

the wicket, and looking over the river towards the sunset. Astonishment and delight deprived me at the first of all power of speech; at last—'Albert!' I cried, 'this is kind of you. When did you arrive?' He seemed not to hear me, and remained in the same attitude. I repeated the words, and with a similar result. 'Albert, look round, man!' Slowly he turned his head and looked me in the face; and then, O horror! even as I was looking at him, he disappeared. He did not fade away; he did not fall; but, in the twinkling of an eye, he was not there. Trembling and awe-struck, I went into the house, and strove to compose my shattered nerves. Was Albert dead and were apparitions truths? I dared not think—I dared not ask myself the question. I passed a wretched night; and the next day I was as unsettled as when first he left me.

It was about four days from this time when a circumstance wholly inexplicable occurred in my house. I was sitting at breakfast in the library, with a volume of Plato beside me, when my servant entered the room, and courted for permission to speak. I looked up, and supposing that she needed money for domestic purposes, I pulled out my purse from my pocket, and saying: 'Well, Katrine, what do you want now?' drew forth a florin, and held it towards her.

She courtesied again, and shook her head. 'Thank you, master; but it is not that.'

Something in the old woman's tone of voice caused me to look up hastily. 'What is the matter, Katrine? Has anything alarmed you?'

'If you please, master—if it is not a rude question, has—has any one been here lately?'

'Here!' I repeated. 'What do you mean?'

'In the bed upstairs, master.'

I sprang to my feet, and turned as cold as a statue.

'The bed has been slept in, master, for the last four nights.'

I flew to the door, thrust her aside, and in a moment sprang up the staircase and into Albert's bedroom; and there, plainly, plainly, I beheld the impression of a heavy body left upon the bed! Yes, there, on the pillow, was the mark where his head had been laid; there the deep groove pressed by his body! It was no deception this, but a strange, an incomprehensible reality. I groaned aloud, and staggered heavily back.

'It has been like this for four nights, master,' said the old woman. 'Each morning I have made the bed, thinking perhaps that you had been then to lie down during the day; but this time I thought I would speak to you about it.'

'Well, Katrine, make the bed once more; let us give it another trial; and then—'

I said no more, but walked away. When all was in order, I returned, bringing with me a basin of fine sand. First of all, I closed and barred the shutters; then sprinkled the floor all round the bed with sand; shut and locked the chamber-door, and left the key, under some trivial pretext, at the house of a friend in the town. Katrine was witness to all this. That night I lay awake and restless; not a sound disturbed the utter silence of the autumn night; not a breath stirred the leaves against my case.

I rose early the next morning; and by the time Katrine was up and at her work, I returned from Ems with the key. 'Come with me, Katrine,' I said; 'let us see if all be right in the Herr Lachner's bedroom.'

At the door, we paused and looked, half-terrified, in each other's faces; then I summoned courage, turned the key, and entered. The window-shutters, which I had fastened the day before, were wide open—unclosed by no mortal hand; and the daylight streaming in, fell upon the disordered bed—upon foot-marks in the sand! Looking attentively at these latter, I saw that the impressions were alternately light and heavy, as if the walker had rested longer upon one foot than the other, like a lame man.

I will not here delay my narrative with an account of the mental anguish which this circumstance caused me; suffice it, that I left that room, locked the door again, and resolved never to re-enter it till I had learned the fate of my friend.

The next day I set off for Cassel. The journey was long and fatiguing, and only a portion could be achieved by train. Though I started very early in the morning, it was quite night before the diligence by which the transit was completed entered the streets of the town. Faint and weary though I was, I could not delay at the inn to partake of any refreshment, but hired a youth to shew me the way to Albert's lodgings, and proceeded at once upon my search. He led me through a labyrinth of narrow old-fashioned streets, and paused at length before a high red-brick dwelling, with projecting stories and a curiously carved doorway. An old man with a lantern answered my summons; and, on my inquiring if Herr Lachner lodged there, desired me to walk up stairs to the third floor.

'Then he is living!' I cried eagerly.

'Living!' echoed the man, as he held the lantern at the foot of the staircase to light me on my way.—'Living! *Mein Gott*, we want no dead lodgers here.'

After the first flight, I found myself in darkness, and went on, feeling my way step by step,

and holding by the broad banisters. As I ascended the third flight, a door on the landing suddenly opened, and a voice exclaimed:

'Welcome, Heinrich! Take care; there is a loose plank on the last step but one.'

It was Albert, holding a candle in his hand—as well, as real, as substantial as ever. I cleared the remaining interval with a bound, and threw myself into his arms.

'Albert, Albert, my friend and companion, alive—alive and well!'

'Yes, alive,' he replied, drawing me into the room and closing the door. 'You thought me dead?'

'I did indeed,' said I, half sobbing with joy. Then glancing round at the blazing hearth—for now the nights were chill—the cheerful lights, and the well-spread supper-table: 'Why, Albert,' I exclaimed, 'you live here like a king.'

'Not always thus,' he replied, with a melancholy smile. 'I lead in general a very sparing bachelor-like existence. But it is not often I have a visitor to entertain; and you, my brother, have never before partaken of my hospitality.'

'How!' I exclaimed quite stupefied; 'you knew that I was coming?'

'Certainly. I have even prepared a bed for you in my own apartment.'

I gasped for breath, and dropped into a seat. 'And this power, this spiritual 'knowledge'—'

'Is simply the effect of magnetic relation—of what is called *rapport*.'

'Explain yourself.'

'Not now, Heinrich. You are exhausted by the mental and bodily excitement which you have this day undergone. Eat, now; eat and rest. After supper, we will talk the subject over.'

Wearied as I was, curiosity, and a vague sort of horror which I found it impossible to control, deprived me of appetite, and I rejoiced when, drawing towards the hearth with our meerschaums and Rhine-wine, we resumed the former conversation.

'You are, of course, aware,' began my friend, 'that in those cases where a mesmeric power has been established by one mind over another, a certain rapport, or intimate relationship, becomes the mysterious link between those two natures. This rapport does not consist in the mere sleep-producing power; that is but the primary form, the simplest stage of its influence, and in many instances may be altogether omitted. By this, I mean that the mesmerist may, by a supreme act of volition, step at once to the highest power of control over the patient, without traversing the intermediate gradations of somnolency or even clairvoyance. This highest power lies in the will of the operator, and enables him to present images to the mind of the other, even as they are produced in his own. I cannot better describe my subject than by comparing the mind of the patient to a mirror which reflects that of the operator as long, as often, and as fully, as he may desire. This rapport I have long sought to establish between us.'

'But you have not succeeded.'

'Not altogether; neither have my efforts been quite in vain. You have struggled to resist me, and I have felt the opposing power baffling me at every step; yet sometimes I have prevailed, if but for a short time. For instance, during many days after leaving Ems, I left a strong impression upon your mind.'

'Which I tried to shake off, and did.'

'True; but it was a contended point for some days. Let me recall another instance to your memory. About five days ago you were suddenly, and for some moments, forced to succumb to my influence, although but an instant previous you were completely a free agent.'

'At what time in the day was that? I asked falteringly.'

'About half-past eight o'clock in the evening.'

I shuddered, grew deadly faint, and pushed my chair back.

'But where were you, Albert?' I muttered in a half-audible voice.

He looked up, surprised at my emotion; then as if catching the reflex of my agitation from my countenance, he turned ghastly pale, even to his lips, and the drop of cold dew started on his forehead.

'I—was—here,' he said, with a slow and laboured articulation, that added to my dismay.

'But I saw you—I saw you standing in my garden, just as I was thinking of you, or, rather, just as the thought of you had been forced upon me.'

'And did you speak to—the figure?'

'Twice, without being heard. The third time I cried—'

'"Albert, look round, man!" interrupted my friend, in a hoarse, quick tone.

'My very words! Then you heard me?'

'But when you had spoken them,' he continued, without heeding my question—'when you had spoken them—what then?'

'It vanished—where and how, I know not.'

Albert covered his face with his hands, and groaned aloud.

'Great God!' he said feebly, 'then I am not mad!'

I was so horror-struck, that I remained

silent. Presently, he raised his head, poured out half a tumblerful of brandy, drank it at a draught, and then turning his face partly aside, and speaking in a low and preternaturally even tone, related to me the following strange and fearful narrative:—

'Dr. K—, under whom I have been studying for the last year here in Cassel, first convinced me of the reality of the mesmeric doctrine; before then, I was as hardened a sceptic as yourself. As is frequently the case in these matters, the pupil—being, perhaps, constitutionally inclined more towards those influences—soon penetrated deeper into the paths of mesmeric research than the master. By a rapidity of conviction that seems almost miraculous, I pierced at once to the essence of the doctrine, and, passing from the condition of patient to that of operator, became sensible of great internal power, and of strength of volition which enabled me to establish the most extraordinary rapports between my patient and myself, even when separated from them by any distance however considerable. Shortly after the discovery of this new power, I became aware of another and a still more singular phenomenon within myself. In order to convey to you a proper idea of what this phenomenon is, I must beg you to analyse with me the ordinary process of memory. Memory is the reproduction or summoning back of past places and events. With some, this mental vision is so vivid, as actually to produce the effect of painting the place or thing remembered upon the retina of the eye, so as to present it with all the substantive form, its lights, its colours, and its shadows. Such is our so-called memory—who shall say whether it be memory or reality? I had always commanded this faculty in a high degree; indeed, so remarkably, that if I but related a passage from any book, the very page, the printed characters, were spread before my mental vision, and I read from them as from the volume. My recollection was therefore said to be wondrously faithful, and, as you will remember, I never erred in a single syllable. Since my recent investigations, this faculty has increased in a very singular manner. I have twice felt as though my inner self, my spiritual self, were a *distinct body*—yet scarcely so much a body as a nervous essence or ether; and as if this second being, in moments of earnest thought, went from me, and visited the people, the places, the objects of external life. Nay,' he continued, observing my extreme agitation, 'this thing is not wholly new in the history of magnetic phenomena—but it is rare. We call it, psychologically speaking, the power of far-working. But there is yet another and a more appalling phase of far-working—that of a visible appearance out of the body—that of being here and elsewhere at the same time—that of becoming, in short, a doppelganger. The irrefragable evidence of this truth I have never dared to doubt, but it has always impressed me with an unparalleled horror. I believed, but I dreaded; yet twice I have for a few moments trembled at the thought that I—I also may be—may be—'

'O rather, far, far rather would I believe myself deluded, dreaming—even mad! Twice have I felt a consciousness of self-absence—once, a consciousness of self-seeing! All knowledge, all perception was transferred to my spiritual self, while a sort of drowsy numbness and inaction weighed upon my bodily part. The first time was about a fortnight before I visited you at Ems; the second happened five nights since, at the period of which you have spoken. On that second evening, Heinrich—here his voice trembled audibly—'

'I felt myself in possession of an unusual mesmeric power. I thought of you, and impelled the influence, as it were, from my mind upon yours. This time, I found no resisting force opposed to mine; you yielded to my dominion—you believed.'

'It was so,' I murmured faintly.

'At the same time, my brother, I felt the most earnest desire to be once more near you, to hear your voice, to see your frank and friendly face, to be standing again in your pretty garden beside the running river. It was sunset, and I pictured to myself the scene from that spot. Even as I did so, a dullness came over my senses—the picture on my memory grew wider, brighter; I felt the cool breeze from the water; I saw the red sun sinking over the far woods; I heard the vespers bells ringing from the steeples; in a word, I was spiritually there. Presently I became aware as of the approach of something, I knew not what—but a something not of the same nature as myself—something that filled me with a shivering, half-compounded of fear and half of pleasure. Then a sound smothered and confused, like distant thunder. I felt paralysed, and unable to turn. It came and died away a second time, yet more distinctly. I distinguished words, but not their sense. It came a third time, vibrating clear and loud—'

'"Albert, look around, man!" Making a terrible effort to overcome the body which seemed to hold me, I turned—I saw you! The next moment, a sharp pain wrung me in every limb; there came a brief darkness, and I then found myself, without any apparent lapse of time or sensible motion, sitting by yonder

window, where, gazing on the sunset, I had begun to think of you. The sound of your voice yet rang in my ears; the sight of your face was still before me; I shuddered—I tried to think that all had been a dream. I lifted my hands to my brow; they were numbed and heavy. I strove to rise; but a rigid torpor seemed to weigh upon my lips. You say that I was visibly present in your garden; I know that I was bodily present in this room. Can it be that my worst fears are confirmed—that I possess a double being?'

We were both silent for some moments. At last I told him the circumstance of the bed, and of the foot-marks on the sand. He was shocked, but scarcely surprised.

'I have been thinking much of you,' he said; 'and for several successive nights I have dreamed of you and my stay—nay, even of that very bedroom. Yet I have been conscious of none of these symptoms of far-working. It is true that I have awaked each morning unrefreshed and weary, as if from bodily fatigue; but this I attributed to over-study and constitutional weakness.'

'Will you tell me the particulars of your first experience of this spiritual absence?'

Albert sat pale and silent, as if he heard not.

I repeated the question.

'Give me some more brandy,' he said, 'and I will tell you.'

I did so. He remained for a few moments looking at the fire before he spoke; at last he proceeded, but in a still lower voice than before:

'The first time was also in this room; but how much more terrible than the second. I had been reading—reading a metaphysical work upon the nature of the soul—when I experienced, quite suddenly, a sensation of extreme lassitude. The book grew dim before my eyes; the room darkened; I appeared to find myself in the streets of the town. Plainly I saw the churches in the gray evening dusk; plainly the hurrying passengers; plainly the faces of many whom I knew. Now it was the market-place; now the bridge; now the well-known street in which I live. Then I came to the door; it stood wide open to admit me. I passed slowly, slowly up the gloomy staircase; I entered my own room; and there—'

He paused; his voice grew husky, and his face assumed a stony, almost a distorted appearance.

'And there you saw,' I urged—'you saw—'

'Myself! Myself sitting in this very chair. Yes, yes; myself stood gazing on myself! We looked—we looked into each other's eyes—we—'

His voice failed; the hand holding the wine-glass grew stiff, and the brittle vessel fell upon the hearth, and was shattered into a thousand fragments.

'Albert! Albert!' I shrieked, 'look up. O heavens! what shall I do?'

I hung frantically over him; I seized his hands in mine; they were cold as marble. Suddenly, as if by a last spasmodic effort, he turned his head in the direction of the door, and looked earnestly forward. The power of speech was gone, but his eyes glared with a light that was more vivid than that of life. Struck with an appalling idea, I followed the course of his gaze. Hark! a dull, dull sound—measured, distinct, and slow, as if of feet ascending. My blood froze; I could not remove my eyes from the doorway; I could not breathe. Nearer and nearer came the steps—alternately light and heavy, light and heavy, as the tread of a lame man. Nearer and nearer—across the landing—upon the very threshold of the chamber. A sudden fall beside me, a crash, a darkness! Albert had slipped from his chair to the floor, dragging the table in his fall, and extinguishing the lights beneath the *débris* of the accident.

Forgetting instantly everything but the danger of my friend, I flew to the bell and rang wildly for help. The vehemence of my cries, and the startling energy of the peal in the midnight silence of the house, roused every creature there; and in less time than it takes to relate, the room was filled with a crowd of anxious and terrified lodgers, some just roused from sleep, and others called from their studies, with their reading-lamps in their hands.

The first thing was to rescue Albert from where he lay, beneath the weight of the fallen table—to throw cold water on his face and hands, to loosen his necktie, to open the windows for the fresh night-air.

'It is of no use,' said a young man, holding his head up and examining his eyes. 'I am a surgeon: I live in this house. Your friend is dead.'

'Dead!' I echoed, sinking upon a chair. 'No, no—not dead. He was—he was subject to this.'

'No doubt,' replied the surgeon: 'It is probably his third attack.'

'Yes, yes—I know it is. Is there no hope?'

He shook his head and turned away.

'What has been the cause of his death?' asked a bystander in an awe-struck whisper. 'Cataplexy.'

The answer given by a prisoner accused of almost cutting his wife to pieces was, with a smile, "Well, Monsieur le Président, you know every one has his little failing."