

The Man with the Nose

by Rhoda Broughton

[The details of this little story are of course imaginary, but the main incidents are, to the best of my belief, facts. They happened twenty, or more than twenty years ago.]

Chapter One

“Let us get a map and see what places look pleasantest,” says she.

“As for that,” reply I, “on a map, most places look equally pleasant.”

“Never mind; get one.”

I obey.

“Do you like the seaside?” asks Elizabeth, lifting her little brown head and her small, happy, white face from the English sea-coast, along which her forefinger is slowly travelling.

“Since you ask me, distinctly *no*,” reply I, for once venturing to have a decided opinion of my own, which, during the last few weeks of imbecility, I can be hardly said to have had. “I broke my last wooden spade five and twenty years ago. I have but a poor opinion of cockles—sandy, red-nosed things, are not they? and the air always makes me bilious.”

“Then we certainly will not go there,” says Elizabeth, laughing. “A bilious bridegroom! alliterative but horrible! None of our friends show the least eagerness to lend us their country house.”

“Oh, that God would put it into the hearts of men to take their wives straight home, as their fathers did!” say I, with a cross groan.

“It is evident, therefore, that we must go somewhere,” returns she, not heeding the aspiration contained in my last speech, making her forefinger resume its employment, and reaching Tor-quay.

“I suppose so,” say I, with a sort of sigh; “for once in our lives we must resign ourselves to having the finger of derision pointed at us by waiters and landlords.”

“You shall leave your new portmanteau at home, and I will leave all my best clothes, and nobody will guess that we are bride and bridegroom; they will think that we have been married—oh, ever since the world began” (opening her eyes very wide).

I shake my head. “With an old portmanteau and in rags, we shall still have the mark of the beast upon us.”

“Do you mind much? do you hate being ridiculous?” asks Elizabeth, meekly, rather depressed by my view of the case; “because, if so, let us go somewhere out of the way, where there will be very few people to laugh at us.”

“On the contrary,” return I, stoutly, “we will betake ourselves to some spot where such as we do chiefly congregate—where we shall be swallowed up and lost in the multitude of our fellow-sinners.” A pause devoted to reflection. “What do you say to Killarney?” say I, cheerfully.

“There are a great many fleas there, I believe,” replies Elizabeth, slowly; “flea-bites make large lumps on me; you would not like me if I were covered with large lumps.”

At the hideous ideal picture thus presented to me by my little beloved I relapse into inarticulate idiocy; emerging from which by-and-by, I suggest “The Lakes.” My arm is round her, and I feel her supple body shiver, though it is mid July, and the bees are boom-ing about in the still and sleepy noon-garden outside.

“Oh, no—no—not *there!*”

“Why such emphasis?” I ask, gayly; “more fleas? At this rate, and with this *sine qua non*, our choice will grow limited.”

“Something dreadful happened to me there,” she says, with another shudder. “But, indeed, I did not think there was any harm in it—I never thought any thing would come of it.”

“What the devil was it?” cry I, in a jealous heat and hurry; “what the mischief *did* you do, and why have not you told me about it before?”

“I did not *do* much,” she answers, meekly, seeking for my hand, and, when found, kissing it in timid deprecation of my wrath; “but I was ill—very ill—there; I had a nervous fever. I was in a bed hung with a chintz, with a red and green fern-leaf pattern on it. I have always hated red and green fern-leaf chintzes ever since.”

“It would be possible to avoid the obnoxious bed, would not it?” say I, laughing a little. “Where does it lie? Windermere? Ullswater? Wastwater? Where?”

“We were at Ullswater,” she says, speaking rapidly, while a hot colour grows on her small white cheeks—“Papa, mamma, and I; and there came a mesmeriser to Penrith, and we went to see him—everybody did—and he asked leave to mesmerise me—he said I should be such a good medium, and—and—I did not know what it was like. I thought it would be quite good fun, and—and—I let him.”

She is trembling exceedingly; even the loving pressure of my arms cannot abate her shivering.

“Well?”

“And after that I do not remember anything; I believe I did all sorts of extraordinary things that he told me—sang and danced, and made a fool of myself—but when I came home I

was very ill, very—I lay in bed for five whole weeks, and—and was off my head, and said odd and wicked things that you would not have expected me to say—that dreadful bed! shall I ever forget it?”

“We will *not* go to the Lakes,” I say, decisively, “and we will not talk any more about mesmerism.”

“That is right,” she says, with a sigh of relief; “I try to think about it as little as possible; but sometimes, in the dead black of the night, when God seems a long way off, and the devil near, it comes back to me so strongly—I feel, do not you know, as if he were *there*—somewhere in the room, and I *must* get up and follow him.”

“Why should not we go abroad?” suggest I, abruptly turning the conversation.

“Why, indeed?” cries Elizabeth, recovering her gayety, while her pretty blue eyes begin to dance. “How stupid of us not to have thought of it before!—only *abroad* is a big word. *What* abroad?”

“We must be content with something short of Central Africa,” I say, gravely, “as I think our one hundred and fifty pounds would hardly take us that far.”

“Wherever we go, we must buy a dialogue-book,” suggests my little bride elect, “and I will learn some phrases before we start.”

“As for that, the Anglo-Saxon tongue takes one pretty well round the world,” reply I, with a feeling of complacent British swagger, putting my hands in my breeches pockets.

“Do you fancy the Rhine?” says Elizabeth, with a rather timid suggestion; “I know it is the fashion to run it down nowadays, and call it a cocktail river; but—but after all it cannot be so *very* contemptible, or Byron could not have said such noble things about it.”

“The castled crag of Drachenfels

Frowns o'er the wide and winding Rhine,

Whose breast of waters broadly swells

Between the banks which bear the vine,"

say I, spouting. "After all, that proves nothing, for Byron could have made a silk purse out of a sow's-ear."

"The Rhine will not do, then?" says she, resignedly, suppressing a sigh.

"On the contrary, it will do admirably; it *is* a cocktail river, and I do not care who says it is not," reply I, with illiberal positiveness; "but everybody should be able to say so from his own experience, and not from hearsay; the Rhine let it be, by all means."

So the Rhine it is.

Chapter Two

I have got over it; we have both got over it tolerably, creditably; but, after all, it is a much severer ordeal for a man than a woman, who, with a bouquet to occupy her hands, and a veil to gently shroud her features, need merely be prettily passive. I am alluding, I need hardly say, to the religious ceremony of marriage, which I flatter myself I have gone through with a stiff sheepishness not unworthy of my country. It is a three-days-old event now, and we are getting used to belonging to one another, though Elizabeth still takes off her ring twenty times a day to admire its bright thickness; still laughs when she hears herself called "Madame." Three days ago we kissed all our friends, and left them to make themselves ill on our cake, and criticise our bridal behaviour, and now we are at Brussels, she and I, feeling oddly, joyfully free from any chaperone. We have been mildly sight-seeing—very mildly, most people would say, but we have resolved not to take our pleasure with the railway speed of Americans, or the hasty sadness of

our fellow Britons. Slowly and gayly we have been taking ours. To-day we have been to visit Wiertz's pictures. Have you ever seen them, oh reader? They are known to comparatively few people, but, if you have a taste for the unearthly terrible—if you wish to sup full of horrors, hasten thither. We have been peering through the appointed peep-hole at the horrible cholera-picture—the man buried alive by mistake, pushing up the lid of his coffin, and stretching a ghastly face and livid hands out of his winding-sheet toward you, while awful grey-blue coffins are piled around, and noisome toads and giant spiders crawl damply about. On first seeing it, I have reproached myself for bringing one of so nervous a temperament as Elizabeth to see so haunting and hideous a spectacle; but she is less impressed than I expected—less impressed than I myself am.

“He is very lucky to be able to get his lid up,” she says, with a half-laugh; “we should find it hard work to burst our brass nails, should not we? When you bury me, dear, fasten me down very slightly, in case there may be some mistake.”

And now all the long and quiet July evening we have been prowling together about the streets. Brussels is the town of towns for *flâner*-ing—have been flattening our noses against the shop-windows, and making each other imaginary presents. Elizabeth has not confined herself to imagination, however; she has made me buy her a little bonnet with feathers—“in order to look married,” as she says, and the result is such a delicious picture of a child playing at being grown up, having practised a theft on its mother's wardrobe, that for the last two hours I have been in a foolish ecstasy of love and laughter over her and it. We are at the “Bellevue,” and have a fine suite of rooms, *au premier*, evidently specially devoted to the English, to the gratification of whose well-known loyalty the Prince and Princess of Wales are simpering from the walls. Is there any one in the three kingdoms who knows his own face as well as he knows the faces of

Albert Victor and Alexandra? The long evening has at last slidden into night—night far advanced—night melting into earliest day. All Brussels is asleep. One moment ago I also was asleep, soundly as any log.

What is it that has made me take this sudden headlong plunge out of sleep into wakefulness? Who is it that is clutching at and calling upon me? What is it that is making me struggle mistily up into a sitting posture, and try to revive my sleep-numbed senses? A summer night is never wholly dark; by the half-light that steals through the closed *persiennes* and open windows I see my wife standing beside my bed; the extremity of terror on her face, and her fingers digging themselves, with painful tenacity into my arm.

“Tighter, tighter!” she is crying, wildly. “What are you thinking of? You are letting me go!”

“Good heavens!” say I, rubbing my eyes, while my muddy brain grows a trifle clearer. “What is it? What has happened? Have you had a nightmare?”

“You saw him,” she says, with a sort of sobbing breathlessness; “you know you did! You saw him as well as I.”

“I!” cry I, incredulously—“not I. Till this second I have been fast asleep. *I* saw nothing.”

“You did!” she cries, passionately. “You know you did. Why do you deny it? You were as frightened as I?”

“As I live,” I answer, solemnly, “I know no more than the dead what you are talking about; till you woke me by calling me and catching hold of me, I was as sound asleep as the seven sleepers.”

“Is it possible that it can have been a *dream*?” she says, with a long sigh, for a moment loosing my arm, and covering her face with her hands. “But no—in a dream I should have been

somewhere else, but I was here—*here*—on that bed, and he stood there (pointing with her forefinger)—just *there*, between the foot of it and the window!”

She stops, panting.

“It is all that brute Wiertz,” say I, in a fury. “I wish I had been buried alive myself, before I had been fool enough to take you to see his beastly daubs.”

“Light a candle,” she says, in the same breathless way, her teeth chattering with fright.

“Let us make sure that he is not hidden somewhere in the room.”

“How could he be?” say I, striking a match; “the door is locked.”

“He might have got in by the balcony,” she answers, still trembling violently.

“He would have had to have cut a very large hole in the *persiennes*,” say I, half-mockingly. “See, they are intact and well fastened on the inside.”

She sinks into an arm-chair, and pushes her loose, soft hair from her white face.

“It *was* a dream, then, I suppose?”

She is silent for a moment or two, while I bring her a glass of water, and throw a dressing-gown round her cold and shrinking form.

“Now tell me, my little one,” say I, coaxingly, sitting down at her feet, “what it was—what you thought you saw?”

“*Thought* I saw!” echoes she, with indignant emphasis, sitting upright, while her eyes sparkle feverishly. “I am as certain that I saw him standing there as I am that I see that candle burning—that I see this chair—that I see you.”

“*Him!* but who is *him?*”

She falls forward on my neck, and buries her face in my shoulder.

“That—dreadful—man!” she says, while her whole body is one tremor.

“*What* dreadful man?” cry I, impatiently.

She is silent.

“Who was he?”

“I do not know.”

“Did you ever see him before?”

“Oh, no—no, never! I hope to God I may never see him again!”

“What was he like?”

“Come closer to me,” she says, laying hold of my hand with her small and chilly fingers; “stay *quite* near me, and I will tell you” (after a pause)—“he had a *nose!*”

“My dear soul,” cry I, bursting out with a loud laugh in the silence of the night, “do not most people have noses? Would not he have been much more dreadful if he had had *none?*”

“But it was *such* a nose!” she says, with perfect trembling gravity.

“A bottle-nose?” suggest I, still cackling.

“For heaven’s sake, don’t laugh!” she says, nervously; “if you had seen his face, you would have been as little disposed to laugh as I.”

“But his nose?” return I, suppressing my merriment; “what kind of nose was it? See, I am as grave as a judge.”

“It was very prominent,” she answers, in a sort of awe-struck half-whisper, “and very sharply chiselled; the nostrils very much cut out.” A little pause. “His eyebrows were one straight black line across his face, and under them his eyes burnt like dull coals of fire, that shone and yet did not shine; they looked like dead eyes, sunken, half-extinguished, and yet sinister.”

“And what did he do?” ask I, impressed, despite myself, by her passionate earnestness; “when did you first see him?”

“I was asleep,” she said—“at least I thought so—and suddenly I opened my eyes, and he was *there—there*”—pointing again with trembling finger—“between the window and the bed.”

“What was he doing? Was he walking about?”

“He was standing as still as stone—I never saw any live thing so still—*looking* at me; he never called or beckoned, or moved a finger, but his eyes *commanded* me to come to him, as the eyes of the mesmeriser at Penrith did.” She stops, breathing heavily. I can hear her heart’s loud and rapid beats.

“And you?” I say, pressing her more closely to my side, and smoothing her troubled hair.

“I *hated* it,” she cries, excitedly; “I loathed it—abhorred it. I was ice-cold with fear and horror, but—I *felt* myself going to him.”

“Yes?”

“And then I shrieked out to you, and you came running, and caught fast hold of me, and held me tight at first—quite tight—but presently I felt your hold slacken—slacken—and, though I *longed* to stay with you, though I was *mad* with fright, yet I felt myself pulling strongly away from you—going to him; and he—he stood there always looking—looking—and then I gave one last loud shriek, and I suppose I woke—and it was a dream!”

“I never heard of a clearer case of nightmare,” say I, stoutly; “that vile Wiertz! I should like to see his whole *Musée* burnt by the hands of the hangman to-morrow.”

She shakes her head. “It had nothing to do with Wiertz; what it meant I do not know, but—”

“It meant nothing,” I answer, reassuringly, “except that for the future we will go and see none but good and pleasant sights, and steer clear of charnel-house fancies.”

Chapter Three

Elizabeth is now in a position to decide whether the Rhine is a cocktail river or no, for she is on it, and so am I. We are sitting, with an awning over our heads, and little wooden stools under our feet. Elizabeth has a small sailor's hat and blue ribbon on her head. The river breeze has blown it rather away; has tangled her plenteous hair; has made a faint pink stain on her pale cheeks. It is some fete-day, and the boat is crowded. Tables, countless camp-stools, volumes of black smoke pouring from the funnel, as we steam along. "Nothing to the Caledonian Canal!" cries a burly Scotchman in leggings, speaking with loud authority, and surveying, with an air of contempt, the eternal vine-clad slopes, that sound so well, and look so *sticky* in reality. "Cannot hold a candle to it!" A rival bride and bridegroom opposite, sitting together like love-birds under an umbrella, looking into each other's eyes instead of at the Rhine scenery.

"They might as well have stayed at home, might not they?" says my wife, with a little air of superiority. "Come, we are not so bad as that, are we?"

A storm comes on: hailstones beat slantwise and reach us—stone and sting us right under our awning. Everybody rushes down below, and takes the opportunity to feed ravenously. There are few actions more disgusting than eating *can* be made. A handsome girl close to us—her immaturity evidenced by the two long tails of black hair down her back—is thrusting her knife halfway down her throat.

"Come on deck again," says Elizabeth, disgusted and frightened at this last sight. "The hail was much better than this!"

So we return to our camp-stools, and sit alone under one mackintosh in the lashing storm, with happy hearts and empty stomachs.

“Is not this better than any luncheon?” asks Elizabeth, triumphantly, while the raindrops hang on her long and curled lashes.

“Infinitely better,” reply I, madly struggling with the umbrella to prevent its being blown inside out, and gallantly ignoring a species of gnawing sensation at my entrails.

The squall clears off by and by, and we go steaming, steaming on past the unnumbered little villages by the water’s edge with church-spires and pointed roofs; past the countless rocks, with their little pert castles perched on the top of them; past the tall, stiff poplar rows. The church-bells are ringing gayly as we go by. A nightingale is singing from a wood. The black eagle of Prussia droops on the stream behind us, swish-swish through the dull-green water. A fat woman, who is interested in it, leans over the back of the boat, and, by some happy effect of crinoline, displays to her fellow passengers two yards of thick, white cotton legs. She is, fortunately for herself, unconscious of her generosity.

The day steals on; at every stopping place more people come on. There is hardly elbow-room; and, what is worse, almost every lady is drunk. Rocks, castles, villages, poplars, slide by, while the paddles churn always the water, and the evening draws greyly on. At Bingen, a party of big blue Prussian soldiers, very drunk, “glorious” as Tam o’ Shanter, come and establish themselves close to us. They call for Lager Beer; talk at the tip-top of their strong voices; two of them begin to spar; all seem inclined to sing. Elizabeth is frightened. We are two hours late in arriving at Biebrich. It is half an hour more before we can get ourselves and our luggage into a carriage and set off along the winding road to Wiesbaden. The night is chilly, but not dark. There is only a little shabby bit of a moon, but it shines as hard as it can. Elizabeth is quite worn out, her tired head droops in uneasy sleep on my shoulder. Once she wakes up with a start.

“Are you sure that it meant nothing?” she asks, looking me eagerly in my face; “do people often have such dreams?”

“Often, often,” I answer, reassuringly.

“I am always afraid of falling asleep now,” she says, trying to sit upright and keep her heavy eyes open, “for fear of seeing him standing there again. Tell me, do you think I shall? Is there any chance, any probability of it?”

“None, none!”

We reach Wiesbaden at last, and drive up to the Hôtel des Quatre Saisons. By this time it is full midnight. Two or three men are standing about the door. Morris, the maid, has got out—so have I, and I am holding out my hand to Elizabeth, when I hear her give one piercing scream, and see her with ash-white face and starting eyes point with her forefinger—

“There he is!—there—there!”

I look in the direction indicated, and just catch a glimpse of a tall figure, standing half in the shadow of the night, half in the gaslight from the hotel. I have not time for more than one cursory glance, as I am interrupted by a cry from the bystanders, and, turning quickly round, am just in time to catch my wife, who falls in utter insensibility into my arms. We carry her into a room on the ground floor; it is small, noisy, and hot, but it is the nearest at hand. In about an hour she reopens her eyes. A strong shudder makes her quiver from head to foot.

“Where is he?” she says, in a terrified whisper, as her senses come slowly back. “He is somewhere about—somewhere near. I feel that he is!”

“My dearest child, there is no one here but Morris and me,” I answer, soothingly.

“Look you yourself. See.”

I take one of the candles and light up each corner of the room in succession.

“You saw him!” she says, in trembling hurry, sitting up and clenching her hands together. “I know you did—I pointed him out to you—you *cannot* say that it was a dream *this* time.”

“I saw two or three ordinary-looking men as we drove up,” I answer, in a commonplace, matter-of-fact tone. “I did not notice any thing remarkable about any of them; you know the fact is, darling, that you have had nothing to eat all day, nothing but a biscuit, and you are overwrought, and fancy things.”

“Fancy!” echoes she, with strong irritation. “How you talk! Was I ever one to fancy things? I tell you that as sure as I sit here—as sure as you stand there—I saw him—*him*—the man I saw in my dream, if it was a dream. There was not a hair’s-breadth of difference between them—and he was looking at me—looking—”

She breaks off into hysterical sobbing.

“My dear child!” say I, thoroughly alarmed, and yet half angry, “for God’s sake do not work yourself up into a fever; wait till to-morrow, and we will find out who he is, and all about him; you yourself will laugh when we discover that he is some harmless bagman.”

“Why not *now*?” she says, nervously; “why cannot you find out *now*—*this minute*?”

“Impossible! Everybody is in bed! Wait till to-morrow, and all will be cleared up.”

The morrow comes, and I go about the hotel, inquiring. The house is so full, and the data I have to go upon are so small, that for some time I have great difficulty in making it understood to whom I am alluding. At length one waiter seems to comprehend.

“A tall and dark gentleman, with a pronounced and very peculiar nose? Yes; there has been such a one, certainly, in the hotel, but he left at ‘grand matin’ this morning; he remained only one night.”

“And his name?”

The garçon shakes his head. “That is unknown, monsieur; he did not inscribe it in the visitor’s book.”

“What countryman was he?”

Another shake of the head. “He spoke German, but it was with a foreign accent.”

“Whither did he go?”

“That also is unknown. Nor can I arrive at any more facts about him.”

Chapter Four

A fortnight has passed; we have been hither and thither; now we are at Lucerne. Peopled with better inhabitants, Lucerne might well do for Heaven. It is drawing toward eventide, and Elizabeth and I are sitting, hand in hand, on a quiet bench, under the shady linden trees, on a high hill up above the lake. There is nobody to see us, so we sit peaceably hand in hand. Up by the still and solemn monastery we came, with its small and narrow windows, calculated to hinder the holy fathers from promenading curious eyes on the world, the flesh, and the devil, tripping past them in blue gauze veils: below us grass and green trees, houses with high-pitched roofs, little dormer-windows, and shutters yet greener than the grass; below us the lake in its rippleless peace, calm, quiet, motionless as Bethesda’s pool before the coming of the troubling angel.

“I said it was too good to last,” say I, doggedly, “did not I, only yesterday? Perfect peace, perfect sympathy, perfect freedom from nagging worries—when did such a state of things last more than two days?”

Elizabeth’s eyes are idly fixed on a little steamer, with a stripe, of red along its side and a tiny puff of smoke from its funnel, gliding along and cutting a narrow, white track on Lucerne’s sleepy surface.

“This is the fifth false alarm of the gout having gone to his stomach within the last two years,” continue I, resentfully. “I declare to Heaven that, if it has not really gone there this time, I’ll cut the whole concern.”

Let no one cast up his eyes in horror, imagining that it is my father to whom I am thus alluding; it is only a great-uncle by marriage, in consideration of whose wealth and vague promises I have dawdled professionless through twenty-eight years of my life.

“You *must* not go,” says Elizabeth, giving my hand an imploring squeeze. “The man in the Bible said, ‘I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come;’ why should it be a less valid excuse nowadays?”

“If I recollect rightly, it was considered rather a poor one even then,” reply I, dryly.

Elizabeth is unable to contradict this, she therefore only lifts two pouted lips (Monsieur Taine objects to the redness of English-women’s mouths, but I do not) to be kissed, and says, “Stay.” I am good enough to comply with her unspoken request, though I remain firm with regard to her spoken one.

“My dearest child,” I say, with an air of worldly experience and superior wisdom, “kisses are very good things—in fact, there are few better—but one cannot live upon them.”

“Let us try,” she says, coaxingly.

“I wonder which would get tired first?” I say, laughing. But she only goes on pleading, “Stay, stay.”

“How *can* I stay?” I cry impatiently “you talk as if I *wanted* to go! Do you think it is any pleasanter to me to leave you than to you to be left? But you know his disposition, his rancorous resentment of fancied neglects. For the sake of two days’ indulgence, must I throw away what will keep us in ease and plenty to the end of our days?”

“I do not care for plenty,” she says, with a little petulant gesture. “I do not see that rich people are any happier than poor ones. Look at the St. Clairs; they have £40,000 a-year, and she is a miserable woman, perfectly miserable, because her face gets red after dinner.”

“There will be no fear of *our* faces getting red after dinner,” say I, grimly; “for we shall have no dinner for them to get red after.”

A pause. My eyes stray away to the mountains. Pilatus on the right, with his jagged peak and slender snow-chains about his harsh neck; hill after hill rising silent, eternal, like guardian spirits standing hand-in-hand around their child, the lake. As I look, suddenly they have all flushed, as at some noblest thought, and over all their sullen faces streams an ineffable, rosy joy—a solemn and wonderful effulgence, such as Israel saw reflected from the features of the Eternal in their prophet’s transfigured eyes. The unutterable peace and stainless beauty of earth and sky seem to lie softly on my soul. “Would God I could stay! Would God all life could be like this!” I say devoutly, and the aspiration has the reverent earnestness of a prayer.

“Why do you say, ‘*Would God?*’” she cries, passionately, “when it lies with yourself. Oh, my dear love” (gently sliding her hand through my arm, and lifting wetly-beseeking eyes to my face), “I do not know why I insist upon it so much—I cannot tell you myself—I dare say I seem selfish and unreasonable—but I feel as if your going now would be the end of all things—as if —” She breaks off suddenly.

“My child,” say I, thoroughly distressed, but still determined to have my own way, “you talk as if I were going forever and a day; in a week, at the outside, I shall be back, and then you will thank me for the very thing for which you now think me so hard and disobliging.”

“Shall I?” she answers, mournfully. Well, I hope so.”

“You will not be alone, either; you will have Morris.”

“Yes.”

“And every day you will write me a long letter, telling me every single thing that you do, say, and think?”

“Yes.”

She answers me gently and obediently; but I can see that she is still utterly unreconciled to the idea of my absence.

“What is it that you are afraid of?” I ask, becoming rather irritated. “What do you suppose will happen to you?”

She does not answer; only a large tear falls on my hand, which she hastily wipes away with her pocket-handkerchief, as if afraid of exciting my wrath.

“Can you give me any good reason why I *should* stay?” I ask, dictatorially.

“None—none—only—stay—stay!”

But I am resolved *not* to stay. Early the next morning I set off.

Chapter Five

This time it is not a false alarm; this time it really has gone to his stomach, and, declining to be dislodged thence, kills him. My return is therefore retarded until after the funeral and the reading of the will. The latter is so satisfactory, and my time is so fully occupied with a multiplicity of attendant business, that I have no leisure to regret the delay. I write to Elizabeth, but receive no letters from her. This surprises and makes me rather angry, but does not alarm me. If she had been ill, if any thing had happened, Morris would have written. She never was great at writing, poor little soul. What dear little babyish notes she used to send me during our

engagement! Perhaps she wishes to punish me for my disobedience to her wishes. Well, *now* she will see who was right.

I am drawing near her now; I am walking up from the railway-station at Lucerne. I am very joyful as I march along under an umbrella, in the grand, broad shining of the summer afternoon. I think with pensive passion of the last glimpse I had of my beloved—her small and wistful face looking out from among the thick, fair fleece of her long hair-winking away her tears and blowing kisses to me. It is a new sensation to me to have any one looking tearfully wistful over my departure. I draw near the great, glaring Schweizerhof, with its colonnaded, tourist-crowded porch; here are all the pomegranates as I left them, in their green tubs, with their scarlet blossoms, and the dusty oleanders in a row. I look up at our windows; nobody is looking out from them: they are open, and the curtains are alternately swelled out and drawn in by the softly-playful wind. I run quickly upstairs and burst noisily into the sitting-room. Empty, perfectly empty! I open the adjoining door into the bedroom, crying, “Elizabeth! Elizabeth!” but I receive no answer. Empty too. A feeling of indignation creeps over me as I think, “Knowing the time of my return, she might have managed to be in-doors.” I have returned to the silent sitting-room, where the only noise is the wind still playing hide-and-seek with the curtains. As I look vacantly round, my eye catches sight of a letter lying on the table. I pick it up mechanically and look at the address. Good Heavens! what can this mean? It is my own, that I sent her two days ago, unopened, with the seal unbroken. Does she carry her resentment so far as not even to open my letters? I spring at the bell and violently ring it. It is answered by the waiter who has always especially attended us.

“Is madame gone out?”

The man opens his mouth and stares at me.

“Madame! Is monsieur then not aware that madame is no longer at the hotel?”

“*What?*”

On the same day as monsieur, madame departed.”

“*Departed!* Good God! what are you talking about?”

A few hours after monsieur’s departure—I will not be positive as to the exact time, but it must have been between one and two o’clock, as the midday *table d’hôte* was in progress—a gentleman came and asked for madame—”

“Yes—be quick.”

“I demanded whether I should take up his card, but he said ‘No,’ that was unnecessary, as he was perfectly well known to madame; and, in fact, a short time afterward, without saying any thing to any one, she departed with him.”

“And did not return in the evening?”

“No, monsieur; madame has not returned since that day.”

I clench my hands in an agony of rage and grief. “So this is it! With that pure child-face, with that divine ignorance—only three weeks married—this is the trick she has played me!” I am recalled to myself by a compassionate suggestion from the garçon.

“Perhaps it was the brother of madame.”

Elizabeth has no brother, but the remark brings back to me the necessity of self-command. “Very probably,” I answer, speaking with infinite difficulty. “What sort of looking gentleman was he?”

“He was a very tall and dark gentleman, with a most peculiar nose—not quite like any nose that I ever saw before—and most singular eyes. Never have I seen a gentleman who at all resembled him.”

I sink into a chair, while a cold shudder creeps over me as I think of my poor child's dream—of her fainting fit at Wiesbaden—of her unconquerable dread of and aversion from my departure. And this happened twelve days ago! I catch up my hat, and prepare to rush like a madman in pursuit.

“How did they go?” I ask, incoherently; “by train?—driving?—walking?”

“They went in a carriage.”

“What direction did they take? Whither did they go?”

He shakes his head. “It is not known.”

“It *must* be known!” I cry, driven to frenzy by every second's delay. “Of course, the driver could tell. Where is he? where can I find him?”

“He did not belong to Lucerne, neither did the carriage; the gentleman brought them with him.”

“But madame's maid,” say I, a gleam of hope flashing across my mind— “did she go with her?”

“No, monsieur; she is still here. She was as much surprised as monsieur at madame's departure.”

“Send her at once!” I cry, eagerly; but, when she comes, I find that she can throw no light on the matter. She weeps noisily, and says many irrelevant things; but I can obtain no information from her beyond the fact that she was unaware of her mistress's departure until long after it had taken place, when, surprised at not being rung for at the usual time, she had gone to her room and found it empty, and, on inquiring in the hotel, had heard of her sudden departure; that, expecting her to return at night, she had sat up waiting for her till two o'clock in the morning, but that, as I knew, she had not returned, neither had any thing since been heard of her.

Not all my inquiries, not all my cross-questionings of the whole staff of the hotel, of the visitors, of the railway-officials, of nearly all the inhabitants of Lucerne and its environs, procure me a jot more knowledge. On the next few weeks I look back as on a hellish and insane dream. I can neither eat nor sleep; I am unable to remain one moment quiet; my whole existence, my nights and my days, are spent in seeking, seeking. Everything that human despair and frenzied love can do is done by me. I advertise, I communicate with the police, I employ detectives; but that fatal twelve days' start forever baffles me. Only on one occasion do I obtain one tittle of information. In a village a few miles from Lucerne, the peasants, on the day in question, saw a carriage driving rapidly through their little street. It was closed, but through the windows they could see the occupants—a dark gentleman, with the peculiar physiognomy which has been so often described, and on the opposite seat a lady, lying apparently in a state of utter insensibility.

But even this leads to nothing.

Oh, reader, these things happened twenty years ago; since then, I have searched sea and land, but never have I seen my little Elizabeth again.