



Arthur Conan Doyle
Gothic Tales

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

GOTHIC TALES

SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE was born in Edinburgh in 1859 to Irish Catholic parents. He was educated at Stonyhurst, the Jesuit college, and studied medicine at Edinburgh University, graduating in 1881. He practised medicine at Southsea in the 1880s as well as in a Greenland whaler, a West African trader, and (after twenty years' retirement) a Boer War hospital. His literary career began in 1879 with the publication of a short story in *Chambers's Journal*, and the first Sherlock Holmes adventure, *A Study in Scarlet*, was published in 1887. A master of short fiction, Doyle was one of the most important writers of the Gothic short stories at a time when this genre was at its most important and influential. Doyle's Gothic tales draw on his enormously wide range of interests, and cover the full panoply of Gothic subgenres, including medical horror, Egyptomaniac stories, ghosts, and spiritualism. He also wrote historical and colonial novels including those that revolved around Brigadier Gerard and Napoleon. He ran unsuccessfully for Parliament and became a leading public figure, as an enthusiastic cricketer, an activist against miscarriages of justice, and the foremost English publicist of spiritualism. He was knighted in 1902 and died at Crowborough, Sussex, in 1930.

DARRYL JONES is Professor in English at Trinity College Dublin, where he has taught since 1994. His publications include *Horror: A Thematic History in Fiction and Film* (2002) and *Jane Austen* (2004). He has edited *Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson* (2014), and M. R. James's *Collected Ghost Stories* (2013) for Oxford World's Classics.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS

For over 100 years Oxford World's Classics have brought readers closer to the world's great literature. Now with over 700 titles—from the 4,000-year-old myths of Mesopotamia to the twentieth century's greatest novels—the series makes available lesser-known as well as celebrated writing.

The pocket-sized hardbacks of the early years contained introductions by Virginia Woolf, T. S. Eliot, Graham Greene, and other literary figures which enriched the experience of reading.

Today the series is recognized for its fine scholarship and reliability in texts that span world literature, drama and poetry, religion, philosophy and politics. Each edition includes perceptive commentary and essential background information to meet the changing needs of readers.

OXFORD WORLD'S CLASSICS



ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

Gothic Tales



Edited with an Introduction and Notes by

DARRYL JONES

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Selection and editorial matter © Darryl Jones 2016

The moral rights of the author have been asserted

First published 2016

First published as an Oxford World's Classics paperback 2018

Impression: 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

ISBN 978-0-19-873430-7

Printed in Great Britain by
Clays Ltd, St Ives plc

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I WOULD like to begin by thanking my editors at OUP. Judith Luna's enthusiasm for the subject, and her habitual patience and wisdom, have meant a great deal to me. My thanks also to Luciana O'Flaherty for seeing the project through to completion, and for her understanding towards my cavalier attitude to the specifics of deadlines. My thanks to the librarians of the British Library and Trinity College Dublin for their help and advice.

I would also like to thank Ailise Bulfin, Con Casey, Valeria Cavalli, Clare Clarke, John Connolly, Nick Daly, Ruth Doherty, Mary Donnelly, Christine Ferguson, Laura Habbe, Kate Hebblethwaite, Douglas Kerr, Miles Link, Roger Luckhurst, Elizabeth McCarthy, Bernice Murphy, Helen Conrad O'Briain, Deaglán Ó Dongháile, Eve Patten, Catherine Phelps, and Conor Reid, all of whom, whether they know it or not, have helped to make this book what it is. Particular thanks go as ever to Jarlath Killeen for his friendship, knowledge, and support over many years.

This book is dedicated with love to Margaret Robson and Morgan Jones, my family.

CONTENTS

<i>Introduction</i>	ix
<i>Note on the Text</i>	xxxiv
<i>Select Bibliography</i>	xxxv
<i>Chronology of Arthur Conan Doyle</i>	xxxvii

THE TALES

The American's Tale	3
The Captain of the 'Polestar'	10
The Winning Shot	32
J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement	63
John Barrington Cowles	91
Uncle Jeremy's Household	113
The Ring of Thoth	150
The Surgeon of Gaster Fell	166
A Pastoral Horror	185
'De Profundis'	201
Lot No. 249	210
The Los Amigos Fiasco	241
The Case of Lady Sannox	248
The Lord of Château Noir	258
The Third Generation	269
The Striped Chest	278
The Fiend of the Cooperage	291
The Beetle-Hunter	303

The Sealed Room	318
The Brazilian Cat	330
The New Catacomb	348
The Retirement of Signor Lambert	361
The Brown Hand	370
Playing with Fire	384
The Leather Funnel	397
The Pot of Caviare	408
The Silver Mirror	421
The Terror of Blue John Gap	430
Through the Veil	446
How It Happened	451
The Horror of the Heights	455
The Bully of Brocas Court	470
The Nightmare Room	482
The Lift	489
<i>Explanatory Notes</i>	501

INTRODUCTION

Readers who are unfamiliar with the stories may prefer to treat the Introduction as an Afterword.

ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE is the greatest genre writer Britain has ever produced. Over the course of a long and very prolific career he earned enormous popularity and public acclaim, some degree of political influence, a knighthood, a very large amount of money, and towards the end of his life no little scorn and ridicule. He was a forceful personality: a big man, proud of his physique—‘strong and active’, he called himself¹—and a man of considerable intelligence, of boundless energy, and of unassailable self-confidence. These were qualities which he brought to bear on a variety of endeavours, but especially upon the writing of fiction, of which he produced a great amount in an astounding variety of genres.

Writers are not always the best judges of their own work. To a significant degree, Doyle owed his fame and success to the creation of Sherlock Holmes, a true literary immortal whose international celebrity and marketability show no signs of dwindling. Doyle is unquestionably one of the most important writers in the history of crime fiction. And yet Holmes was increasingly a source of irritation to his creator, who was convinced that his real talents lay elsewhere. As far as he was concerned, his lasting achievements were in the genre of historical fiction. Looking back on his career in his 1924 autobiography, *Memories and Adventures*, Doyle identified the fourteenth-century historical romances *The White Company* (1891) and *Sir Nigel* (1906) as ‘the most complete, satisfying thing that I have ever done. All things find their level, but I believe that if I had never touched Holmes, who has tended to obscure my higher work, my position in literature would at the present moment be a more commanding one.’²

As well as being a hyper-successful crime writer and a somewhat frustrated historical novelist, Doyle was also a great writer of imperial

¹ Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Crowborough Edition*, xxiv. *Memories and Adventures* (Garden City, NY, 1930), 242.

² Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 86.

adventure fiction, notably with the first of the Professor Challenger novels, *The Lost World* (1912). He wrote pirate stories (the ‘Captain Sharkey’ series), and with his boxing stories made a distinguished contribution to sporting fiction. While a combination of public clamour and financial wisdom saw him returning intermittently to Holmes across his career—reluctantly acknowledging that ‘I do not wish to be ungrateful to Holmes, who has been a good friend to me in many ways’³—there was one genre which he revisited again and again, with great enthusiasm. Arthur Conan Doyle was a major figure in the great period of the history of the Gothic tale.⁴

Dismissed for much of the twentieth century as a cheap brand of populist melodrama, over recent decades the Gothic has become understood as a major cultural mode for the articulation of uncertainty and anxiety.⁵ With its characteristic tensions between past and present, rational scientific naturalism and the irrational and supernatural, centre and periphery, the country and the city, the Gothic drew together many of Doyle’s concerns.⁶ It provided him with a vehicle to express his divided national identity and double consciousness. It gave form to his anxieties, unarticulable in official public discourse, about the moral mission of the British Empire. It allowed him to explore, from the very beginning of his writing career, those possibilities of metaphysics and extreme states of being, disallowed within the realist economy of orthodox literary fiction. ‘We have in our police reports realism pushed to its extreme limits’, Dr Watson suggests.⁷ The Gothic tale allowed Doyle’s imagination to venture far beyond even these limits. The range of stories in this volume is compendious, taking in the full panoply of the Victorian Gothic imagination’s preoccupations—spiritualism, supernaturalism, and the occult;

³ Doyle, *Memories and Adventures*, 117.

⁴ Much has been written on the Gothic tale and Victorian periodical culture. See, for example, Darryl Jones, ‘Introduction’ to *Horror Stories: Classic Tales from Hoffmann to Hodgson*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Jones (Oxford, 2014), pp. xi–xxx.

⁵ For important foundational works of modern Gothic interpretation, see, for example, David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (London, 1979); Fred Botting, *Gothic* (London, 1996). For an excellent modern introductory critical study, see Nick Groom, *The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2012). For the best overview of nineteenth-century Gothic, see Jarlath Killeen, *Gothic Literature 1825–1914* (Cardiff, 2009).

⁶ For a similar argument to this, see Catherine Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle: British Imperialism, Irish Nationalism, and the Gothic* (Westport, Conn., 2002), 2–3.

⁷ Doyle, ‘A Case of Identity’, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Short Stories* (London, 1928), 56.

colonial, Egyptomaniac, and yellow peril horrors; medical and surgical horrors; psychological tales of madness, obsession, and murder; tales of precognition and the uncanny.

Doyle was fortunate to be writing at a time when the literary marketplace was especially amenable to his own particular talents. The hegemony of the classic Victorian ‘three-decker’ novel came to a crashing end in the 1890s: by 1897, the number of three-volume novels published annually in Britain had fallen to four.⁸ The three-decker novel was the distinctive product of an effective cartel of publishers and librarians, which kept the prices of novels artificially—and ultimately unsustainably—high. Into the vacuum created by the demise of the three-decker poured a great number of new periodicals, most notably the *Strand Magazine* (founded 1891), but also *The Idler* (1892), the *Pall Mall Magazine* (1893, and itself an offshoot of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, founded 1865), *The Windsor* (1895), *Pearson’s* (1896), and many others.⁹ Aimed squarely at a popular readership, these periodicals were the major vehicle for the development and publication of the genre short story. More than this, *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine*, the first of the great nineteenth-century periodicals, founded as far back as 1817, had soon discovered a lucrative market for sensational horror fiction—a market which continued throughout the century’s flourishing periodical culture, and intensified with the welter of new arrivals in the 1890s.¹⁰

Doyle’s connection with the periodicals was intimate. It was to the *Strand Magazine*, most particularly, that he owed his success. His agent, A. P. Watt, sent one of his short stories, ‘The Voice of Science’, to Herbert Greenhough Smith, editor of the newly founded periodical: it was published in the third edition of the *Strand* (March 1891), and marked the beginning of a long and mutually fruitful relationship between the author and the magazine.¹¹ Four months later, in July 1891, the *Strand* published the first Holmes short story, ‘A Scandal

⁸ Peter Keating, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875–1914* (London, 1989), 26. See pp. 9–91 for a general account of the literary marketplace in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods, on which I draw heavily in this section.

⁹ Keating, *The Haunted Study*, 35.

¹⁰ See Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall, ‘Introduction’, to *Tales of Terror from Blackwood’s Magazine*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Baldick and Mighall (Oxford, 1995), pp. vii–xviii.

¹¹ Andrew Lycett, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (London, 2007), 170.

in Bohemia', and Arthur Conan Doyle was a literary celebrity. No fewer than fifteen of the stories in this volume were first published in the *Strand*. The great majority of the others—all but one, in fact ('The Third Generation')—were published in *The Idler*, *Pearson's*, the *Cornhill Magazine*, or in one of a number of other magazines or newspapers. In writing his Gothic tales for the periodicals, then, Doyle was continuing a significant nineteenth-century literary tradition.

At the same time that he was making a name for himself as a writer, Doyle also made himself, very insistently, into a public figure, in a manner which suggests that an acknowledged place of influence within the public sphere was central to his conception of himself. Indeed, as Douglas Kerr suggests, Doyle may well have been 'Britain's last national writer'.¹² He was, firstly, a committed correspondent to the press. As the editors of his letters, John Michael Gibson and Richard Lancelyn Green, assert, 'Probably no other writer has ever before revealed quite such a range of interests or believed so fervently that he had the ear of society, and therefore the right to address it on a variety of topics, as did Arthur Conan Doyle.'¹³ His first published story, 'The Mystery of Sasassa Valley', appeared in *Chambers's Magazine* in September 1879, the selfsame month in which the *British Medical Journal* published his first letter—an extraordinary document in which the 20-year-old medical student discusses the results of a course of self-experimentation, having systematically poisoned himself with gelsemium ('a motor paralysers', notes Doyle, with effects that included 'headache, with diarrhoea and extreme lassitude').¹⁴

Though fortuitous, the simultaneous appearance of the story and the letter was not exactly happenstance, as Doyle clearly understood writing fiction and taking public positions to be related activities, each one enabling the other. From 1879 right up to his death in 1930, he was keen to communicate, with great certainty and to a mass audience, his opinions on a wide variety of subjects, on which he generally

¹² Douglas Kerr, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession and Practice* (Oxford, 2013), 1.

¹³ John Michael Gibson and Richard Lancelyn Green, 'Introduction' to Arthur Conan Doyle, *The Unknown Conan Doyle: Letters to the Press*, ed. Gibson and Green (London, 1986), 1.

¹⁴ Doyle, 'Gelseminum [*sic*] as a Poison', in *Letters to the Press*, 13.

took an uncompromising stance. Irish Home Rule, the Contagious Diseases Act, the Boer War, organized religion, trade protectionism, volunteer militias, mounted riflemen, massacres in the Congo, the desirability of a Channel Tunnel, German atrocities in the Great War, the need for reprisal against Zeppelin attacks, the reality of spiritualism. On these and numerous other subjects, the British public was never in doubt as to what Arthur Conan Doyle thought. He was in fact a frustrated politician, having twice stood unsuccessfully for parliament on a Liberal Unionist ticket in Scottish constituencies, in the 1900 and 1905 elections, and used his fame as a platform from which to express his social and political views.

But the habitual confidence of his public utterances concealed, perhaps deliberately, contradictions beneath. One of the most fascinating things about Doyle is that he was such a conflicted, or even a divided, figure. He was by training a doctor, completely aware of the significance of scientific naturalism and, in the figure of Sherlock Holmes, the creator of the foremost literary rationalist: a brilliant applied experimenter (and, like his creator, not past experimenting on himself) and thoroughgoing materialist. And yet he was also increasingly drawn to spiritualism, for which he became a high-profile advocate, to the point, many observers believed, of utter self-damaging credulity. The educational institutions with which he was closely associated themselves express this duality, as he moved from the ultramontane anti-modernity of the Jesuit academy Stonyhurst to the Enlightenment scientism of Edinburgh University medical school. He later wrote with characteristically divided feelings about his Jesuit education: 'Nothing can exceed the uncompromising bigotry of the Jesuit theology, or their apparent ignorance of how it shocks the modern conscience', he maintained, while acknowledging of the Jesuits that 'In all ways, save their theology, they were admirable'.¹⁵ His Irish Catholic background (on both sides of the family) and his Liberal Unionist politics were in direct conflict with one another, to the extent that he reversed his views on Irish Home Rule, which he came to support in the 1910s. Andrew Lycett, one of Doyle's biographers, understands these dualities as the key to grasping his subject as a writer and a man, and traces them back to his home city of Edinburgh, 'a city of dramatic contrasts, made tolerable by thoughtful accommodation'.¹⁶

¹⁵ *Memories and Adventures*, 16.

¹⁶ Lycett, *Conan Doyle*, 3.

It is a city whose very geography is almost Freudian: a planned, rational, orderly, neoclassical New Town paired with a dark, rambling—and in the nineteenth century occasionally dangerous—Old Town, like the conscious and unconscious minds. It is the city which produced one of the great Gothic parables of the divided self, Robert Louis Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, published in 1886, shortly after Doyle's graduation from Edinburgh Medical School—itself the setting for another of Stevenson's dualistic Gothic tales of public virtue and private vice, 'The Bodysnatcher' (1884). This kind of conflict and duality is a central component of Victorian Gothic, and so it is no surprise that Doyle should be drawn to the form, and should return to it so frequently across the course of his career.

Doyle's Gothic fiction often seeks out remote landscapes on the margins of British polity. Holmes is a fundamentally urban creation. His sensibilities are entirely metropolitan—he hates and fears rural life: 'the lowest and vilest alleys in London do not present a more dreadful record of sin than does the smiling and beautiful countryside'.¹⁷ *The Hound of the Baskervilles* (1902), perpetually on the verge of turning into a full-blooded Gothic novel, transforms remote Dartmoor into a phantasmagoric locale, 'like some fantastic landscape in a dream': 'all things are possible upon the moor', says the criminal mastermind Stapleton.¹⁸ But this was hardly Doyle's first fictional visit to Dartmoor. One of his very earliest stories, 'The Winning Shot' (1883), is set in Toynby Hall, on the very edge of 'the great wilderness of Dartmoor, which stretched away to the horizon' (p. 34). To this far-flung spot, as though irresistibly drawn, comes the Swedish occultist and necromancer Dr Octavius Gaster, who makes a dramatic appearance at dusk high on a rock in a 'charnel-house place' on the moor, where the water sounds 'like the gurgling in the throat of a dying man' (p. 36). Gaster is a kind of vampire: 'There was something about

¹⁷ 'The Copper Beeches', in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Short Stories*, 286.

¹⁸ *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Long Stories* (London, 1929), 329, 345. Working from Doyle's 1901 diaries, Christopher Frayling has suggested that Dartmoor was literally an imaginative locale for Doyle, who may not have gone there until after he wrote *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, but rather drew from his reading of Sabine Baring-Gould's *A Book of Dartmoor* (1900). See Frayling, 'Nothing But a Hound Dog', in *Inside the Bloody Chamber: On Angela Carter, the Gothic, and Other Weird Tales* (London, 2015), 193–212.

his angular proportions and the bloodless face which, taken in conjunction with the black cloak which fluttered from his shoulders, irresistibly reminded me of a bloodsucking species of bat' (p. 37). In a manner characteristic of much classic nineteenth-century Gothic, from *Frankenstein* to 'William Wilson' to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 'The Winning Shot' is a tale of the divided self. Gaster recites a spell from an ancient Arabic grimoire which enables him to split his rival Charley Pillar in two, causing Charley to shoot his own double, and thus to kill himself. All things are indeed possible on the moor.

An explicit echo of Dr Gaster returns in a different form in 'The Surgeon of Gaster Fell' (1890), another Gothic tale of occultists on the moors, whose very title suggests a paired relationship with 'The Winning Shot'. This is also a story which, if not straightforwardly autobiographical, certainly weaves together elements from Doyle's life. Like the slightly earlier 'Uncle Jeremy's Household' (1887), 'The Surgeon of Gaster Fell' takes place on the fells of north-east Yorkshire, an area which Doyle knew well: both these stories are based around fictionalized versions of the Yorkshire village of Masongill, where his mother lived from 1882 until 1917. In 'The Surgeon of Gaster Fell', James Upperton, a demobbed soldier, comes to the 'Bleak and wind-swept... harsh and forbidding... lonely and secluded' village of Kirkby-Malthouse seeking solitude in which to pursue his 'mystic studies' into the possibility of human immortality to be found in ancient Egyptian and Neoplatonic works (pp. 166, 167). Upperton's neighbours—the local doctor and his beautiful sister—have come to Gaster Fell to keep a family secret: their father, an exhausted Birmingham GP, has developed homicidal mania, and so his family have locked him away here, far from society. This is a grotesque refiguring of Doyle's own family history. His father, the artist Charles Altamont Doyle, may not have been a homicidal maniac, but he was a chronic alcoholic prone to episodes of mental breakdown, who had a tendency, in Lycett's words, to 'violent and abusive' behaviour, and spent the last years of his life in a series of mental asylums, where he was certainly classed in official documentation as a 'lunatic'.¹⁹ The story of a doctor being summoned to care for a genteel lunatic is one to which Doyle returns several times. In his autobiographical novel *The Stark Munro Letters* (1895), young

¹⁹ Lycett, *Conan Doyle*, 109, 160.

Dr Munro at one point gets a job caring for the Honourable James Derwent, whose mental condition turns him into ‘a foul-tongued rough’.²⁰ In the interview for the job, his prospective employer insists on asking for his height and weight, as the doctor will need to be sufficiently physically robust to restrain the lunatic if necessary. This very same episode is recycled for the Gothic tale ‘The Beetle-Hunter’ (1898), in which a newly qualified doctor answers a newspaper advertisement looking for ‘a medical man . . . of strong physique, of steady nerves, and of a resolute nature’ (p. 303) and finds himself caring for a distinguished aristocratic entomologist who has, once again, succumbed to homicidal mania.

Understandably, Doyle was highly reluctant publicly to discuss his father’s history. His autobiography makes no explicit mention of Charles Altamont Doyle’s alcoholism or his insanity:

My father’s health had utterly broken; he had to retire to that convalescent house in which the last twenty years of his life were spent. . . . My father’s life was full of the tragedy of unfulfilled promise and undeveloped gifts. He had his weaknesses, as all of us have ours, but he also had some remarkable and outstanding virtues.²¹

In ways that were perhaps unknown to himself, the Gothic, with its ability to explore extreme states of being and to give oblique articulation to the unspeakable, provided Doyle with a vehicle to explore the psychological consequences of this ‘tragedy of unfulfilled promise’.

In December 1899, Doyle found himself in Hounslow, ‘standing in a long queue of men who were waiting to enlist in the Middlesex Yeomanry’.²² The Boer War had recently broken out in South Africa, and he was keen to enlist, but the regimental colonel, seeing in front of him a man of 40 with no military training or experience, had other ideas. And so, rather than serving as a soldier, Doyle travelled to Bloemfontein to work as a doctor in a military hospital set up on a racecourse. There, he had to deal with a virulent outbreak of enteric fever which cost 5,000 lives: this, he recalled, was ‘death in its vilest

²⁰ Doyle, *The Stark Munro Letters: Being a series of sixteen letters written by J. Stark Munro, M.B., to his friend and former fellow student, Herbert Swanborough, of Lowell, Massachusetts, during the years 1881–1884* (London, 1895), 73.

²¹ *Memories and Adventures*, 28. ²² *Memories and Adventures*, 168.

and filthiest forms . . . the disease causes constant pollution, and this pollution of the most dangerous kind, with the vilest effluvia'.²³

On returning to Britain, his first literary response to his experiences was not, as might perhaps be expected, a Gothic tale, but a history of the war, *The Great Boer War* (1900). The book was controversial, not least in its justification of British concentration camps. One piece of hostile criticism in particular stuck in the author's mind: 'Doyle's book makes the impression that it was ordered or influenced by the English Jingo party.'²⁴ His response to criticism of the British conduct of the Boer War was an inspired exercise in propaganda, *The War in South Africa: Its Cause and Conduct*, a mass-circulation 6,000-word pamphlet. Doyle oversaw a vigorous campaign of subscriptions to ensure that the pamphlet was translated as quickly as possible into as many languages as possible, and in February 1902 wrote proudly to *The Times* that it was in the process of being translated not only into Dutch (for obvious reasons, as the Boers were the descendants of Dutch settlers), but also into German, French, Norwegian, Italian, Spanish, Russian, Hungarian, Portuguese, and Welsh.²⁵ It was for the success of this campaign—for services not to literature but to military propaganda—that Arthur Conan Doyle was knighted by King Edward VII in 1902.

Doyle may not have been a jingoist, exactly, but he was a British imperialist to his bones. In fact, if one were to single out the major, recurring explicit theme and preoccupation of his writing and thought, it would be his unwavering belief in and support for the British Empire. 'I am an Imperialist,' he wrote to the *Irish Times* in 1912, 'because I believe the whole to be greater than the part, and I would always willingly sacrifice any part if I thought it to the advantage of the whole.'²⁶ The British Empire underlay his own consciousness and sense of self, his national and supranational identity: 'The Empire is in no sense an English thing. Scotch and Irish have combined in the

²³ *Memories and Adventures*, 178–9.

²⁴ *Memories and Adventures*, 215.

²⁵ "'The Cause and Conduct of the War"', *The Times*, 4 February 1902, in *Letters to the Press*, 85–7. The Welsh translation was felt to be necessary because 'the vernacular press of the principality was almost entirely pro-Boer, and the Welsh people had the most distorted information as to the cause for which their fellow-countrymen fought so bravely in the field': *Memories and Adventures*, 219.

²⁶ 'Home Rule: Letter to R. J. Kelly of Dublin', *Irish Times*, 4 April 1912, in *Letters to the Press*, 164.

building of it, and have an equal pride and interest in its immense future.²⁷ In 1924, musing on a visit to Canada, he wrote rapturously of the future of the Empire, which will ‘remain exactly as it is for the remainder of the century’:

[Canadian] imperialism is as warm or warmer than our own. And everywhere there is a consciousness of the glory of the Empire, its magnificent future, and the wonderful possibilities of those great nations all growing up under the same flag and with the same language and destinies.²⁸

Unquestionably, Doyle viewed imperial warfare as a kind of *Boys’ Own* adventure. ‘The British officer at his best’, he came to realize, was really ‘a large edition of the public schoolboy’.²⁹ During his Boer War time in Bloemfontein, he journeyed out onto the veldt, where he discovered the corpse of a nameless Australian soldier: ‘So he met his end—somebody’s boy. Fair fight, open air, and a great cause—I know no better death.’³⁰ Consistently throughout his letters Doyle bemoans the reluctance of the British Empire to propagandize on its own behalf. He himself exhibited no such reluctance, and was, as we have seen, a highly effective propagandist, for whom fiction was a potent tool. *The White Company* and *Sir Nigel* are extended paens to martial prowess. Near the beginning of *The Lost World*, the journalist Malone, chastised by his beloved Gladys, who wants to love ‘a man of great deeds and strange experiences’ like Sir Richard Burton or Henry Morton Stanley, is told by his editor that ‘The big blank spaces on the map are all being filled in, and there’s no room for romance anywhere’.³¹ *The Lost World* does explicitly what many of Doyle’s writings do by implication: it reinscribes a space for romance onto an increasingly utilitarian map of the world.

A few years before his Boer War adventure, in 1896 Doyle had found himself visiting Egypt, and while he was there had wangled a press pass to cover a Mahdist uprising in Nubia, ‘the next adventure which was opening up before both us and the British Empire’.³² Doyle’s fiction had already touched on Mahdism—Bellingham, the occult Egyptologist villain of ‘Lot No. 249’ (1892), is forced to leave

²⁷ ‘On Ireland and the Empire’, *Freeman’s Journal*, Dublin, 3 August 1914, in *Letters to the Press*, 207. ²⁸ *Memories and Adventures*, 344.

²⁹ *Memories and Adventures*, 151. ³⁰ *Memories and Adventures*, 196.

³¹ Doyle, *The Lost World* (London, 1912), 13, 19.

³² *Memories and Adventures*, 147.

England in disgrace and ‘was last heard of in the Soudan’ (p. 240), presumably meddling in a Mahdist insurrection, while the Fenian conscripts of ‘The Green Flag’ (1893) ultimately recognize where their allegiances lie, and die a heroic death defending the Empire in Sudan. The 1896 adventure provided Doyle with fresh impetus and material, and led to the publication of the autobiographical ‘The Three Correspondents’ (1896), the extraordinarily pro-imperialist novel *The Tragedy of the Korosko* (1898, but serialized in 1897), and ‘The Debut of Bimbashi Joyce’ (1900), another tale of an Irish soldier coming good in Egypt and the Sudan. The Mahdist wars of the 1890s were to culminate in the Battle of Omdurman on 2 September 1898, the most one-sided massacre in British imperial history, in which the Maxim guns of the British army cut down 10,000 Mahdist soldiers, many of whom were armed only with assegai spears. This was not, it should be noted, how Doyle himself saw events:

The Arab of the Soudan is a desperate fanatic who rushes to death with the frenzy of a madman and longs for close quarters where he can bury his spear in the body of his foe, even though he carries several bullets in him before he reaches him.³³

As Sven Lindqvist notes, it was to prevent such wounded death-charges that the exploding dum-dum bullet was developed, ‘named after the factory outside Dum Dum in Calcutta, and patented in 1897. . . . The use of dum-dum bullets between “civilized” states was prohibited. They were reserved for big-game hunting and colonial wars.’³⁴ Doyle himself raises the use of exploding bullets in his defence of the British conduct of the Boer War, noting ‘that the British, whose wars are usually against savages, had prepared huge quantities of soft-nosed [dum-dum] bullets. . . . It is only just to say, however, that they were never intended to be used against white races.’³⁵

But Doyle’s assertive public confidence in the civilizing mission of the British Empire is not borne out by a reading of the Gothic tales, whose sensibilities are more modern—or, at least, the stories seem more amenable to modern sensibilities. These tales are full of anxieties about the vengeful or monstrous capabilities and consequences

³³ *Memories and Adventures*, 149.

³⁴ Sven Lindqvist, ‘*Exterminate All the Brutes*’, trans. Joan Tate (New York, 1996), 52.

³⁵ Doyle, ‘Dr Conan Doyle on his Defence’, *Daily News*, 31 January 1902, in *Letters to the Press*, 84.

of imperialism. In a manner unusually explicit for Doyle, the supernatural tale “‘De Profundis’” (1892) opens with a recognition that for the success of ‘the great, broadcast British Empire . . . a price must be paid, and the price is a grievous one. As the beast of old must have one young, human life as a tribute every year, so to our Empire we throw from day to day the pick and flower of our youth’ (p. 201). The Empire, then, is a monster devouring the nation’s young.

In a further, recurring exploration of this Gothic image, one group of Doyle’s stories deals with exotic creatures wreaking havoc either in the colonies, or, worse, on British soil: as Christopher Frayling notes, Doyle was much given to tales of ‘biology run amok’, and particularly of ‘monstrous beasts giving nightmares to the aristocracy of deep England’.³⁶ These tales are Doyle’s most idiosyncratic contribution to fictional explorations of the common *fin-de-siècle* cultural anxiety of reverse colonization, which saw a series of Continental, oriental, imperial, or interplanetary Others wreaking havoc upon British soil. In 1897 alone—the year of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee, which might be said to mark the high point of British imperialism—three canonical works of reverse colonization were published: Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, Richard Marsh’s *The Beetle*, and (in serial form) H. G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds*. A number of Doyle’s stories from the 1890s—‘The Ring of Thoth’, ‘Lot No. 249’, ‘The Case of Lady Sannox’, ‘The Fiend of the Cooperage’, ‘The Brazilian Cat’, ‘The Brown Hand’—as well as numerous of the Holmes stories—notably *The Sign of Four* (1890) and ‘The Speckled Band’ (1892)—are classic tales of colonial horror, shot through with a variety of imperial anxieties.

Fresh out of medical school in the early 1880s, and looking for occupation and adventure, the young Doyle signed as ship’s doctor on a couple of sea voyages that were straight out of the imperial adventure romance. In 1880, he spent several months upon the whaling ship *Hope*, working the far northern waters around Greenland: ‘a region of romance,’ he was to recall many years later, where ‘You stand on the very brink of the unknown . . . a land which the maps know not’.³⁷ More influential for Doyle was his voyage to West Africa

³⁶ Christopher Frayling, ‘Introduction’ to Doyle, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Frayling (London, 2001), p. xxii.

³⁷ *Memories and Adventures*, 47.

on board the *Mayumba* in 1881–2, which was to provide him with the genesis of a decades-long imaginative and political engagement with the region. His initial response to Africa, as recalled in his autobiography, is clearly spoken through by the classic racist discourse of the ‘civilizing mission’ of European colonialism. Africa is a savage and exotic land:

The natives were all absolute savages, offering up human sacrifices to snakes and crocodiles. The captain had heard the screams of the victims and seen them dragged down to the water’s edge, while on another occasion he had seen the protruding skull of a man who had been buried in an ant-heap. It is all very well to make game of the missionaries, but how are such people ever to be improved if it were not for the labours of devoted men?³⁸

All of which sounds as though it might have come straight out of the report for the Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs which Kurtz has prepared in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* (1899), and whose mad logic drives him to the notorious conclusion, ‘Exterminate all the brutes!’ But the truth of Doyle’s engagement with West Africa was more nuanced. One of the *Mayumba*’s passengers was Henry Highland Garnet, an African American diplomat, and ‘The most intelligent and well-read man whom I met on the Coast’. Garnet educated Doyle in the complexities of European–African cultural exchanges:

‘The only way to explore Africa [he told Doyle] is to go without arms and with few servants. You would not like it in England if a body of men came armed to the teeth and marched through your land. The Africans are quite as sensitive.’ It was the method of Livingstone as against the method of Stanley. The former takes the braver and better man.³⁹

Doyle’s first fictional engagement with the implications of this journey was the riotously imaginative ‘J. Habakuk Jephson’s Statement’ (1884), which weaves together the mystery of the *Mary Celeste*—discovered floating crewless in the North Atlantic in 1872—and the founding of the West African Republic of Liberia by freed American slaves in 1847 into a tale of a murderous African American separatist, Septimus Goring. Goring explains his political intentions to the narrator, the abolitionist Doctor Jephson: ‘I determined to find some

³⁸ *Memories and Adventures*, 54.

³⁹ *Memories and Adventures*, 57.

bold free black people and throw in my lot with them, to cultivate their latent powers and to form a nucleus of a great coloured nation' (p. 88). Cast adrift in the Atlantic at the end of the story, Jephson is picked up 'by the British and African Steam Navigation Company's boat *Monrovia*' (p. 90), named in honour of the capital of Liberia.

Journeying through the 'Dark and terrible mangrove swamps' of Creek Town, a former slave port on the Nigerian coast, 'where nothing that is not horrible could exist... a foul place', Doyle recalled glimpsing a native monster: 'Once in an isolated tree standing in a flood, I saw an evil-looking snake, worm-coloured and about three feet long.'⁴⁰ This episode underwent an extraordinary Gothic transformation to become one of Doyle's most remarkable tales of colonial anxiety, 'The Fiend of the Cooperage' (1897), in which a giant West African python which is consistently imagined in terms of 'queer Voodoo tales' and 'Voodoo devilry' (pp. 296, 301) horribly kills Walker, a colonial agent of 'good stiff Unionist' politics and a 'decent, God-fearing, nineteenth-century, Primrose-League Englishman' (p. 301). Walker's colleague, the 'rank Radical' Dr Severall, a supporter of Irish Home Rule, explains that their outpost is situated 'just upon the edge of the great unknown... an undiscovered country', the home of exotic fauna: 'That is the Gaboon country—the land of the great apes' (pp. 292, 293). '[T]he great python of the Gaboon' (p. 301), the story's titular fiend, emerges out of the African unknown to wreak revenge upon the colonizing Englishman.

The threatening or vengeful colonial serpent is an image which Doyle deployed several times, perhaps most famously in 'The Adventure of the Speckled Band' (1892), which he himself considered to be the best of the Holmes stories.⁴¹ Earlier still is 'Uncle Jeremy's Household' (1887), one of his most explicit tales of colonial retribution, in which 'Miss Warrender', in reality a Thug princess dispossessed by the British on account of her father's role in the 1857 First War of Indian Independence, comes to work as a governess in a remote house on the Yorkshire moors: 'She is the child of an Indian chieftain, whose wife was an Englishwoman. He was killed in the mutiny, fighting against us, and his estates being seized by Government, his

⁴⁰ *Memories and Adventures*, 55.

⁴¹ Doyle, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Richard Lancelyn Green (Oxford, 1998), 361.

daughter, then fifteen, was left almost destitute' (p. 115). 'Miss Warrender' is joined on the moors by a Thug strangler, come to carry out her murderous bidding, who is explicitly rendered as a human snake:

As I gazed I became conscious that down this luminous branch something was crawling—a flickering, inchoate something, almost indistinguishable from the branch itself, and yet slowly and steadily writhing its way down it. . . . It was a human being—a man—the Indian whom I had seen in the village. With his arms and legs twined round the great limb, he was shuffling his way down as silently and almost as rapidly as one of his native snakes. (p. 146)

Lawrence, the narrator of 'Uncle Jeremy's Household', is a close counterpart of the Arthur Conan Doyle of the 1880s—he is a student, 'working hard for the final examination which should make me a qualified medical man', at that time living 'in lodgings in London' (p. 114), but whose connections bring him out to the moors—as we have seen, a common location for Doyle's early stories in particular, and a place of which he had direct personal experience. Lawrence is clearly intoxicated by the beautiful Indian governess, who brings 'the brilliance of the tropics in the cold English dwelling-house' (p. 126), and the narrative of 'Uncle Jeremy's Household' cannot bring itself to condemn her actions outright. Her victim is the vile blackmailer Copperthorne, who is trying to inveigle his way into the possession of Uncle Jeremy's fortune. She exits the story, and Lawrence's life, on 'the 7.20 London train, and was safe in the metropolis before any search could be made for her' (p. 147). She will make her way back to India, Lawrence speculates, 'to join her scattered tribesmen' (p. 148) and take up her birthright as queen of the Thugs.

The fact that Severall and Walker, the colonial agents of 'The Fiend of the Cooperage', 'talk Home Rule for two solid hours every evening' (p. 292) in their West African outpost suggests a very real connection in Doyle's imagination between the local concerns of his own Irish family background on the one hand and the global anxieties of 'the great, broadcast British Empire' on the other. Doyle, as we have seen, twice stood for Parliament on a Liberal Unionist platform, in opposition to Gladstone's Home Rule policies, and, as Catherine Wynne has argued, 'the Irish question' runs like a thread throughout his works, which frequently turn on the 'often-troubled convergence

of Irish nationalism and British imperialism'.⁴² Irish nationalism and British imperialism form two halves of one of Doyle's most intriguing and deep-seated dualities. This is, in fact, a feature of 'The Winning Shot', Doyle's most explicit tale of the double: Colonel Pillar, the doomed Charley's father, spends his time cursing Gladstone's 'Liberal administration' for its Irish policies, to such an extent that his son fears that 'that Irish question will get into his system and finish him off' (p. 33). Indeed, it is entirely plausible that Irish nationalism is written into one half of the most celebrated of all of Doyle's doubles, Holmes and Moriarty. Is Moriarty an Irishman? His surname is certainly an Anglicization of the Irish Ó Muirheartaigh; his second-in-command, Colonel Sebastian Moran, also has an Irish surname; and *The Valley of Fear* (1915) reveals his close connections with Irish-American criminal organizations.

In *Memories and Adventures*, Doyle recalls how, as a young man returning from studying at the Stella Matutina academy in Feldkirch on the Austrian Tyrol (a biographical episode recycled in Gothic form in the story 'A Pastoral Horror'), he stopped off to visit his great-uncle Michael Conan in his Paris apartment. Doyle remembered this visit warmly. Conan was a graduate of Trinity College Dublin, an Irish nationalist, and 'a man of distinction, an intellectual Irishman of the type which originally founded the Sinn Fein movement'. He and the young Arthur found they had much in common: Michael was 'a dear old volcanic Irishman . . . I am built rather on his lines of body and mind than any of the Doyles. We made a true friendship.'⁴³ Doyle stayed for a month in his great uncle's apartment on Avenue de Wagram, itself later recycled as the location for one of his most ghoulish tales, 'The Leather Funnel'.

For much of his life, Doyle's public pronouncements consistently expressed his vision of an Ireland firmly situated within the Union. 'The Irish question is upon us once more,' he wrote to his would-be constituents in the Border Burghs seat in the 1905 election. 'My views upon it are the same as in Central Edinburgh in 1900. . . . I will never consent to a separate legislature for Ireland.'⁴⁴ Nevertheless, Doyle's public standing also brought him into contact with men

⁴² Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle*, 2. ⁴³ *Memories and Adventures*, 17–18.

⁴⁴ 'To the Electors of the Border Burghs', *Border Telegraph*, 9 January 1906, in *Letters to the Press*, 113.

whose commitment to the Irish nationalist cause was to cost them their lives: the bestselling novelist turned Sinn Fein politician, Erskine Childers, and the colonial administrator turned nationalist revolutionary, Roger Casement. His friendship with Casement, in particular, changed things, and turned Doyle into a supporter of Irish Home Rule.⁴⁵ Doyle's change of heart began with his involvement in the campaign against atrocities in the Congo, which Casement, who had served there as a British consul, brought to light in a sensational 1905 report which listed the appalling acts of wholesale massacre and brutality committed by King Leopold's administration. Never one to resist involvement in a cause, Doyle found himself drawn into the activities of the Congo Reform Association, founded in Dublin in 1903 by Casement and the Anglo-French journalist and politician Edmund Dene Morel. These activities culminated for Doyle in the publication of *The Crime of the Congo* in 1909, which presented the case against Leopold in the most sensational and uncompromising terms:

never before has there been such a mixture of wholesale expropriation and wholesale massacre all done under an odious guise of philanthropy and with the lowest commercial motive as a reason. It is this sordid cause and unctious [*sic*] hypocrisy which makes this crime unparalleled in its horror.⁴⁶

In a companion article written in *The Times*, Doyle described the Congo atrocities as 'the greatest crime which has ever been committed in the history of the world'.⁴⁷ 'Leopold of Belgium', Doyle came to realize, was 'an incarnate devil who through motives of greed carried murder and torture through a large section of Africa'.⁴⁸

It was his experiences in the Congo, Casement claimed, which gave him the insight he needed into the reality of colonialism, and thus transformed him from a British imperialist to an Irish nationalist: 'In these lonely Congo lands,' he wrote, 'I found Leopold, I found also myself, the incorrigible Irishman'; 'it was only', he wrote elsewhere,

⁴⁵ For a similar argument to the one I make here, and using some of the same sources, see Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle*, 103–5.

⁴⁶ Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo* (New York, 1909), p. iii.

⁴⁷ Doyle, 'England and the Congo', *The Times*, 18 August 1909, in *Letters to the Press*, 138.

⁴⁸ Doyle, *The Vital Message* (1919), in *The New Revelation and the Vital Message* (London, 1981), 78.

'because I was an Irishman that I could understand *fully*, I think, the whole scheme of wrongdoing at work in the Congo'.⁴⁹ Though less extreme, Doyle's own thought followed some of the same lines, drawing him irresistibly towards Irish Home Rule. At the beginning of *The Crime of the Congo*, Doyle acknowledges that Leopold's activities are not historically *sui generis*, and in doing so his gaze alights on Ireland: 'There have been great expropriations like that of the Normans in England or of the English in Ireland.'⁵⁰ Doyle took advice from Casement, and from his mother, before going public with his new-found belief in Irish Home Rule, which he did in a series of pamphlets and letters published in 1911, most notably the official Liberal Party pamphlet *Why He is Now in Favour of Home Rule*.⁵¹

Doyle's belief in Home Rule did not, however, modify his publicly stated faith in the British Empire: 'I think', he wrote to the *Belfast Telegraph*, 'that a solid loyal Ireland is the one thing which the Empire needs to make it impregnable.'⁵² However, the signs of this new-found ambivalence are visible in his fiction of the period, provided one knows where, and how, to look. *The Lost World*, published in 1912, is, we have seen, ostensibly one of Doyle's most straightforwardly imperialist works. And yet one of its heroes, the big-game hunter and imperial fixer Lord John Roxton, is closely modelled on Casement, who followed his Congo report with another, this time into the atrocities committed against the Putomayo Indians in Peru by the rubber industry—a campaign for which Casement was knighted in 1911. Clearly writing under Casement's influence, in the midst of a series of pieces on Irish Home Rule, Doyle wrote a letter on the subject to the *Daily News* in March 1912, entitled 'Rubber Atrocities'.⁵³ *The Lost World* closes with two related images: a pterodactyl flying across the London skies (monstrous beasts at large in England!) and the Irish journalist-narrator Malone taking Roxton's 'brown hand', off for another adventure.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ For these quotations, see Wynne, *The Colonial Conan Doyle*, 105–6.

⁵⁰ Doyle, *The Crime of the Congo*, p. iii.

⁵¹ Doyle, *Why He is Now in Favour of Home Rule* (Liberal Publication Department Leaflet no. 2399; London, 1911).

⁵² Doyle, 'Conan Doyle and Home Rule: How I Stand in the Matter', *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 22 September 1911, in *Letters to the Press*, 157.

⁵³ Doyle, 'Rubber Atrocities', *Daily News*, 5 March 1912, in *Letters to the Press*, 162–3.

⁵⁴ *The Lost World*, 319.

The Lost World, with its allosaurus and iguanodons, is Doyle's most sustained exercise in the representation of monstrous fauna. But it is not the only work of this kind from around this time. In some ways even more interesting is 'The Terror of Blue John Gap' (1910). Here, the beast is not a product of colonialism wreaking retribution on British soil, but an aboriginal English creature. This is a gigantic cave bear which emerges from the Derbyshire Peak District to cause havoc:

This place had then developed a fauna and flora of its own, including such monsters as the one which I had seen, which may well have been the old cave-bear, enormously enlarged and modified by its new environment. For countless æons the internal and the external creation had been kept apart, growing steadily away from each other. Then there had come some rift in the depths of the mountain which had enabled one creature to wander up and . . . to reach the open air. (pp. 444–5)

By 1910, Doyle had come to realize that monsters could be home-grown.⁵⁵

It is, perhaps, possible to imagine an Arthur Conan Doyle fully committed to the cause of Irish nationalism, and perhaps too, like Casement and Childers, willing to give his life for this cause. But that is not what happened. Instead, Doyle's last decades were consumed almost entirely by one overwhelming subject: spiritualism.

The spiritualist movement of the late nineteenth century was, Doyle came to believe, 'by far the greatest religious event since the death of Christ. . . . [It was] an enormous new development, the greatest in this history of mankind.'⁵⁶ Such statements, and they are not uncommon in his later work, seem downright absurd to twenty-first-century ears, and certainly did enormous damage to Doyle's reputation in the last years of his life. But it is important to realize that they arise out of a perfectly comprehensible context, and that while Doyle may have expressed them with characteristically extreme certainty,

⁵⁵ Doyle was not the only writer with Irish connections to explore the possibilities of a distinctively British horror in the Derbyshire Peak District during this period. Bram Stoker's last novel, *The Lair of the White Worm* (1911), has an identical location to 'The Terror of Blue John Gap', and draws heavily on Stoker's own researches into a distinctively British folkloric tradition.

⁵⁶ Doyle, *The New Revelation*, 58.

and at a far later date than perhaps he should have, these were not particularly unusual views for a person of Doyle's generation.

It is impossible, in fact, to understand the intellectual culture of Victorian Britain, the culture which formed Doyle's sensibilities, without understanding spiritualism—the belief in the survival of the human personality after death, and that the dead were continually attempting to make contact with the living, still interested in our activities and our well-being—along with the distinct but overlapping practices of psychical research and occultism. Towards the end of the second volume of his monumental *The History of Spiritualism* (1926), Doyle offers the following definition of the reality of spiritualism:

The spiritual heavens, then, would appear to be sublimated and ethereal reproductions of earth and of earth life under higher and better conditions. . . . The body carries on with its spiritual and intellectual qualities unchanged by the transition from one room of the great universal mansion to the next one.⁵⁷

As Janet Oppenheim writes in *The Other World*, her definitive history of the subject, in the last decades of the nineteenth century the spiritualists' 'concerns and aspirations placed them—far from the lunatic fringe of society—squarely amidst the cultural, intellectual, and emotional moods of the era'.⁵⁸ This is an important point. The Western intelligentsia, at least, tends to see itself as inhabiting a secular modernity characterized, to use Max Weber's famous phrase, by *Entzauberung* (disenchantment): in 1917 Weber wrote that 'the fate of our times is characterized by rationalism and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world"'.⁵⁹ In the closing decades of the nineteenth century, spiritualism was taken very seriously by some very serious people. The Society for Psychical Research (SPR), of which Doyle was a member, was founded in Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1891 by a group of researchers which included Henry

⁵⁷ Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism* (London, 1926), ii. 284.

⁵⁸ Janet Oppenheim, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychical Research in England, 1850–1914* (Cambridge, 1985), 4.

⁵⁹ Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford and New York, 1958), 155. For an analysis of the significance of *Entzauberung* to the spiritualist movement, on which I draw here, see Alex Owen, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago and London, 2004), 10–16.

Sidgwick, Knightsbridge Professor of Philosophy and Fellow of Trinity, and Frederic W. H. Myers, also formerly a Fellow of Trinity. As Roger Luckhurst notes, both Sidgwick and Myers were extraordinarily well connected, with ties of blood, marriage, and friendship to the late Victorian social and intellectual elite—Sidgwick to the Balfour and Benson families (prime ministers, archbishops of Canterbury, the heads of Cambridge colleges), Myers to George Eliot and William James. Both had associations with Tennyson. Gladstone, Tennyson, and Ruskin were all allied to the SPR, whose early presidents included Sidgwick himself, A. J. Balfour, William James, and Henri Bergson.⁶⁰ This was no marginal group.

Doyle did not formally announce himself as a spiritualist until the publication of *The New Revelation* in 1918, but anyone paying attention to his writing career would have been able to trace this as an important, or perhaps a central, interest in his fiction from the very beginning. Spiritualism was a major source for his Gothic imagination—and vice versa. In his fiction of the 1880s and early 1890s, ‘The Winning Shot’, ‘The Surgeon of Gaster Fell’, ‘Lot No. 249’, and ‘“De Profundis”’ are heavily influenced by his growing interest in spiritualism and the occult. His third novel, *The Mystery of Cloomber* (1889), combines occultism and colonial revenge in a tale of Indian Yogis possessed of esoteric knowledge who remorselessly pursue General Heatherstone to his death in ‘the Hole of Cree’, a bottomless chasm on the Scottish borders, in retribution for the General’s killing of their spiritual leader, ‘Goolab Shah, the arch adept’, in the Afghan wars.⁶¹ The novel, full of theosophical disquisitions, closes with a lengthy ‘Addendum’ on ‘The Occult Philosophy’, which acknowledges its author’s reading of the works of the esoteric writer Alfred Percy Sinnett, most particularly *The Occult World* (1883). On joining the SPR in ‘about 1891’, Doyle recalled, ‘I read that monumental book [Frederic] Myers’ *Human Personality*, a great root book from which a whole world of knowledge will grow.’⁶²

From the beginning, then, Doyle’s Gothic tales enact his struggle to reconcile his growing acceptance of the reality of the spirit world with his formal professional training in medicine and science. As

⁶⁰ Roger Luckhurst, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870–1901* (Oxford, 2002), 54–6.

⁶¹ Doyle, *The Mystery of Cloomber* (London, 1896), 114.

⁶² Doyle, *The New Revelation*, 21.

a number of commentators have noted, spiritualism was the nineteenth century's most characteristic response to the materialism suggested by the publication of Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* in 1859, and the more widespread rise of scientific naturalism from the 1870s, which completely rejected any metaphysical basis for existence.⁶³ This tension between materialism and metaphysics, which is there throughout Doyle's writings, is revealed most clearly in two of his less-well-known longer works of the 1890s, the 1894 novella *The Parasite* and the autobiographical *Stark Munro Letters*. The narrator of *The Parasite*, Austin Gilroy, is a young professor of physiology and a self-proclaimed 'materialist . . . a rank one', who initially boasts that 'my brain is soaked with exact knowledge. I have trained myself to deal only with fact and with proof. Surmise and fancy have no place in my scheme of thought.'⁶⁴ Gilroy is taught a comprehensive lesson in metaphysics at the hands of the West Indian mesmerist and supernaturalist Miss Penelosa. *Stark Munro* reads like a tormented work of epistemological self-questioning, whose narrator, a thinly fictionalized version of Doyle himself, constantly interrupts his own narrative with lengthy disquisitions which attempt to reconcile his rejection of conventional organized religion—'I have mastered the principles of several religions. They have all shocked me by the violence which I should have to do to my reason to accept the dogmas of any of them'—with his awareness of the limits of scientific naturalism: 'I know nothing more unbearable than the complacent type of scientist who knows very exactly all that he does know, but has not imagination enough to understand what a speck his little accumulation of doubtful erudition is when compared with the immensity of our ignorance.'⁶⁵

Doyle was not alone in these doubts and questions. This tension between materialism and metaphysics is, in fact, a characteristic of the Victorian and Edwardian supernatural tale more generally. Doyle's very close contemporary, the great English ghost-story writer M. R. James, believed that this was the key to the success of the genre: 'It is

⁶³ See e.g. Oppenheim, *Other World*, 1–4; Luckhurst, *Invention of Telepathy*, 9–59. For Victorian scientific naturalism, see e.g. Bernard Lightman and Gowan Dawson (eds.), *Victorian Scientific Naturalism: Community, Identity, Continuity* (Chicago, 2014).

⁶⁴ Doyle, *The Parasite*, in *The Cromborough Edition*, xxiii. *The Parasite, The Captain of the Pole-Star, Other Tales* (Garden City, NY, 1930), 4.

⁶⁵ Doyle, *The Stark Munro Letters*, 16, 280.

not amiss sometimes to leave a loophole for a natural explanation; but, I would say, let the loophole be so narrow as not to be quite practicable.⁶⁶ This is exactly the narrow loophole which Doyle exploits in “De Profundis”, which closes by positing two competing explanations for the emergence of John Vansittart’s body, apparently leaping out of its watery grave to greet his wife as she sails to meet him in Madeira. Either, the narrator suggests, this tale serves ‘to support the recent theory of telepathy . . . [which] I hold . . . to be proved’ (p. 209), or else ‘the surgeon tells me that the leaden weight was not too firmly fixed, and that seven days bring about changes which fetch a body to the surface. Coming from the depth to which the weight would have sunk it, he explains that it might well attain such a velocity as to carry it clear of the water. Such is my own explanation of the matter’ (p. 209). The loophole, however, seems to grow narrower and narrower as Doyle’s career progresses: the enraged unicorn summoned in the seance in ‘Playing with Fire’ (1900) might be a delusion, but there seems little doubt about the Indian revenant of ‘The Brown Hand’ (1899) or the past visions of ‘The Silver Mirror’ (1909) and ‘Through the Veil’ (1910), and none at all about the afterlife testimony of ‘How It Happened’ (1913) or the undead pugilist of ‘The Bully of Brocas Court’ (1921).

This, of course, accounts for Doyle’s increasing frustration with Sherlock Holmes, a thoroughgoing scientific materialist with whom he was indelibly associated, from whom he could not unchain himself, and whose rationalism was central to his appeal. Professor Challenger, the evolutionary biologist of *The Lost World*, was certainly marshalled for the spiritualist cause: the late Challenger novel *The Land of Mist* (1926) is an almost unreadable exercise in spiritualist fiction, the product of a writer who seems, almost for the only time, adrift from his mooring as a genre professional who knows what his audience wants. But Challenger was no Holmes. *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, though it deploys the imagery of the Gothic to great effect, transforms Holmes into a sceptical psychical researcher, of the kind the later Doyle of *The History of Spiritualism* was to deplore, roundly debunking the Great Grimpen Mire’s supernatural demon hound. One of

⁶⁶ M. R. James, Introduction to V. H. Collins (ed.), *Ghosts and Marvels* (Oxford, 1924), in *Collected Ghost Stories*, ed. with an introduction and notes by Darryl Jones (Oxford, 2011), 407.

the very last Holmes stories, ‘The Sussex Vampire’, written long after Doyle’s public conversion to spiritualism, opens with Holmes contemptuously denying the possibility of the supernatural: ‘Rubbish, Watson, rubbish! What have we to do with walking corpses who can only be held in their grave by stakes driven through their hearts? It’s pure lunacy. . . . This Agency stands flat-footed upon the ground, and there it must remain. The world is big enough for us. No ghosts need apply.’⁶⁷

Scientific materialism itself, Doyle came to believe, was at the root of all the problems of modernity. This is a subject to which he returns again and again in his major works on spiritualism of the late 1910s and 1920s. It is important to stress that, while he had imaginatively engaged with spiritualism as far back as the early 1880s, Doyle does not explicitly declare himself a spiritualist until 1918, toward the close of the Great War. The connections between spiritualism and the War were, for Doyle, vividly real. The war was brought about by ‘the organized materialism of Germany’, since ‘when religion is dead, materialism becomes active, and what active materialism may produce has been seen in Germany’.⁶⁸ The outbreak of the war saw Doyle conducting a press campaign in characteristically bellicose mode, fulminating publicly against ‘Germany’s “Policy of Murder”’, advocating the shaming of ‘shirkers’ into compulsory national service, and lobbying for remorseless reprisals against Zeppelin raids.⁶⁹ But the war brought its traumatic consequences to Doyle, too. His oldest son, Kingsley, died from pneumonia as a consequence of being wounded in action in 1918, while his beloved younger brother, Innes, who survived the war with a promotion to adjutant-general, died in the influenza pandemic of 1919. He also lost two brothers-in-law and two nephews.

If Doyle was interested in spiritualism before the war, he was committed to it afterwards. Indeed, it is little wonder that, like so many others, he should have sought solace in spiritualism, a creed which taught that death is not the end and that the dead are still with us,

⁶⁷ Doyle, ‘The Sussex Vampire’, in *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Short Stories*, 1179.

⁶⁸ Doyle, *The Vital Message*, 79, 149.

⁶⁹ See e.g. ‘Germany’s “Policy of Murder”’, *New York Times*, 6 February 1915, in *Letters to the Press*, 216–19; ‘Compulsory National Service’, *Daily Chronicle*, 23 August 1915, in *Letters to the Press*, 223–6; ‘Reprisal’, *The Times*, 15 October 1915, in *Letters to the Press*, 226–7.

essentially unchanged in personality and attachments, still solicitous of our welfare. There is a very strong element of wish-fulfilment to the spiritualism of the Great War. 'The body', he wrote in 1919, 'is a perfect thing. This is a matter of consequence when many of our heroes have been mutilated in wars. One cannot mutilate the etheric body, and it always remains intact.' The next world, Doyle saw, 'is a place of joy and laughter. There are games and sports of all sorts, though none which cause pain to lower life.'⁷⁰ Both Kingsley and Innes communicated posthumously with Doyle in some of the many seances he attended, passing on their assurances that all was well. By the time of *The History of Spiritualism*, having dwelled publicly on the issue for the better part of a decade, Doyle was very explicit about the intimate connection between spiritualism and the war: 'Many people had never heard of Spiritualism until the period that began in 1914, when into so many homes the Angel of Death entered suddenly.'⁷¹

Doyle was hardly the only writer of his generation or his genre to recoil from the terror of modernity in the wake of the Great War. M. R. James, traumatized beyond endurance by the deaths of so many of his Cambridge University colleagues and students, retreated into the perpetual childhood afforded him by a sinecure as provost of Eton College, where he had been very happy as a boy. As Doyle's writing progresses through the early decades of the twentieth century, a recurrent, and very particular, note of anxiety enters into his stories. In 'How It Happened' (1913), a motorist loses control of his car and hurtles downhill to his death. In 'The Horror of the Heights' (1913), an aviator discovers a hostile new ecosystem high in the stratosphere. In 'The Nightmare Room' (1921), a disturbing domestic scenario is gradually revealed in all its horror as a film set. In 'The Lift' (1922), a group of tourists find themselves suspended in an elevator high above the ground, at the mercy of a homicidal religious maniac. Increasingly, as Arthur Conan Doyle grew older, it was the modern world itself which he found most terrifying.

⁷⁰ Doyle, *The Vital Message*, 124–5.

⁷¹ Doyle, *The History of Spiritualism*, ii. 224.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

THE majority of the stories here are taken from *The Conan Doyle Stories* (London: John Murray, 1929), part of a multi-volume edition of his work which Conan Doyle oversaw for publication at the end of his life. The texts for those stories not collected for this edition are taken from their first periodical publications, with the exception of 'John Barrington Cowles', which is taken from *The Captain of the 'Polestar' and Other Tales* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892).

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

Biographies and Critical Studies of Arthur Conan Doyle

- Edwards, Owen Dudley, *The Quest for Sherlock Holmes: A Biographical Study of Arthur Conan Doyle* (Edinburgh, 1983). Seminal work of biographical criticism, full of fascinating insights.
- Kerr, Douglas, *Conan Doyle: Writing, Profession and Practice* (Oxford, 2013).
- Lellenberg, John, Stashower, Daniel, and Foley, Charles (eds.), *Arthur Conan Doyle: A Life in Letters* (London, 2007).
- Lycett, Andrew, *Conan Doyle: The Man Who Created Sherlock Holmes* (London, 2007). The best modern biography of ACD.
- Rodin, Alvin E., and Key, Jack D., *The Medical Casebook of Doctor Arthur Conan Doyle* (Malabar, Fla., 1984). Deals with ACD as a physician and surgeon.
- Wynne, Catherine, *The Colonial Conan Doyle: British Imperialism, Irish Nationalism, and the Gothic* (Westport, Conn., 2002). Brilliant post-colonial study of ACD's work.

The Gothic and Popular Fiction

- Arata, Stephen J., *Fictions of Loss in the Victorian Fin de Siècle: Identity and Empire* (Cambridge, 1996).
- Bloom, Clive (ed.), *Gothic Horror* (London, 1998).
- Botting, Fred, *Gothic* (London, 1996).
- Brantlinger, Patrick, *Rule of Darkness: British Literature and Imperialism 1830–1900* (Ithaca, NY, 1988).
- Daly, Nicholas, *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siècle: Popular Fiction and British Culture, 1880–1914* (Cambridge, 1999).
- Keating, Peter, *The Haunted Study: A Social History of the English Novel 1875–1914* (London, 1989).
- Killeen, Jarlath, *Gothic Literature, 1825–1914* (Cardiff, 2009).
- Luckhurst, Roger, *The Mummy's Curse: The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford, 1914).

Spiritualism

- Luckhurst, Roger, *The Invention of Telepathy, 1870–1901* (Oxford, 2002).
- Ferguson, Christine, *Determined Spirits: Eugenics, Heredity and Racial Regeneration in Anglo-American Spiritualist Writing, 1848–1930* (Edinburgh, 2012).

Oppenheim, Janet, *The Other World: Spiritualism and Psychological Research in England, 1850–1914* (Cambridge, 1985).

Owen, Alex, *The Place of Enchantment: British Occultism and the Culture of the Modern* (Chicago and London, 2004).

CHRONOLOGY OF ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE

<i>Life</i>	<i>Cultural and Historical Background</i>
1859 ACD born in Edinburgh on 22 May.	Work begins on Suez Canal; Henri Bergson, Knut Hamsen, and Alfred Dreyfus born. Charles Darwin, <i>The Origin of Species</i> ; George Eliot, <i>Adam Bede</i> ; Edward Fitzgerald, <i>The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám</i> ; John Stuart Mill, <i>On Liberty</i> ; Samuel Smiles, <i>Self Help</i> .
1870 Enters Stonyhurst Academy.	Death of Charles Dickens; Franco-Prussian War (1870–1). Verne, <i>Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea</i> .
1875 Enters Stella Matutina school, Feldkirch, Austria.	Edgar Wallace, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Aleister Crowley born.
1876 Enters Edinburgh University Medical School.	Alexander Graham Bell patents telephone. Cesare Lombroso, <i>The Criminal Man</i> .
1878 Works as a doctor's assistant in Sheffield, Shropshire, and Birmingham; writes first (unpublished) novel, <i>The Narrative of John Smith</i> .	Death of Pope Pius IX; Joseph Stalin born. Thomas Hardy, <i>The Return of the Native</i> ; Leo Tolstoy, <i>Anna Karenina</i> .
1879 First story, 'The Mystery of Sasassa Valley', published in <i>Chambers's Journal</i> .	Edison produces electric light bulb; Anglo-Zulu War. Mark Twain, <i>Tom Sawyer</i> .
1880 Ship's doctor on Greenland whaler <i>Hope</i> ; 'The American's Tale'.	Second Afghan War; First Boer War; Lytton Strachey, Sean O'Casey, and Oswald Spengler born. Dostoevsky, <i>The Brothers Karamazov</i> ; Lew Wallace, <i>Ben-Hur</i> .
1881 Voyage to West Africa as ship's doctor on board the <i>Mayumba</i> .	Robert Louis Stevenson, 'The Body Snatcher' and <i>Treasure Island</i> ; death of Dostoevsky and Benjamin Disraeli.
1882 Sets up medical practice in Southsea.	Death of Charles Darwin; Society for Psychological Research founded.
1883 'The Captain of the "Polestar"'; 'The Winning Shot'.	Sax Rohmer and Franz Kafka born; death of Karl Marx.
1884 'John Barrington Cowles'; 'J. Habakuk Jephson's Statement'.	Siege of Khartoum begins.

- | <i>Life</i> | <i>Cultural and Historical Background</i> |
|---|--|
| 1885 Marries Louise Hawkins; writes MD thesis on syphilis. | Leopold II of Belgium establishes Congo Free State; Louis Pasteur produces rabies vaccine; General Charles Gordon killed in Khartoum; D. H. Lawrence born. H. Rider Haggard, <i>King Solomon's Mines</i> ; Mark Twain, <i>Huckleberry Finn</i> . |
| 1887 'Uncle Jeremy's Household'; <i>A Study in Scarlet</i> published in <i>Beeton's Christmas Annual</i> . | Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn founded. Rider Haggard, <i>She</i> ; Boris Karloff born. |
| 1890 Studies ophthalmology in Vienna; 'A Pastoral Horror'; 'The Ring of Thoth'; 'The Surgeon of Gaster Fell'. | H. P. Lovecraft born. William Morris, <i>News from Nowhere</i> ; William James, <i>Principles of Psychology</i> . |
| 1891 Moves to London to set up practice as ophthalmic surgeon in Upper Wimpole Street; 'A Scandal in Bohemia', first Holmes story, published in the <i>Strand</i> ; gives up medical practice and moves to Norwood. | Death of Herman Melville and Madame Blavatsky. Oscar Wilde, <i>The Picture of Dorian Gray</i> . |
| 1892 "'De Profundis"'; 'Lot No. 249'; 'The Los Amigos Fiasco'; <i>The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes</i> . | Gladstone becomes prime minister for third time; Basil Rathbone born; Dimitri Ivanovski discovers the virus. Max Nordau, <i>Degeneration</i> . |
| 1893 'The Case of Lady Sannox'; death of Sherlock Holmes in 'The Final Problem'. | Sigmund Freud and Josef Breuer, <i>Studies in Hysteria</i> . |
| 1894 'The Lord of Château Noir'; 'The Third Generation'; <i>The Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes</i> . | Death of Robert Louis Stevenson. Arthur Machen, <i>The Great God Pan</i> ; Rudyard Kipling, <i>Jungle Books</i> ; Alfred Dreyfus arrested and convicted of treason; Martial Bourdin attempts to blow up Greenwich Observatory. |
| 1897 Meets Jean Leckie, his future second wife; 'The Fiend of the Cooperage'; 'The Striped Chest'. | Stoker, <i>Dracula</i> ; Marsh, <i>The Beetle</i> ; Wells, <i>The Invisible Man</i> . |
| 1898 'The Beetle-Hunter'; 'The Brazilian Cat'; 'The New Catacomb'; 'The Retirement of Signor Lambert'; 'The Sealed Room'; <i>The Tragedy of the Korosko</i> . | Spanish–American War. Wells, <i>War of the Worlds</i> ; Wilde, <i>The Ballad of Reading Gaol</i> ; Henry James, <i>The Turn of the Screw</i> ; Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness' in <i>Blackwood's Magazine</i> . |

- | <i>Life</i> | <i>Cultural and Historical Background</i> |
|---|--|
| 1899 'The Brown Hand'. | Second Boer War; Boxer Rebellion. Sigmund Freud, <i>The Interpretation of Dreams</i> ; Jorge Luis Borges born. |
| 1900 ACD volunteers as medic in Boer War, and publishes <i>The Great Boer War</i> ; stands as a Liberal Unionist candidate for Edinburgh Central constituency; 'Playing with Fire'. | British Labour Party founded; death of Oscar Wilde. |
| 1901 <i>The Hound of the Baskervilles</i> begins publication in the <i>Strand</i> . | Death of Queen Victoria. |
| 1902 Knighted by King Edward VII; <i>The War in South Africa—Its Cause and Conduct</i> . | End of Boer War; coronation of Edward VII. |
| 1903 'The Leather Funnel'. | George Orwell born. Henry James, <i>The Ambassadors</i> ; Erskine Childers, <i>The Riddle of the Sands</i> ; Joseph Conrad, <i>Typhoon</i> . |
| 1905 <i>The Return of Sherlock Holmes</i> . | Trans-Siberian Railway opens; death of Jules Verne and Henry Irving; Albert Einstein, Theory of Special Relativity. |
| 1906 Death of Louise Conan Doyle; stands as Liberal Unionist candidate in Hawick Burghs constituency; <i>Sir Nigel</i> . | San Francisco earthquake; Robert E. Howard and Samuel Beckett born. |
| 1907 Marries Jean Leckie. | W. H. Auden born. Conrad, <i>The Secret Agent</i> ; Rudyard Kipling wins Nobel Prize for Literature. |
| 1908 Moves to Crowborough, Sussex; 'The Pot of Caviare'. | Ford Model T goes on sale. E. M. Foster, <i>A Room with a View</i> ; Kenneth Grahame, <i>The Wind in the Willows</i> . |
| 1909 'The Silver Mirror'; <i>The Crime of the Congo</i> . | Louis Bleriot flies across English Channel. Wells, <i>Tono-Bungay</i> . |
| 1910 'The Terror of Blue John Gap'; 'Through the Veil'. | Mexican Revolution; first horror film released, an adaptation of <i>Frankenstein</i> ; death of Mark Twain and Leo Tolstoy. Gaston Leroux, <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i> ; Forster, <i>Howards End</i> . |
| 1911 Converts to Irish Home Rule. | Stoker, <i>The Lair of the White Worm</i> ; M. R. James, <i>More Ghost Stories of an Antiquary</i> ; Conrad, <i>Under Western Eyes</i> ; Einstein, General Theory of Relativity. |

- | <i>Life</i> | <i>Cultural and Historical Background</i> |
|---|---|
| 1912 <i>The Lost World</i> . | Republic of China formed; sinking of RMS <i>Titanic</i> ; Woodrow Wilson elected US president; Scott Expedition to South Pole ends in disaster. Carl Jung, <i>Psychology of the Unconscious</i> ; death of Bram Stoker. |
| 1913 'How It Happened'; 'The Horror of the Heights'. | Freud, <i>Totem and Taboo</i> ; D. H. Lawrence, <i>Sons and Lovers</i> ; Marcel Proust, <i>Swann's Way</i> . |
| 1914 <i>The Valley of Fear</i> begins publication in the <i>Strand</i> . | First World War begins; assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria; Irish Home Rule. James Joyce, <i>Dubliners</i> ; Edgar Rice Burroughs, <i>Tarzan of the Apes</i> ; Wyndham Lewis, <i>BLAST</i> , vol. i. |
| 1918 Death of eldest son Kingsley from pneumonia after being wounded in battle; <i>The New Revelation</i> , first book on spiritualism. | First World War ends; influenza pandemic kills c.100,000,000 worldwide. Lytton Strachey, <i>Eminent Victorians</i> . |
| 1919 Death of younger brother Innes; <i>The Vital Message</i> . | Benito Mussolini founds Italian Fascist movement; Amritsar Massacre; Treaty of Versailles; Irish War of Independence. M. R. James, <i>A Thin Ghost and Others</i> ; Freud, 'The Uncanny'. |
| 1921 'The Nightmare Room'; 'The Bully of Brocas Court'; death of mother Mary Doyle. | Irish War of Independence ends. Ludwig Wittgenstein, <i>Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus</i> . |
| 1922 'The Lift'; <i>The Coming of the Fairies</i> . | Irish Civil War begins; death of Michael Collins and Erskine Childers; BBC formed. Joyce, <i>Ulysses</i> ; T. S. Eliot, <i>The Waste Land</i> . |
| 1924 <i>Memories and Adventures</i> . | Death of Lenin; Stalin assumes power in Russia. |
| 1926 <i>The History of Spiritualism</i> , 2 vols.; <i>The Land of Mist</i> . | John Logie Baird demonstrates television; General Strike. A. A. Milne, <i>Winnie-the-Pooh</i> ; T. E. Lawrence, <i>The Seven Pillars of Wisdom</i> . |
| 1927 <i>The Casebook of Sherlock Holmes</i> . | Virginia Woolf, <i>To the Lighthouse</i> ; J. W. Dunne, <i>An Experiment with Time</i> . |
| 1930 Arthur Conan Doyle dies in Crowborough on 7 July. | Haile Selassie crowned emperor of Abyssinia; Mahatma Gandhi initiates Indian civil disobedience; death of D. H. Lawrence. William Faulkner, <i>As I Lay Dying</i> ; Dashiell Hammett, <i>The Maltese Falcon</i> . |

THE TALES

THE AMERICAN'S TALE



‘T air strange, it air,’ he was saying as I opened the door of the room where our social little semi-literary society met; ‘but I could tell you queerer things than that ’ere—almighty queer things. You can’t learn everything out of books, sirs, nohow. You see it ain’t the men as can string English together and as has had good eddications as finds themselves in the queer places I’ve been in. They’re mostly rough men, sirs, as can scarce speak aright, far less tell with pen and ink the things they’ve seen; but if they could they’d make some of your European’s har riz with astonishment. They would, sirs, you bet!’

His name was Jefferson Adams, I believe; I know his initials were J.A., for you may see them yet deeply whittled on the right-hand upper panel of our smoking-room door. He left us this legacy, and also some artistic patterns done in tobacco juice upon our Turkey carpet; but beyond these reminiscences our American storyteller has vanished from our ken. He gleamed across our ordinary quiet conviviality like some brilliant meteor, and then was lost in the outer darkness. That night, however, our Nevada friend was in full swing; and I quietly lit my pipe and dropped into the nearest chair, anxious not to interrupt his story.

‘Mind you,’ he continued, ‘I hain’t got no grudge against your men of science. I likes and respects a chap as can match every beast and plant, from a huckleberry to a grizzly with a jaw-breakin’ name; but if you wants real interestin’ facts, something a bit juicy, you go to your whalers and your frontiersmen, and your scouts and Hudson Bay men,* chaps who mostly can scarce sign their names.’

There was a pause here, as Mr Jefferson Adams produced a long cheroot and lit it. We preserved a strict silence in the room, for we had already learned that on the slightest interruption our Yankee drew himself into his shell again. He glanced round with a self-satisfied smile as he remarked our expectant looks, and continued through a halo of smoke

‘Now which of you gentlemen has ever been in Arizona? None, I’ll warrant. And of all English or Americans as can put pen to paper, how many has been in Arizona? Precious few, I calc’late. I’ve been there,

sirs, lived there for years; and when I think of what I've seen there, why, I can scarce get myself to believe it now.

'Ah, there's a country! I was one of Walker's filibusters,* as they chose to call us; and after we'd busted up, and the chief was shot, some on us made tracks and located down there. A reg'lar English and American colony, we was, with our wives and children, and all complete. I reckon there's some of the old folk there yet, and that they hain't forgotten what I'm agoing to tell you. No, I warrant they hain't, never on this side of the grave, sirs.

'I was talking about the country, though; and I guess I could astonish you considerable if I spoke of nothing else. To think of such a land being built for a few "Greasers"* and half-breeds! It's a misusing of the gifts of Providence, that's what I calls it. Grass as hung over a chap's head as he rode through it, and trees so thick that you couldn't catch a glimpse of blue sky for leagues and leagues, and orchids like umbrellas! Maybe some on you has seen a plant as they calls the "fly-catcher," in some parts of the States?'

'*Dianœa muscipula*,*' murmured Dawson, our scientific man *par excellence*.

'Ah, "Die near a municipal," that's him! You'll see a fly stand on that 'ere plant, and then you'll see the two sides of a leaf snap up together and catch it between them, and grind it up and mash it to bits, for all the world like some great sea squid with its beak; and hours after, if you open the leaf, you'll see the body lying half-digested, and in bits. Well, I've seen those flytraps in Arizona with leaves eight and ten feet long, and thorns or teeth a foot or more; why, they could—But darn it, I'm going too fast!

'It's about the death of Joe Hawkins I was going to tell you; 'bout as queer a thing, I reckon, as ever you heard tell on. There wasn't nobody in Montana as didn't know of Joe Hawkins—"Alabama" Joe, as he was called there. A reg'lar out and outer,* he was, 'bout the darndest skunk as ever man clapt eyes on. He was a good chap enough, mind ye, as long as you stroked him the right way; but rile him anyhow, and he were worse nor a wild-cat. I've seen him empty his six-shooter into a crowd as chanced to jostle him agoing into Simpson's bar when there was a dance on; and he bowied Tom Hooper 'cause he spilt his liquor over his weskit by mistake. No, he didn't stick at murder, Joe didn't; and he weren't a man to be trusted further nor you could see him.

‘Now at the time I tell on, when Joe Hawkins was swaggerin’ about the town and layin’ down the law with his shootin’-irons, there was an Englishman there of the name of Scott—Tom Scott, if I rec’lects aright. This chap Scott was a thorough Britisher (beggin’ the present company’s pardon), and yet he didn’t freeze much to the British set there, or they didn’t freeze much to him. He was a quiet simple man, Scott was—rather too quiet for a rough set like that; sneakin’ they called him, but he weren’t that. He kept hisself mostly apart, an’ didn’t interfere with nobody so long as he were left alone. Some said as how he’d been kinder ill-treated at home—been a Chartist,* or something of that sort, and had to up stick and run; but he never spoke of it hisself, an’ never complained. Bad luck or good, that chap kept a stiff lip on him.

‘This chap Scott was a sort o’ butt among the men about Montana, for he was so quiet an’ simple-like. There was no party either to take up his grievances; for, as I’ve been saying, the Britishers hardly counted him one of them, and many a rough joke they played on him. He never cut up rough, but was polite to all hisself. I think the boys got to think he hadn’t much grit in him till he showed ’em their mistake.

‘It was in Simpson’s bar as the row got up, an’ that led to the queer thing I was going to tell you of. Alabama Joe and one or two other rowdies were dead on the Britishers in those days, and they spoke their opinions pretty free, though I warned them as there’d be an almighty muss. That partic’lar night Joe was nigh half drunk, an’ he swaggered about the town with his six-shooter, lookin’ out for a quarrel. Then he turned into the bar where he know’d he’d find some o’ the English as ready for one as he was hisself. Sure enough, there was half a dozen lounging about, an’ Tom Scott standin’ alone before the stove. Joe sat down by the table, and put his revolver and bowie* down in front of him. “Them’s my arguments, Jeff,” he says to me, “if any white-livered Britisher dares give me the lie.” I tried to stop him, sirs; but he weren’t a man as you could easily turn, an’ he began to speak in a way as no chap could stand. Why, even a “Greaser” would flare up if you said as much of Greaser-land! There was a commotion at the bar, an’ every man laid his hands on his wepins; but afore they could draw we heard a quiet voice from the stove: “Say your prayers, Joe Hawkins; for, by Heaven, you’re a dead man!” Joe turned round, and looked like grabbin’ at his iron;* but it weren’t no

manner of use. Tom Scott was standing up, covering him with his Derringer;* a smile on his white face, but the very devil shining in his eye. "It ain't that the old country has used me over-well," he says, "but no man shall speak agin it afore me, and live." For a second or two I could see his finger tighten round the trigger, an' then he gave a laugh, an' threw the pistol on the floor. "No," he says, "I can't shoot a half-drunk man. Take your dirty life, Joe, an' use it better nor you have done. You've been nearer the grave this night than you will be agin until your time comes. You'd best make tracks now, I guess. Nay, never look black at me, man; I'm not afeard at your shootin'-iron. A bully's nigh always a coward." And he swung contemptuously round, and relit his half-smoked pipe from the stove; while Alabama slunk out o' the bar, with the laughs of the Britishers ringing in his ears. I saw his face as he passed me, and on it I saw murder, sirs—murder, as plain as ever I seed anything in my life.

'I stayed in the bar after the row, and watched Tom Scott as he shook hands with the men about. It seemed kinder queer to me to see him smilin' and cheerful-like; for I knew Joe's bloodthirsty mind, and that the Englishman had small chance of ever seeing the morning. He lived in an out-of-the-way sort of place, you see, clean off the trail, and had to pass through the Flytrap Gulch to get to it. This here gulch was a marshy gloomy place, lonely enough during the day even; for it were always a creepy sort o' thing to see the great eight- and ten-foot leaves snapping up if aught touched them; but at night there were never a soul near. Some parts of the marsh, too, were soft and deep, and a body thrown in would be gone by the morning. I could see Alabama Joe crouchin' under the leaves of the great Flytrap in the darkest part of the gulch, with a scowl on his face and a revolver in his hand; I could see it, sirs, as plain as with my two eyes.

"Bout midnight Simpson shuts up his bar, so out we had to go. Tom Scott started off for his three-mile walk at a slashing pace. I just dropped him a hint as he passed me, for I kinder liked the chap. "Keep your Derringer loose in your belt, sir," I says, "for you might chance to need it." He looked round at me with his quiet smile, and then I lost sight of him in the gloom. I never thought to see him again. He'd hardly gone afore Simpson comes up to me and says, "There'll be a nice job in the Flytrap Gulch to-night, Jeff; the boys say that Hawkins started half an hour ago to wait for Scott and shoot him on sight. I calc'late the coroner'll be wanted to-morrow."

‘What passed in the gulch that night? It were a question as were asked pretty free next morning. A half-breed was in Ferguson’s store after daybreak, and he said as he’d chanced to be near the gulch ’bout one in the morning. It warn’t easy to get at his story, he seemed so uncommon scared; but he told us, at last, as he’d heard the fearfulest screams in the stillness of the night. There weren’t no shots, he said, but scream after scream, kinder muffled, like a man with a serapé* over his head, an’ in mortal pain. Abner Brandon and me, and a few more, was in the store at the time; so we mounted and rode out to Scott’s house, passing through the gulch on the way. There weren’t nothing partic’lar to be seen there—no blood nor marks of a fight, nor nothing; and when we gets up to Scott’s house, out he comes to meet us as fresh as a lark. “Hullo, Jeff!” says he, “no need for the pistols after all. Come in an’ have a cocktail, boys.” “Did ye see or hear nothing as ye came home last night?” says I. “No,” says he; “all was quiet enough. An owl kinder moaning in the Flytrap Gulch—that was all. Come, jump off and have a glass.” “Thank ye,” says Abner. So off we gets, and Tom Scott rode into the settlement with us when we went back.

‘An allfired commotion was on in Main-street as we rode into it. The ’Merican party seemed to have gone clean crazed. Alabama Joe was gone, not a darned particle of him left. Since he went out to the gulch nary eye had seen him. As we got off our horses there was a considerable crowd in front of Simpson’s, and some ugly looks at Tom Scott, I can tell you. There was a clickin’ of pistols, and I saw as Scott had his hand in his bosom too. There weren’t a single English face about. “Stand aside, Jeff Adams,” says Zebb Humphrey, as great a scoundrel as ever lived, “you hain’t got no hand in this game. Say, boys, are we, free Americans, to be murdered by any darned Britisher?” It was the quickest thing as ever I seed. There was a rush an’ a crack; Zebb was down, with Scott’s ball in his thigh, and Scott hisself was on the ground with a dozen men holding him. It weren’t no use struggling, so he lay quiet. They seemed a bit uncertain what to do with him at first, but then one of Alabama’s special chums put them up to it. “Joe’s gone,” he said; “nothing ain’t surer nor that, an’ there lies the man as killed him. Some on you knows as Joe went on business to the gulch last night; he never came back. That ’ere Britisher passed through after he’d gone; they’d had a row, screams is heard ’mong the great flytraps. I say agin he has played poor Joe some o’ his sneakin’

tricks, an' thrown him into the swamp. It ain't no wonder as the body is gone. But air we to stan' by and see English murderin' our own chums? I guess not. Let Judge Lynch* try him, that's what I say." "Lynch him!" shouted a hundred angry voices—for all the rag-tag an' bobtail o' the settlement was round us by this time. "Here, boys, fetch a rope, and swing him up. Up with him over Simpson's door!" "See here though," says another, coming forrards; "let's hang him by the great flytrap in the gulch. Let Joe see as he's revenged, if so be as he's buried 'bout theer." There was a shout for this, an' away they went, with Scott tied on his mustang in the middle, and a mounted guard, with cocked revolvers, round him; for we knew as there was a score or so Britishers about, as didn't seem to recognise Judge Lynch, and was dead on a free fight.

'I went out with them, my heart bleedin' for Scott, though he didn't seem a cent put out, he didn't. He were game to the backbone. Seems kinder queer, sirs, hangin' a man to a flytrap; but our'n were a reg'lar tree, and the leaves like a brace of boats with a hinge between 'em and thorns at the bottom.

'We passed down the gulch to the place where the great one grows, and there we seed it with the leaves, some open, some shut. But we seed something worse nor that. Standin' round the tree was some thirty men, Britishers all, an' armed to the teeth. They was waitin' for us evidently, an' had a businesslike look about 'em, as if they'd come for something and meant to have it. There was the raw material there for about as warm a scrimmidge as ever I seed. As we rode up, a great red-bearded Scotchman—Cameron were his name—stood out afore the rest, his revolver cocked in his hand. "See here, boys," he says, "you've got no call to hurt a hair of that man's head. You hain't proved as Joe is dead yet; and if you had, you hain't proved as Scott killed him. Anyhow, it were in self-defence; for you all know as he was lying in wait for Scott, to shoot him on sight; so I say agin, you hain't got no call to hurt that man; and what's more, I've got thirty six-barrelled arguments against your doin' it." "It's an interestin' pint, and worth arguin' out," said the man as was Alabama Joe's special chum. There was a clickin' of pistols, and a loosenin' of knives, and the two parties began to draw up to one another, an' it looked like a rise in the mortality of Montana. Scott was standing behind with a pistol at his ear if he stirred, lookin' quiet and composed as having no money on the table, when sudden he gives a start an' a shout as rang in our ears like

a trumpet. "Joe!" he cried, "Joe! Look at him! In the flytrap!" We all turned an' looked where he was pointin'. Jerusalem! I think we won't get that picter out of our minds agin. One of the great leaves of the flytrap, that had been shut and touchin' the ground as it lay, was slowly rolling back upon its hinges. There, lying like a child in its cradle, was Alabama Joe in the hollow of the leaf. The great thorns had been slowly driven through his heart as it shut upon him. We could see as he'd tried to cut his way out, for there was a slit in the thick fleshy leaf, an' his bowie was in his hand; but it had smothered him first. He'd lain down on it likely to keep the damp off while he were awaitin' for Scott, and it had closed on him as you've seen your little hothouse ones do on a fly; an' there he were as we found him, torn and crushed into pulp by the great jagged teeth of the man-eatin' plant. There, sirs, I think you'll own as that's a curious story.'

'And what became of Scott?' asked Jack Sinclair.

'Why, we carried him back on our shoulders, we did, to Simpson's bar, and he stood us liquors round. Made a speech too—a darned fine speech—from the counter. Somethin' about the British lion an' the 'Merican eagle walkin' arm in arm for ever an' a day. And now, sirs, that yarn was long, and my cheroot's out, so I reckon I'll make tracks afore it's later;' and with a 'Good-night!' he left the room.

* * *

'A most extraordinary narrative!' said Dawson. 'Who would have thought a Dianœa had such power!'

'Deuced rum yarn!' said young Sinclair.

'Evidently a matter-of-fact truthful man,' said the doctor.

'Or the most original liar that ever lived,' said I.

I wonder which he was.

THE CAPTAIN OF THE 'POLESTAR'



[Being an extract from the singular journal of JOHN M'ALISTER RAY, student of medicine.]

SEPTEMBER 11th.—Lat. $81^{\circ} 40'$ N.; long. 2° E.* Still lying-to amid enormous ice-fields. The one which stretches away to the north of us, and to which our ice-anchor is attached, cannot be smaller than an English county. To the right and left unbroken sheets extend to the horizon. This morning the mate reported that there were signs of pack ice to the southward. Should this form of sufficient thickness to bar our return, we shall be in a position of danger, as the food, I hear, is already running somewhat short. It is late in the season, and the nights are beginning to reappear. This morning I saw a star twinkling just over the fore-yard, the first since the beginning of May. There is considerable discontent among the crew, many of whom are anxious to get back home to be in time for the herring season, when labour always commands a high price upon the Scotch coast. As yet their displeasure is only signified by sullen countenances and black looks, but I heard from the second mate this afternoon that they contemplated sending a deputation to the captain to explain their grievance. I much doubt how he will receive it, as he is a man of fierce temper, and very sensitive about anything approaching to an infringement of his rights. I shall venture after dinner to say a few words to him upon the subject. I have always found that he will tolerate from me what he would resent from any other member of the crew. Amsterdam Island, at the north-west corner of Spitzbergen,* is visible upon our starboard quarter—a rugged line of volcanic rocks, intersected by white seams, which represent glaciers. It is curious to think that at the present moment there is probably no human being nearer to us than the Danish settlements in the south of Greenland—a good nine hundred miles as the crow flies. A captain takes a great responsibility upon himself when he risks his vessel under such circumstances. No whaler* has ever remained in these latitudes till so advanced a period of the year.

9 P.M.—I have spoken to Captain Craigie, and though the result has been hardly satisfactory, I am bound to say that he listened to

what I had to say very quietly and even deferentially. When I had finished he put on that air of iron determination which I have frequently observed upon his face, and paced rapidly backwards and forwards across the narrow cabin for some minutes. At first I feared that I had seriously offended him, but he dispelled the idea by sitting down again, and putting his hand upon my arm with a gesture which almost amounted to a caress. There was a depth of tenderness too in his wild dark eyes which surprised me considerably. 'Look here, Doctor,' he said, 'I'm sorry I ever took you—I am indeed—and I would give fifty pounds this minute to see you standing safe upon the Dundee* quay. It's hit or miss with me this time. There are fish to the north of us. How dare you shake your head, sir, when I tell you I saw them blowing from the masthead?'—this in a sudden burst of fury, though I was not conscious of having shown any signs of doubt. 'Two-and-twenty fish in as many minutes as I am a living man, and not one under ten foot.¹ Now, Doctor, do you think I can leave the country when there is only one infernal strip of ice between me and my fortune? If it came on to blow from the north to-morrow we could fill the ship and be away before the frost could catch us. If it came on to blow from the south—well, I suppose the men are paid for risking their lives, and as for myself it matters but little to me, for I have more to bind me to the other world than to this one. I confess that I am sorry for *you*, though. I wish I had old Angus Tait who was with me last voyage, for he was a man that would never be missed, and you—you said once that you were engaged, did you not?'

'Yes,' I answered, snapping the spring of the locket which hung from my watch-chain, and holding up the little vignette of Flora.

'Curse you!' he yelled, springing out of his seat, with his very beard bristling with passion. 'What is your happiness to me? What have I to do with her that you must dangle her photograph before my eyes?' I almost thought that he was about to strike me in the frenzy of his rage, but with another imprecation he dashed open the door of the cabin and rushed out upon deck, leaving me considerably astonished at his extraordinary violence. It is the first time that he has ever shown me anything but courtesy and kindness. I can hear him pacing excitedly up and down overhead as I write these lines.

¹ A whale is measured among whalers not by the length of its body, but by the length of its whalebone.

I should like to give a sketch of the character of this man, but it seems presumptuous to attempt such a thing upon paper, when the idea in my own mind is at best a vague and uncertain one. Several times I have thought that I grasped the clue which might explain it, but only to be disappointed by his presenting himself in some new light which would upset all my conclusions. It may be that no human eye but my own shall ever rest upon these lines, yet as a psychological study I shall attempt to leave some record of Captain Nicholas Craigie.

A man's outer case generally gives some indication of the soul within. The captain is tall and well-formed, with dark, handsome face, and a curious way of twitching his limbs, which may arise from nervousness, or be simply an outcome of his excessive energy. His jaw and whole cast of countenance is manly and resolute, but the eyes are the distinctive feature of his face. They are of the very darkest hazel, bright and eager, with a singular mixture of recklessness in their expression, and of something else which I have sometimes thought was more allied with horror than any other emotion. Generally the former predominated, but on occasions, and more particularly when he was thoughtfully inclined, the look of fear would spread and deepen until it imparted a new character to his whole countenance. It is at these times that he is most subject to tempestuous fits of anger, and he seems to be aware of it, for I have known him lock himself up so that no one might approach him until his dark hour was passed. He sleeps badly, and I have heard him shouting during the night, but his cabin is some little distance from mine, and I could never distinguish the words which he said.

This is one phase of his character, and the most disagreeable one. It is only through my close association with him, thrown together as we are day after day, that I have observed it. Otherwise he is an agreeable companion, well-read and entertaining, and as gallant a seaman as ever trod a deck. I shall not easily forget the way in which he handled the ship when we were caught by a gale among the loose ice at the beginning of April. I have never seen him so cheerful, and even hilarious, as he was that night, as he paced backwards and forwards upon the bridge amid the flashing of the lightning and the howling of the wind. He has told me several times that the thought of death was a pleasant one to him, which is a sad thing for a young man to say; he cannot be much more than thirty, though his hair and moustache are

already slightly grizzled. Some great sorrow must have overtaken him and blighted his whole life. Perhaps I should be the same if I lost my Flora—God knows! I think if it were not for her that I should care very little whether the wind blew from the north or the south to-morrow. There, I hear him come down the companion, and he has locked himself up in his room, which shows that he is still in an unamiable mood. And so to bed, as old Pepys* would say, for the candle is burning down (we have to use them now since the nights are closing in), and the steward has turned in, so there are no hopes of another one.

September 12th.—Calm, clear day, and still lying in the same position. What wind there is comes from the south-east, but it is very slight. Captain is in a better humour, and apologised to me at breakfast for his rudeness. He still looks somewhat distrait,* however, and retains that wild look in his eyes which in a Highlander would mean that he was 'fey'*—at least so our chief engineer remarked to me, and he has some reputation among the Celtic portion of our crew as a seer and expounder of omens.

It is strange that superstition should have obtained such mastery over this hard-headed and practical race. I could not have believed to what an extent it is carried had I not observed it for myself. We have had a perfect epidemic of it this voyage, until I have felt inclined to serve out rations of sedatives and nerve-tonics with the Saturday allowance of grog. The first symptom of it was that shortly after leaving Shetland the men at the wheel used to complain that they heard plaintive cries and screams in the wake of the ship, as if something were following it and were unable to overtake it. This fiction has been kept up during the whole voyage, and on dark nights at the beginning of the seal-fishing it was only with great difficulty that men could be induced to do their spell. No doubt what they heard was either the creaking of the rudder-chains, or the cry of some passing sea-bird. I have been fetched out of bed several times to listen to it, but I need hardly say that I was never able to distinguish anything unnatural. The men, however, are so absurdly positive upon the subject that it is hopeless to argue with them. I mentioned the matter to the captain once, but to my surprise he took it very gravely, and indeed appeared to be considerably disturbed by what I told him. I should have thought that he at least would have been above such vulgar delusions.

All this disquisition upon superstition leads me up to the fact that Mr Manson, our second mate, saw a ghost last night—or, at least, says

that he did, which of course is the same thing. It is quite refreshing to have some new topic of conversation after the eternal routine of bears and whales which has served us for so many months. Manson swears the ship is haunted, and that he would not stay in her a day if he had any other place to go to. Indeed the fellow is honestly frightened, and I had to give him some chloral and bromide of potassium* this morning to steady him down. He seemed quite indignant when I suggested that he had been having an extra glass the night before, and I was obliged to pacify him by keeping as grave a countenance as possible during his story, which he certainly narrated in a very straightforward and matter-of-fact way.

'I was on the bridge,' he said, 'about four bells in the middle watch,* just when the night was at its darkest. There was a bit of a moon, but the clouds were blowing across it so that you couldn't see far from the ship. John M'Leod, the harpooner, came aft from the fo'c'sle-head* and reported a strange noise on the starboard bow. I went forrard and we both heard it, sometimes like a bairn crying and sometimes like a wench in pain. I've been seventeen years to the country and I never heard seal, old or young, make a sound like that. As we were standing there on the fo'c'sle-head the moon came out from behind a cloud, and we both saw a sort of white figure moving across the icefield in the same direction that we had heard the cries. We lost sight of it for a while, but it came back on the port bow, and we could just make it out like a shadow on the ice. I sent a hand aft for the rifles, and M'Leod and I went down on to the pack, thinking that maybe it might be a bear. When we got on the ice I lost sight of M'Leod, but I pushed on in the direction where I could still hear the cries. I followed them for a mile or maybe more, and then running round a hummock I came right on to the top of it standing and waiting for me seemingly. I don't know what it was. It wasn't a bear, anyway. It was tall and white and straight, and if it wasn't a man nor a woman, I'll stake my davy* it was something worse. I made for the ship as hard as I could run, and precious glad I was to find myself aboard. I signed articles to do my duty by the ship, and on the ship I'll stay, but you don't catch me on the ice again after sundown.'

That is his story, given as far as I can in his own words. I fancy what he saw must, in spite of his denial, have been a young bear erect upon its hind legs, an attitude which they often assume when alarmed. In the uncertain light this would bear a resemblance to a human figure,

especially to a man whose nerves were already somewhat shaken. Whatever it may have been, the occurrence is unfortunate, for it has produced a most unpleasant effect upon the crew. Their looks are more sullen than before, and their discontent more open. The double grievance of being debarred from the herring fishing and of being detained in what they choose to call a haunted vessel, may lead them to do something rash. Even the harpooners, who are the oldest and steadiest among them, are joining in the general agitation.

Apart from this absurd outbreak of superstition, things are looking rather more cheerful. The pack which was forming to the south of us has partly cleared away, and the water is so warm as to lead me to believe that we are lying in one of those branches of the gulfstream which run up between Greenland and Spitzbergen. There are numerous small Medusæ and sea-lemons* about the ship, with abundance of shrimps, so that there is every possibility of 'fish' being sighted. Indeed one was seen blowing about dinner-time, but in such a position that it was impossible for the boats to follow it.

September 13th.—Had an interesting conversation with the chief mate, Mr Milne, upon the bridge. It seems that our captain is as great an enigma to the seamen, and even to the owners of the vessel, as he has been to me. Mr Milne tells me that when the ship is paid off, upon returning from a voyage, Captain Craigie disappears, and is not seen again until the approach of another season, when he walks quietly into the office of the company, and asks whether his services will be required. He has no friend in Dundee, nor does anyone pretend to be acquainted with his early history. His position depends entirely upon his skill as a seaman, and the name for courage and coolness which he had earned in the capacity of mate, before being entrusted with a separate command. The unanimous opinion seems to be that he is not a Scotchman, and that his name is an assumed one. Mr Milne thinks that he has devoted himself to whaling simply for the reason that it is the most dangerous occupation which he could select, and that he courts death in every possible manner. He mentioned several instances of this, one of which is rather curious, if true. It seems that on one occasion he did not put in an appearance at the office, and a substitute had to be selected in his place. That was at the time of the last Russian and Turkish War.* When he turned up again next spring he had a puckered wound in the side of his neck which he used to endeavour to conceal with his cravat. Whether the mate's inference that he had

been engaged in the war is true or not I cannot say. It was certainly a strange coincidence.

The wind is veering round in an easterly direction, but is still very slight. I think the ice is lying closer than it did yesterday. As far as the eye can reach on every side there is one wide expanse of spotless white, only broken by an occasional rift or the dark shadow of a hummock. To the south there is the narrow lane of blue water which is our sole means of escape, and which is closing up every day. The captain is taking a heavy responsibility upon himself. I hear that the tank of potatoes has been finished, and even the biscuits are running short, but he preserves the same impassable* countenance, and spends the greater part of the day at the crow's nest, sweeping the horizon with his glass. His manner is very variable, and he seems to avoid my society, but there has been no repetition of the violence which he showed the other night.

7.30 P.M. — My deliberate opinion is that we are commanded by a madman. Nothing else can account for the extraordinary vagaries of Captain Craigie. It is fortunate that I have kept this journal of our voyage, as it will serve to justify us in case we have to put him under any sort of restraint, a step which I should only consent to as a last resource. Curiously enough it was he himself who suggested lunacy and not mere eccentricity as the secret of his strange conduct. He was standing upon the bridge about an hour ago, peering as usual through his glass, while I was walking up and down the quarter-deck. The majority of the men were below at their tea, for the watches have not been regularly kept of late. Tired of walking, I leaned against the bulwarks, and admired the mellow glow cast by the sinking sun upon the great ice-fields which surround us. I was suddenly aroused from the reverie into which I had fallen by a hoarse voice at my elbow, and starting round I found that the captain had descended and was standing by my side. He was staring out over the ice with an expression in which horror, surprise, and something approaching to joy were contending for the mastery. In spite of the cold, great drops of perspiration were coursing down his forehead, and he was evidently fearfully excited. His limbs twitched like those of a man upon the verge of an epileptic fit, and the lines about his mouth were drawn and hard.

'Look!' he gasped, seizing me by the wrist, but still keeping his eyes upon the distant ice, and moving his head slowly in a horizontal direction, as if following some object which was moving across the field of

vision. 'Look! There, man, there! Between the hummocks! Now coming out from behind the far one! You see her—you *must* see her! There still! Flying from me, by God, flying from me—and gone!'

He uttered the last two words in a whisper of concentrated agony which shall never fade from my remembrance. Clinging to the ratlines* he endeavoured to climb up upon the top of the bulwarks as if in the hope of obtaining a last glance at the departing object. His strength was not equal to the attempt, however, and he staggered back against the saloon skylights, where he leaned panting and exhausted. His face was so livid that I expected him to become unconscious, so lost no time in leading him down the companion, and stretching him upon one of the sofas in the cabin. I then poured him out some brandy, which I held to his lips, and which had a wonderful effect upon him, bringing the blood back into his white face and steadying his poor shaking limbs. He raised himself up upon his elbow, and looking round to see that we were alone, he beckoned to me to come and sit beside him.

'You saw it, didn't you?' he asked, still in the same subdued awesome tone so foreign to the nature of the man.

'No, I saw nothing.'

His head sank back again upon the cushions. 'No, he wouldn't without the glass,' he murmured. 'He couldn't. It was the glass that showed her to me, and then the eyes of love—the eyes of love. I say, Doc, don't let the steward in! He'll think I'm mad. Just bolt the door, will you!'

I rose and did what he had commanded.

He lay quiet for a while, lost in thought apparently, and then raised himself up upon his elbow again, and asked for some more brandy.

'You don't think I am, do you, Doc?' he asked, as I was putting the bottle back into the after-locker. 'Tell me now, as man to man, do you think that I am mad?'

'I think you have something on your mind,' I answered, 'which is exciting you and doing you a good deal of harm.'

'Right there, lad!' he cried, his eyes sparkling from the effects of the brandy. 'Plenty on my mind—plenty! But I can work out the latitude and the longitude, and I can handle my sextant and manage my logarithms. You couldn't prove me mad in a court of law, could you, now?' It was curious to hear the man lying back and coolly arguing out the question of his own sanity.

'Perhaps not,' I said; 'but still I think you would be wise to get home as soon as you can, and settle down to a quiet life for a while.'

'Get home, eh?' he muttered, with a sneer upon his face. 'One word for me and two for yourself, lad. Settle down with Flora—pretty little Flora. Are bad dreams signs of madness?'

'Sometimes,' I answered.

'What else? What would be the first symptoms?'

'Pains in the head, noises in the ears, flashes before the eyes, delusions——'

'Ah! what about them?' he interrupted. 'What would you call a delusion?'

'Seeing a thing which is not there is a delusion.'

'But she *was* there!' he groaned to himself. 'She *was* there!' and rising, he unbolted the door and walked with slow and uncertain steps to his own cabin, where I have no doubt that he will remain until tomorrow morning. His system seems to have received a terrible shock, whatever it may have been that he imagined himself to have seen. The man becomes a greater mystery every day, though I fear that the solution which he has himself suggested is the correct one, and that his reason is affected. I do not think that a guilty conscience has anything to do with his behaviour. The idea is a popular one among the officers, and, I believe, the crew; but I have seen nothing to support it. He has not the air of a guilty man, but of one who has had terrible usage at the hands of fortune, and who should be regarded as a martyr rather than a criminal.

The wind is veering round to the south to-night. God help us if it blocks that narrow pass which is our only road to safety! Situated as we are on the edge of the main Arctic pack, or the 'barrier' as it is called by the whalers, any wind from the north has the effect of shredding out the ice around us and allowing our escape, while a wind from the south blows up all the loose ice behind us, and hems us in between two packs. God help us, I say again!

September 14th.—Sunday, and a day of rest. My fears have been confirmed, and the thin strip of blue water has disappeared from the southward. Nothing but the great motionless ice-fields around us, with their weird hummocks and fantastic pinnacles. There is a deathly silence over their wide expanse which is horrible. No lapping of the waves now, no cries of seagulls or straining of sails, but one deep universal silence in which the murmurs of the seamen, and the creak of

their boots upon the white shining deck, seem discordant and out of place. Our only visitor was an Arctic fox, a rare animal upon the pack, though common enough upon the land. He did not come near the ship, however, but after surveying us from a distance fled rapidly across the ice. This was curious conduct, as they generally know nothing of man, and being of an inquisitive nature, become so familiar that they are easily captured. Incredible as it may seem, even this little incident produced a bad effect upon the crew. 'Yon puir beastie kens mair, ay, an' sees mair nor you nor me!'^{*} was the comment of one of the leading harpooners, and the others nodded their acquiescence. It is vain to attempt to argue against such puerile superstition. They have made up their minds that there is a curse upon the ship, and nothing will ever persuade them to the contrary.

The captain remained in seclusion all day except for about half an hour in the afternoon, when he came out upon the quarter-deck. I observed that he kept his eye fixed upon the spot where the vision of yesterday had appeared, and was quite prepared for another outburst, but none such came. He did not seem to see me, although I was standing close beside him. Divine service was read as usual, by the chief engineer. It is a curious thing that in whaling vessels the Church of England Prayer-book is always employed, although there is never a member of that Church among either officers or crew. Our men are all Roman Catholics or Presbyterians, the former predominating. Since a ritual is used which is foreign to both, neither can complain that the other is preferred to them, and they listen with all attention and devotion, so that the system has something to recommend it.

A glorious sunset, which made the great fields of ice look like a lake of blood. I have never seen a finer and at the same time more weird effect. Wind is veering round. If it will blow twenty-four hours from the north all will yet be well.

September 15th.—To-day is Flora's birthday. Dear lass! it is well that she cannot see her boy, as she used to call me, shut up among the ice-fields with a crazy captain and a few weeks' provisions. No doubt she scans the shipping list in the *Scotsman*^{*} every morning to see if we are reported from Shetland. I have to set an example to the men and look cheery and unconcerned; but God knows, my heart is very heavy at times.

The thermometer is at nineteen Fahrenheit to-day. There is but little wind, and what there is comes from an unfavourable quarter.