

disappear. In a moment he is a centre of romance. If he came back *incognito* at the end of the proverbial 'nine days,' which means of course a much longer time than a week and a half, he would not recognize the highly-colored portrait which would be shown him of himself. What did he ever do, he might wonder, to be thought so bad or so good, so strange or so silly? There is no reputation which could stand an unaccountable departure. Such a vague heading as 'Disappearance of a Lady' obviously attracts many readers or we should not see it so often in the public press. Of course, if it can be made a little more definite, and the disappeared person's birthplace, daily work, or social condition can be particularized, the romantic instinct of the multitude is even more certain to be awakened. The notion that someone has not been buried, though every evidence is there to prove that he or she has died, is a recurrent source of squalid romance. We do not need a very long memory to recall several instances of such supposed disappearances.

The romance of disappearance throws, we think, some light, though perhaps it is but an oblique one, upon the value set upon ugly and worthless rarities; also it explains in some degree the fascination exercised by the effigies of animals who have disappeared from the face of the earth. It is natural that they should be deeply interesting to zoölogists, but why they should prove, as they always seem to do, more interesting to the general public than any other exhibit at the South Kensington Museum, we have always wondered. Together with mummies, they have a supreme hold upon the fancy of the young Londoner. Perhaps the inexplicable comicality of the antediluvians may have something to say to their charm, something which might enable them to retain it even if they once

more came to life and had to be confined in the Zoo.

Are there any lost arts? The philosopher's stone, like Atlantis, is a name to conjure with. It is not likely that the alchemists had any secret whatever which we have not long found out. The Black Art has disappeared, but it is surrounded by a romance so profound and so seductive that not everyone would dare even now to make a study of its former pretensions lest he should lose his reason among its spells. Chemistry stands to alchemy as America stands to Atlantis. Romance has very little to do with the actual; the actual is always passing and romance always remains.

The Spectator

'THE PRINCESS DEAD AND ALIVE'

BY FRANCIS DE MIOMANDRE

GUSTAVE FRÉTILLAND, a literary promoter, having urgently requested the presence of his intimate friend and *ame damnée*, Victor Sideret, spoke with him in that tone of friendly and cynical familiarity which one uses in speaking to an *ame damnée*.

'My good Sideret, I have summoned you for an affair of importance. My wife is ill, and needs the sunlight of the Riviera. I feel the oncoming of neurasthenia. We must get away. But I have just carried to the director of *Le Jardin* the outline of my new novel, my new romantic and intriguing novel. You are aware of my talent for novels?'

'I am,' replied Sideret not without melancholy.

'The title is a very taking one, *The Princess Dead and Alive*.'

'Ah, yes, the title is admirable,' replied the *ame damnée* with admiration.

'You are the man for titles. Therefore,' he added in a low voice, 'only the text remains to be written?'

'Even so. Fifty thousand lines. Being in a great hurry, they are willing to receive the copy from day to day.'

'Never mind about the details. How much do I get?'

'I shall give you thirty centimes a line.'

'Eh?'

'That is my final offer.'

'And your first, please?'

'My dear fellow, you are a surprise. Here I offer you fifteen thousand francs on a platter and you turn up your nose at it. Yet only yesterday I received a letter from a certain Poutut who offered to do the work for twenty centimes. Therefore ——'

Sideret shivered, but held his peace.

'Well,' he answered at last, 'I'll do it. Six cents a line; I'll begin to-morrow.'

And home he went with the outline of the novel under his arm.

The next day he had a visit from an unfortunate hack. Sideret received the visit with indignation.

'What times!' he shrieked. 'The chicanery of the world of letters is past supporting. You tried to go over my head; to set yourself up as my rival. A pretty kind of business. But you did n't hit it off. Frétiland himself said to me, "A scoundrel, by the name of Poutut wrote to me yesterday. His ideas are quite beyond the borders of reason. Did you ever hear of the dog?"'

'Pardon me,' said Poutut trembling, 'a kind of folly overcame me. I ——'

'I know, the folly of greatness. But I thought I ought to speak to you about it. Now to serious matters. Here is the outline of an admirable novel, *The Princess Dead and Alive*. I am frightfully busy at this moment. I shall hand the job over to you. Fifty

thousand lines — to be delivered from day to day. I shall give you six thousand francs.'

'That means twelve centimes a line,' sighed Poutut after a rapid calculation.

'You are a terrifying mathematician!' replied Sideret in the voice of a master. 'However I do not intend to argue. Will you accept? Yes or no?'

'I'll do it,' cried Poutut with all his soul. And he, in his turn, carried away the outline.

On his return to his lodgings he was much surprised to discover a soiled and unshaven person who fell on his neck. It was the inevitable childhood friend fallen on evil days. He was drowning in the immense ocean of Paris.

'My dear fellow,' said Poutut with solemnity, 'I never refuse to help those who cry politely for aid. But I have a principle to maintain; I avoid inflicting a humiliation. A loan is but a dole in disguise. You must earn your bread with dignity.'

'But how?' groaned the childhood friend. 'I have tried everything.'

'You shall write a masterpiece.'

And Poutut explained the mechanism of *The Princess Dead and Alive*.

'I shall give you three cents a line. Others are seeking it, but you shall have the preference.'

Overcome with gratitude, the childhood friend accepted and set to work.

In another week *Le Jardin* began the publication of Frétiland's famous novel. A huge success. Never had the master of popular thrills been more subtle, intriguing, mysterious. Bathing in the sun of the Riviera, Frétiland read his romance and was moved by it.

'Ah,' said he, 'if that animal of a Sideret had only a talent for business equal to his genius for composition!

He would have been a great personage by this time.'

Suddenly there came a bolt of lightning from the blue, a telegram from the director of *Le Jardin*.

'Please explain at once. Am not receiving copy.'

Frétiland, stunned, opened the paper. There was no installment of his novel in the day's issue. He telegraphed to Sideret. The telegram surprised Sideret as he was spending his

nine thousand francs. Sideret ran to Poutut's lodgings. Both ran to the garret of the childhood friend.

The poor man had died. According to the concierge he had died of pure joy at seeing himself in print, even though under another's name. The shock had been too great for a nature already too severely tried.

And it was Poutut who finished the novel, after all.

Les Annales

A PASSING

BY A. CHRISTIE

A WHIRLING of dead leaves,
 A gathering in of sheaves,
 The stripping of the trees,
 The ebbing of the seas,
 The shifting of the sands,
 A vision of fair lands —
 A sundering and a thundering
 Of prison bars that fall!
 The answer to a call
 New destiny to shape,
 A silence — and a breath —
 We call it — *Death!*
 Nor dare to say — Escape!

The Poetry Review