

too, who was destined to be my near companion, perhaps for years.

Meanwhile, the boy-vampire had quitted his first victim, and, to my inexpressible horror, was smacking his lips and rubbing his stomach, after the manner of a drunkard who has taken a draught of more than usually generous wine. He passed on to the next bed, and repeated his loathsome operation.

Five beds did I see him visit in this manner, while the power of motion seemed dried up in me with very horror. I struggled to shout, but the sound died upon my lips. I struggled to leap through the window and fall upon the monster, but, luckily for me, or murder might have been the result, an unseen power seemed to rivet me to the spot. Suddenly I turned, and fled down the corridor like a maniac.

To arouse the doctor was the work of a moment. I tried to explain it to him in a few hurried words, but my agitation was so great, and my speech so incoherent, that I must have appeared to be wandering. I dragged him into my room, and pointing to the open window, I left the terrible facts to speak for themselves.

A moment afterwards I saw him leap through the window and alight at Sanderson's feet. I saw the boy raise his lips from the sixth victim, and meet the gaze of the doctor. I saw him fling himself at his feet, and heard him crave in piteous accents for mercy.

"The impulse was upon me," he said: "I could not resist it. Doctor, I loathe, I hate myself more than you can loathe or hate me: but I cannot resist it. Oh, I am miserable—miserable!"

His wail was so piteous that I felt my loathing fast turning into commiseration. Yes, I pitied this monster. This was the terrible secret that he bore about him: this was the curse that, more surely than the leprosy of old, separated him from his fellow-beings, and made his inmost soul cry out "Unclean, unclean!" Surely he *was* to be pitied.

I looked into the doctor's eye to read there if his feelings were akin to mine, but he was little accustomed to allow his face to be an index to the soul within. I could see nothing. He merely said, "This must be seen to." Then he added, "Mr. Merton, you are agitated; you had better retire." He left the room with Sanderson, and I heard the key of the turret-chamber turned.

The vampire was in solitary confinement, with no blood to play upon but his own!

I turned into bed, and tried to compose myself to sleep; but it was not to be. I felt a shock as of an earthquake, and the next moment I awoke up in the coach, which was joggling over the rough stones of C— High Street.

"I fear you have been dreaming sir," said my opposite neighbour.

I had indeed.

But the most curious part is yet to come.

In due time I really did reach N—. The coach put up, at the White Hart, so I had no need of a boy, vampire or otherwise, to show me the Grammar School. I met with a kind welcome from the doctor, and supped with him and his wife in private. In the pleasures of the social meal I could afford to laugh at my strange dream, merely noting that the doctor was singularly like the doctor my fertile brain had conjured up, and that what I saw of the school on alighting bore an equal resemblance to its phantom counterpart. But then I had had a very minute description both of the one and the other, so no great wonder after all.

"The boys are gone to bed," said the doctor, rising and lighting my candle, "and I daresay you will not be sorry to follow their example. I have had a bed prepared in my dressing room, so that you may not be disturbed. To-morrow night you can take charge of your dormitory. There are twenty-five boys under your supervision."

"What a singular coincidence," I thought as I retired, and I indulged my brains in vain to recall if any one could have revealed to me this item of the internal economy of N— Grammar School. In this process I fell into a profound and dreamless sleep, from which I was recalled in the morning by the six o'clock bell.

After prayers, I took my class, and there sure enough straight before me was Sanderson, the vampire! I never was so utterly and hopelessly confused in all my life. There he was no mistake at all about it, only he appeared to be nervous and shy, rather than burdened with conscious guilt. I could not take my eyes off him. I fairly stared him out of countenance. He took refuge in a scrutiny of his shoe-string, and the likeness was complete!

"Sanderson, construe."

"Who sir?" asked a dozen voices.

"That boy," I said, indicating the vampire.

"Oh, sir, Norris."

The difference of name seemed to remove an incubus from me. Norris *alias* Sanderson, *alias* the vampire, essayed to construe, but he broke down hopelessly, and took refuge in the shoe-string. It was Sanderson: there was no denying it. To-night I should see him "tapping" the dormitory boys, and smacking his horrid lips over the loathsome draught. I hated Norris religiously.

"Norris," said the doctor in the afternoon, "show Mr. Merton the town." I was obliged to submit. "One of my best boys," he whispered, as we passed out. I shrugged my shoulders.

Norris showed us everything N— could boast of, and to do him justice, he evidently strove hard to please; but I found him

as taciturn and monosyllabic as my dream had foreshadowed, and, as you may suppose, I took no trouble to draw out a vampire.

At night I had some business to transact with the doctor, and when I sought my chamber the boys were in bed and asleep—twenty-five boys—and Norris just under my window! Before putting out the lamp I looked at each. They were as healthy-looking a set as one could desire to see. I almost resented their good condition. What business had four-and-twenty boys to look fat and well-liking when they slept with a vampire?

I visited Norris last. There he lay, just as I had pictured him, one hand on the quilt, and the look of peaceful innocence on his face. One thing was certain, Norris was very handsome. I may add that the arrangement of the dormitory and of my own room were precisely similar to that portrayed in my dream. I should have felt the same uncertainty as to whether I had heard of it beforehand, as I did with regard to the number of boys in the dormitory, were it not for the utterly inexplicable resemblance between Sanderson and Norris. I worked myself into such a fit of nervousness that I added yet another coincidence by sitting up in the window, whence I fully expected to see Norris arise and practice his blood-sucking. But though I heard the clock strike not only eleven, twelve, and one, but all the hours up to six, nothing of the kind happened. After a while, though a settled aversion to Norris remained, out of which I found it impossible to reason myself, I ceased endeavouring to catch him in overt acts of vampirism, and even the singular pertinacity with which I persisted, at least once in the course of the day, in addressing him as Sanderson, and the strange dislike which I bore him, and which was only too apparent to all, at length ceased to cause any speculation.

Months passed on, and brought with them various changes. I was comfortably settled at N—, and still had from my window the supervision of the "North Dormitory." But Norris's place knew him no more. He had not gone into solitary confinement in the turret-chamber as a convicted vampire. He was dying in a deep decline, and I, as a religious duty, was battling strongly and manfully with my aversion. One day he sent for me. I found him in his favourite position, one arm thrown over the coverlet. It was the well-known position of my dream.

"O thank you," he said, bursting into tears. "Oh, Mr. Merton, why have you disliked me so, when I have always prayed that you might like me? Why have you shunned me as you would a vampire?"

What could I say? I could only blubber as a child.

"When I get well will you promise to like me?"

Of course I promised, and did bitter penance in spirit for my injustice. But I never had the power of fulfilling my word. He died in a few days.

His simple cross in N— Churchyard—I visited it the other day—bears the inscription.

WALTER NORRIS,

IN PEACE,

AGED TWELVE YEARS.

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 184—.

I begged his mother, to whom I related all the circumstances, to allow me to erect it to his memory, and for years my hands planted and tended the flowers at its base. In an old desk, among the relics of the past, such as the coldest among us hoard up, one of my dearest treasures is a lock of light curling hair, and a boy's necktie, the paper attached to which is labelled with the suggestive word, "Sanderson."

I should not have recorded this dream were it not for the strange coincidence attached to it. I must leave scientific men the explanation of the mystery. Can it be that my unkindness was a necessary discipline for Norris, and that the dream was permitted for his good? Who can say?

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M. O. Office, Halifax, Nova Scotia, }
16th March, 1865. }

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