

THE MANIAC OF LEIPSIC

Among the posthumous papers of Dr. David Monroe, a grand uncle of mine, were some manuscripts which interested me a great deal. Dr. Monroe had travelled practically all over the world, and, as he was accustomed to set down in his diary all his experiences, he was able, later, to rewrite them in the form of a manuscript.

He has been dead many years now, but I have not published any of his writing, since, because of his fame, they would probably cause notoriety instead of interest. But, now, I do not think it is unjust to his memory to give some of them, at least, to the public. I consider that it is only fair that the public should share the interest and suspense which occupied my mind for weeks after I obtained possession (I was Dr. Monroe's only heir) of the black metal box containing my grand-uncle's personal papers.

The first one I will set down word for word as it is in the original. As far as I can discover the action took place in 1896.

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One evening in early summer I was walking aimlessly about in the streets of Leipsic in order to quiet my nerves which were in a very bad way. I had had a hard day at the great hospital of Leipsic where I was employed on the staff of surgeons. Upon graduating from the Medical University I had been offered a position at the hospital although I was a foreigner; and being in need of money I gladly accepted.

The day's work in the operating room had so shattered my nerves that, against my better judgment, I took a heavy dose of morphine. Since I had never before taken the drug this was an extremely foolish thing to do. But the morphine instead of quieting me had the contrary effect; and, as I walked along, my mind swung crazily from thought to thought; terrible forms and grotesque shapes swept through my fevered brain. Looking up at the high dwellings I thought that they were about to crumble and bury me alive. I walked swiftly and presently was traversing the poorest section of the city when suddenly I noticed that an approaching thunder-storm was curling over the darkening horizon. The air which until now was quite calm began to move in fitful puffs

of wind. The day was drawing to a tempestuous close, and the distant flares of livid lightning and heavy rumbles of thunder struck my restless brain forcibly. Looking around I noticed that the streets were deserted. Doubtlessly the oncoming storm had scattered the people, but off in the distance I imagined that I heard a low, prolonged noise, like the distant echoes of footsteps. Now a terrifying gleam of lightning snaked across the heavens, and was followed by a heavy roar of thunder.

Startled I turned around, but before I had taken twenty paces a man barred my path. He spoke, "You are Dr. Monroe. I recognize you. Please come with me."

Peering closer in the gathering darkness I perceived that my companion was tall and powerfully built. He was dressed entirely in black; a sable cloak covering his body to the knees. His long, dark hair blew wildly about in the heavy thunder squall. A black hat was slouched low on his forehead. Heavy lines crossed his countenance which was as pale as chalk. His mouth was nearly invisible so thin were his lips, and the latter were curved downward in an everlasting grimace. Under his heavy, beetling brows were terrible caverns in which no eyes could be seen; but at times one could see distant flares, as of a powerful searchlight at sea, which denoted the presence of ocular organs.

After some natural hesitation I asked him where he wished me to go.

With grim precision he replied, "To help a patient in the Street of the Cries of the Lost." (This is the nearest translation I can make from the literal German, but later I found out that there was no such street).

"What disease has the patient got?" I asked the question sternly, for my companion caused considerable fear in me.

"Not leprosy!" He shot the contemptuous reply from tight lips.

After debating in my mind a few moments whether I should go or not, I suddenly decided to follow him. We walked swiftly for about fifteen minutes, he ahead and I behind, until, coming to an old Gothic building, he signified that his home was in the basement of it. The storm broke with all its fury as we descended a long flight of stone steps into the cellar. Zigzagging flashes of light-

ning streamed across the inky heavens, tremendous crashes of thunder roared simultaneously, and a deluge of rain lashed down. The wrath of the Thunder-God was overflowing. To my astonishment, the man in black turned his face toward the sky and shrieked something in a foreign tongue and then passed through a low doorway into his abode.

We entered a dismal room which I will try to describe though to picture it accurately is beyond human ability. The floor consisted of stone flags covered with a thick layer of dust. Pictures hung profusely around the stone walls, but I was thunderstruck to see that they were suspended upside down; all of them portrayed gruesome events such as the Murder of Rizzio and similar ones. The sparse furniture was black with age; a suit of armor stood in one corner while beside it stood a long case. A palpable chill permeated everywhere. In the opposite wall was a heavy iron-studded door. A dark cloth covered the single window, and the only illumination, besides the glaring of the lightning through the cloth, was from a solitary candle which flickered fitfully on the bare table.

My guide motioned me to a pile of rags in the corner in which the armor and case were standing. Taking the candle I approached. Holding the taper above my head I perceived that the case, which was of genuine ebony, contained a mummy. Glancing down I saw that a child of about seven years of age was lying in the foul heap of rags; she was in the last stages of small-pox and had probably two hours to live.

I turned to the man. "What do you wish me to do—heal a child with the stamp of death already on its countenance?"

If it were possible his face became more forbidding. "She does not die quickly enough. There is a drug cabinet over there. Kill the scum!" Here he spat horribly.

Alarmed beyond expression I stared at him in terror. Regaining the power of speech, I cried hoarsely, "Murderer, what would you have me do?"

For answer the demon, for such he must have been, gave vent to a terrible scream; his face worked convulsively. Snatching the ancient sword which made up part of the suit of armor he forced me back to the iron

door on the other side of the room. Maledictions poured from his lips.

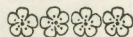
He forced me through the door-way until I stood in a room slightly smaller than the first but having no windows. By the light of the candle which I still held in my hand I witnessed a sight which made my heart leap with terror. Even now as I write my blood runs cold. *The room was filled with corpses and dying human beings!* The terrible odor of decaying bodies was tempered by a strong perfume which, no doubt, had been sprinkled about for that express purpose. In one place an aged man was writhing in his last agony from a broken spine—all horribly twisted. The floor was littered with cadavers from some of which poured blood. Others had died or were dying from deadly diseases.

My deadly fear could no longer be held in check. Screaming and biting my lips I rushed past the fiend, whom I now recognized to be a mad-man, into the larger room. But instead of striking he broke into peals of demoniacal laughter. Scream upon scream of hellish mirth rolled from his blasphemous lips. As I reached the centre of the room a white hand reached out and plucked the still-lighted candle from my hand. Turning I saw the child who had the small-pox hurl it into the rags in the corner. They broke into flames, and at the same time the upright mummy case trembled, then fell with a crash upon the floor. The madman rushed at the child, oaths and curses tumbling from his lips.

In a frenzy of terror I rushed out into the raging elements. Rain, thunder, lightning, and pelting rain swept the deserted streets. As I rushed along I seemed to see the grinning madman keeping pace with me on the opposite side of the street. Once I met a policeman who shouted something to me, but instead of answering I shrieked at the top of my voice between foam-flecked lips. He ran towards me, but I escaped by running up a dark alley. How I reached my lodgings I do not know, but, after what seemed an age, I arrived there half-insane with fright.

As a result of my escapade I spent three weeks in bed, having a high fever and being delirious a great deal of the time. Afterwards I tried to locate the house of the mad-man, but, as I did not know that section of the

city very well, I was unable to do so. My closest friend, Dr. Bellick, to whom I told the story says that it was a hallucination caused by an overdose of morphine. But I do not believe him. Perhaps even yet the fierce maniac is carrying on his gruesome murders.—J. D. MacD., '33.



MARY

Oft dreams and hopes do softly fade and flee
From out my soul, as dew before the sun,
While all alone I lie, the minutes run
And leave us here—dull idleness and me.
Then cherished hopes, the joyful dreams I see,
Glide past and slowly cast faint shadows on
My troubled soul and memory one by one,
Like fading notes of some soft melody.
But lo! The Light of all my dreams is nigh,
Those soothing words of Hers proclaims the breeze;
They gently glide like moonbeams from the sky,
And oft at eve are whispered thro' the trees:
“A Mother I shall be to all who fly
To me,” she murmurs sweetly from on high.

—A.E.L., '31

