

my friend did deliver himself with an eloquent *abandon*, his possession of which I had never till that moment dreamed. I cannot follow his words; I can only give some faint idea of the general color and tenor of his passionate complaint.

An editor, he said, is the only human sufferer for whom there is no pity among his fellow-mortals. His is a lonely sorrow—there is nothing in the experience of those who are near to him that can help them either to mourn with him in his misery, or, what is sometimes needed more, to be glad with him in his joy.

Can you imagine the effect upon the human brain of the unintermitted wash over it of a steady, unending stream of MSS., year in and year out? Can you imagine the intellectual distraction, disintegration, demoralization, that comes of entertaining an inconsequent succession of plots, facts, fancies, freaks, rhymes, reasons, and theories—most of them of no force or value whatever? Do you wonder that an editor, after a good part of a lifetime spent in such abortive labours, should contemplate a lapse into a condition of downright idiocy?

He paused a moment in his speech. His left hand still clasped his forehead, but his right waved in mid-air, as if in time to the ceaseless pulsing of those waters of which he had spoken, and over which his eyes seemed even now vaguely to wander, like those of the "Ancient Mariner" over that wide and dreadful sea.

An awful thought entered my mind—is it really so? I asked myself; have his troubles actually touched that sensitive brain of his—are his own worst anticipations about to be realized? Suppose, I thought with a shudder, suppose he should be taken violently, and, as often happens in such cases, should turn upon his best friend—in a word, suppose he should demolish both me and the Old Cabinet before I had time to call for assistance. I glanced nervously at the brass-knobbed tongs, which happened to be on the side of the hearth near which he stood. But I did not betray my suspicions, and as he went on he gradually became calmer, and more and more like himself, falling at last into the stately phrase for which he is so justly celebrated.

... If the evil were worked only during the reading—he continued—it would not be so disastrous. But the horrible things haunt him. Wherever he goes he is followed by a phantom company, that brings him no companionship, help or solace of any kind—nothing but dissipation and annoyance. A face flickers before him—some dimly outlined personality—taking part in a half-remembered scene. He pauses to recall where he has met such a one—where and when such a thing happened. Then flash across his vision the yellow pages of a MS.—a week ago sent on its homeward journey.

To spend one's days and nights in the company of disagreeable people, to whom the story-writers introduce him, without his consent or desire—to listen to their knock-kneed philosophies, their