

A New Year's Eve Adventure

By E. T. A. Hoffman

FOREWORD BY THE EDITOR

The Travelling Enthusiast, from whose journals we are presenting another “fancy-flight in the manner of Jacques Callot,” has apparently not separated the events of his inner life from those of the outside world; in fact we cannot determine where one ends and the other begins. But even if you cannot see this boundary very clearly, dear reader, the Geisterseher may beckon you to his side, and before you are even aware of it, you will be in a strange magical realm where figures of fantasy step right into your own life, and are as cordial with you as your oldest friends. I beg of you—take them as such, go along with their remarkable doings, yield to the shudders and thrills that they produce, since the more you go along with them, the better they can operate. What more can I do for the Travelling Enthusiast who has encountered so much strangeness and madness, everywhere and at all times, but especially on New Year's Eve in Berlin?

MY BELOVED

I had a feeling of death in my heart—ice-cold death—and the sensation branched out like sharp, growing icicles into nerves that were already boiling with heat. I ran like a madman—no hat, no coat—out into the lightless stormy winter night. The weather vanes were grinding and creaking in the wind, as if Time's eternal gearwork were audibly rotating and the old year were being rolled away like a heavy weight, and ponderously pushed into a gloom-filled abyss.

You must surely know that on this season, Christmas and New Year's, even though it's so fine and pleasant for all of you, I am always driven out of my peaceful cell onto a raging, lashing sea. Christmas! Holidays that have a rosy glow for me. I can hardly wait for it, I look forward to it so much. I am a better, finer man than the rest of the year, and there isn't a single gloomy, misanthropic thought in my mind. Once again I am a boy, shouting with joy. The faces of the angels laugh to me from the gilded fretwork decorations in the shops decorated for Christmas, and the awesome tones of the church organ penetrate the noisy bustle of the streets, as if coming from afar, with “Unto us a child is born.” But after the holidays everything becomes colorless again, and the glow dies away and disappears into drab darkness.

Every year more and more flowers drop away withered, their buds eternally sealed; there is no spring sun that can bring the warmth of new life into old dried-out branches. I know this well enough, but the Enemy never stops maliciously rubbing it in as the year draws to an end. I hear a mocking whisper: “Look what you have lost this year; so many worthwhile things that you'll never see again. But all this makes you wiser, less tied to trivial pleasures, more serious and solid—even though you don't enjoy yourself very much.”

Every New Year's Eve the Devil keeps a special treat for me. He knows just the right moment to jam his claw into my heart, keeping up a fine mockery while he licks the blood that wells out. And there is always someone around to help him, just as yesterday the Justizrat came to his aid. He (the Justizrat) holds a big celebration every New Year's Eve, and likes to give everyone something special as a New Year's present. Only he is so clumsy and bumbling about it, for all

his pains, that what was meant to give pleasure usually turns into a mess that is half slapstick and half torture.

I walked into his front hall, and the Justizrat came running to meet me, holding me back for a moment from the Holy of Holies out of which the odors of tea and expensive perfumes were pouring. He looked especially pleased with himself. He smirked at me in a very strange way and said, “My dear friend, there’s something nice waiting for you in the next room. Nothing like it for a New Year’s surprise. But don’t be afraid!”

I felt that sinking feeling in my heart. Something was wrong, I knew, and I suddenly began to feel depressed and edgy. Then the doors were opened. I took up my courage and stepped forward, marched in, and among the women sitting on the sofa I saw *her*.

Yes, it was she. She herself. I hadn’t seen her for years, and yet in one lightning flash the happiest moments of my life came bad to me, and gone was the pain that had resulted from being separated from her.

What marvellous chance brought her here? What miracle introduced her into the Justizrat’s circle—I didn’t even know that he knew her. But I didn’t think of any of these questions; all I knew was that she was mine again.

I must have stood there as if halted magically in midmotion. The Justizrat kept nudging me and muttering, “Mmmm? Mmmm? How about it?”

I started to walk again, mechanically, but I saw only her, and it was all that I could do to force out, “My God, my God, it’s Julia!” I was practically at the tea table before she even noticed me, but then she stood up and said coldly, “I’m so delighted to see you here. You are looking well.” And with that she sat down again and asked the woman sitting next to her on the sofa, “Is there going to be anything interesting at the theatre the next few weeks?”

You see a miraculously beautiful flower, glowing with beauty, filling the air with scent, hinting at even more hidden beauty. You hurry over to it, but the moment that you bend down to look into its chalice, the glistening petals are pushed aside and out pops a smooth, cold, slimy, little lizard that tries to cut you down with its glare.

That’s just what happened to me. Like a perfect oaf I made a bow to the ladies, and since spite and idiocy often go together, as I stepped back I knocked a cup of hot tea out of the Justizrat’s hand—he was standing right behind me—and all over his beautifully pleated jacket. The company roared at the Justizrat’s mishap, and even more at me. In short, everything was going along smoothly enough for a madhouse, but I just gave up.

Julia, however, hadn’t laughed, and as I looked at her again I thought for a moment that a gleam of our wonderful past came through to me, a fragment of our former life of love and poetry. At this point someone in the next room began to improvise on the piano, and the company began to show signs of life. I heard that this was someone I did not know, a great pianist named Berger, who played divinely, and that you had to listen to him.

“Will you stop making that noise with the teaspoons, Minchen,” bawled the Justizrat, and with a coyly contorted hand and a languorous “Eh bien!” he beckoned the ladies to the door, to approach the virtuoso. Julia arose too and walked slowly into the next room.

There was something strange about her whole figure, I thought. Somehow she seemed larger, more developed, almost lush. Her blouse was cut low, only half covering her breasts, shoulders and neck; her sleeves were puffed, and reached only to her elbows; and her hair was parted at the forehead and pulled back into plaits—all of which gave her an antique look, much like one of the young women in Mieris’s paintings. Somehow it seemed to me as if I had seen her like this

before. She had taken off her gloves, and ornate bracelets on her wrist helped carry through the complete identity of her dress with the past and awaken more vividly dark memories.

She turned toward me before she went into the music room, and for an instant her angel-like, normally pleasant face seemed strained into a sneer. An uncomfortable, unpleasant feeling arose in me, like a cramp running through my nervous system.

“Oh, he plays divinely,” lisped a girl, apparently inspired by the sweet tea, and I don’t know how it happened, but Julia’s arm was in mine, and I led her, or rather she led me, into the next room. Berger was raising the wildest hurricanes, and like a roaring surf his mighty chords rose and fell. It did me good.

Then Julia was standing beside me, and said more softly and more sweetly than before, “I wish you were sitting at the piano, singing softly about pleasures and hopes that have been lost.” The Enemy had left me, and in just the name, “Julia!” I wanted to proclaim the bliss that filled me. But the crowd pushed between us and we were separated. Now she was obviously avoiding me, but I was lucky enough to touch her clothing and close enough to breathe in her perfume, and the springtime of the past arose in a hundred shining colors.

Berger let the hurricane blow itself out, the skies became clear, and pretty little melodies, like the golden clouds of dawn, hovered in pianissimo. Well-earned applause broke out when he finished, and the guests began to move around the room. It came about that I found myself facing Julia again. The spirit rose more mightily in me. I wanted to seize her and embrace her, but a bustling servant crowded between us with a platter of drinks, calling in a very offensive way, “Help yourself, please, help yourself.”

The tray was filled with cups of steaming punch, but in the very middle was a huge cut-crystal goblet, also apparently filled with punch. How did that get there, among all the ordinary punch cups? He knows—the Enemy that I’m gradually coming to understand. Like Clemens in Tieck’s “Oktavian” he walks about making a pleasant squiggle with one foot, and is very fond of red capes and feathers. Julia picked up this sparkling, beautifully cut goblet and offered it to me, saying, “Are you still willing to take a glass from my hand?” “Julia, Julia,” I sighed.

As I took the glass, my fingers brushed against hers, and electric sensations ran through me. I drank and drank, and it seemed to me that little flickering blue flames licked around the goblet and my lip. Then the goblet was empty, and I really don’t know myself how it happened, but I was now sitting on an ottoman in a small room lit only by an alabaster lamp, and Julia was sitting beside me, demure and innocent-looking as ever. Berger had started to play again, the andante from Mozart’s sublime E-flat Symphony, and on the swan’s wings of song my sunlike love soared high. Yes, it was Julia, Julia herself, as pretty as an angel and as demure; our talk a longing lament of love, more looks than words, her hand resting in mine.

“I will never let you go,” I was saying. “Your love is the spark that glows in me, kindling a higher life in art and poetry. Without you, without your love, everything is dead and lifeless. Didn’t you come here so that you could be mine forever?”

At this very moment there tottered into the room a spindle-shanked cretin, eyes a-pop like a frog’s, who said, in a mixture of croak and cackle, “Where the Devil is my wife?”

Julia stood up and said to me in a distant, cold voice, “Shall we go back to the party? My husband is looking for me. You’ve been very amusing again, darling, as overemotional as ever; but you should watch how much you drink.”

The spindle-legged monkey reached for her hand and she followed him into the living room with a laugh.

“Lost forever,” I screamed aloud.

“Oh, yes; codille, darling,” bleated an animal playing ombre.
I ran out into the stormy night.

IN THE BEER CELLAR

Promenading up and down under the linden trees can be a fine thing, but not on a New Year's Eve when it is bitter cold and snow is falling. Bareheaded and without a coat I finally felt the cold when icy shivers began to interrupt my feverishness. I trudged over the Opern Bridge, past the Castle, over the Schleusen Bridge, past the Mint. I was on Jaegerstrasse close to Thiermann's shop. Friendly lights were burning inside. I was about to go in, since I was freezing and I needed a good drink of something strong, when a merry group came bursting out, babbling loudly about fine oysters and good Eilfer wine. One of them—I could see by the lantern light that he was a very impressive-looking officer in the uhlands—was shouting, “You know, he was right, that fellow who cursed them out in Mainz last year for not bringing out the Eilfer, he was right!” They all laughed uproariously.

Without thinking, I continued a little farther, then stopped in front of a beer cellar out of which a single light was shining. Wasn't it Shakespeare's Henry V who once felt so tired and discouraged that he “remembered the poor creature, small beer?” Indeed, the same thing was happening to me. My tongue was practically cracking with thirst for a bottle of good English beer. I hastened down into the cellar.

“Yes, sir?” said the owner of the beer cellar, touching his cap amiably as he came toward me.

I asked for a bottle of good English beer and a pipe of good tobacco, and soon found myself sublimely immersed in fleshly comforts which even the Devil had to respect enough to leave me alone. Ah, Justizrat! If you had seen me descend from your bright living room to a gloomy beer cellar, you would have turned away from me in contempt and muttered, “It's not surprising that a fellow like that can ruin a first-class jacket.”

I must have looked very odd to the others in the beer cellar, since I had no hat or coat. The waiter was just about to say something about it when there was a bang on the window, and a voice shouted down, “Open up! Open up! It's me!”

The tavern keeper went outside and came right back carrying two torches high; following him came a very tall, slender stranger who forgot to lower his head as he came through the low doorway and received a good knock. A black beretlike cap, though, kept him from serious injury. The stranger sidled along the wall in a very peculiar manner, and sat down opposite me, while lights were placed upon the table. You could characterize him briefly as pleasant but unhappy. He called for beer and a pipe somewhat grumpily, and then with a few puffs, created such a fog bank that we seemed to be swimming in a cloud. His face had something so individual and attractive about it that I liked him despite his dark moroseness. He had a full head of black hair, parted in the middle and hanging down in small locks on both sides of his head, so that he looked like someone out of a Rubens picture. When he threw off his heavy cloak, I could see that he was wearing a black tunic with lots of lacing, and it struck me as very odd that he had slippers pulled on over his boots. I became aware of this when he knocked out his pipe on his foot after about five minutes of smoking.

We didn't converse right away, for the stranger was preoccupied with some strange plants which he took out of a little botanical case and started to examine closely. I indicated my astonishment at the plants and asked him, since they seemed freshly gathered, whether he had

been at the botanical garden or Boucher the florist's. He smiled in a strange way, and replied slowly, "Botany does not seem to be your speciality, or else you would not have asked such a . . ." he hesitated and I supplied in a low voice, "foolish. . ." ". . . question," he finished, waving aside my assertion. "If you were a botanist, you would have seen at a glance that these are alpine flora and that they are from Chimborazo." He said the last part very softly, and you can guess that I felt a little strange. This reply prevented further questions, but I kept having the feeling more and more strongly that I knew him—perhaps not "physically" but "mentally."

At this point there came another rapping at the window. The tavern keeper opened the door and a voice called in, "Be so good as to cover your mirrors.

"Aha!" said the host, "General Suvarov is late tonight," and he threw a cloth covering over the mirror. A short, dried-up-looking fellow came tumbling in with frantic, clumsy haste. He was engulfed in a cloak of peculiar brownish color, which bubbled and flapped around him as he bounced across the room toward us, so that in the dim light it looked as if a series of forms were dissolving and emerging from one another, as in Ensler's magic lantern show. He rubbed his hands together inside his overlong sleeves and cried, "Cold! Cold! It's so cold! Altogether different in Italy." Finally he took a seat between me and the tall man and said, "Horrible smoke.., tobacco on tobacco... I wish I had a pipeful."

In my pocket I had a small steel tobacco box, polished like a mirror; I reached it out to the little man. He took one look at it, and thrust out both hands, shoving it away, crying, "Take that damned mirror away." His voice was filled with horror, and as I stared at him with amazement I saw that he had become a different person. He had burst into the beer cellar with a pleasant, youthful face, but now a deathly pale, shrivelled, terrified old man's face glared at me with hollow eyes. I turned in horror to the tall man. I was almost ready to shout, "For God's sake, look at him!" when I saw that the tall stranger was not paying any attention, but was completely engrossed in his plants from Chimborazo. At that moment the little man called, "Northern wine!" in a very affected manner.

After a time the conversation became more lively again. I wasn't quite at ease with the little man, but the tall man had the ability of offering deep and fascinating insights upon seemingly insignificant things, although at times he seemed to struggle to express himself and groped for words, and at times used words improperly, which often gave his statements an air of droll originality. In this way, by appealing to me more and more, he offset the bad impression created by the little man.

The little man seemed to be driven by springs, for he slid back and forth on his chair and waved his hands about in perpetual gesticulations, and a shudder, like icewater down my back, ran through me when I saw very clearly that he had two different faces, the pleasant young man's and the unlovely demonic old man's. For the most part he turned his old man's face upon the tall man, who sat impervious and quiet, in contrast to the perpetual motion of the small man in brown, although it was not as unpleasant as when it had looked at me for the first time.—In the masquerade of life our true inner essence often shines out beyond our mask when we meet a similar person, and it so happened that we three strange beings in a beer cellar looked at one another and knew what we were. Our conversation ran along morbid lines, in the sardonic humor that emerges only when you are wounded, almost to the point of death.

"There are hidden hooks and snares there, too," said the tall man.

"Oh, God," I joined in, "the Devil has set so many hooks for us everywhere, walls, arbors, hedge roses, and so on, and as we brush past them we leave something of our true self caught

there. It seems to me, gentlemen, that all of us lose something this way, just as right now I have no hat or coat. They are both hanging on a hook at the Justizrat's, as you may know."

Both the tall and the short man visibly winced, as if they had been unexpectedly struck. The little man looked at me with hatred from his old man's face, leaped up on his chair and fussily adjusted the cloth that hung over the mirror, while the tall man made a point of pinching the candle wicks. The conversation limped along, and in its course a fine young artist named Philipp was mentioned, together with a portrait of a princess painted with intense love and longing, which she must have inspired in him. "More than just a likeness, a true image," said the tall man. "So completely true," I said, "that you could almost say it was stolen from a mirror."

The little man leaped up in a frenzy, and transfixing me with his flaming eyes, showing his old man's face, he screamed, "That's idiotic, crazy—who can steal your reflection? Who? Perhaps you think the Devil can? He would break the glass with his clumsy claws and the girl's fine white hands would be slashed and bloody. Erkhhhh. Show me a reflection, a stolen reflection, and I'll leap a thousand yards for you, you stupid fool!"

The tall man got up, strode over to the little man, and said in a contemptuous voice, "Don't make such a nuisance of yourself, my friend, or I'll throw you out and you'll be as miserable as your own reflection."

"Ha, ha, ha," laughed the little man with furious scorn. "You think so? Do you think so? You miserable dog, I at least still have my shadow, I still have my shadow!" And he leaped out of his chair and rushed out of the cellar. I could hear his nasty neighing laughter outside, and his shouts of "I still have my shadow!"

The tall man, as if completely crushed, sank back into his chair as pale as death. He took his head in both his hands and sighed deeply and groaned. "What's wrong?" I asked sympathetically. "Sir," he replied somewhat incoherently, "that nasty little fellow—followed me here, even in this tavern, where I used to be alone—nobody around, except once in a while an earth-elemental would dive under the table for bread crumbs—he's made me miserable—there's no getting it back—I've lost ... I've lost ... my . . . oh, I can't go on..." and he leaped up and dashed out into the street.

He happened to pass the lights, and I saw that—he cast no shadow! I was delighted, for I recognized him and knew all about him. I ran out after him. "Peter Schlemihl, Peter Schlemihl," I shouted. But he had kicked off his slippers, and I saw him striding away beyond the police tower, disappearing into the night.

I was about to return to the cellar, but the owner slammed the door in my face, proclaiming loudly, "From guests like these the Good Lord deliver me!"

MANIFESTATIONS

Herr Mathieu is a good friend of mine and his porter keeps his eyes open. He opened the door for me right away when I came to the Golden Eagle and pulled at the bell. I explained matters: that I had been to a party, had left my hat and coat behind, that my house key was in my coat pocket, and that I had no chance of waking my deaf landlady. He was a goodhearted fellow (the porter) and found a room for me, set lights about in it, and wished me a good night. A beautiful wide mirror, however, was covered, and though I don't know why I did it, I pulled off the cloth and set both my candles on the table in front of the mirror. When I looked in, I was so pale and tired-looking that I could hardly recognize myself. Then it seemed to me that from the remote

background of the reflection there came floating a dark form, which as I focused my attention upon it, took on the features of a beautiful woman—Julia—shining with a magic radiance. I said very softly, “Julia, Julia!”

At this I heard a groaning and moaning which seemed to come from behind the drawn curtains of a canopy bed which stood in the farthest corner of the room. I listened closely. The groaning grew louder, seemingly more painful. The image of Julia had disappeared, and resolutely I seized a candle, ripped the curtains of the bed apart, and looked in. How can I describe my feelings to you when I saw before me the little man whom I had met at the beer cellar, asleep on the bed, youthful features dominant (though contorted with pain), muttering in his sleep, “Giuletta, Giuletta!” The name enraged me. I was no longer fearful, but seized the little man and gave him a good shake, shouting, “Heigh, my friend! What are you doing in my room? Wake up and get the Devil out of here!”

The little man blinked his eyes open and looked at me darkly. “That was really a bad dream,” he said. “I must thank you for waking me.” He spoke softly, almost murmured. I don’t know why but he looked different to me; the pain which he obviously felt aroused my sympathy, and instead of being angry I felt very sorry for him. It didn’t take much conversation to learn that the porter had inadvertently given me the room which had already been assigned to the little man, and that it was I who had intruded, disturbing his sleep.

“Sir,” said the little man. “I must have seemed like an utter lunatic to you in the beer cellar. Blame my behavior on this: every now and then, I must confess, a mad spirit seizes control of me and makes me lose all concept of what is right and proper. Perhaps the same thing has happened to you at times?”

“Oh, God, yes,” I replied dejectedly. “Just this evening, when I saw Julia again.”

“Julia!” crackled the little man in an unpleasant tone. His face suddenly aged and his features twitched. “Let me alone. And please be good enough to cover the mirror again,” he said, looking sadly at his pillow.

“Sir,” I said. “The name of my eternally lost love seems to awaken strange memories in you; so much so that your face has changed from its usual pleasant appearance. Still, I have hopes of spending the night here quietly with you, so I am going to cover the mirror and go to bed.”

He raised himself to a sitting position, looked at me with his pleasant young face, and seized my hand, saying, while pressing it gently, “Sleep well, my friend. I see that we are companions in misery. Julia . . . Giuletta . . . Well, if it must be, it must be. I cannot help it; I must tell you my deepest secret, and then you will hate and despise me.”

He slowly climbed out of bed, wrapped himself in a generous white robe, and crept slowly, almost like a ghost, to the great mirror and stood in front of it. Ah—Brightly and clearly the mirror reflected the two lighted candles, the furniture, me—but the little man was not there! He stood, head bowed toward it, in front of the mirror, but he cast no reflection! Turning to me, deep despair on his face, he pressed my hands and said, “Now you know the depths of my misery. Schlemihl, a goodhearted fellow, is to be envied, compared to me. He was irresponsible for a moment and sold his shadow. But—I—I gave my reflection to her . . . to her!”

Sobbing deeply, hands pressed over his eyes, the little man turned to the bed and threw himself on it. I simply stood in astonishment, with suspicion, contempt, disgust, sympathy and pity all intermingled, for and against the little man. But while I was standing there, he began to snore so melodiously that it was contagious, and I couldn’t resist the narcotic power of his tones. I quickly covered the mirror again, put out the candles, threw myself upon the bed like the little man, and immediately fell asleep.

It must have been early morning when a light awakened me, and I opened my eyes to see the little man, still in his white dressing gown, nightcap on his head, back turned to me, sitting at the table busily writing by the light of the two candles. There was a weird look about him, and I felt the chill of the supernatural. I fell into a waking-dream then, and was back at the Justizrat's again, sitting beside Julia on the ottoman. But the whole party seemed to be only a comic candy display in the window of Fuchs, Weide and Schoch (or somewhere similar) for Christmas, and the Justizrat was a splendid gumdrop with a coat made of pleated notepaper. Trees and rosebushes rose higher and higher about us, and Julia stood up, handing me the crystal goblet, out of which blue flames licked. Someone tugged at my arm and there was the little brown man, his old man's face on, whispering loudly to me, "Don't drink it, don't drink it. Look at her closely. Haven't you seen her and been warned against her in Brueghel and Callot and Rembrandt?"

I looked at Julia with horror, and indeed, with her pleated dress and ruffled sleeves and strange coiffure, she did look like one of the alluring young women, surrounded by demonic monsters, from the work of those masters.

"What are you afraid of?" said Julia. "I have you and your reflection, once and for all." I seized the goblet, but the little man leaped to my shoulder in the form of a squirrel, and waved his tail through the blue flames, chattering, "Don't drink it, don't drink it." At this point the sugar figures in the display came alive and moved their hands and feet ludicrously. The Justizrat ran up to me and called out in a thin little voice, "Why all the uproar, my friend? Why all the commotion? All you have to do is get to your feet; for quite a while I've been watching you stride away over tables and chairs."

The little man had completely disappeared. Julia no longer held the goblet in her hand. "Why wouldn't you drink?" she asked. "Wasn't the flame streaming out of the goblet simply the kisses you once got from me?"

I wanted to take her in my arms, but Schlemihl stepped between us and said, "This is Mina, who married my servant, Rascal." He stepped on a couple of the candy figures, who made groaning noises. They started to multiply enormously, hundreds and thousands of them, and they swarmed all over me, buzzing like a hive of bees. The gumdrop Justizrat, who had continued to climb, had swung up as far as my neckcloth, which he kept pulling tighter and tighter. "Justizrat, you confounded gumdrop," I screamed out loud, and startled myself out of sleep. It was bright day, already eleven o'clock.

I was just thinking to myself that the whole adventure with the little brown man had only been an exceptionally vivid dream, when the waiter who brought in my breakfast told me that the stranger who had shared his room with me had left early, and presented his compliments. Upon the table where I had seen the weird little man sitting and writing I found a fresh manuscript, whose content I am sharing with you, since it is unquestionably the remarkable story of the little man in brown. It is as follows.

The Story of the Lost Reflection

Things finally worked out so that Erasmus Spikher was able to fulfill the wish that he had cherished all his life. He climbed into the coach with high spirits and a well-filled knapsack. He was leaving his home in the North and journeying to the beautiful land of Italy. His devoted wife was weeping copiously, and she lifted little Rasmus (after carefully wiping his mouth and nose) into the coach to kiss his father goodbye.

“Farewell, Erasmus Spikher,” said his wife, sobbing. “I will keep your house well for you. Think of me often, remain true to me, and do not lose your hat if you fall asleep near the window, as you always do.” Spikher promised.

In the beautiful city of Florence Spikher found some fellow Germans, young men filled with high spirits and *joie de vivre*, who spent their time revelling in the sensual delights which Italy so well affords. He impressed them as a good fellow and he was often invited to social occasions since he had the talent of supplying soberness to the mad abandon about him, and gave the party a highly individual touch.

One evening in the grove of a splendid fragrant public garden, the young men (Erasmus could be included here, since he was only twenty-seven) gathered for an exceptionally merry feast. Each of the men, except Spikher, brought along a girl. The men were dressed in the picturesque old Germanic costume, and the women wore bright dresses, each styled differently, often fantastically, so that they seemed like wonderful mobile flowers. Every now and then one of the girls would sing an Italian love song, accompanied by the plaintive notes of mandolins, and the men would respond with a lusty German chorus or round, as glasses filled with fine Syracuse wine clinked. Yes, indeed, Italy is the land of love.

The evening breezes sighed with passion, oranges and jasmine breathed out perfume through the grove, and it all formed a part in the banter and play which the girls (delightfully merry as only Italian women can be) began. Wilder and noisier grew the fun. Friedrich, the most excited of all, leaped to his feet, one arm around his mistress, waving high a glass of sparkling Syracuse wine with the other, and shouted, “You wonderful women of Italy! Where can true, blissful love be found except with you? You are love incarnate! But you, Erasmus,” he continued, turning to Spikher, “You don’t seem to understand this. You’ve violated your promise, propriety and the custom. You didn’t bring a girl with you, and you have been sitting here moodily, so quiet and self-concerned that if you hadn’t been drinking and singing with us I’d believe you were suffering an attack of melancholy.”

“Friedrich,” replied Erasmus, “I have to confess that I cannot enjoy myself like that. You know that I have a wife at home, and I love her. If I took up with a girl for even one night it would be betraying my wife. For you young bachelors it’s different, but I have a family.”

The young men laughed uproariously, for when Erasmus announced his family obligations his pleasant young face became very grave, and he really looked very strange. Friedrich’s mistress, when Spikher’s words had been translated for her (for the two men had spoken German), turned very seriously to Erasmus, and said, half-threateningly, finger raised, “Cold-blooded, heartless German watch out—you haven’t seen Giuletta yet.”

At that very instant a rustling noise indicated that someone was approaching, and out of the dark night into the area lighted by the candles strode a remarkably beautiful girl. Her white dress, which only half-hid her bosom, shoulders and neck, fell in rich broad folds; her sleeves, puffed and full, came only to her elbows; her thick hair, parted in the front, fell in braids at the back. Golden chains around her throat, rich bracelets upon her wrists, completed her antique costume. She looked exactly if she were a woman from Miens or Rembrandt walking about. “Giuletta,” shrieked the girls in astonishment and delight.

Giuletta, who was by far the most beautiful of all the women present, asked in a sweet, pleasant voice, “Good Germans, may I join you? I’ll sit with that gentleman over there. He doesn’t have a girl, and he doesn’t seem to be having a very good time, either.” She turned very graciously to Erasmus, and sat down upon the empty seat beside him—empty because everyone thought Erasmus would bring a girl along, too. The girls whispered to each other, “Isn’t Giuletta

beautiful tonight,” and the young men said, “How about Erasmus? Was he joking with us? He’s got the best-looking girl of all!”

As for Erasmus, at the first glance he cast at Giuletta, he was so aroused that he didn’t even know what powerful passions were working in him. As she came close to him, a strange force seized him and crushed his breast so that he couldn’t even breathe. Eyes fixed in a rigid stare at her, mouth agape, he sat there not able to utter a syllable, while all the others were commenting upon Giuletta’s charm and beauty.

Giuletta took a full goblet, and standing up, handed it with a friendly smile to Erasmus. He seized the goblet, touching her soft fingers, and as he drank, fire seemed to stream through his veins. Then Giuletta asked him in a bantering way, “Am I to be your girl friend?” Erasmus threw himself wildly upon the ground in front of her, pressed her hands to his breast, and cried in maudlin tones, “Yes, yes, yes! You goddess! I’ve always been in love with you. I’ve seen you in my dreams, you are my fortune, my happiness, my higher life!”

The others all thought the wine had gone to Erasmus’s head, since they had never seen him like this before; he seemed to be a different man.

“You are my life! I don’t care if I am destroyed, as long as it’s with you,” Erasmus shouted. “You set me on fire!” But Giuletta just took him gently in her arms. He became quieter again, and took his seat beside her. And once again the gaiety which had been interrupted by Erasmus and Giuletta began with songs and laughter. Giuletta sang, and it was as if the tones of her beautiful voice aroused in everyone sensations of pleasure never felt before but only suspected to exist. Her full but clear voice conveyed a secret ardor which inflamed them all. The young men clasped their mistresses more closely, and passion leaped from eye to eye.

Dawn was breaking with a rosy shimmer when Giuletta said that she had to leave. Erasmus got ready to accompany her home, but she refused but gave him the address at which he could find her in the future. During the chorus which the men sang to end the party, Giuletta disappeared from the grove and was seen walking through a distant *allée*, preceded by two linkmen. Erasmus did not dare follow her.

The young men left arm in arm with their mistresses, full of high spirits, and Erasmus, greatly disturbed and internally shattered by the torments of love, followed, preceded by his boy with a torch. After leaving his friends, he was passing down the distant street which led to his dwelling, and his servant had just knocked out the torch against the stucco of the house, when a strange figure mysteriously appeared in the spraying sparks in front of Erasmus. It was a tall, thin, dried-out-looking man with a Roman nose that came to a sharp point, glowing eyes, mouth contorted into a sneer, wrapped in a flame-red cloak with brightly polished steel buttons. He laughed and called out in an unpleasant yelping voice, “Ho, ho, you look as if you came out of a picture book with that cloak, slit doublet and plumed hat. You show a real sense of humor, Signor Erasmus Spikher, but aren’t you afraid of being laughed at on the streets? Signor, signor, crawl quietly back into your parchment binding.”

“What the Devil is my clothing to you?” said Erasmus with anger, and shoving the red-clad stranger aside, he was about to pass by when the stranger called after him, “Don’t be in such a hurry. You won’t get to Giuletta that way.”

“What are you saying about Giuletta?” cried Erasmus wildly. He tried to seize the red-clad man by the breast, but he turned and disappeared so rapidly that Erasmus couldn’t even see where he went, and Erasmus was left standing in astonishment, in his hand a steel button that had been ripped from the stranger’s cloak.

“That’s the Miracle Doctor Dapertutto. What did he want?” asked Erasmus’s servant. But Erasmus was seized with horror, and without replying, hastened home.

When, some time later, Erasmus called on Giuletta, she received him in a very gracious and friendly manner, yet to Erasmus’s fiery passion she opposed a mild indifference. Only once in a while did her eyes flash, whereupon Erasmus would feel shudders pass through him, from his innermost being, when she regarded him with an enigmatic stare. She never told him that she loved him, but her whole attitude and behaviour led him to think so, and he found himself more and more deeply entangled with her. He seldom saw his old friends, however, for Giuletta took him into other circles.

Once Erasmus met Friedrich at a time when Erasmus was depressed, thinking about his native land and his home. Friedrich said, “Don’t you know, Spikher, that you are moving in a very dangerous circle of acquaintances? You must realize by now that the beautiful Giuletta is one of the craftiest courtesans on earth. There are all sorts of strange stories going around about her, and they put her in a very peculiar light. I can see from you that she can exercise an irresistible power over men when she wants to. You have changed completely and are totally under her spell. You don’t think of your wife and family any more.”

Erasmus covered his face with his hands and sobbed, crying out his wife’s name. Friedrich saw that a difficult internal battle had begun in Spikher. “Erasmus,” he said, “let us get out of here immediately.”

“Yes, Friedrich,” said Erasmus heavily. “You are right. I don’t know why I am suddenly overcome by such dark horrible foreboding—I must leave right away, today.”

The two friends hastened along the street, but directly across from them came Signor Dapertutto, who laughed in Erasmus’s face, and cried nasally, “Hurry, hurry; a little faster. Giuletta waiting; her heart is full of longing, and her eyes are full of tears. Make haste. Make haste.”

Erasmus stood as if struck by lightning.

“This scoundrel,” said Friedrich, “this charlatan—I cannot stand him. He is always in and out of Giuletta’s, and he sells her his magical potions.”

“What!” cried Erasmus. “That disgusting creature visits Giuletta, Giuletta?”

“Where have you been so long? Everything is waiting for you. Didn’t you think of me at all,” breathed a soft voice from the balcony. It was Giuletta, in front of whose house the two friends, without noticing it, had stopped. With a leap Erasmus was in the house.

“He is gone, and cannot be saved,” said Friedrich to himself, and walked slowly away.

Never before had Giuletta been more amiable. She wore the same clothing that she had worn when she first met Erasmus, and beauty, charm and youth shone from her. Erasmus completely forgot his conversation with Friedrich, and now more than ever his irresistible passion seized him. This was the first time that Giuletta showed without reservation her deepest love for him. She seemed to see only him, and to live for him only. At a villa which Giuletta had rented for the summer, a festival was being celebrated, and they went there. Among the company was a young Italian with a brutal ugly face and even worse manners, who kept paying court to Giuletta and arousing Erasmus’s jealousy. Fuming with rage, Erasmus left the company and paced up and down in a side path of the garden. Giuletta came looking for him. “What is wrong with you? Aren’t you mine alone?” she asked. She embraced him and planted a kiss upon his lips. Sparks of passion flew through Erasmus, and in a passion he crushed her to himself, crying, “No, I will

not leave you, no matter how low I fall.” Giuletta smiled strangely at these words, and cast at him that peculiar oblique glance which never failed to arouse a chilly feeling in him.

They returned to the company, and the unpleasant young Italian now took over Erasmus’s role. Obviously enraged with jealousy, he made all sorts of pointed insults against Germans, particularly Spikher. Finally Spikher could bear it no longer, and he strode up to the Italian and said, “That’s enough of your insults, unless you’d like to get thrown into the pond and try your hand at swimming.” In an instant a dagger gleamed in the Italian’s hand, but Erasmus dodged, seized him by the throat, threw him to the ground, and shattered his neck with a kick. The Italian gasped out his life on the spot.

Pandemonium broke loose around Erasmus. He lost consciousness, but felt himself being lifted and carried away. When he awoke later, as if from a deep enchantment, he lay at Giuletta’s feet in a small room, while she, head bowed over him, held him in both her arms.

“You bad, bad German,” she finally said, softly and mildly. “If you knew how frightened you’ve made me! You’ve come very close to disaster, but I’ve managed to save you. You are no longer safe in Florence, though, or even Italy. You must leave, and you must leave me, and I love you so much.”

The thought of leaving Giuletta threw Erasmus into pain and sorrow. “Let me stay here,” he cried. “I’m willing to die. Dying is better than living without you.”

But suddenly it seemed to him as if a soft, distant voice was calling his name painfully. It was the voice of his wife at home. Erasmus was stricken dumb. Strangely enough, Giuletta asked him, “Are you thinking of your wife? Ah, Erasmus, you will forget me only too soon!”

“If I could only remain yours forever and ever,” said Erasmus. They were standing directly in front of the beautiful wide mirror, which was set in the wall, and on the sides of it tapers were burning brightly. More firmly, more closely, Giuletta pressed Erasmus to her, while she murmured softly in his ear, “Leave me your reflection, my beloved; it will be mine and will remain with me forever.”

“Giuletta,” cried Erasmus in amazement. “What do you mean? My reflection?” He looked in the mirror, which showed him himself and Giuletta in sweet, close embrace. “How can you keep my reflection? It is part of me. It springs out to meet me from every clear body of water or polished surface.”

“Aren’t you willing to give me even this dream of your ego? Even though you say you want to be mine, body and soul? Won’t you even give me this trivial thing, so that after you leave, it can accompany me in the loveless, pleasureless life that is left to me?”

Hot tears started from Giuletta’s beautiful dark eyes.

At this point Erasmus, mad with pain and passion, cried, “Do I have to leave? If I have to, my reflection will be yours forever and a day. No power—not even the Devil—can take it away from you until you own me, body and soul.”

Giuletta’s kisses burned like fire on his mouth as he said this, and then she released him and stretched out her arms longingly to the mirror. Erasmus saw his image step forward independent of his movements, glide into Giuletta’s arms, and disappear with her in a strange vapor. Then Erasmus heard all sorts of hideous voices bleating and laughing in demoniac scorn, and, seized with a spasm of terror, he sank to the floor. But his horror and fear aroused him, and in thick dense darkness he stumbled out the door and down the steps. In front of the house he was seized and lifted into a carriage, which rolled away with him rapidly.

“Things have changed somewhat, it seems,” said a man in German, who had taken a seat beside him. “Nevertheless, everything will be all right if you give yourself over to me

completely. Dear Giuletta has done her share, and has recommended you to me. You are a fine, pleasant young man and you have a strong inclination to pleasant pranks and jokes—which please Giuletta and me nicely. That was a real nice German kick in the neck. Did you see how Amoroso’s tongue protruded—purple and swollen—it was a fine sight and the strangling noises and groans—ha, ha, ha.” The man’s voice was so repellent in its mockery, his chatter so gruesomely unpleasant, that his words felt like dagger blows in Erasmus’s chest.

“Whoever you are,” he said, “don’t say any more about it. I regret it bitterly.”

“Regret? Regret?” replied the unknown man. “I’ll be bound that you probably regret knowing Giuletta and winning her love.”

“Ah, Giuletta, Giuletta!” sighed Spikher.

“Now,” said the man, “you are being childish. Everything will run smoothly. It is horrible that you have to leave her, I know, but if you were to remain here, I could keep your enemies daggers away from you, and even the authorities.”

The thought of being able to stay with Giuletta appealed strongly to Erasmus. “How, how can that be?”

“I know a magical way to strike your enemies with blindness, in short, that you will always appear to them with a different face, and they will never recognize you again. Since it is getting on toward daylight, perhaps you will be good enough to look long and attentively into any mirror. I shall then perform certain operations upon your reflection, without damaging it in the least, and you will be hidden and can live forever with Giuletta. As happy as can be; no danger at all.”

“Oh, God,” screamed Erasmus.

“Why call upon God, my most worthy friend,” asked the stranger with a sneer.

“I—I have . . .” began Erasmus.

“Left your reflection behind—with Giuletta—” interrupted the other. “Fine. Bravissimo, my dear sir. And now you course through floods and forests, cities and towns, until you find your wife and little Rasmus, and become a paterfamilias again. No reflection, of course—though this really shouldn’t bother your wife since she has you physically. Even though Giuletta will eternally own your dream-ego.”

A torch procession of singers drew near at this moment, and the light the torches cast into the carriage revealed to Erasmus the sneering visage of Dr. Dapertutto. Erasmus leaped out of the carriage and ran toward the procession, for he had recognized Friedrich’s resounding bass voice among the singers. It was his friends returning from a party in the countryside. Erasmus breathlessly told Friedrich everything that had happened, only withholding mention of the loss of his reflection. Friedrich hurried with him into the city, and arrangements were made so rapidly that when dawn broke, Erasmus, mounted on a fast horse, had already left Florence far behind.

Spikher set down in his manuscript the many adventures that befell him upon his journey. Among the most remarkable is the incident which first caused him to appreciate the loss of his reflection. He had stopped over in a large town, since his tired horse needed a rest, and he had sat down without thinking at a well-filled inn table, not noticing that a fine clear mirror hung before him. A devil of a waiter, who stood behind his chair, noticed that the chair seemed to be empty in the reflection and did not show the person who was sitting in it. He shared his observation with Erasmus’s neighbor, who in turn called it to the attention of his. A murmuring and whispering thereupon ran all around the table, and the guests first stared at Erasmus, then at the mirror. Erasmus, however, was unaware that the disturbance concerned him, until a grave gentleman

stood up, took Erasmus to the mirror, looked in, and then turning to the company, cried out loudly, “Struth. He’s not there. He doesn’t reflect.”

“What? No reflection? He’s not in the mirror?” everyone cried in confusion. “He’s a *mauvais sujet*, a *homo nefas*. Kick him out the door!”

Raging and filled with shame, Erasmus fled to his room, but he had hardly gotten there when he was informed by the police that he must either appear with full, complete, impeccably accurate reflection before the magistrate within one hour or leave the town. He rushed away, followed by the idle mob, tormented by street urchins, who called after him, “There he goes. He sold his reflection to the Devil. There he goes!” Finally he escaped. And from then on, under the pretext of having a phobia against mirrors, he insisted on having them covered. For this reason he was nicknamed General Suvarov, since Suvarov acted the same way.

When he finally reached his home city and his house, his wife and child received him with joy, and he began to think that calm, peaceful domesticity would heal the pain of his lost reflection. One day, however, it happened that Spikher, who had now put Giuletta completely out of his mind, was playing with little Rasmus. Rasmus’s little hands were covered with soot from the stove, and he dragged his fingers across his father’s face. “Daddy! I’ve turned you black. Look, look!” cried the child, and before Spikher could prevent it or avoid it, the little boy held a mirror in front of him, looking into it at the same time. The child dropped the mirror with a scream of terror and ran away to his room.

Spikher’s wife soon came to him, astonishment and terror plainly on her face. “What has Rasmus told me—” she began. “Perhaps that I don’t have a reflection, dear,” interrupted Spikher with a forced smile, and he feverishly tried to prove that the story was too foolish to believe, that one could not lose a reflection, but if one did, since a mirror image was only an illusion, it didn’t matter much, that staring into a mirror led to vanity, and pseudo-philosophical nonsense about the reflection dividing the ego into truth and dream. While he was declaiming, his wife removed the covering from a mirror that hung in the room and looked into it. She fell to the floor as if struck by lightning. Spikher lifted her up, but when she regained consciousness, she pushed him away with horror. “Leave me, get away from me, you demon! You are not my husband. No! You are a demon from Hell, who wants to destroy my chance of heaven, who wants to corrupt me. Away! Leave me alone! You have no power over me, damned spirit!”

Her voice screamed through the room, through the halls; the domestics fled the house in terror, and in rage and despair Erasmus rushed out of the house. Madly he ran through the empty walks of the town park. Giuletta’s form seemed to arise in front of him, angelic in beauty, and he cried aloud, “Is this your revenge, Giuletta, because I abandoned you and left you nothing but my reflection in a mirror? Giuletta, I will be yours, body and soul. I sacrificed you for her, Giuletta, and now she has rejected me. Giuletta, let me be yours—body, life, and soul!”

“That can be done quite easily, *caro signore*,” said Dr. Dapertutto, who was suddenly standing beside him, clad in scarlet cloak with polished steel buttons. These were words of comfort to Erasmus, and he paid no heed to Dapertutto’s sneering, unpleasant face. Erasmus stopped and asked in despair, “How can I find her again? She is eternally lost to me.”

“On the contrary,” answered Dapertutto, “she is not far from here, and she longs for your true self, honored sir; you yourself have had the insight to see that a reflection is nothing but a worthless illusion. And as soon as she has the real you—body, life, and soul—she will return your reflection, smooth and undamaged with the utmost gratitude.”

“Take me to her, take me to her,” cried Erasmus. “Where is she?”

“A certain trivial matter must come first,” replied Dapertutto, “before you can see her and redeem your reflection. You are not entirely free to dispose of your worthy self, since you are tied by certain bonds which have to be dissolved first. Your worthy wife. Your promising little son.”

“What do you mean?” cried Erasmus wildly.

“This bond,” continued Dapertutto, “can be dissolved incontrovertibly, easily and humanely. You may remember from your Florentine days that I have the knack of preparing wonder-working medications. I have a splendid household aid here at hand. Those who stand in the way of you and your beloved Giuletta—let them have the benefit of a couple of drops, and they will sink down quietly, no pain, no embarrassment. It is what they call dying, and death is said to be bitter; but don’t bitter almonds taste very nice? The death in this little bottle has only that kind of bitterness. Immediately after the happy collapse, your worthy family will exude a pleasant odor of almonds. Take it, honored sir.”

He handed a small phial to Erasmus.¹

“I should poison my wife and child?” shrieked Erasmus.

“Who spoke of poison?” continued the red-clad man, very calmly. “It’s just a delicious household remedy. It’s true that I have other ways of regaining your freedom for you, but for you I would like the process to be natural, humane, if you know what I mean. I really feel strongly about it. Take it and have courage, my friend.”

Erasmus found the phial in his hand, he knew not how.

Without thinking, he ran home, to his room. His wife had spent the whole night amid a thousand fears and torments, asserting continually that the person who had returned was not her husband but a spirit from Hell who had assumed her husband’s form. As a result, the moment Erasmus set foot in the house, everyone ran. Only little Rasmus had the courage to approach him and ask in childish fashion why he had not brought his reflection back with him, since Mother was dying of grief because of it. Erasmus stared wildly at the little boy, Dapertutto’s phial in his hand. His son’s pet dove was on his shoulder, and it so happened that the dove pecked at the stopper of the phial, dropped its head, and toppled over, dead. Erasmus was overcome with horror.

“Betrayer,” he shouted. “You cannot make me do it!”

He threw the phial out through the open window, and it shattered upon the concrete pavement of the court. A luscious odor of almonds rose in the air and spread into the room, while little Rasmus ran away in terror.

Erasmus spent the whole day in torment until midnight. More and more vividly each moment the image of Giuletta rose in his mind. On one occasion, in the past, her necklace of red berries (which Italian women wear like pearls) had broken, and while Erasmus was picking up the berries he concealed one and kept it faithfully, because it had been on Giuletta’s neck. At this point he took out the berry and fixed his gaze upon it, focusing his thought on his lost love. It seemed to him that a magical aroma emerged from the berry, the scent which used to surround Giuletta.

“Ah, Giuletta, if I could only see you one more time, and then go down in shame and disgrace.
..”

¹ Dr. Dapertutto’s phial almost certainly contained prussic (hydrocyanic) acid, which is prepared from laurel leaves and bitter almonds. A very small quantity of this liquid, less than an ounce, produces the effects described. Cf. *Horns Archiv für mediz. Erfahrung*, 1813, May to December, page 510.

He had hardly spoken, when a soft rustling came along the walk outside. He heard footsteps—there was a knock on the door. Fear and hope stopped his breath. He opened the door, and in walked Giuletta, as remarkably beautiful and charming as ever. Mad with desire, Erasmus seized her in his arms.

“I am here, beloved,” she whispered softly, gently. “See how well I have preserved your reflection?”

She took the cloth down from the mirror on the wall, and Erasmus saw his image nestled in embrace with Giuletta, independent of him, not following his movements. He shook with terror.

“Giuletta,” he cried, “must you drive me mad? Give me my reflection and take me—body, life, soul!”

“There is still something between us, dear Erasmus,” said Giuletta. “You know what it is. Hasn’t Dapertutto told you?”

“For God’s sake, Giuletta,” cried Erasmus. “If that is the only way I can become yours, I would rather die.”

“You don’t have to do it the way Dapertutto suggested,” said Giuletta. “It is really a shame that a vow and a priest’s blessing can do so much, but you must loose the bond that ties you or else you can never be entirely mine. There is a better way than the one that Dapertutto proposed.”

“What is it?” asked Spikher eagerly. Giuletta placed her arm around his neck, and leaning her head upon his breast whispered up softly, “You just write your name, Erasmus Spikher, upon a little slip of paper, under only a few words: ‘I give to my good friend Dr. Dapertutto power over my wife and over my child, so that he can govern and dispose of them according to his will, and dissolve the bond which ties me, because I, from this day, with body and immortal soul, wish to belong to Giuletta, whom I have chosen as wife, and to whom I will bind myself eternally with a special vow.’”

Erasmus shivered and twitched with pain. Fiery kisses burned upon his lips, and he found the little piece of paper which Giuletta had given to him in his hand. Gigantic, Dapertutto suddenly stood behind Giuletta and handed Erasmus a steel pen. A vein on Erasmus’s left hand burst open and blood spurted out.

“Dip it, dip it, write, write,” said the red-clad figure harshly.

“Write, write, my eternal, my only lover,” whispered Giuletta.

He had filled the pen with his blood and started to write when the door suddenly opened and a white figure entered. With staring eyes fixed on Erasmus, it called painfully and leadenly, “Erasmus, Erasmus! What are you doing? For the sake of our Saviour, don’t do this horrible deed.”

Erasmus recognized his wife in the warning figure, and threw the pen and paper far from him.

Sparks and flashes shot out of Giuletta’s eyes; her face was horribly distorted; her body seemed to glow with rage.

“Away from me, demon; you can have no part of my soul. In the name of the Saviour, begone. Snake—Hell glows through you,” cried Erasmus, and with a violent blow he knocked back Giuletta, who was trying to embrace him again. A screaming and howling broke loose, and a rustling, as of raven feathers. Giuletta and Dapertutto disappeared in a thick stinking smoke, which as it poured out of the walls put out the lights.

Dawn finally came, and Erasmus went to his wife. He found her calm and restrained. Little Rasmus sat very cheerfully upon her bed. She held out her hand to her exhausted husband and said, “I now know everything that happened to you in Italy, and I pity you with all my heart. The

power of the Enemy is great. He is given to ill-doing and he could not resist the desire to make away with your reflection and use it to his own purposes. Look into the mirror again, husband.”

Erasmus, trembling, looked into the mirror, completely dejected. It remained blank and clear; no other Erasmus Spikher looked back at him.

“It is just as well that the mirror does not reflect you,” said his wife, “for you look very foolish, Erasmus. But you must recognize that if you do not have a reflection, you will be laughed at, and you cannot be the proper father for a family; your wife and children cannot respect you. Rasmus is already laughing at you and next will paint a mustache on you with soot, since you cannot see it.

“Go out into the world again, and see if you can track down your reflection, away from the Devil. When you have it back, you will be very welcome here. Kiss me” (Erasmus did) “and now—goodbye. Send little Rasmus new stockings every once in a while, for he keeps sliding on his knees and needs quite a few pairs. If you get to Nuremberg, you can also send him a painted soldier and a spice cake, like a devoted father. Farewell, dear Erasmus.”

His wife turned upon her other side and went back to sleep. Spikher lifted up little Rasmus and hugged him to his breast. But since Rasmus cried quite a bit, Spikher set him down again, and went into the wide world. He struck upon a certain Peter Schlemihl, who had sold his shadow; they planned to travel together, so that Erasmus Spikher could provide the necessary shadow and Peter Schlemihl could reflect properly in a mirror. But nothing came of it.

The end of the story of the lost reflection.

POSTSCRIPT BY THE TRAVELLING ENTHUSIAST

What is it that looks out of that mirror there? Is it really I? Julia, Giuletta—divine image, demon from Hell; delights and torments; longing and despair. You can see, my dear Theodore Amadeus Hoffmann, that a strange dark power manifests itself in my life all too often, steals the best dreams away from sleep, pushing strange forms into my life. I am completely saturated with the manifestations of this New Year’s Eve, and I more than half believe that the Justizrat is a gumdrop, that his tea was a candy display for Christmas or New Year’s, that the good Julia was a picture of a siren by Rembrandt or Callot—who betrayed the unfortunate Spikher to get his alter ego, his reflection in the mirror. Forgive me. . . .