**INTRODUCTION**

Every short story has three parts, which may be called Setting or Background, Plot or Plan, and Characters or Character. If you are going to write a short story, as I hope you are, you will find it necessary to think through these three parts so as to relate them interestingly and naturally one to the other; and if you want to assimilate the best that is in the following stories, you will do well to approach them by the same three routes.

The Setting or Background gives us the time and the place of the story with such details of custom, scenery, and dialect as time and place imply. It answers the questions When? Where? The Plot tells us what happened. It gives us the incidents and events, the haps or mishaps, that are interwoven to make up the warp and woof of the story. Sometimes there is hardly any interweaving; just a plain plan or simple outline is followed, as in “The Christmas Carol” or “The Great Stone Face”. We may still call the core of these two stories the Plot, if we want to, but Plan would be the more accurate. This part of the story answers the question What? Under the heading Characters or Character we study the, personalities of the men and women who move through the story and give it unity and coherence. Sometimes, as in “ The Christmas Carol” or ‘Markheim,” one character so dominates the others that they are mere spokes in his hub or incidents in his career. But in “The Gift of the Magi,” though more space is given to Della, she and Jim act from the same motive and contribute equally to the development of the story. In one of our stories the

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main character is a dog, but he is so human that we may still say that the chief question to be answered under this heading is Who?

Many books have been written about these three parts of a short story, but the great lesson to be learned is that the excellence of a story, long or short, consists not in the separate excellence of the Setting or of the Plot or of the Characters but in the perfect blending of the three to produce a single effect or to impress a single truth. If the Setting does not fit the Plot, if the Plot does not rise gracefully from the Setting, if the Characters do not move naturally and self-revealingly through both, the story is a failure. Emerson might well have had our three parts of the short story in mind when he wrote,

All are needed by each one;

Nothing is fair or good alone.

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**SHORT STORIES**

**I.ESTHER1**

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

[Setting. The events take place in Susa, the capital of Persia, in the reign of Ahasuerus, or Xerxes (485-465 B.C.). This foreign locate intensifies the splendid Jewish patriotism that breathes through the story from beginning to end. If the setting had been in Jerusalem, Esther could not have preached the noble doctrine, “When in Rome, don’t do as Rome does, but be true to the old ideals of home and race.”

Plot. “Esther” seems to me the best-told story in the Bible. Observe how the note of empty Persian bigness versus simple Jewish faith is struck at the very beginning and is echoed to the end. Thus, Ahasuerus ruled over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, the opening banquet lasted one hundred and eighty-seven days, the king’s bulletins were as unalterable as the tides, the gallows erected was eighty-three feet high, the beds were of gold and silver upon a pavement of red and blue and white and black marble, the money wrested from the Jews was to be eighteen million dollars, etc. The word “banquet” occurs twenty times in this short story and only twenty times in all the remaining thirty-eight books of the Old Testament. In other words, Ahasuerus and his trencher-mates ate and drank as much in five days as had been eaten and drunk by all the other Old Testament characters from “ Genesis” to “Malachi.”

Note also the contrast between the two queens, the two prime ministers, the two edicts, and the two later banquets.

1From the Old Testament, Authorized Version.

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The most masterly part of the plot is the handling of events between these banquets. Read again from chapter v, beginning at verse 9, through chapter vi, and note how skillfully the pen is held. In motivation as well as in symmetry and naturalness the story is without a peer. There is humor, too, in the solemn deliberations over Vashti’s “No” (chapter i, verses 12-22) and in the strange procession led by pedestrian Haman (chapter vi, verses 6-11).

The purpose of the story was to encourage the feast of Purim (chapter ix, verses 20-32) and to promote national solidarity. It may be compared to “A Christmas Carol,” which was written to restore the waning celebration of Christmas, and to our Declaration of Independence, which is re-read on every Fourth of July to quicken our sense of national fellowship. But “Esther” is more than an institution. It is the old story of two conflicting civilizations, one representing bigness, the other greatness; one standing for materialism, the other for idealism; one enthroning the body, the other the spirit.

Characters. These are finely individualized, though each seems to me a type. Ahasuerus is a tank that runs blood or wine according to the hand that turns the spigot. He was used for good but deserves and receives no credit for it. No man ever missed a greater opportunity. He was brought face to face with the two greatest world-civilizations of history; but, understanding neither, he remains only a muddy place in the road along which Greek and Hebrew passed to world-conquest. Haman, a blend of vanity and cruelty and cowardice but not without some power of initiative, was a fit minister for his king. He lives in history as one who, better than in Hamlet’s illustration, was “hoist with his own petard,” the petard in his case being a gallows. He typifies also the just fate of the man who, spurred by the hate of one, includes in his scheme of extermination a whole people. Collective vengeance never received a better illustration nor a more exemplary punishment. Mordecai is altogether admirable in refusing to kowtow to Haman and in

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**ESTHER**

his unselfish devotion to his fair cousin, Esther. The noblest sentiment in the book --- “ Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” --- comes from Mordecai.

But the leading character is Esther, not because she was “fair and beautiful” but because she was hospitable to the great thought suggested by Mordecai. None but a Jew could have asked, “Who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” and none but a Jew could have answered as Esther answered. The question implied a sense of personal responsibility and of divine guidance far beyond the reach of Persian or Mede or Greek of that time. It calls up many a quiet hour when Esther and Mordecai talked together of their strange lot in this heathen land and wondered if the time would ever come when they could interpret their trials in terms of national service rather than of meaningless fate. Imagine the blank and bovine expression that Ahasuerus or Haman would have turned upon you if you had put such a question to either of them. But in the case of Esther, Mordecai’s appeal unlocked an unused reservoir of power that has made her one of the world’s heroines. She had her faults, or rather her limitations, but since her time men have gone to the stake, have built up and torn down principalities and powers, on the dynamic conviction that they had been sent to the kingdom “for such a time as this.”]

**CHAPTER I**

**THE STORY OF VASHTI**

1. Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over a hundred and seven and twenty provinces,)
2. That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace,

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1. In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him:
2. When he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honour of his excellent majesty many days, even a hundred and fourscore days.
3. And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king’s palace;
4. Where were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings and pillars of marble: the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble.
5. And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, (the vessels being diverse one from another,) and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.
6. And the drinking was according to the law; none did compel: for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man’s pleasure.
7. Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.
8. On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,
9. To bring Vashti the queen before the king with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty: for she was fair to look on.
10. But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king’s commandment by his chamberlains: therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

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**ESTHER**

1. Then the king said to the wise men, which knew the times, (for so was the king’s manner toward all that knew law and judgment:
2. And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king’s face, and which sat the first in the kingdom,)
3. What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahasuerus by the chamberlains?
4. And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus.
5. For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, The king Ahasuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.
6. Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king’s princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.
7. If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.
8. And when the king’s decree, which he shall make, shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great,) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour, both to great and small.
9. And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan:

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1. For he sent letters into all the king’s provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

**CHAPTER II**

**ESTHER MADE QUEEN**

1. After these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.
2. Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king:
3. And let the king appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, that they may gather together all the fair young virgins unto Shushan the palace, to the house of the women, unto the custody of Hegai the king’s chamberlain, keeper of the e women; and let their things for purification be given them
4. And let the maiden which pleaseth the king be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king; and he did so.
5. Now in Shushan the palace there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite;
6. Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jeconiah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.
7. And he brought up Hadassah, that is, Esther, his uncle’s daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful; whom Mordecai, when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

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**ESTHER**

1. So it came to pass, when the king’s commandment and his decree was heard, and when many maidens were gathered together unto Shushan the palace, to the custody of Hegai, that Esther was brought also unto the king’s house, to the custody of Hegai, keeper of the women.
2. And the maiden pleased him, and she obtained kindness of him; and he speedily gave her things for purification, with such things as belonged to her, and seven maidens, which were meet to be given her, out of the king’s house: and he preferred her and her maids unto the best place of the house of the women.
3. Esther had not shewed her people nor her kindred: for Mordecai had charged her that she should not shew it.
4. And Mordecai walked every day before the court of the women’s house, to know how Esther did, and what should become of her.
5. Now when every maid’s turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women,)
6. Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatso- ever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king’s house.
7. In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king’s chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.
8. Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing but what

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Hegai the king’s chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

1. So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.
2. And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.
3. Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther’s feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.
4. And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king’s gate.
5. Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people, as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

**MORDECAI SAVES THE KING’S LIFE**

1. In those days, while Mordecai sat in the king’s gate, two of the king’s chamberlains, Bigthan and Teresh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
2. And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen; and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai’s name.
3. And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out; therefore they were both hanged on a tree: and it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

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1. If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king’s treasuries.
2. And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews’ enemy.
3. And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.
4. Then were the king’s scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king’s lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahasuerus was it written, and sealed with the king’s ring.
5. And the letters were sent by posts into all the king’s provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.
6. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.
7. The posts went out, being hastened by the king’s commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink; but the city Shushan was perplexed.

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**CHAPTER IV**

**FASTING AMONG THE JEWS**

1. When Mordecai perceived all that was done, Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry;
2. And came even before the king’s gate: for none might enter into the king’s gate clothed with sackcloth.
3. And in every province, whithersoever the king’s com- mandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.
4. So Esther’s maids and her chamberlains came and told it her. Then was the queen exceedingly grieved; and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.
5. Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king’s chamber- lains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.
6. So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king’s gate.
7. And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king’s treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.
8. Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.
9. And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

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1. Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him com- mandment unto Mordecai;
2. All the king’s servants, and the people of the king’s provinces, do know, that whosoever, whether man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live: but I have not been called to come in unto the king these thirty days.
3. And they told to Mordecai Esther’s words.

**THE GREAT APPEAL**

1. Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king’s house, more than all the Jews.
2. For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?
3. Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,
4. Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish.
5. So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

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**CHAPTER V**

**THE COURAGE OF ESTHER**

1. Now it came to pass on the third day, that Esther put on her royal apparel, and stood in the inner court of the king’s house, over against the king’s house: and the king sat upon his royal throne in the royal house, over against the gate of the house.
2. And it was so, when the king saw Esther the queen standing in the court, that she obtained favour in his sight and the king held out to Esther the golden sceptre that was in his hand. So Esther drew near, and touched the top of the sceptre.
3. Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou, queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.
4. And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.
5. Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste, that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.
6. And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.
7. Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is;
8. If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall pre- pare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.

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**BETWEEN BANQUETS**

1. Then went Haman forth that day joyful and with a glad heart: but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king’s gate, that he stood not up, nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.
2. Nevertheless Haman refrained himself: and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife.
3. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king.
4. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had pre- pared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king.
5. Yet all this availeth me nothing, so long as I see Mordecai the Jew sitting at the king’s gate.
6. Then said Zeresh his wife and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow speak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon: then go thou in merrily with the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman; and he caused the gallows to be made.

**CHAPTER VI**

**BETWEEN BANQUETS (CONTINUED)**

1. On that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.
2. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king’s chamberlains, the

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**ESTHER**

keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

1. And the king said, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then said the king’s servants that ministered unto him, There is nothing done for him.
2. And the king said, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king’s house, to speak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.
3. And the king’s servants said unto him, Behold, Haman standeth in the court. And the king said, Let him come in.
4. So Haman came in. And the king said unto him, What shall be done unto the man whom the king delight- eth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart, To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?
5. And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour,
6. Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head:
7. And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king’s most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.
8. Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king’s gate: let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.
9. Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of

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the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

1. And Mordecai came again to the king’s gate. But Haman hasted to his house mourning, and having his head covered.
2. And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.
3. And while they were yet talking with him, came the king’s chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

**CHAPTER VII**

**ESTHER’S BANQUET: HAMAN HANGED**

1. So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.
2. And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.
3. Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:
4. For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king’s damage.
5. Then the king Ahasuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

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1. Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king,
2. And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes, let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king’s provinces:
3. For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?
4. Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold, I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.
5. Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king’s name, and seal it with the king’s ring: for the writing which is written in the king’s name, and sealed with the king’s ring, may no man reverse.
6. Then were the king’s scribes called at that time in the third month, that is, the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred twenty and seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.
7. And he wrote in the king Ahasuerus’ name, and sealed it with the king’s ring, and sent letters by posts on horseback, and riders on mules, camels, and young dromedaries:
8. Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life,

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to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish, all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey,

1. Upon one day in all the provinces of king Ahasuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.
2. The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.
3. So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.
4. And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.
5. The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.
6. And in every province, and in every city, whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

**CHAPTER IX**

**THE JEWS DEFEND THEMSEVES**

1. Now in the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar, on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king’s commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them; (though it was turned to the contrary, that the Jews had rule over them that hated them,)

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1. The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt: and no man could withstand them; for the fear of them fell upon all people.
2. And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews; because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.
3. For Mordecai was great in the king’s house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.
4. Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.
5. And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.
6. And Parshandatha, and Dalphon, and Aspatha,
7. And Poratha, and Adalia, and Aridatha,
8. And Parmashta, and Arisai, and Aridai, and Vajezatha,
9. The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.
10. On that day the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace was brought before the king.
11. And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king’s provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.
12. Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan to do to-morrow also according unto this day’s decree, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged upon the gallows,

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**ESTHER**

1. And the king commanded it so to be done: and the decree was given at Shushan; and they hanged Haman’s ten sons.
2. For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan; but on the prey they laid not their hand.
3. But the other Jews that were in the king’s provinces gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand, but they laid not their hands on the prey,
4. On the thirteenth day of the month Adar; and on the fourteenth day of the same rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.
5. But the Jews that were at Shushan assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.
6. Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar a day of gladness and feasting; and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

**THE FEAST OF PURIM**

1. And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far,
2. To establish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, yearly,
3. As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day: that they should make them

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days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

1. And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them;
2. Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews, had devised against the Jews to destroy them, and had cast Pur, that is, the lot, to consume them, and to destroy them;
3. But when Esther came before the king, he commanded by letters that his wicked device, which he devised against the Jews, should return upon his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows.
4. Wherefore they called these days Purim after the name of Pur. Therefore for all the words of this letter, and of that which they had seen concerning this matter, and which had come unto them,
5. The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them, so as it should not fail, that they would keep these two days according to their writing, and according to their appointed time every year;
6. And that these days should be remembered and kept throughout every generation, every family, every province, and every city; and that these days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their seed.
7. Then Esther the queen, the daughter of Abihail, and Mordecai the Jew, wrote with all authority, to confirm this second letter of Purim.
8. And he sent the letters unto all the Jews, to the hundred twenty and seven provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, with words of peace and truth,
9. To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed,

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**ESTHER**

according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had enjoined them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, the matters of the fastings and their cry.

1. And the decree of Esther confirmed these matters of Purim; and it was written in the book.

**CHAPTER X**

**MORDECAI PRIME MINISTER**

1. And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.
2. And all the acts of his power and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?
3. For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his seed.

**II. THE HISTORY OF ALI BABA AND THE FORTY ROBBERS1**

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

[Setting. This story, like “Esther,” takes place in Persia. The stories of “The Arabian Nights” as a whole probably originated in India, were modified and augmented by the Persians, and had the finishing touches put upon them by the Arabians. Bagdad on the Tigris is the city that figures most prominently in the stories, and the good caliph Haroun Al-Raschid (or Alraschid), who ruled from 786 to 809, A.D., is the monarch most often mentioned.

“A goodly place, a goodly time,

For it was in the golden prime

Of good Haroun Alraschid.”

However old the germs of the stories are, the form in which we have them hardly antedates the year 1450. The absence of all mention of coffee and tobacco precludes, at least, a date much later. They began to be translated into the languages of Europe during the reign of Queen Anne and, with the exception of the Old Testament, have been the chief orientalizing influence in modern literature. The setting of “Ali Baba shows the four characteristics of all these Perso-Arabian tales: it has to do with town life, not country life; it presupposes one faith, the Mohammedan; it shows a fondness for magic; and it takes for granted an audience interested not in moral or ethical distinctions but in story-telling for story-telling’s sake.

1From “The Arabian Nights”

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**I**

**CASSIM, ALI BABA’S BROTHER, DISCOVERED AND KILLED BY THE ROBBER’S**

There once lived in a town of Persia two brothers, one named Cassim and the other Ali Baba. Their father divided his small property equally between them. ‘Cassim married a very rich wife, and became a wealthy merchant. Ali Baba married a woman as poor as himself, and lived by cutting wood and bringing it upon three asses into the town to sell.

One day, when Ali Baba had cut just enough wood in theforest to load his asses, he noticed far off a great cloud of dust. As it drew nearer, he saw that it was made by a body of horse- men, whom he suspected to be robbers. Leaving the asses, he climbed a large tree which grew on a high rock, and had branches thick enough to hide him completely while he saw what passed beneath. The troop, forty in number, all well mounted and armed, came to the foot of the rock on which the tree stood, and there dismounted. Each man unbridled his horse, tied him to a shrub, and hung about his neck a bag of corn. Then each of them took off his saddle-bag, which from its weight seemed to Ali Baba full of gold and silver. One, whom he took to be their captain, came under the tree in which Ali Baba was concealed; and, making his way through some shrubs, spoke the words: “Open, Sesame.”1 As soon as the captain of the robbers said this, a door opened in the rock, and after he had made all his troop enter before him, he followed them, when the door shut again of itself.

The robbers stayed some time within, and Ali Baba, earfull of being caught, remained in the tree. At last the door opened again, and the captain came out first, and stood to see all the

1Sesame (pronounced séssamy), a small grain.

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troop pass by him. Then Ali Baba heard him make the door close by saying: “Shut, Sesame.” Every man at once bridled his horse, fastened his wallet, and mounted again. When the captain saw them all ready, he put himself at their head, and they returned the way they had come.

Ali Baba watched them out of sight, and then waited some time before coming down. Wishing to see whether the captain’s words would have the same effect if he should speak them, he found the door hidden in the shrubs, stood before it, and said: “ Open, Sesame.” Instantly the door flew wide open.

Instead of a dark, dismal cavern, Ali Baba was surprised to see a large chamber, well lighted from the top, and in it all sorts of provisions, rich bales of silk, brocade and carpeting, gold and silver ingots in great heaps, and money in bags.

Ali Baba went boldly into the cave, and collected as much of the gold coin, which was in bags, as he thought his asses could carry. When he had loaded them with the bags, he laid wood over them so that they could not be seen, and, passing out of the door for the last time, stood before it and said: “Shut, Sesame.” The door closed of itself, and he made the best of his way to town.

When he reached home, he carefully closed the gate of his little yard, threw off the wood, and carried the bags into the house. They were emptied before his wife, and the great heap of gold dazzled her eyes. Then he told her the whole adventure, and warned her, above all things, to keep it secret.

Ali Baba would not let her take the time to count it out as she wished, but said: “I will dig a hole and bury it.”

“But let us know as nearly as may be,” she said, “how much we have. I will borrow a small measure, and measure it, while you dig a hole.”

Away she ran to the wife of Cassim, who lived near by, and asked for a measure. The sister-in-law, knowing Ali Baba’s

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poverty, was curious to learn what sort of grain his wife wished to measure out, and artfully managed to put some suet in the bottom of the measure before she handed it over. Ali Baba’s wife wanted to show how careful she was in small matters, and, after she had measured the gold, hurried back, even while her husband was burying it, with the borrowed measure, never noticing that a coin had stuck to its bottom.

“What,” said Cassim’s wife, as soon as her sister-in-law had left her, “has Ali Baba gold in such plenty that he measures it? Whence has he all this wealth?” And envy possessed her breast.

When Cassim came home, she said to him: “Cassim, you think yourself rich, but Ali Baba is much richer. He does not count his money; he measures it.” Then she explained to him how she had found it out, and they looked together at the piece of money, which was so old that they could not tell in what prince’s reign it was coined.

Cassim, since marrying the rich widow, had never treated Ali Baba as a brother, but neglected him. Now, instead of be- ing pleased, he was filled with a base envy. Early in the morn- ing, after a sleepless night, he went to him and said: “Ali Baba, you pretend to be wretchedly poor, and yet you measure gold. My wife found this at the bottom of the measure you borrowed yesterday.”

Ali Baba saw that there was no use of trying to conceal his good fortune, and told the whole story, offering his brother part of the treasure to keep the secret.

“I expect as much,” replied Cassim haughtily; “but I must know just where this treasure is and how to visit it myself when I choose. Otherwise I will inform against you, and you will lose even what you have now.”

Ali Baba told him all he wished to know, even to the words he must speak at the door of the cave.

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Cassim rose before the sun the next morning, and set out for the forest with ten mules bearing great chests which he meant to fill. With little trouble he found the rock and the door, and, standing before it, spoke the words: “Open, Sesame.” The door opened at once, and when he was within closed upon him. Here indeed were the riches of which his brother had told. He quickly brought as many bags of gold as he could carry to the door of the cavern; but his thoughts were so full of his new wealth, that he could not think of the word that should let him out. Instead of “Sesame,” he said “Open, Barley,” and was much amazed to find that the door remained fast shut. He named several sorts of grain, but still the door would not open.

Cassim had never expected such a disaster, and was so frightened that the more he tried to recall the word “Sesame,” the more confused his mind became. It was as if he had never heard the word at all. He threw down the bags in his hands, and walked wildly up and down, without a thought of the riches lying round about him.

At noon the robbers visited their cave. From afar they saw Cassim’s mules straggling about the rock, and galloped full speed to the cave. Driving the mules out of sight, they went at once, with their naked sabres in their hands, to the door, which opened as soon as the captain had spoken the proper words before it.

Cassim had heard the noise of the horses’ feet, and guessed that the robbers had come. He resolved to make one effort for his life. As soon as the door opened, he rushed out and threw the leader down, but could not pass the other robbers, who with their scimitars soon put him to death.

The first care of the robbers was to examine the cave. They found all the bags Cassim had brought to the door, but did not miss what Ali Baba had taken. As for Cassim himself, they

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guessed rightly that, once within, he could not get out agam; but how he had managed to learn their secret words that let him in, they could not tell. One thing was certain, - there he was; and to warn all others who might know their secret and follow in Cassim’s footsteps, they agreed to cut his body into four quarters - to hang two on one side and two on the other, within the door of the cave. This they did at once, and leaving the place of their hoards well closed, mounted their horses and set out to attack the caravans they might meet.

**II**

**THE MANNER OF CASSIM’S DEATH CONCEALED**

When night came, and Cassim did not return, his wife be- came very uneasy. She ran to Ali Baba for comfort, and he told her that Cassim would certainly think it unwise to enter the town till night was well advanced. By midnight Cassim’s wife was still more alarmed, and wept till morning, cursing her desire to pry into the affairs of her brother and sister-in-law. In the early day she went again, in tears, to Ali Baba.

He did not wait for her to ask him to go and see what had happened to Cassim, but set out at once for the forest with his three asses. Finding some blood at the door of the cave, he took it for an ill omen; but when he had spoken the words, and the door had opened, he was struck with horror at the dismal sight of his brother’s body. He could not leave it there, and hastened within to find something to wrap around it. Laying the body on one of his asses, he covered it with wood. The other two asses he loaded with bags of gold, covering them also with wood as before. Then bidding the door shut, he came away, but stopped some time at the edge of the forest, that he might not go into the town before night. When he reached home he left the two asses, laden with gold, in his little yard

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for his wife to unload, and led the other to his sister-in-law’s house.

Ali Baba knocked at the door, which was opened by Morgiana, a clever slave, full of devices to conquer difficulties. When he came into the court and unloaded the ass, he took Morgiana aside, and said to her:---

“You must observe a strict secrecy. Your master’s body is

contained in these two panniers. We must bury him as if he had died a natural death. Go now and tell your mistress. I leave the matter to your wit and skillful devices.”

They placed the body in Cassim’s house, and, charging Morgiana to act well her part, Ali Baba returned home with his ass.

Early the next morning, Morgiana went to a druggist, and asked for a sort of lozenge used in the most dangerous illness. When he asked her for whom she wanted it, she answered with a sigh: “My good master Cassim. He can neither eat nor speak.” In the evening she went to the same druggist, and with tears in her eyes asked for an essence given to sick persons for whose life there is little hope. “Alas!” said she, “I am afraid even this will not save my good master.”

All that day Ali Baba and his wife were seen going sadly between their house and Cassim’s, and in the evening nobody was surprised to hear the shrieks and cries of Cassim’s wife and Morgiana, who told everybody that her master was dead.

The next morning at daybreak she went to an old cobbler, who was always early at work, and, putting a piece of gold in his hand, said:---

“Baba Mustapha, you must bring your sewing-tackle and come with me; but I must tell you, I shall blindfold you when we reach a certain place.”

“Oh! oh!” replied he, “you would have me do something against my conscience or my honor.”

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“God forbid!” said Morgiana, putting another piece of gold in his hand; “only come along with me, and fear nothing.”

Baba Mustapha went with Morgiana, and at a certain place she bound his eyes with a handkerchief, which she never un- loosed till they had entered the room of her master’s house, where she had put the corpse together.

“Baba Mustapha,” said she, “you must make haste, and sew the parts of this body together, and when you have done, I will give you another piece of gold.”

After Baba Mustapha had finished his task, she blindfolded him again, gave him the third piece of gold she had promised, and, charging him with secrecy, took him back to the place where she had first bound his eyes. Taking off the bandage, she watched him till he was out of sight, lest he should return and dog her; then she went home.

At Cassim’s house she made all things ready for the funeral, which was duly performed by the imaum1 and other ministers of the mosque. Morgiana, as a slave of the dead man, walked in the procession, weeping, beating her breast, and tearing her hair. Cassim’s wife stayed at home, uttering doleful cries with the women of the neighbourhood, who, according to custom, came to mourn with her. The whole quarter was filled with sounds of sorrow.

Thus the manner of Cassim’s death was hushed up, and, be- sides his widow, Ali Baba, and Morgiana, the slave, nobody in the city suspected the cause of it. Three or four days after the funeral, Ali Baba removed his few goods openly to his sister-in- law’s house, in which he was to live in the future; but the money he had taken from the robbers was carried thither by night. As for Cassim’s warehouse, Ali Baba put it entirely under the charge of his eldest son.

1Imaum, a Mohammedan priest.

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“A dead body!” exclaimed the robber amazed.

“Yes, yes,” answered Baba Mustapha; “I see you want to know more, but you shall not.”

The robber felt sure that he was on the right track. He put a piece of gold into Baba Mustapha’s hand, and said to him:---

“I do not want to learn your secret, though you could safely trust me with it. The only thing I ask of you is to show me the house where you stitched up the dead body.”

“I could not do that,” replied Baba Mustapha, “if I would. I was taken to a certain place, whence I was led blindfold to the house, and afterwards brought back again in the same manner.”

“Well,” replied the robber, “you may remember a little of the way that you were led blindfold. Come, let me blind your eyes at the same place. We will walk together, and perhaps you may recall the way. Here is another piece of gold for you.”

This was enough to bring Baba Mustapha to his feet. They soon reached the place where Morgiana had bandaged his eyes, and here he was blindfolded again. Baba Mustapha and the robber walked on till they came to Cassim’s house, where Ali Baba now lived. Here the old man stopped, and when the thief pulled off the band, and found that his guide could not tell him whose house it was, he let him go. But before he started back for the forest himself, well pleased with what he had learned, he marked the door with a piece of chalk which he had ready in his hand.

Soon after this Morgiana came out upon some errand, and when she returned she saw the mark the robber had made, and stopped to look at it.

“What can this mean?” she said to herself. “Somebody intends my master harm, and in any case it is best to guard against the worst.” Then she fetched a piece of chalk, and marked two or three doors on each side in the same manner, saying nothing to her master or mistress.

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When the robber rejoined his troop in the forest, and told of his good fortune in meeting the one man that could have helped him, they were all delighted.

“Comrades,” said the captain, “we have no time to lose. Let us set off at once, well armed and disguised, enter the town by twos, and join at the great square. Meanwhile our comrade who has brought us the good news and I will go and find out the house, and decide what had best be done.”

Two by two they entered the town. Last of all went the captain and the spy. When they came to the first of the houses which Morgiana had marked, the spy pointed it out. But the captain noticed that the next door was chalked in the same manner, and asked his guide which house it was, that or the first. The guide knew not what answer to make, and was still more puzzled when he and the captain saw five or six houses marked after this same fashion. He assured the captain, with an oath, that he had marked but one, and could not tell who had chalked the rest, nor could he say at which house the cobbler had stopped.

There was nothing to do but to join the other robbers, and tell them to go back to the cave. Here they were told why they had all returned, and the guide was declared by all to be worthy of death. Indeed, he condemned himself, owning that he ought to have been more careful, and prepared to receive the stroke which was to cut off his head.

The safety of the troop still demanded that the second comer to the cave should be found, and another of the gang offered to try it, with the same penalty if he should fail. Like the other robber, he found out Baba Mustapha, and, through him, the house, which he marked, in a place remote from sight, with red chalk.

But nothing could escape Morgiana’s eyes, and when she went out, not long after, and saw the red chalk, she argued

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with herself as before, and marked the other houses near by in the same place and manner.

The robber, when he told his comrades what he had done, prided himself on his carefulness, and the captain and all the troop thought they must succeed this time. Again they entered the town by twos; but when the robber and his captain came to the street, they found the same trouble. The captain was enraged, and the robber as much confused as the former guide had been. Thus the captain and his troop went back again to the cave, and the robber who had failed willingly gave himself up to death.

**IV**

**THE ROBBERS, EXCEPT THE CAPTAIN, DISCOVERED AND KILLED BY MORGIANA**

The captain could not afford to lose any more of his brave fellows, and decided to take upon himself the task in which two had failed. Like the others, he went to Baba Mustapha, and was shown the house. Unlike them he put no mark on it, but studied it carefully and passed it so often that he could not possibly mistake it.

When he returned to the troop, who were waiting for him in the cave, he said:---

“Now, comrades, nothing can prevent our full revenge, as I am certain of the house. As I returned I thought of a way to do our work, but if any one thinks of a better, let him speak.”

He told them his plan, and, as they thought it good, he ordered them to go into the villages about, and buy nineteen mules, with thirty-eight large leather jars, one full of oil, and the others empty. Within two or three days they returned with the mules and the jars, and as the mouths of the jars were rather too narrow for the captain’s purpose, he caused them to

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be widened. Having put one of his men into each jar, with the weapons which he thought fit, and having a seam wide enough open for each man to breathe, he rubbed the jars on the outside with oil from the full vessel.

Thus prepared they set out for the town, the nineteen mules loaded with the thirty-seven robbers in jars, and the jar of oil, with the captain as their driver. When he reached Ali Baba’s door, he found Ali Baba sitting there taking a little fresh air after his supper. The captain stopped his mules, and said:---

“I have brought some oil a great way to sell at to-morrow’s market ; and it is now so late that I do not know where to lodge. Will you do me the favour to let me pass the night with you ?”

Though Ali Baba had seen the captain in the forest, and had heard him speak, he could not know him in the disguise of an oil-merchant, and bade him welcome. He opened his gates for the mules to go into the yard, and ordered a slave to put them in a stable and feed them when they were unloaded, and then called Morgiana to get a good supper for his guest. After supper he charged her afresh to take good care of the stranger, and said to her:---

“To-morrow morning I intend to go to the bath before day; take care to have my bathing linen ready; give it to Abdalla” (which was his slave’s name), “and make me some good broth against my return.” After this he went to bed.

In the mean time the captain of the robbers went into the yard, and took off the lid of each jar, and told his people what they must do. To each, in turn, he said:

“As soon as I throw some stones out of the chamber window where I lie, do not fail to come out, and I will join you at once.”

Then he went into the house, and Morgiana showed him his chamber, where he soon put out the light, and laid himself down in his clothes.

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To carry out Ali Baba’s orders, Morgiana got his bathing linen ready, and bade Abdalla to set on the pot for the broth; but soon the lamp went out, and there was no more oil in the house, nor any candles. She knew not what to do, till the slave reminded her of the oil-jars in the yard. She thanked him for the thought, took the oil-pot, and went out. When she came nigh the first jar, the robber within said softly: “Is it time?”

Of course she was surprised to find a man in the jar instead of the oil, but she saw at once that she must keep silence, as Ali Baba, his family, and she herself were in great danger. Therefore she answered, without showing any fear: “Not yet, but presently.” In this manner she went to all the jars and gave the same answers, till she came to the jar of oil.

By this means Morgiana found that her master had admitted to his house thirty-eight robbers, of whom the pretended oil- merchant, their captain, was one. She made what haste she could to fill her oil-pot, and returned to her kitchen, lighted her lamp, and taking a great kettle went back to the oil-jar and filled it. Then she set the kettle on a large wood fire, and as soon as it boiled went and poured enough into every jar to stifle and destroy the robber within.

When this deed, worthy of the courage of Morgiana, was done without any noise, as she had planned, she returned to the kitchen with the empty kettle, put out the lamp, and left just enough of the fire to make the broth. Then she sat silent, resolving not to go to rest till she had seen through the window that opened on the yard whatever might happen there.

It was not long before the captain of the robbers got up, and, seeing that all was dark and quiet, gave the appointed signal by throwing little stones, some of which hit the jars, as he doubted not by the sound they gave. As there was no response, he threw stones a second and a third time, and could not imagine why there was no answer to his signal.

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Much alarmed, he went softly down into the yard, and, going to the first jar to ask the robber if he was ready, smelt the hot boiled oil, which sent forth a steam out of the jar. From this he suspected that his plot was found out, and, looking into the jars one by one, he found that all his gang were dead. Enraged to despair, he forced the lock of a door that led from the yard to the garden, and made his escape. When Morgiana saw him go, she went to bed, well pleased that she had saved her master and his family.

Ali Baba rose before day, and went to the baths without knowing of what had happened in the night. When he returned he was very much surprised to see the oil-jars in the yard and the mules in the stable.

“God preserve you and all your family,” said Morgiana when she was asked what it meant; “you will know better when you have seen what I have to show you.”

So saying she led him to the first jar, and asked him to see if there was any oil. When he saw a man instead, he started back in alarm.

“Do not be afraid,” said Morgiana; “he can do neither you nor anybody else the least harm. He is dead. Now look into all the other jars.”

Ali Baba was more and more amazed as he went on, and saw all the dead men and the sunken oil-jar at the end. He stood looking from the jars to Morgiana, till he found words to ask: “And what is become of the merchant?”

“Merchant !” answered she; “he is as much one as I am.”

Then she led him into the house, and told of all that she had done, from the first noticing of the chalk-mark to the death of the robbers and the flight of their captain. On hearing of these brave deeds from Morgiana’s own lips, Ali Baba said to her:---

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“God, by your means, has delivered me from death. For the first token of what I owe you, I give you your liberty from this moment, till I can fully reward you as I intend.”

Near the trees at the end of Ali Baba’s long garden, he and Abdalla dug a trench large enough to hold the bodies of the robbers. When they were buried there, Ali Baba hid the jars and weapons; and as the mules were of no use to him, he sent them at different times to be sold in the market by his slave.

**V**

**THE CAPTAIN DISCOVERED AND KILLED BY MORGIANA**

The captain of the forty robbers had returned to his cave in the forest, but found himself so lonely there that the place became frightful to him. He resolved at the same time to avenge the fate of his comrades, and to bring about the death of Ali Baba. For this purpose he returned to the town, dis- guised as a merchant of silks. By degrees he brought from his cavern many sorts of fine stuffs, and to dispose of these he took a warehouse that happened to be opposite Cassim’s, which Ali Baba’s son had occupied since the death of his uncle.

He took the name of Cogia Houssain, and as a newcomer was very civil to the merchants near him. Ali Baba’s son was one of the first to converse with him, and the new merchant was most friendly. Within two or three days Ali Baba came to see his son, and the captain of the robbers knew him at once, and soon learned from his son who he was. From that time forth he was still more polite to Ali Baba’s son, who soon felt bound to repay the many kindnesses of his new friend.

As his own house was small, he arranged with his father that on a certain afternoon, when he and the merchant were

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a good dancer, and on this occasion outdid herself in graceful and surprising motions. At the last, she took the tabor from Abdalla’s hand, and held it out like those who dance for money.

Ali Baba put a piece of gold into it, and so did his son. When Cogia Houssain saw that she was coming to him, he pulled out his purse from his bosom to make her a present; but while he was putting his hand into it, Morgiana, with courage worthy of herself, plunged the poniard into his heart.

“Unhappy woman!” exclaimed Ali Baba, “what have you done to ruin me and my family?”

“It was to preserve, not to ruin you,” answered Morgiana. Then she showed the dagger in Cogia Houssain’s garment, and said: “Look well at him, and you will see that he is both the pretended oil-merchant and the captain of the band of forty robbers. As soon as you told me that he would eat no salt with you, I suspected who it was, and when I saw him, I knew.”

Ali Baba embraced her, and said: “Morgiana, I gave you your liberty before, and promised you more in time; now I would make you my daughter-in-law. Consider,” he said, turning to his son, “that by marrying Morgiana, you marry the preserver of my family and yours.”

The son was all the more ready to carry out his father’s wishes, because they were the same as his own, and within a few days he and Morgiana were married, but before this, the captain of the robbers was buried with his comrades, and so secretly was it done, that their bones were not found till many years had passed, when no one had any concern in making this strange story known.

For a whole year Ali Baba did not visit the robbers’ cave. At the end of that time, as nobody had tried to disturb him, he made another journey to the forest, and, standing before the entrance to the cave, said: “Open, Sesame.” The door opened

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**ALI BABA AND THE FORTY ROBBERS**

at once, and from the appearance of everything within the cavern, he judged that nobody had been there since the captain had fetched the goods for his shop. From this time forth, he took as much of the treasure as his needs demanded. Some years later he carried his son to the cave, and taught him the secret, which he handed down in his family, who used their good fortune wisely, and lived in great honor and splendor.

**III. RIP VAN WINKLE1 (1819)**

BY WASHINGTON IRVING (1783 – 1859)

[Setting. The Hudson River and the Kaatskill Mountains were first brought into literature through this story, Irving being the first American master of local color and local tradition. Since 1870 the American short story, following the example of Irving, has been the leading agency by which the South, the West, and New England have made known and thus perpetuated their local scenery, legends, customs, and dialect. Irving, however, seemed afraid of dialect. There were, it is true, many legends about the Hudson before Irving was born, but they had found no expression in literature. Mrs. Josiah Quincy, who made a voyage up the Hudson in 1786, wrote: “Our captain had a legend for every scene, either supernatural or traditional or of actual occurrence during the war, and not a mountain reared its head unconnected with some marvellous story.” Irving, therefore, did not have to manufacture local traditions; he only gave them wider currency and fitted them more artistically into their natural settings.

Irving chose for his setting the twenty years that embrace the Revolutionary War because the numerous social and political changes that took place then enabled him to bring Rip back after his sleep into a “ world not realized.” You will appreciate much better the art of this time-setting if you will try your hand on a somewhat similar story and place it between 1820

1From “The Sketch Book.” The elaborate Knickerbocker notes with which Irving, following a passing fashion of the time, sought to mystify the reader, are here omitted. They are hindrances now rather than helps.

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and 1840, when railroads, telegraph lines, and transatlantic steamers made a new world out of the old; or, if your story takes place in the South, you might make your background include the interval between 1855 and 1875, when slavery was abolished, when the old plantation system was changed, when the names of new heroes emerged, and when new social and political and industrial problems had to be grappled with.

Plot. The plot is divided into two almost equal parts, which we may call “before and after taking.” A recent critic has said: “The actual forward movement of the plot does not begin until the sentence, ‘In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill Mountains.’” The critic has missed, I think, the main structural excellence of the story. Dame Van Winkle, the children who hung around Rip, his own children, his dog, the social club at the inn with the portrait of George the Third, Van Bummel, and Nicholas Vedder, all had to be mentioned before Rip began the ascent of the mountain. Otherwise, when he returned, we should have had no means of measuring the swift passage of time during his sleep. Each is a skillfully set timepiece or milepost which, on Rip’s return, misleads the poor fellow at every turn and thus produces the exact kind of “totality of effect” that Irving intended. The forward movement of the plot begins with this careful planning of the route that Rip is to take on his return trip, when twenty years shall have done their work. Cut out these points de repère and see how effectively the forward movement of the plot is retarded.

Characters. Rip was the first character in American fiction to be known far beyond our own borders, and he remains one of the best known. In the class with hin belong James Feni- more Cooper’s Leatherstocking (or Natty Bumppo), Harriet Beecher Stowe’s Uncle Tom, Joel Chandler Harris’s Uncle Remus, and Mark Twain’s Huckleberry Finn and Tom Sawyer. He has been called un-American, and so he is, and so Irving

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plainly intended him to be. If one insists on finding a bit of distinctive Americanism somewhere in the story, he will find it not in Rip but in the number and rapidity of the changes that American life underwent during the twenty years that serve as background to the story. George William Curtis calls Rip “the constant and unconscious satirist of American life,” but surely Irving would have smiled at finding so purposeful a mission laid upon the stooping shoulders of his vagabond ne’er-do-well hero. Rip is no satirist, conscious or unconscious. He is a provincial Dutch type, such as Irving had seen a hundred times; but he is so lovable and is sketched so lovingly that we hardly realize the consummate art, the human sympathy, and the keen powers of observation that have gone into his making. Every other character in the story, including Wolf, is a sidelight on Rip. Of “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” Irving said: “The story is a mere whimsical band to connect the descriptions of scenery, customs, manners, etc.” The emphasis, in other words, was put on the setting. Of “Rip Van Winkle” might he not have said, “The descriptions of scenery, customs, manners, etc. are but so many channels through which the character of Rip finds outlet and expression “?]

Whoever has made a voyage up the Hudson must remember the Kaatskill Mountains. They are a dismembered branch of the great Appalachian family, and are seen away to the west of the river, swelling up to a noble height, and lording it over the surrounding country. Every change of season, every change of weather, indeed, every hour of the day, produces some change in the magical hues and shapes of these mountains, and they are regarded by all the good wives, far and near, as perfect barometers. When the weather is fair and settled, they are clothed in blue and purple, and print their bold outlines on the clear evening sky; but sometimes when the rest of the landscape is cloudless they will gather a hood of gray

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vapors about their summits, which, in the last rays of the setting sun, will glow and light up like a crown of glory.

At the foot of these fairy mountains, the voyager may have descried the light smoke curling up from a village, whose shingle- roofs gleam among the trees, just where the blue tints of the upland melt away into the fresh green of the nearer landscape. It is a little village of great antiquity, having been founded by some of the Dutch colonists in the early time of the province, just about the beginning of the government of the good Peter Stuyvesant (may he rest in peace!), and there were some of the houses of the original settlers standing within a f 56/305 of small yellow bricks brought from Holland, windows and gable fronts, surmounted with weathercocks.

In that same village, and in one of these very houses (which, to tell the precise truth, was sadly time-worn and weather beaten), there lived many years since, while the country was yet a province of Great Britain, a simple, good-natured fellow, of the name of Rip Van Winkle. He was a descendant of the Van Winkles who figured so gallantly in the chivalrous days of Peter Stuyvesant, and accompanied him to the siege of Fort Christina. He inherited, however, but little of the martial char- acter of his ancestors. I have observed that he was a simple, good-natured man; he was, moreover, a kind neighbor, and an obedient henpecked husband. Indeed, to the latter circumstance might be owing that meekness of spirit which gained him such universal popularity; for those men are most apt to be obsequious and conciliating abroad, who are under the discipline of shrews at home. Their tempers, doubtless, are rendered pliant and malleable in the fiery furnace of domestic tribulation; and a curtain lecture is worth all the sermons in the world for teaching the virtues of patience and long-suffering. A termagant wife may, therefore, in some respects be considered a tolerable blessing, and if so, Rip Van Winkle was thrice blessed.

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Certain it is, that he was a great favorite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles; and never failed, when- ever they talked those matters over in their evening gossipings, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories of ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighbourhood.

The great error in Rip’s composition was an aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar’s lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling- piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor, even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody’s business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong,

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Rip’s sole domestic adherent was his dog Wolf, who was as much henpecked as his master; for Dame Van Winkle regarded them as companions in idleness, and even looked upon Wolf with an evil eye, as the cause of his master’s going so often astray. True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods ---but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all- besetting terrors of a woman’s tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle he would fly to the door with yelping precipitation.

Times grew worse and worse with Rip Van Winkle as years of matrimony rolled on; a tart temper never mellows vith age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use. For a long while he used to console himself, when driven from home, by frequenting a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village, which held its sessions on a bench before a small inn, designated by a rubicund portrait of His Majesty George the Third. Here they used to sit in the shade through a long lazy summer’s day, talking listlessly over village gossip, or telling endless sleepy stories about nothing. But it would have been worth any statesman’s money to have heard the profound discussions that sometimes took place, when by chance an old newspaper fell into their hands from some passing traveller. How solemnly they would listen to the contents, as drawled out by Derrick Van Bummel, the school-master, a dapper, learned little man, who was not to be daunted by the most gigantic word in the dictionary; and how sagely they would deliberate upon public events some months after they had taken place.

The opinions of this junto were completely controlled by

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Nicholas Vedder, a patriarch of the village, and landlord of the inn, at the door of which he took his seat from morning till night, just moving sufficiently to avoid the sun and keep in the shade of a large tree; so that the neighbors could tell the hour by his movements as accurately as by a sun-dial. It is true he was rarely heard to speak, but smoked his pipe incessantly. His adherents, however (for every great man has his adherents), perfectly understood him, and knew how to gather his opinions. When anything that was read or related displeased him, he was observed to smoke his pipe vehemently, and to send forth short, frequent and angry puffs; but when pleased, he would inhale the smoke slowly and tranquilly, and emit it in light and placid clouds; and sometimes, taking the pipe from his mouth, and letting the fragrant vapor curl about his nose, would gravely nod his head in token of perfect approbation.

From even this stronghold the unlucky Rip was at length routed by his termagant wife, who would suddenly break in upon the tranquillity of the assemblage and call the members all to naught; nor was that august personage, Nicholas Vedder himself, sacred from the daring tongue of this terrible virago, who charged him outright with encouraging her husband in habits of idleness.

Poor Rip was at last reduced almost to despair; and his only alternative, to escape from the labor of the farm and clamor of his wife, was to take gun in hand and stroll away into the woods. Here he would sometimes seat himself at the foot of a tree, and share the contents of his wallet with Wolf, with whom he sympathized as a fellow-sufferer in persecution. “Poor Wolf,” he would say, “thy mistress leads thee a dog’s life of it; but never mind, my lad, whilst I live thou shalt never want a friend to stand by thee!” Wolf would wag his tail, look wistfully in his master’s face, and if dogs can feel pity, I verily believe he reciprocated the sentiment with all his heart.

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In a long ramble of the kind on a fine autumnal day, Rip had unconsciously scrambled to one of the highest parts of the Kaatskill Mountains. He was after his favorite sport of squirrel shooting, and the still solitudes had echoed and re-echoed with the reports of his gun. Panting and fatigued, he threw himself, late in the afternoon, on a green knoll, covered with mountain herbage, that crowned the brow of a precipice. From an opening between the trees he could overlook all the lower country for many a mile of rich woodland. He saw at a distance the lordly Hudson, far, far below him, moving on its silent but majestic course, with the reflection of a purple cloud, or the sail of a lagging bark, here and there sleeping on its glassy bosom, and at last losing itself in the blue highlands.

On the other side he looked down into a deep mountain glen, wild, lonely, and shagged, the bottom filled with fragments from the impending cliffs, and scarcely lighted by the reflected rays of the setting sun. For some time Rip lay musing on this scene; evening was gradually advancing, the mountains began to throw their long blue shadows over the valleys; he saw that it would be dark long before he could reach the village, and he heaved a heavy sigh when he thought of encountering the terrors of Dame Van Winkle.

As he was about to descend, he heard a voice from a distance, hallooing, “Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle!” He looked round, but could see nothing but a crow winging its solitary flight across the mountain. He thought his fancy must have deceived him, and turned again to descend, when he heard the same cry ring through the still evening air: “Rip Van Winkle! Rip Van Winkle l”- at the same time Wolf bristled up his back, and giving a low growl, skulked to his master’s side, looking fearfully down into the glen. Rip now felt a vague apprehension stealing over him; he looked anxiously in the same direction, and perceived a strange figure slowly toiling

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up the rocks, and bending under the weight of something he carried on his back. He was surprised to see any human being in this lonely and unfrequented place; but supposing it to be some one of the neighborhood in need of his assistance, he hastened down to yield it.

On nearer approach he was still more surprised at the singularity of the stranger’s appearance. He was a short, square- built old fellow, with thick bushy hair, and a grizzled beard. His dress was of the antique Dutch fashion: a cloth jerkin strapped round the waist, several pairs of breeches, the outer one of ample volume, decorated with rows of buttons down the sides, and bunches at the knees. He bore on his shoulder a stout keg, that seemed full of liquor, and made signs for Rip to approach and assist him with the load. Though rather shy and distrustful of this new acquaintance, Rip complied with his usual alacrity; and mutually relieving one another, they clambered up a narrow gully, apparently the dry bed of a mountain torrent. As they ascended, Rip every now and then heard long rolling peals like distant thunder, that seemed to issue out of a deep ravine, or rather cleft, between lofty rocks, toward which their rugged path conducted. He paused for a moment, but supposing it to be the muttering of one of those transient thunder-showers which often take place in mountain heights, he proceeded. Passing through the ravine, they came to a hollow, like a small amphitheatre, surrounded by perpendicular precipices, over the brinks of which impending trees shot their branches, so that you only caught glimpses of the azure sky and the bright evening cloud. During the whole time Rip and his companion had labored on in silence; for though the former marvelled greatly what could be the object of carrying a keg of liquor up this wild mountain, yet there was something strange and incomprehensible about the unknown, that inspired awe and checked familiarity.

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On entering the amphitheatre, new objects of wonder presented themselves. On a level spot in the center was a company of odd-looking personages playing at ninepins. They were dressed in a quaint outlandish fashion; some wore short doublets, others jerkins, with long knives in their belts, and most of them had enormous breeches of similar style with that of the guide’s. Their visages, too, were peculiar; one had a large beard, broad face, and small piggish eyes; the face of another seemed to consist entirely of nose, and was surmounted by a white sugar-loaf hat, set off with a little red cock’s tail. They all had beards, of various shapes and colors. There was one who seemed to be the commander. He was a stout old gentleman, with a weather-beaten countenance; he wore a laced doublet, broad belt and hanger, high-crowned hat and feather, red stockings, and high-heeled shoes, with roses in them. The whole group reminded Rip of the figures in an old Flemish painting in the parlor of Dominie Van Shaick, the village parson, which had been brought over from Holland at the time of the settlement.

What seemed particularly odd to Rip was, that though these folks were evidently amusing themselves, yet they maintained the gravest faces, the most mysterious silence, and were, withal, the most melancholy party of pleasure he had ever witnessed. Nothing interrupted the stillness of the scene but the noise of the balls, which, whenever they were rolled, echoed along the mountains like rumbling peals of thunder.

As Rip and his companion approached them, they suddenly desisted from their play, and stared at him with such fixed, statue-like gaze, and such strange, uncouth, lack-lustre countenances, that his heart turned within him, and his knees smote together. His companion now emptied the contents of the keg into large flagons, and made signs to him to wait upon the company. He obeyed with fear and trembling; they quaffed the liquor in profound silence, and then returned to their game.

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By degrees Rip’s awe and apprehension subsided. He even ventured, when no eye was fixed upon him, to taste the bever- age, which he found had much of the flavor of excellent Hol- lands. He was naturally a thirsty soul, and was soon tempted to repeat the draught. One taste provoked another; and he reiterated his visits to the flagon so often that at length his senses were overpowered, his eyes swam in his head, his head gradually declined, and he fell into a deep sleep.

On waking, he found himself on the green knoll whence he had first seen the old man of the glen. He rubbed his eyes--- it was a bright, sunny morning. The birds were hopping and twittering among the bushes, and the eagle was wheeling aloft, and breasting the pure mountain breeze. “Surely,” thought Rip, “I have not slept here all night.” He recalled the occurrences before he fell asleep. The strange man with a keg of liquor--- the mountain ravine--- the wild retreat among the rocks--- the woe-begone party at ninepins--- the flagon--- “Oh! that flagon! that wicked flagon!” thought Rip-”what excuse shall I make to Dame Van Winkle?”

He looked round for his gun, but in place of the clean, well-oiled fowling-piece, he found an old firelock lying by him, the barrel incrusted with rust, the lock falling off, and the stock worm-eaten. He now suspected that the grave roisterers of the mountain had put a trick upon him, and, having dosed him with liquor, had robbed him of his gun. Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen.

He determined to revisit the scene of the last evening’s gambol, and if he met with any of the party, to demand his dog and gun. As he rose to walk, he found himself stiff in the joints, and wanting in his usual activity. “These mountain

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beds do not agree with me,” thought Rip, “and if this frolic should lay me up with a fit of the rheumatism, I shall have a blessed time with Dame Van Winkle.” With some difficulty he got down into the glen; he found the gully up which he and his companion had ascended the preceding evening; but to his astonishment a mountain stream was now foaming down it, leaping from rock to rock, and filling the glen with babbling murmurs. He, however, made shift to scramble up its sides, working his toilsome way through thickets of birch, sassafras, and witch-hazel, and sometimes tripped up or entangled by the wild grapevines that twisted their coils or tendrils from tree to tree, and spread a kind of network in his path.

At length he reached to where the ravine had opened through the cliffs to the amphitheatre; but no traces of such opening remained. The rocks presented a high, impenetrable wall, over which the torrent came tumbling in a sheet of feathery foam, and fell into a broad, deep basin, black from the shadows of the surrounding forest. Here, then, poor Rip was brought to a stand. He again called and whistled after his dog; he was only answered by the cawing of a flock of idle crows, sporting high in air about a dry tree that overhung a sunny precipice; and who, secure in their elevation, seemed to look down and scoff at the poor man’s perplexities. What was to be done? the morning was passing away, and Rip felt famished for want of his breakfast. He grieved to give up his dog and gun; he dreaded to meet his wife; but it would not do to starve among the mountains. He shook his head, shouldered the rusty firelock, and, with a heart full of trouble and anxiety, turned his steps homeward.

As he approached the village he met a number of people, but none whom he knew, which somewhat surprised him, for he had thought himself acquainted with every one in the country round. Their dress, too, was of a different fashion

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and apparently abandoned. This desolateness overcame all his connubial fears--- he called loudly for his wife and children--- the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then again all was silence.

He now hurried forth, and hastened to his old resort, the village inn--- but it, too, was gone. A large, rickety wooden building stood in its place, with great gaping windows, some of them broken and mended with old hats and petticoats, and over the door was painted, “The Union Hotel, by Jonathan Doolittle.” Instead of the great tree that used to shelter the quiet little Dutch inn of yore, there now was reared a tall naked pole, with something on the top that looked like a red night-cap, and from it was fluttering a flag, on which was a singular assemblage of stars and stripes--- all this was strange and incomprehensible. He recognized on the sign, however, the ruby face of King George, under which he had smoked so many a peaceful pipe; but even this was singularly metamorphosed. The red coat was changed for one of blue and buff, a sword was held in the hand instead of a sceptre, the head was decorated with a cocked hat, and underneath was painted in large characters, GENERAL WASHINGTON.

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There was, as usual, a crowd of folk about the door, but none that Rip recollected. The very character of the people seemed changed. There was a busy, bustling, disputatious tone about it, instead of the accustomed phlegm and drowsy tranquillity. He looked in vain for the sage Nicholas Vedder, with his broad face, double chin, and fair long pipe, uttering clouds of tobacco-smoke instead of idle speeches; or Van Bummel, the schoolmaster, doling forth the contents of an ancient newspaper. In place of these, a lean, bilious-looking fellow, with his pockets full of hand-bills, was haranguing vehemently about rights of citizens--- elections--- members of congress--- liberty--- Bunker’s Hill--- heroes of seventy-six--- and other

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words, which were a perfect Babylonish jargon to the bewildered Van Winkle.

The appearance of Rip, with his long grizzled beard, his rusty fowling-piece, his uncouth dress, and an army of women and children at his heels, soon attracted the attention of the tavern-politicians. They crowded round him, eying him from head to foot with great curiosity. The orator bustled up to him, and, drawing him partly aside, inquired “on which side he voted?” Rip stared in vacant stupidity. Another short but busy little fellow pulled him by the arm, and, rising on tiptoe, inquired in his ear, “Whether he was Federal or Democrat?” Rip was equally at a loss to comprehend the question; when a knowing, self-important old gentleman, in a sharp cocked hat, made his way through the crowd, putting them to the right and left with his elbows as he passed, and planting himself before Van Winkle, with one arm akimbo, the other resting on his cane, his keen eyes and sharp hat penetrating, as it were, into his very soul, demanded in an austere tone, “what brought him to the election with a gun on his shoulder, and a mob at his heels, and whether he meant to breed a riot in the village?”--- Alas gentlemen,’ ,” cried Rip, somewhat dismayed, “I am a poor quiet man, a native of the place, and a loyal subject of the king, God bless him!”

Here a general shout burst from the bystanders--- “A tory! a tory! a spy! a refugee! hustle him! away with him!” It was with great difficulty that the self-important man in the cocked hat restored order; and, having assumed a tenfold austerity of brow, demanded again of the unknown culprit what he came there for, and whom he was seeking? The poor man humbly assured him that he meant no harm, but merely came there in search of some of his neighbors, who used to keep about the tavern.

“Well--- who are they?--- name them.”

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Rip bethought himself a moment, and inquired, “Where’s Nicholas Vedder?”

There was a silence for a little while, when an old man replied, in a thin, piping voice: “Nicholas Vedder! why, he is dead and gone these eighteen years! There was a wooden tombstone in the churchyard that used to tell all about him, but that’s rotten and gone too.”

“Where’s Brom Dutcher?”

“Oh, he went off to the army in the beginning of the war; some say he was killed at the storming of Stony Point--- others say he was drowned in a squall at the foot of Antony’s Nose. I don’t know--- he never came back again.”

“Where’s Van Bummel, the schoolmaster?”

“He went off to the wars too, was a great militia general, and is now in Congress.”

Rip’s heart died away at hearing of these sad changes in his home and friends, and finding himself thus alone in the world. Every answer puzzled him too, by treating of such enormous lapses of time, and of matters which he could not understand: war--- Congress--- Stony Point; he had no courage to ask after any more friends, but cried out in despair, “Does nobody here know Rip Van Winkle?”

“Oh, Rip Van Winkle !” exclaimed two or three.

“Oh, to be sure! that’s Rip Van Winkle yonder, leaning against the tree.”

Rip looked, and beheld a precise counterpart of himself, as he went up the mountain: apparently as lazy, and certainly as ragged. The poor fellow was now completely confounded. He doubted his own identity, and whether he was himself or another man. In the midst of his bewilderment, the man in the cocked hat demanded who he was, and what was his name?

“God knows,” exclaimed he, at his wit’s end; “I’m not myself--- I’m somebody else--- that ‘s me yonder--- no--- that ‘s

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somebody else got into my shoes - I was myself last night, but I fell asleep on the mountain, and they ‘ve changed my gun, and everything’s changed, and I’m changed, and I can’t tell what’s my name, or who I am!”

The bystanders began now to look at each other, nod, wink significantly, and tap their fingers against their foreheads. There was a whisper, also, about securing the gun, and keeping the old fellow from doing mischief, at the very suggestion of which the self-important man in the cocked hat retired with some precipitation. At this critical moment a fresh, comely woman pressed through the throng to get a peep at the gray-bearded man. She had a chubby child in her arms, which, frightened at his looks, began to cry. “ Hush, Rip,” cried she, “hush, you little fool; the old man won’t hurt you.” The name of the child, the air of the mother, the tone of her voice, all awakened a train of recollections in his mind. “What is your name, my good woman?” asked he.

“Judith Gardenier.”

“And your father’s name?”

“Ah, poor man, Rip Van Winkle was his name, but it’s twenty years since he went away from home with his gun, and never has been, heard of since,--- his dog came home without him; but whether he shot himself or was carried away by the Indians, nobody can tell. I was then but a little girl.

“ Rip had but one question more to ask; and he put it with a faltering voice:---” Where ‘s your mother?”

“Oh, she too had died but a short time since; she broke a blood-vessel in a fit of passion at a New England peddler.”

There was a drop of comfort, at least, in this intelligence. The honest man could contain himself no longer. He caught his daughter and her child in his arms. “I am your father!” cried he--- “Young Rip Van Winkle once--- old Rip Van Winkle now! Does nobody know poor Rip Van Winkle?”

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All stood amazed, until an old woman, tottering out from among the crowd, put her hand to her brow, and peering under it in his face for a moment, exclaimed, “Sure enough it is Rip Van Winkle--- it is himself! Welcome home again, old neighbor --- Why, where have you been these twenty long years?”

Rip’s story was soon told, for the whole twenty years had been to him but as one night. The neighbors stared when they heard it; some were seen to wink at each other, and put their tongues in their cheeks; and the self-important man in the cocked hat, who, when the alarm was over, had returned to the field, screwed down the corners of his mouth, and shook his head--- upon which there was a general shaking of the head throughout the assemblage.

It was determined, however, to take the opinion of old Peter Vanderdonk, who was seen slowly advancing up the road. He was a descendant of the historian of that name, who wrote one of the earliest accounts of the province. Peter was the most ancient inhabitant of the village, and well versed in all the wonderful events and traditions of the neighborhood. He recollected Rip at once, and corroborated his story in the most satisfactory manner. He assured the company that it was a fact, handed down from his ancestor the historian, that the Kaatskill Mountains had always been haunted by strange beings. That it was affirmed that the great Hendrick Hudson, the first dis- coverer of the river and country, kept a kind of vigil there every twenty years, with his crew of the Half-moon; being permitted in this way to revisit the scenes of his enterprise, and keep a guardian eye upon the river and the great city called by his name. That his father had once seen them in their old Dutch dresses playing at ninepins in a hollow of the mountain; and that he himself had heard, one summer afternoon, the sound of their balls like distant peals of thunder.

To make a long story short, the company broke up and

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returned to the more important concerns of the election. Rip’s daughter took him home to live with her; she had a snug well- furnished house, and a stout cheery farmer for a husband, whom Rip recollected for one of the urchins that used to climb upon his back. As to Rip’s son and heir, who was the ditto of himself, seen leaning against the tree, he was employed to work on the farm; but evinced an hereditary disposition to attend to anything else but his business.

Rip now resumed his old walks and habits; he soon found many of his former cronies, though all rather the worse for the wear and tear of time; and preferred making friends among the rising generation, with whom he soon grew into great favor.

Having nothing to do at home, and being arrived at that happy age when a man can be idle with impunity, he took his place once more on the bench at the inn door, and was reverenced as one of the patriarchs of the village, and a chronicle of the old times “before the war.” It was some time before he could get into the regular track of gossip, or could be made to comprehend the strange events that had taken place during his torpor. How that there had been a revolutionary war - that the country had thrown off the yoke of old England - and that, instead of being a subject of his Majesty George the Third, he was now a free citizen of the United States. Rip, in fact, was no politician; the changes of states and empires made but little impression on him; but there was one species of despotism under which he had long groaned, and that was petticoat government. Happily that was at an end; he had got his neck out of the yoke of matrimony, and could go in and out whenever he pleased, without dreading the tyranny of Dame Van Winkle. Whenever her name was mentioned, how- ever, he shook his head, shrugged his shoulders, and cast up his eyes, which might pass either for an expression of resignation to his fate, or joy at his deliverance.

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He used to tell his story to every stranger that arrived at Mr. Doolittle’s hotel. He was observed, at first, to vary on some points every time he told it, which was, doubtless, owing to his having so recently awaked. It at last settled down precisely to the tale I have related, and not a man, woman, or child in the neighborhood but knew it by heart. Some always pretended to doubt the reality of it, and insisted that Rip had been out of his head, and that this was one point on which he always remained flighty. The old Dutch inhabitants, however, almost universally gave it full credit. Even to this day they never hear a thunder-storm of a summer afternoon about the Kaatskill, but they say Hendrick Hudson and his crew are at their game of ninepins; and it is a common wish of all henpecked husbands in the neighborhood, when life hangs heavy on their hands, that they might have a quieting draught out of Rip Van Winkle’s flagon.

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Characters. Poe’s strength did not lie in the creation of character. He is so intent on the development of the windings and unwindings of his story that the characters become mere puppets, originated and controlled by the needs of the plot. Jupiter deserves mention as one of the earliest attempts made by an American short-story writer to portray negro character. But Jupiter has been so far surpassed in breadth and reality by Joel Chandler Harris, Thomas Nelson Page, and a score of others as to be almost negligible in the count. In defense of Jupiter’s barbarous lingo, which has been often criticized, it should be remembered that Poe intended him as a representative of the Gullah (or Gulla) dialect. “It is the negro dialect,” says Joel Chandler Harris, “in its most primitive state - the ‘Gullah’ talk of some of the negroes on the Sea Islands being merely a confused and untranslatable mixture of English and African words.”

William Legrand, though not a great or notable character in any way, is admirably fitted to do what is required of him in the story. Like Poe, he was solitary, proud, quick-tempered, and “subject to perverse moods of alternate enthusiasm and melancholy.” He had also Poe’s passion for puzzles. Jupiter is hardly more than an awkward tool fashioned to display Legrand’s analytic and directive genius; and the other character in the story, like Dr. Watson in Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes stories, is introduced merely to ask such questions as must be answered if the reader is to follow intelligently the unfolding of the plot. They are agents rather than characters.]

What ho! what ho! this fellow is dancing mad!

He hath been bitten by the Tarantula.

“All in the Wrong “

Many years ago, I contracted an intimacy with a Mr. William Legrand. He was of an ancient Huguenot family, and had once been wealthy; but a series of misfortunes had reduced

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him to want. To avoid the mortification consequent upon his disasters, he left New Orleans, the city of his forefathers, and took up his residence at Sullivan’s Island, near Charleston, South Carolina.

This island is a very singular one. It consists of little else than the sea sand, and is about three miles long. Its breadth at no point exceeds a quarter of a mile. It is separated from the mainland by a scarcely perceptible creek, oozing its way through a wilderness of reeds and slime, a favorite resort of the marsh-hen. The vegetation, as might be supposed, is scant, or at least dwarfish. No trees of any magnitude are to be seen. Near the western extremity, where Fort Moultrie stands, and where are some miserable frame buildings, tenanted during summer by the fugitives from Charleston dust and fever, may be found, indeed, the bristly palmetto; but the whole island, with the exception of this western point, and a line of hard white beach on the seacoast, is covered with a dense under- growth of the sweet myrtle, so much prized by the horticulturists of England. The shrub here often attains the height of fifteen or twenty feet, and forms an almost impenetrable coppice, burdening the air with its fragrance.

In the utmost recesses of this coppice, not far from the eastern or more remote end of the island, Legrand had built himself a small hut, which he occupied when I first, by mere accident, made his acquaintance. This soon ripened into friendship--- for there was much in the recluse to excite interest and esteem. I found him well educated, with unusual powers of mind, but infected with misanthropy, and subject to perverse moods of alternate enthusiasm and melancholy. He had with him many books, but rarely employed them. His chief amusements were gunning and fishing, or sauntering along the beach and through the myrtles in quest of shells or entomological specimens;--- his collection of the latter might have been envied

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by a Swammerdamm. In these excursions he was usually accompanied by an old negro, called Jupiter, who had been manumitted before the reverses of the family, but who could be induced, neither by threats nor by promises, to abandon what he considered his right of attendance upon the footsteps of his young “Massa Will.” It is not improbable that the relatives of Legrand, conceiving him to be somewhat unsettled in intellect, had contrived to instil this obstinacy into Jupiter, with a view to the supervision and guardianship of the wanderer. The winters in the latitude of Sullivan’s Island are seldom

very severe, and in the fall of the year it is a rare event in- deed when a fire is considered necessary. About the middle of October, 18--- , there occurred, however, a day of remarkable chilliness. Just before sunset I scrambled my way through the evergreens to the hut of my friend, whom I had not visited for several weeks--- my residence being at that time in Charleston, a distance of nine miles from the island, while the facilities of passage and repassage were very far behind those of the present day. Upon reaching the hut I rapped, as was my custom, and, getting no reply, sought for the key where I knew it was secreted, unlocked the door, and went in. A fine fire was blazing upon the hearth. It was a novelty, and by no means an ungrateful one. I threw off an overcoat, took an armchair by the crackling logs, and awaited patiently the arrival of my hosts.

Soon after dark they arrived, and gave me a most cordial welcome. Jupiter, grinning from ear to ear, bustled about to prepare some marsh-hens for supper. Legrand was in one of his fits--- how else shall I term them?--- of enthusiasm. He had found an unknown bivalve, forming a new genus, and, more than this, he had hunted down and secured, with Jupiter’s assistance, a scarabaeus which he believed to be totally new, but in respect to which he wished to have my opinion on the morrow.

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“And why not to-night?” I asked, rubbing my hands over the blaze, and wishing the whole tribe of scarabaei at the devil.

“Ah, if I had only known you were here!” said Legrand, “but it’s so long since I saw you; and how could I foresee that you would pay me a visit this very night of all others? As I was coming home I met Lieutenant G, from the fort, and, very foolishly, I lent him the bug; so it will be impossible for you to see it until the morning. Stay here to-night, and I will send Jun down for it at sunrise. It is the loveliest thing in creation!”

“What?--- sunrise?”

“Nonsense! no l--- the bug. It is of a brilliant gold color--- about the size of a large hickory-nut--- with two jet-black spots near one extremity of the back, and another, somewhat longer, at the other. The antennae are---”

“Dey aint no tin in him, Massa Will, I keep a tellin on you,” here interrupted Jupiter; “de bug is a goole-bug, solid, ebery bit of him, inside and all, sep him wing--- neber feel half so hebby a bug in my life.”

“Well, suppose it is, Jup,” replied Legrand, somewhat more earnestly, it seemed to me, than the case demanded, “is that any reason for your letting the birds burn? The color”--- here he turned to me--- “is really almost enough to warrant Jupiter’s idea. You never saw a more brilliant metallic lustre than the scales emit--- but of this you cannot judge till tomorrow. In the meantime I can give you some idea of the shape.” Saying this, he seated himself at a small table, on which were a pen and ink, but no paper. He looked for some in a drawer, but found none.

“Never mind,” said he at length, “this will answer”; and he drew from his waistcoat pocket a scrap of what I took to be very dirty foolscap, and made upon it a rough drawing with the pen. While he did this, I retained my seat by the

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fire, for I was still chilly. When the design was complete, he handed it to me without rising. As I received it, a low growl was heard, succeeded by a scratching at the door. Jupiter opened it, and a large Newfoundland, belonging to Legrand, rushed in, leaped upon my shoulders, and loaded me with caresses; for I had shown him much attention during previous visits. When his gambols were over, I looked at the paper, and, to speak the truth, found myself not a little puzzled at what my friend had depicted.

“Well!” I said, after contemplating it for some minutes, “this is a strange scarabaeus, I must confess; new to me; never saw anything like it before--- unless it was a skull, or a death’s head, which it more nearly resembles than anything else that has come under my observation.”

“A death’s-head!” echoed Legrand---”oh--- yes--- well, it has something of that appearance upon paper, no doubt. The two upper black spots look like eyes, eh? and the longer one at the bottom like a mouth--- and then the shape of the whole is oval.”

“Perhaps so,” said I; “but, Legrand, I fear you are no artist. I must wait until I see the beetle itself, if I am to form any idea of its personal appearance.”

“Well, I don’t know,” said he, a little nettled, “I draw tolerably--- should do it at least--- have had good masters, and flatter myself that I am not quite a blockhead.”

“But, my dear fellow, you are joking then,” said I; “this is a very passable skull,--- indeed, I may say that it is a very excellent skull, according to the vulgar notions about such specimens of physiology--- and your scarabaeus must be the queerest scarabaeus in the world if it resembles it. Why, we may get up a very thrilling bit of superstition upon this hint. I presume you will call the bug scarabaeus caput hominis,1 or something of

1Scarabaeus caput hominis, “death’s-head beetle.”

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that kind--- there are many similar titles in the Natural Histories. But where are the antennae you spoke of?”

“The antennae!” said Legrand, who seemed to be getting unaccountably warm upon the subject; “I am sure you must see the antennae. I made them as distinct as they are in the original insect, and I presume that is sufficient.”

“Well, well,” I said, “perhaps you have--- still I don’t see them”; and I handed him the paper without additional remark, not wishing to ruffle his temper; but I was much surprised at the turn affairs had taken; his ill humor puzzled me -and as for the drawing of the beetle, there were positively no antennae visible, and the whole did bear a very close resemblance to the ordinary cuts of a death’s-head.

He received the paper very peevishly, and was about to crumple it, apparently to throw it in the fire, when a casual glance at the design seemed suddenly to rivet his attention. In an instant his face grew violently red--- in another as excessively pale. For some minutes he continued to scrutinize the drawing minutely where he sat. At length he arose, took a candle from the table, and proceeded to seat himself upon a sea-chest in the farthest corner of the room. Here again he made an anxious examination of the paper; turning it in all directions. He said nothing, however, and his conduct greatly astonished me; yet I thought it prudent not to exacerbate the growing moodiness of his temper by any comment. Presently he took from his coat pocket a wallet, placed the paper carefully in it, and deposited both in a writing-desk, which he locked. He now grew more composed in his demeanor; but his original air of enthusiasm had quite disappeared. Yet he seemed not so much sulky as abstracted. As the evening wore away he became more and more absorbed in revery, from which no sallies of mine could arouse him. It had been my intention to pass the night at the hut, as I had frequently done before, but, seeing

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my host in this mood, I deemed it proper to take leave. He did not press me to remain, but, as I departed, he shook my hand with even more than his usual cordiality.

It was about a month after this (and during the interval I had seen nothing of Legrand) when I received a visit, at Charleston, from his man, Jupiter. I had never seen the good old negro look so dispirited, and I feared that some serious disaster had befallen my friend.

“Well, Jup,” said I, “what is the matter now?--- how is your master?”

“Why, to speak de troof, massa, him not so berry well as mought be.”

“Not well! I am truly sorry to hear it. What does he complain of?”

“Dar! dat ‘s it!--- him neber plain of notin--- but him berry sick for all dat.”

“Very sick, Jupiter!--- why did n’t you say so at once? Is he confined to bed?”

“No, dat he aint!--- he aint find nowhar--- dat’s just whar de shoe pinch--- my mind is got to be berry hebby bout poor Massa Will.”

“Jupiter, I should like to understand what it is you are talking about. You say your master is sick. Hasn’t he told you what ails him?”

“Why, massa, taint worf while for to git mad bout de matter--- Massa Will say noffin at all aint de matter wid him---but den what make him go bout looking dis here way, wid he head down and he soldiers up, and as white as a gose? And then he keeps a syphon all de time--- “

“Keeps a what, Jupiter?”

“Keeps a syphon wid de figgurs on de slate--- de queerest figgurs I ebber did see. Ise gittin to be skeered, I tell you. Hab for to keep mighty tight eye pon him noovers. Todder

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“How I know? why, cause he talk about it in he sleep--- dat’s how I nose.”

“Well, Jup, perhaps you are right; but to what fortunate circumstances am I to attribute the honor of a visit from you to-day?”

“What de matter, massa?”

“Did you bring any message from Mr. Legrand?”

“No, massa, I bring dis here pissel”; and here Jupiter handed me a note which ran thus:

MY DEAR---: Why have I not seen you for so long a time? I hope you have not been so foolish as to take offense at any little brusquerie of mine; but no, that is improbable.

Since I saw you I have had great cause for anxiety. I have some- thing to tell you, yet scarcely know how to tell it, or whether I should tell it at all.

I have not been quite well for some days past, and poor old Jup annoys me, almost beyond endurance, by his well-meant attentions. Would you believe it?--- he had prepared a huge stick, the other day, with which to chastise me for giving him the slip, and spending the day, solus, among the hills on the mainland. I verily believe that my ill looks alone saved me a flogging.

I have made no addition to my cabinet since we met. If you can, in any way, make it convenient, come over with Jupiter. Do come. I wish to see you tonight, upon business of importance. I assure you that it is of the highest importance.

Ever yours,

WILLIAM LEGRAND

There was something in the tone of this note which gave me great uneasiness. Its whole style differed materially from that of Legrand. What could he be dreaming of? What new crotchet possessed his excitable brain? What “business of the highest importance” could he possibly have to transact? Jupiter’s account of him boded no good. I dreaded lest the continued pressure of misfortune had, at length, fairly unsettled the

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reason of my friend. Without a moment’s hesitation, therefore, I prepared to accompany the negro.

Upon reaching the wharf, I noticed a scythe and three spades, all apparently new, lying in the bottom of the boat in which we were to embark.

“What is the meaning of all this, Jup?” I inquired.

“Him syfe, massa, and spade.”

“Very true; but what are they doing here?”

“Him de syfe and de spade what Massa Will sis pon my buying for him in de town, and de debbil’s own lot of money I had to gib for em.”

“But what, in the name of all that is mysterious, is your ‘Massa Will’ going to do with scythes and spades?”

“Dat’s more dan I know, and debbil take me if I don’t believe ‘tis more dan he know, too. But it’s all cum ob de bug.”

Finding that no satisfaction was to be obtained of Jupiter, whose whole intellect seemed to be absorbed by “ de bug,” I now stepped into the boat and made sail. With a fair and strong breeze we soon ran into the little cove to the northward of Fort Moultrie, and a walk of some two miles brought us to the hut. It was about three in the afternoon when we arrived. Legrand had been awaiting us in eager expectation. He grasped my hand with a nervous empressement, which alarmed me and strengthened the suspicions already entertained. His countenance was pale even to ghastliness, and his deep-set eyes glared with unnatural lustre. After some inquiries respecting his health, I asked him, not knowing what better to say, if he had yet obtained the scarabaeus from Lieutenant G---.

“Oh, yes,” he replied, coloring violently, “I got it from him the next morning. Nothing should tempt me to part with that scarabaeus. Do you know that Jupiter is quite right about it?”

“In what way?” I asked, with a sad foreboding at heart.