

To Be Used Against Him

By Richard Marsh

I. A TRAVELLING COMPANION

When the train left Liverpool Street, he and I were the only occupants of the compartment. I was in one corner, he was directly opposite me in the other. He appeared to have purchased the same evening papers which I had purchased. I noticed, too, a certain similarity in his movements to mine. When I lowered my paper he lowered his. When I turned a page he turned one also. This coincidence of action I supposed, at first, was accidental. But I perceived, ere long, that, if it was accidental, the accident was of a peculiar kind. Whatever I did he did. When I exchanged one journal for another, he exchanged one also. I noticed, in this respect, that the imitation was so close, that when I relinquished the *Pall Mall* for the *St. James's*, he relinquished the *Pall Mall* for the *St. James's*. When I put my paper down and looked at him, he put his paper down and looked at me. I asked myself if this person intended to insult me. What conceivable reason could he have for entering a railway carriage with the apparently deliberate intention of insulting an inoffensive stranger? Unless he was drunk, or mad?

Directly I began to observe him I was struck by the fact that he resembled someone whom I had seen before. Who it was I could not, for the instant, recollect. I eyed him—while he eyed me—endeavouring to recall to my mind who was the owner of his features.

“I believe that I have had the pleasure of meeting you before.”

When I addressed to him this commonplace, which so frequently is addressed to individuals whose personality one fails to recollect, to my surprise he replied to me in exactly the same words which I had used—“I believe that I have had the pleasure of meeting you before.”

The tones of his voice were familiar to me. I had not only heard them before, but I had heard them recently.

“You are laughing at me because I cannot recollect your face? And yet it is proverbial among my friends that I have an excellent memory for faces.”

Scarcely had I finished speaking than he echoed me. He repeated, after me, word for word what I had said. The man must be a mountebank. And yet, the longer I looked at him, the better I seemed to know his face. Who was the fellow?

“May I venture to ask your name?”

The only reply which I received to my inquiry was my inquiry echoed. The man must be some clowning spirit, who, in revenge, perhaps for my bad memory, proposed to amuse himself a little at my expense.

“When you are pleased to be more communicative, I will endeavour to apologise for my imperfect recollection.”

“When you are pleased to be more communicative, I will endeavour to apologise,” came the echo from the opposite corner.

I confess that I was conscious of a certain feeling of irritation. The mildest of men does not care to be mocked, and I am not prepared to say that I am the mildest of men. Still I did not propose to have, in a railway carriage, any unpleasantness with a man who, after all, might be a perfect stranger to me. So I gathered my papers and my wraps together, and withdrew to the other end of the carriage. Scarcely had I done so when the man who had been in front of me did

likewise. He gathered his papers and his wraps. He came and planted himself in front of me at this end, as he had done at that.

There could be no doubt that the action was intended to be impertinent. The thing was done too deliberately to admit of any other supposition. Still I was not prepared to show resentment. I did not see how I could do so, that is, with any regard to my own dignity. I could scarcely have a vulgar squabble with the fellow then and there. The boat train does not stop between London and Harwich. We were compulsory companions while the journey lasted, unless I threw him out of the carriage window or he threw me. Better to endure his insolence, unless it became aggressive, until we reached our destination.

I became tired of reading. I put down my paper, the man in front of me, in pursuance of his apparent policy of faithful imitation, simultaneously put down his. He returned the look with which I favoured him. But to that I was indifferent. I continued intently to study his countenance, asking myself when, and where, before our meeting in that carriage, I had encountered him before.

He looked a gentleman; I was prepared to admit that he was a gentleman. He had about him that indefinable something which the trained observer inevitably associates with his idea of a gentleman. He was probably between thirty and forty years of age. He was good-looking, with a long, sallow, oval face, which was innocent of moustache and whiskers, and a very curious mouth and chin. I think it was the peculiarity of that mouth and chin which impressed one with the consciousness that he might not be an agreeable man to quarrel with. There was something about the formation of the lower part of his face which was suggestive— though only to my imagination, perhaps—of cool, calculating, unflinching cruelty. I say that this might have been a suggestion of my imagination, but his eyes conveyed not merely a suggestion, but an absolute certainty. They were the most beautiful eyes which I had ever seen. They were large and black— jet black and deep, so deep that it seemed impossible to penetrate their depths. The pupils had a curious trick of dilation like a cat's. They were large at first, and seemed to gleam with light; as you observed them they grew perceptibly smaller, until but a point remained—a point of light. No man could look at that man's eyes and doubt that he was as cruel as the grave.

The unflinching way in which he met my gaze had a curious effect upon my nerves, though I am far from being a nervous man. The more I continued to observe him the more persuaded I became that we had met before—not once, but constantly—so firmly were his features impressed upon some mis-laid tablet of my memory. Yet, try how I would, I could neither remember where I had seen him nor who he was. This was the more extraordinary, because he was possessed of so distinct an individuality that one was disposed to say that one need only set eyes upon him once never to forget him.

I could restrain my curiosity no longer. I leaned forward and, regarding him fixedly, I said—

“Don't I know you?”

He leaned forward and, regarding me fixedly, replied—

“Don't I know you?”

It was but an echo; the man persisted in his mockery. And yet the tones of his voice—with what a strange familiarity they seemed to ring in my ears, and, at the same time, how they grated on my nerves, how they filled me with a sense of irritation. He had advanced his face to within a few inches of my own. In the irritation of the moment I was more than half-disposed to strike him; the palm of my hand itched to salute his ears. I believe that I should have struck him had I not, all at once, become conscious of the look which was in his eyes. The pupils grew and grew until they glared at me more like a wild beast than like a man. I drew back in my seat, stifling an

exclamation. There could be no doubt whatever that murder was in the man's eyes—that he was mad.

I lost him when we reached Harwich. I went at once to the Antwerp boat. The night was glorious. I remained on deck while the boat was being cast from her moorings, after she was out in the river, after she was out in the sea. I had no desire for a cabin; I did not trouble myself even to secure a berth; I had no desire for slumber. I, of course, was conscious that, in my peculiar circumstances, sleep was a factor not to be neglected. Without a proper amount of sleep a man's nervous system is bound to suffer, and when his nervous system suffers the man suffers altogether; he loses perfect control of his mental faculties. To keep perfect control of my mental faculties was, to one in my position, literally a question of life or death. It is, I firmly believe, only when a man loses perfect control of his mental faculties that the police score what they call their successes.

Therefore, to me, a proper amount of sleep was indispensable, but at the same time I was aware of what was the exact amount I did require, and I knew that I wanted none just then. I was in no mood for slumber; I was in a mood to enjoy the perfect night, the fresh breezes, and the smell of the sea. And I was in a mood, after a while, to think—of Alan Foster. I wondered if he was still lying where I left him, with his face to the ceiling.

I am quite willing to admit that I felt a certain satisfaction in picturing him to my mind's eye exactly as I left him. I felt a certain pleasure in painting as vivid a picture as my imagination would allow me of the room in which I left him; a picture of the little details of the room—his chair and mine, the shaded lamp upon the table, the look upon his face when, in that last, swift moment, he understood that I meant—business, the inanimate thud with which he had banged on the floor. I wondered if he had made much mess, whether I ought to picture him with or without the adjuncts of a crimson pool. If I had possessed the secrets of the magicians I would have travelled back for an instant just to see. I had frequently speculated as to what would be the sensations of a man in my position. I do not know that there was anything remarkable about my own. I should say, in no extraordinary sense, that my sensations were those of satisfaction.

When I had had enough of thinking of my last meeting with Alan Foster my thoughts recurred to the fellow in the train. As I leaned over the side of the steamer I taxed my brain with an effort to recollect where I had seen him. Again and again I had almost hit upon his trail, when it again escaped me. I could not think who the man might be. I wondered if he was in the boat, bound with us for Antwerp, or whether he was journeying in the boat to Rotterdam. Thus wondering, I stood up, and turning to the smoke-room, which was just behind me, saw him at my side.

I own that I was startled. I had supposed that I was the only person upon deck. He certainly had not been there a moment back. I had heard no one approach, yet there he was, leaning, as I was leaning, with one hand upon the side of the vessel, his eyes fixed intently upon mine.

For some moments we continued, in silence, to observe each other. As we did so I was conscious that his glance began to fill me with a species of vague discomfort—if I may say so, with a sort of horror. It was absurd to suppose that I should allow him to continue to amuse himself at my expense. I spoke to him.

“May I ask, sir, if you have any intention of dogging my steps?”

He said nothing. He continued to look at me. And the more he looked at me the less I liked the look of him.

“Is it not a fact, sir, that you and I have met before?”

“It is.”

The voice in which he uttered the two little monosyllables was such a familiar voice, a voice which was so well known to me, that the mere fact of its exceeding familiarity filled me—although it may appear exaggeration on my part to say so—with a vague sense of pain. Surely the sound of that voice had been ringing in my ears for years!

“May I ask, sir, where we have met before?”

He was silent. Less and less did I like the expression which was in his beautiful eyes.

“May I ask, sir, what is your name?”

“I have no connection with the police.” It is true that the peculiarity of his demeanour, the intentness of his gaze, the sense of discomfort with which I was conscious that his presence began to fill me, had led me inwardly to inquire if the fellow could be in any way connected with the police. But I had not formulated the inquiry in words. How came he, then, to reply to my unspoken query? Could he be connected with the hounds of Scotland Yard? The suspicion of such a possibility filled me with a sudden passion—with one of those ugly rages for which, among my friends, I believe, I am well known. I moved towards him, bent on mischief. As I moved towards him he moved towards me. His eyes were fixed on mine. I protest that of no man living have I ever been afraid, and of no man dead; of things of flesh, nor of things of air. I have never hesitated, even for an instant, to do anything because I was afraid—witness my career! I protest that, until that moment, I believed myself to be incapable of the thing called fear. But when, in that moment, I met his eyes, and saw them well, and, in the moonlight, clearly—I was afraid. I slunk away, and stole into the smoke-room, and left him there.

When I entered the smoke-room, still tingling with the consciousness of having played the coward, I found it in the possession of three persons. Two were upon one seat, and had arranged themselves in such a position that each was able to stretch out his feet on the seat in front of him. Both were asleep. The other seat was occupied by a single individual. He, also, was asleep. He lay stretched out at full length upon the seat in such a manner that, at his feet, there was only left space enough to enable me to crowd myself in the corner. This vacant space I occupied. As I sat there, in that cramped position, my feelings towards that luxurious individual were not of the friendliest kind. He was evidently in the enjoyment of perfect comfort—he was actually snoring!—while he had left me scarcely room enough to breathe. I was telling myself that it would serve him well right if I were to pull his nose with sufficient vigour to rouse him out of his state of selfish stupor to a consciousness of the requirements of the situation, when the door opened, and the man came in from whom I had slunk away. He paid no attention to me whatever. He stood looking down at the snoring sleeper. As he looked the expression of his countenance was simply diabolical; it startled even me as I sat looking on. Lower and lower, towards the sleeper, he bent his cruel, handsome face. Suddenly, putting out his hand, he grasped the sleeper’s nose, and wrung it with such savage ferocity that I half expected to see the nose torn right off the victim’s face.

No man could continue wrapped in slumber whose nose had been handled in such fashion as that man’s nose was handled then. The snorer not only ceased to snore, but he sprang to his feet and emitted a yell which must have been audible throughout the ship. The little apartment was in confusion. We were all of us upon our feet. The sufferer fondled his nose—as well he might! The adjectives which proceeded from his lips my pen is unable to record.

“Who did it?” he yelled. “Who did it?”

He glared at each of us in turn, as if disposed, in the first paroxysms of his pain, to regard us all there as guilty parties. His actual assailant had vanished, like a coward, through the door. I was just about to point this out when, to my amazement, the man who had been sleeping just in front

of me charged me with the assault. I repelled the charge with all the indignation with which, on the impulse of the moment, I was capable. The man declared that he had seen me do the deed.

“Why,” I cried, wholly at a loss to conceive what could have induced him even to imagine such a thing, “you were asleep.”

“I was between sleeping and waking,” he replied. “I saw you looking at that gentleman; I saw you lean over him, and I saw you pull his nose.”

If I had not shown the sufferer pretty clearly that discretion upon his part would be the better part of valour, I believe that he would have attacked me there and then. I declared, upon my honour, not only that my accuser lied, but that I was incapable of the conduct with which he charged me. I explained whose was the guilt.

“The man came in, and looked at you, and pulled your nose. Before—so completely was I taken by surprise at what seemed to me to be so unprovoked an outrage—I could stop him, he was gone again.”

We went out to look for the miscreant. We sought for him in all directions. But he was not on deck. No signs of him were to be seen. We asked the watch if he had noticed anybody moving. He declared that he had noticed me, but that, with the exception of myself, no one had been on deck for the last hour or more. It is certain that the sailor was deceived—as he might very easily be in that uncertain light—but the gentleman whose nose had suffered looked at me, as though if he only dared he would.

I know not if the story got about, and if the general verdict was that I was the guilty party, but it certainly seemed to me, throughout the rest of the journey, that the whole of the passengers gave me plenty of elbow-room. Not a soul could I get to exchange a word with me during our passage up the Scheldt. Whoever I spoke to immediately found that something required his presence in another portion of the ship. More than once, before we arrived at Antwerp, I was on the point of showing my resentment. But, until we drew up at the quay, I never caught even a glimpse of the ruffian for whose outrageous conduct it seemed I was temporarily suffering.

I entered the train for Brussels. It seemed, until just as the train was starting, that I was to have the compartment to myself. When the signal had been actually given, and the train was already in motion, the door at the opposite end of the carriage opened, and the man came in who had wrung the unconscious sleeper’s nose half off his face. With the calmest air in the world he came down the carriage, and placed himself on the seat in front of me. This was a little more than I could stand.

“As you have come in, sir, you must excuse me if I get out.”

I put my hand through the window to unfasten the door, but the engine had got up steam. We were clear of the station. To have attempted to alight would have been to infringe the by-laws of the railway company. I should have found myself in the hands of the authorities. There was nothing for it but to make the best of the situation, and to treat my unwelcome companion with all the philosophy at my command. I put my legs upon the seat; I prepared to take my ease. My companion did exactly as I did; he put his legs upon the seat, and he prepared to take his ease. But I was not to be moved by such a trifle as that. If it was his humour to play the mountebank, his humour caused no sort of inconvenience to me. As the train moved through the flat country which lies between Antwerp and Malines, and beyond, I, for my part, was wrapped in thought, until the silence was disturbed by my companion.

“It’s not bad fun, this running away from the police.”

The fellow’s words so exactly interpreted the thoughts which had been passing through my brain, that I could not help but let him see that I was startled. I moved my legs from off the seat,

and turned and faced him. Still bent on imitation, he turned himself towards me. The fellow filled me with such a sense of curious repugnance that I was at a loss for words with which to address him. He, however, seemed to be completely at his ease. He began, leisurely, to remove his gloves. Having removed them, he held out towards me his hands. I noticed what white, slender, artist's hands they were.

“Look at them! They're white enough, they're without a stain. And yet they're dyed in blood!”

He spoke in the tone of voice which seemed to be so intensely familiar.

“They're dyed with the blood of a friend—of the best friend man ever had. I killed him, my best friend.”

He leaned back in his seat. There was a smile about his lips which seemed to me to be the incarnation of all cruelty.

“I killed him because I hated him; and, a little, I think, because he loved me so. He had always trusted me, and I had always played him false, and the more I played him false the more he trusted me. For that I hated him. I robbed him of his moneys, and he pretended that the things which I had stolen had been his gifts to me. For that I hated him the more. So, having robbed him of great things all his life, I robbed him, out of pure pastime, of a little thing—I robbed him of his wife. This fool, he loved his wife; he loved her, I do believe, better than his soul. So, when he learned what I had done, just for the sport of it, he dared to show resentment, for which I killed him, there and then. I killed him when his heart was hot with rage against his well-trying friend. That was yesterday, at six. I left him there, just where he fell, upon the floor. I went round to my rooms. I slipped a few things in my dressing-bag. I caught the boat-train at Liverpool Street. I'm *en route* for Brussels, and after that I know not where.”

The fellow laughed softly to himself—it was the most dreadful sound I had ever heard. Was he man, or was he devil, that he could read the inmost secrets of my heart, only to make a jest of them like that? It was not his own tale he had told, it was mine. I had slain my friend only a couple of hours before I had met this fellow in the Harwich train. Already, I did not doubt, the avengers of blood flattered themselves that they were upon my heels. How came this man to know what was hidden from all the world but me? I knew not what to say to him—what was there to be said? Unless I took him by the throat, and crushed the life from him. I would have done it had I dared. But, for the second time in my life, my courage failed me—I did not dare. There was something about this man which I knew so well—it frightened me. I racked my tortured brain with the unanswered, and it seemed unanswerable question—where had I seen this man before?

Not another word was spoken upon either side until we reached Brussels. As the train drew into the station I arose, and said—“Well, is it your intention to accompany me further?”

He shrugged his shoulders, and he smiled. I went out, and I left him sitting there. But all the time, as the cab drove through the busy streets to the hotel, I felt as though that man were sitting in the cab there at my side.

II. THE HAUNTED MAN

After dinner, by way of a little relaxation, I went to a certain *café* where there are women who sing. I do not pretend that the place was a place of particularly good repute, or that the entertainment which it offered was in any sense worth listening to. As a matter of fact, the performance was execrably bad and abominably dull. Indeed, the place was a vulgar and blackguard place, and therefore excellently suited to the humour I was in, for I was in a

blackguard frame of mind. I sat drinking the poisonous concoction which they call “absinthe á l’anisette,” while one of the chanteuses, a hideous fat woman, hovered about me and asked for drink. On the table next to mine there were some papers. I drew them towards me. Among them was a London paper of that day’s date. It was uncut. It had travelled quicker than I had, having probably reached Brussels by the Ostend route. Opening it, my eyes searched down the columns. They lighted on a paragraph which was headed, “Dreadful Tragedy in Sackville Street.” I read the paragraph. It was a narrative, up to date, of Alan Foster’s murder.

It seemed that they must have discovered the body only a few minutes after I left the house. Alan’s man had gone to the room and knocked, and having received no answer had tried the handle, and found that the door was locked. He waited some minutes, then returned, and, as he still received no answer to his knocking, fearing that Alan was ill inside the room, he sent for assistance, and had the door forced open. Braithwaite had been in the service of Alan’s father. He had tended Alan himself almost since he was a child. I pictured the old man’s face as he saw his master lying dead—murdered—on the floor. It seemed that the body had made a mess. The newspaper said that the corpse was discovered lying in a great pool of blood. I could not altogether understand how that could be. I was positive that I had spitted the heart with one blow, given with Alan’s own stiletto, a long, slender weapon, scarcely broader than a bodkin. It seemed hardly probable that much blood would flow from such a wound as that. The paragraph concluded by stating that the police were on the track of the assassin, and that a warrant had been issued at Scotland Yard. So! we shall see.

When I had finished reading this instructive item of current news, a chanteuse came round, a scallop-shell in her hand, soliciting subscriptions to compensate her, in some measure, for the vocal agony which she had been recently enduring. As I glanced up, to drop some sous into her shell, my eyes chanced upon a man who was seated at a table right in front of me, but on the opposite side of the room. It was the man of the train! He, too, was reading a journal, just as I had been doing, and apparently his was an English journal too. As I looked at him he looked at me, and, raising the paper, pointed to a particular paragraph it contained, indulging in that soft, devilish laughter of his, which seemed to fill my very soul with horror as I heard.

The sensations with which I regarded this man, and heard his horrid laughter, and felt his eyes upon my face, filled me with a feeling of the profoundest physical repulsion.

“My God!” I cried unconsciously aloud. “Who is this man?”

The chanteuse still lingered in front of me. She supposed that my question was addressed to her.

“Which man? That man sitting at the table there! Mon Dieu! Is it not monsieur’s Corsican Brother?”

The woman’s words struck the chord which had been vibrating in my memory, yet which had escaped my keenest search. No wonder I supposed that I had seen this fellow’s face before—it was so like my own. And as the sudden revelation of the fact that this was so flashed upon my brain, such a sense of horror came rushing, whirling over me, that I staggered like a drunken man. The woman must have thought that I was mad, because, so soon as I had recovered sufficient self-control, I rushed out of the place, and into the busy street beyond.

I tore along the Boulevard du Nord like a thing possessed. Such was my haste, that I came into unwitting contact with someone who was advancing in the contrary direction to my own. It was a little child—a little girl. Such had been the force of the collision that I had flung her back upon the stones. I picked her up; I took her in my arms; I soothed her tears. She was a little thing, thin and pale, and poorly clad. I made her distress my own. I pressed some silver coins into her hand,

and begged her to forgive my unintentional transgression. The sight of the silver coins seemed to have more effect even than my words in the drying of her tears. She looked at them, and through the tumult of her grief there already dawned a smile. I was just about to make my peace and leave her, happy in the possession of her newfound wealth, when a man came striding across the street at the rate of a good six miles an hour. It was the man whom that chanteuse had suggested was my Corsican Brother. He caught the child from off the ground; he struck her with his hand; he kicked her with his foot; he tossed her out into the gutter. It was the cruellest thing! And then, as she lay crying where she had fallen, he turned to me and pointed to her, and, laughing, disappeared into the crowd, leaving me standing where he had come on me, riveted to the ground.

The child's cries attracted the attention of the passers-by. They advanced to her assistance; I advanced with the rest. But, to my amazement, the ungrateful creature cried out the more at the sight of me, and shrank back as though I were a plague. "What is the matter with you, little one?" inquired the bystanders.

"He beat me; he kicked me; he threw me out into the road."

The little child stretched out her hand towards me, as though I had been guilty of these things. The wickedness of such a charge, made by one whom I had so recently befriended, for the moment took my breath away. But instead of treating the child's wanton accusation with the incredulity which I naturally expected, the bystanders turned on me with black looks and lowering brows. "To treat a little child like that!" they said.

"Messieurs et mesdames!" I exclaimed; "so far from treating a child like that, I would not injure a single hair upon her head. This little child is labouring under some extraordinary delusion; it was not I who did this thing. The miscreant who was guilty of this wanton cruelty vanished as quickly as he came. He was a stranger, ladies and gentlemen, to me; but rather than this little child should suffer, even at a stranger's hands, I will present her with a napoleon with which to dry her tears."

"It is not money which will pay for conduct such as that."

The people crowded round me. There were some of them whose fists were clenched. The looks with which they regarded me were anything but looks of love. Ominous murmurs were in the air. It would have needed but little to have induced them to lay on me hands of violence. It was with the greatest difficulty that I appeased their anger. It cost me five napoleons to dry the sufferer's tears.

Such incidents as that, if repeated, were likely to prove expensive, to speak of nothing else. It was with feelings of the strongest resentment towards the scoundrel who hung upon my footsteps that I pursued my way towards my hotel. More than once I suspected that he was at my side, or just behind me. Once I distinctly heard his footsteps keeping pace with mine. I turned. He was peering over my shoulder, actually pushing his face against mine.

"Well?" he said, and smiled.

In my sudden, justifiable fury I struck at him. He nimbly moved aside, so that he escaped my blow. Laughing that low, soft laugh of his, before I could pursue him he vanished in the crowd.

It was certain, if I was to continue to endure the infliction of this fellow's presence, that my health would suffer; and chiefly on my health rested my chances of safety. If it failed me, it was not impossible that I might fall into the toils of those bunglers at Scotland Yard. They would then say, "You say that we never make a capture; see what a capture we've made now!" when all the time it was not their wit which had prevailed, but it was that fiend who hung upon my heels who had played into their hands. I resolved to go straight to bed.

When I reached the hotel I noticed that the man from whom I demanded the key of my apartment seemed to look at me askance.

"I am tired," I explained. "I have been travelling all night. I am going to get some sleep; it is that which I require—sleep."

The man said nothing; but it seemed to me that he was extremely careful to keep himself at arm's length of me. What was there about my personal appearance which should make this fellow anxious not to come in contact with my person, or which should cause him to stare at me like that? As I ascended the staircase I met a young woman who was coming down—servant of the hotel, or some such thing as that. She had a smile upon her face, but when she caught sight of me, and her eyes met mine, the smile vanished. I never before saw so sudden and so singular a change come over a woman's face. She shrank away from me sideways, against the wall, as though she was afraid that I would strike her.

"My child," I said, "what is the matter with you? You stare at me as though I were a ghost."

She did not answer me, and she ran down the stairs with the swiftness of the wind. What should induce the woman to behave like that? If there was anything curious about my face, it was owing to the want of sleep. It was only sleep which I required— nothing more.

"At last," I cried, when I entered my apartment, "at last I am alone, free from all that noisy crowd, in the enjoyment of my own company. Now for slumber—for a little closing of my eyes in sleep."

As I moved across the room I remembered that I had omitted to lock the door. It would never do to overlook that ceremony, or that ill-omened wretch, in his measureless impertinence, might even venture to invade the precincts of my bedchamber. I turned to supply the omission, and, in the very act of turning, perceived that the man had been before me. I was too late.

The fellow had taken instantaneous advantage of my slight forgetfulness, and already had forced himself upon my privacy. He stood only a step or two in front of me, with a look upon his face such as surely is only to be seen upon the faces of the fiends in hell. It was a look which I had not seen before. It was instinct with some dreadful meaning. The pupils of his eyes were distended to a monstrous size. They gleamed as if with fire.

But I was not to be frightened by his threatening looks at a moment such as that. I had come there to seek that peace which seemed to have eluded me since yesternight. And if I could not have peace I would at least have privacy. I would not have my solitude polluted by the presence of that thing of evil. He should go out—he should go out, even though in the struggle there was murder done, and he murdered me, as I had murdered Alan Foster, in his room, the night before. With my blood coursing through my veins, as if it were a stream of liquid fire, I advanced upon that messenger from hell. As I advanced on him he advanced on me. I stretched out my arms to take him by the throat, he copying my actions in all their details. I gave a spring to grasp at him, the wildest passion burning in my heart, and—I struck against a mirror!

I struck against a mirror—Oh, my God!

The thing of evil which I thought to grasp was but the image of myself, mirrored in a glass. That creature, on whose countenance was pictured all the passions of all the fiends, was my own image, mirrored in a glass. That human animal, whose eyes gleamed cruelty, and shouted murder, was my own image mirrored in a glass. The dreadful being who had been my almost constant companion since the moment in which I had struck the devil's blow, and who had read the inmost secrets of my heart, and whose ostentatious wickedness had so filled my soul with loathing, had been, all the time, but the image of myself, mirrored in a glass!

I could not believe that the thing could be. I could not believe that the messenger from hell was formed in my own likeness. But it was so—there could be no doubt about it—the thing was as plain as day! A mirror ran from floor to ceiling. I stood close up to it. There, staring at me in the silvered glass, a smiling fiend, was—myself!

In that dreadful moment, when I first realised what manner of man indeed I was, my legs trembled beneath me, and I would have sunk upon my knees to plead for mercy from my God, only that I lacked the courage. It was not for me, whose hands ran blood, to speak with God. And yet it would have been better that I had dared. For as I stood there, striving to obtain the courage which should enable me to shape my lips in the utterance of a prayer, there came a touch upon my shoulder, and turning I beheld at my side the man in the train. He pointed to the mirror, and he smiled—as he always seemed to smile—a devil's smile.

“You see we make a pair. I am you, and you are me. How strange you should not have known me when first we met. How strange you should not have known your own voice when first you heard it, echoing, in the train.”

I knew it now—I knew my own voice as it proceeded from his lips. Then I understood how it was that its exceeding familiarity had seemed to fill me with such a sense of bitter pain.

“I have been sent in order that you may be able to see just what sort of man you are. I am the power which has been given you to enable you to see yourself as others see you. I will be with you to the end—a mirror ever ready to your hand.”

He stopped, and he whispered in my ear; and he smiled—a devil's smile.

“You know, it was murder. There was nothing gallant in the deed. It was the act of a coward and a cur. See, it was like this!”

He took me by the arm, and he turned me round. And I saw a table, on which there was a shaded lamp. And at this table sat a man, and his face was that of a true man, and the light in his eyes was pure and good. And I knew that it was Alan. And this fellow went and sat on a chair which was on the other side of the table, and he looked at Alan. And as the lamplight fell upon his features I noticed what a difference there was between his looks and Alan's. They both were handsome men. But Alan was a fair-haired, blue-eyed, open-faced, English gentleman. The other's was the cleverer face; but there was something in it, notably in the expression of the mouth and of the eyes, which repelled; something which told me, as I stood watching there, that the heart within the man was evil. And Alan said—how well I knew his full, clear voice!—and as he spoke there was a cloud upon his sunny face—

“Jack, I hope you won't mind my saying what I'm going to say, but I was bound to ask you here so that we might have it out between us; I was bound, old man.”

The man upon the other side of the table smiled.

“My dear Alan, pray don't apologise.”

“Jack!” Alan rose. He began pacing to and fro. He seemed to have that to say which he found it difficult to utter. “Jack, you remember when Doris left me, how— how—how my heart was broken. You are quite sure, Jack—I only ask it as a matter of form, old man, because, of course, I know that no man ever had a better friend than you have been to me—you are quite sure, Jack, that you knew nothing of her going?”

The other was a moment or two before he answered. And during that moment or two he smiled. There was, lying on the table, a long, glittering, slender blade, which Alan had brought home with him from India, and which it had been his habit to use as a paper-knife. The blade was so slender, the temper of the steel was so true, and the handle was so heavy, that one had but to hold it, point downwards, five or six feet from the ground, and drop it, for it to bury itself

almost to the hilt in the wood. The man on the other side of the table drew this odd paper-knife of Alan's to him. He began to play with it. As he did so his smile became a very peculiar one indeed.

"My dear Alan, don't you think it is unnecessary for two such old friends as you and I to pay any attention to mere matters of form? Besides, it is nearly two years since Doris left you. Some men would have forgotten such a wife in a week. I thought she was forgotten long ago.

"Forgotten! You thought that I had forgotten Doris, Jack! Forgotten her—my darling! I shall never forget Doris while I have life. If she were to come back to me this moment, or if she comes 'back to me in ten years' time, I will take her to my arms again—if she will only come; and I will forgive her everything. But you have heard me say that sort of thing over and over again. Just answer me my question, Jack. You are quite sure that you knew nothing of her going?"

"My dear Alan, don't you think that it is rather late in the day to ask me such a question as that?"

"Of course I know it's late in the day, and of course I know that the whole thing's an absurdity. But the fact is, old man, some men—some men have been saying—"

Alan paused, as if he were at a loss for words. The man on the other side of the table continued to smile and to trifle with the paper-knife.

"Well? Some men have been saying—what?"

"Some men have been saying that you knew more about her going than you pretended; there's the truth for you, old man."

There was a slight pause. When the man upon the other side of the table spoke there was something so peculiar in his tone of voice that even blundering, slow-witted Alan must have noticed it.

"My dear Alan, it would be just as well that you and I should have a clear and perfect understanding, once for all. It will have to come one day, and why not now? I wish you clearly to understand that I am as sick of hearing Doris's name as I am sick of Doris."

"Jack!"

"Alan!"

"What do you mean?"

"I say that I am as sick of hearing Doris's name as I am sick of Doris. That is what I say, and that is what I mean."

"You are sick of Doris? Do you—know where she is?"

"I know very well indeed where she is."

"Jack! Where is she?"

"She's in a house for which I pay the rent; but, thank goodness, with your money and not with mine. It is only right, my dear Alan, that you should pay house-rent for your own wife."

"Jack! say—say that you lie!"

"My dear Alan, I shall not say that I lie, because I don't." It seemed that Alan could only gasp. "Doris ran away with me, you fool! She never cared for you a pinch of snuff from the beginning. When I acted as your best man, and she stood by your side at the altar, I knew that it was for me she cared. It was the old story of 'Il y a toujours un qui aime, et l'autre qui permet'; always, Alan. When you had married her, I thought I would take her from you. So I took her. It was the easiest thing. The joke of it was, that you never suspected it was I. You made of me your confidant instead; and what a blind fool you've always been, dear boy! But the thing has got beyond a joke. Doris has become a nuisance. I never cared for her! As I said, I am as sick of hearing Doris's name as I am sick of Doris."

There was a pause. Alan said nothing; but with the cry of a wounded lion he rushed upon the man who sat on the other side of the table. The man waited for his spring. Just as Alan was upon him, he rose, holding the glittering weapon with which he had been playing above him in the air. He drove it to the hilt into Alan's breast. Without the utterance of a sound Alan banged backwards on to the floor. I saw him lying there, and I knew that he was dead. My dearest friend! He whose chief crime had been that he loved not wisely, but too well.

The wretch who had done this deed of darkness turned towards me, and said—with, about his lips and in his eyes, that devil's smile—

“You see—it was like that you did it!” I covered my face with my hands, and tried to hide from my eyes that dreadful sight. And when again I removed my hands, the table with the shaded lamp had vanished, and the dead man upon the floor, and there was nothing there but that wretch, who regarded me with his unceasing smile.

And as I looked at him and he at me, the door of the apartment opened, and three men came in, one of whom advanced to the wretch standing in the centre of the room. He laid his hand upon his shoulder, and he said in cold, stern tones— “John Alton, you are my prisoner. I arrest you for Wilful Murder.”

There was a flash of something in the air. I knew that a pair of handcuffs had been produced. The wretch had remained quiescent for a moment, as if stupefied by an unexpected blow. But when he saw the glittering fetters he leapt upon the officer, and, in an instant, he bore him to the ground. The others ran to the assistance of their fallen comrade, or there would have been another murder done, and I should have seen a second corpse lying on the floor before my eyes. The guilty wretch, in his wild frenzy, bit, and scratched, and tore, and kicked, and fought, and screamed, and yelled, like the thing which indeed he was—a fiend from hell. Strangers streamed into the apartment. The room was filled with people, and in their midst the one man against the three. They fought like devils—here, there, and everywhere. But at last they mastered him—the three against the one—and in that same instant the scoundrel vanished.

* * *

And I lay there upon the floor, torn, and scratched, and bruised, and bleeding, with gyves upon my wrists. And they dared to say it was I who had struggled. They lied! Why should I have struggled? Was it because I was afraid of them? Does it look as though I were afraid of them, now that I am writing this, every word of which they tell me will be used against me? What do I care what they use against me? I repeat it once more, in black and white, it was I killed Alan Foster—I! And it is my complete conviction that, under the same circumstances, I should kill the fool again. The so-called “terrors of the law” have no terrors for me. They are quite welcome to take me to any place of execution they may please, and there to hang me by the neck till I am dead.