

## THREE NOTCHES FROM THE DEVIL'S TAIL ;

OR,

## THE MAN IN THE SPANISH CLOAK.

A TALE OF "ST. LUKE'S."

I HAD often met with him before in my travels, and had been much struck with the peculiar acumen of his remarks whenever we entered into conversation. His observations were witty, pungent, and sarcastic; but replete with knowledge of men and things. He seemed to despise book-knowledge of every kind, and argued that it only tended to mislead. "I have good reason to be satisfied on this point," he said to me one day at Vienna. "History is not to be relied on; a fact is told a hundred different ways; the actions of men are misrepresented, their motives more so; and as for travels, and descriptions of countries, manners, customs, &c. I have found out that they are the most absurd things in the world,—mere fables and fairy tales. Never waste your time on such trash!"

I again met this gentleman in Paris; it was at a *salon d'écarté*; and he amused me much by informing me of the names and circumstances of the most distinguished persons present. Whether English, French, or Germans, he knew something of the private history of each, some ridiculous adventure or silly *contre-tems*. I marvelled how he could have collected so great a store, such as it was, of anecdote and information; how he carried it all in remembrance; and, still more, at the perfect *sang-froid* with which he detailed these things under the very noses of the persons concerned, who would, had they heard them, no doubt have made as many holes in his body with "penetrating lead" as there are in a cullender.

To avoid getting into any scrape myself, I invited this *well-informed* gentleman to spend an evening with me at my hotel, where, over a bottle of claret, we might discuss some of those amusing matters, more, at least, to my own ease. Before we separated, I pointed out a certain Englishman to him, who was playing high, and did not notice us: I asked him "If he knew anything respecting that gentleman?" I had my private reasons for asking this question, unnecessary now to mention, and was pleased to find my colloquial friend knew, as they say, "all about him;" so we parted, with a promise on his side that on the following evening he would visit me, and give me every particular.

He came punctually to appointment, but I could not prevail on him to put off his large Spanish cloak, what they call technically "*an all-rounder*;" he complained of cold, said he had been accustomed to a *warm climate*, and sat down just opposite to me, when, without hesitation, in a sort of business-like way, he entered at once into the details I most wished to know respecting the young Englishman we had left at the *salon d'écarté*; and left no doubt on my mind, from some circumstances I already knew respecting him, that the account was most veracious. I fell into a fit of musing in consequence of his narration, which he did not interrupt by a single remark; but, fixing his eyes upon me, seemed to be amusing himself with watching the progress of my thoughts.

“It will never do!” said I, forgetting I was not alone; “he is not worthy of her.”

I stopped, and the stranger rose, gave me a peculiar significant look, and was retiring, but I would not permit it; and, apologising for my abstraction, insisted that he should finish the bottle with me: so he sat down again, and we tried to converse as before, but it would not do.

There we sat, facing each other, and both nearly silent; and now it was that I remembered I had never once seen this stranger without this same Spanish cloak,—a very handsome one it is true, richly embroidered, and decorated with Genoese velvet, and a superb clasp and chain of the purest gold and finest workmanship. I pondered on this circumstance, as I recollected that even in Italy and the Ionian islands, where I had before met him by some extraordinary chance, as well as at Constantinople and at Athens, he had always been enveloped in this same most magnificent mantle. At last I thought of the fable of the man, the sun, and the wind; so concluded that he wore this Spanish cloak to guard him equally from heat and cold, to exclude the sun’s rays and the winter’s winds; or, perhaps, I argued, he wears it to conceal the seedy appearance of his inner garments, or sundry deficiencies of linen, &c. “Things will wear out, and linen will lose its snowy whiteness, but what the devil have I to do with the matter? Let him wear his cloak, and sleep in it too, if it please him; why should I trouble my head about it?”

“You are returning to England soon, sir,” said, at length, the cloaked stranger (but I am certain that I had not intimated such intention to him); “I am proceeding there myself on some pressing business, and will do myself the honour of there renewing our acquaintance.”

I paused and hesitated ere I replied to this proposition. It is one thing to invite an agreeable stranger to drink a bottle of claret with you at an hotel in Paris, and another to bring him to the sanctuary of your home, to the fireside of an Englishman, to the board of your ancestors, to suffer him to gaze freely on the faces of your sisters, and to pay his court at his ease to every other female relative beneath the paternal roof!

The stranger saw my embarrassment, and seemed to penetrate the cause. He gave me a smile of most inexplicable expression as he said,

“Your late father, Sir George F——, and myself, were old acquaintances. We spent some months together at Rome, and met with a few adventures there, which I dare say have never reached the ears of his son.”

This was said in his usual sarcastic way; but I could not endure that he should allude in the slightest manner of disrespect to my deceased father; so I answered, with much reserve, and some sign of displeasure, “That I did not wish to pry into the youthful follies of so near a relative; at the same time I thought it odd I never should have heard my father mention that he had formed any particular intimacy with any one at Rome, but, on the contrary, had even been given to understand that all his recollections of the Eternal City were rather of an *unpleasing* nature.”

“Did he never mention to you the baths of Caracalla?” demanded my strange guest; “but it matters little, for the son of Sir George F—— merits every attention from me *on his own account*, as well as for the sake of *another*——” He did not finish the sentence; but, folding his cloak more closely round him, he made me a profound bow, something between an Eastern salaam and the bow of a dancing-master, and politely took his leave.

For two or three days I thought much of this extraordinary man; but after that time I became so deeply interested in a Platonic *liaison* with Madame de R——, the beautiful wife of a Parisian banker, that I forgot him altogether. I had to read, as well as to write, sentimental *billets-doux* sometimes twice a day, for so often they passed between my fair Platonist and myself. I had to select all her books, her flowers, and to choose her ribbons. I know not how it might have ended, for affairs began to wear a very critical aspect; but I was summoned to England by an express. My beloved mother was dangerously ill. I tore myself away, disregarding of the tears that gathered in the brightest pair of eyes in the world, and travelled post-haste to Calais.

Scarcely had I put my foot on the deck of the vessel ere I perceived my acquaintance of the Spanish cloak. There he was, walking up and down the deck,—tall, erect, gentlemanly; there was his magnificent cloak, without a wrinkle or a spot, the gloss still on it. I sat still, and watched him, not without a sensation of annoyance, as I was not at all in the humour just then to enter into conversation. I was uneasy respecting the life of an only parent, and I had just parted with one of the prettiest women in France, at the moment, too, when we both wished Platonism in the same place its founder was, dead and buried; but I might have saved myself the trouble of being annoyed, for the stranger did not seem to recognise me, nor wish to speak to any one. His carriage was lofty and reserved; his eye was proud, and sought to *overlook* the rest of the passengers as unworthy of its notice; and so marked was his avoidance of myself, that I began to feel piqued, and to imagine that my own personal appearance, if not our former knowledge of each other, might have gained for me the honour of his notice. Never before did I see so imperious an eye, or so magnificent a cloak!

The passage was a very boisterous one; and all the passengers, both male and female, began to show evident signs enough that the human animal was never intended by Nature to ride upon the ocean's billows. Strange sounds were heard from the very depths of human stomachs, as if in response to the roaring of the winds and the dashing of the waves! I began to sympathise most sincerely with the unhappy sufferers; for such sights and sounds are sure to affect the feelings of those who both see and hear. In short, I began to look grave, and become squeamish. I saw nothing but livid lips and blue cheeks around me,—a perfect pandæmonium of wretchedness; yet there walked the stately man in the cloak, perfectly unmoved in countenance and stomach. I perceived he had lighted a cigar, which glowed of a bright red colour, and threw a glow over his handsome features.

I grew still worse, and my disorder was coming to its climax, when

the eye of the stranger for the first time condescended to notice me, and he bowed ceremoniously, with a smile which seemed to say, "I wish you joy, young man, of your sea-sickness!" I turned from him, and sincerely wished him in the same condition as myself and the other victims of the wrath of Neptune. He advanced towards me.

"You look ill, sir!" he exclaimed. "Take the advice of an old sailor; only try one of my cigars; *they are not of common use*; one or two whiffs will drive away your nausea. I never knew them fail."

Now I loathe smoking at all times; it is a vulgar and idle amusement, fit only, as a modern writer says, for "the swell-mob;" but at this moment the thought of it was execrable. I could have hurled the stranger, when he offered me one of his cigars already ignited, into the sea.

"I never smoke, sir," said I, pettishly, "and I always get as far away as I can from those who do. May I thank you to go a little to the windward?"

"My dear sir, do not be obstinate," said the pertinacious stranger; "we have many hours before we shall touch the shore, for you see both wind and tide are against us. I assure you the remedy is always efficacious;" and he handed me a lighted cigar, immediately under my nose.

I snatched at the burning preparation, and flung it overboard, with an exclamation of no gentle kind; it dropped into the boiling waves, making a noise like a hissing red-hot iron, as it is put by the smith into the water of the stone cistern.

"It is not of the slightest consequence," said my tormentor, affecting to believe I had dropped the cigar by accident, "I have plenty more in my case;" and with the most provoking coolness he lighted another from his own, and presented it to me. I was puzzled what to do, for the courtesy of this man was extreme. I was exceedingly sick, and wished to get rid of him; for who likes to have a witness during the time of Nature's distress? I therefore accepted his cigar, and turned from him, with a very equivocal bow of acknowledgement.

There was something of a very refreshing nature in the smell of this extraordinary-looking cigar, which was burning steadily in my hand. I resolved to try its boasted efficacy; and accordingly put it to my lips, and inhaled its fragrance. In a moment I was well, more than well; for a delicious languor seized me. After that, my nerves were braced, invigorated; I felt as a hunter does after a long day's sport, hungry almost to famine, and I descended to the saloon, and called lustily to the steward to bring me a cold fowl, a plate of ham, and a bottle of porter. No more nausea, no more livid lips and blue cheeks. All of a sudden I became eloquent, poetical, and brimful of the tender passion. I wished to console some of my fair companions who were languishing around me, and offered my cigar to all who would accept it. Had it not been for an occasional thought of my mother's illness, which would intrude upon me whether I wished it or not, what folly and entanglement might I have got into with a pretty milliner on board, just returned from Paris, with fashions in her head, and French levity in her heart!

I ought to have acknowledged my obligation to the stranger for his

remedy; but I had conceived so insuperable a dislike to him, that I could not account for it, and my only wish was to escape from his society at Dover, as I feared he would offer to accompany me to London, and I could hardly refuse him after the service he had rendered me. I therefore lingered below some few minutes when we arrived, and looked cautiously around me when I ascended the companion-ladder; but the stranger was gone. I saw no trace of his august person then, or his superb Spanish cloak.

I hastened on with four horses to — Square, and met my weeping sisters. My mother still breathed; but that was all. The physicians could not comprehend her malady, but agreed to call it a general debility, an exhaustion of the vital energies, without any particular complaint. She was extremely weak, but knew me instantly, and smiled her welcome as I knelt and kissed her hand.

My mother was only of the middle age, which made it more strange that physical weakness should thus overpower her. I inquired at what time she was first seized; and on reference to my notebook, found out that her first appearance of illness was at the *precise hour* when the stranger in the Spanish cloak was sitting with me at my hotel, and talking to me of my father. Well! what of that? it was a mere chance!

It is no use disguising it. I am naturally superstitious. We can no more help the frailties of our minds than the blemishes of our features. As I sat by my declining mother's side, I pondered again and again on this mysterious stranger. I recollected how he had cured me of my sickness in a moment; how wonderfully he knew the private history of every individual; and I ended by believing that there was something of a supernatural agency about him. "Perhaps," thought I, starting up suddenly, and speaking aloud, "perhaps this wonderful cigar of his might recover my beloved mother." I searched every pocket, hoping that a remnant of it might have remained: but, no; it had been whiffed away by the ladies in the cabin, and I had not a vestige left.

When once an idea seizes hold on the mind, it scarcely ever lets go its hold. I began to consider myself mad, yet could not prevent myself from going out I knew not whither, to make inquiries for the cloaked stranger, and request him to give me another of his marvellous cigars. As I passed Louisa and Emily, my sisters, and —, now no more, they were alarmed by the wildness of my looks, and endeavoured to arrest my progress.

"I go to seek a remedy for my mother," exclaimed I, breaking from them, and I darted from the house.

I made inquiries at all the principal hotels and club-houses for the stranger in the magnificent cloak. The waiters at the Oriental, the Travellers, and the Albion, had all seen him, but knew not his address or name. I sought him in the parks, at the exhibitions; but could not find him. At length I thought of the British Museum, but *why* I did so appears to me most mysterious; I drove instantly thither, and ran through all the rooms with the most searching gaze. In George the Fourth's splendid library there, seated at his ease by special permission from Sir Henry Ellis, I beheld the man I sought, with a large folio volume of Eastern learning spread open before him.

I felt ashamed to address him ; for, had I not been most uncourteous, most repulsive to him ? and now I wanted another favour. I stood before the table at which he sat, and watched his countenance as he seemed engrossed with his Oriental literature ; but it was only for a moment, for he raised his eyes by some sudden impulse, and fixed them straight upon me.

The stranger acknowledged me not even by a bow or a look of recognition. I knew not what to say to him, yet the case was urgent.

“Pardon me, sir,” I stammered out, “I fear I interrupt you ; but——”

“Proceed, sir,” said the stranger, coldly. “I am always ready to listen to the son of Sir George F——, for I owe to the father some obligation.”

“You possess the power of allaying the most tormenting sickness by some mysterious drug or preparation,” I said, hesitating as I spoke : “that was no common cigar. Have you other remedies ?”

“A thousand,” replied the stranger. “Pray go on.”

“My mother lies dangerously ill ; can you restore her ?”

“May I behold the patient ?” demanded the stranger, and an inexpressible glance flashed from his brilliant eyes.

What made me tremble at this natural request ? for such it might have been deemed, since every medical man has free liberty to inquire into the symptoms of the case before he prescribes.

Fixedly did his eyes rest on mine ; they seemed as if turned to stone, for they moved not in the slightest degree.

“I will *describe* my mother’s case to you, sir,” I said, evasively.

He made me no answer ; but, casting down his eyes, he calmly resumed his reading, and I walked up and down the spacious apartment, in which there were not above a dozen other persons, in a state of mind resembling a chaos, occasionally glancing with angry eyes at the reading stranger, who seemed perfectly composed, and unconscious of my presence.

“What a fool am I !” said I, mentally ; “what *harm* can this man do my dying mother ? but, then, *she* may see him—this being that resembles a demi-god—and *she* too of so peculiar a mind, so enamoured of all that is great and wonderful ; so romantic, too ! Wretch that I am ! is my beloved mother’s life to be sacrificed—at least the chance of saving her—to a wild and jealous fantasy ? No !” and I walked up again to the table.

The stranger was rising as I approached him, had closed his book, and returned it to the librarian. He would have passed me, but I laid my hand upon his arm.

“Most extraordinary being !” said I, “*come*, I conjure you, and save my mother !”

He entered my carriage without saying a word, and silently followed me to the apartment of my languishing parent, who was dozing in a sort of lethargic stupor, that appeared to be the precursor of death. My two sisters stood gazing on her pale features, and —— was holding her thin white hand in one of hers, and bathing it with her tears.

The stranger took my mother’s hand from hers, and—I cannot be mistaken, for I watched every movement—some strong agitation,

some convulsive spasm, passed over his countenance as he looked upon that face which never had its equal yet on earth; but, whatever was his emotion, he soon mastered it, and desired that a silver plate and lamp might be brought to him.

From a small crystal box the stranger took out a brown preparation, and, breaking it in two, placed them on the silver plate; then with a slip of paper lighted from the lamp he ignited the substance so placed, which sent up a pale blue flame, and a most intoxicating odour. He desired that my mother should be raised in bed, even to a sitting posture, when he placed the blazing plate immediately beneath her nostrils, and some portion of the actual flame entered and curled about her face. My sisters shrieked, but — spake not a word, and I waited the result with agonised impatience.

“She revives! she revives!” exclaimed the latter, “and my blessed aunt will live!”

It was true. Years have gone by, and *my mother is still alive*. Never has she had an hour's illness from that hour. Was I grateful to the stranger for saving a life so prized? No. In my heart I loathed him at the very time he was heaping benefits upon me. And why? I detected a look of wonder, and admiration, and gratitude, and a smile of ineffable beauty directed towards him by one who——

Disguising as well as I was able the hatred that swelled within my heart, I offered to place on the finger of this mysterious visitant a ring of great value, that belonged once to my father. He started as he saw it, and, pressing a secret spring in it that I knew not of, restored it to me.

“It was a present from myself to him at Rome,” he said, and his voice faltered, “for a signal benefit conferred. Behold! there is my own miniature!”

And it was so. Most exquisitely painted was there concealed, a minute resemblance of himself. I now perceived, and I cursed him in my heart for it, that —— retained the ring, after having expressed her astonishment at the fidelity of the likeness. I rudely snatched it from her hand, and threw the ring from me.

“Theodore,” said my mother, “give me that ring. I know full well who it was presented that ring to him who is now no more. Marquis! I must speak to you alone, but not now. Come hither tomorrow. Now, I beseech you, retire!”

How dreadful is it to bear about with us the seeds of insanity. I have felt them shoot and grow within me from my childhood. The fibres had twined about my very being. *I knew* that madness must some time or other scorch my brain; I was full of delusions; I could behold nothing clear with my mental vision. I once heard a learned physician say to my father, “Take care of him, sir. Excitement may drive that boy mad. Do not let him study too much; and, above all, I trust he will never meet with disappointment in any affair of the heart.”

Have I met with such? Let me not think about it, or——*And yet I am not mad now.*

From this time I became gloomy and morose, and always worse whenever this accursed man in the Spanish cloak came to the house, which now was very often. He charmed all but myself. I hated the sound of his voice. My sisters would come and try to soothe me

into sociability and calmness. I repelled them with harshness and severity ; and even when my gentle cousin tried each soft persuasive art to lead me to his presence, I taunted her in the cruellest manner with her hypocrisy, as I chose to call her blandishments, and bade her “go to the fascinating marquis, and heap her witcheries on him.” Nothing could exceed the patience of this devoted being, her sweetness of temper, her angelic forbearance, but my own ferocity and hellish brutality ; yet how did I love her, even when I bitterly reviled her ! Once, when I observed that ring upon her finger, which my mother had permitted her to wear,—that ring, bearing the portrait of *that man*,—I absolutely spurned her from my presence, and wonder now that I did not murder her.

Cloud after cloud obscured the light of reason in my brain, and it was deemed advisable by those who loved me still, notwithstanding my growing malady, to have some one with me night and day, lest I should lay violent hands upon myself, as if a life like mine were worth the caring for.

An intelligent young man, one of my tenants, accepted this painful task, and he performed it with gentleness and fidelity. He soon perceived that I grew more furious when the voice or the name of the Marquis —— met my ears. He mentioned this circumstance to my mother, and from that time the marquis was not permitted to enter the house. I heard of this at first with incredulity, then with complacency. By degrees I grew calmer. I was afterwards shown a letter from the cloaked stranger, dated Rome ; and it confirmed their assertions. I once more enjoyed the society of my family, and basked in the smiles of my beloved cousin. She was all kindness, all attention ; and I began to flatter myself that the ardent love I had borne her from my very boyhood was returned. It was her reserve that before drove me from my country.

To my great astonishment and delight, that young Englishman who had interested me so much in the *salon d'écarté* at Paris, was formally refused by her who was dearer to me than life. He was of ancient family, and of great possessions ; I knew he loved her, and feared he would gain her : but on my saying one day, as if by accident, in her presence, “that I feared S—— gamed high, and consequently was not worthy of the regard of any woman of discretion,” she gave me a smile of ineffable sweetness, and told me, “It was of little consequence to her his frailties or his virtues ; for she had long determined to give him a refusal, and, in fact, had done so before he went to Paris.”

I considered the *manner* of my cousin, more than her mere words, as encouragement to myself, and with all the ardour of my nature declared to her my passion. These were her words in reply : “Theodore, I pretend not to misunderstand you ; and, if it be any comfort to you, believe that I most tenderly return your affection. But, oh, my beloved cousin ! think how you have been afflicted,—and then ask yourself whether I ought to listen to your proposals ? whether you ought to marry ? Theodore, I solemnly promise you that, for your sake, never will I wed another ; but, oh ! ask me not to become your wife whilst you are subject to such a fearful malady.”

In vain I represented to her that my late mental affliction had been caused wholly by my fear of losing her, as I believed that detested



foreigner was exactly the man to charm her, and thus I considered her lost to me for ever.

"This, dear Theodore," she answered, "is one of your delusions. You had no cause why you should form such a preposterous notion, —a man old enough to be my father, and ——"

"That is true," said I, "there is disparity of years; but, then, what a splendid being!"

"Yes," she replied coldly, "he wears a most magnificent cloak."

"Not always, sure?" I asked inquiringly, for I had never entered the room where he was, since he had cured my mother. "Did he not remove it when he dined and drank tea with you so often, and stayed so late, that I could have torn him to pieces for it?"

"Softly, my beloved cousin," said the sweet girl, placing her soft hand before my lips; "why are you so excited now when talking of this stranger? *Your* mother, Theodore, has been restored by him; and for that service what do we not all owe him?"

"Was it for this," I said, "from gratitude alone, you wore that ring?"

"Yes, from gratitude only. Are you now satisfied?"

"Blessings on you, dearest, for your kindness!" I continued. "But say, did you ever see him without that cloak?"

"Never, Theodore, never. It was always too hot or too cold; or he was poorly, or some excuse or other. We never could persuade him to take off that cloak."

I fell into a long reverie after this; nor could I blame her for her decision. I knew myself that my brain was not steady, and consequently I had no right to marry, to entail on my innocent offspring such a calamity. But then this inexplicable stranger;—perhaps he had the power to cure me,—he had already performed almost a miracle; if he could but settle my head, my beloved cousin would become mine, and I should be free from those fears that were constantly besetting me of becoming incurably mad.

Nothing would now do but my immediately setting out for Rome to seek the stranger with the large Spanish cloak. My mother did not think it advisable that I should go alone; so it was determined that she, with Louisa and Emily, accompanied by our sweet relative, should bear me company to Italy, and thither we accordingly went. We lingered not on our progress to look at curiosities, or paintings, or prospects. We journeyed as fast as four horses could carry us, and arrived quite safe at imperial Rome.

I was sorry to learn that the Marquis —— was now at Naples; and, after settling my family in an elegant villa a few miles from modern Rome, I set off in quest of the man for whom I had an antipathy, powerful, incurable; and for what purpose? To request his aid, mysterious, perhaps sinful, to cure me of a disorder, of which the consciousness was part of its calamity. The raving madman, at least, is saved from *knowing* his own misery.

I had not been an hour at Naples, attended by my favourite servant, the young man who once acted to me as my keeper, when I saw from the window of my hotel the cloaked stranger pass with a lady on his arm. But I hesitated not,—I might lose him for ever; so I ran into the street, and hastily accosted him.

What I said to him I know not, for my words were wild and ambi-

guous; but he promised that he would dine with me the following day, although his manners were even more reserved than when I spoke to him at the Museum.

Our instincts ought ever to be attended to; the brute creation follow nothing else, and *they* commit no sin. The first time I saw this stranger, he was looking at an inscription at Athens, and I felt a secret desire to get from his presence; but he entangled me with his talk, his knowledge of everything around, his high bearing, his intelligent eyes, and his superb Spanish cloak.

Again we were seated at the same table, and I again requested him to remove his mantle.

"Not yet," he said significantly; "but after the cloth is removed I will, if you still wish it, take off this upper clothing."

Oh how sarcastically were these words pronounced! My heart beat violently; I could not eat, and became abstracted and melancholy; not a word was said respecting my request to him, nor did he ask me why I sought him. He ate in silence, and seemed to have forgotten he was not alone.

When the table was cleared, the stranger coolly took a book from under his cloak, and began to read; whilst I, pondering on all I had ever known of him, began to feel the most burning desire to see this man once *without* his cloak, and was determined to do my utmost to effect it.

"The cloth is now removed, signor," said I, "and you promised *then* you would take off that everlasting garment."

"It displeases you, then?" retorted my companion. "*Is it not unsafe to penetrate below the exterior of all things? Is not the surface ever the most safe? Is not the outer clothing of nature ever the most beautiful to the eye? What deformity dwells in mines, in caverns, at the bottom of the ocean! Nature wears a cloak as beautiful as mine: do you wish also to strip off her covering as well as mine?*"

"At this moment, signor," said I gloomily, "I was not thinking of Nature at all, but of the strangeness of your ever wearing that cloak."

"Was it for this you came from England, Sir Theodore?" inquired the marquis, "and sought me at Naples? The knowledge, I should deem, could never compensate you for the loss of your cousin's society so many days."

"It was not for this I sought you, noble marquis," I replied, piqued at his irony; "but, when a man ever wears a cloak, it must be for some purpose."

"Granted," slowly said my companion; "I have such purpose."

"Which you promised to unfold!" I exclaimed, with pertinacity. "Is it still your pleasure so to do?"

"*It is necessary first that we should have no intruders,*" he answered, with a tone that froze me to the heart. Oh, how cutting, how sarcastic did it sound in my ears!

"No person will enter this apartment save my faithful servant, Hubert; therefore——"

"I promised to enlighten the master, and not the servant. If you insist on this strange request, the door must be securely locked; there must be no chance of interruption."

"Oh, what a fuss," I thought, "about a mantle! Why, *he* must

be mad too! How can he cure me of an evil he has himself? Lock the door, forsooth, because he takes off his cloak! But I must humour him, I suppose, or he will find an excuse for breach of promise." As I thought this, I walked to the door, locked it, and, placing the key upon the table, merely said, "Now, signor, your promise?"

"Would it not be prudent, young gentleman," he observed, laying his finger on my sleeve, "that you should speak of your request,—that one that brought you hither, and which I should conceive of more importance than the satisfying an idle curiosity,—would it not be wiser of you to mention this previously to my taking off my cloak?"

"Oh, what importance he attaches to so trifling a thing!" thought I; "but, after all, the man is right; I had better attend to the most essential, nor was I wise to couple two requests together."

"Signor Marquis," said I, "have you any cure for insanity?"

"*I cured your father,*" was the answer, "and this your mother knows. He in return did *me* a service; he presented me with—this excellent cloak."

I was more puzzled than ever; I had never before *heard* that my poor father had unsettled reason, but many circumstances made me now believe it. I fancied too that my youngest sister gave indications of the same disorder; she was growing melancholy and reserved. "Oh, heavens!" thought I, "there will be more work for this man to do; I had better invite him at once to England, and make him physician in ordinary to our family."

"I have an engagement at nine," said the stranger; "have you any other inquiries to make?"

"But, if you *cured* my father, Signor Marquis," I observed, "how is it that I have inherited the disease? Should not the *cure* have eradicated it for ever from him and his posterity?"

"Is it not enough that I prevented the display of such a malady during his life? that I drove away the cloud that obscured his day, so that the sun of reason shone brightly on him until his death? What had I to do with future generations? with a race of men then unborn? *I performed my contract,* and he was satisfied. Shall the son be more difficult to please than the father?"

I interrupted him, "Oh, mysterious man! canst thou not cure the *root* of this disease? stop its fatal progress? prevent the seed from partaking of the nature of the plant?"

"Young man!" solemnly returned the marquis, "was not thy first progenitor, the man who resided in Paradise, *mad*—essentially mad? and has not his disease been carried on, in spite of all physicians, down, down to the present hour? It is woven into man's very nature; the warp and woof of which he is composed. I can check its open manifestation in a single individual; but the evil will only be dammed up during his time, to give it an increased impetus and power to those who follow him. Art thou not an instance of this fact? Hast thou not been madder than thy father?"

I groaned aloud. I remembered my own wild delusions, my sudden bursts of passion. I even began to think that madness ruled me at that very hour; that all I saw and heard was the coinage of a dis-tempered brain.

At length I said, dejectedly, unknowing that I spoke aloud, "Then I must never marry; my children will become worse than myself. Farewell then——"

“Or rather,” interrupted the cloaked stranger, “farewell to human marriages altogether, if those who marry must be free from madness. Why, 'tis the very sign they are so, their wishing to rivet fetters on themselves; but, no matter. What have I to do with all the freaks and frenzied institutions of such a set of driveling idiots?”

“Art thou not a man?”

“Thou shalt judge for thyself, thou insect of an hour!” and he unclasped his cloak, and stood erect before me. Coiled around him like a large boa-constrictor, reaching to his very throat,— But I sicken as I write! The remembrance of that moment, how shall it be effaced? Time deadens thousands of recollections, but has never weakened the impression made upon me at that appalling moment!

The immense mass that wound its lengthy fibres round him, like a cable of a ship, now became sensibly animated by life! I beheld it move, and writhe, and unfold itself! I heard its extremity drop upon the floor! I saw it extend itself, and creep along! More—more still descended; fewer coils were round him! He turned himself to facilitate its descent; and, when the enormous whole encircled him, still undulating on the ground, that being looked towards me with one of those smiles, that Satan might be supposed to use.

“Behold!” said he, pointing to the dark undulation on the floor, “*behold the reason why I wear a cloak!*”

Insensibility closed up my senses. I could behold no more. When I recovered, I was alone. The stranger had departed, leaving the door ajar; but he had written on a slip of paper, and placed it just before me, these words:

“The remedy I bestowed upon the father, for *his* sake I will give unto the son. *Three notches of the devil's tail* will perfectly restore you; but it must be cut off by the hand of *the purest person that you know on earth. It will grow again!*”

\* \* \* \* \*

I hastily caught up this paper on hearing the step of my attendant, and placed it in my bosom. I think he saw the action, for he looked mournfully on me, and shook his head. I told him I was ready to set off instantly for Rome: his simple answer was,

“I wish we had remained there!”

“And *why*, Hubert?”

“You are pale as a sheeted corpse, and the boards of the floor are *singed*, yet there has been no fire in the room!”

I looked where he pointed; and, in a serpentine form, I beheld the traces of that enormous tail I had seen fall from the body of the cloaked stranger, coiled round him as an immense serpent twines itself around a tree. I shuddered at the sight. I felt my brain working; yet I wrestled with the spirit of darkness within. I tried to persuade myself that I had been overtaken only by a dream; that my whole acquaintance with the pretended marquis was nothing but an illusion, a vision of the imagination, an optic delusion, an hallucination of an excited state of mind; but it would not do. There were the dark and calcined marks, which it was my duty to account for to my host, who cared very little how they were occasioned, so as he received an ample sum to have the boards removed, and others in their place.

Our accounts were soon arranged, and I returned to my anxious family; but my disorder was increasing hourly. The wildest imaginations haunted and perplexed me. My beloved mother looked at me with tears swimming in her eyes. My eldest sister strove, by a hundred stratagems, to dispel the gloom that arose amongst us all. Emily sat, absorbed in her own melancholy thoughts, a fellow-sufferer, I fancied, with myself. My lovely, innocent, affectionate cousin held my fevered hand in one of hers, and imploringly asked me to be tranquil; said she would sing to me if I would try to sleep. I felt the gentle charm, and gave myself up to it. I laid myself upon the sofa; and she, whose name I cannot utter, sitting on a low stool by my side, sought to soothe me with her voice.

## THE SONG OF ———.

“Come from Heaven, soft balmy Sleep,  
Since thou art an angel there!  
Come, and watch around him keep—  
Watch that I with thee will share.

Strew thy poppies o'er his head,  
Calm the fever of his mind;  
All thy healing virtues shed,  
That he may composure find!”

“Oh, God!” I cried, jumping up; “and must I never call this angel mine? Better to die at once, or lose all consciousness of what a wretch I am!”

“Hush, my dearest cousin! I have invoked an angel from the skies to visit you; drive her not away by ill-timed violence; here, let me hold your hand;” and she began again to murmur in a low tone,

“Strew thy poppies o'er his head,  
Calm the fever of his mind.”

and so I fell asleep.

When I awoke, my gentle cousin, (more constant than my heavenly visitant, Sleep,) was still seated by my side; all the rest were gone; candles burned on the table—it was midnight; I had slept for hours, she yet retained my hand. I looked at her, and burst into tears.

“We are alone, Theodore,” said my beloved; “tell me, I beseech you, what is labouring on your mind. You have spoken strange things during your sleep. You have declared that I had the power to restore you; can I do this? Theodore, be candid! Were it to cost my life, I would gladly lay it down to be of benefit to you.”

I could not answer her; but I clasped my arms round that pure, angelic form, and wept like an infant on her bosom.

“Can I do you service, Theodore? You deny not what your lips murmured in sleep.”

“You can restore my reason, for you are the purest person that I know on earth.”

“By what means? But, alas! you are wandering still; this is one of your delusions! Would that it were in my power to heal thy mind, my dearest cousin.”

“In this, my heart's treasure, I am at least perfectly sane. *You have the power to cure me.*”

“Tell me the means.”

I related to — the whole of my adventures at Naples. I hid nothing from her excepting that our children might be infected with the same disease. Many reasons prevented my naming this. She was too delicate for me to allude to such a circumstance; I was willing to run all hazards of my posterity inheriting so dreadful a disease. My father had done as I intended to do; and the remedy was as open to *my* offspring as to myself, for had not the cloaked stranger told me that “the tail would grow again”? Even without such growth, had it not notches enough for a whole line of my posterity, supposing them all in want of such a restorative.

There was a pause of a full minute ere she spoke; her cheek was blanched, and her hand trembled in mine.

“Theodore, I know not what to think, whether from madness or from sanity comes your wondrous tale; but I will go through it, come what may. I will see this being; and, should he be indeed the author of all evil, out of evil shall come good, for I have courage, for your dear sake, to take from him the horrid remedy; but speak not of it, even to your mother or your sisters. Ah, poor Emily! she too may need such help! I will procure enough for her also.”

Every thing was arranged. I was in that state that all I demanded was granted to me, for they feared to oppose my wishes. I entered the travelling carriage with my beautiful betrothed.

We had no attendants. We drove to the same hotel in which I had been before. We were shown into the same room; but the marks upon the floor were gone, — new boards were there. We ordered dinner *for three*; and I went out in search of the cloaked stranger.

It may seem strange that those who seek the devil, should seek in vain; but what is so perverse as the Origin of Evil?

Towards the close of day I however brought him in, as lofty, proud-looking, and handsome as ever; his features bore the stamp of angelic beauty; but, alas! the expression was — *the fallen angel*. He saluted with much politeness, nay, even kindness, my lovely friend; and we entered at once upon the business.

When he heard *who* was to perform the operation, he absolutely turned pale, and made a thousand objections. Some other person might be found; but I, fool that I was! overruled them all, and insisted on it, that she was the purest person that I knew on earth.

He then endeavoured to intimidate her; but she was resolute, though her lip quivered. We had a long argument about it, and most subtle was his reasoning. Yet he seemed as if he had no power absolutely to refuse. Reluctantly he drew from a secret pocket in his cloak a small steel hatchet, with many figures inscribed upon it. She received it at his hands; but I observed a fixedness in her beautiful eyes, and a rigidity about her mouth, that I did not like; still she grasped the shining instrument, and hesitated not. But, when his cloak fell off, oh, what a look of horror did those dear eyes assume!

Slowly descended the voluminous appendage; its extreme end fell on the chair on which he had been sitting. She flew like lightning thither, raised the glittering tool, marked the precise spot, and severed at a blow “three notches of the devil’s tail!”

“Take—take your remedy, dear Theodore!” she whispered, “for I cannot touch it.”

I stooped, and took the severed quivering part, *but could not hold it for its heat*; so thrust it into my coat-pock; I then turned to congratulate my deliverer, *but she was a lifeless corpse at my feet*; and the stranger had vanished, I knew not and I cared not whither.

How often have I called on madness, or on death, to take from me the memory of her loss! Neither would come! I have had no return of my malady, but I have experienced anguish fourfold! The only benefit derived has been that my sister Emily has been totally cured by the specific that was so dearly purchased, for it proved efficacious in both cases.

Perchance it may prove useful for the future members of our family, should they be infected with this hereditary complaint; for myself, I shall never need it for my offspring, my affections are buried in the grave; but I have bequeathed it to my beloved sisters—with my hopes, more than my belief, that it may prove effective,—*“the three notches of the devil’s tail!”*

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## TRANSLATION FROM UHLAND.

### THE SERENADE.

WHAT soft low strains are these I hear  
That come my dreams between?  
Oh! mother, look! who may it be  
That plays so late at e’en?

“I hear no sound, I see no form;  
Oh! rest in slumber mild:  
They’ll bring no music to thee now,  
My poor, my sickly child!”

It is not music of the earth  
That makes my heart so light;  
The angels call me with their songs,  
Oh! mother dear, good night!