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The Master was wishing Tseihteon K'ac to enter on official employment. He replied,—“I am not yet able to rest in the assurance of THIS.” The Master was pleased.

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Mang Woo asked about Tszeloo, whether he was perfectly virtuous. The Master said,—“I do not know.”

He asked again, when the Master replied,—“In a kingdom of a thousand chariots, Yew might be employed to manage the military levies, but I do not know whether he is perfectly virtuous.”

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“What do you say of Ch'ih?” The Master replied,—“With his sash girt, and standing in a court, Ch'ih might be employed to converse with the visitors and guests, but I do not know whether he is perfectly virtuous.”

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The Master said,—“I have not seen a firm and unbending man.”

Some one replied,—“There is Shin Ch'ang.”

“Ch'ang,” said the Master, “is under the influence of his passions; how can he be pronounced firm and unbending?”

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The Master said of Tsz-ch'an that he had four of the marks of a superior man: in his conduct of himself, he was humble; in serving his superiors, he was respectful; in nourishing the people, he was kind; in ordering the people, he was just.

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The Master said,—“Gan P'ing knew well how to maintain friendly intercourse. The acquaintance might be long, but he showed the same respect as at first.”

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Tsze-chang asked, saying,—“The minister Tsze-wan thrice took office, and manifested no joy in his countenance. Thrice he retired from office, and manifested no displeasure. He made it a point to inform the new minister of the way in which he had conducted the government;—what do you say of him?”

The Master replied,—“He was loyal.”

“Was he perfectly virtuous?”

“I do not know. How can he be pronounced perfectly virtuous?”

Tsze-chang proceeded,—“When the officer Ts'uy killed the prince of Ts'e, Ch'in Wan, though he was the owner of forty horses, abandoned them, and left the country. Coming to another state, he said,—‘They are here like our great officer Ts'uy,’ and left it. He came to a second state, and with the same observation left it also;—what do you say of him?”

The Master replied,—“He was pure.”

“Was he perfectly virtuous?”

“I do not know. How can he be pronounced perfectly virtuous?”

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The Master said,—“Fine words, an insinuating appearance, and excessive respect;—Tso K'ew Ming was ashamed of them. I am also ashamed of them. To conceal resentment against a person, and appear friendly with him;—Ming was ashamed of such conduct. I am also ashamed of it.”

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The Master said,—“When Ch'ih was proceeding to Ts'e, he had fat horses to his carriage, and wore light furs. I have heard that a superior man helps the distressed, but does not add to the wealth of the rich.”

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Where the solid qualities are in excess of accomplishments, we have rusticity; where the accomplishments are in excess of the solid qualities, we have the manners of a clerk.

(To be continued.)

Contes Macabres.

MY CASE.

I AM normal, absolutely normal. I have always been a sane and balanced person. I have no affectations of dress, the order of my life presents no peculiarities except that I am, perhaps, more exclusive than is customary.

I have said that I was normal, though I have always had an æsthetic appreciation of an unusual kind. But what man of even mediocre genius has not had his foible?

Perhaps in this age that denounces any variance from the “normal,” as an “abnormality,” or “a derangement of the nervous system,” there are those who might say that I was obsessed by the great beauty of Nature's law of transmutation through decay.

How well I remember the birth of this passion in me.

A boy, a little friend of mine, had strayed from his home. For a week he had been gone, and I, standing at a window, thought of him, and watched the last blood-red glow of the sun. I looked again and again at the fire-ball, and out upon the world through the red mist my eyes retained. I saw the woods beyond as trees of flame; and the stream, a bloody river and above were great purple birds darting and circling as though it were the play of blood-washed sabres. I was so impressed by this notion that I determined to examine them closer.

I left the house and followed the path until I came out upon the river bank. An extraordinary odour assailed me. I drank it in ecstasy. But once again in my life was I to experience so exquisite a moment.

The birds above circled against the now leaden clouds with an extraordinary majesty.

Again my senses stirred with an ineffable longing as that odour at once bland and thrilling was borne to me. The vibrating stillness of a forest folded about me. I was confused, bewildered. Instinctively I followed the scent. I walked blindly, with hardly a sense of motion.

And at last I came upon it—the secret of my ecstasy.

There, at my feet, in that little secret hollow where we had last played together, lay the scarred and mutilated body of my little friend.

Child though I was, I had no terror. I can hear again my own soft cries of ecstasy. I knelt down—I threw myself upon him—I fondled him, calling him by endearing names. In my bliss I got up and danced, and I had what could only have been a Bacchic vision. I seemed to be treading upon great clusters of purple grapes, so that they gave out wine. The heavy blood-red juice dripped from my dancing feet. . . .

I have no clear recollection of what followed. I was found, I and my little companion. I tried to speak of my joy, but they stopped me and called a physician, believing that my brain had been turned by terror of the night and my discovery. And indeed the excitement had produced a dull fever and I lay for many weeks with no great wish to be up again and about, so sweet were my dreams by day and by night.

In the upheaval of adolescence came the inevitable awakening to beauty. Unstable, wearying in my unknown desires. I still had the most subtly diffused and exotic tremors as memory revived the sensations of that night. I lived from that time with but one purpose—to experience again the full joy of possessing some loved creature, made perfect by Nature's last exquisite function.

To will perfectly is to create the desired!

At twenty-five my reputation was being established. I and my writings were denounced. “Bizarre, neurotic, macabre,” were the mildest of the epithets hurled at me by the eternal public that condemns.

I was living in seclusion, and so might have continued, if I had not been called to assist in settling an estate for a woman who had been my father's ward.

She was not obviously attractive; indeed, in appearance she was curiously *baroque*. At once beautiful, and trivial: fantastic and commonplace: weird and laughable: no one, in reality, more innocuous, more normal could have been found, and that with an appearance equivocal, monstrous! Her eyes were dark, opaque, unwinking in their gaze, and with a dull lustre like those of the dead: they were large, menacing, watchful: they never lightened, though her laughter, which was innocent and child-like, gave them an expression of sly lewdness. Nothing could have been more provocative to a man of my temperament. Her startlingly beautiful hair was like copper, giving to her face a delicate greenish pallor. Her mouth was chaste, wistful, exquisite: she stammered a little.

To look into those lustreless, evil eyes and to watch that quivering mouth, half trembling to a laugh, struggling toward heaven only knew what foulness of utterance—and then to hear some childish platitude, stammered—made me shiver with ecstatic and terrible laughter.

What a creature! At this moment as I write, after all these years, I quiver and throb with excitement at the vision of her.

She was so frail, so exquisite, her body swayed so lightly when she walked, and she had a way, a little gesture all her own, of holding her slender hands before her, *groping*, as it were, through the most brilliant sun: as though, being dead, with tenuous pathetic fingers she parted the crowding ghosts.

Then those implacable, baleful eyes, that morbid pallor, as though she had been formed of the corruption of dead bodies—that suggestion of depravity, that delicious intimation of perverted instincts. To will perfectly, is indeed to create the desired! She was my creation, my manifest thought, the perfect tribute to my genius!

I took her home. She had few wants as far as I could judge; I knew very little about her. I believe she was unhappy. I have some idea that her impulses and desires were quite normal. I was incapable of interest in such matters.

My work occupied a certain amount of my time morning and afternoon, but it was my pleasure to have her with me during the long evenings. It was our custom to sit late over the fire, with little light in the room.

I gloated over her, I devoured her. She spoke rarely, but my prolonged surveys must have troubled her; she was intimidated, as are animals under like provocation; occasionally she wept, and wrung her hands, the lids half dropped over those malevolent eyes.

These exquisite moments were, as Fate willed it, so rare as to be numbered, for blindness, the incipient secret of her strange eyes, fell upon her. From that time she became more passive, pliant without a murmur to my will, but unavoidably less interesting. The unreal, the ideal, the potential, are the artist's medium. Had she been as lewd, as corrupt, as her eyes promised, she would have bored me to extinction; and equally, to be forced to realise that her enigmatical, suggested vice and perversion, was but the result of a defect of vision—! Her groping gestures, having now their obvious cause, ceased to delight me with their pathos,—and her health, now that blindness had actually come upon her, seemed to improve; her pallor gave way to a delicate flush—but tinted flesh had never any charm for me.

For several weeks I worked quietly and alone, but the habit I had formed of having her near me in the evening, troubled me, and in the end I sent for her. She came reluctantly. I said, "We are alone." She gave a cry, a soft wail, and groped for some way of escape.

If she had gained colour, now, with her terror, she was pale enough to excite me to a very frenzy of my peculiar lust.

She crouched, whimpering like a hurt animal, against the wall.

Her little cries—when I think of her little cries—!

In the morning she was gone, she had disappeared like a wraith, without sound, slipped off, wandered away, nobody knew what had become of her. We made what effort we could to trace her, but what can one do in the heart of barren country? My man dragged the little pond, his old wife wandered through the wood, weeping and calling for her. With me they were surly and fearful. I also searched.

Three days passed, and in the evening, just at sunset, I found her.

I had been walking at the foot of the garden, watching the red glow of the sunset; the fields stretched before me as though bathed in blood; above me were blood-red clouds. My eyes were arrested by the glory of the light reflected in the window of the turret room—the great pane of glass glowed like molten metal. I felt impelled to go up, to gaze out upon the sun-flooded world from that high point

It was there that I found her.

Wounded, as he had been—the little boy of whom I have spoken. I do not know how it had happened. She may have had a lover. As I have said, I knew very little of her. She was gentle, clinging, and could have been easily murdered.

FINIS.

CONDEMNED TO DIE.

"Nobody will believe me—nobody—nobody—and yet I am telling the truth. How strange that one should be telling the truth and yet not be believed. How can that happen? I ask God how that can happen. To-morrow I am to die—and I am young—I am young. It was the first night of our marriage. How did it happen? I tell you it was the devil's work. Has the devil conquered God?"

She is dead—but there would have been another maybe. How can I die—I ask you how can I die to-morrow?

It happened so.

She was a big girl, strong, with a way of holding her head like a colt not yet broken. She was all brown and red, and I loved her. And yet, there came times when I would draw back from her with foreboding, and she was like a great lady.

At the marriage, she was confused, and strange, and distraught. And at the supper, she would touch nothing.

It was about three hours before the dawn when the guests left us. We stood a moment at the door, and heard the leaves stir, and the faint sleepy twittings of the birds.

Then a wind moaned above the roof and she clung to me frightened while I dropped the bar.

She softened. Then of a sudden she gave a cry, and beat on the air with her hands. I turned, but there was nothing. And when I turned again, my girl had gone, she looked like a lady born! She seemed grown taller. She had her heard thrown back and lifted like a queen.

And then she spoke—and her voice like ice. She said:

"She shall die, sooner than that I shall have no body."

And with that commenced a struggle, such as no other human eyes have known. For her hands, my girl's strong hands, seized upon her throat, her thumbs upon the windpipe.

And I stared, dazed, till it came to me that my

girl was being strangled, and that *not by herself*. Then for one moment came my girl's face, and she cried:

"Oh, save me, save me!"

I sprang to her, and we swayed back and forth, and struggled, I striving to unloose her hands. And always the face changing swiftly—my girl, then not my girl, till I grew mad with horror, and caught out my knife to strike at those strangling fingers. And the sight of the blood sickened me—and the thing became a nightmare. I could only pray: "God, wake me from my dream!"

And her face, when it came, was all terror, like a child's: and the other was malignant fury.

And at the back of my mind, quite clear and sharp, I was saying: "What a pity!" for all this time we were crushing and breaking those little things that we had bought together in such gay humour; and there was one, a pitcher, that smashed and lay like a flower, pink with white edges, and my mind said: "What a pity!" And that was strange.

So we struggled, hours, or minutes maybe, till her clothing was torn from her. But what was human frailty against the strength of devils!

And the end came, and my girl's face was blackened, and the blood all trickling down from her fingers where my knife had cut.

And that demon spoke again, looking hate out of my girl's eyes at me: "I have conquered and—I die," she said.

And then it was my girl again, and she sobbed, "Take me!" like a tired child, and died.

I beg you, make the judges say, *how the marks came so upon her throat.*"

A LETTER.

Thérèse, my very dear one,

At last I write you a letter. You have been patient.

That I should so repay your patience!

But hear me.

It is now six months since I saw you. I have not recovered. Indeed my malady strikes deeper!

We should now have been two months married. Thérèse, my beautiful, no human creature could have drawn me from you.

I am haunted.

What can be done for me?

I have always another about me. Another who wails and weeps continually. This other is a woman, a great blob of sensitive fibre. Yet why do I revile her, I love her, I have possessed her.

You say, "but she has no existence." She has not, but I have possessed her soul: daily, I ravish her spirit. With exquisite anguish we flame together, till I am like molten stuff, like molten pain. I cannot describe it.

Once I went everywhere, did all things. I was young, I was healthy. You will forgive me, you know of old, my horror of disease, my pride that I was healthy. Now, under this strain, the head grows weary, and I suffer from ill-health.

You will say, "go out, go again among people, diversion is good for you." But I cannot, I must protect her.

You must understand, she has no existence apart from me. I am like a tree with two great branches. From the waist up I am double. She is contained in me: I am built about her, as though one ring were encased in another. So, when I sit at my desk, she may throw herself forward, arms outstretched, head bowed, weeping. Then I can see her dimly.

It is grotesque, and hideous—and beautiful.

You must understand, she suffers continually, a very nightmare of pain, and I suffer with her. She has—how am I to make it plain to you—she *sees clearly*. She has no safeguard of convention and tradition. All the horrors of lust and disease she feels and knows.

Think, my Thérèse, you who have been shielded

and protected by ignorance, by fraud, by tradition, think what it must mean to see clearly the world as it is.

Looking back, I know it was a year ago that I first realised her. You remember, how I changed suddenly from gaiety and light living and became the sullen, morose, unhappy fellow that I am. I did not know then that she existed, but only that I could go nowhere without seeing misery. I saw victims, victims, victims, of lust, of brutality, of self-seeking. All my friends became different: you alone, my dear, were unchanged. Tortured, maimed animals were about my feet: I wandered in strange parts of the city without volition: I stood in brothels where children were the victims.

I went to old haunts of my own pleasure. All was changed. Where, where, where were the lights, the gay women, the *flair*, the *panache*, of the half-world? Where, in that muck of brutal, sordid living, that cesspool of cadaverous vice, was the thread of beauty, the Rabelaisian good humour that we have been taught existed?

Wherever I turned, blighted children, sickly midgets, blind, lame, imbecile, shrieked "Lust!" at me.

The social system became suddenly vivid, important to me: and I writhed in my bed in the dim mornings, while a great army of miners, factory women, labourers, mechanics filed past me uttering moans and cries of anguish.

I decided upon suicide.

You remember, when I left you six months ago? When I raised the pistol, I felt—I saw—but how shall I tell you, for it is neither feeling nor seeing—I was conscious of an exquisite, sorrowful face, all the pain of the world incarnate. Quivering, pathetic fingers arrested my action, lips sought mine unsteadily, the lower lip caught in as though with the breath of a sob. All this I got vividly, and with a great sense of relief. The unknown that had haunted me was, at last, known and living. The lips met my own.

Thérèse, my dear one, I tell you there are a thousand exquisite sensations, subtle and strong, that we with our coarse grain do not comprehend. Our love, our lust, are but the beginning of what the future will know.

When I think of the grotesque clumsiness of our endeavours toward pleasure and sensation, compared to the darting, flickering, biting flame of my new medium, I look upon man as but little advanced beyond the animal, for all of his boasted "progress and civilisation."

What colossal stupidity, what monstrous duplicity, has reduced us to this?

Through her eyes I see things, I see how all our beautiful instincts have been distorted by treason, by those great lies of the brute world to betray us. The great warring of the brute-world and of consciousness is always about us.

I could not endure my impatience and horror were it not for her kisses, her union with me, her beauty beyond beauty to stay me.

To see things as they are—

What devastation!

She has shown me cruelty, that delicate poignard of the Earth-mother, become brutality, a thing that maims, bruises, and shatters, without beauty.

She is complete Pain and perfect Beauty. But I am not strong enough to bear it.

She suffers too much. It is through my eyes that she sees. I shall blind myself to save her. I shall have her kisses and memory to drag through the years with.

I shall sign this in my blindness to show that I am recovered.

My great love to you.

You will have understood. . . .

FRANCES GREGG.