

The Metempsychosis

By Dr. Robert McNish

A slight shudder came over me as I was entering the inner court of the college of Göttingen. It was, however, but momentary; and on recovering from it, I felt both taller and heavier and altogether more vigorous than the instant before. Being rather nervous, I did not much mind these feelings, imputing them to some sudden determination to the brain or some unusual beating about the heart, which had assailed me suddenly, and as suddenly left me. On proceeding, I met a student coming in the opposite direction. I had never see him before, but as he passed me by he nodded familiarly—"This is a fine day, Wolstang." "What does this fellow mean?" said I to myself. "He speaks to me with as much ease as if I had been his intimate acquaintance. And he calls me Wolstang—a person to whom I bear no more resemblance than to the man in the moon." I looked after him for some time, pondering whether I should call him back and demand an explanation; but before I could form any resolution, he was out of my sight.

Thinking it needless to take any further notice of the circumstance, I went on. Another student, whom I did not know, now passed me. "Charming weather, Wolstang." "Wolstang again!" said I; "this is insufferable. Hollo, I say! what do you mean?" But at this very moment he entered the library, and either did not hear my voice or paid no attention to it.

As I was standing in a mood between rage and vexation, a batch of collegians came up, talking loud and laughing. Three, with whom I was intimately acquainted, took no notice of me; while two, to whom I was totally unknown, saluted me with, "Good-morning, Wolstang." One of these latter, after having passed me a few yards, turned round and cried out, "Wolstang, your cap is awry."

I did not know what to make of this preposterous conduct. Could it be premeditated? It was hardly possible, or I must have discovered the trick in the countenances of those who addressed me. Could it be that they really mistook me for Wolstang? This was still more incredible, for Wolstang was fully six inches taller, four stone heavier, and ten years older than I. I found myself in a maze of bewilderment in endeavoring to discover the cause of all this.

While meditating as in a reverie on these events, I was aroused by approaching steps. On looking up, I beheld the most learned Dr. Dedimus Dunderhead, provost, and professor of moral philosophy of the college. He was a man about five feet high; but so far as rotundity of corporation went, nowadays deficient. On the contrary, he was uncommonly fat, and his long-waisted velvet coat of office, buttoning over a capacious belly, showed underneath a pair of thick, stumpy legs, cased in short small-clothes and silk stockings, and bedizened at the knees with large buckles of silver. The doctor had on, as usual, his cocked-hat, below whose rim at each side descended the copious curls of an immense bob-wig. His large carbuncle nose was adorned with a pair of spectacles, through which he looked pompously from side to side, holding back his head in grenadier fashion, and knocking his long silver-headed baton to the earth as he walked with all the formal precision of a drum-major.

Now be it known that it is binding on every student who attends the University of Göttingen to doff his cap on meeting this illustrious personage. It may be guessed, then, what was my degree of stupefaction when I saw Dr. Dunderhead approach—when I heard his baton striking upon the ground, responsive to his steps—when I saw his large eyes, reflected through the spectacles, looking intently upon me—I say my stupefaction may be guessed, when, even on this occasion,

my band did not make one single motion upward toward my cap. The latter still stuck to my head, and I stood folded in my college gown, my mouth half open, and my eyes fixed upon the doctor in empty abstraction. I could see that he was angry at my tardy recognition of his presence; and as he came nearer me, he slackened his pace a little, as if to give me an opportunity of mending my neglect. However, I was so drowned in reflection that I did not take the hint. At last he made a sudden stop directly in front of me, folded his arms in the same manner as mine, and looked upward in my face with a fixed glance, as much as to say, "Well, master, what now?" I never thought the doctor so little, or myself so tall, as at this moment.

Having continued some time in the above attitude he took off his hat, and made me a profound bow. "Mr. Wolstang, I am your most humble servant." Then rising up, he lifted his baton toward my cap, and knocked it off. "Your cap is awry," continued he. "Excuse me, Mr. Wolstang, it is really awry upon your head." Another bow of mockery, as profound as the first, followed this action, and he marched away, striking his baton on the ground, holding back his head, and walking with slow, pompous step down the college court.

"What the devil is the meaning of it all?" said I. "Wolstang again! Confusion, this is no trick! The provost of the college engage in a deception upon me—impossible! They are all mad, or I am mad! Wolstang from one—Wolstang from another—Wolstang from Dr. Dedimus Dunderhead! I will see to the bottom of this—I will go to Wolstang's house immediately." So saying, I snatched up my cap, put it on my head, and walked smartly down the court to gain the street where he lived. Before I got far, a young man met me. By-the-by, Wolstang, I wish you would let me have the ten gilders I lent you. I require them immediately." "Ten gilders!" said I; "I don't owe you a farthing. I never saw your face before, and my name is not Wolstang; it is Frederick Stadt."

"Psha! But, Wolstang, laying jesting aside," continued he, "I must positively have them."

"Have what?"

"My dear fellow, the ten gilders."

"Ten devils! I tell you, I don't owe you a farthing."

"Really, Wolstang, this joke is very silly. We know you are an odd fellow, but this is the most foolish prank I ever saw you play."

"Wolstang again!" said I, my heart boiling with indignation. "I tell you, sir—I tell you, sir, that—that—" I could not get out another word, to such a degree had indignation confounded me. Without finishing my sentence, I rushed into the street, but not without hearing the person say, "By Heaven, he is either mad or drunk!"

In a moment I was at Wolstang's lodgings and set the knocker agoing with violence. The door was opened by his servant girl Louise, a buxom wench of some eighteen or twenty.

"Is Mr. Wolstang in?" I demanded, quickly.

"Mr. who sir?"

"Mr. Wolstang, my dear."

"Mr. Wol—Mr. who, sir?—I did not hear you."

"Mr. Wolstang."

"Mr. Wolstang!" re-echoed the girl, with some surprise.

"Assuredly, I ask you if Mr. Wolstang is within."

"Mr. Wolstang!" reiterated she. "Ha, ha, ha! how droll you are to-day, master!"

"Damnation! what do you mean?" cried I, in a fury, which I now found it impossible to suppress. "Tell me this instant if Mr. Wolstang, your master, is at home, or by the beard of Socrates, I—I—"

“Ha, ha! this is the queerest thing I ever heard of,” said the little jade, retreating into the house, and holding her sides with laughter. “Come here, Barnabas, and hear our master asking for himself.”

I now thought that the rage into which I had thrown myself had excited the laughter of the wench, whom I knew very well to be of a frolicsome disposition, and much disposed to turn people into ridicule. I therefore put on as grave a face as I could—I even threw a smile into it—and said, with all the composure and good humor I could muster: “Come now, my dear—conduct me to your master—I am sure he is within.” This only set her a-laughing more than ever; not a word could I get out of her. At last Barnabas made his appearance from the kitchen, and to him I addressed myself. “Barnabas,” said I, laying my hand upon his arm, “I conjure you, as you value my happiness, to tell me if Mr. Wolstang is at home.”

“Sir!” said Barnabas, with a long stare.

I repeated my question.

“Did you ask,” replied he, “if Mr. Wolstang was at home? If that gentleman is yourself, he is at home. Oh, yes, I warrant you my master is at home.”

“In what place is he, then?” I inquired.

“Wherever you are, he is not far off, I warrant you, master.”

“Can I find him in his study?”

“Oh, yes,” continued Barnabas; “if you go to his study, I warrant you he’ll be there. Will you please to walk in, sir?” and I could see the fellow put his finger to his nose and wink to the girl, who kept tittering away in a corner. As soon as I was in the study she burst into a loud laugh, which ended by her declaring that I must be mad—“Or drunk,” quoth the sapient Barnabas, in his usual dry manner.

On entering the room, no person was to be seen; but from behind a large screen, which stood fronting the fire, I heard a sneeze. “This must be Wolstang,” thought I; “but it is not his sneeze, either—it is too sharp and finical for him; however, let us see.” So on I went behind the screen, and there beheld, not the person I expected, but one very different—to wit, a little, meager, brown-faced, elderly gentleman, with hooked nose and chin, a long, well-powdered queue, and a wooden leg. He was dressed in a snuff-colored surtout, a scarlet waistcoat, and black small-clothes buckled at the knee; and on his nose was stuck a pair of tortoise-shell spectacles, the glasses of which were of most unusual dimensions. A dapper-looking cocked-hat lay upon the table, together with a large open snuff-box full of rich rappee. Behind his ear a pen was stuck, after the manner of the counting-house, and he seemed busily pouring over a book in manuscript.

I looked a few seconds at this oddity, equally astonished and vexed at being put into what I naturally supposed the wrong room. “I am afraid, sir,” said I, as he turned his eyes toward me, “that I have intruded upon your privacy. I beg leave to apologize for the mistake. The servant led me to believe that Mr. Wolstang, with whom I wished to speak, was in his chamber.”

“Don’t talk of apology, my dear sir,” said the little gentleman, rising up and bowing with the utmost politeness. “Be seated, sir—be seated. Indeed, I am just here on the same errand—to see Mr. Wolstang—eh (a sneeze)—that rappee is certainly very strong. Do me the honor to occupy the seat opposite. I understand from the servants that he is expected soon.” (Another sneeze.)

For the first five minutes I did not form a very high opinion of this new acquaintance. He seemed to have all the fidgety politeness and intolerable chit-chat of a French petit maître of the old school. He bored me with questions and apologies, hoped I felt myself comfortable; and every interval of his speech was filled up by intolerable giggling and sneezing. In order, as it were, to increase the latter, he kept snuffing away at a preposterous rate; and when he addressed

me, his mouth was drawn up into a most complacent smile, and his long nose and chin, which threatened each other like nut-crackers, thrown forward to within a foot of my face. However, in the next five minutes he improved upon me, from some very judicious observations which he made; and in five more I became convinced that he was far from being an ordinary man. I found that he had a complete knowledge of the philosophical systems of the day; among others, that of my favorite, Kant; and on the merits of the school in the north of Germany, founded by this great metaphysician, his opinions and mine tallied to a point. He also seemed deeply conversant with the mathematics.

Let it not be supposed that all this was advanced with the formal pomp of a philosopher; on the contrary, he preserved throughout his frivolousness of manner, apologized for everything he said, hoped I was not offended if he differed in opinion from me, and concluded every position with a sneeze.

“By-the-by,” said I, “what do you think of the doctrine of Gall and Spurzheim? I am inclined to believe there must be some truth in it; at least, I have seen it verified in a number of heads, and among others in that of Cicero, which I saw a few years ago in the sculpture-gallery of the Louvre. It was a beautiful head.”

“You are right there, my dear friend,” replied he. “The head, phrenologically considered, is extremely beautiful. I believe I have got it in my pocket.” (A sneeze.)

“You have got the head of Cicero in your pocket!” cried I, with surprise.

“Oh, no! not absolutely the head of Cicero,” said he, smiling—“Mark Antony disposed of that—but only his bust—the bust that you saw.”

“You mean a miniature of that bust?”

“No—not a miniature, but the real bust. Here it comes—how heavy it is!” And, to my amazement, I saw him take out of his pocket the identical bust, as large as life, of the Roman orator, and place it on the table before me.

“Have you any more heads of this description about you?” said I, not a little marveling how he was able to stuff such a block of marble into his pocket.

“I have a few others at your service, my dear friend. Name any one you would wish to see, and I shall be most happy to produce it.”

“Let me see, then, the head of Copernicus.” I had scarcely spoken the word when he brought out the philosopher and put him beside Cicero. I named successively Socrates, Thales, Galileo, Confucius, Zoroaster, Tycho Brahé, Roger Bacon, and Paracelsus, and straightway they stood upon the table as fresh as if they had just received the last touch of the sculptor’s chisel. I must confess that such a number of large heads emanating from the pockets of the little meager man in the snuff-colored surtout would have occasioned me incredible wonder, had my stock of astonishment not been exhausted by the previous display of his abilities.

“And do you,” I demanded, as the last-named was brought forth, “always carry those heads about with you?”

“I generally do so, for the amusement of my friends,” answered he. “But do not think that my stock is exhausted; I have still a few more that I can show you—for instance, Pythagoras.”

“Pythagoras!” exclaimed I; “no, don’t produce him. He is the last of all the philosophers I would wish to see.”

“My dear friend,” said the little man, with unusual gravity, “you do not say so?”

“I do say so. Pythagoras was a fool, a madman, an imposter.”

“You don’t speak thus of the divine Pythagoras?” returned he, putting his bust upon the table.

“No, not of the divine Pythagoras, for such a person never existed. I speak of Pythagoras the Samian—him of the golden thigh, the founder of what is called the Pythagorean philosophy.”

“And the most rational system of philosophy that ever existed. Begging your pardon, I think it goes far beyond that of Plato or the Stagyrate.”

“If you mean that it goes beyond them in being as full of absurdity as they are of wisdom, I really agree with you,” said I, my anger rising at hearing the divine doctrines of Aristotle and the’ disciple of Socrates so irreverently spoken of.

“Pray, what were its absurdities?” asked he, with the most imperturbable good nature. “Ah, well, did he not forbid the use of animal food to his followers? and, to crown all, did he not teach the monstrous doctrine of transmigration of souls—sending the spirits of men, after death, to inhabit the bodies of dogs, and cats, and frogs, and geese, and even insects?”

“And call you this a monstrous doctrine?”

“Monstrous!” I exclaimed with surprise—“it is the ne plus ultra, the climax of fatuity, the raving of a disordered imagination.”

“So you do not believe in metempsychosis?” asked he, with a smile.

“I would as soon believe in demonology or magic. There is nothing I would not rather credit. But perhaps you are a believer.” He shrugged up his shoulders at this last remark, stroked his chin, and, giving me a sarcastic look, said, with a familiar nod and smile, “Yes, I am a believer.”

“What!” said I, “you—you, with your immense learning, can you put faith in such doctrines?”

“If I put faith in them,” said he, “it is my learning which has taught me to do so.”

“And do you really go all the length of Pythagoras?” I demanded.

“I not only go all his length, but I go much farther. For instance, he believed that the soul never left the body until the latter was dead. Now, my belief is that two living bodies may exchange souls with each other. For instance, your soul may take possession of my body, and my soul of yours, and both our bodies may be alive.”

“In that case,” said I, laughing heartily, “you would be me, and I would be you.”

“Precisely so, my dear friend,” replied the little gentleman, laughing in his turn, and concluding with a sneeze.

“Faith, my good sir,” my reverence for his abilities somewhat lessened by this declaration, “I am afraid you have lost your senses.”

“I am afraid you have lost something of more importance,” returned he, with a smile, in which I thought I recognized a tinge of derision. I did not like it, so, eyeing him with some sternness, I said, hastily, “And pray, what have I lost?” Instead of answering me, he burst into a loud fit of laughter, holding his sides while the tears ran down his cheeks, and he seemed half stifled with a flood of irresistible merriment. My passion at this rose to such a pitch that had he been a man of any appearance I should have knocked him down; but I could not think of resorting to such an extremity with a meager, little, elderly fellow, who had, moreover, a wooden leg. I could therefore only wait till his mirth subsided, when I demanded, with as much calmness as I could assume, what I had lost.

“Are you sure you have not lost your body?” said he. “My body!” answered I, with some surprise; “what do you mean?”

“Now, my dear friend, tell me plainly; are you sure that this is your own body?”

“My own body—who the devil’s can it be?”

“Are you sure you are yourself?”

“Myself—who, in Heaven’s name, could I be but myself?”

“Ay, that is the rub,” continued he; “are you perfectly satisfied that you are yourself, and nobody but yourself?” I could not help smiling at the apparent stupidity of this question; but before I was able to compose myself, he had resumed his query—“Are you sure you are—that you are——”

“That I am who?” said I, hurriedly.

“That you are Frederick Stadt?”

“Perfectly.”

“And not Albert Wolstang?” concluded he.

A pang shot through my whole body at this last part of his question. I recalled in an instant all my previous vexation. I remembered the insults I had met with, not only from the students of Göttingen and Dr. Dedimus Dunderhead, but from the domestics of Wolstang; and lastly, I recollected the business which had brought me to the house of the latter. Everything came as a flash of lightning through my brain, and I was more perplexed than ever. At length, arousing myself from my stupor, I put the following question to him:

“Did you ask me if I was sure that I am not Wolstang?”

“I did sir,” answered he, with a bow.

“Then, sir, I must tell you that I am not that person, but Frederick Stadt, student of philosophy in the University of Göttingen.” He looked incredulous.

“What, sir,” said I; “do you not believe me?” He shrugged up his shoulders.

“It is impossible, sir,” said I, “that you can mistake me for Wolstang—seeing that, on my entry, you told me you expected that gentleman in a short time, and desired me to be seated till he came in.” At this he seemed a little disconcerted, and was beginning to mutter something in explanation, when I interrupted him—“Besides, sir, Wolstang is a man at least six inches taller, four stone heavier, and ten years older than I.”

“What an immense fellow he must be, my dear friend! At that rate, he ought to stand six feet eight inches, and weigh twenty stone.”

I could hardly retain my gravity at this calculation. “Pray, what do you take my stature and weight to be?”

“I should take you,” replied he, “to be about six feet two inches high, and to weigh about sixteen stone.”

This admeasurement raised my merriment to its acme, and I laughed aloud. “Know, then, my good little man, that all your geometry has availed you nothing, for I only stand five feet eight and never weighed more than twelve stone.” He shrugged up his shoulders once more, and put on another of his incredulous looks.

“Eh, eh—I may be mistaken—but I—I—”

“Mistaken!” exclaimed I; “zounds, you were never more egregiously mistaken, even when you advocated the Pythagorean doctrine of metempsychosis!”

“I may be wrong, but I could lay five gilders that I am right. I never bet high—just a trifle occasionally.”

“You had better keep your gilders in your pocket,” said I, “and not risk them so foolishly.”

“With your permission, however, I shall back my pieces against yours”—and he drew five from a little green silk purse, and put them on the table. I deposited an equal number.

“Now,” said I, “how is this dispute to be settled? Where can I get myself weighed?”

“I believe,” answered he, “there is a pair of scales in the room hard by, and weights, too, if I mistake not.” He accordingly got up and opened the door of the adjoining chamber, where, to my surprise, I beheld a pair of immense scales hanging from the roof, and hundred and half-hundred

weights, etc., lying around. I seated myself on one of the scales, chuckling very heartily at the scrape into which the little fellow had brought himself. He lifted up weight after weight, placing them upon the opposite scale. Eleven stone had been put in, and he was lifting the twelfth. "Now," says I, eyeing him waggishly, "for your five guiders." He dropped the weight, but the beam never moved, and I still sat on the lowest scale. Thirteen were put on, and my weight yet triumphed. With amazement I saw fourteen and fifteen successively added to the number, without effect. At last, on putting down the sixteenth, the scale on which I sat was gently raised from the ground. I turned my eyes upward toward the needle, which I saw quivering as if uncertain where to stop; at last it paused exactly in the center, and stood erect; the beam lay perfectly horizontal, and I sat motionless, poised in middle air.

"You will observe, sir, that my calculation was correct," observed my companion, taking a fresh pinch of snuff. "You are just sixteen stone. Nothing now remains but to measure your height."

"There is no occasion for that," I replied, rising slowly from the scale. "If you can contrive to make me weigh sixteen stone, you can readily make me measure six feet two inches." I now threw myself down on a seat in the study, which both of us had reentered, placed my elbows on the table, and buried my face in my hands, absorbed in deep reflection. I thought and thought again upon every event which had befallen me since the morning. The whole formed a combination which I found myself utterly unable to comprehend. In a few minutes I looked up, exhausted with vain thought. All the heads were gone except that of Pythagoras, which he left lying in its place. He now took up his snuff-box and deposited it in his waistcoat pocket; drew an old-fashioned watch out of his fob, and looked at the hour; and, lastly, laying his hand upon the ten gilders, he dropped them one by one into his green purse. "I believe," said he, with a smile, "the money is mine." So saying, he snatched up his little cocked-hat, made me half-a-dozen of bows, and bade me adieu, after promising to see me at the same time and place two days after.

Again did I bury my face in my hands; again did my fit of meditation come on; I felt my bosom glowing with perplexity. It was now the scales which occupied my thoughts, to the exclusion of everything else. "Sixteen stone!—impossible, I cannot believe it. This old rascal has cheated me. The weights he has put on must be defective—they must be hollow. I will see to it in a moment, and if there has been any deception, I shall break his bones the first time I set my eyes upon him, mauger his wooden leg; I will at least smash his spectacles, trip up his heels, and pull his hook nose." Full of these resolutions, I proceeded to the adjoining room. Guess of my amazement when, instead of the great machines in which I had been weighed but ten minutes before, I beheld nothing but a small pair of apothecary's scales, and a few drachm, scruple, and grain weights scattered upon the floor.

Not knowing what to make of this, I returned to the study, when, happening to look into a mirror placed behind the chair on which I had been sitting, I beheld (joyous sight) the reflection of Wolstang. "Ala, you have come?" said I, turning round to receive him, but nobody was to be seen. I looked again through every part of the room; no Wolstang was there. This was passing strange; where could the man have gone in such a hurry? I was now in a greater fright than ever, when, casting my eyes a second time upon the mirror, he again made his appearance. I instantly looked round—no one was present; in another instant I turned to the glass, and there stood the reflection as before. Not knowing what this phenomenon could be, and thinking perhaps that my eyes were dazzled by some phantom, I raised my hands, and rubbed them; Wolstang did the same. I struck my forehead, bit my lip with vexation, and started back, when, marvelous to relate, the figure in the glass repeated all my gestures. I now got alarmed, and, shrinking away

from the apparition, threw myself upon the chair. In a few minutes, my courage being somewhat revived, I ventured to face the mirror, but without any better success—the same object presented itself. I desisted, and renewed the trial three several times, with the like result. In vain was my philosophy exerted to unfold this mystery. The doctrines of Aristotle, the dreams of alchemy, and the wonders of the Cabala presented themselves in succession to my disordered fancy. All was in vain; nothing could account for the present occurrence; nothing in mystical or scientific lore bore any analogy to it.

In this perturbed state of mind my eye caught the bust of Pythagoras. This was a flood of light to my understanding. I instantly remembered what the old fellow had hinted about the transmigration of souls; I remembered what he said about me being myself or another person. Then connecting this with the previous events of the day, with the Göttingen students, with Dr. Dedimus Dunderhead, with Wolstang's domestics, and lastly with the reflection in the looking-glass—I say, coupling all these things together, I came to the horrible conclusion that I was not myself. "There must be some truth in the Pythagorean doctrine, and I am laboring under a metempsychosis."

It would be a vain attempt for me to describe the horror I endured at this dreadful transmogrification. After the first burst of dismay was over, I wept bitterly, bewailing the loss of my dear body, which I now felt convinced was gone from me forever. "And poor Wolstang," cried I, lamentably, "you are no longer yourself. You are me, and I am you; and doubtless you are deploring your misfortune as bitterly as your unhappy friend Stadt."

Night was now coming on, and it became necessary that I should resolve upon what ought to be done in my present state. I soon perceived that it would serve no purpose to say that I was myself; no one would have believed me, and I would run the risk of being put in a strait-jacket as a lunatic. To avoid these evils, there was no resource but to pass myself off upon the community as Wolstang.

In order to cool my heated brain, I went out into the open air and wandered about the streets. I was addressed by a number of persons whom I did not know; and several of my acquaintances, to whom I inadvertently spoke, did not know me. With the former I was very short, answering their questions at random, and getting off as soon as possible. To the latter I could only apologize, assuring them that they had been mistaken by me for other persons. I felt my situation most unpleasant; for, besides the consciousness of no longer being myself, I was constantly running into the most perplexing blunders. For instance, after strolling about for a considerable period, I came, as it were, by a sort of instinct, to my own lodgings. For a time I forgot my situation, and knocked at the door. It was opened by my domestic, from whom I took the candle which he held in his hand, and, according to wont, walked into the study. "Mr. Stadt is not in, sir," said the man, following me; "perhaps you will sit till he comes; I expect him soon." This aroused me from my reverie, confirming too truly the fact that I was changed. I started up from the seat into which I had dropped, rushed past him and gained the street. Here I made up my mind to return to Wolstang's lodgings, which I accordingly did, in a mood which a condemned criminal would hardly envy.

I kept the house for the whole of next day, employing myself in writing, in order that the servants might at least see some cause for my confinement. Notwithstanding this, it was easy to observe that they perceived something unusual about me; and several remarks which escaped them convinced me that they considered my head touched in no slight degree. Although I did all that I was able to compose myself, it was impossible that I could think like Wolstang, and still less that I could know a hundred private and household matters on which the pert Louise and

sapient Barnabas made a point of consulting me. Whenever I was spoken to concerning things that I knew, my answers were kind and condescending; but on any point about which I was ignorant, I utterly lost temper, and peremptorily forbade them to repeat it. Both shook their heads at such inconsistent behavior; and it was soon bruited among the neighbors that Mr. Albert Wolstang had parted with his senses.

The second day arrived, and found me in the same state of mind. The amazement which succeeded the discovery of my metamorphosis had indeed given way, but my feelings were still as embittered as ever, and I ardently longed for death to put an end to such intolerable misery. While brooding over these matters, the door of the study opened. Thinking it was one of the domestics, I paid no attention to it; but in a moment I heard a sneeze, which made my flesh creep, and in another the little man with the snuff-colored surtout, the scarlet waistcoat, and the wooden leg made his appearance. Since I last saw this old fellow, I had conceived a mortal hatred against him. I thought, although the idea was wild enough, that he had some hand in my metempsychosis—and the affair of the scales and the marble busts, together with his Pythagorean opinions, his vast learning, his geomancy and astrology, gave to my idea a strong confirmation. On the present occasion his politeness was excessive; he bowed almost to the ground, made fifty apologies for intruding, and inquired, with the most outré affectation of tenderness, into the state of my health. He then seated himself opposite to me, laid his cocked-hat upon the table, took a pinch of snuff, and commenced his intolerable system of sneezing. I was never less in a humor to relish anything like foppery; so throwing myself back upon the chair, putting on as commanding a look as I could, and looking at him fiercely, I said: “So, sir, you are back again; I suppose you know me?”

“Know you, my dear friend—eh—yes, I derived great pleasure in being made acquainted with you tire day before yesterday. You are Mr. Frederick Stadt—that is to say, you are Mr. Albert Wolstang.” (A sneeze.)

“Then you know that I am not myself?”

“My dear friend,” replied he, with a smile, “I hinted as much the last time I saw you.”

“And pray how did you ascertain that?”

“You don’t ask me such a question,” said he, with an air of surprise; “I knew it by your own signature.”

“My own signature! I know not what you mean by my signature.”

“Eh—eh—the signature, you know—that is, the compact you made with Wolstang.”

“I know of no compact,” cried I, in a passion; “nor did I ever make one with any man living. I defy either you or Wolstang to produce any such instrument.”

“I believe it is in my pocket at this very moment. Look here, my dear sir.” And he brought out a small manuscript book, and, turning up the leaves, pointed to view the following words:

“I hereby, in consideration of the sum of fifty gilders, give to Albert Wolstang the use of my body, at any time he is disposed, provided that, for the time being, he gives me the use of his—Frederick Stadt.”

“It is a damnable forgery,” said I, starting up with fury; “a *deceptio visûs* at least—something like your scales.”

“What about the scales, my dear friend?” said he, with a whining voice.

“Go” replied I, “into that room, and you shall see.”

He accordingly went, but returned immediately, saying that he observed nothing remarkable. “No!” said I, rising up; “then I shall take the trouble to point it out to you.” My astonishment may be better conceived than described when, instead of the small apothecary’s scales, I beheld

the immense ones in which I had been weighed two days before. I felt confounded and mortified, and returned with him to the study, muttering something about *deceptio visûs*, necromancy, and demonology.

“Well,” continued I, after recovering a little, “what about this compact—when and where was it made?”

“It was made some three days ago, at the Devil’s Hoof Tavern. You may remember that you and Wolstang were drinking there at that time.”

“Yes, I remember it well enough; but I understood that I was putting my name to a receipt for fifty gilders which he paid me. I never read the writing; I merely subscribed it.”

“That was a pity; for really you have bound yourself as firmly as signing with a person’s own blood can do.”

“Did I sign it with my own blood?” said I, alarmed. “Exactly so. You may recollect of cutting your finger. I had the pleasure of stanching the blood, sufficient of which was, nevertheless, collected to write this document.”

“Then you were present,” said I—“yes, I have a recollection of your face, now that you mention the circumstance. You were then dressed as a clergyman, if I mistake not.”

“Precisely.”

“And what,” continued I, “are the conditions on which I hold this strange existence? Suppose Wolstang dies?”

“Then you keep his body till the natural period of your own death.”

“Suppose I die?”

“He then keeps your body.”

“Then, if he dies, my body is buried and goes to decay, while I am clogged up in his body till relieved from it by death?”

“Precisely.”

This announcement struck me with terror. “And shall I never,” said I, weeping, “see my dear body again?”

“You may see it if ever Wolfstang comes in your way.

“But shall I never possess it—shall I never be myself again?”

“Not unless he pleases.”

“The villain!” exclaimed I, in an agony of grief; “I am then undone—the tool of a heartless, unprincipled miscreant. Is my case hopeless?”

“Oh no, my dear friend,” said the little man, “not at all hopeless; there is nothing simpler than the remedy. Only put your name here, and you will be yourself in a minute. The fellow will then lose all power over your body.” I seized with avidity the pen which he presented to me, dipped it in a vial of red ink, and was proceeding to do as he directed, when the writing above caught my eye. It ran thus:

“I hereby engage, after my natural decease, to give over my soul to the owner of this book.”

“Zounds!” said I. “what is this?”

“It is nothing at all; just a form—a mere form of business, of no intrinsic meaning. If you would just write your name—it is very easily done.”

“Has any other person signed such a deed?” dented I.

“Many a one. Here, for example, is Wolstang’s name attached to a similar contract. It is, in fact, by virtue of this that he has the power over your body. The deed which you have signed would have availed him nothing without this one.”

“Then,” said I, “if you relieve me from my present condition, you break faith with Wolstang, seeing that you deprive him of his stipulated power.”

“I deprive him of his power over you, but I give him in return power over some other person, which will answer his purpose equally well. I think you had better sign.”

“No, you old villain!” said I, wrought up to a pitch of fury at the infernal plan which I saw he was meditating, “I will never sign your damnable compact. I have religion enough to know the value of my soul, and sufficient philosophy to bear with any wretchedness I may endure under my present form. You may play the devil if you choose, but you shall never get me to act the part of Dr. Faustus.” I pronounced these words in a voice of thunder; but, so far from being angry, he used every endeavor to soothe me—made a thousand apologies for having been the unwilling cause of such a commotion; then, snatching up his hat and making a profound bow, he left the room.

A glow of conscious virtue passed over me on his departure. I found that I had resisted evil, and gloried in the thought; but this triumphant feeling gave way to one of revenge against the author of toy calamity. After reflecting for a short time, it occurred to me that the best way to punish him would be to commit some outrage which might stamp him with infamy, and render him miserable if he ever thought of resuming his body. “I shall at least have him expelled from the university. This shall be the first blow directed against his comfort. He will in time become weary of my body and will find very little satisfaction in his own when he takes it into his head to make an exchange.” Full of these ideas, I entered the college court, where the first object that met my eyes was Dr. Dedimus Dunderhead coming toward me—his baton of office in his hand, spectacles on his carbuncle nose, and his head thrown back as he strutted along à la militaire. Without a moment’s hesitation I advanced up to him and knocked off his cocked-hat; nor did I stop to see how he looked at this extraordinary salutation, but walked deliberately on. I heard him distinctly call after me, “You shall hear of this, sir, by to-morrow.” “When you please, doctor,” was my answer. “Now, Master Wolstang,” said I to myself, “I have driven you from Göttingen college, and wish you much joy of your expulsion.” Such were my thoughts, and the morrow verified them; for, a meeting of the Senatus Academicus being summoned by the provost, that learned body declared Albert Wolstang unfit to be a member of the university, and he was accordingly placarded upon the gate and expelled in terrorem.

This circumstance, being just what I wanted, gave me no uneasiness; but a few days thereafter an event arose out of it which subjected me to much inconvenience. Having unwittingly strolled into the college, I was rudely collared by one of the officers, which so enraged me that I knocked down the fellow with a blow of my fist. For this I was apprehended the same day by three gendarmes, and carried before the Syndic, who condemned me to suffer two weeks close confinement, and to be fed on bread and water. This punishment, though perhaps not disproportioned to the offence, was, in my estimation, horribly severe; and now, for the first time, did I feel regret for the absurdity of my conduct. I found that in endeavoring to punish Wolstang I was in truth only punishing myself, and that it was a matter of doubt whether he would ever submit to a corporeal change, seeing that my fortune was much more considerable than his own, and that he would come at it in the course of six months. This, I had no doubt, was the chief consideration that induced the fellow to bring about such a metamorphosis.

On getting out of prison I was the most miserable wretch on earth. The fierce desire of vengeance had formerly kept up my spirits; but this was now gone, and they sank to the lowest pitch. I found that I was spurned by those very persons who were before most anxious to

cultivate my friendship. Barnabas and Louise had left me, resolving no longer to serve one who had undergone the punishment of a malefactor. In order to clear up matters, I frequently called at my own house to inquire if I myself was at home—for so was I obliged to speak of the miscreant who had possession of my body; but on every occasion I was answered in the negative. “I had gone out to see a friend in town;” “I had gone to the country;” “I was expected soon.” Never by any possibility could I get a sight of myself. All this convinced me that the case was hopeless, and that I must make the best of my deplorable situation.

In consequence of the peculiar opportunities which I enjoyed, I soon discovered that Wolstang, whom I had long thought rather highly of, was in reality a very bad character. Some persons of the worst description in Göttingen appeared to have been his associates. Times without number I was accosted as an acquaintance by gamblers, pickpockets, usurers, and prostitutes; and through their means I unravelled a train of imposture, profligacy, and dissipation in which he had been long deeply involved. I found out even worse than this—at least what I dreaded much more. This was a forgery to an immense amount, which he, in concert with another person, had committed on an extensive mercantile house. The accomplice, in a high state of trepidation, came to tell me that the whole was in a fair way of being blown, and that if we wished to save our necks an instantaneous departure from the city was indispensable. Such a piece of intelligence threw me into great alarm. If I remained, my apprehension would be inevitable; and how would it be possible for me to persuade any one that I was not Wolstang? My conviction and execution must follow; and though I was now so regardless of life that I would gladly have been in my grave, yet there was something revolting in the idea of dying for a villain, merely because I could not show that I was not myself. These reflections had their due weight, and I resolved to leave Göttingen next day, and escape from the country altogether.

While meditating upon this scheme, I walked about three miles out of town for the purpose of maturing my plans undisturbed by the noise and bustle of the streets. ‘As I was going slowly along, I perceived a man walking about a furlong before me. His gait and dress arrested my attention particularly, and after a few glances I was convinced that he must be myself. The joy that pervaded my mind at the sight no language can describe; it was as a glimpse of Heaven, and filled me with perfect ecstasy. Prudence, however, did not forsake me, and I resolved to steal slowly upon him, collar him, and demand an explanation. With this view I approached him, concealing myself as well as I could, and was so successful that I had actually got within ten yards of my prey without being discovered. At this instant, hearing footsteps, he turned round, looked alarmed, and took to his heels. I was after him in a moment, and the flight on one side and pursuit on the other were keenly contested. Thanks to Wolstang’s long legs, they were better than the short ones with which my antagonist was furnished, and I caught him by the collar as he was about to enter a wood. I grasped my body with Herculean grip, so terrified was I to lose it. “And now, you villain,” said I, as soon as I could recover breath, “tell me the meaning of this. Restore me my body, or by Heaven I will—”

“You will do what?” asked he, with the most insolent coolness. This question was a dagger to my soul, for I knew that any punishment I inflicted upon him must be inflicted upon myself. I stood mute for a few seconds, still holding him strongly in my grasp. At last, throwing pity aside, by one vast effort I cried out, “I declare solemnly, Wolstang, that if you do not give me back my body I shall kill you on the spot.”

“Kill me on the spot!” replied he. “Do you mean to say that you will kill your own body?”

“I do say so,” was my answer. “I will rather destroy my dear body, than it should be disgraced by a scoundrel like you.”

“You are jesting,” said Wolstang, endeavoring to extricate himself.

“I shall show you the contrary,” rejoined I, giving him a violent blow on the nose, and another on the ribs. These strokes almost drew tears from my eyes; and when I saw my precious blood flowing, I certainly would have wept aloud, but for the terrible energy which rage had given me. The punishment had its evident effect, however, upon Wolstang, for he became agitated and alarmed, grew pale, and entreated me to let him go. “Never, you villain, till you return me back my body. Let me be myself again, and then you are free.”

“That is impossible,” said he, “and cannot be done without the agency of another person, who is absent; but I hereby solemnly swear that five days after my death your body shall be your own.”

“If better terms cannot be had, I must take even these, but better I shall have; so prepare to part with what is not your own. Take yourself back again, or I will beat you to a mummy.” So saying, I laid on him most unmercifully—flattened his nose (or rather my own), and laid him sprawling on the earth without ceremony. While engaged in this business, I heard a sneeze, and, looking to the quarter from which it proceeded, whom did I see emerging from the wood but my old acquaintance with the snuff-colored surtout, the scarlet waistcoat, and wooden leg. He saluted me as usual with a smile, and was beginning to regret the length of time which had elapsed since he last had the pleasure of seeing me, when I interrupted him. “Come,” said I; “this is not a time for ridiculous grimace; you know all about it; so help me to get my body back from this scoundrel here.”

“Certainly, my dear friend. Heaven forbid that you should be robbed of so unalienable a property. Wolstang, you must give it up. 'Tis the height of injustice to deprive him of it.”

“Shall I surrender it, then?” said Wolstang, with a pitiable voice.

“By all means; let Mr. Stadt have his body.”

In an instant I felt great pains shoot through me, and I lay on the ground, breathless and exhausted as if from some dreadful punishment. I also saw the little gentleman, and the tall, stout figure of Wolstang, walk away arm in arm, and enter the wood. I was now myself again, but had at first little cause of congratulation on the change, while the unprincipled author of my calamities was moving off in his own body without a single scratch. If my frame was in bad case, however, my mind felt relieved beyond conception. A load was taken from it, and it felt the consciousness of being encased in that earthly tenement destined by Heaven for its habitation.

Alas, how transient is human happiness! Scarcely had an hour elapsed when a shudder came over me, precisely similar to that which occurred some weeks before on entering the college of Göttingen. I also perceived that I was stronger, taller, and more vigorous, and, as if by magic, totally free of pain. At this change a horrid sentiment came across me, and, on looking at my shadow in a well, I observed that I was no longer myself, but Wolstang; the diabolical miscreant had again effected a metempsychosis. Full of distracting ideas, I wandered about the fields till nightfall, when I returned into the city, and threw myself into bed, overpoured with fatigue and grief.

Next day I made a point of calling at my own house, and inquiring for myself. The servant said that I could not be seen, being confined to bed in consequence of several bruises received in an encounter with two highwaymen. I called next day and was still confined. On the third I did the same, but I had gone out with a friend. On the fourth I learned that I was dead.

It will readily be believed that this last intelligence was far from being unwelcome. On hearing of my own death I felt the most lively pleasure, anticipating the period when I would be myself again. That period, according to Wolstang's solemn vow, would arrive in five days. Three of

these I had spent in the house, carefully secluding myself from observation, when I heard a sneeze at the outside of the door. It opened, and in stepped the little man with the snuff-colored surtout, the scarlet waistcoat, and the wooden leg. I had conceived a dislike approaching to horror at this rascal, whom I naturally concluded to be at the bottom of these diabolical transformations; I, however, contained my wrath until I should hear what he had to say.

“I wish you much joy, my dear friend, that you are going to resume your own body. There is, however, one circumstance which perhaps you have overlooked. Are you aware that you are to be buried to-day?”

“I never thought of it,” answered I, calmly, nor is it of any consequence, I presume. In two days I shall be myself again. I shall then leave this body behind me, and take possession of my own.”

“And where will your own body be then?”

“In the grave,” said I, with a shudder, as the thought came across me.

“Precisely so, and you will enjoy the pleasure of being buried alive; that, I suppose, you have not calculated upon.”

This remark struck me with blank dismay, and I fell back on my chair, uttering a deep groan. Is there then no hope? cannot this dreadful doom be averted? must I be buried alive?”

“The case is rather a hard one, Mr. Stadt, but perhaps not without a remedy.”

“Yes, there is a remedy,” cried I, starting up and striking my forehead. “I will hie me to my own house, and entreat them to suspend the funeral for two days.”

“I saw the undertaker’s men enter the house, as I passed by, for the purpose, I should think, of screwing down the coffin-lid. However,” continued he, taking a pinch of snuff, “you may try; and if you fail, I have a scheme in view which will perhaps suit your purpose. I shall await your return.”

In a moment my hat was on my head, in another I was out of the room, and in a third at my own house. What he had stated was substantially true. Some of the mourners had arrived, and the undertaker’s men were waiting below, till they should be summoned upstairs to screw down the lid. Without an instant of delay I rushed to the chamber where my dear body was lying in its shell. Some of my friends were there, and I entreated them, in imploring accents, to stop for two days, and they would see that the corpse which lay before them would revive. “I am not dead,” cried I, forgetting myself—“I assure you I am not dead.”

“Poor fellow! he has lost his senses,” said one.

“I assure you I am not dead,” said I, throwing myself upon my knees before my cousin, who was present.

“I know that, my good fellow,” was his answer, “but poor Stadt, you see, is gone forever.”

“That is not Stadt—it is I—it is I—will you not believe me? I am Stadt—this is not me—I am not myself. For Heaven’s sake suspend this funeral.” Such were my exclamations, but they produced no other effect but that of pity among the bystanders.

“Poor, unfortunate fellow, he is crazed. Get a porter and let him be taken home.”

This order, which was given by my cousin himself, stung me to madness, and, changing my piteous tones for those of fierce resistance, I swore that “I would not turn out for any man living. I would not be buried alive to please them.” To this nobody made any reply, but in the course of a minute four stout porters made their appearance, and I was forced from the house.

Returning to Wolstang’s lodgings, the old man was there in waiting, as he promised. “What,” said I, with trepidation—“what is the scheme you were to propose? Tell me, and avert the horrible doom which will await me, for they have refused to suspend the funeral.”

“My dear friend,” said he, in the most soothing manner, “your case is far from being so bad as you apprehend. You have just to write your name in this book, and you will be yourself again in an instant. Instead of coming alive in the grave, you will be alive before the coffin-lid is put on. Only think of the difference of the two situations.”

“A confounded difference, indeed,” thought I, taking hold of the pen. But at the very moment when I was going to write, I observed, above, the following words:

“I hereby engage, after my natural decease, to give over my soul to the owner of this book.”

“What!” said I, “this is the old compact; the one you wished me to sign before.”

“The same, my dear friend.”

“Then I’ll be d—d if I sign it.”

“Only think of the consequences,” said he.

“I will abide the consequences rather than sell my soul.”

“Buried alive, my dear sir—only think.”

“I will not sign the compact.”

“Only think of being buried alive,” continued he—“stifled to death—pent up on all sides—earth above earth below—no hope—no room to move in—suffocated, stupefied, horrorstruck—utter despair. Is not the idea dreadful?”

I gave a shudder at this picture, which was drawn with horrible truth; but the energies of religion and the hopes of futurity rushed upon my soul and sustained it in the dreadful trial. “Away, away,” said I, pushing him back. “I have made up my mind to the sacrifice, since better may not be. Whatever happens to my body, I am resolved not to risk my eternal soul for its sake.”

“Think again,” said he, “and make up your mind. If I leave you, your fate is irrevocable. Are you decided?”

“I am.”

“Only reflect once more. Consider how, by putting your name in this book, you will save yourself from a miserable death. Are you decided?”

“I am,” replied I, firmly.

“Then, fool,” said he, while a frown perfectly unnatural to him corrugated his brow, and his eyes shot forth vivid glances of fire—“then, fool, I leave you to your fate. You shall never see me again.” So saying, he walked out of the room, dispensing with his usual bows and grimaces, and dashing the door fiercely after him, while I threw myself upon a couch in an agony of despair.

My doom was now sealed; for, on going to the windows a few minutes thereafter, I beheld my own funeral, with my cousin at the head of the procession, acting as chief mourner. In a short time I saw the company returning from the interment. All is over, then,” said I, wringing my hands at the deplorable sight. “I am the victim of some infernal agency, and must prepare for the dreadful sacrifice.” That night I was supremely wretched, tossing incessantly in bed, while sleep was denied to my wearied eyelids. Next morning my haggard look was remarked by my servant, who proposed sending for a physician; but this I would not allow, knowing that woe like mine was beyond the reach of medicine. The day after was the last I was to behold upon the earth. It came, and I endeavored by every means to subdue the terror which it brought along with it. On arising from bed, I sent for my servant, an elderly woman whom I had got to supply the place of Barnabas and Louise, and gave her one hundred guilders, being all the money I could find in Wolstang’s bureau. “Now, Philippa,” said I, “as soon as the clock of the study has struck three,

come in, and you will find me dead. Retire, and do not enter till then." She went away, promising to do all that I had ordered her.

During the interval I sat opposite the clock, marking the hours pass rapidly by. Every tick was as a death-knell to my ear—every movement of the hands, as the motion of a scimitar leveled to cut me in pieces. I heard all and I saw all in horrid silence. Two o'clock at length struck. "Now," said I, "there is but one hour for me on earth—then the dreadful struggle begins—then I must live again in the tomb, only to perish miserably." Half an hour passed, then forty minutes, then fifty, then fifty-five. I saw with utter despair the minute-hand go by the latter, and approach the meridian number of the dial. As it swept on, a stupor fell over my spirit, a mist swam before my eyes, and I almost lost the power of consciousness. At last I heard one strike aloud—my flesh crept with dread; then two—I gave a universal shudder; then three, and I gasped convulsively, and saw and heard nothing further.

At this moment I was sensible of an insufferable coldness. My heart fluttered, then it beat strong, and the blood, passing as it were over my chilled frame, gave it warmth and animation. I also began by slow degrees to breathe. But though my bodily feelings were thus torpid, my mental ones were very different. They were on the rack; for I knew that I was now buried alive, and that the dreadful struggle was about to commence. I was terrified to move, because I knew I would feel the horrid walls of my narrow prison-house. I was terrified to breathe, because the pent air within it would be exhausted, and the suffocation of struggling humanity would seize upon me. I was even terrified to open my eyes, and gaze upon the eternal darkness by which I was surrounded. Could I resist?—the idea was madness. What would my strength avail against the closed coffin, and the pressure above, below, and on every side?

Meanwhile I felt the necessity of breathing, and I did breathe fully; and the air was neither so close nor scanty as might have been supposed. This struck me as very singular; and being naturally of an inquisitive disposition, I felt an irresistible wish, even in my dreadful situation, to investigate, if possible, the cause of it. "The coffin must be unconscionably large." This was my first idea; and to ascertain it, I slightly raised my hands, shuddering at the same time at the thought of their coming in contact with the lid above one. However, they encountered no lid. Up, up, up I elevated them, and met with nothing. I then groped to the sides, but the coffin laterally seemed equally capacious; no sides were to be found. "This is certainly a most extraordinary shell to bury a man of my size in. I shall try if possible to ascertain its limits before I die—suppose I endeavor to stand upright." The thought no sooner came across my mind than I carried it into execution. I got up, raising myself by slow degrees, in case of knocking my head against the lid. Nothing, however, impeded my extension, and I stood straight. I even raised my hands on high, to feel if it were possible to reach the top: no such thing; the coffin was apparently without bounds. Altogether, I felt more comfortable than a buried man could expect to be. One thing struck me, and it was this—I had no grave-clothes upon me. "But," thought I, "this is easily accounted for; my cousin comes to my property, and the scoundrel has adopted the most economical means of getting rid of me." I had not as yet opened my eyes, being daunted at the idea of encountering the dreary darkness of the grave. But my courage being somewhat augmented by the foregoing events, I endeavored to open them. This was impossible; and on examination, I found that they were bandaged, my head being encircled with a fillet. On endeavoring to loosen it, I lost my balance, and tumbled down with a hideous noise. I did not merely fall upon the bottom of the coffin, as might be expected; on the contrary, I seemed to roll off it, and fell lower, as it were, into some vault underneath. In endeavoring to arrest this strange

descent, I caught hold of the coffin, and pulled it on the top of me. Nor was this all; for, before I could account for such a train of extraordinary accidents below ground, and while yet stupefied and bewildered, I heard a door open, and, in an instant after, human voices. "What, in Heaven's name, can be the meaning of this?" ejaculated I, involuntarily. "Is it a dream?—am I asleep or am I awake? Am I dead or alive?" While meditating thus, and struggling to extricate myself from the coffin, I heard someone say distinctly, "Good God, he is come alive!" At the same instant the fillet was drawn from my eyes. I opened them with amazement; instead of the gloom of death, the glorious light of heaven burst upon them! I was confounded; and, to add to my surprise, I saw supporting me two men, with whose faces I was familiar. I gazed at the one, then at the other, with looks of fixed astonishment "What is this?" said I; "where am I?"

"You must remain quiet," said the eldest, with a smile. "We must have you put to bed, and afterward dressed."

"What is this?" continued I; "am I not dead? was I not buried?"

"Hush, my dear friend—let me throw this great-coat over you."

"But I must speak," said I, my senses still wandering. "Where am I? who are you?"

"Do you not know me?"

"Yes," replied I, gazing at him intently—"my friend, Dr. Wunderdudt Good God! how do you happen to be here? Did I not come alive in the grave?"

"You may thank us that you did not," said he. "Look around, and say if you know where you are." I looked, as he directed, and found myself in a large room fitted up with benches, and having half a dozen skeletons dangling from the roof. At last I satisfied myself that I was in the anatomical theater of the university.

"But," said I, "there is something in all this that I cannot comprehend. What—where is the coffin?"

"What coffin, my dear fellow?" said Wunderdudt.

"The coffin that I was in."

"The coffin!" said he, smiling; "I suppose it remains where it was put the day before yesterday."

I rubbed my eyes with vexation, not knowing what to make of these perplexing circumstances. "I mean," said I, "the coffin—the coffin I drew over upon me when I fell."

"I do not know of any coffin," answered he, laughing heartily; "but I know very well that you have pulled upon yourself my good mahogany table; there it lies." And on looking, I observed the large table, which stood in the middle of the hall, overturned upon the floor. Dr. Wunderdudt (he was professor of anatomy to the college) now made me retire, and he put me in bed till clothing could be procured. But I would not allow him to depart till he had unravelled the strange web of perplexity in which I still found myself involved.

"The day before yesterday," said he, "I informed the resurrectionists in the service of the university that I was in want of a subject, desiring them at the same time to set to work with all speed. That very night they returned, assuring me that they had fished up one which would answer to a hair, being both young and vigorous. In order to inform myself of the quality of what they brought me, I examined the body, when, to my indignation and grief, I found that they had disinterred my excellent friend, Mr. Frederick Stadt, who had been buried the same day."

"What!" said I, starting up from the bed, "did they disinter me?—the scoundrels!"

"You may well call them scoundrels," said the professor, "for preventing a gentleman from enjoying the pleasure of being buried alive. The deed was certainly most felonious; and if you are at all anxious, I shall have them reported to the Syndic, and tried for their impertinent

interference. But to proceed. No sooner did I observe that they had fallen upon you, than I said: 'My good men, this will never do. You have brought me here my worthy friend, Mr. Stadt. I cannot feel in my heart to anatomize him; so just carry him quietly back to his old quarters, and I shall pay you his price, and something over and above.'

"What!" said I, again interrupting the doctor, "is it possible that you could be so inhuman as to make the scoundrels bury me again?"

"Now, Stadt," rejoined he, with a smile, "you are a strange fellow. You were angry at the men for raising you, and now you are angry at me for endeavoring to repair their error by reinterring you."

"But you forget that I was to come alive?"

"How the deuce was I to know that, my dear boy?"

"Very true. Go on, doctor, and excuse me for interrupting you so often."

"Well," continued he, "the men carried you last night to deposit you in your long home, when, as fate would have it, they were prevented by a ridiculous fellow of a tailor, who, for a trifling wager, had engaged to sit up alone, during the whole night, in the churchyard, exactly at the spot where your grave lay. So they brought you back to the college, resolving to inter you to-night, if the tailor, or the devil himself, should stand in their way. Your timely resuscitation will save them this trouble. At the same time, if you are still offended, they will be happy to take you back, and you may yet enjoy the felicity of being buried alive."

Such was a simple statement of the fact, delivered in the professor's good-humored and satirical style; and from it the reader may guess what a narrow escape I had from the most dreadful of deaths. I returned to my own house as soon as possible, to the no small mortification of my cousin, who was proceeding to invest himself with all that belonged to me. I made him refund without ceremony, and altered my will, which had been made in his favor, not forgetting, in so doing, his refusal to let my body remain two days longer unburied. A day or two afterward, I saw a funeral pass by, which, on inquiry, I learned to be Wolstang's. He died suddenly, as I was informed, and some persons remarked it as a curious event that his death happened at precisely the same moment as my return to life. This was merely mentioned as a passing observation, but no inference was deduced from it. The old domestic in Wolstang's house gave a wonderful account of his death, mentioning the hour at which he said he was to die, and how it was verified by the event. She said nothing, however, about the hundred guilders. Many considered her story as a piece of mere trumpery. She had, nevertheless, a number of believers.

These events, which are here related at full, I can only attest by my own word, except, indeed, the affair of the coming alive, which everybody in Göttingen knows of. If any doubt the more unlikely parts of the detail, I cannot help it. I have not written this with the view of empty fame, and still less of profit. Philosophy has taught me to despise the former, and my income renders the latter an object of no importance. I shall conclude by acknowledging that a strong change has been wrought in my opinions; and that from ridiculing the doctrines of the sage of Samos, I am now one of their firmest supporters. In a word, I am what I have designated myself,

"A Modern Pythagorean."