

The Dweller on the Threshold by Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton

The Dweller on the Threshold **From Book IV and V of Zanoni - A Rosicrucian Tale**

by Sir Edward Bulwar Lytton

Published in the 1800's

Truly " The Dwellers of the Threshold" are within!"- Collected Writings of H.P.Blavatsky Page 242- Volume VII

ZANONI was written in 1842, and is one of the finest examples of Spiritual Fiction. Divided in seven sections, the fourth entitled, "THE DWELLER ON THE THRESHOLD' is an extremely profound expression of profound occult facts and experiences recognized as true by anyone possessing spiritual insight.

For several days Mejnour refused to confer with Glyndon on the subjects nearest to his heart.

"All without", said he, "is prepared, but not all within; your own soul must grow accustomed to the spot, and filled with the surrounding nature; for nature is the source of all inspiration."

With these words Mejnour turned to lighter topics. He made the Englishman accompany him in long rambles through the wild scenes around, and he smiled approvingly when the young artist gave way to the enthusiasm which their fearful beauty could not have failed to rouse in a duller breast; and then Mejnour poured forth to his wondering pupil the stores of a knowledge that seemed inexhaustible and boundless. He gave accounts the most curious, graphics, and minute, of the various races (their characters, habits, creeds, and manners,) by which that fair land had been successively overrun. It is true that his descriptions could not be found in books, and were unsupported by learned authorities; but he possessed the true charm of the tale-teller, and spoke of all with the animated confidence of a personal witness. Sometimes, too, he would converse upon the more durable and the loftier mysteries of Nature with an eloquence and a research which invested them with all the colours rather of poetry than science. Insensibly the young artist found himself elevated and soothed by the lore of his companion; the fever of his wild desire was slaked. His mind became more and more lulled into the divine tranquility of contemplation; he felt himself a nobler being; and in the silence of his senses he imagined that he heard the voice of his soul.

It was to this state that Mejnour evidently sought to bring the Neophyte, and in this elementary initiation the mystic was like every more ordinary sage. For he who seeks to DISCOVER, must first reduce himself into a kind of abstract idealism, and be rendered up, in solemn and sweet bondage, to the faculties which CONTEMPLATE and IMAGINE.

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Glyndon noticed that, in their rambles, Mejnour often paused where the foliage was rifest, to gather some herb or flower; and this reminded him that he had seen Zaroni similarly occupied. "Can these humble children of nature," said he one day to Mejnour, "things that bloom and wither in a day, be serviceable to the science of the higher secrets? Is there a pharmacy for the soul as well as the body, and do the nurslings of the summer minister not only to human health but spiritual immortality?"

"If," answered Mejnour, "a stranger had visited a wandering tribe before one property of herbalism was known to them; if he had told the savages that the herbs which every day they trampled under foot, were endowed with the most potent virtues; that one would restore to health a brother on the verge of death; that another would paralyze into idiocy their wisest sage; that a third would strike lifeless to the dust their most stalwart champion; that tears and laughter, vigor and disease, madness and reason, wakefulness and sleep, existence and dissolution, were coiled up in those unregarded leaves- would they not have held him a sorcerer or a liar? To half the virtues of the vegetable world mankind are yet in the darkness of the savages I have supposed. There are faculties within us which certain herbs have affinity, and over which they have power. The moly of the ancients is not all a fable."

The apparent character of Mejnour differed in much from that of Zaroni; and while it fascinated Glyndon less, it subdued and impressed him more. The conversation of Zaroni evinced a deep and general interest for mankind- a feeling approaching to enthusiasm for Art and Beauty. The stories circulated concerning his habits elevated the mystery of his life by actions of charity and beneficence. And in all this there was something genial and humane that softened the awe he created, and tended, perhaps, to raise suspicions as to the loftier secrets that he arrogated himself. But Mejnour seemed wholly indifferent to all the actual world. If he committed no evil, he seemed equally apathetic to good. His deeds relieved no want, his words pitied no distress. What we call the heart appeared to have merged into the intellect. He moved, thought, and lived, like some regular and calm Abstraction, rather than one who yet retained, with the form, the feelings and sympathies of his kind!

Glyndon once, observing the tone of supreme indifference with which he spoke of those changes on the face of earth, which he asserted he had witnessed, ventured to remark to him the distinction he had noted.

"It is true," said Mejnour, coldly. "My life is the life that contemplates- Zaroni's is the life that enjoys; when I gather the herb, I think but of its uses; Zaroni will pause to admire its beauties."

"And you deem your own the superior and the loftier existence?"

"No. His is the existence of youth- mine of age. We have cultivated different faculties. Each has powers the other cannot aspire to. Those with whom he associates live better- those who associate with me, know more.

"I have heard, in truth", said Glyndon, "that his companions at Naples were observed to lead purer and nobler lives after intercourse with Zaroni; yet were they not strange companions, at the best, for a sage?"

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This terrible power, too, that he exercises at will, as in the death of the Prince di-----, and that of the Count Ughelli, scarcely becomes the tranquil seeker after good."

"True", said Mejnour, with an icy smile: "Such must ever be the error of those philosophers who would meddle with the active life of mankind. You cannot serve some without injuring others; you cannot protect the good without warring on the bad; and if you desire to reform the faulty, why must you lower yourself to live with the faulty to know their faults. Even so saith Paracelsus, a great man, though often wrong. Not mine this folly; I live but in knowledge- I have no life in mankind!"

Another time Glyndon questioned the mystic as to the nature of that union or fraternity to which Zanoni had once referred.

"I am right, I suppose," said he, "in conjecturing that you and himself profess to be the brothers of the Rosy Cross?"

"Do you imagine," answered Mejnour, "that there were no mystic and solemn unions of men seeking the same end through the same means, before the Arabians of Damus, in 1378, taught to a wandering German the secrets which founded the Institution of the Rosicrucians? I allow, however, that the Rosicrucians formed a sect descended from the greater and earlier school. They were wiser than the Alchemists- their masters are wiser than they."

"And of this early and primary order how many still exist?"

"Zanoni and myself."

"What, two only!- and you profess the powers to teach to all the secret that battles Death?"

"Your ancestor attained that secret; he died rather than survive the only thing he loved. We have, my pupil, no arts by which we can put Death out of our option, or out of the will of Heaven. These walls may crush me as I stand. All that we profess to do is but this- to find out the secrets of the human frame, to know why the parts ossify and the blood stagnates, and to apply continual preventives to the effects of Time. This is not Magic; it is the Art of Medicine rightly understood. In our order we hold most noble- first, that knowledge which elevates the intellect; secondly, that which preserves the body. But the mere art (extracted from the juices and simples) which recruits the animal vigor and arrests the progress of decay, or that more noble secret which I will only hint to three at present, by which HEAT or CALORIC, as we call it, being, as Heraclitus wisely taught, the primordial principle of life, can be made its perpetual renovator- these, I say, would not suffice for safety. It is ours also to disarm and elude the wrath of men, to turn the swords of our foes against each other, to glide (if not incorporeal) invisible to eyes over which we can throw a mist and darkness. And this some seers have professed to be the virtue of a stone of agate. Abaris placed it in his arrow. I will find you a herb in yon valley that will give a surer charm than the agate and the arrow. In one word, know this, that the humblest and meanest products of Nature are those from which the sublimest properties are to be drawn."

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"But," said Glyndon, "If possessed of these great secrets, why so churlish in withholding their diffusion? Does not the false or charlatanic science differ in this from the true and indisputable- that the last communicates to the world the process by which it attains its discoveries; the first boasts of marvellous results, and refuses to explain the causes?"

"Well said, O Logician of the Schools; -but think again. Suppose we were to impart all our knowledge to all mankind, indiscriminately, alike to the vicious and the virtuous- should we be benefactors or scourges? Imagine the tyrant, the sensualist, the evil and corrupted being possessed of these tremendous powers; would he not be a demon let loose on earth? Grand that the same privilege be accorded also to the good; and in what state would be society? Engaged in a Titian war- the good for ever on the defensive, the bad for ever in assault.. In the present condition of the earth, evil is a more active principle than good, and the evil would prevail. It is for these reasons that we are not only solemnly bound to administer our lore only to those who will not misuse and pervert it; but that we place our ordeal in tests that purify the passions, and elevate the desires. And Nature in this controls and assists us: for it places awful guardians and insurmountable barriers between the ambition of vice and the heaven of the loftier science."

Such made a small part of the numerous conversations Mejnour held with his pupil- conversations that, while they appeared to address themselves to the reason, inflamed yet more the fancy. It was the very disclaiming of all powers which Nature, properly investigated, did not suffice to create, that gave an air of probability to those which Mejnour asserted Nature might bestow.

Thus days and weeks rolled on; and the mind of Glyndon, gradually fitted to the sequestered and musing life, forgot at last the vanities and chimeras of the world without.

One evening he had lingered alone and late upon the ramparts, watching the stars, as, one by one, they broke upon the twilight. Never had he felt so sensibly the mighty power of the heavens and the earth upon man! How much the springs of our intellectual being are moved and acted upon by the solemn influences of nature! As a patient on whom slowly and by degrees, the agencies of mesmerism are brought to bear, he acknowledged to his heart the growing force of that vast and universal magnetism which is the life of creation, and binds the atom to the whole. A strange and ineffable consciousness of power, of the SOMETHING GREAT within the perishable clay, appealed to feelings at once dim and glorious- like the faint recognitions of a holier and former being. An impulse, that he could not resist, led him to seek the mystic. He would demand, that hour, his initiation into worlds beyond our world- he was prepared to breathe a diviner air. He entered the castle, and strode the shadowy and starlit gallery which conducted to Mejnour's apartment.

CHAPTER III

MAN is the eye of things.- EURYPH De Vit Hum.

* * * There is, therefore, a certain ecstatical or transporting power, which, if at any time it shall be excited or stirred up by ardent desire and most strong imagination, is able to conduct the spirit of the more

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outward, even to some absent and far-distant object.- VON HELMONT

The rooms that Mejnour occupied consisted of two chambers communicating with each other, and a third in which he slept. All these rooms were placed in the huge square tower that beetled over the dark and bush-grown precipice. The first chamber which Glyndon entered was empty. With a noiseless step he passed on, and opened the door that admitted him into the inner one. He drew back at the threshold, overpowered by a strong fragrance which filled the chamber; a kind of mist thickened the air, rather than obscured it, for this vapor was not dark, but resembled a snow cloud, moving slowly, and in heavy undulations, wave upon wave, regularly over the space. A mortal cold struck to the Englishman's heart, and his blood froze. He stood rooted to the spot; and, as his eyes strained involuntarily through the vapor, he fancied (for he could) not be sure that it was not the trick of his imagination) that he saw dim, specter-like, but gigantic forms floating through the mist; or was it not rather the mist itself that formed its vapors fantastically into those moving, impalpable, and bodiless apparitions?

A great painter of antiquity is said, in a picture of Hades, to have represented the monsters that glide through the ghostly River of the Dead, so artfully, that the eye perceived at once that the river itself was but a sceptre, and the bloodless things that tenanted it had no life, their forms blending with the dead waters till, as the eye continued to gaze, it ceased to discern them from the preternatural element they were supposed to inhabit.

Such were the moving outlines that coiled and floated through the mist; but before Glyndon had, even drawn breath in this atmosphere- for his life itself seemed arrested or changed into a kind of horrid trance- he felt his hand seized, and he was led from that room into the outer one. He heard the door close- his blood rushed again through his veins, and he saw Mejnour by his side. Strong convulsions then suddenly seized his whole frame - he fell to the ground insensible. When he recovered, he found himself in the open air, in a rude balcony of stone that jutted from the chamber; the stars shining serenely over the dark abyss below, and resting calmly upon the face of the mystic, who stood beside him with folded arms.

"Young man," said Mejnour, "judge by what you have just felt, how dangerous it is to seek knowledge until prepared to receive it. Another moment in the air of that chamber and you had been a corpse."

"Then of what nature was the knowledge that you, once mortal life myself, could safely have sought in that icy atmosphere, which it was death for me to breathe?- Mejnour," continued Glyndon, and his wild desire sharpened by the very danger he had passed, once more animated and nerved him; "I am prepared, at least for the first steps. I come to you as of old, the pupil to the Hierophant, and demand the initiation."

Mejnour passed his hand over the young man's heart- it beat loud, regularly, and boldly. He looked at him with something almost like admiration in his passionless and frigid features, and muttered, half to himself: "Surely, in so much courage the true disciple is found at last." Then, speaking aloud, he added: "Be it so; man's first initiation is in TRANCE. In dreams commences all human knowledge; in dreams hovers over measureless space the first faint bridge between spirit and spirit- this world and the worlds beyond! Look steadfastly on yonder star!"

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Glyndon obeyed, and Mejnour retired into the chamber; from which there then slowly emerged a vapor, somewhat paler and of fainter odour than that which had nearly produced so fatal an effect on his frame. This, on the contrary, as it coiled around him, and then melted in thin spires into the air, breathed a refreshing and healthful fragrance. He still kept his eyes on the star, and the star seemed gradually to fix and command his gaze. A sort of languor next seized his frame, but without, as he thought, communicating itself to the mind; and as this crept over him, he felt his temples sprinkled with some volatile and fiery essence. At the same moment, a slight tremor shook his limbs, and thrilled through his veins. The languor increased: still he kept his gaze upon the star; and now its luminous circumference seemed to expand and dilate. It became gradually softer and clearer in its light; spreading wider and broader, it diffused all space- all space seemed swallowed up in it. And at last, in the midst of a silver shining atmosphere, he felt as if something burst within his brain- as if a strong chain were broken; and at that moment a sense of heavenly liberty, of unutterable delight, of freedom from the body, of birdlike lightness, seemed to float him into the space itself.

"Rouse thyself," said Mejnour, "thy ordeal has commenced! There are pretenders to the solemn science, who could have shown thee the absent; and prated to thee, in their charlatanic jargon, of the secret electricities and the magnetic fluid, of whose true properties they know but the germs and elements. I will lend thee the books of those glorious dupes, and thou will find, in the dark ages, how many erring steps have stumbled upon the threshold of the mighty learning, and fancied they had pierced the temple. Hermes and Albert, and Paracelsus, I knew ye all; but, noble as ye were, ye were fated to be deceived. Ye had not souls of faith, and daring fitted for the destinies at which ye aimed! Yet Paracelsus- modest Paracelsus- had an arrogance that soared higher than all our knowledge. Ho! Ho!- he thought he could make a race of men from chemistry; he arrogated to himself the Divine gift- the breath of life. (Paracelsus, De Nat. Rer. Lib. I) He would have made men, and, after all, confessed that they could be but pygmies! My art is to make men above mankind. But you are impatient of my digressions. Forgive me. All these men (they were great dreamers) as you desire to be) were intimate friends of mine. But they are dead and rotten. They talked of spirits- but they dreaded to be in other company than that of men. Like orators whom I have heard, when I stood by the Pnyx of Athens, blazing with words like comets in the assembly, and extinguishing their ardor like holiday rockets when they were in the field. Ho! Ho!. Demosthenes, my hero-coward, how nimble were thy heels at Chaeronea! And thou art impatient still! Boy, I could tell thee such truths of the Past, as would make thee the luminary of schools But thou lustest only for the shadows of the Future. Thou shalt have thy wish. But the mind must be first exercised and trained. Go to thy room, and sleep; fast austerely; read no books; meditate, imagine, dream, bewilder thyself, if thou wilt. Thought shapes out its own chaos at last. Before midnight, seek me again!"

Chapter IV

It wanted still many minutes of midnight, and Glyndon was once more in the apartment of the mystic. He had rigidly observed the fast ordained to him; and in the rapt and intense reveries into which his exited fancy had plunged him, he was not only insensible to the wants of the flesh- he felt above them.

Mejnour, seated beside his disciple, thus addressed him:-

"Man is arrogant in proportion to his ignorance. Man's natural tendency is to egotism. Man, in his infancy of knowledge, thinks that all creation was formed for him. For several ages he saw in the countless

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worlds, that sparkle through space like the bubbles of a shoreless ocean, only the petty candles, the household torches, that Providence had been pleased to light for no other purpose but to make the night more agreeable to man. Astronomy has corrected this delusion of human vanity; and man now reluctantly confesses that the stars are worlds, larger and more glorious than his own- that the earth on which he crawls is a scarce visible speck on the vast chart of creation. But in the small as in the vast, God is equally profuse of life. The traveller looks upon the tree, and fancies its boughs were formed for his shelter in the summer sun, or his fuel in the winter frosts. But in each leaf of these boughs the Creator has made a world it swarms with innumerable races. Each drop of the water in yon moat is an orb more populous than a kingdom is of men. Everywhere, then, in this immense Design, Science brings new life to light. Life is the one pervading principle, and even the thing that seems to die and putrefy, but engenders new life, and changes to fresh forms of matter.

Reasoning, then, by evident analogy- if not a leaf, if not a drop of water, but is, no less than yonder star, a habitable and breathing world- nay, if even man himself is a world to other lives, and millions and myriads dwell in the rivers of his blood, and inhabit man's frame as man inhabits earth, common sense (if you schoolmen had it) would suffice to teach that the circumfluent infinite which you call space- the boundless Impalpable which divides earth from the moon and stars, is filled also with its correspondent and appropriate life. Is it not a visible absurdity to suppose that Being is crowded upon every leaf, yet absent from the immensities of space? The law of the Great System forbids the waste even of an atom; it knows no spot where something of life does not breathe. In the very charnel-house is the nursery of production and animation. Is that true? Well, then, can you conceive that space which is the Infinite itself is alone a waste, is alone lifeless, is less useful to the one design of universal being than the dead carcass of a dog, than the peopled leaf, than the swarming globule? The microscope shows you the creatures on the leaf; no mechanical tube is yet invented to discover the nobler and more gifted things that hover in the illimitable air. Yet between these last and man is a mysterious and terrible affinity. And hence, by tales and legends, not wholly false nor wholly true, have arisen from time to time, beliefs in apparitions and sceptres. If more common to the earlier and simpler tribes than to the men of your duller age, it is but that, with the first, the senses are more keen and quick. And as the savage can see or scent, miles away, the traces of a foe, invisible to the gross sense of the civilized animal, so the barrier itself between him and the creatures of the airy world is less thickened and obscured. Do you listen?"

"With my soul!"

"But first, to penetrate this barrier, the soul with which you listen must be sharpened by intense enthusiasm, purified from all earthlier desires. Not without reason have the so-styled magicians, in all lands and times, insisted on chastity and abstemious reverie as the communicants of inspiration. When thus prepared, science can be brought to aid it; the sight itself may be rendered more subtle, the nerves more acute, the spirit more alive and outward, and the element itself- the air, the space- may be made by certain secrets of the higher chemistry, More palpable and clear. And this, too, is not magic as the credulous call it;- as I have so often said before, magic (or science that violates Nature) exists not;- it is but the science by which Nature can be controlled. Now, in space there are millions of beings, not literally spiritual, for they have all, like the animalcule unseen by the naked eye, certain forms of matter, though matter so delicate, air-drawn, and subtle, that it is, as it were, but a film, a gossamer that clothes the spirit. Hence the Rosicrucian's lovely phantoms of sylph and gnome. Yet, in truth, these races and tribes differ more widely, each from each, than the Calmuck from the Greek- differ in attributes and powers. In the drop of water you see how the animalcule vary, how vast and terrible are some of those monster-

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mites as compared with others. Equally so with the Inhabitants of the atmosphere: some of surpassing wisdom, some of horrible malignity; some hostile as fiends to men, others gentle as messengers between earth and heaven. He who would establish intercourse with these varying beings, resembles the traveller who would penetrate into unknown lands. He is exposed to strange dangers and un conjectured terrors. That intercourse once gained I cannot secure thee from the chances to which thy journey is exposed. I cannot direct thee to paths free from the wanderings of the deadliest foes. Thou must alone, and of thyself, face and hazard all. But if thou art so enamored of life as to care only to live on, no matter for what ends, recruiting the nerves and veins with the alchemist's vivifying elixir, why seek these dangers from the intermediate tribes? Because the very elixir that pours a more glorious life into the frame, so sharpens the senses that those larvae of the air become to thee audible and apparent; so that, unless trained by degrees to endure the phantoms and subdue their malice, a life thus gifted would be the most awful doom man could bring upon himself. Hence it is that though the elixir be compounded of the simplest herbs, his frame only is prepared to receive it who has gone through the subtlest trials. Nay, some, scared and daunted into the most intolerable horror by the sights that burst upon their eyes at the first draught, have found the potion less powerful to save than the agony and travail of Nature to destroy. To the unprepared the elixir is thus but the deadliest poison. Amidst the dwellers of the threshold is ONE, too, surpassing in malignity and hatred all her tribe- one whose eyes have paralyzed the bravest, and whose power increases over the spirit precisely in proportion to its fear. Does thy courage falter?"

"Nay, thy words but kindle it."

"Follow me, then, and submit to the initiatory labors."

With that, Mejnour led him into the interior chamber, and proceeded to explain to him certain chemical operations, which, though extremely simple in themselves, Glyndon soon perceived were capable of very extra-ordinary results.

"In the remoter times," said Mejnour smiling, "our brotherhood were often compelled to recur to delusions to protect realities; and, as Dexter's mechanics or expert chemists, they obtained the name of sorcerers. Observe how easy to construct is the Specter Lion that attended the renowned Leonardo da Vinci!"

And Glyndon beheld with delighted surprise the simple means by which the wildest cheats of the imagination can be formed. The magical landscapes in which Baptista Porta rejoiced; the apparent change of the seasons with which Albertus Magnus startled the Earl of Holland; nay, even those more dread delusions of the Ghost and image with which the Necromancers of Heraclea woke the conscience of the Conqueror of Plataea (Pausanias- see Plutarch.)- all these, as the showman enchants some trembling children on a Christmas Eve with his lantern and phantasmagoria, Mejnour exhibited to his pupil

And now laugh forever at magic! when these, the very tricks, the very sports and frivolities of science, were the very acts which men viewed with abhorrence, and Inquisitors and Kings rewarded with the rack and the stake."

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"But the Alchemist's transmutation of metals----"

"Nature herself is a laboratory in which metals, and all elements, are for ever at change. Easy to make gold- easier, more commodious and cheaper still, to make the pearl, the diamond, and the ruby. Oh yes; wise men found sorcery in this , too; but they found no sorcery in the discovery, that by the simplest combination of things of everyday use they could raise a Devil that would sweep away thousands of their kind by the breath of consuming fire. Discover what will destroy life, and you are a great man!- what will prolong it, and you are an impostor!- Discover some invention in machinery that will make the rich more rich, and the poor more poor, and they will build you a statue! Discover some mystery in art that will equalize disparities and they will pull down their own houses to stone you! Ha, ha, my pupil! such is the world Zanoni still cares for! You and I will leave this world to itself. And now that you have seen some few of the effects of science, begin to learn its grammar."

Mejnour then set before his pupil certain tasks, in which the rest of the night wore itself away.

CHAPTER V

For a considerable period the pupil of Mejnour was now absorbed in labour dependent on the most vigilant attention, on the most minute and subtle calculation. Results astonishing and various rewarded his toils and stimulated his interest. Nor were these studies limited to chemical discovery- in which it is permitted me to say that the greatest marvels upon the organization of physical life seemed wrought by experiments of the vivifying influence of Heat. Mejnour professed to find a link between all intellectual beings in the existence of a certain all-pervading and invisible fluid resembling electricity, yet distinct from the known operations of that mysterious agency- a fluid that connected thought to thought with the rapidity and precision of the modern telegraph, and the influence of this fluid, according to Mejnour, extended to the remotest past- that is to say, whenever and wheresoever man had thought. Thus, if the doctrine were true, all human knowledge became attainable through a medium established between the brain of the individual inquirer and all the farthest and obscurest regions in the universe of ideas. Glyndon was surprised to find Mejnour attached to the abstruse mysteries which the Pythagoreans ascribed to the occult science of NUMBERS. In this last, new lights glimmered dimly on his eyes; and he began to perceive that even the power to predict, or rather to calculate, results, might by----(Here there is an erasure in the Manuscript)

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But he observed that the last brief process by which, in each of these experiments, the wonder was achieved, Mejnour reserved for himself, and refused to communicate the secret. The answer he obtained to his remonstrances on this head was more stern than satisfactory:

"Dost thou think," said Mejnour, "that I would give to the mere pupil, whose qualities are not yet tried, powers that might change the face of the social world? The last secrets are entrusted only to him of whose virtue the Master is convinced. Patience! It is labour itself that is the great purifier of the mind; and by degrees the secrets will grow upon thyself as thy mind becomes riper to receive them."

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At last Mejnour professed himself satisfied with the progress made by his pupil. "The hour now arrives," he said, "when thou mayest pass the great but airy barrier- when thou mayest gradually confront the terrible Dweller on the Threshold. Continue thy labors- continue to suppress thine impatience for results until thou canst fathom the causes. I leave thee for one month; if at the end of that period, when I return, the tasks set thee are completed, and thy mind prepared by contemplation and austere thought for the ordeal, I promise thee the ordeal shall commence. One caution alone I give thee, regard it as a peremptory command- Enter not this chamber!" (They were then standing in the room where their experiments had been chiefly made, and in which Glyndon, on the night he had sought the solitude of the Mystic, had nearly fallen a victim to his intrusion.)

"Enter not this chamber till my return; or above all, if by any search for materials necessary to thy toils, thou shouldst venture hither, forbear to light the naphtha in those vessels, and to open the vases on yonder shelves. I leave the key of the room in thy keeping, in order to try thy abstinence and self-control. Young man, this very temptation is a part of thy trial."

With that Mejnour placed the key in his hands; and at sunset he left the castle.

For several days Glyndon continued immersed in employments which strained to the utmost all the faculties of his intellect. Even the most partial success depended so entirely on the abstraction of the mind, and the minuteness of its calculations, that there was scarcely room for any other thoughts than those absorbed in the occupation. And doubtless this perpetual strain of the faculties was the object of Mejnour in works that did not seem exactly pertinent to the purposes in view. As the study of the elementary mathematics, for example, is not so profitable in the solving of problems, useless in our after-callings, as it is serviceable in training the intellect to the comprehension and analysis of general truths.

But in less than half the time which Mejnour had stated for the duration of his absence, all that the Mystic had appointed to his toils were completed by the Pupil; and then his mind thus relieved from the drudgery and mechanism of employment, once more sought occupation in dim conjecture and restless fancies. His inquisitive and rash nature grew excited by the prohibition of Mejnour, and he found himself gazing too often, with perturbed and daring curiosity, upon the key of the forbidden chamber. He began to feel indignant at a trial of constancy which he deemed frivolous and puerile. What nursery tales of Bluebeard and his closet were revived to daunt and terrify him! How could the mere walls of a chamber, in which he had so often securely pursued his labors, start into living danger? If haunted, it could be but by those delusions which Mejnour had taught to despise. A shadowy lion- a chemical phantasm! Tush! He lost half his awe of Mejnour, when he thought that by such tricks the sage could practice upon the very intellect he had awakened and instructed! Still he resisted the impulses of his curiosity and his pride, and, to escape from their dictation, he took long rambles on the hills, or amidst the valleys that surrounded the castle- seeking by bodily fatigue to subdue the unreposing mind. One day, suddenly emerging from a dark ravine, he came upon one of those Italian scenes of rural festivity and mirth in which the classic age appears to revive. It was a festival, partly agricultural, partly religious, held yearly by the peasants of that district. Assembled at the outskirts of a village, animated crowds, just returned from a procession to a neighbouring chapel, were now forming themselves into groups- the old to taste the vintage, the young to dance- all to be gay and happy. This sudden picture of easy joy, and careless ignorance, contrasting so forcibly with the intense studies and that parching desire for wisdom which had so long made up his own life, and burned at his own heart, sensibly affected Glyndon. As he stood aloof and gazing on them, the young man felt once more that he was young! The memory of all he had been content to sacrifice spoke

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to him like the sharp voice of remorse. The flitting forms of the women in their picturesque attire, their happy laughter ringing through the cold still air of the autumn noon, brought back to the heart, or rather perhaps to the senses, the image of his past time, the "golden shepherd hours", when to live was but to enjoy.

He approached nearer and nearer to the scene, and suddenly a noisy group swept round him; and Maestro Paolo, tapping him familiarly on the shoulder, exclaimed in a hearty voice: "Welcome, Excellency- we are rejoiced to see you amongst us". Glyndon was about to reply to this salutation, when his eyes rested upon the face of a young girl, leaning on Paolo's arm, of a beauty so attractive, that his colour rose and his heart beat as he encountered her gaze. Her eyes sparkled with a roguish and petulant mirth, her parted lips showed teeth like pearls- as if impatient at the cause of her companion from the revel of the rest, her little foot beat the ground to a measure that she half hummed, half chanted. Paolo laughed as he saw the effect the girl had produced upon the young foreigner.

"Will you not dance, Excellency? Come, lay aside your greatness, and be merry, like us poor devils. See how our pretty Fillide is longing for a partner. Take compassion on her."

Fillide pouted at this speech; and disengaging her arm from Paolo's, turned away, but threw over her shoulder a glance half inviting, half defying. Glyndon, almost involuntary advanced to her, and addressed her.

Oh yes, he addresses her! She looks down, and smiles, Paolo leaves them to themselves, sauntering off with a devil-me-carish air. Fillide speaks now, and looks up at the scholar's face with arch invitation. He shakes his head: Fillide laughs, and her laugh is silvery. She points to a gay mountaineer, who is tripping up to her merrily. Why does Glyndon feel jealous? Why, when she speaks again, does he shake his head no more? He offers his hand; Fillide blushes, and takes it with demure coquetry. What! Is it so, indeed! They whirl into the noisy circle of the revellers. Ha! Ha! Is not this better than distilling herbs, and breaking thy brains on Pythagorean numbers? How lightly Fillide bounds along! How her lithesome waist supplies itself to thy circling arm! Tara-ra-tara, ta-tara, rara-ra! What the devil is in the measure, that it makes the blood course like quicksilver through the veins? Was there ever a pair of eyes like Fillide's? Nothing of the cold stars there! Yet how they twinkle and laugh at thee! And that rosy, pursed-up mouth, that will answer so sparingly to thy flatteries, as if words were a waste of time, and kisses were their proper language. Oh, pupil of Mejnour! Oh, would-be Rosicrucian-Platonist-Magian I know not what! I am ashamed of thee! What, in the names of Averroes, and Burri, and Agrippa and Hermes, have become of thy austere contemplations? Was it for this thou didst resign Viola? I don't think thou hast the smallest recollection of the elixir or the cabala. Take care! What are you about, sir? Why do you clasp that small hand locked within your own? Why do you- Tara-rara-tara-ra, tara-rara-ra, rarara, ta-ra a-ra! Keep your eyes off those slender ankles, and that crimson bodice! Tara-rara-ra! There they go again! And now they rest under the broad trees. The revel has whirled away from them. They hear- or do they not hear- the laughter at the distance? They see- or if they have their eyes about them, they should see- couple after couple, gliding by, love-talking and love-looking. But I will lay a wager, as they sit under that tree, and the round sun goes down behind the mountains, that they see or hear very little except themselves!

"Hollo, Signor Excellency! and how does your partner please you? Come and join our feast, Loiterers; one dances more merrily after wine."

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Down goes the round sun; up comes the autumn moon. Tara, tara, rarara, rarara, tarara-ra! Dancing again; is it a dance, or some movement gayer, noisier, wilder still? How they glance and gleam through the night-shadows- those flitting forms! What confusion- what order! Ha, that is the Tarantula dance; Maestro Paolo foots it bravely! Diavolo, what fury! the tarantula has stung them all. Dance, or die; it is fury- the Corybantes- the Maenads- the----. Ho, ho! more wine! The Sabbath of the Witches at Benevento is a joke to this! From cloud to cloud wanders the moon- now shining, now lost. Dimness while the maiden blushes; light when the maiden smiles.

"Fillide, thou art an enchantress!"

"Buona notte, Excellency: you will see me again!"

"Ah, young man," said an old decrepit, hollow-eyed octogenarian, leaning on his staff, "make the best of your youth. I, too, once had a Fillide! I was handsomer than you then! Alas! If we could be always young!"

"Always young!" Glyndon started, as he turned his gaze from the fresh fair rosy face of the girl, and saw the eyes drooping rheum- the yellow wrinkled skin- the tottering frame of the old man.

"Ha, ha!" said the decrepit creature, hobbling near to him, and with a malicious laugh. "Yet I, too was young once! Give me baiocco for a glass of acqua vita!"

Tara, rara, ra-rara, tara, rara-ra! There dance Youth! Wrap thy rags round thee, and totter off, Old Age!

CHAPTER VI

It was that gray, indistinct, struggling interval between the night and the dawn, when Clarence stood once more in his chamber. The abstruse calculations lying on his table caught his eye, and filled him with a sentiment of weariness and distaste. But: "Alas, if we could be always young! Oh, thou horrid spectre of the old rheum-eyed man! What apparition can the mystic chamber shadow forth more ugly and more hateful than thou? Oh yes; if we could be always young! But not (thinks the neophyte now)- not to labour for ever at these crabbed figures and these cold compounds of herbs and drugs. No; but to enjoy, to love, to revel! What should be the companion of youth but pleasure? - and the gift of eternal youth may be mine this very hour! What means this prohibition of Mejnour's? Is it not of the same complexion as his ungenerous reserve even in the minutest secrets of chemistry, or the numbers of his cabala?- compelling me to perform all the toils, and yet withholding from me the knowledge of the crowning result? No doubt he will still, on his return, show me that the great mystery can be attained; but will still forbid me to attain it. Is it not as if he desired to keep my youth the slave to his age?- to make me dependent solely on himself? to bind me to a journeyman's service by perpetual excitement to curiosity, and the sight of the fruits he places beyond my lips?" These, and many reflections still more repining, disturbed and irritated him. Heated with wine- excited by the wild revels he had left- he was unable to sleep. The image of that revolting Old Age which Time, unless defeated, must bring upon himself, quickened the eagerness of his desire for the dazzling and imperishable Youth he ascribed to Zanon. The prohibition only served to

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create a spirit of defiance. The reviving day, laughing jocundly through his lattice, dispelled all the fears and superstitions that belong to night. The mystic chamber presented to his imagination nothing to differ from any other apartment in the castle. What foul or malignant apparition could harm him in the light of that blessed sun! It was the peculiar, and on the whole most unhappy, contradiction in Glyndon's nature, that while his reasonings led him to doubt- and doubt rendered him in moral conduct irresolute and unsteady- he was physically brave to rashness. Nor is this uncommon: scepticism and presumption are often twins. When a man of this character determines upon any action, personal fear never deters him; and for the moral fear, any sophistry suffices to self-will. Almost without analysing himself the mental process by which his nerves hardened themselves and his limbs moved, he traversed the corridor, gained Mejnour's apartment, and opened the forbidden door. All was as he had been accustomed to see it, save that on a table in the centre of the room lay open a large volume. He approached, and gazed on the characters on the page; they were in a cipher, the study of which had made a part of his labours. With but slight difficulty he imagined that he interpreted the meaning of the first sentences, and that they ran thus:

"To quaff the inner life, is to see the outer life; to live in defiance of time, is to live in the whole. He who discovers the elixir, discovers what lies in space; for the spirit that vivifies the frame strengthens the senses. There is attraction in the elementary principle of light. In the lamps of Rosicrucius, the fire is the pure elementary principle. Kindle the lamps while thou openest the vessel that contains the elixir, and the light attracts towards thee those beings whose life is that light. Beware of Fear: Fear is the deadliest enemy to knowledge." Here the ciphers changed their character, and became incomprehensible. But had he not read enough? Did not the last sentence suffice?- "Beware of fear!" It was as if Mejnour had purposely left the page open- as if the trial was, in truth, the reverse of the one pretended- as if the Mystic had designed to make experiment of his courage while affecting but that of his forbearance. Not Boldness, but Fear was the deadliest enemy to Knowledge. He moved to the shelves on which the crystal vases were placed; with an untrembling hand he took from one of them the stopper, and a delicious odour suddenly diffused itself through the room. The air sparkled as if with diamond dust. A sense of unearthly delight- of an existence that seemed all spirit, flashed through his whole frame; and a faint, low, but exquisite music crept, thrilling, through the chamber. At this moment he heard a voice in the corridor, calling on his name; and presently there was a knock at the door without. "Are you there, Signor?" said the clear tones of Maestro Paolo. Glyndon hastily reclosed and replaced the vial; and bidding Paolo await him in his own apartment, tarried till he heard the intruder's steps depart; he then reluctantly quitted the room. As he locked the door he still heard the dying strain of that fairy music; and with a light step and a joyous heart, he repaired to Paolo, only resolving to visit again the chamber at an hour when his experiment would be safe from interruption.

As he crossed his threshold, Paolo started back, and exclaimed, "Why, Excellency! I scarcely recognise you! Amusement I see is a great beautifier to the young. Yesterday you looked so pale and haggard; but Fillide's merry eyes have done more for you than the philosopher's stone (Saints forgive me for naming it!) ever did for the wizards." And Glyndon, glancing at the old Venetian mirror, as Paolo spoke, was scarcely less startled than Paolo himself at the change in his own mien and bearing. His form, before bent with thought, seemed to him taller by half a head, so lithesome and erect rose his slender stature; his eyes glowed, his cheeks bloomed with health and the innate and pervading pleasure. If the mere fragrance of the elixir was thus potent, well might the alchemists have ascribed life and youth to the draught!

"You must forgive me, Excellency, for disturbing you," said Paolo, producing a letter from his pouch; "but our Patron had just written to me to say that he will be here tomorrow, and desired me to lose not a

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moment in giving to yourself this billet, which he enclosed."

"Who brought the letter?"

"A horseman, who did not wait for any reply.

Glyndon opened the letter, and read as follows;

"I return a week sooner than I had intended, and you will expect me tomorrow. You will then enter on the ordeal you desire; but remember that, in doing so, you must reduce Being as far as possible into Mind. The senses must be mortified and subdued- not the whisper of one passion heard. Thou mayst be master of the Cabala and the Chemistry; but thou must be master also over the Flesh and the Blood- over Love and Vanity, Ambition and Hate. I will trust to find thee so. Fast and meditate till we meet!"

Glyndon crumpled the letter in his hand with a smile of disdain. What! More drudgery- more abstinence! Youth without love and pleasure! Ha, ha! baffled Mejnour, thy pupil shall gain thy secrets without thine aid!

"And Fillide! I passed her cottage on my way- she blushed and sighed when I jested her about you, Excellency!"

"Well, Paolo! I thank thee for so charming an introduction. Thine must be a rare life."

"Ah, Excellency, while we are young, nothing like adventure- except love, wine, and laughter!"

"Very true. Farewell, Maestro Paolo; we will talk more with each other in a few days."

All that morning Glyndon was almost overpowered with the new sentiment of happiness that had entered into him. He roamed into the woods, and he felt a pleasure that resembled his earlier life of an artist, but a pleasure yet more subtle and vivid, in the various colours of the autumn foliage. Certainly, Nature seemed to be brought closer to him; he comprehended better all that Mejnour had often preached to him of the mystery of sympathies and attractions. He was about to enter into the same law as those mute children of the forest! He was to know the renewal of life; the seasons that chilled to winter should yet bring again the bloom and the mirth of spring. Man's common existence is as one year to the vegetable world: he was his spring, his summer, his autumn, and winter- but only once. But the giant oaks around him go through a revolving series of verdure and youth, and the green of the centenarian is as vivid in the beams of May as that of the sapling by its side. "Mine shall be your spring, but not your winter!" exclaimed the Aspirant.

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Wrapt in these sanguine and joyous reveries, Glyndon, quitting the woods, found himself amidst cultivated fields and vineyards to which his footstep had not before wandered; and there stood, by the skirts of a green lane that reminded him of a verdant England, a modest house- half cottage, half farm. The door was open, and he saw a girl at work with her distaff. She looked up, uttered a slight cry, and tripping gaily into the lane to his side, he recognised the dark-eyed Fillide.

"Hist!" she said, archly putting her finger to her lip; "do not speak loud- my mother is asleep within; and I knew you would come to see me. It is kind!"

Glyndon, with a little embarrassment, accepted the compliment to his kindness, which he did not exactly deserve. "You have thought, then, of me, fair Fillide?"

"Yes," answered the girl colouring, but with that frank, bold ingenuousness which characterises the females of Italy, especially of the lower class, and in the southern provinces- "oh yes! I have thought of little else. Paolo said he knew you would visit me."

"And what relation is Paolo to you?"

"None; but a good friend to us all. My brother is one of his band."

"One of his band!- A robber?"

"We, of the mountains, do not call a mountaineer a robber,' Signor."

"I ask pardon. Do you not tremble sometimes for your brother's life? The law----"

"Law never ventures into these defiles. Tremble for him! No. My father and grandsire were of the same calling. I often wish I were a man!"

"By these lips, I am enchanted that your wish cannot be realized!"

"Fie, Signor! And do you really love me?"

"With my whole heart!"

"And I thee!" said the girl, with a candour that seemed innocent, as she suffered him to clasp her hand.

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"But," she added, "thou wilt soon leave us; and I--" She stopped short, and the tears stood in her eyes.

There was something dangerous in this, it must be confessed. Certainly Fillide had not the seraphic loveliness of Viola (Zanoni's companion); but hers was a beauty that equally at least touched the senses. Perhaps Glyndon had never really loved Viola; perhaps the feelings with which she had inspired him were not of that ardent character which deserves the name of love. However that be, he thought as he gazed on those dark eyes that he had never loved before.

"And could you not leave thy mountains?" he whispered, as he drew yet nearer to her.

"Dost thou ask me!" she said, retreating, and looking him steadfastly in the face. "Dost thou know what we daughters of the mountains are? You gay, smooth cavaliers of cities seldom mean what you speak. With you, love is amusement; with us, it is life. Leave these mountains! Well! I should not leave my nature."

"Keep thy nature ever- it is a sweet one."

"Yes, sweet while thou art true; stern, if thou art faithless. Shall I tell thee what I- what the girls of this country are? Daughters of men who you call robbers, we aspire to be the companions of our lovers or our husbands. We love ardently, we own it boldly. We stand by your side in danger; we serve you as slaves in safety; we never change, and we resent change. You may reproach, strike us, trample us as a dog- we bear all without a murmur; betray us, and no tiger is more relentless. Be true, and our hearts reward you; be false, and our hands revenge!- Dost thou love me now?"

During this speech, the Italian's countenance had most eloquently aided her words- by turns soft, frank, fierce- and, at the last question, she inclined her head humbly, and stood, as in fear of his reply, before him. The stern, brave, wild spirit, in which what seemed unfeminine was yet, if I may so say, still womanly did not recoil, it rather captivated Glyndon. He answered readily, briefly, and freely: "Fillide-yes!"

Oh, "yes!" forsooth, Clarence Glyndon! Every light nature answers "yes" lightly to such a question from lips so rosy! Have a care- have a care! Why the deuce, Mejnour, do you leave your pupil of four-and-twenty to the mercy of these wild cats-a-mountain! Preach fast, and abstinence, and sublime renunciation of the cheats of the senses! Very well in you, sir, heaven knows how many ages old! But, at four-and-twenty, your Hierophant would have kept you out of Fillide's way, or you would have had small taste for the cabala!

And so they stood, and talked, and vowed, and whispered, till the girl's mother made some noise within the house, and Fillide bounded back to the distaff, her finger once more on her lip.

"There is more magic in Fillide than in Mejnour," said Glyndon to himself, walking gaily home; "yet, on second thoughts, I know not if I quite so well like a character so ready for revenge! But he who has the

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real secret can baffle even the vengeance of a woman, disarm all danger!"

Sirrah! dost thou even already meditate the possibility of treason? Oh, well said Zaroni: "To pour pure water into the muddy well does not disturb the mud!"

CHAPTER VII

And it is profound night. All is at rest within the old castle- all is breathless under the melancholy stars. Now is the time. Mejnour with his austere wisdom- Mejnour, the enemy to love- Mejnour, whose eye will read thy heart, and refuse thee the promised secrets, because the sunny face of Fillide disturbs the lifeless shadow that he calls repose- Mejnour comes tomorrow! Seize the night! Beware of fear! Never, or this hour! So, brave youth- brave despite all thy errors- so, with a steady pulse, thy hand unlocks once more the forbidden door!

He placed his lamp on the table beside the book, which still lay there opened; he turned over the leaves, but could decipher their meaning till he came to the following passage:

"When, then, the pupil is thus initiated and prepared, let him open the casement, light the lamps, and bathe his temples with the elixir. He must beware how he presume yet to quaff the volatile and fiery spirit. To taste, till repeated inhalations have accustomed the frame gradually to the ecstatic liquid, is to know not life, but death."

He could penetrate no further into the instructions; the cipher again changed. He now looked steadily and earnestly round the chamber. The moonlight came quietly through the lattice as his hand opened it, and seemed, as it rested on the floor and filled the walls, like the presence of some ghostly and mournful Power. He ranged the mystic lamps (nine in number), round the centre of the room, and lighted them one by one. A flame of silvery and azure tints sprung up from each, and lighted the apartment with a calm and yet most dazzling splendour; but presently this light grew more soft and dim, as a thin gray cloud, like a mist, gradually spread over the room; and an icy thrill shot through the heart of the Englishman, and quickly gathered over him like the coldness of death. Instinctively aware of his danger, he tottered, though with difficulty, for his limbs seemed rigid and stone-like, to the shelf that contained the crystal vials; hastily he inhaled the spirit, and laved his temples with the sparkling liquid. The same sensation of vigour, and youth, and joy, and airy lightness, that he had felt in the morning, instantaneously replaced the deadly numbness that just before had invaded the citadel of life. He stood with his arms folded on his bosom, erect and dauntless, to watch what should ensue.

The vapour had now assumed almost the thickness and seeming consistency of a snow-cloud; the lamps piercing it like stars. And now he distinctly saw shapes, somewhat resembling in outline those of the human form, gliding slowly and with regular evolutions through the cloud. They appeared bloodless; their bodies were transparent and contracted or expanded, like the folds of a serpent. As they moved in majestic order, he heard a low sound- the ghost as it were of voice- which each caught and echoed from the other; a low sound, but musical, which seemed the chant of some unspeakable tranquil joy. None of these apparitions heeded him. His intense longing to accost them, to be of them, to make one of this

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movement of aerial happiness- for such it seemed to him- made him stretch forth his arms and seek to cry aloud, but only an inarticulate whisper passed his lips; and the movement and the music went on the same if the mortal were not there. Slowly they glided round and aloft, till, in the same majestic order, one after one, they floated through the casement and were lost in the moonlight; then, as his eyes followed them, the casement became darkened with some object undistinguishable at the first gaze, but which sufficed mysteriously to change into ineffable horror the delight he had before experienced. By degrees, this object shaped itself to his sight. It was as that of a human head, covered with a dark veil, through which glared with livid and demoniac fire, eyes that froze the marrow of his bones. Nothing else of the face was distinguishable- nothing but those intolerable eyes; but his terror, that even at the first seemed beyond nature to endure, was increased a thousandfold, when, after a pause, the Phantom glided slowly into the chamber. The cloud retreated from it as it advanced; the bright lamps grew wan, and flickered restlessly as at the breath of its presence. Its form was veiled as the face, but the outline was that of a female; yet it moved not as move even the ghosts that simulate the living. It seemed rather to crawl as some vast misshapen reptile; and pausing, at length it cowered beside the table which held the mystic volume, and again fixed its eyes through the filmy veil on the rash invoker. All fancies, the most grotesque, of Monk or Painter in the early North, would have failed to give to the visage of imp or fiend that aspect of deadly malignity which spoke to the shuddering nature in those eyes alone. All else so dark- shrouded- veiled and larva-like. But that burning glare so intense, so livid, yet so living, had in it something that was almost human, in its passion of hate and mockery- something that served to show that the shadowy Horror was not all a spirit, but partook of matter enough, a least to make it more deadly and fearful an enemy to material forms. As, clinging with the grasp of agony to the wall- his hair erect- his eyeballs starting, he still gazed back upon that appalling gaze- the Image spoke to him- his soul rather than his ear comprehended the words it said.

"Thou hast entered the immeasurable region. I am the Dweller of the Threshold. What wouldst thou with me? Silent? Does thou fear me? Am I not thy beloved? Is it not for me that thou has rendered up the delights of thy race? Wouldst thou be wise? Mine is the wisdom of the countless ages. Kiss me, my mortal lover." And the Horror crawled near and nearer to him; it crept to his side, its breath breathed upon his cheek! With a sharp cry he fell to the earth insensible, and knew no more till, far in the noon of the next day, he opened his eyes and found himself in his bed- the glorious sun streaming through his lattice, and the bandit Paolo by his side, engaged in polishing his carbine, and whistling a Calabrian love air.

CHAPTER VIII

In one of those islands whose history the imperishable literature and renown of Athens yet invest with melancholy interest, and on which Nature, in whom "there is nothing melancholy," still bestows a glory of scenery and climate equally radiant for the freeman or the slave- the Ionian, the Venetian, the Gaul, the Turk, or the restless Briton- Zanoni had fixed his bridal Home. There the air carries with it the perfumes of the plains for miles along the blue translucent deep. Seen from one of its green sloping heights, the island he had selected seemed one delicious garden. The towers and turrets of its capital gleaming amidst groves of oranges and lemons; -vineyards and olive-woods filling up the valleys, and clambering along the hillsides; and villa, farm, and cottage covered with luxuriant trellises of dark-green leaves and purple fruit. For, there, the prodigal beauty yet seems half to justify those graceful superstitions of a creed that, too enamoured of earth, rather brought the deities to man, than raised the man to their less alluring and less voluptuous Olympus.

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And still to the fishermen, weaving yet their antique dances on the sand- to the maiden, adorning yet, with many a silver fibula, her glossy tresses under the tree that overshadows her tranquil cot- the same great Mother that watched over the wise of Samos- the democracy of Corcyra- the graceful and deep-taught loveliness of Miletus- smiles as graciously as of yore. For the North, philosophy and freedom are essentials to human happiness. In the lands which Aphrodite rose from the waves to govern, as the Seasons, hand in hand, stood to welcome her on the shores, Nature is all-sufficient.

The isle which Zanoni had selected was one of the loveliest in that divine sea. His abode, at some distance from the city, but near one of the creeks on the shore, belonged to a Venetian, and though small, had more of elegance than the natives ordinarily cared for. On the seas, and in sight, rode his vessel. His Indians, as before, ministered in mute gravity to the service of the household. No spot could be more beautiful, no solitude less invaded. To the mysterious knowledge of Zanoni- to the harmless ignorance of Viola- the babbling and garish world of civilized man was alike unheeded. The loving sky and the lovely earth are companions enough to Wisdom and to Ignorance while they love!

Although, as I have before said, there was nothing in the visible occupations of Zanoni that betrayed a cultivator of the occult sciences- his habit were those of a man who remembers or reflects. He loved to roam alone, chiefly at dawn, or at night, when the moon was clear (especially in each month, at its rise and fall,) miles and miles away over the rich inlands of the island, and to cull herbs and flowers, which he hoarded with jealous care. Sometimes at the dead of night, Viola would wake by an instinct that told her he was not by her side, and, stretching out her arms, find that the instinct had not deceived her. But she early saw that he was reserved on his peculiar habits, and if at times a chill, a foreboding, a suspicious awe crept over her, she forebore to question him. But his rambles were not always unaccompanied- he took pleasure in excursions less solitary. Often, when the sea lay before them like a lake, the barren dreariness of the opposite coast of Cephallenia contrasting the smiling shores on which they dwelt, Viola and himself would pass days in cruising slowly around the coast, or in visits to the neighbouring isles.

Every spot of the Greek soil, "that fair Fable-land", seemed to him familiar; and as he conversed of the Past, and its exquisite traditions, he taught Viola to love the race from which have descended the poetry and wisdom of the world. There was much in Zanoni, as she knew him better, that deepened the fascination in which Viola was from the first enthralled. His love for herself was so tender, so vigilant, and had that best and most enduring attribute, that it seemed rather grateful for the happiness in its own cares than vain of the happiness it created. His habitual mood with all who approached him was calm and gentle, almost to apathy. An angry word never passed his lips- an angry gleam never shot from his eyes. Once they had been exposed to the danger not uncommon in those then half-savage lands. Some pirates who infested the neighbouring coasts had heard of the arrival of the strangers, and the seamen Zanoni employed had gossiped of their master's wealth.

One night after Viola had retired to rest, she was awakened by a slight noise below, Zanoni was not by her side; she listened in some alarm. Was that a groan that came upon her ear? She started up, she went to the door; all was still. A footstep now slowly approached, and Zanoni entered calm as usual, and seemed unconscious of her fears. The next morning, three men were found dead at the threshold of the principal entrance, the door of which had been forced. They were recognized in the neighbourhood as the most sanguinary and terrible marauders of the coasts- men stained with a thousand murders, and who have never hitherto failed in any attempt to which the lust of rapine had impelled them. The footsteps of many others were tracked to the sea shore. It seemed that their accomplices must have fled

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on the death of their leaders.

But when the Venetian Proveditore, or authority of the island, came to examine into the matter, the most unaccountable mystery was the manner in which these ruffians had met their fate. Zanoni had not stirred from the apartment in which he ordinarily pursued his chemical studies. None of the servants had even been disturbed from their slumbers. No marks of human violence were on the bodies of the dead. They died, and made no sign. From that moment Zanoni's house, nay, the whole vicinity, was sacred. The neighbouring villages, rejoiced to be delivered from a scourge, regarded the stranger as one who the Pagiana (or Virgin) held under her especial protection. In truth, the lively Greeks around, facile to all external impressions, and struck with the singular and majestic beauty of the man who knew their language as a native, whose voice often cheered them in their humble sorrows, and whose hand was never closed to their wants, long after he had left shore, preserved his memory by grateful traditions, and still point to the lofty platanus beneath which they had often seen him seated, alone and thoughtful, in the heats of noon. But Zanoni had haunts less open to the gaze than the shade of the platanus.

In that isle there are the bituminous springs which Herodotus has commemorated. Often at night, the moon, at least, beheld him emerging from the myrtle and cystus that clothe the hillocks around the marsh that imbeds the pools containing the inflammable material, all the medical uses of which, as applied to the nerves of organic life, modern science has not yet perhaps explored. Yet more often would he pass his hours in a cavern, by the loneliest part of the beach, where the stalactites seem almost arranged by the hand of art, and which the superstition of the peasants associate, in some ancient legends, with the numerous and almost incessant earthquakes to which the island is so singularly subjected.

Whatever the pursuits that instigated these wanderings and favoured these haunts, either they were linked with, or else subordinate to, one main and master desire, which every fresh day, passed in the sweet human company of Viola, confirmed and strengthened.

The scene that Glyndon had witnessed in his trance was faithful to truth. And some little time after the date of that night, Viola was dimly aware that an influence, she knew not of what nature, was struggling to establish itself over her happy life. Visions, indistinct and beautiful, such as those she had known in her earlier days, but more constant and impressive, began to haunt her night and day when Zanoni was absent, to fade in his presence, and seem less fair than that. Zanoni questioned her eagerly and minutely of these visitations, but seemed dissatisfied, and at times perplexed, by her answers.

"Tell me not," he said, one day, "of those unconnected images, those evolutions of starry shapes in a choral dance, or those delicious melodies that seem to thee of the music and the language of the distant spheres. Has no one shape been to thee more distinct and more beautiful than the rest- no voice uttering, or seeming to utter, thine own tongue and whispering to thee of strange secrets and solemn knowledge?"

"No; all is confused in these dreams, whether of day or night; and when at the sound of thy footsteps I recover, my memory retains nothing but a vague impression of happiness. How different-how cold- to the rapture of hanging on thy smile, and listening to thy voice, when it says-"I love thee!"

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"Yet, how is it that visions less fair than these once seemed to thee so alluring? How is it that they then stirred thy fancies and filled thy heart? Once thou didst desire a fairy-land, and now thou seemest so contented with common life!"

"Have I not explained it to thee before? Is it common life, then, to love and to live with the one we love? My true fairy-land is won! Speak to me of no other."

And so night surprised them by the lonely beach; and Zanoni, allured from his sublimer projects, and bending over that tender face, forgot that, in the Harmonious Infinite which spread around, there were other worlds than that one human heart!

BOOK V

It will be remembered that we left Master Paolo by the bedside of Glyndon; and as, waking from that profound slumber, the recollections of the past night came horribly back to his mind, the Englishman uttered a cry, and covered his face with his hands.

"Good-morrow, Excellency," said Paolo gaily. "Corpo DI Bacco, you have slept soundly!"

The sound of this man's voice, so lusty, ringing, and healthful, served to scatter before it the phantasma that yet haunted Glyndon's memory.

He rose erect in his bed. "And where did you find me? Why are you here?"

"Where did I find you!" repeated Paolo, in surprise; "in your bed, to be sure. Why am I here!- because the Padrone bade me await your waking, and attend your commands."

"The Padrone, Mejnour!- is he arrived?"

"Arrived and departed, Signor. He has left this letter for you."

"Give it me, and wait without till I am dressed."

"At your service. I have bespoke an excellent breakfast: you must be hungry. I am a very tolerable cook: a monk's son ought to be! You will be startled at my genius in the dressing of fish. My singing, I trust, will not disturb you. I always sing while I prepare a salad; it harmonises the ingredients." And slinging his carbine over his shoulder, Paolo sauntered from the room and closed the door.

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Glyndon was already deep in the contents of the following letter:

"When I first received thee as my pupil, I promised Zanoni, if convinced by thy first trials that thou couldst but swell, not the number of our order but the list of the victims who have aspired to it in vain, I would not rear thee to thine own wretchedness and doom; I would dismiss thee back to the world. I fulfil my promise. Thine ordeal has been the easiest that Neophyte ever knew. I asked for nothing but abstinence from the sensual, and a brief experiment of thy patience and thy faith. Go back to thine own world, thou hast no nature to aspire to ours!

"It was I who prepared Paolo to receive thee at the revel. It was I who instigated the old beggar to ask thee for alms. It was I who left open the book that thou couldst not read without violating my command. Well, thou has seen what awaits thee at the threshold of knowledge. Thou hast confronted the first foe that menaces him whom the senses yet grasp and enthrall. Dost thou wonder that I close upon thee the gates for ever. Dost thou not comprehend, at last, that it needs a soul tempered, and purified, and raised, not by external spells, but by its own sublimity and valour, to pass the threshold and disdain the foe? Wretch! all my science avails nothing for the rash, for the sensual- for him who desires our secrets but to pollute them to gross enjoyments and selfish vice? How have the impostors and sorcerers of the earlier times perished by their very attempt to penetrate the mysteries that should purify and not deprave! They have boasted of the philosopher's stone and died in rags; of the immortal elixir, and sank to their grave, gray before their time. Legends tell you that the fiend rent them into fragments. Yes, the fiend of their own unholy desires and criminal designs! What they coveted thou covetest; and if thou hadst the wings, of a seraph, thou couldst soar not from the slough of thy mortality. Thy desire for knowledge, but petulant presumption; thy thirst for happiness, but the diseased longing for the unclean and muddied waters of corporeal pleasure; thy very love, which usually elevates even the mean, a passion that calculates treason, amidst the first glow of lust;- thou, one of us! Thou, a brother of the August Order! Thou, an Aspirant to the Stars that shine in the Shemaia of the Chaldaean love! The eagle can raise but the eaglet to the sun. I abandon thee to the twilight!

"But, alas, for thee, disobedient and profane! Thou hast inhaled the elixir, thou has attracted to thy presence a ghastly and remorseless foe. Thou thyself must exorcise the phantom thou hast raised. Thou must return to the world; but not without punishment and strong effort canst thou regain the calm and the joy of the life thou hast left behind. This for thy comfort will I tell thee: he who has drawn into his frame even so little of the volatile and vital energy of the aerial juices as thyself, has awakened faculties that cannot sleep- faculties that may yet, with patient humility, with sound faith, and the courage that is not of the body like thine, but of the resolute and virtuous mind, attain, if not to the knowledge that reigns above, to high achievement in the career of men. Thou wilt find the restless influence in all that thou wouldst undertake. Thy heart, amidst vulgar joys, will aspire to something holier; thy ambition, amidst coarse excitement, to something beyond thy reach. But deem not that this of itself will suffice for glory. Equally may the craving lead thee to shame and guilt. It is but an imperfect and new-born energy, which will not suffer thee to repose. As thou directest it, must thou believe it to be the emanation of thine evil genius or thy good.

"But woe to thee! insect meshed in the web in which thou hast entangled limbs and wings! Thou hast not only inhaled the elixir, thou hast conjured the spectre; of all the tribes of the space no foe is so malignant to man,- and thou hast lifted the veil from thy gaze. I cannot restore to thee the happy dimness of thy vision. Know, at least, that all of us- the highest and the wisest- who have, in sober truth, passed beyond

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the threshold, have had, as our first fearful task, to master and subdue its grisly and appalling guardian. Know that thou canst deliver thyself from those livid eyes- know that, while they haunt, they cannot harm, if thou resistest the thoughts to which they tempt, and the horror they engender. Dread them most when thou beholdest them not. And thus, son of the worm, we part! All that I can tell thee to encourage, yet to warn and to guide, I have told thee in these lines. Not from me, from thyself has come the gloomy trial, from which I yet trust thou wilt emerge into peace. Type of the knowledge that I serve, I withhold no lesson from the pure aspirant; I am a dark enigma to the general seeker. As man's only indestructible possession is his memory, so it is not in mine art to crumble into matter the immaterial thoughts that have sprung up within thy breast. The tyro might shatter this castle to the dust, and topple down the mountain to the plain. The master has no power to say, 'Exist no more', to one THOUGHT that his knowledge has inspired. Thou mayst change the thought into new forms; thou mayst rarify and sublimate it into a finer spirit, but thou canst not annihilate that which has no home but in the memory- no substance but the idea. EVERY THOUGHT IS A SOUL! Vainly, therefore, would I or thou undo the past, or restore to thee the gay blindness of thy youth. Thou must endure the influence of the elixir thou hast inhaled; thou must wrestle with the spectre thou hast invoked!"

Notes from H.P.Blavatsky on the Dweller on the Threshold

- (From Vol.12- of Collected Writings of H.P.Blavatsky- - Page 636)

The future of the Lower Manas (Lower Mind) is more terrible, and still more terrible to humanity than to the now animal man. It sometimes happens after the separation the exhausted Soul, now become supremely animal, fades out in Kama-Loka (Desire Location), as do all other animal souls. But seeing that the more material the human mind, the longer it lasts, in that intermediate stage, it frequently happens that after the actual life of the soulless man is ended, he is again and again reincarnated into new personalities, each one more abject than the other. The impulse of animal life is too strong; it cannot wear itself out in one or two lives only. In rare cases, however, something far more dreadful may happen. When the lower Manas is doomed to exhaust itself by starvation; when there is no longer hope that even a remnant of a lower light will, owing to favorable conditions- say, even a short period of spiritual aspiration and repentance- attract back to itself its Parent Ego, then Karma leads the Higher Ego back to new incarnations. In this case the Kama-Manasic spook may become that which we call in Occultism the "Dweller on the Threshold". This "Dweller" is not like that which is described so graphically in Zanon, but an actual fact in nature and not a fiction in romance, however beautiful the latter may be. Bulwer must have got the idea from some Eastern Initiate. Our "Dweller", led by affinity and attraction, forces itself into the astral current, and through the Auric Envelope of the new tabernacle inhabited by the Parent Ego, and declares war to the lower light which has replaced it. This, of course, can only happen in the case of moral weakness of the personality so obsessed. No one strong in his virtue, and righteous in his walk of life, can risk or dread any such thing; but only those depraved in heart. Robert Louis Stevenson had a glimpse of true vision indeed when he wrote his Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. His story is a true allegory. Every Chela (disciple) would recognize in it a substratum of truth, and in Mr. Hyde a "Dweller", an obsessor of the personality, the tabernacle of the "Parent Spirit".

"This is a nightmare tale!" I was often told by one, now no more in our ranks, a person who had a most pronounced "Dweller", a "Mr. Hyde", as an almost constant companion. "How can such a process take place without one's knowledge?" It can and does so happen, and I have almost described it once before in The Theosophist. "The Soul, the Lower Mind, becomes as a half-animal principle almost paralyzed

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with daily vice, and grows gradually unconscious of its subjective half, the Lord ... one of the mighty Host". and "in proportion to the rapid sensuous development of the brain and nerves, sooner or later, it (the personal Soul) finally loses sight of its divine mission on earth". Truly, "like the vampire, the brain feeds and lives and grows in strength at the expense of its spiritual parent ... and the personal half-unconscious Soul becomes senseless, beyond hope of redemption. It is powerless to discern the voice of its "God". It aims but at the development and fuller comprehension of natural, earthly life; and thus can discover but the mysteries of physical nature ... It begins by becoming virtually dead, during the life of the body; and ends by dying completely -- that is, by being annihilated as a complete immortal Soul. Such a catastrophe may often happen long years before one's physical death: "We elbow soulless men and women at every step in life". And, when death arrives ... there is no more a Soul (the reincarnating Spiritual Ego) to liberate ... for it has fled years before".

[More information is available in Collective Writings- Volume XII, page 637 and about this particular topic.]