The Golden Ingot

Fitzjames O'Brien

Table of Contents

The Golden Ingot

Fitzjames O'Brien

I had just retired to rest, with my eyes almost blind with the study of a new work on physiology by M. Brown−Sequard, when the night bell was pulled violently.

It was winter, and I confess I grumbled as I rose and went downstairs to open the door. Twice that week I had been aroused long after midnight for the most trivial causes. Once, to attend upon the son and heir of a wealthy family, who had cut his thumb with a penknife, which, it seems, he insisted on taking to bed with him; and once, to restore a young gentleman to consciousness, who had been found by his horrified parent stretched insensible on the staircase. Diachylon in the one case and ammonia in the other were all that my patients required; and I had a faint suspicion that the present summons was perhaps occasioned by no case more necessitous than those I have quoted. I was too young in my profession, however, to neglect opportunities. It is only when a physician rises to a very large practice that he can afford to be inconsiderate. I was on the first step of the ladder, so I humbly opened my door.

A woman was standing ankle deep in the snow that lay upon the stoop. I caught but a dim glimpse of her form, for the night was cloudy; but I could hear her teeth rattling like castanets, and, as the sharp wind blew her clothes close to her form, I could discern from the sharpness of the outlines that she was very scantily supplied with raiment.

"Come in, come in, my good woman," I said hastily, for the wind seemed to catch eagerly at the opportunity of making itself at home in my hall, and was rapidly forcing an entrance through the half− open door. "Come in, you can tell me all you have to communicate inside."

She slipped in like a ghost, and I closed the door. While I was striking a light in my office, I could hear her teeth still clicking out in the dark hall, till it seemed as if some skeleton was chattering. As soon as I obtained a light I begged her to enter the room, and, without occupying myself particularly about her appearance, asked her abruptly what her business was.

"My father has met with a severe accident," she said, "and requires instant surgical aid. I entreat you to come to him immediately."

The freshness and the melody of her voice startled me. Such voices rarely, if ever, issue from any but beautiful forms. I looked at her attentively, but, owing to a nondescript species of shawl in which her head was wrapped, I could discern nothing beyond what seemed to be a pale, thin face and large eyes. Her dress was lamentable. An old silk, of a color now unrecognizable, clung to her figure in those limp folds which are so eloquent of misery. The creases where it had been folded were worn nearly through, and the edges of the skirt had decayed into a species of irregular fringe, which was clotted and discolored with mud. Her shoes— which were but half concealed by this scanty garment—were shapeless and soft with moisture. Her hands were hidden under the ends of the shawl which covered her head and hung down over a bust, the outlines of which, although angular, seemed to possess grace. Poverty, when partially shrouded, seldom fails to interest: witness the statue of the Veiled Beggar, by Monti.

"In what manner was your father hurt?" I asked, in a tone considerably softened from the one in which I put my first question.

"He blew himself up, sir, and is terribly wounded."

"Ah! He is in some factory, then?"

"No, sir, he is a chemist."

"A chemist? Why, he is a brother professional. Wait an instant, and I will slip on my coat and go with you. Do you live far from here?"

"In the Seventh Avenue, not more than two blocks from the end of this street."

"So much the better. We will be with him in a few minutes. Did you leave anyone in attendance on him?"

"No, sir. He will allow no one but myself to enter his laboratory. And, injured as he is, I could not induce him to quit it."

"Indeed! He is engaged in some great research, perhaps? I have known such cases."

We were passing under a lamp−post, and the woman suddenly turned and glared at me with a look of such wild terror that for an instant I involuntarily glanced round me under the impression that some terrible peril, unseen by me, was menacing us both.

"Don't—don't ask me any questions," she said breathlessly. "He will tell you all. But do, oh, do hasten! Good God! he may be dead by this time!"

I made no reply, but allowed her to grasp my hand, which she did with a bony, nervous clutch, and endeavored with some difficulty to keep pace with the long strides—I might well call them bounds, for they seemed the springs of a wild animal rather than the paces of a young girl—with which she covered the ground. Not a word more was uttered until we stopped before a shabby, old−fashioned tenement house in the Seventh Avenue, not far above Twenty−third Street. She pushed the door open with a convulsive pressure, and, still retaining hold of my hand, literally dragged me upstairs to what seemed to be a back offshoot from the main building, as high, perhaps, as the fourth story. In a moment more I found myself in a moderate−sized chamber, lit by a single lamp. In one corner, stretched motionless on a wretched pallet bed, I beheld what I supposed to be the figure of my patient.

"He is there," said the girl; "go to him. See if he is dead—I dare not look."

I made my way as well as I could through the numberless dilapidated chemical instruments with which the room was littered. A French chafing dish supported on an iron tripod had been overturned, and was lying across the floor, while the charcoal, still warm, was scattered around in various directions. Crucibles, alembics, and retorts were confusedly piled in various corners, and on a small table I saw distributed in separate bottles a number of mineral and metallic substances, which I recognized as antimony, mercury, plumbago, arsenic, borax, etc. It was veritably the apartment of a poor chemist. All the apparatus had the air of being second−hand. There was no luster of exquisitely annealed glass and highly polished metals, such as dazzles one in the laboratory of the prosperous analyst. The makeshifts of poverty were everywhere visible. The crucibles were broken, or gallipots were used instead of crucibles. The colored tests were not in the usual transparent vials, but were placed in ordinary black bottles. There is nothing more melancholy than to behold science or art in distress. A threadbare scholar, a tattered book, or a battered violin is a mute appeal to our sympathy.

I approached the wretched pallet bed on which the victim of chemistry was lying. He breathed heavily, and had his head turned toward the wall. I lifted his arm gently to arouse his attention. "How goes it, my poor friend?" I asked him. "Where are you hurt?"

In a moment, as if startled by the sound of my voice, he sprang up in his bed, and cowered against the wall like a wild animal driven to bay. "Who are you? I don't know you. Who brought you here? You are a stranger. How dare you come into my private rooms to spy upon me?"

And as he uttered this rapidly with a frightful nervous energy, I beheld a pale distorted face, draped with long gray hair, glaring at me with a mingled expression of fury and terror.

"I am no spy," I answered mildly. "I heard that you had met with an accident, and have come to cure you. I am Dr. Luxor, and here is my card."

The old man took the card, and scanned it eagerly. "You are a physician?" he inquired distrustfully.

"And surgeon also."

"You are bound by oath not to reveal the secrets of your patients."

"Undoubtedly."

"I am afraid that I am hurt," he continued faintly, half sinking back in the bed.

I seized the opportunity to make a brief examination of his body. I found that the arms, a part of the chest, and a part of the face were terribly scorched; but it seemed to me that there was nothing to be apprehended but pain.

"You will not reveal anything that you may learn here?" said the old man, feebly fixing his eyes on my face while I was applying a soothing ointment to the burns. "You will promise me."

I nodded assent.

"Then I will trust you. Cure me—I will pay you well."

I could scarce help smiling. If Lorenzo de' Medici, conscious of millions of ducats in his coffers, had been addressing some leech of the period, he could not have spoken with a loftier air than this inhabitant of the fourth story of a tenement house in the Seventh Avenue.

"You must keep quiet," I answered. "Let nothing irritate you. I will leave a composing draught with your daughter, which she will give you immediately. I will see you in the morning. You will be well in a week."

"Thank God!" came in a murmur from a dusk corner near the door. I turned, and beheld the dim outline of the girl, standing with clasped hands in the gloom of the dim chamber.

"My daughter!" screamed the old man, once more leaping up in the bed with renewed vitality. "You have seen her, then? When? Where? Oh, may a thousand cur—"

"Father! father! Anything—anything but that. Don't, don't curse me!" And the poor girl, rushing in, flung herself sobbing on her knees beside his pallet.

"Ah, brigand! You are there, are you? Sir," said he, turning to me, "I am the most unhappy man in the world. Talk of Sisyphus rolling the ever−recoiling stone—of Prometheus gnawed by the vulture since the birth of time. The fables yet live. There is my rock, forever crushing me back! there is my eternal vulture, feeding upon my heart! There! there! there!" And, with an awful gesture of malediction and hatred, he pointed with his wounded hand, swathed and shapeless with bandages, at the cowering, sobbing, wordless woman by his side.

I was too much horror−stricken to attempt even to soothe him. The anger of blood against blood has an electric power which paralyzes bystanders.

"Listen to me, sir," he continued, "while I skin this painted viper. I have your oath; you will not reveal. I am an alchemist, sir. Since I was twenty−two years old, I have pursued the wonderful and subtle secret. Yes, to unfold the mysterious Rose guarded with such terrible thorns; to decipher the wondrous Table of Emerald; to accomplish the mystic nuptials of the Red King and the White Queen; to marry them soul to soul and body to body, forever and ever, in the exact proportions of land and water—such has been my sublime aim, such has been the splendid feat that I have accomplished."

I recognized at a glance, in this incomprehensible farrago, the argot of the true alchemist. Ripley, Flamel, and others have supplied the world, in their works, with the melancholy spectacle of a scientific bedlam.

"Two years since," continued the poor man, growing more and more excited with every word that he uttered—"two years since, I succeeded in solving the great problem—in transmuting the baser metals into gold. None but myself, that girl, and God knows the privations I had suffered up to that time. Food, clothing, air, exercise, everything but shelter, was sacrificed toward the one great end. Success at last crowned my labors. That which Nicholas Flamel did in 1382, that which George Ripley did at Rhodes in 1460, that which Alexander Sethon and Michael Scudivogius did in the seventeenth century, I did in 1856. I made gold! I said to myself, 'I will astonish New York more than Flamel did Paris.' He was a poor copyist, and suddenly launched into magnificence. I had scarce a rag to my back: I would rival the Medicis. I made gold every day. I toiled night and morning; for I must tell you that I never was able to make more than a certain quantity at a time, and that by a process almost entirely dissimilar to those hinted at in those books of alchemy I had hitherto consulted. But I had no doubt that facility would come with experience, and that ere long I should be able to eclipse in wealth the richest sovereigns of the earth.

"So I toiled on. Day after day I gave to this girl here what gold I succeeded in fabricating, telling her to store it away after supplying our necessities. I was astonished to perceive that we lived as poorly as ever. I reflected, however, that it was perhaps a commendable piece of prudence on the part of my daughter. Doubtless, I said, she argues that the less we spend the sooner we shall accumulate a capital wherewith to live at ease; so, thinking her course a wise one, I did not reproach her with her niggardliness, but toiled on, amid want, with closed lips.

"The gold which I fabricated was, as I said before, of an invariable size, namely, a little ingot worth perhaps thirty or forty−five dollars. In two years I calculated that I had made five hundred of these ingots, which, rated at an average of thirty dollars apiece, would amount to the gross sum of fifteen thousand dollars. After deducting our slight expenses for two years, we ought to have had nearly fourteen thousand dollars left. It was time, I thought, to indemnify myself for my years of suffering, and surround my child and myself with such moderate comforts as our means allowed. I went to my daughter and explained to her that I desired to make an encroachment upon our little hoard. To my utter amazement, she burst into tears, and told me that she had not got a dollar—that all of our wealth had been stolen from her. Almost overwhelmed by this new misfortune, I in vain endeavored to discover from her in what manner our savings had been plundered. She could afford me no explanation beyond what I might gather from an abundance of sobs and a copious flow of tears.

"It was a bitter blow, doctor, but nil desperandum was my motto, so I went to work at my crucible again, with redoubled energy, and made an ingot nearly every second day. I determined this time to put them in some secure

place myself; but the very first day I set my apparatus in order for the projection, the girl Marion—that is my daughter's name—came weeping to me and implored me to allow her to take care of our treasure. I refused decisively, saying that, having found her already incapable of filling the trust, I could place no faith in her again. But she persisted, clung to my neck, threatened to abandon me; in short, used so many of the bad but irresistible arguments known to women that I had not the heart to refuse her. She has since that time continued to take the ingots.

"Yet you behold," continued the old alchemist, casting an inexpressibly mournful glance around the wretched apartment, "the way we live. Our food is insufficient and of bad quality; we never buy clothes; the rent of this hole is a mere nothing. What am I to think of the wretched girl who plunges me into this misery? Is she a miser, think you?—or a female gamester?—or—or—does she squander it riotously in places I know not of? O Doctor, Doctor! do not blame me if I heap imprecations on her head, for I have suffered bitterly!" The poor man here closed his eyes and sank back groaning on his bed.

This singular narrative excited in me the strangest emotions. I glanced at the girl Marion, who had been a patient listener to these horrible accusations of cupidity, and never did I behold a more angelic air of resignation than beamed over her countenance. It was impossible that anyone with those pure, limpid eyes; that calm, broad forehead; that childlike mouth, could be such a monster of avarice or deceit as the old man represented. The truth was plain enough: the alchemist was mad—what alchemist was there ever who was not?—and his insanity had taken this terrible shape. I felt an inexpressible pity move my heart for this poor girl, whose youth was burdened with such an awful sorrow.

"What is your name?" I asked the old man, taking his tremulous, fevered hand in mine.

"William Blakelock," he answered. "I come of an old Saxon stock, sir, that bred true men and women in former days. God! how did it ever come to pass that such a one as that girl ever sprung from our line?" The glance of loathing and contempt that he cast at her made me shudder.

"May you not be mistaken in your daughter?" I said, very mildly. "Delusions with regard to alchemy are, or have been, very common—"

"What, sir?" cried the old man, bounding in his bed. "What? Do you doubt that gold can be made? Do you know, sir, that M. C. Theodore Tiffereau made gold at Paris in the year 1854 in the presence of M. Levol, the assayer of the Imperial Mint, and the result of the experiments was read before the Academy of Sciences on the sixteenth of October of the same year? But stay; you shall have better proof yet. I will pay you with one of my ingots, and you shall attend me until I am well. Get me an ingot!"

This last command was addressed to Marion, who was still kneeling close to her father's bedside. I observed her with some curiosity as this mandate was issued. She became very pale, clasped her hands convulsively, but neither moved nor made any reply.

"Get me an ingot, I say!" reiterated the alchemist passionately.

She fixed her large eyes imploringly upon him. Her lips quivered, and two huge tears rolled slowly down her white cheeks.

"Obey me, wretched girl," cried the old man in an agitated voice, "or I swear, by all that I reverence in heaven and earth, that I will lay my curse upon you forever!"

I felt for an instant that I ought perhaps to interfere, and spare the girl the anguish that she was so evidently suffering; but a powerful curiosity to see how this strange scene would terminate withheld me.

The last threat of her father, uttered as it was with a terrible vehemence, seemed to appall Marion. She rose with a sudden leap, as if a serpent had stung her, and, rushing into an inner apartment, returned with a small object which she placed in my hand, and then flung herself in a chair in a distant corner of the room, weeping bitterly.

"You see—you see," said the old man sarcastically, "how reluctantly she parts with it. Take it, sir; it is yours."

It was a small bar of metal. I examined it carefully, poised it in my hand—the color, weight, everything, announced that it really was gold.

"You doubt its genuineness, perhaps," continued the alchemist. "There are acids on yonder table—test it."

I confess that I DID doubt its genuineness; but after I had acted upon the old man's suggestion, all further suspicion was rendered impossible. It was gold of the highest purity. I was astounded. Was then, after all, this man's tale a truth? Was his daughter, that fair, angelic−looking creature, a demon of avarice, or a slave to worse passions? I felt bewildered. I had never met with anything so incomprehensible. I looked from father to daughter in the blankest amazement. I suppose that my countenance betrayed my astonishment, for the old man said: "I perceive that you are surprised. Well, that is natural. You had a right to think me mad until I proved myself sane."

"But, Mr. Blakelock," I said, "I really cannot take this gold. I have no right to it. I cannot in justice charge so large a fee."

"Take it—take it," he answered impatiently; "your fee will amount to that before I am well. Besides," he added mysteriously, "I wish to secure your friendship. I wish that you should protect me from her," and he pointed his poor, bandaged hand at Marion.

My eyes followed his gesture, and I caught the glance that replied— a glance of horror, distrust, despair. The beautiful face was distorted into positive ugliness.

"It's all true," I thought; "she is the demon that her father represents her."

I now rose to go. This domestic tragedy sickened me. This treachery of blood against blood was too horrible to witness. I wrote a prescription for the old man, left directions as to the renewal of the dressings upon his burns, and, bidding him good night, hastened toward the door.

While I was fumbling on the dark, crazy landing for the staircase, I felt a hand laid on my arm.

"Doctor," whispered a voice that I recognized as Marion Blakelock's, "Doctor, have you any compassion in your heart?"

"I hope so," I answered shortly, shaking off her hand; her touch filled me with loathing.

"Hush! don't talk so loud. If you have any pity in your nature, give me back, I entreat of you, that gold ingot which my father gave you this evening."

"Great heaven!" said I, "can it be possible that so fair a woman can be such a mercenary, shameless wretch?"

"Ah! you know not—I cannot tell you! Do not judge me harshly. I call God to witness that I am not what you deem me. Some day or other you will know. But," she added, interrupting herself, "the ingot—where is it? I must have it. My life depends on your giving it to me."

"Take it, impostor!" I cried, placing it in her hand, that closed on it with a horrible eagerness. "I never intended to keep it. Gold made under the same roof that covers such as you must be accursed."

So saying, heedless of the nervous effort she made to detain me, I stumbled down the stairs and walked hastily home.

The next morning, while I was in my office, smoking my matutinal cigar, and speculating over the singular character of my acquaintances of last night, the door opened, and Marion Blakelock entered. She had the same look of terror that I had observed the evening before, and she panted as if she had been running fast.

"Father has got out of bed," she gasped out, "and insists on going on with his alchemy. Will it kill him?"

"Not exactly," I answered coldly. "It were better that he kept quiet, so as to avoid the chance of inflammation. However, you need not be alarmed; his burns are not at all dangerous, although painful."

"Thank God! thank God!" she cried, in the most impassioned accents; and, before I was aware of what she was doing, she seized my hand and kissed it.

"There, that will do," I said, withdrawing my hand; "you are under no obligations to me. You had better go back to your father."

"I can't go," she answered. "You despise me—is it not so?"

I made no reply.

"You think me a monster—a criminal. When you went home last night, you were wonderstruck that so vile a creature as I should have so fair a face."

"You embarrass me, madam," I said, in a most chilling tone. "Pray relieve me from this unpleasant position."

"Wait. I cannot bear that you should think ill of me. You are good and kind, and I desire to possess your esteem. You little know how I love my father."

I could not restrain a bitter smile.

"You do not believe that? Well, I will convince you. I have had a hard struggle all last night with myself, but am now resolved. This life of deceit must continue no longer. Will you hear my vindication?"

I assented. The wonderful melody of her voice and the purity of her features were charming me once more. I half believed in her innocence already.

"My father has told you a portion of his history. But he did not tell you that his continued failures in his search after the secret of metallic transmutation nearly killed him. Two years ago he was on the verge of the grave, working every day at his mad pursuit, and every day growing weaker and more emaciated. I saw that if his mind was not relieved in some way he would die. The thought was madness to me, for I loved him—I love him still, as a daughter never loved a father before. During all these years of poverty I had supported the house with my needle; it was hard work, but I did it—I do it still!"

"What?" I cried, startled, "does not—"

"Patience. Hear me out. My father was dying of disappointment. I must save him. By incredible exertions, working night and day, I saved about thirty−five dollars in notes. These I exchanged for gold, and one day, when my father was not looking, I cast them into the crucible in which he was making one of his vain attempts at transmutation. God, I am sure, will pardon the deception. I never anticipated the misery it would lead to.

"I never beheld anything like the joy of my poor father, when, after emptying his crucible, he found a deposit of pure gold at the bottom. He wept, and danced, and sang, and built such castles in the air, that my brain was dizzy to hear him. He gave me the ingot to keep, and went to work at his alchemy with renewed vigor. The same thing occurred. He always found the same quantity of gold in his crucible. I alone knew the secret. He was happy, poor man, for nearly two years, in the belief that he was amassing a fortune. I all the while plied my needle for our daily bread. When he asked me for the savings, the first stroke fell upon me. Then it was that I recognized the folly of my conduct. I could give him no money. I never had any—while he believed that I had fourteen thousand dollars. My heart was nearly broken when I found that he had conceived the most injurious suspicions against me. Yet I could not blame him. I could give no account of the treasure I had permitted him to believe was in my possession. I must suffer the penalty of my fault, for to undeceive him would be, I felt, to kill him. I remained silent then, and suffered.

"You know the rest. You now know why it was that I was reluctant to give you that ingot—why it was that I degraded myself so far as to ask it back. It was the only means I had of continuing a deception on which I believed my father's life depended. But that delusion has been dispelled. I can live this life of hypocrisy no longer. I cannot exist and hear my father, whom I love so, wither me daily with his curses. I will undeceive him this very day. Will you come with me, for I fear the effect on his enfeebled frame?"

"Willingly," I answered, taking her by the hand; "and I think that no absolute danger need be apprehended. Now, Marion," I added, "let me ask forgiveness for having even for a moment wounded so noble a heart. You are truly as great a martyr as any of those whose sufferings the Church perpetuates in altar−pieces."

"I knew you would do me justice when you knew all," she sobbed, pressing my hand; "but come. I am on fire. Let us hasten to my father, and break this terror to him."

When we reached the old alchemist's room, we found him busily engaged over a crucible which was placed on a small furnace, and in which some indescribable mixture was boiling. He looked up as we entered.

"No fear of me, doctor," he said, with a ghastly smile, "no fear; I must not allow a little physical pain to interrupt my great work, you know. By the way, you are just in time. In a few moments the marriage of the Red King and White Queen will be accomplished, as George Ripley calls the great act, in his book entitled 'The Twelve Gates.' Yes, doctor, in less than ten minutes you will see me make pure, red, shining gold!" And the poor old man smiled triumphantly, and stirred his foolish mixture with a long rod, which he held with difficulty in his bandaged hands. It was a grievous sight for a man of any feeling to witness.

"Father," said Marion, in a low, broken voice, advancing a little toward the poor old dupe, "I want your forgiveness."

"Ah, hypocrite! for what? Are you going to give me back my gold?"

"No, father, but for the deception that I have been practicing on you for two years—"

"I knew it! I knew it!" shouted the old man, with a radiant countenance. "She has concealed my fourteen thousand dollars all this time, and now comes to restore them. I will forgive her. Where are they, Marion?"

"Father—it must come out. You never made any gold. It was I who saved up thirty−five dollars, and I used to slip them into your crucible when your back was turned—and I did it only because I saw that you were dying of disappointment. It was wrong, I know—but, father, I meant well. You'll forgive me, won't you?" And the poor girl advanced a step toward the alchemist.

He grew deathly pale, and staggered as if about to fall. The next instant, though, he recovered himself, and burst into a horrible sardonic laugh. Then he said, in tones full of the bitterest irony: "A conspiracy, is it? Well done, doctor! You think to reconcile me with this wretched girl by trumping up this story that I have been for two years a dupe of her filial piety. It's clumsy, doctor, and is a total failure. Try again."

"But I assure you, Mr. Blakelock," I said as earnestly as I could, "I believe your daughter's statement to be perfectly true. You will find it to be so, as she has got the ingot in her possession which so often deceived you into the belief that you made gold, and you will certainly find that no transmutation has taken place in your crucible."

"Doctor," said the old man, in tones of the most settled conviction, "you are a fool. The girl has wheedled you. In less than a minute I will turn you out a piece of gold purer than any the earth produces. Will that convince you?"

"That will convince me," I answered. By a gesture I imposed silence on Marion, who was about to speak. I thought it better to allow the old man to be his own undeceiver—and we awaited the coming crisis.

The old man, still smiling with anticipated triumph, kept bending eagerly over his crucible, stirring the mixture with his rod, and muttering to himself all the time. "Now," I heard him say, "it changes. There—there's the scum. And now the green and bronze shades flit across it. Oh, the beautiful green! the precursor of the golden−red hue that tells of the end attained! Ah! now the golden−red is coming—slowly—slowly! It deepens, it shines, it is dazzling! Ah, I have it!" So saying, he caught up his crucible in a chemist's tongs, and bore it slowly toward the table on which stood a brass vessel.

"Now, incredulous doctor!" he cried, "come and be convinced," and immediately began carefully pouring the contents of the crucible into the brass vessel. When the crucible was quite empty he turned it up and called me again. "Come, doctor, come and be convinced. See for yourself."

"See first if there is any gold in your crucible," I answered, without moving.

He laughed, shook his head derisively, and looked into the crucible. In a moment he grew pale as death.

"Nothing!" he cried. "Oh, a jest, a jest! There must be gold somewhere. Marion!"

"The gold is here, father," said Marion, drawing the ingot from her pocket; "it is all we ever had."

"Ah!" shrieked the poor old man, as he let the empty crucible fall, and staggered toward the ingot which Marion held out to him. He made three steps, and then fell on his face. Marion rushed toward him, and tried to lift him, but could not. I put her aside gently, and placed my hand on his heart.

"Marion," said I, "it is perhaps better as it is. He is dead!"