

“Superstitions And Fortunes”

By Elliott O'Donnell

Thirteen at Table

There is no doubt that there have been many occasions upon which thirteen people have sat down to dinner, all of which people at the end of a year have been alive and well; there is no doubt also that there have been many occasions upon which thirteen have sat down to dine, and the first of them to rise has died within twelve months. Therefore, I prefer not to take the risk, and to sit down to dinner in any number but thirteen.

A curious story is told in connection with this superstition. A lady was present at a dinner party given by the Count D—— in Buda-Pesth, when it was discovered that the company about to sit down numbered thirteen. Immediately there was a loud protest, and the poor Count was at his wits' end to know how to get out of the difficulty, when a servant hurriedly entered and whispered something in his ear. Instantly the Count's face lighted up. “How very fortunate!” he exclaimed, addressing his guests. “A very old friend of mine, who, to tell the truth, I had thought to be dead, has just turned up. We may, therefore, sit down in peace, for we shall now be fourteen.” A wave of relief swept through the party, and, in the midst of their congratulations, in walked the opportune guest, a tall, heavily bearded young man, with a strangely set expression in his eyes and mouth, and not a vestige of colour in his cheeks. It was noticed that after replying to the Count's salutations in remarkably hollow tones that made those nearest him shiver, he took no part in the conversation, and partook of nothing beyond a glass of wine and some fruit. The evening passed in the usual manner; the guests, with the exception of the stranger, went, and, eventually, the Count found himself alone with the friend of his boyhood, the friend whom he had not seen for years, and whom he had believed to be dead.

Wondering at the unusual reticence of his old chum, but attributing it to shyness, the Count, seeing that he now had an opportunity for a chat, and, anxious to hear what his friend had been doing in the long interval since they had last met, sat down beside him on the couch, and thus began: “How very odd that you should have turned up to-night! If you hadn't come just when you did, I don't know what would have happened!”

“But I do!” was the quiet reply. “You would have been the first to rise from the table, and, consequently, you would have died within the year. That is why I came.”

At this the Count burst out laughing. “Come, come, Max!” he cried. “You always were a bit of a wag, and I see you haven't improved. But be serious now, I beg you, and tell me what made you come to-night and what you have been doing all these years? Why, it must be sixteen years, if a day, since last I saw you!”

Max leaned back in his seat, and, regarding the Count earnestly with his dark, penetrating eyes, said, “I have already told you why I came here to-night, and you don't believe me, but WAIT! Now, as to what has happened to me since we parted. Can I expect you to believe that? Hardly! Anyhow, I will put you to the test. When we parted, if you remember rightly, I had just passed my final, and having been elected junior house surgeon at my hospital, St Christopher's, at Brunn, had taken up my abode there. I remained at St Christopher's for two years, just long enough to earn distinction in the operating theatre, when I received a more lucrative appointment

in Cracow. There I soon had a private practice of my own and was on the high road to fame and fortune, when I was unlucky enough to fall in love.”

“Unlucky!” laughed the Count. “Pray what was the matter with her? Had she no dowry, or was she an heiress with an ogre of a father, or was she already married?”

“Married,” Max responded, “married to a regular martinet who, whilst treating her in the same austere manner he treated his soldiers—he was colonel of a line regiment—was jealous to the verge of insanity. It was when I was attending him for a slight ailment of the throat that I met her, and we fell in love with each other at first sight.”

“How romantic!” sighed the Count. “How very romantic! Another glass of Moselle?”

“For some time,” Max continued, not noticing the interruption, “all went smoothly. We met clandestinely and spent many an hour together, unknown to the invalid. We tried to keep him in bed as long as we could, but his constitution, which was that of an ox, was against us, and his recovery was astonishingly rapid. An indiscreet observation on the part of one of the household first led him to suspect, and, watching his wife like a cat does a mouse, he caught her one evening in the act of holding out her hand for me to kiss. With a yell of fury he rushed upon us, and in the scuffle that followed——”

“You killed him,” said the Count. “Well! I forgive you! We all forgive you! By the love of Heaven! you had some excuse.

“You are mistaken!” Max went on, still in the same cold, unmoved accents, “it was I who was killed!” He looked at the Count, and the Count’s blood turned to ice as he suddenly realised he was, indeed, gazing at a corpse.

For some seconds the Count and the corpse sat facing one another in absolute silence, and then the latter, rising solemnly from the chair, mounted the window-sill, and, with an expressive wave of farewell, disappeared in the absorbing darkness without. Now, as Max was never seen again, and it was ascertained without any difficulty that he had actually perished in the manner he had described, there is surely every reason to believe that a *bona fide* danger had threatened the Count, and that the spirit of Max in his earthly guise had, in very deed, turned up at the dinner party with the sole object of saving his friend.

Spilling Salt

Everyone knows that to avoid bad luck from spilling salt, it is only necessary to throw some of it over the left shoulder; but no one knows why such an act is a deterrent to misfortune, any more than why misfortune, if not then averted, should accrue from the spilling.

That the superstition originated in a tradition that Judas Iscariot overturned a salt-cellar is ridiculous, for there is but little doubt it was in vogue long before the advent of Christ, and is certainly current to-day among tribes and races that have never heard of the “Last Supper.”

In all probability the superstition is derived from the fact that salt, from its usage in ancient sacrificial rites, was once regarded as sacred. Hence to spill any carelessly was looked upon as sacrilegious and an offence to the gods, to appease whom the device of throwing it over the left, the more psychic shoulder, was instituted.

Looking-glasses

The breaking of a looking-glass is said to be an ill omen, and I have certainly known many cases in which one misfortune after another has occurred to the person who has had the misfortune to

break a looking-glass. Some think that because looking-glasses were once used in sorcery, they possess certain psychic properties, and that by reason of their psychic properties any injury done to a mirror must be fraught with danger to the doer of that injury, but whether this is so or not is a matter of conjecture.

Psychic Days

“Friday’s child is full of woe.” Of all days Friday is universally regarded as the most unlucky. According to Soames in his work, *The Anglo-Saxon Church*, Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit on a Friday and died on a Friday. And since Jesus Christ was crucified on a Friday, it is naturally of small wonder that Friday is accursed.

To travel on Friday is generally deemed to be courting accident; to be married on Friday, courting divorce or death. Few sailors care to embark on Friday; few theatrical managers to produce a new play on Friday. In Livonia most of the inhabitants are so prejudiced against Friday, that they never settle any important business, or conclude a bargain on that day; in some places they do not even dress their children.

For my part, I so far believe in this superstition that I never set out for a journey, or commence any new work on Friday, if I have the option of any other day. Thursday has always been an unlucky day for me. Most of my accidents, disappointments, illnesses have happened on Thursdays. Wednesday has been my luckiest day. Monday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday the days when I have mostly experienced occult phenomena. On All-Hallows E’en the spirits of the dead are supposed to walk. I remember when a child hearing from the lips of a relative how in her girlhood she had screwed up the courage to shut herself in a dark room on All-Hallows E’en and had eaten an apple in front of the mirror; and that instead of seeing the face of her future husband peering over her shoulder, she had seen a quantity of earth falling. She was informed that this was a prognostication of death, and, surely enough, within the year her father died. I have heard, too, of a girl who, on All-Hallows E’en, walked down a gloomy garden path scattering hempseed for her future lover to pick up, and on hearing someone tiptoeing behind her, and fancying it was a practical joker, turned sharply round, to confront a skeleton dressed exactly similar to herself. She died before the year was out from the result of an accident on the ice.

I have often poured boiling lead into water on All-Hallows E’en and it has assumed strange shapes, once—a boot, once—a coffin, once—a ship; and I have placed all the letters of the alphabet cut out of pasteboard by my bedside, and on one occasion (my door was locked, by the way, and I fully satisfied myself no one was in hiding) found, on awakening in the morning, the following word spelt out of them—“Merivale.” It was not until some days afterwards that I remembered associations with this word, and then it all came back to me in a trice—it was the name of a man who had once wanted me to join him in an enterprise in British West Africa.

On New Year’s Eve a certain family, with whom I am very intimately acquainted, frequently see ghosts of the future, as well as phantasms of the dead, and, when I stay with them, which I often do at Christmas, I am always glad when this night is over. On one occasion, one of them saw a lady come up the garden path and vanish on the front doorsteps. She saw the lady’s face distinctly; every feature in it, together with the clothes she was wearing, stood out with startling perspicuity.

Some six months later, she was introduced to the material counterpart of the phantasm, who was destined to play a most important part in her life. On another New Year’s Eve she saw the

phantasm of a dog, to which she had been deeply attached, enter her bedroom and jump on her bed, just as it had done during its lifetime. Not in the least frightened, she put down her hand to stroke it, when it vanished. I have given several other instances of this kind in my *Haunted Houses of London* and *Ghostly Phenomena*—they all, I think, tend to prove a future existence for dumb animals.

The 28th of December, Childermass Day, or the Feast of the Holy Innocents, the day on which King Herod slaughtered so many infants (if they were no better mannered than the bulk of the County Council children of to-day, one can hardly blame him), is held to be unpropitious for the commencement of any new undertaking by those of tender years.

The fishermen who dwell on the Baltic seldom use their nets between All Saints and St Martin's Day, or on St Blaise's Day; if they did, they believe they would not take any fish for a whole year. On Ash Wednesday the women in those parts neither sew nor knit for fear of bringing misfortune upon their cattle, whilst they do not use fire on St Lawrence's Day, in order to secure themselves against fire for the rest of the year.

In Moravia the peasants used not to hunt on St Mark's or St Catherine's Day, for fear they should be unlucky all the rest of the year. In Yorkshire it was once customary to watch for the dead on St Mark's (April 24) and Midsummer Eve. On both those nights (so says Mr Timbs in his *Mysteries of Life and Futurity*) persons would sit and watch in the church porch from eleven o'clock at night till one in the morning. In the third year (for it must be done thrice), the watchers were said to see the spectres of all those who were to die the next year pass into the church.

I am quite sure there is much truth in this, for I have heard of sceptics putting it to the test, and of "singing to quite a different tune" when the phantasms of those they knew quite well suddenly shot up from the ground, and, gliding past them, vanished at the threshold of the church. Occasionally, too, I have been informed of cases where the watchers have seen themselves in the ghostly procession and have died shortly afterwards.

Fortune-telling

Before ridiculing the possibility of telling fortunes by cards, it would be just as well for sceptics to inquire into the history of cards, and the reason of their being designated the Devil's pasteboards. Their origin may be traced to the days when man was undoubtedly in close touch with the occult, and each card, *i.e.* of the original design, has a psychic meaning. Hence the telling of fortunes by certain people—those who have had actual experience with occult phenomena—deserves to be taken seriously; and I am convinced many of the fortunes thus told come true.

Palmistry

That there is much truth in palmistry—the palmistry of those who have made a thorough study of the subject—should by this time, I think, be an established fact. I can honestly say I have had my hand told with absolute accuracy, and in such a manner as utterly precludes the possibility of coincidence or chance. Many of the events, and out-of-the-way events, of my life have been read in my lines with perfect veracity, my character has been delineated with equal fidelity, and the future portrayed exactly in the manner it has come about—and all by a stranger, one who had never seen or heard of me before he "told my hand."

To attempt to negative the positive is the height of folly, but fools will deny anything and everything save their own wit. It does not follow that because one palmist has been at fault, all palmists are at fault. I believe in palmistry, because I have seen it verified in a hundred and one instances.

Apart from the lines, however, there is a wealth of character in hands: I am never tired of studying them. To me the most beautiful and interesting hands are the pure psychic and the dramatic—the former with its thin, narrow palm, slender, tapering fingers and filbert nails; the latter a model of symmetry and grace, with conical finger-tips and filbert nails—indeed, filbert nails are more or less confined to these two types; one seldom sees them in other hands.

Then there are the literary and artistic hands, with their mixed types of fingers, some conical and some square-tipped, but always with some redeeming feature of refinement and elegance in them; and the musical hand, sometimes a modified edition of the psychic, and sometimes quite different, with short, supple fingers and square tips. And yet again—would that it did not exist!—the business hand, far more common in England, where the bulk of the people have commercial minds, than elsewhere. It has no redeeming feature, but is short, and square, and fat, with stumpy fingers and hideous, spatulate nails, the very sight of which makes me shudder. indeed, I have heard it said abroad, and not without some reason, that, apart from other little peculiarities, such as projecting teeth and big feet, the English have two sets of toes! When I look at English children's fingers, and see how universal is the custom of biting the nails, I feel quite sure the day will come when there will be no nails left to bite—that the day, in fact, is not far distant, when nails, rather than teeth, will become extinct.

The Irish, French, Italians, Spanish, and Danes, being far more dramatic and psychic than the English, have far nicer hands, and for one set of filbert nails in London, we may count a dozen in Paris or Madrid.

Murderers' hands are often noticeable for their knotted knuckles and club-shaped finger-tips; suicides—for the slenderness of the thumbs and strong inclination of the index to the second finger; thieves—for the pointedness of the fingertips, and the length and suppleness of the fingers. Dominating, coarse-minded people, and people who exert undue influence over others, generally have broad, flat thumbs. The hands of soldiers and sailors are usually broad, with short, thick, square-tipped fingers; the hands of clergy are also more often broad and coarse than slender and conical, which may be accounted for by the fact that so many of them enter the Church with other than spiritual motives. The really spiritual hand is the counterpart of the psychical, and rarely seen in England. Doctors, doctors with a genuine love of their profession, in other words, "born" doctors, have broad but slender palms, with long, supple fingers and moderately square tips. This type of hand is typical, also, of the hospital nurse.

It is, of course, a gross error to think that birth has everything to do with the shape of the hand; for the latter is entirely dependent on temperament; but it is also a mistake to say that as many beautiful-shaped hands are to be found among the lower as among the upper classes in England. It is a mistake, because the psychic and dramatic temperaments (and the psychic and dramatic type of hand is unquestionably the most beautiful) are rarely to be found in the middle and lower classes in England—they are almost entirely confined to the upper classes.

Pyromancy

Predicting the future by fire is one of the oldest methods of fortune-telling, and has been practised from time immemorial. I have often had my fortune told in the fire, but I cannot say it

has ever proved to be very correct; only once a prognostication came true,—a sudden death occurred in a family very nearly connected with me, after a very fanciful churchyard had been pointed out to me amid the glowing embers.

Hydromancy

There are many ways of telling the fortune by means of water. One of the most usual methods is to float some object on the water's surface, predicting the future in accordance with the course that object takes; but I believe future events are just as often foretold by means of the water only.

Many people believe that especially successful results in fortune-telling may be obtained by means of water only, on All-Hallows E'en or New Year's Eve.

On the former night, the method of divining the future is as follows:—Place a bowl of clear spring water on your lap at midnight, and gaze into it. If you are to be married, you will see the face of your future husband (or bride) reflected in the water; if you are to remain single all your life, you will see nothing; and if you are to die within the year, the water will become muddy. On New Year's Eve a tumbler of water should be placed at midnight before the looking-glass, when any person, or persons, destined to play a very important role in your life within the coming year, will suddenly appear and sip the water. Should you be doomed to die within that period, the tumbler will be thrown on the ground and dashed to pieces.

The conditions during the trial of both these methods are that you should be alone in the room, with only one candle burning.

The Crystal

I often practise crystal-gazing, and the results are strangely inconsistent. I see with startling vividness events that actually come to pass, and sometimes with equal perspicuity events that, as far as I know, are never fulfilled. And this I feel sure must be the case with all crystal-gazers, if they would but admit it. My method is very simple. As I cannot concentrate unless I have absolute quiet, I wait till the house is very still, and I then sit alone in my room with my back to the light, in such a position that the light pours over my shoulders on to the crystal, which I have set on the table before me. Sometimes I sit for a long time before I see anything, and sometimes, after a lengthy sitting, I see nothing at all; but when a tableau does come, it is always with the most startling vividness. When I want to be initiated into what is happening to certain of my friends, I concentrate my whole mind on those friends—I think of nothing but them—their faces, forms, mannerisms, and surroundings—and then, suddenly, I see them in the crystal! Visions are sometimes of the future, sometimes of the present, sometimes of the past, and sometimes of neither, but of what never actually transpires—and there is the strange inconsistency. I do not know what methods other people adopt, I daresay some of them differ from mine, but I feel quite sure that, look at the crystal how they will, it will invariably lie to them at times.

A day or so before the death of Lafayette, when I was concentrating my whole mind on forthcoming events, I distinctly saw, in the crystal, a stage with a man standing before the footlights, either speaking or singing. In the midst of his performance, a black curtain suddenly fell, and I intuitively realised the theatre was on fire. The picture then faded away and was replaced by something of a totally different character. Again, just before the great thunder-storm at the end of May, when Holy Trinity Church, Marylebone, was struck, I saw, in the crystal, a

black sky, vivid flashes of lightning, a road rushing with brown water, and a church spire with an enormous crack in it.

Of course, it is very easy to say these visions might have been mere coincidences; but if they were only coincidences, they were surpassingly uncommon ones.

Talismans and Amulets

Amulets, though now practically confined to the East, were once very much in vogue throughout Europe.

Count Daniel O'Donnell, brigadier-general in the Irish Brigade of Louis XIV., never went into battle without carrying with him an amulet in the shape of the jewelled casket "Cathach of Columbcille," containing a Latin psalter said to have been written by St Columba. It has quite recently been lent to the Royal Irish Academy (where it is now) by my kinsman, the late Sir Richard O'Donnell, Bart. Count O'Donnell used to say that so long as he had this talisman with him, he would never be wounded, and it is a fact that though he led his regiment in the thick of the fight at Borgoforte, Nago, Arco, Vercelli, Ivrea, Verrua, Chivasso, Cassano, and other battles in the Italian Campaign of 1701-7, and at Oudenarde, Malplaquet, Arleux, Denain, Douai, Bouchain, and Fuesnoy, in the Netherlands, he always came through scathless. Hence, like him, I am inclined to attribute his escapes to the psychic properties of the talisman.

The great family of Lyons were in possession of a talisman in the form of a "lion-cup," the original of Scott's "Blessed Bear of Bradwardine," which always brought them good luck till they went to Glamis, and after that they experienced centuries of misfortune.

Another famous talisman is the "Luck of Edenhall," in the possession of Sir Richard Musgrave of Edenhall, in Cumberland; and many other ancient families still retain their amulets.

"The Evil Eye"

I was recently speaking to an Italian lady who informed me that belief in "the evil eye" is still very prevalent in many parts of Italy. "I myself believe in it," she said, "and whenever I pass a person whom I think possesses it, I make a sign with my fingers"—and she held up two of her fingers as she spoke. I certainly have observed that people with a peculiar and undefinable "something" in their eyes are particularly unlucky and invariably bring misfortune on those with whom they are in any degree intimate. These people, I have no doubt, possess "the evil eye," though it would not be discernible except to the extremely psychic, and there is no doubt that the Irish and Italians are both far more psychic than the English.

People are of opinion that the eye is not a particularly safe indicator of true character, but I beg to differ. To me the eye tells everything, and I have never yet looked directly into a person's eyes without being able to satisfy myself as to their disposition. Cruelty, vanity, deceit, temper, sensuality, and all the other vices display themselves at once; and so with vulgarity—the glitter of the vulgar, of the ignorant, petty, mean, sordid mind, the mind that estimates all things and all people by money and clothes, cannot be hidden; "vulgarity" will out, and in no way more effectually than through the eyes. No matter how "smart" the *parvenu* dresses, no matter how perfect his "style," the glitter of the eye tells me what manner of man he is, and when I see that strange anomaly, "nature's gentleman," in the service of such a man, I do not say to myself "Jack is as good"—I say, "Jack is better than his master."

But to me “the evil eye,” no less than the vulgar eye, manifests itself. I was at an “at home” one afternoon several seasons ago, when an old friend of mine suddenly whispered:

“You see that lady in black, over there? I must tell you about her. She has just lost her husband, and he committed suicide under rather extraordinary circumstances in Sicily. He was not only very unlucky himself, but he invariably brought misfortune on those to whom he took a liking—even his dogs. His mother died from the effects of a railway accident; his favourite brother was drowned; the girl to whom he was first engaged went into rapid consumption; and no sooner had he married the lady you see, than she indirectly experienced misfortune through the heavy monetary losses of her father. At last he became convinced that he must be labouring under the influence of a curse, and, filled with a curious desire to see if he had ‘the evil eye,’—people of course said he was mad—he went to Sicily. Arriving there, he had no sooner shown himself among the superstitious peasants, than they made a sign with their fingers to ward off evil, and in every possible way shunned him. Convinced then that what he had suspected was true, namely, that he was genuinely accursed, he went into a wood and shot himself.”

This, I daresay, is only one of many suicides in similar circumstances, and not a few of the suicides we attribute, with such obvious inconsistency (thinking thereby to cover our ignorance), to “temporary insanity,” may be traceable to the influence of “the evil eye.”

Witches

Though witches no longer wear conical hats and red cloaks and fly through the air on broomsticks, and though their *modus operandi* has changed with their change of attire, I believe there are just as many witches in the world to-day, perhaps even more, than in days gone by. All women are witches who exert baleful influence over others—who wreck the happiness of families by setting husbands against wives (or, what is even more common, wives against husbands), parents against children, and brothers against sisters; and, who steal whole fortunes by inveigling into love, silly, weak-minded old men, or by captivating equally silly and weak-willed women. Indeed, the latter is far from rare, and there are instances of women having filled other women with the blindest infatuation for them—an infatuation surpassing that of the most doting lovers, and, without doubt, generated by undue influence, or, in other words, by witchcraft. Indeed, I am inclined to believe that the orthodox witch of the past was harmless compared with her present-day representative. There is, however, one thing we may be thankful for, and that is—that in the majority of cases the modern witch, despite her disregard of the former properties of her calling, cannot hide her danger signals. Her manners are soft and insinuating, but her eyes are hard—hard with the steely hardness, which, granted certain conditions, would not hesitate at murder. Her hands, too, are coarse—an exaggeration of the business type of hand—the fingers short and club-shaped, the thumbs broad and flat, the nails hideous; they are the antipodes of the psychic or dramatic type of hands: a type that, needless to say, witches have never been known to possess. Once the invocation of the dead was one of the practices of ancient witchcraft: one might, perhaps, not inappropriately apply the term witch to the modern spiritualist.

If we credit the Scriptures with any degree of truth, then witches most certainly had the power of calling up the dead in Biblical days, for at Endor the feat—rare even in those times—was accomplished of invoking in material form the phantasms of the good as well as the evil. Though I am of the opinion that no amount of invocation will bring back a phantasm from the higher spiritual planes to-day, unless that invocation be made in very exceptional circumstances, with a

specific purpose, I am quite sure that *bona fide* spirits of the earthbound do occasionally materialise in answer to the summons of the spiritualist. I do not base this statement on any experience I have ever had, for it is a rather singular fact that, although I have seen many spontaneous phenomena in haunted houses, I have never seen anything resembling, in the slightest degree, a genuine spirit form, at a séance. Therefore, I repeat, I do not base my statement, as to the occasional materialisation of *bona fide* earth-bound spirits, on any of my experiences, but on those of “sitters” with whom I am intimately acquainted. What benefit can be derived from getting into close touch with earth-bound spirits, *i.e.* with vice and impersonating elementals and the phantasms of dead idiots, lunatics, murderers, suicides, rakes, drunkards, immoral women and silly people of all sorts, is, I think, difficult to say; for my own part, I am only too content to steer clear of them, and confine my attentions to trying to be of service to those apparitions that are, obviously, for some reason, made to appear by the higher occult powers. Thus, what is popularly known as spiritualism is, from my point of view, a mischievous and often very dangerous form of witchcraft.

A Frenchman to whom I was recently introduced at a house in Maida Vale, told me the following case, which he assured me actually happened in the middle of the eighteenth century, and was attested to by judicial documents. A French nobleman, whom I will designate the Vicomte Davergny, whilst on a visit to some friends near Toulouse, on hearing that a miller in the neighbourhood was in the habit of holding Sabbats, was seized with a burning desire to attend one. Consequently, in opposition to the advice of his friends, he saw the miller, and, by dint of prodigious bribing, finally persuaded the latter to permit him to attend one of the orgies. But the miller made one stipulation—the Vicomte was on no account to carry firearms; and to this the latter readily agreed. When, however, the eventful night arrived, the Vicomte, becoming convinced that it would be the height of folly to go to a notoriously lonely spot, in the dark, and unarmed, concealed a brace of pistols under his clothes. On reaching the place of assignation, he found the miller already there, and on the latter enveloping him in a heavy cloak, the Vicomte felt himself lifted bodily from the ground and whirled through the air. This sensation continued for several moments, when he was suddenly set down on the earth again and the cloak taken off him. At first he could scarcely make out anything owing to a blaze of light, but as soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the illumination, he perceived that he was standing near a huge faggot fire, around which squatted a score or so of the most hideous hags he had ever conceived even in his wildest imagination. After going through a number of strange incantations, which were more or less Greek to the Vicomte, there was a most impressive lull, that was abruptly broken by the appearance of an extraordinary and alarming-looking individual in the midst of the flames. All the witches at once uttered piercing shrieks and prostrated themselves, and the Vicomte then realised that the remarkable being who had caused the commotion was none other than the devil. Yielding to an irresistible impulse, but without really knowing what he was doing, the Vicomte whipped out a pistol, and, pointing at Mephistopheles, fired. In an instant, fire and witches vanished, and all was darkness and silence.

Terrified out of his wits, the Count sank on the ground, where he remained till daylight, when he received another shock, on discovering, stretched close to him, the body of the miller with a bullet wound in his forehead. Flying from the spot, he wandered on and on, until he came to a cottage, at which he inquired his way home. And here another surprise awaited him. For the cottagers, in answer to his inquiries, informed him that the nearest town was not Toulouse but Bordeaux, and if he went on walking in such and such a direction, he would speedily come to it. Arriving at Bordeaux, as the peasant had directed, the Vicomte rested a short time, and then set

out for Toulouse, which city he at length reached after a few days' journeying. But he had not been back long before he was arrested for the murder of the miller, it being deposed that he had been seen near Bordeaux, in the immediate neighbourhood of the tragedy, directly after its enactment. However, as it was obviously impossible that the Vicomte could have taken less than a few days to travel from Toulouse to a spot near Bordeaux, where the murder had taken place, a distance of several hundreds of miles, on the evidence of his friends, who declared that he had been with them till within a few hours of the time when it was presumed the crime was committed, the charge was withdrawn, and the Vicomte was fully acquitted.