

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor. Copyright, 1927, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for July, 1927

Cover Design	C. C. Senf	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Return of the Master"</i>		
The Return of the Master	H. Warner Munn	6
<i>The Werewolf of Ponkert returns from the pit of Hell to thwart the sinister Master who has wrought his downfall</i>		
Gray Ghouls	Bassett Morgan	21
<i>A creepy weird tale of the South Seas, giant apes and ery murders—a startling story of surgery</i>		
The Impossible	Don Robert Catlin	35
<i>Travis sought out the source of the tricks of Black Magic, and was trailed across the world by a malignant Chinaman</i>		
The Unchained Devil	Roscoe Gilmore Stott	42
<i>The violinist made an evil pledge to a statue, and was redeemed from utter ruin by the love of a girl</i>		

(Continued on Next Page)

The UNCHAINED DEVIL

by ROSCOE
GILMORE
STOTT



"One by one the features took on a gruesome, hideous likeness."

MARCH 3rd, 19—: Perhaps somebody will believe my story. I am a plain man not given to imagination; surely not to lying. You have seen me, no doubt. When you came front at the Durand Theater you saw me. I was the last orchestra member to come out of the "hole"—the one at the far left. You thought me a hunchback, perhaps. But I am not. My fingers are knotted a bit and I have become a little bowed by constant playing of the bass viol. My eyes are not what they once were. My arms have lost their muscular freedom. I am nervous. I know; because of this I shrink from the sight of the front rows at the Durand. Sometimes I twitch more than others. It is not a

disease. Nor is the tightness of my muscles age. I am but forty-two, though I look sixty.

I must tell this story before—well, I will be frank in these written words—*before I pass away*. For I can not live long. My nights of tossing tell me this. My weird hours of pain and nausea tell me. I am fading—fading—fading. I will tell it all, and maybe you, who later read, will believe my story. God, somebody *must* believe me!

It is the story of the Unchained Devil.

Twenty-two years ago I was a pupil of the violin in Munich. Had we possessed great wealth I would have been there as a lad of ten, for our neighbors said that my fingers

were those of a genius. At twelve I played better than our first-violin now at the Durand. We did not know then that Grandfather Printz owned the dye-works at Berlin. Nor did we know that he had standing with the German royalty. Nor did we know that—but I am going too fast.

When I finished at Munich I was a concert violinist. But my time had come for the Prussian army. I rebelled. My mother rebelled and wept because my art would be crushed by three years of army service. One day we learned our fate more certainly. Father came in with a face aflame. A ruling of the throne was about to snatch from him his toy-inventions. He had been years perfecting them. He cursed the ruling powers and said we were to flee to America.

It would take thousands of words to tell all of our flight. I was about to be free in America. I had had distant relatives to return with their stories of America and her spirit of freedom and her great concert-halls and orchestras and her chances for being somebody and getting somewhere. Father sat half-hidden among packs of emigrant belongings and whispered his dreams of toy production when he should reach Boston. Mother stroked my fingers and told of her dreams of me as I stood before great masses of the rich who sat in decorated boxes. And together we laughed and cried—sometimes hours at a time.

Never with us—always alone—sat Grandfather Printz. He sat silent for the ten days we were on ship-board. And to add to the mystery of his silence he leaned against what appeared to be a wooden coffin-box. It was the only possession he had brought, and when it had been loaded by four burly deck-hands he had refused all information as to its contents. Now and then he would take a small book from his pocket

and write down a few German words. He was the only one, however, among us four who knew English, and he spoke it as a scholar. I learned later from Mother that he had been—years before—in diplomatic service and in his early manhood an instructor in the university at Göttingen.

Perhaps it was his great joy, perhaps it was the strain of early army life. Before Father could get a hearing with American manufacturers he died. Grandfather took Mother and me to a little town north of Boston. It was then we knew of his wealth. Much to our surprize, he purchased a beautiful, though small, estate near the Atlantic. On the newly-bought grounds was a grove of hardy trees. In the heart of the grove he had his coffin-box opened for the first time—though the custom-house officers had taken off a slat or two to estimate the duty. It revealed a carefully-crated statue of Baron von Bismarck.

Grandfather was radiant as his workmen placed it.

"This, Franz," he said to me, "this is to be our inspiration—yours and mine. This is the likeness of the world's greatest spirit, the embodiment of all that is power and energy and courage and craftsmanship and ambition. Here is our idol, the Iron Chancellor. Sit here with him in the grove until you catch the mystery of his being. Ponder on the grass by the side of this marble being until you catch his ambition. We have our work to do—you and I. Remember, Franz!"

Grandfather doled out his money solemnly, almost stubbornly. Mother wished to seek work until I should come into my own, but he would not hear to it. I found him once ten days after we had become established. I had been sent by Mother to Boston and had chosen to see the harbor rather than spend my vacant time in some place of amusement. I

came upon Grandfather. He was silently and with rare art charting the harbor. His surprize at seeing me was not as great as his apparent uneasiness. He ordered me away. But secretly I found his notations later. In German words he had written upon each sheet in small characters, "For the Fatherland."

I wonder today, if Grandfather Printz had lived, if the fate of France and Belgium would not have been America's! But he aged rapidly after leaving Munich and he left us suddenly. According to his papers we shipped his remains back to Munich—the ashes of cremation as he had directed. The papers and charts he wished returned to Berlin we did not send. Mother seemed to divine that he had, in his loyalty to the old, been unfaithful to the new. His funds (I do not think we ever found all of them), Mother directed into a finishing course for me at Boston Conservatory and my initial career.

I WILL rush by two years of study at Boston. My chance finally came. I was to be soloist with a great orchestra. Mother told me that afterward managers would flock to me and the critics would herald me. In anticipation of the triumph I went to rest for a month or more back at the little estate which Grandfather had bought.

Perhaps I had been there four days—at least four—when a strange sensation came over me. I am about to be absolutely honest. I do not understand the spirit world. I have never studied the unseen forces of Nature and Mind. I am by trade a musician—a violinist. I merely am writing those sensations which I felt. I do not know that I heard actual voices. I do not know whether or not actual sound-waves were produced. I can only tell *what I actually heard*.

It was late on a Friday afternoon,

I had been telling Mother of my efforts at mastering English at the Conservatory. Later I had gone to my own room and was looking about on the photographic prints—some of Munich, many more of America. Suddenly I saw Grandfather Printz. No form at the Judgment Throne will ever be more real. He appeared to be touched with some great zeal, some big enthusiasm. His words were as clear as his living voice—only not as loud. "Have you forgotten, Franz, our inspiration—yours and mine? Ponder on the grass by the side of this marble being until you catch his ambition. We have our work to do—you and I. Remember, Franz!"

By nature I am obedient. Even then—in my early twenties—I still asked permission of my Mother for almost anything I wished to do. She had often smiled and told me I was a man. But the habit was strong upon me. Now when Grandfather looked straight at me with unusual animation, I never questioned the idea that I had an hallucination. I saw Grandfather—actual, real. His words went into the depths of me. I quickly obeyed. Any other course was out of the question. Without thinking of Mother, I almost ran from the room. I do not recall seeing the buildings in the outer barnlot. I do not remember whether I leapt the fence or opened the gateway. But ten minutes later I was in the heart of the grove, prostrate upon the grass—and I was looking stedfastly upon the marble statue.

Nor will I try to imagine how long I was there. The sun must have crept below the hill. For I saw the image in the moonlight. It was as distinct as a fine portrait.

My story is honest. I do not know how long I was there; I do not even know why I did not hunger. Crouched there, I looked upon the face of my Grandfather's idol—the embodiment of a giant ambition. I

do not recall being numb, though I do not believe I changed my position for at least three hours.

All of a sudden that finely chiseled face changed. I believe the sky had become overcast, for it was necessary to look more intently to see the different features of the face. The face of von Bismarck faded out into an intense blackness. I would judge that it remained so perhaps for three or four minutes of time. The mystery held me closely and I stood to my feet and came a bit closer. One by one the features took on a most gruesome, hideous likeness. The nose became more pointed and slender than Grandfather's idol's; the whole contour was longer and thinner and sterner, if anything. Before my gaze there came into being a face of some terrible and mighty force or personality or being—call it anything you will. To me it was nothing short of *the face of Satan*. Not differing from the pictured likenesses, it shone almost as a dull-red sun against a stormy sky. There was no recognition. No smile—indeed, there appeared to be nothing personal.

Yet I heard a voice. Before God's throne, I would still declare I heard a voice!

The words came slowly and yet with a terrible power that seemed to make them burn their way into my consciousness. The words sank so deep that I could scarcely breathe. I know I was absolutely motionless. I felt the sensation of an all-engulfing power of deity—call it what you wish. The voice was harsh and as if strained in the production. Like brands each word burned its way into memory.

"Today," said the voice, "is the night of toll. All things have their price. You have bound me for years. You have shackled me and trodden me down. Loose me!—loose me or you shall die! Loose me and your dream shall come true! Loose me

and your art shall become wonderful and terrible—and your name shall be glorious. Loose me! Loose me! I am bound, who should be free. Loose me and into your fingers shall flow my power—into your soul shall then come the rivers of ambition that none shall stem. I am the lord of power! I am the king of all yet to be!"

As quickly as the words were spoken the direful visage faded out and I found my eyes looking once more upon von Bismarck. I fell to the ground as in a great swoon. When I awoke, Mother was weeping over me. She said they had not found me until dawn.

MARCH 6th: The pain of the writing stayed my stiff fingers from their task. You who read will never know the labor of my record. But I will go on today after my rest. You must know. You must judge.

When I was strong again I went back to the statue. This time with a strange fear that hung upon me like a cloak. But I saw nothing. Neither did I hear a word.

Today I met an American girl. She lives near by and seems to be an artist. Yes, she told me—a sculptress. She interested me. But I am not for women. I have my art.

She told me to call her Minna. She is frail and unlike my old-country women friends.

She asked all about my story. I did not tell her—she is young and beautiful and she might—well, a woman can change one's ambition.

I may see her again after my debut.

Her eyes were large and wistful and she—am I an egotist to think she is drawn to me?

Bah, with the entire sex!

The night before I should go to New York for the debut I saw Grandfather. This was the last time I ever saw his image. He repeated only a phrase and went from view

into the darkness of my sleeping room. But the phrase branded me with a swift purpose. He said:

"This is to be our inspiration . . ."

I walked slowly this time out into the grove. My mood was unlike anything I had known. A strange receptivity possessed me completely. I felt as one being led into an unknown land by an untried pathway.

I had not long to wait. The spell did not hold by mystery as on the first occasion. I looked about me, I even walked about the statue and watched the sun go down behind the hill. I felt oddly unafraid.

With the darkness the terrible face crept slowly into view and I no longer viewed my grandparent's idol but the being of satanic likeness and power.

"You will loose me, my musician! You have accepted my terms. You will pay the toll . . . And yours is to be the power and glory and kingdom forever and ever and ever."

The voice faded and with it the terrible face. I turned about with deliberate purpose and walked slowly back to my mother, whom I found with friends on the veranda. I was not shaken. Nor, to be honest, had I known that I had reached any decisions or made any surrender. I do know that a very queer sense of relief possessed me utterly. I amused my mother's friends with some stories of Conservatory life. I found myself laughing with a strange intoxication. Mother even felt my cheeks, fearing a fever had come with the approach of my great night. I brought out Grandfather's ancient tankard and, as we were all of one blood, we drank rather heartily of the beer and ate with enthusiasm of the German cakes which Mother always baked with such fine skill. I am not by nature a wit; in fact I have always taken myself too seriously. Yet on that strange night—that eve of victory—I became a punster of the worst sort. I sang lilting

snatches of folk-song, too; and to cap the evening's mirth, I told the party that on the morrow I would play like *this*, and—oh God, I tell the truth!—I actually transfixed them, my mother most of all. At the close of the rhapsody I had chosen, my mother held me for minutes to her breast and every woman in the party kissed me with the silly sentimentality of the French.

Minna was among them.

I think she had asked Mother if she might not hear me sometime.

The wistfulness of her eyes! I am twice her age at least. Why do I even think of her a moment? We are unlike. She asked me for a moment in the far corner away from the others. She showed me rough sketches of her sculpture. She, too, has a gift.

But she has no ambition. She will not go far. She managed to reply to my question about her career by blushing and saying a home must be more remarkable than all the careers in the world.

She is weakly sentimental that way.

MARCH 20th: What surrender I ever made will always be a mystery to me. I can not name an hour when I ever said to imp or god that I would do thus or so. But heart decisions are unlike mind decisions. The mind may speak one thing and the heart be acting along lines quite contrary. The heart in its decision is still; the heart is never loud, never boastful; but it wins over the mind—will or nil.

I went to my debut with no concern. In fact my calm puzzled my friends and made my mother sorrowful. She had never known an artist to feel such an abandon, such buoyancy—such utter lack of concern. (My fingers ache with their task. I will finish another day.)

April 2nd: I could not go on. For days I have been in physical misery.

I can hardly play the bass viol at the Durand. I am aging. I am old and stiff—at forty-two!

But the story. I dare not delay it. Perhaps I can never finish it, if I neglect my chance.

With nimble fingers, I wish to tell you of that great evening. But cramped fingers can not write with rapidity, and besides, you all have read—ah, you have read of Franz Printz!

I was *everything* that night! Listen, for I am not a boasting, lying man. In the name of the Blessed Virgin, I am even thought modest. But it is God's truth—I *was* everything. I was Passion running with wild abandon down flowering garden-paths to find Youth eager and unafraid in the secret of alluring caves. I was Power with my hand on the river, the mill, the dynamo, and the forge. I was Love leading to a million sacrifices. I was fiendish, wooing, haunting, and Sir Galahad on holy quests. I was man in his striving. God with forgiving, Satan with his subtle mockeries.

Yes, they covered me with flowers and they shrieked their voices hoarse because their hands could not show me their homage. I was mobbed, kissed and applauded until—

When it was, I do not know. I was heavy with drinking and only awake enough from to time to time to feel bare-breasted women leaning about me. It had been a mad carnival of the low and beast in me. Mother told me later that I left the stage with critics begging for photographs and interviews. But, so she told, I broke away in a delirium of joy and said that *I owed a man something and that I must first pay him!*

It was Minna who found me. How strange are the ways of good women! She searched for me until she found me. She took her own reputation into her own hands. She fell down by my side with painted women showering me with their hectic at-

tentions. She dragged me away against every protest. Leaning upon her frail shoulder I came to a park.

The girl confessed her love for me. But I can have none of it. I have a work—if they will only let me—and they *will let me*—whatever gods there be!

Days later, when I crept back, the critics found me and the managers crowded upon me. For genius is readily forgiven its dissipations. But when I found my violin it had been smashed. I recall vaguely that I hit a stage-hand who stood in my way after my last great number. And with managers pleading for my booking time, I discovered that I had truly paid a price dearer than my goal. My fingers were worked, not by nimble and trained, but by surely knotted muscles. My whole being was actually warped. I could not stand straight. I seemed muscle-bound and every atom of vital power seemed to have left me—helpless. Mother and the managers spared no expense. I was rubbed and massaged; I was bathed in every known mineral water. But to no avail.

I paid my toll.

And later with difficulty I managed to hold the stubby bow and for years I have been at the Durand with a bass viol—the purchase of the last money given me by a broken-hearted mother. The estate went, the friends, all save Minna, forsook me; God turned away from me.

Even the Unchained Devil never visited me again.

But Minna came. She came night after night to share with me the scant luxury of a walk to my home or the jars of a surface-car.

She bathes my fingers.

Last night she told me that maybe I could come to see her work. It is an exhibit or something. But I will never go. I will not ruin her standing, whatever it has grown to be. I am an outcast, a failure! . . . I could cry from the pain of humiliation

until the stars shriek back at me in mockery.

Love has welled up in my hard heart. I love the girl in return—but I am man enough never to let her know. She is gentle—like the whisper of new spring in Central Park. She must have some wealth. I do not understand it. But I will be fair to her. I will give her no wreck.

April 15th: I must add this. Some unseen power compels me. I have just gotten word from the manager of the Durand to whom in a moment of terrible despair I showed these slowly-penned pages of my life. He says that I must be treated yet again. That new invention and discovery will play upon my tightened, stiffened muscles and I yet will play. He has loaned me a violin and I am trying daily to play.

April 20th: The Symphony Orchestra needs a first-violin. My conductor at the Durand has recommended me.

MAY 1st: It is evening. I have surrendered the bass viol at the Durand and daily they are rubbing my muscles. I have come to the old estate bought by Grandfather. It will be sunset soon. I am here pondering on the grass by the side of a marble statue. Something has lured, something has called me. I do not know what; I do not care. Only I am here to watch and listen—and obey.

It is so near the dusk that I can hardly see to write . . . Oh God, the

face is changing into the likeness of Satan! And the lips are moving—moving as they did so long ago. Yes, it is the same voice and I hear the same words.

“Loose me! Loose me and I will——”

Oh, I will, I will, I will! I will loose you and I shall play in the Symphony with the first violins! I shall . . .

May 15th: It was Minna’s hand that stopt me at the writing. It was the warm heart of a wonder-woman who took me away.

“I have something to show you, My Own!” she explained.

Then she took me back to the garden. Her own funds had purchased it all back for me.

Then I looked on the miracle that is Love. And, Oh you who read my honest story, don’t forget, as I did, that Love is more than all Art or Genius or Power.

This was the miracle. She had with skilled fingers changed the statue of Bismarck—von Bismarck the chancellor—into a being scarce a fourth the size—and it was the likeness of a little child!

“And,” she went on, “this is to be our new inspiration until—until the time comes, if it ever comes, that God shall give to us a living child—sent from His glory-throne to lead us aright.”

Daily she has massaged my fingers with more than skill.

Today I took a bow into my hands.

I can play!—I can play a violin!

