

## Selected Story.

### THE DEMON IN THE CUP.

I HAD been reading an oriental tale of the faucal order. It was a story of the genii, and I had been deeply interested in it. I was very comfortably situated in my room, and on the table was a glass containing the remains of a sherry cobbler I had just imbibed. It never occurred to me that these same sherry cobbler were dangerous companions for a young man, and I was in the habit of taking from three to a dozen of them *per diem*—three when I was going to see Lucy Sheldon, a particular friend of mine, and a dozen on the off days.

I turned the leaves of the magazine, but could find no other story that looked inviting; so I threw it down, and sunk back in my rocking-chair. Things had begun to look rather dim, and my own consciousness very indistinct, when my attention was attracted by a strange commotion in the glass from which I had partly consumed my cobbler.

I glanced at it, and presently a long wreath of smoke or vapor rose from the cup, and stretched itself over towards the farther corner of the room, just exactly as the clouds had preceded the appearance of the genii in the story I had been reading.

The vapor slowly, and apparently with malice aforethought, began to assume a tangible shape, finally resolving itself in the form of an ugly looking demon as I had ever read about. He was monstrous in size, would probably have been twenty feet high, if the room had been lofty enough.

"Who are you?" I inquired, displeased with my visitor.

"I am the Demon of the Cup," he replied, in a voice which seemed to shake the whole house.

"I haven't the pleasure of your acquaintance," I continued.

"Yes, you have. You are one of my best friends."

"I believe we never met before."

"A dozen times a day."

"Then you don't look as ugly as you do now, if you will excuse my boldness."

"No; I wear a pleasant face when I make the acquaintance of young gentlemen; but I thought it was about time we should be better acquainted. You don't know me yet. We will have a social time, if you like."

"No, I thank you; I can't say I am much pleased with your society."

"At any rate, I shall introduce you to a few of my friends," he continued, as he waved his wand over the cup.

Instantly another cloud of smoke or vapor proceeded from the cup, which presently assumed the form of a decrepit, ragged, filthy old man. Of all that I had ever seen of wretchedness seemed a hundred-fold intensified.

"Who are you?" I demanded, as the old man moved towards me.

"My name is Poverty."

"I should think it might be. What do you want here?"

"I just dropped in to be introduced to you, for you and I are likely to be friends."

"Indeed, old fellow, you are reckoning too fast. I keep only respectable company."

"Just now you do; but you will change habits by-and-by."

"Don't be too familiar, if you please. I suggested, as the old chap drew a chair to my side, and seated himself."

"We are bound to be friends, young man. Did you ever read Emerson's works?"

"Of course I have."

"Well, sir, I am the representative man."

"You had better take yourself off, or I shall be under the necessity of kicking you down stairs."

"I don't mind that; I am used to it."

"Be civil to him," interposed the Demon. "He is one of us, and a good fellow in his way. He often brings men to their senses when nothing else will, but you have another friend, and again he waved his wand over the cup."

Again the vapor rose from the glass, and another form, more hideous than either of the others, appeared before me. I was alarmed at first by his savage expression and glaring eyes.

"Who are you?" I enquired, shrinking back from the loathsome monster.

"My name is Crime."

"Then you have been well named."

"I have work for you to do."

"I am too much engaged to assist you," I replied. "Come, come, don't be too stiff about it. I suppose you are not quite ready to help me yet, but I can bide my time, for I have a mortgage on you which in due season you must pay up."

"How do you like my friends?" asked the Demon.

"I don't like them."

"No?"

"The old fellow is an inconvenient companion, and I don't like the morals of the other chap. His notions of mine and mine are too indefinite to suit my ideas."

"Indeed, you seemed so much inclined to make their acquaintance, that I sup-

posed you were anxious to number them among your friends."

"Certainly; they belong in the cup. But there is one more you must know."

As he spoke, that smoke infernal curled up and resolved into the form of a woman. She was pale, haggard, and almost a skeleton. She was clothed in rags, and was a perfect picture of wretchedness and despair. There was nothing really hideous in her aspect beyond the marks of poverty and want which she bore. She turned and fixed a glance of reproach upon me—a glance which thilled me to the soul. I pitied the poor wretch, and turned away.

I looked again. These features were familiar to me. I was shocked, horrified, as I recognized Lucy Sheldon in the dreadful figure before me.

"Lucy!" I exclaimed, with a start of horror.

"Oh, Robert!" she cried, in agony, as she threw herself upon her knees before me. "Pity me! Pity our poor children! They are hungry. I am freezing, but I care not for myself. Pity them, save them!"

"My God, Lucy!"

"Drink no more, Robert. You have reduced me to the most abject misery. Drink no more, as you pity me, if you do not love me!"

"Oh, Lucy! Does she too belong to the cup?" I asked, appealing to the Demon.

"She does; but for the present we keep her down in the mint and sugar. She will be one of us by-and-by," he replied, with a grin.

"Robert! Robert!" groaned Lucy. "Promise me you will drink no more!"

"As God is my judge I will not," I cried, springing from my chair.

But there I stood in my chamber alone, and there on the table stood the glass from which my dreaming fancy had conjured up the Demon of the Cup and his friends.

I reflected for a time, and then threw the balance of the sherry cobbler into the grate. If the cup was the abode of such a wretched crew (my readers know that it is) I determined not to meddle with it again, and I have not.

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Ch'town, Dec. 26, 1877.—3i

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Nov. 27—

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Dec. 27—2aw till 15th ar till 15th

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July 24 1877.

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