

# Weird Tales

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# The SHADOWS

by  
HENRY S.  
WHITEHEAD.



"A fearful thing leaped upon him, a dreadful, purplish shadow-thing."

I DID not begin to see the shadows until I had lived in Old Morris' house for more than a week. Old Morris, dead and gone these many years, had been the scion of a still earlier Irish settler in Santa Cruz, of a family which had come into the island when the Danes, failing to colonize its rich acres, had opened it, in the middle of the Eighteenth Century, to colonists; and younger sons of Irish, Scottish, and English gentry had taken up sugar estates and commenced that baronial life which lasted for a century and which declined after the abolition of slavery and the German bounty on beet sugar had started the long

process of West Indian commercial decadence. Mr. Morris' youth had been spent in the French islands.

The shadows were at first so vague that I attributed them wholly to the slight weakness which began to affect my eyes in early childhood, and which, while never materially interfering with the enjoyment of life in general, had necessitated the use of glasses when I used my eyes to read or write. My first experience of them was about 1 o'clock in the morning. I had been at a "Gentlemen's Party" at Hacker's house, "Emerald," as some poetic-minded ancestor of Hacker's had named the family estate three miles out of Christian-

sted, the northerly town, built on the site of the ancient abandoned French town of Bassin.

I had come home from the party and was undressing in my bedroom, which is one of two rooms on the westerly side of the house which stands at the edge of the old "Sunday Market". These two bedrooms open on the market-place, and I had chosen them, rather than the more airy rooms on the other side, because of the space outside. I like to look out on trees in the early mornings, whenever possible, and the ancient market-place is overshadowed with the foliage of hundred-year-old mahogany trees, and a few gnarled "otaheites" and Chinese-bean trees.

I had nearly finished undressing, had noted that my servant had let down and properly fastened the mosquito netting, and had stepped into the other bedroom to open the jalousies so that I might get as much of the night-breeze as possible circulating through the house. I was coming back through the doorway between the two bedrooms, and taking off my dressing gown, at the moment, when the first faint perception of what I have called "the shadows" made itself apparent. It was very dark, just, after switching off the electric light in that front bedroom. I had, in fact, to feel for the doorway. In this I experienced some difficulty, and my eyes had not fully adjusted themselves to the thin starlight seeping in through the slanted jalousies of my own room when I passed through the doorway and groped my way toward the great mahogany four-poster in which I was about to lie down for my belated rest.

I saw the nearest post looming before me, closer than I had expected. Putting out my hand, I grasped—nothing. I winked in some surprize, and peered through the slightly increasing light, as my eyes adjusted themselves to the sudden change.

Yes, surely,—there was the corner of the bedstead just in front of my face! By now my eyes were sufficiently attuned to the amount of light from outside to see a little plainer. I was puzzled. The bed was not where I had supposed it to be. What could have happened? That the servants should have moved my bed without orders to do so was incredible. Besides, I had undressed, in full electric light in that room, not more than a few minutes ago, and then the bed was standing exactly where it had been since I had had it moved into that room a week before. I kicked, gently, before me with a slippers foot, against the place where that bedpost appeared to be standing—and my foot met no resistance.

I stepped over to the light in my own room, and snapped the button. In the sudden glare, everything readjusted itself to normal. There stood my bed, and here in their accustomed places about the room were ranged the chairs, the polished wardrobe (we do not use cupboards in the West India Islands), the mahogany dressing table,—even my clothes which I had hung over a chair where Albertina my servant would find them in the morning and put them (they were of white drill) into the soiled-clothes bag in the morning.

I shook my head. Light and shadow in these islands seem, somehow, different from what they are like at home in the United States! The tricks they play are different tricks, somehow.

I snapped off the light again, and in the ensuing dead blackness, I crawled in under the loose edge of the mosquito netting, tucked it along under the edge of the mattress on that side, adjusted my pillows and the sheets, and settled myself for a good sleep. Even to a moderate man, these gentlemen's parties are rather wearing sometimes. They invariably last too long. I closed my eyes and

was asleep before I could have put these last ideas into words.

**I**N THE morning the recollection of the experience with the bed-being-in-the-wrong-place was gone. I jumped out of bed and into my shower bath at half-past 6, for I had promised O'Brien, captain of the U. S. Marines, to go out with him to the rifle range at La Grande Princesse that morning and look over the butts with him. I like O'Brien, and I am not uninterested in the efficiency of Uncle Sam's Marines, but my chief objective was to watch the pelicans. Out there on the glorious beach of Estate Grande Princesse ("Big Princess" as the Black People call it), a colony of pelicans make their home, and it is a never-ending source of amusement to me to watch them fish. A Caribbean pelican is probably the most graceful fier we have in these latitudes,—barring not even the hurricane bird, that describer of noble arcs and parabolas,—and the most insanely, absurdly awkward creature on land that Providence has cared in a light-hearted moment to create!

I expressed my interest in Captain O'Brien's latest improvements, and while he was talking shop to one of his lieutenants and half a dozen enlisted men he has camped out there, I slipped down to the beach to watch the pelicans fish. Three or four of them were describing curves and turns of indescribable complexity and perfect grace over the green water of the reef-enclosed white beach. Ever and again one would stop short in the air, fold himself up like a jack-knife, turn head downward, his great pouched bill extended like the head of a cruel spear, and drop like a plummet into the water, emerging an instant later with the pouch distended with a fish.

I stayed a trifle too long,—for my eyes. Driving back I observed that I

had picked up several sun-spots, and when I arrived home I polished a set of yellowish sun-spectacles I keep for such emergencies and put them on.

The east side of the house had been shaded against the pouring morning sunlight, and in this double shade I looked to see my eyes clear up. The sun-spots persisted, however, in that annoying, recurrent way they have,—almost disappearing and then returning in undiminished kaleidoscopic grotesqueness,—those strange blocks and parcels of pure color changing as one winks from indigo to brown and from brown to orange and then to a blinding turquoise-blue, according to some eery natural law of physics, within the fluids of the eye itself.

The sun-spots were so persistent that morning that I decided to keep my eyes closed for some considerable time and see if that would allow them to run their course and wear themselves out. Blue and mauve grotesques of the vague, general shape of diving pelicans swam and jumped inside my eyes. It was very annoying. I called to Albertina.

"Albertina," said I, when she had come to the door, "please go into my bedroom and close all the jalousies tight. Keep out all the light you can, please."

"Ahl roight, sir," replied the obedient Albertina, and I heard her slapping the jalousie-blinds together with sharp little clicks.

"De jalousie ahl close, sir," reported Albertina. I thanked her, and proceeded with half-shut eyes into the bedroom, which, not yet invaded with afternoon's sunlight and closely shuttered, offered an appearance of deep twilight. I lay, face down, across the bed, a pillow under my face, and my eyes buried in darkness.

Very gradually, the diving pelican faded out, to a cube, to a dim, recur-

rent blur, to nothingness. I raised my head and rolled over on my side, placing the pillow back where it belonged. And as I opened my eyes on the dim room, there stood, in faint, shadowy outline, in the opposite corner of the room, away from the outside wall on the market-place side, the huge, Danish bedstead I had vaguely noted the night before, or rather, early that morning.

It was the most curious sensation, looking at that bed in the dimness of the room. I was reminded of those fourth-dimensional tales which are so popular nowadays, for the bed impinged, spatially, on my large bureau, and the curious thing was that I could see the bureau at the same time! I rubbed my eyes, a little unwisely, but not enough to bring back the pelican sun-spots into them, for I remembered and desisted pretty promptly. I looked, fixedly, at the great bed, and it blurred and dimmed and faded out of my vision.

Again, I was greatly puzzled, and I went over to where it seemed to stand and walked through it,—it being no longer visible to my now restored vision, free of the effects of the sun-spots,—and then I went out into the “hall”—a West Indian drawing room is called “the hall”—and sat down to think over this strange phenomenon. I could not account for it. If it had been poor Prentice, now! Prentice attended all the “gentlemen’s parties” to which he was invited with a kind of religious regularity, and had to be helped into his car with a similar regularity, a regularity which was verging on the monotonous nowadays, as the invitations became more and more strained. No,—in my case it was, if there was anything certain about it, assuredly not the effects of strong liquors, for barring an occasional sociable swizzel I retained here in my West Indian residence my American convictions that mod-

eration in such matters was a reasonable virtue. I reasoned out the matter of the phantom bedstead,—for so I was already thinking of it,—as far as I was able. That it was a phantom of defective eyesight I had no reasonable doubt. I had had my eyes examined in New York three months before, and the oculist had pleased me greatly by assuring me that there were no visible indications of deterioration. In fact, Dr. Jusserand had said at that time that my eyes were stronger, sounder, than when he had made his last examination six months before.

Perhaps this conviction,—that the appearance was due to my own physical shortcoming, accounts for the fact that I was not (what shall I say?) *disturbed*, by what I saw, or thought I saw. Confront the most thoroughgoing materialist with a ghost, and he will act precisely like anyone else; like any normal human being who believes in the material world as the outward and visible sign of something which animates it. All normal human beings, it seems to me, are sacramentalists!

I was, for this reason, able to think clearly about the phenomenon. My mind was not clouded and bemused with fear, and its known physiological effects. I can, quite easily, record what I “saw” in the course of the next few days. The bed was clearer to my vision and apprehension than it had been. It seemed to have grown in visibility; in a kind of substantialness, if there is such a word! It appeared more *material* than it had before, less shadowy.

I looked about the room and saw other furniture: a huge, old-fashioned mahogany bureau with men’s heads carved on the knuckles of the front legs, Danish fashion. There is precisely such carving on pieces in the museum in Copenhagen, they tell me, those who have seen my drawing of it. I was actually able to do that,

and had completed a kind of plan-picture of the room, putting in all the shadow-furniture, and leaving my own, actual furniture out. Thank the God in whom I devoutly believe,—and know to be more powerful than the Powers of Evil,—I was able to finish that rather elaborate drawing before . . . Well, I must not “run ahead of my story”.

**T**HAT night when I was ready to retire, and had once more opened up the jalousies of the front bedroom, and had switched off the light, I looked, naturally enough under the circumstances, for the outlines of that ghostly furniture. They were much clearer now. I studied them with a certain sense of almost “scientific” detachment. It was, even then, apparent to me that no weakness of the strange complexity which is the human eye could reasonably account for the presence of a well-defined set of mahogany furniture in a room already furnished with real furniture! But I was by now sufficiently accustomed to it to be able to examine it all without that always-disturbing element of fear,—strangeness. I looked at the bedstead and the “roll-back” chairs, and the great bureau, and a ghostly, huge, and quaintly carved wardrobe, studying their outlines, noting their relative positions. It was on that occasion that it occurred to me that it would be of interest to make some kind of drawing of them. I looked the harder after that, fixing the details and the relations of them all in my mind, and then I went into the hall and got some paper and a pencil and set to work.

It was hard work, this of reproducing something which I was well aware was some kind of an “apparition”, especially after looking at the furniture in the dark bedroom, switching on the light in another room and then trying to reproduce. I

could not, of course, make a direct comparison. I mean it was impossible to look at my drawing and then look at the furniture. There was always a necessary interval between the two processes. I persisted through several evenings, and even for a couple of evenings fell into the custom of going into my bedroom in the evening’s darkness, looking at what was there, and then attempting to reproduce it. After five or six days, I had a fair plan, in considerable detail, of the arrangement of this strange furniture in my bedroom,—a plan or drawing which would be recognizable if there were anyone now alive who remembered such an arrangement of such furniture. It will be apparent that a story had been growing up in my mind, or, at least, that I had come to some kind of conviction that what I “saw” was a reproduction of something that had once existed in that same detail and that precise order!

On the seventh night, there came an interruption.

I had, by that time, finished my work, pretty well. I had drawn the room as it would have looked with that furniture in it, and had gone over the whole with India ink, very carefully. As a drawing, the thing was finished, so far as my indifferent skill as a draftsman would permit.

That seventh evening, I was looking over the appearance of the room, such qualms as the eeriness of the situation might have otherwise produced reduced to next-to-nothing partly by my interest, in part by having become accustomed to it all. I was making, this evening, as careful a comparison as possible between my remembered work on paper and the detailed appearance of the room. By now, the furniture stood out clearly, in a kind of light of its own which I can roughly compare only to “phosphorescence.” It was not, quite, that. But that will serve, lame as it

is, and trite perhaps, to indicate what I mean. I suppose the appearance of the room was something like what a cat "sees" when she arches her back,—as Algernon Blackwood has pointed out, in *John Silence*,—and rubs against the imaginary legs of some personage entirely invisible to the man in the armchair who idly wonders what has taken possession of his house-pet.

I was, as I say, studying the detail. I could not find that I had left out anything salient. The detail was, too, quite clear now. There were no blurred outlines as there had been on the first few nights. My own, material furniture had, so to speak, sunk back into invisibility, which was sensible enough, seeing that I had put the room in as nearly perfect darkness as I could, and there was no moon to interfere, those nights.

I had run my eyes all around it, up and down the twisted legs of the great bureau, along the carved ornamentation of the top of the wardrobe, along the lines of the chairs, and had come back to the bed. It was at this point of my checking-up that I got what I must describe as the first "shock" of the entire experience.

Something moved, beside the bed.

I peered, carefully, straining my eyes to catch what it might be. It had been something bulky, a slow-moving object, on the far side of the bed, blurred, somewhat, just as the original outlines had been blurred in the beginning of my week's experience. The now strong and clear outlines of the bed, and what I might describe as its ethereal substance, stood between me and it. Besides, the vision of the slow-moving mass was further obscured by a ghostly mosquito-net, which had been one of the last of the details to come into the scope of my strange night-vision.

Those folds of the mosquito-netting moved,—waved, before my eyes.

Someone, it might almost be imagined, was getting into that bed!

I sat, petrified. This was a bit too much for me. I could feel the little chills run up and down my spine. My scalp prickled. I put my hands on my knees, and pressed hard. I drew several deep breaths. "All-overish" is an old New England expression, once much used by spinsters, I believe, resident in that intellectual section of the United States. Whatever the precise connotation of the term, that was the way I felt. I could feel the reactive sensation, I mean, of that particular portion of the whole experience, in every part of my being,—body, mind, and soul! It was,—paralyzing. I reached up a hand that was trembling violently,—I could barely control it, and the fingers, when they touched the hard-rubber button, felt numb,—and switched on the bedroom light, and spent the next ten minutes recovering.

That night, when I came to retire, I dreaded,—actually dreaded,—what might come to my vision when I snapped off the light. This, however, I managed to reason out with myself. I used several arguments—nothing had so far occurred to annoy or injure me; if this were to be a cumulative experience, if something were to be "revealed" to me by this deliberate process of slow materialization which had been progressing for the last week or so, then it might as well be for some good and useful purpose. I might be, in a sense, the agent of Providence! If it were otherwise; if it were the evil work of some discarnate spirit, or something of the sort, well, every Sunday since my childhood, in church, I had recited the Creed, and so admitted, along with the clergy and the rest of the congregation, that God our Father had created all things,—visible *and invisible!* If it were this part of His creation at work, for *any* purpose,



then He was stronger than they. I said a brief prayer before turning off that light, and put my trust in Him. It may appear to some a bit old-fashioned,—even Victorian! But He does not change along with the current fashions of human thought about Him, and this “human thought,” and “the modern mind,” and all the rest of it, does not mean the vast, the overwhelming majority of people. It involves only a few dozen prideful “intellectuals” at best, or worst!

I switched off the light, and, already clearer, I saw what must have been Old Morris, getting into bed.

I had interviewed old Mr. Bonesteel, the chief government surveyor, a gentleman of parts and much experience, a West Indian born on this island. Mr. Bonesteel, in response to my guarded enquiries,—for I had, of course, already suspected Old Morris; was not my house still called his?—had stated that he remembered Old Morris well, in his own remote youth. His description of that personage and this apparition tallied. This, undoubtedly, was Old Morris. That it was *someone*, was apparent. I felt, somehow, rather relieved to realize that it was he. I knew something about him, you see. Mr. Bonesteel had given me a good description and many anecdotes, quite freely, and as though he enjoyed being called on for information about one of the old-timers like Morris. He had been more reticent, guarded, in fact, when I pressed him for details of Morris' end. That there had been some obscurity,—intentional or otherwise, I could never ascertain,—about the old man, I had already known. Such casual enquiries as I had made on other occasions through natural interest in the person whose name still clung to my house sixty years or more since he had lived in it, had never got me anywhere. I had only gathered what Mr. Bonesteel's more ample ac-

count corroborated: that Morris had been eccentric, in some ways, amusingly so. That he had been extraordinarily well-to-do. That he gave occasional large parties, which, contrary to the custom of the hospitable island of St. Croix, were always required to come to a conclusion well before midnight. Why, there was a story of Old Morris almost literally getting rid of a few reluctant guests, by one device or another, from these parties, a circumstance on which hinged several of the amusing anecdotes of that eccentric person!

Old Morris, as I knew, had not always lived on St. Croix. His youth had been spent in Martinique, in the then smaller and less important town of Fort-de-France. That, of course, was many years before the terrific calamity of the destruction of St. Pierre had taken place, by the eruption of Mt. Pelée. Old Morris, coming to St. Croix in young middle-age,—forty-five or thereabouts,—had already been accounted a rich man. He had been engaged in no business. He was not a planter, not a store-keeper, had no profession. Where he produced his affluence was one of the local mysteries. His age, it seemed, was the other.

“I suppose,” Mr. Bonesteel had said, “that Morris was nearer a hundred than ninety, when he,—ah,—died. I was a child of about eight at that time. I shall be seventy next August-month. That, you see, would be about sixty-two years ago, about 1861, or about the time your Civil War was beginning. Now my father has told me,—he died when I was nineteen,—that Old Morris looked exactly the same when he was a boy! Extraordinary. The Black People used to say——” Mr. Bonesteel fell silent, and his eyes had an old man's dim, far-away look.

“The Black People have some very strange beliefs, Mr. Bonesteel,” said I, attempting to prompt him. “A

good many of them I have heard about myself, and they interest me very much. What particular——”

Mr. Bonesteel turned his mild, blue eyes upon me, reflectively.

“You must drop in at my house one of these days, Mr. Stewart,” said he, mildly. “I have some rare old rum that I’d be glad to have you sample, sir! There’s not much of it on the island these days, since Uncle Sam turned his prohibition laws loose on us in 1922.”

“Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Bonesteel,” I replied. “I shall take the first occasion to do so, sir; not that I care especially for ‘old rum’ except a spoonful in a cup of tea, or in pudding sauce, perhaps; but the pleasure of your company, sir, is always an inducement.”

Mr. Bonesteel bowed to me gravely, and I returned his bow from where I sat in his airy office in Government House.

“Would you object to mentioning what that ‘belief’ was, sir?”

A slightly pained expression replaced my old friend’s look of hospitality.

“All that is a lot of foolishness!” said he, with something like asperity. He looked at me, contemplatively.

“Not that I believe in such things, you must understand. Still, a man sees a good many things in these islands, in a lifetime, you know! Well, the Black People——” Mr. Bonesteel looked apprehensively about him, as though reluctant to have one of his clerks overhear what he was about to say, and leaned toward me from his chair, lowering his voice to a whisper.

“They said,—it was a remark here and a kind of hint there, you must understand; nothing definite,—that Morris had interfered, down there in Martinique, with some of their queer doings, offended the Zombi,—something of the kind; that Morris had made some kind of conditions—oh, it

was very vague, and probably all mixed up!—you know, whereby he was to have a long life and all the money he wanted,—something like that,—and afterward. . .

“Well, Mr. Stewart, you just ask somebody, sometime, about Morris’ death.”

NOT another word about Old Morris could I extract out of Mr. Bonesteel.

But of course he had me aroused. I tried Despard, who lives on the other end of the island, a man educated at the Sorbonne, and who knows, it is said, everything there is to know about the island and its affairs.

It was much the same with Mr. Despard, who is an entirely different kind of person; younger, for one thing, than my old friend the government surveyor.

Mr. Despard smiled, a kind of wry smile. “Old Morris!” said he, reflectively, and paused.

“Might I venture to ask—no offense, my dear sir!—why you wish to rake up such an old matter as Old Morris’ death?”

I was a bit nonplussed, I confess. Mr. Despard had been perfectly courteous, as he always is, but, somehow, I had not expected such an intervention on his part.

“Why,” said I, “I should find it hard to tell you, precisely, Mr. Despard. It is not that I am averse to being frank in the face of such an enquiry as yours, sir. I was not aware that there was anything important,—serious, as your tone implies,—about that matter. Put it down to mere curiosity if you will, and answer or not, as you wish, sir.”

I was, perhaps, a little nettled at this unexpected, and, as it then seemed to me, finicky obstruction being placed in my way. What could there be in such a case for this formal reticence,—these verbal safe-

guards? If it were a "jumbie" story, there was no importance to it. If otherwise, well, I might be regarded by Despard as a person of reasonable discretion. Perhaps Despard was some relative of Old Morris, and there was something a bit off-color about his death. That, too, might account for Mr. Bonesteel's reticence.

"By the way," I enquired, noting Despard's reticence, "might I ask another question, Mr. Despard?"

"Certainly, Mr. Stewart."

"I do not wish to impress you as idly or unduly curious, but—are you and Mr. Bonesteel related in any way?"

"No, sir. We are not related in any way at all, sir."

"Thank you, Mr. Despard," said I, and, bowing to each other after the fashion set here by the Danes, we parted.

I had not learned a thing about Old Morris' death.

I WENT in to see Mrs. Heidenklang. Here, if anywhere, I should find out what was intriguing me.

Mrs. Heidenklang is an ancient Creole lady, relict of a prosperous storekeeper, who lives, surrounded by a certain state of her own, propped up in bed in an environment of a stupendous quantity of lacy things and gauzy ruffles. I did not intend to mention Old Morris to her, but only to get some information about the Zombi, if that should be possible.

I found the old lady, surrounded by her ruffles and lace things, in one of her good days. Her health has been precarious for twenty years!

It was not difficult to get her talking about the Zombi.

"Yes," said Mrs. Heidenklang, "it is extraordinary how the old beliefs and the old words cling in their minds! Why, Mr. Stewart, I was hearing about a trial in the police

court a few days ago. One old Black woman had summoned another for abusive language. On the witness stand the complaining old woman said: 'She cah! me a wuthless ole Cartagene, sir!' Now, think of that! Carthage was destroyed 'way back in the days of Cato the Elder, you know, Mr. Stewart! The greatest town of all Africa. To be a Carthaginian meant to be a sea-robber,—a pirate; that is, a thief. One old woman on this island, more than two thousand years afterward, wishes to call another a thief, and the word 'Cartagene' is the word she naturally uses! I suppose that has persisted on the West Coast and throughout all those village dialects in Africa without a break, all these centuries! The Zombi of the French islands? Yes, Mr. Stewart. There are some extraordinary beliefs. Why, perhaps you've heard mention made of Old Morris, Mr. Stewart. He used to live in your house, you know?"

I held my breath. Here was a possible trove. I nodded my head. I did not dare to speak!

"Well, Old Morris, you see, lived most of his earlier days in Martinique, and, it is said, he had a somewhat adventurous life there, Mr. Stewart. Just what he did or how he got himself involved, seems never to have been made clear, but—in some way, Mr. Stewart, the Black People believe, Morris got himself involved with a very powerful 'Jumbie', and that is where what I said about the persistence of ancient beliefs comes in. Look on that table there, among those photographs, Mr. Stewart. There! that's the place. I wish I were able to get up and assist you. These maids! Everything askew, I have no doubt! Do you observe a kind of fish-headed thing, about as big as the palm of your hand? Yes! that is it!"

I found the "fish-headed thing" and carried it over to Mrs. Heiden-

klang. She took it in her hand and looked at it. It lacked a nose, but otherwise it was intact, a strange, uncouth-looking little godling, made of anciently-polished volcanic stone, with huge, protruding eyes, small, humanlike ears, and what must have been a nose like a Tortola jackfish, or a black witch-bird, with its parrot beak.

"Now that," continued Mrs. Heidenklang, "is one of the very ancient household gods of the aborigines of Martinique, and you will observe the likeness in the idea to the *Lares* and *Penates* of your school-Latin days. Whether this is a *lar* or a *penate*, I can not tell," and the old lady paused to smile at her little joke, "but at any rate he is a representation of something very powerful,—a fish-god of the Caribs. There's something Egyptian about the idea, too, I've always suspected; and, Mr. Stewart, a Carib or an Arawak Indian,—there were both in these islands, you know,—looked much like an ancient Egyptian; perhaps half like your Zuñi or Aztec Indians, and half Egyptian, would be a fair statement of his appearance. These fish-gods had men's bodies, you see, precisely like the hawk-headed and jackal-headed deities of ancient Egypt.

"It was one of those, the Black People say, with which Mr. Morris got himself mixed up,—'Gahd knows' as they say,—how! And, Mr. Stewart, they say, his death was terrible! The particulars I've never heard, but my father knew, and he was sick for several days after seeing Mr. Morris' body. Extraordinary, isn't it? And when are you coming this way again, Mr. Stewart? Do drop in and call on an old lady."

I felt that I was progressing.

THE next time I saw Mr. Bonesteel, which was that very evening, I stopped him on the street and asked for a word with him.

"What was the date, or the approximate date, Mr. Bonesteel, of Mr. Morris' death? Could you recall that, sir?"

Mr. Bonesteel paused and considered.

"It was just before Christmas," said he. "I remember it not so much by Christmas as by the races, which always take place the day after Christmas. Morris had entered his sorrel mare Santurce, and, as he left no heirs, there was no one who 'owned' Santurce, and she had to be withdrawn from the races. It affected the betting very materially and a good many persons were annoyed about it, but there wasn't anything that could be done."

I thanked Mr. Bonesteel, and not without reason, for his answer had fitted into something that had been growing in my mind. Christmas was only eight days off. This drama of the furniture and Old Morris getting into bed, I had thought (and not unnaturally, it seems to me), might be a kind of re-enactment of the tragedy of his death. If I had the courage to watch, night after night, I might be relieved of the necessity of asking any questions. I might witness whatever had occurred, in some weird reproduction, engineered, God knows how!

For three nights now, I had seen the phenomenon of Old Morris getting into bed repeated, and each time it was clearer. I had sketched him into my drawing, a short, squat figure, rather stooped and fat, but possessed of a strange, gorillalike energy. His movements, as he walked toward the bed, seized the edge of the mosquito-netting and climbed in, were, somehow, full of *power*, which was the more apparent since these were ordinary motions. One could not help imagining that Old Morris would have been a tough customer to tackle, for all his alleged age!

This evening, at the hour when this phenomenon was accustomed to enact itself, that is, about 11 o'clock, I watched again. The scene was very much clearer, and I observed something I had not noticed before. Old Morris' *simulacrum* paused just before seizing the edge of the netting, raised its eyes, and began, with its right hand, a motion precisely like one who is about to sign himself with the cross. The motion was abruptly arrested, however, only the first of the four touches on the body being made.

I saw, too, something of the expression of the face that night, for the first time. At the moment of making the arrested sign, it was one of despairing horror. Immediately afterward, as this motion appeared to be abandoned for the abrupt clutching of the lower edge of the mosquito-net, it changed into a look of ferocious stubbornness, of almost savage self-confidence. I lost the facial expression as the appearance sank down upon the bed and pulled the ghostly bedclothes over itself.

Three nights later, when all this had become as greatly intensified as had the clearing-up process that had affected the furniture, I observed another motion, or what might be taken for the faint foreshadowing of another motion. This was not on the part of Old Morris. It made itself apparent as lightly and elusively as the swift flight of a moth across the reflection of a lamp, over near the bedroom door (the doors in my house are more than ten feet high, in fourteen-foot-high walls), a mere flicker of something,—something entering the room. I looked, and peered at that corner, straining my eyes, but nothing could I see save what I might describe as an intensification of the black shadow in that corner near the door, vaguely formed like a slim human figure, though grossly out of all human proportion. The vague

shadow looked purple against the black. It was about ten feet high, and otherwise as though cast by an incredibly tall, thin human being.

I made nothing of it then; and again, despite all this cumulative experience with the strange shadows of my bedroom, attributed this last phenomenon to my eyes. It was too vague to be at that time accounted otherwise than as a mere subjective effect.

But the night following, I watched for it at the proper moment in the sequence of Old Morris' movements as he got into bed, and this time it was distinctly clearer. The shadow, it was, of some monstrous shape, ten feet tall, long, angular, of vaguely human appearance, though even in its merely shadowed form, somehow cruelly, strangely inhuman! I can not describe the cold horror of its realization. The head-part was, relatively to the proportions of the body, short and broad, like a pumpkin head of a "man" made of sticks by boys, to frighten passers-by on Hallowe'en.

The next evening I was out again to an entertainment at the residence of one of my hospitable friends, and arrived home after midnight. There stood the ghostly furniture, there on the bed was the form of the apparently sleeping Old Morris, and there in the corner stood the shadow, little changed from last night's appearance.

The next night would be pretty close to the date of Old Morris' death. It would be that night, or the next at latest, according to Mr. Bonesteel's statement. The next day I could not avoid the sensation of something impending!

I entered my room and turned off the light a little before 11, seated myself, and waited.

The furniture tonight was, to my vision, absolutely indistinguishable from reality. This statement may sound somewhat strange, for it will

be remembered that I was sitting in the dark. Approximating terms again, I may say, however, that the furniture was visible in a light of its own, a kind of "phosphorescence", which apparently emanated from it. Certainly there was no natural source of light. Perhaps I may express the matter thus: that light and darkness were *reversed* in the case of this ghostly bed, bureau, wardrobe, and chairs. When actual light was turned on, they disappeared. In darkness, which, of course, is the absence of physical light, they emerged. That is the nearest I can get to it. At any rate, tonight the furniture was entirely, perfectly, visible to me.

OLD MORRIS came in at the usual time. I could see him with a clarity exactly comparable to what I have said about the furniture. He made his slight pause, his arrested motion of the right hand, and then, as usual, cast from him, according to his expression, the desire for that protective gesture, and reached a hard-looking, gnarled fist out to take hold of the mosquito-netting.

As he did so, a fearful thing leaped upon him, a thing out of the corner by the high doorway,—the dreadful, purplish shadow-thing. I had not been looking in that direction, and while I had not forgotten this newest of the strange items in this fantasmagoria which had been repeating itself before my eyes for many nights, I was wholly unprepared for its sudden appearance and malignant activity.

I have said the shadow was purplish against black. Now that it had taken form, as the furniture and Old Morris himself had taken form, I observed that this purplish coloration was actual. It was a glistening, humanlike, almost metallic-appearing thing, certainly ten feet high, completely covered with great, iridescent fish-scales, each perhaps four square

inches in area, which shimmered as it leaped across the room. I saw it for only a matter of a second or two. I saw it clutch surely and with a deadly malignity, the hunched body of Old Morris, from behind, just, you will remember, as the old man was about to climb into his bed. The dreadful thing turned him about as a wasp turns a fly, in great, flail-like, glistening arms, and never, to the day of my death, do I ever expect to be free of the look on Old Morris' face,—a look of a lost soul who knows that there is no hope for him in this world or the next,—as the great, squat, rounded head, a head precisely like that of Mrs. Heidenkang's little fish-jumbee, descended, revealing to my horrified sight one glimpse of a huge, scythelike parrot-beak which it used, with a nodding motion of the ugly head, to plunge into its writhing victim's breast, with a tearing motion like the barracoota when it attacks and tears. . . .

I fainted then, for that was the last of the fearful picture which I can remember.

I awakened a little after 1 o'clock, in a dark and empty room, peopled by no ghosts, and with my own, more commonplace, mahogany furniture thinly outlined in the faint light of the new moon which was shining cleanly in a starry sky. The fresh night-wind stirred the netting of my bed. I rose, shakily, and went and leaned out of the window, and lit and puffed rapidly at a cigarette, which perhaps did something to settle my jangling nerves.

The next morning, with a feeling of loathing which has gradually worn itself out in the course of the months which have now elapsed since my dreadful experience, I took up my drawing again, and added as well as I could the fearful scene I had witnessed. The completed picture was a horror, crude as is my work in this direction. I wanted to destroy

it, but I did not, and I laid it away under some unused clothing in one of the large drawers of my bedroom wardrobe.

THREE days later, just after Christmas, I observed Mr. Despard's car driving through the streets, the driver being alone. I stopped the boy and asked him where Mr. Despard was at the moment. The driver told me Mr. Despard was having breakfast,—the West Indian midday meal,—with Mr. Bonesteel at that gentleman's house on the Prince's Cross Street. I thanked him and went home. I took out the drawing, folded it, and placed it in the inside breast pocket of my coat, and started for Bonesteel's house.

I arrived fifteen minutes or so before the breakfast hour, and was pleasantly received by my old friend and his guest. Mr. Bonesteel pressed me to join them at breakfast, but I declined.

Mr. Bonesteel brought in a swizzel, compounded of his very old rum, and after partaking of this in ceremonious fashion, I engaged the attention of both gentlemen.

"Gentlemen," said I, "I trust that you will not regard me as too much of a bore, but I have, I believe, a legitimate reason for asking you if you will tell me the manner in which the gentleman known as Old Morris, who once occupied my house, met his death."

I stopped there, and immediately discovered that I had thrown my kind old host into a state of embarrassed confusion. Glancing at Mr. Despard, I saw at once that if I had not actually offended him, I had, by my question, at least put him "on his dignity." He was looking at me severely, rather, and I confess that for a moment I felt a bit like a schoolboy. Mr. Bonesteel caught something of this atmosphere, and looked helplessly at Despard. Both

men shifted uneasily in their chairs; each waited for the other to speak.

Despard, at last, cleared his throat.

"You will excuse me, Mr. Stewart," said he, slowly, "but you have asked a question which for certain reasons, no one, aware of the circumstances, would desire to answer. The reasons are, briefly, that Mr. Morris, in certain respects, was—what shall I say, not to do the matter an injustice?—well, perhaps I might say he was abnormal. I do not mean that he was crazy. He was, though, eccentric. His end was such that stating it would open up a considerable argument, one which agitated this island for a long time after he was found dead. By a kind of general consent, that matter is taboo on the island. That will explain to you why no one wishes to answer your question. I am free to say that Mr. Bonesteel here, in considerable distress, told me that you had asked it of him. You also asked me about it not long ago. I can add only that the manner of Mr. Morris' end was such that—" Mr. Despard hesitated, and looked down, a frown on his brow, at his shoe, which he tapped nervously on the tiled floor of the gallery where we were seated.

"Old Morris, Mr. Stewart," he resumed, after a moment's reflection, in which, I imagined, he was carefully choosing his words, "was, to put it plainly, murdered! There was much discussion over the identity of the murderer, but the most of it, the unpleasant part of the discussion, was rather whether he was killed by human agency or not! Perhaps you will see now, sir, the difficulty of the matter. To admit that he was murdered by an ordinary murderer is, to my mind, an impossibility. To assert that some other agency, something ab-human, killed him, opens up the question of one's belief, one's credulity. 'Magic' and occult agencies are, as you are aware, strongly in-

trenched in the minds of the ignorant people of these islands. None of us cares to admit a similar belief. Does that satisfy you, Mr. Stewart, and will you let the matter rest there, sir?"

I drew out the picture, and, without unfolding it, laid it across my knees. I nodded to Mr. Despard, and, turning to our host, asked:

"As a child, Mr. Bonesteel, were you familiar with the arrangement of Mr. Morris' bedroom?"

"Yes, sir," replied Mr. Bonesteel, and added: "Everybody was! Persons who had never been in the old man's house, crowded in when——" I intercepted a kind of warning look passing from Despard to the speaker. Mr. Bonesteel, looking much embarrassed, looked at me in that helpless fashion I have already mentioned, and remarked that it was hot weather these days!

"Then," said I, "perhaps you will recognize its arrangement and even some of the details of its furnishing," and I unfolded the picture and handed it to Mr. Bonesteel.

If I had anticipated its effect upon the old man, I would have been more discreet, but I confess I was nettled by their attitude. By handing it to Mr. Bonesteel (I could not give it to both of them at once) I did the natural thing, for he was our host. The old man looked at what I had handed him, and (this is the only way I can describe what happened) became, suddenly, as though petrified. His eyes bulged out of his head, his lower jaw dropped and hung open. The paper slipped from his nerveless grasp and fluttered and zigzagged to the floor, landing at Despard's feet. Despard stooped and picked it up, ostensibly to restore it to me, but in doing so, he glanced at it, and had his reaction. He leaped frantically to his feet, and positively goggled at the

picture, then at me. Oh, I was having my little revenge for their reticence, right enough!

"My God!" shouted Despard. "My God, Mr. Stewart, where did you get such a thing?"

Mr. Bonesteel drew in a deep breath, the first, it seemed, for sixty seconds, and added his word.

"Oh my God!" muttered the old man, shakily. "Mr. Stewart, Mr. Stewart! what is it, what is it? where——"

"It is a Martinique fish-zombi, what is known to professional occult investigators like Elliott O'Donnell and William Hope Hodgson as an 'elemental,'" I explained, calmly. "It is a representation of how poor Mr. Morris actually met his death; until now, as I understand it, a purely conjectural matter. Christiansted is built on the ruins of French Bassin, you will remember," I added. "It is a very likely spot for an 'elemental'!"

"But, but," almost shouted Mr. Despard, "Mr. Stewart, where did you get this, its——"

"I made it," said I, quietly, folding up the picture and placing it back in my inside pocket.

"But how——?" this from both Despard and Bonesteel, speaking in unison.

"I saw it happen, you see," I replied, taking my hat, bowing formally to both gentlemen, and murmuring my regret at not being able to remain for breakfast, I departed.

And as I reached the bottom of Mr. Bonesteel's gallery steps and turned along the street in the direction of Old Morris' house, where I live, I could hear their voices speaking together:

"But how, how——?" This was Bonesteel.

"Why, why——?" And that was Despard.