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FANTASTIC

Novels

MAGAZINE

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No. 4

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THE LIVING PORTRAIT



By
**Tod
Robbins**

The dread desire he had never acknowledged looked out at him from that tormenting canvas—taunting him with the bloody deed it meant to do . . . and the face of the killer was his own!

I AM not insane! You doctors who wag your pointed beards over me, you specialists who attempt to analyze my brain in all its separate cells, you nurses and keepers who buzz about me continually like summer flies, have you no pity for a man robbed of everything which can make life dear—a man unjustly accused of homicidal mania—a man forcibly deprived of the sovereign rights which accompany intelligence?

You have incarcerated me in this beehive of insanity because the scope of human imagination cannot embrace an

unusual chain of events. Like Christ, I find myself abused because I am neither understood nor believed. Very well—but I shall snarl a bit.

May I ask, learned doctors, in what way your combined intelligences overshadow my single mind? You who follow in dead men's footsteps; you, the apprentices of a profession which it has been my lot to advance into a yet unexplored wilderness; you, pitiful practitioners of a knowledge handed down to you between the covers of countless books, dare to put your hands upon me and lead me to this dungeon!



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"What happened then was photographed on my brain for all time. . . ."

Like *Gulliver*, I am at the mercy of Lilliputian minds!

But if I could once escape from here, if I could once break down the barrier which you have so carefully erected, what then, learned doctors?

There are elements in the sea and air as yet unknown to science. I have the key which unlocks the arsenal of the heavens. Did you think, when the Purple Veil lies ready to my hand, that I would strike with a poniard?

If so, you little guessed your man—if so, you did rightly by confining me in this place. It is written that one's acts cannot exceed one's intelligence.

And yet it is not with your stupidity that I quarrel—it is rather with the teaspoonful of knowledge which you have absorbed and which has made you incapable of understanding the slightest truth not written on a printed page. You smile—wagging your beards at me, you smile.

But will you smile at my translucent child, the Purple Veil? I doubt it very much, my genial friends.

But I must not wander. Even though the moon has pressed her soft, leprous face against my barred window, I must not wander.

And yet what a strange power rests behind those haggard, sightless eyes! With them she beckons from us our calm, collected thoughts. Like a mother she bends over us—a sad, shy mother who dares visit her children only at night.

She had stolen into the nursery to see us play. Now she is shaking her black, tangled locks over the world. They trail out behind her; and, afar off, through their moving blackness, tiny trembling disks of light appear.

She, our mother, has plundered the infinite. Like a mad queen she steals to my window, her diadem of precious stones caught and dangling from the intertangled meshes of her hair.

"Play!" she commands with a wide, toothless smile. "Play!"

But I will not play—not tonight. Even *she* shall not dominate my mind. It is necessary that I first give to the world a clear, collected account of the strange chain of events which has drawn me hither—a narrative which shall prove to unborn generations that Gustave Ericson was a victim to the stupidity of his age rather than to the slow inroads of egomania.

After that, if she is still there and still smiling—well, perhaps—

CHAPTER I

TWO DISCOVERIES

I WAS not born to battle for existence. My father had amassed a considerable fortune before I came into the world. He was a large obese man with round, protruding eyes which gave his florid face a look of perpetual astonishment.

He never understood me and it tickled the ribs of my humor to set his slow mind revolving on the axis of a new idea. At these times he would regard me with an air of amazement and pique—the air, in fact of a hen that has inadvertently hatched a duck's egg with brain-numbing results. Undoubtedly I was the cause of much mental worry to the poor old man.

It is not my purpose to bore you with a long dissertation on my boyhood. Suffice it to say that even at that time I had an instinctive love for chemistry. Soon I fitted up a room in the house as a miniature laboratory, and with a school friend, Paul Grey, experienced the various vicissitudes common to most youthful exponents of science.

What soul-stirring odors permeated the atmosphere of that house! What ear-jarring explosions rattled the window-panes!

Daily the expression of rapt astonishment on my father's face deepened. I was at last breaking through the barrier of his mercantile calm; I was proving the fact that life is precious only because it is precarious.

Paul Grey, even in his teens, gave promise of some day making his mark in the world. He was my direct opposite in every physical and mental attribute.

Excessively blond, with pale-blue eyes and the girlish trick of turning fiery-red at any emotional crisis, he fluttered about our laboratory like a pigeon swooping after each stray crumb of knowledge, while I, with my swarthy skin and unmanageable tangle of blue-black hair, followed as sedately as a crow.

And yet, although he was far quicker, he lacked the depth of insight which makes toward originality of thought. It was *I* who unearthed hidden knowledge in later years; it was *he* who put it to an immediate practical use.

I was very attached to Paul—I am still attached to his memory despite his colossal theft of my discovery. You smile incredulously, but it is a fact, I assure you.

One could not cherish a lasting hatred for such a sunny personality.

Even a thief is forgiven, if he can amuse.

We grew up together like two brothers, united by the chain of a common interest. At school and college we were inseparable. I shared the burden of his wild escapades; he dispelled the gloom of my rather melancholy temperament. He was sunshine; I, shadow.

We were as united as day and night, as moonshine and madness, as sorrow and joy. Then one day the old, old story—a woman came between us.

Only a month ago Evelyn testified at my trial. As she stood in the witness-box I looked at her quite calmly. There was no feverish throbbing of the senses, no wild beating of the heart, no feeling of sadness or of joy.

On the contrary, this slender figure in black conjured up nothing but a kind of dull resentment. "What a tiny speck of dust," I thought, "to slow down the wheel of Progress!"

And suddenly this inconsequential doll in her widow's weeds, this female straw whom I had loved, lost all semblance to humanity and became a meaningless automaton—an automaton created by my attorney to squeak out on the silent air one mechanical phrase:

"He is insane—he is insane—he is insane!"

Ah, no, waxen puppet, Gustave Ericson is not insane! Squeak on till the end of time that lying phrase and still it will find no echo of the truth.

Many years ago, perhaps, there were chords of moonlight in my brain which you could play upon, intertangled threads of wild emotion which throbbled at your slightest touch—but now I am reason itself enthroned, silent and smiling, as impervious to that small, petty passion as is the mountain-peak to the fretful, flickering lightning.

I do not attempt to justify my youthful infatuation. Evelyn Lawrence, as I saw her in the court-room—her eyes red from weeping, her dark hair prematurely streaked with gray—makes that impossible.

But there was a time, not so many years ago, when she possessed a certain languid charm which one associates with a warm summer afternoon spent in the country. She was the kind of woman toward whom an overworked man naturally turns with thoughts of rest.

I remember distinctly how I chanced to meet her. It was two years after my graduation from college. Paul and I had

been working steadily in the laboratory for upward of a month.

I was at that time on the point of discovering Zodium, the life-giving chemical which was afterward to revolutionize medicine. We were both worn out and plunged into a fit of depression. We had gone far, but still success trembled in the balance.

Suddenly Paul, with a muttered imprecation, flung himself on the leather couch in one corner. Spots of color flamed up in his cheeks, and he began to pluck at his lower lip—a sure sign that he was out of sorts with the world.

"What's the matter?" I asked, looking up from the test-tube which I was heating over an electric burner.

Paul's blue eyes wandered to the window. "It's hell to be cooped up in here day after day!" he murmured. "I've grown to feel like a rundown machine. Let's chuck it and get out into the air."

"But there's our experiment," I expostulated. "We may find the secret any day now."

"That's what you've been saying for the last week!" he cried impatiently. "Let Zodium wait a while. My aunt's having some sort of an affair over the weekend. Let's go!"

"Who'll be there?"

"Oh, there'll be the Turners and a cousin of theirs—Evelyn Lawrence, I believe her name it. She's quite a beauty, Aunt Grace tells me."

I snorted contemptuously. Here we were on the brink of one of the most noteworthy discoveries of the age, and Paul was yapping about house-parties and pretty girls!

As fond as I was of him, I was never quite reconciled to this frivolous strain in his nature—a strain that kept popping up at the most inopportune moments, interfering with hard, conscientious work toward the furthering of science. And yet it was necessary to humor him on these occasions—otherwise he would sulk for days and be of no use in the laboratory.

"Well, if *you* go on a strike, I suppose the shop must close up!" I said regretfully. "But it seems a shame when—"

He cut me short with the gleeful shout of a released school boy.

"Now you're talking!" he cried. "Get your things together and we'll be off in two shakes! And, remember, not a word about chemistry until after Sunday."

The upshot of the affair was that I spent the weekend out of town and met Evelyn Lawrence. I can only explain the emotional

crisis I passed through by the fact that I was in an exhausted mental condition, and that the girl's languid atmosphere soothed my tingling nerves like a sleeping draft.

Certainly love at first sight is a ridiculous hypothesis to be entertained for an instant by the scientific mind. And yet on the evening of the second day—as we drifted lazily along on the smooth, moonlit waters of Lake Deerfoot in one of Miss Grey's canoes, seemingly as far distant from the noisy frivolous world as the small, remote stars—I had all I could do to refrain from voicing an ardent protestation of an enduring love.

What a fool! Even then the moon exerted an undue influence over me.

ON the following day I regained a measure of common sense. Here I was wasting the precious moments when I might be at work in my laboratory.

If I happened to be in love—well, even love must wait its turn on science. After I had completed my discovery, why, then, it would be time enough to analyze my emotions toward the girl.

I pointed out to Paul that our holiday was over. He seemed very loath to leave the country.

Finally he said that he would follow me into town later in the day, but that no consideration could move him to travel on such a warm morning. I had to content myself with his promise, and, after saying my farewells to Evelyn and Miss Grey, caught the ten-thirty for town.

I have always prided myself on an ability to banish everything from my mind but the work at hand. Perfect concentration is the ladder by which man may ascend to unknown heights.

And yet, on returning home, I had great difficulty in fixing my attention on Zodium. For the first hour or so in the laboratory Evelyn Lawrence's face hung like a brilliant, languid moon over my mental horizon, drawing my thoughts away from the hunt for unknown knowledge. I broke fully three test-tubes and scalded my hand severely before I regained my usual mental equilibrium.

Paul, in spite of his promise, failed to put in an appearance during the afternoon. I did not see him for the entire week—in fact not until after I had made the final, triumphant experiment which gave Zodium to the world.

By an acute chain of reasoning I had succeeded in discovering the essential with-

out him, and was actually holding a vial of the precious amber-colored liquid in my hand when he made a rather shameful appearance in the doorway of the laboratory.

At the moment I was so flushed with success that I greeted him with no shade of reproach in my tone.

"Let me introduce you to Zodium, Paul!" I cried, leaping to my feet and advancing toward him. "At last the secret is ours!"

His face, which had worn a ruefully penitent expression, flushed on a sudden to a deep red. He advanced a step and examined the contents of the vial which I held out for his inspection.

"You don't say!" he muttered. "So you got it, after all!" His eyes avoided mine and wandered to the window. "Well, now you've discovered it," he said almost belligerently, "of what practical use is it?"

"Of what practical use?" I cried. "Why, you talk like a grocer, Paul! How should I know as yet? But undoubtedly it will be invaluable for medical purposes."

"Perhaps," he muttered. "That remains to be seen. But tell me how you happened to hit upon it."

When one has worked unremittingly to the successful conclusion of a problem—worked both day and night, as I had done—one often finds recompense for one's labor by explaining the solution to an enthusiastic, comprehending listener.

So it was in my case. It was a pleasure to unburden my mind to Paul. I even went so far as to repeat with equally good results my triumphant experiment.

"You see how near we were to the solution last week," I finished. "If you hadn't insisted on taking a holiday it might have been you who discovered Zodium."

He laughed a trifle bitterly.

"You deserve all the credit, Gustave. It was your idea, in the first place. But I made a discovery this week which puts Zodium in the shade."

"You did? Why, I didn't know you were working this week. What is it?"

I had an uncomfortable feeling that Paul had stolen a march on me.

"You wouldn't call it work, exactly," he answered with one of his vivid flushes. "My discovery is simply this: I am in love!"

In spite of myself a feeling of relief permeated me. So it was just another one of his silly sentimental affairs and no startling chemical discovery which might overshadow Zodium.

Paul, in spite of his brilliancy, was as susceptible to Cupid's darts as any school

girl. A lack of constancy alone had pulled him up short on the very brink of matrimony at least a score of times.

"Who's the lucky girl now?" I asked indulgently.

"Mrs. Paul Grey."

"Mrs. Paul Grey?" I repeated, aghast. "You don't mean to tell me that you're married?"

"Just that," he said simply.

"But after that affair with Laura La Rue, I thought—"

He cut me short impatiently.

"That was just moonshine and nonsense. This is an entirely different thing. Evelyn Lawrence is a girl any man would be proud of winning.

"We loved each other from the first day. What was the use of waiting? We were married this morning before a magistrate."

"Evelyn Lawrence!" I muttered. "You married *her*, Paul?"

Suddenly all the air seemed to have been pumped out of the room. It became difficult to breathe. He had been right—this discovery of his had completely overshadowed Zodium.

"To be sure Evelyn Lawrence," he continued joyously. "You remember her, don't you?"

And then I could not refrain from smiling. Remember her? Good God, I should always do that—always! And this red-faced fool had dared to ask me. Gustave Ericson, if I—

But I must be quite calm, smiling, cheerful. He must never know that he had blundered unpardonably into the web of my attachment. While I had been working like a slave for science, he, the shirker, the woman-seeker, had slipped out and stolen my life's happiness!

Very well—but some day he should answer for that! Now it was necessary that no shadow of the truth should fall between us.

Rising, I grasped his hand.

"My heartiest congratulations, Paul!" I cried. "She is indeed a prize well worth winning!"

How much longer we talked I do not know. I was like a man coming out of an opiate to the presence of feverish pain. And everything I said did not seem to come from myself but rather from a talking-machine which had suddenly been placed in my breast, wound, and started; and everything he said fell on my eardrums like the relentless beating of tiny steel hammers. *Tip tap! tip tap!* his words sounded, driving in painful thoughts

which were as searing as red-hot nails.

And all the time the vial of Zodium grinned at me from the table like a tiny misshapen Judas.

THERE is no medicine in all nature's apothecary shop so potent, so soothing as the slow-falling sands of time. They cover up in due course the painful bleeding wounds of yesterday; and when we attempt to retrace our steps into that by-gone era, when we attempt to portray the agonies which once seemed so real to us, we stumble over the mounds of buried feeling like strangers in an unknown graveyard.

My infatuation for Evelyn was real enough at the time—so real indeed that it caused me unparalleled agony to think of her as another man's wife.

Even my sincere affection for Paul failed to lessen the weight of the blow. Realizing that I could no longer put my mind on science, I closed up the laboratory and left the city.

For several months I traveled aimlessly from place to place, driven on by a restless energy to be moving. Gradually peace began to settle over my tormented mind.

And then, a year after Paul's marriage—just as I had begun to take a brighter view of life—I met the man who was unconsciously to play such an important part in future events.

At the time I was living at a small hotel in one of those picturesque little towns to be found in Virginia. I was in the third week of my stay when a young man stepped up to where I was sitting on the veranda and accosted me.

"You have a most interesting face," he said without any preamble. "I would like to paint your portrait."

Naturally I was rather taken aback by his bluntness. However, I had already learned never to take offense at an artist. One might as well grow angry at a hummingbird. It is a waste of energy.

Besides, there was a pleasing frankness in this young man's manner which was very attractive. He stood with his legs wide apart, cocking his head at me as though I were some strange specimen under a microscope.

"You flatter me!" I said with a half-smile. "But may I ask why you find my face of interest?"

Before he answered he scrutinized me with a pair of very keen eyes. In spite of his immaculate flannels, pink cheeks, and youthfully egotistical mustache, there was

something of the wolf about this young man. He had the air of one sniffing at the heels of vanishing Truth.

"Before I tell you that," said he, "I wish you would visit my studio. I'm sure I could explain everything more easily there.

"An artist can only be natural when he is surrounded by the works of his art. Can I presume upon your good nature to the extent of enticing you up three flights of stairs?"

I rose to my feet willingly enough. The boredom which so often accompanies loneliness had weighed down my spirits of late. Perhaps the company of this ingenious young man would prove amusing.

"I must warn you beforehand that I know nothing about art!" I told him as we entered the hotel together.

"No matter," he rejoined lightly. "You yourself—if you will pardon my frankness—are a work of art, a walking portrait of an advanced passion.

"There is a look in your eyes at times—a certain twist to your lips that— But, no matter, I will explain later."

As we mounted to his room he told me that he was the famous portrait painter, Anthony Worthington, of New York, and that his doctor had ordered him to take a protracted rest in the country. He had already been away from town for nearly two months, and during that time had not done a single stroke of work.

"I'm fairly itching to get back at it," he continued. "And when I saw your face at breakfast this morning I knew that the moment had come."

Anthony Worthington had secured the largest and brightest room in the hotel. It had two long French windows, through which the sunlight streamed, lighting every corner and illumining several dark portraits on the wall.

The whole place had absorbed the personality of its occupant. It was indisputably the abode of a painter.

"Is this some of your work?" I asked, stepping up to the wall and examining the portrait of a bull-necked individual with a jaw which jutted out like the prow of a battleship.

"Yes," he answered, offering me a cigarette and lighting one himself. "That's Bill Sands. I painted him a week before he was arrested for murder.

"You may remember the case. He killed his father and robbed him of a cheap watch. The most primitive type. But still we must have a beginning."

"Am I to understand that you are in-

terested in portraying criminal types?"

"Murderers!" he replied simply. "It's my life's work! We all have our hobbies, we artists. Some of us paint cows, sheep, geese—even pigs.

"But give me murderers every time. I've painted dozens of them in the last five years."

"But isn't it rather difficult to find sitters?" I asked.

"Not at all," he told me. "Any city is loaded with murderers. Walk a block and you'll meet ten.

"Most of them are of the primitive type like Bill here and of course nearly all of them are in the embryonic state. These remain out of jail merely because the peculiar twist in their characters has never been properly developed."

"This poor young man is mentally deranged." I thought to myself. "What a shame it is that so many artists live on the borderland of reason!" Aloud I said:

"But I suppose in time they all succumb to their natural tendencies?"

"Not necessarily," he answered lightly. "On the contrary, very few attain a full mental growth. Perhaps the natural fear of the consequences holds them in check, or perhaps the psychological moment never enters their lives."

I began to feel a strange interest in this crack-brained artist's theory. He stated his opinion with such evident sincerity that I knew well enough that he was not joking.

Could there be any truth in such a bizarre belief? If so, it would cause timid folk like my father no end of worry—timid folk who had amassed large fortunes and whose progeny would be benefited by an early demise.

"And some of these embryonic murderers go through life never guessing the truth about themselves?" I suggested.

"Just so, said he. "It often takes war to wake them up. A great international conflict serves as a mammoth incubator for all the vices. It hatches out some strange chicks, my friend—some very strange chicks."

He paused for a moment, and I caught the glint of his sharp, gray eyes as he turned toward the window.

"A fair light," he murmured. "If you would oblige—"

"You want me to sit for you?" I asked. "I am then one of these embryonic murderers?"

I had spoken facetiously and was scarcely prepared for his answer.

When he said, "Out of your own mouth you have spoken it," I started involuntarily.

"But not at all like Bill," he went on encouragingly. "You're of a very uncommon type. Just glance at that other portrait near the window."

TO humor him, I did as he told me. I saw a strikingly handsome face, lean dark, esthetic—a face with haunting eyes and drooping, crimson lips—a face which one felt instinctively to be quite soulless quite malign

Like an assassin's mask, time had carefully carved it out of ivory to conceal the grimaces of the soul. And yet, through the slanting eyelids, death looked out at the world; and behind those languid crimson lips, one sensed the cruel white fangs.

"That," Anthony Worthington continued, "is Burgess Corell. He murdered his wife by mental suggestion. He forced her to commit suicide

"The law could never touch him. That is the face of an advanced type of murderer, just as Bill's is the primitive type. Together they represent crime's ultimates."

I turned from the portrait with an involuntary shudder. The atmosphere of this mad artist had got on my nerves. Of course, what he had said about me was ridiculous.

And yet there had been a time, a year ago now, when Paul had stood in my laboratory and told me that—

What nonsense! Of course I had been hurt and angry. What man would not? But I had long since reconciled myself to my loss. I could now view the affair with a philosophic calm. All my affection for Paul had returned.

"Do these murderers whom you paint confess their crimes to you?" I asked.

"Very often," my host answered genially. "It's embarrassing. Murderers are inclined to be too communicative, in anything.

"They're all great egotists at heart. Many a confession has been made because the guilty man thought the story too good to keep all to himself."

"To be the confidant of a murderer I should think would be a trifle dangerous. They might repent of their loquacity at leisure."

Anthony Worthington smiled pleasantly

"You're right," he said. "It is dangerous. After a few unpleasant experiences, I always put wads of cotton in my ears and made sure that my models saw me do it.

Now, if you'll be kind enough to sit in that chair by the window, I'll get to work."

"You think that my face really deserves your attention?" I asked as I seated myself.

"It stirs me!" he cried enthusiastically. "You have a remarkable expression. Turn your head a trifle to the right, please. The chin a little higher. Ah, that's it! Splendid! Splendid!"

He began to take aim at me with a piece of charcoal.

And I, in spite of my great sanity, once more experienced an involuntary tremor. At first this young man's silly pretense had amused me. I had looked on him as a crack-brained child and had humored him accordingly.

But the portrait of Burgess Corell had unaccountably affected me. For an instant it had seemed that I was looking into a distorted mirror at my own face.

There was something about the tilt of the chin, something in the curve of the lips and the lifted eyebrows, which resembled the Gustave Ericson I met each morning in the shaving-mirror. It was just a coincidence, of course, but then—

Anthony Worthington's voice broke in on my thoughts. He stood before his easel, making quick, definite strokes, and while he worked, he talked coherently.

"We all have two faces," he was saying. "Men go about in masks. It is the art of the portrait-painter to unmask humanity. He must see more than the surface values; he must get a glimpse of the soul, or he is merely a photographer

"It is difficult in some cases; and especially difficult with you. Now, if you would kindly think of some special enemy of yours—some person whom you hate with all your soul."

"I have no enemies," I answered coldly. "I hate no one."

"Have you seen the morning paper?" he asked hopefully. "No? Well, there's a most interesting murder on the first page, and a rather vivid description of the details. Allow me."

He rose, and, picking up a copy of the *Sentinel*, presented it to me.

"Read it carefully," he pleaded. "It's the first column to the right. All about the murder of an old woman in Roanoke."

I smiled in spite of myself.

"I have no interest in such things," I assured him. "Well, if you insist." I took the paper and glanced at it. The next moment I had all I could do to stifle a cry of astonishment.

My eyes had become riveted upon an article to the left where he had pointed—an article which bore the heading:

**YOUNG SCIENTIST GIVES ZODIUM TO
THE WORLD**

I had great difficulty in holding the paper steady while I read the short paragraph.

One of the most interesting discoveries of modern times was recently made by the young chemist and scientist, Paul Grey. And he has put his discovery to an eminently practical use. Zodium, we have been told, is likely to revolutionize medicine. Dr. Madden, an eminent physician and specialist, prophesies that this drug will add at least ten years to the longevity of the race. It acts as a powerful stimulant on diseased and wornout organs, and is said to be a sure cure for hardening of the arteries.

For a moment the room seemed to be revolving slowly about me. Allowing the newspaper to slip to the floor, I seized the arms of the chair. And then a great wave of blood swam up into my head, burring my vision with a curtain of dancing purple.

So Paul had betrayed me! Not contented with robbing me of a wife, he had now robbed me of my discovery. Like a sneaking hound, he had waited till my back was turned before stretching out his plundering hands to my treasure.

And I had trusted him always! What a fool I had been! But now—Why, he would smart a bit. I would see to that. I would—"Hold it, hold it!" Anthony Worthington cried out. He was working like a madman.

"The very expression I wanted! Hold it, man—for God's sake, hold it! Hold it, and I will paint a portrait of you which shall be life itself—as true as your own soul!"

CHAPTER II

"I HAVE PAINTED YOUR SOUL"

TWO weeks after I learned of Paul's treachery, Anthony Worthington wrote his name on the canvas and stepped back with a sigh of content. My portrait was finished.

"Come and look at yourself," he called to me. "This is a sample of my very best work."

With no small amount of curiosity I

took my stand beside him and examined the painting. Up to this I had purposely refrained from looking at it.

It is unfair to judge a man's work until it is the finished product of its creator. The satisfying results often rest in the very last touch of the master's hand.

For some time I looked at this painted likeness of myself with amazement. This could not be I! This face, distorted by passion, with pinched nostrils and glaring eyes, was not the face which had so often looked reassuringly at me from the mirror.

Like Medusa's head, this horrible apparition froze me into dumb immobility. The painted figure seemed to be crouched there waiting but for the signal to spring forward to all its murderous length. And while thus waiting, the stored-up venom of the world was welling into cruel lines about the lips, glowing dully behind the starting eyeballs, writing its message to the world on the furrowed parchment of the forehead. Shuddering, I turned away.

"This is a portrait painted by a madman," I said aloud.

Anthony Worthington smiled.

"It is you," he answered. "I have painted your soul."

For an instant hot anger overmastered me. It took all my self-command to hold in check a wild desire to pick up one of the pallet-knives and cut into the shreds the painted lie.

What right had this crack-brained artist to so parody my emotions? I had been a fool to sit for him!

"It is a fine piece of work," he continued, rubbing his hands together gleefully. "If you don't want it, I'll hang it in my studio at home."

I was silent for several moments. It would never do to let him have this portrait. He might show it to his friends; he might even put it on exhibition or sell it.

In my mind's eye I could see a crowd of the curious surrounding this abomination and commenting on the model who was so very different. Such a portrait could well-nigh brand a man a felon. I had a shrinking shame that other eyes might see it.

No, that would never do. I would buy it and destroy it at my leisure.

Once more I looked long at the painting. It was necessary to humor the artist until I rescued it from his clutches.

After that? Well, after that I could destroy it in a thousand different ways.

"It improves on a second glance," I told him. "In fact, it isn't at all bad. You seem to have got the—er—"

"The hidden expression," he broke in impatiently. "This is your real face, my friend."

"To be sure," I said mildly, "to be sure. The hidden expression, that's what I meant. Now I want this portrait, Mr. Werthington. The price?"

"In your case, nothing. It was a positive joy to paint you. I would like to do another one of you."

"I am leaving for home tomorrow," I told him hastily. "Perhaps some other time."

"That's a shame," said he. "However, as you say, perhaps some other time. When I return to the city, I intend painting my conception of the Spanish Inquisition."

"You will be invaluable as a model. May I call on you?"

"Certainly," I lied. "And my portrait?"

"I'll have it crated up and sent to your address."

We parted with this understanding; and on the following afternoon I boarded the train for home. Strange to say, I had a feeling of unbounded relief as the wheels began to revolve.

It was as though I were escaping some imminent peril. Try as I would, I could not then account for this uncalled-for sensation.

On arriving home, I found my father greatly altered. During my absence, he had aged considerably.

His face, once as round and red as a harvest moon, had dwindled. Now it was as shriveled as a winter apple; and his large, protruding, brown eyes looked out of it with the hopeless expression of a sick animal.

Also his disposition had altered for the worse. He now evinced an impatience toward the petty little annoyances of everyday life which he would have blushed for at an earlier period.

He greeted me with an unpleasant allusion to my long absence which was galling in the extreme. It was all I could do to refrain from voicing my opinion of his churlishness.

"Well, now that you're home," he continued, "I hope you'll go into the office and be of some credit to me."

The mere thought of Gustave Ericson in an office made me smile. An eagle in a hencoop could not be any more incongruous.

"My dear father," I said patiently enough, "do you not realize that I am a scientist? My time is invaluable to the progress of the world. No business is im-

portant enough to absorb my mentality."

Now this truthful answer should have allenced him. But it did not silence him. On the contrary, it seemed to infuriate him.

The poor old man was such a mental dullard that he could not appreciate the gifts of his son. No doubt my words sounded to him like hollow boasting.

"A scientist!" he sneered. "What have you ever discovered? All you do is to make vile stinks in your laboratory."

"Now, if you were like Paul Grey, and really did something, I'd put up with it. If you had discovered Zodium, which is of practical use, why, then—"

Suddenly he paused, and his eyes seemed to fairly pop out at me. He had the look of one who beholds an unaccountable transformation.

"Why, what's the matter, Gustave? Aren't you well?"

"Certainly, Father. Do I look ill?"

"No, not now. A moment ago your face seemed to change. It must be my eyes."

He put his hand to his forehead with a weary gesture.

"I haven't been myself lately. What was I saying? Oh, yes! You must go into the office, Gustave. I'll not support you in idleness."

"Idleness!" I cried angrily. "Have you no conception of my life? I have worked very hard."

"Where are the results?" he asked in an aggravating tone.

I HAD opened my lips for a bitter reply when the tall figure of the butler appeared in the doorway, interrupting for a time the family quarrel.

"The express company just left a large box for you, Mr. Gustave," he said. "Where shall I put it, sir?"

Instantly the feeling of exhilaration which I had experienced since leaving Virginia vanished. It was as though an invisible weight had descended upon me.

I had a sensation of guilt—a sensation as though I were in immediate danger of being detected in some crime. If the butler had been a relentless policeman, and I a cowering felon, his words could not have caused me a greater shock.

Ridiculous as it now seems, beads of perspiration gathered on my forehead, and my knees began to tremble.

"You may put it in my laboratory, Tom," I said at length.

"Shall I take the crate off, sir?"

"No!" burst from me with such ve-

hence that my father and the butler both started involuntarily. "I'll open it myself!"

"Very well, sir," said Tom in a grieved tone. "I'll leave a hammer on the table."

"Why did you shout at Tom like that?" my father asked when the butler had gone. "That's no way to speak to servants, Gustave. I won't tolerate that kind of thing in *my* house."

"It won't happen again, Father."

I turned on my heel and strode into the laboratory, leaving the old man pacing up and down the room with the pompous air of one who has come off best in a battle of words.

Tom had obeyed me with rather more than his customary alacrity. I found a tall, crated package leaning up against one of the walls. Undoubtedly it was the portrait.

Picking up a hammer, I began to tear the laths free. They gave readily enough, coming out with the sharp, rasping sound of nails torn from wood; and, in a moment more, I lowered the paper-swathed portrait to the floor and began to unwrap it. Soon the painted apparition of myself glared up at me with all its blood-curdling ferocity.

While I had been at work, my nerves had been steady enough; but now, as I met the fixed regard of the portrait, I noted something which at the time I thought a foolish fancy. The figure in the gold frame seemed to writhe from side to side; as if in a death agony, its thin, red lips drew back from long, white fangs. Its breast rose and fell spasmodically and its malignant, narrow-lidded eyes rolled wildly, as though seeking some loophole of escape.

And then a strange hallucination possessed me. For an instant it seemed that we had struggled together, this painted creature and I; that we had had a fierce combat in this very room; that at last I had thrown it on its back and was holding it there.

Sweat poured down my face and my knees were trembling from fatigue; yet an overmastering hatred burned my veins like molten lava. I would destroy it forever. That was my only hope, my only salvation.

I would bring the hammer down on its leering face again and again till nothing was left but an unrecognizable pulp. Now for a straight blow and a strong blow. I raised the hammer aloft.

Suddenly a human hand grasped my

arm and a loud voice called out, "What are you doing, Gustave?"

Instantly the strange hallucination passed. I found myself on my feet, the hammer still gripped tightly in my hand.

My father stood near me, his face unnaturally white, and his eyes staring. He had raised one arm on a level with his head, as though to protect himself from a blow.

"What do you say?" I muttered hoarsely. The hammer slipped from my hand to the floor.

He lowered his arm, and his face became suffused with blood. He seemed to be in a towering rage.

"You must be insane!" he shouted. "I'll have no madman in this house! Whether you like it or not, I tell you that that painting does resemble you."

"Just a moment ago, when you lifted the hammer to strike me, your face was exactly like that."

"I lifted the hammer to strike you, Father?" I cried, dumfounded. "Why, I didn't know you were in the room!"

"You're lying or you're mad," he said. "I knew you had an abominable temper, but I didn't think—" He paused and shot a suspicious glance at the portrait.

"If I hadn't seen you in time, you'd have killed me, Gustave! I know it. I could see it in your face—it's in the face of your portrait now. Good God, what a son!"

He began sidling toward the door, his frightened eyes still fixed upon me.

"But I don't know what you're talking about!" I cried in desperation. "I was unpacking the portrait and didn't even know—"

"It's no use lying," he sneered. "I came in here and found you on your knees staring at that painting. Looking over your shoulder I said that I thought it was a very good likeness."

"At that you shouted out, 'You lie!' and, springing to your feet, attacked me with a hammer. I avoided your first blow, and then you came to your senses."

"A ridiculous story!" I shouted after him.

"Perhaps so," said he. "But if the facts were known, you'd get a term in prison. From now on we'll not live under the same roof. I think you'd better be off on your travels again tomorrow."

Once more he gave me a fearful look over his shoulder, and then, without another word, slammed the door in my face. Soon the sound of his shuffling footsteps died away.

SOMEONE has said, "Truth is stranger than fiction." Bear this well in mind as you peruse the chronicle of the startling events which befell me and do not deafen your ears to these unparalleled experiences because they seem unbelievable.

Once more I repeat, "I am sane, quite sane!" And as a proof of my sanity, I refer you triumphantly to Zodium and the Purple Veil. Which one of you, my readers, has given to the world such proofs of sound mentality as these?

On the night of our altercation, my father was stricken with a severe attack of paralysis. Perhaps the abnormal excitement under which he had been laboring brought it on prematurely. But, as I look back on the scene, as I weigh again on the scales of time his uncalled-for accusation, I exonerate myself from any shadow of blame.

Thus all my life I have been more sinned against than sinning.

It is terrifying to see a robust man stricken down in an instant—at one moment to see him strong, upright, master of his powers; at the next, a fallen tree-trunk, twisted, motionless, dumb.

An unseen ax has been at work for days, months, years—but we have noticed nothing till the fall. Who wields this ax so essence of our lives.

Who then is safe?

Even now the shadowy woodsman may have signaled us out in the waiting forest, even now he may be chopping through the essence of our lives. Who then is safe?

My father, once a virile, boisterous man, had become an inanimate, voiceless lump of humanity—an odd, waxen dummy which lay motionless in its large four-posted bed.

Only his eyes moved. In them had centered the spark of life. They followed the nurse, the doctor and myself about with feverish anxiety. And often, when my back was turned, I knew that they were still staring at me.

Although he had lost both the power of speech and the power of motion, in fact was as completely shut off from human intercourse as if he were already dead and buried, I knew by the expression in his eyes that he feared me and would continue to fear me up to the very end. If nothing else, fear dwelt behind those eyes.

How ridiculous, how laughably absurd! He should have been as immune from fear as a fallen tree is immune from the rising storm.

Suppose his ridiculous surmise had been correct, suppose I had once threatened him with physical violence, what then? Surely he was now quite safe from me. I could offer him nothing but a blessed relief.

A man of limited intelligence, he remained one to the very end.

I had a consultation with the family doctor shortly after my father's stroke. He offered no hopes of recovery, but seemed to think that his patient might retain this feeble spark of life for years. It was at that time I made the statement which was later to count so heavily against me at my trial. It was simply this: "It would be a work of kindness to put my father out of his misery."

Surely it was a very innocent and truthful remark. And yet how sinister it has been made to appear when repeated triumphantly by the prosecuting attorney!

For a time my father's illness caused me to forget the portrait. I had a thousand and one things to attend to. It was necessary that his business interests should be looked after. I was plunged into a whirlpool of commercial affairs.

Exactly two weeks after my home-coming, I entered the laboratory for the second time. It was evening and the room was bathed in blackness. Lighting the electric-lamp, I glanced about me.

Unconsciously my eyes sought the corner where my portrait had rested against the wall. It was no longer there.

An unaccountable tremor passed through me. I circled the room with my eyes apprehensively and at the next moment uttered an ejaculation of relief. Someone had hung the portrait above the fireplace.

Now it looked down at me with sneering, sardonic contempt—the look of a lifelong enemy who has suddenly obtained the upper hand. "I am here for all time," it seemed to be saying.

Instantly all my old hatred and repugnance for this painted abomination returned in full force. Seating myself opposite it, I repaid its baleful stare with all my mental strength, attempting to break its almost hypnotic influence.

And sitting thus, apparently in repose, but in reality tingling all over from an overmastering sensation of loathing and fear, I soon beheld a clarified vision of the truth. It was simply this:

Suddenly my painted likeness moved, its breast rose and fell, and its lips lengthened in a mocking smile. Then, nodding its head at me solemnly, reprovingly, it spoke.

Like dry, wind-swept leaves, its words came to me—leaves that halt for an instant only to rustle on again about our feet.

"Gustave Ericson, why do you deny me?"

And then it seemed to me that hot, angry speech tore my lips apart, that challenging words leaped forth like an army going out in battle array.

"I know what you want," I cried aloud. "But I will not obey you! How dare you claim to be my soul?—you with your murderous eyes and loathsome lips! I will do more than deny you—I will destroy you!"

"No man can destroy his own thoughts," the portrait murmured.

"You are not my thoughts," I answered. "You are but another's painted fancy of my thoughts."

Again the portrait smiled.

"Your father found me true. Do you not remember when you denied me first?"

An involuntary shudder passed through my frame.

"It was *you* then," I gasped, "who threatened him with a hammer?"

The portrait bowed and smiled. Placing one of its long, thin hands over its heart, it bowed and smiled.

"You or me, what can it matter?" it murmured politely. "In the eyes of the world, it will not matter."

"In the eyes of the world it will not matter," I replied dully. The portent of its words sounded a brazen alarm somewhere in my breast. God! how true that was. In the eyes of the world, it would not matter.

What it did, I must answer for. And if it could once escape from its golden prison, what might it not do?

I feared the look in its eyes, the crimson cruelty of its lips, the long, thin hands which seemed to vibrate with evil energy. I must destroy it now or never!

"You wish me to kill my father?" I said at length, glancing about furtively for some weapon to use against it.

"I demand that you kill your father," the portrait answered calmly. "We need his fortune to advance science. How can you hesitate?"

At that moment my wandering eyes encountered what they had been in search of—a bottle containing a powerful chemical which had gone into the making of Zodium. A few drops of this sprinkled on the canvas and I would be rid of my loathsome visitor for all time.

Rising, I took the bottle from the shelf and approached the portrait.

"You're right," I said in a reassuring

tone; "it is evidently my duty. But there are the means to be considered.

"Now, this chemical is deadly and leaves no telltale traces. If I gave him a drop in his sleeping-draft, he would never wake again."

The portrait's lips were once more contorted in an evil smile, and for an instant its eyes were covered with a gray film.

"Poison?" it muttered. "To be sure, *poison*. Let me see!"

By now I had reached the wall and stood directly beneath the portrait.

"Perhaps you are unfamiliar with this chemical," I murmured, uncorking the bottle deftly. "It is guaranteed to be efficacious—to remove all the stains from our lives. Here, take it in the face, you dog!"

The portrait made a protective movement with its thin, white hands. But it was too late. With the speed of lightning I had thrown the contents of the bottle straight into its leering eyes.

Now the fiery liquid was running down the canvas, burning and destroying everything in its path. I heard a choking cry, and then all was silence.

PICKING up a large sponge from the laboratory table, I began to pass it up and down the canvas till every square inch of paint was saturated with the liquid. Then I seated myself with a feeling of relief and watched the grizzly apparition decompose and fade away before my eyes.

Soon the canvas offered nothing but a bare expanse of withered white. My portrait was no more.

And now a great drowsiness descended on me like a soft, languorous sea of mist. The mental struggle through which I had passed left me weary in both body and mind.

Closing my eyes, I was soon wafted away to the land of dreams—dreams, gigantic and ponderous, under which the subconscious mind toiled wearily along up mountain-peaks and down deep declivities, on and on till the break of dawn.

And through these dreams, like the motif in music, as persistent and relentless as the voice of eternal alarm, rang these words in strange cadence: "What it does, I must answer for; what it does, I must answer for," till all the weird valleys of sleep took up the refrain and whispered it softly.

When I awoke, a sickly morning peered in at me through the trembling curtains. The room was still a ghostly battlefield for day and night.

In the corners, an army of shadows



When it saw her, the creature leaped to its feet and fled screaming.

lurked, dark-browed and sinister, crawling ever back before the spear-points of dawn. Suddenly the picture above my head was illumined, and I uttered a cry of horror.

Surely I could not have dreamed that I had destroyed the portrait! There was the empty bottle to prove that I had not dreamed. And yet the canvas no longer offered a bare, seamed expanse.

No, there was my abominable painted likeness glaring down at me with an added venom in its eyes! And, while before the crouching figure had seemed several paces in the background, now it appeared closer, as if it had made a long stride forward while I slept.

Rubbing my eyes, I stared at it. But no stare of mine could wipe it out. If the acid had failed, was there anything in the world which *could* wipe it out?

And the portrait seemed to answer silently with its eyes: "No man can destroy his own thoughts."

How long I sat confronting this incomprehensible apparition, I do not know. I was suddenly brought to myself by the sound of the door opening behind my back.

Starting, I turned and saw the butler's long, lugubrious face peering in at me.

"Well?" I asked sharply.

The man's watery eyes avoided mine. He licked his lips as though they were dry.

"I went for the doctor as you told me, sir," he said at last.

"You went for the doctor?" I cried at a loss. "When did I tell you to go for the doctor?"

Again Tom moistened his lips.

"Why, only two hours ago, sir! You must remember, sir, it was when I ran against you in the dark just as you were coming out of the sick-room!"

"Nonsense! I haven't been near my father all night long."

"If you'll pardon me, sir," Tom continued more firmly, "I advise you to take a little rest. You're not yourself, sir. Your father's sudden death has—"

"My father's death!" I cried, aghast. "You don't mean to tell me that he's dead?"

"Yes, sir. It was as you thought—he was dead when I met you in the hall. Dr. Parkinson said it must have been his heart which failed him at the last.

"Now brace up, sir! Don't give way! Just lean on my arm, sir. That's right; that's right."

My overstrung nerves had suddenly snapped at the butler's news. Trembling

from head to foot, I burst into uncontrolled sobs. So this was where my portrait had vanished to while I—slept.

I had thought the acid had destroyed it, while in reality it had only liberated it for a time to do a ghastly business. There had been a few drops of the chemical left in the bottle—enough to kill an old man; and when I had dozed off, it had used them.

See, the bottle was now bone-dry. God help me! What was I to do?

"Come into your own room and lie down, Mr. Gustave," Tom pleaded. "You need rest, sir."

I could no longer resist him. Indeed, I was so weak both in mind and body that I could not have found the strength to disobey a child.

What I needed was sleep—an ocean of tranquil, dreamless sleep. In the future lay a silent struggle between this painted demon and me, an heroic struggle for which I could expect no help from the world.

Before I quitted the room, I glanced over my shoulder at the painting. And as I did so, I saw its crimson lips curl up like a cat's, I saw it place its hand on its breast and bow ever so gracefully, like a famous actor responding to an encore. Bowing and smiling, it followed me with its eyes.

"Can I destroy it!" I murmured. "Will I ever be able to destroy it?"

CHAPTER III

THE PURPLE VEIL

FORTUNATELY my father's death called for no unpleasant investigations. It was natural enough that a man well past the prime of life, suffering from paralysis and a weak heart, should flicker out without a moment's warning.

After the funeral I was plunged into a whirlwind of financial affairs which kept me thoroughly occupied. My father's estate proved to be a complex affair and one which took the family lawyer and myself many weeks to straighten out.

And yet I was not able to forget my painted evil genius at this time. It would obtrude itself before my mental vision at the most inopportune moments, parting the calm, collected chain of thought with its ghostly hand, bowing and smiling at me in mockery from the picture frames which hung in the lawyer's office, and even interrupting me as I spoke solemnly of my affliction with some ribald jest at the expense of my poor dead father—jests which

my companions evidently considered as proceeding from my own lips, and which soon won for me an unenviable reputation.

And I was powerless to clear myself! Even then I realized that any accusation launched against the portrait would rebound and destroy me. The incredulity of a world given over to safety and sanity—a world marked out into squares of possibility like a chess board—offers no mercy to a man such as I, a man lost in the labyrinth of unparalleled experiences.

But do not think that I suffered meekly and in silence. No, on returning home from some scene in which I had been made to appear odious, I would sneak into the laboratory, close the door softly, and take my stand before the portrait. Then, with a heart heavy with horror, I would upbraid it.

"You are a murderer?" I would say.

And my portrait would smirk at me with vivid lips, smirk and bow with its hand on its heart.

"I am a thought," it would murmur—"I am your crimson thought!"

"But why do you persecute me?"

"Do you not deny me?"

"And if I did not deny you?"

"Why, then we would be as one, united and peaceful—quite happy with one another. Do you not long for rest?"

And then somewhere in my breast the strident voice of eternal alarm would cry out, "Not yet—not yet!" And fear would ripple over me like an ice-crowned wave; and it would become difficult to face the portrait.

Shivering and drawing my dressing-gown about me for warmth, I would steal out of the laboratory and up the creaking stairs to my room. God! how cold it was!

A month after I came into my inheritance, I once more took up my scientific studies. Under the eyes of the portrait, grimly and in silence, I experimented with various chemicals.

And such was my concentration that even its gorgonlike regard failed to shatter a theory which was springing up in my brain. Already I had visualized my translucent child, the Purple Veil.

You, who have experienced the poisonous gases on foreign battle-fields, can have but a minimized conception of the Purple Veil. Imagine, if you can, a thick, purplish smoke, shot here and there with tiny iridescent specks of flame like spangles in an eastern shawl—a thick, purplish smoke which coils about its victim fold on fold, smothering and burning till all life is

transformed into mere blackened ashes.

Imagine this, and you may have some slight conception of the Purple Veil.

Hate is one of the great motive forces in the world. Often, like love, it inspires its devotees to unprecedented achievement.

It is a matter for speculation as to how many artistic masterpieces have been inspired by the transcending delirium of rage. And if this is true of Art, so also is it true of its calm but more deadly sisters, Science and Invention.

Hate drove me to the discovery of the Purple Veil—hate and fear. The peering, evil face of the portrait lashed me to herculean mental efforts.

"Perhaps," I thought, "my salvation rests in such a discovery. This grimacing, painted thing has life—life hard to touch, indeed; but still life—and what has life can surely be smothered in the Purple Veil—"

Thinking in this wise, I redoubled my efforts to reach the goal, slaving both day and night till my brain reeled and my nerves seemed like tightly drawn, throbbing wires. And while I toiled thus, my portrait looked down on me calmly, ironically, seemingly quite safe in its impregnable immortality. Often now it conversed with me.

"Why do you toil thus?"

"Because I hate deeply."

"And whom do you hate?"

"I hate the world. It has taken another to its breast in my place."

"And you would destroy the world?"

"Yes, I would destroy it! I would clothe it in the Purple Veil! Death shall hover over its cities and towns, over its valleys and mountain-tops."

And then my portrait would smile as though well pleased; and it would moisten its crimson lips like one who is athirst. Ah, my cunning was more than a match for it!

How eagerly it swallowed the bait! Little did it guess for whom I was so carefully preparing the Purple Veil.

Once it said, "But is there no one among the multitudes, no especial enemy whom you have singled out?"

At that, I nearly dropped the test-tube I was holding. Had it guessed my secret? No, evidently not. It was smiling at me with a new, strange affection in its eyes—a loathsome affection which made my flesh crawl with unspeakable horror and dread.

For an instant I felt that I was stripped bare, that I could move neither hand nor foot, and that its eyes had multiplied into thousands of cold, slimy creatures which

were crawling over me in a noisome wave—creatures which nestled against my body with a sickening sentimentality! It was possible to bear its hatred, but its love—

After a moment I answered:

"Yes, there is one. No doubt you have guessed. I would strike the false friend who robbed me of my discovery—that false friend whose treachery was responsible for your existence."

And then my portrait laughed a low laugh of satisfaction.

"We have become as brothers," it murmured, barely moving its lips. "No longer will we struggle with one another. We will enjoy a lifelong peace."

There came a day at last when my toil culminated in triumph—a day when the Purple Veil became a reality. A dozen tiny glass globes lay on the laboratory table, each one of which contained a thimbleful of crimson liquid—glass globes which, if broken, would exude a poisonous purple vapor spangled here and there with tiny iridescent sparks of living fire.

And my own self-protection had not been neglected. I had taken no risks. Upstairs, in my bedroom, there hung a suit of asbestos and a gas-mask warranted to protect its wearer from the fatal fumes. Also, I had designed a covering of asbestos for the picture-frame.

IT WAS a melancholy afternoon in late autumn, an afternoon when Nature seems grieving over the sins of a prodigal youth. Through the laboratory window I could see the rain-swept street glistening dully where the early electric illuminations touched it. Above the heads of passersby, umbrellas would open their petals like parched buds welcoming the moisture.

And I thought with a grim smile, "What a commotion would be caused in this slow-moving stream of people if I dropped one of the little glass globes at their feet! How they would take to their heels if the Purple Veil were cast among them! Then this multitude of umbrellas, which are passing so sedately, would be caught up and blown away in an instant by a gale of fear."

"Why not do it?" the portrait murmured from its shadowed corner.

But I shook my head.

"You must not forget my personal enemy," I answered. "He comes first, so that others may follow."

"True," said the portrait, believing that I spoke of Paul. "Of course he must be the first and then—"

Suddenly it broke off and cautioned me

to silence by a stealthy finger lifted to its lips.

Someone was coming. I heard footsteps in the hall, the murmuring of voices; and then the door swung open, letting in a stream of golden light. I rose to my feet, my heart beating great waves of blood up into my head.

Paul stood on the threshold in the very center of this river of light—Paul, like a vision of the past, who had stolen from me both love and fame! Time had not even touched him in its passage. He looked not a day older than when I had seen him last.

"So you have come!" I cried.

He shaded his eyes with his hand and peered in.

"Is that you, Gustave?" he asked. "It's so dark in here that it's hard to make things out. I can see your face now, but—"

He broke off suddenly and uttered an ejaculation of astonishment.

"Why, what are you doing?" he cried. "Why are you standing on a chair before the fireplace?"

Instinctively my eyes followed his. A shaft of light from the street rested on the portrait's face, but everything else was in unstable, tottering shadow. One could see indistinctly the leather armchair beneath it, and that was all.

He had evidently taken Anthony Worthington's painted lie to be his friend whom it so brazenly caricatured. It was scarcely complimentary.

A month before, no doubt, I would have been unable to control my temper at this insult. But since then I had learned caution from close association with the portrait.

Now my answer was cooled by cunning before it left my lips. One had to be on guard against the stupid misapprehension of the world.

"This is a case of mistaken identity, Paul," I replied, touching the electric button at my elbow which illumined the room.

He evinced a ludicrous surprise when he realized his mistake. Wheeling about, he stammered:

"Why, I could have sworn that it was you! It seemed to move and smile!"

"Merely the play of light and shadow," I rejoined carelessly. "Surely to a scientific mind there can be nothing incomprehensible in natural phenomena? But what do you think of the portrait?"

"Not at all flattering," he muttered at length. "It portrays you in an ugly mood. But it's you, old man; it's undoubtedly you. I've seen you look just like that."

"When?" I asked curiously.

"Let me see." He paused for an instant and plucked at his lower lip with nervous fingers. "Why, the last time I saw you.

"You were put out because I had deserted the laboratory for a week to get married. I remember—"

"You didn't lose anything by that desertion," my portrait broke in ironically.

As was usual on such occasions, its words seemed to come from my own mouth. Paul thought that I had spoken to upbraid him for his theft of my discovery. His face flushed to a dark crimson.

"I came here to see you about that, Gustave," he began in a halting voice. "You don't know how I've suffered ever since. I wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for Evelyn. All my money went in that Wall Street panic and I had to do something."

"Your money went?" I said kindly enough. "How was that?"

He ran his hand feverishly through his flaxen hair.

"It was my father's fault," he continued hastily. "He was always a gambler, you know. Someone gave him the wrong tip; he put everything he had on it and even borrowed Evelyn's little fortune.

"Then came the crash. Everything went—everything! We were all in debt."

"That left—Zodium," I suggested.

"Yes, Zodium was our only chance. I tried to get hold of you; but your father didn't know where you were. From the first I knew that there was a practical side to Zodium—a side worth millions if we could get the medical profession interested.

"Here was a great scheme lying idle. Evelyn and I at our wits' end, and you somewhere in the wilds.

"It was a temptation. I couldn't wait for you—I simply couldn't! You had shown me the formula; I went ahead and made Zodium and put it to a practical, money-getting use."

"You appeared in the eyes of the world as its discoverer," the portrait said coldly.

"That was necessary," Paul answered, evidently again laboring under the delusion that I had spoken. "I couldn't have sold it otherwise."

"But now," I cried joyfully, "you'll make full reparation; won't you, Paul?"

All my confidence in him had returned. As I spoke, I gazed challengingly at the portrait, which repaid my regard with an almost imperceptible curl of the lip. Evidently it was my friend's enemy as well as mine.

"Most certainly, Gustave," Paul rejoined solemnly. "I've come to offer full reparation. I have prospered in the last year. I am now able to pay you back every cent Zodium has made for me.

"And as for the fame, I will renounce that, too. I have already sent a letter to the *Scientific Monthly*, telling the whole truth about the matter and naming you as the discoverer."

I was overjoyed. All my old-time affection for Paul returned. His offense had not been so heinous as I had imagined.

When one considered the temptation, one had to acknowledge that it would have taken a supernaturally moral man to have resisted.

And besides, was he not making full reparation?

Grasping his hand, I told him that there was now nothing to forgive; I assured him of my friendship and spoke so warmly that I soon saw suspicious drops of moisture in his eyes.

And all the time, behind his back, my evil painted passion mocked and mowed, parodying our emotions with ugly grimaces which furrowed its face into wicked lines.

And on the table, within arm's reach, lay the little glass globes, each with a beating, crimson heart—the little glass globes in which lay waiting for any murderous hand, the Purple Veil.

I SPENT that evening with Paul. He insisted that I return home with him; and I, nothing loath, accompanied him through the glistening streets.

As we sauntered along, side by side, two united shadows in a world of shadows, it seemed to me that nothing could ever again come between us.

A ten-minute walk brought us to his house. It was a large, pretentious-looking building—a building which reminded me of public libraries one finds in small Southern towns. It exuded an atmosphere of frigid learning not at all in keeping with its laughter-loving master.

At first I rather dreaded meeting Evelyn again. Perhaps she could still play upon my emotion—perhaps I had not yet outgrown my feeling. And if this were so, would not my reborn affection for Paul be eaten away in an instant by that deadly chemical, jealousy?

But I might have spared myself all fears. That foolish sentiment had been buried somewhere in the past. As I greeted her, it was as though I were meeting her for the first time.

I saw a rather tall, anemic-looking girl with the dissatisfied expression of one who attempts to find happiness in material luxuries. What had become of that languid lily which had grown to such rare beauty in the fertile soil of my imagination?

I dined with Paul and his wife, and he and I talked of the past. We went over again our school and college days, while Evelyn struggled against boredom. At last our conversation flowed into the present.

"What are you working on now, Paul?" I asked.

"Nothing at present," he murmured, flushing slightly. "Evelyn has me nicely crucified on the cross of society. What with bridge, dances, and receptions, I haven't been able to draw a free breath in months."

"But it's a very good thing for you to go about!" Evelyn broke in with a note of irritation in her voice. "You were almost a hermit when I married you."

Paul a hermit! I allowed myself a smile. My friend had never been *that*. On the contrary, his mixing propensities had interfered greatly with his scientific studies.

"And what are *you* doing now?" Paul asked eagerly. "Have you made another remarkable discovery?"

Before I answered him, my eyes wandered to a large oil landscape which hung on the opposite wall. To my horror, a familiar figure suddenly stepped out of a grove of trees in the background of this painting and warned me to silence with a ghostly finger lifted to its lips.

There was something immeasurably terrifying in thus being confronted by my relentless enemy. With a muffled exclamation of dismay, I stared at the canvas.

"Why, what is it?" Evelyn cried in alarm. "What do you see, Mr. Ericson?"

With a superhuman effort of will, I turned my head, glanced at her, and even smiled.

"Nothing," I murmured. "I was trying to discover if there were any human figures in that landscape. A shepherd, perhaps?"

"No," Evelyn answered wonderingly. "There are no figures."

"Quite so," I said lightly. "My eyes have been playing me tricks lately."

"But you haven't told me what you've been doing!" Paul broke in. "Have you come across anything as good as Zodium?"

Stiffening my will, forcing my eyes away from the tiny figure of fear in the painted meadow, I answered truthfully:

"Yes, I believe I *have* discovered something as good as Zodium."

Paul's cheeks were suddenly suffused

with blood and his eyes shone brightly.

"I'd like to be let into the secret, old man," he muttered. "Perhaps I could be of some help. Of course, after what has happened, it seems—"

He broke off lamely with a muttered "damn" under his breath and a quick look at Evelyn. Evidently she knew nothing of what had formerly transpired.

And now the tiny figure in the painted meadow was waving its arms about as though possessed. "Stop! Stop!" it seemed to be screaming through its wide-open mouth.

But my determination to trust Paul was adamant. There was a look in his eyes that wrung my heart. For the once I would prove that I was stronger than my enemy—I would speak.

"My new discovery is called 'The Purple Veil,'" I began. "It is the most powerful, the most deadly chemical compound ever known to man. It is invaluable for military purposes. A shell containing the Purple Veil could destroy a city and the population of a city."

"If that is true," Paul cried with flashing eyes, "you can ask your own price for it! Any nation in command of such a secret would soon rule the world. I suppose you invented it with the idea of making it the most powerful weapon of modern warfare?"

Smiling slightly, I bent forward and murmured in his ear:

"I invented it to destroy a portrait which has become loathsome to me!"

Evidently Paul considered this remark as an attempted joke. He laughed rather foolishly and immediately suggested showing me his laboratory which was situated in the garden at the rear of the house. Evelyn excused herself, saying that she had some domestic matters to attend to and would perhaps join us later.

Strange as it might once have seemed to me, I was glad to be rid of her. Tonight I wanted no one but Paul. We had so many things to talk over, he and I, that the presence of an unsympathetic listener seemed an irksome encumbrance.

With a sigh of relief, I followed my friend out of the house and down a winding garden-path which led to a small cement building a score of yards away.

"Why didn't you have your laboratory in the house?" I asked idly.

"Because of Evelyn," he called back over his shoulder. "She didn't like the idea of having all those combustibles so near her."

"What a blessed escape I have had!"

was my thought as I followed him up a flight of stone steps and waited while he swung back the heavy door of his laboratory.

THE out-house consisted of a single large room lighted by electricity. The walls and ceiling were of stone, and in the center was a long metal table, on which were grouped several bottles of chemicals and the various appliances to be found in most laboratories. There was a musty odor about the place which called out for thorough airing and cleansing.

"You haven't been very busy here?" I suggested, pointing out several glass jars which were gray with dust.

"No," he answered with an almost inaudible sigh. "I have let my ambition go to the dogs. I've always needed you, Gustave, to keep me going."

He seated himself on the table.

"This is a wonderful workshop," he continued, glancing about him, "and yet it's of no use to me. No ideas stirring. Gustave."

"Why not help me with the Purple Veil?" I asked.

Paul leaped down and took a stride toward me with outstretched hands.

"You mean that, Gustave?" he cried. "After all that's happened, you can still trust me? That's awfully decent of you, old man! I'd work my fingers to the bone; I'd—"

I have always had a dread of sentimental outbursts. Now I broke in on him abruptly.

"This is an excellent place to experiment with such a powerful chemical. Nothing can be hurt in this vault."

"When can we begin?" he cried excitedly. "I'd like to start tonight."

"Would you?" I asked. "Well, why not? I've got several vials of the Purple Veil in my laboratory now. It's barely a ten-minute walk. I'll step around and bring them over, if you say the word."

"That would be corking! I'm in just the mood for a little work. Shall I go with you?"

"No, don't do that," I answered. "You stay here and remove every inflammable object that may be about. I tell you, the

Purple Veil is the nearest thing to hell's fire ever uncorked."

"Very well," he said with a laugh. "I'll see that everything's shipshape before you get back."

"Will I have to go out through the house?" I asked.

"No, there's a gate in the garden which opens on the street. Come this way."

Paul conducted me to a large iron gate set in the garden wall. At first he had some difficulty in unlocking it, but at last, with a shrill, complaining sound, the key turned in the lock and the gate swung slowly outward. I followed my friend through this aperture and into a side street.

"I'll leave the gate on the latch," Paul said as we parted. "You can come right in any time. You'll find me in the laboratory when you get back."

"Very well," I answered. "I won't be long."

Turning, I left him standing bareheaded under an arc light and hurried up the street. At the corner, I turned and looked back.

He was still standing where I had left him. To this day I can see him thus—one hand resting on the rusted bars of the gate; the other shading his eyes from the bright electric rays which streamed down on his flaxen hair. And to this day there is a great love in my heart for that slim, upright figure—a great love and a great sorrow.

CHAPTER IV

FIND THE MURDERER!

NOW, as I near the end of my tale, once more Horror holds my beating heart in the hollow of her hand. It is as if I were once again facing the terrors of the past. I am cold, bitterly cold—so cold that the pencil shakes between my trembling fingers.

And yet I must force myself to finish this chronicle. Truth has lain for months buried deep. Before she crumbles to dust, I must unearth her! Yes, although it is a ghastly business, I must unearth her!

After I had left Paul, I hurried home. Opening the door with my latch-key, I

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mounted the stairs to my own room. Here I found everything as I had left it—the asbestos suit over the back of a chair, the gas-mask hanging from a peg on the wall.

It was but the work of a moment to don this gray uniform; and then, resembling some tattered derelict who has slept all night on a dust-heap, I began to descend the stairs to the laboratory. At every step I made a swishing sound as though I were clothed in paper.

I had not as yet put on the gas mask. I carried it in my hand as if it were a lantern. Now and then it swung against my thigh, causing me to start involuntarily.

The laboratory was plunged in blackness. Turning on the lights, I took a quick survey of the premises. *There* were the tiny globes in which glistened the Purple Veil; *there* was the picture-frame cover of asbestos in which I intended placing the portrait at the last moment.

The portrait! I wheeled about and met its satanic regard. During the last few days it had grown ever more lifelike. Now one could fairly see the blood coursing behind the swarthy skin, the beastlike moisture on the crimson lips, the vibrating tension of the curling fingers.

There it crouched—malevolent as a spider—studying me with its unbearable eyes. Would I be able to destroy it? Would I *ever* be able to destroy it?

"Well," I said at last, "why do you stare at me thus?"

Then its thin, red lips curled in a sneer.

"You interest me," it murmured. "You are such a fool—such a weak fool!"

"I do not understand you," I answered coldly.

"You do not understand me?" it cried vehemently. "I thought we had become friends, you and I! Well, I will make my meaning clear. Is it wise to trust one who is untrustworthy—one who has proved himself untrustworthy?"

"Did you not see me warning you from that picture in Paul's house? Surely you saw me; and yet you still persevered. Why have you given yourself into the hands of your enemy?"

Velling the hatred in my eyes, I laughed aloud. Surely I was more than a match for it! It had called itself a crimson thought—well, even a *crimson thought* can be the toy of man. Now I would play a little game with it—a game of life or death.

"I do not trust Paul," I answered. "Have I not told you that I intend to kill him?"

"Then why did you speak to him of the Purple Veil?"

"Crude, stupid passion," I cried, "you are like some frenzied wild beast! You have no cunning, no subtlety. I spoke to Paul of the Purple Veil because I intend to choke him with it.

"He himself has opened the way. He has offered to help me in an experiment tonight—he has given me the use of his laboratory."

"So that he may rob you again," the portrait broke in.

"Perhaps. But in reality I shall rob him. I shall take his most precious possession—his life!

"There will be an unavoidable accident, you understand? His widow will have the consolation of knowing that her husband died in the service of science."

The portrait began to chuckle. The rasping sound of its merriment, the gray film which covered its eyes, and lastly the greedy way it licked its lips, made my flesh crawl. And yet it was necessary for me to go on building a dwelling of lies in which it might feel secure.

"That is the reason I came back and put on my asbestos suit," I continued. "Paul is now awaiting me in the laboratory. I shall take him one of these little glass globes and then we will experiment."

"How I wish I could be there!" the portrait murmured. "Are there any paintings in his laboratory? If so, I might manage it. I have access to all paintings."

"I'm sorry to say that there are not," I said regretfully. "However, I think it could be managed. I'll take you under my arm as a gift to him—you understand?"

"But first you must put on this picture-frame cover of asbestos. It will protect you from the Purple Veil."

The portrait gave me a look of loathsome affection.

"You are growing very fond of me," it whispered. "We are becoming as brothers. Let us hurry. I am anxious to see Paul enshrouded in the Purple Veil."

STILL masking the hate in my eyes, I slipped the asbestos cover over its frame; next I went to the table and picked up one of the tiny glass globes. Then I returned to the portrait which still regarded me with its loose-lipped smile.

"Does it suspect anything?" I wondered. "If I can only put on my gas-mask before it suspects anything!"

At that instant, the portrait pointed out my path. It said anxiously:

"How can you carry me when you have that mask in your hand?"

"That is true!" I cried with a laugh. "I'll have to wear the mask, then."

With fingers that shook, I slipped the contrivance over my head.

"You will appear ridiculous on the street," the portrait expostulated. "But take me down and let us hurry."

Suddenly its voice changed and it eyed me intently.

"What are you waiting for?" it cried. "Ah, traitor—traitor! You dare not!"

"I dare everything!" I cried exultantly and cast the tiny glass globe straight at its terror-stricken eyes.

What happened then was photographed on the film of my brain for all time. The blinding flash as the glass globe exploded, the thin stream of purplish vapor which coiled over the canvas like twisting snakes, the iridescent sparks of flame which whirled hither and thither in a mad dance—all these I had expected to see.

But the passing of the portrait! Ah, that was different—that was enough to turn a strong man's brain to quivering jelly!

At first the portrait remained motionless, its mouth agape in ludicrous astonishment. But when a stream of the Purple Veil coiled about its knees, it began to struggle.

With distended eyeballs and lolling tongue, with foaming lips and bursting lungs, it writhed back and forth in its efforts to escape. And as it fought for life, silently, vindictively, its venomous eyes were still fixed upon my face.

But soon there came a change. The Purple Veil squirmed upward till it reached the portrait's gasping mouth. For an instant I saw my enemy's breast rise and fall in a last convulsive movement.

At that superhuman effort, its lungs must have broken like wind-distended bags. At the next moment, the portrait toppled forward on its face.

Yet all was not over. It still held tenaciously to life. Like a wounded spider it lay there, quivering slightly.

And now the tiny sparks of flame gathered on the fallen body like fireflies settling on a withered branch. Burning now green, now white, now green again, they fell on the portrait in a shower. In vain it writhed beneath their fiery weight.

Soon they had buried it; and the whole canvas was aflame. Then long fingers of fire reached upward till they touched the asbestos-covered frame, retiring sullenly and attempting an outlet on another side.

And I stood looking aghast at this living

painting of hell. Long after my enemy had fallen, I saw the heap of red-hot ashes, under which it lay, stir slightly.

At that I turned on my heel, sick and dizzy, and dared not look again till the canvas was but blackened ashes. Then, at last, I realized that I was free.

Trembling with excitement, I then opened the window and let the cool night air cleanse the poisonous atmosphere. Next I removed the gas-mask, and, sinking into the nearest chair, closed my eyes.

A great fatigue had overmastered me. As on a former occasion, I felt myself drifting out on the drowsy sea of dreams. Even Paul had become a secondary consideration.

Why should I not sleep? Had I not earned the right to sleep? I had at last conquered, and to the conqueror what more blessed wreath than sleep?

I AWOKE with a start to a feeling of dread. Sitting up, I rubbed my eyes and looked about me. A pallid, ghostly light stole in through the open window; and the air was damp with the promise of dawn.

While I had slept a breeze had sprung up. Now the curtains in the alcove, like phantoms of bygone courtiers, seemed curtsying and bowing to one another.

Long habit turned my eyes to the portrait. With a feeling of unbounded joy, I saw that this time I had really succeeded. The entire surface of the canvas was charred a deep-black.

What delight took possession of me then!—a delight which carried me to childish lengths. I rose and capered about the room, I shook my fist at it, I even laughed aloud.

Suddenly I was brought to myself by the faraway, brazen voice of the door-bell. Who could be ringing at this hour? I wondered. And as I turned this question over in my mind, I once again glanced at the charred canvas.

My God! Will I ever be able to forget what I saw then?

My eyes had fallen on the left-hand corner of the portrait—the side nearest the window. With an inarticulate cry of horror, I saw something stirring there.

It was yellow and small, and not unlike an oddly shaped autumn-leaf; and it twitched spasmodically.

"It *must* be a leaf," I told myself firmly—"a leaf which has blown in through the open window and caught there."

Once more I looked, and hope deserted

me. It was not a leaf—ah, no! It was a human hand—a human hand which felt its way with writhing fingers—a human hand which I knew only too well!

Ah, there was the arm, long and slender; and there was the body itself sidling into the canvas! Like a thief in the night, it stole forward, with averted face.

Crouching, it crawled along till it reached its old spot; and then—ah, then it turned and I saw its eyes!

For an instant I stood there, motionless, dumb, staring into my enemy's face, and then, with a cry of terror, I fled to the door and threw it open. As I hesitated on the threshold, I heard the sound of footsteps in the hall.

"There he is now, sir," I heard Tom's voice say, and the next moment I was confronted by two strangers.

Any human manifestation was welcome indeed on such a night. Instantly I was calm and even smiling.

"You wish to see me, gentlemen?" I asked, wiping the cold perspiration from my forehead. "Won't you step into my laboratory?"

The presence of these strangers had given me confidence. Perhaps, after all, I had dreamed of the reappearance of my enemy. At any rate, it would be as well to get normal opinion on such a phenomenon.

"Now, gentleman, will you kindly fix your attention on that canvas," I said. "Is there a figure in it, or is there not? My common sense tells me that there is not."

"Certainly, there's a figure there," said one of my guests brusquely. "It's a full-length portrait of you, and a very good likeness, I'd call it."

I turned to the other one in despair. "Do you also see it?" I cried.

But he cut me short with even more brusqueness than his companion.

"We've got a warrant for your arrest," Mr. Ericson, he said.

"My arrest! You are police officers, then? Under what charge?"

But before he answered me, I knew well enough what had happened while I had slept. I saw it all in a blinding flash.

Not I, but my portrait, had kept the rendezvous with Paul. As on a previous occasion, in my attempt to destroy my enemy I had only succeeded in loosing it on the world.

"You are charged with the murder of Paul Grey," one of the police officers said heavily.

It was as I had suspected then—Paul was dead! Poor old Paul whom I had

loved like a brother! And now I was charged with his death, I who would not have harmed a hair of his head!

"You're going a little bit too far in this!" I cried angrily. "You have no reason to accuse me. Are there not others about as capable of committing crimes as I—others who hated Paul while I loved him?"

"Look at that face on the canvas! What does it tell you?"

I glanced full at the portrait as I spoke; and, to my joy, it was bowing and smiling—bowing and smiling with its hand on its heart.

"Look, look!" I cried in an agonized voice. "Can't you see it silently affirming my words? Where are you taking me? Stop! I demand justice! The real murderer hangs on the wall!"

But my captors were deaf to my words. They had handcuffed me and were leading me toward the door. On the threshold I cast a last glance over my shoulder.

My portrait was still bowing and smiling like a mechanical doll. And I knew then that it had conquered for all time.

And I? Why, I must suffer for it in silence and solitude. And because of its victory—like a famous actor who has played his rôle to the applause of the house—it would continue bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling.

I HAVE but little more to add. You, who I have followed my trial in the papers, will remember Evelyn's testimony—how, on the night of the murder, she visited her husband's laboratory at a late hour to find his charred remains on the stone floor and a crazed being, whom she falsely declared to be Gustave Ericson, crouched in one corner, mumbling to itself; how, when it saw her, this creature leaped to its feet and fled screaming; how she made her way back to the house and called the police.

And also you will remember that, in spite of my brilliant speech accusing the portrait of the crime, the jury was swayed by the opinions of certain learned asses and brought in a verdict of homicidal mania, and that shortly after my trial, I was removed to this asylum for the criminal insane.

But have you ever thought of what a terrible punishment it is to be incarcerated among mental derelicts—to be exposed night after night to the caresses of our mother of madness, the moon? When she commands us to play it is difficult to resist.

And have you ever longed, in your safety and sanity, to throw back your head and

howl like wolves? We do strange, unaccountable things here—acts which we blush for when the sun again rules the world.

No, this is not a healthy spot. While I still possess all my mental powers undimmed, I have certain presentiments which make me extremely anxious for the future.

It is on account of these presentiments that I have written this truthful chronicle, hoping that it will fall into the hands of some worthy person who will gather sufficient evidence to finally secure my release.

And yet, how few there are who can see the truth even when it is pointed out to them! For instance, we hear on all sides such phrases as these: "That painting has life," "This book will live." Yet, who of us actually believes that these statements are true?

When I tried to prove that Anthony Worthington's portrait of me had life, I was laughed at and labeled insane. And even my fellow sufferers mock me when I tell them that I have actually discovered that books may live.

We have a library in the asylum with some splendid books. They whisper all night long. They tell their separate stories over and over again, each vying with the other, each attempting to drown out the other with its low, sibilant whisper.

I have sat in this library listening to them until sometimes my brain began to swim—there are so many of them, each is

so perfectly convinced of its own immortality!

Please pardon this digression, which perhaps is not such a great digression after all. It may at least be of interest to the kind of man who will be my saviour and friend—a man broad enough to acknowledge the still, small area of plowed soil in this wilderness we call the "world"—a man with humanity enough to acknowledge that there may be phenomena of which he is ignorant.

And when my unknown friend has read this chronicle and believed, let him go out and hunt my portrait down. I understand that my relatives have sold all my effects—therefore, the search may be difficult.

But to the strong in heart all things are possible. Somewhere in the city—perhaps in some art dealer's—the real murderer of Paul Grey is lurking. Hunt down the assassin and deliver it to justice!

Now, give heed, my unknown friend. It is the portrait of a strikingly handsome young man—swarthy, with cruel, crimson lips and a mole on its right cheek. But if this description is not sufficient, it has other telltale characteristics.

The portrait to which I refer—that living portrait of an evil passion—like a great actor responding to an encore, is continually bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling, bowing and smiling.

And because of these calm, graceful salutations, it should not be difficult to recognize it among thousands.