

The Black Spider

By Anonymous

Among the numerous and appalling lessons, which the vices of mankind in times gone by, read to the coevals of later years, the adventures of Rodolpho de Burkart are not the least awful. Possessed of more than ordinary intellectual powers, a capacious memory and impetuous application soon carried him through the dull routine, which the acquisition of rudimental knowledge imposes on youth; and released him from those trammels, which the uninformed mind is necessarily subjected to, in the first stages of instruction.

When thus master of the usual branches of learning, he was placed, at a comparatively early age, in one of the numerous universities, which have rendered Germany so famous. Here unfortunately, his young and aspiring mind received a wrong bias, from the instructions of a crazy professor, who entailed on his unfortunate pupil, all the follies of which he was himself the dupe, and wore out his faculties in an incessant application to studies which were worse than useless.

Among these were Alchemy; an aberration of the chemical art, which its mad professors dignified into a science, and pursued with far greater zeal, than they devoted to the useful operations of chemistry. The professor, to whose care Rodolpho was committed, was a votary of this science, the principles of which are, that there is a universal solvent capable of decomposing every substance, but the precious metal gold, into which it converts the baser metals; in addition to these properties, it has the miraculous power of conferring perpetual youth and immortality on its possessors.

The professor was not a novice in the science. He possessed a commodious laboratory, in which he had long practised all the fooleries of his art, and scraped crucibles, and blew furnaces, with unwearied industry. Into this sanctum sanctorum, he now introduced his pupil, infected with the fables of Alchemy, and master of much figurative nonsense, which its unfortunate devotees imagined to contain the principles of the art. In this chamber of science Rodolpho soon commenced his labours, and he too, scraped crucibles, and blew furnaces, from morning till night, with the most laudable patience and industry. Among the numerous experiments tried by the learned professor, or perhaps more properly speaking among those he tried to try, the following two merit our particular attention. First, a plate of gold on which was painted, eyes, nose, and mouth, to typify its representative character of the sun, was immured in a sand bath, there to remain in a rich glow, until the sun had performed his annual course. Three hundred and sixty five nights blowing, of course, caused a great consumption of charcoal, and produced nothing, save much sweat from the experimentalist.—In a mattress elevated over a spirit lamp—a green liquid, compounded of many salts, was to undergo a slow evaporation, till a pillicle announced its powers sufficiently concentrated. It was easy enough to evaporate to a pillicle, but the mischief was, that this phenomenon should not take place, till the silver moon had described her orbit, and nothing but a month's slow boiling would do; 'neither more nor less,' as Portia says to Shylock. This experiment, although tried with great success by the professor and his pupil, never entirely succeeded, owing to the extreme difficulty of adjusting the heat, so as to effect the given degree of concentration in the proper ratio of time; however the professor and his pupil boiled eggs remarkably well. These grand experiments, it may be supposed, were not the only ones which occupied their time and attention: innumerable retorts, receivers, and mattresses were continually boiling, bursting, and breaking, around the experimentalists, and an ugly

urchin, who was permitted to sweep out the laboratory, derived an handsome independence, and 'cut a swell' at the fruit stalls, by the sale of the broken glass.

After two years of slavery had been passed by the pupil in the laboratory, nearly three thousand retorts, receivers, and mattresses were reduced to atoms; and much good, genuine gold dissolved, melted, and lost, the professor, who, like his pupil, was assiduously blowing a charcoal furnace, suddenly relaxed his labours—the bellows ceased to blow, the red glow of the charcoal gave place to occasional scintillations, and the professor in an invoking attitude, with impassioned but reverend utterance, addressed his Saint, thus:—'Shade of Cornelius Agrippa! how my shirt sticks to my back!'

The professor had scarce uttered these words, when the bursting of a large retort of liquor, intended to become *Aqua mirabilis*, put an end to his apostrophe, and so grievously scalded both him and his pupil, as to render immediate pharmaceutical aid necessary.

Rodolpho was placed under the care of a learned professor of phlebotomy, who after administering much external plaster, physicked, blistered, purged and bolussed his patient till he had reduced him to the common standard of humanity; and cured of his enthusiasm for this science, Rodolpho gave up the search for *Elixir Vitae*.

Rodolpho during the confinement of his sick chamber, perused many medical and anatomical treatises, and on his return to convalescence, attended the lectures of the worthy professor under whose care he had been placed. The lecture room was amply supplied with proper objects for illustration of the science. Skeletons shewed the fabric, muscular, and other dissections, the superstratum and construction of the human body, and nature thus exhibited to the pupil, convinced him that we are 'wonderfully and fearfully made'. Rodolpho felt this on his entry—it struck a chill to his heart—his frame was unnerved, and he would have fallen to the ground, had not his conductors supported him—this feeling soon wore off, and he surveyed and inspected the dissections without emotion—in a week he had acquired firmness to take up the dissecting knife, and mangle the 'subjects', and could smile at the miserable conceits and jests of the elder students, as they jocosely discussed whether a corpse under examination, had more adipose membrane than muscular fibre, or whether the *pia mater* was larger than the *dura mater*; and in a fortnight he had become a 'regular carver', and could cut up the heart of a man, and cut a joke at the same time.

During his pupilage to the Alchemistic professor, Rodolpho had studied electricity and galvanism, which had both been resorted to in the search after the philosopher's stone, and in his few hours of occasional relaxation had sometimes amused himself by making a calf's head look foolish, or a dead frog dance to the tune of his galvanic battery. He now experimented on the subjects for dissection, and could make a corpse raise an arm or a leg, open and shut its eyes or mouth at will.

The new buried corpse of a young female which had been stolen from a neighbouring cemetery, was, on its way to the Anatomical Theatre, deposited in the apartment of Rodolpho, with a view to its removal at a more convenient season, and this he considered a good opportunity of ascertaining the utmost power of his galvanic battery—indeed he had sometimes almost entertained the belief that the mere muscular motion first caused by the application of galvanism, might by its continued action, be converted into more than involuntary agitation, and that, when muscular action had been sufficiently excited, it would cause the heart to beat, the lungs to inflate, the blood to flow; and then thought he reanimation must ensue. All was prepared, and he gradually applied the powers of his battery to the corpse before him—it caused at first a sort of tremor of the whole body,—then muscular action commenced—Rodolpho turned

to increase the strength of the battery—he thought he heard a sigh—he stood aghast and motionless till he was sure he heard a moan, and then the corpse before him half uplifted its head, and raised its arm—it started half upright—opened its eyes—gazed wildly—and sunk again. Rodolpho now knew what nature had revived, and he immediately procured assistance and conveyed the body to the Infirmary attached to the university.

At this juncture a summons from the father of Rodolpho suddenly arrived, requiring the immediate presence of his son—he was at the point of death; our hero arrived at his paternal home in time to receive his father's blessing and last instructions. After the burial, and when the first violent emotions of grief had subsided, he began to investigate into his father's affairs, naturally anxious to ascertain what he was heir to, and found that he must in a great measure depend on his good spirits to feed and clothe him.

Rodolpho's thoughts had been so much engaged by the circumstances of his sudden recall from college and his father's death with its attendant cares and duties, as to wholly banish all recollection of his last galvanic experiment, when he received a letter from the professor of anatomy, informing him that the corpse he had recalled to life had been completely restored to health—that she was the daughter of Baron von Stickmeheart, that having fallen into a lethargic state she had been supposed dead, and too hastily buried. This letter enclosed another from the Baron, expressing in high terms his thanks for the restoration of his child, and closing with a pressing invitation to his château.

The events that followed are such as are familiar to every reader of romance, and we shall not dilate either upon them, or upon the beauty of Leonora, for that was the name of the resuscitated lady; sufficient to say that Rodolpho immediately accepted the invitation—was hospitably entertained by the father—fell in love with the daughter—and after exchanging eternal vows of constancy and affection with the fair Leonora, was kicked out of doors for his presumption.—Baron Von Stickmeheart although he felt grateful for Rodolpho's services, feeling equal contempt for his poverty.

Rodolpho lingered many a long and weary day, near the spot where his beloved Leonora resided, but the Baron was too cautious in his measures to give the lovers an opportunity of again meeting.

In his lurkings round the château, he more than once encountered the noble lord who, confident that he had by his precautions secured his daughter from all access, good humouredly rallied our hero on his fruitless endeavours to catch a glance of his mistress, and advised him to give up the idle pursuit in which he was engaged, and apply himself to some other, by which he might acquire sufficient wealth to rank himself equal to the lady he aspired to.

Rodolpho listened to these admonitions with a long face and heavy heart—his alchemistic labours had taught him patience, but he knew too well that if he must be rich before his union with Leonora could take place, many a year of hope deferred and lingering expectation must be passed, ere he could count gold enough to buy his bride. At length, finding no relaxation in the baron's precautionary measures, and more than all convinced by the baron's friendly conduct towards him in other points where his daughter was not concerned, Rodolpho resolved to return homeward and adopt the course recommended to him. Before however he quitted the locality so dear to him, he visited every spot that could remind him of his Leonora—every rustic arbour where they had sat, and enjoyed the converse sweet that none but lovers know.—When every stump of tree on which Leonora had rested, had received his benediction, he felt that he must depart and with a heavy sigh looked towards the path he must take to return, when he recollected that one object, which was associated with the idea of his mistress, had been neglected, in this,

his farewell perambulation. There stood not far from the château of the baron, a noble fir-tree, which reared on high its lofty head, and spread its branches wide around: this was an object which had often excited the admiration of the lovers in the walks together. He surveyed it now with peculiar attention and regard, and sighing deeply as he viewed it, thought how many years would perhaps elapse, ere he might again behold either that, or Leonora. He threw himself on the turf and reclined beneath its branches, and in a melancholy stupor, forgot awhile his sorrow. But thought was not idle, his busy brain in wild succession, let loose ideas which mocked the sober understanding. In imagination he again commenced his alchemistic labours—again scraped crucibles and bellows blew—again watched over the slow boiling of Aqua mirabilis—a female of exquisite beauty appeared to rise from the boiling compound, gradually expanding to the stature of humanity.—She held in her right hand a golden sceptre headed by a transparent globe which contained a fluid of golden hue—she held it forth to Rodolpho, but as he seemed to rise to receive it—a retort burst with loud detonation, and the spectrum vanished. The climax of fancy past, reason resumed her sway, and Rodolpho awoke.

He had at first reclined himself beneath the branches of the fir-tree to shade him from the rays of a setting sun—while the sky shone in glorious splendour. The noble fern now sheltered him from the rain which fell in torrents—the sky was dark and obscured—the wind rushed in by stormy blasts, while the light-fling flashed vividly, followed by loud peals of thunder. The storm was succeeded by a gloomy calm, and the sky, disburdened by the falling of the rain, glared with a bluish light. As Rodolpho lay half asleep beneath the tree, he saw strange shapes flitting around him, and then quite awake with terror, he sat up motionless and breathless to observe them. They became more numerous and regular in their motions, and after capering about individually, took hands, and forming a ring, danced round the fern. Rodolpho lay in a state more likely to be imagined than described, and the cold perspiration bedewed his face and limbs, as he listened to a doggrel chorus, raised by the hellish figurants.

CHORUS OF IMPS

Here we are!—Here we are!

Above in the sky, below on the earth,
We have come from the land of night afar,
Where the sun never gleams, where the darkness has birth.

The mighty wheel of a hundred years
Has turned on its axis since last we met,
And now we have come to calm your fears,
But must depart, ere the sun be set.

And we must reside in the land of gloom,
'Midst thunder, fire, and pain,
Till this century's past, and another has come,
And then we'll revisit the earth again.

Here we are!—Here we are!

From North and South, from East and West,
To know how you do and how you fare,

We must obey the high behest
And dance about
The fir so stout,
Where you are confined and can't come out!
But we must away—we must away,
For the sun sinks fast and we cannot stay;
And the storm comes on and the rain comes fast,
And we must away, ere the day be passed.

We'll once more dance around the fern,
Then away we go, then away we go,
We know you're safe and we must say so;
We'll once more dance around the fern,
Ere we sink below to the fires that burn,
And as nothing has happened our sport to mar,
We'll bid you good-bye with a loud Ha! Ha! Ha!

At the conclusion of the chorus, the elves disappeared. This ballet of the devils had a good effect upon Rodolpho; it took off his thoughts from Leonora, and fully occupied his mind. He was about to depart from the forest when a hollow deep toned voice addressed him thus:—'Stranger! happy and fortunate; whom fate has led upon this spot—speak, what wouldst thou? Once in a hundred years 'tis mine to grant whatever can be asked for. The hour is passing fast which gives that power.—Speak! stranger! speak! and lose not the golden opportunity thou hast attained.'—Rodolpho, startled and bewildered by surprise, was unable to answer; the previous exhibition of the Devil's pantomime had prepared him against much alarm at any strange object he might see in crossing the forest, but he never dreamt of holding conference with anything supernatural. The voice again addressed him—'Speak! stranger! speak—why dost thou hesitate?—But once in a hundred years I offer—the hour is passing, which once past, leaves me dumb for another century—speak! what wouldst?—power—honour—fame—knowledge—these are mine to grant.' Rodolpho had half a mind to sneak off quietly without reply, but knowing riches, power, honour, fame and knowledge were not everyday bargains, he screwed up his courage to the sticking place, rejoined, 'Mysterious being!—who art thou?—hast thou, indeed, the power, and will to grant thus largely?'—'Doubt not,' replied the voice, 'speak, ask, and thy wish is granted.'

Rodolpho had read the history of the Devil and Doctor Faustus, so he replied 'You offer well, but grant ye these great gifts without condition?'—'Without condition! without condition!' rejoined the voice. 'Thou hast but one single task to perform for all that I can give thee—I want no bond of blood nor penalty of soul.' 'What is it that I must do to merit such a recompense,' asked Rodolpho eagerly. 'Set me free!' replied the mysterious voice; 'on a level with yon eye, upon this fir tree you may discern a knotty peg—pull but that out, and I am free. Immured within this fern for many a century past have I pined in misery.—But once in an hundred years have I the power of speech—but once in an hundred years the chance of liberation—that hour is passing—hesitate not, or I am dumb and powerless for another century.' 'What power,' asked Rodolpho, 'has confined thee thus?—what crime has thou committed to merit such a doom?' 'An evil power confines me thus! No crime have I committed to merit such a doom—haste thee stranger—deliver me, and lose not the golden opportunity,—if riches, power, honour, fame and

knowledge please thee not, ask something else—or hast thou not a mistress whom these gifts might grace?’

The imprisoned spirit had now hit the right nail on the head, and stood some chance of liberation. Our hero thought only of his beloved, and hesitated no longer, but pulled out the peg, when out crawled a black spider which swelled to an enormous size as it descended the tree. Rodolpho, who expected to see a ‘dainty Arid’ spring from confinement, singing ‘merrily, merrily, shall I live now, under the blossom that hangs on the bough,’ drew back with astonishment as he viewed the reptile before him. ‘Nay, startle not, friend,’ said the same voice as before—‘I shall not wear this livery long!’ and as it spoke, the spider gradually assumed a human form, and said, ‘Thanks for your kindness; but words alone are nothing—now for deeds—first then, behold your Leonora.’ And Leonora rushed into Rodolpho’s arms. The lovers were too overjoyed at thus meeting again, to notice what was passing around them, and on their relapse into ordinary human feelings, Rodolpho found that the demon had quietly walked off. He thought this a dirty trick of the imp, that after making such proud offers and liberal promises, he should sneak off without so much as a ‘good-bye’, or ‘good morning’, he however concealed his chagrin from Leonora, and in her sweet society, forgot both the demon, and his pie—crust promises. He inquired to what fortunate accident were they indebted for their happy meeting, and found that Baron Von Stickmeheart, having overgorged himself with Salmagunda, had been obliged to relax in his strict discipline, as he required the assistance of his daughter for the administration of the comforts of his sick chamber, and that Leonora, having left the precincts of her father’s chateau to enjoy the evening breeze, felt herself drawn as if by an irresistible impulse, to the spot where they had met. He also found that she had not seen the spider demon, and knew nothing either of him or his braggart offers. The evening was now pretty far advanced, and having conducted Leonora to as near the chateau as prudence permitted, he returned to his lodging for the night.

Rodolpho on his awakening in the morning, had so confused a recollection of the occurrences of the preceding day, that after a long self confabulation, he set down the whole as a dream—he thought, as well he might, that he had a distinct recollection of pulling out the peg, and liberating the demon—and of his previous tempting offers—but then, the total absence of any evidence of their fulfilment, convinced him that the whole could be nothing more than a dream.

These ruminations passed in his mind, as he lay awake in his bed, with his eyes under his nightcap; but when he pulled off that elegant article of night attire, new subjects of astonishment presented themselves. He found himself lying on a sumptuous bed in a chamber, very different from that he had retired to rest in. This last excitation of astonishment quite bewildered him, and he was amazed indeed. When he had a little come to himself, he scrambled out of bed, and began capering and vaulting about the room, to convince himself that he was really awake; during his gymnastic exercises, a valet whose appearance showed he belonged to the establishment of a nobleman of consequence, entered the chamber, and stood bowing before him.—Rodolpho stared at him for several minutes, quite lost in amazement, when the ill-suppressed tittering of the valet, a little recalled him to his senses. On viewing him more composedly, Rodolpho thought he had seen him before, and was a little calmed by the idea that now rushed into his head, that he must be in the chateau of the Baron Von Stickmeheart, and after several vain efforts to speak, he articulated ‘Who are you!’ ‘I have the honour to be your lordship’s gentleman,’ replied the valet, bowing very low. Rodolpho was all abroad again, and he chattered rather than said—‘My lordship’s gentleman! and who am I then?’ ‘Your lordship knows, your lordship has the honour to be the Count Von Attenburg,’ answered the valet. Rodolpho turned from him and

threw himself on the bed. As his agitation calmed, he thought of Abon Hassan, the Duke and the Devil, and Kit Sly, then his mind reverted back to the imprisoned spirit in the fern, and the more he thought, the firmer was his conviction that the occurrences of the previous day were indeed reality—yet he was afraid to open his eyes, lest he should find himself again deceived. He was anxious to ascertain what the fact was, but he dared not—he made efforts to open his eyes, and himself resisted those efforts; at length he summoned up sufficient courage to set about the solution of the question another way—he began with hastily feeling the bed furniture! It certainly was a different bed from that he recollected retiring in—he could not remember seeing such a great tassel as he felt in his hand belonging to the curtains, but still he was not sufficiently encouraged to open his eyes, and he resolved to try another experiment before he resorted to that desperate measure—with great joy he recollected that the bed he had laid himself down on, was rather too short for him, and that he had poked his feet out at the bottom when he wished to lay straight—again he jumped into bed and stretched himself at length, and to his great satisfaction, found that his feet could not reach the bottom of the bed by near a foot—this gave him courage—he opened his eyes, and the bed was still sumptuous, the bedchamber still magnificent, and the grinning valet was still grinning and bowing at his side.

Rodolpho, now fortune was buckled on his back, felt highly offended at the familiar manner in which the valet conducted himself, and with an assumption of dignity suitable to the proud fortune he had reached, asked the ‘stupid booby’, as he condescendingly designated him, what he was grinning and sniggering at. This interrogation silenced the rascal’s giggling, and he submissively asked if his lordship had any commands for him. ‘None at present,’ replied Rodolpho, ‘I shall this morning dress without assistance, but attend within call;’ as Rodolpho spoke, he recollected he did not know his valet’s name, so he said, ‘Ah! fellow! what name do I generally call you by?’—‘Your lordship,’ replied the valet, ‘generally calls me Brushat, but sometimes—the Spider Demon!’—While he spoke, his countenance changed, and Rodolpho recognized the same features as he saw when the gigantic spider assumed a human form. ‘Tis as I suspected then,’ said Rodolpho, without evincing much emotion, ‘and half the mystery’s explained, but how, and by what means am I thus metamorphosed into the Count Von Attenburg, and as I suppose master of a fortune suited to my rank?’ ‘The Count Von Attenburg,’ replied the demon, ‘last night breathed his last in that bed,’ pointing to the one in which Rodolpho had slept,—‘and you have succeeded to his honours.’ ‘By what means?’ rejoined Rodolpho. ‘By the agency of my power,’ replied the demon. ‘But if I cannot boast a legal title, what is to ensure my possession?’ again interrogated Rodolpho, (who had now equipped himself in a splendid suit of blue and gold); ‘instant detection must take place, unless you have provided some expedient to render the deception infallible.’—‘I have done so,’ said the demon, drawing aside a curtain. ‘See ye that portrait of the late Count Von Attenburg—’twas finished but a few days since—and now,’ continued the demon, drawing aside another curtain from before a splendid mirror, ‘behold the present Count Von Attenburg!—what say ye of detection now?’ Rodolpho looked at himself in the glass, and saw that he was habited exactly as the figure. ‘This is mere disguise, mere stage trick,’ said he, ‘a change of dress will not maintain me in the station I have thus usurped.’ ‘Look again,’ replied the demon, ‘and your fears will be at rest.’ Rodolpho did look again, and started back with horror as he discovered that he had not merely changed his dress but his countenance also, and found the portrait and his own reflection in the glass were exactly similar. ‘Demon!’ exclaimed he, ‘instantly restore me to my former person and estate, and leave me for ever!’ ‘No! no!’ replied the demon, ‘we part not so soon, my friendship is not of such brief continuance.’

‘Demon of hell! deceitful tempter!’ again exclaimed Rodolpho, ‘withdraw thee from my sight and trouble me no more.’ The demon after a loud laugh of scorn and bitterness, vanished.

Our hero, much relieved by his departure, paced the chamber in gloomy mood, debating within himself how he should act in this strange dilemma—he looked and looked again in the glass, but his former features were not restored to him, and after waiting in anxious expectation several hours, he still found his countenance, and that of the picture, the same. He now felt internal qualms of a somewhat unpleasant nature, from going without his breakfast, and hunger compelled him to pull the bell rope—his summons was answered by Brushat. Rodolpho, who had indulged the hope that the evil spirit had departed from him forever, shuddered as he recognized him. ‘What is your lordship’s pleasure?’ inquired Brushat. Rodolpho was too much agitated to answer, and Brushat continued, ‘Will not your lordship take breakfast; ’tis much later than your lordship usually takes your morning refreshment.’ Rodolpho answered him by an affirmative inclination of the head, and Brushat led the way. After descending a handsome painted staircase, they entered a splendid hall, where an excellent breakfast was set out. It is well known that a starved tiger is as gentle as a lamb, Rodolpho, now he had got the wind in his stomach, was very mild and tractable, and treated Brushat with as much civility, as, considering their relative situations of lord and slave, could be expected. While partaking of the very excellent breakfast aforesaid, his agitation of mind subsided, and by the time he had satiated his appetite, he was quite resigned to his fate. He was much gratified by observing that Brushat shewed no signs of his satanic origin, and appeared quite an ordinary valet. Rodolpho thought he could not employ the time, between breakfast and dinner, better than by going over, and inspecting his new mansion; so having signified his intention to Brushat, the latter led the way. The hail they were in, opened by folding doors into another still more elegant and spacious, which led to a library and picture gallery. Rodolpho after surveying the interior of his château, walked over the grounds attached to it, and found everything very much to his satisfaction. In crossing a bridge over an artificial waterfall, he discerned a handsome château in the background, and inquiring of his attendant to whom it belonged, received answer, that it was the château of Baron Von Stickmeheart. This information recalled to his mind his love for Leonora, whom he had forgotten in his turmoil of soul and novelty of situation. He thought of her with varied emotions of pleasure and pain, he was delighted to think that his present good fortune, that is to say, his rank and wealth, removed the only obstacle which appeared to their union; but this feeling merged into sensations of a less pleasing character, as he recollected he was not only changed in estate, but in person also. He sighed to think that this circumstance might prove a greater obstacle to his happiness than the former, and returning to the château in a pensive mood, he retired to the library to indulge in his melancholy feelings. He took up, looked at, and threw down the books almost unconscious of what he was doing—he tried to read, but they were all Greek to him now. Rodolpho, who was well acquainted with many languages, and thought he knew the characters at least of almost all, was astonished, after a most attentive and careful examination of one volume, to find that he could not decipher in what language it was. He strained his eyes in painful efforts to discover a resemblance to characters he knew, but these were totally different to all he had ever before seen, they eluded all detection of their meaning, and to use a common expression, and double negative, he could neither make head nor tail of it; he let the book fall in despair, and this simple circumstance revealed to him the secret—he had taken up the book topsy turvy, and begun at the wrong end. As he had already bestowed so much time on the volume, he resolved now to see what it was, he found it to be a collection of romantic legends, and as he glanced over its pages, thought of the days when he considered those

marvellous narrations, but as the creations of imagination—as mere fiction; but now his own adventures, gave them a character and importance of a much higher grade, and compelled a credence of their wondrous relations. This idea brought no comfort with it; in all the ‘Legends of the Wild’ he had ever read, he knew that the supernaturals had always most woefully the advantage over the naturals, and that they generally ended in smoke. As he turned over its pages, an illustration attached to one of the legends, caught his eye—the subject was a spectre barber shaving a terrified mortal, who had much rather been well tarred, and shaved with a piece of iron hoop, by the jolly dogs of Neptune, in latitude 0°, though the spectre barber shaved gratis.

‘Ah!’ said Rodolpho to himself, ‘had I been but shaved by a spectre barber, though he had shaved my head clean, yet the effluxion of a short period of time would have at once restored to me both happiness and a good head of hair! But thus changed as I am in form and feature, my growth in the favour of my mistress, will be much slower than that of my beard!’

Brushat now entered the library, he came to announce the arrival of Baron Von Stickmeheart, who was on friendly, not to say intimate terms of acquaintance with the Count Von Attenburg, and who was of course quite ignorant of the extraordinary change that had taken place.

Rodolpho hastened to receive the baron, who had been ushered into the state drawing-room. He was greeted by a friendly shake of the hand, and the usual exchange of courteous inquiries having been made, and the state of the weather properly ascertained, and sufficiently commented upon; ‘how d’ye do’s’, ‘fine day’, ‘rather cloudy though’, and similar interjections gave way to conversation of a more connected and interesting nature. ‘He’s gone,’ said the Baron, seizing the Count’s hand, ‘he’s gone off; and the girl will soon forget him.’

The Count, who had but assumed the form of the last possessor of the title, without inheriting his memory and mind, was quite in the dark as to whom ‘he’s gone’ could apply, and could not divine who he could be: he had however the presence of mind to say, ‘Indeed! how fortunate.’ ‘Fortunate indeed,’ returned the Baron, ‘Leonora will now receive your attentions with less reserve, than when her head was full of Professor de Burkart.’ The hero of our tale now discovered that he himself was the person alluded to by the baron, and was well pleased to find that though as Rodolpho de Burkart he was despised and avoided, yet that as the Count Von Attenburg, he was a welcomed and encouraged suitor at Château Stickmeheart. After having invited the Count to dine with him and Leonora, the Baron took his leave.—Rodolpho arrived at Château Stickmeheart, full an hour before the appointed time, and an hour and a half before he was wanted; the cook dreaded dinner being called for before everything was ready: the baron had retired to his chamber, to take a little repose after his morning’s walk, as it was one of his maxims of health, never to dine in a state of fatigue: and to Leonora any visitor would have been an unwelcome one. Rodolpho was too well-bred to disturb the Baron’s repose, and learning, on inquiry after the lady Leonora, that she was walking in the grounds attached to the château, he went in quest of her. He ranged the grounds over and over again, without meeting with Leonora, and then thinking she might perhaps have ventured beyond the precincts of her father’s château, he left the enclosed lands, and sought for her in the surrounding wilds, but found her not; he penetrated deeper into the forest, and on arriving at the spot, where stood the fir tree before mentioned, there discovered the object of his search. Leonora had been much disappointed, by finding on inquiry at the cottage, where Rodolpho had slept, on the night of their last interview, that he had departed thence before daybreak, without any previous intimation of his intention to its inmates; and had been led to visit that spot, by a vague hope that she might here meet Rodolpho. Here then the lovers again met, but with very different feelings to those they experienced on their former interview. Leonora who had been ‘sitting like patience on a

monument' at the foot of the fern, was much disconcerted being discovered there, by him, whom she only knew as the Count Von Attenburg, while Rodolpho felt equal confusion. He had intended to communicate to Leonora, all the strange circumstances that had occurred previously to, and since their last meeting: but his tongue clove to the roof of his mouth, when he would speak, and he felt a secret dread of revealing them. Thus compelled to sustain a false character, he greeted Leonora with cold formality, and mere commonplace conversation passed between them, as he led her homewards. Leonora paid the count the attention due to his rank and station, but was otherwise very reserved in her carriage towards him. The baron did all he could to bring about a better understanding between them, but all his efforts were abortive, and he only preserved the equanimity of his temper, by the consideration, that time's miraculous power would subdue the obstinacy of his daughter: and the baron was quite correct in his notion. Time's miraculous power works wonders, and a year's effluxion placed the count on a very different footing at Château Stickmeheart. No tidings of Rodolpho reached Leonora; the Count was so constant a visitor, that habit removed the irksomeness and repugnance she formerly felt at his presence: till at length his visits became very agreeable. Some of our fair readers may deem this change in the sentiments of our heroine, very inconsistent with the idea they have been led to entertain of her character, but we beg they will bear in mind, that there was a great similarity between Rodolpho, in his former and his present estate, he was changed but in outward circumstances; the man was still the same. Rodolpho often resolved to cut short his courtship by the avowal of his real character, but never could summon sufficient courage to do so; he seemed restrained from the disclosure, by an inward dread that something fatal would attend the revelation of the mystery that enveloped him. One day when Leonora was particularly gracious, he determined to overcome this repugnance, and own himself Rodolpho. He fell at her feet in a very graceful attitude, but as he raised his eyes to meet those of his mistress, was horror-struck at beholding the Spider Demon standing before him, with his finger on his lip; the usual mute sign of imposing silence.

This unexpected and ill-timed visitation of the Spider Demon, struck Rodolpho with horror, he endeavoured to account for his agitation, by attributing it to sudden indisposition, and immediately left Château Stickmeheart. When he arrived at his own château he directed Brushat to attend him in the library. Rodolpho, who always felt 'tremor cordis' when that mysterious being was present, had never, since their colloquy, when he first discovered his elevation to the Peerage, held further conference with the demon, but endeavoured to consider him, as what he appeared to be, an ordinary valet. He was now resolved to come to an explanation with the demon, and demand the reason of the warning given him so mal apropos. He was astonished to find, on interrogating Brushat, that he pretended total ignorance of any of the mysterious circumstances before related, and Brushat was equally astonished at the strange, and to him, unintelligible inquiries of his lordship, who was now compelled to solve this fresh difficulty by supposition that the demon had assumed the form of the domestic. Though disappointed in one respect, he was greatly pleased at discovering that the demon was not so constantly before him as he had imagined. At the present moment, however, the demon was wanted, and Rodolpho began cogitating how he could summon him before him. I can call him from the vasty deep, thought Rodolpho; but I must take my chance whether he will come or not, when I do call him. Rodolpho considered that the best and most likely method to produce a satisfactory result, would be an invocation in the chamber, where the demon had formerly appeared to him. He proceeded there accordingly, and thus invoked him:

Spirit of the demon tree,
Whom I released from misery,
Where e're thou art, obey my call
And hither come, before night fall.

No demon however appeared, and Rodolpho was obliged to exercise his poetic genius, in the composition of another verse:

Demon Spider of the tree,
Thy compact thou has soon forgot:
In keeping word and faith with me,
Methinks the most exact you're not.

The demon now stood before him. 'Oh! ho!' said he, 'now I am wanted; the last time you scared me from you with maledictions.' 'And I am like to do so again,' said Rodolpho; 'I had not called thee now, hadst thou not come uncalled for. Why was I cursed with thy hideous silent visitation, this very day, in an hour too sacred, to love and beauty?' 'That was a friendly warning to thee,' answered the demon, 'had not my appearance prevented thee, like another Sampson, thou hadst revealed to thy Delilah, where thy strength lay, and met destruction. Shouldst thou ever communicate the secret of thy metamorphoses to mortal ear, that moment thy existence ends.'

Rodolpho heard the communication in silence, he had no heart to reply; and the demon, having waited as long as good-breeding required, disappeared. His wonted elasticity of mind soon threw off the apathy created by the demon's warning, and Rodolpho again visited Château Stickmeheart. In a short time his assiduities overcame the weak barrier which Leonora's faint recollection of Rodolpho in his former estate opposed to their union, and to the great joy of Baron Von Stickmeheart, the noble houses of Von Stickmeheart and Von Attenburg were united in the persons of Rodolpho and Leonora. The marriage festival was kept with every 'pomp and circumstance', suited to the exalted rank of the parties; the festivities commenced under the most auspicious expectations, but after a week of happiness and pleasure had been passed, amidst the varied scenes of enjoyment, which château Attenburg presented at this period, an event happened which melted every fair one into grief, and struck every manly breast with horror. While Rodolpho and his bride sat surrounded by their friends, under a tented canopy in the gardens, a sudden outcry was heard from another part, and a horror-struck domestic rushed forward, to communicate the harrowing intelligence, that the Baron Von Stickmeheart had been murdered. The fair Leonora and the majority of the ladies present, of course fainted, and while they were being conveyed to the château, Rodolpho and the rest, repaired to the scene of murder. The baron lay weltering in his gore, and a group of domestics stood on one side, with the murderer in their custody. After the first emotions of horror, excited by the appalling spectacle, had subsided, a general cry issued from all, of 'Who is the murderer?' The domestics, in whose custody he was, reluctantly produced the assassin. The gaze of all was in an instant on the miscreant, and to their great astonishment, he was recognized as the confidential valet of the count, as Brushat! The assembled guests, who were nearly all connected by the ties of consanguinity to the deceased, loudly invoked justice on the murderer, and immediately called upon Rudolpho, instead of restoring to the common dilatory course of preceeding, to sit in his baronial hall of justice, according to the feudal law, and there pronounce judgement on the murderer. The count, who had always found Brushat a faithful and attached domestic, was reluctant to adopt the hasty

procedure recommended: and his reluctance increased, as he formed the opinion that this scene of horror, arose from the machinations of the Demon; and that he had again assumed the form of Brushat, with a much more fell purpose than on the former occasion. He had resolved to resign the supposed assassin to the ordinary course of law, when one of the guests, more loud in his outcries than the rest, cautioned Rodolpho how he refused the general call for justice, and stated to him that there was already a murmuring among them, that Rodolpho must be in some way connected with the commission of the black deed, as it had been perpetrated by his own confidential domestic. Thus assailed, Rodolpho was compelled to yield to the united voice of the guests. The long unused baronial hail of justice, was hastily prepared, and the reluctant judge ascended his tribunal. Baron Pratterpace, whom we have before mentioned, as the foremost of the vengeance-calling throng, came forward as the accuser, and advocate of justice; he narrated what he imagined to be the circumstances of the case, with great forensic eloquence. He dilated on the atrocity of the crime committed, and argued that as the prisoner was the confidential servant of Rodolpho, and the latter, the son-in-law of the murdered victim to cupidity or hatred, that the prisoner must be considered as if he were the assassin of his master, and visited with the usual rigidity, and extreme of punishment, awarded in such cases. He was particular in dwelling on the fact of the murderer being the confidential servant of Rodolpho, in order that by thus influencing the mind of the count, with the impression that his own safety called for the sacrifice of Brushat, the latter might have no chance of escape. Baron Pratterpace, being one of those impetuous prejudiced men, who, having once formed an opinion, never suffer themselves to be convinced of their error, but pursue the delusion to the end, had determined that Brushat was the murderer, and he had also determined that he should suffer execution for his offence. These feelings caused the acrimony of heart with which he pursued the prisoner 'to the death', and it would have excessively mortified him, had Brushat been, even by the clearest proofs, declared innocent. As it was, however, he was not doomed to experience a disappointment: the prisoner could offer no defence, save protestations of innocence, which were rendered nugatory by the reluctant evidence of the prisoner's fellow domestics, No one but Rodolpho could doubt the guilt of the prisoner, but he, with the gloomy suspicion of the truth rankling in his breast, felt a conviction of his innocence. The accuser loudly called for judgement, and the judge, unable to resist the current of his opinion and offered proffer, pronounced Brushat the murderer. The assembled throng did not wait for sentence to be passed, but as Rodolpho sunk back in his seat, overcome by his emotions, they dragged the prisoner to instant execution. Rodolpho, who, for a few minutes, had been lost in his feelings, started up as he heard the shout raised on the termination of Brushat's mundane existence: and perceived the demon standing before him, with his finger on his lip as in his last uncalled for visitation: after a loud burst of hideous laughter, the demon vanished, leaving Rodolpho in that state of mind, to which, since his first interview with the demon, he was too much accustomed. Time's mellowing hand, which had already done much for Rodolpho, gradually erased from his recollection, this unfortunate transaction, but by the period of its removal, another cause of irritation of a different description arose. The coffers of château Attenburg were exhausted—the count, whose thoughts were divided between his love for Leonora, and the bewildering mysteries which surrounded him, of course paid no attention to household economy, but trusted the entire management of his estate to Brushat, in whose hands he found it. So long as he considered Brushat to be the demon in human guise, he knew that he had no power to oppose the demon's will, and when awakened from that delusion, he felt no disposition to change his household arrangements. Brushat was in one sense faithful to his trust, he did not by private peculation defraud his master, but he suffered him to live on a scale of

magnificence his estate could not maintain; and which gradually ate up his property. Rodolpho, on discovering the situation he was in, knew he had no alternative, but either to sink to his former obscurity, or else again invoke the aid of the Spider Demon. He would himself gladly have retired from his splendid deception, but he could not involve in his degradation the wife of his bosom, and who was now shortly to become the mother of his child. Still he delayed the effort from day to day, till the birth of a son and the newly awakened feelings of a father, gave him courage to put in execution the measures necessary to secure the future welfare of his offspring. He accordingly entered the chamber of the demon conference, which had been abandoned as a sleeping apartment, and used as a mere lumber room. His invocation now, was as follows:

Spider demon of the tree,
A curse yourself!—a curse to me,
Hither come where e're you be,
And rescue me from misery.

Deceitful tempter! braggart imp!
Hast thou forgot the years of old,
When in the fir-tree thou didst limp,
Ere I released thee from thy hold?

'What now?' said the demon, standing at the count's elbow. 'For what purpose am I again summoned by Rodolpho de Burkart!' 'When I released thee from the fir tree,' returned the count, 'didst thou not promise to perform whate'er I asked for?' 'And did not I keep my word,' answered the demon, 'did not I create thee Count Von Attenburg—did not I invest thee too, with riches—and with accruing revenues to support that high estate? If you have wasted patrimony with prodigal expenditures—blame not me. I promised but one gift; not a continuity of favours. However, I am not ungrateful, nor unmindful of your services; what is it that you ask for now?' 'To restore my broken fortunes, that I may still maintain my credit, and leave a fair name and inheritance to my child;' was the count's reply. 'On one condition will I perform your wish,' rejoined the demon. 'Name it,' said the count. 'Within a cottage near your lordship's domain,' said the demon, 'a few days since a new-born infant saw the light—'tis the child of poverty and obscurity—'tis the sure heir of misery—think'ye not 'twere kind to release its spirit from the bonds of clay that fetter it, and let it float a cherubim to heaven? Grasp but its throat tight, and the thing is done! This perform, and I will restore your broken fortunes.' Rodolpho heard the proposal with mingled emotions of horror, and something like joy; his fortunes were desperate—he had nerved himself up for the worst—but he shuddered at the thoughts of committing murder to retrieve himself—still he had not the courage at once to reject the demon's temptation. The demon, observing Rodolpho's hesitation, knew that he had half accomplished his hellish work, and continued—'What say ye! Hesitate not too long, or your fortunes may be irretrievable—let your credit be once blasted, and no power, human or demoniac, can restore you.' 'But what a price must I pay for the bubble reputation;' exclaimed Rodolpho, 'murder a sleeping infant—never.' 'You forget,' said the demon, 'twill not be the first murder your lordship has committed!' 'What mean ye?' demanded the count. The demon replied, 'Did not your lordship murder Brushat—your faithful Brushat? I murdered the baron, and you knew it too well, yet you suffered the innocent Brushat to die upon the scaffold as his murderer—nay, yourself condemned

him, with a firm conviction of his innocence. Was not that murder, think'ye!' 'Demon, forbear,' exclaimed Rodolpho, 'forbear to upbraid me with the guilt your own machinations have plunged me in. Would that I could retrace my steps to the point where first I listened to your tempting offers—but I am too sure your victim—ye have led me on step by step in guilt, that now my callous heart shudders not at the thoughts of committing infanticide. Lead me—lead me to the cottage of murder—and then we part I trust for ever.' 'Your lordship,' said the demon, 'need not go so far—the child of death is here.'—As he spoke, the demon threw off a mantle from his side, and exposed to view an infant sleeping in his arms; Rodolpho was staggered, but he nerved himself up with desperate energy, and without looking at it, grasped the infant's throat, when a loud burst of laughter from the demon announced the consummation of his crime. 'Now,' said the demon, 'you will find the coffers of Von Attenburg refilled—its mortgages redeemed;' and the demon disappeared. Rodolpho remained in the chamber several hours, in a gloomy and bewildering reverie: on his quitting it, he was amazed to find a general expression of grief on the countenances of his attendants, they seemed to avoid him as he passed: when he reached the chamber of Leonora, he found its expression more violent. She was surrounded by her weeping attendants, who were engaged in restoring her from a fainting fit, Rodolpho hastily demanded the cause of grief; he was answered by bursts of tears, and mute pointings to the cradle of his child; a cold sweat came over Rodolpho, he immediately surmised the fatal cause of sorrow—in wild despair he gazed on the infant—its throat was black from the grasp of strangulation, and it lay dead before him. In wild frenzy, he cursed himself and the deceitful demon who had betrayed him. 'Cursed demon of the tree;' he exclaimed, 'thou hast now indeed made a victim of Rodolpho de Burkart.' As he spoke he fell in the agonies of despair and death—a loud burst of demon laughter was heard—the hideous black spider appeared as after it had descended from the fir tree, and from it arose the demon, who laughed loudly as he exclaimed, 'How like ye the web the Black Spider weaves—another fly I've caught;' and disappeared.