

To "LA GRIPPE."

By a victim.

The time has come for you to leave this house. Seventeen days ago you folsted yourself upon me, and since then we have been together night and day. You were unwelcome and uninvited, and you made yourself intensely disagreeable. We wrestled, you and I, but you attacked me unawares in the back, and you threw me. Then, like the ungenerous foe that you are, you struck me while I was down. However, your designs have failed. I struggle to my feet and order you to withdraw. Nay, withdraw is too polite a word. Your cab is at the door; get out. But, stop, a word with you before you go.

Most of your hosts, I fancy, run you out of their houses without first saying what they think of you. Their one desire is to be rid of you. Perhaps they are afraid to denounce you to your face. I want, however, to tell you that I have been looking forward to this moment ever since you put me to bed. I said little while I was there, but I thought a good deal, and most of my thoughts were of you. You fancied yourself invisible, but I saw you glaring at me, and I clenched my fists beneath the blankets. I could paint your portrait. You are very tall and stout, with a black beard, and a cruel, unsteady eye, and you have a way of crackling your fingers while you exult in your power. I used to lie watching you as you lolled in my cane-chair. At first it was empty, but I felt you were in it, and gradually you took shape. I could hear your fingers crackling, and the chair creak as you moved in it. If I sat up in fear, you disappeared, but as soon as I lay back, there you were again. I know now that in a sense you were a creature of my imagination. I have discovered something more. I know why you seemed tall and stout and bearded, and why I heard your fingers crackling.

Fever—one of your dastard weapons—was no doubt what set me drawing portraits, but why did I see you a big man with a black beard? Because long ago, when the world was young, I had a schoolmaster of that appearance. He crackled his fingers too. I had forgotten him utterly. He had gone from me with the love of climbing for crows' nests—which I once thought would never die—but during some of these seventeen days of thirty-six hours each I suppose I have been a boy again. Yet I had many schoolmasters, all sure at first that they could make something of me, all doleful when they found that

I had conscientious scruples against learning. Why do I merge you into him of the crackling fingers? I know. It is because in mediaeval times I hated him as I hate you. No others have I loathed with any intensity, but he alone of my masters refused to be reconciled to my method of study, which consisted, I remember (without shame) in glancing at my task, as I hopped and skipped to school. Sometimes I hopped and skipped, but did not arrive at school in time to take solid part in lessons, and this grieved the soul of him who wanted to be my instructor. So we differed, as Gladstonian and Conservative on the result of the Parnell Commission, and my teacher, being in office, troubled me not a little. I confess I hated him, and while I sat glumly in his room, whence the better boys had retired, much solace I found in wondering how I would slay him, supposing I had a loaded pistol, a sword, and a hatchet, and he had only one life. I schemed to be a dark, morose pirate of fourteen, so that I might capture him, even at his black-board, and make him walk the plank. I was Judge Lynch, and he was the man at the end of the rope. I charged upon him on horseback, and cut him down. I challenged him to single combat, and then I was Ivanhoe. I even found pleasure in conceiving myself shouting "Crack-fingers" after him, and then bolting round a corner. You must see now why I pictured you heavy, and dark, and bearded. You are the schoolmaster of my later years. I lay in bed and gloried in the thought that presently I would be up, and fall on you like a body of cavalry.

What did you think of my doctor? You need not answer, for I know that you disliked him. You and I were Yoes, and I was getting the worst of it when he walked in and separated the combatants. His entrance was pleasant to me. He showed a contempt for you that perhaps he did not feel, and he used to take your chair. There were days when I wondered at his audacity in doing that, but I liked it, too, and by and by I may tell you why. I often asked him to sit there. He was your doctor as well as mine, and every time he said that I was a little better, I knew he meant that you were a little weaker. You knew it, too, for I saw you scowling after he had gone. My doctor is also my friend, and so, when I am well, I say things against him behind his back. Then I see his weaknesses and smile comfortably at them with his other friends—whom I also discuss

with him. But while you had me down he was another man. He became, as it were a foot taller, and I felt that he alone of men had anything to say that was worth listening to. Other friends came to look curiously at me and talk of politics, or Stanley, or on other frivolous topics, but he spoke of my case, which was the great affair. I was not, in my own mind, a patient for whom he was merely doing his best; I was entirely in his hands. I was a business, and it rested with him whether I was to be wound up or carried on as usual. I daresay I tried to be pleasant to him—which is not my way—took his prescriptions as if I rather enjoyed them, and held his thermometer in my mouth as though it were a new kind of pipe. This was diplomacy. I have no real pleasure in being fed with a spoon, nor do I intend in the future to smoke thermometers. But I knew that I must pander to my doctor's weakness if he was to take my side against you. Now that I am able to snap my fingers at you I am looking forward to sneering once more at him. Just at this moment, however, I would prefer to lay a sword flat upon his shoulders, and say gratefully, "Arise, Sir James." He has altered the faces of the various visitors who whispered to each other in my presence, and nodded at me and said aloud that I would soon be right again, and then said something else on the other side of the door. He has opened my windows and set the sparrows a-chirping again, and he has turned on the sunshine. Lastly, he has enabled me to call your cab. I am done. Get out. —J. M. Barrie.

BRIEF BUT TO THE POINT.

Dr. Donne had married a lady belonging to a rich family without the consent of her parents, and in consequence was treated with great asperity; in fact, he was told by his father-in-law that he was not to expect any money from him. The doctor went home and penned the pithy note: "John Donne, Anne Donne, undone," which he sent to the gentleman in question, and this had the effect of restoring them to favour.—Chamber's Journal.

A GREAT LIKING.

Landlady (to boarder, who has passed his cup six times)—You are very fond of coffee, Mr. B.

Mr. Banford—Yes, ma'am, it looks as if I was when I am willing to swallow so much water for the sake of getting a little.