

THE AWAKENING

"I share your enthusiasm for the day," said I, "and I am not in the least worried, but I am intensely curious. I will waive the question of where I am, if you're afraid the answer would disturb me, but I would like an answer to another that's a good deal more important. That question is, *Who* am I? My memory for the moment seems to be playing tricks with me."

At this time I looked at him while I spoke, keen to get what answer I could from his look as well as from his words. A man less alert than I—a blind man—might have understood the effect of my question upon him. He simply gasped with relief, and there flickered in his eye an evil look of perfectly ruthless joy.

"I can answer that question," he said. He was trying to keep a quiver of eagerness out of his voice, but not succeeding very well. "You are a—a house painter," he said, "a sort of odd-job man, employed by the owner of one of the large country estates in this vicinity. You had an accident. A piece of staging gave way, and you fell on your head, and have been in a state of only semiconsciousness since. We were afraid that the only hope for your recovery lay in a serious surgical operation which would endanger your life. The owner of the estate, your employer, a Mr.—a—Thompson—does the name bring anything