

THE MUMMY'S SOUL.

It was high noon, and fresh, luxuriant life without, and the darkness of mid-night and the dead, within this Egyptian tomb, hollowed out of the heart of the Libyan chain of mountains. Two hundred feet above me, massive ruins, half-buried beneath the yellow, glittering sands of the desert, were revealed as the skeleton of a city of gigantic wonders. Now, Thebes was not so desolate. The sculptured faces of colossi gazed with stern, tearless eyes over the waste, as if in mockery of the frailty of cotemporary creations. Around me were mummies, sculptures, and rough paintings on the walls. Life and death here touched each other, and were identified by the reality of mutual existence. A humanity of forgotten ages, by its ashes preached sermons of profoundest truths in stupendous charnel-houses. Yet I asked myself, in a spirit of unbelief of such truths, if the oracles of Egyptian mythology spoke falsely, when they asserted, that the soul, after three thousand years of pilgrimage to other shrines, would reinvest the bodies of the dead with new life?

A startled bat flew in and out of an empty tomb; and an angry scorpion clicked his armor-plates, as he crept along the ledge of one of the crypts above me. A faint puff of air from the passage filled my nostrils with the sickening effluvia of mummies, and scattered the dust from the carvings of the pillar. I was in a casket of Death, and the jewels were mummies. Dead for centuries, yet alive in every thing but life; lacking only a breath of that life to cast off the swathing-cloths, and confront me! The thought of seeing them step from the tomb, in the hideousness of such a resurrection, made me shudder.

Yet, if their doctrine of a renewal of life after thirty centuries, were to prove true, there might at any moment be a resurrection, and a consequent paroxysm of terror on my part. What if I should be attacked, as I threaded intricate passages in this birth-place of antique horrors, by mobs of these resurrected Egyptians, infuriated by the sacrilege of my presence?

The mere idea of encountering their shrivelled forms in deadly struggle, and wrestling for victory with entwined limbs, while their crisp hair, odorous of the crypt, brushed my face; all these foolish promptings of an imagination, excited by my strange surroundings, together with a shuffling noise in a distant passage, caused me to drop my torch, and rush to the entrance of the tomb, where I stood quivering with fright, not knowing which way to turn. Fortunately, Ferraj, my guide, was the comer; else, in the darkness and sickening solitude, I should have become mad.

The tomb in which I stood had been discovered the previous day. It consisted of one large chamber with heavy arches, a massive pillar in the centre, and with three tiers of niches on each side; the fronts being ornamented with outline paintings of a brilliant red color. The ponderous carvings of the pillar were merely heavy lines of sculpture, with no delicacy of outline, no airy gracefulness to mar the effectiveness of their stupendous symmetry. Every curve and straight line on pillar and tablet was harsh, rigid, and even cruel in

its expression of power. The rough granite had been carved, in many cases, into crude and intricate delineations of human pageantry, by the ready skill of the patient artist. Yet, the hands that had cut and painted, day after day, in the service of cunning priest or mourning relative, had dropped the chisel and the brush thousands of years before, leaving outlines of works to be memorials of undeveloped grandeur.

Many of the niches in the tiers had been despoiled of their contents. One only remained untouched; upon its tablet was painted, in rich colors, a lotus-flower, broken at the blossom. There was no inscription upon the tomb to designate its occupant; no legendary engraving of his or her life's events. The cement around the edges of the tablet was as hard as the rock in which the tomb was cut. A half-hour's labor with a crow-bar had but meagre result; so I placed a quantity of powder under the lower edge of the stone, where a small cavity had been made with the bar. There was a hissing noise as the fire ran up the fuse, followed by a dull sound of explosion, that was immediately hushed and smothered by the dead silence of the passages without. The slab with its painting fell to the ground, and was shattered.

Within the niche thus opened was a mummy-case, containing a mummy, bandaged from head to foot in fine linen, and lying upon a bed of crumbling flowers. I reproached myself, in a sorrowful, musing mood, for such a sacrilege, when I found it was the body of a woman. But a sickening, musty odor from the corpse spread its subtle essences throughout the chamber, and stealing to the brain intoxicated it. I seemed to see, in this momentary incubation of the senses, the body of this mummy snap its cerements, and slowly recede through the rocky walls, which closed not after it; while it floated, in plain sight, down a passage, in the mountain, bordered by rows of tombs, one above another. And out of these graves of stone stretched bandaged arms of tawny-skinned mummies, whose fingers vainly clutched at the phantom, as, motionless in features and limbs, it glided down the terrible aisle, and was lost in the gloom.

The agony of the vision was over. My forehead was covered with a cold perspiration, and my eyes ached with the fierce heat that had created the appalling vision; while white flames of light seemed, now and then, to mingle with the darkness of the corridor.

I looked behind me. Ferraj sat cowering upon the ground, with his hands covering his face.

'Ferraj!'

'Howadji! Brave Sidi! did you not see the body move and motion with its hands? Did it move away into the darkness?' he cried, seizing my hand.

'Of course not, you foolish fellow. Is it not there in the case? It is impossible for the dead to come to life.'

I laughed feebly to put him in good spirits; but he was not at all reassured, and I noticed that, while we remained in the tomb, he stood at a distance from the mummy, holding his torch like a sword, as if to parry a blow from unseen hands.

In profound awe, and with a delicate touch, I unwrapped the face of the

body. A woman's features, black and shrivelled, were revealed. I was startled — even sickened — at the hideous revelation. For an instant I had forgotten my situation, and its surroundings, and remembered only an occasion when I turned back the coffin-lid, and gazed for the last time upon the face of my dead sister. I thought, in my reverie over this mummy, of a lovely face, and fair features, like marble. Imagination had never conjured up so shocking a vision. But my zeal as an antiquary suppressed delicate dreams and disagreeable realities. This woman might have been handsome in the era in which she existed; she was, perhaps, considered as the possessor of great beauty. She was very short, slight, with a low forehead; the cheek-bones were high, but not prominent, and the nose delicate and small; the eyes, the windows to a woman's soul, were closed in a sleep of centuries. Her hair was black, curled, and somewhat faded. Her mouth was small, exquisitely formed, and the lips were devoid of any heaviness of curve to mark the tincture of Ethiopian blood. But the dark, parchment-like skin, wrinkled and rough, made me loathe the corpse, and to wonder at the love that thus burned out beauty, by slow consuming fires of subtle chemistry; and laid away the shell of the soul, that it might once more be reinvigorated with a life that in its wanderings had animated beast, bird, or insect, and acquired strength at each succeeding transmigration. As I unwrapped the long bandages from the breast, a strong gust of wind rushed from the desert into the dim crypts of the mountains. It flared the expiring torches, scattered dust from pillar and niche, and caused the mummy to crumble into a nauseous powder, that half-choked me with its subtle essence of humanity. From a mass of beads and shreds of cloth, I picked out a stone *scarabæus*, on whose back was graven many minute hieroglyphics. I succeeded in translating the following: '*Three thousand years hence, a new life.*' So the prophecy had been refuted, and dust returned to dust, I said to myself. But the doubt whether the resurrection predicted would not reform this dust into a re-created body, intruded itself, and strengthened the imagination, which hoped it would be so.

In the crypt, at the head of the body, I found a tiny vase of green translucent stone, of antique form, embellished with exquisitely carved devices. From either side sprang a serpent, which extended upward with light, graceful curves, until with its hideous fangs it indented the delicate rim of the vase. It was so fragile that it seemed as if a touch from the most careful fingers would crush it to atoms. I accidentally inverted it, and there fell upon the floor a quantity of light, fine ashes, and an insect of enormous size. It lay upon the ground, at my feet, with outstretched wings. Ferraj stooped down, and taking it in his hand, gazed upon it for a minute, his lips quivering, and his hand trembling so much that his torch almost fell to the ground.

'*Efrit! Efrit!* a foul devil!' he shouted, and cast the thing from him into the remains of the mummy. Picking it up, I examined it carefully, but with an indescribable loathing, that seized me whenever I saw the vile thing.

It was a fly, six inches long, with a head the size and shape of a pea; and appeared like a globule of liquid silver. Its small white eyes sparkled with the brilliancy of a diamond, and projected slightly from the head. The body was

elastic, and of a bright golden color, encircled at regular distances with bands of green. Its long, delicate, many-jointed legs were adorned with a fine yellow hair. Its wings were broad sheets of beauty — traceries of golden lines, shadows of deep blackness — gorgeously embellished, where veins of silver hue tinged the edges, with a net-work of marvellous loveliness. These labyrinths of delicate colors so merged into one another that the eye wearied in striving to find where one hue ended and another commenced. The brilliancy of color had not been dimmed by the death of the insect, but was revealed in all its glory. From the sharp-pointed tips of these wonderful wings hung tiny tassels of finest hair, filled with the dust in which it had been buried. Notwithstanding its diversity of colors, and wondrous construction, it was hideously deformed; for springing out of the very centre of the front of its head, lay coiled a fine elastic antenna of blood-red color. Upon seeing it, my admiration changed to disgust. A shudder of terror ran over me when, with a sharp click, the extended antenna slipped from my fingers, and struck the head. Ferraj had stood apart from me during this examination; but when he saw my movement, and heard the sharp sound as the coil flew back, he uttered a low moan.

The remarkable elasticity of the insect convinced me that it had been embalmed in the vase in a fluid, long before evaporated. The ashes might or might not have formed a part of an embalming mixture. Every thing about the insect was flexible and moist, as if life had just gone out. But I could not conjecture its use when alive, or what it symbolized when dead.

The insect fascinated me, not simply by its gorgeous variety of colors, not by any hitherto unknown peculiarity of structure, nor by the brilliant appearance of its dimmed eyes, but as a whole; even the loathsome helmet upon its head, was an essential in the fascination. I hated myself for yielding to the feeling that in after-days grew into an intense passion, and a pride in the possession of so wonderful a creation.

I gathered one or two handfuls of the mummy's dust, and put them, with the fly, into the vase, and left the tomb, dispirited — overcome by the sensations experienced, and the discoveries I had made. I had not the heart to farther prosecute my investigation among the tombs, and almost immediately departed for America.

I often exhibited my mementoes to friends; the ladies, acknowledging the wondrous magnificence of the insect, almost invariably declared it to be the most treacherous thing they had ever seen, and inveighed most bitterly against a judgment that selected such abortions, as mementoes of my sojourn in Egypt.

But my wife — my young and beautiful good angel — became terribly fascinated with this insect. I did not discover this slavery of her mind, until after many months; even then, by becoming suddenly cognizant of having found it in her hands upon many occasions, it occurred to me that she might be enthralled by this creature. When I accused her of it, she burst into tears, and acknowledged the truth of my accusation; saying, in a piteous, apologetic strain, 'that the fascination of the pretty thing was so irresistible, and at the

same time reminded her so strongly of my long absence in foreign countries, that she could not avoid dwelling in thought upon the strange scenery and discoveries that had kept me from her, and of contemplating the only memento of such an absence.' Then, for the first time, I told her of the occurrences in the tomb. When I had concluded, she clasped her pretty little hands, and said: 'Fred, this insect attracts me as it attracts you; only that with my submission to its thralldom is allied a premonition, that it will work me a fearful injury. I have repelled the idea again and again, but it always returns. I strive to be philosophical, and treat it as a frenzy, but there is no relief.'

Thereafter, in company, we used to pass hours in contemplating the antipathetic features of this fly, and in conjecturing what part it acted in the economy of nature, when it winged the air among people whose existence was almost forgotten. These examinations intoxicated our imaginations, by the antiquity and mystery surrounding the object of our investigation. We clung more to each other by reason of our servility to this incomprehensible influence of the fly. We were not unhappy, but simply uneasy; never striving, after a couple of months, to throw off our bondage.

If this were the termination of the history, I would weep for joy. But it is at this particular point of time that the insect, hitherto quiet, plays its active part in a tragedy to which there is no parallel.

One evening, in making an experiment, I had occasion to use a mixture of ammonia and ether, and had prepared it in a saucer, when I was suddenly called from the house, leaving the compound upon the table, in the dish. When I returned, late in the evening, I ascertained that a servant had emptied the contents of the saucer into a vase. It never occurred to me to ask what vase she meant; as there were several in the room, it surely was in one of them, and I gave no thought to the matter. The bed-room opened into the study; the two rooms were separated by a partition of lath and plaster, and the door at night always stood open.

About half-past twelve o'clock, my sleep was broken in a quiet, unaccountable way, that is often the precursor of danger. Every faculty was fresh and keen, and unusually active. Listening, my ear suddenly caught a faint sound of music, whose delicate strains floated softly toward me from a corner of the bed-room; then, with the rapidity of lightning, there burst upon me a delicious, maddening flow of measure after measure of passionate symphonies. They flowed in from the study, and beat the stagnant air to-and-fro, until every particle became a bell that tinkled sweetest melody. This music was so sweet, yet so fierce; so gentle in its cadences, yet so vigorous in its utterances; so peaceful, yet so thrilling, that the room trembled with the reverberations. A delicious languor possessed me. There was a profound silence for a minute. Then, just above my face, there was another outbreak of this wild melody; these chiming echoes.

My wife moaned, and in her restlessness, her hand fell upon my face.

My thoughts had been so absolutely controlled by the weird, soulless music, that the touch frightened me; it was as if a hand had been put forth from the thick darkness, and laid upon my forehead. But the alarm, soon re-

pulsed by calm reason, was succeeded by another shock, less sharp and sudden, but more lasting, and full of subtle terrors and keen agony. The hand of my wife was dry, feverish and shrunken, as if a quick, consuming fever had burned out its freshness, and left beneath the parchment-like skin, the hot ashes of its previous beauty.

She moaned feebly, when I passionately called her name. I pressed my lips to her face; it was as terrible as her hand. Alarmed at her incomprehensible silence, and at the swift, silent change manifest to my touch, I lighted the candle.

She was lying upon her side, looking at me with eyes so senseless in expression, so devoid of life or brilliancy in their idiotic fixedness, that the unexpected, terrible transformation, more grievous because of its hopelessness, touched my heart like the keen edge of a knife. I wept.

As I moaned and cried in my hopeless agony, her rough, hot hand once more rested upon my face, as if to express, feebly though it were, her sympathy for my affliction; though she could not appreciate the bitterness of my agony, she comprehended, dreamily without doubt, that a sorrow had fallen upon me.

With a cry of joy at this manifestation of her intense love, I clasped her in my arms; but the hope that had suddenly sprung up in my heart was cruelly crushed to death, for she lay in my arms a passive, undemonstrative being, with swift pulsations of the hot blood that scorched the delicate skin, until it was like fine parchment.

But while I was suffering most intensely, while my brain grew delirious under this desolation of my love — this mysterious, maddening affliction — I heard, with inexpressible fear, the wild, varying music. My wife trembled violently when she heard the clear ringing notes. Every second was affecting her appearance, developing a woman whose features were shrivelled and brown; the eyes, once animated by holiest love, were cold, passionless, and fixed in a soulless gaze. She lost all volition, and sunk into a dreadful apathy. *In every thing but form and face, she resembled the mummy in the tomb.* Hitherto my mind had been paralyzed by terror and grief. Now it was recovering from its shock. I implored my wife to tell me the cause of her illness, to speak to me; and I put my ear close to her lips, to catch the faintest whisper. But the musical hum in the study was the only sound I heard. Frantic with the thought that my delay might hasten her death, I summoned a physician, who, after much delay, dare not prescribe. Another one was sent for; he had never heard or read of so strange a case. He prescribed brandy to stimulate the blood, which was fast becoming sluggish, and said that he could do no more.

It was after he had gone that, in bending over my wife, I saw several small spots of blood upon the pillow. Back of her left ear was found a spot where the skin was a little broken, as if by the prick of a pin, and from which blood slowly oozed. I was still stooping over her, and the servants were chafing her hands and feet, and giving the stimulant, when suddenly the mysterious music

thrilled the air. My wife shuddered at the sound, and the women rested from their labor, to gaze upon each other in wonderment and alarm.

Taking a light from the stand, I passed into the study, closing the door after me. I had not removed my hand from the knob, when, with a whizzing noise, a large object, hot as a coal of fire, struck my face; and being beaten off, rose and fluttered hither and thither against the high ceiling. In amazement I recognized this assailant, this musician, this exuder of sweet sounds. It was the Insect. Its body, like glistening gold and flashing emerald, was distended to its full proportions; its great tasselled wings beat the air, until it frothed into unearthly music; its eyes, sparkling like diamonds, seemed the prisons of a thousand tiny fires, burning with a steady flame; its antenna was outstretched, and felt nervously along the white ceiling, leaving small red dots as indices of its touch. The loathsome thing flew from point to point as I pursued. It easily eluded the missiles I cast at it, and suddenly disappeared through the ventilator.

I picked up from the table the little green vase, in which the resurrected insect had been kept, and found that it was nearly full of the mixture I had left in the saucer. By the agency of these liquids vigorous life had been created in the body of the embalmed insect. That I did not comprehend the principle of this resurrection, through the instrumentality of such subtle materials, was not my fault. The insect was alive, and its place in the vase filled by fluids in which it must have been immersed — I accepted the facts as they were presented.

And the insect lived on human blood! As my eye glanced along the ceiling, the red dots thereon were a revelation of the cause of my wife's suffering; and were proofs of the injection into her veins of a subtle poison, to dry up her blood and parch the fair skin. The full extent of my sorrow, past and future, passed before my straining eyes, like a terrible vision; it shook me as the wind beats a blade of dried grass. I returned to the bed-side of my wife, as a man blasted by the bitterest sorrow, and sharpest agony of the soul. Eternal misery chained me, like a felon, to ghastly horrors; while Imagination decked my future with gloomy robes, and bid me hope only for death, as life would be full of vivid phantasms to blight the most joyous moments.

To love a woman as passionately as I loved my wife, and hold her in one's arms as the last great change of life gradually develops; to feel the beatings of the heart diminish, to see the gasps for breath, to look into the eyes soon to close forever, and read in them the love they look back into yours, are the saddest of duties to the dying. But how terrible the anguish, when the eyes are fixed in an idiotic stare, their light forever extinguished, and the loved one, unconscious of your maddening grief, your piteous, unavailing love, is released by Death from her unhappy life! My wife changed but little in appearance after that memorable night. Her body became emaciated; the skin became black, and hot to the touch; the eyes were half-closed, and their light hidden. She would lie in my arms, at the window, for hours; and, with her cheek pressed closely to my breast, just over my aching heart, would imitate the sweet sounds that had been made by the insect's wings. She never spoke;

nor did she evince the slightest consciousness of my presence. Oftentimes she fiercely pressed her hands upon her head, as if it suffered intolerable pain. In my lamentable helplessness, I could do nothing but support her in my arms, and calmly endure the awful agony of the sight.

Since the night of its disappearance, I had not heard the insect. I cared not whither it had flown, so that it left me in peace. But one afternoon, when the rain was falling in broad sheets, while sitting as usual at the window, my wife lying in my arms, the hated music sounded, faint and low, in the partition separating the study from the bed-room. The strains aroused my wife from her apathy. She raised herself up, repeated them in all their variations, and as she ended, she quickly turned her face toward me, and threw her arms around my neck. There followed a sudden, convulsive gasping for breath, and a short, feeble moan. The arms unclasped, and my wife was dead.

My wife was buried, and I was a monomaniac. My only thought, the only thing for which I cared to live, was, in what manner I might seize and destroy the insect—the cause of all my sorrow. I tore down a large part of the partition, in which it was last heard, but was unsuccessful in my search. I was in despair. I sat for hours at the breach I had made in the wall, listening intently for the slightest sound; but none was heard, and I had come to believe that the insect had crept through some crevice into the chimney, and flown away.

The wall had not been repaired when, one night, in a pleasant stupor, I heard sweet music close to my ear, and felt cool air, and then a sharp stinging pain, lasting only for a second. The low, plaintive music soothed my brain. A delicious languor possessed me. For an instant the sublime solitude of the grave, with musical silence awed my soul. Then, with a noise like the distant cries of a vast army, there rushed upon me a scorching wind and monstrous phantasms.

I lay upon the sand before the front of the grand temple of Abou Simbal, with its three colossal statues hewn out of the mountain, sitting in a majestic agony of silence, watching the Nile, with their staring eyes of stone, as they have watched it for three thousand years. The desert laves them with its billows of sand, half-submerging their huge limbs in its yellow flow, half-revealing their stupendousness, while it contrasts the solemn grey of the rocks and statues with the gleaming of the swift river. I hear voices sounding in the inner temple, where sit the gods in gloomy darkness, where sacrifices were made and agonies endured. As I listen, the magnificent temple dissolves in the soft twilight, and the sublime idea of Sesostri's shadows my soul like a cloud.

Palm-trees and shattered columns! Philae and Isis and Osiris! Mecca of a people of stupendous wonders! Island of beautiful ruins and lovely desolation! The great black rocks inclosing it smoothed their jagged edges, and the moon-light trembled in its avenues, and lingered in the courts of its temples, as the darkness in which I wandered over a great desert plain, was parted by the heavenly vision. One glimpse of its magnificent beauty, and the gloomy black-

ness gathered and swung to-and-fro — the proscenium to a revelation of exquisite loveliness.

Once again, as in by-gone days, I wandered among the majestic ruins of Karnac. Masses of rock carved into graceful shapes stopped my way. Architraves of noble temples, fragments of fallen columns, made me sigh at their downfall. I walked down the avenue of sphinxes, amid mutilated colossi and rudely-sculptured columns, half-buried in the glittering sands of the desert. I lingered in the great halls of temples of stupendous size, where light and darkness struggled for superiority; and the imagination shrunk to nothingness, as it essayed to compass the magnificence of dead Thebes, whose gigantic skeleton lay unburied upon the desert. I was lost in the forest of columns of the grand hall at Karnac, and shivered with supernatural terror beside the granite statues at the entrance to the temple at El Uksorein. I hungered and thirsted in my journeys among these shreds of ancient grandeur, and my soul asked for relief, for terror itself had become colossal. And amid this rubbish of dead cities, oppressed by the very magnitude of desolation, my soul cried for relief. But the hot sun poured down its hottest rays, the monstrous obelisks hid me from the cool, refreshing wind, and vast walls threatened to crush me under their broad surfaces of hieroglyphics. In my agony, I dug a shallow grave in the sand, and hid myself therein, and let the sun pierce it with its rays, and sloughing stone to descend upon it — but I slept.

Suddenly, in my fitful slumber, surrounded by these well-remembered scenes, there shivered the air, shrilly and clearly, a sound that thrilled every nerve in my body, and echoed in my brain, until the air seemed a tumult of piercing chords, that racked the sensitive nerves, and pealed upon the fastidious ear until it was deafened. Vibration after vibration of sound overwhelmed me with its powerful utterances. I rise from my grave and listen for their source. The faint glow of the rising sun steals down the rough sides of the Libyan mountains, and the lordly river sweeps past on its unending journey. Once, twice, thrice, sounds the shrill note; and the fabled Memnon, as gigantic as if it still sat upon its carved throne, upon the western plain of ruined Thebes, strides toward me, falls upon and mangles me. I am stung by thousands of quick, sharp pains; my body burns with their fires. The music grows fainter and is still. Thick darkness overwhelms me, and I unavailingly buffet its noiseless waves.

The memory of the disease that tortured my mind and body during the month succeeding my visions, is rendered prominent by an illusion as painful as it was enduring. I believed that my wife, swathed in linen, aromatic of rich gums and spices, that poisoned the air with their heavy fragrance, sat at my bed-side in all the hideous blackness of her transformation; that she clasped my hand in hers, and gazed into my aching eyes with the blank idiotic stare which had characterized the final stage of her disease.

I did not doubt the reality of the vision; nor would my mind be disabused of its belief by cunning stratagems of kindly-disposed physicians. The close

communion of souls, existing between living beings, was thus continued when one of them was dead. The agony of this companionship was, at first, exceedingly acute. My delirium added nothing to the happiness of this intercourse, and detracted nothing from its terrors. I was continually reminded of the mummy and the insect, and all the incidents connected with their discovery.

Day and night saw no change in the position of my wife, sitting silently at my bed-side. My head weighed me down, as if it were a mountain — a quiet Vesuvius of dormant horrors. My slumbers were infrequent, short and unquiet, full of visions of monstrosities in repose.

A month passed replete with these torments, and I fell into a deep sleep that continued for fifty hours. When I awoke, my consciousness of external things, much enfeebled to be sure, had returned. But the vigor of the mind was forever gone. I could think but slowly, and my conclusions were very imperfect. A lagging, slow-consuming fever, flowed in my veins, and my limbs had been shorn of their strength, and their quickness of movement was lost.

The condition in which I had been found by the servant, and the fatal drops of blood from the wound behind the ear, surely indicated the cause of my suffering, as identical with the cause that had killed my wife. If my many hopes had been blighted, my ambitions crushed, my heavy sorrows made still more heavy, and the swift running current of my life turned backward by the mysterious agency of this terrible insect, there yet flourished and thrived by their extinction a bitter hatred of the cause. Although my brain was dulled in its acuteness of perception, and my body was parched with a fierce unnatural heat that burned the skin into large wrinkles, and scorched the fair complexion to a tawny hue, yet I hoped and planned and lived only to destroy the insect, whose music I could now and then hear in the wall, and from which place of concealment the fiendish thing seldom ventured.

One day, in an unusually dejected mood, I entered my study, closed the door and sat down. In an instant, I heard the music of the insect, above my head; and looking up, saw it clinging to the chandelier, near the ceiling. A sense of ineffable happiness possessed me for several minutes. I thought of all I had suffered since I found the fly in the Egyptian tomb. The minute details of this life of strange catastrophes, culminating in my own sickness, were quickly reviewed. I watched the insect as it clung to the iron pipe of the chandelier, and fluttered its great wings; they fanned delirious music into existence, but I was not charmed; its eyes glistened in all their brilliancy, but I was not fascinated. Suddenly the long legs of the creature loosened their clasp, and it dropped like lead almost upon my upturned face; but before I could strike, it had risen to the ceiling.

It was not an unequal contest that followed this attack. The insect, eluding with ease my furious blows, struck me many times in the face with its antenna, but without penetrating the skin. I struck at it with books, with sticks, and with my fist, as it circled around or above me and fanned my face with its

my assertions, bade them look through the key-hole, looked upon me with white, terror-stricken faces, and fled from the house. The consequence of such a revelation to a stranger would be worse, and cause rumors to be circulated prejudicial to my reputation. So I have concluded that the only manner to rid myself of this living incubus is to kill her by starvation. I have no pity, no heart. The possession of so terrible a creature is worse than murder deliberately committed.

I have boarded up all the windows, and discharged the servants, living alone with my burden.

Having partly overcome my fear, I have occupied a room next the study; and in the quiet of the night, I can hear the woman moving about the room in a slow movement; now and then she sings such strange, unnatural tunes, that in my fear I am compelled to leave the house for several hours.

It seems as if she would never die, for it is nine days since she made her appearance. The other day, when in the parlor listening to an unusual, grating sound in the study, such as I had not before heard there, some plastering fell from the wall separating the rooms, upon the floor. The Form, the Death in Life, was endeavoring to *break through*! I promptly collected building materials, and made the wall three feet thick. I worked night and day—I secured it.

Those are her *dying* groans. But whither—oh! whither! out into what new life goes that undying Egyptian soul? And I? Shall I be linked through eternity by a terrible destiny of unknown mystery, whirling through what Hermes Trismegistus of Thebes calls ‘the downward-borne elements of God?’*

And I too am dying. But a few hours she and I will again know in clearness and in truth the meaning of the words which Sothis wrote on the painted stone in the valley of Memphis, ‘wherein appeared, in but few letters, all the lore of life, and of the soul, and of after-days, and of the eternal flood.’

Free! My will still moves the dead hand which pens these lines, but I hover afar over it like a star. Out into Eternity!

* HERMES, *Poemander*, lib. I.