole was just as you see it now.”

Here Legrand, having re-heated the parchment, submitted it my inspection. The following characters were rudely traced, in a red tint, between the death’s-head and the goat:

\[
53++!305))6*;4826)4+.4)+;806*;48!8`60))85;]8*:++8!83(88)5*; \]
\[
46(;88*96?:;8)*+.;485);5!*2:*+;4956*2(5*-4)8*; 4069285);6 \]
\[
!8)4++;1(+9;48081;8:8+1;48!85;4)485!528806*81(+9;48;(88;4(+3 \]
\[
4;48)4++;161.;:188;+?; \]
“But,” said I, returning him the slip, “I am as much in the dark as ever. Were all the jewels of Golconda awaiting me on my solution of this enigma, I am quite sure that I should be unable to earn them.”

“And yet,” said Legrand, “the solution is by no means so difficult as you might be led to imagine from the first hasty inspection of the characters. These characters, as any one might readily guess, form a cipher --that is to say, they convey a meaning; but then, from what is known of Kidd, I could not suppose him capable of constructing any of the more abstruse cryptographs. I made up my mind, at once, that this was of a simple species --such, however, as would appear, to the crude intellect of the sailor; absolutely insoluble without the key.”

“And you really solved it?”

“Readily; I have solved others of an abstruseness ten thousand times greater. Circumstances, and a certain bias of mind, have led me to take interest in such riddles, and it may well be doubted whether human ingenuity can construct an enigma of the kind which human ingenuity may not, by proper application, resolve. In fact, having once established connected and legible characters, I scarcely gave a thought to the mere difficulty of developing their import.

“In the present case --indeed in all cases of secret writing --the first question regards the language of the cipher; for the principles of solution, so far, especially, as the more simple ciphers are concerned, depend on, and are varied by, the genius of the particular idiom. In general, there is no alternative but experiment (directed by probabilities) of every tongue known to him who attempts the solution, until the true one be attained. But, with the cipher now before us, all difficulty is removed by the signature. The pun on the word ‘Kidd’ is appreciable in no other language than the English. But for this consideration I should have begun my attempts with the Spanish and French, as the tongues in which a secret of this kind would most naturally have been written by a pirate of the Spanish main. As it was, I assumed the cryptograph to be English.

“You observe there are no divisions between the words. Had there been divisions, the task would have been comparatively easy. In such case I should have commenced with a collation and analysis of the shorter words, and, had a word of a single letter occurred, as is most likely, (a or I, for example,) I should have considered the solution as assured. But, there being no division, my first step was to ascertain the predominant letters, as well as the least frequent. Counting all, I constructed a table, thus:

Of the character 8 there are 33.

; “ 26.

4 “ 19.
"Now, in English, the letter which most frequently occurs is e. Afterwards, the succession runs thus: a o i d h n r s t u y c f g l m w b k p q x z. E however predominates so remarkably that an individual sentence of any length is rarely seen, in which it is not the prevailing character.

"Here, then, we have, in the very beginning, the groundwork for something more than a mere guess. The general use which may be made of the table is obvious --but, in this particular cipher, we shall only very partially require its aid. As our predominant character is 8, we will commence by assuming it as the e of the natural alphabet. To verify the supposition, let us observe if the 8 be seen often in couples --for e is doubled with great frequency in English --in such words, for example, as ‘meet,’ ‘fleeet,’ ‘speed,’ ‘seen,’ ‘been,’ ‘agree,’ &c. In the present instance we see it doubled less than five times, although the cryptograph is brief.

"Let us assume 8, then, as e. Now, of all words in the language, ‘the’ is the most usual; let us see, therefore, whether they are not repetitions of any three characters in the same order of collocation, the last of them being 8. If we discover repetitions of such letters, so arranged, they will most probably represent the word ‘the.’ On inspection, we find no less than seven such arrangements, the characters being ;48. We may, therefore, assume that the semicolon represents t, that 4 represents h, and that 8 represents e --the last being now well confirmed. Thus a great step has been taken.

"But, having established a single word, we are enabled to establish a vastly important point; that is to say, several commencements and terminations of other words. Let us refer, for example, to the last instance but one, in which the combination ;48 occurs --not far from the end of the cipher. We know that the semicolon immed-
ately ensuing is the commencement of a word, and, of the six characters succeeding this ‘the,’ we are cognizant of no less than five. Let us set these characters down, thus, by the letters we know them to represent, leaving a space for the unknown—

t eeth.

“Here we are enabled, at once, to discard the ‘th,’ as forming no portion of the word commencing with the first t; since, by experiment of the entire alphabet for a letter adapted to the vacancy we perceive that no word can be formed of which this th can be a part. We are thus narrowed into

t ee,

and, going through the alphabet, if necessary, as before, we arrive at the word ‘tree,’ as the sole possible reading. We thus gain another letter, r, represented by (, with the words ‘the tree’ in juxtaposition.

“Looking beyond these words, for a short distance, we again see the combination ;48, and employ it by way of termination to what immediately precedes. We have thus this arrangement:

the tree ;4(+?34 the,

or substituting the natural letters, where known, it reads thus:

the tree thr+?3h the.

“Now, if, in place of the unknown characters, we leave blank spaces, or substitute dots, we read thus:

the tree thr...h the,

when the word ‘through’ makes itself evident at once. But this discovery gives us three new letters, o, u and g, represented by + ? and 3.

“Looking now, narrowly, through the cipher for combinations of known characters, we find, not very far from the beginning, this arrangement,

83(88, or egree,

which, plainly, is the conclusion of the word ‘degree,’ and gives us another letter, d, represented by !.

“Four letters beyond the word ‘degree,’ we perceive the combination

;46(;88*.

“Translating the known characters, and representing the unknown by dots, as before, we read thus:
an arrangement immediately suggestive of the word ‘thirteen,’ and again furnishing us with two new characters, i and n, represented by 6 and *.

“Referring, now, to the beginning of the cryptograph, we find the combination, 53++.!

“Translating, as before, we obtain .good,

which assures us that the first letter is A, and that the first two words are ‘A good.’

“To avoid confusion, it is now time that we arrange our key, as far as discovered, in a tabular form. It will stand thus:

5 represents a

! “ d
8 “ e
3 “ g
4 “ h
6 “ i
* “ n
+ “ o
( “ r
; “ t

“We have, therefore, no less than ten of the most important letters represented, and it will be unnecessary to proceed with the details of the solution. I have said enough to convince you that ciphers of this nature are readily soluble, and to give you some insight into the rationale of their development. But be assured that the specimen before us appertains to the very simplest species of cryptograph. It now only remains to give you the full translation of the characters upon the parchment, as unriddled. Here it is:
'A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's seat twenty-one degrees and thirteen minutes northeast and by north main branch seventh limb east side shoot from the left eye of the death's-head a bee line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out.'

"But," said I, "the enigma seems still in as bad a condition as ever. How is it possible to extort a meaning from all this jargon about 'devil's seats,' 'death's-heads,' and 'bishop's hostel'?"

"I confess," replied Legrand, "that the matter still wears a serious aspect, when regarded with a casual glance. My first endeavor was to divide the sentence into the natural division intended by the cryptographist."

"You mean, to punctuate it?"

"Something of that kind."

"But how was it possible to effect this?"

"I reflected that it had been a point with the writer to run his words together without division, so as to increase the difficulty of solution. Now, a not overacute man, in pursuing such an object, would be nearly certain to overdo the matter: When, in the course of his composition, he arrived at a break in his subject which would naturally require a pause, or a point, he would be exceedingly apt to run his characters, at this place, more than usually close together. If you will observe the MS., in the present instance, you will easily detect five such cases of unusual crowding. Acting on this hint, I made the division thus:

'A good glass in the bishop's hostel in the devil's --twenty-one degrees and thirteen minutes --northeast and by north --main branch seventh limb east side --shoot from the left eye of the death's-head --a bee-line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out.'"

"Even this division," said I, "leaves me still in the dark."

"It left me also in the dark," replied Legrand, "for a few days; during which I made diligent inquiry, in the neighborhood of Sullivan's Island, for any building which went by the name of the 'Bishop's Hotel'; for, of course, I dropped the obsolete word 'hostel.' Gaining no information on the subject, I was on the point of extending my sphere of search, and proceeding in a more systematic manner; when, one morning, it entered into my head, quite suddenly, that this 'Bishop's Hostel' might have some reference to an old family, of the name of Bessop, which, time out of mind, had held possession of an ancient manor-house, about four miles to the northward of the Island. I accordingly went over to the plantation, and reinstituted my inquiries among the older negroes of the place. At length one of the most aged of the women said that she had heard of such a place as Bessop's Castle, and thought that she could guide me to it, but that it was not a castle, nor a tavern, but a high rock."
"I offered to pay her well for her trouble, and, after some demur, she consented to accompany me to the spot. We found it without much difficulty, when, dismissing her, I proceeded to examine the place. The ‘castle’ consisted of an irregular assemblage of cliffs and rocks --one of the latter being quite remarkable for its height as well as for its insulated and artificial appearance. I clambered to its apex, and then felt much at a loss as to what should be next done.

"While I was busied in reflection, my eyes fell upon a narrow ledge in the eastern face of the rock, perhaps a yard below the summit on which I stood. This ledge projected about eighteen inches, and was not more than a foot wide, while a niche in the cliff just above it, gave it a rude resemblance to one of the hollow-backed chairs used by our ancestors. I made no doubt that here was the ‘devil’s-seat’ alluded to in the MS., and now I seemed to grasp the full secret of the riddle.

"The ‘good glass,’ I knew, could have reference to nothing but a telescope; for the word ‘glass’ is rarely employed in any other sense by seamen. Now here, I at once saw, was a telescope to be used, and a definite point of view, admitting no variation, from which to use it. Nor did I hesitate to believe that the phrases, ‘twenty-one degrees and thirteen minutes,’ and northeast and by north,’ were intended as directions for the levelling of the glass. Greatly excited by these discoveries, I hurried home, procured a telescope, and returned to the rock.

"I let myself down to the ledge, and found that it was impossible to retain a seat on it unless in one particular position. This fact confirmed my preconceived idea. I proceeded to use the glass. Of course, the ‘twenty-one degrees and thirteen minutes’ could allude to nothing but elevation above the visible horizon, since the horizontal direction was clearly indicated by the words, ‘northeast and by north.’ This latter direction I at once established by means of a pocket-compass; then, pointing the glass as nearly at an angle of twenty-one degrees of elevation as I could do it by guess, I moved it cautiously up or down, until my attention was arrested by a circular rift or opening in the foliage of a large tree that overtopped its fellows in the distance. In the centre of this rift I perceived a white spot, but could not, at first, distinguish what it was. Adjusting the focus of the telescope, I again looked, and now made it out to be a human skull.

"On this discovery I was so sanguine as to consider the enigma solved; for the phrase ‘main branch, seventh limb, east side,’ could refer only to the position of the skull on the tree, while shoot from the left eye of the death’s-head’ admitted, also, of but one interpretation, in regard to a search for buried treasure. I perceived that the design was to drop a bullet from the left eye of the skull, and that a bee-line, or, in other words, a straight line, drawn from the nearest point of the trunk through ‘the shot,’ (or the spot where the bullet fell,) and thence extended to a distance of fifty feet, would indicate a definite point--and beneath this point I thought it at least possible that a deposit of value lay concealed."
“All this,” I said, “is exceedingly clear, and, although ingenious, still simple and explicit. When you left the Bishop’s Hotel, what then?”

“Why, having carefully taken the bearings of the tree, I turned homewards. The instant that I left ‘the devil’s seat,’ however, the circular rift vanished; nor could I get a glimpse of it afterwards, turn as I would. What seems to me the chief ingenuity in this whole business, is the fact (for repeated experiment has convinced me it is a fact) that the circular opening in question is visible from no other attainable point of view than that afforded by the narrow ledge on the face of the rock.

“In this expedition to the ‘Bishop’s Hotel’ I had been attended by Jupiter; who had, no doubt, observed, for some weeks past, the abstraction of my demeanor, and took especial care not to leave me alone. But, on the next day, getting up very early, I contrived to give him the slip, and went into the hills in search of the tree. After much toil I found it. When I came home at night my valet proposed to give me a flogging. With the rest of the adventure I believe you are as well acquainted as myself.”

“I suppose,” said I, “you missed the spot, in the first attempt at digging through Jupiter’s stupidity in letting the bug fall through the right instead of the left of the skull.”

“Precisely. This mistake made a difference of about two inches and a half in the ‘shot’ --that is to say, in the position of the peg nearest the tree; and had the treasure been beneath the ‘shot,’ the error would have been of little moment; but the ‘shot,’ together with the nearest point of the tree, were merely two points for the establishment of a line of direction; of course the error, however trivial in the beginning, increased as we proceeded with the line, and by the time we had gone fifty feet, threw us quite off the scent. But for my deep-seated convictions that treasure was here somewhere actually buried, we might have had all our labor in vain.”

“I presume the fancy of the skull, of letting fall a bullet through the skull’s eye --was suggested to Kidd by the piratical flag. No doubt he felt a kind of poetical consistency in recovering his money through this ominous insignium.”

“Perhaps so; still I cannot help thinking that common-sense had quite as much to do with the matter as poetical consistency. To be visible from the devil’s-seat, it was necessary that the object, if small, should be white; and there is nothing like your human skull for retaining and even increasing its whiteness under exposure to all vicissitudes of weather.”

“But your grandiloquence, and your conduct in swinging the beetle --how excessively odd! I was sure you were mad. And why did you insist on letting fall the bug, instead of a bullet, from the skull?”

“Why, to be frank, I felt somewhat annoyed by your evident suspicions touching my sanity, and so resolved to punish you quietly, in my own way, by a little bit of sober mystification. For this reason I swung the beetle, and for this reason I let it fall
from the tree. An observation of yours about its great weight suggested the latter idea."

“Yes, I perceive; and now there is only one point which puzzles me. What are we to make of the skeletons found in the hole?”

“That is a question I am no more able to answer than yourself. There seems, however, only one plausible way of accounting for them -- and yet it is dreadful to believe in such atrocity as my suggestion would imply. It is clear that Kidd -- if Kidd indeed secreted this treasure, which I doubt not -- it is clear that he must have had assistance in the labor. But, the worst of this labor concluded, he may have thought it expedient to remove all participants in his secret. Perhaps a couple of blows with a mattock were sufficient, while his coadjutors were busy in the pit; perhaps it required a dozen -- who shall tell?”
THE BLACK CAT

FOR the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not--and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified--have tortured--have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but Horror--to many they will seem less terrible than baroques. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace--some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals, and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiar of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature or the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere Man.

I married early, and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, gold-fish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a cat.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tintured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever serious upon this point--and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.

Pluto--this was the cat’s name--was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.
Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character--through the instrumentality of the Fiend Intemperance--had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by, accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me--for what disease is like Alcohol!--and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish--even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat-pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning--when I had slept off the fumes of the night’s debauch--I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart--one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a stupid action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul to vex itself--to offer violence to its own nature--to do wrong for the wrong’s sake only--that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in
cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;--hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;--hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence;--hung it because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin--a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it--if such a thing were possible--even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect, between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts--and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire--a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with every minute and eager attention. The words “strange!” “singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in bas relief upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic cat. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvelous. There was a rope about the animal’s neck.

When I first beheld this apparition--for I could scarcely regard it as less--my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd--by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly-spread plaster; the lime of which, had then with the flames, and the ammonia from the carcass, accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact ‘just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half-sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.
One night as I sat, half stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of gin, or of rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat--a very large one--fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it--knew nothing of it--had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and, when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but I know not how or why it was--its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed me. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill use it; but gradually--very gradually--I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair; or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk it would get between my feet and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly it at by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly--let me confess it at once--by absolute dread of the beast.
This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil—and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own—yes, even in this felon’s cell, I am almost ashamed to own—that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimeras it would be possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees—degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my reason struggled to reject as fanciful—it had, at length, assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared—it was now, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWS!—oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime—of Agony and of Death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere Humanity. And a brute beast—whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed—a brute beast to work out for me—for me a man, fashioned in the image of the High God—so much of insufferable woe! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of rest any more! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started hourly from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of the thing upon my face, and its vast weight—an incarnate nightmare that I had no power to shake off—incumbent eternally upon my heart!

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates—the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of all things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse...
into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it in the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as if merchandize, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the Middle Ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed, and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up, and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crowbar I easily dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while with little trouble, I relaid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair; with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brick-work. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself—"Here at least, then, my labor has not been in vain."

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it, at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger; and forebore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe or to imagine the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night—and thus for one night at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, slept even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a freeman. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises forever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no
embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

“Gentlemen,” I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, “I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen, this--this is a very well-constructed house,” (In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all),--"I may say an excellently well-constructed house. These walls--are you going, gentlemen?--these walls are solidly put together”; and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brick-work behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch-Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb! --by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman--a howl--a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were tolling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder; and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb.
THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled -- but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point -- this Fortunato -- although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmery, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; -- I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him -- "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado, A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

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“Amontillado!”

“And I must satisfy them.”

“Amontillado!”

“As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me --”

“Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.”

“And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.

“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi--”

“I have no engagement; --come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre.”

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado.”

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a roquelaire closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

“The pipe,” he said.
"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication.

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?"

"Ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh!" My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

"It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi --"

"Enough," he said; "the cough's a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough."

"True --true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily --but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damp.

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.

"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.

He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.

"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."

"And I to your long life."

He again took my arm, and we proceeded.

"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."

"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."

"I forget your arms."

"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."
“And the motto?”

“Nemo me impune lacessit.”

“Good!” he said.

The wine sparkled in his eyes and the bells jingled. My own fancy grew warm with the Medoc. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and puncheons intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again, and this time I made bold to seize Fortunato by an arm above the elbow.

“The nitre!” I said; “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough --”

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc.”

I broke and reached him a flagon of De Grave. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement --a grotesque one.

“You do not comprehend?” he said.

“Not I,” I replied.

“Then you are not of the brotherhood.”

“How?”

“You are not of the masons.”

“Yes, yes,” I said; “yes, yes.”

“You? Impossible! A mason?”

“A mason,” I replied.

“A sign,” he said, “a sign.”

“It is this,” I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

“You jest,” he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. “But let us proceed to the Amontillado.”

“Be it so,” I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descend-
ing again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi --”

“He is an ignoramus,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In niche, and finding an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally. From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. He was too much astounded to resist. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

“Pass your hand,” I said, “over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.”

“The Amontillado!” ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.

“As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain.
The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labours and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled. Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess; but the thought of an instant reassured me. I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamoured. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamourer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. I had completed the eighth, the ninth and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said--

"Ha! ha! ha! --he! he! he! --a very good joke, indeed --an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo --he! he! he! --over our wine --he! he! he!"

"The Amontillado!" I said.

"He! he! he! --he! he! he! --yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."

"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."

"For the love of God, Montresor!"

"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"

But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud--

"Fortunato!"

No answer. I called again--

"Fortunato!"

No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of
my labour. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*
THE TELL-TALE HEART

TRUE! --nervous --very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses --not destroyed --not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily --how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye of a vulture --a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees --very gradually --I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded --with what caution --with what foresight --with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it --oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly --very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! would a madman have been so wise as this, And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously-oh, so cautiously --cautiously (for the hinges creaked) --I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights --every night just at midnight --but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door: A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers --of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you
may think that I drew back --but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out --"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; --just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief --oh, no! --it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself --"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney --it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel --although he neither saw nor heard --to feel the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little --a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it --you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily --until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open --wide, wide open --and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness --all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the sense? --now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.
But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eve. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man’s terror must have been extreme! It grew louder; I say, louder every moment! --do you mark me well I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me --the sound would be heard by a neighbour! The old man’s hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once --once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye --not even his --could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out --no stain of any kind --no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all --ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o’clock --still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, --for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbour during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled, --for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search --search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigue, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.
The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: --It continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness --until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

No doubt I now grew very pale; --but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased --and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound --much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath --and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly --more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men --but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed --I raved --I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder --louder --louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! --no, no! They heard! --they suspected! --they knew! --they were making a mockery of my horror!--this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now --again! --hark! louder! louder! louder! louder! louder!

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed! --tear up the planks! here, here! --It is the beating of his hideous heart!”
“THE CITY IN THE SEA”

Lo! Death has reared himself a throne
   In a strange city lying alone
   Far down within the dim West,
   Where the good and the bad and the worst and the best
   Have gone to their eternal rest.
There shrines and palaces and towers
   (Time-eaten towers that tremble not!)
Resemble nothing that is ours.
Around, by lifting winds forgot,
   Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.

No rays from the holy heaven come down
On the long night-time of that town;
But light from out the lurid sea
Streams up the turrets silently-
Gleams up the pinnacles far and free-
Up domes- up spires- up kingly halls-
Up fanes- up Babylon-like walls-
Up shadowy long-forgotten bowers
Of sculptured ivy and stone flowers-
Up many and many a marvellous shrine
Whose wreathed friezes intertwine
The viol, the violet, and the vine.
Resignedly beneath the sky
The melancholy waters lie.
So blend the turrets and shadows there
That all seem pendulous in air,
While from a proud tower in the town
Death looks gigantically down.

There open fanes and gaping graves
Yawn level with the luminous waves;
But not the riches there that lie
In each idol's diamond eye-
Not the gaily-jewelled dead
Tempt the waters from their bed;
For no ripples curl, alas!
Along that wilderness of glass-
No swellings tell that winds may be
Upon some far-off happier sea-
No heavings hint that winds have been
On seas less hideously serene.

But lo, a stir is in the air!
The wave- there is a movement there!
As if the towers had thrust aside,
In slightly sinking, the dull tide-
As if their tops had feebly given
A void within the filmy Heaven.
The waves have now a redder glow-
The hours are breathing faint and low-
And when, amid no earthly moans,
Down, down that town shall settle hence,
Hell, rising from a thousand thrones,
Shall do it reverence.
“THE RAVEN”

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door-
Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow; - vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow - sorrow for the lost Lenore-
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me - filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door; -
This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you" - here I opened wide the door; -
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"
Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice:
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore-
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore; -
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"
Open here I flung the shutter; when, with many a flirt and flutter;
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door-
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door-
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore.
“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore-
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning- little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door-
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door;
With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered- not a feather then he fluttered-
Till I scarcely more than muttered, “Other friends have flown before-
On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.”
Then the bird said, “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore-
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never- nevermore!’”

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore-
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o’er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o’er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee- by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite- respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil! -
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted-
On this home by Horror hauntèd- tell me truly, I implore-
Is there- is there balm in Gilead?- tell me- tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us- by that God we both adore-
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a saintèd maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend,” I shrieked, upstarting-
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!- quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon’s that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted- nevermore!
“ANNABEL LEE”

It was many and many a year ago,
   In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
   By the name of ANNABEL LEE;--
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
   Than to love and be loved by me.
She was a child and I was a child,
   In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love--
   I and my Annabel Lee--
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
   Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
   In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud by night
   Chilling my Annabel Lee;
So that her high-born kinsman came
   And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
   In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
   Went envying her and me:--
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,
   In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of a cloud, chilling
   And killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
   Of those who were older than we--
   Of many far wiser than we-
And neither the angels in Heaven above,
   Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
   Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:--

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
   Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
   Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
   Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,
     In her sepulchre there by the sea--
     In her tomb by the side of the sea.
CHARLES DICKENS, in a note now lying before me, alluding to an examination I once made of the mechanism of “Barnaby Rudge,” says- “By the way, are you aware that Godwin wrote his ‘Caleb Williams’ backwards? He first involved his hero in a web of difficulties, forming the second volume, and then, for the first, cast about him for some mode of accounting for what had been done.”

I cannot think this the precise mode of procedure on the part of Godwin- and indeed what he himself acknowledges, is not altogether in accordance with Mr. Dickens’ idea- but the author of “Caleb Williams” was too good an artist not to perceive the advantage derivable from at least a somewhat similar process. Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen. It is only with the denouement constantly in view that we can give a plot its indispensable air of consequence, or causation, by making the incidents, and especially the tone at all points, tend to the development of the intention.

There is a radical error, I think, in the usual mode of constructing a story. Either history affords a thesis- or one is suggested by an incident of the day- or, at best, the author sets himself to work in the combination of striking events to form merely the basis of his narrative-designing, generally, to fill in with description, dialogue, or autorial comment, whatever crevices of fact, or action, may, from page to page, render themselves apparent.

I prefer commencing with the consideration of an effect. Keeping originality always in view- for he is false to himself who ventures to dispense with so obvious and so easily attainable a source of interest- I say to myself, in the first place, “Of the innumerable effects, or impressions, of which the heart, the intellect, or (more generally) the soul is susceptible, what one shall I, on the present occasion, select?” Having chosen a novel, first, and secondly a vivid effect, I consider whether it can be best wrought by incident or tone- whether by ordinary incidents and peculiar tone, or the converse, or by peculiarity both of incident and tone- afterward looking about me (or rather within) for such combinations of event, or tone, as shall best aid me in the construction of the effect.

I have often thought how interesting a magazine paper might be written by any author who would- that is to say, who could- detail, step by step, the processes by which any one of his compositions attained its ultimate point of completion. Why such a paper has never been given to the world, I am much at a loss to say- but, perhaps, the autorial vanity has had more to do with the omission than any one other cause. Most writers- poets in especial- prefer having it understood that they compose by a species of fine frenzy- an ecstatic intuition- and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes, at the elaborate and vacillating crudities of thought- at the true purposes seized only at the last moment- at the in-
numerable glimpses of idea that arrived not at the maturity of full view— at the fully-matured fancies discarded in despair as unmanageable— at the cautious selections and rejections— at the painful erasures and interpolations— in a word, at the wheels and pinions— the tackle for scene-shifting— the step-ladders, and demon-traps— the cock’s feathers, the red paint and the black patches, which, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, constitute the properties of the literary histrio.

I am aware, on the other hand, that the case is by no means common, in which an author is at all in condition to retrace the steps by which his conclusions have been attained. In general, suggestions, having arisen pell-mell are pursued and forgotten in a similar manner.

For my own part, I have neither sympathy with the repugnance alluded to, nor, at any time, the least difficulty in recalling to mind the progressive steps of any of my compositions, and, since the interest of an analysis or reconstruction, such as I have considered a desideratum, is quite independent of any real or fancied interest in the thing analysed, it will not be regarded as a breach of decorum on my part to show the modus operandi by which some one of my own works was put together: I select ‘The Raven’ as most generally known. It is my design to render it manifest that no one point in its composition is referable either to accident or intuition— that the work proceeded step by step, to its completion, with the precision and rigid consequence of a mathematical problem.

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, per se, the circumstance— or say the necessity— which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and the critical taste.

We commence, then, with this intention.

The initial consideration was that of extent. If any literary work is too long to be read at one sitting, we must be content to dispense with the immensely important effect derivable from unity of impression— for, if two sittings be required, the affairs of the world interfere, and everything like totality is at once destroyed. But since, ceteris paribus, no poet can afford to dispense with anything that may advance his design, it but remains to be seen whether there is, in extent, any advantage to counterbalance the loss of unity which attends it. Here I say no, at once. What we term a long poem is, in fact, merely a succession of brief ones— that is to say, of brief poetical effects. It is needless to demonstrate that a poem is such only inasmuch as it intensely excites, by elevating the soul; and all intense excitements are, through a psychical necessity, brief.

For this reason, at least, one-half of the “Paradise Lost” is essentially prose— a succession of poetical excitements interspersed, inevitably, with corresponding depressions— the whole being deprived, through the extremeness of its length, of the vastly important artistic element, totality, or unity of effect.
It appears evident, then, that there is a distinct limit, as regards length, to all works of literary art— the limit of a single sitting— and that, although in certain classes of prose composition, such as “Robinson Crusoe” (demanding no unity), this limit may be advantageously overpassed, it can never properly be overpassed in a poem. Within this limit, the extent of a poem may be made to bear mathematical relation to its merit— in other words, to the excitement or elevation— again, in other words, to the degree of the true poetical effect which it is capable of inducing; for it is clear that the brevity must be in direct ratio of the intensity of the intended effect— this, with one proviso— that a certain degree of duration is absolutely requisite for the production of any effect at all.

Holding in view these considerations, as well as that degree of excitement which I deemed not above the popular, while not below the critical taste, I reached at once what I conceived the proper length for my intended poem— a length of about one hundred lines. It is, in fact, a hundred and eight.

My next thought concerned the choice of an impression, or effect, to be conveyed: and here I may as well observe that throughout the construction, I kept steadily in view the design of rendering the work universally appreciable. I should be carried too far out of my immediate topic were I to demonstrate a point upon which I have repeatedly insisted, and which, with the poetical, stands not in the slightest need of demonstration— the point, I mean, that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem. A few words, however, in elucidation of my real meaning, which some of my friends have evinced a disposition to misrepresent. That pleasure which is at once the most intense, the most elevating, and the most pure is, I believe, found in the contemplation of the beautiful. When, indeed, men speak of Beauty, they mean, precisely, not a quality, as is supposed, but an effect— they refer, in short, just to that intense and pure elevation of soul— not of intellect, or of heart— upon which I have commented, and which is experienced in consequence of contemplating the “beautiful.”

Now I designate Beauty as the province of the poem, merely because it is an obvious rule of Art that effects should be made to spring from direct causes— that objects should be attained through means best adapted for their attainment— no one as yet having been weak enough to deny that the peculiar elevation alluded to is most readily attained in the poem. Now the object Truth, or the satisfaction of the intellect, and the object Passion, or the excitement of the heart, are, although attainable to a certain extent in poetry, far more readily attainable in prose. Truth, in fact, demands a precision, and Passion, a homeliness (the truly passionate will comprehend me), which are absolutely antagonistic to that Beauty which, I maintain, is the excitement or pleasurable elevation of the soul. It by no means follows, from anything here said, that passion, or even truth, may not be introduced, and even profitably introduced, into a poem for they may serve in elucidation, or aid the general effect, as do discords in music, by contrast— but the true artist will always contrive, first, to tone them into proper subservience to the predominant aim, and,
secondly, to enveil them, as far as possible, in that Beauty which is the atmosphere and the essence of the poem.

Regarding, then, Beauty as my province, my next question referred to the tone of its highest manifestation- and all experience has shown that this tone is one of sadness. Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones.

The length, the province, and the tone, being thus determined, I betook myself to ordinary induction, with the view of obtaining some artistic piquancy which might serve me as a key-note in the construction of the poem- some pivot upon which the whole structure might turn. In carefully thinking over all the usual artistic effects- or more properly points, in the theatrical sense- I did not fail to perceive immediately that no one had been so universally employed as that of the refrain. The universality of its employment sufficed to assure me of its intrinsic value, and spared me the necessity of submitting it to analysis. I considered it, however, with regard to its susceptibility of improvement, and soon saw it to be in a primitive condition. As commonly used, the refrain, or burden, not only is limited to lyric verse, but depends for its impression upon the force of monotone- both in sound and thought. The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity- of repetition. I resolved to diversify, and so heighten the effect, by adhering in general to the monotone of sound, while I continually varied that of thought: that is to say, I determined to produce continuously novel effects, by the variation of the application of the refrain- the refrain itself remaining for the most part, unvaried.

These points being settled, I next bethought me of the nature of my refrain. Since its application was to be repeatedly varied it was clear that the refrain itself must be brief, for there would have been an insurmountable difficulty in frequent variations of application in any sentence of length. In proportion to the brevity of the sentence would, of course, be the facility of the variation. This led me at once to a single word as the best refrain.

The question now arose as to the character of the word. Having made up my mind to a refrain, the division of the poem into stanzas was of course a corollary, the refrain forming the close to each stanza. That such a close, to have force, must be sonorous and susceptible of protracted emphasis, admitted no doubt, and these considerations inevitably led me to the long o as the most sonorous vowel in connection with r as the most producible consonant.

The sound of the refrain being thus determined, it became necessary to select a word embodying this sound, and at the same time in the fullest possible keeping with that melancholy which I had pre-determined as the tone of the poem. In such a search it would have been absolutely impossible to overlook the word “Nevermore.” In fact it was the very first which presented itself.
The next desideratum was a pretext for the continuous use of the one word “nevermore.” In observing the difficulty which I had at once found in inventing a sufficiently plausible reason for its continuous repetition, I did not fail to perceive that this difficulty arose solely from the preassumption that the word was to be so continuously or monotonously spoken by a human being- I did not fail to perceive, in short, that the difficulty lay in the reconciliation of this monotonity with the exercise of reason on the part of the creature repeating the word. Here, then, immediately arose the idea of a non-reasoning creature capable of speech, and very naturally, a parrot, in the first instance, suggested itself, but was superseded forthwith by a Raven as equally capable of speech, and infinitely more in keeping with the intended tone.

I had now gone so far as the conception of a Raven, the bird of ill-omen, monotonously repeating the one word “Nevermore” at the conclusion of each stanza in a poem of melancholy tone, and in length about one hundred lines. Now, never losing sight of the object- supreneness or perfection at all points, I asked myself- “Of all melancholy topics what, according to the universal understanding of mankind, is the most melancholy?” Death, was the obvious reply. “And when,” I said, “is this most melancholy of topics most poetical?” From what I have already explained at some length the answer here also is obvious- “When it most closely allies itself to Beauty: the death then of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world, and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.”

I had now to combine the two ideas of a lover lamenting his deceased mistress and a Raven continuously repeating the word “Nevermore.” I had to combine these, bearing in mind my design of varying at every turn the application of the word repeated, but the only intelligible mode of such combination is that of imagining the Raven employing the word in answer to the queries of the lover. And here it was that I saw at once the opportunity afforded for the effect on which I had been depending, that is to say, the effect of the variation of application. I saw that I could make the first query propounded by the lover- the first query to which the Raven should reply “Nevermore”- that I could make this first query a commonplace one, the second less so, the third still less, and so on, until at length the lover, startled from his original nonchalance by the melancholy character of the word itself, by its frequent repetition, and by a consideration of the ominous reputation of the fowl that uttered it, is at length excited to superstition, and wildly propounds queries of a far different character- queries whose solution he has passionately at heart- propounds them half in superstition and half in that species of despair which delights in self-torture- propounds them not altogether because he believes in the prophetic or demoniac character of the bird (which reason assures him is merely repeating a lesson learned by rote), but because he experiences a frenzied pleasure in so modelling his questions as to receive from the expected “Nevermore” the most delicious because the most intolerable of sorrows. Perceiving the opportunity thus afforded me, or, more strictly, thus forced upon me in the progress of the construction, I first
established in my mind the climax or concluding query— that query to which “Nevermore” should be in the last place an answer— that query in reply to which this word “Nevermore” should involve the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair:

Here then the poem may be said to have had its beginning— at the end where all works of art should begin— for it was here at this point of my preconsiderations that I first put pen to paper in the composition of the stanza:

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil! prophet still if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us— by that God we both adore,
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aiden,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven— “Nevermore.”

I composed this stanza, at this point, first that, by establishing the climax, I might the better vary and graduate, as regards seriousness and importance, the preceding queries of the lover, and secondly, that I might definitely settle the rhythm, the metre, and the length and general arrangement of the stanza, as well as graduate the stanzas which were to precede, so that none of them might surpass this in rhythmical effect. Had I been able in the subsequent composition to construct more vigorous stanzas I should without scruple have purposely enfeebled them so as not to interfere with the climacteric effect.

And here I may as well say a few words of the versification. My first object (as usual) was originality. The extent to which this has been neglected in versification is one of the most unaccountable things in the world. Admitting that there is little possibility of variety in mere rhythm, it is still clear that the possible varieties of metre and stanza are absolutely infinite, and yet, for centuries, no man, in verse, has ever done, or ever seemed to think of doing, an original thing. The fact is that originality (unless in minds of very unusual force) is by no means a matter; as some suppose, of impulse or intuition. In general, to be found, it must be elaborately sought, and although a positive merit of the highest class, demands in its attainment less of invention than negation.

Of course I pretend to no originality in either the rhythm or metre of the “Raven.” The former is trochaic- the latter is octametre acatalectic, alternating with heptametre catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrametre catalectic. Less pedantically the feet employed throughout (trochees) consist of a long syllable followed by a short, the first line of the stanza consists of eight of these feet, the second of seven and a half (in effect two-thirds), the third of eight, the fourth of seven and a half; the fifth the same, the sixth three and a half. Now, each of these lines taken individually has been employed before, and what originality the “Raven” has, is in their combination into stanza; nothing even remotely approaching this has ever been attempted. The effect of this originality of combination is
aided by other unusual and some altogether novel effects, arising from an extension of the application of the principles of rhyme and alliteration.

The next point to be considered was the mode of bringing together the lover and the Raven- and the first branch of this consideration was the locale. For this the most natural suggestion might seem to be a forest, or the fields- but it has always appeared to me that a close circumscription of space is absolutely necessary to the effect of insulated incident- it has the force of a frame to a picture. It has an indisputable moral power in keeping concentrated the attention, and, of course, must not be confounded with mere unity of place.

I determined, then, to place the lover in his chamber- in a chamber rendered sacred to him by memories of her who had frequented it. The room is represented as richly furnished- this in mere pursuance of the ideas I have already explained on the subject of Beauty, as the sole true poetical thesis.

The locale being thus determined, I had now to introduce the bird- and the thought of introducing him through the window was inevitable. The idea of making the lover suppose, in the first instance, that the flapping of the wings of the bird against the shutter, is a “tapping” at the door, originated in a wish to increase, by prolonging, the reader’s curiosity, and in a desire to admit the incidental effect arising from the lover’s throwing open the door; finding all dark, and thence adopting the half-fancy that it was the spirit of his mistress that knocked.

I made the night tempestuous, first to account for the Raven’s seeking admission, and secondly, for the effect of contrast with the (physical) serenity within the chamber.

I made the bird alight on the bust of Pallas, also for the effect of contrast between the marble and the plumage- it being understood that the bust was absolutely suggested by the bird- the bust of Pallas being chosen, first, as most in keeping with the scholarship of the lover; and secondly, for the sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself.

About the middle of the poem, also, I have availed myself of the force of contrast, with a view of deepening the ultimate impression. For example, an air of the fantastic- approaching as nearly to the ludicrous as was admissible- is given to the Raven’s entrance. He comes in “with many a flirt and flutter.”

Not the least obeisance made he- not a moment stopped or stayed he, But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door. In the two stanzas which follow, the design is more obviously carried out:- Then this ebony bird, beguiling my sad fancy into smiling By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore, “Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven, Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore-
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore?”
Quoth the Raven- “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning- little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door-
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door;
With such name as “Nevermore.”

The effect of the denouement being thus provided for; I immediately drop the fantastic for a tone of the most profound seriousness- this tone commencing in the stanza directly following the one last quoted, with the line,

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only, etc.

From this epoch the lover no longer jests- no longer sees anything even of the fantastic in the Raven’s demeanour: He speaks of him as a “grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore;” and feels the “fiery eyes” burning into his “bosom’s core.” This revolution of thought, or fancy, on the lover’s part, is intended to induce a similar one on the part of the reader- to bring the mind into a proper frame for the denouement- which is now brought about as rapidly and as directly as possible.

With the denouement proper- with the Raven’s reply, “Nevermore,” to the lover’s final demand if he shall meet his mistress in another world- the poem, in its obvious phase, that of a simple narrative, may be said to have its completion. So far, everything is within the limits of the accountable- of the real. A raven, having learned by rote the single word “Nevermore,” and having escaped from the custody of its owner, is driven at midnight, through the violence of a storm, to seek admission at a window from which a light still gleams- the chamber-window of a student, occupied half in poring over a volume, half in dreaming of a beloved mistress deceased. The casement being thrown open at the fluttering of the bird’s wings, the bird itself perches on the most convenient seat out of the immediate reach of the student, who amused by the incident and the oddity of the visitor’s demeanour, demands of it, in jest and without looking for a reply, its name. The raven addressed, answers with its customary word, “Nevermore”- a word which finds immediate echo in the melancholy heart of the student, who, giving utterance aloud to certain thoughts suggested by the occasion, is again startled by the fowl’s repetition of “Nevermore.” The student now guesses the state of the case, but is impelled, as I have before explained, by the human thirst for self-torture, and in part by superstition, to propound such queries to the bird as will bring him, the lover, the most of the luxury of sorrow, through the anticipated answer; “Nevermore.” With the indulgence, to the extreme, of this self-torture, the narration, in what I have termed its first or obvious
phase, has a natural termination, and so far there has been no overstepping of the limits of the real.

But in subjects so handled, however skilfully, or with however vivid an array of incident, there is always a certain hardness or nakedness which repels the artistical eye. Two things are invariably required—first, some amount of complexity, or more properly, adaptation; and, secondly, some amount of suggestiveness—some under-current, however indefinite, of meaning. It is this latter, in especial, which imparts to a work of art so much of that richness (to borrow from colloquy a forcible term), which we are too fond of confounding with the ideal. It is the excess of the suggested meaning— it is the rendering this the upper instead of the under-current of the theme—which turns into prose (and that of the very flattest kind), the so-called poetry of the so-called transcendentalists.

Holding these opinions, I added the two concluding stanzas of the poem— their suggestiveness being thus made to pervade all the narrative which has preceded them. The under-current of meaning is rendered first apparent in the line—

“Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore!”

It will be observed that the words, “from out my heart,” involve the first metaphorical expression in the poem. They, with the answer, “Nevermore,” dispose the mind to seek a moral in all that has been previously narrated. The reader begins now to regard the Raven as emblematical—but it is not until the very last line of the very last stanza that the intention of making him emblematical of Mournful and never ending Remembrance is permitted distinctly to be seen:

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting,
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
      Shall be lifted—nevermore.
Unit III - American Realism

Historical Background: The Rise of Realism & Naturalism

“Realism is nothing more and nothing less than the truthful treatment of material.”
--William Dean Howells, “Editor’s Study,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine (November 1889)

“Realism, n. The art of depicting nature as it is seen by toads. The charm suffusing a landscape painted by a mole, or a story written by a measuring-worm.”
--Ambrose Bierce The Devil’s Dictionary (1911)

As intellectual and artistic movements, 19th Century Realism and Naturalism are both responses to Romanticism but are not really comparable to it in scope or influence. Realism had profound effects on fiction from places as far-flung as Russia and the Americas. The novel, which had been born out of the romance as a more or less fantastic narrative, settled into a realistic mode which is still dominant today. Aside from genre fiction such as fantasy and horror, we expect the ordinary novel today to be based in our own world, with recognizably familiar types of characters endowed with no supernatural powers, doing the sorts of things that ordinary people do every day. It is easy to forget that this expectation is only a century and a half old, and that the great bulk of the world’s fiction before departed in a wide variety of ways from this standard.

The emergence of Naturalism does not mark a radical break with Realism; rather the new style is a logical extension of the old. The term was invented by the French novelist Émile Zola partly because he was seeking for a striking platform from which to convince the reading public that it was getting something new and modern in his fiction. Zola argued that his special contribution to the art of fiction was the application to the creation of characters and plot of the scientific method. Critical to the development of Zola's style was the increasing acceptance of Charles Darwin's controversial 1859 study The Origin of the Species, which, in turn, revived the popularity of the philosophy of scientific determinism among late 19th Century artists and intellectuals. The new “scientific novel” would be created by placing characters with known inherited characteristics into a carefully defined environment and observing the resulting behavior. No novelist can actually work like this, of course, since both characters and setting are imagined;
but Zola’s novels do place special stress on the importance of heredity and environment in determining character. They are anti-Romantic in their rejection of the self-defining hero who transcends his background. History shapes his protagonists rather than being shaped by them. This leads to an overwhelming sense of doom in most of his novels, culminating in a final catastrophe. (adapted from Wikipedia)

**Realism & Naturalism in American Literature**

Realism became the dominant mode in American literature in the wake of the Civil War. Mark Twain, the most enduring and acclaimed writer of the Realist period, made no secret of his contempt for the romances popular among the many young men who eagerly went off to war in search of the idealized experience they’d read about in novels and found instead unprecedented devastation. Twain went so far as to assign blame for the Civil War to Scottish novelist Sir Walter Scott, whose romances celebrating the chivalric code of knighthood and the glories of fighting nobly for a lost cause were wildly popular in the first half of the 19th century, particularly among well-heeled southerners. In *Life on the Mississippi*, Twain argued that “it was Sir Walter that made every gentleman in the South a Major or a Colonel, or a General or a Judge, before the war; and it was he, also, that made those gentlemen value their bogus decorations. For it was he that created rank and caste down there, and also reverence for rank and caste, and pride and pleasure in them. Enough is laid on slavery, without fathering upon it these creations and contributions of Sir Walter. Sir Walter had so large a hand in making Southern character, as it existed before the war, that he is in great measure responsible for the war.”

Hence, American Realism can be fairly understood as a powerful reaction against Romanticism stimulated by the sobering effect of the Civil War on the national consciousness, combined with the same innovations in science and philosophy that had already taken hold in Europe. It is no accident that a number of the major writers of American Realist and Naturalist fiction were also journalists. Ambrose Bierce was both a journalist and a Civil War veteran. Though Stephen Crane was born after the events he describes so vividly and accurately in his landmark novel *The Red Badge of Courage* (1895), he later witnessed combat first-hand as a correspondent covering the Spanish-American War.

The rise of Realism also coincided with the development of improved printing and publishing techniques and the expanding growth of an educated middle class. Hence, in addition to grittier, unromantic depictions of warfare, Realist subjects turned away from the fantastic exploits of heroes and toward the everyday lives of outwardly unremarkable people. Realist writers such as
Jack London told stories about the exploration and commercial development of the West, sometimes turning toward the lives of underclass characters and themes reflecting the growing interest among the working poor in socialist and communist political movements. Stephen Crane’s first success, *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, is a Naturalist novel describing how the daughter of a poor family in New York’s Bowery district is driven by poverty and the restrictions imposed upon her gender into a life of prostitution. Charles Chesnutt, the first African-American fiction writer of the post-bellum era to be embraced by the mainstream publishing industry, published stories set in rural North Carolina in the *Atlantic Monthly Magazine*. These stories revolved around a Northern white couple recently relocated to a former plantation property in North Carolina and their interactions with the wily Uncle Julius, who amuses the couple with his tales of life under slavery and supernatural African-American folklore. Though initially regarded as “local color” tales solely meant to provide entertaining anecdotes about Southern life, Chesnutt’s Uncle Julius stories have been the subject of revived scholarly interest in recent decades and are now recognized for their craft and for Chesnutt’s own independent expression in literary fiction of W.E.B. DuBois’ concept of double-consciousness—i.e., the contrast between black self-perception and the perceptions of the dominant white majority—which has gone on to permeate the themes of literature focused on Black American experience to the present day.

Kate Chopin’s stories, like Chesnutt’s, initially well received for their charming ‘local color’ depictions of life in the rural South, became controversial as her themes turned toward the interior lives of women trapped in a repressive patriarchal society. Though now among the most widely read and taught novels in American college and high school classrooms, Chopin’s novel *The Awakening* (1899), which frankly examines a young woman’s struggle to reconcile her desires for freedom and independence with the social code of late-19th Century New Orleans, was considered shocking by turn-of-the-century audiences and effectively ended Chopin’s publishing career. Similarly, feminist activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s acclaimed story “The Yellow Wallpaper” depicts the interior life of a woman withering from the oppressed condition of life imposed upon her by the oppression of women and the strict social codes surrounding marriage in the 19th Century. The story has gone on to become a staple in literature classrooms and short fiction anthologies, both for its feminist themes and for its sensitive depiction of the narrator’s consciousness.

Significantly, increasing interest in the lives of common, middle-class characters coincided with an outpouring of poetry and fiction by Midwestern writers. Sherwood Anderson, a native of Ohio who launched his literary career in Chicago, gained fame and critical praise for his stories examining
the lives of small-town Midwesterners. *Winesburg, Ohio*, Anderson's masterpiece, is a linked cycle of stories depicting the physical and emotional struggles of a variety of common or grotesque characters in a small-town setting, and marks an important connection between the Realist tradition and the emerging Modernist aesthetic that would lead the United States to become the center of the literary world in the 20th Century.

**Characteristics of Realism**

(from Richard Chase, *The American Novel and Its Tradition*)

- Renders reality closely and in comprehensive detail. Selective presentation of reality with an emphasis on verisimilitude, even at the expense of a well-made plot
- Character is more important than action and plot; complex ethical choices are often the subject.
- Characters appear in their real complexity of temperament and motive; they are in explicable relation to nature, to each other, to their social class, to their own past.
- Class is important; the novel has traditionally served the interests and aspirations of an insurgent middle class. (See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*)
- Events will usually be plausible. Realistic novels avoid the sensational, dramatic elements of naturalistic novels and romances.
- Diction is natural vernacular, not heightened or poetic; tone may be comic, satiric, or matter-of-fact.
- Objectivity in presentation becomes increasingly important: overt authorial comments or intrusions diminish as the century progresses.
- Interior or psychological realism a variant form.
- In *Black and White Strangers*, Kenneth Warren suggests that a basic difference between realism and sentimentalism is that in realism, “the redemption of the individual lay within the social world,” but in sentimental fiction, “the redemption of the social world lay with the individual” (75-76).
Ambrose Bierce (1842-1913)

Today, Ambrose Bierce is best known for his short story, “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” and his satirical lexicon, The Devil's Dictionary. The sardonic view of human nature that informed his work – along with his vehemence as a critic, with his motto “nothing matters” – earned him the nickname “Bitter Bierce.”

Bierce was born at Horse Cave Creek in Meigs County, Ohio to Marcus Aurelius Bierce (1799–1876) and Laura Sherwood Bierce. His mother was a descendant of William Bradford. His parents were a poor but literary couple who instilled in him a deep love for books and writing. The boy grew up in Kosciusko County, Indiana, attending high school at the county seat, Warsaw.

He was the tenth of 13 children whose father gave all of them names beginning with the letter “A”. In order of birth, the Bierce siblings were Abigail, Amelia, Ann, Addison, Aurelius, Augustus, Almeda, Andrew, Albert, Ambrose, Arthur, Adelia, and Aurelia. He left home at age fifteen to become a “printer’s devil” at a small Ohio newspaper.

At the outset of the American Civil War, Bierce enlisted in the Union Army’s 9th Indiana Infantry Regiment. He participated in the Operations in Western Virginia campaign (1861), was present at the “first battle” at Philippi and received newspaper attention for his daring rescue, under fire, of a gravely wounded comrade at the Battle of Rich Mountain. In February 1862 he was commissioned First Lieutenant, and served on the staff of General William Babcock Hazen as a topographical engineer, making maps of likely battlefields.

Bierce fought at the Battle of Shiloh (April 1862), a terrifying experience that became a source for several later short stories and the memoir, “What I Saw of Shiloh”. In June 1864, he sustained a serious head wound at the Battle of Kennesaw Mountain, and spent the rest of the summer on furlough, returning to active duty in September. He was discharged from the army in January 1865.

His military career resumed, however, when in mid-1866 he rejoined General Hazen as part of the latter’s expedition to inspect military outposts across the Great Plains. The expedition proceeded by horseback and wagon from Omaha, Nebraska, arriving toward year’s end in San Francisco, California.
In San Francisco, Bierce received the rank of brevet major before resigning from the Army. He remained in San Francisco for many years, eventually becoming famous as a contributor and/or editor for a number of local newspapers and periodicals, including *The San Francisco News Letter, The Argonaut, The Overland Monthly, The Californian* and *The Wasp*. A selection of his crime reporting from *The San Francisco News Letter* was included in The Library of America anthology *True Crime*.

Bierce lived and wrote in England from 1872 to 1875, contributing to *Fun* magazine. His first book, *The Fiend’s Delight*, a compilation of his articles, was published in London in 1873 by John Camden Hotten under the pseudonym “Dod Grile”. Returning to the United States, he again took up residence in San Francisco. From 1879 to 1880, he travelled to Rockerville and Deadwood in the Dakota Territory, to try his hand as local manager for a New York mining company, but when the company failed he returned to San Francisco and resumed his career in journalism.

In 1887, he published a column called “Prattle” and became one of the first regular columnists and editorialists to be employed on William Randolph Hearst’s newspaper, the *San Francisco Examiner*, eventually becoming one of the most prominent and influential among the writers and journalists working for Hearst.

Bierce was considered a master of “Pure” English by his contemporaries, and virtually everything that came from his pen was notable for its judicious wording and economy of style. He wrote in a variety of literary genres. His short stories are held among the best of the 19th century, providing a popular following based on his roots. He wrote realistically of the terrible things he had seen in the war in such stories as “An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge,” “The Boarded Window,” “Killed at Resaca,” and “Chickamauga.”

In addition to his ghost and war stories, he also published several volumes of poetry. His *Fantastic Fables* anticipated the ironic style of grotesquerie that became a more common genre in the 20th century.

One of Bierce’s most famous works is his much-quoted book, *The Devil’s Dictionary*, originally an occasional newspaper item which was first published in book form in 1906 as *The Cynic’s Word Book*. It consists of satirical definitions of English words which lampoon cant and political double-talk. Bierce’s twelve-volume *Collected Works* were published in 1909, the seventh volume of which consists solely of *The Devil’s Dictionary*, the title Bierce himself preferred to *The Cynic’s Word Book*. 
In October 1913 Bierce, then aged 71, departed Washington, D.C., for a tour of his old Civil War battlefields. By December he had proceeded through Louisiana and Texas, crossing by way of El Paso into Mexico, which was in the throes of revolution. In Ciudad Juárez he joined Pancho Villa’s army as an observer, and in that role he witnessed the Battle of Tierra Blanca.

Bierce is known to have accompanied Villa’s army as far as the city of Chihuahua. His last known communication with the world was a letter he wrote there to Blanche Partington, a close friend, dated December 26, 1913. After closing this letter by saying, “As to me, I leave here tomorrow for an unknown destination,” he vanished without a trace, becoming one of the most famous disappearances in American literary history. (adapted from Wikipedia)
AN OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE

A man stood upon a railroad bridge in northern Alabama, looking down into the swift water twenty feet below. The man's hands were behind his back, the wrists bound with a cord. A rope closely encircled his neck. It was attached to a stout cross-timber above his head and the slack fell to the level of his knees. Some loose boards laid upon the ties supporting the rails of the railway supplied a footing for him and his executioners—two private soldiers of the Federal army, directed by a sergeant who in civil life may have been a deputy sheriff. At a short remove upon the same temporary platform was an officer in the uniform of his rank, armed. He was a captain. A sentinel at each end of the bridge stood with his rifle in the position known as “support,” that is to say, vertical in front of the left shoulder; the hammer resting on the forearm thrown straight across the chest—a formal and unnatural position, enforcing an erect carriage of the body. It did not appear to be the duty of these two men to know what was occurring at the center of the bridge; they merely blockaded the two ends of the foot planking that traversed it.

Beyond one of the sentinels nobody was in sight; the railroad ran straight away into a forest for a hundred yards, then, curving, was lost to view. Doubtless there was an outpost farther along. The other bank of the stream was open ground—a gentle slope topped with a stockade of vertical tree trunks, loopholed for rifles, with a single embrasure through which protruded the muzzle of a brass cannon commanding the bridge. Midway up the slope between the bridge and fort were the spectators—a single company of infantry in line, at “parade rest,” the butts of their rifles on the ground, the barrels inclining slightly backward against the right shoulder; the hands crossed upon the stock. A lieutenant stood at the right of the line, the point of his sword upon the ground, his left hand resting upon his right. Excepting the group of four at the center of the bridge, not a man moved. The company faced the bridge, staring stonily, motionless. The sentinels, facing the banks of the stream, might have been statues to adorn the bridge. The captain stood with folded arms, silent, observing the work of his subordinates, but making no sign. Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him. In the code of military etiquette silence and fixity are forms of deference.

The man who was engaged in being hanged was apparently about thirty-five years of age. He was a civilian, if one might judge from his habit, which was that of a planter. His features were good—a straight nose, firm mouth, broad forehead, from which his long, dark hair was combed straight back, falling behind his ears to the collar of his well fitting frock coat. He wore a
moustache and pointed beard, but no whiskers; his eyes were large and dark gray, and had a kindly expression which one would hardly have expected in one whose neck was in the hemp. Evidently this was no vulgar assassin. The liberal military code makes provision for hanging many kinds of persons, and gentlemen are not excluded.

The preparations being complete, the two private soldiers stepped aside and each drew away the plank upon which he had been standing. The sergeant turned to the captain, saluted and placed himself immediately behind that officer, who in turn moved apart one pace. These movements left the condemned man and the sergeant standing on the two ends of the same plank, which spanned three of the cross-ties of the bridge. The end upon which the civilian stood almost, but not quite, reached a fourth. This plank had been held in place by the weight of the captain; it was now held by that of the sergeant. At a signal from the former the latter would step aside, the plank would tilt and the condemned man go down between two ties. The arrangement commended itself to his judgement as simple and effective. His face had not been covered nor his eyes bandaged. He looked a moment at his “unsteadfast footing,” then let his gaze wander to the swirling water of the stream racing madly beneath his feet. A piece of dancing driftwood caught his attention and his eyes followed it down the current. How slowly it appeared to move! What a sluggish stream!

He closed his eyes in order to fix his last thoughts upon his wife and children. The water, touched to gold by the early sun, the brooding mists under the banks at some distance down the stream, the fort, the soldiers, the piece of drift—all had distracted him. And now he became conscious of a new disturbance. Striking through the thought of his dear ones was sound which he could neither ignore nor understand, a sharp, distinct, metallic percussion like the stroke of a blacksmith’s hammer upon the anvil; it had the same ringing quality. He wondered what it was, and whether immeasurably distant or near by— it seemed both. Its recurrence was regular; but as slow as the tolling of a death knell. He awaited each new stroke with impatience and—he knew not why—apprehension. The intervals of silence grew progressively longer; the delays became maddening. With their greater infrequency the sounds increased in strength and sharpness. They hurt his ear like the trust of a knife; he feared he would shriek. What he heard was the ticking of his watch.

He unclosed his eyes and saw again the water below him. “If I could free my hands,” he thought, “I might throw off the noose and spring into the stream. By diving I could evade the bullets and, swimming vigorously, reach the bank, take to the woods and get away home. My home, thank God, is as yet outside their lines; my wife and little ones are still beyond the invader’s
farthest advance.”

As these thoughts, which have here to be set down in words, were flashed into the doomed man’s brain rather than evolved from it the captain nodded to the sergeant. The sergeant stepped aside.

II

Peyton Farquhar was a well to do planter, of an old and highly respected Alabama family. Being a slave owner and like other slave owners a politician, he was naturally an original secessionist and ardently devoted to the Southern cause. Circumstances of an imperious nature, which it is unnecessary to relate here, had prevented him from taking service with that gallant army which had fought the disastrous campaigns ending with the fall of Corinth, and he chafed under the inglorious restraint, longing for the release of his energies, the larger life of the soldier, the opportunity for distinction. That opportunity, he felt, would come, as it comes to all in wartime. Meanwhile he did what he could. No service was too humble for him to perform in the aid of the South, no adventure to perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier, and who in good faith and without too much qualification assented to at least a part of the frankly villainous dictum that all is fair in love and war.

One evening while Farquhar and his wife were sitting on a rustic bench near the entrance to his grounds, a gray-clad soldier rode up to the gate and asked for a drink of water. Mrs. Farquhar was only too happy to serve him with her own white hands. While she was fetching the water her husband approached the dusty horseman and inquired eagerly for news from the front.

“The Yanks are repairing the railroads,” said the man, “and are getting ready for another advance. They have reached the Owl Creek bridge, put it in order and built a stockade on the north bank. The commandant has issued an order, which is posted everywhere, declaring that any civilian caught interfering with the railroad, its bridges, tunnels, or trains will be summarily hanged. I saw the order.”

“How far is it to the Owl Creek bridge?” Farquhar asked.

“About thirty miles.”

“Is there no force on this side of the creek?”
“Only a picket post half a mile out, on the railroad, and a single sentinel at this end of the bridge.”

“Suppose a man—a civilian and student of hanging—should elude the picket post and perhaps get the better of the sentinel,” said Farquhar, smiling, “what could he accomplish?”

The soldier reflected. “I was there a month ago,” he replied. “I observed that the flood of last winter had lodged a great quantity of driftwood against the wooden pier at this end of the bridge. It is now dry and would burn like tinder.”

The lady had now brought the water, which the soldier drank. He thanked her ceremoniously, bowed to her husband and rode away. An hour later, after nightfall, he repassed the plantation, going northward in the direction from which he had come. He was a Federal scout.

III

As Peyton Farquhar fell straight downward through the bridge he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the pain of a sharp pressure upon his throat, followed by a sense of suffocation. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fiber of his body and limbs. These pains appeared to flash along well defined lines of ramification and to beat with an inconceivably rapid periodicity. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature. As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but a feeling of fullness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. He was conscious of motion. Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum. Then all at once, with terrible suddenness, the light about him shot upward with the noise of a loud splash; a frightful roaring was in his ears, and all was cold and dark. The power of thought was restored; he knew that the rope had broken and he had fallen into the stream. There was no additional strangulation; the noose about his neck was already suffocating him and kept the water from his lungs. To die of hanging at the bottom of a river!—the idea seemed to him ludicrous. He opened his eyes in the darkness and saw above him a gleam of light, but how distant, how inaccessible! He was still sinking, for the light became fainter and fainter until it was a mere glimmer. Then it began to grow and brighten, and he knew that he was rising toward the surface—
knew it with reluctance, for he was now very comfortable. “To be hanged and drowned,” he thought, “that is not so bad; but I do not wish to be shot. No; I will not be shot; that is not fair.”

He was not conscious of an effort, but a sharp pain in his wrist apprised him that he was trying to free his hands. He gave the struggle his attention, as an idler might observe the feat of a juggler, without interest in the outcome. What splendid effort!—what magnificent, what superhuman strength! Ah, that was a fine endeavor! Bravo! The cord fell away; his arms parted and floated upward, the hands dimly seen on each side in the growing light. He watched them with a new interest as first one and then the other pounced upon the noose at his neck. They tore it away and thrust it fiercely aside, its undulations resembling those of a water snake. “Put it back, put it back!” He thought he shouted these words to his hands, for the undoing of the noose had been succeeded by the direst pang that he had yet experienced. His neck ached horribly; his brain was on fire, his heart, which had been fluttering faintly, gave a great leap, trying to force itself out at his mouth. His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command. They beat the water vigorously with quick, downward strokes, forcing him to the surface. He felt his head emerge; his eyes were blinded by the sunlight; his chest expanded convulsively, and with a supreme and crowning agony his lungs engulfed a great draught of air, which instantly he expelled in a shriek!

He was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were, indeed, preternaturally keen and alert. Something in the awful disturbance of his organic system had so exalted and refined them that they made record of things never before perceived. He felt the ripples upon his face and heard their separate sounds as they struck. He looked at the forest on the bank of the stream, saw the individual trees, the leaves and the veinings of each leaf—he saw the very insects upon them: the locusts, the brilliant bodied flies, the gray spiders stretching their webs from twig to twig. He noted the prismatic colors in all the dewdrops upon a million blades of grass. The humming of the gnats that danced above the eddies of the stream, the beating of the dragon flies’ wings, the strokes of the water spiders’ legs, like oars which had lifted their boat—all these made audible music. A fish slid along beneath his eyes and he heard the rush of its body parting the water.

He had come to the surface facing down the stream; in a moment the visible world seemed to wheel slowly round, himself the pivotal point, and he saw the bridge, the fort, the soldiers upon the bridge, the captain, the sergeant, the two privates, his executioners. They were in silhouette against the blue sky. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. The captain had drawn his pistol, but did not fire; the others were unarmed. Their movements
were grotesque and horrible, their forms gigantic.

Suddenly he heard a sharp report and something struck the water smartly within a few inches of his head, spattering his face with spray. He heard a second report, and saw one of the sentinels with his rifle at his shoulder, a light cloud of blue smoke rising from the muzzle. The man in the water saw the eye of the man on the bridge gazing into his own through the sights of the rifle. He observed that it was a gray eye and remembered having read that gray eyes were keenest, and that all famous marksmen had them. Nevertheless, this one had missed.

A counter-swirl had caught Farquhar and turned him half round; he was again looking at the forest on the bank opposite the fort. The sound of a clear, high voice in a monotonous singsong now rang out behind him and came across the water with a distinctness that pierced and subdued all other sounds, even the beating of the ripples in his ears. Although no soldier, he had frequented camps enough to know the dread significance of that deliberate, drawling, aspirated chant; the lieutenant on shore was taking a part in the morning’s work. How coldly and pitilessly—with what an even, calm intonation, presaging, and enforcing tranquility in the men—with what accurately measured interval fell those cruel words:

“Company!... Attention!... Shoulder arms!... Ready!... Aim!... Fire!”

Farquhar dived—dived as deeply as he could. The water roared in his ears like the voice of Niagara, yet he heard the dull thunder of the volley and, rising again toward the surface, met shining bits of metal, singularly flattened, oscillating slowly downward. Some of them touched him on the face and hands, then fell away, continuing their descent. One lodged between his collar and neck; it was uncomfortably warm and he snatched it out.

As he rose to the surface, gasping for breath, he saw that he had been a long time under water; he was perceptibly farther downstream—nearer to safety. The soldiers had almost finished reloading; the metal ramrods flashed all at once in the sunshine as they were drawn from the barrels, turned in the air, and thrust into their sockets. The two sentinels fired again, independently and ineffectually.

The hunted man saw all this over his shoulder; he was now swimming vigorously with the current. His brain was as energetic as his arms and legs; he thought with the rapidity of lightning:

“The officer,” he reasoned, “will not make that martinet’s error a second time. It is as easy to dodge a volley as a single shot. He has probably already
given the command to fire at will. God help me, I cannot dodge them all!

An appalling splash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, DIMINUENDO, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps! A rising sheet of water curved over him, fell down upon him, blinded him, strangled him! The cannon had taken an hand in the game. As he shook his head free from the commotion of the smitten water he heard the deflected shot humming through the air ahead, and in an instant it was cracking and smashing the branches in the forest beyond.

“They will not do that again,” he thought; “the next time they will use a charge of grape. I must keep my eye upon the gun; the smoke will apprise me—the report arrives too late; it lags behind the missile. That is a good gun.”

Suddenly he felt himself whirled round and round—spinning like a top. The water, the banks, the forests, the now distant bridge, fort and men, all were commingled and blurred. Objects were represented by their colors only; circular horizontal streaks of color—that was all he saw. He had been caught in a vortex and was being whirled on with a velocity of advance and gyration that made him giddy and sick. In few moments he was flung upon the gravel at the foot of the left bank of the stream—the southern bank—and behind a projecting point which concealed him from his enemies. The sudden arrest of his motion, the abrasion of one of his hands on the gravel, restored him, and he wept with delight. He dug his fingers into the sand, threw it over himself in handfuls and audibly blessed it. It looked like diamonds, rubies, emeralds; he could think of nothing beautiful which it did not resemble. The trees upon the bank were giant garden plants; he noted a definite order in their arrangement, inhaled the fragrance of their blooms. A strange roseate light shone through the spaces among their trunks and the wind made in their branches the music of AEolian harps. He had not wish to perfect his escape—he was content to remain in that enchanting spot until retaken.

A whiz and a rattle of grapeshot among the branches high above his head roused him from his dream. The baffled cannoneer had fired him a random farewell. He sprang to his feet, rushed up the sloping bank, and plunged into the forest.

All that day he traveled, laying his course by the rounding sun. The forest seemed interminable; nowhere did he discover a break in it, not even a woodman’s road. He had not known that he lived in so wild a region. There was something uncanny in the revelation.

By nightfall he was fatigued, footsore, famished. The thought of his wife
and children urged him on. At last he found a road which led him in what he knew to be the right direction. It was as wide and straight as a city street, yet it seemed untraveled. No fields bordered it, no dwelling anywhere. Not so much as the barking of a dog suggested human habitation. The black bodies of the trees formed a straight wall on both sides, terminating on the horizon in a point, like a diagram in a lesson in perspective. Overhead, as he looked up through this rift in the wood, shone great golden stars looking unfamiliar and grouped in strange constellations. He was sure they were arranged in some order which had a secret and malign significance. The wood on either side was full of singular noises, among which—once, twice, and again—he distinctly heard whispers in an unknown tongue.

His neck was in pain and lifting his hand to it found it horribly swollen. He knew that it had a circle of black where the rope had bruised it. His eyes felt congested; he could no longer close them. His tongue was swollen with thirst; he relieved its fever by thrusting it forward from between his teeth into the cold air. How softly the turf had carpeted the untraveled avenue—he could no longer feel the roadway beneath his feet!

Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene—perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine. He must have traveled the entire night. As he pushes open the gate and passes up the wide white walk, he sees a flutter of female garments; his wife, looking fresh and cool and sweet, steps down from the veranda to meet him. At the bottom of the steps she stands waiting, with a smile of ineffable joy, an attitude of matchless grace and dignity. Ah, how beautiful she is! He springs forwards with extended arms. As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon—then all is darkness and silence!

Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timbers of the Owl Creek bridge.
PARKER ADDERSON, PHILOSOPHER

“Prisoner, what is your name?”

“As I am to lose it at daylight to-morrow morning it is hardly worth while concealing it. Parker Adderson.”

“Your rank?”

“A somewhat humble one; commissioned officers are too precious to be risked in the perilous business of a spy. I am a sergeant.”

“Of what regiment?”

“You must excuse me; my answer might, for anything I know, give you an idea of whose forces are in your front. Such knowledge as that is what I came into your lines to obtain, not to impart.”

“You are not without wit.”

“If you have the patience to wait you will find me dull enough to-morrow.”

“How do you know that you are to die to-morrow morning?”

“As among spies captured by night that is the custom. It is one of the nice observances of the profession.”

The general so far laid aside the dignity appropriate to a Confederate officer of high rank and wide renown as to smile. But no one in his power and out of his favor would have drawn any happy augury from that outward and visible sign of approval. It was neither genial nor infectious; it did not communicate itself to the other persons exposed to it—the caught spy who had provoked it and the armed guard who had brought him into the tent and now stood a little apart, watching his prisoner in the yellow candle-light. It was no part of that warrior’s duty to smile; he had been detailed for another purpose. The conversation was resumed; it was in character a trial for a capital offense.

“You admit, then, that you are a spy—that you came into my camp, disguised as you are in the uniform of a Confederate soldier, to obtain information secretly regarding the numbers and disposition of my troops.”

“Regarding, particularly, their numbers. Their disposition I already knew.”
It is morose."

The general brightened again; the guard, with a severer sense of his responsibility, accentuated the austerity of his expression an stood a trifle more erect than before. Twirling his gray slouch hat round and round upon his forefinger, the spy took a leisurely survey of his surroundings. They were simple enough. The tent was a common "wall tent," about eight feet by ten in dimensions, lighted by a single tallow candle stuck into the haft of a bayonet, which was itself stuck into a pine table at which the general sat, now busily writing and apparently forgetful of his unwilling guest. An old rag carpet covered the earthen floor; an older leather trunk, a second chair and a roll of blankets were about all else that the tent contained; in General Clavering's command Confederate simplicity and penury of "pomp and circumstance" had attained their highest development. On a large nail driven into the tent pole at the entrance was suspended a sword-belt supporting a long sabre, a pistol in its holster and, absurdly enough, a bowie-knife. Of that most unmilitary weapon it was the general's habit to explain that it was a souvenir of the peaceful days when he was a civilian.

It was a stormy night. The rain cascaded upon the canvas in torrents, with the dull, drum-like sound familiar to dwellers in tents. As the whooping blasts charged upon it the frail structure shook and swayed and strained at its confining stakes and ropes. The general finished writing, folded the half-sheet of paper and spoke to the soldier guarding Adderson: "Here, Tassman, take that to the adjutant-general; then return."

"And the prisoner, General?" said the soldier, saluting, with an inquiring glance in the direction of that unfortunate.

"Do as I said," replied the officer, curtly.

The soldier took the note and ducked himself out of the tent. General Clavering turned his handsome face toward the Federal spy, looked him in the eyes, not unkindly, and said: "It is a bad night, my man."

"For me, yes."

"Do you guess what I have written?"

"Something worth reading, I dare say. And—perhaps it is my vanity—I venture to suppose that I am mentioned in it."

"Yes; it is a memorandum for an order to be read to the troops at reveille
concerning your execution. Also some notes for the guidance of the provost-
marshal in arranging the details of that event.”

“I hope, General, the spectacle will be intelligently arranged, for I shall
attend it myself.”

“Have you any arrangements of your own that you wish to make? Do you
wish to see a chaplain, for example?”

“I could hardly secure a longer rest for myself by depriving him of some of
his.”

“Good God, man! do you mean to go to your death with nothing but jokes
upon your lips? Do you know that this is a serious matter?”

“How can I know that? I have never been dead in all my life. I have
heard that death is a serious matter, but never from any of those who have
experienced it.”

The general was silent for a moment; the man interested, perhaps amused
him—a type not previously encountered.

“Death,” he said, “is at least a loss—a loss of such happiness as we have,
and of opportunities for more.”

“A loss of which we shall never be conscious can be borne with composure
and therefore expected without apprehension. You must have observed,
General, that of all the dead men with whom it is your soldierly pleasure to
strew your path none shows signs of regret.”

“If the being dead is not a regrettable condition, yet the becoming so—the
act of dying—appears to be distinctly disagreeable to one who has not lost
the power to feel.”

“Pain is disagreeable, no doubt. I never suffer it without more or less
discomfort. But he who lives longest is most exposed to it. What you call
dying is simply the last pain—there is really no such thing as dying. Suppose,
for illustration, that I attempt to escape. You lift the revolver that you are
courteously concealing in your lap, and—”

The general blushed like a girl, then laughed softly, disclosing his brilliant
teeth, made a slight inclination of his handsome head and said nothing. The
spy continued: “You fire, and I have in my stomach what I did not swallow. I
fall, but am not dead. After a half-hour of agony I am dead. But at any given
instant of that half-hour I was either alive or dead. There is no transition period.

“When I am hanged to-morrow morning it will be quite the same; while conscious I shall be living; when dead, unconscious. Nature appears to have ordered the matter quite in my interest—the way that I should have ordered it myself. It is so simple,” he added with a smile, “that it seems hardly worth while to be hanged at all.”

At the finish of his remarks there was a long silence. The general sat impassive, looking into the man’s face, but apparently not attentive to what had been said. It was as if his eyes had mounted guard over the prisoner while his mind concerned itself with other matters. Presently he drew a long, deep breath, shuddered, as one awakened from a dreadful dream, and exclaimed almost inaudibly: “Death is horrible!”—this man of death.

“It was horrible to our savage ancestors,” said the spy, gravely, “because they had not enough intelligence to dissociate the idea of consciousness from the idea of the physical forms in which it is manifested—as an even lower order of intelligence, that of the monkey, for example, may be unable to imagine a house without inhabitants, and seeing a ruined hut fancies a suffering occupant. To us it is horrible because we have inherited the tendency to think it so, accounting for the notion by wild and fanciful theories of another world—as names of places give rise to legends explaining them and reasonless conduct to philosophies in justification. You can hang me, General, but there your power of evil ends; you cannot condemn me to heaven.”

The general appeared not to have heard; the spy’s talk had merely turned his thoughts into an unfamiliar channel, but there they pursued their will independently to conclusions of their own. The storm had ceased, and something of the solemn spirit of the night had imparted itself to his reflections, giving them the sombre tinge of a supernatural dread. Perhaps there was an element of prescience in it. “I should not like to die,” he said—”not to-night.”

He was interrupted—if, indeed, he had intended to speak further—by the entrance of an officer of his staff, Captain Hasterlick, the provost-marshal. This recalled him to himself; the absent look passed away from his face.

“Captain,” he said, acknowledging the officer’s salute, “this man is a Yankee spy captured inside our lines with incriminating papers on him. He has confessed. How is the weather?”
“The storm is over, sir, and the moon shining."

“Good; take a file of men, conduct him at once to the parade ground, and shoot him.”

A sharp cry broke from the spy’s lips. He threw himself forward, thrust out his neck, expanded his eyes, clenched his hands.

“Good God!” he cried hoarsely, almost inarticulately; “you do not mean that! You forget—I am not to die until morning.”

“I have said nothing of morning,” replied the general, coldly; “that was an assumption of your own. You die now.”

“But, General, I beg—I implore you to remember; I am to hang! It will take some time to erect the gallows—two hours—an hour. Spies are hanged; I have rights under military law. For Heaven’s sake, General, consider how short—”

“Captain, observe my directions.”

The officer drew his sword and fixing his eyes upon the prisoner pointed silently to the opening of the tent. The prisoner hesitated; the officer grasped him by the collar and pushed him gently forward. As he approached the tent pole the frantic man sprang to it and with cat-like agility seized the handle of the bowie-knife, plucked the weapon from the scabbard and thrusting the captain aside leaped upon the general with the fury of a madman, hurling him to the ground and falling headlong upon him as he lay. The table was overturned, the candle extinguished and they fought blindly in the darkness. The provost-marshal sprang to the assistance of his Superior officer and was himself prostrated upon the struggling forms. Curses and inarticulate cries of rage and pain came from the welter of limbs and bodies; the tent came down upon them and beneath its hampering and enveloping folds the struggle went on. Private Tassman, returning from his errand and dimly conjecturing the situation, threw down his rifle and laying hold of the flouncing canvas at random vainly tried to drag it off the men under it; and the sentinel who paced up and down in front, not daring to leave his beat though the skies should fall, discharged his rifle. The report alarmed the camp; drums beat the long roll and bugles sounded the assembly, bringing swarms of half-clad men into the moonlight, dressing as they ran, and falling into line at the sharp commands of their officers. This was well; being in line the men were under control; they stood at arms while the general’s staff and the men of his escort brought order out of confusion by lifting off the fallen tent and pulling apart the breathless and bleeding actors in that strange contention.
Breathless, indeed, was one: the captain was dead; the handle of the bowie-knife, protruding from his throat, was pressed back beneath his chin until the end had caught in the angle of the jaw and the hand that delivered the blow had been unable to remove the weapon. In the dead man's hand was his sword, clenched with a grip that defied the strength of the living. Its blade was streaked with red to the hilt.

Lifted to his feet, the general sank back to the earth with a moan and fainted. Besides his bruises he had two sword-thrusts—one through the thigh, the other through the shoulder.

The spy had suffered the least damage. Apart from a broken right arm, his wounds were such only as might have been incurred in an ordinary combat with nature's weapons. But he was dazed and seemed hardly to know what had occurred. He shrank away from those attending him, cowered upon the ground and uttered unintelligible remonstrances. His face, swollen by blows and stained with gouts of blood, nevertheless showed white beneath his disheveled hair—as white as that of a corpse.

"The man is not insane," said the surgeon, preparing bandages and replying to a question; "he is suffering from fright. Who and what is he?"

Private Tassman began to explain. It was the opportunity of his life; he omitted nothing that could in any way accentuate the importance of his own relation to the night's events. When he had finished his story and was ready to begin it again nobody gave him any attention.

The general had now recovered consciousness. He raised himself upon his elbow, looked about him, and, seeing the spy crouching by a camp-fire, guarded, said simply:

"Take that man to the parade ground and shoot him."

"The general's mind wanders," said an officer standing near.

"His mind does not wander," the adjutant-general said. "I have a memorandum from him about this business; he had given that same order to Hasterlick"—with a motion of the hand toward the dead provost-marshal—"and, by God! it shall be executed."

Ten minutes later Sergeant Parker Adderson, of the Federal army, philosopher and wit, kneeling in the moonlight and begging incoherently for his life, was shot to death by twenty men. As the volley rang out upon the
keen air of the midnight, General Clavering, lying white and still in the red
glow of the camp-fire, opened his big blue eyes, looked pleasantly upon those
about him and said: “How silent it all is!”

The surgeon looked at the adjutant-general, gravely and significantly. The
patient’s eyes slowly closed, and thus he lay for a few moments; then, his face
suffused with a smile of ineffable sweetness, he said, faintly: “I suppose this
must be death,” and so passed away.
ONE OF THE MISSING

Jerome Searing, a private soldier of General Sherman’s army, then confronting the enemy at and about Kennesaw Mountain, Georgia, turned his back upon a small group of officers with whom he had been talking in low tones, stepped across a light line of earthworks, and disappeared in a forest. None of the men in line behind the works had said a word to him, nor had he so much as nodded to them in passing, but all who saw understood that this brave man had been intrusted with some perilous duty. Jerome Searing, though a private, did not serve in the ranks; he was detailed for service at division headquarters, being borne upon the rolls as an orderly. “Orderly” is a word covering a multitude of duties. An orderly may be a messenger, a clerk, an officer’s servant—anything. He may perform services for which no provision is made in orders and army regulations. Their nature may depend upon his aptitude, upon favor, upon accident. Private Searing, an incomparable marksman, young, hardy, intelligent and insensible to fear, was a scout. The general commanding his division was not content to obey orders blindly without knowing what was in his front, even when his command was not on detached service, but formed a fraction of the line of the army; nor was he satisfied to receive his knowledge of his vis-à-vis through the customary channels; he wanted to know more than he was apprised of by the corps commander and the collisions of pickets and skirmishers. Hence Jerome Searing, with his extraordinary daring, his woodcraft, his sharp eyes, and truthful tongue. On this occasion his instructions were simple: to get as near the enemy’s lines as possible and learn all that he could.

In a few moments he had arrived at the picket-line, the men on duty there lying in groups of two and four behind little banks of earth scooped out of the slight depression in which they lay, their rifles protruding from the green boughs with which they had masked their small defenses. The forest extended without a break toward the front, so solemn and silent that only by an effort of the imagination could it be conceived as populous with armed men, alert and vigilant—a forest formidable with possibilities of battle. Pausing a moment in one of these rifle-pits to apprise the men of his intention Searing crept stealthily forward on his hands and knees and was soon lost to view in a dense thicket of underbrush.

“That is the last of him,” said one of the men; “I wish I had his rifle; those fellows will hurt some of us with it.”

Searing crept on, taking advantage of every accident of ground and growth to give himself better cover. His eyes penetrated everywhere, his ears
took note of every sound. He stilled his breathing, and at the cracking of a twig beneath his knee stopped his progress and hugged the earth. It was slow work, but not tedious; the danger made it exciting, but by no physical signs was the excitement manifest. His pulse was as regular, his nerves were as steady as if he were trying to trap a sparrow.

“It seems a long time,” he thought, “but I cannot have come very far; I am still alive.”

He smiled at his own method of estimating distance, and crept forward. A moment later he suddenly flattened himself upon the earth and lay motionless, minute after minute. Through a narrow opening in the bushes he had caught sight of a small mound of yellow clay—one of the enemy’s rifle-pits. After some little time he cautiously raised his head, inch by inch, then his body upon his hands, spread out on each side of him, all the while intently regarding the hillock of clay. In another moment he was upon his feet, rifle in hand, striding rapidly forward with little attempt at concealment. He had rightly interpreted the signs, whatever they were; the enemy was gone.

To assure himself beyond a doubt before going back to report upon so important a matter, Searing pushed forward across the line of abandoned pits, running from cover to cover in the more open forest, his eyes vigilant to discover possible stragglers. He came to the edge of a plantation—one of those forlorn, deserted homesteads of the last years of the war, upgrown with brambles, ugly with broken fences and desolate with vacant buildings having blank apertures in place of doors and windows. After a keen reconnoissance from the safe seclusion of a clump of young pines Searing ran lightly across a field and through an orchard to a small structure which stood apart from the other farm buildings, on a slight elevation. This he thought would enable him to overlook a large scope of country in the direction that he supposed the enemy to have taken in withdrawing. This building, which had originally consisted of a single room elevated upon four posts about ten feet high, was now little more than a roof; the floor had fallen away, the joists and planks loosely piled on the ground below or resting on end at various angles, not wholly torn from their fastenings above. The supporting posts were themselves no longer vertical. It looked as if the whole edifice would go down at the touch of a finger.

Concealing himself in the debris of joists and flooring Searing looked across the open ground between his point of view and a spur of Kennesaw Mountain, a half-mile away. A road leading up and across this spur was crowded with troops—the rear-guard of the retiring enemy, their gun-barrels gleaming in the morning sunlight.
Searing had now learned all that he could hope to know. It was his duty to return to his own command with all possible speed and report his discovery. But the gray column of Confederates toiling up the mountain road was singularly tempting. His rifle—an ordinary “Springfield,” but fitted with a globe sight and hair-trigger—would easily send its ounce and a quarter of lead hissing into their midst. That would probably not affect the duration and result of the war, but it is the business of a soldier to kill. It is also his habit if he is a good soldier. Searing cocked his rifle and “set” the trigger.

But it was decreed from the beginning of time that Private Searing was not to murder anybody that bright summer morning, nor was the Confederate retreat to be announced by him. For countless ages events had been so matching themselves together in that wondrous mosaic to some parts of which, dimly discernible, we give the name of history, that the acts which he had in will would have marred the harmony of the pattern. Some twenty-five years previously the Power charged with the execution of the work according to the design had provided against that mischance by causing the birth of a certain male child in a little village at the foot of the Carpathian Mountains, had carefully reared it, supervised its education, directed its desires into a military channel, and in due time made it an officer of artillery. By the concurrence of an infinite number of favoring influences and their preponderance over an infinite number of opposing ones, this officer of artillery had been made to commit a breach of discipline and flee from his native country to avoid punishment. He had been directed to New Orleans (instead of New York), where a recruiting officer awaited him on the wharf. He was enlisted and promoted, and things were so ordered that he now commanded a Confederate battery some two miles along the line from where Jerome Searing, the Federal scout, stood cocking his rifle. Nothing had been neglected—at every step in the progress of both these men’s lives, and in the lives of their contemporaries and ancestors, and in the lives of the contemporaries of their ancestors, the right thing had been done to bring about the desired result. Had anything in all this vast concatenation been overlooked Private Searing might have fired on the retreating Confederates that morning, and would perhaps have missed. As it fell out, a Confederate captain of artillery, having nothing better to do while awaiting his turn to pull out and be off, amused himself by sighting a field-piece obliquely to his right at what he mistook for some Federal officers on the crest of a hill, and discharged it. The shot flew high of its mark.

As Jerome Searing drew back the hammer of his rifle and with his eyes upon the distant Confederates considered where he could plant his shot with the best hope of making a widow or an orphan or a childless mother,—perhaps all three, for Private Searing, although he had repeatedly refused promotion, was not without a certain kind of ambition,—he heard a rushing
sound in the air, like that made by the wings of a great bird swooping down upon its prey. More quickly than he could apprehend the gradation, it increased to a hoarse and horrible roar, as the missile that made it sprang at him out of the sky, striking with a deafening impact one of the posts supporting the confusion of timbers above him, smashing it into matchwood, and bringing down the crazy edifice with a loud clatter, in clouds of blinding dust!

When Jerome Searing recovered consciousness he did not at once understand what had occurred. It was, indeed, some time before he opened his eyes. For a while he believed that he had died and been buried, and he tried to recall some portions of the burial service. He thought that his wife was kneeling upon his grave, adding her weight to that of the earth upon his breast. The two of them, widow and earth, had crushed his coffin. Unless the children should persuade her to go home he would not much longer be able to breathe. He felt a sense of wrong. “I cannot speak to her,” he thought; “the dead have no voice; and if I open my eyes I shall get them full of earth.”

He opened his eyes. A great expanse of blue sky, rising from a fringe of the tops of trees. In the foreground, shutting out some of the trees, a high, dun mound, angular in outline and crossed by an intricate, patternless system of straight lines; the whole an immeasurable distance away—a distance so inconceivably great that it fatigued him, and he closed his eyes. The moment that he did so he was conscious of an insufferable light. A sound was in his ears like the low, rhythmic thunder of a distant sea breaking in successive waves upon the beach, and out of this noise, seeming a part of it, or possibly coming from beyond it, and intermingled with its ceaseless undertone, came the articulate words: “Jerome Searing, you are caught like a rat in a trap—in a trap, trap, trap.”

Suddenly there fell a great silence, a black darkness, an infinite tranquillity, and Jerome Searing, perfectly conscious of his rathood, and well assured of the trap that he was in, remembering all and nowise alarmed, again opened his eyes to reconnoitre, to note the strength of his enemy, to plan his defense.

He was caught in a reclining posture, his back firmly supported by a solid beam.

Another lay across his breast, but he had been able to shrink a little away from it so that it no longer oppressed him, though it was immovable. A brace joining it at an angle had wedged him against a pile of boards on his left, fastening the arm on that side. His legs, slightly parted and straight along the ground, were covered upward to the knees with a mass of debris which
towered above his narrow horizon. His head was as rigidly fixed as in a vise; he could move his eyes, his chin—no more. Only his right arm was partly free. “You must help us out of this,” he said to it. But he could not get it from under the heavy timber athwart his chest, nor move it outward more than six inches at the elbow.

Searing was not seriously injured, nor did he suffer pain. A smart rap on the head from a flying fragment of the splintered post, incurred simultaneously with the frightfully sudden shock to the nervous system, had momentarily dazed him. His term of unconsciousness, including the period of recovery, during which he had had the strange fancies, had probably not exceeded a few seconds, for the dust of the wreck had not wholly cleared away as he began an intelligent survey of the situation.

With his partly free right hand he now tried to get hold of the beam that lay across, but not quite against, his breast. In no way could he do so. He was unable to depress the shoulder so as to push the elbow beyond that edge of the timber which was nearest his knees; failing in that, he could not raise the forearm and hand to grasp the beam. The brace that made an angle with it downward and backward prevented him from doing anything in that direction, and between it and his body the space was not half so wide as the length of his forearm. Obviously he could not get his hand under the beam nor over it; the hand could not, in fact, touch it at all. Having demonstrated his inability, he desisted, and began to think whether he could reach any of the débris piled upon his legs.

In surveying the mass with a view to determining that point, his attention was arrested by what seemed to be a ring of shining metal immediately in front of his eyes. It appeared to him at first to surround some perfectly black substance, and it was somewhat more than a half-inch in diameter. It suddenly occurred to his mind that the blackness was simply shadow and that the ring was in fact the muzzle of his rifle protruding from the pile of débris. He was not long in satisfying himself that this was so—if it was a satisfaction. By closing either eye he could look a little way along the barrel—to the point where it was hidden by the rubbish that held it. He could see the one side, with the corresponding eye, at apparently the same angle as the other side with the other eye. Looking with the right eye, the weapon seemed to be directed at a point to the left of his head, and vice-versa. He was unable to see the upper surface of the barrel, but could see the under surface of the stock at a slight angle. The piece was, in fact, aimed at the exact centre of his forehead.

In the perception of this circumstance, in the recollection that just previously to the mischance of which this uncomfortable situation was
the result he had cocked the rifle and set the trigger so that a touch would discharge it, Private Searing was affected with a feeling of uneasiness. But that was as far as possible from fear; he was a brave man, somewhat familiar with the aspect of rifles from that point of view, and of cannon too. And now he recalled, with something like amusement, an incident of his experience at the storming of Missionary Ridge, where, walking up to one of the enemy’s embrasures from which he had seen a heavy gun throw charge after charge of grape among the assailants he had thought for a moment that the piece had been withdrawn; he could see nothing in the opening but a brazen circle. What that was he had understood just in time to step aside as it pitched another peck of iron down that swarming slope. To face firearms is one of the commonest incidents in a soldier’s life—firearms, too, with malevolent eyes blazing behind them. That is what a soldier is for. Still, Private Searing did not altogether relish the situation, and turned away his eyes.

After groping, aimless, with his right hand for a time he made an ineffectual attempt to release his left. Then he tried to disengage his head, the fixity of which was the more annoying from his ignorance of what held it. Next he tried to free his feet, but while exerting the powerful muscles of his legs for that purpose it occurred to him that a disturbance of the rubbish which held them might discharge the rifle; how it could have endured what had already befallen it he could not understand, although memory assisted him with several instances in point. One in particular he recalled, in which in a moment of mental abstraction he had clubbed his rifle and beaten out another gentleman’s brains, observing afterward that the weapon which he had been diligently swinging by the muzzle was loaded, capped, and at full cock—knowledge of which circumstance would doubtless have cheered his antagonist to longer endurance. He had always smiled in recalling that blunder of his “green and salad days” as a soldier, but now he did not smile. He turned his eyes again to the muzzle of the rifle and for a moment fancied that it had moved; it seemed somewhat nearer.

Again he looked away. The tops of the distant trees beyond the bounds of the plantation interested him: he had not before observed how light and feathery they were, nor how darkly blue the sky was, even among their branches, where they somewhat paled it with their green; above him it appeared almost black. “It will be uncomfortably hot here,” he thought, “as the day advances. I wonder which way I am looking.”

Judging by such shadows as he could see, he decided that his face was due north; he would at least not have the sun in his eyes, and north—well, that was toward his wife and children.

“Bah!” he exclaimed aloud, “what have they to do with it?”
He closed his eyes. “As I can’t get out I may as well go to sleep. The rebels are gone and some of our fellows are sure to stray out here foraging. They’ll find me.”

But he did not sleep. Gradually he became sensible of a pain in his forehead—a dull ache, hardly perceptible at first, but growing more and more uncomfortable. He opened his eyes and it was gone—closed them and it returned. “The devil!” he said, irrelevantly, and stared again at the sky. He heard the singing of birds, the strange metallic note of the meadow lark, suggesting the clash of vibrant blades. He fell into pleasant memories of his childhood, played again with his brother and sister, raced across the fields, shouting to alarm the sedentary larks, entered the sombre forest beyond and with timid steps followed the faint path to Ghost Rock, standing at last with audible heart-throbs before the Dead Man’s Cave and seeking to penetrate its awful mystery. For the first time he observed that the opening of the haunted cavern was encircled by a ring of metal. Then all else vanished and left him gazing into the barrel of his rifle as before. But whereas before it had seemed nearer, it now seemed an inconceivable distance away, and all the more sinister for that. He cried out and, startled by something in his own voice—the note of fear—lied to himself in denial: “If I don’t sing out I may stay here till I die.”

He now made no further attempt to evade the menacing stare of the gun barrel. If he turned away his eyes an instant it was to look for assistance (although he could not see the ground on either side the ruin), and he permitted them to return, obedient to the imperative fascination. If he closed them it was from weariness, and instantly the poignant pain in his forehead—the prophecy and menace of the bullet—forced him to reopen them.

The tension of nerve and brain was too severe; nature came to his relief with intervals of unconsciousness. Reviving from one of these he became sensible of a sharp, smarting pain in his right hand, and when he worked his fingers together, or rubbed his palm with them, he could feel that they were wet and slippery. He could not see the hand, but he knew the sensation; it was running blood. In his delirium he had beaten it against the jagged fragments of the wreck, had clutched it full of splinters. He resolved that he would meet his fate more manly. He was a plain, common soldier, had no religion and not much philosophy; he could not die like a hero, with great and wise last words, even if there had been some one to hear them, but he could die “game,” and he would. But if he could only know when to expect the shot!

Some rats which had probably inhabited the shed came sneaking and scampering about. One of them mounted the pile of débris that held the
rifle; another followed and another. Searing regarded them at first with indifference, then with friendly interest; then, as the thought flashed into his bewildered mind that they might touch the trigger of his rifle, he cursed them and ordered them to go away. “It is no business of yours,” he cried.

The creatures went away; they would return later, attack his face, gnaw away his nose, cut his throat—he knew that, but he hoped by that time to be dead.

Nothing could now unfix his gaze from the little ring of metal with its black interior. The pain in his forehead was fierce and incessant. He felt it gradually penetrating the brain more and more deeply, until at last its progress was arrested by the wood at the back of his head. It grew momentarily more insufferable: he began wantonly beating his lacerated hand against the splinters again to counteract that horrible ache. It seemed to throb with a slow, regular recurrence, each pulsation sharper than the preceding, and sometimes he cried out, thinking he felt the fatal bullet. No thoughts of home, of wife and children, of country, of glory. The whole record of memory was effaced. The world had passed away—not a vestige remained. Here in this confusion of timbers and boards is the sole universe. Here is immortality in time—each pain an everlasting life. The throbs tick off eternities.

Jerome Searing, the man of courage, the formidable enemy, the strong, resolute warrior, was as pale as a ghost. His jaw was fallen; his eyes protruded; he trembled in every fibre; a cold sweat bathed his entire body; he screamed with fear. He was not insane—he was terrified.

In groping about with his torn and bleeding hand he seized at last a strip of board, and, pulling, felt it give way. It lay parallel with his body, and by bending his elbow as much as the contracted space would permit, he could draw it a few inches at a time. Finally it was altogether loosened from the wreckage covering his legs; he could lift it clear of the ground its whole length. A great hope came into his mind: perhaps he could work it upward, that is to say backward, far enough to lift the end and push aside the rifle; or, if that were too tightly wedged, so place the strip of board as to deflect the bullet. With this object he passed it backward inch by inch, hardly daring to breathe lest that act somehow defeat his intent, and more than ever unable to remove his eyes from the rifle, which might perhaps now hasten to improve its waning opportunity.
Something at least had been gained: in the occupation of his mind in this attempt at self-defense he was less sensible of the pain in his head and had ceased to wince. But he was still dreadfully frightened and his teeth rattled like castanets.

The strip of board ceased to move to the suasion of his hand. He tugged at it with all his strength, changed the direction of its length all he could, but it had met some extended obstruction behind him and the end in front was still too far away to clear the pile of débris and reach the muzzle of the gun. It extended, indeed, nearly as far as the trigger guard, which, uncovered by the rubbish, he could imperfectly see with his right eye. He tried to break the strip with his hand, but had no leverage. In his defeat, all his terror returned, augmented tenfold. The black aperture of the rifle appeared to threaten a sharper and more imminent death in punishment of his rebellion. The track of the bullet through his head ached with an intenser anguish. He began to tremble again.

Suddenly he became composed. His tremor subsided. He clenched his teeth and drew down his eyebrows. He had not exhausted his means of defense; a new design had shaped itself in his mind—another plan of battle. Raising the front end of the strip of board, he carefully pushed it forward through the wreckage at the side of the rifle until it pressed against the trigger guard. Then he moved the end slowly outward until he could feel that it had cleared it, then, closing his eyes, thrust it against the trigger with all his strength! There was no explosion; the rifle had been discharged as it dropped from his hand when the building fell. But it did its work.

Lieutenant Adrian Searing, in command of the picket-guard on that part of the line through which his brother Jerome had passed on his mission, sat with attentive ears in his breastwork behind the line. Not the faintest sound escaped him; the cry of a bird, the barking of a squirrel, the noise of the wind among the pines—all were anxiously noted by his overstrained sense. Suddenly, directly in front of his line, he heard a faint, confused rumble, like the clatter of a falling building translated by distance. The lieutenant mechanically looked at his watch. Six o’clock and eighteen minutes. At the same moment an officer approached him on foot from the rear and saluted.

“Lieutenant,” said the officer, “the colonel directs you to move forward your line and feel the enemy if you find him. If not, continue the advance until directed to halt. There is reason to think that the enemy has retreated.”

The lieutenant nodded and said nothing; the other officer retired. In a moment the men, apprised of their duty by the non-commissioned officers
in low tones, had deployed from their rifle-pits and were moving forward in skirmishing order, with set teeth and beating hearts.

This line of skirmishers sweeps across the plantation toward the mountain. They pass on both sides of the wrecked building, observing nothing. At a short distance in their rear their commander comes. He casts his eyes curiously upon the ruin and sees a dead body half buried in boards and timbers. It is so covered with dust that its clothing is Confederate gray. Its face is yellowish white; the cheeks are fallen in, the temples sunken, too, with sharp ridges about them, making the forehead forbiddingly narrow; the upper lip, slightly lifted, shows the white teeth, rigidly clenched. The hair is heavy with moisture, the face as wet as the dewy grass all about. From his point of view the officer does not observe the rifle; the man was apparently killed by the fall of the building.

“Dead a week,” said the officer curtly, moving on and absently pulling out his watch as if to verify his estimate of time. Six o’clock and forty minutes.
THE COUP DE GRÂCE

The fighting had been hard and continuous; that was attested by all the senses. The very taste of battle was in the air. All was now over; it remained only to succor the wounded and bury the dead—to “tidy up a bit,” as the humorist of a burial squad put it. A good deal of “tidying up” was required. As far as one could see through the forests, among the splintered trees, lay wrecks of men and horses. Among them moved the stretcher-bearers, gathering and carrying away the few who showed signs of life. Most of the wounded had died of neglect while the right to minister to their wants was in dispute. It is an army regulation that the wounded must wait; the best way to care for them is to win the battle. It must be confessed that victory is a distinct advantage to a man requiring attention, but many do not live to avail themselves of it.

The dead were collected in groups of a dozen or a score and laid side by side in rows while the trenches were dug to receive them.

Some, found at too great a distance from these rallying points, were buried where they lay. There was little attempt at identification, though in most cases, the burial parties being detailed to glean the same ground which they had assisted to reap, the names of the victorious dead were known and listed. The enemy’s fallen had to be content with counting. But of that they got enough: many of them were counted several times, and the total, as given afterward in the official report of the victorious commander, denoted rather a hope than a result.

At some little distance from the spot where one of the burial parties had established its “bivouac of the dead,” a man in the uniform of a Federal officer stood leaning against a tree. From his feet upward to his neck his attitude was that of weariness reposing; but he turned his head uneasily from side to side; his mind was apparently not at rest. He was perhaps uncertain in which direction to go; he was not likely to remain long where he was, for already the level rays of the setting sun straggled redly through the open spaces of the wood and the weary soldiers were quitting their task for the day. He would hardly make a night of it alone there among the dead.

Nine men in ten whom you meet after a battle inquire the way to some fraction of the army—as if any one could know. Doubtless this officer was lost. After resting himself a moment he would presumably follow one of the retiring burial squads.
When all were gone he walked straight away into the forest toward the red west, its light staining his face like blood. The air of confidence with which he now strode along showed that he was on familiar ground; he had recovered his bearings. The dead on his right and on his left were unregarded as he passed. An occasional low moan from some sorely-stricken wretch whom the relief-parties had not reached, and who would have to pass a comfortless night beneath the stars with his thirst to keep him company, was equally unheeded. What, indeed, could the officer have done, being no surgeon and having no water?

At the head of a shallow ravine, a mere depression of the ground, lay a small group of bodies. He saw, and swerving suddenly from his course walked rapidly toward them. Scanning each one sharply as he passed, he stopped at last above one which lay at a slight remove from the others, near a clump of small trees. He looked at it narrowly. It seemed to stir. He stooped and laid his hand upon its face. It screamed.

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The officer was Captain Downing Madwell, of a Massachusetts regiment of infantry, a daring and intelligent soldier, an honorable man.

In the regiment were two brothers named Halcrow—Caffal and Creede Halcrow. Caffal Halcrow was a sergeant in Captain Madwell's company, and these two men, the sergeant and the captain, were devoted friends. In so far as disparity of rank, difference in duties and considerations of military discipline would permit they were commonly together. They had, indeed, grown up together from childhood. A habit of the heart is not easily broken off. Caffal Halcrow had nothing military in his taste nor disposition, but the thought of separation from his friend was disagreeable; he enlisted in the company in which Madwell was second-lieutenant. Each had taken two steps upward in rank, but between the highest non-commissioned and the lowest commissioned officer the gulf is deep and wide and the old relation was maintained with difficulty and a difference.

Creede Halcrow, the brother of Caffal, was the major of the regiment—a cynical, saturnine man, between whom and Captain Madwell there was a natural antipathy which circumstances had nourished and strengthened to an active animosity. But for the restraining influence of their mutual relation to Caffal these two patriots would doubtless have endeavored to deprive their country of each other's services.

At the opening of the battle that morning the regiment was performing outpost duty a mile away from the main army. It was attacked and nearly
surrounded in the forest, but stubbornly held its ground. During a lull in the fighting, Major Halcrow came to Captain Madwell. The two exchanged formal salutes, and the major said: “Captain, the colonel directs that you push your company to the head of this ravine and hold your place there until recalled. I need hardly apprise you of the dangerous character of the movement, but if you wish, you can, I suppose, turn over the command to your first-lieutenant. I was not, however, directed to authorize the substitution; it is merely a suggestion of my own, unofficially made.”

To this deadly insult Captain Madwell coolly replied:

“Sir, I invite you to accompany the movement. A mounted officer would be a conspicuous mark, and I have long held the opinion that it would be better if you were dead.”

The art of repartee was cultivated in military circles as early as 1862.

A half-hour later Captain Madwell’s company was driven from its position at the head of the ravine, with a loss of one-third its number. Among the fallen was Sergeant Halcrow. The regiment was soon afterward forced back to the main line, and at the close of the battle was miles away. The captain was now standing at the side of his subordinate and friend.

Sergeant Halcrow was mortally hurt. His clothing was deranged; it seemed to have been violently torn apart, exposing the abdomen. Some of the buttons of his jacket had been pulled off and lay on the ground beside him and fragments of his other garments were strewn about. His leather belt was parted and had apparently been dragged from beneath him as he lay. There had been no great effusion of blood. The only visible wound was a wide, ragged opening in the abdomen.

It was defiled with earth and dead leaves. Protruding from it was a loop of small intestine. In all his experience Captain Madwell had not seen a wound like this. He could neither conjecture how it was made nor explain the attendant circumstances—the strangely torn clothing, the parted belt, the besmirching of the white skin. He knelt and made a closer examination. When he rose to his feet, he turned his eyes in different directions as if looking for an enemy. Fifty yards away, on the crest of a low, thinly wooded hill, he saw several dark objects moving about among the fallen men—a herd of swine. One stood with its back to him, its shoulders sharply elevated. Its forefeet were upon a human body, its head was depressed and invisible. The bristly ridge of its chine showed black against the red west. Captain Madwell drew away his eyes and fixed them again upon the thing which had been his friend.
The man who had suffered these monstrous mutilations was alive. At intervals he moved his limbs; he moaned at every breath. He stared blankly into the face of his friend and if touched screamed. In his giant agony he had torn up the ground on which he lay; his clenched hands were full of leaves and twigs and earth. Articulate speech was beyond his power; it was impossible to know if he were sensible to anything but pain. The expression of his face was an appeal; his eyes were full of prayer. For what?

There was no misreading that look; the captain had too frequently seen it in eyes of those whose lips had still the power to formulate it by an entreaty for death.

Consciously or unconsciously, this writhing fragment of humanity, this type and example of acute sensation, this handiwork of man and beast, this humble, unheroic Prometheus, was imploring everything, all, the whole non-ego, for the boon of oblivion. To the earth and the sky alike, to the trees, to the man, to whatever took form in sense or consciousness, this incarnate suffering addressed that silent plea.

For what, indeed? For that which we accord to even the meanest creature without sense to demand it, denying it only to the wretched of our own race: for the blessed release, the rite of uttermost compassion, the coup de grâce.

Captain Madwell spoke the name of his friend. He repeated it over and over without effect until emotion choked his utterance.

His tears plashed upon the livid face beneath his own and blinded himself. He saw nothing but a blurred and moving object, but the moans were more distinct than ever, interrupted at briefer intervals by sharper shrieks. He turned away, struck his hand upon his forehead, and strode from the spot. The swine, catching sight of him, threw up their crimson muzzles, regarding him suspiciously a second, and then with a gruff, concerted grunt, raced away out of sight. A horse, its foreleg splintered by a cannon-shot, lifted its head sidewise from the ground and neighed piteously. Madwell stepped forward, drew his revolver and shot the poor beast between the eyes, narrowly observing its death-struggle, which, contrary to his expectation, was violent and long; but at last it lay still. The tense muscles of its lips, which had uncovered the teeth in a horrible grin, relaxed; the sharp, clean-cut profile took on a look of profound peace and rest.

Along the distant, thinly wooded crest to westward the fringe of sunset fire had now nearly burned itself out. The light upon the trunks of the trees had faded to a tender gray; shadows were in their tops, like great dark birds aperch. Night was coming and there were miles of haunted forest between
Captain Madwell and camp. Yet he stood there at the side of the dead animal, apparently lost to all sense of his surroundings. His eyes were bent upon the earth at his feet; his left hand hung loosely at his side, his right still held the pistol. Presently he lifted his face, turned it toward his dying friend and walked rapidly back to his side. He knelt upon one knee, cocked the weapon, placed the muzzle against the man's forehead, and turning away his eyes pulled the trigger. There was no report. He had used his last cartridge for the horse.

The sufferer moaned and his lips moved convulsively. The froth that ran from them had a tinge of blood.

Captain Madwell rose to his feet and drew his sword from the scabbard. He passed the fingers of his left hand along the edge from hilt to point. He held it out straight before him, as if to test his nerves. There was no visible tremor of the blade; the ray of bleak skylight that it reflected was steady and true. He stooped and with his left hand tore away the dying man's shirt, rose and placed the point of the sword just over the heart. This time he did not withdraw his eyes. Grasping the hilt with both hands, he thrust downward with all his strength and weight. The blade sank into the man's body—through his body into the earth; Captain Madwell came near falling forward upon his work. The dying man drew up his knees and at the same time threw his right arm across his breast and grasped the steel so tightly that the knuckles of the hand visibly whitened. By a violent but vain effort to withdraw the blade the wound was enlarged; a rill of blood escaped, running sinuously down into the deranged clothing. At that moment three men stepped silently forward from behind the clump of young trees which had concealed their approach. Two were hospital attendants and carried a stretcher.

The third was Major Creede Halcrow.
Jack London (1876-1916)

John Griffith “Jack” London (born John Griffith Chaney) was a pioneer in the then-burgeoning world of commercial magazine fiction and was one of the first fiction writers to obtain worldwide celebrity and a large fortune from his fiction alone. He is best remembered as the author of White Fang and Call of the Wild, set in the Klondike Gold Rush, as well as the short stories “To Build a Fire,” “An Odyssey of the North,” and “Love of Life.” He also wrote of the South Pacific in such stories as “The Pearls of Parlay” and “The Heathen,” and of the San Francisco Bay area in The Sea Wolf.

London was a passionate advocate of unionization, socialism, and the rights of workers and wrote several powerful works dealing with these topics such as his dystopian novel, The Iron Heel and his non-fiction exposé, The People of the Abyss.

Jack London’s mother, Flora Wellman, worked as a music teacher and spiritualist claiming to channel the spirit of an Indian chief. Biographer Clarice Stasz and others believe that London’s father was astrologer William Chaney. Flora Wellman was living with Chaney in San Francisco when she became pregnant. According to Flora Wellman’s account, as recorded in the San Francisco Chronicle of June 4, 1875, Chaney demanded that she have an abortion. When she refused, he disclaimed responsibility for the child. In desperation, she shot herself. She was not seriously wounded, but she was temporarily deranged. After she gave birth, Flora turned the baby over to ex-slave Virginia Prentiss, who remained a major maternal figure throughout London’s life. Late in 1876, Flora Wellman married John London, a partially disabled Civil War veteran, and brought her baby John, later known as Jack, to live with the newly married couple. The family moved around the San Francisco Bay Area before settling in Oakland, where London completed grade school.

In 1889, London began working 12 to 18 hours a day at Hickmott’s Cannery. Seeking a way out, he borrowed money from his black foster mother Virginia Prentiss, bought the sloop Razzle-Dazzle from an oyster pirate named French Frank, and became an oyster pirate. In his memoir, John Barleycorn, he claims to have stolen French Frank’s mistress Mamie. After a few months, his sloop became damaged beyond repair. London became hired as a member of the California Fish Patrol. In 1893, he signed on to the sealing schooner Sophie Sutherland, bound for the coast of Japan. When he returned, the country was in the grip of the panic of ‘93 and Oakland was swept by labor unrest. After grueling jobs in a jute mill and a street-railway power
On July 12, 1897, London (age 21) and his sister’s husband Captain Shepard sailed to join the Klondike Gold Rush. This was the setting for some of his first successful stories. London’s time in the Klondike, however, was detrimental to his health. Like so many other men who were malnourished in the goldfields, London developed scurvy. His gums became swollen, leading to the loss of his four front teeth. A constant gnawing pain affected his hip and leg muscles, and his face was stricken with marks that always reminded him of the struggles he faced in the Klondike.

London left Oakland with a social conscience and socialist leanings; he returned to become an activist for socialism. He concluded that his only hope of escaping the work “trap” was to get an education and “sell his brains.” He saw his writing as a business, his ticket out of poverty, and, he hoped, a means of beating the wealthy at their own game. London joined the Socialist Labor Party in April 1896. In the same year, the San Francisco Chronicle published a story about the twenty-year-old London giving nightly speeches in Oakland’s City Hall Park, an activity he was arrested for a year later. In 1901, he left the Socialist Labor Party and joined the new Socialist Party of America. He ran unsuccessfully as the high-profile Socialist nominee for mayor of Oakland in 1901 (receiving 245 votes) and 1905 (improving to 981 votes), toured the country lecturing on socialism in 1906, and published collections of essays about socialism (The War of the Classes, 1905; Revolution, and other Essays, 1906). As London explained in his essay, “How I Became a Socialist,” his views were influenced by his experience with people at the bottom of the social pit. His optimism and individualism faded, and he vowed never to do more hard work than necessary. He wrote that his individualism was hammered out of him, and he was politically reborn. He often closed his letters “Yours for the Revolution.” In later years, London felt some ambivalence toward socialism and complained about the “inefficient Italian labourers” he employed on his ranch in Glen Ellen, California. In 1916, he resigned from the Glen Ellen chapter of the Socialist Party, but stated emphatically he did so “because of its lack of fire and fight, and its loss of emphasis on the class struggle.”

On returning to California in 1898, London began working deliberately to get published, a struggle described in his novel, Martin Eden. His first published story was “To the Man On Trail,” which has frequently been collected in anthologies. When The Overland Monthly offered him only five dollars for it—and was slow paying—London came close to abandoning his writing career. In his words, “literally and literarily I was saved” when The Black Cat accepted his story “A Thousand Deaths,” and paid him $40—the “first money I ever received for a story.”
London was fortunate in the timing of his writing career. He started just as new printing technologies enabled lower-cost production of magazines. This resulted in a boom in popular magazines aimed at a wide public, and a strong market for short fiction. In 1900, he made $2,500 in writing, about $66,000 in current value. In early 1903, London sold The Call of the Wild to The Saturday Evening Post for $750, and the book rights to Macmillan for $2,000. Macmillan’s promotional campaign propelled it to swift success, making London wealthy.

London died November 22, 1916, in a sleeping porch in a cottage on his ranch. He was in extreme pain and taking morphine, and it is possible that a morphine overdose, accidental or deliberate, may have contributed to his death.

London’s ashes were buried, together with those of his second wife Charmian (who died in 1955), in Jack London State Historic Park, in Glen Ellen, California. The simple grave is marked only by a mossy boulder. (adapted from Wikipedia)
THE MEXICAN

NOBODY knew his history—they of the Junta least of all. He was their “little mystery,” their “big patriot,” and in his way he worked as hard for the coming Mexican Revolution as did they. They were tardy in recognizing this, for not one of the Junta liked him. The day he first drifted into their crowded, busy rooms, they all suspected him of being a spy—one of the bought tools of the Diaz secret service. Too many of the comrades were in civil an military prisons scattered over the United States, and others of them, in irons, were even then being taken across the border to be lined up against adobe walls and shot.

At the first sight the boy did not impress them favorably. Boy he was, not more than eighteen and not over large for his years. He announced that he was Felipe Rivera, and that it was his wish to work for the Revolution. That was all—not a wasted word, no further explanation. He stood waiting. There was no smile on his lips, no geniality in his eyes. Big dashing Paulino Vera felt an inward shudder. Here was something forbidding, terrible, inscrutable. There was something venomous and snakelike in the boy’s black eyes. They burned like cold fire, as with a vast, concentrated bitterness. He flashed them from the faces of the conspirators to the typewriter which little Mrs. Sethby was industriously operating. His eyes rested on hers but an instant—she had chanced to look up—and she, too, sensed the nameless something that made her pause. She was compelled to read back in order to regain the swing of the letter she was writing.

Paulino Vera looked questioningly at Arrellano and Ramos, and questioningly they looked back and to each other. The indecision of doubt brooded in their eyes. This slender boy was the Unknown, vested with all the menace of the Unknown. He was unrecognizable, something quite beyond the ken of honest, ordinary revolutionists whose fiercest hatred for Diaz and his tyranny after all was only that of honest and ordinary patriots. Here was something else, they knew not what. But Vera, always the most impulsive, the quickest to act, stepped into the breach.

“Very well,” he said coldly. “You say you want to work for the Revolution. Take off your coat. Hang it over there. I will show you, come—where are the buckets and cloths. The floor is dirty. You will begin by scrubbing it, and by scrubbing the floors of the other rooms. The spittoons need to be cleaned. Then there are the windows.”

“Is it for the Revolution?” the boy asked.
“It is for the Revolution,” Vera answered.

Rivera looked cold suspicion at all of them, then proceeded to take off his coat.
“It is well,” he said.

And nothing more. Day after day he came to his work—sweeping, scrubbing, cleaning. He emptied the ashes from the stoves, brought up the coal and kindling, and lighted the fires before the most energetic one of them was at his desk.

“Can I sleep here?” he asked once.

Ah, ha! So that was it—the hand of Diaz showing through! To sleep in the rooms of the Junta meant access to their secrets, to the lists of names, to the addresses of comrades down on Mexican soil. The request was denied, and Rivera never spoke of it again. He slept they knew not where, and ate they knew not where nor how. Once, Arrellano offered him a couple of dollars. Rivera declined the money with a shake of the head. When Vera joined in and tried to press it upon him, he said:

“I am working for the Revolution.”

It takes money to raise a modern revolution, and always the Junta was pressed. The members starved and toiled, and the longest day was none too long, and yet there were times when it appeared as if the Revolution stood or fell on no more than the matter of a few dollars. Once, the first time, when the rent of the house was two months behind and the landlord was threatening dispossession, it was Felipe Rivera, the scrub-boy in the poor, cheap clothes, worn and threadbare, who laid sixty dollars in gold on May Sethby’s desk. There were other times. Three hundred letters, clicked out on the busy typewriters (appeals for assistance, for sanctions from the organized labor groups, requests for square news deals to the editors of newspapers, protests against the high-handed treatment of revolutionists by the United States courts), lay unmailed, awaiting postage. Vera’s watch had disappeared—the old-fashioned gold repeater that had been his father’s. Likewise had gone the plain gold band from May Sethby’s third finger. Things were desperate. Ramos and Arrellano pulled their long mustaches in despair. The letters must go off, and the Post Office allowed no credit to purchasers of stamps. Then it was that Rivera put on his hat and went out. When he came back he laid a thousand two-cent stamps on May Sethby’s desk.

“I wonder if it is the cursed gold of Diaz?” said Vera to the comrades.
They elevated their brows and could not decide. And Felipe Rivera, the scrubber for the Revolution, continued, as occasion arose, to lay down gold and silver for the Junta’s use.

And still they could not bring themselves to like him. They did not know him. His ways were not theirs. He gave no confidences. He repelled all probing. Youth that he was, they could never nerve themselves to dare to question him.

“A great and lonely spirit, perhaps, I do not know, I do not know,” Arrellano said helplessly.

“He is not human,” said Ramos.

“His soul has been seared,” said May Sethby. “Light and laughter have been burned out of him. He is like one dead, and yet he is fearfully alive.”

“He has been through hell,” said Vera. “No man could look like that who has not been through hell—and he is only a boy.”

Yet they could not like him. He never talked, never inquired, never suggested. He would stand listening, expressionless, a thing dead, save for his eyes, coldly burning, while their talk of the Revolution ran high and warm. From face to face and speaker to speaker his eyes would turn, boring like gimlets of incandescent ice, disconcerting and perturbing.

“He is no spy,” Vera confided to May Sethby. “He is a patriot—mark me, the greatest patriot of us all. I know it, I feel it, here in my heart and head I feel it. But him I know not at all.”

“He has a bad temper,” said May Sethby.

“I know,” said Vera, with a shudder. “He has looked at me with those eyes of his. They do not love; they threaten; they are savage as a wild tiger’s. I know, if I should prove unfaithful to the Cause, that he would kill me. He has no heart. He is pitiless as steel, keen and cold as frost. He is like moonshine in a winter night when a man freezes to death on some lonely mountain top. I am not afraid of Diaz and all his killers; but this boy, of him am I afraid. I tell you true. I am afraid. He is the breath of death.”

Yet Vera it was who persuaded the others to give the first trust to Rivera. The line of communication between Los Angeles and Lower California had broken down. Three of the comrades had dug their own graves and been shot into them. Two more were United States prisoners in Los Angeles. Juan
Alvarado, the Federal commander, was a monster. All their plans did he checkmate. They could no longer gain access to the active revolutionists, and the incipient ones, in Lower California.

Young Rivera was given his instructions and dispatched south. When he returned, the line of communication was reestablished, and Juan Alvarado was dead. He had been found in bed, a knife hilt-deep in his breast. This had exceeded Rivera's instructions, but they of the Junta knew the times of his movements. They did not ask him. He said nothing. But they looked at one another and conjectured.

“I have told you,” said Vera. “Diaz has more to fear from this youth than from any man. He is implacable. He is the hand of God.”

The bad temper, mentioned by May Sethby, and sensed by them all, was evidenced by physical proofs. Now he appeared with a cut lip, a blackened cheek, or a swollen ear. It was patent that he brawled, somewhere in that outside world where he ate and slept, gained money, and moved in ways unknown to them. As the time passed, he had come to set type for the little revolutionary sheet they published weekly. There were occasions when he was unable to set type, when his knuckles were bruised and battered, when his thumbs were injured and helpless, when one arm or the other hung wearily at his side while his face was drawn with unspoken pain.

“A wastrel,” said Arrellano.

“A frequenter of low places,” said Ramos.

“But where does he get the money?” Vera demanded. “Only to-day, just now, have I learned that he paid the bill for white paper—one hundred and forty dollars.”

“There are his absences,” said May Sethby. “He never explains them.”

“We should set a spy upon him,” Ramos propounded.

“I should not care to be that spy,” said Vera. “I fear you would never see me again, save to bury me. He has a terrible passion. Not even God would he permit to stand between him and the way of his passion.”

“I feel like a child before him,” Ramos confessed.

“To me he is power—he is the primitive, the wild wolf, the striking rattlesnake, the stinging centipede,” said Arrellano.
“He is the Revolution incarnate,” said Vera. “He is the flame and the spirit of it, the insatiable cry for vengeance that makes no cry but that slays noiselessly. He is a destroying angel in moving through the still watches of the night.”

“I could weep over him,” said May Sethby. “He knows nobody. He hates all people. Us he tolerates, for we are the way of his desire. He is alone.... lonely.” Her voice broke in a half sob and there was dimness in her eyes.

Rivera’s ways and times were truly mysterious. There were periods when they did not see him for a week at a time. Once, he was away a month. These occasions were always capped by his return, when, without advertisement or speech, he laid gold coins on May Sethby’s desk. Again, for days and weeks, he spent all his time with the Junta. And yet again, for irregular periods, he would disappear through the heart of each day, from early morning until late afternoon. At such times he came early and remained late. Arrellano had found him at midnight, setting type with fresh swollen knuckles, or mayhap it was his lip, new-split, that still bled.

II

The time of the crisis approached. Whether or not the Revolution would be depended upon the Junta, and the Junta was hard-pressed. The need for money was greater than ever before, while money was harder to get. Patriots had given their last cent and now could give no more. Section gang laborers-fugitive peons from Mexico—were contributing half their scanty wages. But more than that was needed. The heart-breaking, conspiring, undermining toil of years approached fruition. The time was ripe. The Revolution hung on the balance. One shove more, one last heroic effort, and it would tremble across the scales to victory. They knew their Mexico. Once started, the Revolution would take care of itself. The whole Diaz machine would go down like a house of cards. The border was ready to rise. One Yankee, with a hundred I.W.W. men, waited the word to cross over the border and begin the conquest of Lower California. But he needed guns. And clear across to the Atlantic, the Junta in touch with them all and all of them needing guns, mere adventurers, soldiers of fortune, bandits, disgruntled American union men, socialists, anarchists, rough-necks, Mexican exiles, peons escaped from bondage, whipped miners from the bull-pens of Coeur d’Alene and Colorado who desired only the more vindictively to fight—all the flotsam and jetsam of wild spirits from the madly complicated modern world. And it was guns and ammunition, ammunition and guns—the unceasing and eternal cry.

Fling this heterogeneous, bankrupt, vindictive mass across the border,
and the Revolution was on. The custom house, the northern ports of entry, would be captured. Diaz could not resist. He dared not throw the weight of his armies against them, for he must hold the south. And through the south the flame would spread despite. The people would rise. The defenses of city after city would crumple up. State after state would totter down. And at last, from every side, the victorious armies of the Revolution would close in on the City of Mexico itself, Diaz’s last stronghold.

But the money. They had the men, impatient and urgent, who would use the guns. They knew the traders who would sell and deliver the guns. But to culture the Revolution thus far had exhausted the Junta. The last dollar had been spent, the last resource and the last starving patriot milked dry, and the great adventure still trembled on the scales. Guns and ammunition! The ragged battalions must be armed. But how? Ramos lamented his confiscated estates. Arrellano wailed the spendthriftness of his youth. May Sethby wondered if it would have been different had they of the Junta been more economical in the past.

“To think that the freedom of Mexico should stand or fall on a few paltry thousands of dollars,” said Paulino Vera.

Despair was in all their faces. Jose Amarillo, their last hope, a recent convert, who had promised money, had been apprehended at his hacienda in Chihuahua and shot against his own stable wall. The news had just come through.

Rivera, on his knees, scrubbing, looked up, with suspended brush, his bare arms flecked with soapy, dirty water.

“Will five thousand do it?” he asked.

They looked their amazement. Vera nodded and swallowed. He could not speak, but he was on the instant invested with a vast faith.

“Order the guns,” Rivera said, and thereupon was guilty of the longest flow of words they had ever heard him utter. “The time is short. In three weeks I shall bring you the five thousand. It is well. The weather will be warmer for those who fight. Also, it is the best I can do.”

Vera fought his faith. It was incredible. Too many fond hopes had been shattered since he had begun to play the revolution game. He believed this threadbare scrubber of the Revolution, and yet he dared not believe.

“You are crazy,” he said.
“In three weeks,” said Rivera. “Order the guns.”

He got up, rolled down his sleeves, and put on his coat.

“Order the guns,” he said.

“I am going now.”

III

After hurrying and scurrying, much telephoning and bad language, a night session was held in Kelly’s office. Kelly was rushed with business; also, he was unlucky. He had brought Danny Ward out from New York, arranged the fight for him with Billy Carthey, the date was three weeks away, and for two days now, carefully concealed from the sporting writers, Carthey had been lying up, badly injured. There was no one to take his place. Kelly had been burning the wires East to every eligible lightweight, but they were tied up with dates and contracts. And now hope had revived, though faintly.

“You’ve got a hell of a nerve,” Kelly addressed Rivera, after one look, as soon as they got together.

Hate that was malignant was in Rivera’s eyes, but his face remained impassive.

“I can lick Ward,” was all he said.

“How do you know? Ever see him fight?”

Rivera shook his head.

“He can beat you up with one hand and both eyes closed.”

Rivera shrugged his shoulders.

“Haven’t you got anything to say?” the fight promoter snarled.

“I can lick him.”

“Who’d you ever fight, anyway!” Michael Kelly demanded. Michael was the promoter’s brother, and ran the Yellowstone pool rooms where he made goodly sums on the fight game.
Rivera favored him with a bitter, unanswering stare.

The promoter’s secretary, a distinctively sporty young man, sneered audibly.

“Well, you know Roberts,” Kelly broke the hostile silence. “He ought to be here. I’ve sent for him. Sit down and wait, though from the looks of you, you haven’t got a chance. I can’t throw the public down with a bum fight. Ringside seats are selling at fifteen dollars, you know that.”

When Roberts arrived, it was patent that he was mildly drunk. He was a tall, lean, slack-jointed individual, and his walk, like his talk, was a smooth and languid drawl.

Kelly went straight to the point.

“Look here, Roberts, you’ve been bragging you discovered this little Mexican. You know Carthey’s broke his arm. Well, this little yellow streak has the gall to blow in to-day and say he’ll take Carthey’s place. What about it?”

“It’s all right, Kelly,” came the slow response. “He can put up a fight.”

“I suppose you’ll be sayin’ next that he can lick Ward,” Kelly snapped.

Roberts considered judicially.

“No, I won’t say that. Ward’s a top-notcher and a ring general. But he can’t hashhouse Rivera in short order. I know Rivera. Nobody can get his goat. He ain’t got a goat that I could ever discover. And he’s a two-handed fighter. He can throw in the sleep-makers from any position.”

“Never mind that. What kind of a show can he put up? You’ve been conditioning and training fighters all your life. I take off my hat to your judgment. Can he give the public a run for its money?”

“He sure can, and he’ll worry Ward a mighty heap on top of it. You don’t know that boy. I do. I discovered him. He ain’t got a goat. He’s a devil. He’s a wizzy-wooz if anybody should ask you. He’ll make Ward sit up with a show of local talent that’ll make the rest of you sit up. I won’t say he’ll lick Ward, but he’ll put up such a show that you’ll all know he’s a comer.”

“All right.” Kelly turned to his secretary. “Ring up Ward. I warned him to show up if I thought it worth while. He’s right across at the Yellowstone, throwin’ chests and doing the popular.”
Kelly turned back to the conditioner. “Have a drink?”

Roberts sipped his highball and unburdened himself.

“Never told you how I discovered the little cuss. It was a couple of years ago he showed up out at the quarters. I was getting Prayne ready for his fight with Delaney. Prayne’s wicked. He ain’t got a tickle of mercy in his make-up. I chopped up his pardner’s something cruel, and I couldn’t find a willing boy that’d work with him. I’d noticed this little starved Mexican kid hanging around, and I was desperate. So I grabbed him, shoved on the gloves and put him in. He was tougher’n rawhide, but weak. And he didn’t know the first letter in the alphabet of boxing. Prayne chopped him to ribbons. But he hung on for two sickening rounds, when he fainted. Starvation, that was all. Battered! You couldn’t have recognized him. I gave him half a dollar and a square meal. You oughta seen him wolf it down. He hadn’t had the end of a bite for a couple of days. That’s the end of him, thinks I. But next day he showed up, stiff an’ sore, ready for another half and a square meal. And he done better as time went by. Just a born fighter, and tough beyond belief. He hasn’t a heart. He’s a piece of ice. And he never talked eleven words in a string since I know him. He saws wood and does his work.”

“I’ve seen ‘m,” the secretary said. “He’s worked a lot for you.”

“All the big little fellows has tried out on him,” Roberts answered. “And he’s learned from ‘em. I’ve seen some of them he could lick. But his heart wasn’t in it. I reckoned he never liked the game. He seemed to act that way.”

“He’s been fighting some before the little clubs the last few months,” Kelly said.

“Sure. But I don’t know what struck ‘m. All of a sudden his heart got into it. He just went out like a streak and cleaned up all the little local fellows. Seemed to want the money, and he’s won a bit, though his clothes don’t look it. He’s peculiar. Nobody knows his business. Nobody knows how he spends his time. Even when he’s on the job, he plumb up and disappears most of each day soon as his work is done. Sometimes he just blows away for weeks at a time. But he don’t take advice. There’s a fortune in it for the fellow that gets the job of managin’ him, only he won’t consider it. And you watch him hold out for the cash money when you get down to terms.”

It was at this stage that Danny Ward arrived. Quite a party it was. His manager and trainer were with him, and he breezed in like a gusty draught of geniality, good-nature, and all-conqueringness. Greetings flew about, a joke
here, a retort there, a smile or a laugh for everybody. Yet it was his way, and only partly sincere. He was a good actor, and he had found geniality a most valuable asset in the game of getting on in the world. But down underneath he was the deliberate, cold-blooded fighter and business man. The rest was a mask. Those who knew him or trafficked with him said that when it came to brass tacks he was Danny-on-the-Spot. He was invariably present at all business discussions, and it was urged by some that his manager was a blind whose only function was to serve as Danny's mouth-piece.

Rivera's way was different. Indian blood, as well as Spanish, was in his veins, and he sat back in a corner, silent, immobile, only his black eyes passing from face to face and noting everything.

“So that’s the guy,” Danny said, running an appraising eye over his proposed antagonist. “How de do, old chap.”

Rivera’s eyes burned venomously, but he made no sign of acknowledgment. He disliked all Gringos, but this Gringo he hated with an immediacy that was unusual even in him.

“Gawd!” Danny protested facetiously to the promoter. “You ain’t expectin’ me to fight a deaf mute.” When the laughter subsided, he made another hit. “Los Angeles must be on the dink when this is the best you can scare up. What kindergarten did you get ‘m from?”

“He’s a good little boy, Danny, take it from me,” Roberts defended. “Not as easy as he looks.”

“And half the house is sold already,” Kelly pleaded. “You’ll have to take ‘m on, Danny. It is the best we can do.”

Danny ran another careless and unflattering glance over Rivera and sighed.

“I gotta be easy with ‘m, I guess. If only he don’t blow up.”

Roberts snorted.

“You gotta be careful,” Danny’s manager warned. “No taking chances with a dub that’s likely to sneak a lucky one across.”

“Oh, I'll be careful all right, all right,” Danny smiled. “I’ll get in at the start an’ nurse ‘im along for the dear public’s sake. What d’ ye say to fifteen rounds, Kelly—an’ then the hay for him?”
“That’ll do,” was the answer. “As long as you make it realistic.”

“Then let’s get down to biz.” Danny paused and calculated. “Of course, sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts, same as with Carthey. But the split’ll be different. Eighty will just about suit me.” And to his manager, “That right?”

The manager nodded.

“Here, you, did you get that?” Kelly asked Rivera.

Rivera shook his head.

“Well, it is this way,” Kelly explicated. “The purse’ll be sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts. You’re a dub, and an unknown. You and Danny split, twenty per cent goin’ to you, an’ eighty to Danny. That’s fair, isn’t it, Roberts?”

“Very fair, Rivera,” Roberts agreed.

“You see, you ain’t got a reputation yet.”

“What will sixty-five per cent of the gate receipts be?” Rivera demanded.

“Oh, maybe five thousand, maybe as high as eight thousand,” Danny broke in to explain. “Something like that. Your share’ll come to something like a thousand or sixteen hundred. Pretty good for takin’ a licking from a guy with my reputation. What d’ ye say?”

Then Rivera took their breaths away. “Winner takes all,” he said with finality.

A dead silence prevailed.

“It’s like candy from a baby,” Danny’s manager proclaimed.

Danny shook his head.

“I’ve been in the game too long,” he explained.

“I’m not casting reflections on the referee, or the present company. I’m not sayin’ nothing about book-makers an’ frame-ups that sometimes happen. But what I do say is that it’s poor business for a fighter like me. I play safe. There’s no tellin’. Mebbe I break my arm, eh? Or some guy slips me a bunch of dope?” He shook his head solemnly. “Win or lose, eighty is my split. What d’ ye say,
Mexican?"

Rivera shook his head.

Danny exploded. He was getting down to brass tacks now.

“Why, you dirty little greaser! I’ve a mind to knock your block off right now.”

Roberts drawled his body to interposition between hostilities.

“Winner takes all,” Rivera repeated sullenly.

“Why do you stand out that way?” Danny asked.

“I can lick you,” was the straight answer.

Danny half started to take off his coat. But, as his manager knew, it was a grand stand play. The coat did not come off, and Danny allowed himself to be placated by the group. Everybody sympathized with him. Rivera stood alone.

“Look here, you little fool,” Kelly took up the argument. “You’re nobody. We know what you’ve been doing the last few months—putting away little local fighters. But Danny is class. His next fight after this will be for the championship. And you’re unknown. Nobody ever heard of you out of Los Angeles.”

“They will,” Rivera answered with a shrug, “after this fight.”

“You think for a second you can lick me?” Danny blurted in.

Rivera nodded.

“Oh, come; listen to reason,” Kelly pleaded. “Think of the advertising.”

“I want the money,” was Rivera’s answer.

“You couldn’t win from me in a thousand years,” Danny assured him.

“Then what are you holdin’ out for?” Rivera countered. “If the money’s that easy, why don’t you go after it?”

“I will, so help me!” Danny cried with abrupt conviction. “I’ll beat you to death in the ring, my boy—you monkeyin’ with me this way. Make out the
articles, Kelly. Winner take all. Play it up in the sportin’ columns. Tell ‘em it’s a grudge fight. I’ll show this fresh kid a few.”

Kelly’s secretary had begun to write, when Danny interrupted.

“Hold on!” He turned to Rivera.

“Weights?”

“Ringside,” came the answer.

“Not on your life, Fresh Kid. If winner takes all, we weigh in at ten A.M.”

“And winner takes all?” Rivera queried.

Danny nodded. That settled it. He would enter the ring in his full ripeness of strength.

“Weigh in at ten,” Rivera said.

The secretary’s pen went on scratching.

“It means five pounds,” Roberts complained to Rivera.

“You’ve given too much away. You’ve thrown the fight right there. Danny’ll lick you sure. He’ll be as strong as a bull. You’re a fool. You ain’t got the chance of a dewdrop in hell.”

Rivera’s answer was a calculated look of hatred. Even this Gringo he despised, and him had he found the whitest Gringo of them all.

IV

Barely noticed was Rivera as he entered the ring. Only a very slight and very scattering ripple of half-hearted hand-clapping greeted him. The house did not believe in him. He was the lamb led to slaughter at the hands of the great Danny. Besides, the house was disappointed. It had expected a rushing battle between Danny Ward and Billy Carthey, and here it must put up with this poor little tyro. Still further, it had manifested its disapproval of the change by betting two, and even three, to one on Danny. And where a betting audience’s money is, there is its heart.

The Mexican boy sat down in his corner and waited. The slow minutes lagged by. Danny was making him wait. It was an old trick, but ever it worked
on the young, new fighters. They grew frightened, sitting thus and facing
their own apprehensions and a callous, tobacco-smoking audience. But for
once the trick failed. Roberts was right. Rivera had no goat. He, who was
more delicately coordinated, more finely nerve and strung than any of
them, had no nerves of this sort. The atmosphere of foredoomed defeat in his
own corner had no effect on him. His handlers were Gringos and strangers.
Also they were scrubs—the dirty driftage of the fight game, without honor,
without efficiency. And they were chilled, as well, with certitude that theirs
was the losing corner.

“Now you gotta be careful,” Spider Hagerty warned him. Spider was his
chief second. “Make it last as long as you can—them’s my instructions from
Kelly. If you don’t, the papers’ll call it another bum fight and give the game a
bigger black eye in Los Angeles.”

All of which was not encouraging. But Rivera took no notice. He despised
prize fighting. It was the hated game of the hated Gringo. He had taken up
with it, as a chopping block for others in the training quarters, solely because
he was starving. The fact that he was marvelously made for it had meant
nothing. He hated it. Not until he had come in to the Junta, had he fought for
money, and he had found the money easy. Not first among the sons of men
had he been to find himself successful at a despised vocation.

He did not analyze. He merely knew that he must win this fight. There
could be no other outcome. For behind him, nerving him to this belief, were
profounder forces than any the crowded house dreamed. Danny Ward fought
for money, and for the easy ways of life that money would bring. But the
things Rivera fought for burned in his brain—blazing and terrible visions,
that, with eyes wide open, sitting lonely in the corner of the ring and waiting
for his tricky antagonist, he saw as clearly as he had lived them.

He saw the white-walled, water-power factories of Rio Blanco. He saw
the six thousand workers, starved and wan, and the little children, seven
and eight years of age, who toiled long shifts for ten cents a day. He saw the
perambulating corpses, the ghastly death’s heads of men who labored in the
dye-rooms. He remembered that he had heard his father call the dye-rooms
the “suicide-holes,” where a year was death. He saw the little patio, and his
mother cooking and moiling at crude housekeeping and finding time to
caress and love him. And his father he saw, large, big-moustached and deep-
chested, kindly above all men, who loved all men and whose heart was so
large that there was love to overflowing still left for the mother and the little
muchacho playing in the corner of the patio. In those days his name had not
been Felipe Rivera. It had been Fernandez, his father’s and mother’s name.
Him had they called Juan. Later, he had changed it himself, for he had found
the name of Fernandez hated by prefects of police, jefes politicos, and rurales.

Big, hearty Joaquin Fernandez! A large place he occupied in Rivera’s visions. He had not understood at the time, but looking back he could understand. He could see him setting type in the little printery, or scribbling endless hasty, nervous lines on the much-cluttered desk. And he could see the strange evenings, when workmen, coming secretly in the dark like men who did ill deeds, met with his father and talked long hours where he, the muchacho, lay not always asleep in the corner.

As from a remote distance he could hear Spider Hagerty saying to him: “No layin’ down at the start. Them’s instructions. Take a beatin’ and earn your dough.”

Ten minutes had passed, and he still sat in his corner. There were no signs of Danny, who was evidently playing the trick to the limit.

But more visions burned before the eye of Rivera’s memory. The strike, or, rather, the lockout, because the workers of Rio Blanco had helped their striking brothers of Puebla. The hunger, the expeditions in the hills for berries, the roots and herbs that all ate and that twisted and pained the stomachs of all of them. And then, the nightmare; the waste of ground before the company’s store; the thousands of starving workers; General Rosalio Martinez and the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz, and the death-spitting rifles that seemed never to cease spitting, while the workers’ wrongs were washed and washed again in their own blood. And that night! He saw the flat cars, piled high with the bodies of the slain, consigned to Vera Cruz, food for the sharks of the bay. Again he crawled over the grisly heaps, seeking and finding, stripped and mangled, his father and his mother. His mother he especially remembered—only her face projecting, her body burdened by the weight of dozens of bodies. Again the rifles of the soldiers of Porfirio Diaz cracked, and again he dropped to the ground and slunk away like some hunted coyote of the hills.

To his ears came a great roar, as of the sea, and he saw Danny Ward, leading his retinue of trainers and seconds, coming down the center aisle. The house was in wild uproar for the popular hero who was bound to win. Everybody proclaimed him. Everybody was for him. Even Rivera’s own seconds warmed to something akin to cheerfulness when Danny ducked jauntily through the ropes and entered the ring. His face continually spread to an unending succession of smiles, and when Danny smiled he smiled in every feature, even to the laughter-wrinkles of the corners of the eyes and into the depths of the eyes themselves. Never was there so genial a fighter: His face was a running advertisement of good feeling, of good fellowship. He knew
everybody. He joked, and laughed, and greeted his friends through the ropes. Those farther away, unable to suppress their admiration, cried loudly: “Oh, you Danny!” It was a joyous ovation of affection that lasted a full five minutes.

Rivera was disregarded. For all that the audience noticed, he did not exist. Spider Lagerty’s bloated face bent down close to his.

“No gettin’ scared,” the Spider warned.

“An’ remember instructions. You gotta last. No layin’ down. If you lay down, we got instructions to beat you up in the dressing rooms. Savve? You just gotta fight.”

The house began to applaud. Danny was crossing the ring to him. Danny bent over, caught Rivera’s right hand in both his own and shook it with impulsive heartiness. Danny’s smile-wreathed face was close to his. The audience yelled its appreciation of Danny’s display of sporting spirit. He was greeting his opponent with the fondness of a brother. Danny’s lips moved, and the audience, interpreting the unheard words to be those of a kindly-natured sport, yelled again. Only Rivera heard the low words.

“You little Mexican rat,” hissed from between Danny’s gaily smiling lips, “I’ll fetch the yellow outa you.”

Rivera made no move. He did not rise. He merely hated with his eyes.

“Get up, you dog!” some man yelled through the ropes from behind.

The crowd began to hiss and boo him for his unsportsmanlike conduct, but he sat unmoved. Another great outburst of applause was Danny’s as he walked back across the ring.

When Danny stripped, there was ohs! and ahs! of delight. His body was perfect, alive with easy suppleness and health and strength. The skin was white as a woman’s, and as smooth. All grace, and resilience, and power resided therein. He had proved it in scores of battles. His photographs were in all the physical culture magazines.

A groan went up as Spider Hagerty peeled Rivera’s sweater over his head. His body seemed leaner, because of the swarthiness of the skin. He had muscles, but they made no display like his opponent’s. What the audience neglected to see was the deep chest. Nor could it guess the toughness of the fiber of the flesh, the instantaneousness of the cell explosions of the muscles, the fineness of the nerves that wired every part of him into a splendid
fighting mechanism. All the audience saw was a brown-skinned boy of eighteen with what seemed the body of a boy. With Danny it was different. Danny was a man of twenty-four, and his body was a man’s body. The contrast was still more striking as they stood together in the center of the ring receiving the referee’s last instructions.

Rivera noticed Roberts sitting directly behind the newspaper men. He was drunker than usual, and his speech was correspondingly slower.

“Take it easy, Rivera,” Roberts drawled.

“He can’t kill you, remember that. He’ll rush you at the go-off, but don’t get rattled. You just and stall, and clinch. He can’t hurt cover up, much. Just make believe to yourself that he’s choppin’ out on you at the trainin’ quarters.”

Rivera made no sign that he had heard.

“Sullen little devil,” Roberts muttered to the man next to him. “He always was that way.”

But Rivera forgot to look his usual hatred. A vision of countless rifles blinded his eyes. Every face in the audience, far as he could see, to the high dollar-seats, was transformed into a rifle. And he saw the long Mexican border arid and sun-washed and aching, and along it he saw the ragged bands that delayed only for the guns.

Back in his corner he waited, standing up. His seconds had crawled out through the ropes, taking the canvas stool with them. Diagonally across the squared ring, Danny faced him. The gong struck, and the battle was on. The audience howled its delight. Never had it seen a battle open more convincingly. The papers were right. It was a grudge fight. Three-quarters of the distance Danny covered in the rush to get together, his intention to eat up the Mexican lad plainly advertised. He assailed with not one blow, nor two, nor a dozen. He was a gyroscope of blows, a whirlwind of destruction. Rivera was nowhere. He was overwhelmed, buried beneath avalanches of punches delivered from every angle and position by a past master in the art. He was overborne, swept back against the ropes, separated by the referee, and swept back against the ropes again.

It was not a fight. It was a slaughter, a massacre. Any audience, save a prize fighting one, would have exhausted its emotions in that first minute. Danny was certainly showing what he could do—a splendid exhibition. Such was the certainty of the audience, as well as its excitement and favoritism, that it failed to take notice that the Mexican still stayed on his feet. It forgot Rivera. It rarely saw him, so closely was he enveloped in Danny’s man-eating
attack. A minute of this went by, and two minutes. Then, in a separation, it caught a clear glimpse of the Mexican. His lip was cut, his nose was bleeding. As he turned and staggered into a clinch, the welts of oozing blood, from his contacts with the ropes, showed in red bars across his back. But what the audience did not notice was that his chest was not heaving and that his eyes were coldly burning as ever. Too many aspiring champions, in the cruel welter of the training camps, had practiced this man-eating attack on him. He had learned to live through for a compensation of from half a dollar a go up to fifteen dollars a week—a hard school, and he was schooled hard.

Then happened the amazing thing. The whirling, blurring mix-up ceased suddenly. Rivera stood alone. Danny, the redoubtable Danny, lay on his back. His body quivered as consciousness strove to return to it. He had not staggered and sunk down, nor had he gone over in a long slumping fall. The right hook of Rivera had dropped him in midair with the abruptness of death. The referee shoved Rivera back with one hand, and stood over the fallen gladiator counting the seconds. It is the custom of prize-fighting audiences to cheer a clean knock-down blow. But this audience did not cheer. The thing had been too unexpected. It watched the toll of the seconds in tense silence, and through this silence the voice of Roberts rose exultantly:

“I told you he was a two-handed fighter!”

By the fifth second, Danny was rolling over on his face, and when seven was counted, he rested on one knee, ready to rise after the count of nine and before the count of ten. If his knee still touched the floor at “ten,” he was considered “down,” and also “out.” The instant his knee left the floor, he was considered “up,” and in that instant it was Rivera’s right to try and put him down again. Rivera took no chances. The moment that knee left the floor he would strike again. He circled around, but the referee circled in between, and Rivera knew that the seconds he counted were very slow. All Gringos were against him, even the referee.

At “nine” the referee gave Rivera a sharp thrust back. It was unfair, but it enabled Danny to rise, the smile back on his lips. Doubled partly over, with arms wrapped about face and abdomen, he cleverly stumbled into a clinch. By all the rules of the game the referee should have broken it, but he did not, and Danny clung on like a surf-battered barnacle and moment by moment recuperated. The last minute of the round was going fast. If he could live to the end, he would have a full minute in his corner to revive. And live to the end he did, smiling through all desperateness and extremity.

“The smile that won’t come off!” somebody yelled, and the audience laughed loudly in its relief.
“The kick that Greaser's got is something God-awful,” Danny gasped in his corner to his adviser while his handlers worked frantically over him.

The second and third rounds were tame. Danny, a tricky and consummate ring general, stalled and blocked and held on, devoting himself to recovering from that dazing first-round blow. In the fourth round he was himself again. Jarred and shaken, nevertheless his good condition had enabled him to regain his vigor. But he tried no man-eating tactics. The Mexican had proved a tartar. Instead, he brought to bear his best fighting powers. In tricks and skill and experience he was the master, and though he could land nothing vital, he proceeded scientifically to chop and wear down his opponent. He landed three blows to Rivera's one, but they were punishing blows only, and not deadly. It was the sum of many of them that constituted deadliness. He was respectful of this two-handed duel with the amazing short-arm kicks in both his fists.

In defense, Rivera developed a disconcerting straight-left. Again and again, attack after attack he straight-lefted away from him with accumulated damage to Danny's mouth and nose. But Danny was protean. That was why he was the coming champion. He could change from style to style of fighting at will. He now devoted himself to infighting. In this he was particularly wicked, and it enabled him to avoid the other's straight-left. Here he set the house wild repeatedly, capping it with a marvelous lockbreak and lift of an inside upper-cut that raised the Mexican in the air and dropped him to the mat. Rivera rested on one knee, making the most of the count, and in the soul of him he knew the referee was counting short seconds on him.

Again, in the seventh, Danny achieved the diabolical inside uppercut. He succeeded only in staggering Rivera, but, in the ensuing moment of defenseless helplessness, he smashed him with another blow through the ropes. Rivera's body bounced on the heads of the newspaper men below, and they boosted him back to the edge of the platform outside the ropes. Here he rested on one knee, while the referee raced off the seconds. Inside the ropes, through which he must duck to enter the ring, Danny waited for him. Nor did the referee intervene or thrust Danny back.

The house was beside itself with delight.

“Kill'm, Danny, kill'm!” was the cry.

Scores of voices took it up until it was like a war-chant of wolves.

Danny did his best, but Rivera, at the count of eight, instead of nine,
came unexpectedly through the ropes and safely into a clinch. Now the referee worked, tearing him away so that he could be hit, giving Danny every advantage that an unfair referee can give.

But Rivera lived, and the daze cleared from his brain. It was all of a piece. They were the hated Gringos and they were all unfair. And in the worst of it visions continued to flash and sparkle in his brain—long lines of railroad track that simmered across the desert; rurales and American constables, prisons and calabozes; tramps at water tanks—all the squalid and painful panorama of his odyssey after Rio Blanca and the strike. And, resplendent and glorious, he saw the great, red Revolution sweeping across his land. The guns were there before him. Every hated face was a gun. It was for the guns he fought. He was the guns. He was the Revolution. He fought for all Mexico.

The audience began to grow incensed with Rivera. Why didn’t he take the licking that was appointed him? Of course he was going to be licked, but why should he be so obstinate about it? Very few were interested in him, and they were the certain, definite percentage of a gambling crowd that plays long shots. Believing Danny to be the winner, nevertheless they had put their money on the Mexican at four to ten and one to three. More than a trifle was up on the point of how many rounds Rivera could last. Wild money had appeared at the ringside proclaiming that he could not last seven rounds, or even six. The winners of this, now that their cash risk was happily settled, had joined in cheering on the favorite.

Rivera refused to be licked. Through the eighth round his opponent strove vainly to repeat the uppercut. In the ninth, Rivera stunned the house again. In the midst of a clinch he broke the lock with a quick, lithe movement, and in the narrow space between their bodies his right lifted from the waist. Danny went to the floor and took the safety of the count. The crowd was appalled. He was being bested at his own game. His famous right-uppercut had been worked back on him. Rivera made no attempt to catch him as he arose at “nine.” The referee was openly blocking that play, though he stood clear when the situation was reversed and it was Rivera who desired to rise.

Twice in the tenth, Rivera put through the right-uppercut, lifted from waist to opponent’s chin. Danny grew desperate. The smile never left his face, but he went back to his man-eating rushes. Whirlwind as he would, he could not damage Rivera, while Rivera through the blur and whirl, dropped him to the mat three times in succession. Danny did not recuperate so quickly now, and by the eleventh round he was in a serious way. But from then till the fourteenth he put up the gamest exhibition of his career. He stalled and blocked, fought parsimoniously, and strove to gather strength. Also, he fought as foully as a successful fighter knows how. Every trick and device he
employed, butting in the clinches with the seeming of accident, pinioning Rivera’s glove between arm and body, heeling his glove on Rivera’s mouth to clog his breathing. Often, in the clinches, through his cut and smiling lips he snarled insults unspeakable and vile in Rivera’s ear. Everybody, from the referee to the house, was with Danny and was helping Danny. And they knew what he had in mind. Bested by this surprise-box of an unknown, he was pinning all on a single punch. He offered himself for punishment, fished, and feinted, and drew, for that one opening that would enable him to whip a blow through with all his strength and turn the tide. As another and greater fighter had done before him, he might do a right and left, to solar plexus and across the jaw. He could do it, for he was noted for the strength of punch that remained in his arms as long as he could keep his feet.

Rivera’s seconds were not half-caring for him in the intervals between rounds. Their towels made a showing, but drove little air into his panting lungs. Spider Hagerty talked advice to him, but Rivera knew it was wrong advice. Everybody was against him. He was surrounded by treachery. In the fourteenth round he put Danny down again, and himself stood resting, hands dropped at side, while the referee counted. In the other corner Rivera had been noting suspicious whisperings. He saw Michael Kelly make his way to Roberts and bend and whisper. Rivera’s ears were a cat’s, desert-trained, and he caught snatches of what was said. He wanted to hear more, and when his opponent arose he maneuvered the fight into a clinch over against the ropes.

“Got to,” he could hear Michael, while Roberts nodded. “Danny’s got to win—I stand to lose a mint—I’ve got a ton of money covered—my own. If he lasts the fifteenth I’m bust—the boy’ll mind you. Put something across.”

And thereafter Rivera saw no more visions. They were trying to job him. Once again he dropped Danny and stood resting, his hands at his slide. Roberts stood up.

“That settled him,” he said.

“Go to your corner.”

He spoke with authority, as he had often spoken to Rivera at the training quarters. But Rivera looked hatred at him and waited for Danny to rise. Back in his corner in the minute interval, Kelly, the promoter, came and talked to Rivera.

“Throw it, damn you,” he rasped in, a harsh low voice. “You gotta lay down, Rivera. Stick with me and I’ll make your future. I’ll let you lick Danny next time. But here’s where you lay down.”
Rivera showed with his eyes that he heard, but he made neither sign of assent nor dissent.

“Why don’t you speak?” Kelly demanded angrily.

“You lose, anyway,” Spider Hagerty supplemented. “The referee’ll take it away from you. Listen to Kelly, and lay down.”

“Lay down, kid,” Kelly pleaded, “and I’ll help you to the championship.”

Rivera did not answer.

“I will, so help me, kid.”

At the strike of the gong Rivera sensed something impending. The house did not. Whatever it was it was there inside the ring with him and very close. Danny’s earlier surety seemed returned to him. The confidence of his advance frightened Rivera. Some trick was about to be worked. Danny rushed, but Rivera refused the encounter. He side-stepped away into safety. What the other wanted was a clinch. It was in some way necessary to the trick. Rivera backed and circled away, yet he knew, sooner or later, the clinch and the trick would come. Desperately he resolved to draw it. He made as if to effect the clinch with Danny’s next rush. Instead, at the last instant, just as their bodies should have come together, Rivera darted nimbly back. And in the same instant Danny’s corner raised a cry of foul. Rivera had fooled them. The referee paused irresolutely. The decision that trembled on his lips was never uttered, for a shrill, boy’s voice from the gallery piped, “Raw work!”

Danny cursed Rivera openly, and forced him, while Rivera danced away. Also, Rivera made up his mind to strike no more blows at the body. In this he threw away half his chance of winning, but he knew if he was to win at all it was with the outfighting that remained to him. Given the least opportunity, they would lie a foul on him. Danny threw all caution to the winds. For two rounds he tore after and into the boy who dared not meet him at close quarters. Rivera was struck again and again; he took blows by the dozens to avoid the perilous clinch. During this supreme final rally of Danny’s the audience rose to its feet and went mad. It did not understand. All it could see was that its favorite was winning, after all.

“Why don’t you fight?” it demanded wrathfully of Rivera.

“You’re yellow! You’re yellow!” “Open up, you cur! Open up!” “Kill’m, Danny! Kill ‘m!” “You sure got ‘m! Kill ‘m!”

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In all the house, bar none, Rivera was the only cold man. By temperament and blood he was the hottest-passioned there; but he had gone through such vastly greater heats that this collective passion of ten thousand throats, rising surge on surge, was to his brain no more than the velvet cool of a summer twilight.

Into the seventeenth round Danny carried his rally. Rivera, under a heavy blow, drooped and sagged. His hands dropped helplessly as he reeled backward. Danny thought it was his chance. The boy was at, his mercy. Thus Rivera, feigning, caught him off his guard, lashing out a clean drive to the mouth. Danny went down. When he arose, Rivera felled him with a down-chop of the right on neck and jaw. Three times he repeated this. It was impossible for any referee to call these blows foul.

“Oh, Bill! Bill!” Kelly pleaded to the referee.

“I can’t,” that official lamented back. “He won’t give me a chance.”

Danny, battered and heroic, still kept coming up. Kelly and others near to the ring began to cry out to the police to stop it, though Danny’s corner refused to throw in the towel. Rivera saw the fat police captain starting awkwardly to climb through the ropes, and was not sure what it meant. There were so many ways of cheating in this game of the Gringos. Danny, on his feet, tottered groggily and helplessly before him. The referee and the captain were both reaching for Rivera when he struck the last blow. There was no need to stop the fight, for Danny did not rise.

“Count!” Rivera cried hoarsely to the referee.

And when the count was finished, Danny’s seconds gathered him up and carried him to his corner.

“Who wins?” Rivera demanded.

Reluctantly, the referee caught his gloved hand and held it aloft.

There were no congratulations for Rivera. He walked to his corner unattended, where his seconds had not yet placed his stool. He leaned backward on the ropes and looked his hatred at them, swept it on and about him till the whole ten thousand Gringos were included. His knees trembled under him, and he was sobbing from exhaustion. Before his eyes the hated faces swayed back and forth in the giddiness of nausea. Then he remembered they were the guns. The guns were his. The Revolution could go on.
IN A FAR COUNTRY

When a man journeys into a far country, he must be prepared to forget many of the things he has learned, and to acquire such customs as are inherent with existence in the new land; he must abandon the old ideals and the old gods, and oftentimes he must reverse the very codes by which his conduct has hitherto been shaped. To those who have the protean faculty of adaptability, the novelty of such change may even be a source of pleasure; but to those who happen to be hardened to the ruts in which they were created, the pressure of the altered environment is unbearable, and they chafe in body and in spirit under the new restrictions which they do not understand. This chafing is bound to act and react, producing divers evils and leading to various misfortunes. It were better for the man who cannot fit himself to the new groove to return to his own country; if he delay too long, he will surely die.

The man who turns his back upon the comforts of an elder civilization, to face the savage youth, the primordial simplicity of the North, may estimate success at an inverse ratio to the quantity and quality of his hopelessly fixed habits. He will soon discover, if he be a fit candidate, that the material habits are the less important. The exchange of such things as a dainty menu for rough fare, of the stiff leather shoe for the soft, shapeless moccasin, of the feather bed for a couch in the snow, is after all a very easy matter. But his pinch will come in learning properly to shape his mind’s attitude toward all things, and especially toward his fellow man. For the courtesies of ordinary life, he must substitute unselfishness, forbearance, and tolerance. Thus, and thus only, can he gain that pearl of great price—true comradeship. He must not say ‘thank you’; he must mean it without opening his mouth, and prove it by responding in kind. In short, he must substitute the deed for the word, the spirit for the letter.

When the world rang with the tale of Arctic gold, and the lure of the North gripped the heartstrings of men, Carter Weatherbee threw up his snug clerkship, turned the half of his savings over to his wife, and with the remainder bought an outfit. There was no romance in his nature—the bondage of commerce had crushed all that; he was simply tired of the ceaseless grind, and wished to risk great hazards in view of corresponding returns. Like many another fool, disdaining the old trails used by the Northland pioneers for a score of years, he hurried to Edmonton in the spring of the year; and there, unluckily for his soul’s welfare, he allied himself with a party of men.
There was nothing unusual about this party, except its plans. Even its goal, like that of all the other parties, was the Klondike. But the route it had mapped out to attain that goal took away the breath of the hardiest native, born and bred to the vicissitudes of the Northwest. Even Jacques Baptiste, born of a Chippewa woman and a renegade voyageur (having raised his first whimpers in a deerskin lodge north of the sixty-fifth parallel, and had the same hushed by blissful sucks of raw tallow), was surprised. Though he sold his services to them and agreed to travel even to the never-opening ice, he shook his head ominously whenever his advice was asked.

Percy Cuthfert’s evil star must have been in the ascendant, for he, too, joined this company of argonauts. He was an ordinary man, with a bank account as deep as his culture, which is saying a good deal. He had no reason to embark on such a venture—no reason in the world save that he suffered from an abnormal development of sentimentality. He mistook this for the true spirit of romance and adventure. Many another man has done the like, and made as fatal a mistake.

The first break-up of spring found the party following the ice-run of Elk River. It was an imposing fleet, for the outfit was large, and they were accompanied by a disreputable contingent of half-breed voyageurs with their women and children. Day in and day out, they labored with the bateaux and canoes, fought mosquitoes and other kindred pests, or sweated and swore at the portages. Severe toil like this lays a man naked to the very roots of his soul, and ere Lake Athabasca was lost in the south, each member of the party had hoisted his true colors.

The two shirked and chronic grumblers were Carter Weatherbee and Percy Cuthfert. The whole party complained less of its aches and pains than did either of them. Not once did they volunteer for the thousand and one petty duties of the camp. A bucket of water to be brought, an extra armful of wood to be chopped, the dishes to be washed and wiped, a search to be made through the outfit for some suddenly indispensable article—and these two effete scions of civilization discovered sprains or blisters requiring instant attention.

They were the first to turn in at night, with score of tasks yet undone; the last to turn out in the morning, when the start should be in readiness before the breakfast was begun.

They were the first to fall to at mealtime, the last to have a hand in the cooking; the first to dive for a slim delicacy, the last to discover they had added to their own another man’s share. If they toiled at the oars, they slyly cut the water at each stroke and allowed the boat’s momentum to float up
the blade. They thought nobody noticed; but their comrades swore under
their breaths and grew to hate them, while Jacques Baptiste sneered openly
and damned them from morning till night. But Jacques Baptiste was no
gentleman.

At the Great Slave, Hudson Bay dogs were purchased, and the fleet sank to
the guards with its added burden of dried fish and pemican. Then canoe and
bateau answered to the swift current of the Mackenzie, and they plunged into
the Great Barren Ground. Every likely-looking ‘feeder’ was prospected, but
the elusive ‘pay-dirt’ danced ever to the north. At the Great Bear, overcome by
the common dread of the Unknown Lands, their voyageurs began to desert,
and Fort of Good Hope saw the last and bravest bending to the towlines as
they bucked the current down which they had so treacherously glided.

Jacques Baptiste alone remained. Had he not sworn to travel even to the
never-opening ice? The lying charts, compiled in main from hearsay, were
now constantly consulted.

And they felt the need of hurry, for the sun had already passed its
northern solstice and was leading the winter south again. Skirting the shores
of the bay, where the Mackenzie disembogues into the Arctic Ocean, they
entered the mouth of the Little Peel River. Then began the arduous up-stream
toil, and the two Incapables fared worse than ever. Towline and pole, paddle
and tumpline, rapids and portages—such tortures served to give the one a
deep disgust for great hazards, and printed for the other a fiery text on the
true romance of adventure. One day they waxed mutinous, and being vilely
cursed by Jacques Baptiste, turned, as worms sometimes will. But the half-
breed thrashed the twain, and sent them, bruised and bleeding, about their
work. It was the first time either had been manhandled.

Abandoning their river craft at the headwaters of the Little Peel, they
consumed the rest of the summer in the great portage over the Mackenzie
watershed to the West Rat. This little stream fed the Porcupine, which in turn
joined the Yukon where that mighty highway of the North countermarches on
the Arctic Circle.

But they had lost in the race with winter, and one day they tied their rafts
to the thick eddy-ice and hurried their goods ashore. That night the river
jammed and broke several times; the following morning it had fallen asleep
for good. ‘We can’t be more’n four hundred miles from the Yukon,’ concluded
Sloper, multiplying his thumb nails by the scale of the map. The council, in
which the two Incapables had whined to excellent disadvantage, was drawing
to a close.
‘Hudson Bay Post, long time ago. No use um now.’ Jacques Baptiste’s father had made the trip for the Fur Company in the old days, incidentally marking the trail with a couple of frozen toes.

Sufferin’ cracky!’ cried another of the party. ‘No whites?’ ‘Nary white,’ Sloper sententiously affirmed; ‘but it’s only five hundred more up the Yukon to Dawson. Call it a rough thousand from here.’ Weatherbee and Cuthfert groaned in chorus.

‘How long’ll that take, Baptiste?’ The half-breed figured for a moment. ‘Workum like hell, no man play out, ten—twenty—forty—fifty days. Um babies come’ (designating the Incapables), ‘no can tell. Mebbe when hell freeze over; mebbe not then.’ The manufacture of snowshoes and moccasins ceased. Somebody called the name of an absent member, who came out of an ancient cabin at the edge of the campfire and joined them. The cabin was one of the many mysteries which lurk in the vast recesses of the North. Built when and by whom, no man could tell.

Two graves in the open, piled high with stones, perhaps contained the secret of those early wanderers. But whose hand had piled the stones? The moment had come. Jacques Baptiste paused in the fitting of a harness and pinned the struggling dog in the snow. The cook made mute protest for delay, threw a handful of bacon into a noisy pot of beans, then came to attention. Sloper rose to his feet. His body was a ludicrous contrast to the healthy physiques of the Incapables. Yellow and weak, fleeing from a South American fever-hole, he had not broken his flight across the zones, and was still able to toil with men. His weight was probably ninety pounds, with the heavy hunting knife thrown in, and his grizzled hair told of a prime which had ceased to be. The fresh young muscles of either Weatherbee or Cuthfert were equal to ten times the endeavor of his; yet he could walk them into the earth in a day’s journey. And all this day he had whipped his stronger comrades into venturing a thousand miles of the stiffest hardship man can conceive. He was the incarnation of the unrest of his race, and the old Teutonic stubbornness, dashed with the quick grasp and action of the Yankee, held the flesh in the bondage of the spirit.

‘All those in favor of going on with the dogs as soon as the ice sets, say ay.’ ‘Ay!’ rang out eight voices—voices destined to string a trail of oaths along many a hundred miles of pain.

‘Contrary minded?’ ‘No!’ For the first time the Incapables were united without some compromise of personal interests.

‘And what are you going to do about it?’ Weatherbee added belligerently.
‘Majority rule! Majority rule!’ clamored the rest of the party.

‘I know the expedition is liable to fall through if you don’t come,’ Sloper replied sweetly; ‘but I guess, if we try real hard, we can manage to do without you.

What do you say, boys?’ The sentiment was cheered to the echo.

‘But I say, you know,’ Cuthfert ventured apprehensively; ‘what’s a chap like me to do?’

‘Ain’t you coming with us.’ ‘No—o.’ ‘Then do as you damn well please. We won’t have nothing to say.’ ‘Kind o’ calkilate yuh might settle it with that canoodlin’ pardner of yourn,’ suggested a heavy-going Westerner from the Dakotas, at the same time pointing out Weatherbee. ‘He’ll be shore to ask yuh what yur a-goin’ to do when it comes to cookin’ an’ gatherin’ the wood.’ ‘Then we’ll consider it all arranged,’ concluded Sloper.

‘We’ll pull out tomorrow, if we camp within five miles—just to get everything in running order and remember if we’ve forgotten anything.’ The sleds groaned by on their steel-shod runners, and the dogs strained low in the harnesses in which they were born to die.

Jacques Baptiste paused by the side of Sloper to get a last glimpse of the cabin. The smoke curled up pathetically from the Yukon stovepipe. The two Incapables were watching them from the doorway.

Sloper laid his hand on the other’s shoulder.

‘Jacques Baptiste, did you ever hear of the Kilkenny cats?’ The half-breed shook his head.

‘Well, my friend and good comrade, the Kilkenny cats fought till neither hide, nor hair, nor yowl, was left. You understand?—till nothing was left. Very good.

Now, these two men don’t like work. They’ll be all alone in that cabin all winter—a mighty long, dark winter. Kilkenny cats—well?’ The Frenchman in Baptiste shrugged his shoulders, but the Indian in him was silent. Nevertheless, it was an eloquent shrug, pregnant with prophecy. Things prospered in the little cabin at first. The rough badinage of their comrades had made Weatherbee and Cuthfert conscious of the mutual responsibility which had devolved upon them; besides, there was not so much work after all for two healthy men. And the removal of the cruel whiphand, or in other
words the bulldozing half-breed, had brought with it a joyous reaction. At first, each strove to outdo the other, and they performed petty tasks with an unction which would have opened the eyes of their comrades who were now wearing out bodies and souls on the Long Trail.

All care was banished. The forest, which shouldered in upon them from three sides, was an inexhaustible woodyard. A few yards from their door slept the Porcupine, and a hole through its winter robe formed a bubbling spring of water, crystal clear and painfully cold. But they soon grew to find fault with even that. The hole would persist in freezing up, and thus gave them many a miserable hour of ice-chopping. The unknown builders of the cabin had extended the sidelogs so as to support a cache at the rear. In this was stored the bulk of the party’s provisions.

Food there was, without stint, for three times the men who were fated to live upon it. But the most of it was the kind which built up brawn and sinew, but did not tickle the palate.

True, there was sugar in plenty for two ordinary men; but these two were little else than children. They early discovered the virtues of hot water judiciously saturated with sugar, and they prodigally swam their flapjacks and soaked their crusts in the rich, white syrup.

Then coffee and tea, and especially the dried fruits, made disastrous inroads upon it. The first words they had were over the sugar question. And it is a really serious thing when two men, wholly dependent upon each other for company, begin to quarrel.

Weatherbee loved to discourse blatantly on politics, while Cuthfert, who had been prone to clip his coupons and let the commonwealth jog on as best it might, either ignored the subject or delivered himself of startling epigrams. But the clerk was too obtuse to appreciate the clever shaping of thought, and this waste of ammunition irritated Cuthfert.

He had been used to blinding people by his brilliancy, and it worked him quite a hardship, this loss of an audience. He felt personally aggrieved and unconsciously held his muttonhead companion responsible for it.

Save existence, they had nothing in common—came in touch on no single point.

Weatherbee was a clerk who had known naught but clerking all his life; Cuthfert was a master of arts, a dabbler in oils, and had written not a little. The one was a lower-class man who considered himself a gentleman, and
the other was a gentleman who knew himself to be such. From this it may be remarked that a man can be a gentleman without possessing the first instinct of true comradeship. The clerk was as sensuous as the other was aesthetic, and his love adventures, told at great length and chiefly coined from his imagination, affected the supersensitive master of arts in the same way as so many whiffs of sewer gas. He deemed the clerk a filthy, uncultured brute, whose place was in the muck with the swine, and told him so; and he was reciprocally informed that he was a milk-and-water sissy and a cad. Weatherbee could not have defined ‘cad’ for his life; but it satisfied its purpose, which after all seems the main point in life.

Weatherbee flatted every third note and sang such songs as ‘The Boston Burglar’ and ‘the Handsome Cabin Boy,’ for hours at a time, while Cuthfert wept with rage, till he could stand it no longer and fled into the outer cold. But there was no escape. The intense frost could not be endured for long at a time, and the little cabin crowded them—beds, stove, table, and all—into a space of ten by twelve. The very presence of either became a personal affront to the other; and they lapsed into sullen silences which increased in length and strength as the days went by. Occasionally, the flash of an eye or the curl of a lip got the better of them, though they strove to wholly ignore each other during these mute periods.

And a great wonder sprang up in the breast of each, as to how God had ever come to create the other.

With little to do, time became an intolerable burden to them. This naturally made them still lazier. They sank into a physical lethargy which there was no escaping, and which made them rebel at the performance of the smallest chore. One morning when it was his turn to cook the common breakfast, Weatherbee rolled out of his blankets, and to the snoring of his companion, lighted first the slush lamp and then the fire. The kettles were frozen hard, and there was no water in the cabin with which to wash. But he did not mind that. Waiting for it to thaw, he sliced the bacon and plunged into the hateful task of bread-making. Cuthfert had been slyly watching through his half-closed lids.

Consequently there was a scene, in which they fervently blessed each other, and agreed, henceforth, that each do his own cooking. A week later, Cuthfert neglected his morning ablutions, but none the less complacently ate the meal which he had cooked. Weatherbee grinned. After that the foolish custom of washing passed out of their lives.

As the sugar-pile and other little luxuries dwindled, they began to be afraid they were not getting their proper shares, and in order that they might not be robbed, they fell to gorging themselves. The luxuries suffered in this
gluttonous contest, as did also the men.

In the absence of fresh vegetables and exercise, their blood became impoverished, and a loathsome, purplish rash crept over their bodies. Yet they refused to heed the warning.

Next, their muscles and joints began to swell, the flesh turning black, while their mouths, gums, and lips took on the color of rich cream. Instead of being drawn together by their misery, each gloated over the other’s symptoms as the scurvy took its course.

They lost all regard for personal appearance, and for that matter, common decency. The cabin became a pigpen, and never once were the beds made or fresh pine boughs laid underneath. Yet they could not keep to their blankets, as they would have wished; for the frost was inexorable, and the fire box consumed much fuel. The hair of their heads and faces grew long and shaggy, while their garments would have disgusted a ragpicker. But they did not care. They were sick, and there was no one to see; besides, it was very painful to move about.

To all this was added a new trouble—the Fear of the North. This Fear was the joint child of the Great Cold and the Great Silence, and was born in the darkness of December, when the sun dipped below the horizon for good. It affected them according to their natures.

Weatherbee fell prey to the grosser superstitions, and did his best to resurrect the spirits which slept in the forgotten graves. It was a fascinating thing, and in his dreams they came to him from out of the cold, and snuggled into his blankets, and told him of their toils and troubles ere they died. He shrank away from the clammy contact as they drew closer and twined their frozen limbs about him, and when they whispered in his ear of things to come, the cabin rang with his frightened shrieks. Cuthfert did not understand—for they no longer spoke—and when thus awakened he invariably grabbed for his revolver. Then he would sit up in bed, shivering nervously, with the weapon trained on the unconscious dreamer. Cuthfert deemed the man going mad, and so came to fear for his life.

His own malady assumed a less concrete form. The mysterious artisan who had laid the cabin, log by log, had pegged a wind-vane to the ridgepole. Cuthfert noticed it always pointed south, and one day, irritated by its steadfastness of purpose, he turned it toward the east. He watched eagerly, but never a breath came by to disturb it. Then he turned the vane to the north, swearing never again to touch it till the wind did blow. But the air frightened him with its unearthly calm, and he often rose in the middle of the
night to see if the vane had veered—ten degrees would have satisfied him. But no, it poised above him as unchangeable as fate.

His imagination ran riot, till it became to him a fetish. Sometimes he followed the path it pointed across the dismal dominions, and allowed his soul to become saturated with the Fear. He dwelt upon the unseen and the unknown till the burden of eternity appeared to be crushing him. Everything in the Northland had that crushing effect—the absence of life and motion; the darkness; the infinite peace of the brooding land; the ghastly silence, which made the echo of each heartbeat a sacrilege; the solemn forest which seemed to guard an awful, inexpressible something, which neither word nor thought could compass.

The world he had so recently left, with its busy nations and great enterprises, seemed very far away. Recollections occasionally obtruded—recollections of marts and galleries and crowded thoroughfares, of evening dress and social functions, of good men and dear women he had known—but they were dim memories of a life he had lived long centuries ago, on some other planet. This phantasm was the Reality. Standing beneath the wind-vane, his eyes fixed on the polar skies, he could not bring himself to realize that the Southland really existed, that at that very moment it was a-roar with life and action.

There was no Southland, no men being born of women, no giving and taking in marriage.

Beyond his bleak skyline there stretched vast solitudes, and beyond these still vaster solitudes.

There were no lands of sunshine, heavy with the perfume of flowers. Such things were only old dreams of paradise. The sunlands of the West and the spicelands of the East, the smiling Arcadias and blissful Islands of the Blest—ha! ha! His laughter split the void and shocked him with its unwonted sound. There was no sun.

This was the Universe, dead and cold and dark, and he its only citizen. Weatherbee? At such moments Weatherbee did not count. He was a Caliban, a monstrous phantom, fettered to him for untold ages, the penalty of some forgotten crime.

He lived with Death among the dead, emasculated by the sense of his own insignificance, crushed by the passive mastery of the slumbering ages. The magnitude of all things appalled him. Everything partook of the superlative save himself—the perfect cessation of wind and motion, the immensity of
the snow-covered wildness, the height of the sky and the depth of the silence. That wind-vane—if it would only move. If a thunderbolt would fall, or the forest flare up in flame.

The rolling up of the heavens as a scroll, the crash of Doom—anything, anything! But no, nothing moved; the Silence crowded in, and the Fear of the North laid icy fingers on his heart.

Once, like another Crusoe, by the edge of the river he came upon a track—the faint tracery of a snowshoe rabbit on the delicate snow-crust. It was a revelation.

There was life in the Northland. He would follow it, look upon it, gloat over it.

He forgot his swollen muscles, plunging through the deep snow in an ecstasy of anticipation. The forest swallowed him up, and the brief midday twilight vanished; but he pursued his quest till exhausted nature asserted itself and laid him helpless in the snow.

There he groaned and cursed his folly, and knew the track to be the fancy of his brain; and late that night he dragged himself into the cabin on hands and knees, his cheeks frozen and a strange numbness about his feet. Weatherbee grinned malevolently, but made no offer to help him. He thrust needles into his toes and thawed them out by the stove. A week later mortification set in.

But the clerk had his own troubles. The dead men came out of their graves more frequently now, and rarely left him, waking or sleeping. He grew to wait and dread their coming, never passing the twin cairns without a shudder. One night they came to him in his sleep and led him forth to an appointed task. Frightened into inarticulate horror, he awoke between the heaps of stones and fled wildly to the cabin. But he had lain there for some time, for his feet and cheeks were also frozen.

Sometimes he became frantic at their insistent presence, and danced about the cabin, cutting the empty air with an axe, and smashing everything within reach.

During these ghostly encounters, Cuthfert huddled into his blankets and followed the madman about with a cocked revolver, ready to shoot him if he came too near.

But, recovering from one of these spells, the clerk noticed the weapon
trained upon him.

His suspicions were aroused, and thenceforth he, too, lived in fear of his life. They watched each other closely after that, and faced about in startled fright whenever either passed behind the other’s back. The apprehensiveness became a mania which controlled them even in their sleep. Through mutual fear they tacitly let the slush-lamp burn all night, and saw to a plentiful supply of bacon-grease before retiring. The slightest movement on the part of one was sufficient to arouse the other, and many a still watch their gazes countered as they shook beneath their blankets with fingers on the trigger-guards.

What with the Fear of the North, the mental strain, and the ravages of the disease, they lost all semblance of humanity, taking on the appearance of wild beasts, hunted and desperate. Their cheeks and noses, as an aftermath of the freezing, had turned black.

Their frozen toes had begun to drop away at the first and second joints. Every movement brought pain, but the fire box was insatiable, wringing a ransom of torture from their miserable bodies. Day in, day out, it demanded its food—a veritable pound of flesh—and they dragged themselves into the forest to chop wood on their knees. Once, crawling thus in search of dry sticks, unknown to each other they entered a thicket from opposite sides.

Suddenly, without warning, two peering death’s-heads confronted each other. Suffering had so transformed them that recognition was impossible. They sprang to their feet, shrieking with terror, and dashed away on their mangled stumps; and falling at the cabin’s door, they clawed and scratched like demons till they discovered their mistake.

Occasionally they lapsed normal, and during one of these sane intervals, the chief bone of contention, the sugar, had been divided equally between them. They guarded their separate sacks, stored up in the cache, with jealous eyes; for there were but a few cupfuls left, and they were totally devoid of faith in each other.

But one day Cuthfert made a mistake. Hardly able to move, sick with pain, with his head swimming and eyes blinded, he crept into the cache, sugar canister in hand, and mistook Weatherbee’s sack for his own.

January had been born but a few days when this occurred. The sun had some time since passed its lowest southern declination, and at meridian now threw flaunting streaks of yellow light upon the northern sky. On the day following his mistake with the sugar-bag, Cuthfert found himself feeling better, both in body and in spirit. As noontime drew near and the
day brightened, he dragged himself outside to feast on the evanescent glow, which was to him an earnest of the sun's future intentions. Weatherbee was also feeling somewhat better, and crawled out beside him. They propped themselves in the snow beneath the moveless wind-vane, and waited.

The stillness of death was about them. In other climes, when nature falls into such moods, there is a subdued air of expectancy, a waiting for some small voice to take up the broken strain. Not so in the North. The two men had lived seeming eons in this ghostly peace.

They could remember no song of the past; they could conjure no song of the future. This unearthly calm had always been—the tranquil silence of eternity.

Their eyes were fixed upon the north. Unseen, behind their backs, behind the towering mountains to the south, the sun swept toward the zenith of another sky than theirs. Sole spectators of the mighty canvas, they watched the false dawn slowly grow. A faint flame began to glow and smoulder. It deepened in intensity, ringing the changes of reddish-yellow, purple, and saffron. So bright did it become that Cuthfert thought the sun must surely be behind it—a miracle, the sun rising in the north! Suddenly, without warning and without fading, the canvas was swept clean. There was no color in the sky. The light had gone out of the day.

They caught their breaths in half-sobs. But lo! the air was aglint with particles of scintillating frost, and there, to the north, the wind-vane lay in vague outline of the snow.

A shadow! A shadow! It was exactly midday. They jerked their heads hurriedly to the south. A golden rim peeped over the mountain's snowy shoulder, smiled upon them an instant, then dipped from sight again.

There were tears in their eyes as they sought each other. A strange softening came over them. They felt irresistibly drawn toward each other. The sun was coming back again. It would be with them tomorrow, and the next day, and the next.

And it would stay longer every visit, and a time would come when it would ride their heaven day and night, never once dropping below the skyline. There would be no night.

The ice-locked winter would be broken; the winds would blow and the forests answer; the land would bathe in the blessed sunshine, and life renew.
Hand in hand, they would quit this horrid dream and journey back to the Southland. They lurched blindly forward, and their hands met—their poor maimed hands, swollen and distorted beneath their mittens.

But the promise was destined to remain unfulfilled. The Northland is the Northland, and men work out their souls by strange rules, which other men, who have not journeyed into far countries, cannot come to understand.

An hour later, Cuthfert put a pan of bread into the oven, and fell to speculating on what the surgeons could do with his feet when he got back. Home did not seem so very far away now. Weatherbee was rummaging in the cache. Of a sudden, he raised a whirlwind of blasphemy, which in turn ceased with startling abruptness. The other man had robbed his sugar-sack. Still, things might have happened differently, had not the two dead men come out from under the stones and hushed the hot words in his throat. They led him quite gently from the cache, which he forgot to close. That consummation was reached; that something they had whispered to him in his dreams was about to happen. They guided him gently, very gently, to the woodpile, where they put the axe in his hands.

Then they helped him shove open the cabin door, and he felt sure they shut it after him—at least he heard it slam and the latch fall sharply into place. And he knew they were waiting just without, waiting for him to do his task.

‘Carter! I say, Carter!’ Percy Cuthfert was frightened at the look on the clerk’s face, and he made haste to put the table between them.

Carter Weatherbee followed, without haste and without enthusiasm. There was neither pity nor passion in his face, but rather the patient, stolid look of one who has certain work to do and goes about it methodically.

‘I say, what’s the matter?’

The clerk dodged back, cutting off his retreat to the door, but never opening his mouth.

‘I say, Carter, I say; let’s talk. There’s a good chap.’ The master of arts was thinking rapidly, now, shaping a skillful flank movement on the bed where his Smith & Wesson lay. Keeping his eyes on the madman, he rolled backward on the bunk, at the same time clutching the pistol.

‘Carter!’ The powder flashed full in Weatherbee’s face, but he swung his weapon and leaped forward. The axe bit deeply at the base of the spine, and
Percy Cuthfert felt all consciousness of his lower limbs leave him. Then the clerk fell heavily upon him, clutching him by the throat with feeble fingers. The sharp bite of the axe had caused Cuthfert to drop the pistol, and as his lungs panted for release, he fumbled aimlessly for it among the blankets. Then he remembered. He slid a hand up the clerk’s belt to the sheath-knife; and they drew very close to each other in that last clinch.

Percy Cuthfert felt his strength leave him. The lower portion of his body was useless, The inert weight of Weatherbee crushed him—crushed him and pinned him there like a bear under a trap. The cabin became filled with a familiar odor, and he knew the bread to be burning. Yet what did it matter? He would never need it. And there were all of six cupfuls of sugar in the cache—if he had foreseen this he would not have been so saving the last several days. Would the wind-vane ever move? Why not? Had he not seen the sun today? He would go and see. No; it was impossible to move. He had not thought the clerk so heavy a man.

How quickly the cabin cooled! The fire must be out. The cold was forcing in.

It must be below zero already, and the ice creeping up the inside of the door. He could not see it, but his past experience enabled him to gauge its progress by the cabin’s temperature. The lower hinge must be white ere now. Would the tale of this ever reach the world? How would his friends take it? They would read it over their coffee, most likely, and talk it over at the clubs. He could see them very clearly, ‘Poor Old Cuthfert,’ they murmured; ‘not such a bad sort of a chap, after all.’ He smiled at their eulogies, and passed on in search of a Turkish bath. It was the same old crowd upon the streets.

Strange, they did not notice his moosehide moccasins and tattered German socks! He would take a cab. And after the bath a shave would not be bad. No; he would eat first.

Steak, and potatoes, and green things how fresh it all was! And what was that? Squares of honey, streaming liquid amber! But why did they bring so much? Ha! ha! he could never eat it all.

Shine! Why certainly. He put his foot on the box. The bootblack looked curiously up at him, and he remembered his moosehide moccasins and went away hastily.

Hark! The wind-vane must be surely spinning. No; a mere singing in his ears.

That was all—a mere singing. The ice must have passed the latch by now.
More likely the upper hinge was covered. Between the moss-chinked roof-poles, little points of frost began to appear. How slowly they grew! No; not so slowly. There was a new one, and there another. Two—three—four; they were coming too fast to count. There were two growing together. And there, a third had joined them.

Why, there were no more spots. They had run together and formed a sheet.

Well, he would have company. If Gabriel ever broke the silence of the North, they would stand together, hand in hand, before the great White Throne. And God would judge them, God would judge them!

Then Percy Cuthfert closed his eyes and dropped off to sleep.
Stephen Crane (1871-1900)

Stephen Crane is recognized by modern critics as one of the most innovative writers of his generation. His first novel was the 1893 Bowery tale *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, which critics generally consider the first work of American literary Naturalism. He won international acclaim for his 1895 Civil War novel *The Red Badge of Courage*, which he wrote without any battle experience.

Crane died of tuberculosis at the age of 28. At the time of his death, he had become an important figure in American literature. He was nearly forgotten, however, until two decades later when critics revived interest in his life and work. Stylistically, Crane’s writing is characterized by vivid intensity, distinctive dialects, and irony. Common themes involve fear, spiritual crises and social isolation.

Crane wrote his first known story, “Uncle Jake and the Bell Handle”, when he was 14 years old. In the summer of 1888, Crane became his brother Townley’s assistant at a New Jersey shore news bureau, working there every summer until 1892. He briefly attended Syracuse University, but left without taking a degree to launch his career as a writer. Crane moved into his brother Edmund’s house in Lake View, a suburb of Paterson, New Jersey, in the fall of 1891. From here, he made frequent trips into New York City, writing and reporting particularly on its impoverished tenement districts. Crane focused particularly on the Bowery, a small and once prosperous neighborhood in the southern part of Manhattan. After the Civil War, however, Bowery shops and mansions had given way to saloons, dance halls, brothels and flophouses, all of which Crane frequented, later saying he did so for research purposes. He was attracted to the human nature found in the slums, considering it “open and plain, with nothing hidden”. Believing nothing honest and unsentimentalized had been written about the Bowery, Crane became determined to do so himself; this would become the setting of his first novel. On December 7, 1891, Crane’s mother died at the age of 64, and the 20-year-old appointed Edmund as his guardian.

Crane struggled to make a living as a free-lance writer, contributing sketches and feature articles to various New York newspapers. In October 1892, he moved into a rooming house in Manhattan inhabited by a group of medical students. *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*, which is about a girl who “blossoms in a mud-puddle” and becomes a tragic victim of circumstance, was expanded or entirely rewritten during this time. In the winter of 1893, Crane took the manuscript of *Maggie* to Richard Watson Gilder, who rejected it for publication in *The Century Magazine*. Crane decided to publish
it privately, with money he had inherited from his mother. The novel was published in late February or early March 1893 by a small printing shop that usually printed medical books and religious tracts. The typewritten title page for the Library of Congress copyright application read simply: “A Girl of the Streets, / A Story of New York. / —By—/Stephen Crane.” The name “Maggie” was added to the title later.

In the spring of 1894, Crane offered the finished manuscript of *The Red Badge of Courage* to *McClure’s Magazine*, which had become the foremost magazine for Civil War literature. After discovering that McClure’s could not afford to pay him, Crane took his war novel to Irving Bacheller of the Bacheller-Johnson Newspaper Syndicate, which agreed to publish *The Red Badge of Courage* in serial form. Between the third and the ninth of December 1894, *The Red Badge of Courage* began appearing in some half-dozen newspapers in the United States. Although it was greatly cut for syndication, Bacheller attested to its causing a stir, saying “its quality [was] immediately felt and recognized.” The lead editorial in the *Philadelphia Press* of December 7 said that Crane “is a new name now and unknown, but everybody will be talking about him if he goes on as he has begun.”

Given $700 in Spanish gold by the Bacheller-Johnson syndicate to work as a war correspondent in Cuba, Crane left New York on November 27 on a train bound for Jacksonville, Florida. While waiting for a boat, he toured the city and visited the local brothels. Within days he met 31-year-old Cora Taylor, proprietor of the downtown bawdy house Hotel de Dream. The two spent much time together while Crane awaited his departure. He was finally cleared to leave for the Cuban port of Cienfuegos on New Year’s Eve aboard the SS Commodore. On January 2, 1897, the ship sank off the coast of Mosquito Inlet. Crane was one of the last to leave the ship in a 10-foot (3.0 m) dinghy. In an ordeal that he would recount in the short story “The Open Boat”, Crane and three other men (including the ship’s Captain) floundered off the coast of Florida for a day and a half before attempting to land the dinghy at Daytona Beach. The small boat, however, overturned in the surf, forcing the exhausted men to swim to shore; one of them died. The disaster was widely reported on the front pages of newspapers across the country. Rumors that the ship had been sabotaged were widely circulated but never substantiated. Portrayed favorably and heroically by the press, Crane emerged from the ordeal with his reputation enhanced.

Crane returned to Jacksonville, where he took up residence with Cora Taylor and began writing “The Open Boat.” Taylor became Crane’s constant companion, and though they were never married, she eventually referred to herself as Cora Crane. Crane spent time as a correspondent covering the Greco-Turkish War and then settled in England with Cora, where he took
up acquaintance with other literati, including novelist Joseph Conrad. Soon after, the USS Maine exploded in Havana Harbor on February 15, 1898, under suspicious circumstances. Crane was then offered a 60 pound advance by Blackwood’s Magazine for articles “from the seat of war in the event of a war breaking out” between the United States and Spain. His health was failing, and it is believed that signs of his pulmonary tuberculosis, which he may have contracted in childhood, became apparent. Crane accepted the assignment and went to Cuba, where he reported upon various battles and the worsening military conditions and praised Theodore Roosevelt’s Rough Riders despite past tensions with the Commissioner. In early July, however, Crane was sent to the United States for medical treatment for a high fever. He was diagnosed with yellow fever, then malaria. After convalescing in Virginia, he returned to Cuba and continued his work as a correspondent. Crane finally left Havana and arrived in England on January 11, 1899. He died on June 5, 1900, at the age of 28. In his will he left everything to Taylor, who took his body to New York for burial. Crane was interred in the Evergreen Cemetery in what is now Hillside, New Jersey.

Crane’s work is often thematically driven by Naturalistic and Realistic concerns, including ideals versus realities, spiritual crises and fear. Similar to other Naturalistic works, Crane scrutinizes the position of man, who has been isolated not only from society, but also from God and nature. “The Open Boat,” for example, distances itself from the old Romantic optimism and affirmation of man’s place in the world by concentrating on the characters’ isolation. Despite his prolific output, the majority of scholarly attention to Crane’s short fiction has centered on four specific stories: “The Open Boat”, “The Blue Hotel”, “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky”, and The Monster. H. G. Wells considered “The Open Boat” to be “beyond all question, the crown of all his work”, and it is one of the most frequently discussed works in Crane’s canon.

In four years, Stephen Crane published five novels, two volumes of poetry, three short story collections, two books of war stories, and numerous works of short fiction and reporting. Today, Crane is considered one of the most innovative writers of the 1890s. His peers, including Conrad and Henry James, as well as later writers such as Robert Frost and Ezra Pound, hailed Crane as one of the finest creative spirits of his time. In 1936, Hemingway wrote in The Green Hills of Africa that “The good writers are Henry James, Stephen Crane, and Mark Twain. That’s not the order they’re good in. There is no order for good writers.” (adapted from Wikipedia)
THE BLUE HOTEL

I

The Palace Hotel at Fort Romper was painted a light blue, a shade that is on the legs of a kind of heron, causing the bird to declare its position against any background. The Palace Hotel, then, was always screaming and howling in a way that made the dazzling winter landscape of Nebraska seem only a gray swampish hush. It stood alone on the prairie, and when the snow was falling the town two hundred yards away was not visible. But when the traveller alighted at the railway station he was obliged to pass the Palace Hotel before he could come upon the company of low clapboard houses which composed Fort Romper, and it was not to be thought that any traveller could pass the Palace Hotel without looking at it. Pat Scully, the proprietor, had proved himself a master of strategy when he chose his paints. It is true that on clear days, when the great trans-continental expresses, long lines of swaying Pullmans, swept through Fort Romper, passengers were overcome at the sight, and the cult that knows the brown-reds and the subdivisions of the dark greens of the East expressed shame, pity, horror, in a laugh. But to the citizens of this prairie town and to the people who would naturally stop there, Pat Scully had performed a feat. With this opulence and splendor, these creeds, classes, egotisms, that streamed through Romper on the rails day after day, they had no color in common.

As if the displayed delights of such a blue hotel were not sufficiently enticing, it was Scully’s habit to go every morning and evening to meet the leisurely trains that stopped at Romper and work his seductions upon any man that he might see wavering, gripsack in hand.

One morning, when a snow-crusted engine dragged its long string of freight cars and its one passenger coach to the station, Scully performed the marvel of catching three men. One was a shaky and quick-eyed Swede, with a great shining cheap valise; one was a tall bronzed cowboy, who was on his way to a ranch near the Dakota line; one was a little silent man from the East, who didn’t look it, and didn’t announce it. Scully practically made them prisoners. He was so nimble and merry and kindly that each probably felt it would be the height of brutality to try to escape. They trudged off over the creaking board sidewalks in the wake of the eager little Irishman. He wore a heavy fur cap squeezed tightly down on his head. It caused his two red ears to stick out stiffly, as if they were made of tin.

At last, Scully, elaborately, with boisterous hospitality, conducted them through the portals of the blue hotel. The room which they entered was small.
It seemed to be merely a proper temple for an enormous stove, which, in the centre, was humming with godlike violence. At various points on its surface the iron had become luminous and glowed yellow from the heat. Beside the stove Scully’s son Johnnie was playing High-Five with an old farmer who had whiskers both gray and sandy. They were quarrelling. Frequently the old farmer turned his face towards a box of sawdust—colored brown from tobacco juice—that was behind the stove, and spat with an air of great impatience and irritation. With a loud flourish of words Scully destroyed the game of cards, and bustled his son up-stairs with part of the baggage of the new guests. He himself conducted them to three basins of the coldest water in the world. The cowboy and the Easterner burnished themselves fiery-red with this water, until it seemed to be some kind of a metal polish. The Swede, however, merely dipped his fingers gingerly and with trepidation. It was notable that throughout this series of small ceremonies the three travellers were made to feel that Scully was very benevolent. He was conferring great favors upon them. He handed the towel from one to the other with an air of philanthropic impulse.

Afterwards they went to the first room, and, sitting about the stove, listened to Scully’s officious clamor at his daughters, who were preparing the mid-day meal. They reflected in the silence of experienced men who tread carefully amid new people. Nevertheless, the old farmer, stationary, invincible in his chair near the warmest part of the stove, turned his face from the sawdust box frequently and addressed a glowing commonplace to the strangers. Usually he was answered in short but adequate sentences by either the cowboy or the Easterner. The Swede said nothing. He seemed to be occupied in making furtive estimates of each man in the room. One might have thought that he had the sense of silly suspicion which comes to guilt. He resembled a badly frightened man.

Later, at dinner, he spoke a little, addressing his conversation entirely to Scully. He volunteered that he had come from New York, where for ten years he had worked as a tailor. These facts seemed to strike Scully as fascinating, and afterwards he volunteered that he had lived at Romper for fourteen years. The Swede asked about the crops and the price of labor. He seemed barely to listen to Scully’s extended replies. His eyes continued to rove from man to man.

Finally, with a laugh and a wink, he said that some of these Western communities were very dangerous; and after his statement he straightened his legs under the table, tilted his head, and laughed again, loudly. It was plain that the demonstration had no meaning to the others. They looked at him wondering and in silence.
II

As the men trooped heavily back into the front-room, the two little windows presented views of a turmoiling sea of snow. The huge arms of the wind were making attempts—mighty, circular, futile—to embrace the flakes as they sped. A gate-post like a still man with a blanched face stood aghast amid this profligate fury. In a hearty voice Scully announced the presence of a blizzard. The guests of the blue hotel, lighting their pipes, assented with grunts of lazy masculine contentment. No island of the sea could be exempt in the degree of this little room with its humming stove. Johnnie, son of Scully, in a tone which defined his opinion of his ability as a card-player, challenged the old farmer of both gray and sandy whiskers to a game of High-Five. The farmer agreed with a contemptuous and bitter scoff. They sat close to the stove, and squared their knees under a wide board. The cowboy and the Easterner watched the game with interest. The Swede remained near the window, aloof, but with a countenance that showed signs of an inexplicable excitement.

The play of Johnnie and the gray-beard was suddenly ended by another quarrel. The old man arose while casting a look of heated scorn at his adversary. He slowly buttoned his coat, and then stalked with fabulous dignity from the room. In the discreet silence of all other men the Swede laughed. His laughter rang somehow childish. Men by this time had begun to look at him askance, as if they wished to inquire what ailed him.

A new game was formed jocosely. The cowboy volunteered to become the partner of Johnnie, and they all then turned to ask the Swede to throw in his lot with the little Easterner. He asked some questions about the game, and, learning that it wore many names, and that he had played it when it was under an alias, he accepted the invitation. He strode towards the men nervously, as if he expected to be assaulted. Finally, seated, he gazed from face to face and laughed shrilly. This laugh was so strange that the Easterner looked up quickly, the cowboy sat intent and with his mouth open, and Johnnie paused, holding the cards with still fingers.

Afterwards there was a short silence. Then Johnnie said, “Well, let’s get at it. Come on now!” They pulled their chairs forward until their knees were bunched under the board. They began to play, and their interest in the game caused the others to forget the manner of the Swede.

The cowboy was a board-whacker. Each time that he held superior cards he whanged them, one by one, with exceeding force, down upon the improvised table, and took the tricks with a glowing air of prowess and pride.
that sent thrills of indignation into the hearts of his opponents. A game with a board-whacker in it is sure to become intense. The countenances of the Easterner and the Swede were miserable whenever the cowboy thundered down his aces and kings, while Johnnie, his eyes gleaming with joy, chuckled and chuckled.

Because of the absorbing play none considered the strange ways of the Swede. They paid strict heed to the game. Finally, during a lull caused by a new deal, the Swede suddenly addressed Johnnie: “I suppose there have been a good many men killed in this room.” The jaws of the others dropped and they looked at him.

“What in hell are you talking about?” said Johnnie.

The Swede laughed again his blatant laugh, full of a kind of false courage and defiance. “Oh, you know what I mean all right,” he answered.

“I’m a liar if I do!” Johnnie protested. The card was halted, and the men stared at the Swede. Johnnie evidently felt that as the son of the proprietor he should make a direct inquiry. “Now, what might you be drivin’ at, mister?” he asked. The Swede winked at him. It was a wink full of cunning. His fingers shook on the edge of the board. “Oh, maybe you think I have been to nowheres. Maybe you think I’m a tenderfoot?”

“I don’t know nothin’ about you,” answered Johnnie, “and I don’t give a damn where you’ve been. All I got to say is that I don’t know what you’re driving at. There hain’t never been nobody killed in this room.”

The cowboy, who had been steadily gazing at the Swede, then spoke: “What’s wrong with you, mister?”

Apparently it seemed to the Swede that he was formidably menaced. He shivered and turned white near the corners of his mouth. He sent an appealing glance in the direction of the little Easterner. During these moments he did not forget to wear his air of advanced pot-valor. “They say they don’t know what I mean,” he remarked mockingly to the Easterner.

The latter answered after prolonged and cautious reflection. “I don’t understand you,” he said, impassively.

The Swede made a movement then which announced that he thought he had encountered treachery from the only quarter where he had expected sympathy, if not help. “Oh, I see you are all against me. I see—”
The cowboy was in a state of deep stupefaction. “Say,” he cried, as he tumbled the deck violently down upon the board “—say, what are you gittin’ at, hey?”

The Swede sprang up with the celerity of a man escaping from a snake on the floor. “I don’t want to fight!” he shouted. “I don’t want to fight!”

The cowboy stretched his long legs indolently and deliberately. His hands were in his pockets. He spat into the sawdust box. “Well, who the hell thought you did?” he inquired.

The Swede backed rapidly towards a corner of the room. His hands were out protectingly in front of his chest, but he was making an obvious struggle to control his fright. “Gentlemen,” he quavered, “I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house! I suppose I am going to be killed before I can leave this house!” In his eyes was the dying-swan look. Through the windows could be seen the snow turning blue in the shadow of dusk. The wind tore at the house and some loose thing beat regularly against the clapboards like a spirit tapping.

A door opened, and Scully himself entered. He paused in surprise as he noted the tragic attitude of the Swede. Then he said, “What’s the matter here?”

The Swede answered him swiftly and eagerly: “These men are going to kill me.”

“Kill you!” ejaculated Scully. “Kill you! What are you talkin’?”

The Swede made the gesture of a martyr.

Scully wheeled sternly upon his son. “What is this, Johnnie?”

The lad had grown sullen. “Damned if I know,” he answered. “I can’t make no sense to it.” He began to shuffle the cards, fluttering them together with an angry snap. “He says a good many men have been killed in this room, or something like that. And he says he’s goin’ to be killed here too. I don’t know what ails him. He’s crazy, I shouldn’t wonder.”

Scully then looked for explanation to the cowboy, but the cowboy simply shrugged his shoulders.

“Kill you?” said Scully again to the Swede. “Kill you? Man, you’re off your nut.”
“Oh, I know.” burst out the Swede. “I know what will happen. Yes, I’m crazy—yes. Yes, of course, I’m crazy—yes. But I know one thing—” There was a sort of sweat of misery and terror upon his face. “I know I won’t get out of here alive.”

The cowboy drew a deep breath, as if his mind was passing into the last stages of dissolution. “Well, I’m dog-goned,” he whispered to himself.

Scully wheeled suddenly and faced his son. “You’ve been troublin’ this man!”

Johnnie’s voice was loud with its burden of grievance. “Why, good Gawd, I ain’t done nothin’ to ‘im.”

The Swede broke in. “Gentlemen, do not disturb yourselves. I will leave this house. I will go away because”—he accused them dramatically with his glance—“because I do not want to be killed.”

Scully was furious with his son. “Will you tell me what is the matter, you young divil? What’s the matter, anyhow? Speak out!”

“Blame it!” cried Johnnie in despair, “don’t I tell you I don’t know. He—he says we want to kill him, and that’s all I know. I can’t tell what ails him.”

The Swede continued to repeat: “Never mind, Mr. Scully; nevermind. I will leave this house. I will go away, because I do not wish to be killed. Yes, of course, I am crazy—yes. But I know one thing! I will go away. I will leave this house. Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will go away.”

“You will not go ‘way,” said Scully. “You will not go ‘way until I hear the reason of this business. If anybody has troubled you I will take care of him. This is my house. You are under my roof, and I will not allow any peaceable man to be troubled here.” He cast a terrible eye upon Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner.

“Never mind, Mr. Scully; never mind. I will go away. I do not wish to be killed.” The Swede moved towards the door, which opened upon the stairs. It was evidently his intention to go at once for his baggage.

“No, no,” shouted Scully peremptorily; but the white-faced man slid by him and disappeared. “Now,” said Scully severely, “what does this mane?”

Johnnie and the cowboy cried together: “Why, we didn’t do nothin’ to ‘im!”
Scully’s eyes were cold. “No,” he said, “you didn’t?”

Johnnie swore a deep oath. “Why this is the wildest loon I ever see. We didn’t do nothin’ at all. We were jest sittin’ here playin’ cards, and he—”

The father suddenly spoke to the Easterner. “Mr. Blanc,” he asked, “what has these boys been doin’?”

The Easterner reflected again. “I didn’t see anything wrong at all,” he said at last, slowly.

Scully began to howl. “But what does it mean?” He stared ferociously at his son. “I have a mind to lather you for this, me boy.”

Johnnie was frantic. “Well, what have I done?” he bawled at his father.

III

“I think you are tongue-tied,” said Scully finally to his son, the cowboy, and the Easterner; and at the end of this scornful sentence he left the room.

Up-stairs the Swede was swiftly fastening the straps of his great valise. Once his back happened to be half turned towards the door, and, hearing a noise there, he wheeled and sprang up, uttering a loud cry. Scully’s wrinkled visage showed grimly in the light of the small lamp he carried. This yellow effulgence, streaming upward, colored only his prominent features, and left his eyes, for instance, in mysterious shadow. He resembled a murderer.

“Man! man!” he exclaimed, “have you gone daffy?”

“Oh, no! Oh, no!” rejoined the other. “There are people in this world who know pretty nearly as much as you do—understand?”

For a moment they stood gazing at each other. Upon the Swede’s deathly pale checks were two spots brightly crimson and sharply edged, as if they had been carefully painted. Scully placed the light on the table and sat himself on the edge of the bed. He spoke ruminatively. “By cracky, I never heard of such a thing in my life. It’s a complete muddle. I can’t, for the soul of me, think how you ever got this idea into your head.” Presently he lifted his eyes and asked: “And did you sure think they were going to kill you?”

The Swede scanned the old man as if he wished to see into his mind.
“I did,” he said at last. He obviously suspected that this answer might precipitate an outbreak. As he pulled on a strap his whole arm shook, the elbow wavering like a bit of paper.

Scully banged his hand impressively on the foot-board of the bed. “Why, man, we’re goin’ to have a line of illicit street-cars in this town next spring.”

“A line of electric street-cars,” repeated the Swede, stupidly.

“And,” said Scully, “there’s a new railroad goin’ to be built down from Broken Arm to here. Not to mention the four churches and the smashin’ big brick school-house. Then there’s the big factory, too. Why, in two years Romper ‘ll be a metropolis.”

Having finished the preparation of his baggage, the Swede straightened himself. “Mr. Scully,” he said, with sudden hardihood, “how much do I owe you?”

“You don’t owe me anythin’,” said the old man, angrily.

“Yes, I do,” retorted the Swede. He took seventy-five cents from his pocket and tendered it to Scully; but the latter snapped his fingers in disdainful refusal. However, it happened that they both stood gazing in a strange fashion at three silver pieces on the Swede’s open palm.

“I’ll not take your money,” said Scully at last. “Not after what’s been goin’ on here.” Then a plan seemed to strike him. “Here,” he cried, picking up his lamp and moving towards the door. “Here! Come with me a minute.”

“No,” said the Swede, in overwhelming alarm.

“Yes,” urged the old man. “Come on! I want you to come and see a picture—just across the hall—in my room.”

The Swede must have concluded that his hour was come. His jaw dropped and his teeth showed like a dead man’s. He ultimately followed Scully across the corridor, but he had the step of one hung in chains.

Scully flashed the light high on the wall of his own chamber. There was revealed a ridiculous photograph of a little girl. She was leaning against a balustrade of gorgeous decoration, and the formidable bang to her hair was prominent. The figure was as graceful as an upright sled-stake, and, withal, it was of the hue of lead. “There,” said Scully, tenderly, “that’s the picture of my little girl that died. Her name was Carrie. She had the purtiest hair you ever
saw! I was that fond of her, she—"

Turning then, he saw that the Swede was not contemplating the picture at all, but, instead, was keeping keen watch on the gloom in the rear.

“Look, man!” cried Scully, heartily. “That’s the picture of my little gal that died. Her name was Carrie. And then here’s the picture of my oldest boy, Michael. He’s a lawyer in Lincoln, an’ doin’ well. I gave that boy a grand eddycation, and I’m glad for it now. He’s a fine boy. Look at ‘im now. Ain’t he bold as blazes, him there in Lincoln, an’ respected gentleman. An honored an’ respected gentleman,” concluded Scully with a flourish. And, so saying, he smote the Swede jovially on the back.

The Swede faintly smiled.

“Now,” said the old man, “there’s only one more thing.” He dropped suddenly to the floor and thrust his head beneath the bed. The Swede could hear his muffled voice. “I’d keep it under me piller if it wasn’t for that boy Johnnie. Then there’s the old woman—Where is it now? I never put it twice in the same place. Ah, now come out with you!”

Presently he backed clumsily from under the bed, dragging with him an old coat rolled into a bundle. “I’ve fetched him,” he muttered. Kneeling on the floor, he unrolled the coat and extracted from its heart a large yellow-brown whiskey bottle.

His first maneuver was to hold the bottle up to the light. Reassured, apparently, that nobody had been tampering with it, he thrust it with a generous movement towards the Swede.

The weak-kneed Swede was about to eagerly clutch this element of strength, but he suddenly jerked his hand away and cast a look of horror upon Scully.

“Drink,” said the old man affectionately. He had risen to his feet, and now stood facing the Swede.

There was a silence. Then again Scully said: “Drink!”

The Swede laughed wildly. He grabbed the bottle, put it to his mouth, and as his lips curled absurdly around the opening and his throat worked, he kept his glance, burning with hatred, upon the old man’s face.
IV

After the departure of Scully the three men, with the card-board still upon their knees, preserved for a long time an astounded silence. Then Johnnie said: “That’s the dod-dangest Swede I ever see.”

“He ain’t no Swede,” said the cowboy, scornfully.

“Well, what is he then?” cried Johnnie. “What is he then?”

“It’s my opinion,” replied the cowboy deliberately, “he’s some kind of a Dutchman.”

It was a venerable custom of the country to entitle as Swedes all light-haired men who spoke with a heavy tongue. In consequence the idea of the cowboy was not without its daring. “Yes, sir,” he repeated. “It’s my opinion this feller is some kind of a Dutchman.”

“Well, he says he’s a Swede, anyhow,” muttered Johnnie, sulkily. He turned to the Easterner: “What do you think, Mr. Blanc?”

“Oh, I don’t know,” replied the Easterner.

“Well, what do you think makes him act that way?” asked the cowboy.

“Why, he’s frightened.” The Easterner knocked his pipe against a rim of the stove. “He’s clear frightened out of his boots.”

“What at?” cried Johnnie and cowboy together.

The Easterner reflected over his answer.

“What at?” cried the others again.

“Oh, I don’t know, but it seems to me this man has been reading dime-novels, and he thinks he’s right out in the middle of it—the shootin’ and stabbin’ and all.”

“But,” said the cowboy, deeply scandalized, “this ain’t Wyoming, ner none of them places. This is Nebrasker.”

“Yes,” added Johnnie, “an’ why don’t he wait till he gits out West?”

The travelled Easterner laughed. “It isn’t different there even—not in
these days. But he thinks he’s right in the middle of hell."

Johnnie and the cowboy mused long.

“It’s awful funny,” remarked Johnnie at last.

“Yes,” said the cowboy. “This is a queer game. I hope we don’t git snowed in, because then we’d have to stand this here man bein’ around with us all the time. That wouldn’t be no good.”

“I wish pop would throw him out,” said Johnnie.

Presently they heard a loud stamping on the stairs, accompanied by ringing jokes in the voice of old Scully, and laughter, evidently from the Swede. The men around the stove stared vacantly at each other. “Gosh!” said the cowboy. The door flew open, and old Scully, flushed and anecdotal, came into the room. He was jabbering at the Swede, who followed him, laughing bravely. It was the entry of two roisterers from a banquet-hall.

“Come now,” said Scully sharply to the three seated men, “move up and give us a chance at the stove.” The cowboy and the Easterner obediently sidled their chairs to make room for the new-comers. Johnnie, however, simply arranged himself in a more indolent attitude, and then remained motionless.

“Come! Git over, there,” said Scully.

“Plenty of room on the other side of the stove,” said Johnnie.

“Do you think we want to sit in the draught?” roared the father.

But the Swede here interposed with a grandeur of confidence. “No, no. Let the boy sit where he likes,” he cried in a bullying voice to the father.

“All right! All right!” said Scully, deferentially. The cowboy and the Easterner exchanged glances of wonder.

The five chairs were formed in a crescent about one side of the stove. The Swede began to talk; he talked arrogantly, profanely, angrily. Johnnie, the cowboy, and the Easterner maintained a morose silence, while old Scully appeared to be receptive and eager, breaking in constantly with sympathetic ejaculations.

Finally the Swede announced that he was thirsty. He moved in his chair,
and said that he would go for a drink of water.

“I’ll git it for you,” cried Scully at once.

“No,” said the Swede, contemptuously. “I’ll get it for myself.” He arose and stalked with the air of an owner off into the executive parts of the hotel.

As soon as the Swede was out of hearing Scully sprang to his feet and whispered intensely to the others: “Up-stairs he thought I was tryin’ to poison ‘im.”

“Say,” said Johnnie, “this makes me sick. Why don’t you throw ‘im out in the snow?”

“Why, he’s all right now,” declared Scully. “It was only that he was from the East, and he thought this was a tough place. That’s all. He’s all right now.”

The cowboy looked with admiration upon the Easterner. “You were straight,” he said. “You were on to that there Dutchman.”

“Well,” said Johnnie to his father, “he may be all right now, but I don’t see it. Other time he was scared, but now he’s too fresh.”

Scully’s speech was always a combination of Irish brogue and idiom, Western twang and idiom, and scraps of curiously formal diction taken from the story-books and newspapers, He now hurled a strange mass of language at the head of his son. “What do I keep? What do I keep? What do I keep?” he demanded, in a voice of thunder. He slapped his knee impressively, to indicate that he himself was going to make reply, and that all should heed. “I keep a hotel,” he shouted. “A hotel, do you mind? A guest under my roof has sacred privileges. He is to be intimidated by none. Not one word shall he hear that would prejudice him in favor of goin’ away. I’ll not have it. There’s no place in this here town where they can say they iver took in a guest of mine because he was afraid to stay here.” He wheeled suddenly upon the cowboy and the Easterner. “Am I right?”

“Yes, Mr. Scully,” said the cowboy, “I think you’re right.”

“Yes, Mr. Scully,” said the Easterner, “I think you’re right.”

V

At six-o’clock supper, the Swede fizzed like a fire-wheel. He sometimes seemed on the point of bursting into riotous song, and in all his madness
he was encouraged by old Scully. The Easterner was incased in reserve; the cowboy sat in wide-mouthed amazement, forgetting to eat, while Johnnie wrathily demolished great plates of food. The daughters of the house, when they were obliged to replenish the biscuits, approached as warily as Indians, and, having succeeded in their purpose, fled with ill-concealed trepidation. The Swede domineered the whole feast, and he gave it the appearance of a cruel bacchanal. He seemed to have grown suddenly taller; he gazed, brutally disdainful, into every face. His voice rang through the room. Once when he jabbed out harpoon-fashion with his fork to pinion a biscuit, the weapon nearly impaled the hand of the Easterner which had been stretched quietly out for the same biscuit.

After supper, as the men filed towards the other room, the Swede smote Scully ruthlessly on the shoulder. “Well, old boy, that was a good, square meal.” Johnnie looked hopefully at his father; he knew that shoulder was tender from an old fall; and, indeed, it appeared for a moment as if Scully was going to flame out over the matter, but in the end he smiled a sickly smile and remained silent. The others understood from his manner that he was admitting his responsibility for the Swede’s new view-point.

Johnnie, however, addressed his parent in an aside. “Why don’t you license somebody to kick you down-stairs?” Scully scowled darkly by way of reply.

When they were gathered about the stove, the Swede insisted on another game of High Five. Scully gently deprecated the plan at first, but the Swede turned a wolfish glare upon him. The old man subsided, and the Swede canvassed the others. In his tone there was always a great threat. The cowboy and the Easterner both remarked indifferently that they would play. Scully said that he would presently have to go to meet the 6.58 train, and so the Swede turned menacingly upon Johnnie. For a moment their glances crossed like blades, and then Johnnie smiled and said, “Yes, I’ll play.”

They formed a square, with the little board on their knees. The Easterner and the Swede were again partners. As the play went on, it was noticeable that the cowboy was not board-whacking as usual. Meanwhile, Scully, near the lamp, had put on his spectacles and, with an appearance curiously like an old priest, was reading a newspaper. In time he went out to meet the 6.58 train, and, despite his precautions, a gust of polar wind whirled into the room as he opened the door. Besides scattering the cards, it dulled the players to the marrow. The Swede cursed frightfully. When Scully returned, his entrance disturbed a cosey and friendly scene. The Swede again cursed. But presently they were once more intent, their heads bent forward and their hands moving swiftly. The Swede had adopted the fashion of board-whacking.
Scully took up his paper and for a long time remained immersed in matters which were extraordinarily remote from him. The lamp burned badly, and once he stopped to adjust the wick. The newspaper, as he turned from page to page, rustled with a slow and comfortable sound. Then suddenly he heard three terrible words: “You are cheatin’!”

Such scenes often prove that there can be little of dramatic import in environment. Any room can present a tragic front; any room can be comic. This little den was now hideous as a torture-chamber. The new faces of the men themselves had changed it upon the instant. The Swede held a huge fist in front of Johnnie’s face, while the latter looked steadily over it into the blazing orbs of his accuser. The Easterner had grown pallid; the cowboy’s jaw had dropped in that expression of bovine amazement which was one of his important mannerisms. After the three words, the first sound in the room was made by Scully’s paper as it floated forgotten to his feet. His spectacles had also fallen from his nose, but by a clutch he had saved them in air: His hand, grasping the spectacles, now remained poised awkwardly and near his shoulder. He stared at the card-players.

Probably the silence was while a second elapsed. Then, if the floor had been suddenly twitched out from under the men they could not have moved quicker: The five had projected themselves headlong towards a common point. It happened that Johnnie, in rising to hurl himself upon the Swede, had stumbled slightly because of his curiously instinctive care for the cards and the board. The loss of the moment allowed time for the arrival of Scully, and also allowed the cowboy time to give the Swede a great push which sent him staggering back. The men found tongue together, and hoarse shouts of rage, appeal, or fear burst from every throat. The cowboy pushed and jostled feverishly at the Swede, and the Easterner and Scully clung wildly to Johnnie; but, through the smoky air, above the swaying bodies of the peace-compellers, the eyes of the two warriors ever sought each other in glances of challenge that were at once hot and steely.

Of course the board had been overturned, and now the whole company of cards was scattered over the floor; where the boots of the men trampled the fat and painted kings and queens as they gazed with their silly eyes at the war that was waging above them.

Scully’s voice was dominating the yells. “Stop now? Stop, I say! Stop, now—”

Johnnie, as he struggled to burst through the rank formed by Scully and the Easterner, was crying, “Well, he says I cheated! He says I cheated! I won’t allow no man to say I cheated! If he says I cheated, he’s a ——— ———!”

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The cowboy was telling the Swede, “Quit, now! Quit, d’ye hear—”

The screams of the Swede never ceased: “He did cheat! I saw him! I saw him—”

As for the Easterner, he was importuning in a voice that was not heeded: “Wait a moment, can’t you? Oh, wait a moment. What’s the good of a fight over a game of cards? Wait a moment—”

In this tumult no complete sentences were clear: “Cheat”—”Quit”—”He says”—these fragments pierced the uproar and rang out sharply. It was remarkable that, whereas Scully undoubtedly made the most noise, he was the least heard of any of the riotous band.

Then suddenly there was a great cessation. It was as if each man had paused for breath; and although the room was still lighted with the anger of men, it could be seen that there was no danger of immediate conflict, and at once Johnnie, shouldering his way forward, almost succeeded in confronting the Swede. “What did you say I cheated for? What did you say I cheated for? I don’t cheat, and I won’t let no man say I do!”

The Swede said, “I saw you! I saw you!”

“Well,” cried Johnnie, “I’ll fight any man what says I cheat!”

“No, you won’t,” said the cowboy. “Not here.”

“Ah, be still, can’t you?” said Scully, coming between them.

The quiet was sufficient to allow the Easterner’s voice to be heard. He was repealing, “Oh, wait a moment, can’t you? What’s the good of a fight over a game of cards? Wait a moment!”

Johnnie, his red face appearing above his father’s shoulder, hailed the Swede again. “Did you say I cheated?”

The Swede showed his teeth. “Yes.”

“Then,” said Johnnie, “we must fight.”

“Yes, fight,” roared the Swede. He was like a demoniac. “Yes, fight! I’ll show you what kind of a man I am! I’ll show you who you want to fight! Maybe you think I can’t fight! Maybe you think I can’t! I’ll show you, you skin, you card-
sharp! Yes, you cheated! You cheated! You cheated!"

“Well, let’s go at it, then, mister;” said Johnnie, coolly.

The cowboy’s brow was beaded with sweat from his efforts in intercepting all sorts of raids. He turned in despair to Scully. “What are you goin’ to do now?”

A change had come over the Celtic visage of the old man. He now seemed all eagerness; his eyes glowed.

“We’ll let them fight,” he answered, stalwartly. “I can’t put up with it any longer. I’ve stood this damned Swede till I’m sick. We’ll let them fight.”

VI

The men prepared to go out-of-doors. The Easterner was so nervous that he had great difficulty in getting his arms into the sleeves of his new leather coat. As the cowboy drew his fur cap down over his ears his hands trembled. In fact, Johnnie and old Scully were the only ones who displayed no agitation. These preliminaries were conducted without words.

Scully threw open the door. “Well, come on,” he said. Instantly a terrific wind caused the flame of the lamp to struggle at its wick, while a puff of black smoke sprang from the chimney-top. The stove was in mid-current of the blast, and its voice swelled to equal the roar of the storm. Some of the scarred and bedabbled cards were caught up from the floor and dashed helplessly against the farther wall. The men lowered their heads and plunged into the tempest as into a sea.

No snow was falling, but great whirls and clouds of flakes, swept up from the ground by the frantic winds, were streaming southward with the speed of bullets. The covered land was blue with the sheen of an unearthly satin, and there was no other hue save where, at the low, black railway station—which seemed incredibly distant—one light gleamed like a tiny jewel. As the men floundered into a thigh deep drift, it was known that the Swede was bawling out something. Scully went to him, put a hand on his shoulder and projected an ear. “What’s that you say?” he shouted.

“I say,” bawled the Swede again, “I won’t stand much show against this gang. I know you’ll all pitch on me.”

Scully smote him reproachfully on the arm. “Tut, man!” he yelled. The
wind tore the words from Scully’s lips and scattered them far alee.

“You are all a gang of—”  boomed the Swede, but the storm also seized the remainder of this sentence.

Immediately turning their backs upon the wind, the men had swung around a corner to the sheltered side of the hotel. It was the function of the little house to preserve here, amid this great devastation of snow, an irregular V-shape of heavily incrusted grass, which crackled beneath the feet. One could imagine the great drifts piled against the windward side. When the party reached the comparative peace of this spot it was found that the Swede was still bellowing.

“Oh, I know what kind of a thing this is! I know you’ll all pitch on me. I can’t lick you all!”

Scully turned upon him panther fashion. “You’ll not have to whip all of us. You’ll have to whip my son Johnnie. An’ the man what troubles you durin’ that time will have me to dale with.”

The arrangements were swiftly made. The two men faced each other, obedient to the harsh commands of Scully, whose face, in the subtly luminous gloom, could be seen set in the austere impersonal lines that are pictured on the countenances of the Roman veterans. The Easterner’s teeth were chattering, and he was hopping up and down like a mechanical toy. The cowboy stood rock-like.

The contestants had not stripped off any clothing. Each was in his ordinary attire. Their fists were up, and they eyed each other in a calm that had the elements of leonine cruelty in it.

During this pause, the Easterner’s mind, like a film, took lasting impressions of three men—the iron-nerved master of the ceremony; the Swede, pale, motionless, terrible; and Johnnie, serene yet ferocious, brutish yet heroic. The entire prelude had in it a tragedy greater than the tragedy of action, and this aspect was accentuated by the long, mellow cry of the blizzard, as it sped the tumbling and wailing flakes into the black abyss of the south.

“Now!” said Scully.

The two combatants leaped forward and crashed together like bullocks. There was heard the cushioned sound of blows, and of a curse squeezing out from between the tight teeth of one.
As for the spectators, the Easterner’s pent-up breath exploded from him with a pop of relief, absolute relief from the tension of the preliminaries. The cowboy bounded into the air with a yowl. Scully was immovable as from supreme amazement and fear at the fury of the fight which he himself had permitted and arranged.

For a time the encounter in the darkness was such a perplexity of flying arms that it presented no more detail than would a swiftly revolving wheel. Occasionally a face, as if illumined by a flash of light, would shine out, ghastly and marked with pink spots. A moment later, the men might have been known as shadows, if it were not for the involuntary utterance of oaths that came from them in whispers.

Suddenly a holocaust of warlike desire caught the cowboy, and he bolted forward with the speed of a broncho. “Go it, Johnnie! go it! Kill him! Kill him!”

Scully confronted him. “Kape back,” he said; and by his glance the cowboy could tell that this man was Johnnie’s father.

To the Easterner there was a monotony of unchangeable fighting that was an abomination. This confused mingling was eternal to his sense, which was concentrated in a longing for the end, the priceless end. Once the fighters lurched near him, and as he scrambled hastily backward he heard them breathe like men on the rack.

“Kill him, Johnnie! Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!” The cowboy’s face was contorted like one of those agony masks in museums.

“Keep still,” said Scully, icily.

Then there was a sudden loud grunt, incomplete, cut short, and Johnnie’s body swung away from the Swede and fell with sickening heaviness to the grass. The cowboy was barely in time to prevent the mad Swede from flinging himself upon his prone adversary. “No, you don’t,” said the cowboy, interposing an arm. “Wait a second.”

Scully was at his son’s side. “Johnnie! Johnnie, me boy!” His voice had a quality of melancholy tenderness. “Johnnie! Can you go on with it?” He looked anxiously down into the bloody, pulpy face of his son.

There was a moment of silence, and then Johnnie answered in his ordinary voice, “Yes, I—it—yes.”
Assisted by his father he struggled to his feet. “Wait a bit now till you git your wind,” said the old man.

A few paces away the cowboy was lecturing the Swede. “No, you don’t! Wait a second!”

The Easterner was plucking at Scully’s sleeve. “Oh, this is enough,” he pleaded. “This is enough! Let it go as it stands. This is enough!”

“Bill,” said Scully, “git out of the road.” The cowboy stepped aside. “Now.” The combatants were actuated by a new caution as they advanced towards collision. They glared at each other, and then the Swede aimed a lightning blow that carried with it his entire weight. Johnnie was evidently half stupid from weakness, but he miraculously dodged, and his fist sent the over-balanced Swede sprawling.

The cowboy, Scully, and the Easterner burst into a cheer that was like a chorus of triumphant soldiery, but before its conclusion the Swede had scuffled agilely to his feet and come in berserk abandon at his foe. There was another perplexity of flying arms, and Johnnie’s body again swung away and fell, even as a bundle might fall from a roof. The Swede instantly staggered to a little wind-waved tree and leaned upon it, breathing like an engine, while his savage and flame-lit eyes roamed from face to face as the men bent over Johnnie. There was a splendor of isolation in his situation at this time which the Easterner felt once when, lifting his eyes from the man on the ground, he beheld that mysterious and lonely figure, waiting.

“Arc you any good yet, Johnnie?” asked Scully in a broken voice.

The son gasped and opened his eyes languidly. After a moment he answered, “No—I ain’t—any good—any—more.” Then, from shame and bodily ill he began to weep, the tears furrowing down through the blood-stains on his face. “He was too—too—too heavy for me.”

Scully straightened and addressed the waiting figure. “Stranger,” he said, evenly, “it’s all up with our side.” Then his voice changed into that vibrant huskiness which is commonly the tone of the most simple and deadly announcements. “Johnnie is whipped.”

Without replying, the victor moved off on the route to the front door of the hotel.

The cowboy was formulating new and un-spellable blasphemies. The Easterner was startled to find that they were out in a wind that seemed to
come direct from the shadowed arctic floes. He heard again the wail of the snow as it was flung to its grave in the south. He knew now that all this time the cold had been sinking into him deeper and deeper, and he wondered that he had not perished. He felt indifferent to the condition of the vanquished man.

“Johnnie, can you walk?” asked Scully.

“Did I hurt—hurt him any?” asked the son.

“Can you walk, boy? Can you walk?”

Johnnie’s voice was suddenly strong. There was a robust impatience in it. “I asked you whether I hurt him any!”

“Yes, yes, Johnnie,” answered the cowboy, consolingly; “he’s hurt a good deal.”

They raised him from the ground, and as soon as he was on his feet he went tottering off, rebuffing all attempts at assistance. When the party rounded the corner they were fairly blinded by the pelting of the snow. It burned their faces like fire. The cowboy carried Johnnie through the drift to the door. As they entered some cards again rose from the floor and beat against the wall.

The Easterner rushed to the stove. He was so profoundly chilled that he almost dared to embrace the glowing iron. The Swede was not in the room. Johnnie sank into a chair, and, folding his arms on his knees, buried his face in them. Scully, warming one foot and then the other at a rim of the stove, muttered to himself with Celtic mournfulness. The cowboy had removed his fur cap, and with a dazed and rueful air he was running one hand through his tousled locks. From overhead they could hear the creaking of boards, as the Swede tramped here and there in his room.

The sad quiet was broken by the sudden flinging open of a door that led towards the kitchen. It was instantly followed by an inrush of women. They precipitated themselves upon Johnnie amid a chorus of lamentation. Before they carried their prey off to the kitchen, there to be bathed and harangued with that mixture of sympathy and abuse which is a feat of their sex, the mother straightened herself and fixed old Scully with an eye of stern reproach. “Shame be upon you, Patrick Scully!” she cried. “Your own son, too. Shame be upon you!”

“There, now! Be quiet, now!” said the old man, weakly.
“Shame be upon you, Patrick Scully!” The girls, rallying to this slogan, sniffed disdainfully in the direction of those trembling accomplices, the cowboy and the Easterner. Presently they bore Johnnie away, and left the three men to dismal reflection.

VII

“I’d like to fight this here Dutchman myself,” said the cowboy, breaking a long silence.

Scully wagged his head sadly. “No, that wouldn’t do. It wouldn’t be right. It wouldn’t be right.”

“Well, why wouldn’t it?” argued the cowboy. “I don’t see no harm in it.”

“No,” answered Scully, with mournful heroism. “It wouldn’t be right. It was Johnnie’s fight, and now we mustn’t whip the man just because he whipped Johnnie.”

“Yes, that’s true enough,” said the cowboy; “but—he better not get fresh with me, because I couldn’t stand no more of it.”

“You’ll not say a word to him,” commanded Scully, and even then they heard the tread of the Swede on the stairs. His entrance was made theatric. He swept the door back with a bang and swaggered to the middle of the room. No one looked at him. “Well,” he cried, insolently, at Scully, “I s’pose you’ll tell me now how much I owe you?”

The old man remained stolid. “You don’t owe me nothin’!”

“Huh!” said the Swede, “huh! Don’t owe ‘im nothin’.”

The cowboy addressed the Swede. “Stranger, I don’t see how you come to be so gay around here.”

Old Scully was instantly alert. “Stop!” he shouted, holding his hand forth, fingers upward. “Bill, you shut up!”

The cowboy spat carelessly into the sawdust box. “I didn’t say a word, did I?” he asked.

“Mr. Scully,” called the Swede, “how much do I owe you?” It was seen that he was attired for departure, and that he had his valise in his hand.
“You don’t owe me nothin’,” repeated Scully in his same imperturbable way.

“Huh!” said the Swede. “I guess you’re right. I guess if it was any way at all, you’d owe me somethin’. That’s what I guess.” He turned to the cowboy. “‘Kill him! Kill him! Kill him!’” he mimicked, and then guffawed victoriously. “‘Kill him!’” He was convulsed with ironical humor.

But he might have been jeering the dead. The three men were immovable and silent, staring with glassy eyes at the stove.

The Swede opened the door and passed into the storm, giving one derisive glance backward at the still group.

As soon as the door was closed, Scully and the cowboy leaped to their feet and began to curse. They trampled to and fro, waving their arms and smashing into the air with their fists. “Oh, but that was a hard minute!” wailed Scully. “That was a hard minute! Him there leerin’ and scoffin’! One bang at his nose was worth forty dollars to me that minute! How did you stand it, Bill?”

“How did I stand it?” cried the cowboy in a quivering voice. “How did I stand it? Oh!”

The old man burst into sudden brogue. “I’d loike to take that Swade,” he wailed, “and hould ‘im down on a shtone flure and bate ‘im to a jelly wid a shtick!”

The cowboy groaned in sympathy. “I’d like to git him by the neck and ha-ammer him”—he brought his hand down on a chair with a noise like a pistol-shot—”hammer that there Dutchman until he couldn’t tell himself from a dead coyote!”

“I’d bate ‘im until he—”

“I’d show him some things—”

And then together they raised a yearning, fanatic cry—”Oh-o-oh! if we only could—”

“Yes!”

“Yes!”
“And then I’d—”

“O-o-oh!”

VIII

The Swede, tightly gripping his valise, tacked across the face of the storm as if he carried sails. He was following a line of little naked, gasping trees, which he knew must mark the way of the road. His face, fresh from the pounding of Johnnie’s fists, felt more pleasure than pain in the wind and the driving snow. A number of square shapes loomed upon him finally, and he knew them as the houses of the main body of the town. He found a street and made travel along it, leaning heavily upon the wind whenever; at a corner; a terrific blast caught him.

He might have been in a deserted village. We picture the world as thick with conquering and elate humanity, but here, with the bugles of the tempest pealing, it was hard to imagine a peopled earth. One viewed the existence of man then as a marvel, and conceded a glamour of wonder to these lice which were caused to cling to a whirling, fire-smote, ice-locked, disease-stricken, space-lost bulb. The conceit of man was explained by this storm to be the very engine of life. One was a coxcomb not to die in it. However, the Swede found a saloon.

In front of it an indomitable red light was burning, and the snow-flakes were made blood color as they flew through the circumscribed territory of the lamp’s shining. The Swede pushed open the door of the saloon and entered. A sanded expanse was before him, and at the end of it four men sat about a table drinking. Down one side of the room extended a radiant bar, and its guardian was leaning upon his elbows listening to the talk of the men at the table. The Swede dropped his valise upon the floor, and, smiling fraternally upon the barkeeper, said, “Gimme some whiskey, will you?” The man placed a bottle, a whiskey-glass, and a glass of ice-thick water upon the bar. The Swede poured himself an abnormal portion of whiskey and drank it in three gulps. “Pretty bad night,” remarked the bartender, indifferently. He was making the pretension of blindness which is usually a distinction of his class; but it could have been seen that he was furtively studying the half-erased blood-stains on the face of the Swede. “Bad night,” he said again.

“Oh, it’s good enough for me,” replied the Swede, hardily, as he poured himself some more whiskey. The barkeeper took his coin and maneuvered it through its reception by the highly nickelled cash-machine. A bell rang; a card
labelled “20 cts.” had appeared.

“No,” continued the Swede, “this isn’t too bad weather. It’s good enough for me.”

“So?” murmured the barkeeper, languidly.

The copious drams made the Swede’s eyes swim, and he breathed a trifle heavier. “Yes, I like this weather. I like it. It suits me.” It was apparently his design to impart a deep significance to these words.

“So?” murmured the bartender again. He turned to gaze dreamily at the scroll-like birds and bird-like scrolls which had been drawn with soap upon the mirrors back of the bar.

“Well, I guess I’ll take another drink,” said the Swede, presently. “Have something?”

“No, thanks; I’m not drinkin’,” answered the bartender. Afterwards he asked, “How did you hurt your face?”

The Swede immediately began to boast loudly. “Why, in a fight. I thumped the soul out of a man down here at Scully’s hotel.”

The interest of the four men at the table was at last aroused.

“Who was it?” said one.

“Johnnie Scully,” blustered the Swede. “Son of the man what runs it. He will be pretty near dead for some weeks, I can tell you. I made a nice thing of him, I did. He couldn’t get up. They carried him in the house. Have a drink?”

Instantly the men in some subtle way incased themselves in reserve. “No, thanks,” said one. The group was of curious formation. Two were prominent local business men; one was the district-attorney; and one was a professional gambler of the kind known as “square.” But a scrutiny of the group would not have enabled an observer to pick the gambler from the men of more reputable pursuits. He was, in fact, a man so delicate in manner, when among people of fair class, and so judicious in his choice of victims, that in the strictly masculine part of the town’s life he had come to be explicitly trusted and admired. People called him a thoroughbred. The fear and contempt with which his craft was regarded was undoubtedly the reason that his quiet dignity shone conspicuous above the quiet dignity of men who might be merely hatters, billiard markers, or grocery-clerks. Beyond an occasional unwary traveller, who came by rail, this gambler was supposed to prey solely upon reckless and senile farmers, who, when flush with good crops,
drove into town in all the pride and confidence of an absolutely invulnerable stupidity. Hearing at times in circuitous fashion of the despoilment of such a farmer, the important men of Romper invariably laughed in contempt of the victim, and, if they thought of the wolf at all, it was with a kind of pride at the knowledge that he would never dare think of attacking their wisdom and courage. Besides, it was popular that this gambler had a real wife and two real children in a neat cottage in a suburb, where he led an exemplary home life; and when any one even suggested a discrepancy in his character, the crowd immediately vociferated descriptions of this virtuous family circle. Then men who led exemplary home lives, and men who did not lead exemplary home lives, all subsided in a bunch, remarking that there was nothing more to be said.

However, when a restriction was placed upon him—as, for instance, when a strong clique of members of the new Pollywog Club refused to permit him, even as a spectator, to appear in the rooms of the organization—the candor and gentleness with which he accepted the judgment disarmed many of his foes and made his friends more desperately partisan. He invariably distinguished between himself and a respectable Romper man so quickly and frankly that his manner actually appeared to be a continual broadcast compliment.

And one must not forget to declare the fundamental fact of his entire position in Romper. It is irrefutable that in all affairs outside of his business, in all matters that occur eternally and commonly between man and man, this thieving card-player was so generous, so just, so moral, that, in a contest, he could have put to flight the consciences of nine-tenths of the citizens of Romper.

And so it happened that he was seated in this saloon with the two prominent local merchants and the district-attorney.

The Swede continued to drink raw whiskey, meanwhile babbling at the barkeeper and trying to induce him to indulge in potations. “Come on. Have a drink. Come on. What—no? Well, have a little one, then. By gawd, I’ve whipped a man to-night, and I want to celebrate. I whipped him good, too. Gentlemen,” the Swede cried to the men at the table, “have a drink?”

“Ssh!” said the barkeeper.

The group at the table, although furtively attentive, had been pretending to be deep in talk, but now a man lifted his eyes towards the Swede and said, shortly, “Thanks. We don’t want any more.”
At this reply the Swede ruffled out his chest like a rooster. “Well,” he exploded, “it seems I can’t get anybody to drink with me in this town. Seems so, don’t it? Well!”

“Ssh!” said the barkeeper.

“Say,” snarled the Swede, “don’t you try to shut me up. I won’t have it. I’m a gentleman, and I want people to drink with me. And I want ‘em to drink with me now. Now—do you understand?” He rapped the bar with his knuckles.

Years of experience had calloused the bartender. He merely grew sulky. “I hear you,” he answered.

“Well,” cried the Swede, “listen hard then. See those men over there? Well, they’re going to drink with me, and don’t you forget it. Now you watch.”

“Hi!” yelled the barkeeper, “this won’t do!”

“Why won’t it?” demanded the Swede. He stalked over to the table, and by chance laid his hand upon the shoulder of the gambler. “How about this?” he asked, wrathfully. “I asked you to drink with me.”

The gambler simply twisted his head and spoke over his shoulder. “My friend, I don’t know you.”

“Oh, hell!” answered the Swede, “come and have a drink.”

“Now, my boy,” advised the gambler, kindly, “take your hand off my shoulder and go ’way and mind your own business.” He was a little, slim man, and it seemed strange to hear him use this tone of heroic patronage to the burly Swede. The other men at the table said nothing.

“What! You won’t drink with me, you little dude? I’ll make you then! I’ll make you!” The Swede had grasped the gambler frenziedly at the throat, and was dragging him from his chair. The other men sprang up. The barkeeper dashed around the corner of his bar. There was a great tumult, and then was seen a long blade in the hand of the gambler. It shot forward, and a human body, this citadel of virtue, wisdom, power, was pierced as easily as if it had been a melon. The Swede fell with a cry of supreme astonishment.

The prominent merchants and the district attorney must have at once tumbled out of the place backward. The bartender found himself hanging limply to the arm of a chair and gazing into the eyes of a murderer.

“Henry,” said the latter, as he wiped his knife on one of the towels that
hung beneath the bar-rail, “you tell ‘em where to find me. I'll be home, waiting for ‘em.” Then he vanished. A moment afterwards the barkeeper was in the street dinning through the storm for help, and, moreover, companionship.

The corpse of the Swede, alone in the saloon, had its eyes fixed upon a dreadful legend that dwelt atop of the cash-machine: “This registers the amount of your purchase.”

IX

Months later, the cowboy was frying pork over the stove of a little ranch near the Dakota line, when there was a quick thud of hoofs outside, and presently the Easterner entered with the letters and the papers.

“Well,” said the Easterner at once, “the chap that killed the Swede has got three years. Wasn't much, was it?”

“He has? Three years?” The cowboy poised his pan of pork, while he ruminated upon the news. “Three years. That ain't much.”

“No. It was a light sentence,” replied the Easterner as he unbuckled his spurs. “Seems there was a good deal of sympathy for him in Romper.”

“If the bartender had been any good,” observed the cowboy, thoughtfully, “he would have gone in and cracked that there Dutchman on the head with a bottle in the beginnin’ of it and stopped all this here murderin’.”

“Yes, a thousand things might have happened,” said the Easterner, tartly.

The cowboy returned his pan of pork to the fire, but his philosophy continued. “It's funny, ain't it? If he hadn't said Johnnie was cheatin' he'd be alive this minute. He was an awful fool. Game played for fun, too. Not for money. I believe he was crazy.”

“I feel sorry for that gambler,” said the Easterner.

“Oh, so do I,” said the cowboy. “He don't deserve none of it for killin' who he did.”

“The Swede might not have been killed if everything had been square.”

“Might not have been killed?” exclaimed the cowboy. “Everythin' square? Why, when he said that Johnnie was cheatin' and acted like such a jackass? And then in the saloon he fairly walked up to git hurt?” With these arguments
the cowboy browbeat the Easterner and reduced him to rage.

“You’re a fool!” cried the Easterner, viciously. “You’re a bigger jackass than the Swede by a million majority. Now let me tell you one thing. Let me tell you something. Listen! Johnnie was cheating!”

“Johnnie,” said the cowboy, blankly. There was a minute of silence, and then he said, robustly, “Why, no. The game was only for fun.”

“Fun or not,” said the Easterner, “Johnnie was cheating. I saw him. I know it. I saw him. And I refused to stand up and be a man. I let the Swede fight it out alone. And you—you were simply puffing around the place and wanting to fight. And then old Scully himself! We are all in it! This poor gambler isn’t even a noun. He is kind of an adverb. Every sin is the result of a collaboration. We, five of us, have collaborated in the murder of this Swede. Usually there are from a dozen to forty women really involved in every murder; but in this case it seems to be only five men—you, I, Johnnie, old Scully, and that fool of an unfortunate gambler came merely as a culmination, the apex of a human movement, and gets all the punishment.”

The cowboy, injured and rebellious, cried out blindly into this fog of mysterious theory: “Well, I didn’t do anythin’, did I?”
THE OPEN BOAT
A Tale intended to be after the fact. Being the experience of four men from the sunk steamer “Commodore”

I

None of them knew the color of the sky. Their eyes glanced level, and were fastened upon the waves that swept toward them. These waves were of the hue of slate, save for the tops, which were of foaming white, and all of the men knew the colors of the sea. The horizon narrowed and widened, and dipped and rose, and at all times its edge was jagged with waves that seemed thrust up in points like rocks. Many a man ought to have a bath-tub larger than the boat which here rode upon the sea. These waves were most wrongfully and barbarously abrupt and tall, and each froth-top was a problem in small-boat navigation.

The cook squatted in the bottom and looked with both eyes at the six inches of gunwale which separated him from the ocean. His sleeves were rolled over his fat forearms, and the two flaps of his unbuttoned vest dangled as he bent to bail out the boat. Often he said: “Gawd! That was a narrow clip.” As he remarked it he invariably gazed eastward over the broken sea.

The oiler, steering with one of the two oars in the boat, sometimes raised himself suddenly to keep clear of water that swirled in over the stern. It was a thin little oar and it seemed often ready to snap.

The correspondent, pulling at the other oar, watched the waves and wondered why he was there.

The injured captain, lying in the bow, was at this time buried in that profound dejection and indifference which comes, temporarily at least, to even the bravest and most enduring when, willy nilly, the firm fails, the army loses, the ship goes down. The mind of the master of a vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her; though he commanded for a day or a decade, and this captain had on him the stern impression of a scene in the greys of dawn of seven turned faces, and later a stump of a top-mast with a white ball on it that slashed to and fro at the waves, went low and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his voice. Although steady, it was, deep with mourning, and of a quality beyond oration or tears.

“Keep ‘er a little more south, Billie,” said he.

“A little more south,’ sir,” said the oiler in the stern.
A seat in this boat was not unlike a seat upon a bucking broncho, and by the same token, a broncho is not much smaller. The craft pranced and reared, and plunged like an animal. As each wave came, and she rose for it, she seemed like a horse making at a fence outrageously high. The manner of her scramble over these walls of water is a mystic thing, and, moreover, at the top of them were ordinarily these problems in white water, the foam racing down from the summit of each wave, requiring a new leap, and a leap from the air. Then, after scornfully bumping a crest, she would slide, and race, and splash down a long incline, and arrive bobbing and nodding in front of the next menace.

A singular disadvantage of the sea lies in the fact that after successfully surmounting one wave you discover that there is another behind it just as important and just as nervously anxious to do something effective in the way of swamping boats. In a ten-foot dingey one can get an idea of the resources of the sea in the line of waves that is not probable to the average experience which is never at sea in a dingey. As each slatey wall of water approached, it shut all else from the view of the men in the boat, and it was not difficult to imagine that this particular wave was the final outburst of the ocean, the last effort of the grim water. There was a terrible grace in the move of the waves, and they came in silence, save for the snarling of the crests.

In the wan light, the faces of the men must have been grey. Their eyes must have glinted in strange ways as they gazed steadily astern. Viewed from a balcony, the whole thing would doubtless have been weirdly picturesque. But the men in the boat had no time to see it, and if they had had leisure there were other things to occupy their minds. The sun swung steadily up the sky, and they knew it was broad day because the color of the sea changed from slate to emerald-green, streaked with amber lights, and the foam was like tumbling snow. The process of the breaking day was unknown to them. They were aware only of this effect upon the color of the waves that rolled toward them.

In disjointed sentences the cook and the correspondent argued as to the difference between a life-saving station and a house of refuge. The cook had said: “There’s a house of refuge just north of the Mosquito Inlet Light, and as soon as they see us, they’ll come off in their boat and pick us up.”

“As soon as who see us?” said the correspondent.

“The crew,” said the cook.

“Houses of refuge don’t have crews,” said the correspondent. “As I
understand them, they are only places where clothes and grub are stored for the benefit of shipwrecked people. They don’t carry crews.”

“Oh, yes, they do,” said the cook.

“No, they don’t,” said the correspondent.

“Well, we’re not there yet, anyhow,” said the oiler, in the stern.

“Well,” said the cook, “perhaps it’s not a house of refuge that I’m thinking of as being near Mosquito Inlet Light. Perhaps it’s a life-saving station.”

“We’re not there yet,” said the oiler, in the stern.

II

As the boat bounced from the top of each wave, the wind tore through the hair of the hatless men, and as the craft plopped her stern down again the spray splashed past them. The crest of each of these waves was a hill, from the top of which the men surveyed, for a moment, a broad tumultuous expanse, shining and wind-riven. It was probably splendid. It was probably glorious, this play of the free sea, wild with lights of emerald and white and amber.

“Bully good thing it’s an on-shore wind,” said the cook; “If not, where would we be? Wouldn’t have a show.”

“That’s right,” said the correspondent.

The busy oiler nodded his assent.

Then the captain, in the bow, chuckled in a way that expressed humor, contempt, tragedy, all in one. “Do you think We’ve got much of a show now, boys?” said he.

Whereupon the three were silent, save for a trifle of hemming and hawing. To express any particular optimism at this time they felt to be childish and stupid, but they all doubtless possessed this sense of the situation in their mind. A young man thinks doggedly at such times. On the other hand, the ethics of their condition was decidedly against any open suggestion of hopelessness. So they were silent.

“Oh, well,” said the captain, soothing his children, “We’ll get ashore all right.”
But there was that in his tone which made them think, so the oiler quoth: “Yes! If this wind holds!”

The cook was bailing: “Yes! If we don’t catch hell in the surf.”

Canton flannel gulls flew near and far. Sometimes they sat down on the sea, near patches of brown seaweed that rolled on the waves with a movement like carpets on a line in a gale. The birds sat comfortably in groups, and they were envied by some in the dingey, for the wrath of the sea was no more to them than it was to a covey of prairie chickens a thousand miles inland. Often they came very close and stared at the men with black bead-like eyes. At these times they were uncanny and sinister in their unblinking scrutiny, and the men hooted angrily at them, telling them to be gone. One came, and evidently decided to alight on the top of the captain’s head. The bird flew parallel to the boat and did not circle, but made short sidelong jumps in the air in chicken-fashion. His black eyes were wistfully fixed upon the captain’s head. “Ugly brute,” said the oiler to the bird. “You look as if you were made with a jack-knife.” The cook and the correspondent swore darkly at the creature. The captain naturally wished to knock it away with the end of the heavy painter; but he did not dare do it, because anything resembling an emphatic gesture would have capsized this freighted boat, and so with his open hand, the captain gently and carefully waved the gull away. After it had been discouraged from the pursuit the captain breathed easier on account of his hair, and others breathed easier because the bird struck their minds at this time as being somehow gruesome and ominous.

In the meantime the oiler and the correspondent rowed. And also they rowed.

They sat together in the same seat, and each rowed an oar. Then the oiler took both oars; then the correspondent took both oars; then the oiler; then the correspondent. They rowed and they rowed. The very ticklish part of the business was when the time came for the reclining one in the stern to take his turn at the oars. By the very last star of truth, it is easier to steal eggs from under a hen than it was to change seats in the dingey. First the man in the stern slid his hand along the thwart and moved with care, as if he were of Sevres. Then the man in the rowing seat slid his hand along the other thwart. It was all done with most extraordinary care. As the two sidled past each other, the whole party kept watchful eyes on the coming wave, and the captain cried: “Look out now! Steady there!”

The brown mats of seaweed that appeared from time to time were like islands, bits of earth. They were traveling, apparently, neither one way nor the other. They were, to all intents, stationary. They informed the men in the
boat that it was making progress slowly toward the land.

The captain, rearing cautiously in the bow, after the dingey soared on a great swell, said that he had seen the light-house at Mosquito Inlet. Presently the cook remarked that he had seen it. The correspondent was at the oars then, and for some reason he too wished to look at the lighthouse, but his back was toward the far shore and the waves were important, and for some time he could not seize an opportunity to turn his head. But at last there came a wave more gentle than the others, and when at the crest of it he swiftly scoured the western horizon.

“See it?” said the captain.

“No,” said the correspondent slowly, “I didn’t see anything.”

“Look again,” said the captain. He pointed. “It’s exactly in that direction.”

At the top of another wave, the correspondent did as he was bid, and this time his eyes chanced on a small still thing on the edge of the swaying horizon. It was precisely like the point of a pin. It took an anxious eye to find a lighthouse so tiny.

“Think we’ll make it, captain?”

“If this wind holds and the boat don’t swamp, we can’t do much else,” said the captain.

The little boat, lifted by each towering sea, and splashed viciously by the crests, made progress that in the absence of seaweed was not apparent to those in her. She seemed just a wee thing wallowing, miraculously top-up, at the mercy of five oceans. Occasionally, a great spread of water, like white flames, swarmed into her.

“Bail her, cook,” said the captain serenely.

“All right, captain,” said the cheerful cook.

III

It would be difficult to describe the subtle brotherhood of men that was here established on the seas. No one said that it was so. No one mentioned it. But it dwelt in the boat, and each man felt it warm him. They were a captain, an oiler, a cook, and a correspondent, and they were friends, friends in a more curiously iron-bound degree than may be common. The hurt captain, lying
against the water-jar in the bow, spoke always in a low voice and calmly, but he could never command a more ready and swiftly obedient crew than the motley three of the dingey. It was more than a mere recognition of what was best for the common safety. There was surely in it a quality that was personal and heartfelt. And after this devotion to the commander of the boat there was this comradeship that the correspondent, for instance, who had been taught to be cynical of men, knew even at the time was the best experience of his life. But no one said that it was so. No one mentioned it.

“I wish we had a sail,” remarked the captain. “We might try my overcoat on the end of an oar and give you two boys a chance to rest.” So the cook and the correspondent held the mast and spread wide the overcoat. The oiler steered, and the little boat made good way with her new rig. Sometimes the oiler had to scull sharply to keep a sea from breaking into the boat, but otherwise sailing was a success.

Meanwhile the lighthouse had been growing slowly larger. It had now almost assumed color, and appeared like a little grey shadow on the sky. The man at the oars could not be prevented from turning his head rather often to try for a glimpse of this little grey shadow.

At last, from the top of each wave the men in the tossing boat could see land. Even as the lighthouse was an upright shadow on the sky, this land seemed but a long black shadow on the sea. It certainly was thinner than paper. “We must be about opposite New Smyrna,” said the cook, who had coasted this shore often in schooners. “Captain, by the way, I believe they abandoned that life-saving station there about a year ago.”

“Did they?” said the captain.

The wind slowly died away. The cook and the correspondent were not now obliged to slave in order to hold high the oar. But the waves continued their old impetuous swooping at the dingey, and the little craft, no longer under way, struggled woundily over them. The oiler or the correspondent took the oars again.

Shipwrecks are a propos of nothing. If men could only train for them and have them occur when the men had reached pink condition, there would be less drowning at sea. Of the four in the dingey none had slept any time worth mentioning for two days and two nights previous to embarking in the dingey, and in the excitement of clambering about the deck of a foundering ship they had also forgotten to eat heartily.
For these reasons, and for others, neither the oiler nor the correspondent was fond of rowing at this time. The correspondent wondered ingenuously how in the name of all that was sane could there be people who thought it amusing to row a boat. It was not an amusement; it was a diabolical punishment, and even a genius of mental aberrations could never conclude that it was anything but a horror to the muscles and a crime against the back. He mentioned to the boat in general how the amusement of rowing struck him, and the weary-faced oiler smiled in full sympathy. Previously to the foundering, by the way, the oiler had worked double-watch in the engine-room of the ship.

"Take her easy, now, boys," said the captain. "Don't spend yourselves. If we have to run a surf you'll need all your strength, because we'll sure have to swim for it. Take your time."

Slowly the land arose from the sea. From a black line it became a line of black and a line of white, trees and sand. Finally, the captain said that he could make out a house on the shore. "That's the house of refuge, sure," said the cook. "They'll see us before long, and come out after us."

The distant lighthouse reared high. "The keeper ought to be able to make us out now, if he's looking through a glass," said the captain. "He'll notify the life-saving people."

"None of those other boats could have got ashore to give word of the wreck," said the oiler, in a low voice. "Else the lifeboat would be out hunting us."

Slowly and beautifully the land loomed out of the sea. The wind came again. It had veered from the north-east to the south-east. Finally, a new sound struck the ears of the men in the boat. It was the low thunder of the surf on the shore. "We'll never be able to make the lighthouse now," said the captain. "Swing her head a little more north, Billie," said he.

"'A little more north,' sir," said the oiler.

Whereupon the little boat turned her nose once more down the wind, and all but the oarsman watched the shore grow. Under the influence of this expansion doubt and direful apprehension was leaving the minds of the men. The management of the boat was still most absorbing, but it could not prevent a quiet cheerfulness. In an hour, perhaps, they would be ashore.

Their backbones had become thoroughly used to balancing in the boat, and they now rode this wild colt of a dingey like circus men. The
correspondent thought that he had been drenched to the skin, but happening to feel in the top pocket of his coat, he found therein eight cigars. Four of them were soaked with sea-water; four were perfectly scathless. After a search, somebody produced three dry matches, and thereupon the four waifs rode impudently in their little boat, and with an assurance of an impending rescue shining in their eyes, puffed at the big cigars and judged well and ill of all men. Everybody took a drink of water.

IV

“Cook,” remarked the captain, “there don’t seem to be any signs of life about your house of refuge.”

“No,” replied the cook. “Funny they don’t see us!”

A broad stretch of lowly coast lay before the eyes of the men. It was of dunes topped with dark vegetation. The roar of the surf was plain, and sometimes they could see the white lip of a wave as it spun up the beach. A tiny house was blocked out black upon the sky. Southward, the slim lighthouse lifted its little grey length.

Tide, wind, and waves were swinging the dingey northward. “Funny they don’t see us,” said the men.

The surf’s roar was here dulled, but its tone was, nevertheless, thunderous and mighty. As the boat swam over the great rollers, the men sat listening to this roar. “We’ll swamp sure,” said everybody.

It is fair to say here that there was not a life-saving station within twenty miles in either direction, but the men did not know this fact, and in consequence they made dark and opprobrious remarks concerning the eyesight of the nation’s life-savers. Four scowling men sat in the dingey and surpassed records in the invention of epithets.

“Funny they don’t see us.”

The lightheartedness of a former time had completely faded. To their sharpened minds it was easy to conjure pictures of all kinds of incompetency and blindness and, indeed, cowardice. There was the shore of the populous land, and it was bitter and bitter to them that from it came no sign.

“Well,” said the captain, ultimately, “I suppose we’ll have to make a try for ourselves. If we stay out here too long, we’ll none of us have strength left to swim after the boat swamps.”
And so the oiler, who was at the oars, turned the boat straight for the shore. There was a sudden tightening of muscle. There was some thinking.

“If we don’t all get ashore--” said the captain. “If we don’t all get ashore, I suppose you fellows know where to send news of my finish?”

They then briefly exchanged some addresses and admonitions. As for the reflections of the men, there was a great deal of rage in them. Perchance they might be formulated thus: “If I am going to be drowned-- if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life? It is preposterous. If this old ninny-woman, Fate, cannot do better than this, she should be deprived of the management of men’s fortunes. She is an old hen who knows not her intention. If she has decided to drown me, why did she not do it in the beginning and save me all this trouble? The whole affair is absurd... But no, she cannot mean to drown me. She dare not drown me. She cannot drown me. Not after all this work.” Afterward the man might have had an impulse to shake his fist at the clouds: “Just you drown me, now, and then hear what I call you!”

The billows that came at this time were more formidable. They seemed always just about to break and roll over the little boat in a turmoil of foam. There was a preparatory and long growl in the speech of them. No mind unused to the sea would have concluded that the dingey could ascend these sheer heights in time. The shore was still afar. The oiler was a wily surfman. “Boys,” he said swiftly, “she won’t live three minutes more, and we’re too far out to swim. Shall I take her to sea again, captain?”

“Yes! Go ahead!” said the captain.

This oiler, by a series of quick miracles, and fast and steady oarsmanship, turned the boat in the middle of the surf and took her safely to sea again.

There was a considerable silence as the boat bumped over the furrowed sea to deeper water. Then somebody in gloom spoke. “Well, anyhow, they must have seen us from the shore by now.”

The gulls went in slanting flight up the wind toward the grey desolate east. A squall, marked by dingy clouds, and clouds brick-red, like smoke from a burning building, appeared from the south-east.
“What do you think of those life-saving people? Ain't they peaches?”

“Funny they haven’t seen us.”

“Maybe they think we’re out here for sport! Maybe they think we’re fishin’. Maybe they think we’re damned fools.”

It was a long afternoon. A changed tide tried to force them southward, but the wind and wave said northward. Far ahead, where coast-line, sea, and sky formed their mighty angle, there were little dots which seemed to indicate a city on the shore.

“St. Augustine?”

The captain shook his head. “Too near Mosquito Inlet.”

And the oiler rowed, and then the correspondent rowed. Then the oiler rowed. It was a weary business. The human back can become the seat of more aches and pains than are registered in books for the composite anatomy of a regiment. It is a limited area, but it can become the theatre of innumerable muscular conflicts, tangles, wrenches, knots, and other comforts.

“Did you ever like to row, Billie?” asked the correspondent.

“No,” said the oiler. “Hang it!”

When one exchanged the rowing-seat for a place in the bottom of the boat, he suffered a bodily depression that caused him to be careless of everything save an obligation to wiggle one finger. There was cold sea-water swashing to and fro in the boat, and he lay in it. His head, pillowed on a thwart, was within an inch of the swirl of a wave crest, and sometimes a particularly obstreperous sea came in-board and drenched him once more. But these matters did not annoy him. It is almost certain that if the boat had capsized he would have tumbled comfortably out upon the ocean as if he felt sure that it was a great soft mattress.

“Look! There’s a man on the shore!”

“Where?”

“There! See ‘im? See ‘im?”

“Yes, sure! He’s walking along.”
“Now he’s stopped. Look! He’s facing us!”

“He’s waving at us!”

“So he is! By thunder!”

“Ah, now we’re all right! Now we’re all right! There’ll be a boat out here for us in half-an-hour.”

“He’s going on. He’s running. He’s going up to that house there.”

The remote beach seemed lower than the sea, and it required a searching glance to discern the little black figure. The captain saw a floating stick and they rowed to it. A bath-towel was by some weird chance in the boat, and, tying this on the stick, the captain waved it. The oarsman did not dare turn his head, so he was obliged to ask questions.

“What’s he doing now?”

“He’s standing still again. He’s looking, I think.... There he goes again. Toward the house.... Now he’s stopped again.”

“Is he waving at us?”

“No, not now! he was, though.”

“Look! There comes another man!”

“He’s running.”

“Look at him go, would you.”

“Why, he’s on a bicycle. Now he’s met the other man. They’re both waving at us. Look!”

“There comes something up the beach.”

“What the devil is that thing?”

“Why it looks like a boat.”

“Why, certainly it’s a boat.”

“No, it’s on wheels.”
“Yes, so it is. Well, that must be the life-boat. They drag them along shore on a wagon.”

“That’s the life-boat, sure.”

“No, by ----, it’s--it’s an omnibus.”

“I tell you it’s a life-boat.”

“It is not! It’s an omnibus. I can see it plain. See? One of these big hotel omnibuses.”

“By thunder, you’re right. It’s an omnibus, sure as fate. What do you suppose they are doing with an omnibus? Maybe they are going around collecting the life-crew, hey?”

“That’s it, likely. Look! There’s a fellow waving a little black flag. He’s standing on the steps of the omnibus. There come those other two fellows. Now they’re all talking together. Look at the fellow with the flag. Maybe he ain’t waving it.”

“That ain’t a flag, is it? That’s his coat. Why, certainly, that’s his coat.”

“So it is. It’s his coat. He’s taken it off and is waving it around his head. But would you look at him swing it.”

“Oh, say, there isn’t any life-saving station there. That’s just a winter resort hotel omnibus that has brought over some of the boarders to see us drown.”

“What’s that idiot with the coat mean? What’s he signaling, anyhow?”

“It looks as if he were trying to tell us to go north. There must be a life-saving station up there.”

“No! He thinks we’re fishing. Just giving us a merry hand. See? Ah, there, Willie!”

“Well, I wish I could make something out of those signals. What do you suppose he means?”

“He don’t mean anything. He’s just playing.”

“Well, if he’d just signal us to try the surf again, or to go to sea and wait, or go north, or go south, or go to hell--there would be some reason in it. But look
at him. He just stands there and keeps his coat revolving like a wheel. The ass!”

“There come more people.”

“Now there’s quite a mob. Look! Isn’t that a boat?”

“Where? Oh, I see where you mean. No, that’s no boat.”

“That fellow is still waving his coat.”

“He must think we like to see him do that. Why don’t he quit it? It don’t mean anything.”

“I don’t know. I think he is trying to make us go north. It must be that there’s a life-saving station there somewhere.”

“Say, he ain’t tired yet. Look at ‘im wave.”

“Wonder how long he can keep that up. He’s been revolving his coat ever since he caught sight of us. He’s an idiot. Why aren’t they getting men to bring a boat out? A fishing boat--one of those big yawls--could come out here all right. Why don’t he do something?”

“Oh, it’s all right, now.”

“They’ll have a boat out here for us in less than no time, now that they’ve seen us.”

A faint yellow tone came into the sky over the low land. The shadows on the sea slowly deepened. The wind bore coldness with it, and the men began to shiver.

“Holy smoke!” said one, allowing his voice to express his impious mood, “if we keep on monkeying out here! If we’ve got to flounder out here all night!”

“Oh, we’ll never have to stay here all night! Don’t you worry. They’ve seen us now, and it won’t be long before they’ll come chasing out after us.”

The shore grew dusky. The man waving a coat blended gradually into this gloom, and it swallowed in the same manner the omnibus and the group of people. The spray, when it dashed uproariously over the side, made the voyagers shrink and swear like men who were being branded.
“I’d like to catch the chump who waved the coat. I feel like soaking him one, just for luck.”

“Why? What did he do?”

“Oh, nothing, but then he seemed so damned cheerful.”

In the meantime the oiler rowed, and then the correspondent rowed, and then the oiler rowed. Grey-faced and bowed forward, they mechanically, turn by turn, plied the leaden oars. The form of the lighthouse had vanished from the southern horizon, but finally a pale star appeared, just lifting from the sea. The streaked saffron in the west passed before the all-merging darkness, and the sea to the east was black. The land had vanished, and was expressed only by the low and drear thunder of the surf.

“If I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees? Was I brought here merely to have my nose dragged away as I was about to nibble the sacred cheese of life?”

The patient captain, drooped over the water-jar, was sometimes obliged to speak to the oarsman.

“Keep her head up! Keep her head up!”

“Keep her head up,’ sir.” The voices were weary and low.

This was surely a quiet evening. All save the oarsman lay heavily and listlessly in the boat’s bottom. As for him, his eyes were just capable of noting the tall black waves that swept forward in a most sinister silence, save for an occasional subdued growl of a crest.

The cook’s head was on a thwart, and he looked without interest at the water under his nose. He was deep in other scenes. Finally he spoke. “Billie,” he murmured, dreamfully, “what kind of pie do you like best?”

V

“Pie,” said the oiler and the correspondent, agitatedly. “Don’t talk about those things, blast you!”

“Well,” said the cook, “I was just thinking about ham sandwiches, and--”
A night on the sea in an open boat is a long night. As darkness settled finally, the shine of the light, lifting from the sea in the south, changed to full gold. On the northern horizon a new light appeared, a small bluish gleam on the edge of the waters. These two lights were the furniture of the world. Otherwise there was nothing but waves.

Two men huddled in the stern, and distances were so magnificent in the dingey that the rower was enabled to keep his feet partly warmed by thrusting them under his companions. Their legs indeed extended far under the rowing-seat until they touched the feet of the captain forward. Sometimes, despite the efforts of the tired oarsman, a wave came piling into the boat, an icy wave of the night, and the chilling water soaked them anew. They would twist their bodies for a moment and groan, and sleep the dead sleep once more, while the water in the boat gurgled about them as the craft rocked.

The plan of the oiler and the correspondent was for one to row until he lost the ability, and then arouse the other from his sea-water couch in the bottom of the boat.

The oiler plied the oars until his head drooped forward, and the overpowering sleep blinded him. And he rowed yet afterward. Then he touched a man in the bottom of the boat, and called his name. “Will you spell me for a little while?” he said, meekly.

“Sure, Billie,” said the correspondent, awakening and dragging himself to a sitting position. They exchanged places carefully, and the oiler, cuddling down in the sea-water at the cook’s side, seemed to go to sleep instantly.

The particular violence of the sea had ceased. The waves came without snarling. The obligation of the man at the oars was to keep the boat headed so that the tilt of the rollers would not capsize her, and to preserve her from filling when the crests rushed past. The black waves were silent and hard to be seen in the darkness. Often one was almost upon the boat before the oarsman was aware.

In a low voice the correspondent addressed the captain. He was not sure that the captain was awake, although this iron man seemed to be always awake. “Captain, shall I keep her making for that light north, sir?”

The same steady voice answered him. “Yes. Keep it about two points off the port bow.”
The cook had tied a life-belt around himself in order to get even the warmth which this clumsy cork contrivance could donate, and he seemed almost stove-like when a rower, whose teeth invariably chattered wildly as soon as he ceased his labor, dropped down to sleep.

The correspondent, as he rowed, looked down at the two men sleeping under-foot. The cook’s arm was around the oiler’s shoulders, and, with their fragmentary clothing and haggard faces, they were the babes of the sea, a grotesque rendering of the old babes in the wood.

Later he must have grown stupid at his work, for suddenly there was a growling of water, and a crest came with a roar and a swash into the boat, and it was a wonder that it did not set the cook afloat in his life-belt. The cook continued to sleep, but the oiler sat up, blinking his eyes and shaking with the new cold.

“Oh, I’m awful sorry, Billie,” said the correspondent contritely.

“That’s all right, old boy,” said the oiler, and lay down again and was asleep.

Presently it seemed that even the captain dozed, and the correspondent thought that he was the one man afloat on all the oceans. The wind had a voice as it came over the waves, and it was sadder than the end.

There was a long, loud swishing astern of the boat, and a gleaming trail of phosphorescence, like blue flame, was furrowed on the black waters. It might have been made by a monstrous knife.

Then there came a stillness, while the correspondent breathed with the open mouth and looked at the sea.

Suddenly there was another swish and another long flash of bluish light, and this time it was alongside the boat, and might almost have been reached with an oar. The correspondent saw an enormous fin speed like a shadow through the water, hurling the crystalline spray and leaving the long glowing trail.

The correspondent looked over his shoulder at the captain. His face was hidden, and he seemed to be asleep. He looked at the babes of the sea. They certainly were asleep. So, being bereft of sympathy, he leaned a little way to one side and swore softly into the sea.

But the thing did not then leave the vicinity of the boat. Ahead or astern,
on one side or the other, at intervals long or short, fled the long sparkling
streak, and there was to be heard the whirroo of the dark fin. The speed and
power of the thing was greatly to be admired. It cut the water like a gigantic
and keen projectile.

The presence of this biding thing did not affect the man with the same
horror that it would if he had been a picnicker. He simply looked at the sea
dully and swore in an undertone.

Nevertheless, it is true that he did not wish to be alone. He wished one of
his companions to awaken by chance and keep him company with it. But the
captain hung motionless over the water-jar, and the oiler and the cook in the
bottom of the boat were plunged in slumber.

VI

“If I am going to be drowned--if I am going to be drowned--if I am going to
be drowned, why, in the name of the seven mad gods who rule the sea, was I
allowed to come thus far and contemplate sand and trees?”

During this dismal night, it may be remarked that a man would conclude
that it was really the intention of the seven mad gods to drown him, despite
the abominable injustice of it. For it was certainly an abominable injustice
to drown a man who had worked so hard, so hard. The man felt it would
be a crime most unnatural. Other people had drowned at sea since galleys
swarmed with painted sails, but still—

When it occurs to a man that nature does not regard him as important,
and that she feels she would not maim the universe by disposing of him, he
at first wishes to throw bricks at the temple, and he hates deeply the fact that
there are no brick and no temples. Any visible expression of nature would
surely be pelleted with his jeers.

Then, if there be no tangible thing to hoot he feels, perhaps, the desire to
confront a personification and indulge in pleas, bowed to one knee, and with
hands supplicant, saying: “Yes, but I love myself.”

A high cold star on a winter’s night is the word he feels that she says to
him. Thereafter he knows the pathos of his situation.

The men in the dingey had not discussed these matters, but each had, no
doubt, reflected upon them in silence and according to his mind. There was
seldom any expression upon their faces save the general one of complete
weariness. Speech was devoted to the business of the boat.
To chime the notes of his emotion, a verse mysteriously entered the correspondent’s head. He had even forgotten that he had forgotten this verse, but it suddenly was in his mind.

“A soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers,
There was a lack of woman’s nursing, there was dearth of woman’s tears;
But a comrade stood beside him, and he took that comrade’s hand,
And he said: ‘I shall never see my own, my native land.’”

In his childhood, the correspondent had been made acquainted with the fact that a soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers, but he had never regarded the fact as important. Myriads of his school-fellows had informed him of the soldier’s plight, but the dinning had naturally ended by making him perfectly indifferent. He had never considered it his affair that a soldier of the Legion lay dying in Algiers, nor had it appeared to him as a matter for sorrow. It was less to him than the breaking of a pencil’s point.

Now, however, it quaintly came to him as a human, living thing. It was no longer merely a picture of a few throes in the breast of a poet, meanwhile drinking tea and warming his feet at the grate; it was an actuality—stern, mournful, and fine.

The correspondent plainly saw the soldier. He lay on the sand with his feet out straight and still. While his pale left hand was upon his chest in an attempt to thwart the going of his life, the blood came between his fingers. In the far Algerian distance, a city of low square forms was set against a sky that was faint with the last sunset hues. The correspondent, plying the oars and dreaming of the slow and slower movements of the lips of the soldier, was moved by a profound and perfectly impersonal comprehension. He was sorry for the soldier of the Legion who lay dying in Algiers.

The thing which had followed the boat and waited, had evidently grown bored at the delay. There was no longer to be heard the slash of the cut-water, and there was no longer the flame of the long trail. The light in the north still glimmered, but it was apparently no nearer to the boat. Sometimes the boom of the surf rang in the correspondent’s ears, and he turned the craft seaward then and rowed harder. Southward, some one had evidently built a watch-fire on the beach. It was too low and too far to be seen, but it made a shimmering, roseate reflection upon the bluff back of it, and this could be discerned from the boat. The wind came stronger, and sometimes a wave suddenly raged out like a mountain-cat, and there was to be seen the sheen and sparkle of a broken crest.
The captain, in the bow, moved on his water-jar and sat erect. "Pretty long night," he observed to the correspondent. He looked at the shore. "Those life-saving people take their time."

"Did you see that shark playing around?"

"Yes, I saw him. He was a big fellow, all right."

"Wish I had known you were awake."

Later the correspondent spoke into the bottom of the boat.

"Billie!" There was a slow and gradual disentanglement. "Billie, will you spell me?"

"Sure," said the oiler.

As soon as the correspondent touched the cold comfortable sea-water in the bottom of the boat, and had huddled close to the cook's life-belt he was deep in sleep, despite the fact that his teeth played all the popular airs. This sleep was so good to him that it was but a moment before he heard a voice call his name in a tone that demonstrated the last stages of exhaustion. "Will you spell me?"

"Sure, Billie."

The light in the north had mysteriously vanished, but the correspondent took his course from the wide-awake captain.

Later in the night they took the boat farther out to sea, and the captain directed the cook to take one oar at the stern and keep the boat facing the seas. He was to call out if he should hear the thunder of the surf. This plan enabled the oiler and the correspondent to get respite together. "We'll give those boys a chance to get into shape again," said the captain. They curled down and, after a few preliminary chatterings and trembles, slept once more the dead sleep. Neither knew they had bequeathed to the cook the company of another shark, or perhaps the same shark.

As the boat caroused on the waves, spray occasionally bumped over the side and gave them a fresh soaking, but this had no power to break their repose. The ominous slash of the wind and the water affected them as it would have affected mummies.

"Boys," said the cook, with the notes of every reluctance in his voice, "she's
drifted in pretty close. I guess one of you had better take her to sea again.”
The correspondent, aroused, heard the crash of the toppled crests.

As he was rowing, the captain gave him some whisky-and-water, and this steadied the chills out of him. “If I ever get ashore and anybody shows me even a photograph of an oar—”

At last there was a short conversation.

“Billie.... Billie, will you spell me?”

“Sure,” said the oiler.

VII

When the correspondent again opened his eyes, the sea and the sky were each of the grey hue of the dawning. Later, carmine and gold was painted upon the waters. The morning appeared finally, in its splendor, with a sky of pure blue, and the sunlight flamed on the tips of the waves.

On the distant dunes were set many little black cottages, and a tall white windmill reared above them. No man, nor dog, nor bicycle appeared on the beach. The cottages might have formed a deserted village.

The voyagers scanned the shore. A conference was held in the boat. “Well,” said the captain, “if no help is coming we might better try a run through the surf right away. If we stay out here much longer we will be too weak to do anything for ourselves at all.” The others silently acquiesced in this reasoning. The boat was headed for the beach. The correspondent wondered if none ever ascended the tall wind-tower, and if then they never looked seaward. This tower was a giant, standing with its back to the plight of the ants. It represented in a degree, to the correspondent, the serenity of nature amid the struggles of the individual--nature in the wind, and nature in the vision of men. She did not seem cruel to him then, nor beneficent, nor treacherous, nor wise. But she was indifferent, flatly indifferent. It is, perhaps, plausible that a man in this situation, impressed with the unconcern of the universe, should see the innumerable flaws of his life, and have them taste wickedly in his mind and wish for another chance. A distinction between right and wrong seems absurdly clear to him, then, in this new ignorance of the grave-edge, and he understands that if he were given another opportunity he would mend his conduct and his words, and be better and brighter during an introduction or at a tea.

“Now, boys,” said the captain, “she is going to swamp, sure. All we can do
is to work her in as far as possible, and then when she swamps, pile out and scramble for the beach. Keep cool now, and don’t jump until she swamps sure.”

The oiler took the oars. Over his shoulders he scanned the surf. “Captain,” he said, “I think I’d better bring her about, and keep her head-on to the seas and back her in.”

“All right, Billie,” said the captain. “Back her in.” The oiler swung the boat then and, seated in the stern, the cook and the correspondent were obliged to look over their shoulders to contemplate the lonely and indifferent shore.

The monstrous in-shore rollers heaved the boat high until the men were again enabled to see the white sheets of water scudding up the slanted beach. “We won’t get in very close,” said the captain. Each time a man could wrest his attention from the rollers, he turned his glance toward the shore, and in the expression of the eyes during this contemplation there was a singular quality. The correspondent, observing the others, knew that they were not afraid, but the full meaning of their glances was shrouded.

As for himself, he was too tired to grapple fundamentally with the fact. He tried to coerce his mind into thinking of it, but the mind was dominated at this time by the muscles, and the muscles said they did not care. It merely occurred to him that if he should drown it would be a shame.

There were no hurried words, no pallor, no plain agitation. The men simply looked at the shore. “Now, remember to get well clear of the boat when you jump,” said the captain.

Seaward the crest of a roller suddenly fell with a thunderous crash, and the long white comber came roaring down upon the boat.

“Steady now,” said the captain. The men were silent. They turned their eyes from the shore to the comber and waited. The boat slid up the incline, leaped at the furious top, bounced over it, and swung down the long back of the wave. Some water had been shipped and the cook bailed it out.

But the next crest crashed also. The tumbling, boiling flood of white water caught the boat and whirled it almost perpendicular. Water swarmed in from all sides. The correspondent had his hands on the gunwale at this time, and when the water entered at that place he swiftly withdrew his fingers, as if he objected to wetting them.

The little boat, drunken with this weight of water, reeled and snuggled
deeper into the sea.

“Bail her out, cook! Bail her out,” said the captain.

“All right, captain,” said the cook.

“Now, boys, the next one will do for us, sure,” said the oiler. “Mind to jump clear of the boat.”

The third wave moved forward, huge, furious, implacable. It fairly swallowed the dingey, and almost simultaneously the men tumbled into the sea. A piece of lifebelt had lain in the bottom of the boat, and as the correspondent went overboard he held this to his chest with his left hand.

The January water was icy, and he reflected immediately that it was colder than he had expected to find it on the coast of Florida. This appeared to his dazed mind as a fact important enough to be noted at the time. The coldness of the water was sad; it was tragic. This fact was somehow so mixed and confused with his opinion of his own situation that it seemed almost a proper reason for tears. The water was cold.

When he came to the surface he was conscious of little but the noisy water. Afterward he saw his companions in the sea. The oiler was ahead in the race. He was swimming strongly and rapidly. Off to the correspondent’s left, the cook’s great white and corked back bulged out of the water, and in the rear the captain was hanging with his one good hand to the keel of the overturned dingey.

There is a certain immovable quality to a shore, and the correspondent wondered at it amid the confusion of the sea.

It seemed also very attractive, but the correspondent knew that it was a long journey, and he paddled leisurely. The piece of life-preserver lay under him, and sometimes he whirled down the incline of a wave as if he were on a handsled.

But finally he arrived at a place in the sea where travel was beset with difficulty. He did not pause swimming to inquire what manner of current had caught him, but there his progress ceased. The shore was set before him like a bit of scenery on a stage, and he looked at it and understood with his eyes each detail of it.

As the cook passed, much farther to the left, the captain was calling to him, “Turn over on your back, cook! Turn over on your back and use the oar.”
“All right, sir.” The cook turned on his back, and, paddling with an oar, went ahead as if he were a canoe.

Presently the boat also passed to the left of the correspondent with the captain clinging with one hand to the keel. He would have appeared like a man raising himself to look over a board fence, if it were not for the extraordinary gymnastics of the boat. The correspondent marvelled that the captain could still hold to it.

They passed on, nearer to shore--the oiler, the cook, the captain--and following them went the water-jar, bouncing gaily over the seas.

The correspondent remained in the grip of this strange new enemy--a current. The shore, with its white slope of sand and its green bluff, topped with little silent cottages, was spread like a picture before him. It was very near to him then, but he was impressed as one who in a gallery looks at a scene from Brittany or Holland.

He thought: “I am going to drown? Can it be possible Can it be possible? Can it be possible?” Perhaps an individual must consider his own death to be the final phenomenon of nature.

But later a wave perhaps whirled him out of this small, deadly current, for he found suddenly that he could again make progress toward the shore. Later still, he was aware that the captain, clinging with one hand to the keel of the dingey, had his face turned away from the shore and toward him, and was calling his name. “Come to the boat! Come to the boat!”

In his struggle to reach the captain and the boat, he reflected that when one gets properly wearied, drowning must really be a comfortable arrangement, a cessation of hostilities accompanied by a large degree of relief, and he was glad of it, for the main thing in his mind for some months had been horror of the temporary agony. He did not wish to be hurt.

Presently he saw a man running along the shore. He was undressing with most remarkable speed. Coat, trousers, shirt, everything flew magically off him.

“Come to the boat,” called the captain.

“All right, captain.” As the correspondent paddled, he saw the captain let himself down to bottom and leave the boat. Then the correspondent performed his one little marvel of the voyage. A large wave caught him and
flung him with ease and supreme speed completely over the boat and far beyond it. It struck him even then as an event in gymnastics, and a true miracle of the sea. An over-turned boat in the surf is not a plaything to a swimming man.

The correspondent arrived in water that reached only to his waist, but his condition did not enable him to stand for more than a moment. Each wave knocked him into a heap, and the under-tow pulled at him.

Then he saw the man who had been running and undressing, and undressing and running, come bounding into the water. He dragged ashore the cook, and then waded towards the captain, but the captain waved him away, and sent him to the correspondent. He was naked, naked as a tree in winter, but a halo was about his head, and he shone like a saint. He gave a strong pull, and a long drag, and a bully heave at the correspondent’s hand. The correspondent, schooled in the minor formulae, said: “Thanks, old man.” But suddenly the man cried: “What’s that?” He pointed a swift finger. The correspondent said: “Go.”

In the shallows, face downward, lay the oiler. His forehead touched sand that was periodically, between each wave, clear of the sea.

The correspondent did not know all that transpired afterward. When he achieved safe ground he fell, striking the sand with each particular part of his body. It was as if he had dropped from a roof, but the thud was grateful to him.

It seems that instantly the beach was populated with men with blankets, clothes, and flasks, and women with coffeepots and all the remedies sacred to their minds. The welcome of the land to the men from the sea was warm and generous, but a still and dripping shape was carried slowly up the beach, and the land’s welcome for it could only be the different and sinister hospitality of the grave.

When it came night, the white waves paced to and fro in the moonlight, and the wind brought the sound of the great sea’s voice to the men on shore, and they felt that they could then be interpreters.
Charles Chesnutt (1858-1932)

Charles Waddell Chesnutt (June 20, 1858 – November 15, 1932) was an African-American author, essayist, political activist and lawyer, best known for his novels and short stories exploring complex issues of racial and social identity in the post-Civil War South. Many families of free people of color were formed in the colonial and early Federal period; some attained education and property; in addition there were many mixed-race slaves, who as freedmen after the war were part of the complex society of the South.

Chesnutt was born in Cleveland, Ohio, to Andrew Chesnutt and Ann Maria (née Sampson) Chesnutt, both “free persons of color” from Fayetteville, North Carolina. His paternal grandfather was known to be a white slaveholder, and Chesnutt likely had other white ancestors. He identified as African American but noted that he was seven-eighths white. Given his majority-European ancestry, Chesnutt could “pass” as a white man, but he never chose to do so. In many southern states at the time of his birth, Chesnutt would have been considered legally white if he had chosen to identify so. By contrast, under the one drop rule later adopted into law by the 1920s in most of the South, he would have been classified as legally black because of some known African ancestry.

After the end of the Civil War and resulting emancipation, in 1867 the Chesnutt family returned to Fayetteville; Charles was nine years old. His parents ran a grocery store, but it failed because of his father’s poor business practices and the struggling economy of the postwar South. By the age of 14, Charles was a pupil-teacher at the Howard School, one of many founded for black students by the Freedmen’s Bureau during the Reconstruction era.

Chesnutt continued to study and teach. He eventually was promoted to assistant principal of the normal school in Fayetteville, one of a number of historically black colleges established for the training of black teachers. The normal school developed into Fayetteville State University. Freedmen made education a priority during the nineteenth century. Reconstruction legislatures had created the first systems of public education in the states of the South, but they made them segregated as part of the price of passage. States hired black teachers for black students. In 1878, at the age of 20, Chesnutt married Susan Perry. They moved to New York City. He wanted to escape the prejudice and poverty of the South, as well as to pursue a literary career. After six months, the Chesnutts moved to Cleveland.
In 1887 in Cleveland, Chesnutt read the law and passed the bar exam. Chesnutt had learned stenography as a young man in North Carolina. He established what became a lucrative court reporting (legal stenography) business, which made him “financially prosperous.” Chesnutt also began writing stories, which were published by top-ranked national magazines. These included The Atlantic Monthly, which in August 1887 published his first short story, “The Goophered Grapevine.” It was the first work by an African American to be published by The Atlantic. His first book was a collection of short stories entitled The Conjure Woman, published in 1899. These stories featured black characters who spoke in Negro dialect, as was popular in much contemporary southern literature portraying the antebellum years in the South, as well as the postwar period. That year he published another short story collection, The Wife of His Youth and Other Stories of the Color-Line (1899), which included the title story, as well as “The Passing of Grandison,” and others. These overturned contemporary ideas about the behavior of slaves, and their seeking of freedom, as well as raising new issues about African-American culture. Atlantic editors strongly encouraged Chesnutt in his writing, and he had a 20-year relationship with the magazine.

Chesnutt’s stories were more complex than those of many of his contemporaries. He wrote about characters dealing with difficult issues of mixed race, “passing,” illegitimacy, racial identities, and social place throughout his career. As in “The Wife of His Youth,” Chesnutt explored issues of color and class preference within the black community, including among longtime free people of color in northern towns. The issues were especially pressing during the social volatility of Reconstruction and late 19th-century southern society.

Chesnutt continued writing short stories and also completed a biography of the abolitionist Frederick Douglass. Encouraged by Atlantic editors, Chestnutt moved to the larger novel form. The magazine’s press published his first novel, The House behind the Cedars (1900). His Marrow of Tradition (1901) was based on the Wilmington Massacre of 1898, when whites took over the city, attacking and killing many blacks, and ousting the elected biracial government. This was the only coup d’état in United States history. Eric Sundquist, in his book To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Culture (1993), described the novel as “probably the most astute political-historical novel of its day,” both in recounting the massacre and reflecting the complicated social times in which Chesnutt wrote it.

Because his novels posed a more direct challenge to current sociopolitical conditions, they were not as popular among readers as his stories, which had portrayed antebellum society. But, among the era’s literary writers, Chesnutt was well respected. For instance, in 1905, Chesnutt was invited to Mark
Twain’s 70th-birthday party in New York City. Although Chesnutt’s stories met with critical acclaim, poor sales of his novels doomed his hopes of a self-supporting literary career. His last novel was published in 1905. In 1906, his play Mrs. Darcy’s Daughter was produced, but it was also a commercial failure. Between 1906 and his death in 1932, Chesnutt wrote and published little, except for a few short stories and essays.

In style and subject matter, the writings of Charles Chesnutt straddle the divide between the local color school of American writing and literary realism.

In *The Conjure Woman* (1899), the lead character Uncle Julius, a freed slave, entertains a white couple from the North, who have moved to the farm, with fantastical tales of antebellum plantation life. Julius’ tales feature such supernatural elements as haunting, transfiguration, and conjuring, which were typical of Southern African-American folk tales. But Uncle Julius is also telling the stories in ways crafted to achieve his own goals and care for his circle. While Julius’s tales recall the Uncle Remus tales published by Joel Chandler Harris, they differ in that Uncle Julius’ tales offer oblique or coded commentary on the psychological and social effects of slavery and racial inequality. While controversy exists over whether Chesnutt’s Uncle Julius stories reaffirmed stereotypical views of African-Americans, most critics contend that their allegorical critiques of racial injustice took them to a different level. Seven of the Uncle Julius tales were collected in the *The Conjure Woman*. Chesnutt wrote a total of fourteen Uncle Julius tales, the remainder of which were later collected in *The Conjure Woman and Other Conjure Tales*, published posthumously in 1993.

Starting in 1901, Chesnutt turned more energies to his court reporting business and, increasingly, to social and political activism. Beginning in 1910, he served on the General Committee of the newly founded National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). Working with W. E. B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington, he became one of the early 20th century’s most prominent activists and commentators. Chesnutt died on November 15, 1932, at the age of 74. He was interred in Cleveland’s Lake View Cemetery.

-adapted from Wikipedia
THE GOOPHERED GRAPEVINE

Some years ago my wife was in poor health, and our family doctor, in whose skill and honesty I had implicit confidence, advised a change of climate. I shared, from an unprofessional standpoint, his opinion that the raw winds, the chill rains, and the violent changes of temperature that characterized the winters in the region of the Great Lakes tended to aggravate my wife’s difficulty, and would undoubtedly shorten her life if she remained exposed to them. The doctor’s advice was that we seek, not a temporary place of sojourn, but a permanent residence, in a warmer and more equable climate. I was engaged at the time in grape-culture in northern Ohio, and, as I liked the business and had given it much study, I decided to look for some other locality suitable for carrying it on. I thought of sunny France, of sleepy Spain, of Southern California, but there were objections to them all. It occurred to me that I might find what I wanted in some one of our own Southern States. It was a sufficient time after the war for conditions in the South to have become somewhat settled; and I was enough of a pioneer to start a new industry, if I could not find a place where grape-culture had been tried. I wrote to a cousin who had gone into the turpentine business in central North Carolina. He assured me, in response to my inquiries, that no better place could be found in the South than the State and neighborhood where he lived; the climate was perfect for health, and, in conjunction with the soil, ideal for grape-culture; labor was cheap, and land could be bought for a mere song. He gave us a cordial invitation to come and visit him while we looked into the matter. We accepted the invitation, and after several days of leisurely travel, the last hundred miles of which were up a river on a sidewheel steamer, we reached our destination, a quaint old town, which I shall call Patesville, because, for one reason, that is not its name. There was a red brick market-house in the public square, with a tall tower, which held a four-faced clock that struck the hours, and from which there pealed out a curfew at nine o’clock. There were two or three hotels, a court-house, a jail, stores, offices, and all the appurtenances of a county seat and a commercial emporium; for while Patesville numbered only four or five thousand inhabitants, of all shades of complexion, it was one of the principal towns in North Carolina, and had a considerable trade in cotton and naval stores. This business activity was not immediately apparent to my unaccustomed eyes. Indeed, when I first saw the town, there brooded over it a calm that seemed almost sabbatic in its restfulness, though I learned later on that underneath its somnolent exterior the deeper currents of life—love and hatred, joy and despair, ambition and avarice, faith and friendship—flowed not less steadily than in livelier latitudes.
We found the weather delightful at that season, the end of summer, and were hospitably entertained. Our host was a man of means and evidently regarded our visit as a pleasure, and we were therefore correspondingly at our ease, and in a position to act with the coolness of judgment desirable in making so radical a change in our lives. My cousin placed a horse and buggy at our disposal, and himself acted as our guide until I became somewhat familiar with the country.

I found that grape-culture, while it had never been carried on to any great extent, was not entirely unknown in the neighborhood. Several planters thereabouts had attempted it on a commercial scale, in former years, with greater or less success; but like most Southern industries, it had felt the blight of war and had fallen into desuetude.

I went several times to look at a place that I thought might suit me. It was a plantation of considerable extent, that had formerly belonged to a wealthy man by the name of McAdoo. The estate had been for years involved in litigation between disputing heirs, during which period shiftless cultivation had well-nigh exhausted the soil. There had been a vineyard of some extent on the place, but it had not been attended to since the war, and had lapsed into utter neglect. The vines—here partly supported by decayed and broken-down trellises, there twining themselves among the branches of the slender saplings which had sprung up among them—grew in wild and unpruned luxuriance, and the few scattered grapes they bore were the undisputed prey of the first comer. The site was admirably adapted to grape-raising; the soil, with a little attention, could not have been better; and with the native grape, the luscious scuppernong, as my main reliance in the beginning, I felt sure that I could introduce and cultivate successfully a number of other varieties.

One day I went over with my wife to show her the place. We drove out of the town over a long wooden bridge that spanned a spreading mill-pond, passed the long whitewashed fence surrounding the county fair-ground, and struck into a road so sandy that the horse’s feet sank to the fetlocks. Our route lay partly up hill and partly down, for we were in the sand-hill county; we drove past cultivated farms, and then by abandoned fields grown up in scrub-oak and short-leaved pine, and once or twice through the solemn aisles of the virgin forest, where the tall pines, well-nigh meeting over the narrow road, shut out the sun, and wrapped us in cloistral solitude. Once, at a cross-roads, I was in doubt as to the turn to take, and we sat there waiting ten minutes—we had already caught some of the native infection of restfulness—for some human being to come along, who could direct us on our way. At length a little negro girl appeared, walking straight as an arrow, with a piggin full of water on her head. After a little patient investigation, necessary to overcome the child’s shyness, we learned what we wished to know, and at the
end of about five miles from the town reached our destination.

We drove between a pair of decayed gateposts—the gate itself had long since disappeared—and up a straight sandy lane, between two lines of rotting rail fence, partly concealed by jimson-weeds and briers, to the open space where a dwelling-house had once stood, evidently a spacious mansion, if we might judge from the ruined chimneys that were still standing, and the brick pillars on which the sills rested. The house itself, we had been informed, had fallen a victim to the fortunes of war.

We alighted from the buggy, walked about the yard for a while, and then wandered off into the adjoining vineyard. Upon Annie’s complaining of weariness I led the way back to the yard, where a pine log, lying under a spreading elm, afforded a shady though somewhat hard seat. One end of the log was already occupied by a venerable-looking colored man. He held on his knees a hat full of grapes, over which he was smacking his lips with great gusto, and a pile of grapeskins near him indicated that the performance was no new thing. We approached him at an angle from the rear, and were close to him before he perceived us. He respectfully rose as we drew near, and was moving away, when I begged him to keep his seat.

“Don’t let us disturb you,” I said. “There is plenty of room for us all.”

He resumed his seat with somewhat of embarrassment. While he had been standing, I had observed that he was a tall man, and, though slightly bowed by the weight of years, apparently quite vigorous. He was not entirely black, and this fact, together with the quality of his hair, which was about six inches long and very bushy, except on the top of his head, where he was quite bald, suggested a slight strain of other than negro blood. There was a shrewdness in his eyes, too, which was not altogether African, and which, as we afterwards learned from experience, was indicative of a corresponding shrewdness in his character. He went on eating the grapes, but did not seem to enjoy himself quite so well as he had apparently done before he became aware of our presence.

“Do you live around here?” I asked, anxious to put him at his ease.

“Yas, suh. I lives des ober yander, behine de nex’ san’-hill, on de Lumberton plank-road.”

“Do you know anything about the time when this vineyard was cultivated?”

“Lawd bless you, suh, I knows all about it. Dey ain’ na’er a man in dis
settlement w’at won’ tell you ole Julius McAdoo ‘uz bawn en raise’ on dis yer same plantation. Is you de Norv’n gemman w’at’s gwine ter buy de ole vimya’d?’

“I am looking at it,” I replied; “but I don’t know that I shall care to buy unless I can be reasonably sure of making something out of it.”

“Well, suh, you is a stranger ter me, en I is a stranger ter you, en we is bofe strangers ter one anudder, but ‘f I ‘uz in yo’ place, I wouldn’ buy dis vimya’d.”

“Why not?” I asked.

“Well, I dunno whe’r you b’lieves in cunj’in’ er not,—some er de w’ite folks don’t, er says dey don’t,—but de truf er de matter is dat dis yer ole vimya’d is goophered.”

“Is what?” I asked, not grasping the meaning of this unfamiliar word.

“Is goophered,—cunju’d, bewitch.”

He imparted this information with such solemn earnestness, and with such an air of confidential mystery, that I felt somewhat interested, while Annie was evidently much impressed, and drew closer to me.

“How do you know it is bewitched?” I asked.

“I wouldn’ spec’ fer you ter b’lieve me ‘less you know all ‘bout de fac’s. But ef you en young miss dere doan’ min’ lis’nin’ ter a ole nigger run on a minute er two w’ile you er restin’, I kin ‘splain to you how it all happen’.”

We assured him that we would be glad to hear how it all happened, and he began to tell us. At first the current of his memory—or imagination—seemed somewhat sluggish; but as his embarrassment wore off, his language flowed more freely, and the story acquired perspective and coherence. As he became more and more absorbed in the narrative, his eyes assumed a dreamy expression, and he seemed to lose sight of his auditors, and to be living over again in monologue his life on the old plantation.

“Ole Mars Dugal’ McAdoo,” he began, “bought dis place long many years befo’ de wah, en I’member well w’en he sot out all dis yer part er de plantation in scuppernon’s. De vimes growed monst’us fas’, en Mars Dugal’ made a thousan’ gallon er scuppernon’ wine eve’y year.

“Now, ef dey’s an’thing a nigger lub, nex’ ter ‘possum, en chick’n, en
watermillyums, it's scuppernon's. Dey ain' nuffin dat kin stan' up side'n de scuppernon' fer sweetness; sugar ain't a suckumstance ter scuppernon'. W'en de season is nigh 'bout ober, en de grapes begin ter swivel up des a little wid de wrinkles er ole age,—w'en de skin git sof' en brown,—den de scuppernon' make you smack yo' lip en roll yo' eye en wush fer mo'; so I reckon it ain' very 'stonishin' dat niggers lub scuppernon'.

“Dey wuz a sight er niggers in de nabershood er de vimya'd. Dere wuz ole Mars Henry Brayboy's niggers, en ole Mars Jeems McLean's niggers, en Mars Dugal's own niggers; den de wuz a settlement er free niggers en po' buckrahs down by de Wim'I'lon Road, en Mars Dugal' had de only vimya'd in de nabershood. I reckon it ain' so much so nowadays, but befo' de wah, in slab'ry times, a nigger did n' mine goin' f' er ten mile in a night, w'en dey wuz sump'n good ter eat at de yuther een'.

“So atter a w'ile Mars Dugal' begin ter miss his scuppernon's. Co'se he 'cuse' de niggers er it, but dey all 'nied it ter de las'. Mars Dugal' sot spring guns en steel traps, en he en de oberseah sot up nights once't er twice't, tel one night Mars Dugal'—he 'uz a monst'us keerless man—got his leg shot full er cow-peas. But somehow er nudder dey could n' nebber ketch none er de niggers. I dunner how it happen, but it happen des like I tell you, en de grapes kep' on a-goin' des de same.

“But bimeby ole Mars Dugal' fix' up a plan ter stop it. Dey wuz a cunjuh 'oman livin' down 'mong's de free niggers on de Wim'I'lon Road, en all de darkies fum Rockfish ter Beaver Crick wuz feared er her. She could wuk de mos' powerfulles' kin' er goopher,—could make people hab fits, er rheumatiz, er make 'em des dwinel away en die; en dey say she went out ridin' de niggers at night, fer she wuz a witch 'sides bein' a cunjuh 'oman. Mars Dugal' hearn 'bout Aun' Peggy's doin's, en begun ter 'flect whe'r er no he could n' git her ter he'p him keep de niggers off'n de grapevimes. One day in de spring er de year, ole miss pack' up a basket er chick'n en pou'n'-cake, en a bottle er scuppernon' wine, en Mars Dugal' tuk it in his buggy en driv ober ter Aun' Peggy's cabin. He tuk de basket in, en had a long talk wid Aun' Peggy.

“De nex' day Aun' Peggy come up ter de vimya'd. De niggers seed her slippin' 'roun', en dey soon foun' out what she 'uz doin' dere. Mars Dugal' had hi'ed her ter goopher de grapevimes. She sa'ntered 'roun' 'mong's de vimes, en tuk a leaf fum dis one, en a grape-hull fum dat one, en a grape-seed fum anudder one; en den a little twig fum here, en a little pinch er dirt fum dere,—en put it all in a big black bottle, wid a snake's toof en a speckle' hen's gall en some ha'rs fum a black cat's tail, en den fill' de bottle wid scuppernon' wine. Wen she got de goopher all ready en fix', she tuk 'n went out in de woods en buried it under de root uv a red oak tree, en den come back en tole one er
de niggers she done goopher de grapevimes, en a’er a nigger w’at eat dem grapes ‘ud be sho ter die inside’n twel’ mont’s.

“Atter dat de niggers let de scuppernon’s ‘lone, en Mars Dugal’ did n’ hab no ‘casion ter fine no mo’ fault; en de season wuz mos’ gone, w’en a strange gemman stop at de plantation one night ter see Mars Dugal’ on some business; en his coachman, seein’ de scuppernon’s growin’ so nice en sweet, slip ‘roun’ behine de smoke-house, en et all de scuppernon’s he could hole. Nobody did n’ notice it at de time, but dat night, on de way home, de gemman’s hoss runned away en kill’ de coachman. W’en we hearnd de noos, Aun’ Lucy, de cook, she up ’n say she seed de strange nigger eat’n’ er de scuppernon’s behine de smoke-house; en den we knowed de goopher had b’en er wukkin’. Den one er de nigger chilluns runned away fum de quarters one day, en got in de scuppernon’s, en died de nex’ week. W’ite folks say he die’ er de fevuh, but de niggers knowed it wuz de goopher. So you k’n be sho de darkies did n’ hab much ter do wid dem scuppernon’ vimes.

“W’en de scuppernon’ season ‘uz ober fer dat year, Mars Dugal’ foun’ he had made fifteen hund’ed gallon er wine; en one er de niggers hearnd him laffin’ wid de oberseah fit ter kill, en sayin’ dem fifteen hund’ed gallon er wine wuz monst’us good intrus’ on de ten dollars he laid out on de vimya’d. So I ’low ez he paid Aun’ Peggy ten dollars fer to goopher de grapevimes.

“De goopher did n’ wuk no mo’ tel de nex’ summer, w’en ‘long to’ds de middle er de season one er de fiel’ han’s died; en ez dat lef’ Mars Dugal’ sho’t er han’s, he went off ter town fer ter buy anudder. He fotch de noo nigger home wid ‘im. He wuz er ole nigger, er de color er a gingy-cake, en ball ez a hoss-apple on de top er his head. He wuz a peart ole nigger, do’, en could do a big day’s wuk.

“Now it happen dat one er de niggers on de nex’ plantation, one er ole Mars Henry Brayboy’s niggers, had runned away de day befo’, en tuk ter de swamp, en ole Mars Dugal’ en some er de yuther nabor w’ite folks had gone out wid dere guns en dere dogs fer ter he’p ’em hunt fer de nigger; en de han’s on our own plantation wuz all so flusterated dat we fuhgot ter tell de noo han’ ‘bout de goopher on de scuppernon’ vimes. Co’se he smell de grapes en see de vimes, an atter dahk de fus’ thing he done wuz ter slip off ter de grapevimes ‘dout sayin’ nuffin ter nobody. Nex’ mawnin’ he tole some er de niggers ‘bout de fine bait er scuppernon’ he et de night befo’.

“Wen dey tole ‘im ‘bout de goopher on de grapevimes, he ‘uz dat terrified dat he turn pale, en look des like he gwine ter die right in his tracks. De oberseah come up en axed w’at ‘uz de matter; en w’en dey tole ‘im Henry be’n eatin’ er de scuppernon’s, en got de goopher on ‘im, he gin Henry a big drink.
er w'iskey, en 'low dat de nex' rainy day he take 'im ober ter Aun' Peggy's, en see ef she would n' take de goopher off'n him, seein' ez he did n' know nuffin' erbout it tel he done et de grapes.

“Sho nuff, it rain de nex' day, en de oberseah went ober ter Aun' Peggy's wid Henry. En Aun' Peggy say dat bein' ez Henry did n' know 'bout de goopher, en et de grapes in ign'ance er de conseq'ences, she reckon she mought be able fer ter take de goopher off'n him. So she focht out er bottle wid some cunjuh medicine in it, en po'd some out in a go'd fer Henry ter drink. He manage ter git it down; he say it tas'e like whiskey wid sump'n bitter in it. She 'lowed dat 'ud keep de goopher off'n him tel de spring; but w'en de sap begin ter rise in de grapevimes he ha' ter come en see her ag'in, en she tell him w'at e's ter do.

“Nex' spring, w'en de sap commence' ter rise in de scuppernon' vime, Henry tuk a ham one night. Whar'd he git de ham? I doan know; dey wa'n't no hams on de plantation 'cep'n' w'at 'uz in de smoke-house, but I never see Henry 'bout de smoke-house. But ez I wuz a-sayin', he tuk de ham ober ter Aun' Peggy's; en Aun' Peggy tole 'im dat w'en Mars Dugal' begin ter prune de grapevimes, he mus' go en take 'n scrape off de sap whar it ooze out'n de cut een's er de vimes, en 'n'int his ball head wid it; en ef he do dat once't a year de goopher would n' wuk agin 'im long ez he done it. En bein' ez he focht her de ham, she fix' it so he kin eat all de scuppernon' he want.

“So Henry 'n'int his head wid de sap out'n de big grapevime des ha'f way 'twix' de quarters en de big house, en de goopher neber wuk agin him dat summer. But de beatenes' thing you eber see happen ter Henry. Up ter dat time he wuz ez ball ez a sweeten' 'tater, but des ez soon ez de young leaves begun ter come out on de grapevimes, de ha'r begun ter grow out on Henry's head, en by de middle er de summer he had de bigges' head er ha'r on de plantation. Befo' dat, Henry had tol'able good ha'r 'roun' de aidges, but soon ez de young grapes begun ter come, Henry's ha'r begun to quirl all up in little balls, des like dis yer reg'lar grapy ha'r, en by de time de grapes got ripe his head look des like a bunch er grapes. Combin' it did n' do no good; he wuk at it ha'f de night wid er Jim Crow, en think he git it straighten' out, but in de mawnin' de grapes 'ud be dere des de same. So he gin it up, en tried ter keep de grapes down by havin' his ha'r cut sho't.

A small card, resembling a currycomb in construction, and used by negroes in the rural districts instead of a comb.

“But dat wa'n't de quares' thing 'bout de goopher. When Henry come ter de plantation, he wuz gittin' a little ole an stiff in de j'ints. But dat summer he got des ez spry en libely ez any young nigger on de plantation; fac', he got
so biggity dat Mars Jackson, de oberseah, ha' ter th'eaten ter whip 'im, ef he
did n' stop cuttin' up his didos en behave hisse'f. But de mos' cur'ouses' thing
happen' in de fall, when de sap begin ter go down in de grapevimes. Fus',
when de grapes uz gethered, de knots begun ter straighten out'n Henry's
ha'r; en w'en de leaves begin ter fall, Henry's ha'r 'mence' ter drop out; en
when de vimes 'uz bar', Henry's head wuz baller 'n it wuz in de spring, en
he begin ter git ole en stiff in de j'ints ag'in, en paid no mo' 'tention ter de
gals dyoin' er de whole winter. En nex' spring, w'en he rub de sap on ag'in,
he got young ag'in, en so soopl en libely dat none er de young niggers on de
plantation could n' jump, ner dance, ner hoe ez much cotton ez Henry. But in
de fall er de year his grapes 'mence' ter straighten out, en his j'ints ter git stiff,
en his ha'r drap off, en de rheumatiz begin ter wrestle wid 'im.

“Now, ef you 'd 'a' knowed ole Mars Dugal' McAdoo, you 'd 'a' knowed dat
it ha' ter be a mighty rainy day when he could n' fine sump'n fer his niggers
ter do, en it ha' ter be a mighty little hole he could n' crawl thoo, en ha' ter be
a monst'us cloudy night when a dollar git by him in de dahkness; en w'en he
see how Henry git young in de spring en ole in de fall, he 'lowed ter hisse'f ez
how he could make mo' money out'n Henry dan by wukkin' him in de cotton-
fiel'. 'Long de nex' spring, atter de sap 'mence' ter rise, en Henry 'n'int 'is head
en sta'ted fer ter git young en soopl, Mars Dugal' up 'n tuk Henry ter town,
en sole 'im fer fifteen hunder' dollars. Co'se de man w'at bought Henry did n'
know nuffin 'bout de goopher, en Mars Dugal' did n' see no 'casion fer ter tell
'im. Long to'ds de fall, w'en de sap went down, Henry begin ter git ole ag'in
same ez yuzhal, en his noo marster begin ter git skeered les'n he gwine ter
lose his fifteen-hunder'-$ dollar nigger. He sent fer a mighty fine doctor; but de
med'cine did n' 'pear ter do no good; de goopher had a good holt. Henry tole
dee doctor 'bout de goopher; but de doctor des laff at 'im.

“One day in de winter Mars Dugal’ went ter town, en wuz santerin' 'long
de Main Street, when who should he meet but Henry's noo marster. Dey said
'Hoddy,' en Mars Dugal' ax 'im ter hab a seegyar; en atter dey run on awhile
'bout de craps en de weather, Mars Dugal' ax 'im, sorter keerless, like ez ef he
des thought of it,—

“How you like de nigger I sole you las' spring?”

“Henry’s marster shuck his head en knock de ashes off’n his seegyar.

“Spec’ I made a bad bahgin when I bought dat nigger. Henry done good
wuk all de summer, but sence de fall set in he ‘pears ter be sorter pinin’ away.
Dey ain’ nuffin pertickler de matter wid ‘im—leastways de doctor say so—
'cep'n' a tech er de rheumatiz; but his ha'r is all fell out, en ef he don't pick up
his strenk mighty soon, I spec’ I'm gwine ter lose ‘im.”
"Dey smoked on awhile, en bimeby ole mars say, 'Well, a bahgin 's a bahgin, but you en me is good fren's, en I doan wan' ter see you lose all de money you paid fer dat nigger; en ef w'at you say is so, en I ain't 'sputin' it, he ain't wuf much now. I 'spec's you wukked him too ha'd dis summer, er e'se de swamps down here don't agree wid de san'-hill nigger. So you des lemme know, en ef he gits any wusser I'll be willin' ter gib yer five hund'ed dollars fer 'im, en take my chances on his livin'.'

"Sho 'nuff, when Henry begun ter draw up wid de rheumatiz en it look like he gwine ter die fer sho, his noo marster sen' fer Mars Dugal', en Mars Dugal' gin him what he promus, en brung Henry home ag'in. He tuk good keer uv 'im dyoin' er de winter,—give 'im w'iskey ter rub his rheumatiz, en terbacker ter smoke, en all he want ter eat,—'caze a nigger w'at he could make a thousan' dollars a year off'n did n' grow on eve'ye huckleberry bush.

"Nex' spring, w'en de sap ris en Henry's ha'r commence' ter sprout, Mars Dugal' sole 'im ag'in, down in Robeson County dis time; en he kep' dat sellin' business up fer five year er mo'. Henry neber say nuffin 'bout de goopher ter his noo marsters, 'caze he know he gwine ter be tuk good keer uv de nex' winter, w'en Mars Dugal' buy him back. En Mars Dugal' made 'nuff money off'n Henry ter buy anudder plantation ober on Beaver Crick.

"But 'long 'bout de een' er dat five year dey come a stranger ter stop at de plantation. De fus' day he 'uz dere he went out wid Mars Dugal' en spent all de mawnin' lookin' ober de vimya'd, en atter dinner dey spent all de evenin' playin' kya'ds. De niggers soon 'skiver' dat he wuz a Yankee, en dat he come down ter Norf C'lina fer ter l'arn de w'ite folks how to raise grapes en make wine. He promus Mars Dugal' he c'd make de grapevimes b'ar twice't ez many grapes, en dat de noo winepress he wuz a-sellin' would make mo' d'n twice't ez many gallons er wine. En ole Mars Dugal' des drunk it all in, des 'peared ter be bewitch' wid dat Yankee. Wen de darkies see dat Yankee runnin' 'roun' de vimya'd en diggin' under de grapevimes, dey shuk dere heads, en 'lowed dat dey feared Mars Dugal' losin' his min'. Mars Dugal' had all de dirt dug away fum under de roots er all de scuppernon' vimes, an' let 'em stan' dat away fer a week er mo'. Den dat Yankee made de niggers fix up a mixtry er lime en ashes en manyo, en po' it 'roun' de roots er de grapevimes. Den he 'vise Mars Dugal' fer ter trim de vimes close't, en Mars Dugal' tuck 'n done eve'ything de Yankee tole him ter do. Dyoin' all er dis time, mind yer, dis yer Yankee wuz libbin' off'n de fat er de lan', at de big house, en playin' kya'ds wid Mars Dugal' eve'y night; en dey say Mars Dugal' los' mo'n a thousan' dollars dyoin' er de week dat Yankee wuz a-ruinin' de grapevimes.

"Wen de sap ris nex' spring, ole Henry 'n'inted his head ez yuzhal, en his
ha’r ‘mence’ ter grow des de same ez it done eve’y year. De scuppernon’ vimes
growed monst’ s fas’, en de leaves wuz greener en thicker dan dey eber be’n
dyoin’ my rememb’ ance; en Henry’s ha’r growed out thicker dan eber; en he
‘peared ter git younger ‘n younger, en soopler ‘n soopler; en seein’ ez he wuz
sho’t er ban’ s dat spring, havin’ tuk in consid’ able noo groun’, Mars Dugal’
‘eluded he would n’ sell Henry ‘tel he git de crap in en de cotton chop’. So he
kep’ Henry on de plantation.

“But ’long ’bout time fer de grapes ter come on de scuppernon’ vimes, dey
‘peared ter come a change ober ‘em; de leaves withered en swivel’ up, en de
young grapes turn’ yaller, en bimeby eve’ybody on de plantation could see
dat de whole vimya’d wuz dyin’. Mars Dugal’ tuk’n water de vimes en done
all he could, but ’t wa’n’ no use: dat Yankee had done bus’ de watermillyum.
One time de vimes picked up a bit, en Mars Dugal’ ‘lowed dey wuz gwine ter
come out ag’in; but dat Yankee done dug too close under de roots, en prune
de branches too close ter de vime, en all dat lime en ashes done burn’ de life
out’n de vimes, en dey des kep’ a-with’ in’ en a-swivelin’.

“All dis time de goopher wuz a-wukkin’. When de vimes sta’ ted ter wither,
Henry ‘mence’ ter complain er his rheumatiz; en when de leaves begin ter dry
up, his ha’r ‘mence’ ter drap out. When de vimes fresh’ up a bit, Henry ‘d git
peart ag’in, en when de vimes wither’ ag’in, Henry ‘d git ole ag’in, en des kep’
gittin’ mo’ en mo’ fitten fer nuffin; he des pined away, en pined away, en fine’ly
tuk ter his cabin; en when de big vime whar he got de sap ter ‘n’int his head
withered en turned yaller en died, Henry died too,—des went out sorter like a
cannel. Dey didn’t ‘pear ter be nuffin de matter wid ‘im, ’cep’n’ de rheumatiz,
buthis strenk des dwinel’ away ’tel he did n’ hab ernuff lef ter draw his bref.
De goopher had got de under holt, en th’owed Henry dat time fer good en all.

“Mars Dugal’ tuk on might’ly ’bout losin’ his vimes en his nigger in de
same year; en he swo’ dat ef he could git holt er dat Yankee he ‘d wear ‘im
ter a frazzle, en den chaw up de frazzle; en he’d done it, too, for Mars Dugal’
‘uz a monst’us brash man w’en he once git started. He sot de vimya’d out
ober ag’in, but it wuz th’ee er fo’ year befo’ de vimes got ter b’arin’ any
scuppernon’ s.

“W’en de wah broke out, Mars Dugal’ raise’ a comp’ ny, en went off ter fight
de Yankees. He say he wuz mighty glad dat wah come, en he des want ter kill
a Yankee fer eve’y dollar he los’ ‘long er dat grape-raisin’ Yankee. En I ’spec’
he would ‘a’ done it, too, ef de Yankees had n’ s’picioned sump’n, en killed him
fus’. Atter de s’render ole miss move’ ter town, de niggers all scattered ‘way
fum de plantation, en de vimya’d ain’ be’n cultvated sence.”

“Is that story true?” asked Annie doubtfully, but seriously, as the old man
concluded his narrative.

“It’s des ez true ez I’m a-settin’ here, miss. Dey’s a easy way ter prove it: I kin lead de way right ter Henry’s grave ober yander in de plantation buryin’-groun’. En I tell yer w’at, marster, I would n’ ‘vise you to buy dis yer ole vinya’d, ‘caze de goopher ‘s on it yit, en dey ain’ no tellin’ w’en it’s gwine ter crap out.”

“But I thought you said all the old vines died.”

“Dey did ‘pear ter die, but a few un ‘em come out ag’in, en is mixed in ‘mongs’ de yuthers. I ain’ skeered ter eat de grapes, ‘caze I knows de old vimes fum de noo ones; but wid strangers dey ain’ no tellin’ w’at mought happen. I would n’ ‘vise yer ter buy dis vinya’d.”

I bought the vineyard, nevertheless, and it has been for a long time in a thriving condition, and is often referred to by the local press as a striking illustration of the opportunities open to Northern capital in the development of Southern industries. The luscious scuppernong holds first rank among our grapes, though we cultivate a great many other varieties, and our income from grapes packed and shipped to the Northern markets is quite considerable. I have not noticed any developments of the goopher in the vineyard, although I have a mild suspicion that our colored assistants do not suffer from want of grapes during the season.

I found, when I bought the vineyard, that Uncle Julius had occupied a cabin on the place for many years, and derived a respectable revenue from the product of the neglected grapevines. This, doubtless, accounted for his advice to me not to buy the vineyard, though whether it inspired the goopher story I am unable to state. I believe, however, that the wages I paid him for his services as coachman, for I gave him employment in that capacity, were more than an equivalent for anything he lost by the sale of the vineyard.
“Have some dinner, Uncle Julius?” said my wife. It was a Sunday afternoon in early autumn. Our two women-servants had gone to a camp-meeting some miles away, and would not return until evening. My wife had served the dinner, and we were just rising from the table, when Julius came up the lane, and, taking off his hat, seated himself on the piazza.

The old man glanced through the open door at the dinner-table, and his eyes rested lovingly upon a large sugar-cured ham, from which several slices had been cut, exposing a rich pink expanse that would have appealed strongly to the appetite of any hungry Christian.

“Thanky, Miss Annie,” he said, after a momentary hesitation, “I dunno ez I keers ef I does tas’e a piece er dat ham, ef yer’ll cut me off a slice un it.”

“No,” said Annie, “I won’t. Just sit down to the table and help yourself; eat all you want, and don’t be bashful.”

Julius drew a chair up to the table, while my wife and I went out on the piazza. Julius was in my employment; he took his meals with his own family, but when he happened to be about our house at meal-times, my wife never let him go away hungry.

I threw myself into a hammock, from which I could see Julius through an open window. He ate with evident relish, devoting his attention chiefly to the ham, slice after slice of which disappeared in the spacious cavity of his mouth. At first the old man ate rapidly, but after the edge of his appetite had been taken off he proceeded in a more leisurely manner. When he had cut the sixth slice of ham (I kept count of them from a lazy curiosity to see how much he could eat) I saw him lay it on his plate; as he adjusted the knife and fork to cut it into smaller pieces, he paused, as if struck by a sudden thought, and a tear rolled down his rugged cheek and fell upon the slice of ham before him. But the emotion, whatever the thought that caused it, was transitory, and in a moment he continued his dinner. When he was through eating, he came out on the porch, and resumed his seat with the satisfied expression of countenance that usually follows a good dinner.

“Julius,” I said, “you seemed to be affected by something, a moment ago. Was the mustard so strong that it moved you to tears?”

“No, suh, it wa’n’t de mustard; I wuz studyin’ ‘bout Dave.”
The conditions were all favorable to story-telling. There was an autumnal languor in the air, and a dreamy haze softened the dark green of the distant pines and the deep blue of the Southern sky. The generous meal he had made had put the old man in a very good humor. He was not always so, for his curiously undeveloped nature was subject to moods which were almost childish in their variableness. It was only now and then that we were able to study, through the medium of his recollection, the simple but intensely human inner life of slavery. His way of looking at the past seemed very strange to us; his view of certain sides of life was essentially different from ours. He never indulged in any regrets for the Arcadian joyousness and irresponsibility which was a somewhat popular conception of slavery; his had not been the lot of the petted house-servant, but that of the toiling field-hand. While he mentioned with a warm appreciation the acts of kindness which those in authority had shown to him and his people, he would speak of a cruel deed, not with the indignation of one accustomed to quick feeling and spontaneous expression, but with a furtive disapproval which suggested to us a doubt in his own mind as to whether he had a right to think or to feel, and presented to us the curious psychological spectacle of a mind enslaved long after the shackles had been struck off from the limbs of its possessor. Whether the sacred name of liberty ever set his soul aglow with a generous fire; whether he had more than the most elementary ideas of love, friendship, patriotism, religion,—things which are half, and the better half, of life to us; whether he even realized, except in a vague, uncertain way, his own degradation, I do not know. I fear not; and if not, then centuries of repression had borne their legitimate fruit. But in the simple human feeling, and still more in the undertone of sadness, which pervaded his stories, I thought I could see a spark which, fanned by favoring breezes and fed by the memories of the past, might become in his children’s children a glowing flame of sensibility, alive to every thrill of human happiness or human woe.

“Dave use’ ter b’long ter my ole marster,” said Julius; “he wuz raise’ on dis yer plantation, en I kin ‘member all erbout ‘im, fer I wuz ole ‘nuff ter chop cotton w’en it all happen’. Dave wuz a tall man, en monst’us strong: he could do mo’ wuk in a day dan any yuther two niggers on de plantation. He wuz one er dese yer solemn kine er men, en nebber run on wid much foolishness, like de yuther darkies. He use’ ter go out in de woods en pray; en w’en he hear de han’s on de plantation cussin’ en gwine on wid dere dancin’ en foolishness, he use’ ter tell ‘em ‘bout religion en jedgmen’-day, w’en dey would haf ter gin account fer eve’y idle word en all dey yuther sinful kyarin’s-on.

“Dave had l’arn’ how ter read de Bible. Dey wuz a free nigger boy in de
settlement w’at wuz monst’us smart, en could write en cipher; en wuz alluz readin’ books er papers. En Dave had hi’ed dis free boy fer ter l’arn ‘im how ter read. Hit wuz ‘g’in’ de law, but co’se none er de niggers did n’ say nuffin ter de w’ite folks ‘bout it. Howsomedever, one day Mars Walker—he wuz de oberseah—foun’ out Dave could read. Mars Walker wa’n’t nuffin but a po’ bockrah, en folks said he could n’ read ner write hisse’f, en co’se he didn’ lack ter see a nigger w’at knowed mo’ d’n he did; so he went en tole Mars Dugal’. Mars Dugal’ sont fer Dave, en ax’ ‘im ‘bout it.

“Dave didn’t hardly knowed w’at ter do; but he could n’ tell no lie, so he ‘fessed he could read de Bible a little by spellin’ out de words. Mars Dugal’ look’ mighty solemn.

“Dis yer is a se’ious matter,’ sez ee; ‘it’s ‘g’in’ de law ter l’arn niggers how ter read, er ‘low ‘em ter hab books. But w’at yer l’arn out’n dat Bible, Dave?’

“Dave wa’n’t no fool, ef he wuz a nigger, en seeze:—

“Marster, I l’arns dat it’s a sin fer ter steal, er ter lie, er fer ter want w’at doan b’long ter yer; en I l’arns fer ter love de Lawd en ter ‘bey my marster.’

“Mars Dugal’ sorter smile’ en laf ter hisse’f, like he ‘uz might’ly tickle’ ‘bout sump’n, en seeze:—

“Doan ‘pear ter me lack readin’ de Bible done yer much harm, Dave. Dat ‘s w’at I wants all my niggers fer ter know. Yer keep right on readin’, en tell de yuther han’s w’at yer be’n tellin’ me. How would yer lack fer ter preach ter de niggers on Sunday?’

“Dave say he ‘d be glad fer ter do w’at he could. So Mars Dugal’ tole de oberseah fer ter let Dave preach ter de niggers, en tell ‘em w’at wuz in de Bible, en it would he’p ter keep ‘em fum stealin’ er runnin’ erway.

“So Dave ‘mence’ ter preach, en done de han’s on de plantation a heap er good, en most un ‘em lef’ off dey wicked ways, en ‘mence’ ter love ter hear ‘bout God, en religion, en de Bible; en dey done dey wuk better, en didn’ gib de oberseah but mighty little trouble fer ter manage ‘em.

“Dave wuz one er dese yer men w’at did n’ keer much fer de gals,—leastways he did n’ ‘tel Dilsey come ter de plantation. Dilsey wuz a monst’us peart, good-lookin’, gingybread-colored gal,—one er dese yer high-steppin’ gals w’at hol’s dey heads up, en won’ stan’ no foolishness fum no man. She had b’long’ ter a gemman over on Rockfish, w’at died, en whose ‘state ha’ ter be sol’ fer ter pay his debts. En Mars Dugal’ had be’n ter de oction, en w’en he
seed dis gal a-cryin’ en gwine on ‘bout bein’ sol’ erway fum her ole mammy, Aun’ Mahaly, Mars Dugal’ bid ‘em bofe in, en fotch ‘em ober ter our plantation.

“De young nigger men on de plantation wuz des wil’ atter Dilsey, but it did n’ do no good, en none un ‘em could n’ git Dilsey fer dey junesey, ‘tel Dave ‘mence’ fer ter go roun’ Aun’ Mahaly’s cabin. Dey wuz a fine-lookin’ couple, Dave en Dilsey wuz, bofe tall, en well-shape’, en soopl’. En dey sot a heap by one ernudder. Mars Dugal’ seed ‘em tergedder one Sunday, en de nex’ time he seed Dave atter dat, sezee:—

“‘Dave, w’en yer en Dilsey gits ready fer ter git married, I ain’ got no rejections. Dey’s a poun’ er so er chawin’-terbacker up at de house, en I reckon yo’ mist’iss kin fine a frock en a ribbin er two fer Dilsey. Youer bofe good niggers, en yer neenter be feared er bein’ sol’ ‘way fum one ernudder long ez I owns dis plantation; en I ‘spec’s ter own it fer a long time yit.’

“But dere wuz one man on de plantation w’at did n’ lack ter see Dave en Dilsey tergedder ez much ez ole marster did. W’en Mars Dugal’ went ter de sale whar he got Dilsey en Mahaly, he bought ernudder ban’, by de name er Wiley. Wiley wuz one er dese yer shiny-eyed, double-headed little niggers, sha’p ez a steel trap, en sly ez de fox w’at keep out’n it. Dis yer Wiley had be’n pesterin’ Dilsey ‘fo’ she come ter our plantation, en had nigh ‘bout worried de life out’n her. She did n’ keer nuffin fer ‘im, but he pestered her so she ha’ ter th’eaten ter tell her marster fer ter make Wiley let her ‘lone. W’en he come ober to our place it wuz des ez bad, ‘tel bimeby Wiley seed dat Dilsey had got ter thinkin’ a heap ‘bout Dave, en den he sorter hilt off aw’ile, en purten’ lack he gin Dilsey up. But he wuz one er dese yer ‘ceitful niggers, en w’ile he wuz laffin’ en jokin’ wid de yuther ban’s ‘bout Dave en Dilsey, he wuz settin’ a trap fer ter ketch Dave en git Dilsey back fer hisse’ff.

“Dave en Dilsey made up dere min’s fer ter git married long ‘bout Christmas time, w’en dey ‘d hab mo’ time fer a weddin’. But ‘long ‘bout two weeks befo’ dat time ole mars ‘mence’ ter lose a heap er bacon. Eve’y night er so somebody ‘ud steal a side er bacon, er a ham, er a shoulder, er sump’n, fum one er de smoke-‘ouses. De smoke-‘ouses wuz lock’, but somebody had a key, en manage’ ter git in in some way er ‘nudder. Dey ‘s mo’ ways ‘n one ter skin a cat, en dey’s mo’ d’n one way ter git in a smoke-‘ouse,—leastways dat’s w’at I hearn say. Folks w’at had bacon fer ter sell did n’ hab no trouble ‘bout gittin’ rid un it. Hit wuz ‘g’in’ de law fer ter buy things fum slabe’s; but Lawd! dat law did n’ ‘mount ter a hill er peas. Eve’y week er so one er dese yer big covered waggins would come ‘long de road, peddlin’ terbacker en w’iskey. Dey wuz a sight er room in one er dem big waggins, en it wuz monst’us easy fer ter swop off bacon fer sump’n ter chaw er ter wa’m yer up in de wintertime. I s’pose de peddlers did n’ knowed dey wuz breakin’ de law, caze de niggers alluz went
at night, en stayed on de dark side er de waggin; en it wuz mighty hard fer ter
tell w’at kine er folks dey wuz.

“Atter two er th’e hund’ed er meat had be’n stole’, Mars Walker call all de
niggers up one ebenin’, en tol’ ‘em dat de fus’ nigger he cot stealin’ bacon on
dat plantation would git sump’n fer ter ‘member it by long ez he lib’. En he say
he ‘d gin fi’ dollars ter de nigger w’at ‘skiver’ de rogue. Mars Walker say he
s’picion’ one er two er de niggers, but he could n’ tell fer sho, en co’se dey all
‘nied it w’en he ‘cuse em un it.

“Dey wa’n’t no bacon stole’ fer a week er so, ‘tel one dark night w’en
somebody tuk a ham fum one er de smoke-‘ouses. Mars Walker des cusst
awful w’en he foun’ out de ham wuz gone, en say he gwine ter sarch all de
niggers’ cabins; w’en dis yer Wiley I wuz tellin’ yer ‘bout up’n say he s’picion’
who tuk de ham, fer he seed Dave comin’ ‘cross de plantation fum to’ds de
smoke-‘ouse de night befo’. W’en Mars Walker hear dis fum Wiley, he went
en sarch’ Dave’s cabin, en foun’ de ham hid under de flo’.

“Eve’ybody wuz ‘stonish’; but dere wuz de ham. Co’se Dave ‘nied it ter de
las’, but dere wuz de ham. Mars Walker say it wuz des ez he ‘spected: he did n’
b’lieve in dese yer readin’ en prayin’ niggers; it wuz all ‘pocrisy, en sarve’ Mars
Dugal’ right fer ‘lowin’ Dave ter be readin’ books w’en it wuz ‘g’in’ de law.

“W’en Mars Dugal hear’n ‘bout de ham, he say he wuz might’ly ‘ceived en
disapp’inted in Dave. He say he wouldn’ nebber hab no mo’ conferdence in no
nigger, en Mars Walker could do des ez he wuz a mineter wid Dave er any er
de res’ er de niggers. So Mars Walker tuk’n tied Dave up en gin ‘im forty; en
den he got some er dis yer wire clof w’at dey uses fer ter make sifters out’n,
en tuk’n wrap’ it roun’ de ham en fasten it tergedder at de little een’. Den
he tuk Dave down ter de blacksmif-shop, en had Unker Silas, de plantation
blacksmif, fasten a chain ter de ham, en den fasten de yuther een’ er de chain
roun’ Dave’s neck. En den he says ter Dave, sezee:—

“‘Now, suh, yer’ll wear dat neckliss fer de nex’ six mont’s; en I ‘spec’s yer
ner none er de yuther niggers on dis plantation won’ steal no mo’ bacon
dyoin’ er dat time.’

“Well, it des ‘peared ez if fum dat time Dave did n’ hab nuffin but trouble.
De niggers all turnt ag’in’ ‘im, caze he be’n de ‘casion er Mars Dugal’ turnin’
‘em all ober ter Mars Walker. Mars Dugal’ wa’n’t a bad marster hisse’f, but
Mars Walker wuz hard ez a rock. Dave kep’ on sayin’ he did n’ take de ham,
but none un ‘em did n’ b’lieve ‘im.

“Dilsey wa’n’t on de plantation w’en Dave wuz ‘cused er stealin’ de bacon.
Ole mist'iss had s'ont her ter town fer a week er so fer ter wait on one er her darters w'at had a young baby, en she didn’ fine out nuffin ‘bout Dave’s trouble ‘tel she got back ter de plantation. Dave had patien’ly endyoed de finger er scawn, en all de hard words w'at de niggers pile’ on ‘im, caze he wuz sho’ Dilsey would stan’ by ‘im, en would n’ b’lieve he wuz a rogue, ner none er de yuther tales de darkies wuz tellin’ ‘bout ‘im.

“W’en Dilsey come back fum town, en got down fum behine de buggy whar she b’en ridin’ wid ole mars, de fus’ nigger ‘ooman she met says ter her,—

“‘Is yer seed Dave, Dilsey?’

“‘No, I ain’ seed Dave,’ says Dilsey.

“‘Yer des oughter look at dat nigger; reckon yer would n’ want ‘im fer yo’ junesey no mo’. Mars Walker cotch ‘im stealin’ bacon, en gone en fasten’ a ham roun’ his neck, so he can’t git it off’n hisse’f. He sut’nly do look quare.’ En den de ‘ooman bus’ out laffin’ fit ter kill herse’f. W’en she got thoo laffin’ she up’n tole Dilsey all ‘bout de ham, en all de yuther lies w’at de niggers be’n tellin’ on Dave.

“W’en Dilsey started down ter de quarters, who should she meet but Dave, comin’ in fur de cotton-fiel’. She turnt her head ter one side, en purten’ lack she did n’ seed Dave.

“‘Dilsey!’ sezee.

“Dilsey walk’ right on, en did n’ notice ‘im.

“‘Oh, Dilsey!’

“Dilsey did n’ paid no ‘tention ter ‘im, en den Dave knowed some er de niggers be’n tellin’ her ‘bout de ham. He felt monst’us bad, but he ‘lowed ef he could des git Dilsey fer ter listen ter ‘im fer a minute er so, he could make her b’lieve he did n’ stole de bacon. It wuz a week er two befo’ he could git a chance ter speak ter her ag’in; but fine’ly he cotch her down by de spring one day, en sezee:—

“‘Dilsey, w’at fer yer won’ speak ter me, en purten’ lack yer doan see me? Dilsey, yer knows me too well fer ter b’lieve I ‘d steal, er do dis yuther wick’ness de niggers is all layin’ ter me,—yer knows I would n’ do dat, Dilsey. Yer ain’ gwine back on yo’ Dave, is yer?’
“But w’at Dave say didn’ hab no ‘fec’ on Dilsey. Dem lies folks b’en tellin’ her had p’isen’ her min’ ‘g’in’ Dave.

“I doan wanter talk ter no nigger,’ says she, ‘w’at be’n whip’ fer stealin’, en w’at gwine roun’ wid sich a lookin’ thing ez dat hung roun’ his neck. I’s a ’spectable gal, I is. W’at yer call dat, Dave? Is dat a cha’m fer ter keep off witches, er is it a noo kine er neckliss yer got?’

“Po’ Dave did n’ knowed w’at ter do. De las’ one he had pended on fer ter stan’ by ‘im had gone back on ‘im, en dey did n’ ‘pear ter be nuffin mo’ wuf libbin’ fer. He could n’ hol’ no mo’ pra’r-meetin’s, fer Mars Walker would n’ ‘low ‘im ter preach, en de darkies would n’ ‘a’ listen’ ter ‘im ef he had preach’. He didn’ eben hab his Bible fer ter comfort hisse’f wid, fer Mars Walker had tuk it erway fum ‘im en burnt it up, en say ef he ketch any mo’ niggers wid Bibles on de plantation he ‘d do ‘em wuss’n he done Dave.

“En ter make it still harder fer Dave, Dilsey tuk up wid Wiley. Dave could see him gwine up ter Aun’ Mahaly’s cabin, en settin’ out on de bench in de moonlight wid Dilsey, en singin’ sinful songs en playin’ de banjer. Dave use’ ter scrouch down behine de bushes, en wonder w’at de Lawd sen’ ‘im all dem tribberlations fer.

“But all er Dave’s yuther troubles wa’n’t nuffin side er dat ham. He had wrap’ de chain roun’ wid a rag, so it did n’ hurt his neck; but w’eneber he went ter wuk, dat ham would be in his way; he had ter do his task, howsomedever, des de same ez ef he did n’ hab de ham. W’eneber he went ter lay down, dat ham would be in de way. Ef he turn ober in his sleep, dat ham would be tuggin’ at his neck. It wuz de las’ thing he seed at night, en de fus’ thing he seed in de mawnin’. W’eneber he met a stranger, de ham would be de fus’ thing de stranger would see. Most un ‘em would ‘mence’ ter laf, en whareber Dave went he could see folks p’intin’ at him, en year ‘em sayin’:—

“W’at kine er collar dat nigger got roun’ his neck?’ er, ef dey knowed ‘im, ‘Is yer stole any mo’ hams lately?’ er ‘W’at yer take fer yo’ neckliss, Dave?’ er some joke er ‘nuther ‘bout dat ham.

“Fus’ Dave did n’ mine it so much, caze he knowed he had n’ done nuffin. But bimeby he got so he could n’ stan’ it no longer, en he ‘d hide hisse’f in de bushes w’eneber he seed anybody comin’, en alluz kep’ hisse’f shet up in his cabin atter he come in fum wuk.

“It wuz monst’us hard on Dave, en bimeby, w’at wid dat ham eberlastin’ en eternally draggin’ roun’ his neck, he ‘mence’ fer ter do en say quare things, en make de niggers wonder ef he wa’n’t gittin’ out’n his mine. He got ter
gwine roun' talkin' ter hisse'f, en singin' corn-shuckin' songs, en laffin' fit ter kill 'bout nuffin. En one day he tole one er de niggers he had 'skivered a noo way fer ter raise hams,—gwine ter pick 'em off'n trees, en save de expense er smoke-ouses by kyoin' 'em in de sun. En one day he up'n tole Mars Walker he got sump'n pertickler fer ter say ter 'im; en he tuk Mars Walker off ter one side, en tole 'im he wuz gwine ter show 'im a place in de swamp whar dey wuz a whole trac' er lan' covered wid ham-trees.

“Wen Mars Walker hearn Dave talkin' dis kine er fool-talk, en w'en he seed how Dave wuz 'mencin' ter git behine in his wuk, en w'en he ax' de niggers en dey tole 'im how Dave be'n gwine on, he 'lowed he reckon' he 'd punish' Dave ernuff, en it mou't do mo' harm dan good fer ter keep de ham on his neck any longer. So he sent Dave down ter de blacksmif-shop en had de ham tuk off. Dey wa'n't much er de ham lef' by dat time, fer de sun had melt all de fat, en de lean had all swivel' up, so dey wa'n't but th'ee er fo' poun's lef'.

“W'en de ham had be'n tuk off'n Dave, folks kinder stopped talkin' 'bout 'im so much. But de ham had be'n on his neck so long dat Dave had sorter got use' ter it. He look des lack he 'd los' sump'n fer a day er so atter de ham wuz tuk off, en didn' 'pear ter know w'at ter do wid hisse'f; en fine'ly he up'n tuk'n tied a lighterd-knot ter a string, en hid it under de flo' er his cabin, en w'en nobody wuz n' lookin' he 'd take it out en hang it roun' his neck, en go off in de woods en holler en sing; en he allus tied it roun' his neck w'en he went ter sleep. Fac', it 'peared lack Dave done gone clean out'n his mine. En atter a w'ile he got one er de quarest notions you eber hearn tell un. It wuz 'bout dat time dat I come back ter de plantation fer ter wuk,—I had be'n out ter Mars Dugal's yuther place on Beaver Crick for a mont' er so. I had hearn 'bout Dave en de bacon, en 'bout w'at wuz gwine on de plantation; but I did n' b'lieve w'at dey all say 'bout Dave, fer I knowed Dave wa'n't dat kine er man. One day atter I come back, me'n Dave wuz choppin' cotton tergedder, w'en Dave lean' on his hoe, en motion' fer me ter come ober close ter 'im; en den he retch' ober en w'ispered ter me.

“'Julius', sezee, 'did yer knowed yer wuz wukkin' long yer wid a ham?'

“I could n' 'magine w'at he meant. 'G'way fum yer, Dave,' says I. 'Yer ain' wearin' no ham no mo'; try en fergit 'bout dat; 't ain' gwine ter do yer no good fer ter 'member it.'

“Look a-yer, Julius,' sezee, 'kin yer keep a secret?'

“'Co' se I kin, Dave,' says I. 'I doan go roun' tellin' people w'at yuther folks says ter me.'
“Kin I trus’ yer, Julius? Will yer cross yo’ heart?”

“I cross’ my heart. ‘Wush I may die ef I tells a soul,’ says I.

“Dave look’ at me des lack he wuz lookin’ thoo me en ‘way on de yuther side er me, en sezee:—

““Did yer knowed I wuz turnin’ ter a ham, Julius?”

“I tried ter ‘suade Dave dat dat wuz all foolishness, en dat he oughtn’t ter be talkin’ dat-a-way,—hit wa’n’t right. En I tole ‘im ef he ‘d des be patien’, de time would sho’ly come w’en eve’ything would be straighten’ out, en folks would fine out who de rale rogue wuz w’at stole de bacon. Dave ‘peared ter listen ter w’at I say, en promise’ ter do better, en stop gwine on dat-a-way; en it seem lack he pick’ up a bit w’en he seed dey wuz one pusson did n’ b’lieve dem tales ‘bout ‘im.

“Hit wa’n’t long atter dat befo’ Mars Archie McIntyre, ober on de Wimbleton road, ‘mence’ ter complain ‘bout somebody stealin’ chickens fum his hen-‘ouse. De chickens kep’ on gwine, en at las’ Mars Archie tole de ban’s on his plantation dat he gwine ter shoot de fus’ man he ketch in his hen-‘ouse. In less’n a week atter he gin dis warnin’, he cotch a nigger in de hen-‘ouse, en fill’ ‘im full er squir’l-shot. W’en he got a light, he ‘skivered it wuz a strange nigger; en w’en he call’ one er his own sarven’s, de nigger tole ‘im it wuz our Wiley. W’en Mars Archie foun’ dat out, he sent ober ter our plantation fer ter tell Mars Dugal’ he had shot one er his niggers, en dat he could sen’ ober dere en git w’at wuz lef un ‘im.

“Mars Dugal’ wuz mad at fus’; but w’en he got ober dere en hearn how it all happen’, he did n’ hab much ter say. Wiley wuz shot so bad he wuz sho’ he wuz gwine ter die, so he up’n says ter ole marster:—

““Mars Dugal’ sezee, ‘I knows I’s be’n a monst’us bad nigger, but befo’ I go I wanter git sump’n off’n my mine. Dave didn’ steal dat bacon w’at wuz tuk out’n de smoke-‘ouse. I stole it all, en I hid de ham under Dave’s cabin fer ter th’ow de blame on him—en may de good Lawd fergib me fer it.’

“Mars Dugal’ had Wiley tuk back ter de plantation, en sent fer a doctor fer ter pick de shot out’n ‘im. En de ve’y nex’ mawnin’ Mars Dugal’ sent fer Dave ter come up ter de big house; he felt kinder sorry fer de way Dave had be’n treated. Co’se it wa’n’t no fault er Mars Dugal’s, but he wuz gwine ter do w’at he could fer ter make up fer it. So he sent word down ter de quarters fer Dave en all de yuther han’s ter ‘semble up in de yard befo’ de big house at sun-up nex’ mawnin’.

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“Yearly in de mawnin’ de niggers all swarm’ up in de yard. Mars Dugal’ wuz feelin’ so kine dat he had brung up a bairl er cider, en tole de niggers all fer ter he’p deyselves.

“All de han’s on de plantation come but Dave; en bimeby, w’en it seem lack he wa’n’t comin’, Mars Dugal’ sont a nigger down ter de quarters ter look fer ‘im. De sun wuz gittin’ up, en dey wuz a heap er wuk ter be done, en Mars Dugal’ sorter got ti’ ed waitin’; so he up’n says:—

“Well, boys en gals, I sont fer yer all up yer fer ter tell yer dat all dat ‘bout Dave’s stealin’ er de bacon wuz a mistake, ez I s’pose yer all done hearn befo’ now, en I ‘s mighty sorry it happen’. I wants ter treat all my niggers right, en I wants yer all ter know dat I sets a heap by all er my han’s w’at is hones’ en smart. En I want yer all ter treat Dave des lack yer did befo’ dis thing happen’, en mine w’at he preach ter yer; fer Dave is a good nigger, en has had a hard row ter hoe. En de fus’ one I ketch sayin’ anythin’ ‘g’in’ Dave, I’ll tell Mister Walker ter gin ‘im forty. Now take ernudder drink er cider all roun’, en den git at dat cotton, fer I wanter git dat Persimmon Hill trac’ all pick’ ober ter-day.’

“W’en de niggers wuz gwine ‘way, Mars Dugal’ tole me fer ter go en hunt up Dave, en bring ‘im up ter de house. I went down ter Dave’s cabin, but could n’ fine ‘im dere. Den I look’ roun’ de plantation, en in de aidge er de woods, en ‘long de road; but I could n’ fine no sign er Dave. I wuz ‘bout ter gin up de sarch, w’en I happen’ fer ter run ‘cross a foot-track w’at look’ lack Dave’s. I had wukked ‘long wid Dave so much dat I knowed his tracks: he had a monst’us long foot, wid a holler instep, w’ich wuz sump’n skase ‘mong’ black folks. So I follered dat track ‘cross de fiel’ fum de quarters ‘tel I got ter de smoke-’ouse. De fus’ thing I notice’ wuz smoke comin’ out’n de cracks; it wuz cu’ous, caze dey had n’ be’n no hogs kill’ on de plantation fer six mont’ er so, en all de bacon in de smoke-’ouse wuz done kyoed. I could n’ ‘magine fer ter sabe my life w’at Dave wuz doin’ in dat smoke-’ouse. I went up ter de do’ en hollered:—

“‘Dave!’

“Dey didn’ nobody answer. I didn’ wanter open de do’, fer w’ite folks is monst’us pertickler ‘bout dey smoke-’ouses; en ef de oberseah had a-come up en cotch me in dere, he mou’t not wanter b’lieve I wuz des lookin’ fer Dave. So I sorter knock at de do’ en call’ out ag’in:—

“‘O Dave, hit’s me—Julius! Doan be skeered. Mars Dugal’ wants yer ter come up ter de big house,—he done ‘skivered who stole de ham.’
“But Dave didn’ answer. En w’en I look’ roun’ ag’in en didn’ seed none er his tracks gwine way fum de smoke-’ouse, I knowed he wuz in dere yit, en I wuz ’termine’ fer ter fetch ‘im out; so I push de do’ open en look in.

“Dey wuz a pile er bark burnin’ in de middle er de flo’, en right ober de fier, hangin’ fum one er de rafters, wuz Dave; dey wuz a rope roun’ his neck, en I didn’ haf ter look at his face mo’ d’n once fer ter see he wuz dead.

“Den I knowed how it all happen’. Dave had kep’ on gittin’ wusser en wusser in his mine, ‘tel he des got ter b’lievin’ he wuz all done turnt ter a ham; en den he had gone en built a fier, en tied a rope roun’ his neck, des lack de hams wuz tied, en had hung hisse’f up in de smoke-’ouse fer ter kyo.

“Dave wuz buried down by de swamp, in de plantation buryin’ groun’. Wiley didn’ died fum de woun’ he got in Mars McIntyre’s hen ‘ouse; he got well atter a w’ile, but Dilsey wouldn’ hab nuffin mo’ ter do wid ‘im, en ‘t wa’n’t long ‘fo’ Mars Dugal’ sol’ ‘im ter a spekilater on his way souf,—he say he didn’ want no sich a nigger on de plantation, ner in de county, ef he could he’p it. En w’en de een’ er de year come, Mars Dugal’ turnt Mars Walker off, en run de plantation hisse’f atter dat.

“Eber sence den,” said Julius in conclusion, “w’eneber I eats ham, it min’s me er Dave. I lacks ham, but I nebber kin eat mo’ d’n two er th’ee poun’s befo’ I gits ter studyin’ ‘bout Dave, en den I has ter stop en leab de res’ fer ernudder time.”

There was a short silence after the old man had finished his story, and then my wife began to talk to him about the weather, on which subject he was an authority. I went into the house. When I came out, half an hour later, I saw Julius disappearing down the lane, with a basket on his arm.

At breakfast, next morning, it occurred to me that I should like a slice of ham. I said as much to my wife.

“Oh, no, John,” she responded, “you shouldn’t eat anything so heavy for breakfast.”

I insisted.

“The fact is,” she said, pensively, “I couldn’t have eaten any more of that ham, and so I gave it to Julius.”
Kate Chopin (1851-1904)

From 1892 to 1895, Kate Chopin wrote short stories for both children and adults which were published in such magazines as Atlantic Monthly, Vogue, the Century, and Harper's Youth's Companion. Her major works were two short story collections, Bayou Folk (1894) and A Night in Acadie (1897). Her important short stories included “Desiree's Baby”, a tale of miscegenation in antebellum Louisiana (published in 1893); “The Story of an Hour” (1894), and “The Storm” (1898). Chopin also wrote two novels: At Fault (1890) and The Awakening (1899), which are set in New Orleans and Grand Isle, respectively. The people in her stories are usually inhabitants of Louisiana. Many of her works are set in Natchitoches in north central Louisiana.

Chopin was born Kate O’Flaherty in St. Louis, Missouri. Her father, Thomas O’Flaherty, was a successful businessman who had emigrated from Galway, Ireland. Her mother, Eliza Faris, was a well-connected member of the French community in St. Louis. In 1870, at the age of 20, she married Oscar Chopin and settled in New Orleans. Chopin had all six of her children by 29. In 1879 Oscar Chopin’s cotton brokerage failed, and the family moved to Cloutierville in south Natchitoches Parish to manage several small plantations and a general store. They became active in the community, and Chopin absorbed much material for her future writing, especially regarding the Creole culture of the area.

When Oscar Chopin died in 1882 (like his half-brother two decades earlier), he left Kate with $12,000 in debt (approximately $250,000 today). Although Chopin made an honest effort to keep her late husband’s plantation and general store alive, two years later she sold her Louisiana business. Her mother implored her to move back to St. Louis, so Chopin did, and the children gradually settled into life in St. Louis, where finances were no longer a concern. The following year, Chopin’s mother died. Chopin found herself in a state of depression after the loss of both her husband and her mother. Her obsetrician and family friend, Dr. Frederick Kolbenheyer, felt that writing would be a source of therapeutic healing for Kate during her hard times. He understood that writing could be a focus for her extraordinary energy, as well as a source of income.

By the early 1890s, Kate Chopin was writing short stories, articles, and translations which appeared in periodicals, including the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. She was quite successful and placed many of her publications in literary magazines. But she became known only as a regional local color writer and her literary qualities were overlooked.

In 1899, her second novel, The Awakening, was published, and the book
was criticized because of its moral as well as its literary standards. This, her best-known work, is the story of a woman trapped in the confines of an oppressive society. Out of print for several decades, it is now widely available and critically acclaimed for its writing quality and importance as an early feminist work. Chopin, deeply discouraged by the criticism, turned to short story writing.

While visiting the St. Louis World’s Fair on August 20, 1904, Chopin suffered a brain hemorrhage and died two days later, at the age of 53. She was interred in the Calvary cemetery in St. Louis.

Kate Chopin had different lifestyles throughout her life. These lifestyles provided her with insights, understanding and allowed her an analysis of late 19th century American society. Her childhood consisted of an upbringing by women with ancestry descending from both Irish and French family. Chopin also found herself within the Cajun and Creole part of the nation after she joined her husband in Louisiana. As a result, many of her stories and sketches were about her life in Louisiana in addition to the incorporation of her less than typical portrayals of women as their own individuals with wants and needs.

Chopin put much concentration and emphasis on women’s lives and their continual struggles to create an identity of their own within the boundaries of the patriarchy. In “The Story of an Hour,” Mrs. Mallard allows herself time to reflect upon learning of her husband’s death. Instead of dreading the lonely years ahead of her, she stumbles upon another realization all together. “She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.” (adapted from Wikipedia)
DESIREE’S BABY

As the day was pleasant, Madame Valmonde drove over to L'Abri to see Desiree and the baby.

It made her laugh to think of Desiree with a baby. Why, it seemed but yesterday that Desiree was little more than a baby herself; when Monsieur in riding through the gateway of Valmonde had found her lying asleep in the shadow of the big stone pillar.

The little one awoke in his arms and began to cry for “Dada.” That was as much as she could do or say. Some people thought she might have strayed there of her own accord, for she was of the toddling age. The prevailing belief was that she had been purposely left by a party of Texans, whose canvas-covered wagon, late in the day, had crossed the ferry that Coton Mais kept, just below the plantation. In time Madame Valmonde abandoned every speculation but the one that Desiree had been sent to her by a beneficent Providence to be the child of her affection, seeing that she was without child of the flesh. For the girl grew to be beautiful and gentle, affectionate and sincere,—the idol of Valmonde.

It was no wonder, when she stood one day against the stone pillar in whose shadow she had lain asleep, eighteen years before, that Armand Aubigny riding by and seeing her there, had fallen in love with her. That was the way all the Aubignys fell in love, as if struck by a pistol shot. The wonder was that he had not loved her before; for he had known her since his father brought him home from Paris, a boy of eight, after his mother died there. The passion that awoke in him that day, when he saw her at the gate, swept along like an avalanche, or like a prairie fire, or like anything that drives headlong over all obstacles.

Monsieur Valmonde grew practical and wanted things well considered: that is, the girl’s obscure origin. Armand looked into her eyes and did not care. He was reminded that she was nameless. What did it matter about a name when he could give her one of the oldest and proudest in Louisiana? He ordered the corbeille from Paris, and contained himself with what patience he could until it arrived; then they were married.

Madame Valmonde had not seen Desiree and the baby for four weeks. When she reached L'Abri she shuddered at the first sight of it, as she always did. It was a sad looking place, which for many years had not known the gentle presence of a mistress, old Monsieur Aubigny having married and
buried his wife in France, and she having loved her own land too well ever to leave it. The roof came down steep and black like a cowl, reaching out beyond the wide galleries that encircled the yellow stuccoed house. Big, solemn oaks grew close to it, and their thick-leaved, far-reaching branches shadowed it like a pall. Young Aubigny’s rule was a strict one, too, and under it his negroes had forgotten how to be gay, as they had been during the old master’s easy-going and indulgent lifetime.

The young mother was recovering slowly, and lay full length, in her soft white muslins and laces, upon a couch. The baby was beside her, upon her arm, where he had fallen asleep, at her breast. The yellow nurse woman sat beside a window fanning herself.

Madame Valmonde bent her portly figure over Desiree and kissed her, holding her an instant tenderly in her arms. Then she turned to the child.

“This is not the baby!” she exclaimed, in startled tones. French was the language spoken at Valmonde in those days.

“I knew you would be astonished,” laughed Desiree, “at the way he has grown. The little cochon de lait! Look at his legs, mamma, and his hands and fingernails,—real finger-nails. Zandrine had to cut them this morning. Isn’t it true, Zandrine?”

The woman bowed her turbaned head majestically, “Mais si, Madame.”

“And the way he cries,” went on Desiree, “is deafening. Armand heard him the other day as far away as La Blanche’s cabin.”

Madame Valmonde had never removed her eyes from the child. She lifted it and walked with it over to the window that was lightest. She scanned the baby narrowly, then looked as searchingly at Zandrine, whose face was turned to gaze across the fields.

“Yes, the child has grown, has changed,” said Madame Valmonde, slowly, as she replaced it beside its mother. “What does Armand say?”

Desiree’s face became suffused with a glow that was happiness itself.

“Oh, Armand is the proudest father in the parish, I believe, chiefly because it is a boy, to bear his name; though he says not,—that he would have loved a girl as well. But I know it isn’t true. I know he says that to please me. And mamma,” she added, drawing Madame Valmonde’s head down to her, and speaking in a whisper, “he hasn’t punished one of them—not one of them—
since baby is born. Even Negrillon, who pretended to have burnt his leg that he might rest from work—he only laughed, and said Negrillon was a great scamp. Oh, mamma, I'm so happy; it frightens me.”

What Desiree said was true. Marriage, and later the birth of his son had softened Armand Aubigny’s imperious and exacting nature greatly. This was what made the gentle Desiree so happy, for she loved him desperately. When he frowned she trembled, but loved him. When he smiled, she asked no greater blessing of God. But Armand’s dark, handsome face had not often been disfigured by frowns since the day he fell in love with her.

When the baby was about three months old, Desiree awoke one day to the conviction that there was something in the air menacing her peace. It was at first too subtle to grasp. It had only been a disquieting suggestion; an air of mystery among the blacks; unexpected visits from far-off neighbors who could hardly account for their coming. Then a strange, an awful change in her husband’s manner, which she dared not ask him to explain. When he spoke to her, it was with averted eyes, from which the old love-light seemed to have gone out. He absented himself from home; and when there, avoided her presence and that of her child, without excuse. And the very spirit of Satan seemed suddenly to take hold of him in his dealings with the slaves. Desiree was miserable enough to die.

She sat in her room, one hot afternoon, in her peignoir; listlessly drawing through her fingers the strands of her long, silky brown hair that hung about her shoulders. The baby, half naked, lay asleep upon her own great mahogany bed, that was like a sumptuous throne, with its satin-lined half-canopy. One of La Blanche’s little quadroon boys—half naked too—stood fanning the child slowly with a fan of peacock feathers. Desiree’s eyes had been fixed absently and sadly upon the baby, while she was striving to penetrate the threatening mist that she felt closing about her. She looked from her child to the boy who stood beside him, and back again; over and over. “Ah!” It was a cry that she could not help; which she was not conscious of having uttered. The blood turned like ice in her veins, and a clammy moisture gathered upon her face.

She tried to speak to the little quadroon boy; but no sound would come, at first. When he heard his name uttered, he looked up, and his mistress was pointing to the door. He laid aside the great, soft fan, and obediently stole away, over the polished floor, on his bare tiptoes.

She stayed motionless, with gaze riveted upon her child, and her face the picture of fright.

Presently her husband entered the room, and without noticing her, went
to a table and began to search among some papers which covered it.

“Armand,” she called to him, in a voice which must have stabbed him, if he was human. But he did not notice. “Armand,” she said again. Then she rose and tottered towards him. “Armand,” she panted once more, clutching his arm, “look at our child. What does it mean? tell me.”

He coldly but gently loosened her fingers from about his arm and thrust the hand away from him. “Tell me what it means!” she cried despairingly.

“It means,” he answered lightly, “that the child is not white; it means that you are not white.”

A quick conception of all that this accusation meant for her nerved her with unwonted courage to deny it. “It is a lie; it is not true, I am white! Look at my hair, it is brown; and my eyes are gray, Armand, you know they are gray. And my skin is fair;” seizing his wrist. “Look at my hand; whiter than yours, Armand,” she laughed hysterically.

“As white as La Blanche’s,” he returned cruelly; and went away leaving her alone with their child.

When she could hold a pen in her hand, she sent a despairing letter to Madame Valmonde.

“My mother, they tell me I am not white. Armand has told me I am not white. For God’s sake tell them it is not true. You must know it is not true. I shall die. I must die. I cannot be so unhappy, and live.”

The answer that came was brief:

“My own Desiree: Come home to Valmonde; back to your mother who loves you. Come with your child.”

When the letter reached Desiree she went with it to her husband’s study, and laid it open upon the desk before which he sat. She was like a stone image: silent, white, motionless after she placed it there.

In silence he ran his cold eyes over the written words.

He said nothing. “Shall I go, Armand?” she asked in tones sharp with agonized suspense.

“Yes, go.”
“Do you want me to go?”

“Yes, I want you to go.”

He thought Almighty God had dealt cruelly and unjustly with him; and felt, somehow, that he was paying Him back in kind when he stabbed thus into his wife’s soul. Moreover he no longer loved her, because of the unconscious injury she had brought upon his home and his name.

She turned away like one stunned by a blow, and walked slowly towards the door, hoping he would call her back.

“Good-by, Armand,” she moaned.

He did not answer her. That was his last blow at fate.

Desiree went in search of her child. Zandrine was pacing the sombre gallery with it. She took the little one from the nurse’s arms with no word of explanation, and descending the steps, walked away, under the live-oak branches.

It was an October afternoon; the sun was just sinking. Out in the still fields the negroes were picking cotton.

Desiree had not changed the thin white garment nor the slippers which she wore. Her hair was uncovered and the sun’s rays brought a golden gleam from its brown meshes. She did not take the broad, beaten road which led to the far-off plantation of Valmonde. She walked across a deserted field, where the stubble bruised her tender feet, so delicately shod, and tore her thin gown to shreds.

She disappeared among the reeds and willows that grew thick along the banks of the deep, sluggish bayou; and she did not come back again.

Some weeks later there was a curious scene enacted at L’Abri. In the centre of the smoothly swept back yard was a great bonfire. Armand Aubigny sat in the wide hallway that commanded a view of the spectacle; and it was he who dealt out to a half dozen negroes the material which kept this fire ablaze.

A graceful cradle of willow, with all its dainty furbishings, was laid upon the pyre, which had already been fed with the richness of a priceless layette. Then there were silk gowns, and velvet and satin ones added to these; laces,
too, and embroideries; bonnets and gloves; for the corbeille had been of rare
quality.

The last thing to go was a tiny bundle of letters; innocent little scribblings
that Desiree had sent to him during the days of their espousal. There was the
remnant of one back in the drawer from which he took them. But it was not
Desiree’s; it was part of an old letter from his mother to his father. He read it.
She was thanking God for the blessing of her husband’s love:—

“But above all,” she wrote, “night and day, I thank the good God for having
so arranged our lives that our dear Armand will never know that his mother,
who adores him, belongs to the race that is cursed with the brand of slavery.”
Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who had been in the newspaper office when intelligence of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of “killed.” He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister’s arms. When the storm of grief had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into her soul.

She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which some one was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves.

There were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully.
What was it? She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will— as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under the breath: “free, free, free!” The vacant stare and the look of terror that had followed it went from her eyes. They stayed keen and bright. Her pulses beat fast, and the coursing blood warmed and relaxed every inch of her body.

She did not stop to ask if it were or were not a monstrous joy that held her. A clear and exalted perception enabled her to dismiss the suggestion as trivial. She knew that she would weep again when she saw the kind, tender hands folded in death; the face that had never looked save with love upon her, fixed and gray and dead. But she saw beyond that bitter moment a long procession of years to come that would belong to her absolutely. And she opened and spread her arms out to them in welcome.

There would be no one to live for during those coming years; she would live for herself. There would be no powerful will bending hers in that blind persistence with which men and women believe they have a right to impose a private will upon a fellow-creature. A kind intention or a cruel intention made the act seem no less a crime as she looked upon it in that brief moment of illumination.

And yet she had loved him—sometimes. Often she had not. What did it matter! What could love, the unsolved mystery, count for in the face of this possession of self-assertion which she suddenly recognized as the strongest impulse of her being!

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhold, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg; open the door—you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought
with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs. Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Some one was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his gripsack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one. He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease--of the joy that kills.
Sherwood Anderson (1876-1941)

Novelist and short story writer Sherwood Anderson was one of the most influential figures in early 20th Century American literature. His *Winesburg, Ohio* is a landmark work in the transition from Realism to Modernism. Anderson also personally influenced a number of young writers, including Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner.

Anderson was born in Camden, Ohio, the third of seven children of Erwin M. and Emma S. Anderson. After Erwin’s business failed, the family was forced to move frequently, finally settling down at Clyde, Ohio, in 1884. Partly as a result of these misfortunes, young Sherwood found various odd jobs to help his family, which earned him the nickname “Jobby.” He left school at age 14. Anderson moved to Chicago near his brother Karl’s home and worked as a manual laborer until near the turn of the century, when he enlisted in the United States Army. He was called up but did not see action in Cuba during the Spanish-American War. After the war, in 1900, he enrolled at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio. Eventually he secured a job as a copywriter in Chicago and became more successful. In 1904, he married Cornelia Lane, the daughter of a wealthy Ohio family. He fathered three children while living in Cleveland, Ohio, and later Elyria, Ohio, where he managed a mail-order business and paint manufacturing firms.

In November 1912 he suffered a mental breakdown and disappeared for four days. He was found in a drugstore in Cleveland, having walked almost thirty miles. Soon after, he left his position as president of the Anderson Manufacturing Co. in Elyria, Ohio, and left his wife and three small children to pursue the writer’s life of creativity. Anderson described the entire episode as “escaping from his materialistic existence,” which garnered praise from many young writers, who used his “courage” as an example. Anderson moved back to Chicago, working again for a publishing and advertising company. In 1914, he divorced Lane and married Tennessee Mitchell.

Anderson’s first novel, *Windy McPherson’s Son*, was published in 1916, followed, three years later, by his second major work, *Marching Men*. However, he is most famous for the collection of interrelated short stories, which were published in 1919, known as *Winesburg, Ohio*. The work is structured around the life of protagonist George Willard, from the time he was a child to his growing independence and ultimate abandonment of Winesburg as a young man. It is set in the fictional town of Winesburg, Ohio (not to be confused with the actual Winesburg), which is based loosely on the author’s childhood memories of Clyde, Ohio.
Mostly written from late 1915 to early 1916, with a few stories completed closer to publication, they were “...conceived as complementary parts of a whole, centered in the background of a single community.” The book consists of twenty-two stories, with the first story, “The Book of the Grotesque,” serving as an introduction. Each of the stories shares a specific character’s past and present struggle to overcome the loneliness and isolation that seems to permeate the town. Stylistically, because of its emphasis on the psychological insights of characters over plot, and plain-spoken prose, *Winesburg, Ohio* is known as one of the earliest Modern fictional works. He claimed that “Hands,” the opening story, was the first “real” story he ever wrote. *Winesburg, Ohio* was received well by critics despite some reservations about its moral tone and unconventional storytelling. Though its reputation waned in the 1930s, it has since rebounded and is now considered one of the most influential portraits of pre-industrial small-town life in the United States.

Because Sherwood Anderson was so ambiguous about what directly influenced him, it is difficult to say that any specific writer or work inspired him to write *Winesburg, Ohio* as a whole. Still, most scholars affirm the obvious connection between Anderson’s cycle and the *Spoon River Anthology* of Edgar Lee Masters (published in April 1915). Gertrude Stein, whose work Anderson was introduced to by his brother Karl between 1912 and 1915, is also said to have played a key role in helping shape the unique style found in the stories. As indicated by the correspondence the two writers developed after the publication of *Winesburg, Ohio*, variations on the repetition found in Stein’s writing in addition to their mutual appreciation for the sentence as a basic unit of prose were also likely features of her writing that Anderson noticed and drew upon in writing his *Winesburg, Ohio*.

Beginning in 1924, Anderson lived in the historic Pontalba Apartments (540-B St. Peter Street) adjoining Jackson Square in New Orleans. There, he and his wife entertained William Faulkner, Carl Sandburg, Edmund Wilson and other literary luminaries. Of Faulkner, in fact, he wrote his ambiguous and moving short story “A Meeting South,” and, in 1925, wrote *Dark Laughter*, a novel rooted in his New Orleans experience. Although the book is now out of print (and was satirized by Ernest Hemingway in his novel *The Torrents of Spring*), it was Anderson’s only bestseller.

Anderson died in Panama at the age of 64 while on a cruise to South America. An autopsy revealed that he had accidentally swallowed a toothpick (presumably in a martini olive), which had perforated his colon and caused a fatal case of peritonitis. He was buried at Round Hill Cemetery in Marion, Virginia. His epitaph reads, “Life, Not Death, is the Great Adventure.” (adapted from Wikipedia)
The writer, an old man with a white mustache, had some difficulty in getting into bed. The windows of the house in which he lived were high and he wanted to look at the trees when he awoke in the morning. A carpenter came to fix the bed so that it would be on a level with the window.

Quite a fuss was made about the matter. The carpenter, who had been a soldier in the Civil War, came into the writer’s room and sat down to talk of building a platform for the purpose of raising the bed. The writer had cigars lying about and the carpenter smoked.

For a time the two men talked of the raising of the bed and then they talked of other things. The soldier got on the subject of the war. The writer, in fact, led him to that subject. The carpenter had once been a prisoner in Andersonville prison and had lost a brother. The brother had died of starvation, and whenever the carpenter got upon that subject he cried. He, like the old writer, had a white mustache, and when he cried he puckered up his lips and the mustache bobbed up and down. The weeping old man with the cigar in his mouth was ludicrous. The plan the writer had for the raising of his bed was forgotten and later the carpenter did it in his own way and the writer, who was past sixty, had to help himself with a chair when he went to bed at night.

In his bed the writer rolled over on his side and lay quite still. For years he had been beset with notions concerning his heart. He was a hard smoker and his heart fluttered. The idea had got into his mind that he would some time die unexpectedly and always when he got into bed he thought of that. It did not alarm him. The effect in fact was quite a special thing and not easily explained. It made him more alive, there in bed, than at any other time. Perfectly still he lay and his body was old and not of much use any more, but something inside him was altogether young. He was like a pregnant woman, only that the thing inside him was not a baby but a youth. No, it wasn’t a youth, it was a woman, young, and wearing a coat of mail like a knight. It is absurd, you see, to try to tell what was inside the old writer as he lay on his high bed and listened to the fluttering of his heart. The thing to get at is what the writer, or the young thing within the writer, was thinking about.

The old writer, like all of the people in the world, had got, during his long life, a great many notions in his head. He had once been quite handsome and a number of women had been in love with him. And then, of course, he had known people, many people, known them in a peculiarly intimate way that
was different from the way in which you and I know people. At least that is what the writer thought and the thought pleased him. Why quarrel with an old man concerning his thoughts?

In the bed the writer had a dream that was not a dream. As he grew somewhat sleepy but was still conscious, figures began to appear before his eyes. He imagined the young indescribable thing within himself was driving a long procession of figures before his eyes.

You see the interest in all this lies in the figures that went before the eyes of the writer. They were all grotesques. All of the men and women the writer had ever known had become grotesques.

The grotesques were not all horrible. Some were amusing, some almost beautiful, and one, a woman all drawn out of shape, hurt the old man by her grotesqueness. When she passed he made a noise like a small dog whimpering. Had you come into the room you might have supposed the old man had unpleasant dreams or perhaps indigestion.

For an hour the procession of grotesques passed before the eyes of the old man, and then, although it was a painful thing to do, he crept out of bed and began to write. Some one of the grotesques had made a deep impression on his mind and he wanted to describe it.

At his desk the writer worked for an hour. In the end he wrote a book which he called “The Book of the Grotesque.” It was never published, but I saw it once and it made an indelible impression on my mind. The book had one central thought that is very strange and has always remained with me. By remembering it I have been able to understand many people and things that I was never able to understand before. The thought was involved but a simple statement of it would be something like this:

That in the beginning when the world was young there were a great many thoughts but no such thing as a truth. Man made the truths himself and each truth was a composite of a great many vague thoughts. All about in the world were the truths and they were all beautiful.

The old man had listed hundreds of the truths in his book. I will not try to tell you of all of them. There was the truth of virginity and the truth of passion, the truth of wealth and of poverty, of thrift and of profligacy, of carelessness and abandon. Hundreds and hundreds were the truths and they were all beautiful.

And then the people came along. Each as he appeared snatched up one of the truths and some who were quite strong snatched up a dozen of them.
It was the truths that made the people grotesques. The old man had quite an elaborate theory concerning the matter. It was his notion that the moment one of the people took one of the truths to himself, called it his truth, and tried to live his life by it, he became a grotesque and the truth he embraced became a falsehood.

You can see for yourself how the old man, who had spent all of his life writing and was filled with words, would write hundreds of pages concerning this matter. The subject would become so big in his mind that he himself would be in danger of becoming a grotesque. He didn’t, I suppose, for the same reason that he never published the book. It was the young thing inside him that saved the old man.

Concerning the old carpenter who fixed the bed for the writer, I only mentioned him because he, like many of what are called very common people, became the nearest thing to what is understandable and lovable of all the grotesques in the writer’s book.
HANDS

Upon the half decayed veranda of a small frame house that stood near the edge of a ravine near the town of Winesburg, Ohio, a fat little old man walked nervously up and down. Across a long field that had been seeded for clover but that had produced only a dense crop of yellow mustard weeds, he could see the public highway along which went a wagon filled with berry pickers returning from the fields. The berry pickers, youths and maidens, laughed and shouted boisterously. A boy clad in a blue shirt leaped from the wagon and attempted to drag after him one of the maidens, who screamed and protested shrilly. The feet of the boy in the road kicked up a cloud of dust that floated across the face of the departing sun. Over the long field came a thin girlish voice. “Oh, you Wing Biddlebaum, comb your hair, it’s falling into your eyes,” commanded the voice to the man, who was bald and whose nervous little hands fiddled about the bare white forehead as though arranging a mass of tangled locks.

Wing Biddlebaum, forever frightened and beset by a ghostly band of doubts, did not think of himself as in any way a part of the life of the town where he had lived for twenty years. Among all the people of Winesburg but one had come close to him. With George Willard, son of Tom Willard, the proprietor of the New Willard House, he had formed something like a friendship. George Willard was the reporter on the Winesburg Eagle and sometimes in the evenings he walked out along the highway to Wing Biddlebaum’s house. Now as the old man walked up and down on the veranda, his hands moving nervously about, he was hoping that George Willard would come and spend the evening with him. After the wagon containing the berry pickers had passed, he went across the field through the tall mustard weeds and climbing a rail fence peered anxiously along the road to the town. For a moment he stood thus, rubbing his hands together and looking up and down the road, and then, fear overcoming him, ran back to walk again upon the porch on his own house.

In the presence of George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum, who for twenty years had been the town mystery, lost something of his timidity, and his shadowy personality, submerged in a sea of doubts, came forth to look at the world. With the young reporter at his side, he ventured in the light of day into Main Street or strode up and down on the rickety front porch of his own house, talking excitedly. The voice that had been low and trembling became shrill and loud. The bent figure straightened. With a kind of wriggle, like a fish returned to the brook by the fisherman, Biddlebaum the silent began to talk, striving to put into words the ideas that had been accumulated by his mind during long years of silence.
Wing Biddlebaum talked much with his hands. The slender expressive fingers, forever active, forever striving to conceal themselves in his pockets or behind his back, came forth and became the piston rods of his machinery of expression.

The story of Wing Biddlebaum is a story of hands. Their restless activity, like unto the beating of the wings of an imprisoned bird, had given him his name. Some obscure poet of the town had thought of it. The hands alarmed their owner. He wanted to keep them hidden away and looked with amazement at the quiet inexpressive hands of other men who worked beside him in the fields, or passed, driving sleepy teams on country roads.

When he talked to George Willard, Wing Biddlebaum closed his fists and beat with them upon a table or on the walls of his house. The action made him more comfortable. If the desire to talk came to him when the two were walking in the fields, he sought out a stump or the top board of a fence and with his hands pounding busily talked with renewed ease.

The story of Wing Biddlebaum's hands is worth a book in itself. Sympathetically set forth it would tap many strange, beautiful qualities in obscure men. It is a job for a poet. In Winesburg the hands had attracted attention merely because of their activity. With them Wing Biddlebaum had picked as high as a hundred and forty quarts of strawberries in a day. They became his distinguishing feature, the source of his fame. Also they made more grotesque an already grotesque and elusive individuality. Winesburg was proud of the hands of Wing Biddlebaum in the same spirit in which it was proud of Banker White’s new stone house and Wesley Moyer's bay stallion, Tony Tip, that had won the two-fifteen trot at the fall races in Cleveland.

As for George Willard, he had many times wanted to ask about the hands. At times an almost overwhelming curiosity had taken hold of him. He felt that there must be a reason for their strange activity and their inclination to keep hidden away and only a growing respect for Wing Biddlebaum kept him from blurting out the questions that were often in his mind.

Once he had been on the point of asking. The two were walking in the fields on a summer afternoon and had stopped to sit upon a grassy bank. All afternoon Wing Biddlebaum had talked as one inspired. By a fence he had stopped and beating like a giant woodpecker upon the top board had shouted at George Willard, condemning his tendency to be too much influenced by the people about him, “You are destroying yourself,” he cried. “You have the inclination to be alone and to dream and you are afraid of dreams. You want to be like others in town here. You hear them talk and you try to imitate them.”
On the grassy bank Wing Biddlebaum had tried again to drive his point home. His voice became soft and reminiscent, and with a sigh of contentment he launched into a long rambling talk, speaking as one lost in a dream.

Out of the dream Wing Biddlebaum made a picture for George Willard. In the picture men lived again in a kind of pastoral golden age. Across a green open country came clean-limbed young men, some afoot, some mounted upon horses. In crowds the young men came to gather about the feet of an old man who sat beneath a tree in a tiny garden and who talked to them.

Wing Biddlebaum became wholly inspired. For once he forgot the hands. Slowly they stole forth and lay upon George Willard’s shoulders. Something new and bold came into the voice that talked. “You must try to forget all you have learned,” said the old man. “You must begin to dream. From this time on you must shut your ears to the roaring of the voices.”

Pausing in his speech, Wing Biddlebaum looked long and earnestly at George Willard. His eyes glowed. Again he raised the hands to caress the boy and then a look of horror swept over his face.

With a convulsive movement of his body, Wing Biddlebaum sprang to his feet and thrust his hands deep into his trousers pockets. Tears came to his eyes. “I must be getting along home. I can talk no more with you,” he said nervously.

Without looking back, the old man had hurried down the hillside and across a meadow, leaving George Willard perplexed and frightened upon the grassy slope. With a shiver of dread the boy arose and went along the road toward town. “I'll not ask him about his hands,” he thought, touched by the memory of the terror he had seen in the man’s eyes. “There’s something wrong, but I don’t want to know what it is. His hands have something to do with his fear of me and of everyone.”

And George Willard was right. Let us look briefly into the story of the hands. Perhaps our talking of them will arouse the poet who will tell the hidden wonder story of the influence for which the hands were but fluttering pennants of promise.

In his youth Wing Biddlebaum had been a school teacher in a town in Pennsylvania. He was not then known as Wing Biddlebaum, but went by the less euphonic name of Adolph Myers. As Adolph Myers he was much loved by the boys of his school.
Adolph Myers was meant by nature to be a teacher of youth. He was one of those rare, little-understood men who rule by a power so gentle that it passes as a lovable weakness. In their feeling for the boys under their charge such men are not unlike the finer sort of women in their love of men.

And yet that is but crudely stated. It needs the poet there. With the boys of his school, Adolph Myers had walked in the evening or had sat talking until dusk upon the schoolhouse steps lost in a kind of dream. Here and there went his hands, caressing the shoulders of the boys, playing about the tousled heads. As he talked his voice became soft and musical. There was a caress in that also. In a way the voice and the hands, the stroking of the shoulders and the touching of the hair were a part of the schoolmaster’s effort to carry a dream into the young minds. By the caress that was in his fingers he expressed himself. He was one of those men in whom the force that creates life is diffused, not centralized. Under the caress of his hands doubt and disbelief went out of the minds of the boys and they began also to dream.

And then the tragedy. A half-witted boy of the school became enamored of the young master. In his bed at night he imagined unspeakable things and in the morning went forth to tell his dreams as facts. Strange, hideous accusations fell from his loosehung lips. Through the Pennsylvania town went a shiver. Hidden, shadowy doubts that had been in men’s minds concerning Adolph Myers were galvanized into beliefs.

The tragedy did not linger. Trembling lads were jerked out of bed and questioned. “He put his arms about me,” said one. “His fingers were always playing in my hair,” said another.

One afternoon a man of the town, Henry Bradford, who kept a saloon, came to the schoolhouse door. Calling Adolph Myers into the school yard he began to beat him with his fists. As his hard knuckles beat down into the frightened face of the school-master, his wrath became more and more terrible. Screaming with dismay, the children ran here and there like disturbed insects. “I’ll teach you to put your hands on my boy, you beast,” roared the saloon keeper, who, tired of beating the master, had begun to kick him about the yard.

Adolph Myers was driven from the Pennsylvania town in the night. With lanterns in their hands a dozen men came to the door of the house where he lived alone and commanded that he dress and come forth. It was raining and one of the men had a rope in his hands. They had intended to hang the school-master, but something in his figure, so small, white, and pitiful, touched their hearts and they let him escape. As he ran away into the darkness they repented of their weakness and ran after him, swearing and
throwing sticks and great balls of soft mud at the figure that screamed and ran faster and faster into the darkness.

For twenty years Adolph Myers had lived alone in Winesburg. He was but forty but looked sixty-five. The name of Biddlebaum he got from a box of goods seen at a freight station as he hurried through an eastern Ohio town. He had an aunt in Winesburg, a black-toothed old woman who raised chickens, and with her he lived until she died. He had been ill for a year after the experience in Pennsylvania, and after his recovery worked as a day laborer in the fields, going timidly about and striving to conceal his hands. Although he did not understand what had happened he felt that the hands must be to blame. Again and again the fathers of the boys had talked of the hands. “Keep your hands to yourself,” the saloon keeper had roared, dancing, with fury in the schoolhouse yard.

Upon the veranda of his house by the ravine, Wing Biddlebaum continued to walk up and down until the sun had disappeared and the road beyond the field was lost in the grey shadows. Going into his house he cut slices of bread and spread honey upon them. When the rumble of the evening train that took away the express cars loaded with the day’s harvest of berries had passed and restored the silence of the summer night, he went again to walk upon the veranda. In the darkness he could not see the hands and they became quiet. Although he still hungered for the presence of the boy, who was the medium through which he expressed his love of man, the hunger became again a part of his loneliness and his waiting. Lighting a lamp, Wing Biddlebaum washed the few dishes soiled by his simple meal and, setting up a folding cot by the screen door that led to the porch, prepared to undress for the night. A few stray white bread crumbs lay on the cleanly washed floor by the table; putting the lamp upon a low stool he began to pick up the crumbs, carrying them to his mouth one by one with unbelievable rapidity. In the dense blotch of light beneath the table, the kneeling figure looked like a priest engaged in some service of his church. The nervous expressive fingers, flashing in and out of the light, might well have been mistaken for the fingers of the devotee going swiftly through decade after decade of his rosary.
If you have lived in cities and have walked in the park on a summer afternoon, you have perhaps seen, blinking in a corner of his iron cage, a huge, grotesque kind of monkey, a creature with ugly, sagging, hairless skin below his eyes and a bright purple underbody. This monkey is a true monster. In the completeness of his ugliness he achieved a kind of perverted beauty. Children stopping before the cage are fascinated, men turn away with an air of disgust, and women linger for a moment, trying perhaps to remember which one of their male acquaintances the thing in some faint way resembles.

Had you been in the earlier years of your life a citizen of the village of Winesburg, Ohio, there would have been for you no mystery in regard to the beast in his cage. “It is like Wash Williams,” you would have said. “As he sits in the corner there, the beast is exactly like old Wash sitting on the grass in the station yard on a summer evening after he has closed his office for the night.”

Wash Williams, the telegraph operator of Winesburg, was the ugliest thing in town. His girth was immense, his neck thin, his legs feeble. He was dirty. Everything about him was unclean. Even the whites of his eyes looked soiled.

I go too fast. Not everything about Wash was unclean. He took care of his hands. His fingers were fat, but there was something sensitive and shapely in the hand that lay on the table by the instrument in the telegraph office. In his youth Wash Williams had been called the best telegraph operator in the state, and in spite of his degradement to the obscure office at Winesburg, he was still proud of his ability.

Wash Williams did not associate with the men of the town in which he lived. “I’ll have nothing to do with them,” he said, looking with bleary eyes at the men who walked along the station platform past the telegraph office. Up along Main Street he went in the evening to Ed Griffith’s saloon, and after drinking unbelievable quantities of beer staggered off to his room in the New Willard House and to his bed for the night.

Wash Williams was a man of courage. A thing had happened to him that made him hate life, and he hated it wholeheartedly, with the abandon of a poet. First of all, he hated women. “Bitches,” he called them. His feeling toward men was somewhat different. He pitied them. “Does not every man let his life be managed for him by some bitch or another?” he asked.

In Winesburg no attention was paid to Wash Williams and his hatred of his fellows. Once Mrs. White, the banker’s wife, complained to the telegraph...
company, saying that the office in Winesburg was dirty and smelled abominably, but nothing came of her complaint. Here and there a man respected the operator. Instinctively the man felt in him a glowing resentment of something he had not the courage to resent. When Wash walked through the streets such a one had an instinct to pay him homage, to raise his hat or to bow before him. The superintendent who had supervision over the telegraph operators on the railroad that went through Winesburg felt that way. He had put Wash into the obscure office at Winesburg to avoid discharging him, and he meant to keep him there. When he received the letter of complaint from the banker’s wife, he tore it up and laughed unpleasantly. For some reason he thought of his own wife as he tore up the letter.

Wash Williams once had a wife. When he was still a young man he married a woman at Dayton, Ohio. The woman was tall and slender and had blue eyes and yellow hair. Wash was himself a comely youth. He loved the woman with a love as absorbing as the hatred he later felt for all women.

In all of Winesburg there was but one person who knew the story of the thing that had made ugly the person and the character of Wash Williams. He once told the story to George Willard and the telling of the tale came about in this way:

George Willard went one evening to walk with Belle Carpenter, a trimmer of women’s hats who worked in a millinery shop kept by Mrs. Kate McHugh. The young man was not in love with the woman, who, in fact, had a suitor who worked as bartender in Ed Griffith’s saloon, but as they walked about under the trees they occasionally embraced. The night and their own thoughts had aroused something in them. As they were returning to Main Street they passed the little lawn beside the railroad station and saw Wash Williams apparently asleep on the grass beneath a tree. On the next evening the operator and George Willard walked out together. Down the railroad they went and sat on a pile of decaying railroad ties beside the tracks. It was then that the operator told the young reporter his story of hate.

Perhaps a dozen times George Willard and the strange, shapeless man who lived at his father’s hotel had been on the point of talking. The young man looked at the hideous, leering face staring about the hotel dining room and was consumed with curiosity. Something he saw lurking in the staring eyes told him that the man who had nothing to say to others had nevertheless something to say to him. On the pile of railroad ties on the summer evening, he waited expectantly. When the operator remained silent and seemed to have changed his mind about talking, he tried to make conversation. “Were you ever married, Mr. Williams?” he began. “I suppose you were and your wife is dead, is that it?”
Wash Williams spat forth a succession of vile oaths. “Yes, she is dead,” he agreed. “She is dead as all women are dead. She is a living-dead thing, walking in the sight of men and making the earth foul by her presence.” Staring into the boy’s eyes, the man became purple with rage. “Don’t have fool notions in your head,” he commanded. “My wife, she is dead; yes, surely. I tell you, all women are dead, my mother, your mother, that tall dark woman who works in the millinery store and with whom I saw you walking about yesterday—all of them, they are all dead. I tell you there is something rotten about them. I was married, sure. My wife was dead before she married me, she was a foul thing come out a woman more foul. She was a thing sent to make life unbearable to me. I was a fool, do you see, as you are now, and so I married this woman. I would like to see men a little begin to understand women. They are sent to prevent men making the world worth while. It is a trick in Nature. Ugh! They are creeping, crawling, squirming things, they with their soft hands and their blue eyes. The sight of a woman sickens me. Why I don’t kill every woman I see I don’t know.”

Half frightened and yet fascinated by the light burning in the eyes of the hideous old man, George Willard listened, afire with curiosity. Darkness came on and he leaned forward trying to see the face of the man who talked. When, in the gathering darkness, he could no longer see the purple, bloated face and the burning eyes, a curious fancy came to him. Wash Williams talked in low even tones that made his words seem the more terrible. In the darkness the young reporter found himself imagining that he sat on the railroad ties beside a comely young man with black hair and black shining eyes. There was something almost beautiful in the voice of Wash Williams, the hideous, telling his story of hate.

The telegraph operator of Winesburg, sitting in the darkness on the railroad ties, had become a poet. Hatred had raised him to that elevation. “It is because I saw you kissing the lips of that Belle Carpenter that I tell you my story,” he said. “What happened to me may next happen to you. I want to put you on your guard. Already you may be having dreams in your head. I want to destroy them.”

Wash Williams began telling the story of his married life with the tall blonde girl with the blue eyes whom he had met when he was a young operator at Dayton, Ohio. Here and there his story was touched with moments of beauty intermingled with strings of vile curses. The operator had married the daughter of a dentist who was the youngest of three sisters. On his marriage day, because of his ability, he was promoted to a position as dispatcher at an increased salary and sent to an office at Columbus, Ohio. There he settled down with his young wife and began buying a house on the installment plan.
The young telegraph operator was madly in love. With a kind of religious fervor he had managed to go through the pitfalls of his youth and to remain virginal until after his marriage. He made for George Willard a picture of his life in the house at Columbus, Ohio, with the young wife. “In the garden back of our house we planted vegetables,” he said, “you know, peas and corn and such things. We went to Columbus in early March and as soon as the days became warm I went to work in the garden. With a spade I turned up the black ground while she ran about laughing and pretending to be afraid of the worms I uncovered. Late in April came the planting. In the little paths among the seed beds she stood holding a paper bag in her hand. The bag was filled with seeds. A few at a time she handed me the seeds that I might thrust them into the warm, soft ground.”

For a moment there was a catch in the voice of the man talking in the darkness. “I loved her,” he said. “I don’t claim not to be a fool. I love her yet. There in the dusk in the spring evening I crawled along the black ground to her feet and groveled before her. I kissed her shoes and the ankles above her shoes. When the hem of her garment touched my face I trembled. When after two years of that life I found she had managed to acquire three other lovers who came regularly to our house when I was away at work, I didn’t want to touch them or her. I just sent her home to her mother and said nothing. There was nothing to say. I had four hundred dollars in the bank and I gave her that. I didn’t ask her reasons. I didn’t say anything. When she had gone I cried like a silly boy. Pretty soon I had a chance to sell the house and I sent that money to her.”

Wash Williams and George Willard arose from the pile of railroad ties and walked along the tracks toward town. The operator finished his tale quickly, breathlessly.

“Her mother sent for me,” he said. “She wrote me a letter and asked me to come to their house at Dayton. When I got there it was evening about this time.”

Wash Williams’ voice rose to a half scream. “I sat in the parlor of that house two hours. Her mother took me in there and left me. Their house was stylish. They were what is called respectable people. There were plush chairs and a couch in the room. I was trembling all over. I hated the men I thought had wronged her. I was sick of living alone and wanted her back. The longer I waited the more raw and tender I became. I thought that if she came in and just touched me with her hand I would perhaps faint away. I ached to forgive and forget.”
Wash Williams stopped and stood staring at George Willard. The boy's body shook as from a chill. Again the man's voice became soft and low. “She came into the room naked,” he went on. “Her mother did that. While I sat there she was taking the girl's clothes off, perhaps coaxing her to do it. First I heard voices at the door that led into a little hallway and then it opened softly. The girl was ashamed and stood perfectly still staring at the floor. The mother didn't come into the room. When she had pushed the girl in through the door she stood in the hallway waiting, hoping we would—well, you see—waiting.”

George Willard and the telegraph operator came into the main street of Winesburg. The lights from the store windows lay bright and shining on the sidewalks. People moved about laughing and talking. The young reporter felt ill and weak. In imagination, he also became old and shapeless. “I didn't get the mother killed,” said Wash Williams, staring up and down the street. “I struck her once with a chair and then the neighbors came in and took it away. She screamed so loud you see. I won't ever have a chance to kill her now. She died of a fever a month after that happened.”
AN AWAKENING

Belle Carpenter had a dark skin, grey eyes, and thick lips. She was tall and strong. When black thoughts visited her she grew angry and wished she were a man and could fight someone with her fists. She worked in the millinery shop kept by Mrs. Kate McHugh and during the day sat trimming hats by a window at the rear of the store. She was the daughter of Henry Carpenter, bookkeeper in the First National Bank of Winesburg, and lived with him in a gloomy old house far out at the end of Buckeye Street. The house was surrounded by pine trees and there was no grass beneath the trees. A rusty tin eaves-trough had slipped from its fastenings at the back of the house and when the wind blew it beat against the roof of a small shed, making a dismal drumming noise that sometimes persisted all through the night.

When she was a young girl Henry Carpenter made life almost unbearable for Belle, but as she emerged from girlhood into womanhood he lost his power over her. The bookkeeper's life was made up of innumerable little pettinesses. When he went to the bank in the morning he stepped into a closet and put on a black alpaca coat that had become shabby with age. At night when he returned to his home he donned another black alpaca coat. Every evening he pressed the clothes worn in the streets. He had invented an arrangement of boards for the purpose. The trousers to his street suit were placed between the boards and the boards were clamped together with heavy screws. In the morning he wiped the boards with a damp cloth and stood them upright behind the dining room door. If they were moved during the day he was speechless with anger and did not recover his equilibrium for a week.

The bank cashier was a little bully and was afraid of his daughter. She, he realized, knew the story of his brutal treatment of her mother and hated him for it. One day she went home at noon and carried a handful of soft mud, taken from the road, into the house. With the mud she smeared the face of the boards used for the pressing of trousers and then went back to her work feeling relieved and happy.

Belle Carpenter occasionally walked out in the evening with George Willard. Secretly she loved another man, but her love affair, about which no one knew, caused her much anxiety. She was in love with Ed Handby, bartender in Ed Griffith’s Saloon, and went about with the young reporter as a kind of relief to her feelings. She did not think that her station in life would permit her to be seen in the company of the bartender and walked about under the trees with George Willard and let him kiss her to relieve a longing that was very insistent in her nature. She felt that she could keep the younger man within bounds. About Ed Handby she was somewhat uncertain.
Handby, the bartender, was a tall, broad-shouldered man of thirty who lived in a room upstairs above Griffith's saloon. His fists were large and his eyes unusually small, but his voice, as though striving to conceal the power back of his fists, was soft and quiet.

At twenty-five the bartender had inherited a large farm from an uncle in Indiana. When sold, the farm brought in eight thousand dollars, which Ed spent in six months. Going to Sandusky, on Lake Erie, he began an orgy of dissipation, the story of which afterward filled his home town with awe. Here and there he went throwing the money about, driving carriages through the streets, giving wine parties to crowds of men and women, playing cards for high stakes and keeping mistresses whose wardrobes cost him hundreds of dollars. One night at a resort called Cedar Point, he got into a fight and ran amuck like a wild thing. With his fist he broke a large mirror in the wash room of a hotel and later went about smashing windows and breaking chairs in dance halls for the joy of hearing the glass rattle on the floor and seeing the terror in the eyes of clerks who had come from Sandusky to spend the evening at the resort with their sweethearts.

The affair between Ed Handby and Belle Carpenter on the surface amounted to nothing. He had succeeded in spending but one evening in her company. On that evening he hired a horse and buggy at Wesley Moyer's livery barn and took her for a drive. The conviction that she was the woman his nature demanded and that he must get her settled upon him and he told her of his desires. The bartender was ready to marry and to begin trying to earn money for the support of his wife, but so simple was his nature that he found it difficult to explain his intentions. His body ached with physical longing and with his body he expressed himself. Taking the milliner into his arms and holding her tightly in spite of her struggles, he kissed her until she became helpless. Then he brought her back to town and let her out of the buggy. “When I get hold of you again I’ll not let you go. You can’t play with me,” he declared as he turned to drive away. Then, jumping out of the buggy, he gripped her shoulders with his strong hands. “I’ll keep you for good the next time,” he said. “You might as well make up your mind to that. It’s you and me for it and I’m going to have you before I get through.”

One night in January when there was a new moon George Willard, who was in Ed Handby's mind the only obstacle to his getting Belle Carpenter, went for a walk. Early that evening George went into Ransom Surbeck's pool room with Seth Richmond and Art Wilson, son of the town butcher. Seth Richmond stood with his back against the wall and remained silent, but George Willard talked. The pool room was filled with Winesburg boys and they talked of women. The young reporter got into that vein. He said that women should look out for themselves, that the fellow who went out
with a girl was not responsible for what happened. As he talked he looked about, eager for attention. He held the floor for five minutes and then Art Wilson began to talk. Art was learning the barber's trade in Cal Prouse's shop and already began to consider himself an authority in such matters as baseball, horse racing, drinking, and going about with women. He began to tell of a night when he with two men from Winesburg went into a house of prostitution at the county seat. The butcher's son held a cigar in the side of his mouth and as he talked spat on the floor. "The women in the place couldn't embarrass me although they tried hard enough," he boasted. "One of the girls in the house tried to get fresh, but I fooled her. As soon as she began to talk I went and sat in her lap. Everyone in the room laughed when I kissed her. I taught her to let me alone."

George Willard went out of the pool room and into Main Street. For days the weather had been bitter cold with a high wind blowing down on the town from Lake Erie, eighteen miles to the north, but on that night the wind had died away and a new moon made the night unusually lovely. Without thinking where he was going or what he wanted to do, George went out of Main Street and began walking in dimly lighted streets filled with frame houses.

Out of doors under the black sky filled with stars he forgot his companions of the pool room. Because it was dark and he was alone he began to talk aloud. In a spirit of play he reeled along the street imitating a drunken man and then imagined himself a soldier clad in shining boots that reached to the knees and wearing a sword that jingled as he walked. As a soldier he pictured himself as an inspector, passing before a long line of men who stood at attention. He began to examine the accoutrements of the men. Before a tree he stopped and began to scold. "Your pack is not in order," he said sharply. "How many times will I have to speak of this matter? Everything must be in order here. We have a difficult task before us and no difficult task can be done without order."

Hypnotized by his own words, the young man stumbled along the board sidewalk saying more words. "There is a law for armies and for men too," he muttered, lost in reflection. "The law begins with little things and spreads out until it covers everything. In every little thing there must be order; in the place where men work, in their clothes, in their thoughts. I myself must be orderly. I must learn that law. I must get myself into touch with something orderly and big that swings through the night like a star. In my little way I must begin to learn something, to give and swing and work with life, with the law."

George Willard stopped by a picket fence near a street lamp and his body began to tremble. He had never before thought such thoughts as had just
come into his head and he wondered where they had come from. For the moment it seemed to him that some voice outside of himself had been talking as he walked. He was amazed and delighted with his own mind and when he walked on again spoke of the matter with fervor: “To come out of Ransom Surbeck’s pool room and think things like that,” he whispered. “It is better to be alone. If I talked like Art Wilson the boys would understand me but they wouldn’t understand what I’ve been thinking down here.”

In Winesburg, as in all Ohio towns of twenty years ago, there was a section in which lived day laborers. As the time of factories had not yet come, the laborers worked in the fields or were section hands on the railroads. They worked twelve hours a day and received one dollar for the long day of toil. The houses in which they lived were small cheaply constructed wooden affairs with a garden at the back. The more comfortable among them kept cows and perhaps a pig, housed in a little shed at the rear of the garden.

With his head filled with resounding thoughts, George Willard walked into such a street on the clear January night. The street was dimly lighted and in places there was no sidewalk. In the scene that lay about him there was something that excited his already aroused fancy. For a year he had been devoting all of his odd moments to the reading of books and now some tale he had read concerning life in old world towns of the middle ages came sharply back to his mind so that he stumbled forward with the curious feeling of one revisiting a place that had been a part of some former existence. On an impulse he turned out of the street and went into a little dark alleyway behind the sheds in which lived the cows and pigs.

For a half hour he stayed in the alleyway, smelling the strong smell of animals too closely housed and letting his mind play with the strange new thoughts that came to him. The very rankness of the smell of manure in the clear sweet air awoke something heady in his brain. The poor little houses lighted by kerosene lamps, the smoke from the chimneys mounting straight up into the clear air, the grunting of pigs, the women clad in cheap calico dresses and washing dishes in the kitchens, the footsteps of men coming out of the houses and going off to the stores and saloons of Main Street, the dogs barking and the children crying—all of these things made him seem, as he lurked in the darkness, oddly detached and apart from all life.

The excited young man, unable to bear the weight of his own thoughts, began to move cautiously along the alleyway. A dog attacked him and had to be driven away with stones, and a man appeared at the door of one of the houses and swore at the dog. George went into a vacant lot and throwing back his head looked up at the sky. He felt unutterably big and remade by the simple experience through which he had been passing and in a kind of fervor
of emotion put up his hands, thrusting them into the darkness above his head and muttering words. The desire to say words overcame him and he said words without meaning, rolling them over on his tongue and saying them because they were brave words, full of meaning. “Death,” he muttered, “night, the sea, fear, loveliness.”

George Willard came out of the vacant lot and stood again on the sidewalk facing the houses. He felt that all of the people in the little street must be brothers and sisters to him and he wished he had the courage to call them out of their houses and to shake their hands. “If there were only a woman here I would take hold of her hand and we would run until we were both tired out,” he thought. “That would make me feel better.” With the thought of a woman in his mind he walked out of the street and went toward the house where Belle Carpenter lived. He thought she would understand his mood and that he could achieve in her presence a position he had long been wanting to achieve. In the past when he had been with her and had kissed her lips he had come away filled with anger at himself. He had felt like one being used for some obscure purpose and had not enjoyed the feeling. Now he thought he had suddenly become too big to be used.

When George got to Belle Carpenter's house there had already been a visitor there before him. Ed Handby had come to the door and calling Belle out of the house had tried to talk to her. He had wanted to ask the woman to come away with him and to be his wife, but when she came and stood by the door he lost his self-assurance and became sullen. “You stay away from that kid,” he growled, thinking of George Willard, and then, not knowing what else to say, turned to go away. “If I catch you together I will break your bones and his too,” he added. The bartender had come to woo, not to threaten, and was angry with himself because of his failure.

When her lover had departed Belle went indoors and ran hurriedly upstairs. From a window at the upper part of the house she saw Ed Handby cross the street and sit down on a horse block before the house of a neighbor. In the dim light the man sat motionless holding his head in his hands. She was made happy by the sight, and when George Willard came to the door she greeted him effusively and hurriedly put on her hat. She thought that, as she walked through the streets with young Willard, Ed Handby would follow and she wanted to make him suffer.

For an hour Belle Carpenter and the young reporter walked about under the trees in the sweet night air. George Willard was full of big words. The sense of power that had come to him during the hour in the darkness in the alleyway remained with him and he talked boldly, swaggering along and swinging his arms about. He wanted to make Belle Carpenter realize that
he was aware of his former weakness and that he had changed. “You’ll find me different,” he declared, thrusting his hands into his pockets and looking boldly into her eyes. “I don’t know why but it is so. You’ve got to take me for a man or let me alone. That’s how it is.”

Up and down the quiet streets under the new moon went the woman and the boy. When George had finished talking they turned down a side street and went across a bridge into a path that ran up the side of a hill. The hill began at Waterworks Pond and climbed upward to the Winesburg Fair Grounds. On the hillside grew dense bushes and small trees and among the bushes were little open spaces carpeted with long grass, now stiff and frozen.

As he walked behind the woman up the hill George Willard’s heart began to beat rapidly and his shoulders straightened. Suddenly he decided that Belle Carpenter was about to surrender herself to him. The new force that had manifested itself in him had, he felt, been at work upon her and had led to her conquest. The thought made him half drunk with the sense of masculine power. Although he had been annoyed that as they walked about she had not seemed to be listening to his words, the fact that she had accompanied him to this place took all his doubts away. “It is different. Everything has become different,” he thought and taking hold of her shoulder turned her about and stood looking at her, his eyes shining with pride.

Belle Carpenter did not resist. When he kissed her upon the lips she leaned heavily against him and looked over his shoulder into the darkness. In her whole attitude there was a suggestion of waiting. Again, as in the alleyway, George Willard’s mind ran off into words and, holding the woman tightly he whispered the words into the still night. “Lust,” he whispered, “lust and night and women.”

George Willard did not understand what happened to him that night on the hillside. Later, when he got to his own room, he wanted to weep and then grew half insane with anger and hate. He hated Belle Carpenter and was sure that all his life he would continue to hate her. On the hillside he had led the woman to one of the little open spaces among the bushes and had dropped to his knees beside her. As in the vacant lot, by the laborers’ houses, he had put up his hands in gratitude for the new power in himself and was waiting for the woman to speak when Ed Handby appeared.

The bartender did not want to beat the boy, who he thought had tried to take his woman away. He knew that beating was unnecessary, that he had power within himself to accomplish his purpose without using his fists. Gripping George by the shoulder and pulling him to his feet, he held him with one hand while he looked at Belle Carpenter seated on the grass. Then with
a quick wide movement of his arm he sent the younger man sprawling away into the bushes and began to bully the woman, who had risen to her feet. “You’re no good,” he said roughly. “I’ve half a mind not to bother with you. I’d let you alone if I didn’t want you so much.”

On his hands and knees in the bushes George Willard stared at the scene before him and tried hard to think. He prepared to spring at the man who had humiliated him. To be beaten seemed to be infinitely better than to be thus hurled ignominiously aside.

Three times the young reporter sprang at Ed Handby and each time the bartender, catching him by the shoulder, hurled him back into the bushes. The older man seemed prepared to keep the exercise going indefinitely but George Willard’s head struck the root of a tree and he lay still. Then Ed Handby took Belle Carpenter by the arm and marched her away.

George heard the man and woman making their way through the bushes. As he crept down the hillside his heart was sick within him. He hated himself and he hated the fate that had brought about his humiliation. When his mind went back to the hour alone in the alleyway he was puzzled and stopping in the darkness listened, hoping to hear again the voice outside himself that had so short a time before put new courage into his heart. When his way homeward led him again into the street of frame houses he could not bear the sight and began to run, wanting to get quickly out of the neighborhood that now seemed to him utterly squalid and commonplace.
ELIZABETH WILLARD, the mother of George Willard, was tall and gaunt and her face was marked with smallpox scars. Although she was but forty-five, some obscure disease had taken the fire out of her figure. Listlessly she went about the disorderly old hotel looking at the faded wall-paper and the ragged carpets and, when she was able to be about, doing the work of a chambermaid among beds soiled by the slumbers of fat traveling men. Her husband, Tom Willard, a slender, graceful man with square shoulders, a quick military step, and a black mustache trained to turn sharply up at the ends, tried to put the wife out of his mind. The presence of the tall ghostly figure, moving slowly through the halls, he took as a reproach to himself. When he thought of her he grew angry and swore. The hotel was unprofitable and forever on the edge of failure and he wished himself out of it. He thought of the old house and the woman who lived there with him as things defeated and done for. The hotel in which he had begun life so hopefully was now a mere ghost of what a hotel should be. As he went spruce and business-like through the streets of Winesburg, he sometimes stopped and turned quickly about as though fearing that the spirit of the hotel and of the woman would follow him even into the streets. “Damn such a life, damn it!” he sputtered aimlessly.

Tom Willard had a passion for village politics and for years had been the leading Democrat in a strongly Republican community. Some day, he told himself, the tide of things political will turn in my favor and the years of ineffectual service count big in the bestowal of rewards. He dreamed of going to Congress and even of becoming governor. Once when a younger member of the party arose at a political conference and began to boast of his faithful service, Tom Willard grew white with fury. “Shut up, you,” he roared, glaring about. “What do you know of service? What are you but a boy? Look at what I’ve done here! I was a Democrat here in Winesburg when it was a crime to be a Democrat. In the old days they fairly hunted us with guns.”

Between Elizabeth and her one son George there was a deep unexpressed bond of sympathy, based on a girlhood dream that had long ago died. In the son’s presence she was timid and reserved, but sometimes while he hurried about town intent upon his duties as a reporter, she went into his room and closing the door knelt by a little desk, made of a kitchen table, that sat near a window. In the room by the desk she went through a ceremony that was half a prayer, half a demand, addressed to the skies. In the boyish figure she yearned to see something half forgotten that had once been a part of herself recreated. The prayer concerned that. “Even though I die, I will in some way keep defeat from you,” she cried, and so deep was her determination that her whole body shook. Her eyes glowed and she clenched her fists. “If I am
dead and see him becoming a meaningless drab figure like myself, I will come back,” she declared. “I ask God now to give me that privilege. I demand it. I will pay for it. God may beat me with his fists. I will take any blow that may befall if but this my boy be allowed to express something for us both.” Pausing uncertainly, the woman stared about the boy’s room. “And do not let him become smart and successful either,” she added vaguely.

The communion between George Willard and his mother was outwardly a formal thing without meaning. When she was ill and sat by the window in her room he sometimes went in the evening to make her a visit. They sat by a window that looked over the roof of a small frame building into Main Street. By turning their heads they could see through another window, along an alleyway that ran behind the Main Street stores and into the back door of Abner Groff’s bakery. Sometimes as they sat thus a picture of village life presented itself to them. At the back door of his shop appeared Abner Groff with a stick or an empty milk bottle in his hand. For a long time there was a feud between the baker and a grey cat that belonged to Sylvester West, the druggist. The boy and his mother saw the cat creep into the door of the bakery and presently emerge followed by the baker, who swore and waved his arms about. The baker’s eyes were small and red and his black hair and beard were filled with flour dust. Sometimes he was so angry that, although the cat had disappeared, he hurled sticks, bits of broken glass, and even some of the tools of his trade about. Once he broke a window at the back of Sinning’s Hardware Store. In the alley the grey cat crouched behind barrels filled with torn paper and broken bottles above which flew a black swarm of flies. Once when she was alone, and after watching a prolonged and ineffectual outburst on the part of the baker, Elizabeth Willard put her head down on her long white hands and wept. After that she did not look along the alleyway any more, but tried to forget the contest between the bearded man and the cat. It seemed like a rehearsal of her own life, terrible in its vividness.

In the evening when the son sat in the room with his mother, the silence made them both feel awkward. Darkness came on and the evening train came in at the station. In the street below feet tramped up and down upon a board sidewalk. In the station yard, after the evening train had gone, there was a heavy silence. Perhaps Skinner Leason, the express agent, moved a truck the length of the station platform. Over on Main Street sounded a man’s voice, laughing. The door of the express office banged. George Willard arose and crossing the room fumbled for the doorknob. Sometimes he knocked against a chair, making it scrape along the floor. By the window sat the sick woman, perfectly still, listless. Her long hands, white and bloodless, could be seen drooping over the ends of the arms of the chair. “I think you had better be out among the boys. You are too much indoors,” she said, striving to relieve the embarrassment of the departure. “I thought I would take a walk,” replied George Willard, who felt awkward and confused.
One evening in July, when the transient guests who made the New Willard House their temporary home had become scarce, and the hallways, lighted only by kerosene lamps turned low, were plunged in gloom, Elizabeth Willard had an adventure. She had been ill in bed for several days and her son had not come to visit her. She was alarmed. The feeble blaze of life that remained in her body was blown into a flame by her anxiety and she crept out of bed, dressed and hurried along the hallway toward her son’s room, shaking with exaggerated fears. As she went along she steadied herself with her hand, slipped along the papered walls of the hall and breathed with difficulty. The air whistled through her teeth. As she hurried forward she thought how foolish she was. “He is concerned with boyish affairs,” she told herself. “Perhaps he has now begun to walk about in the evening with girls.”

Elizabeth Willard had a dread of being seen by guests in the hotel that had once belonged to her father and the ownership of which still stood recorded in her name in the county courthouse. The hotel was continually losing patronage because of its shabbiness and she thought of herself as also shabby. Her own room was in an obscure corner and when she felt able to work she voluntarily worked among the beds, preferring the labor that could be done when the guests were abroad seeking trade among the merchants of Winesburg.

By the door of her son’s room the mother knelt upon the floor and listened for some sound from within. When she heard the boy moving about and talking in low tones a smile came to her lips. George Willard had a habit of talking aloud to himself and to hear him doing so had always given his mother a peculiar pleasure. The habit in him, she felt, strengthened the secret bond that existed between them. A thousand times she had whispered to herself of the matter. “He is groping about, trying to find himself,” she thought. “He is not a dull clod, all words and smartness. Within him there is a secret something that is striving to grow. It is the thing I let be killed in myself.”

In the darkness in the hallway by the door the sick woman arose and started again toward her own room. She was afraid that the door would open and the boy come upon her. When she had reached a safe distance and was about to turn a corner into a second hallway she stopped and bracing herself with her hands waited, thinking to shake off a trembling fit of weakness that had come upon her. The presence of the boy in the room had made her happy. In her bed, during the long hours alone, the little fears that had visited her had become giants. Now they were all gone. “When I get back to my room I shall sleep,” she murmured gratefully.
But Elizabeth Willard was not to return to her bed and to sleep. As she stood trembling in the darkness the door of her son’s room opened and the boy’s father, Tom Willard, stepped out. In the light that steamed out at the door he stood with the knob in his hand and talked. What he said infuriated the woman.

Tom Willard was ambitious for his son. He had always thought of himself as a successful man, although nothing he had ever done had turned out successfully. However, when he was out of sight of the New Willard House and had no fear of coming upon his wife, he swaggered and began to dramatize himself as one of the chief men of the town. He wanted his son to succeed. He it was who had secured for the boy the position on the Winesburg Eagle. Now, with a ring of earnestness in his voice, he was advising concerning some course of conduct. “I tell you what, George, you’ve got to wake up,” he said sharply. “Will Henderson has spoken to me three times concerning the matter. He says you go along for hours not hearing when you are spoken to and acting like a gawky girl. What ails you?” Tom Willard laughed good-naturedly. “Well, I guess you’ll get over it,” he said. “I told Will that. You’re not a fool and you’re not a woman. You’re Tom Willard’s son and you’ll wake up. I’m not afraid. What you say clears things up. If being a newspaper man had put the notion of becoming a writer into your mind that’s all right. Only I guess you’ll have to wake up to do that too, eh?”

Tom Willard went briskly along the hallway and down a flight of stairs to the office. The woman in the darkness could hear him laughing and talking with a guest who was striving to wear away a dull evening by dozing in a chair by the office door. She returned to the door of her son’s room. The weakness had passed from her body as by a miracle and she stepped boldly along. A thousand ideas raced through her head. When she heard the scraping of a chair and the sound of a pen scratching upon paper, she again turned and went back along the hallway to her own room.

A definite determination had come into the mind of the defeated wife of the Winesburg hotel keeper. The determination was the result of long years of quiet and rather ineffectual thinking. “Now,” she told herself, “I will act. There is something threatening my boy and I will ward it off.” The fact that the conversation between Tom Willard and his son had been rather quiet and natural, as though an understanding existed between them, maddened her. Although for years she had hated her husband, her hatred had always before been a quite impersonal thing. He had been merely a part of something else that she hated. Now, and by the few words at the door, he had become the thing personified. In the darkness of her own room she clenched her fists and glared about. Going to a cloth bag that hung on a nail by the wall she took out a long pair of sewing scissors and held them in her hand like a dagger. “I will
stab him,” she said aloud. “He has chosen to be the voice of evil and I will kill him. When I have killed him something will snap within myself and I will die also. It will be a release for all of us.”

In her girlhood and before her marriage with Tom Willard, Elizabeth had borne a somewhat shaky reputation in Winesburg. For years she had been what is called “stage-struck” and had paraded through the streets with traveling men guests at her father’s hotel, wearing loud clothes and urging them to tell her of life in the cities out of which they had come. Once she startled the town by putting on men’s clothes and riding a bicycle down Main Street.

In her own mind the tall dark girl had been in those days much confused. A great restlessness was in her and it expressed itself in two ways. First there was an uneasy desire for change, for some big definite movement to her life. It was this feeling that had turned her mind to the stage. She dreamed of joining some company and wandering over the world, seeing always new faces and giving something out of herself to all people. Sometimes at night she was quite beside herself with the thought, but when she tried to talk of the matter to the members of the theatrical companies that came to Winesburg and stopped at her father’s hotel, she got nowhere. They did not seem to know what she meant, or if she did get something of her passion expressed, they only laughed. “It’s not like that,” they said. “It’s as dull and uninteresting as this here. Nothing comes of it.”

With the traveling men when she walked about with them, and later with Tom Willard, it was quite different. Always they seemed to understand and sympathize with her. On the side streets of the village, in the darkness under the trees, they took hold of her hand and she thought that something unexpressed in herself came forth and became a part of an unexpressed something in them.

And then there was the second expression of her restlessness. When that came she felt for a time released and happy. She did not blame the men who walked with her and later she did not blame Tom Willard. It was always the same, beginning with kisses and ending, after strange wild emotions, with peace and then sobbing repentance. When she sobbed she put her hand upon the face of the man and had always the same thought. Even though he were large and bearded she thought he had become suddenly a little boy. She wondered why he did not sob also. In her room, tucked away in a corner of the old Willard House, Elizabeth Willard lighted a lamp and put it on a dressing table that stood by the door. A thought had come into her mind and she went to a closet and brought out a small square box and set it on the table. The box contained material for make-up and had been left with other
things by a theatrical company that had once been stranded in Winesburg. Elizabeth Willard had decided that she would be beautiful. Her hair was still black and there was a great mass of it braided and coiled about her head. The scene that was to take place in the office below began to grow in her mind. No ghostly worn-out figure should confront Tom Willard, but something quite unexpected and startling. Tall and with dusky cheeks and hair that fell in a mass from her shoulders, a figure should come striding down the stairway before the startled loungers in the hotel office. The figure would be silent—it would be swift and terrible. As a tigress whose cub had been threatened would she appear, coming out of the shadows, stealing noiselessly along and holding the long wicked scissors in her hand.

With a little broken sob in her throat, Elizabeth Willard blew out the light that stood upon the table and stood weak and trembling in the darkness. The strength that had been as a miracle in her body left and she half reeled across the floor, clutching at the back of the chair in which she had spent so many long days staring out over the tin roofs into the main street of Winesburg. In the hallway there was the sound of footsteps and George Willard came in at the door. Sitting in a chair beside his mother he began to talk. “I’m going to get out of here,” he said. “I don’t know where I shall go or what I shall do but I am going away.”

The woman in the chair waited and trembled. An impulse came to her. “I suppose you had better wake up,” she said. “You think that? You will go to the city and make money, eh? It will be better for you, you think, to be a business man, to be brisk and smart and alive?” She waited and trembled. The son shook his head. “I suppose I can’t make you understand, but oh, I wish I could,” he said earnestly. “I can’t even talk to father about it. I don’t try. There isn’t any use. I don’t know what I shall do. I just want to go away and look at people and think.” Silence fell upon the room where the boy and woman sat together. Again, as on the other evenings, they were embarrassed. After a time the boy tried again to talk. “I suppose it won’t be for a year or two but I’ve been thinking about it,” he said, rising and going toward the door. “Something father said makes it sure that I shall have to go away.” He fumbled with the doorknob. In the room the silence became unbearable to the woman. She wanted to cry out with joy because of the words that had come from the lips of her son, but the expression of joy had become impossible to her. “I think you had better go out among the boys. You are too much indoors,” she said. “I thought I would go for a little walk,” replied the son stepping awkwardly out of the room and closing the door.
FROM HIS SEAT on a box in the rough board shed that stuck like a burr on the rear of Cowley & Son’s store in Winesburg, Elmer Cowley, the junior member of the firm, could see through a dirty window into the printshop of the Winesburg Eagle. Elmer was putting new shoelaces in his shoes. They did not go in readily and he had to take the shoes off. With the shoes in his hand he sat looking at a large hole in the heel of one of his stockings. Then looking quickly up he saw George Willard, the only newspaper reporter in Winesburg, standing at the back door of the Eagle printshop and staring absentmindedly about. “Well, well, what next!” exclaimed the young man with the shoes in his hand, jumping to his feet and creeping away from the window.

A flush crept into Elmer Cowley’s face and his hands began to tremble. In Cowley & Son’s store a Jewish traveling salesman stood by the counter talking to his father. He imagined the reporter could hear what was being said and the thought made him furious. With one of the shoes still held in his hand he stood in a corner of the shed and stamped with a stockinged foot upon the board floor.

Cowley & Son’s store did not face the main street of Winesburg. The front was on Maumee Street and beyond it was Voight’s wagon shop and a shed for the sheltering of farmers’ horses. Beside the store an alleyway ran behind the main street stores and all day drays and delivery wagons, intent on bringing in and taking out goods, passed up and down. The store itself was indescribable. Will Henderson once said of it that it sold everything and nothing. In the window facing Maumee Street stood a chunk of coal as large as an apple barrel, to indicate that orders for coal were taken, and beside the black mass of the coal stood three combs of honey grown brown and dirty in their wooden frames.

The honey had stood in the store window for six months. It was for sale as were also the coat hangers, patent suspender buttons, cans of roof paint, bottles of rheumatism cure, and a substitute for coffee that companioned the honey in its patient willingness to serve the public.

Ebenezer Cowley, the man who stood in the store listening to the eager patter of words that fell from the lips of the traveling man, was tall and lean and looked unwashed. On his scrawny neck was a large wen partially covered by a grey beard. He wore a long Prince Albert coat. The coat had been purchased to serve as a wedding garment. Before he became a merchant Ebenezer was a farmer and after his marriage he wore the Prince Albert coat to church on Sundays and on Saturday afternoons when he came into
town to trade. When he sold the farm to become a merchant he wore the coat constantly. It had become brown with age and was covered with grease spots, but in it Ebenezer always felt dressed up and ready for the day in town.

As a merchant Ebenezer was not happily placed in life and he had not been happily placed as a farmer. Still he existed. His family, consisting of a daughter named Mabel and the son, lived with him in rooms above the store and it did not cost them much to live. His troubles were not financial. His unhappiness as a merchant lay in the fact that when a traveling man with wares to be sold came in at the front door he was afraid. Behind the counter he stood shaking his head. He was afraid, first that he would stubbornly refuse to buy and thus lose the opportunity to sell again; second that he would not be stubborn enough and would in a moment of weakness buy what could not be sold.

In the store on the morning when Elmer Cowley saw George Willard standing and apparently listening at the back door of the Eagle printshop, a situation had arisen that always stirred the son's wrath. The traveling man talked and Ebenezer listened, his whole figure expressing uncertainty. “You see how quickly it is done,” said the traveling man, who had for sale a small flat metal substitute for collar buttons. With one hand he quickly unfastened a collar from his shirt and then fastened it on again. He assumed a flattering wheedling tone. “I tell you what, men have come to the end of all this fooling with collar buttons and you are the man to make money out of the change that is coming. I am offering you the exclusive agency for this town. Take twenty dozen of these fasteners and I’ll not visit any other store. I’ll leave the field to you.”

The traveling man leaned over the counter and tapped with his finger on Ebenezer’s breast. “It’s an opportunity and I want you to take it,” he urged. “A friend of mine told me about you. ‘See that man Cowley,’ he said. ‘He’s a live one.’”

The traveling man paused and waited. Taking a book from his pocket he began writing out the order. Still holding the shoe in his hand Elmer Cowley went through the store, past the two absorbed men, to a glass showcase near the front door. He took a cheap revolver from the case and began to wave it about. “You get out of here!” he shrieked. “We don’t want any collar fasteners here.” An idea came to him. “Mind, I’m not making any threat,” he added. “I don’t say I’ll shoot. Maybe I just took this gun out of the case to look at it. But you better get out. Yes sir, I’ll say that. You better grab up your things and get out.”
The young storekeeper’s voice rose to a scream and going behind the counter he began to advance upon the two men. “We’re through being fools here!” he cried. “We ain’t going to buy any more stuff until we begin to sell. We ain’t going to keep on being queer and have folks staring and listening. You get out of here!”

The traveling man left. Raking the samples of collar fasteners off the counter into a black leather bag, he ran. He was a small man and very bow-legged and he ran awkwardly. The black bag caught against the door and he stumbled and fell. “Crazy, that’s what he is--crazy!” he sputtered as he arose from the sidewalk and hurried away.

In the store Elmer Cowley and his father stared at each other. Now that the immediate object of his wrath had fled, the younger man was embarrassed. “Well, I meant it. I think we’ve been queer long enough,” he declared, going to the showcase and replacing the revolver. Sitting on a barrel he pulled on and fastened the shoe he had been holding in his hand. He was waiting for some word of understanding from his father but when Ebenezer spoke his words only served to reawaken the wrath in the son and the young man ran out of the store without replying. Scratching his grey beard with his long dirty fingers, the merchant looked at his son with the same wavering uncertain stare with which he had confronted the traveling man. “I'll be starched,” he said softly. “Well, well, I'll be washed and ironed and starched!”

Elmer Cowley went out of Winesburg and along a country road that paralleled the railroad track. He did not know where he was going or what he was going to do. In the shelter of a deep cut where the road, after turning sharply to the right, dipped under the tracks he stopped and the passion that had been the cause of this outburst in the store began to again find expression. “I will not be queer--one to be looked at and listened to,” he declared aloud. “I'll be like other people. I'll show that George Willard. He'll find out. I'll show him!”

The distraught young man stood in the middle of the road and glared back at the town. He did not know the reporter George Willard and had no special feeling concerning the tall boy who ran about town gathering the town news. The reporter had merely come, by his presence in the office and in the printshop of the Winesburg Eagle, to stand for something in the young merchant’s mind. He thought the boy who passed and repassed Cowley & Son’s store and who stopped to talk to people in the street must be thinking of him and perhaps laughing at him. George Willard, he felt, belonged to the town, typified the town, represented in his person the spirit of the town. Elmer Cowley could not have believed that George Willard had also his days of unhappiness, that vague hungers and secret unnamable desires visited
also his mind. Did he not represent public opinion and had not the public opinion of Winesburg condemned the Cowleys to queerness? Did he not walk whistling and laughing through Main Street? Might not one by striking his person strike also the greater enemy--the thing that smiled and went its own way--the judgment of Winesburg?

Elmer Cowley was extraordinarily tall and his arms were long and powerful. His hair, his eyebrows, and the downy beard that had begun to grow upon his chin, were pale almost to whiteness. His teeth protruded from between his lips and his eyes were blue with the colorless blueness of the marbles called “aggies” that the boys of Winesburg carried in their pockets. Elmer had lived in Winesburg for a year and had made no friends. He was, he felt, one condemned to go through life without friends and he hated the thought.

Sullenly the tall young man tramped along the road with his hands stuffed into his trouser pockets. The day was cold with a raw wind, but presently the sun began to shine and the road became soft and muddy. The tops of the ridges of frozen mud that formed the road began to melt and the mud clung to Elmer’s shoes. His feet became cold. When he had gone several miles he turned off the road, crossed a field and entered a wood. In the wood he gathered sticks to build a fire, by which he sat trying to warm himself, miserable in body and in mind.

For two hours he sat on the log by the fire and then, arising and creeping cautiously through a mass of underbrush, he went to a fence and looked across fields to a small farmhouse surrounded by low sheds. A smile came to his lips and he began making motions with his long arms to a man who was husking corn in one of the fields.

In his hour of misery the young merchant had returned to the farm where he had lived through boyhood and where there was another human being to whom he felt he could explain himself. The man on the farm was a half-witted old fellow named Mook. He had once been employed by Ebenezer Cowley and had stayed on the farm when it was sold. The old man lived in one of the unpainted sheds back of the farmhouse and puttered about all day in the fields.

Mook the half-wit lived happily. With childlike faith he believed in the intelligence of the animals that lived in the sheds with him, and when he was lonely held long conversations with the cows, the pigs, and even with the chickens that ran about the barnyard. He it was who had put the expression regarding being “laundered” into the mouth of his former employer. When excited or surprised by anything he smiled vaguely and muttered: “I’ll be washed and ironed. Well, well, I’ll be washed and ironed and starched.”
When the half-witted old man left his husking of corn and came into
the wood to meet Elmer Cowley, he was neither surprised nor especially
interested in the sudden appearance of the young man. His feet also were
cold and he sat on the log by the fire, grateful for the warmth and apparently
indifferent to what Elmer had to say.

Elmer talked earnestly and with great freedom, walking up and down and
waving his arms about. “You don’t understand what’s the matter with me so
of course you don’t care,” he declared. “With me it’s different. Look how it has
always been with me. Father is queer and mother was queer, too. Even the
clothes mother used to wear were not like other people’s clothes, and look
at that coat in which father goes about there in town, thinking he’s dressed
up, too. Why don’t he get a new one? It wouldn’t cost much. I’ll tell you why.
Father doesn’t know and when mother was alive she didn’t know either.
Mabel is different. She knows but she won’t say anything. I will, though. I’m
not going to be stared at any longer. Why look here, Mook, father doesn’t
know that his store there in town is just a queer jumble, that he’ll never sell
the stuff he buys. He knows nothing about it. Sometimes he’s a little worried
that trade doesn’t come and then he goes and buys something else. In the
evenings he sits by the fire upstairs and says trade will come after a while. He
isn’t worried. He’s queer. He doesn’t know enough to be worried.”

The excited young man became more excited. “He don’t know but I know,”
he shouted, stopping to gaze down into the dumb, unresponsive face of the
half-wit. “I know too well. I can’t stand it. When we lived out here it was
different. I worked and at night I went to bed and slept. I wasn’t always seeing
people and thinking as I am now. In the evening, there in town, I go to the
post office or to the depot to see the train come in, and no one says anything
to me. Everyone stands around and laughs and they talk but they say nothing
to me. Then I feel so queer that I can’t talk either. I go away. I don’t say any-
things. I can’t.”

The fury of the young man became uncontrollable. “I won’t stand it,” he
yelled, looking up at the bare branches of the trees. “I’m not made to stand it.”

Maddened by the dull face of the man on the log by the fire, Elmer
turned and glared at him as he had glared back along the road at the town of
Winesburg. “Go on back to work,” he screamed. “What good does it do me to
talk to you?” A thought came to him and his voice dropped. “I’m a coward too,
eh?” he muttered. “Do you know why I came clear out here afoot? I had to tell
someone and you were the only one I could tell. I hunted out another queer
one, you see. I ran away, that’s what I did. I couldn’t stand up to someone like
that George Willard. I had to come to you. I ought to tell him and I will.”
Again his voice arose to a shout and his arms flew about. “I will tell him. I won’t be queer. I don’t care what they think. I won’t stand it.”

Elmer Cowley ran out of the woods leaving the half-wit sitting on the log before the fire. Presently the old man arose and climbing over the fence went back to his work in the corn. “I’ll be washed and ironed and starched,” he declared. “Well, well, I’ll be washed and ironed.” Mook was interested. He went along a lane to a field where two cows stood nibbling at a straw stack. “Elmer was here,” he said to the cows. “Elmer is crazy. You better get behind the stack where he don’t see you. He’ll hurt someone yet, Elmer will.”

At eight o’clock that evening Elmer Cowley put his head in at the front door of the office of the Winesburg Eagle where George Willard sat writing. His cap was pulled down over his eyes and a sullen determined look was on his face. “You come on outside with me,” he said, stepping in and closing the door. He kept his hand on the knob as though prepared to resist anyone else coming in. “You just come along outside. I want to see you.”

George Willard and Elmer Cowley walked through the main street of Winesburg. The night was cold and George Willard had on a new overcoat and looked very spruce and dressed up. He thrust his hands into the overcoat pockets and looked inquiringly at his companion. He had long been wanting to make friends with the young merchant and find out what was in his mind. Now he thought he saw a chance and was delighted. “I wonder what he’s up to? Perhaps he thinks he has a piece of news for the paper. It can’t be a fire because I haven’t heard the fire bell and there isn’t anyone running,” he thought.

In the main street of Winesburg, on the cold November evening, but few citizens appeared and these hurried along bent on getting to the stove at the back of some store. The windows of the stores were frosted and the wind rattled the tin sign that hung over the entrance to the stairway leading to Doctor Welling’s office. Before Hern’s Grocery a basket of apples and a rack filled with new brooms stood on the sidewalk. Elmer Cowley stopped and stood facing George Willard. He tried to talk and his arms began to pump up and down. His face worked spasmodically. He seemed about to shout. “Oh, you go on back,” he cried. “Don’t stay out here with me. I ain’t got anything to tell you. I don’t want to see you at all.”

For three hours the distracted young merchant wandered through the resident streets of Winesburg blind with anger, brought on by his failure to declare his determination not to be queer. Bitterly the sense of defeat settled upon him and he wanted to weep. After the hours of futile sputtering at
nothingness that had occupied the afternoon and his failure in the presence of the young reporter, he thought he could see no hope of a future for himself.

And then a new idea dawned for him. In the darkness that surrounded him he began to see a light. Going to the now darkened store, where Cowley & Son had for over a year waited vainly for trade to come, he crept stealthily in and felt about in a barrel that stood by the stove at the rear. In the barrel beneath shavings lay a tin box containing Cowley & Son’s cash. Every evening Ebenezer Cowley put the box in the barrel when he closed the store and went upstairs to bed. “They wouldn’t never think of a careless place like that,” he told himself, thinking of robbers.

Elmer took twenty dollars, two ten-dollar bills, from the little roll containing perhaps four hundred dollars, the cash left from the sale of the farm. Then replacing the box beneath the shavings he went quietly out at the front door and walked again in the streets.

The idea that he thought might put an end to all of his unhappiness was very simple. “I will get out of here, run away from home,” he told himself. He knew that a local freight train passed through Winesburg at midnight and went on to Cleveland, where it arrived at dawn. He would steal a ride on the local and when he got to Cleveland would lose himself in the crowds there. He would get work in some shop and become friends with the other workmen and would be indistinguishable. Then he could talk and laugh. He would no longer be queer and would make friends. Life would begin to have warmth and meaning for him as it had for others.

The tall awkward young man, striding through the streets, laughed at himself because he had been angry and had been half afraid of George Willard. He decided he would have his talk with the young reporter before he left town, that he would tell him about things, perhaps challenge him, challenge all of Winesburg through him.

Aglow with new confidence Elmer went to the office of the New Willard House and pounded on the door. A sleep-eyed boy slept on a cot in the office. He received no salary but was fed at the hotel table and bore with pride the title of “night clerk.” Before the boy Elmer was bold, insistent. “You ‘wake him up,” he commanded. “You tell him to come down by the depot. I got to see him and I’m going away on the local. Tell him to dress and come on down. I ain’t got much time.”

The midnight local had finished its work in Winesburg and the trainsmen were coupling cars, swinging lanterns and preparing to resume their flight east. George Willard, rubbing his eyes and again wearing the new overcoat,
ran down to the station platform afire with curiosity. “Well, here I am. What do you want? You’ve got something to tell me, eh?” he said.

Elmer tried to explain. He wet his lips with his tongue and looked at the train that had begun to groan and get under way. “Well, you see,” he began, and then lost control of his tongue. “I’ll be washed and ironed. I’ll be washed and ironed and starched,” he muttered half incoherently.

Elmer Cowley danced with fury beside the groaning train in the darkness on the station platform. Lights leaped into the air and bobbed up and down before his eyes. Taking the two ten-dollar bills from his pocket he thrust them into George Willard’s hand. “Take them,” he cried. “I don’t want them. Give them to father. I stole them.” With a snarl of rage he turned and his long arms began to flay the air. Like one struggling for release from hands that held him he struck out, hitting George Willard blow after blow on the breast, the neck, the mouth. The young reporter rolled over on the platform half unconscious, stunned by the terrific force of the blows. Springing aboard the passing train and running over the tops of cars, Elmer sprang down to a flat car and lying on his face looked back, trying to see the fallen man in the darkness. Pride surged up in him. “I showed him,” he cried. “I guess I showed him. I ain’t so queer. I guess I showed him I ain’t so queer.”
Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935)

Charlotte Perkins Gilman (July 3, 1860 – August 17, 1935) was a prominent American feminist, sociologist, novelist, writer of short stories, poetry, and nonfiction, and a lecturer for social reform. She was a utopian feminist and served as a role model for future generations of feminists because of her unorthodox concepts and lifestyle.

Gilman was born on July 3, 1860 in Hartford, Connecticut, to Mary Perkins (formerly Mary Fitch Westcott) and Frederic Beecher Perkins. During Charlotte’s infancy, her father moved out and abandoned his wife and children, leaving them in an impoverished state. Since their mother was unable to support the family on her own, the Perkins were often in the presence of her father’s aunts, namely Isabella Beecher Hooker, a suffragist, Harriet Beecher Stowe (author of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*) and Catharine Beecher.

Her schooling was erratic: she attended seven different schools, for a cumulative total of just four years, ending when she was fifteen. Her mother was not affectionate with her children. To keep them from getting hurt as she had been, she forbade her children to make strong friendships or read fiction. In her autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, Gilman wrote that her mother showed affection only when she thought her young daughter was asleep. Although she lived a childhood of isolated, impoverished loneliness, she unknowingly prepared herself for the life that lay ahead by frequently visiting the public library and studying ancient civilizations on her own. Additionally, her father’s love for literature influenced her, and years later he contacted her with a list of books he felt would be worthwhile for her to read.

Much of Gilman’s youth was spent in Providence, Rhode Island. What friends she had were mainly male, and she was unashamed, for her time, to call herself a “tomboy.” Her natural intelligence and breadth of knowledge always impressed her teachers, who were nonetheless disappointed in her because she was a poor student. Her favorite subject was “natural philosophy,” especially what later would become known as physics. In 1878, the eighteen-year-old enrolled in classes at the Rhode Island School of Design with the monetary help of her absent father, and subsequently supported herself as an artist of trade cards. She was a tutor, and encouraged others to expand their artistic creativity. She was also a painter.

In 1884, she married the artist Charles Walter Stetson after initially declining his proposal because a gut feeling told her it was not the right thing for her. Their only child, Katharine Beecher Stetson, was born the following year. Charlotte Perkins Gilman suffered a very serious bout of post-partum
depression in the months after Katharine’s birth. This was an age in which women were seen as “hysterical” and “nervous” beings; thus, when a woman claimed to be seriously ill after giving birth, her claims were sometimes dismissed as being invalid.

In 1888, Charlotte separated from her husband – a rare occurrence in the late nineteenth century. The two legally divorced in 1894. Following the separation, Charlotte moved with her daughter to Pasadena, California, where she became active in several feminist and reformist organizations such as the Pacific Coast Woman’s Press Association, the Woman’s Alliance, the Economic Club, the Ebell Society, the Parents Association, and the State Council of Women, in addition to writing and editing the Bulletin, a journal put out by one of the earlier-mentioned organizations. As a delegate, she represented California in 1896 at both the Suffrage Convention in Washington, D.C. and the International Socialist and Labor Congress, which was held in England. In 1890, she was introduced to Nationalist Clubs movement which worked to “end capitalism’s greed and distinctions between classes while promoting a peaceful, ethical, and truly progressive human race.” Published in the Nationalist magazine, her poem, “Similar Cases” was a satirical review of people who resisted social change. Throughout that same year, 1890, she became inspired enough to write fifteen essays, poems, a novella, and the short story “The Yellow Wallpaper.” Her career was launched when she began lecturing on Nationalism and gained the public’s eye with her first volume of poetry, *In This Our World*, published in 1893. As a successful lecturer who relied on giving speeches as a source of income, her fame grew along with her social circle of similar-minded activists and writers of the feminist movement.

Although it was not the first or longest of her works, without question Gilman’s most famous piece is her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper”, which became a best-seller of the Feminist Press. She wrote it on June 6 and 7, 1890 in her home of Pasadena, and it was printed a year and a half later in the January 1892 issue of *The New England Magazine*. Since its original printing, it has been anthologized in numerous collections of women’s literature, American literature, and textbooks, though not always in its original form. For instance, many textbooks omit the phrase “in marriage” from a very important line in the beginning of story: “John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.” The reason for this omission is a mystery, as Gilman’s views on marriage are made clear throughout the story.

The story is about a woman who suffers from mental illness after three months of being closeted in a room by her husband for the sake of her health. She becomes obsessed with the room’s revolting yellow wallpaper. Gilman wrote this story to change people’s minds about the role of women
in society, illustrating how women’s lack of autonomy is detrimental to their mental, emotional, and even physical wellbeing. This story was inspired by her treatment from her first husband. The narrator in the story must do as her husband, who is also her doctor, demands, although the treatment he prescribes contrasts directly with what she truly needs — mental stimulation and the freedom to escape the monotony of the room to which she is confined. “The Yellow Wallpaper” was essentially a response to the doctor who had tried to cure her of her depression through a “rest cure,” Dr. Silas Weir Mitchell, and she sent him a copy of the story.

Gilman called herself a humanist and believed the domestic environment oppressed women through the patriarchal beliefs upheld by society. Gilman embraced the theory of reform Darwinism and argued that Darwin’s theories of evolution presented only the male as the given in the process of human evolution, thus overlooking the origins of the female brain in society that rationally chose the best suited mate that they could find. Gilman argued that male aggressiveness and maternal roles for women were artificial and no longer necessary for survival in post-prehistoric times. She wrote, “There is no female mind. The brain is not an organ of sex. Might as well speak of a female liver.” Her main argument was that sex and domestic economics went hand in hand; for a woman to survive, she was reliant on her sexual assets to please her husband so that he would financially support his family. From childhood, young girls are forced into a social constraint that prepares them for motherhood by the toys that are marketed to them and the clothes designed for them. She argued that there should be no difference in the clothes that little girls and boys wear, the toys they play with, or the activities they do, and described tomboys as perfect humans who ran around and used their bodies freely and healthily.

Gilman argued that women’s contributions to civilization, throughout history, have been halted because of an androcentric culture. She believed that womankind was the underdeveloped half of humanity, and improvement was necessary to prevent the deterioration of the human race. Gilman believed economic independence is the only thing that could really bring freedom for women, and make them equal to men. In 1898 she published Women and Economics, a theoretical treatise which argued, among other things, that women are subjugated by men, that motherhood should not preclude a woman from working outside the home, and that housekeeping, cooking, and child care, would be professionalized. “The ideal woman,” Gilman wrote, “was not only assigned a social role that locked her into her home, but she was also expected to like it, to be cheerful and gay, smiling and good-humored.” When the sexual-economic relationship ceases to exist, life on the domestic front would certainly improve, as frustration in relationships often stems from the lack of social contact that the domestic wife has with the outside world.
Gilman became a spokesperson on topics such as women’s perspectives on work, dress reform, and family. Housework, she argued, should be equally shared by men and women, and that at an early age women should be encouraged to be independent. In many of her major works, including “The Home” (1903), Human Work (1904), and The Man-Made World (1911), Gilman also advocated women working outside of the home.

In January 1932, Gilman was diagnosed with incurable breast cancer. An advocate of euthanasia for the terminally ill, Gilman committed suicide on August 17, 1935 by taking an overdose of chloroform. In both her autobiography and suicide note, she wrote that she “chose chloroform over cancer” and she died quickly and quietly.
THE YELLOW WALLPAPER

It is very seldom that mere ordinary people like John and myself secure ancestral halls for the summer.

A colonial mansion, a hereditary estate, I would say a haunted house, and reach the height of romantic felicity—but that would be asking too much of fate!

Still I will proudly declare that there is something queer about it.

Else, why should it be let so cheaply? And why have stood so long untenanted?

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage.

John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and PERHAPS—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—PERHAPS that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one’s own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

So I take phosphates or phosphites—whichever it is, and tonics, and journeys, and air, and exercise, and am absolutely forbidden to “work” until I am well again.

Personally, I disagree with their ideas.

Personally, I believe that congenial work, with excitement and change, would do me good.
But what is one to do?

I did write for a while in spite of them; but it DOES exhaust me a good deal—having to be so sly about it, or else meet with heavy opposition.

I sometimes fancy that in my condition if I had less opposition and more society and stimulus—but John says the very worst thing I can do is to think about my condition, and I confess it always makes me feel bad.

So I will let it alone and talk about the house.

The most beautiful place! It is quite alone, standing well back from the road, quite three miles from the village. It makes me think of English places that you read about, for there are hedges and walls and gates that lock, and lots of separate little houses for the gardeners and people.

There is a DELICIOUS garden! I never saw such a garden—large and shady, full of box-bordered paths, and lined with long grape-covered arbors with seats under them.

There were greenhouses, too, but they are all broken now.

There was some legal trouble, I believe, something about the heirs and coheirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years.

That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a DRAUGHT, and shut the window.

I get unreasonably angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself—before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! but John would not hear of it.

He said there was only one window and not room for two beds, and no near room for him if he took another.
He is very careful and loving, and hardly lets me stir without special
direction.

I have a schedule prescription for each hour in the day; he takes all care
from me, and so I feel basely ungrateful not to value it more.

He said we came here solely on my account, that I was to have perfect rest
and all the air I could get. “Your exercise depends on your strength, my dear,”
said he, “and your food somewhat on your appetite; but air you can absorb all
the time.” So we took the nursery at the top of the house.

It is a big, airy room, the whole floor nearly, with windows that look all
ways, and air and sunshine galore. It was nursery first and then playroom and
gymnasium, I should judge; for the windows are barred for little children, and
there are rings and things in the walls.

The paint and paper look as if a boys’ school had used it. It is stripped
off—the paper—in great patches all around the head of my bed, about as far
as I can reach, and in a great place on the other side of the room low down. I
never saw a worse paper in my life.

One of those sprawling flamboyant patterns committing every artistic sin.
It is dull enough to confuse the eye in following, pronounced enough
to constantly irritate and provoke study, and when you follow the lame
uncertain curves for a little distance they suddenly commit suicide—plunge
off at outrageous angles, destroy themselves in unheard of contradictions.

The color is repellent, almost revolting; a smouldering unclean yellow,
strangely faded by the slow-turning sunlight.

It is a dull yet lurid orange in some places, a sickly sulphur tint in others.
No wonder the children hated it! I should hate it myself if I had to live in
this room long.

There comes John, and I must put this away,—he hates to have me write a
word.

We have been here two weeks, and I haven’t felt like writing before, since
that first day.

I am sitting by the window now, up in this atrocious nursery, and there is
nothing to hinder my writing as much as I please, save lack of strength.

John is away all day, and even some nights when his cases are serious.
I am glad my case is not serious!

But these nervous troubles are dreadfully depressing.

John does not know how much I really suffer: He knows there is no REASON to suffer, and that satisfies him.

Of course it is only nervousness. It does weigh on me so not to do my duty in any way!

I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already!

Nobody would believe what an effort it is to do what little I am able,—to dress and entertain, and order things.

It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby!

And yet I CANNOT be with him, it makes me so nervous.

I suppose John never was nervous in his life. He laughs at me so about this wall-paper!

At first he meant to repaper the room, but afterwards he said that I was letting it get the better of me, and that nothing was worse for a nervous patient than to give way to such fancies.

He said that after the wall-paper was changed it would be the heavy bedstead, and then the barred windows, and then that gate at the head of the stairs, and so on.

“You know the place is doing you good,” he said, “and really, dear, I don’t care to renovate the house just for a three months’ rental.”

“Then do let us go downstairs,” I said, “there are such pretty rooms there.”

Then he took me in his arms and called me a blessed little goose, and said he would go down to the cellar, if I wished, and have it whitewashed into the bargain.

But he is right enough about the beds and windows and things.

It is an airy and comfortable room as any one need wish, and, of course, I would not be so silly as to make him uncomfortable just for a whim.
I’m really getting quite fond of the big room, all but that horrid paper.

Out of one window I can see the garden, those mysterious deepshaded arbors, the riotous old-fashioned flowers, and bushes and gnarly trees.

Out of another I get a lovely view of the bay and a little private wharf belonging to the estate. There is a beautiful shaded lane that runs down there from the house. I always fancy I see people walking in these numerous paths and arbors, but John has cautioned me not to give way to fancy in the least. He says that with my imaginative power and habit of story-making, a nervous weakness like mine is sure to lead to all manner of excited fancies, and that I ought to use my will and good sense to check the tendency. So I try.

I think sometimes that if I were only well enough to write a little it would relieve the press of ideas and rest me.

But I find I get pretty tired when I try.

It is so discouraging not to have any advice and companionship about my work. When I get really well, John says we will ask Cousin Henry and Julia down for a long visit; but he says he would as soon put fireworks in my pillow-case as to let me have those stimulating people about now.

**I wish I could get well faster.**

But I must not think about that. This paper looks to me as if it KNEW what a vicious influence it had!

There is a recurrent spot where the pattern lolls like a broken neck and two bulbous eyes stare at you upside down.

I get positively angry with the impertinence of it and the everlastingness. Up and down and sideways they crawl, and those absurd, unblinking eyes are everywhere. There is one place where two breadths didn’t match, and the eyes go all up and down the line, one a little higher than the other.

I never saw so much expression in an inanimate thing before, and we all know how much expression they have! I used to lie awake as a child and get more entertainment and terror out of blank walls and plain furniture than most children could find in a toy store.

I remember what a kindly wink the knobs of our big, old bureau used to have, and there was one chair that always seemed like a strong friend.
I used to feel that if any of the other things looked too fierce I could always hop into that chair and be safe.

The furniture in this room is no worse than inharmonious, however, for we had to bring it all from downstairs. I suppose when this was used as a playroom they had to take the nursery things out, and no wonder! I never saw such ravages as the children have made here.

The wall-paper, as I said before, is torn off in spots, and it sticketh closer than a brother—they must have had perseverance as well as hatred.

Then the floor is scratched and gouged and splintered, the plaster itself is dug out here and there, and this great heavy bed which is all we found in the room, looks as if it had been through the wars.

But I don't mind it a bit—only the paper.

There comes John's sister. Such a dear girl as she is, and so careful of me! I must not let her find me writing.

She is a perfect and enthusiastic housekeeper, and hopes for no better profession. I verily believe she thinks it is the writing which made me sick!

But I can write when she is out, and see her a long way off from these windows.

There is one that commands the road, a lovely shaded winding road, and one that just looks off over the country. A lovely country, too, full of great elms and velvet meadows.

This wall-paper has a kind of sub-pattern in a different shade, a particularly irritating one, for you can only see it in certain lights, and not clearly then.

But in the places where it isn't faded and where the sun is just so—I can see a strange, provoking, formless sort of figure, that seems to skulk about behind that silly and conspicuous front design.

There's sister on the stairs!

Well, the Fourth of July is over! The people are gone and I am tired out. John thought it might do me good to see a little company, so we just had mother and Nellie and the children down for a week.
Of course I didn’t do a thing. Jennie sees to everything now.

But it tired me all the same.

John says if I don’t pick up faster he shall send me to Weir Mitchell in the fall.
But I don’t want to go there at all. I had a friend who was in his hands once, and she says he is just like John and my brother, only more so!

Besides, it is such an undertaking to go so far.

I don’t feel as if it was worth while to turn my hand over for anything, and I’m getting dreadfully fretful and querulous.

I cry at nothing, and cry most of the time.

Of course I don’t when John is here, or anybody else, but when I am alone.

And I am alone a good deal just now. John is kept in town very often by serious cases, and Jennie is good and lets me alone when I want her to.

So I walk a little in the garden or down that lovely lane, sit on the porch under the roses, and lie down up here a good deal.

I’m getting really fond of the room in spite of the wall-paper. Perhaps BECAUSE of the wall-paper.

It dwells in my mind so!

I lie here on this great immovable bed—it is nailed down, I believe—and follow that pattern about by the hour. It is as good as gymnastics, I assure you. I start, we’ll say, at the bottom, down in the corner over there where it has not been touched, and I determine for the thousandth time that I WILL follow that pointless pattern to some sort of a conclusion.

I know a little of the principle of design, and I know this thing was not arranged on any laws of radiation, or alternation, or repetition, or symmetry, or anything else that I ever heard of.

It is repeated, of course, by the breadths, but not otherwise.

Looked at in one way each breadth stands alone, the bloated curves and flourishes—a kind of “debased Romanesque” with delirium tremens—go
waddling up and down in isolated columns of fatuity.

But, on the other hand, they connect diagonally, and the sprawling outlines run off in great slanting waves of optic horror, like a lot of wallowing seaweeds in full chase.

The whole thing goes horizontally, too, at least it seems so, and I exhaust myself in trying to distinguish the order of its going in that direction.

They have used a horizontal breadth for a frieze, and that adds wonderfully to the confusion.

There is one end of the room where it is almost intact, and there, when the crosslights fade and the low sun shines directly upon it, I can almost fancy radiation after all,—the interminable grotesques seem to form around a common centre and rush off in headlong plunges of equal distraction.

It makes me tired to follow it. I will take a nap I guess.

I don't know why I should write this.

I don't want to.

I don't feel able.

And I know John would think it absurd. But I MUST say what I feel and think in some way—it is such a relief!

But the effort is getting to be greater than the relief.

Half the time now I am awfully lazy, and lie down ever so much.

John says I musn't lose my strength, and has me take cod liver oil and lots of tonics and things, to say nothing of ale and wine and rare meat.

Dear John! He loves me very dearly, and hates to have me sick. I tried to have a real earnest reasonable talk with him the other day, and tell him how I wish he would let me go and make a visit to Cousin Henry and Julia.

But he said I wasn't able to go, nor able to stand it after I got there; and I did not make out a very good case for myself, for I was crying before I had finished.

It is getting to be a great effort for me to think straight. Just this nervous
weakness I suppose.

And dear John gathered me up in his arms, and just carried me upstairs and laid me on the bed, and sat by me and read to me till it tired my head.

He said I was his darling and his comfort and all he had, and that I must take care of myself for his sake, and keep well.

He says no one but myself can help me out of it, that I must use my will and self-control and not let any silly fancies run away with me.

There’s one comfort, the baby is well and happy, and does not have to occupy this nursery with the horrid wall-paper.

If we had not used it, that blessed child would have! What a fortunate escape! Why, I wouldn’t have a child of mine, an impressionable little thing, live in such a room for worlds.

I never thought of it before, but it is lucky that John kept me here after all, I can stand it so much easier than a baby, you see.

Of course I never mention it to them any more—I am too wise,—but I keep watch of it all the same.

There are things in that paper that nobody knows but me, or ever will.

Behind that outside pattern the dim shapes get clearer every day.

It is always the same shape, only very numerous.

And it is like a woman stooping down and creeping about behind that pattern. I don’t like it a bit. I wonder—I begin to think—I wish John would take me away from here!

It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so.

But I tried it last night.

It was moonlight. The moon shines in all around just as the sun does.

I hate to see it sometimes, it creeps so slowly, and always comes in by one window or another.
John was asleep and I hated to waken him, so I kept still and watched the moonlight on that undulating wall-paper till I felt creepy.

The faint figure behind seemed to shake the pattern, just as if she wanted to get out.

I got up softly and went to feel and see if the paper DID move, and when I came back John was awake.

“What is it, little girl?” he said. “Don’t go walking about like that—you’ll get cold.”

I thought it was a good time to talk, so I told him that I really was not gaining here, and that I wished he would take me away.

“Why darling!” said he, “our lease will be up in three weeks, and I can’t see how to leave before.

“The repairs are not done at home, and I cannot possibly leave town just now. Of course if you were in any danger, I could and would, but you really are better, dear; whether you can see it or not. I am a doctor, dear, and I know. You are gaining flesh and color, your appetite is better, I feel really much easier about you.”

“I don’t weigh a bit more,” said I, “nor as much; and my appetite may be better in the evening when you are here, but it is worse in the morning when you are away!”

“Bless her little heart!” said he with a big hug, “she shall be as sick as she pleases! But now let’s improve the shining hours by going to sleep, and talk about it in the morning!”

“And you won’t go away?” I asked gloomily.

“Why, how can I, dear? It is only three weeks more and then we will take a nice little trip of a few days while Jennie is getting the house ready. Really dear you are better!”

“Better in body perhaps—” I began, and stopped short, for he sat up straight and looked at me with such a stern, reproachful look that I could not say another word.

“My darling,” said he, “I beg of you, for my sake and for our child’s sake, as well as for your own, that you will never for one instant let that idea enter
your mind! There is nothing so dangerous, so fascinating, to a temperament like yours. It is a false and foolish fancy. Can you not trust me as a physician when I tell you so?"

So of course I said no more on that score, and we went to sleep before long. He thought I was asleep first, but I wasn’t, and lay there for hours trying to decide whether that front pattern and the back pattern really did move together or separately.

On a pattern like this, by daylight, there is a lack of sequence, a defiance of law, that is a constant irritant to a normal mind.

The color is hideous enough, and unreliable enough, and infuriating enough, but the pattern is torturing.

You think you have mastered it, but just as you get well underway in following, it turns a back-somersault and there you are. It slaps you in the face, knocks you down, and tramples upon you. It is like a bad dream.

The outside pattern is a florid arabesque, reminding one of a fungus. If you can imagine a toadstool in joints, an interminable string of toadstools, budding and sprouting in endless convolutions—why, that is something like it.

That is, sometimes!

There is one marked peculiarity about this paper, a thing nobody seems to notice but myself, and that is that it changes as the light changes.

When the sun shoots in through the east window—I always watch for that first long, straight ray—it changes so quickly that I never can quite believe it.

That is why I watch it always.

By moonlight—the moon shines in all night when there is a moon—I wouldn’t know it was the same paper.

At night in any kind of light, in twilight, candle light, lamplight, and worst of all by moonlight, it becomes bars! The outside pattern I mean, and the woman behind it is as plain as can be.

I didn’t realize for a long time what the thing was that showed behind, that dim sub-pattern, but now I am quite sure it is a woman.
By daylight she is subdued, quiet. I fancy it is the pattern that keeps her so still. It is so puzzling. It keeps me quiet by the hour.

I lie down ever so much now. John says it is good for me, and to sleep all I can.

Indeed he started the habit by making me lie down for an hour after each meal.

It is a very bad habit I am convinced, for you see I don't sleep.

And that cultivates deceit, for I don't tell them I'm awake—O no!

The fact is I am getting a little afraid of John.

He seems very queer sometimes, and even Jennie has an inexplicable look.

It strikes me occasionally, just as a scientific hypothesis,—that perhaps it is the paper!

I have watched John when he did not know I was looking, and come into the room suddenly on the most innocent excuses, and I've caught him several times LOOKING AT THE PAPER! And Jennie too. I caught Jennie with her hand on it once.

She didn't know I was in the room, and when I asked her in a quiet, a very quiet voice, with the most restrained manner possible, what she was doing with the paper—she turned around as if she had been caught stealing, and looked quite angry—asked me why I should frighten her so!

Then she said that the paper stained everything it touched, that she had found yellow smooches on all my clothes and John's, and she wished we would be more careful!

Did not that sound innocent? But I know she was studying that pattern, and I am determined that nobody shall find it out but myself!

Life is very much more exciting now than it used to be. You see I have something more to expect, to look forward to, to watch. I really do eat better, and am more quiet than I was.

John is so pleased to see me improve! He laughed a little the other day, and said I seemed to be flourishing in spite of my wall-paper.
I turned it off with a laugh. I had no intention of telling him it was 
BECAUSE of the wall-paper—he would make fun of me. He might even want 
to take me away.

I don't want to leave now until I have found it out. There is a week more, 
and I think that will be enough.

I'm feeling ever so much better! I don't sleep much at night, for it is so 
interesting to watch developments; but I sleep a good deal in the daytime.

In the daytime it is tiresome and perplexing.

There are always new shoots on the fungus, and new shades of yellow all 
over it. I cannot keep count of them, though I have tried conscientiously.

It is the strangest yellow, that wall-paper! It makes me think of all the 
yellow things I ever saw—not beautiful ones like buttercups, but old foul, bad 
yellow things.

But there is something else about that paper—the smell! I noticed it the 
moment we came into the room, but with so much air and sun it was not bad. 
Now we have had a week of fog and rain, and whether the windows are open 
or not, the smell is here.

It creeps all over the house.

I find it hovering in the dining-room, skulking in the parlor, hiding in the 
hall, lying in wait for me on the stairs.

It gets into my hair.

Even when I go to ride, if I turn my head suddenly and surprise it—there 
is that smell!

Such a peculiar odor, too! I have spent hours in trying to analyze it, to find 
what it smelled like.

It is not bad—at first, and very gentle, but quite the subtlest, most 
enduring odor I ever met.

In this damp weather it is awful, I wake up in the night and find it hanging 
over me.

It used to disturb me at first. I thought seriously of burning the house—to
reach the smell.

But now I am used to it. The only thing I can think of that it is like is the COLOR of the paper! A yellow smell.

There is a very funny mark on this wall, low down, near the mopboard. A streak that runs round the room. It goes behind every piece of furniture, except the bed, a long, straight, even SMOOCH, as if it had been rubbed over and over.

I wonder how it was done and who did it, and what they did it for. Round and round and round—round and round and round—it makes me dizzy!

I really have discovered something at last.

Through watching so much at night, when it changes so, I have finally found out.

The front pattern DOES move—and no wonder! The woman behind shakes it!

Sometimes I think there are a great many women behind, and sometimes only one, and she crawls around fast, and her crawling shakes it all over.

Then in the very bright spots she keeps still, and in the very shady spots she just takes hold of the bars and shakes them hard.

And she is all the time trying to climb through. But nobody could climb through that pattern—it strangles so; I think that is why it has so many heads.

They get through, and then the pattern strangles them off and turns them upside down, and makes their eyes white!

If those heads were covered or taken off it would not be half so bad.

I think that woman gets out in the daytime!

And I'll tell you why—privately—I've seen her!

I can see her out of every one of my windows!

It is the same woman, I know, for she is always creeping, and most women do not creep by daylight.
I see her on that long road under the trees, creeping along, and when a carriage comes she hides under the blackberry vines.

I don't blame her a bit. It must be very humiliating to be caught creeping by daylight!

I always lock the door when I creep by daylight. I can't do it at night, for I know John would suspect something at once.

And John is so queer now, that I don't want to irritate him. I wish he would take another room! Besides, I don't want anybody to get that woman out at night but myself.

I often wonder if I could see her out of all the windows at once.

But, turn as fast as I can, I can only see out of one at one time.

And though I always see her, she MAY be able to creep faster than I can turn!

I have watched her sometimes away off in the open country, creeping as fast as a cloud shadow in a high wind.

If only that top pattern could be gotten off from the under one! I mean to try it, little by little.

I have found out another funny thing, but I shan't tell it this time! It does not do to trust people too much.

There are only two more days to get this paper off, and I believe John is beginning to notice. I don't like the look in his eyes.

And I heard him ask Jennie a lot of professional questions about me. She had a very good report to give.

She said I slept a good deal in the daytime.

John knows I don't sleep very well at night, for all I'm so quiet!

He asked me all sorts of questions, too, and pretended to be very loving and kind.
As if I couldn’t see through him!

Still, I don’t wonder he acts so, sleeping under this paper for three months.

It only interests me, but I feel sure John and Jennie are secretly affected by it.

Hurrah! This is the last day, but it is enough. John is to stay in town over night, and won’t be out until this evening.

Jennie wanted to sleep with me—the sly thing! but I told her I should undoubtedly rest better for a night all alone.

That was clever, for really I wasn’t alone a bit! As soon as it was moonlight and that poor thing began to crawl and shake the pattern, I got up and ran to help her.

I pulled and she shook, I shook and she pulled, and before morning we had peeled off yards of that paper.

A strip about as high as my head and half around the room.

And then when the sun came and that awful pattern began to laugh at me, I declared I would finish it to-day!

We go away to-morrow, and they are moving all my furniture down again to leave things as they were before.

Jennie looked at the wall in amazement, but I told her merrily that I did it out of pure spite at the vicious thing.

She laughed and said she wouldn’t mind doing it herself, but I must not get tired.
How she betrayed herself that time!

But I am here, and no person touches this paper but me—not ALIVE!

She tried to get me out of the room—it was too patent! But I said it was so quiet and empty and clean now that I believed I would lie down again and sleep all I could; and not to wake me even for dinner—I would call when I woke.

So now she is gone, and the servants are gone, and the things are gone,
and there is nothing left but that great bedstead nailed down, with the canvas mattress we found on it.

We shall sleep downstairs to-night, and take the boat home to-morrow.

I quite enjoy the room, now it is bare again.

How those children did tear about here!

This bedstead is fairly gnawed!

But I must get to work.

I have locked the door and thrown the key down into the front path.

I don't want to go out, and I don't want to have anybody come in, till John comes.

I want to astonish him.

I've got a rope up here that even Jennie did not find. If that woman does get out, and tries to get away, I can tie her!

But I forgot I could not reach far without anything to stand on!

This bed will NOT move!

I tried to lift and push it until I was lame, and then I got so angry I bit off a little piece at one corner—but it hurt my teeth.

Then I peeled off all the paper I could reach standing on the floor. It sticks horribly and the pattern just enjoys it! All those strangled heads and bulbous eyes and waddling fungus growths just shriek with derision!

I am getting angry enough to do something desperate. To jump out of the window would be admirable exercise, but the bars are too strong even to try.

Besides I wouldn't do it. Of course not. I know well enough that a step like that is improper and might be misconstrued.

I don't like to LOOK out of the windows even—there are so many of those creeping women, and they creep so fast.
I wonder if they all come out of that wall-paper as I did?

But I am securely fastened now by my well-hidden rope—you don’t get ME out in the road there!

I suppose I shall have to get back behind the pattern when it comes night, and that is hard!

It is so pleasant to be out in this great room and creep around as I please!

I don’t want to go outside. I won’t, even if Jennie asks me to.

For outside you have to creep on the ground, and everything is green instead of yellow.

But here I can creep smoothly on the floor, and my shoulder just fits in that long smooch around the wall, so I cannot lose my way.

Why there’s John at the door!

It is no use, young man, you can’t open it!

How he does call and pound!

Now he’s crying for an axe.

It would be a shame to break down that beautiful door!

“John dear!” said I in the gentlest voice, “the key is down by the front steps, under a plantain leaf!”

That silenced him for a few moments.

Then he said—very quietly indeed, “Open the door, my darling!”

“I can’t,” said I. “The key is down by the front door under a plantain leaf!”

And then I said it again, several times, very gently and slowly, and said it so often that he had to go and see, and he got it of course, and came in. He stopped short by the door:

“What is the matter?” he cried. “For God’s sake, what are you doing!”

I kept on creeping just the same, but I looked at him over my shoulder.
“I’ve got out at last,” said I, “in spite of you and Jane. And I’ve pulled off most of the paper, so you can’t put me back!”

Now why should that man have fainted? But he did, and right across my path by the wall, so that I had to creep over him every time!
Unit IV - Herman Melville: Anticipating Modernism

Historical Context: The Transition from Romanticism to Modernism

“He can neither believe, nor be comfortable in his unbelief; and he is too honest and courageous not to try to do one or the other. If he were a religious man, he would be one of the most truly religious and reverential; he has a very high and noble nature, and better worth immortality than most of us.”

-Nathaniel Hawthorne’s journal, describing his last meeting with Melville in Liverpool, November, 1856

The career of Herman Melville marks an important period of transition in American Literature. Initially a devout disciple of the dark strain of American Romanticism practiced by Hawthorne, his mentor, friend, and idol, Melville’s literary style evolved considerably from his early successes as an author of seafaring adventure stories through the commercial failure of his masterpiece, *Moby-Dick* (1850), on into the late 19th Century, where, as a poet and author of short fiction, Melville became among the first to notice the impact of the late 19th Century’s radical changes upon human psychology and society. In doing so, Melville stands apart from his contemporaries. He cannot be solely classified as a Romantic, nor can he be comfortably associated with the style of literary realism that became the dominant mode of American literary fiction from the 1880s through the duration of the 20th Century. Instead, he might be best understood as a forerunner of Modernism, a style borne out of the recognition of the changes brought on by the Industrial Revolution and the consequent deterioration of faith in traditional values and institutions.

Herman Melville (1819-1891)

Herman Melville (1819-1891) experienced one of the more unusual and absurd literary careers of any American writer. He went from bestselling author of sea adventure tales to misunderstood genius to being declared ‘mad’ in reviews of his novels. He died almost completely forgotten, only to experience a career revival some sixty years after his death that would see him recognized as the greatest American fiction writer of the 19th Century—perhaps the greatest ever.

Melville was the third child of a marriage that joined two distinguished early American families. His father came from Boston and was descended from one of Samuel Adams’ Sons of Liberty, a participant in the Boston Tea Party and the subject of a famous poem by Oliver Wendell Holmes, “The Last Leaf.” Melville’s mother was a Gansevoort, of
New York Dutch ‘Knickerbocker’ stock. His grandfather was Peter Gansevoort, hero of the Revolutionary War Battle of Saratoga. Melville’s father, however, was a poor businessman who struggled to stay solvent his entire life and who also suffered from depression.

In 1830, the family moved from New York City to Albany, where Melville’s father attempted to restore his business career, to no avail. In deep debt and with no prospects for recovery, Melville’s father declared bankruptcy and shortly after succumbed first to a nervous breakdown and then to a series of health problems that resulted in premature death. Though educated in the best schools as a boy, with the death of his father, Melville was no longer afforded the relative luxury of education. In fact, he was forced to seek employment to help support his struggling family. He became a cabin boy on a ship bound for Liverpool, and then later worked briefly as a schoolteacher in Albany. Eventually, and perhaps understandably, Melville returned to the occupation that removed him from the humiliating circumstances of his family’s condition while allowing him to contribute to their welfare. For the next few years he lived the life of a merchant sailor.

Melville worked on a number of different vessels traveling in both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. He journeyed around Cape Horn (an extraordinarily perilous feat with early-to-mid 19th Century technology) and visited the Hawaiian and Marquesas Islands. Eventually, he and a shipmate deserted and lived among the natives of Tahiti for a brief period, before rejoining another ship and returning to New England. Melville then worked on whaling vessels off the coast of Massachusetts before returning home to New York in 1844. When Melville returned home, he entertained his mother and his sister with tales of his adventures on the high seas. With their encouragement, he began to write about his experiences. His early novels—*Omoo*, *Typee*, *Whitejacket*, *Mardi*, and *Redburn*—were all sea adventures that found wide audiences, and Melville was considered to be a popular American writer of great promise.

In 1847, Melville married Elizabeth Shaw, the daughter of Lemuel Shaw, Chief Justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court. In August of 1850, Melville moved his family to Arrowhead, a farmhouse in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. Not long after, he made the acquaintance of Nathaniel Hawthorne, and the two struck a fast friendship. Melville had recently read Hawthorne’s story collection, *Mosses from an Old Manse*, which had a profound effect on his worldview and philosophy of composition. Melville published a review, “Hawthorne and his *Mosses*,” which served both to praise Hawthorne as an authentic American genius and to announce Melville’s own intentions for his future writing projects. In the next year, Hawthorne published *The Scarlet Letter*; not long after, Melville published his own masterpiece: *Moby-Dick*.

Though Hawthorne’s masterpiece was well received and raised his prominence, Melville’s was received poorly. His bizarre, apocalyptic vision of a mad whaler captain in pursuit of a near-mythical beast of the sea was too dense in description, too pessimistic, and, frankly, too far ahead of its time for contemporary audiences. Disappointed with the reception of *Moby-Dick*, Melville resolved to write a more popular novel, based on some of the low culture ‘genres’ of the day. The result, *Pierre*, about a young man who
falls from prominence into a sordid life in the Bowery neighborhood of New York, was lambasted by the press. One review was titled “Melville Goes Mad.”

Made wary by the harsh reception of *Pierre*, publishers became reluctant to take Melville’s manuscripts or offer advances for his proposed projects. Though Melville was writing the most innovative fiction of his age, his economic prospects became increasingly dire, and he was forced to seek various forms of employment to support his struggling family. To add insult to injury, in the mid 1850s, Melville’s friendship with Hawthorne cooled, as the older man began to distance himself from the younger. They last met in 1856 when, while on a trip to visit the Holy Land subsidized by his father-in-law, who hoped the journey might rehabilitate the author’s flagging spirits, Melville stayed briefly in Liverpool with Hawthorne, who had been appointed American Consul to the English port city by his college friend, President Franklin W. Pierce. No one knows what happened to the friendship. Some suppose that Hawthorne was embarrassed that he could not fulfill a promise to help Melville also gain a government position through Pierce, and avoided Melville out of shame. Others suggest that Hawthorne was simply jealous of Melville’s gifts. Still others believe that Melville’s excitable temperament had begun to wear on Hawthorne. In any case, the once young and precocious genius found himself entering middle age essentially alone, believing himself a failure.

Melville wrote one final full-length novel. *The Confidence Man* met with the same fate as *Moby-Dick*: a failure in its time, the novel has since gained appreciation as a brilliant cultural satire and precursor of Modernist styles and themes such as absurdism, nihilism, and existentialism. After its failure, in 1863, Melville’s family resettled in New York City. He spent a short period of time on the popular lecture circuit, where authors as diverse as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Mark Twain gained widespread notoriety. He also began to write poetry, much of it based on the Civil War. In 1866, unable to make a living as a writer or a lecturer, Melville used his wife’s connections to secure the position of Customs Inspector for the City of New York, a position he held for 19 years. Though he continued to write prolifically, Melville’s public career as an author ended, and he spent the rest of his days veering between periods of relative tranquility and deep despair. Melville’s beloved son Malcolm died of a self-inflicted gunshot wound in 1867; in 1886, his younger son, Stanwix, succumbed to tuberculosis in San Francisco. Plagued by depression and anxiety for most of his life, he was nearly committed to an insane asylum by his wife at the urging of her friends and family, though she ultimately refused and remained loyal to Melville, despite the unhappiness of their marriage. Finally, when his wife came into a substantial inheritance, Melville was able to retire from his job as customs inspector. In September of 1891, Melville died at home of heart failure. All but forgotten at the time of his death, immortality still lay ahead of him. (Dr. Ed Tarkington)

**Melville’s Revival**

A confluence of publishing events in the 1920s brought about a reassessment now commonly called “the Melville Revival.” The two books generally considered most important to the Revival were Raymond Weaver’s 1921 biography *Herman
Melville: Man, Mariner and Mystic and his 1924 edition of Melville’s last great but never quite finished manuscript, *Billy Budd*, which Melville’s granddaughter gave to Weaver when he visited her for research on the biography. The other works that helped fan the Revival flames were Carl Van Doren’s *The American Novel* (1921), D. H. Lawrence’s *Studies in Classic American Literature* (1923), and Lewis Mumford’s biography, *Herman Melville: A Study of His Life and Vision* (1929). In 1945, the Melville Society was formed as a nonprofit organization dedicated to celebrating Melville’s literary legacy. In 1941, Eminent Harvard literary scholar F.O. Matthiesen published his opus, *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman*, in which Melville’s career is ranked alongside the major writers of his age. *American Renaissance* redefined the field of American literary studies, and established Melville as the most daring and ambitious American writer of his century.

**Melville’s Turn to Short Fiction**

Melville did not turn to short fiction out of interest in the form, but, rather, because short stories were a way to earn a quicker payment. As the magazine culture began to rise in the United States with the spread of literacy, writers began increasingly to turn to short fiction as a means of easier, more steady income. Melville also began to vary his subject matter, taking on popular genres, among which was the popular ‘lawyer’ story. Though not especially well received at the time of its publication, “Bartleby” is now among the most highly regarded of all American short stories. Melville appears to have anticipated a number of different trends: absurdism, irony, black comedy, and the literature of alienation, among others. In his depiction of a timid, elderly attorney and his battle of wills with a bizarre, recalcitrant scrivener, Melville forecast the alienating effects of modern office culture decades before their full impact on American life would begin to be appreciated.

Melville’s next great short work saw the author return to the setting of his earliest successes. But *Benito Cereno* is no mere seafaring adventure, but, rather, a psychological thriller in which Melville turns his unflinching eye to the most controversial issue of his time: slavery. Like “Bartleby,” *Benito Cereno* first appeared in *Putnam’s*, which, long before the story’s first installment appeared in 1855, was already established as a prominent venue for anti-slavery feature articles and opinion pieces. While, today, we encounter the story as a classic mystery/thriller with a potent thematic subtext, it is important to remember as we read that the story first appeared at the height of public debate over the morality and legality of slavery in a virulently anti-slavery national magazine.

As with a number of his other stories and novels, Melville based *Benito Cereno* on actual events narrated in the memoir of Massachussets merchant sea captain Amasa Delano, who, in 1805, encountered a Spanish slave-ship anchored off the island of Santa Maria—a ship under the command of, as Delano spelled it, one “Bonito Sereno.” “Benito Cereno” was both timely and realistic to its audience. In
1839, a schooner called *Amistad* was seized off the coast of Long Island. *Amistad*’s original cargo was human contraband: 50 slaves purchased in violation of an 1817 treaty banning the international slave trade. Somewhere off the coast of Cuba, the captives rebelled, killed two crew members, and demanded to be returned to Africa. The fate of the captured mutineers was eventually settled in the U.S. Supreme Court, where former U.S. President John Quincey Adams successfully argued that they should be emancipated and returned to their homeland. A similar incident took place in 1841, also involving a famous American politician: slaves on the cargo ship *Creole* revolted and sailed the ship from somewhere off the Atlantic Coast south of Virginia (en route to New Orleans) to the British Bahamas. Secretary of State Daniel Webster unsuccessfully petitioned the British Government for restitution.

*Benito Cereno* challenges readers with a complex, ambiguous moral vision. The point of view for the majority of the story is 3rd person-limited: we observe through the eyes of the fictionalized American Captain, Amasa Delano, whose prejudices—typical of his time (remember, the story is set in 1799, almost six decades before it was published)—reflect a powerful tension between the accepted view of Africans as inferior (and, hence, fit to be slaves) and the genteel compassion and decency of an honorable and dutiful merchant see captain. Delano is also “of a singularly undistrustful good nature” and “a benevolent heart”—characteristics Melville utilizes masterfully both to heighten the story’s suspense and its irony. Even today, a careful reading of *Benito Cereno* challenges our perceptions of good and evil. Is the story a terrifying suspense thriller in which the heroes narrowly escape a gruesome fate, or a tragedy in which the hero is condemned and the villain rescued by a decadent, immoral system of law? Is Babo actually a heroic character with whom we should sympathize, and Cereno and Delano the villains? Is his treachery legitimized by his circumstances, or is he the devil incarnate, who so terrifies Cereno that, even after the slave’s plan is thwarted, his former captor cannot lay eyes on him without growing faint? Is the evil in the story the institution of slavery, guilty of corrupting the hearts of both master and slave? Is cold-blooded murder justified in these circumstances, or is justice served in the story’s harrowing conclusion?
I am a rather elderly man. The nature of my avocations for the last thirty years has brought me into more than ordinary contact with what would seem an interesting and somewhat singular set of men, of whom as yet nothing that I know of has ever been written:—I mean the law-copyists or scriveners. I have known very many of them, professionally and privately, and if I pleased, could relate divers histories, at which good-natured gentlemen might smile, and sentimental souls might weep. But I waive the biographies of all other scriveners for a few passages in the life of Bartleby, who was a scrivener of the strangest I ever saw or heard of. While of other law-copyists I might write the complete life, of Bartleby nothing of that sort can be done. I believe that no materials exist for a full and satisfactory biography of this man. It is an irreparable loss to literature. Bartleby was one of those beings of whom nothing is ascertainable, except from the original sources, and in his case those are very small. What my own astonished eyes saw of Bartleby, that is all I know of him, except, indeed, one vague report which will appear in the sequel.

Ere introducing the scrivener, as he first appeared to me, it is fit I make some mention of myself, my employees, my business, my chambers, and general surroundings; because some such description is indispensable to an adequate understanding of the chief character about to be presented.

Imprimis: I am a man who, from his youth upwards, has been filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best. Hence, though I belong to a profession proverbially energetic and nervous, even to turbulence, at times, yet nothing of that sort have I ever suffered to invade my peace. I am one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause; but in the cool tranquility of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men's bonds and mortgages and title-deeds. All who know me, consider me an eminently safe man. The late John Jacob Astor, a personage little given to poetic enthusiasm, had no hesitation in pronouncing my first grand point to be prudence; my next, method. I do not speak it in vanity, but simply record the fact, that I was not unemployed in my profession by the late John Jacob Astor; a name which, I admit, I love to repeat, for it hath a rounded and orbicular sound to it, and rings like unto bullion. I will freely add, that I was not insensible to the late John Jacob Astor’s good opinion.

Some time prior to the period at which this little history begins, my avocations had been largely increased. The good old office, now extinct in the State of New York, of a Master in Chancery, had been conferred upon me. It was not a very arduous office, but very pleasantly remunerative. I seldom lose my temper; much more seldom indulge in dangerous indignation at wrongs and outrages; but I must be permitted to be rash here and declare, that I consider the sudden and violent ab-
rogation of the office of Master in Chancery, by the new Constitution, as a—prema-
ture act; inasmuch as I had counted upon a life-lease of the profits, whereas I only
received those of a few short years. But this is by the way.

My chambers were up stairs at No.—Wall-street. At one end they looked upon
the white wall of the interior of a spacious sky-light shaft, penetrating the building
from top to bottom. This view might have been considered rather tame than oth-
erwise, deficient in what landscape painters call “life.” But if so, the view from the
other end of my chambers offered, at least, a contrast, if nothing more. In that direc-
tion my windows commanded an unobstructed view of a lofty brick wall, black by
age and everlasting shade; which wall required no spy-glass to bring out its lurking
beauties, but for the benefit of all near-sighted spectators, was pushed up to within
ten feet of my window panes. Owing to the great height of the surrounding build-
ings, and my chambers being on the second floor; the interval between this wall and
mine not a little resembled a huge square cistern.

At the period just preceding the advent of Bartleby, I had two persons as copy-
ists in my employment, and a promising lad as an office-boy. First, Turkey; second,
Nippers; third, Ginger Nut. These may seem names, the like of which are not usu-
ally found in the Directory. In truth they were nicknames, mutually conferred upon
each other by my three clerks, and were deemed expressive of their respective per-
sons or characters. Turkey was a short, pursy Englishman of about my own age,
that is, somewhere not far from sixty. In the morning, one might say, his face was
of a fine florid hue, but after twelve o’clock, meridian—his dinner hour—it blazed
like a grate full of Christmas coals; and continued blazing—but, as it were, with a
gradual wane—till 6 o’clock, P.M. or thereabouts, after which I saw no more of the
proprietor of the face, which gaining its meridian with the sun, seemed to set with
it, to rise, culminate, and decline the following day, with the like regularity and un-
diminished glory. There are many singular coincidences I have known in the course
of my life, not the least among which was the fact, that exactly when Turkey dis-
played his fullest beams from his red and radiant countenance, just then, too, at that
critical moment, began the daily period when I considered his business capacities
as seriously disturbed for the remainder of the twenty-four hours. Not that he was
absolutely idle, or averse to business then; far from it. The difficulty was, he was apt
to be altogether too energetic. There was a strange, inflamed, flurried, flighty reck-
lessness of activity about him. He would be incautious in dipping his pen into his
inkstand. All his blots upon my documents, were dropped there after twelve o’clock,
meridian. Indeed, not only would he be reckless and sadly given to making blots in
the afternoon, but some days he went further, and was rather noisy. At such times,
too, his face flamed with augmented blazonry, as if cannal coal had been heaped on
anthracite. He made an unpleasant racket with his chair; spilled his sand-box; in
mending his pens, impatiently split them all to pieces, and threw them on the floor
in a sudden passion; stood up and leaned over his table, boxing his papers about in
a most indecorous manner; very sad to behold in an elderly man like him. Neverthe-
less, as he was in many ways a most valuable person to me, and all the time before
twelve o'clock, meridian, was the quickest, steadiest creature too, accomplishing a
great deal of work in a style not easy to be matched—for these reasons, I was will-
ing to overlook his eccentricities, though indeed, occasionally, I remonstrated with
him. I did this very gently, however, because, though the civilest, nay, the blandest
and most reverential of men in the morning, yet in the afternoon he was disposed,
upon provocation, to be slightly rash with his tongue, in fact, insolent. Now, valuing
his morning services as I did, and resolved not to lose them; yet, at the same time
made uncomfortable by his inflamed ways after twelve o'clock; and being a man of
peace, unwilling by my admonitions to call forth unseemly retorts from him; I took
upon me, one Saturday noon (he was always worse on Saturdays), to hint to him,
very kindly, that perhaps now that he was growing old, it might be well to abridge
his labors; in short, he need not come to my chambers after twelve o'clock, but, din-
er over, had best go home to his lodgings and rest himself till teatime. But no; he
insisted upon his afternoon devotions. His countenance became intolerably fervid,
as he oratorically assured me—gesticulating with a long ruler at the other end of
the room—that if his services in the morning were useful, how indispensable, then,
in the afternoon?

"With submission, sir," said Turkey on this occasion, "I consider myself your right-
hand man. In the morning I but marshal and deploy my columns; but in the after-
noon I put myself at their head, and gallantly charge the foe, thus!"—and he made a
violent thrust with the ruler.

"But the blots, Turkey," intimated I.

"True,—but, with submission, sir, behold these hairs! I am getting old. Surely, sir;
a blot or two of a warm afternoon is not to be severely urged against gray hairs. Old
age—even if it blot the page—is honorable. With submission, sir, we both are get-
ning old."

This appeal to my fellow-feeling was hardly to be resisted. At all events, I saw that
go he would not. So I made up my mind to let him stay, resolving, nevertheless, to
see to it, that during the afternoon he had to do with my less important papers.

Nippers, the second on my list, was a whiskered, sallow, and, upon the whole,
rather piratical-looking young man of about five and twenty. I always deemed
him the victim of two evil powers—ambition and indigestion. The ambition was
evinced by a certain impatience of the duties of a mere copyist, an unwarrantable
usurpation of strictly professional affairs, such as the original drawing up of legal
documents. The indigestion seemed betokened in an occasional nervous testiness
and grinning irritability, causing the teeth to audibly grind together over mistakes
committed in copying; unnecessary maledictions, hissed, rather than spoken, in the
heat of business; and especially by a continual discontent with the height of the
table where he worked. Though of a very ingenious mechanical turn, Nippers could
never get this table to suit him. He put chips under it, blocks of various sorts, bits
of pasteboard, and at last went so far as to attempt an exquisite adjustment by final
pieces of folded blotting paper. But no invention would answer. If, for the sake of easing his back, he brought the table lid at a sharp angle well up towards his chin, and wrote there like a man using the steep roof of a Dutch house for his desk:—then he declared that it stopped the circulation in his arms. If now he lowered the table to his waistbands, and stooped over it in writing, then there was a sore aching in his back. In short, the truth of the matter was, Nippers knew not what he wanted. Or, if he wanted any thing, it was to be rid of a scrivener’s table altogether. Among the manifestations of his diseased ambition was a fondness he had for receiving visits from certain ambiguous-looking fellows in seedy coats, whom he called his clients. Indeed I was aware that not only was he, at times, considerable of a ward-politician, but he occasionally did a little business at the Justices’ courts, and was not unknown on the steps of the Tombs. I have good reason to believe, however, that one individual who called upon him at my chambers, and who, with a grand air, he insisted was his client, was no other than a dun, and the alleged title-deed, a bill. But with all his failings, and the annoyances he caused me, Nippers, like his compatriot Turkey, was a very useful man to me; wrote a neat, swift hand; and, when he chose, was not deficient in a gentlemanly sort of deportment. Added to this, he always dressed in a gentlemanly sort of way; and so, incidentally, reflected credit upon my chambers. Whereas with respect to Turkey, I had much ado to keep him from being a reproach to me. His clothes were apt to look oily and smell of eating-houses. He wore his pantaloons very loose and baggy in summer. His coats were execrable; his hat not to be handled. But while the hat was a thing of indifference to me, inasmuch as his natural civility and deference, as a dependent Englishman, always led him to doff it the moment he entered the room, yet his coat was another matter. Concerning his coats, I reasoned with him; but with no effect. The truth was, I suppose, that a man of so small an income, could not afford to sport such a lustrous face and a lustrous coat at one and the same time. As Nippers once observed, Turkey’s money went chiefly for red ink. One winter day I presented Turkey with a highly respectable looking coat of my own, a padded gray coat, of a most comfortable warmth, and which buttoned straight up from the knee to the neck. I thought Turkey would appreciate the favor, and abate his rashness and obstreperousness of afternoons. But no. I verily believe that buttoning himself up in so downy and blanket-like a coat had a pernicious effect upon him; upon the same principle that too much oats are bad for horses. In fact, precisely as a rash, restive horse is said to feel his oats, so Turkey felt his coat. It made him insolent. He was a man whom prosperity harmed.

Though concerning the self-indulgent habits of Turkey I had my own private surmises, yet touching Nippers I was well persuaded that whatever might by his faults in other respects, he was, at least, a temperate young man. But indeed, nature herself seemed to have been his vintner; and at his birth charged him so thoroughly with an irritable, brandy-like disposition, that all subsequent potations were needless. When I consider how, amid the stillness of my chambers, Nippers would sometimes impatiently rise from his seat, and stooping over his table, spread his arms wide apart, seize the whole desk, and move it, and jerk it, with a grim, grinding motion on the floor; as if the table were a perverse voluntary agent, intent on thwarting
and vexing him; I plainly perceive that for Nippers, brandy and water were altogether superfluous.

It was fortunate for me that, owing to its peculiar cause—indigestion—the irritability and consequent nervousness of Nippers, were mainly observable in the morning, while in the afternoon he was comparatively mild. So that Turkey’s paroxysms only coming on about twelve o’clock, I never had to do with their eccentricities at one time. Their fits relieved each other like guards. When Nippers’ was on, Turkey’s was off; and vice versa. This was a good natural arrangement under the circumstances.

Ginger Nut, the third on my list, was a lad some twelve years old. His father was a carman, ambitious of seeing his son on the bench instead of a cart, before he died. So he sent him to my office as student at law, errand boy, and cleaner and sweeper, at the rate of one dollar a week. He had a little desk to himself, but he did not use it much. Upon inspection, the drawer exhibited a great array of the shells of various sorts of nuts. Indeed, to this quick-witted youth the whole noble science of the law was contained in a nut-shell. Not the least among the employments of Ginger Nut, as well as one which he discharged with the most alacrity, was his duty as cake and apple purveyor for Turkey and Nippers. Copying law papers being proverbially dry, husky sort of business, my two scriveners were fain to moisten their mouths very often with Spitzenbergs to be had at the numerous stalls nigh the Custom House and Post Office. Also, they sent Ginger Nut very frequently for that peculiar cake—small, flat, round, and very spicy—after which the had been named by them. Of a cold morning when business was but dull, Turkey would gobble up scores of these cakes, as if they were mere wafers—indeed they sell them at the rate of six or eight for a penny—the scrape of his pen blending with the crunching of the crisp particles in his mouth. Of all the fiery afternoon blunders and flurried trashnesses of Turkey, was his once moistening a ginger-cake between his lips, and clapping it on to a mortgage for a seal. I came within an ace of dismissing him then. But he mollified me by making an oriental bow, and saying—"With submission, sir, it was generous of me to find you in stationery on my own account."

Now my original business—that of a conveyancer and title hunter, and drawer-up of recondite documents of all sorts—was considerably increased by receiving the master’s office. There was now great work for scriveners. Not only must I push the clerks already with me, but I must have additional help. In answer to my advertisement, a motionless young man one morning, stood upon my office threshold, the door being open, for it was summer. I can see that figure now—palidly neat, pitifully respectable, incurably forlorn! It was Bartleby.

After a few words touching his qualifications, I engaged him, glad to have among my corps of copyists a man of so singularly sedate an aspect, which I thought might operate beneficially upon the flighty temper of Turkey, and the fiery one of Nippers.
I should have stated before that ground glass folding-doors divided my premises into two parts, one of which was occupied by my scriveners, the other by myself. According to my humor I threw open these doors, or closed them. I resolved to assign Bartleby a corner by the folding-doors, but on my side of them, so as to have this quiet man within easy call, in case any trifling thing was to be done. I placed his desk close up to a small side-window in that part of the room, a window which originally had afforded a lateral view of certain grimy back-yards and bricks, but which, owing to subsequent erections, commanded at present no view at all, though it gave some light. Within three feet of the panes was a wall, and the light came down from far above, between two lofty buildings, as from a very small opening in a dome. Still further to a satisfactory arrangement, I procured a high green folding screen, which might entirely isolate Bartleby from my sight, though not remove him from my voice. And thus, in a manner, privacy and society were conjoined.

At first Bartleby did an extraordinary quantity of writing. As if long famishing for something to copy, he seemed to gorge himself on my documents. There was no pause for digestion. He ran a day and night line, copying by sun-light and by candle-light. I should have been quite delighted with his application, had he been cheerfully industrious. But he wrote on silently, palely, mechanically.

It is, of course, an indispensable part of a scrivener’s business to verify the accuracy of his copy, word by word. Where there are two or more scriveners in an office, they assist each other in this examination, one reading from the copy, the other holding the original. It is a very dull, wearisome, and lethargic affair. I can readily imagine that to some sanguine temperaments it would be altogether intolerable. For example, I cannot credit that the mettlesome poet Byron would have contentedly sat down with Bartleby to examine a law document of, say five hundred pages, closely written in a crumpy hand.

Now and then, in the haste of business, it had been my habit to assist in comparing some brief document myself, calling Turkey or Nippers for this purpose. One object I had in placing Bartleby so handy to me behind the screen, was to avail myself of his services on such trivial occasions. It was on the third day, I think, of his being with me, and before any necessity had arisen for having his own writing examined, that, being much hurried to complete a small affair I had in hand, I abruptly called to Bartleby. In my haste and natural expectancy of instant compliance, I sat with my head bent over the original on my desk, and my right hand sideways, and somewhat nervously extended with the copy, so that immediately upon emerging from his retreat, Bartleby might snatch it and proceed to business without the least delay.

In this very attitude did I sit when I called to him, rapidly stating what it was I wanted him to do—namely, to examine a small paper with me. Imagine my surprise, nay, my consternation, when without moving from his privacy, Bartleby in a singularly mild, firm voice, replied, “I would prefer not to.”
I sat awhile in perfect silence, rallying my stunned faculties. Immediately it occurred to me that my ears had deceived me, or Bartleby had entirely misunderstood my meaning. I repeated my request in the clearest tone I could assume. But in quite as clear a one came the previous reply, “I would prefer not to.”

“Prefer not to,” echoed I, rising in high excitement, and crossing the room with a stride. “What do you mean? Are you moon-struck? I want you to help me compare this sheet here—take it,” and I thrust it towards him.

“I would prefer not to,” said he.

I looked at him steadfastly. His face was leanly composed; his gray eye dimly calm. Not a wrinkle of agitation rippled him. Had there been the least uneasiness, anger, impatience or impertinence in his manner; in other words, had there been anything ordinarily human about him, doubtless I should have violently dismissed him from the premises. But as it was, I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-paris bust of Cicero out of doors. I stood gazing at him awhile, as he went on with his own writing, and then reseated myself at my desk. This is very strange, thought I. What had one best do? But my business hurried me. I concluded to forget the matter for the present, reserving it for my future leisure. So calling Nippers from the other room, the paper was speedily examined.

A few days after this, Bartleby concluded four lengthy documents, being quadruplicates of a week’s testimony taken before me in my High Court of Chancery. It became necessary to examine them. It was an important suit, and great accuracy was imperative. Having all things arranged I called Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut from the next room, meaning to place the four copies in the hands of my four clerks, while I should read from the original. Accordingly Turkey, Nippers and Ginger Nut had taken their seats in a row, each with his document in hand, when I called to Bartleby to join this interesting group.

“Bartleby! quick, I am waiting.”

I heard a slow scrape of his chair legs on the uncarpeted floor; and soon he appeared standing at the entrance of his hermitage.

“What is wanted?” said he mildly.

“The copies, the copies,” said I hurriedly. “We are going to examine them. There”—and I held towards him the fourth quadruplicate.

“I would prefer not to,” he said, and gently disappeared behind the screen.

For a few moments I was turned into a pillar of salt, standing at the head of my seated column of clerks. Recovering myself, I advanced towards the screen, and demanded the reason for such extraordinary conduct.

“Why do you refuse?”
“I would prefer not to.”

With any other man I should have flown outright into a dreadful passion, scorned all further words, and thrust him ignominiously from my presence. But there was something about Bartleby that not only strangely disarmed me, but in a wonderful manner touched and disconcerted me. I began to reason with him.

“These are your own copies we are about to examine. It is labor saving to you, because one examination will answer for your four papers. It is common usage. Every copyist is bound to help examine his copy. Is it not so? Will you not speak? Answer!”

“I prefer not to,” he replied in a flute-like tone. It seemed to me that while I had been addressing him, he carefully revolved every statement that I made; fully comprehended the meaning; could not gainsay the irresistible conclusions; but, at the same time, some paramount consideration prevailed with him to reply as he did.

“You are decided, then, not to comply with my request—a request made according to common usage and common sense?”

He briefly gave me to understand that on that point my judgment was sound. Yes: his decision was irreversible.

It is not seldom the case that when a man is browbeaten in some unprecedented and violently unreasonable way, he begins to stagger in his own plainest faith. He begins, as it were, vaguely to surmise that, wonderful as it may be, all the justice and all the reason is on the other side. Accordingly, if any disinterested persons are present, he turns to them for some reinforcement for his own faltering mind.

“Turkey,” said I, “what do you think of this? Am I not right?”

“With submission, sir,” said Turkey, with his blandest tone, “I think that you are.”

“Nippers,” said I, “what do you think of it?”

“I think I should kick him out of the office.”

(The reader of nice perceptions will here perceive that, it being morning, Turkey’s answer is couched in polite and tranquil terms, but Nippers replies in ill-tempered ones. Or, to repeat a previous sentence, Nippers’ ugly mood was on duty and Turkey’s off.)

“Ginger Nut,” said I, willing to enlist the smallest suffrage in my behalf, “what do you think of it?”

“I think, sir, he’s a little luny,” replied Ginger Nut with a grin.

“You hear what they say,” said I, turning towards the screen, “come forth and do your duty.”
But he vouchsafed no reply. I pondered a moment in sore perplexity. But once more business hurried me. I determined again to postpone the consideration of this dilemma to my future leisure. With a little trouble we made out to examine the papers without Bartleby, though at every page or two, Turkey deferentially dropped his opinion that this proceeding was quite out of the common; while Nippers, twitching in his chair with a dyspeptic nervousness, ground out between his set teeth occasional hissing maledictions against the stubborn oaf behind the screen. And for his (Nippers') part, this was the first and the last time he would do another man's business without pay.

Meanwhile Bartleby sat in his hermitage, oblivious to every thing but his own peculiar business there.

Some days passed, the scrivener being employed upon another lengthy work. His late remarkable conduct led me to regard his ways narrowly. I observed that he never went to dinner; indeed that he never went any where. As yet I had never of my personal knowledge known him to be outside of my office. He was a perpetual sentry in the corner. At about eleven o'clock though, in the morning, I noticed that Ginger Nut would advance toward the opening in Bartleby's screen, as if silently beckoned thither by a gesture invisible to me where I sat. The boy would then leave the office jingling a few pence, and reappear with a handful of ginger-nuts which he delivered in the hermitage, receiving two of the cakes for his trouble.

He lives, then, on ginger-nuts, thought I; never eats a dinner, properly speaking; he must be a vegetarian then; but no; he never eats even vegetables, he eats nothing but ginger-nuts. My mind then ran on in reveries concerning the probable effects upon the human constitution of living entirely on ginger-nuts. Ginger-nuts are so called because they contain ginger as one of their peculiar constituents, and the final flavoring one. Now what was ginger? A hot, spicy thing. Was Bartleby hot and spicy? Not at all. Ginger, then, had no effect upon Bartleby. Probably he preferred it should have none.

Nothing so aggravates an earnest person as a passive resistance. If the individual so resisted be of a not inhumane temper, and the resisting one perfectly harmless in his passivity; then, in the better moods of the former, he will endeavor charitably to construe to his imagination what proves impossible to be solved by his judgment. Even so, for the most part, I regarded Bartleby and his ways. Poor fellow! thought I, he means no mischief; it is plain he intends no insolence; his aspect sufficiently evinces that his eccentricities are involuntary. He is useful to me. I can get along with him. If I turn him away, the chances are he will fall in with some less indulgent employer, and then he will be rudely treated, and perhaps driven forth miserably to starve. Yes. Here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval. To befriend Bartleby; to humor him in his strange willfulness, will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually prove a sweet morsel for my conscience. But this mood was not invariable with me. The passiveness of Bartleby sometimes irritated me. I felt strangely goaded on to encounter him in new opposition, to elicit
some angry spark from him answerable to my own. But indeed I might as well have essayed to strike fire with my knuckles against a bit of Windsor soap. But one afternoon the evil impulse in me mastered me, and the following little scene ensued:

“Bartleby,” said I, “when those papers are all copied, I will compare them with you.”

“I would prefer not to.”

“How? Surely you do not mean to persist in that mulish vagary?”

No answer:

I threw open the folding-doors near by, and turning upon Turkey and Nippers, exclaimed in an excited manner—

“He says, a second time, he won’t examine his papers. What do you think of it, Turkey?”

It was afternoon, be it remembered. Turkey sat glowing like a brass boiler, his bald head steaming, his hands reeling among his blotted papers.

“Think of it?” roared Turkey; “I think I’ll just step behind his screen, and black his eyes for him!”

So saying, Turkey rose to his feet and threw his arms into a pugilistic position. He was hurrying away to make good his promise, when I detained him, alarmed at the effect of incautiously rousing Turkey’s combativeness after dinner.

“Sit down, Turkey,” said I, “and hear what Nippers has to say. What do you think of it, Nippers? Would I not be justified in immediately dismissing Bartleby?”

“Excuse me, that is for you to decide, sir. I think his conduct quite unusual, and indeed unjust, as regards Turkey and myself. But it may only be a passing whim.”

“Ah,” exclaimed I, “you have strangely changed your mind then—you speak very gently of him now.”

“All beer,” cried Turkey; “gentleness is effects of beer—Nippers and I dined together to-day. You see how gentle I am, sir. Shall I go and black his eyes?”

“You refer to Bartleby, I suppose. No, not to-day, Turkey,” I replied; “pray, put up your fists.”

I closed the doors, and again advanced towards Bartleby. I felt additional incentives tempting me to my fate. I burned to be rebelled against again. I remembered that Bartleby never left the office.
“Bartleby,” said I, “Ginger Nut is away; just step round to the Post Office, won’t you? (it was but a three minute walk,) and see if there is any thing for me.”

“I would prefer not to.”

“You will not?”

“I prefer not.”

I staggered to my desk, and sat there in a deep study. My blind inveteracy returned. Was there any other thing in which I could procure myself to be ignominiously repulsed by this lean, penniless wight?—my hired clerk? What added thing is there, perfectly reasonable, that he will be sure to refuse to do?

“Bartleby!”

No answer.

“Bartleby,” in a louder tone.

No answer.

“Bartleby,” I roared.

Like a very ghost, agreeably to the laws of magical invocation, at the third summons, he appeared at the entrance of his hermitage.

“Go to the next room, and tell Nippers to come to me.”

“I prefer not to,” he respectfully and slowly said, and mildly disappeared.

“Very good, Bartleby,” said I, in a quiet sort of serenely severe self-possessed tone, intimating the unalterable purpose of some terrible retribution very close at hand. At the moment I half intended something of the kind. But upon the whole, as it was drawing towards my dinner-hour, I thought it best to put on my hat and walk home for the day, suffering much from perplexity and distress of mind.

Shall I acknowledge it? The conclusion of this whole business was, that it soon became a fixed fact of my chambers, that a pale young scrivener, by the name of Bartleby, and a desk there; that he copied for me at the usual rate of four cents a folio (one hundred words); but he was permanently exempt from examining the work done by him, that duty being transferred to Turkey and Nippers, one of compliment doubtless to their superior acuteness; moreover, said Bartleby was never on any account to be dispatched on the most trivial errand of any sort; and that even if entreated to take upon him such a matter, it was generally understood that he would prefer not to—in other words, that he would refuse pointblank.

As days passed on, I became considerably reconciled to Bartleby. His steadiness, his freedom from all dissipation, his incessant industry (except when he chose to
throw himself into a standing revery behind his screen), his great, stillness, his unalterableness of demeanor under all circumstances, made him a valuable acquisition. One prime thing was this,—he was always there;—first in the morning, continually through the day, and the last at night. I had a singular confidence in his honesty. I felt my most precious papers perfectly safe in his hands. Sometimes to be sure I could not, for the very soul of me, avoid falling into sudden spasmodic passions with him. For it was exceeding difficult to bear in mind all the time those strange peculiarities, privileges, and unheard of exemptions, forming the tacit stipulations on Bartleby’s part under which he remained in my office. Now and then, in the eagerness of dispatching pressing business, I would inadvertently summon Bartleby, in a short, rapid tone, to put his finger, say, on the incipient tie of a bit of red tape with which I was about compressing some papers. Of course, from behind the screen the usual answer, “I prefer not to,” was sure to come; and then, how could a human creature with the common infirmities of our nature, refrain from bitterly exclaiming upon such perverseness—such unreasonableness. However, every added repulse of this sort which I received only tended to lessen the probability of my repeating the inadvertence.

Here it must be said, that according to the custom of most legal gentlemen occupying chambers in densely-populated law buildings, there were several keys to my door. One was kept by a woman residing in the attic, which person weekly scrubbed and daily swept and dusted my apartments. Another was kept by Turkey for convenience sake. The third I sometimes carried in my own pocket. The fourth I knew not who had.

Now, one Sunday morning I happened to go to Trinity Church, to hear a celebrated preacher, and finding myself rather early on the ground, I thought I would walk around to my chambers for a while. Luckily I had my key with me; but upon applying it to the lock, I found it resisted by something inserted from the inside. Quite surprised, I called out; when to my consternation a key was turned from within; and thrusting his lean visage at me, and holding the door ajar, the apparition of Bartleby appeared, in his shirt sleeves, and otherwise in a strangely tattered dishabille, saying quietly that he was sorry, but he was deeply engaged just then, and—preferred not admitting me at present. In a brief word or two, he moreover added, that perhaps I had better walk round the block two or three times, and by that time he would probably have concluded his affairs.

Now, the utterly unsurmised appearance of Bartleby, tenanting my law-chambers of a Sunday morning, with his cadaverously gentlemanly nonchalance, yet withal firm and self-possessed, had such a strange effect upon me, that incontinently I slunk away from my own door, and did as desired. But not without sundry twinges of impotent rebellion against the mild effrontery of this unaccountable scrivener: Indeed, it was his wonderful mildness chiefly, which not only disarmed me, but unmanned me, as it were. For I consider that one, for the time, is a sort of unmanned when he tranquilly permits his hired clerk to dictate to him, and order him away from his own premises. Furthermore, I was full of uneasiness as to what Bartleby
could possibly be doing in my office in his shirt sleeves, and in an otherwise dis-
mantled condition of a Sunday morning. Was any thing amiss going on? Nay, that
was out of the question. It was not to be thought of for a moment that Bartleby
was an immoral person. But what could he be doing there?—copying? Nay again,
whatever might be his eccentricities, Bartleby was an eminently decorous person.
He would be the last man to sit down to his desk in any state approaching to nudity.
Besides, it was Sunday; and there was something about Bartleby that forbade the
supposition that he would by any secular occupation violate the proprieties of the
day.

Nevertheless, my mind was not pacified; and full of a restless curiosity, at last I
returned to the door. Without hindrance I inserted my key, opened it, and entered.
Bartleby was not to be seen. I looked round anxiously, peeped behind his screen;
but it was very plain that he was gone. Upon more closely examining the place, I
surmised that for an indefinite period Bartleby must have ate, dressed, and slept in
my office, and that too without plate, mirror, or bed. The cushioned seat of a rickety
old sofa in one corner bore the faint impress of a lean, reclining form. Rolled away
under his desk, I found a blanket; under the empty grate, a blacking box and brush;
on a chair, a tin basin, with soap and a ragged towel; in a newspaper a few crumbs of
ginger-nuts and a morsel of cheese. Yes, thought I, it is evident enough that Bartleby
has been making his home here, keeping bachelor’s hall all by himself. Immediately
then the thought came sweeping across me, What miserable friendlessness and
loneliness are here revealed! His poverty is great; but his solitude, how horrible!
Think of it. Of a Sunday, Wall-street is deserted as Petra; and every night of every
day it is an emptiness. This building too, which of week-days hums with industry
and life, at nightfall echoes with sheer vacancy, and all through Sunday is forlorn.
And here Bartleby makes his home; sole spectator of a solitude which he has seen
all populous—a sort of innocent and transformed Marius brooding among the ru-
ins of Carthage!

For the first time in my life a feeling of overpowering stinging melancholy seized
me. Before, I had never experienced aught but a not-unpleasing sadness. The bond
of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom. A fraternal melancholy!
For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. I remembered the bright silks and spar-
kling faces I had seen that day, in gala trim, swan-like sailing down the Mississippi
of Broadway; and I contrasted them with the pallid copyist, and thought to myself,
Ah, happiness courts the light, so we deem the world is gay; but misery hides aloof,
so we deem that misery there is none. These sad fancyings—chimeras, doubtless,
of a sick and silly brain—led on to other and more special thoughts, concerning the
eccentricities of Bartleby. Presentiments of strange discoveries hovered round me.
The scrivener’s pale form appeared to me laid out, among uncaring strangers, in its
shivering winding sheet.

Suddenly I was attracted by Bartleby’s closed desk, the key in open sight left in
the lock.
I mean no mischief, seek the gratification of no heartless curiosity, thought I; besides, the desk is mine, and its contents too, so I will make bold to look within. Everything was methodically arranged, the papers smoothly placed. The pigeon holes were deep, and removing the files of documents, I groped into their recesses. Presently I felt something there, and dragged it out. It was an old bandanna handkerchief, heavy and knotted. I opened it, and saw it was a savings' bank.

I now recalled all the quiet mysteries which I had noted in the man. I remembered that he never spoke but to answer; that though at intervals he had considerable time to himself, yet I had never seen him reading—no, not even a newspaper; that for long periods he would stand looking out, at his pale window behind the screen, upon the dead brick wall; I was quite sure he never visited any refectory or eating house; while his pale face clearly indicated that he never drank beer like Turkey, or tea and coffee even, like other men; that he never went anywhere in particular that I could learn; never went out for a walk, unless indeed that was the case at present; that he had declined telling who he was, or whence he came, or whether he had any relatives in the world; that though so thin and pale, he never complained of ill health. And more than all, I remembered a certain unconscious air of pallid—how shall I call it?—of pallid haughtiness, say, or rather an austere reserve about him, which had positively awed me into my tame compliance with his eccentricities, when I had feared to ask him to do the slightest incidental thing for me, even though I might know, from his long-continued motionlessness, that behind his screen he must be standing in one of those dead-wall reveries of his.

Revolving all these things, and coupling them with the recently discovered fact that he made my office his constant abiding place and home, and not forgetful of his morbid moodiness; revolving all these things, a prudential feeling began to steal over me. My first emotions had been those of pure melancholy and sincerest pity; but just in proportion as the forlornness of Bartleby grew and grew to my imagination, did that same melancholy merge into fear, that pity into repulsion. So true it is, and so terrible too, that up to a certain point the thought or sight of misery enlists our best affections; but, in certain special cases, beyond that point it does not. They err who would assert that invariably this is owing to the inherent selfishness of the human heart. It rather proceeds from a certain hopelessness of remedying excessive and organic ill. To a sensitive being, pity is not seldom pain. And when at last it is perceived that such pity cannot lead to effectual succor; common sense bids the soul rid of it. What I saw that morning persuaded me that the scrivener was the victim of innate and incurable disorder. I might give alms to his body; but his body did not pain him; it was his soul that suffered, and his soul I could not reach.

I did not accomplish the purpose of going to Trinity Church that morning. Somehow, the things I had seen disqualified me for the time from church-going. I walked homeward, thinking what I would do with Bartleby. Finally, I resolved upon this;—I would put certain calm questions to him the next morning, touching his history, etc., and if he declined to answer them openly and unreservedly (and I supposed he would prefer not), then to give him a twenty dollar bill over and above whatever I
might owe him, and tell him his services were no longer required; but that if in any other way I could assist him, I would be happy to do so, especially if he desired to return to his native place, wherever that might be, I would willingly help to defray the expenses. Moreover, if, after reaching home, he found himself at any time in want of aid, a letter from him would be sure of a reply.

The next morning came.

“Bartleby,” said I, gently calling to him behind his screen.

No reply.

“Bartleby,” said I, in a still gentler tone, “come here; I am not going to ask you to do any thing you would prefer not to do—I simply wish to speak to you.”

Upon this he noiselessly slid into view.

“Will you tell me, Bartleby, where you were born?”

“I would prefer not to.”

“Will you tell me any thing about yourself?”

“I would prefer not to.”

“But what reasonable objection can you have to speak to me? I feel friendly towards you.”

He did not look at me while I spoke, but kept his glance fixed upon my bust of Cicero, which as I then sat, was directly behind me, some six inches above my head.

“What is your answer, Bartleby?” said I, after waiting a considerable time for a reply, during which his countenance remained immovable, only there was the faintest conceivable tremor of the white attenuated mouth.

“At present I prefer to give no answer,” he said, and retired into his hermitage.

It was rather weak in me I confess, but his manner on this occasion nettled me. Not only did there seem to lurk in it a certain calm disdain, but his perverseness seemed ungrateful, considering the undeniable good usage and indulgence he had received from me.

Again I sat ruminating what I should do. Mortified as I was at his behavior, and resolved as I had been to dismiss him when I entered my offices, nevertheless I strangely felt something superstitious knocking at my heart, and forbidding me to carry out my purpose, and denouncing me for a villain if I dared to breathe one bitter word against this forlornest of mankind. At last, familiarly drawing my chair behind his screen, I sat down and said: “Bartleby, never mind then about revealing your history; but let me entreat you, as a friend, to comply as far as may be with the
usages of this office. Say now you will help to examine papers to-morrow or next
day: in short, say now that in a day or two you will begin to be a little reasonable:—
say so, Bartleby.”

“At present I would prefer not to be a little reasonable,” was his mildly cadaverous
reply.

Just then the folding-doors opened, and Nippers approached. He seemed suffer-
ing from an unusually bad night’s rest, induced by severer indigestion then com-
mon. He overheard those final words of Bartleby.

“Prefer not, eh?” grated Nippers—”I’d prefer him, if I were you, sir,” addressing
me—”I’d prefer him; I’d give him preferences, the stubborn mule! What is it, sir, pray, that he prefers not to do now?”

Bartleby moved not a limb.

“Mr. Nippers,” said I, “I’d prefer that you would withdraw for the present.”

Somehow, of late I had got into the way of involuntarily using this word “prefer”
upon all sorts of not exactly suitable occasions. And I trembled to think that my con-
tact with the scrivener had already and seriously affected me in a mental way. And
what further and deeper aberration might it not yet produce? This apprehension
had not been without efficacy in determining me to summary means.

As Nippers, looking very sour and sulky, was departing, Turkey blandly and def-
erentially approached.

“With submission, sir,” said he, “yesterday I was thinking about Bartleby here, and
I think that if he would but prefer to take a quart of good ale every day, it would do
much towards mending him, and enabling him to assist in examining his papers.”

“So you have got the word too,” said I, slightly excited.

“With submission, what word, sir,” asked Turkey, respectfully crowding himself
into the contracted space behind the screen, and by so doing, making me jostle the
scrivener. “What word, sir?”

“I would prefer to be left alone here,” said Bartleby, as if offended at being mobbed
in his privacy.

“That’s the word, Turkey,” said I—“that’s it.”

“Oh, prefer? oh yes—queer word. I never use it myself. But, sir, as I was saying, if he would but prefer—”

“Turkey,” interrupted I, “you will please withdraw.”

“Oh certainly, sir, if you prefer that I should.”
As he opened the folding-door to retire, Nippers at his desk caught a glimpse of me, and asked whether I would prefer to have a certain paper copied on blue paper or white. He did not in the least roguishly accent the word prefer. It was plain that it involuntarily rolled form his tongue. I thought to myself, surely I must get rid of a demented man, who already has in some degree turned the tongues, if not the heads of myself and clerks. But I thought it prudent not to break the dismissal at once.

The next day I noticed that Bartleby did nothing but stand at his window in his dead-wall revery. Upon asking him why he did not write, he said that he had decided upon doing no more writing.

"Why, how now? what next?" exclaimed I, "do no more writing?"

"No more."

"And what is the reason?"

"Do you not see the reason for yourself," he indifferently replied.

I looked steadfastly at him, and perceived that his eyes looked dull and glazed. Instantly it occurred to me, that his unexampled diligence in copying by his dim window for the first few weeks of his stay with me might have temporarily impaired his vision.

I was touched. I said something in condolence with him. I hinted that of course he did wisely in abstaining from writing for a while; and urged him to embrace that opportunity of taking wholesome exercise in the open air. This, however, he did not do. A few days after this, my other clerks being absent, and being in a great hurry to dispatch certain letters by the mail, I thought that, having nothing else earthly to do, Bartleby would surely be less inflexible than usual, and carry these letters to the post-office. But he blankly declined. So, much to my inconvenience, I went myself.

Still added days went by. Whether Bartleby’s eyes improved or not, I could not say. To all appearance, I thought they did. But when I asked him if they did, he vouchsafed no answer. At all events, he would do no copying. At last, in reply to my urgings, he informed me that he had permanently given up copying.

"What!" exclaimed I; "suppose your eyes should get entirely well—better than ever before—would you not copy then?"

"I have given up copying," he answered, and slid aside.

He remained as ever, a fixture in my chamber. Nay—if that were possible—he became still more of a fixture than before. What was to be done? He would do nothing in the office: why should he stay there? In plain fact, he had now become a millstone to me, not only useless as a necklace, but afflictive to bear. Yet I was sorry for him. I speak less than truth when I say that, on his own account, he occasioned me uneasi-
ness. If he would but have named a single relative or friend, I would instantly have written, and urged their taking the poor fellow away to some convenient retreat. But he seemed alone, absolutely alone in the universe. A bit of wreck in the mid Atlantic. At length, necessities connected with my business tyrannized over all other considerations. Decently as I could, I told Bartleby that in six days’ time he must unconditionally leave the office. I warned him to take measures, in the interval, for procuring some other abode. I offered to assist him in this endeavor, if he himself would but take the first step towards a removal. “And when you finally quit me, Bartleby,” added I, “I shall see that you go not away entirely unprovided. Six days from this hour; remember.”

At the expiration of that period, I peeped behind the screen, and lo! Bartleby was there.

I buttoned up my coat, balanced myself; advanced slowly towards him, touched his shoulder; and said, “The time has come; you must quit this place; I am sorry for you; here is money; but you must go.”

“I would prefer not,” he replied, with his back still towards me.

“You must.”

He remained silent.

Now I had an unbounded confidence in this man’s common honesty. He had frequently restored to me sixpences and shillings carelessly dropped upon the floor, for I am apt to be very reckless in such shirt-button affairs. The proceeding then which followed will not be deemed extraordinary.

“Bartleby,” said I, “I owe you twelve dollars on account; here are thirty-two; the odd twenty are yours.—Will you take it?” and I handed the bills towards him.

But he made no motion.

“I will leave them here then,” putting them under a weight on the table. Then taking my hat and cane and going to the door I tranquilly turned and added—“After you have removed your things from these offices, Bartleby, you will of course lock the door—since every one is now gone for the day but you—and if you please, slip your key underneath the mat, so that I may have it in the morning. I shall not see you again; so good-bye to you. If hereafter in your new place of abode I can be of any service to you, do not fail to advise me by letter. Good-bye, Bartleby, and fare you well.”

But he answered not a word; like the last column of some ruined temple, he remained standing mute and solitary in the middle of the otherwise deserted room.

As I walked home in a pensive mood, my vanity got the better of my pity. I could not but highly plume myself on my masterly management in getting rid of Bartleby.
Masterly I call it, and such it must appear to any dispassionate thinker: The beauty of my procedure seemed to consist in its perfect quietness. There was no vulgar bullying, no bravado of any sort, no choleric hectoring, and striding to and fro across the apartment, jerking out vehement commands for Bartleby to bundle himself off with his beggarly traps. Nothing of the kind. Without loudly bidding Bartleby depart—as an inferior genius might have done—I assumed the ground that depart he must; and upon that assumption built all I had to say. The more I thought over my procedure, the more I was charmed with it. Nevertheless, next morning, upon awakening, I had my doubts,—I had somehow slept off the fumes of vanity. One of the coolest and wisest hours a man has, is just after he awakes in the morning. My procedure seemed as sagacious as ever.—but only in theory. How it would prove in practice—there was the rub. It was truly a beautiful thought to have assumed Bartleby’s departure; but, after all, that assumption was simply my own, and none of Bartleby’s. The great point was, not whether I had assumed that he would quit me, but whether he would prefer so to do. He was more a man of preferences than assumptions.

After breakfast, I walked down town, arguing the probabilities pro and con. One moment I thought it would prove a miserable failure, and Bartleby would be found all alive at my office as usual; the next moment it seemed certain that I should see his chair empty. And so I kept veering about. At the corner of Broadway and Canal-street, I saw quite an excited group of people standing in earnest conversation.

“I’ll take odds he doesn’t,” said a voice as I passed.

“Doesn’t go?—done!” said I, “put up your money.”

I was instinctively putting my hand in my pocket to produce my own, when I remembered that this was an election day. The words I had overheard bore no reference to Bartleby, but to the success or non-success of some candidate for the mayoralty. In my intent frame of mind, I had, as it were, imagined that all Broadway shared in my excitement, and were debating the same question with me. I passed on, very thankful that the uproar of the street screened my momentary absent-mindedness.

As I had intended, I was earlier than usual at my office door. I stood listening for a moment. All was still. He must be gone. I tried the knob. The door was locked. Yes, my procedure had worked to a charm; he indeed must be vanished. Yet a certain melancholy mixed with this: I was almost sorry for my brilliant success. I was fumbling under the door mat for the key, which Bartleby was to have left there for me, when accidentally my knee knocked against a panel, producing a summoning sound, and in response a voice came to me from within—”Not yet; I am occupied.”

It was Bartleby.

I was thunderstruck. For an instant I stood like the man who, pipe in mouth, was killed one cloudless afternoon long ago in Virginia, by a summer lightning; at his
own warm open window he was killed, and remained leaning out there upon the
dreamy afternoon, till some one touched him, when he fell.

“Not gone!” I murmured at last. But again obeying that wondrous ascendancy
which the inscrutable scrivener had over me, and from which ascendancy, for all
my chafing, I could not completely escape, I slowly went down stairs and out into
the street, and while walking round the block, considered what I should next do
in this unheard-of perplexity. Turn the man out by an actual thrusting I could not;
to drive him away by calling him hard names would not do; calling in the police
was an unpleasant idea; and yet, permit him to enjoy his cadaverous triumph over
me,—this too I could not think of. What was to be done? or, if nothing could be done,
was there anything further that I could assume in the matter? Yes, as before I had
prospectively assumed that Bartleby would depart, so now I might retrospectively
assume that departed he was. In the legitimate carrying out of this assumption, I
might enter my office in a great hurry, and pretending not to see Bartleby at all,
walk straight against him as if he were air. Such a proceeding would in a singular
degree have the appearance of a home-thrust. It was hardly possible that Bartleby
could withstand such an application of the doctrine of assumptions. But upon sec-
ond thoughts the success of the plan seemed rather dubious. I resolved to argue the
matter over with him again.

“Bartleby,” said I, entering the office, with a quietly severe expression, “I am seri-
ously displeased. I am pained, Bartleby. I had thought better of you. I had imagined
you of such a gentlemanly organization, that in any delicate dilemma a slight hint
would have suffice—in short, an assumption. But it appears I am deceived. Why,” I
added, unaffectedly starting, “you have not even touched that money yet,” pointing
to it, just where I had left it the evening previous.

He answered nothing.

“Will you, or will you not, quit me?” I now demanded in a sudden passion, advanc-
ing close to him.

“I would prefer not to quit you,” he replied, gently emphasizing the not.

“What earthly right have you to stay here? Do you pay any rent? Do you pay my
taxes? Or is this property yours?”

He answered nothing.

“Are you ready to go on and write now? Are your eyes recovered? Could you copy
a small paper for me this morning? or help examine a few lines? or step round to the
post-office? In a word, will you do any thing at all, to give a coloring to your refusal
to depart the premises?”

He silently retired into his hermitage.
I was now in such a state of nervous resentment that I thought it but prudent to check myself at present from further demonstrations. Bartleby and I were alone. I remembered the tragedy of the unfortunate Adams and the still more unfortunate Colt in the solitary office of the latter; and how poor Colt, being dreadfully incensed by Adams, and imprudently permitting himself to get wildly excited, was at unawares hurried into his fatal act—an act which certainly no man could possibly deplore more than the actor himself. Often it had occurred to me in my ponderings upon the subject, that had that altercation taken place in the public street, or at a private residence, it would not have terminated as it did. It was the circumstance of being alone in a solitary office, up stairs, of a building entirely unhallowed by humanizing domestic associations—an uncarpeted office, doubtless, of a dusty, haggard sort of appearance;—this it must have been, which greatly helped to enhance the irritable desperation of the hapless Colt.

But when this old Adam of resentment rose in me and tempted me concerning Bartleby, I grappled him and threw him. How? Why, simply by recalling the divine injunction: “A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another.” Yes, this it was that saved me. Aside from higher considerations, charity often operates as a vastly wise and prudent principle—a great safeguard to its possessor. Men have committed murder for jealousy’s sake, and anger’s sake, and hatred’s sake, and selfishness’ sake, and spiritual pride’s sake; but no man that ever I heard of, ever committed a diabolical murder for sweet charity’s sake. Mere self-interest, then, if no better motive can be enlisted, should, especially with high-tempered men, prompt all beings to charity and philanthropy. At any rate, upon the occasion in question, I strove to drown my exasperated feelings towards the scrivener by benevolently construing his conduct. Poor fellow, poor fellow! thought I, he don’t mean any thing; and besides, he has seen hard times, and ought to be indulged.

I endeavored also immediately to occupy myself, and at the same time to comfort my despondency. I tried to fancy that in the course of the morning, at such time as might prove agreeable to him, Bartleby, of his own free accord, would emerge from his hermitage, and take up some decided line of march in the direction of the door. But no. Half-past twelve o’clock came; Turkey began to glow in the face, overturn his inkstand, and become generally obstreperous; Nippers abated down into quietude and courtesy; Ginger Nut munched his noon apple; and Bartleby remained standing at his window in one of his profoundest dead-wall reveries. Will it be credited? Ought I to acknowledge it? That afternoon I left the office without saying one further word to him.

Some days now passed, during which, at leisure intervals I looked a little into “Edwards on the Will,” and “Priestly on Necessity.” Under the circumstances, those books induced a salutary feeling. Gradually I slid into the persuasion that these troubles of mine touching the scrivener, had been all predestinated from eternity, and Bartleby was billeted upon me for some mysterious purpose of an all-wise Providence, which it was not for a mere mortal like me to fathom. Yes, Bartleby, stay there behind your screen, thought I; I shall persecute you no more; you are harm-
less and noiseless as any of these old chairs; in short, I never feel so private as when I know you are here. At last I see it, I feel it; I penetrate to the predestinated purpose of my life. I am content. Others may have loftier parts to enact; but my mission in this world, Bartleby, is to furnish you with office-room for such period as you may see fit to remain.

I believe that this wise and blessed frame of mind would have continued with me, had it not been for the unsolicited and uncharitable remarks obtruded upon me by my professional friends who visited the rooms. But thus it often is, that the constant friction of illiberal minds wears out at last the best resolves of the more generous. Though to be sure, when I reflected upon it, it was not strange that people entering my office should be struck by the peculiar aspect of the unaccountable Bartleby, and so be tempted to throw out some sinister observations concerning him. Sometimes an attorney having business with me, and calling at my office and finding no one but the scrivener there, would undertake to obtain some sort of precise information from him touching my whereabouts; but without heeding his idle talk, Bartleby would remain standing immovable in the middle of the room. So after contemplating him in that position for a time, the attorney would depart, no wiser than he came.

Also, when a Reference was going on, and the room full of lawyers and witnesses and business was driving fast; some deeply occupied legal gentleman present, seeing Bartleby wholly unemployed, would request him to run round to his (the legal gentleman’s) office and fetch some papers for him. Thereupon, Bartleby would tranquilly decline, and yet remain idle as before. Then the lawyer would give a great stare, and turn to me. And what could I say? At last I was made aware that all through the circle of my professional acquaintance, a whisper of wonder was running round, having reference to the strange creature I kept at my office. This worried me very much. And as the idea came upon me of his possibly turning out a long-lived man, and keep occupying my chambers, and denying my authority; and perplexing my visitors; and scandalizing my professional reputation; and casting a general gloom over the premises; keeping soul and body together to the last upon his savings (for doubtless he spent but half a dime a day), and in the end perhaps outlive me, and claim possession of my office by right of his perpetual occupancy: as all these dark anticipations crowded upon me more and more, and my friends continually intruded their relentless remarks upon the apparition in my room; a great change was wrought in me. I resolved to gather all my faculties together, and for ever rid me of this intolerable incubus.

Ere revolving any complicated project, however, adapted to this end, I first simply suggested to Bartleby the propriety of his permanent departure. In a calm and serious tone, I commended the idea to his careful and mature consideration. But having taken three days to meditate upon it, he apprised me that his original determination remained the same in short, that he still preferred to abide with me.
What shall I do? I now said to myself, buttoning up my coat to the last button. What shall I do? what ought I to do? what does conscience say I should do with this man, or rather ghost. Rid myself of him, I must; go, he shall. But how? You will not thrust him, the poor, pale, passive mortal,—you will not thrust such a helpless creature out of your door? you will not dishonor yourself by such cruelty? No, I will not, I cannot do that. Rather would I let him live and die here, and then mason up his remains in the wall. What then will you do? For all your coaxing, he will not budge. Bribes he leaves under your own paperweight on your table; in short, it is quite plain that he prefers to cling to you.

Then something severe, something unusual must be done. What! surely you will not have him collared by a constable, and commit his innocent pallor to the common jail? And upon what ground could you procure such a thing to be done?—a vagrant, is he? What! he a vagrant, a wanderer; who refuses to budge? It is because he will not be a vagrant, then, that you seek to count him as a vagrant. That is too absurd. No visible means of support: there I have him. Wrong again: for indubitably he does support himself, and that is the only unanswerable proof that any man can show of his possessing the means so to do. No more then. Since he will not quit me, I must quit him. I will change my offices; I will move elsewhere; and give him fair notice, that if I find him on my new premises I will then proceed against him as a common trespasser.

Acting accordingly, next day I thus addressed him: “I find these chambers too far from the City Hall; the air is unwholesome. In a word, I propose to remove my offices next week, and shall no longer require your services. I tell you this now, in order that you may seek another place.”

He made no reply, and nothing more was said.

On the appointed day I engaged carts and men, proceeded to my chambers, and having but little furniture, every thing was removed in a few hours. Throughout, the scrivener remained standing behind the screen, which I directed to be removed the last thing. It was withdrawn; and being folded up like a huge folio, left him the motionless occupant of a naked room. I stood in the entry watching him a moment, while something from within me upbraided me.

I re-entered, with my hand in my pocket—and—and my heart in my mouth.

“Good-bye, Bartleby; I am going—good-bye, and God some way bless you; and take that,” slipping something in his hand. But it dropped upon the floor; and then,—strange to say—I tore myself from him whom I had so longed to be rid of.

Established in my new quarters, for a day or two I kept the door locked, and started at every footfall in the passages. When I returned to my rooms after any little absence, I would pause at the threshold for an instant, and attentively listen, ere applying my key. But these fears were needless. Bartleby never came nigh me.
I thought all was going well, when a perturbed looking stranger visited me, inquiring whether I was the person who had recently occupied rooms at No.—Wall-street.

Full of forebodings, I replied that I was.

“Then sir,” said the stranger, who proved a lawyer, “you are responsible for the man you left there. He refuses to do any copying; he refuses to do any thing; he says he prefers not to; and he refuses to quit the premises.”

“I am very sorry, sir,” said I, with assumed tranquility, but an inward tremor, “but, really, the man you allude to is nothing to me—he is no relation or apprentice of mine, that you should hold me responsible for him.”

“In mercy’s name, who is he?”

“I certainly cannot inform you. I know nothing about him. Formerly I employed him as a copyist; but he has done nothing for me now for some time past.”

“I shall settle him then,—good morning, sir.”

Several days passed, and I heard nothing more; and though I often felt a charitable prompting to call at the place and see poor Bartleby, yet a certain squeamishness of I know not what withheld me.

All is over with him, by this time, thought I at last, when through another week no further intelligence reached me. But coming to my room the day after, I found several persons waiting at my door in a high state of nervous excitement.

“That’s the man—here he comes,” cried the foremost one, whom I recognized as the lawyer who had previously called upon me alone.

“You must take him away, sir; at once,” cried a portly person among them, advancing upon me, and whom I knew to be the landlord of No.—Wall-street. “These gentlemen, my tenants, cannot stand it any longer; Mr. B—” pointing to the lawyer, “has turned him out of his room, and he now persists in haunting the building generally, sitting upon the banisters of the stairs by day, and sleeping in the entry by night. Everybody is concerned; clients are leaving the offices; some fears are entertained of a mob; something you must do, and that without delay.”

Aghast at this torrent, I fell back before it, and would fain have locked myself in my new quarters. In vain I persisted that Bartleby was nothing to me—no more than to any one else. In vain:—I was the last person known to have any thing to do with him, and they held me to the terrible account. Fearful then of being exposed in the papers (as one person present obscurely threatened) I considered the matter, and at length said, that if the lawyer would give me a confidential interview with the scrivener, in his (the lawyer’s) own room, I would that afternoon strive my best to rid them of the nuisance they complained of.
Going up stairs to my old haunt, there was Bartleby silently sitting upon the banister at the landing.

“What are you doing here, Bartleby?” said I.

“Sitting upon the banister,” he mildly replied.

I motioned him into the lawyer’s room, who then left us.

“Bartleby,” said I, “are you aware that you are the cause of great tribulation to me, by persisting in occupying the entry after being dismissed from the office?”

No answer.

“Now one of two things must take place. Either you must do something, or something must be done to you. Now what sort of business would you like to engage in? Would you like to re-engage in copying for some one?”

“No; I would prefer not to make any change.”

“Would you like a clerkship in a dry-goods store?”

“There is too much confinement about that. No, I would not like a clerkship; but I am not particular.”

“Too much confinement,” I cried, “why you keep yourself confined all the time!”

“I would prefer not to take a clerkship,” he rejoined, as if to settle that little item at once.

“How would a bar-tender’s business suit you? There is no trying of the eyesight in that.”

“I would not like it at all; though, as I said before, I am not particular.”

His unwonted wordiness inspirited me. I returned to the charge.

“Well then, would you like to travel through the country collecting bills for the merchants? That would improve your health.”

“No, I would prefer to be doing something else.”

“How then would going as a companion to Europe, to entertain some young gentleman with your conversation,—how would that suit you?”

“Not at all. It does not strike me that there is any thing definite about that. I like to be stationary. But I am not particular.”

“Stationary you shall be then,” I cried, now losing all patience, and for the first time in all my exasperating connection with him fairly flying into a passion. “If
you do not go away from these premises before night, I shall feel bound—indeed I am bound—to—to—quit the premises myself!” I rather absurdly concluded, knowing not with what possible threat to try to frighten his immobility into compliance. Despairing of all further efforts, I was precipitately leaving him, when a final thought occurred to me—one which had not been wholly unindulged before.

“Bartleby,” said I, in the kindest tone I could assume under such exciting circumstances, “will you go home with me now—not to my office, but my dwelling—and remain there till we can conclude upon some convenient arrangement for you at our leisure? Come, let us start now, right away.”

“No: at present I would prefer not to make any change at all.”

I answered nothing; but effectually dodging every one by the suddenness and rapidity of my flight, rushed from the building, ran up Wall-street towards Broadway, and jumping into the first omnibus was soon removed from pursuit. As soon as tranquility returned I distinctly perceived that I had now done all that I possibly could, both in respect to the demands of the landlord and his tenants, and with regard to my own desire and sense of duty, to benefit Bartleby, and shield him from rude persecution. I now strove to be entirely care-free and quiescent; and my conscience justified me in the attempt; though indeed it was not so successful as I could have wished. So fearful was I of being again hunted out by the incensed landlord and his exasperated tenants, that, surrendering my business to Nippers, for a few days I drove about the upper part of the town and through the suburbs, in my rockaway; crossed over to Jersey City and Hoboken, and paid fugitive visits to Manhattanville and Astoria. In fact I almost lived in my rockaway for the time.

When again I entered my office, lo, a note from the landlord lay upon the desk. I opened it with trembling hands. It informed me that the writer had sent to the police, and had Bartleby removed to the Tombs as a vagrant. Moreover, since I knew more about him than any one else, he wished me to appear at that place, and make a suitable statement of the facts. These tidings had a conflicting effect upon me. At first I was indignant; but at last almost approved. The landlord’s energetic, summary disposition had led him to adopt a procedure which I do not think I would have decided upon myself; and yet as a last resort, under such peculiar circumstances, it seemed the only plan.

As I afterwards learned, the poor scrivener, when told that he must be conducted to the Tombs, offered not the slightest obstacle, but in his pale unmoving way, silently acquiesced.

Some of the compassionate and curious bystanders joined the party; and headed by one of the constables arm in arm with Bartleby, the silent procession filed its way through all the noise, and heat, and joy of the roaring thoroughfares at noon.

The same day I received the note I went to the Tombs, or to speak more properly, the Halls of Justice. Seeking the right officer, I stated the purpose of my call,
and was informed that the individual I described was indeed within. I then assured the functionary that Bartleby was a perfectly honest man, and greatly to be compassionated, however unaccountably eccentric. I narrated all I knew, and closed by suggesting the idea of letting him remain in as indulgent confinement as possible till something less harsh might be done—though indeed I hardly knew what. At all events, if nothing else could be decided upon, the alms-house must receive him. I then begged to have an interview.

Being under no disgraceful charge, and quite serene and harmless in all his ways, they had permitted him freely to wander about the prison, and especially in the inclosed grass-platted yard thereof. And so I found him there, standing all alone in the quietest of the yards, his face towards a high wall, while all around, from the narrow slits of the jail windows, I thought I saw peering out upon him the eyes of murderers and thieves.

“Bartleby!”

“I know you,” he said, without looking round,—”and I want nothing to say to you.”

“It was not I that brought you here, Bartleby,” said I, keenly pained at his implied suspicion. “And to you, this should not be so vile a place. Nothing reproachful attaches to you by being here. And see, it is not so sad a place as one might think. Look, there is the sky, and here is the grass.”

“I know where I am,” he replied, but would say nothing more, and so I left him.

As I entered the corridor again, a broad meat-like man, in an apron, accosted me, and jerking his thumb over his shoulder said—"Is that your friend?"

“Yes.”

“Does he want to starve? If he does, let him live on the prison fare, that’s all.”

“Who are you?” asked I, not knowing what to make of such an unofficially speaking person in such a place.

“I am the grub-man. Such gentlemen as have friends here, hire me to provide them with something good to eat.”

“Is this so?” said I, turning to the turnkey.

He said it was.

“Well then,” said I, slipping some silver into the grub-man’s hands (for so they called him). “I want you to give particular attention to my friend there; let him have the best dinner you can get. And you must be as polite to him as possible.”
“Introduce me, will you?” said the grub-man, looking at me with an expression
which seem to say he was all impatience for an opportunity to give a specimen of
his breeding.

Thinking it would prove of benefit to the scrivener, I acquiesced; and asking the
grub-man his name, went up with him to Bartleby.

“Bartleby, this is Mr. Cutlets; you will find him very useful to you.”

“Your servant, sir, your servant,” said the grub-man, making a low salutation
behind his apron. “Hope you find it pleasant here, sir;—spacious grounds,—cool
apartments, sir—hope you will stay with us some time—try to make it agreeable. May
Mrs. Cutlets and I have the pleasure of your company to dinner, sir; in Mrs. Cutlets'
private room?”

“I prefer not to dine to-day,” said Bartleby, turning away. “It would disagree with
me; I am unused to dinners.” So saying he slowly moved to the other side of the in-
closure, and took up a position fronting the dead-wall.

“How’s this?” said the grub-man, addressing me with a stare of astonishment.
“He’s odd, ain’t he?”

“I think he is a little deranged,” said I, sadly.

“Deranged? deranged is it? Well now, upon my word, I thought that friend of
yourn was a gentleman forger; they are always pale and genteel-like, them forgers.
I can’t pity’em—can’t help it, sir. Did you know Monroe Edwards?” he added touch-
ingly, and paused. Then, laying his hand pityingly on my shoulder, sighed, “he died
of consumption at Sing-Sing. So you weren’t acquainted with Monroe?”

“No, I was never socially acquainted with any forgers. But I cannot stop longer.
Look to my friend yonder. You will not lose by it. I will see you again.”

Some few days after this, I again obtained admission to the Tombs, and went
through the corridors in quest of Bartleby; but without finding him.

“I saw him coming from his cell not long ago,” said a turnkey, “may be he’s gone to
loiter in the yards.”

So I went in that direction.

“Are you looking for the silent man?” said another turnkey passing me. “Yonder he
lies—sleeping in the yard there. ‘Tis not twenty minutes since I saw him lie down.”

The yard was entirely quiet. It was not accessible to the common prisoners. The
surrounding walls, of amazing thickness, kept off all sounds behind them. The Egyp-
tian character of the masonry weighed upon me with its gloom. But a soft impris-
oned turf grew under foot. The heart of the eternal pyramids, it seemed, wherein, by
some strange magic, through the clefts, grass-seed, dropped by birds, had sprung.
Strangely huddled at the base of the wall, his knees drawn up, and lying on his side, his head touching the cold stones, I saw the wasted Bartleby. But nothing stirred. I paused; then went close up to him; stooped over, and saw that his dim eyes were open; otherwise he seemed profoundly sleeping. Something prompted me to touch him. I felt his hand, when a tingling shiver ran up my arm and down my spine to my feet.

The round face of the grub-man peered upon me now. “His dinner is ready. Won’t he dine to-day, either? Or does he live without dining?”

“Lives without dining,” said I, and closed his eyes.

“Eh!—He’s asleep, aint he?”

“With kings and counselors,” murmured I.

There would seem little need for proceeding further in this history. Imagination will readily supply the meager recital of poor Bartleby’s interment. But ere parting with the reader, let me say, that if this little narrative has sufficiently interested him, to awaken curiosity as to who Bartleby was, and what manner of life he led prior to the present narrator’s making his acquaintance, I can only reply, that in such curiosity I fully share, but am wholly unable to gratify it. Yet here I hardly know whether I should divulge one little item of rumor, which came to my ear a few months after the scrivener’s decease. Upon what basis it rested, I could never ascertain; and hence, how true it is I cannot now tell. But inasmuch as this vague report has not been without certain strange suggestive interest to me, however sad, it may prove the same with some others; and so I will briefly mention it. The report was this: that Bartleby had been a subordinate clerk in the Dead Letter Office at Washington, from which he had been suddenly removed by a change in the administration. When I think over this rumor, I cannot adequately express the emotions which seize me. Dead letters! does it not sound like dead men? Conceive a man by nature and misfortune prone to a pallid hopelessness, can any business seem more fitted to heighten it than that of continually handling these dead letters, and assorting them for the flames? For by the cart-load they are annually burned. Sometimes from out the folded paper the pale clerk takes a ring:—the finger it was meant for; perhaps, moulders in the grave; a bank-note sent in swiftest charity:—he whom it would relieve, nor eats nor hungers any more; pardon for those who died despairing; hope for those who died unhoping; good tidings for those who died stifled by unrelieved calamities. On errands of life, these letters speed to death.

Ah Bartleby! Ah humanity!
BENITO CERENO

In the year 1799, Captain Amasa Delano, of Duxbury, in Massachusetts, commanding a large sealer and general trader, lay at anchor with a valuable cargo, in the harbor of St. Maria—a small, desert, uninhabited island toward the southern extremity of the long coast of Chili. There he had touched for water.

On the second day, not long after dawn, while lying in his berth, his mate came below, informing him that a strange sail was coming into the bay. Ships were then not so plenty in those waters as now. He rose, dressed, and went on deck.

The morning was one peculiar to that coast. Everything was mute and calm; everything gray. The sea, though undulated into long roods of swells, seemed fixed, and was sleeked at the surface like waved lead that has cooled and set in the smelter’s mould. The sky seemed a gray surlout. Flights of troubled gray fowl, kith and kin with flights of troubled gray vapors among which they were mixed, skimmed low and fitfully over the waters, as swallows over meadows before storms. Shadows present, foreshadowing deeper shadows to come.

To Captain Delano’s surprise, the stranger, viewed through the glass, showed no colors; though to do so upon entering a haven, however uninhabited in its shores, where but a single other ship might be lying, was the custom among peaceful seamen of all nations. Considering the lawlessness and loneliness of the spot, and the sort of stories, at that day, associated with those seas, Captain Delano’s surprise might have deepened into some uneasiness had he not been a person of a singularly undistrustful good-nature, not liable, except on extraordinary and repeated incentives, and hardly then, to indulge in personal alarms, any way involving the imputation of malign evil in man. Whether, in view of what humanity is capable, such a trait implies, along with a benevolent heart, more than ordinary quickness and accuracy of intellectual perception, may be left to the wise to determine.

But whatever misgivings might have obtruded on first seeing the stranger, would almost, in any seaman’s mind, have been dissipated by observing that, the ship, in navigating into the harbor, was drawing too near the land; a sunken reef making out her bow. This seemed to prove her a stranger, indeed, not only to the sealer, but the island; consequently, she could be no wonted freebooter on that ocean. With no small interest, Captain Delano continued to watch her—a proceeding not much facilitated by the vapors partly mantling the hull, through which the far matin light from her cabin streamed equivocally enough; much like the sun—by this time hemisphered on the rim of the horizon, and, apparently, in company with the strange ship entering the harbor—which, wimpled by the same low, creeping clouds, showed not unlike a Lima intriguante’s one sinister eye peering across the Plaza from the Indian loop-hole of her dusksaya-y-manta.

It might have been but a deception of the vapors, but, the longer the stranger was watched the more singular appeared her manoeuvres. Ere long it seemed
hard to decide whether she meant to come in or no—what she wanted, or what she was about. The wind, which had breezed up a little during the night, was now extremely light and baffling, which the more increased the apparent uncertainty of her movements. Surmising, at last, that it might be a ship in distress, Captain Delano ordered his whale-boat to be dropped, and, much to the wary opposition of his mate, prepared to board her, and, at the least, pilot her in. On the night previous, a fishing-party of the seamen had gone a long distance to some detached rocks out of sight from the sealer; and, an hour or two before daybreak, had returned, having met with no small success. Presuming that the stranger might have been long off soundings, the good captain put several baskets of the fish, for presents, into his boat, and so pulled away. From her continuing too near the sunken reef, deeming her in danger, calling to his men, he made all haste to apprise those on board of their situation. But, some time ere the boat came up, the wind, light though it was, having shifted, had headed the vessel off, as well as partly broken the vapors from about her.

Upon gaining a less remote view, the ship, when made signally visible on the verge of the leaden-hued swells, with the shreds of fog here and there raggedly furring her, appeared like a white-washed monastery after a thunder-storm, seen perched upon some dun cliff among the Pyrenees. But it was no purely fanciful resemblance which now, for a moment, almost led Captain Delano to think that nothing less than a ship-load of monks was before him. Peering over the bulwarks were what really seemed, in the hazy distance, throngs of dark cowls; while, fitfully revealed through the open port-holes, other dark moving figures were dimly descried, as of Black Friars pacing the cloisters.

Upon a still higher approach, this appearance was modified, and the true character of the vessel was plain—a Spanish merchantman of the first class, carrying negro slaves, amongst other valuable freight, from one colonial port to another. A very large, and, in its time, a very fine vessel, such as in those days were at intervals encountered along that main; sometimes superseded Acapulco treasure-ships, or retired frigates of the Spanish king's navy, which, like superannuated Italian palaces, still, under a decline of masters, preserved signs of former state.

As the whale-boat drew more and more nigh, the cause of the peculiar pipe-clayed aspect of the stranger was seen in the slovenly neglect pervading her. The spars, ropes, and great part of the bulwarks, looked woolly, from long unacquaintance with the scraper, tar, and the brush. Her keel seemed laid, her ribs put together, and she launched, from Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones.

In the present business in which she was engaged, the ship's general model and rig appeared to have undergone no material change from their original warlike and Froissart pattern. However, no guns were seen.

The tops were large, and were railed about with what had once been octagonal net-work, all now in sad disrepair: These tops hung overhead like three ruinous avi-
aries, in one of which was seen, perched, on a ratlin, a white noddy, a strange fowl, so called from its lethargic, somnambulistic character, being frequently caught by hand at sea. Battered and mouldy, the castellated forecastle seemed some ancient turret, long ago taken by assault, and then left to decay. Toward the stern, two high-raised quarter galleries—the balustrades here and there covered with dry, tindery sea-moss—opening out from the unoccupied state-cabin, whose dead-lights, for all the mild weather, were hermetically closed and caked—these tenantless balconies hung over the sea as if it were the grand Venetian canal. But the principal relic of faded grandeur was the ample oval of the shield-like stern-piece, intricately carved with the arms of Castile and Leon, medallioned about by groups of mythological or symbolical devices; uppermost and central of which was a dark satyr in a mask, holding his foot on the prostrate neck of a writhing figure, likewise masked.

Whether the ship had a figure-head, or only a plain beak, was not quite certain, owing to canvas wrapped about that part, either to protect it while undergoing a re-furbishing, or else decently to hide its decay. Rudely painted or chalked, as in a sailor freak, along the forward side of a sort of pedestal below the canvas, was the sentence, “Seguid vuestro jefe” (follow your leader); while upon the tarnished headboards, near by, appeared, in stately capitals, once gilt, the ship’s name, “SAN DOMINICK,” each letter streakingly corroded with tricklings of copper-spike rust; while, like mourning weeds, dark festoons of sea-grass slimily swept to and fro over the name, with every hearse-like roll of the hull.

As, at last, the boat was hooked from the bow along toward the gangway amidship, its keel, while yet some inches separated from the hull, harshly grated as on a sunken coral reef. It proved a huge bunch of conglobated barnacles adhering below the water to the side like a wen—a token of baffling airs and long calms passed somewhere in those seas.

Climbing the side, the visitor was at once surrounded by a clamorous throng of whites and blacks, but the latter outnumbering the former more than could have been expected, negro transportation-ship as the stranger in port was. But, in one language, and as with one voice, all poured out a common tale of suffering; in which the negresses, of whom there were not a few, exceeded the others in their dolorous vehemence. The scurvy, together with the fever, had swept off a great part of their number, more especially the Spaniards. Off Cape Horn they had narrowly escaped shipwreck; then, for days together, they had lain tranced without wind; their provisions were low; their water next to none; their lips that moment were baked.

While Captain Delano was thus made the mark of all eager tongues, his one eager glance took in all faces, with every other object about him.

Always upon first boarding a large and populous ship at sea, especially a foreign one, with a nondescript crew such as Lascars or Manilla men, the impression varies in a peculiar way from that produced by first entering a strange house with strange inmates in a strange land. Both house and ship—the one by its walls and blinds,
the other by its high bulwarks like ramparts—hoard from view their interiors till the last moment: but in the case of the ship there is this addition; that the living spectacle it contains, upon its sudden and complete disclosure, has, in contrast with the blank ocean which zones it, something of the effect of enchantment. The ship seems unreal; these strange costumes, gestures, and faces, but a shadowy tableau just emerged from the deep, which directly must receive back what it gave.

Perhaps it was some such influence, as above is attempted to be described, which, in Captain Delano’s mind, heightened whatever; upon a staid scrutiny, might have seemed unusual; especially the conspicuous figures of four elderly grizzled negroes, their heads like black, doddered willow tops, who, in venerable contrast to the tumult below them, were couched, sphynx-like, one on the starboard cat-head, another on the larboard, and the remaining pair face to face on the opposite bulwarks above the main-chains. They each had bits of unstranded old junk in their hands, and, with a sort of stoical self-content, were picking the junk into oakum, a small heap of which lay by their sides. They accompanied the task with a continuous, low, monotonous, chant; droning and drilling away like so many gray-headed bag-pipers playing a funeral march.

The quarter-deck rose into an ample elevated poop, upon the forward verge of which, lifted, like the oakum-pickers, some eight feet above the general throng, sat along in a row, separated by regular spaces, the cross-legged figures of six other blacks; each with a rusty hatchet in his hand, which, with a bit of brick and a rag, he was engaged like a scullion in scouring; while between each two was a small stack of hatchets, their rusted edges turned forward awaiting a like operation. Though occasionally the four oakum-pickers would briefly address some person or persons in the crowd below, yet the six hatchet-polishers neither spoke to others, nor breathed a whisper among themselves, but sat intent upon their task, except at intervals, when, with the peculiar love in negroes of uniting industry with pastime, two and two they sideways clashed their hatchets together; like cymbals, with a barbarous din. All six, unlike the generality, had the raw aspect of unsophisticated Africans.

But that first comprehensive glance which took in those ten figures, with scores less conspicuous, rested but an instant upon them, as, impatient of the hubbub of voices, the visitor turned in quest of whomsoever it might be that commanded the ship.

But as if not unwilling to let nature make known her own case among his suffering charge, or else in despair of restraining it for the time, the Spanish captain, a gentlemanly, reserved-looking, and rather young man to a stranger’s eye, dressed with singular richness, but bearing plain traces of recent sleepless cares and disquietudes, stood passively by, leaning against the main-mast, at one moment casting a dreary, spiritless look upon his excited people, at the next an unhappy glance toward his visitor. By his side stood a black of small stature, in whose rude face, as
occasionally, like a shepherd’s dog, he mutely turned it up into the Spaniard’s, sorrow and affection were equally blended.

Struggling through the throng, the American advanced to the Spaniard, assuring him of his sympathies, and offering to render whatever assistance might be in his power. To which the Spaniard returned for the present but grave and ceremonious acknowledgments, his national formality dusked by the saturnine mood of ill-health.

But losing no time in mere compliments, Captain Delano, returning to the gangway, had his basket of fish brought up; and as the wind still continued light, so that some hours at least must elapse ere the ship could be brought to the anchorage, he bade his men return to the sealer, and fetch back as much water as the whale-boat could carry, with whatever soft bread the steward might have, all the remaining pumpkins on board, with a box of sugar, and a dozen of his private bottles of cider.

Not many minutes after the boat’s pushing off, to the vexation of all, the wind entirely died away, and the tide turning, began drifting back the ship helplessly seaward. But trusting this would not long last, Captain Delano sought, with good hopes, to cheer up the strangers, feeling no small satisfaction that, with persons in their condition, he could—thanks to his frequent voyages along the Spanish main—converse with some freedom in their native tongue.

While left alone with them, he was not long in observing some things tending to heighten his first impressions; but surprise was lost in pity, both for the Spaniards and blacks, alike evidently reduced from scarcity of water and provisions; while long-continued suffering seemed to have brought out the less good-natured qualities of the negroes, besides, at the same time, impairing the Spaniard’s authority over them. But, under the circumstances, precisely this condition of things was to have been anticipated. In armies, navies, cities, or families, in nature herself, nothing more relaxes good order than misery. Still, Captain Delano was not without the idea, that had Benito Cereno been a man of greater energy, misrule would hardly have come to the present pass. But the debility, constitutional or induced by hardships, bodily and mental, of the Spanish captain, was too obvious to be overlooked. A prey to settled dejection, as if long mocked with hope he would not now indulge it, even when it had ceased to be a mock, the prospect of that day, or evening at furthest, lying at anchor, with plenty of water for his people, and a brother captain to counsel and befriend, seemed in no perceptible degree to encourage him. His mind appeared unstrung, if not still more seriously affected. Shut up in these oaken walls, chained to one dull round of command, whose unconditionality cloyed him, like some hypochondriac abbot he moved slowly about, at times suddenly pausing, starting, or staring, biting his lip, biting his finger-nail, flushing, paling, twitching his beard, with other symptoms of an absent or moody mind. This distempered spirit was lodged, as before hinted, in as distempered a frame. He was rather tall, but seemed never to have been robust, and now with nervous suffering was almost worn to a skeleton. A tendency to some pulmonary complaint appeared to have
been lately confirmed. His voice was like that of one with lungs half gone—hoarsely suppressed, a husky whisper. No wonder that, as in this state he tottered about, his private servant apprehensively followed him. Sometimes the negro gave his master his arm, or took his handkerchief out of his pocket for him; performing these and similar offices with that affectionate zeal which transmutes into something filial or fraternal acts in themselves but menial; and which has gained for the negro the repute of making the most pleasing body-servant in the world; one, too, whom a master need be on no stiffly superior terms with, but may treat with familiar trust; less a servant than a devoted companion.

Marking the noisy indolence of the blacks in general, as well as what seemed the sullen inefficiency of the whites it was not without humane satisfaction that Captain Delano witnessed the steady good conduct of Babo.

But the good conduct of Babo, hardly more than the ill-behavior of others, seemed to withdraw the half-lunatic Don Benito from his cloudy languor. Not that such precisely was the impression made by the Spaniard on the mind of his visitor: The Spaniard’s individual unrest was, for the present, but noted as a conspicuous feature in the ship’s general affliction. Still, Captain Delano was not a little concerned at what he could not help taking for the time to be Don Benito’s unfriendly indifference towards himself. The Spaniard’s manner, too, conveyed a sort of sour and gloomy disdain, which he seemed at no pains to disguise. But this the American in charity ascribed to the harassing effects of sickness, since, in former instances, he had noted that there are peculiar natures on whom prolonged physical suffering seems to cancel every social instinct of kindness; as if, forced to black bread themselves, they deemed it but equity that each person coming nigh them should, indirectly, by some slight or affront, be made to partake of their fare.

But ere long Captain Delano bethought him that, indulgent as he was at the first, in judging the Spaniard, he might not, after all, have exercised charity enough. At bottom it was Don Benito’s reserve which displeased him; but the same reserve was shown towards all but his faithful personal attendant. Even the formal reports which, according to sea-usage, were, at stated times, made to him by some petty underling, either a white, mulatto or black, he hardly had patience enough to listen to, without betraying contemptuous aversion. His manner upon such occasions was, in its degree, not unlike that which might be supposed to have been his imperial countryman’s, Charles V., just previous to the anchoritish retirement of that monarch from the throne.

This splenetic disrelish of his place was evinced in almost every function pertaining to it. Proud as he was moody, he condescended to no personal mandate. Whatever special orders were necessary, their delivery was delegated to his body-servant, who in turn transferred them to their ultimate destination, through runners, alert Spanish boys or slave boys, like pages or pilot-fish within easy call continually hovering round Don Benito. So that to have beheld this undemonstrative invalid
gliding about, apathetic and mute, no landsman could have dreamed that in him was lodged a dictatorship beyond which, while at sea, there was no earthly appeal.

Thus, the Spaniard, regarded in his reserve, seemed the involuntary victim of mental disorder. But, in fact, his reserve might, in some degree, have proceeded from design. If so, then here was evinced the unhealthy climax of that icy though conscientious policy, more or less adopted by all commanders of large ships, which, except in signal emergencies, obliterates alike the manifestation of sway with every trace of sociality; transforming the man into a block, or rather into a loaded cannon, which, until there is call for thunder, has nothing to say.

Viewing him in this light, it seemed but a natural token of the perverse habit induced by a long course of such hard self-restraint, that, notwithstanding the present condition of his ship, the Spaniard should still persist in a demeanor, which, however harmless, or, it may be, appropriate, in a well-appointed vessel, such as the San Dominick might have been at the outset of the voyage, was anything but judicious now. But the Spaniard, perhaps, thought that it was with captains as with gods: reserve, under all events, must still be their cue. But probably this appearance of slumbering dominion might have been but an attempted disguise to conscious imbecility—not deep policy, but shallow device. But be all this as it might, whether Don Benito’s manner was designed or not, the more Captain Delano noted its pervading reserve, the less he felt uneasiness at any particular manifestation of that reserve towards himself.

Neither were his thoughts taken up by the captain alone. Wonted to the quiet orderliness of the sealer’s comfortable family of a crew, the noisy confusion of the San Dominick’s suffering host repeatedly challenged his eye. Some prominent breaches, not only of discipline but of decency, were observed. These Captain Delano could not but ascribe, in the main, to the absence of those subordinate deck-officers to whom, along with higher duties, is intrusted what may be styled the police department of a populous ship. True, the old oakum-pickers appeared at times to act the part of monitorial constables to their countrymen, the blacks; but though occasionally succeeding in allaying trifling outbreaks now and then between man and man, they could do little or nothing toward establishing general quiet. The San Dominick was in the condition of a transatlantic emigrant ship, among whose multitude of living freight are some individuals, doubtless, as little troublesome as crates and bales; but the friendly remonstrances of such with their ruder companions are of not so much avail as the unfriendly arm of the mate. What the San Dominick wanted was, what the emigrant ship has, stern superior officers. But on these decks not so much as a fourth-mate was to be seen.

The visitor’s curiosity was roused to learn the particulars of those mishaps which had brought about such absenteeism, with its consequences; because, though deriving some inkling of the voyage from the wails which at the first moment had greeted him, yet of the details no clear understanding had been had. The best account would, doubtless, be given by the captain. Yet at first the visitor was loth to
ask it, unwilling to provoke some distant rebuff. But plucking up courage, he at last accosted Don Benito, renewing the expression of his benevolent interest, adding, that did he (Captain Delano) but know the particulars of the ship’s misfortunes, he would, perhaps, be better able in the end to relieve them. Would Don Benito favor him with the whole story.

Don Benito faltered; then, like some somnambulist suddenly interfered with, vacantly stared at his visitor, and ended by looking down on the deck. He maintained this posture so long, that Captain Delano, almost equally disconcerted, and involuntarily almost as rude, turned suddenly from him, walking forward to accost one of the Spanish seamen for the desired information. But he had hardly gone five paces, when, with a sort of eagerness, Don Benito invited him back, regretting his momentary absence of mind, and professing readiness to gratify him.

While most part of the story was being given, the two captains stood on the after part of the main-deck, a privileged spot, no one being near but the servant.

“IT IS NOW A HUNDRED AND NINETY DAYS,” began the Spaniard, in his husky whisper, “that this ship, well officered and well manned, with several cabin passengers—some fifty Spaniards in all—sailed from Buenos Ayres bound to Lima, with a general cargo, hardware, Paraguay tea and the like—and,” pointing forward, “that parcel of negroes, now not more than a hundred and fifty, as you see, but then numbering over three hundred souls. Off Cape Horn we had heavy gales. In one moment, by night, three of my best officers, with fifteen sailors, were lost, with the main-yard; the spar snapping under them in the slings, as they sought, with heavers, to beat down the icy sail. To lighten the hull, the heavier sacks of mata were thrown into the sea, with most of the water-pipes lashed on deck at the time. And this last necessity it was, combined with the prolonged detections afterwards experienced, which eventually brought about our chief causes of suffering. When—”

Here there was a sudden fainting attack of his cough, brought on, no doubt, by his mental distress. His servant sustained him, and drawing a cordial from his pocket placed it to his lips. He a little revived. But unwilling to leave him unsupported while yet imperfectly restored, the black with one arm still encircled his master, at the same time keeping his eye fixed on his face, as if to watch for the first sign of complete restoration, or relapse, as the event might prove.

The Spaniard proceeded, but brokenly and obscurely, as one in a dream.

—”Oh, my God! rather than pass through what I have, with joy I would have hailed the most terrible gales; but—”

His cough returned and with increased violence; this subsiding; with reddened lips and closed eyes he fell heavily against his supporter.

“His mind wanders. He was thinking of the plague that followed the gales,” plaintively sighed the servant; “my poor, poor master!” wringing one hand, and with the
other wiping the mouth. “But be patient, Señor,” again turning to Captain Delano, “these fits do not last long; master will soon be himself.”

Don Benito reviving, went on; but as this portion of the story was very brokenly delivered, the substance only will here be set down.

It appeared that after the ship had been many days tossed in storms off the Cape, the scurvy broke out, carrying off numbers of the whites and blacks. When at last they had worked round into the Pacific, their spars and sails were so damaged, and so inadequately handled by the surviving mariners, most of whom were become invalids, that, unable to lay her northerly course by the wind, which was powerful, the unmanageable ship, for successive days and nights, was blown north-westward, where the breeze suddenly deserted her, in unknown waters, to sultry calms. The absence of the water-pipes now proved as fatal to life as before their presence had menaced it. Induced, or at least aggravated, by the more than scanty allowance of water, a malignant fever followed the scurvy; with the excessive heat of the lengthened calm, making such short work of it as to sweep away, as by billows, whole families of the Africans, and a yet larger number, proportionally, of the Spaniards, including, by a luckless fatality, every remaining officer on board. Consequently, in the smart west winds eventually following the calm, the already rent sails, having to be simply dropped, not furled, at need, had been gradually reduced to the beggars’ rags they were now. To procure substitutes for his lost sailors, as well as supplies of water and sails, the captain, at the earliest opportunity, had made for Baldivia, the southernmost civilized port of Chili and South America; but upon nearing the coast the thick weather had prevented him from so much as sighting that harbor. Since which period, almost without a crew, and almost without canvas and almost without water; and, at intervals giving its added dead to the sea, the San Dominick had been battle-dored about by contrary winds, inveigled by currents, or grown weedy in calms. Like a man lost in woods, more than once she had doubled upon her own track.

“But throughout these calamities,” huskily continued Don Benito, painfully turning in the half embrace of his servant, “I have to thank those negroes you see, who, though to your inexperienced eyes appearing unruly, have, indeed, conducted themselves with less of restlessness than even their owner could have thought possible under such circumstances.”

Here he again fell faintly back. Again his mind wandered; but he rallied, and less obscurely proceeded.

“Yes, their owner was quite right in assuring me that no fetters would be needed with his blacks; so that while, as is wont in this transportation, those negroes have always remained upon deck—not thrust below, as in the Guinea-men—they have, also, from the beginning, been freely permitted to range within given bounds at their pleasure.”
Once more the faintness returned—his mind roved—but, recovering, he resumed:

“But it is Babo here to whom, under God, I owe not only my own preservation, but likewise to him, chiefly, the merit is due, of pacifying his more ignorant brethren, when at intervals tempted to murmurings.”

“Ah, master,” sighed the black, bowing his face, “don’t speak of me; Babo is nothing; what Babo has done was but duty.”

“Faithful fellow!” cried Captain Delano. “Don Benito, I envy you such a friend; slave I cannot call him.”

As master and man stood before him, the black upholding the white, Captain Delano could not but bethink him of the beauty of that relationship which could present such a spectacle of fidelity on the one hand and confidence on the other. The scene was heightened by the contrast in dress, denoting their relative positions. The Spaniard wore a loose Chili jacket of dark velvet; white small-clothes and stockings, with silver buckles at the knee and instep; a high-crowned sombrero, of fine grass; a slender sword, silver mounted, hung from a knot in his sash—the last being an almost invariable adjunct, more for utility than ornament, of a South American gentleman’s dress to this hour. Excepting when his occasional nervous contortions brought about disarray, there was a certain precision in his attire curiously at variance with the unsightly disorder around; especially in the belittered Ghetto, forward of the main-mast, wholly occupied by the blacks.

The servant wore nothing but wide trowsers, apparently, from their coarseness and patches, made out of some old topsail; they were clean, and confined at the waist by a bit of unstranded rope, which, with his composed, deprecatory air at times, made him look something like a begging friar of St. Francis.

However unsuitable for the time and place, at least in the blunt-thinking American’s eyes, and however strangely surviving in the midst of all his afflictions, the toilette of Don Benito might not, in fashion at least, have gone beyond the style of the day among South Americans of his class. Though on the present voyage sailing from Buenos Ayres, he had avowed himself a native and resident of Chili, whose inhabitants had not so generally adopted the plain coat and once plebeian pantaloons; but, with a becoming modification, adhered to their provincial costume, picturesque as any in the world. Still, relatively to the pale history of the voyage, and his own pale face, there seemed something so incongruous in the Spaniard’s apparel, as almost to suggest the image of an invalid courtier tottering about London streets in the time of the plague.

The portion of the narrative which, perhaps, most excited interest, as well as some surprise, considering the latitudes in question, was the long calms spoken of, and more particularly the ship’s so long drifting about. Without communicating the opinion, of course, the American could not but impute at least part of the deten-
tions both to clumsy seamanship and faulty navigation. Eying Don Benito’s small, yellow hands, he easily inferred that the young captain had not got into command at the hawse-hole, but the cabin-window; and if so, why wonder at incompetence, in youth, sickness, and gentility united?

But drowning criticism in compassion, after a fresh repetition of his sympathies, Captain Delano, having heard out his story, not only engaged, as in the first place, to see Don Benito and his people supplied in their immediate bodily needs, but, also, now farther promised to assist him in procuring a large permanent supply of water; as well as some sails and rigging; and, though it would involve no small embarrassment to himself, yet he would spare three of his best seamen for temporary deck officers; so that without delay the ship might proceed to Conception, there fully to refit for Lima, her destined port.

Such generosity was not without its effect, even upon the invalid. His face lighted up; eager and hectic, he met the honest glance of his visitor. With gratitude he seemed overcome.

“This excitement is bad for master,” whispered the servant, taking his arm, and with soothing words gently drawing him aside.

When Don Benito returned, the American was pained to observe that his hopefulness, like the sudden kindling in his cheek, was but febrile and transient.

Ere long, with a joyless mien, looking up towards the poop, the host invited his guest to accompany him there, for the benefit of what little breath of wind might be stirring.

As, during the telling of the story, Captain Delano had once or twice started at the occasional cymballing of the hatchet-polishers, wondering why such an interruption should be allowed, especially in that part of the ship, and in the ears of an invalid; and moreover, as the hatchets had anything but an attractive look, and the handlers of them still less so, it was, therefore, to tell the truth, not without some lurking reluctance, or even shrinking, it may be, that Captain Delano, with apparent complaisance, acquiesced in his host’s invitation. The more so, since, with an untimely caprice of punctilio, rendered distressing by his cadaverous aspect, Don Benito, with Castilian bows, solemnly insisted upon his guest’s preceding him up the ladder leading to the elevation; where, one on each side of the last step, sat for armorial supporters and sentries two of the ominous file. Gingerly enough stepped good Captain Delano between them, and in the instant of leaving them behind, like one running the gauntlet, he felt an apprehensive twitch in the calves of his legs.

But when, facing about, he saw the whole file, like so many organ-grinders, still stupidly intent on their work, unmindful of everything beside, he could not but smile at his late fidgety panic.
Presently, while standing with his host, looking forward upon the decks below, he was struck by one of those instances of insubordination previously alluded to. Three black boys, with two Spanish boys, were sitting together on the hatches, scraping a rude wooden platter, in which some scanty mess had recently been cooked. Suddenly, one of the black boys, enraged at a word dropped by one of his white companions, seized a knife, and, though called to forbear by one of the oakum-pickers, struck the lad over the head, inflicting a gash from which blood flowed.

In amazement, Captain Delano inquired what this meant. To which the pale Don Benito dully muttered, that it was merely the sport of the lad.

“Pretty serious sport, truly,” rejoined Captain Delano. “Had such a thing happened on board the Bachelor’s Delight, instant punishment would have followed.”

At these words the Spaniard turned upon the American one of his sudden, staring, half-lunatic looks; then, relapsing into his torpor, answered, “Doubtless, doubtless, Señor.”

Is it, thought Captain Delano, that this hapless man is one of those paper captains I’ve known, who by policy wink at what by power they cannot put down? I know no sadder sight than a commander who has little of command but the name.

“I should think, Don Benito,” he now said, glancing towards the oakum-picker who had sought to interfere with the boys, “that you would find it advantageous to keep all your blacks employed, especially the younger ones, no matter at what useless task, and no matter what happens to the ship. Why, even with my little band, I find such a course indispensable. I once kept a crew on my quarter-deck thruming mats for my cabin, when, for three days, I had given up my ship—mats, men, and all—for a speedy loss, owing to the violence of a gale, in which we could do nothing but helplessly drive before it.”

“Doubtless, doubtless,” muttered Don Benito.

“But,” continued Captain Delano, again glancing upon the oakum-pickers and then at the hatchet-polishers, near by, “I see you keep some, at least, of your host employed.”

“Yes,” was again the vacant response.

“Those old men there, shaking their pows from their pulpits,” continued Captain Delano, pointing to the oakum-pickers, “seem to act the part of old dominies to the rest, little heeded as their admonitions are at times. Is this voluntary on their part, Don Benito, or have you appointed them shepherds to your flock of black sheep?”

“What posts they fill, I appointed them,” rejoined the Spaniard, in an acrid tone, as if resenting some supposed satiric reflection.
“And these others, these Ashantee conjurors here,” continued Captain Delano, rather uneasily eying the brandished steel of the hatchet-polishers, where, in spots, it had been brought to a shine, “this seems a curious business they are at, Don Benito?”

“In the gales we met,” answered the Spaniard, “what of our general cargo was not thrown overboard was much damaged by the brine. Since coming into calm weather, I have had several cases of knives and hatchets daily brought up for overhauling and cleaning.”

“A prudent idea, Don Benito. You are part owner of ship and cargo, I presume; but none of the slaves, perhaps?”

“I am owner of all you see,” impatiently returned Don Benito, “except the main company of blacks, who belonged to my late friend, Alejandro Aranda.”

As he mentioned this name, his air was heart-broken; his knees shook; his servant supported him.

Thinking he divined the cause of such unusual emotion, to confirm his surmise, Captain Delano, after a pause, said: “And may I ask, Don Benito, whether—since awhile ago you spoke of some cabin passengers—the friend, whose loss so afflicts you, at the outset of the voyage accompanied his blacks?”

“Yes.”

“But died of the fever?”

“Died of the fever. Oh, could I but—”

Again quivering, the Spaniard paused.

“Pardon me,” said Captain Delano, lowly, “but I think that, by a sympathetic experience, I conjecture, Don Benito, what it is that gives the keener edge to your grief. It was once my hard fortune to lose, at sea, a dear friend, my own brother, then supercargo. Assured of the welfare of his spirit, its departure I could have borne like a man; but that honest eye, that honest hand—both of which had so often met mine—and that warm heart; all, all—like scraps to the dogs—to throw all to the sharks! It was then I vowed never to have for fellow-voyager a man I loved, unless, unbeknown to him, I had provided every requisite, in case of a fatality, for embalming his mortal part for interment on shore. Were your friend’s remains now on board this ship, Don Benito, not thus strangely would the mention of his name affect you.”

“On board this ship?” echoed the Spaniard. Then, with horrified gestures, as directed against some spectre, he unconsciously fell into the ready arms of his attendant, who, with a silent appeal toward Captain Delano, seemed beseeching him not again to broach a theme so unspeakably distressing to his master.
This poor fellow now, thought the pained American, is the victim of that sad superstition which associates goblins with the deserted body of man, as ghosts with an abandoned house. How unlike are we made! What to me, in like case, would have been a solemn satisfaction, the bare suggestion, even, terrifies the Spaniard into this trance. Poor Alexandro Aranda! what would you say could you here see your friend—who, on former voyages, when you, for months, were left behind, has, I dare say, often longed, and longed, for one peep at you—now transported with terror at the least thought of having you anyway nigh him.

At this moment, with a dreary grave-yard toll, betokening a flaw, the ship's forecastle bell, smote by one of the grizzled oakum-pickers, proclaimed ten o'clock, through the leaden calm; when Captain Delano's attention was caught by the moving figure of a gigantic black, emerging from the general crowd below, and slowly advancing towards the elevated poop. An iron collar was about his neck, from which depended a chain, thrice wound round his body; the terminating links padlocked together at a broad band of iron, his girdle.

“How like a mute Atufal moves,” murmured the servant.

The black mounted the steps of the poop, and, like a brave prisoner, brought up to receive sentence, stood in unquailing muteness before Don Benito, now recovered from his attack.

At the first glimpse of his approach, Don Benito had started, a resentful shadow swept over his face; and, as with the sudden memory of bootless rage, his white lips glued together.

This is some mulish mutineer, thought Captain Delano, surveying, not without a mixture of admiration, the colossal form of the negro.

“See, he waits your question, master,” said the servant.

Thus reminded, Don Benito, nervously averting his glance, as if shunning, by anticipation, some rebellious response, in a disconcerted voice, thus spoke:—

“Atufal, will you ask my pardon, now?”

The black was silent.

“Again, master,” murmured the servant, with bitter upbraiding eyeing his countryman, “Again, master; he will bend to master yet.”

“Answer,” said Don Benito, still averting his glance, “say but the one word, pardon, and your chains shall be off.”

Upon this, the black, slowly raising both arms, let them lifelessly fall, his links clanking, his head bowed; as much as to say, “no, I am content.”

“Go,” said Don Benito, with inkept and unknown emotion.
Deliberately as he had come, the black obeyed.

“Excuse me, Don Benito,” said Captain Delano, “but this scene surprises me; what means it, pray?”

“It means that that negro alone, of all the band, has given me peculiar cause of offense. I have put him in chains; I—”

Here he paused; his hand to his head, as if there were a swimming there, or a sudden bewilderment of memory had come over him; but meeting his servant’s kindly glance seemed reassured, and proceeded:—

“I could not scourge such a form. But I told him he must ask my pardon. As yet he has not. At my command, every two hours he stands before me.”

“And how long has this been?”

“Some sixty days.”

“And obedient in all else? And respectful?”

“Yes.”

“Upon my conscience, then,” exclaimed Captain Delano, impulsively, “he has a royal spirit in him, this fellow.”

“He may have some right to it,” bitterly returned Don Benito, “he says he was king in his own land.”

“Yes,” said the servant, entering a word, “those slits in Atufal’s ears once held wedges of gold; but poor Babo here, in his own land, was only a poor slave; a black man’s slave was Babo, who now is the white’s.”

Somewhat annoyed by these conversational familiarities, Captain Delano turned curiously upon the attendant, then glanced inquiringly at his master; but, as if long wonted to these little informalities, neither master nor man seemed to understand him.

“What, pray, was Atufal’s offense, Don Benito?” asked Captain Delano; “if it was not something very serious, take a fool’s advice, and, in view of his general docility, as well as in some natural respect for his spirit, remit him his penalty.”

“No, no, master never will do that,” here murmured the servant to himself, “proud Atufal must first ask master’s pardon. The slave there carries the padlock, but master here carries the key.”

His attention thus directed, Captain Delano now noticed for the first, that, suspended by a slender silken cord, from Don Benito’s neck, hung a key. At once, from
the servant’s muttered syllables, divining the key’s purpose, he smiled, and said:—”So, Don Benito—padlock and key—significant symbols, truly.”

Biting his lip, Don Benito faltered.

Though the remark of Captain Delano, a man of such native simplicity as to be incapable of satire or irony, had been dropped in playful allusion to the Spaniard’s singularly evidenced lordship over the black; yet the hypochondriac seemed some way to have taken it as a malicious reflection upon his confessed inability thus far to break down, at least, on a verbal summons, the entrenched will of the slave. Deploring this supposed misconception, yet despairing of correcting it, Captain Delano shifted the subject; but finding his companion more than ever withdrawn, as if still sourly digesting the lees of the presumed affront above-mentioned, by-and-by Captain Delano likewise became less talkative, oppressed, against his own will, by what seemed the secret vindictiveness of the morbidly sensitive Spaniard. But the good sailor, himself of a quite contrary disposition, refrained, on his part, alike from the appearance as from the feeling of resentment, and if silent, was only so from contagion.

Presently the Spaniard, assisted by his servant somewhat discourteously crossed over from his guest; a procedure which, sensibly enough, might have been allowed to pass for idle caprice of ill-humor, had not master and man, lingering round the corner of the elevated skylight, begun whispering together in low voices. This was unpleasing. And more; the moody air of the Spaniard, which at times had not been without a sort of valetudinarian stateliness, now seemed anything but dignified; while the menial familiarity of the servant lost its original charm of simple-hearted attachment.

In his embarrassment, the visitor turned his face to the other side of the ship. By so doing, his glance accidentally fell on a young Spanish sailor, a coil of rope in his hand, just stepped from the deck to the first round of the mizzen-rigging. Perhaps the man would not have been particularly noticed, were it not that, during his ascent to one of the yards, he, with a sort of covert intentness, kept his eye fixed on Captain Delano, from whom, presently, it passed, as if by a natural sequence, to the two whisperers.

His own attention thus redirected to that quarter, Captain Delano gave a slight start. From something in Don Benito’s manner just then, it seemed as if the visitor had, at least partly, been the subject of the withdrawn consultation going on—a conjecture as little agreeable to the guest as it was little flattering to the host.

The singular alternations of courtesy and ill-breeding in the Spanish captain were unaccountable, except on one of two suppositions—innocent lunacy, or wicked imposture.

But the first idea, though it might naturally have occurred to an indifferent observer, and, in some respect, had not hitherto been wholly a stranger to Captain
Delano's mind, yet, now that, in an incipient way, he began to regard the stranger's conduct something in the light of an intentional affront, of course the idea of lunacy was virtually vacated. But if not a lunatic, what then? Under the circumstances, would a gentleman, nay, any honest boor, act the part now acted by his host? The man was an impostor. Some low-born adventurer, masquerading as an oceanic grandee; yet so ignorant of the first requisites of mere gentlemanhood as to be betrayed into the present remarkable indecorum. That strange ceremoniousness, too, at other times evinced, seemed not uncharacteristic of one playing a part above his real level. Benito Cereno—Don Benito Cereno—a sounding name. One, too, at that period, not unknown, in the surname, to super-cargo and sea captains trading along the Spanish Main, as belonging to one of the most enterprising and extensive mercantile families in all those provinces; several members of it having titles; a sort of Castilian Rothschild, with a noble brother, or cousin, in every great trading town of South America. The alleged Don Benito was in early manhood, about twenty-nine or thirty. To assume a sort of roving cadetship in the maritime affairs of such a house, what more likely scheme for a young knave of talent and spirit? But the Spaniard was a pale invalid. Never mind. For even to the degree of simulating mortal disease, the craft of some tricksters had been known to attain. To think that, under the aspect of infantile weakness, the most savage energies might be couched—those velvets of the Spaniard but the silky paw to his fangs.

From no train of thought did these fancies come; not from within, but from without; suddenly, too, and in one throng, like hoar frost; yet as soon to vanish as the mild sun of Captain Delano's good-nature regained its meridian.

Glancing over once more towards his host—whose side-face, revealed above the skylight, was now turned towards him—he was struck by the profile, whose clearness of cut was refined by the thinness, incident to ill-health, as well as ennobled about the chin by the beard. Away with suspicion. He was a true off-shoot of a true hidalgo Cereno.

Relieved by these and other better thoughts, the visitor, lightly humming a tune, now began indifferently pacing the poop, so as not to betray to Don Benito that he had at all mistrusted incivility; much less duplicity; for such mistrust would yet be proved illusory, and by the event, though, for the present, the circumstance which had provoked that distrust remained unexplained. But when that little mystery should have been cleared up, Captain Delano thought he might extremely regret it, did he allow Don Benito to become aware that he had indulged in ungenerous surmises. In short, to the Spaniard's black-letter text, it was best, for awhile, to leave open margin.

Presently, his pale face twitching and overcast, the Spaniard, still supported by his attendant, moved over towards his guest, when, with even more than his usual embarrassment, and a strange sort of intriguing intonation in his husky whisper, the following conversation began:—
“Señor, may I ask how long you have lain at this isle?”

“Oh, but a day or two, Don Benito.”

“And from what port are you last?”

“Canton.”

“And there, Señor, you exchanged your sealskins for teas and silks, I think you said?”

“Yes, Silks, mostly.”

“And the balance you took in specie, perhaps?”

Captain Delano, fidgeting a little, answered—

“Yes; some silver; not a very great deal, though.”

“Ah—well. May I ask how many men have you, Señor?”

Captain Delano slightly started, but answered—

“About five-and-twenty, all told.”

“And at present, Señor, all on board, I suppose?”

“All on board, Don Benito,” replied the Captain, now with satisfaction.

“And will be to-night, Señor?”

At this last question, following so many pertinacious ones, for the soul of him Captain Delano could not but look very earnestly at the questioner; who, instead of meeting the glance, with every token of craven discomposure dropped his eyes to the deck; presenting an unworthy contrast to his servant, who, just then, was kneeling at his feet, adjusting a loose shoe-buckle; his disengaged face meantime, with humble curiosity, turned openly up into his master’s downcast one.

The Spaniard, still with a guilty shuffle, repeated his question:

“And—and will be to-night, Señor?”

“Yes, for aught I know,” returned Captain Delano—“but nay,” rallying himself into fearless truth, “some of them talked of going off on another fishing party about midnight.”

“Your ships generally go—go more or less armed, I believe, Señor?”

“Oh, a six-pounder or two, in case of emergency,” was the intrepidly indifferent reply, “with a small stock of muskets, sealing-spears, and cutlasses, you know.”
As he thus responded, Captain Delano again glanced at Don Benito, but the latter’s eyes were averted; while abruptly and awkwardly shifting the subject, he made some peevish allusion to the calm, and then, without apology, once more, with his attendant, withdrew to the opposite bulwarks, where the whispering was resumed.

At this moment, and ere Captain Delano could cast a cool thought upon what had just passed, the young Spanish sailor, before mentioned, was seen descending from the rigging. In act of stooping over to spring inboard to the deck, his voluminous, unconfined frock, or shirt, of coarse woolen, much spotted with tar, opened out far down the chest, revealing a soiled under garment of what seemed the finest linen, edged, about the neck, with a narrow blue ribbon, sadly faded and worn. At this moment the young sailor’s eye was again fixed on the whisperers, and Captain Delano thought he observed a lurking significance in it, as if silent signs, of some Freemason sort, had that instant been interchanged.

This once more impelled his own glance in the direction of Don Benito, and, as before, he could not but infer that himself formed the subject of the conference. He paused. The sound of the hatchet-polishing fell on his ears. He cast another swift side-look at the two. They had the air of conspirators. In connection with the late questionings, and the incident of the young sailor, these things now begat such return of involuntary suspicion, that the singular guilelessness of the American could not endure it. Plucking up a gay and humorous expression, he crossed over to the two rapidly, saying:—“Ha, Don Benito, your black there seems high in your trust; a sort of privy-counselor, in fact.”

Upon this, the servant looked up with a good-natured grin, but the master started as from a venomous bite. It was a moment or two before the Spaniard sufficiently recovered himself to reply; which he did, at last, with cold constraint:—”Yes, Señor; I have trust in Babo.”

Here Babo, changing his previous grin of mere animal humor into an intelligent smile, not ungratefully eyed his master:

Finding that the Spaniard now stood silent and reserved, as if involuntarily, or purposely giving hint that his guest’s proximity was inconvenient just then, Captain Delano, unwilling to appear uncivil even to incivility itself, made some trivial remark and moved off; again and again turning over in his mind the mysterious demeanor of Don Benito Cereno.

He had descended from the poop, and, wrapped in thought, was passing near a dark hatchway, leading down into the steerage, when, perceiving motion there, he looked to see what moved. The same instant there was a sparkle in the shadowy hatchway, and he saw one of the Spanish sailors, prowling there hurriedly placing his hand in the bosom of his frock, as if hiding something. Before the man could have been certain who it was that was passing, he slunk below out of sight. But enough was seen of him to make it sure that he was the same young sailor before noticed in the rigging.
What was that which so sparkled? thought Captain Delano. It was no lamp—no match—no live coal. Could it have been a jewel? But how come sailors with jewels?—or with silk-trimmed under-shirts either? Has he been robbing the trunks of the dead cabin-passengers? But if so, he would hardly wear one of the stolen articles on board ship here. Ah, ah—if, now, that was, indeed, a secret sign I saw passing between this suspicious fellow and his captain awhile since; if I could only be certain that, in my uneasiness, my senses did not deceive me, then—

Here, passing from one suspicious thing to another, his mind revolved the strange questions put to him concerning his ship.

By a curious coincidence, as each point was recalled, the black wizards of Ashantee would strike up with their hatchets, as in ominous comment on the white stranger’s thoughts. Pressed by such enigmas: and portents, it would have been almost against nature, had not, even into the least distrustful heart, some ugly misgivings obtruded.

Observing the ship, now helplessly fallen into a current, with enchanted sails, drifting with increased rapidity seaward; and noting that, from a lately intercepted projection of the land, the sealer was hidden, the stout mariner began to quake at thoughts which he barely durst confess to himself. Above all, he began to feel a ghostly dread of Don Benito. And yet, when he roused himself, dilated his chest, felt himself strong on his legs, and coolly considered it—what did all these phantoms amount to?

Had the Spaniard any sinister scheme, it must have reference not so much to him (Captain Delano) as to his ship (the Bachelor’s Delight). Hence the present drifting away of the one ship from the other, instead of favoring any such possible scheme, was, for the time, at least, opposed to it. Clearly any suspicion, combining such contradictions, must need be delusive. Beside, was it not absurd to think of a vessel in distress—a vessel by sickness almost dismanned of her crew—a vessel whose inmates were parched for water—was it not a thousand times absurd that such a craft should, at present, be of a piratical character; or her commander, either for himself or those under him, cherish any desire but for speedy relief and refreshment? But then, might not general distress, and thirst in particular, be affected? And might not that same undiminished Spanish crew, alleged to have perished off to a remnant, be at that very moment lurking in the hold? On heart-broken pretense of entreating a cup of cold water, fiends in human form had got into lonely dwellings, nor retired until a dark deed had been done. And among the Malay pirates, it was no unusual thing to lure ships after them into their treacherous harbors, or entice boarders from a declared enemy at sea, by the spectacle of thinly manned or vacant decks, beneath which prowled a hundred spears with yellow arms ready to upthrust them through the mats. Not that Captain Delano had entirely credited such things. He had heard of them—and now, as stories, they recurred. The present destination of the ship was the anchorage. There she would be near his own vessel.
Upon gaining that vicinity, might not the San Dominick, like a slumbering volcano, suddenly let loose energies now hid?

He recalled the Spaniard's manner while telling his story. There was a gloomy hesitancy and subterfuge about it. It was just the manner of one making up his tale for evil purposes, as he goes. But if that story was not true, what was the truth? That the ship had unlawfully come into the Spaniard's possession? But in many of its details, especially in reference to the more calamitous parts, such as the fatalities among the seamen, the consequent prolonged beating about, the past sufferings from obstinate calms, and still continued suffering from thirst; in all these points, as well as others, Don Benito's story had corroborated not only the wailing ejaculations of the indiscriminate multitude, white and black, but likewise—what seemed impossible to be counterfeit—by the very expression and play of every human feature, which Captain Delano saw. If Don Benito's story was, throughout, an invention, then every soul on board, down to the youngest negress, was his carefully drilled recruit in the plot: an incredible inference. And yet, if there was ground for mistrusting his veracity, that inference was a legitimate one.

But those questions of the Spaniard. There, indeed, one might pause. Did they not seem put with much the same object with which the burglar or assassin, by day-time, reconnoitres the walls of a house? But, with ill purposes, to solicit such information openly of the chief person endangered, and so, in effect, setting him on his guard; how unlikely a procedure was that? Absurd, then, to suppose that those questions had been prompted by evil designs. Thus, the same conduct, which, in this instance, had raised the alarm, served to dispel it. In short, scarce any suspicion or uneasiness, however apparently reasonable at the time, which was not now, with equal apparent reason, dismissed.

At last he began to laugh at his former forebodings; and laugh at the strange ship for, in its aspect, someway siding with them, as it were; and laugh, too, at the odd-looking blacks, particularly those old scissors-grinders, the Ashantees; and those bed-ridden old knitting women, the oakum-pickers; and almost at the dark Spaniard himself, the central hobgoblin of all.

For the rest, whatever in a serious way seemed enigmatical, was now good-naturedly explained away by the thought that, for the most part, the poor invalid scarcely knew what he was about; either sulking in black vapors, or putting idle questions without sense or object. Evidently for the present, the man was not fit to be intrusted with the ship. On some benevolent plea withdrawing the command from him, Captain Delano would yet have to send her to Conception, in charge of his second mate, a worthy person and good navigator—a plan not more convenient for the San Dominick than for Don Benito; for, relieved from all anxiety, keeping wholly to his cabin, the sick man, under the good nursing of his servant, would, probably, by the end of the passage, be in a measure restored to health, and with that he should also be restored to authority.
Such were the American’s thoughts. They were tranquilizing. There was a difference between the idea of Don Benito’s darkly pre-ordaining Captain Delano’s fate, and Captain Delano’s lightly arranging Don Benito’s. Nevertheless, it was not without something of relief that the good seaman presently perceived his whale-boat in the distance. Its absence had been prolonged by unexpected detention at the sealer’s side, as well as its returning trip lengthened by the continual recession of the goal.

The advancing speck was observed by the blacks. Their shouts attracted the attention of Don Benito, who, with a return of courtesy, approaching Captain Delano, expressed satisfaction at the coming of some supplies, slight and temporary as they must necessarily prove.

Captain Delano responded; but while doing so, his attention was drawn to something passing on the deck below: among the crowd climbing the landward bulwarks, anxiously watching the coming boat, two blacks, to all appearances accidentally incommoded by one of the sailors, violently pushed him aside, which the sailor someway resenting, they dashed him to the deck, despite the earnest cries of the oakum-pickers.

“Don Benito,” said Captain Delano quickly, “do you see what is going on there? Look!”

But, seized by his cough, the Spaniard staggered, with both hands to his face, on the point of falling. Captain Delano would have supported him, but the servant was more alert, who, with one hand sustaining his master, with the other applied the cordial. Don Benito restored, the black withdrew his support, slipping aside a little, but dutifully remaining within call of a whisper. Such discretion was here evinced as quite wiped away, in the visitor’s eyes, any blemish of impropriety which might have attached to the attendant, from the indecorous conferences before mentioned; showing, too, that if the servant were to blame, it might be more the master’s fault than his own, since, when left to himself, he could conduct thus well.

His glance called away from the spectacle of disorder to the more pleasing one before him, Captain Delano could not avoid again congratulating his host upon possessing such a servant, who, though perhaps a little too forward now and then, must upon the whole be invaluable to one in the invalid’s situation.

“Tell me, Don Benito,” he added, with a smile—“I should like to have your man here, myself—what will you take for him? Would fifty doubloons be any object?”

“Master wouldn’t part with Babo for a thousand doubloons,” murmured the black, overhearing the offer, and taking it in earnest, and, with the strange vanity of a faithful slave, appreciated by his master; scornimg to hear so paltry a valuation put upon him by a stranger. But Don Benito, apparently hardly yet completely restored, and again interrupted by his cough, made but some broken reply.
Soon his physical distress became so great, affecting his mind, too, apparently, that, as if to screen the sad spectacle, the servant gently conducted his master below.

Left to himself, the American, to while away the time till his boat should arrive, would have pleasantly accosted some one of the few Spanish seamen he saw; but recalling something that Don Benito had said touching their ill conduct, he refrained; as a shipmaster indisposed to countenance cowardice or unfaithfulness in seamen.

While, with these thoughts, standing with eye directed forward towards that handful of sailors, suddenly he thought that one or two of them returned the glance and with a sort of meaning. He rubbed his eyes, and looked again; but again seemed to see the same thing. Under a new form, but more obscure than any previous one, the old suspicions recurred, but, in the absence of Don Benito, with less of panic than before. Despite the bad account given of the sailors, Captain Delano resolved forthwith to accost one of them. Descending the poop, he made his way through the blacks, his movement drawing a queer cry from the oakum-pickers, prompted by whom, the negroes, twitching each other aside, divided before him; but, as if curious to see what was the object of this deliberate visit to their Ghetto, closing in behind, in tolerable order, followed the white stranger up. His progress thus proclaimed as by mounted kings-at-arms, and escorted as by a Caffre guard of honor; Captain Delano, assuming a good-humored, off-handed air, continued to advance; now and then saying a blithe word to the negroes, and his eye curiously surveying the white faces, here and there sparsely mixed in with the blacks, like stray white pawns venturously involved in the ranks of the chess-men opposed.

While thinking which of them to select for his purpose, he chanced to observe a sailor seated on the deck engaged in tarring the strap of a large block, a circle of blacks squatted round him inquisitively eying the process.

The mean employment of the man was in contrast with something superior in his figure. His hand, black with continually thrusting it into the tar-pot held for him by a negro, seemed not naturally allied to his face, a face which would have been a very fine one but for its haggardness. Whether this haggardness had aught to do with criminality, could not be determined; since, as intense heat and cold, though unlike, produce like sensations, so innocence and guilt, when, through casual association with mental pain, stamping any visible impress, use one seal—a hacked one.

Not again that this reflection occurred to Captain Delano at the time, charitable man as he was. Rather another idea. Because observing so singular a haggardness combined with a dark eye, averted as in trouble and shame, and then again recalling Don Benito’s confessed ill opinion of his crew, insensibly he was operated upon by certain general notions which, while disconnecting pain and abashment from virtue, invariably link them with vice.
If, indeed, there be any wickedness on board this ship, thought Captain Delano, be sure that man there has fouled his hand in it, even as now he fouls it in the pitch. I don’t like to accost him. I will speak to this other; this old Jack here on the windlass.

He advanced to an old Barcelona tar, in ragged red breeches and dirty night-cap, cheeks trenched and bronzed, whiskers dense as thorn hedges. Seated between two sleepy-looking Africans, this mariner; like his younger shipmate, was employed upon some rigging—splicing a cable—the sleepy-looking blacks performing the inferior function of holding the outer parts of the ropes for him.

Upon Captain Delano’s approach, the man at once hung his head below its previous level; the one necessary for business. It appeared as if he desired to be thought absorbed, with more than common fidelity, in his task. Being addressed, he glanced up, but with what seemed a furtive, diffident air; which sat strangely enough on his weather-beaten visage, much as if a grizzly bear, instead of growling and biting, should simper and cast sheep’s eyes. He was asked several questions concerning the voyage—questions purposely referring to several particulars in Don Benito’s narrative, not previously corroborated by those impulsive cries greeting the visitor on first coming on board. The questions were briefly answered, confirming all that remained to be confirmed of the story. The negroes about the windlass joined in with the old sailor; but, as they became talkative, he by degrees became mute, and at length quite glum, seemed morosely unwilling to answer more questions, and yet, all the while, this ursine air was somehow mixed with his sheepish one.

Despairing of getting into unembarrassed talk with such a centaur; Captain Delano, after glancing round for a more promising countenance, but seeing none, spoke pleasantly to the blacks to make way for him; and so, amid various grins and grimaces, returned to the poop, feeling a little strange at first, he could hardly tell why, but upon the whole with regained confidence in Benito Cereno.

How plainly, thought he, did that old whiskerando yonder betray a consciousness of ill desert. No doubt, when he saw me coming, he dreaded lest I, apprised by his Captain of the crew’s general misbehavior, came with sharp words for him, and so down with his head. And yet—and yet, now that I think of it, that very old fellow, if I err not, was one of those who seemed so earnestly eying me here awhile since. Ah, these currents spin one’s head round almost as much as they do the ship. Ha, there now’s a pleasant sort of sunny sight; quite sociable, too.

His attention had been drawn to a slumbering negress, partly disclosed through the lacework of some rigging, lying, with youthful limbs carelessly disposed, under the lee of the bulwarks, like a doe in the shade of a woodland rock. Sprawling at her lapped breasts, was her wide-awake fawn, stark naked, its black little body half lifted from the deck, crosswise with its dam’s; its hands, like two paws, clambering upon her; its mouth and nose ineffectually rooting to get at the mark; and meantime giving a vexatious half-grunt, blending with the composed snore of the negress.
The uncommon vigor of the child at length roused the mother. She started up, at a distance facing Captain Delano. But as if not, at all concerned at the attitude in which she had been caught, delightedly she caught the child up, with maternal transports, covering it with kisses.

There’s naked nature, now; pure tenderness and love, thought Captain Delano, well pleased.

This incident prompted him to remark the other negresses more particularly than before. He was gratified with their manners: like most uncivilized women, they seemed at once tender of heart and tough of constitution; equally ready to die for their infants or fight for them. Unsophisticated as leopardesses; loving as doves. Ah! thought Captain Delano, these, perhaps, are some of the very women whom Ledyard saw in Africa, and gave such a noble account of.

These natural sights somehow insensibly deepened his confidence and ease. At last he looked to see how his boat was getting on; but it was still pretty remote. He turned to see if Don Benito had returned; but he had not.

To change the scene, as well as to please himself with a leisurely observation of the coming boat, stepping over into the mizzen-chains, he clambered his way into the starboard quarter-gallery—one of those abandoned Venetian-looking water-balconies previously mentioned—retreats cut off from the deck. As his foot pressed the half-damp, half-dry sea-mosses matting the place, and a chance phantom cats-paw—an islet of breeze, unheralded unfollowed—as this ghostly cats-paw came fanning his cheek; as his glance fell upon the row of small, round dead-lights—all closed like coppered eyes of the coffined—and the state-cabin door, once connecting with the gallery, even as the dead-lights had once looked out upon it, but now calked fast like a sarcophagus lid; and to a purple-black tarred-over, panel, threshold, and post; and he bethought him of the time, when that state-cabin and this state-balcony had heard the voices of the Spanish king’s officers, and the forms of the Lima viceroy’s daughters had perhaps leaned where he stood—as these and other images flitted through his mind, as the cats-paw through the calm, gradually he felt rising a dreamy inquietude, like that of one who alone on the prairie feels unrest from the repose of the noon.

He leaned against the carved balustrade, again looking off toward his boat; but found his eye falling upon the ribbon grass, trailing along the ship’s water-line, straight as a border of green box; and parterres of sea-weed, broad ovals and crescents, floating nigh and far; with what seemed long formal alleys between, crossing the terraces of swells, and sweeping round as if leading to the grottoes below. And overhanging all was the balustrade by his arm, which, partly stained with pitch and partly embossed with moss, seemed the charred ruin of some summer-house in a grand garden long running to waste.

Trying to break one charm, he was but becharmed anew. Though upon the wide sea, he seemed in some far inland country; prisoner in some deserted château, left
to stare at empty grounds, and peer out at vague roads, where never wagon or way-
farer passed.

But these enchantments were a little disenchanted as his eye fell on the corroded main-chains. Of an ancient style, massy and rusty in link, shackle and bolt, they seemed even more fit for the ship's present business than the one for which she had been built.

Presently he thought something moved nigh the chains. He rubbed his eyes, and looked hard. Groves of rigging were about the chains; and there, peering from behind a great stay, like an Indian from behind a hemlock, a Spanish sailor, a marlingspike in his hand, was seen, who made what seemed an imperfect gesture towards the balcony, but immediately as if alarmed by some advancing step along the deck within, vanished into the recesses of the hempen forest, like a poacher.

What meant this? Something the man had sought to communicate, unbeknown to any one, even to his captain. Did the secret involve aught unfavorable to his captain? Were those previous misgivings of Captain Delano's about to be verified? Or, in his haunted mood at the moment, had some random, unintentional motion of the man, while busy with the stay, as if repairing it, been mistaken for a significant beckoning?

Not unbewildered, again he gazed off for his boat. But it was temporarily hidden by a rocky spur of the isle. As with some eagerness he bent forward, watching for the first shooting view of its beak, the balustrade gave way before him like charcoal. Had he not clutched an outreaching rope he would have fallen into the sea. The crash, though feeble, and the fall, though hollow, of the rotten fragments, must have been overheard. He glanced up. With sober curiosity peering down upon him was one of the old oakum-pickers, slipped from his perch to an outside boom; while below the old negro, and, invisible to him, reconnoitering from a port-hole like a fox from the mouth of its den, crouched the Spanish sailor again. From something suddenly suggested by the man's air; the mad idea now darted into Captain Delano's mind, that Don Benito's plea of indisposition, in withdrawing below, was but a pretense: that he was engaged there maturing his plot, of which the sailor, by some means gaining an inkling, had a mind to warn the stranger against; incited, it may be, by gratitude for a kind word on first boarding the ship. Was it from foreseeing some possible interference like this, that Don Benito had, beforehand, given such a bad character of his sailors, while praising the negroes; though, indeed, the former seemed as docile as the latter the contrary? The whites, too, by nature, were the shrewder race. A man with some evil design, would he not be likely to speak well of that stupidity which was blind to his depravity, and malign that intelligence from which it might not be hidden? Not unlikely, perhaps. But if the whites had dark secrets concerning Don Benito, could then Don Benito be any way in complicity with the blacks? But they were too stupid. Besides, who ever heard of a white so far a renegade as to apostatize from his very species almost, by leaguing in against it with negroes? These difficulties recalled former ones. Lost in their mazes, Captain
Delano, who had now regained the deck, was uneasily advancing along it, when he observed a new face; an aged sailor seated cross-legged near the main hatchway. His skin was shrunk up with wrinkles like a pelican’s empty pouch; his hair frosted; his countenance grave and composed. His hands were full of ropes, which he was working into a large knot. Some blacks were about him obligingly dipping the strands for him, here and there, as the exigencies of the operation demanded.

Captain Delano crossed over to him, and stood in silence surveying the knot; his mind, by a not uncongenial transition, passing from its own entanglements to those of the hemp. For intricacy, such a knot he had never seen in an American ship, nor indeed any other. The old man looked like an Egyptian priest, making Gordian knots for the temple of Ammon. The knot seemed a combination of double-bowline-knot, treble-crown-knot, back-handed-well-knot, knot-in-and-out-knot, and jamming-knot.

At last, puzzled to comprehend the meaning of such a knot, Captain Delano addressed the knotter:—

“What are you knotting there, my man?”

“The knot,” was the brief reply, without looking up.

“So it seems; but what is it for?” “For some one else to undo,” muttered back the old man, plying his fingers harder than ever, the knot being now nearly completed.

While Captain Delano stood watching him, suddenly the old man threw the knot towards him, saying in broken English—the first heard in the ship—something to this effect: “Undo it, cut it, quick.” It was said lowly, but with such condensation of rapidity, that the long, slow words in Spanish, which had preceded and followed, almost operated as covers to the brief English between.

For a moment, knot in hand, and knot in head, Captain Delano stood mute; while, without further heeding him, the old man was now intent upon other ropes. Presently there was a slight stir behind Captain Delano. Turning, he saw the chained negro, Atufal, standing quietly there. The next moment the old sailor rose, muttering, and, followed by his subordinate negroes, removed to the forward part of the ship, where in the crowd he disappeared.

An elderly negro, in a clout like an infant’s, and with a pepper and salt head, and a kind of attorney air, now approached Captain Delano. In tolerable Spanish, and with a good-natured, knowing wink, he informed him that the old knotter was simple-witted, but harmless; often playing his odd tricks. The negro concluded by begging the knot, for of course the stranger would not care to be troubled with it. Unconsciously, it was handed to him. With a sort of congé, the negro received it, and, turning his back, ferreted into it like a detective custom-house officer after smuggled laces. Soon, with some African word, equivalent to pshaw, he tossed the knot overboard.
All this is very queer now, thought Captain Delano, with a qualmish sort of emotion; but, as one feeling incipient sea-sickness, he strove, by ignoring the symptoms, to get rid of the malady. Once more he looked off for his boat. To his delight, it was now again in view, leaving the rocky spur astern.

The sensation here experienced, after at first relieving his uneasiness, with unforeseen efficacy soon began to remove it. The less distant sight of that well-known boat—showing it, not as before, half blended with the haze, but with outline defined, so that its individuality, like a man’s, was manifest; that boat, Rover by name, which, though now in strange seas, had often pressed the beach of Captain Delano’s home, and, brought to its threshold for repairs, had familiarly lain there, as a Newfoundland dog; the sight of that household boat evoked a thousand trustful associations, which, contrasted with previous suspicions, filled him not only with lightsome confidence, but somehow with half humorous self-reproaches at his former lack of it.

“What, I, Amasa Delano—Jack of the Beach, as they called me when a lad—I, Amasa; the same that, duck-satchel in hand, used to paddle along the water-side to the school-house made from the old hulk—I, little Jack of the Beach, that used to go berrying with cousin Nat and the rest; I to be murdered here at the ends of the earth, on board a haunted pirate-ship by a horrible Spaniard? Too nonsensical to think of! Who would murder Amasa Delano? His conscience is clean. There is some one above. Fie, fie, Jack of the Beach! you are a child indeed; a child of the second childhood, old boy; you are beginning to dote and drule, I’m afraid.”

Light of heart and foot, he stepped aft, and there was met by Don Benito’s servant, who, with a pleasing expression, responsive to his own present feelings, informed him that his master had recovered from the effects of his coughing fit, and had just ordered him to go present his compliments to his good guest, Don Amasa, and say that he (Don Benito) would soon have the happiness to rejoin him.

There now, do you mark that? again thought Captain Delano, walking the poop.

What a donkey I was. This kind gentleman who here sends me his kind compliments, he, but ten minutes ago, dark-lantern in had, was dodging round some old grind-stone in the hold, sharpening a hatchet for me, I thought. Well, well; these long calms have a morbid effect on the mind, I’ve often heard, though I never believed it before. Ha! glancing towards the boat; there’s Rover; good dog; a white bone in her mouth. A pretty big bone though, seems to me.—What? Yes, she has fallen afoul of the bubbling tide-rip there. It sets her the other way, too, for the time. Patience.

It was now about noon, though, from the grayness of everything, it seemed to be getting towards dusk.

The calm was confirmed. In the far distance, away from the influence of land, the leaden ocean seemed laid out and leaded up, it’s course finished, soul gone, defunct.
But the current from landward, where the ship was, increased; silently sweeping her further and further towards the tranced waters beyond.

Still, from his knowledge of those latitudes, cherishing hopes of a breeze, and a fair and fresh one, at any moment, Captain Delano, despite present prospects, buoyantly counted upon bringing the San Dominick safely to anchor ere night. The distance swept over was nothing; since, with a good wind, ten minutes’ sailing would retrace more than sixty minutes, drifting. Meantime, one moment turning to mark “Rover” fighting the tide-rip, and the next to see Don Benito approaching, he continued walking the poop.

Gradually he felt a vexation arising from the delay of his boat; this soon merged into uneasiness; and at last—his eye falling continually, as from a stage-box into the pit, upon the strange crowd before and below him, and, by-and-by, recognizing there the face—now composed to indifference—of the Spanish sailor who had seemed to beckon from the main-chains—something of his old trepidations returned.

Ah, thought he—gravely enough—this is like the ague: because it went off, it follows not that it won’t come back.

Though ashamed of the relapse, he could not altogether subdue it; and so, exerting his good-nature to the utmost, insensibly he came to a compromise.

Yes, this is a strange craft; a strange history, too, and strange folks on board. But—nothing more.

By way of keeping his mind out of mischief till the boat should arrive, he tried to occupy it with turning over and over, in a purely speculative sort of way, some lesser peculiarities of the captain and crew. Among others, four curious points recurred:

First, the affair of the Spanish lad assailed with a knife by the slave boy; an act winked at by Don Benito. Second, the tyranny in Don Benito’s treatment of Atufal, the black; as if a child should lead a bull of the Nile by the ring in his nose. Third, the trampling of the sailor by the two negroes; a piece of insolence passed over without so much as a reprimand. Fourth, the cringing submission to their master, of all the ship’s underlings, mostly blacks; as if by the least inadvertence they feared to draw down his despotic displeasure.

Coupling these points, they seemed somewhat contradictory. But what then, thought Captain Delano, glancing towards his now nearing boat—what then? Why, Don Benito is a very capricious commander. But he is not the first of the sort I have seen; though it’s true he rather exceeds any other. But as a nation—continued he in his reveries—these Spaniards are all an odd set; the very word Spaniard has a curious, conspirator, Guy-Fawkish twang to it. And yet, I dare say, Spaniards in the main are as good folks as any in Duxbury, Massachusetts. Ah good! last “Rover” has come.
As, with its welcome freight, the boat touched the side, the oakum-pickers, with venerable gestures, sought to restrain the blacks, who, at the sight of three gurried water-casks in its bottom, and a pile of wilted pumpkins in its bow, hung over the bulwarks in disorderly raptured.

Don Benito, with his servant, now appeared; his coming, perhaps, hastened by hearing the noise. Of him Captain Delano sought permission to serve out the water, so that all might share alike, and none injure themselves by unfair excess. But sensible, and, on Don Benito’s account, kind as this offer was, it was received with what seemed impatience; as if aware that he lacked energy as a commander, Don Benito, with the true jealousy of weakness, resented as an affront any interference. So, at least, Captain Delano inferred.

In another moment the casks were being hoisted in, when some of the eager negroes accidentally jostled Captain Delano, where he stood by the gangway; so, that, unmindful of Don Benito, yielding to the impulse of the moment, with good-natured authority he bade the blacks stand back; to enforce his words making use of a half-mirthful, half-menacing gesture. Instantly the blacks paused, just where they were, each negro and negress suspended in his or her posture, exactly as the word had found them—for a few seconds continuing so—while, as between the responsive posts of a telegraph, an unknown syllable ran from man to man among the perched oakum-pickers. While the visitor’s attention was fixed by this scene, suddenly the hatchet-polishers half rose, and a rapid cry came from Don Benito.

Thinking that at the signal of the Spaniard he was about to be massacred, Captain Delano would have sprung for his boat, but paused, as the oakum-pickers, dropping down into the crowd with earnest exclamations, forced every white and every negro back, at the same moment, with gestures friendly and familiar, almost jocose, bidding him, in substance, not be a fool. Simultaneously the hatchet-polishers resumed their seats, quietly as so many tailors, and at once, as if nothing had happened, the work of hoisting in the casks was resumed, whites and blacks singing at the tackle.

Captain Delano glanced towards Don Benito. As he saw his meagre form in the act of recovering itself from reclining in the servant’s arms, into which the agitated invalid had fallen, he could not but marvel at the panic by which himself had been surprised, on the darting supposition that such a commander, who, upon a legitimate occasion, so trivial, too, as it now appeared, could lose all self-command, was, with energetic iniquity, going to bring about his murder.

The casks being on deck, Captain Delano was handed a number of jars and cups by one of the steward’s aids, who, in the name of his captain, entreated him to do as he had proposed—dole out the water. He complied, with republican impartiality as to this republican element, which always seeks one level, serving the oldest white no better than the youngest black; excepting, indeed, poor Don Benito, whose condition, if not rank, demanded an extra allowance. To him, in the first place, Captain
Delano presented a fair pitcher of the fluid; but, thirsting as he was for it, the Spaniard quaffed not a drop until after several grave bows and salutes. A reciprocation of courtesies which the sight-loving Africans hailed with clapping of hands.

Two of the less wilted pumpkins being reserved for the cabin table, the residue were minced up on the spot for the general regalement. But the soft bread, sugar, and bottled cider, Captain Delano would have given the whites alone, and in chief Don Benito; but the latter objected; which disinterestedness not a little pleased the American; and so mouthfuls all around were given alike to whites and blacks; excepting one bottle of cider, which Babo insisted upon setting aside for his master.

Here it may be observed that as, on the first visit of the boat, the American had not permitted his men to board the ship, neither did he now; being unwilling to add to the confusion of the decks.

Not uninfluenced by the peculiar good-humor at present prevailing, and for the time oblivious of any but benevolent thoughts, Captain Delano, who, from recent indications, counted upon a breeze within an hour or two at furthest, dispatched the boat back to the sealer, with orders for all the hands that could be spared immediately to set about rafting casks to the watering-place and filling them. Likewise he bade word be carried to his chief officer, that if, against present expectation, the ship was not brought to anchor by sunset, he need be under no concern; for as there was to be a full moon that night, he (Captain Delano) would remain on board ready to play the pilot, come the wind soon or late.

As the two Captains stood together, observing the departing boat—the servant, as it happened, having just spied a spot on his master’s velvet sleeve, and silently engaged rubbing it out—the American expressed his regrets that the San Dominick had no boats; none, at least, but the unseaworthy old hulk of the long-boat, which, warped as a camel’s skeleton in the desert, and almost as bleached, lay pot-wise inverted amidships, one side a little tipped, furnishing a subterraneous sort of den for family groups of the blacks, mostly women and small children; who, squatting on old mats below, or perched above in the dark dome, on the elevated seats, were descried, some distance within, like a social circle of bats, sheltering in some friendly cave; at intervals, ebon flights of naked boys and girls, three or four years old, darting in and out of the den’s mouth.

“Had you three or four boats now, Don Benito,” said Captain Delano, “I think that, by tugging at the oars, your negroes here might help along matters some. Did you sail from port without boats, Don Benito?”

“They were stove in the gales, Señor.”

“That was bad. Many men, too, you lost then. Boats and men. Those must have been hard gales, Don Benito.”

“Past all speech,” cringed the Spaniard.
“Tell me, Don Benito,” continued his companion with increased interest, “tell me, were these gales immediately off the pitch of Cape Horn?”

“Cape Horn?—who spoke of Cape Horn?”

“Youself did, when giving me an account of your voyage,” answered Captain Delano, with almost equal astonishment at this eating of his own words, even as he ever seemed eating his own heart, on the part of the Spaniard. “You yourself, Don Benito, spoke of Cape Horn,” he emphatically repeated.

The Spaniard turned, in a sort of stooping posture, pausing an instant, as one about to make a plunging exchange of elements, as from air to water:

At this moment a messenger-boy, a white, hurried by, in the regular performance of his function carrying the last expired half hour forward to the forecastle, from the cabin time-piece, to have it struck at the ship’s large bell.

“Master,” said the servant, discontinuing his work on the coat sleeve, and addressing the rapt Spaniard with a sort of timid apprehensiveness, as one charged with a duty, the discharge of which, it was foreseen, would prove irksome to the very person who had imposed it, and for whose benefit it was intended, “master told me never mind where he was, or how engaged, always to remind him to a minute, when shaving-time comes. Miguel has gone to strike the half-hour afternoon. It is now, master. Will master go into the cuddy?”

“Ah—yes,” answered the Spaniard, starting, as from dreams into realities; then turning upon Captain Delano, he said that ere long he would resume the conversation.

“Then if master means to talk more to Don Amasa,” said the servant, “why not let Don Amasa sit by master in the cuddy, and master can talk, and Don Amasa can listen, while Babo here lathers and strops.”

“Yes,” said Captain Delano, not displeased with this sociable plan, “yes, Don Benito, unless you had rather not, I will go with you.”

“Be it so, Señor.”

As the three passed aft, the American could not but think it another strange instance of his host’s capriciousness, this being shaved with such uncommon punctuality in the middle of the day. But he deemed it more than likely that the servant’s anxious fidelity had something to do with the matter; inasmuch as the timely interruption served to rally his master from the mood which had evidently been coming upon him.

The place called the cuddy was a light deck-cabin formed by the poop, a sort of attic to the large cabin below. Part of it had formerly been the quarters of the officers; but since their death all the partitioning had been thrown down, and the whole
interior converted into one spacious and airy marine hall; for absence of fine furniture and picturesque disarray of odd appurtenances, somewhat answering to the wide, cluttered hall of some eccentric bachelor-squire in the country, who hangs his shooting-jacket and tobacco-pouch on deer antlers, and keeps his fishing-rod, tongs, and walking-stick in the same corner.

The similitude was heightened, if not originally suggested, by glimpses of the surrounding sea; since, in one aspect, the country and the ocean seem cousins-german.

The floor of the cuddy was matted. Overhead, four or five old muskets were stuck into horizontal holes along the beams. On one side was a claw-footed old table lashed to the deck; a thumbed missal on it, and over it a small, meagre crucifix attached to the bulk-head. Under the table lay a dented cutlass or two, with a hacked harpoon, among some; melancholy old rigging, like a heap of poor friars’ girdles. There were also two long, sharp-ribbed settees of Malacca cane, black with age, and uncomfortable to look at as inquisitors’ racks, with a large, misshapen arm-chair, which, furnished with a rude barber’s crotch at the back, working with a screw, seemed some grotesque engine of torment. A flag locker was in one corner, open, exposing various colored bunting, some rolled up, others half unrolled, still others tumbled. Opposite was a cumbrous washstand, of black mahogany, all of one block, with a pedestal, like a font, and over it a railed shelf, containing combs, brushes, and other implements of the toilet. A torn hammock of stained grass swung near; the sheets tossed, and the pillow wrinkled up like a brow, as if who ever slept here slept but illly, with alternate visitations of sad thoughts and bad dreams.

The further extremity of the cuddy, overhanging the ship’s stern, was pierced with three openings, windows or port-holes, according as men or cannon might peer, socially or unsocially, out of them. At present neither men nor cannon were seen, though huge ring-bolts and other rusty iron fixtures of the wood-work hinted of twenty-four-pounders.

Glancing towards the hammock as he entered, Captain Delano said, “You sleep here, Don Benito?”

“Yes, Señor; since we got into mild weather.”

“This seems a sort of dormitory, sitting-room, sail-loft, chapel, armory, and private closet all together, Don Benito,” added Captain Delano, looking round.

“Yes, Señor; events have not been favorable to much order in my arrangements.”

Here the servant, napkin on arm, made a motion as if waiting his master’s good pleasure. Don Benito signified his readiness, when, seating him in the Malacca arm-chair, and for the guest’s convenience drawing opposite one of the settees, the servant commenced operations by throwing back his master’s collar and loosening his cravat.
There is something in the negro which, in a peculiar way, fits him for avocations about one’s person. Most negroes are natural valets and hair-dressers; taking to the comb and brush congenially as to the castinets, and flourishing them apparently with almost equal satisfaction. There is, too, a smooth tact about them in this employment, with a marvelous, noiseless, gliding briskness, not ungraceful in its way, singularly pleasing to behold, and still more so to be the manipulated subject of. And above all is the great gift of good-humor. Not the mere grin or laugh is here meant. Those were unsuitable. But a certain easy cheerfulness, harmonious in every glance and gesture; as though God had set the whole negro to some pleasant tune.

When to this is added the docility arising from the unassuming contentment of a limited mind and that susceptibility of blind attachment sometimes inhering in indisputable inferiors, one readily perceives why those hypochondriacs, Johnson and Byron—it may be, something like the hypochondriac Benito Cereno—took to their hearts, almost to the exclusion of the entire white race, their serving men, the negroes, Barber and Fletcher. But if there be that in the negro which exempts him from the inflicted sourness of the morbid or cynical mind, how, in his most prepossessing aspects, must he appear to a benevolent one? When at ease with respect to exterior things, Captain Delano’s nature was not only benign, but familiarly and humorously so. At home, he had often taken rare satisfaction in sitting in his door, watching some free man of color at his work or play. If on a voyage he chanced to have a black sailor, invariably he was on chatty and half-gamesome terms with him. In fact, like most men of a good, blithe heart, Captain Delano took to negroes, not philanthropically, but genially, just as other men to Newfoundland dogs.

Hitherto, the circumstances in which he found the San Dominick had repressed the tendency. But in the cuddy, relieved from his former uneasiness, and, for various reasons, more sociably inclined than at any previous period of the day, and seeing the colored servant, napkin on arm, so debonair about his master, in a business so familiar as that of shaving, too, all his old weakness for negroes returned.

Among other things, he was amused with an odd instance of the African love of bright colors and fine shows, in the black’s informally taking from the flag-locker a great piece of bunting of all hues, and lavishly tucking it under his master’s chin for an apron.

The mode of shaving among the Spaniards is a little different from what it is with other nations. They have a basin, specifically called a barber’s basin, which on one side is scooped out, so as accurately to receive the chin, against which it is closely held in lathering; which is done, not with a brush, but with soap dipped in the water of the basin and rubbed on the face.

In the present instance salt-water was used for lack of better; and the parts lathered were only the upper lip, and low down under the throat, all the rest being cultivated beard.
The preliminaries being somewhat novel to Captain Delano, he sat curiously ey-
ing them, so that no conversation took place, nor, for the present, did Don Benito appear disposed to renew any.

Setting down his basin, the negro searched among the razors, as for the sharpest, and having found it, gave it an additional edge by expertly strapping it on the firm, smooth, oily skin of his open palm; he then made a gesture as if to begin, but midway stood suspended for an instant, one hand elevating the razor; the other professionally dabling among the bubbling suds on the Spaniard's lank neck. Not unaffected by the close sight of the gleaming steel, Don Benito nervously shuddered; his usual ghastliness was heightened by the lather, which lather, again, was intensified in its hue by the contrasting sootiness of the negro's body. Altogether the scene was somewhat peculiar; at least to Captain Delano, nor, as he saw the two thus postured, could he resist the vagary, that in the black he saw a headsman, and in the white a man at the block. But this was one of those antic conceits, appearing and vanishing in a breath, from which, perhaps, the best regulated mind is not always free.

Meantime the agitation of the Spaniard had a little loosened the bunting from around him, so that one broad fold swept curtain-like over, the chair-arm to the floor, revealing, amid a profusion of armorial bars and ground-colors—black, blue, and yellow—a closed castle in a blood red field diagonal with a lion rampant in a white.

“The castle and the lion,” exclaimed Captain Delano—“why, Don Benito, this is the flag of Spain you use here. It's well it's only I, and not the King, that sees this,” he added, with a smile, “but”—turning towards the black—”it's all one, I suppose, so the colors be gay;” which playful remark did not fail somewhat to tickle the negro.

“Now, master,” he said, readjusting the flag, and pressing the head gently further back into the crotch of the chair; “now, master;” and the steel glanced nigh the throat.

Again Don Benito faintly shuddered.

“You must not shake so, master: See, Don Amasa, master always shakes when I shave him. And yet master knows I never yet have drawn blood, though it’s true, if master will shake so, I may some of these times. Now master,” he continued. “And now, Don Amasa, please go on with your talk about the gale, and all that; master can hear, and, between times, master can answer.”

“Ah yes, these gales,” said Captain Delano; “but the more I think of your voyage, Don Benito, the more I wonder, not at the gales, terrible as they must have been, but at the disastrous interval following them. For here, by your account, have you been these two months and more getting from Cape Horn to St. Maria, a distance which I myself, with a good wind, have sailed in a few days. True, you had calms, and long ones, but to be becalmed for two months, that is, at least, unusual. Why, Don Benito, had almost any other gentleman told me such a story, I should have been half disposed to a little incredulity.”
Here an involuntary expression came over the Spaniard, similar to that just before on the deck, and whether it was the start he gave, or a sudden gawky roll of the hull in the calm, or a momentary unsteadiness of the servant’s hand, however it was, just then the razor drew blood, spots of which stained the creamy lather under the throat: immediately the black barber drew back his steel, and, remaining in his professional attitude, back to Captain Delano, and face to Don Benito, held up the trickling razor, saying, with a sort of half humorous sorrow, “See, master—you shook so—here’s Babo’s first blood.”

No sword drawn before James the First of England, no assassination in that timid King’s presence, could have produced a more terrified aspect than was now presented by Don Benito.

Poor fellow, thought Captain Delano, so nervous he can’t even bear the sight of barber’s blood; and this unstrung, sick man, is it credible that I should have imagined he meant to spill all my blood, who can’t endure the sight of one little drop of his own? Surely, Amasa Delano, you have been beside yourself this day. Tell it not when you get home, sappy Amasa. Well, well, he looks like a murderer; doesn’t he? More like as if himself were to be done for. Well, well, this day’s experience shall be a good lesson.

Meantime, while these things were running through the honest seaman’s mind, the servant had taken the napkin from his arm, and to Don Benito had said—"But answer Don Amasa, please, master, while I wipe this ugly stuff off the razor, and strop it again."

As he said the words, his face was turned half round, so as to be alike visible to the Spaniard and the American, and seemed, by its expression, to hint, that he was desirous, by getting his master to go on with the conversation, considerately to withdraw his attention from the recent annoying accident. As if glad to snatch the offered relief, Don Benito resumed, rehearsing to Captain Delano, that not only were the calms of unusual duration, but the ship had fallen in with obstinate currents; and other things he added, some of which were but repetitions of former statements, to explain how it came to pass that the passage from Cape Horn to St. Maria had been so exceedingly long; now and then, mingling with his words, incidental praises, less qualified than before, to the blacks, for their general good conduct. These particulars were not given consecutively, the servant, at convenient times, using his razor, and so, between the intervals of shaving, the story and panegyric went on with more than usual huskiness.

To Captain Delano’s imagination, now again not wholly at rest, there was something so hollow in the Spaniard’s manner, with apparently some reciprocal hollowness in the servant’s dusky comment of silence, that the idea flashed across him, that possibly master and man, for some unknown purpose, were acting out, both in word and deed, nay, to the very tremor of Don Benito’s limbs, some juggling play before him. Neither did the suspicion of collusion lack apparent support, from the
fact of those whispered conferences before mentioned. But then, what could be the object of enacting this play of the barber before him? At last, regarding the notion as a whimsy, insensibly suggested, perhaps, by the theatrical aspect of Don Benito in his harlequin ensign, Captain Delano speedily banished it.

The shaving over, the servant bestirred himself with a small bottle of scented waters, pouring a few drops on the head, and then diligently rubbing; the vehemence of the exercise causing the muscles of his face to twitch rather strangely.

His next operation was with comb, scissors, and brush; going round and round, smoothing a curl here, clipping an unruly whisker-hair there, giving a graceful sweep to the temple-lock, with other impromptu touches evincing the hand of a master; while, like any resigned gentleman in barber’s hands, Don Benito bore all, much less uneasily, at least than he had done the razoring; indeed, he sat so pale and rigid now, that the negro seemed a Nubian sculptor finishing off a white statue-head.

All being over at last, the standard of Spain removed, tumbled up, and tossed back into the flag-locker, the negro's warm breath blowing away any stray hair; which might have lodged down his master’s neck; collar and cravat readjusted; a speck of lint whisked off the velvet lapel; all this being done; backing off a little space, and pausing with an expression of subdued self-complacency, the servant for a moment surveyed his master, as, in toilet at least, the creature of his own tasteful hands.

Captain Delano playfully complimented him upon his achievement; at the same time congratulating Don Benito.

But neither sweet waters, nor shampooing, nor fidelity, nor sociality, delighted the Spaniard. Seeing him relapsing into forbidding gloom, and still remaining seated, Captain Delano, thinking that his presence was undesired just then, withdrew, on pretense of seeing whether, as he had prophesied, any signs of a breeze were visible.

Walking forward to the main-mast, he stood awhile thinking over the scene, and not without some undefined misgivings, when he heard a noise near the cuddy, and turning, saw the negro, his hand to his cheek. Advancing, Captain Delano perceived that the cheek was bleeding. He was about to ask the cause, when the negro’s wailing soliloquy enlightened him.

“Ah, when will master get better from his sickness; only the sour heart that sour sickness breeds made him serve Babo so; cutting Babo with the razor; because, only by accident, Babo had given master one little scratch; and for the first time in so many a day, too. Ah, ah, ah,” holding his hand to his face.

Is it possible, thought Captain Delano; was it to wreak in private his Spanish spite against this poor friend of his, that Don Benito, by his sullen manner, impelled me to withdraw? Ah this slavery breeds ugly passions in man.—Poor fellow!
He was about to speak in sympathy to the negro, but with a timid reluctance he now re-entered the cuddy.

Presently master and man came forth; Don Benito leaning on his servant as if nothing had happened.

But a sort of love-quarrel, after all, thought Captain Delano.

He accosted Don Benito, and they slowly walked together. They had gone but a few paces, when the steward—a tall, rajah-looking mulatto, orientally set off with a pagoda turban formed by three or four Madras handkerchiefs wound about his head, tier on tier—approaching with a saalam, announced lunch in the cabin.

On their way thither, the two captains were preceded by the mulatto, who, turning round as he advanced, with continual smiles and bows, ushered them on, a display of elegance which quite completed the insignificance of the small bare-headed Babo, who, as if not unconscious of inferiority, eyed askance the graceful steward. But in part, Captain Delano imputed his jealous watchfulness to that peculiar feeling which the full-blooded African entertains for the adulterated one. As for the steward, his manner, if not bespeaking much dignity of self-respect, yet evidenced his extreme desire to please; which is doubly meritorious, as at once Christian and Chesterfieldian.

Captain Delano observed with interest that while the complexion of the mulatto was hybrid, his physiognomy was European—classically so.

“Don Benito,” whispered he, “I am glad to see this usher-of-the-golden-rod of yours; the sight refutes an ugly remark once made to me by a Barbadoes planter; that when a mulatto has a regular European face, look out for him; he is a devil. But see, your steward here has features more regular than King George’s of England; and yet there he nods, and bows, and smiles; a king, indeed—the king of kind hearts and polite fellows. What a pleasant voice he has, too?”

“He has, Señor.”

“But tell me, has he not, so far as you have known him, always proved a good, worthy fellow?” said Captain Delano, pausing, while with a final genuflexion the steward disappeared into the cabin; “come, for the reason just mentioned, I am curious to know.”

“Francesco is a good man,” a sort of sluggishly responded Don Benito, like a phlegmatic appreciator, who would neither find fault nor flatter.

“Ah, I thought so. For it were strange, indeed, and not very creditable to us whiteskins, if a little of our blood mixed with the African’s, should, far from improving the latter’s quality, have the sad effect of pouring vitriolic acid into black broth; improving the hue, perhaps, but not the wholesomeness.”
"Doubtless, doubtless, Señor; but"—glancing at Babo—"not to speak of negroes, your planter’s remark I have heard applied to the Spanish and Indian intermixtures in our provinces. But I know nothing about the matter;" he listlessly added.

And here they entered the cabin.

The lunch was a frugal one. Some of Captain Delano’s fresh fish and pumpkins, biscuit and salt beef, the reserved bottle of cider, and the San Dominick’s last bottle of Canary.

As they entered, Francesco, with two or three colored aids, was hovering over the table giving the last adjustments. Upon perceiving their master they withdrew, Francesco making a smiling congé, and the Spaniard, without condescending to notice it, fastidiously remarking to his companion that he relished not superfluous attendance.

Without companions, host and guest sat down, like a childless married couple, at opposite ends of the table, Don Benito waving Captain Delano to his place, and, weak as he was, insisting upon that gentleman being seated before himself.

The negro placed a rug under Don Benito’s feet, and a cushion behind his back, and then stood behind, not his master’s chair, but Captain Delano’s. At first, this a little surprised the latter. But it was soon evident that, in taking his position, the black was still true to his master; since by facing him he could the more readily anticipate his slightest want.

“This is an uncommonly intelligent fellow of yours, Don Benito,” whispered Captain Delano across the table.

“You say true, Señor.”

During the repast, the guest again reverted to parts of Don Benito’s story, begging further particulars here and there. He inquired how it was that the scurvy and fever should have committed such wholesale havoc upon the whites, while destroying less than half of the blacks. As if this question reproduced the whole scene of plague before the Spaniard’s eyes, miserably reminding him of his solitude in a cabin where before he had had so many friends and officers round him, his hand shook, his face became hueless, broken words escaped; but directly the sane memory of the past seemed replaced by insane terrors of the present. With starting eyes he stared before him at vacancy. For nothing was to be seen but the hand of his servant pushing the Canary over towards him. At length a few sips served partially to restore him. He made random reference to the different constitution of races, enabling one to offer more resistance to certain maladies than another. The thought was new to his companion.

Presently Captain Delano, intending to say something to his host concerning the pecuniary part of the business he had undertaken for him, especially—since he was
strictly accountable to his owners—with reference to the new suit of sails, and other things of that sort; and naturally preferring to conduct such affairs in private, was desirous that the servant should withdraw; imagining that Don Benito for a few minutes could dispense with his attendance. He, however, waited awhile; thinking that, as the conversation proceeded, Don Benito, without being prompted, would perceive the propriety of the step.

But it was otherwise. At last catching his host’s eye, Captain Delano, with a slight backward gesture of his thumb, whispered, “Don Benito, pardon me, but there is an interference with the full expression of what I have to say to you.”

Upon this the Spaniard changed countenance; which was imputed to his resenting the hint, as in some way a reflection upon his servant. After a moment’s pause, he assured his guest that the black’s remaining with them could be of no disservice; because since losing his officers he had made Babo (whose original office, it now appeared, had been captain of the slaves) not only his constant attendant and companion, but in all things his confidant.

After this, nothing more could be said; though, indeed, Captain Delano could hardly avoid some little tinge of irritation upon being left ungratified in so inconsiderable a wish, by one, too, for whom he intended such solid services. But it is only his querulousness, thought he; and so filling his glass he proceeded to business.

The price of the sails and other matters was fixed upon. But while this was being done, the American observed that, though his original offer of assistance had been hailed with hectic animation, yet now when it was reduced to a business transaction, indifference and apathy were betrayed. Don Benito, in fact, appeared to submit to hearing the details more out of regard to common propriety, than from any impression that weighty benefit to himself and his voyage was involved.

Soon, his manner became still more reserved. The effort was vain to seek to draw him into social talk. Gnawed by his splenetic mood, he sat twitching his beard, while to little purpose the hand of his servant, mute as that on the wall, slowly pushed over the Canary.

Lunch being over, they sat down on the cushioned transom; the servant placing a pillow behind his master. The long continuance of the calm had now affected the atmosphere. Don Benito sighed heavily, as if for breath.

“Why not adjourn to the cuddy,” said Captain Delano; “there is more air there.” But the host sat silent and motionless.

Meantime his servant knelt before him, with a large fan of feathers. And Francesco coming in on tiptoes, handed the negro a little cup of aromatic waters, with which at intervals he chafed his master’s brow; smoothing the hair along the temples as a nurse does a child’s. He spoke no word. He only rested his eye on his master’s,
as if, amid all Don Benito’s distress, a little to refresh his spirit by the silent sight of fidelity.

Presently the ship’s bell sounded two o’clock; and through the cabin windows a slight rippling of the sea was discerned; and from the desired direction.

“There,” exclaimed Captain Delano, “I told you so, Don Benito, look!”

He had risen to his feet, speaking in a very animated tone, with a view the more to rouse his companion. But though the crimson curtain of the stern-window near him that moment fluttered against his pale cheek, Don Benito seemed to have even less welcome for the breeze than the calm.

Poor fellow, thought Captain Delano, bitter experience has taught him that one ripple does not make a wind, any more than one swallow a summer. But he is mistaken for once. I will get his ship in for him, and prove it.

Briefly alluding to his weak condition, he urged his host to remain quietly where he was, since he (Captain Delano) would with pleasure take upon himself the responsibility of making the best use of the wind.

Upon gaining the deck, Captain Delano started at the unexpected figure of Atufal, monumentally fixed at the threshold, like one of those sculptured porters of black marble guarding the porches of Egyptian tombs.

But this time the start was, perhaps, purely physical. Atufal’s presence, singularly attesting docility even in sullenness, was contrasted with that of the hatchet-polishers, who in patience evinced their industry; while both spectacles showed, that lax as Don Benito’s general authority might be, still, whenever he chose to exert it, no man so savage or colossal but must, more or less, bow.

Snatching a trumpet which hung from the bulwarks, with a free step Captain Delano advanced to the forward edge of the poop, issuing his orders in his best Spanish. The few sailors and many negroes, all equally pleased, obediently set about heading the ship towards the harbor.

While giving some directions about setting a lower stu’n’-sail, suddenly Captain Delano heard a voice faithfully repeating his orders. Turning, he saw Babo, now for the time acting, under the pilot, his original part of captain of the slaves. This assistance proved valuable. Tattered sails and warped yards were soon brought into some trim. And no brace or halyard was pulled but to the blithe songs of the inspired negroes.

Good fellows, thought Captain Delano, a little training would make fine sailors of them. Why see, the very women pull and sing too. These must be some of those Ashantee negresses that make such capital soldiers, I’ve heard. But who’s at the helm. I must have a good hand there.
He went to see.

The San Dominick steered with a cumbrous tiller; with large horizontal pullies attached. At each pully-end stood a subordinate black, and between them, at the tiller-head, the responsible post, a Spanish seaman, whose countenance evinced his due share in the general hopefulness and confidence at the coming of the breeze.

He proved the same man who had behaved with so shame-faced an air on the windlass.

“Ah,—it is you, my man,” exclaimed Captain Delano—"well, no more sheep's-eyes now;—look straight forward and keep the ship so. Good hand, I trust? And want to get into the harbor, don't you?"

The man assented with an inward chuckle, grasping the tiller-head firmly. Upon this, unperceived by the American, the two blacks eyed the sailor intently.

Finding all right at the helm, the pilot went forward to the forecastle, to see how matters stood there.

The ship now had way enough to breast the current. With the approach of evening, the breeze would be sure to freshen.

Having done all that was needed for the present, Captain Delano, giving his last orders to the sailors, turned aft to report affairs to Don Benito in the cabin; perhaps additionally incited to rejoin him by the hope of snatching a moment's private chat while the servant was engaged upon deck.

From opposite sides, there were, beneath the poop, two approaches to the cabin; one further forward than the other, and consequently communicating with a longer passage. Marking the servant still above, Captain Delano, taking the highest entrance—the one last named, and at whose porch Atufal still stood—hurried on his way till, arrived at the cabin threshold, he paused an instant, a little to recover from his eagerness. Then, with the words of his intended business upon his lips, he entered. As he advanced toward the seated Spaniard, he heard another footstep, keeping time with his. From the opposite door, a salver in hand, the servant was likewise advancing.

"Confound the faithful fellow," thought Captain Delano; "what a vexatious coincidence."

Possibly, the vexation might have been something different, were it not for the brisk confidence inspired by the breeze. But even as it was, he felt a slight twinge, from a sudden indefinite association in his mind of Babo with Atufal.

"Don Benito," said he, "I give you joy; the breeze will hold, and will increase. By the way, your tall man and time-piece, Atufal, stands without. By your order, of course?"
Don Benito recoiled, as if at some bland satirical touch, delivered with such adroit garnish of apparent good breeding as to present no handle for retort.

He is like one flayed alive, thought Captain Delano; where may one touch him without causing a shrink?

The servant moved before his master, adjusting a cushion; recalled to civility, the Spaniard stiffly replied: “you are right. The slave appears where you saw him, according to my command; which is, that if at the given hour I am below, he must take his stand and abide my coming.”

“Ah now, pardon me, but that is treating the poor fellow like an ex-king indeed. Ah, Don Benito,” smiling, “for all the license you permit in some things, I fear lest, at bottom, you are a bitter hard master.”

Again Don Benito shrank; and this time, as the good sailor thought, from a genuine twinge of his conscience.

Again conversation became constrained. In vain Captain Delano called attention to the now perceptible motion of the keel gently cleaving the sea; with lack-lustre eye, Don Benito returned words few and reserved.

By-and-by, the wind having steadily risen, and still blowing right into the harbor bore the San Dominick swiftly on. Sounding a point of land, the sealer at distance came into open view.

Meantime Captain Delano had again repaired to the deck, remaining there some time. Having at last altered the ship’s course, so as to give the reef a wide berth, he returned for a few moments below.

I will cheer up my poor friend, this time, thought he.

“Better and better;” Don Benito, he cried as he blithely re-entered: “there will soon be an end to your cares, at least for awhile. For when, after a long, sad voyage, you know, the anchor drops into the haven, all its vast weight seems lifted from the captain’s heart. We are getting on famously, Don Benito. My ship is in sight. Look through this side-light here; there she is; all a-taunt-o! The Bachelor’s Delight, my good friend. Ah, how this wind braces one up. Come, you must take a cup of coffee with me this evening. My old steward will give you as fine a cup as ever any sultan tasted. What say you, Don Benito, will you?”

At first, the Spaniard glanced feverishly up, casting a longing look towards the sealer; while with mute concern his servant gazed into his face. Suddenly the old ague of coldness returned, and dropping back to his cushions he was silent.

“You do not answer. Come, all day you have been my host; would you have hospitality all on one side?”
“I cannot go,” was the response.

“What? it will not fatigue you. The ships will lie together as near as they can, without swinging foul. It will be little more than stepping from deck to deck, which is but as from room to room. Come, come, you must not refuse me.”

“I cannot go,” decisively and repulsively repeated Don Benito.

Renouncing all but the last appearance of courtesy, with a sort of cadaverous sullenness, and biting his thin nails to the quick, he glanced, almost glared, at his guest, as if impatient that a stranger’s presence should interfere with the indulgence of his morbid hour. Meantime the sound of the parted waters came more and more gurglingly and merrily in at the windows; as reproaching him for his dark spleen; as telling him that, sulk as he might, and go mad with it, nature cared not a jot; since, whose fault was it, pray?

But the foul mood was now at its depth, as the fair wind at its height.

There was something in the man so far beyond any mere unsociality or sourness previously evinced, that even the forbearing good-nature of his guest could no longer endure it. Wholly at a loss to account for such demeanor, and deeming sickness with eccentricity, however extreme, no adequate excuse, well satisfied, too, that nothing in his own conduct could justify it, Captain Delano’s pride began to be roused. Himself became reserved. But all seemed one to the Spaniard. Quitting him, therefore, Captain Delano once more went to the deck.

The ship was now within less than two miles of the sealer. The whale-boat was seen darting over the interval.

To be brief, the two vessels, thanks to the pilot’s skill, ere long neighborly style lay anchored together.

Before returning to his own vessel, Captain Delano had intended communicating to Don Benito the smaller details of the proposed services to be rendered. But, as it was, unwilling anew to subject himself to rebuffs, he resolved, now that he had seen the San Dominick safely moored, immediately to quit her, without further allusion to hospitality or business. Indefinitely postponing his ulterior plans, he would regulate his future actions according to future circumstances. His boat was ready to receive him; but his host still tarried below. Well, thought Captain Delano, if he has little breeding, the more need to show mine. He descended to the cabin to bid a ceremonious, and, it may be, tacitly rebukeful adieu. But to his great satisfaction, Don Benito, as if he began to feel the weight of that treatment with which his slighted guest had, not indecorously, retaliated upon him, now supported by his servant, rose to his feet, and grasping Captain Delano’s hand, stood tremulous; too much agitated to speak. But the good augury hence drawn was suddenly dashed, by his resuming all his previous reserve, with augmented gloom, as, with half-averted
eyes, he silently reseated himself on his cushions. With a corresponding return of
his own chilled feelings, Captain Delano bowed and withdrew.

He was hardly midway in the narrow corridor; dim as a tunnel, leading from the
cabin to the stairs, when a sound, as of the tolling for execution in some jail-yard,
fell on his ears. It was the echo of the ship’s flawed bell, striking the hour; drearily
reverberated in this subterranean vault. Instantly, by a fatality not to be withstood,
his mind, responsive to the portent, swarmed with superstitious suspicions. He
paused. In images far swifter than these sentences, the minutest details of all his
former distrusts swept through him.

Hitherto, credulous good-nature had been too ready to furnish excuses for rea-
sonable fears. Why was the Spaniard, so superfluously punctilious at times, now
heedless of common propriety in not accompanying to the side his departing guest?
Did indisposition forbid? Indisposition had not forbidden more irksome exertion
that day. His last equivocal demeanor recurred. He had risen to his feet, grasped his
guest’s hand, motioned toward his hat; then, in an instant, all was eclipsed in sin-
ister muteness and gloom. Did this imply one brief, repentant relenting at the final
moment, from some iniquitous plot, followed by remorseless return to it? His last
glance seemed to express a calamitous, yet acquiescent farewell to Captain Delano
forever. Why decline the invitation to visit the sealer that evening? Or was the Span-
iard less hardened than the Jew, who refrained not from supping at the board of
him whom the same night he meant to betray? What imported all those day-long
enigmas and contradictions, except they were intended to mystify, preliminary to
some stealthy blow? Atufal, the pretended rebel, but punctual shadow, that mo-
ment lurked by the threshold without. Who, by his own confession, had stationed him there? Was the negro now lying in wait?

The Spaniard behind—his creature before: to rush from darkness to light was the
involuntary choice.

The next moment, with clenched jaw and hand, he passed Atufal, and stood un-
harmed in the light. As he saw his trim ship lying peacefully at anchor; and almost
within ordinary call; as he saw his household boat, with familiar faces in it, patiently
rising and falling, on the short waves by the San Dominick’s side; and then, glancing
about the decks where he stood, saw the oakum-pickers still gravely plying their
fingers; and heard the low, buzzing whistle and industrious hum of the hatchet-
polishers, still bestirring themselves over their endless occupation; and more than
all, as he saw the benign aspect of nature, taking her innocent repose in the evening;
the screened sun in the quiet camp of the west shining out like the mild light from
Abraham’s tent; as charmed eye and ear took in all these, with the chained figure
of the black, clenched jaw and hand relaxed. Once again he smiled at the phantoms
which had mocked him, and felt something like a tinge of remorse, that, by harbor-
ing them even for a moment, he should, by implication, have betrayed an atheist
doubt of the ever-watchful Providence above.
There was a few minutes’ delay, while, in obedience to his orders, the boat was being hooked along to the gangway. During this interval, a sort of saddened satisfaction stole over Captain Delano, at thinking of the kindly offices he had that day discharged for a stranger. Ah, thought he, after good actions one’s conscience is never ungrateful, however much so the benefited party may be.

Presently, his foot, in the first act of descent into the boat, pressed the first round of the side-ladder; his face presented inward upon the deck. In the same moment, he heard his name courteously sounded; and, to his pleased surprise, saw Don Benito advancing—an unwonted energy in his air, as if, at the last moment, intent upon making amends for his recent discourtesy. With instinctive good feeling, Captain Delano, withdrawing his foot, turned and reciprocally advanced. As he did so, the Spaniard’s nervous eagerness increased, but his vital energy failed; so that, the better to support him, the servant, placing his master’s hand on his naked shoulder, and gently holding it there, formed himself into a sort of crutch.

When the two captains met, the Spaniard again fervently took the hand of the American, at the same time casting an earnest glance into his eyes, but, as before, too much overcome to speak.

I have done him wrong, self-reproachfully thought Captain Delano; his apparent coldness has deceived me: in no instance has he meant to offend.

Meantime, as if fearful that the continuance of the scene might too much unstring his master, the servant seemed anxious to terminate it. And so, still presenting himself as a crutch, and walking between the two captains, he advanced with them towards the gangway; while still, as if full of kindly contrition, Don Benito would not let go the hand of Captain Delano, but retained it in his, across the black’s body.

Soon they were standing by the side, looking over into the boat, whose crew turned up their curious eyes. Waiting a moment for the Spaniard to relinquish his hold, the now embarrassed Captain Delano lifted his foot, to overstep the threshold of the open gangway; but still Don Benito would not let go his hand. And yet, with an agitated tone, he said, “I can go no further; here I must bid you adieu. Adieu, my dear, dear Don Amasa. Go—go!” suddenly tearing his hand loose, “go, and God guard you better than me, my best friend.”

Not unaffected, Captain Delano would now have lingered; but catching the meekly admonitory eye of the servant, with a hasty farewell he descended into his boat, followed by the continual adieus of Don Benito, standing rooted in the gangway.

Seating himself in the stern, Captain Delano, making a last salute, ordered the boat shoved off. The crew had their oars on end. The bowsmen pushed the boat a sufficient distance for the oars to be lengthwise dropped. The instant that was done, Don Benito sprang over the bulwarks, falling at the feet of Captain Delano; at the same time calling towards his ship, but in tones so frenzied, that none in the boat could understand him. But, as if not equally obtuse, three sailors, from three
different and distant parts of the ship, splashed into the sea, swimming after their
captain, as if intent upon his rescue.

The dismayed officer of the boat eagerly asked what this meant. To which, Cap-
tain Delano, turning a disdainful smile upon the unaccountable Spaniard, answered
that, for his part, he neither knew nor cared; but it seemed as if Don Benito had tak-
en it into his head to produce the impression among his people that the boat want-
ed to kidnap him. “Or else—give way for your lives,” he wildly added, starting at a
clattering hubbub in the ship, above which rang the tocsin of the hatchet-polishers;
and seizing Don Benito by the throat he added, “this plotting pirate means murder!”
Here, in apparent verification of the words, the servant, a dagger in his hand, was
seen on the rail overhead, poised, in the act of leaping, as if with desperate fidelity
to befriend his master to the last; while, seemingly to aid the black, the three white
sailors were trying to clamber into the hampered bow. Meantime, the whole host
of negroes, as if inflamed at the sight of their jeopardized captain, impended in one
sooty avalanche over the bulwarks.

All this, with what preceded, and what followed, occurred with such involutions
of rapidity, that past, present, and future seemed one.

Seeing the negro coming, Captain Delano had flung the Spaniard aside, almost
in the very act of clutching him, and, by the unconscious recoil, shifting his place,
with arms thrown up, so promptly grappled the servant in his descent, that with
dagger presented at Captain Delano’s heart, the black seemed of purpose to have
leaped there as to his mark. But the weapon was wrenched away, and the assailant
dashed down into the bottom of the boat, which now, with disentangled oars, be-
gan to speed through the sea.

At this juncture, the left hand of Captain Delano, on one side, again clutched the
half-reclined Don Benito, heedless that he was in a speechless faint, while his right-
foot, on the other side, ground the prostrate negro; and his right arm pressed for
added speed on the after oar; his eye bent forward, encouraging his men to their
utmost.

But here, the officer of the boat, who had at last succeeded in beating off the tow-
ing sailors, and was now, with face turned aft, assisting the bowsman at his oar; sud-
denly called to Captain Delano, to see what the black was about; while a Portuguese
oarsman shouted to him to give heed to what the Spaniard was saying.

Glancing down at his feet, Captain Delano saw the freed hand of the servant aim-
ing with a second dagger—a small one, before concealed in his wool— with this he
was snakishly writhing up from the boat’s bottom, at the heart of his master, his
countenance lividly vindictive, expressing the centred purpose of his soul; while the
Spaniard, half-choked, was vainly shrinking away, with husky words, incoherent to
all but the Portuguese.
That moment, across the long-benighted mind of Captain Delano, a flash of revelation swept, illuminating, in unanticipated clearness, his host’s whole mysterious demeanor; with every enigmatic event of the day, as well as the entire past voyage of the San Dominick. He smote Babo’s hand down, but his own heart smote him harder. With infinite pity he withdrew his hold from Don Benito. Not Captain Delano, but Don Benito, the black, in leaping into the boat, had intended to stab.

Both the black’s hands were held, as, glancing up towards the San Dominick, Captain Delano, now with scales dropped from his eyes, saw the negroes, not in misrule, not in tumult, not as if frantically concerned for Don Benito, but with mask torn away, flourishing hatchets and knives, in ferocious piratical revolt. Like delirious black dervishes, the six Ashanteees danced on the poop. Prevented by their foes from springing into the water, the Spanish boys were hurrying up to the topmost spars, while such of the few Spanish sailors, not already in the sea, less alert, were descried, helplessly mixed in, on deck, with the blacks.

Meantime Captain Delano hailed his own vessel, ordering the ports up, and the guns run out. But by this time the cable of the San Dominick had been cut; and the fag-end, in lashing out, whipped away the canvas shroud about the beak, suddenly revealing, as the bleached hull swung round towards the open ocean, death for the figure-head, in a human skeleton; chalky comment on the chalked words below, “Follow your leader.”

At the sight, Don Benito, covering his face, wailed out: “’Tis he, Aranda! my murdered, unburied friend!”

Upon reaching the sealer, calling for ropes, Captain Delano bound the negro, who made no resistance, and had him hoisted to the deck. He would then have assisted the now almost helpless Don Benito up the side; but Don Benito, wan as he was, refused to move, or be moved, until the negro should have been first put below out of view. When, presently assured that it was done, he no more shrank from the ascent.

The boat was immediately dispatched back to pick up the three swimming sailors. Meantime, the guns were in readiness, though, owing to the San Dominick having glided somewhat astern of the sealer, only the aftermost one could be brought to bear. With this, they fired six times; thinking to cripple the fugitive ship by bringing down her spars. But only a few inconsiderable ropes were shot away. Soon the ship was beyond the gun’s range, steering broad out of the bay; the blacks thickly clustering round the bowsprit, one moment with taunting cries towards the whites, the next with upthrown gestures hailing the now dusky moors of ocean—cawing crows escaped from the hand of the fowler.

The first impulse was to slip the cables and give chase. But, upon second thoughts, to pursue with whale-boat and yawl seemed more promising.

Upon inquiring of Don Benito what firearms they had on board the San Dominick, Captain Delano was answered that they had none that could be used; because,
in the earlier stages of the mutiny, a cabin-passenger, since dead, had secretly put out of order the locks of what few muskets there were. But with all his remaining strength, Don Benito entreated the American not to give chase, either with ship or boat; for the negroes had already proved themselves such desperadoes, that, in case of a present assault, nothing but a total massacre of the whites could be looked for. But, regarding this warning as coming from one whose spirit had been crushed by misery the American did not give up his design.

The boats were got ready and armed. Captain Delano ordered his men into them. He was going himself when Don Benito grasped his arm.

“What! have you saved my life, Señor, and are you now going to throw away your own?”

The officers also, for reasons connected with their interests and those of the voyage, and a duty owing to the owners, strongly objected against their commander’s going. Weighing their remonstrances a moment, Captain Delano felt bound to remain; appointing his chief mate—an athletic and resolute man, who had been a privateer’s-man—to head the party. The more to encourage the sailors, they were told, that the Spanish captain considered his ship good as lost; that she and her cargo, including some gold and silver, were worth more than a thousand doubloons. Take her, and no small part should be theirs. The sailors replied with a shout.

The fugitives had now almost gained an ooffing. It was nearly night; but the moon was rising. After hard, prolonged pulling, the boats came up on the ship’s quarters, at a suitable distance laying upon their oars to discharge their muskets. Having no bullets to return, the negroes sent their yells. But, upon the second volley, Indian-like, they hurtled their hatchets. One took off a sailor’s fingers. Another struck the whale-boat’s bow, cutting off the rope there, and remaining stuck in the gunwale like a woodman’s axe. Snatching it, quivering from its lodgment, the mate hurled it back. The returned gauntlet now stuck in the ship’s broken quarter-gallery, and so remained.

The negroes giving too hot a reception, the whites kept a more respectful distance. Hovering now just out of reach of the hurtling hatchets, they, with a view to the close encounter which must soon come, sought to decoy the blacks into entirely disarming themselves of their most murderous weapons in a hand-to-hand fight, by foolishly flinging them, as missiles, short of the mark, into the sea. But, ere long, perceiving the stratagem, the negroes desisted, though not before many of them had to replace their lost hatchets with handspikes; an exchange which, as counted upon, proved, in the end, favorable to the assailants.

Meantime, with a strong wind, the ship still clove the water; the boats alternately falling behind, and pulling up, to discharge fresh volleys.

The fire was mostly directed towards the stern, since there, chiefly, the negroes, at present, were clustering. But to kill or maim the negroes was not the object. To take
them, with the ship, was the object. To do it, the ship must be boarded; which could not be done by boats while she was sailing so fast.

A thought now struck the mate. Observing the Spanish boys still aloft, high as they could get, he called to them to descend to the yards, and cut adrift the sails. It was done. About this time, owing to causes hereafter to be shown, two Spaniards, in the dress of sailors, and conspicuously showing themselves, were killed; not by volleys, but by deliberate markman’s shots; while, as it afterwards appeared, by one of the general discharges, Atufal, the black, and the Spaniard at the helm likewise were killed. What now, with the loss of the sails, and loss of leaders, the ship became unmanageable to the negroes.

With creaking masts, she came heavily round to the wind; the prow slowly swinging into view of the boats, its skeleton gleaming in the horizontal moonlight, and casting a gigantic ribbed shadow upon the water. One extended arm of the ghost seemed beckoning the whites to avenge it.

“Follow your leader!” cried the mate; and, one on each bow, the boats boarded. Sealing-spears and cutlasses crossed hatchets and hand-spikes. Huddled upon the long-boat amidships, the negresses raised a wailing chant, whose chorus was the clash of the steel.

For a time, the attack wavered; the negroes wedging themselves to beat it back; the half-repelled sailors, as yet unable to gain a footing, fighting as troopers in the saddle, one leg sideways flung over the bulwarks, and one without, plying their cutlasses like carters’ whips. But in vain. They were almost overborne, when, rallying themselves into a squad as one man, with a huzza, they sprang inboard, where, entangled, they involuntarily separated again. For a few breaths’ space, there was a vague, muffled, inner sound, as of submerged sword-fish rushing hither and thither through shoals of black-fish. Soon, in a reunited band, and joined by the Spanish seamen, the whites came to the surface, irresistibly driving the negroes toward the stern. But a barricade of casks and sacks, from side to side, had been thrown up by the main-mast. Here the negroes faced about, and though scorning peace or truce, yet fain would have had respite. But, without pause, overleaping the barrier, the unflagging sailors again closed. Exhausted, the blacks now fought in despair. Their red tongues lolled, wolf-like, from their black mouths. But the pale sailors’ teeth were set; not a word was spoken; and, in five minutes more, the ship was won.

Nearly a score of the negroes were killed. Exclusive of those by the balls, many were mangled; their wounds—mostly inflicted by the long-edged sealing-spears, resembling those shaven ones of the English at Preston Pans, made by the poled scythes of the Highlanders. On the other side, none were killed, though several were wounded; some severely, including the mate. The surviving negroes were temporarily secured, and the ship, towed back into the harbor at midnight, once more lay anchored.
Omitting the incidents and arrangements ensuing, suffice it that, after two days spent in refitting, the ships sailed in company for Conception, in Chili, and thence for Lima, in Peru; where, before the vice-regal courts, the whole affair, from the beginning, underwent investigation.

Though, midway on the passage, the ill-fated Spaniard, relaxed from constraint, showed some signs of regaining health with free-will; yet, agreeably to his own foreboding, shortly before arriving at Lima, he relapsed, finally becoming so reduced as to be carried ashore in arms. Hearing of his story and plight, one of the many religious institutions of the City of Kings opened an hospitable refuge to him, where both physician and priest were his nurses, and a member of the order volunteered to be his one special guardian and consoler, by night and by day.

The following extracts, translated from one of the official Spanish documents, will, it is hoped, shed light on the preceding narrative, as well as, in the first place, reveal the true port of departure and true history of the San Dominick’s voyage, down to the time of her touching at the island of St. Maria.

But, ere the extracts come, it may be well to preface them with a remark.

The document selected, from among many others, for partial translation, contains the deposition of Benito Cereno; the first taken in the case. Some disclosures therein were, at the time, held dubious for both learned and natural reasons. The tribunal inclined to the opinion that the deponent, not undisturbed in his mind by recent events, raved of some things which could never have happened. But subsequent depositions of the surviving sailors, bearing out the revelations of their captain in several of the strangest particulars, gave credence to the rest. So that the tribunal, in its final decision, rested its capital sentences upon statements which, had they lacked confirmation, it would have deemed it but duty to reject.

* * * * *

I, DON JOSE DE ABOS AND PADILLA, His Majesty’s Notary for the Royal Revenue, and Register of this Province, and Notary Public of the Holy Crusade of this Bishopric, etc.

Do certify and declare, as much as is requisite in law, that, in the criminal cause commenced the twenty-fourth of the month of September, in the year seventeen hundred and ninety-nine, against the negroes of the ship San Dominick, the following declaration before me was made:

Declaration of the first witness, DON BENITO CERENO.

The same day, and month, and year; His Honor, Doctor Juan Martinez de Rozas, Councilor of the Royal Audience of this Kingdom, and learned in the law of this Intendency, ordered the captain of the ship San Dominick, Don Benito Cereno, to appear; which he did, in his litter, attended by the monk Infelez; of whom he received the oath, which he took by God, our Lord, and a sign of the Cross; under which he promised to tell the truth of whatever he should know and should be asked;—and being interrogated agreeably to the tenor of the act commencing the process,
he said, that on the twentieth of May last, he set sail with his ship from the port of Valparaiso, bound to that of Callao; loaded with the produce of the country beside thirty cases of hardware and one hundred and sixty blacks, of both sexes, mostly belonging to Don Alexandro Aranda, gentleman, of the city of Mendoza; that the crew of the ship consisted of thirty-six men, beside the persons who went as passengers; that the negroes were in part as follows:

[Here, in the original, follows a list of some fifty names, descriptions, and ages, compiled from certain recovered documents of Aranda's, and also from recollections of the deponent, from which portions only are extracted.]

—One, from about eighteen to nineteen years, named José, and this was the man that waited upon his master, Don Alexandro, and who speaks well the Spanish, having served him four or five years; *** a mulatto, named Francesco, the cabin steward, of a good person and voice, having sung in the Valparaiso churches, native of the province of Buenos Ayres, aged about thirty-five years. *** A smart negro, named Dago, who had been for many years a grave-digger among the Spaniards, aged forty-six years. *** Four old negroes, born in Africa, from sixty to seventy, but sound, calkers by trade, whose names are as follows:—the first was named Muri, and he was killed (as was also his son named Diamelo); the second, Nacta; the third, Yola, likewise killed; the fourth, Ghofan; and six full-grown negroes, aged from thirty to forty-five, all raw, and born among the Ashantees—Matilqui, Yan, Leche, Mapenda, Yambaio, Akim; four of whom were killed; *** a powerful negro named Atufal, who being supposed to have been a chief in Africa, his owner set great store by him. *** And a small negro of Senegal, but some years among the Spaniards, aged about thirty, which negro's name was Babo; *** that he does not remember the names of the others, but that still expecting the residue of Don Alexandra's papers will be found, will then take due account of them all, and remit to the court; *** and thirty-nine women and children of all ages.

[The catalogue over, the deposition goes on]

*** That all the negroes slept upon deck, as is customary in this navigation, and none wore fetters, because the owner, his friend Aranda, told him that they were all tractable; *** that on the seventh day after leaving port, at three o'clock in the morning, all the Spaniards being asleep except the two officers on the watch, who were the boatswain, Juan Robles, and the carpenter, Juan Bautista Gayete, and the helmsman and his boy, the negroes revolted suddenly, wounded dangerously the boatswain and the carpenter, and successively killed eighteen men of those who were sleeping upon deck, some with hand-spikes and hatchets, and others by throwing them alive overboard, after tying them; that of the Spaniards upon deck, they left about seven, as he thinks, alive and tied, to manœuvre the ship, and three or four more, who hid themselves, remained also alive. Although in the act of revolt the negroes made themselves masters of the hatchway, six or seven wounded went through it to the cockpit, without any hindrance on their part; that during the act of revolt, the mate and another person, whose name he does not recollect, attempted to come up through the hatchway, but being quickly wounded, were obliged to return to the cabin; that the deponent resolved at break of day to come up the companion-way, where the negro Babo was, being the ringleader; and Atufal, who assisted him, and having spoken to them, exhorted them to cease committing such atrocities, asking them, at the same time, what they wanted and intended to do, offering, himself, to obey their commands;
that notwithstanding this, they threw, in his presence, three men, alive and tied, overboard; that they told the deponent to come up, and that they would not kill him; which having done, the negro Babo asked him whether there were in those seas any negro countries where they might be carried, and he answered them, No; that the negro Babo afterwards told him to carry them to Senegal, or to the neighboring islands of St. Nicholas; and he answered, that this was impossible, on account of the great distance, the necessity involved of rounding Cape Horn, the bad condition of the vessel, the want of provisions, sails, and water; but that the negro Babo replied to him he must carry them in any way; that they would do and conform themselves to everything the deponent should require as to eating and drinking; that after a long conference, being absolutely compelled to please them, for they threatened to kill all the whites if they were not, at all events, carried to Senegal, he told them that what was most wanting for the voyage was water; that they would go near the coast to take it, and thence they would proceed on their course; that the negro Babo agreed to it; and the deponent steered towards the intermediate ports, hoping to meet some Spanish, or foreign vessel that would save them; that within ten or eleven days they saw the land, and continued their course by it in the vicinity of Nasca; that the deponent observed that the negroes were now restless and mutinous, because he did not effect the taking in of water, the negro Babo having required, with threats, that it should be done, without fail, the following day; he told him he saw plainly that the coast was steep, and the rivers designated in the maps were not to be found, with other reasons suitable to the circumstances; that the best way would be to go to the island of Santa Maria, where they might water easily, it being a solitary island, as the foreigners did; that the deponent did not go to Pisco, that was near, nor make any other port of the coast, because the negro Babo had intimated to him several times, that he would kill all the whites the very moment he should perceive any city, town, or settlement of any kind on the shores to which they should be carried: that having determined to go to the island of Santa Maria, as the deponent had planned, for the purpose of trying whether, on the passage or near the island itself, they could find any vessel that should favor them, or whether he could escape from it in a boat to the neighboring coast of Arruco, to adopt the necessary means he immediately changed his course, steering for the island; that the negroes Babo and Atufal held daily conferences, in which they discussed what was necessary for their design of returning to Senegal, whether they were to kill all the Spaniards, and particularly the deponent; that eight days after parting from the coast of Nasca, the deponent being on the watch a little after day-break, and soon after the negroes had their meeting, the negro Babo came to the place where the deponent was, and told him that he had determined to kill his master, Don Alexandro Aranda, both because he and his companions could not otherwise be sure of their liberty, and that to keep the seamen in subjection, he wanted to prepare a warning of what road they should be made to take did they or any of them oppose him; and that, by means of the death of Don Alexandro, that warning would best be given; but, that what this last meant, the deponent did not at the time comprehend, nor could not, further than that the death of Don Alexandro was intended; and moreover the negro Babo proposed to the deponent to call the mate Raneds, who was sleeping in the cabin, before the thing was done, for fear; as the deponent understood it, that the mate, who was a good navigator, should be killed with Don Alexandro and the rest; that the deponent, who was the friend, from youth, of Don Alexandro, prayed and conjured, but all was useless; for the negro Babo answered him that the thing could not be prevented, and that all the Spaniards risked their death if they should attempt to frustrate his will in this matter, or any other; that, in this conflict, the deponent called the mate, Raneds, who
was forced to go apart, and immediately the negro Babo commanded the Ashantee Martinqui and the Ashantee Lecbe to go and commit the murder; that those two went down with hatchets to the berth of Don Alexandro; that, yet half alive and mangled, they dragged him on deck; that they were going to throw him overboard in that state, but the negro Babo stopped them, bidding the murder be completed on the deck before him, which was done, when, by his orders, the body was carried below, forward; that nothing more was seen of it by the deponent for three days; *** that Don Alonzo Sidonia, an old man, long resident at Valparaiso, and lately appointed to a civil office in Peru, whither he had taken passage, was at the time sleeping in the berth opposite Don Alexandro’s; that awakening at his cries, surprised by them, and at the sight of the negroes with their bloody hatchets in their hands, he threw himself into the sea through a window which was near him, and was drowned, without it being in the power of the deponent to assist or take him up; *** that a short time after killing Aranda, they brought upon deck his german-cousin, of middle-age, Don Francisco Masa, of Mendoza, and the young Don Joaquin, Marques de Aramboalaza, then lately from Spain, with his Spanish servant Ponce, and the three young clerks of Aranda, José Mozairi Lorenzo Bargas, and Hermenegildo Gandix, all of Cadiz; that Don Joaquin and Hermenegildo Gandix, the negro Babo, for purposes hereafter to appear, preserved alive; but Don Francisco Masa, José Mozairi, and Lorenzo Bargas, with Ponce the servant, beside the boatswain, Juan Robles, the boatswain’s mates, Manuel Viscaya and Rodergo Hurt, and four of the sailors, the negro Babo ordered to be thrown alive into the sea, although they made no resistance, nor begged for anything else but mercy; that the boatswain, Juan Robles, who knew how to swim, kept the longest above water, making acts of contrition, and, in the last words he uttered, charged this deponent to cause mass to be said for his soul to our Lady of Succor: *** that, during the three days which followed, the deponent, uncertain what fate had befallen the remains of Don Alexandro, frequently asked the negro Babo where they were, and, if still on board, whether they were to be preserved for interment ashore, entreating him so to order it; that the negro Babo answered nothing till the fourth day, when at sunrise, the deponent coming on deck, the negro Babo showed him a skeleton, which had been substituted for the ship’s proper figure-head—the image of Christopher Colon, the discoverer of the New World; that the negro Babo asked him whose skeleton that was, and whether, from its whiteness, he should not think it a white’s; that, upon discovering his face, the negro Babo, coming close, said words to this effect: “Keep faith with the blacks from here to Senegal, or you shall in spirit, as now in body, follow your leader;” pointing to the prow; *** that the same morning the negro Babo took by succession each Spaniard forward, and asked him whose skeleton that was, and whether, from its whiteness, he should not think it a white’s; that each Spaniard covered his face; that then to each the negro Babo repeated the words in the first place said to the deponent; *** that they (the Spaniards), being then assembled aft, the negro Babo harrangued them, saying that he had now done all; that the deponent (as navigator for the negroes) might pursue his course, warning him and all of them that they should, soul and body, go the way of Don Alexandro, if he saw them (the Spaniards) speak, or plot anything against them (the negroes)—a threat which was repeated every day; that, before the events last mentioned, they had tied the cook to throw him overboard, for it is not known what thing they heard him speak, but finally the negro Babo spared his life, at the request of the deponent; that a few days after, the deponent, endeavoring not to omit any means to preserve the lives of the remaining whites, spoke to the negroes peace and tranquillity, and agreed to draw up a paper, signed by the deponent and the sailors who could write, as also by the negro Babo, for himself and all the blacks,
in which the deponent obliged himself to carry them to Senegal, and they not to kill any more, and he formally to make over to them the ship, with the cargo, with which they were for that time satisfied and quieted. ** But the next day, the more surely to guard against the sailors’ escape, the negro Babo commanded all the boats to be destroyed but the long-boat, which was unseaworthy, and another, a cutter in good condition, which knowing it would yet be wanted for towing the water casks, he had it lowered down into the hold.

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[Various particulars of the prolonged and perplexed navigation ensuing here follow, with incidents of a calamitous calm, from which portion one passage is extracted, to wit.]

—That on the fifth day of the calm, all on board suffering much from the heat, and want of water; and five having died in fits, and mad, the negroes became irritable, and for a chance gesture, which they deemed suspicious—though it was harmless—made by the mate, Raneds, to the deponent in the act of handing a quadrant, they killed him; but that for this they afterwards were sorry, the mate being the only remaining navigator on board, except the deponent.

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—That omitting other events, which daily happened, and which can only serve uselessly to recall past misfortunes and conflicts, after seventy-three days’ navigation, reckoned from the time they sailed from Nasca, during which they navigated under a scanty allowance of water, and were afflicted with the calms before mentioned, they at last arrived at the island of Santa Maria, on the seventeenth of the month of August, at about six o’clock in the afternoon, at which hour they cast anchor very near the American ship, Bachelor’s Delight, which lay in the same bay, commanded by the generous Captain Amasa Delano; but at six o’clock in the morning, they had already descried the port, and the negroes became uneasy, as soon as at distance they saw the ship, not having expected to see one there; that the negro Babo pacified them, assuring them that no fear need be had; that straightway he ordered the figure on the bow to be covered with canvas, as for repairs and had the decks a little set in order; that for a time the negro Babo and the negro Atufal conferred; that the negro Atufal was for sailing away, but the negro Babo would not, and, by himself, cast about what to do; that at last he came to the deponent, proposing to him to say and do all that the deponent declares to have said and done to the American captain; ******** that the negro Babo warned him that if he varied in the least, or uttered any word, or gave any look that should give the least intimation of the past events or present state, he would instantly kill him, with all his companions, showing a dagger, which he carried hid, saying something which, as he understood it, meant that that dagger would be alert as his eye; that the negro Babo then announced the plan to all his companions, which pleased them; that he then, the better to disguise the truth, devised many expedients, in some of them uniting deceit and defense; that of this sort was the device of the six Ashantees before named, who were his braves; that them he stationed on the break of the poop, as if to clean certain hatchets (in cases, which were part of the cargo), but in reality to use them, and distribute them at need, and at a given word he told them; that, among other devices, was the device of presenting Atufal, his right hand man, as chained, though in a moment the chains could be dropped; that in every
particular he informed the deponent what part he was expected to enact in every device, and what story he was to tell on every occasion, always threatening him with instant death if he varied in the least: that, conscious that many of the negroes would be turbulent, the negro Babo appointed the four aged negroes, who were calkers, to keep what domestic order they could on the decks; that again and again he harangued the Spaniards and his companions, informing them of his intent, and of his devices, and of the invented story that this deponent was to tell; charging them lest any of them varied from that story; that these arrangements were made and matured during the interval of two or three hours, between their first sighting the ship and the arrival on board of Captain Amasa Delano; that this happened about half-past seven o’clock in the morning, Captain Amasa Delano coming in his boat, and all gladly receiving him; that the deponent, as well as he could force himself, acting then the part of principal owner, and a free captain of the ship, told Captain Amasa Delano, when called upon, that he came from Buenos Ayres, bound to Lima, with three hundred negroes; that off Cape Horn, and in a subsequent fever, many negroes had died; that also, by similar casualties, all the sea officers and the greatest part of the crew had died.

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And so the deposition goes on, circumstantially recounting the fictitious story dictated to the deponent by Babo, and through the deponent imposed upon Captain Delano; and also recounting the friendly offers of Captain Delano, with other things, but all of which is here omitted. After the fictitious story, etc. the deposition proceeds:

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—that the generous Captain Amasa Delano remained on board all the day, till he left the ship anchored at six o’clock in the evening, deponent speaking to him always of his pretended misfortunes, under the fore-mentioned principles, without having had it in his power to tell a single word, or give him the least hint, that he might know the truth and state of things; because the negro Babo, performing the office of an officious servant with all the appearance of submission of the humble slave, did not leave the deponent one moment; that this was in order to observe the deponent’s actions and words, for the negro Babo understands well the Spanish; and besides, there were thereabout some others who were constantly on the watch, and likewise understood the Spanish; that upon one occasion, while deponent was standing on the deck conversing with Amasa Delano, by a secret sign the negro Babo drew him (the deponent) aside, the act appearing as if originating with the deponent; that then, he being drawn aside, the negro Babo proposed to him to gain from Amasa Delano full particulars about his ship, and crew, and arms; that the deponent asked “For what?” that the negro Babo answered he might conceive; that, grieved at the prospect of what might overtake the generous Captain Amasa Delano, the deponent at first refused to ask the desired questions, and used every argument to induce the negro Babo to give up this new design; that the negro Babo showed the point of his dagger; that, after the information had been obtained the negro Babo again drew him aside, telling him that that very night he (the deponent) would be captain of two ships, instead of one, for that, great part of the American’s ship’s crew being to be absent fishing, the six Ashantees, without any one else, would easily take it; that at this time he said other things to the same purpose; that no entreaties availed; that, before Amasa Delano’s coming on board, no hint had been given touch-
ing the capture of the American ship: that to prevent this project the deponent was powerless; * * *—that in some things his memory is confused, he cannot distinctly recall every event; * * —that as soon as they had cast anchor at six of the clock in the evening, as has before been stated, the American Captain took leave, to return to his vessel; that upon a sudden impulse, which the deponent believes to have come from God and his angels, he, after the farewell had been said, followed the generous Captain Amasa Delano as far as the gunwale, where he stayed, under pretense of taking leave, until Amasa Delano should have been seated in his boat; that on shoving off, the deponent sprang from the gunwale into the boat, and fell into it, he knows not how, God guarding him; that—

** ***

[Here, in the original, follows the account of what further happened at the escape, and how the San Dominick was retaken, and of the passage to the coast; including in the recital many expressions of "eternal gratitude" to the "generous Captain Amasa Delano." The deposition then proceeds with recapitulatory remarks, and a partial re-numeration of the negroes, making record of their individual part in the past events, with a view to furnishing, according to command of the court, the data whereon to found the criminal sentences to be pronounced. From this portion is the following;]

—That he believes that all the negroes, though not in the first place knowing to the design of revolt, when it was accomplished, approved it. * * * That the negro, José, eighteen years old, and in the personal service of Don Alexandro, was the one who communicated the information to the negro Babo, about the state of things in the cabin, before the revolt; that this is known, because, in the preceding midnight, he use to come from his berth, which was under his master’s, in the cabin, to the deck where the ringleader and his associates were, and had secret conversations with the negro Babo, in which he was several times seen by the mate; that, one night, the mate drove him away twice; * * that this same negro José was the one who, without being commanded to do so by the negro Babo, as Lecbe and Martinqui were, stabbed his master, Don Alexandro, after he had been dragged half-lifeless to the deck; * * that the mulatto steward, Francesco, was of the first band of revolters, that he was, in all things, the creature and tool of the negro Babo; that, to make his court, he, just before a repast in the cabin, proposed, to the negro Babo, poisoning a dish for the generous Captain Amasa Delano; this is known and believed, because the negroes have said it; but that the negro Babo, having another design, forbade Francesco; * * that the Ashantee Lecbe was one of the worst of them; for that, on the day the ship was retaken, he assisted in the defense of her, with a hatchet in each hand, with one of which he wounded, in the breast, the chief mate of Amasa Delano, in the first act of boarding; this all knew; that, in sight of the deponent, Lecbe struck, with a hatchet, Don Francisco Masa, when, by the negro Babo’s orders, he was carrying him to throw him overboard, alive, beside participating in the murder, before mentioned, of Don Alexandro Aranda, and others of the cabin-passengers; that, owing to the fury with which the Ashantees fought in the engagement with the boats, but this Lecbe and Yan survived; that Yan was bad as Lecbe; that Yan was the man who, by Babo’s command, willingly prepared the skeleton of Don Alexandro, in a way the negroes afterwards told the deponent, but which he, so long as reason is left him, can never divulge; that Yan and Lecbe were the two who, in a calm by night, riveted the skeleton to the bow; this also the negroes told him; that the negro Babo was he who traced the inscription
below it; that the negro Babo was the plotter from first to last; he ordered every murder; and
was the helm and keel of the revolt; that Atufal was his lieutenant in all; but Atufal, with his own
hand, committed no murder; nor did the negro Babo; ** that Atufal was shot, being killed in the
fight with the boats, ere boarding; ** that the negresses, of age, were knowing to the revolt, and
testified themselves satisfied at the death of their master, Don Alejandro; that, had the negroes
not restrained them, they would have tortured to death, instead of simply killing, the Spaniards
slain by command of the negro Babo; that the negresses used their utmost influence to have the
deponent made away with; that, in the various acts of murder, they sang songs and danced—
not gaily, but solemnly; and before the engagement with the boats, as well as during the action,
they sang melancholy songs to the negroes, and that this melancholy tone was more inflaming
than a different one would have been, and was so intended; that all this is believed, because the
negroes have said it.—that of the thirty-six men of the crew, exclusive of the passengers (all of
whom are now dead), which the deponent had knowledge of, six only remained alive, with four
cabin-boys and ship-boys, not included with the crew; **—that the negroes broke an arm of
one of the cabin-boys and gave him strokes with hatchets.

[Then follow various random disclosures referring to various periods of time. The
following are extracted;]

—That during the presence of Captain Amasa Delano on board, some attempts were made by
the sailors, and one by Hermenegildo Gandix, to convey hints to him of the true state of affairs;
but that these attempts were ineffectual, owing to fear of incurring death, and, futhermore,
owing to the devices which offered contradictions to the true state of affairs, as well as owing
to the generosity and piety of Amasa Delano incapable of sounding such wickedness; *** that
Luys Galgo, a sailor about sixty years of age, and formerly of the king's navy, was one of those
who sought to convey tokens to Captain Amasa Delano; but his intent, though undiscovered,
being suspected, he was, on a pretense, made to retire out of sight, and at last into the hold,
and there was made away with. This the negroes have since said; *** that one of the ship-boys
feeling, from Captain Amasa Delano's presence, some hopes of release, and not having enough
prudence, dropped some chance-word respecting his expectations, which being overheard and
understood by a slave-boy with whom he was eating at the time, the latter struck him on the
head with a knife, inflicting a bad wound, but of which the boy is now healing; that likewise,
not long before the ship was brought to anchor, one of the seamen, steering at the time, endan-
gered himself by letting the blacks remark some expression in his countenance, arising from a
cause similar to the above; but this sailor, by his heedful after conduct, escaped; *** that these
statements are made to show the court that from the beginning to the end of the revolt, it was
impossible for the deponent and his men to act otherwise than they did; **—that the third
clerk, Hermenegildo Gandix, who before had been forced to live among the seamen, wearing a
seaman's habit, and in all respects appearing to be one for the time; he, Gandix, was killed by a
musket ball fired through mistake from the boats before boarding; having in his fright run up
the mizzen-rigging, calling to the boats—"don't board," lest upon their boarding the negroes
should kill him; that this inducing the Americans to believe he some way favored the cause
of the negroes, they fired two balls at him, so that he fell wounded from the rigging, and was
drowned in the sea; ***—that the young Don Joaquin, Marques de Aramboalaza, like Hermene-
gildo Gandix, the third clerk, was degraded to the office and appearance of a common seaman;
that upon one occasion when Don Joaquin shrank, the negro Babo commanded the Ashantee Lecbe to take tar and heat it, and pour it upon Don Joaquin's hands; **—that Don Joaquin was killed owing to another mistake of the Americans, but one impossible to be avoided, as upon the approach of the boats, Don Joaquin, with a hatchet tied edge out and upright to his hand, was made by the negroes to appear on the bulwarks; whereupon, seen with arms in his hands and a questionable altitude, he was shot for a renegade seaman; **—that on the person of Don Joaquin was found secreted a jewel, which, by papers that were discovered, proved to have been meant for the shrine of our Lady of Mercy in Lima; a votive offering, beforehand prepared and guarded, to attest his gratitude, when he should have landed in Peru, his last destination, for the safe conclusion of his entire voyage from Spain; **—that the jewel, with the other effects of the late Don Joaquin, is in the custody of the brethren of the Hospital de Sacerdotes, awaiting the disposition of the honorable court; **—that, owing to the condition of the deponent, as well as the haste in which the boats departed for the attack, the Americans were not forewarned that there were, among the apparent crew, a passenger and one of the clerks disguised by the negro Babo; **—that, beside the negroes killed in the action, some were killed after the capture and re-anchoring at night, when shackled to the ring-bolts on deck; that these deaths were committed by the sailors, ere they could be prevented. That so soon as informed of it, Captain Amasa Delano used all his authority, and, in particular with his own hand, struck down Martinez Gola, who, having found a razor in the pocket of an old jacket of his, which one of the shackled negroes had on, was aiming it at the negro's throat; that the noble Captain Amasa Delano also wrenched from the hand of Bartholomew Barlo a dagger, secreted at the time of the massacre of the whites, with which he was in the act of stabbing a shackled negro, who, the same day, with another negro, had thrown him down and jumped upon him; **—that, for all the events, befalling through so long a time, during which the ship was in the hands of the negro Babo, he cannot here give account; but that, what he has said is the most substantial of what occurs to him at present, and is the truth under the oath which he has taken; which declaration he affirmed and ratified, after hearing it read to him.

He said that he is twenty-nine years of age, and broken in body and mind; that when finally dismissed by the court, he shall not return home to Chili, but betake himself to the monastery on Mount Agonia without; and signed with his honor, and crossed himself, and, for the time, departed as he came, in his litter; with the monk Infelez, to the Hospital de Sacerdotes.

BENITO CERENO.

DOCTOR ROZAS.

If the Deposition have served as the key to fit into the lock of the complications which precede it, then, as a vault whose door has been flung back, the San Dominick's hull lies open to-day.

Hitherto the nature of this narrative, besides rendering the intricacies in the beginning unavoidable, has more or less required that many things, instead of being set down in the order of occurrence, should be retrospectively, or irregularly given; this last is the case with the following passages, which will conclude the account:
During the long, mild voyage to Lima, there was, as before hinted, a period during which the sufferer a little recovered his health, or, at least in some degree, his tranquillity. Ere the decided relapse which came, the two captains had many cordial conversations—their fraternal unreserve in singular contrast with former withdrawals.

Again and again it was repeated, how hard it had been to enact the part forced on the Spaniard by Babo.

"Ah, my dear friend," Don Benito once said, "at those very times when you thought me so morose and ungrateful, nay, when, as you now admit, you half thought me plotting your murder, at those very times my heart was frozen; I could not look at you, thinking of what, both on board this ship and your own, hung, from other hands, over my kind benefactor. And as God lives, Don Amasa, I know not whether desire for my own safety alone could have nerved me to that leap into your boat, had it not been for the thought that, did you, unenlightened, return to your ship, you, my best friend, with all who might be with you, stolen upon, that night, in your hammocks, would never in this world have wakened again. Do but think how you walked this deck, how you sat in this cabin, every inch of ground mined into honeycombs under you. Had I dropped the least hint, made the least advance towards an understanding between us, death, explosive death—yours as mine—would have ended the scene."

"True, true," cried Captain Delano, starting, "you have saved my life, Don Benito, more than I yours; saved it, too, against my knowledge and will."

"Nay, my friend," rejoined the Spaniard, courteous even to the point of religion, "God charmed your life, but you saved mine. To think of some things you did—those smilings and chattings, rash pointings and gesturings. For less than these, they slew my mate, Raneds; but you had the Prince of Heaven’s safe-conduct through allambuscades."

"Yes, all is owing to Providence, I know: but the temper of my mind that morning was more than commonly pleasant, while the sight of so much suffering, more apparent than real, added to my good-nature, compassion, and charity, happily interweaving the three. Had it been otherwise, doubtless, as you hint, some of my interferences might have ended unhappily enough. Besides, those feelings I spoke of enabled me to get the better of momentary distrust, at times when acuteness might have cost me my life, without saving another's. Only at the end did my suspicions get the better of me, and you know how wide of the mark they then proved."

"Wide, indeed," said Don Benito, sadly; "you were with me all day; stood with me, sat with me, talked with me, looked at me, ate with me, drank with me; and yet, your last act was to clutch for a monster, not only an innocent man, but the most pitiable of all men. To such degree may malign machinations and deceptions impose. So far may even the best man err, in judging the conduct of one with the recesses of whose
condition he is not acquainted. But you were forced to it; and you were in time undeceived. Would that, in both respects, it was so ever, and with all men."

“You generalize, Don Benito; and mournfully enough. But the past is passed; why moralize upon it? Forget it. See, yon bright sun has forgotten it all, and the blue sea, and the blue sky; these have turned over new leaves.”

“Because they have no memory,” he dejectedly replied; “because they are not human.”

“But these mild trades that now fan your cheek, do they not come with a human-like healing to you? Warm friends, steadfast friends are the trades.”

“With their steadfastness they but waft me to my tomb, Señor,” was the foreboding response.

“You are saved,” cried Captain Delano, more and more astonished and pained; “you are saved: what has cast such a shadow upon you?”

“The negro.”

There was silence, while the moody man sat, slowly and unconsciously gathering his mantle about him, as if it were a pall.

There was no more conversation that day.

But if the Spaniard’s melancholy sometimes ended in muteness upon topics like the above, there were others upon which he never spoke at all; on which, indeed, all his old reserves were piled. Pass over the worst, and, only to elucidate let an item or two of these be cited. The dress, so precise and costly, worn by him on the day whose events have been narrated, had not willingly been put on. And that silver-mounted sword, apparent symbol of despotic command, was not, indeed, a sword, but the ghost of one. The scabbard, artificially stiffened, was empty.

As for the black—whose brain, not body, had schemed and led the revolt, with the plot—his slight frame, inadequate to that which it held, had at once yielded to the superior muscular strength of his captor in the boat. Seeing all was over, he uttered no sound, and could not be forced to. His aspect seemed to say, since I cannot do deeds, I will not speak words. Put in irons in the hold, with the rest, he was carried to Lima. During the passage, Don Benito did not visit him. Nor then, nor at any time after, would he look at him. Before the tribunal he refused. When pressed by the judges he fainted. On the testimony of the sailors alone rested the legal identity of Babo.

Some months after, dragged to the gibbet at the tail of a mule, the black met his voiceless end. The body was burned to ashes; but for many days, the head, that hive of subtlety, fixed on a pole in the Plaza, met, unabashed, the gaze of the whites; and across the Plaza looked towards St. Bartholomew’s church, in whose vaults slept
then, as now, the recovered bones of Aranda: and across the Rimac bridge looked towards the monastery, on Mount Agonia without; where, three months after being dismissed by the court, Benito Cereno, borne on the bier; did, indeed, follow his leader.
Appendix A - Prosody & Poetic Technique

Rhythm & Meter

Poetry is distinguished not only by intensity of meaning and significance but also by rhythm. Originally, poems were meant to be chanted or sung, sometimes with dance accompaniment. Rhythm can be created in many ways. Each poem is a unique combination of techniques. Some of these are:

- **Rhyme** (not only at the end of lines, but also within and between)
- **Line Length** (enjambed or end-stopped)
- **Caesura** (pauses or spaces within lines)
- **Repetition of vowel or consonant sounds** (assonance & consonance)
- **Repetition of words or phrases** (cadence & anaphora)
- **Pattern of accented and unaccented syllables**

The aspect of rhythm which consists of syllables, stress, and length of lines is termed **Meter** (measure). The meter of a poem is usually classified in one of four ways:

1. **Accentual-Syllabic**: traditional meter based on patter of stressed and unstressed syllables.
2. **Syllabic**: number of syllables in each line
3. **Accentual**: number of stressed syllables in each line (often in combination with repetition of vowels or consonants)
4. **Free Verse**: This term means that the poem is free of traditional rhythm, not free of rhythm. The free-verse poem must have a unique rhythm, often based on a pattern of ideas or a combination of traditional forms.

**Scansion**

The process of determining the meter of a poem is called Scansion.

To ‘scan’ a poem, follow these steps:

1. Read the poem with natural expression
2. Mark stressed and unstressed syllables in several lines
3. Look for patterns and stresses
4. Count syllables in each line for several lines
5. Look for consistent patterns of syllables
6. Decide the type of rhythm (syllabic, accentual-syllabic, etc.)

**Determining the Rhythm of a Poem**

After deciding on the type of meter, note the presence or absence of the following:

- Rhyme
- Repeated vowel or consonant sounds (alliteration, assonance)
- Repeated words or phrases
- Spacing of words or lines
- Particular sounds of words (including onomatopoeia)
- Any other feature which affects the sound of the poem

**Poetic Feet or Scansion**

Scansions pertain to accentual-syllabic meter. In order to describe the meter of an accentual-syllabic poem, you must have a working definition of the most common types of poetic feet. These are based on the most frequent patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables found in English speech and writing.

**Types of Poetic Feet**

1. **Iambus (Iambic Foot):** two syllables, unstressed followed by stress
   
   Example: return, review, about
   
   Iambic line: “I like to see it lap the miles
   
   And lick the valleys up.”

2. **Trochee (Trochaic Foot):** two syllables, stress followed by unstressed.
   
   Example: any, future, never
   
   Trochaic line: “Tiger, tiger, burning bright . . .”

3. **Anapest (Anapestic Foot):** thee syllables, stress on the last.
   
   Example: “In the still of the night.”

4. **Dactyl (Dactylic Foot):** one stress followed by two unstressed syllables.
   
   Example: elephant, anyone, beautiful
   
   Dactylic line: “Down in the valley so beautiful.”

5. **Spondee:** two syllables, both stressed
   
   Example: campground, picnic, white boy
   
   Note: A spondee line is impossible, or nearly so.
6. **Pyrrhic Foot**: two unstressed syllables.  
Note: a pyrrhic line is impossible, or nearly so.

**Effects of Feet**

1. **Iambic line** – close to rhythm of speech; therefore the most common foot.  
2. **Trochaic line** – somewhat heavier than normal speech; emphatic.  
3. **Anaplectic or dactylic line** – waltzing rhythm; fast  
4. **Spondee** – very strong emphasis; heavy, plodding, slow.  
5. **Pyrrhic** – very fast and very unemphatic; weak.  

Regular and Substituted Feet

The most commonly repeated foot in the poem is the **regular foot** and determines the meter; however, most poets vary the meter from time to time. These variations are called **substitutions**. Spondee and Pyrrhic feet can only be used as substitutions. An incomplete foot is called an **imperfect foot**.

**Line Length**

After establishing the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables and, secondly, the dominant foot, you are ready to determine the line length, which follows a simple formula:

- **Dimeter** – two metrical feet per line  
- **Trimeter** – three metric feet per line  
- **Tetrameter** – four metric feet per line  
- **Pentameter** – five metric feet per line  
- **Hexameter** – six metric feet per line  
- **Heptameter** – seven metric feet per line  
- **Octameter** – eight metric feet per line

Count substituted or imperfect feet (incomplete) feet as full feet. If the lines vary in length, give the pattern of line lengths. If the pattern is tetrameter-trimeter in stanzas of four lines, simply label the poem a **ballad**.

Example:

“Till Serpahs swing their snowy Hats—  
And Saints—to windows run—  
To see the little Tippler  
Leaning against the—sun—“
The third line is iambic tetrameter with an imperfect foot beginning with the last syllable of *tippler*. Note also the carefully placed substitution in the fourth line. Many of Emily Dickinson’s poems are written in ballad stanzas such as this one, but with sophisticated rhythm and rhyme.

Substituted and imperfect feet create *counterpoint* within an accentual-syllabic poem and prevent the rhythm from becoming sing-song.

**Elision** occurs when two syllables are slurred together in natural reading so as th serve as one. For example,

You’d think I never had felt before  
The weight of an ax-head poised aloft, . . .

Frost intends for us to elide the syllables of *never* and *of an*. Note also the spondee at ‘head poised.’

Scansion should also note caesura, endstopped lines, or enjambment.

**Metaphor, Simile**

One of many techniques used to make poetry intensive, musical, and significant, metaphor can be defined as an unusual, unconventional, or illogical comparison. Metaphor can be expressed in many grammatical ways, excluding like or as. Simile is actually a type of metaphor restricted to like or as used to make the comparison.

**Examples:**

*Love is blue* (popular song of 1967)  
*My love is like a red, red rose* (simile)

Note that not all metaphor is expressed with the verb ‘to be.’

**Appositives:**

*Prayer, the church’s banquet, angel’s age,*  
*God’s breath in man returning to his birth,*  
*The soul in paraphrase, heart in pilgrimage,*  
*The Christian plummet sounding heaven and earth . . .*

--George Herbert
Prepositional Phrases:

*A mind of winter*

*Complacencies of the peignoir*

--Wallace Stevens

Verbs, verbals:

*The sea growled assult on the wave-bitten shore*

--Untermeyer

Piled-up metaphors:

*The old South Boston Aquarium stands
In a Sahara of snow now.*

--Robert Lowell

**Extended metaphor (conceit)** is one which runs through more than one line of a poem. Emily Dickinson’s puzzle poems, such as “I Like to See it Lap the Miles,” are examples of extended metaphor.

Note that metaphor and simile are often found in cliché and colorful but uncouth or socially unacceptable (and especially illogical) expressions:

--busy as a bee
--slow as molasses in January
--a party animal
--“that test was hard as (insert expletive).”

Do not confuse metaphor and simile with related but distinct figures of speech, such as personification, symbol, and oxymoron.

**Figures of Speech**

Figures of speech are devices used by writers, including poets, to expand the suggestiveness, capacity, and power of language. Metaphor and simile are the most common tropes, but many others can be identified.
Some of the other frequently found tropes include:

**Personification** – Attributing human qualities to non-human beings or objects.

Example: In Frost’s “Stopping By Woods on a Snowy Evening,” the horse is attributed with human characteristics (“He gives his harness bells a shake/To ask if there is some mistake”)

Note: Giving animate qualities to inanimate things does not qualify as personification.

Ships, countries, and hurricanes are typically personified.

**Oxymoron** – A briefly stated paradox, a contradiction which makes sense. Examples: cold fire, sweet sorrow, bittersweet

“I taste a liquor never brewed” – Emily Dickinson

**Symbol** – A tangible object or quality which represents a number of intangible or abstract ideas, concepts, or principles.

Many symbols are standardized to some degree. The rose is a symbol of love, passion, beauty, and romance. Religion employs standard symbols, such as the dove, which symbolizes the Holy Spirit.

Symbol is related to metaphor, but the significance of a symbol is more elaborate than that of metaphor.

**Synecdoche** – Reference to a part or stand for the whole, or the individual for the group, or the group for the individual.

Examples:

Republicans now have the upper hand in Congress.
The coach gave the team a good word after the game.

**Metonymy** – Reference to something, an idea or quality, by means of a related feature, thing, or quality. This trope is considered the opposite of metaphor.

Examples:

Try not to eat sweets before a meal.
The pilot steered us high into the blue.
Denotations and Connotations of words - Poets are particularly careful to select words with the right related meanings, or shades of suggestion, to fit the theme and feeling of a poem. Compare and contrast the connotations of synonyms, such as pig and swine, fair and equitable, truth and fact.

Synesthesia – Describing one sense in terms of another, or mixing the senses. Do not confuse with Oxymoron (briefly stated paradox).

Examples:

“deafening sight” – Austin
She felt my eyes upon her.
Warm green, hard sounds, blue mood

Apostrophe – address (questioning or dialogue) to non-human or inanimate objects. Do not confuse with personification.

Examples:

“With ow sad steps, O Moon, thou climb’st at the skies.”
William Blake apostrophizes the tiger throughout “The Tiger.”

Hyperbole – exaggeration

Example: “Great wonder of wonders!”

Litotes – Understatement

Example:

“Oedipus, thou unhappy man.” (Spoken to the title character of Oedipus Rex after he has recently learned that he unwittingly murdered his biological father and is married to his biological mother.)

Anaphora – Repetition of words, phrases, or clauses; similar to musical cadence or refrain.

“I looked upon the scene before me– upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain– upon the bleak walls– upon the vacant eye-like windows– upon a few rank sedges– and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees…” (Poe)

-Dr. Wayne Batten
Appendix B - Glossary of Poetic Terms

Alexandrine – An iambic hexameter line of poetry.

Allegory – A narrative or description having a second meaning beneath the surface one.

Alliteration – The repetition at close intervals of the initial consonant sounds of accented syllables.

Allusion – A reference, explicit or implicit, to something in previous literature or history.

Amphibrach – A relatively uncommon type of metrical foot consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by one accented syllable and then another unaccented syllable (example: from Swinburne’s “Dolores” – “Ah, feed me and fill me with pleasure”).

Amphimacer (or Cretic) – A relatively uncommon type of metrical foot consisting of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable and then by another accented syllable (example: love is best).

Anapestic – A type of metrical foot consisting of two unaccented syllables followed by one accented syllable (example: ‘understand’).

Anaphora – Repetition of words, phrases, or clauses; similar to musical cadence or refrain.

Apostrophe – A figure of speech in which someone absent or dead or something not human is addressed as if it were alive and present and could reply.

Approximate rhyme – a term used for words in a rhyming pattern that have some kind of sound correspondence but are not perfect rhymes.

Assonance – the repetition at close intervals of the vowel sounds of accented syllables or important words (example: hat-ran-amber; vein-made).

Aubade – a love lyric in which the speaker complains about the arrival of the dawn, when he must part from his lover.
Bacchius (or Bacchic) – a relatively uncommon type of metrical foot consisting of an unaccented syllable followed by two accented syllables (example: some late lark).

Ballad – a fairly short narrative poem written in a songlike stanzaic form. The most common form is a quatrain of alternating four- and three-stress iambic lines, with the second and fourth lines rhyming. Often the ballad will employ a refrain – that is, the last line of each stanza will be identical or similar.

Blank verse – unrhymed iambic pentameter.

Cacophony – a harsh, discordant, unpleasant-sounding choice and arrangement of sounds.

Caesura – 1) a pause introduced into the reading of a line by a mark of punctuation. Also known as a grammatical pause, it does not affect scansion. 2) a natural pause, unmarked by punctuation, introduced into the reading of a line by its phrasing or syntax. Also known as a rhetorical pause, it does not affect scansion.

Cinquain – a five-line stanza.

Conceit – an extended metaphor that compares and links two apparently unrelated subjects in an unexpected combination; a philosophically intricate comparison.

Connotation – what a word suggests beyond its basic definition; a word’s overtones of meaning.

Consonance – the repetition at close intervals of the final consonant sounds of accented syllables or important words (example: book-plaque-thicker).

Couplet – two successive lines, usually in the same meter, often linked by rhyme (rhyming couplet).

Cretic – see Amphimacer

Dactylic – a type of meter consisting of one accented syllable followed by two unaccented syllables (example: merr-i-ly).

Denotation – the basic definition or dictionary meaning of a word.

Didactic poetry – poetry having as a primary purpose to teach or preach.
Dimeter – a metrical line consisting of two feet.

Double rhyme – a rhyme in which the repeated vowel sound is in the second-to-last syllable of the words involved (example: politely-sprightly-brightly); one form of feminine rhyme.

Dramatic monologue – a poem consisting of a self-revealing speech delivered by one person to a silent listener (example: Poe’s “The Raven”).

Elizabethan sonnet- see English sonnet.

End rhyme – rhyme that occurs at the ends of lines.

End-stopped line – a line that ends with a natural speech pause, usually marked by punctuation.

Enjambment – see run-on line.

Elegy – a poem commemorating someone’s death.

English (or Shakespearian) sonnet – a sonnet rhyming ababcdcdefefgg. Its content or structure ideally parallels the rhyme scheme, falling into three coordinate quatrains and a concluding couplet; but it is often structured, like the Italian sonnet, into octave and sestet, the principal break in thought coming at the end of the eighth line.

Explication – a careful line-by-line explanation of a passage in a poem or of an entire poem.

Feminine rhyme – a rhyme in which the repeated accented vowel is in either the second or third last syllable of the words involved (example: ceiling-appealing; hurrying-scurrying).

Figurative language - language employing figures of speech; language that cannot be taken literally or only literally.

Figure of speech – broadly, any way of saying something other than the ordinary way; more narrowly, a way of saying one thing and meaning another.

Foot – the basic unit used in the scansion or measurement of verse. A foot usually contains one accented syllable and one or two unaccented syllables, but the monosyllabic foot (the spondaic foot) is an exception.
Form – the structure or organization of the work that gives it unity, through arrangement, rhyme scheme, number of lines, etc. Different forms of poetry include haiku, sonnet, ode, elegy, lyric, epic, and many others.

Free verse – poetry that does not have regular rhythm, rhyme, or standard form.

Grammatical Pause – see Caesura.

Heptameter – a metrical line containing seven feet.

Heptastich – a seven-line stanza.

Heroic couplet – two successive lines of iambic pentameter.

Hexameter – a metrical foot containing six feet.

Hyperbole (or Overstatement) – a figure of speech in which exaggeration is used in the service of truth.

Iambic – a type of metrical foot consisting of one unaccented syllable followed by an accented syllable (example: re-hearse).

Imagery – language that appeals to the senses.

Imperfect Rhyme – see Approximate Rhyme

Internal rhyme – a rhyme in which one or both of the rhyme-words occur within the line.

Irony – a situation, or a use of language, involving some kind of incongruity or discrepancy. Three kinds of irony are as follows: 1) Verbal irony: a figure of speech in which what is meant is the opposite of what is said. 2) Dramatic irony: a device by which the author implies a different meaning from that intended by the speaker (or by a speaker) in a literary work. 3) Situational irony: a situation in which there is an incongruity between actual circumstances and those that would seem appropriate or between what is anticipated and what actually comes to pass.

Italian (or Petrarchan) sonnet – a sonnet consisting of an octave rhyming abbaabba and of a sestet using an arrangement of two or three additional rhymes, such as cdcde or cdecde. The content is divided typically as follows: question-answer, problem-solution, description-response.
Litotes (or Understatement) – a figure of speech that consists of saying less than one means, or of saying what one means with less force than the occasion warrants.

Lyric poetry – poetry that expresses a feeling or emotion.

Masculine rhyme (also known as Single Rhyme) – a rhyme in which the repeated accented vowel sound is in the final syllable of the words involved (example: dance-pants, scald-recalled).

Metaphor – a figure of speech in which an implicit comparison is made between two things essentially unlike.

Meter – regularized rhythm; an arrangement of language in which the accents occur as apparently equal intervals in time. Types include iambic, trochaic, anapestic, dactylic.

Metonymy – a figure of speech in which some significant aspect or detail closely related to an experience or thing is used in the place of the experience or thing itself (example: “I drank the glass of milk,” meaning the contents of the glass; “The White House said today . . . ,” meaning a spokesperson for the President).

Monometer – a metrical line consisting of one foot.

Near Rhyme – see Approximate Rhyme.

Octameter – a metrical line consisting of eight feet.

Octave – 1) an eight-line stanza. 2) the first eight lines of a sonnet, especially one structured in the manner of an Italian sonnet.

Ode – a long, serious lyric focusing on a stated theme.

Onomatopoeia – the use of words that supposedly mimic their meaning in their sound (example: boom, click, plop, whisper).

Ottava rima – a particular specialized stanzaic form composed of eight lines rhyming abababcc and written in iambic pentameter.

Oxymoron – a compact paradox, one in which two successive words apparently contradict each other (example: icy hot, jumbo shrimp).
Paradox – a statement or situation containing apparently contradictory or incompatible elements (example: “The child is father to the man”); an apparent contradiction that actually may contain a universal truth.

Paraphrase – a restatement of the content of a poem designed to make its prose meaning as clear as possible.

Pentameter – a metrical line consisting of five feet.

Persona – the speaker in a poem.

Personification – a figure of speech in which human attributes are given to an animal, object, or concept.

Petrarchan sonnet – see Italian Sonnet.

Prose – non-metrical language; the opposite of verse.

Prosody – the study of sound and rhythm in poetry. Other equally descriptive words are metrics, versification, and mechanics of verse.

Pun – a play on words (ex: “To England will I steal, and there will I steal.”)

Pyrrhic – two unaccented syllables together, as in “of the.” This serves as a substitute for iambic and trochaic feet and does not serve as a metrical norm.

Quatrain – 1) a four-line stanza. 2) a four-line division of a sonnet marked off by its rhyme scheme.

Refrain – a repeated word, phrase, line, or group of lines, normally at some fixed position in a poem written in stanzaic form.

Rhetorical pause – see Caesura.

Rhythm – any wavelike recurrence of motion or sound.

Rhyme (Rime) – the repetition of the accented vowel sound and all succeeding sounds in important or importantly positioned words (example: old-cold, vane-reign, court-report, order-recorders). The above definition refers to perfect rhyme and assumes that the accented vowel sounds involved are preceded by differing consonant sounds. If the preceding consonant sound is the same (example: manse-romance, style-stile), or if there is no preceding consonant sound in either word (example: aisle-isle, alter-altar), or if the same word is repeated in the rhyming position (example: hill-hill), the
words are called identical rhymes. Both perfect rhymes and identical rhymes are to be distinguished from approximate rhymes.

Rhyme royal – a stanza composed of seven lines written in iambic pentameter and rhyming ababbcc.

Rhyme scheme – any fixed pattern of rhymes characterizing a whole poem or its stanzas.

Run-on line – a line that has no natural speech pause at its end, allowing the sense to flow uninterruptedly into the succeeding line (also known as enjambment).

Sarcasm – bitter or cutting speech; speech intended by its speaker to give pain to the person addressed.

Satire – a kind of literature that ridicules human folly or vice with the purpose of bringing about reform or of keeping others from falling into similar folly or vice.

Scansion – the process of measuring verse, that is, of marking accented and unaccented syllables, dividing the lines into feet, identifying the metrical pattern, and noting significant variations from that pattern.

Septet – a seven-line stanza.

Sestet – 1) a six-line stanza. 2) the last six lines of a sonnet structured on the Italian model.

Sestina – a poem of thirty-nine lines written in iambic pentameter. Its six-line stanzas repeat in an intricate and prescribed order the six last words of each line in the opening stanza. After the sixth stanza, there is a three-line envoi (or envoy), which uses the six repeating words.

Shakespearian Sonnet – see English Sonnet.

Simile – a figure of speech in which an explicit comparison is made between two things essentially unlike. The comparison is made explicit by the use of some such word or phrase as like, as, than, similar to, resembles, or seems.

Single rhyme – see Masculine Rhyme.

Slant Rhyme – see Approximate Rhyme.
Spenserian stanza – a stanza composed of nine lines, the first eight of which are written in iambic pentameter while the last or ninth line is written in iambic hexameter; the stanza rhymes ababcbccc.

Synesthesia – figurative language in which one sense impression is described in terms of another (example: “hot pink” or “blue uncertain stumbling buzz”).

Sonnet – a fixed form of fourteen lines, normally iambic pentameter, with a rhyme scheme conforming to or approximating one of two main types – the Italian or the English.

Spondee – a metrical foot consisting of two syllables equally or almost equally accented (for example: true blue).

Stanza – a group of lines whose metrical pattern (and usually its rhyme scheme as well) is repeated throughout a poem.

Symbol – a figure of speech in which something (object, person, situation, or action) means more than what it is. A symbol, in other words, may be read both literally and metaphorically.

Synechdoche – a figure of speech in which a part is used for the whole (example: all hands on deck – represents the entire crew).

Tercet (or triplet) – a three-line stanza.

Terza rima – a verse form consisting of tercets, usually in iambic pentameter with an interlaced rhyme scheme (as aba, bcb, ded).

Tetrameter – a metrical line containing four feet.

Theme – the central idea of a literary work.

Tone – the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward his subject, his audience, or himself; the emotional coloring, or emotional meaning, of a work.

Trimeter – a metrical line consisting of three feet.

Triple meter – a meter in which a majority of the feet contain three syllables. Anapestic and dactylic are both triple meters.

Triple rhyme – a rhyme in which the repeated accented vowel sound is in the third last syllable of the words involved (example: gainfully-disdainfully); one form of feminine rhyme.
Trochaic meter – a type of meter consisting of one accented syllable followed by an unaccented syllable (example: bar-ter).

Verse – 1) metrical language; the opposite of prose. 2) a line of poetry.

Versification – the mechanics of poetic composition, including such elements as rhyme, rhythm, meter, and stanza form.

Villanelle – a French verse form of nineteen lines (of any length) divided into six stanzas – five tercets and a final quatrain—employing two rhymes and two refrains. The refrains consist of lines one (repeated as lines six, twelve, and eighteen) and three (repeated as lines nine, fifteen, and nineteen).


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