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THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER by Edgar Allan Poe. Son coeur est un luth suspendu; Sitot qu'on le touche il resonne. DE BERANGER. During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on hor orseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was--but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasureable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me--upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain--upon the bleak walls--upon the vacant eye-like windows--upon a few rank sedges--and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees--with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium--the bitter lapse into everyday life--the hideous dropping off the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart--an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it--lapsed to fall back upon details of the property standard to represent the property standa
as a mystery all insoluble; nor could I grapple with the shadowy fancies that crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the possible, I reflected, that a mere different arrangement of the particulars of the scene, of the details of the picture. So the details of the picture of the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn that lay in unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down--but with a shudder even more thrilling than before--upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastify tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows. Never the less, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him--and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. It was the manner in which all this, and much more, was said—it was the apparent heart that his request—which allowed his only personal friend, a very singular summons. Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of temperament, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotio
a very anapture summons. Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet if really know thins on my friend. His serves and been aways excessive and habitual, I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been rode, time of or 1 min. For a peculiar sensitivity of temperature, and the serves of the serv
alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spir
the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent pos
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      itive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe, in one unceasing radiation of gloom. I s
hall ever bear about me a memory of the many solemn hours I thus spent alone with the master of the House of ons, in which he involved me, or led me the way. An excited and highly distempered ideality threw a sulph ainfully in mind a certain singular perversion and amplification of the wild air of the last waltz of Von
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  Usher. Yet I should fail in any attempt to convey an idea of the exact character of the studies, or of the occupati
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ureous lustre over all. His long improvised dirges will ring for ever in my ears. Among other things, I hold p
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                Weber. From the paintings over which his elaborate fancy brooded, and which grew, touch by touch,
nto vagueness at which I shuddered the more thrillingly, because I shuddered knowing not why;
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        rom these paintings (vivid as their images now are before me) I would in vain endeavour to educ
e more than a small portion which should lie within the compass of merely written words. By
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              er simplicity, by the nakedness of his designs, he arrested and overawed attention. If ever m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   urrounding me--there arose out of the pure abstractions which the hypochondriac contriv
ortal painted an idea, that mortal was Roderick Usher. For me at least--in the circumstanc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         he contemplation of the certainly glowing yet too concrete reveries of Fuseli. One of t
shadowed forth, although feebly, in words. A small picture presented the interior o
ed to throw upon his canvas, an intensity of intolerable awe, no shadow of which felt I
he phantasmagoric conceptions of my friend, partaking not so rigidly of the spirit
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     e, and without interruption
f an immensely long and rectangular vault or tunnel, with low walls, smooth, wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   or device. Certain accessory points of the design served well to convey the idea
that this excavation lay at an exceeding depth below the surface of the earth
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       erved in any portion of its vast extent, and no torch, or other artificial source
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   outlet w
of light was discernible; yet a flood of intense rays rolled throughout, and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ghastly and inappropriate splendour. I have just spoken of that morbid of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  e in a
ondition of the auditory nerve which rendered all music intolerable to t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               on of certain effects of stringed instruments. It was, perhaps, the narro
                                                                                                                                                                                                               e suf
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ex
w limits to which he thus confined himself upon the guitar, which gav
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       , in great m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   e fantastic character of the performances. But the fervid facility of his
                                                                                                                                                                                                        e b
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          easur e,
impromptus could not be so accounted for. They must have been,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        in the words of his wild fantasias (for he not unfrequently accomp
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           concentration to which I have previously alluded as observable
                                                                                                                                                                                                      at intense
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    I collectedness and
only in particular moments of the highest artificial excitement.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ily remembered. I was, perhaps, the more forcibly impressed
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            e rh apsodies I have eas
with it, as he gave it, because, in the under or mystic curren
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 first time, a full consciousness on the part of Usher, of the
                                                                                                                                                           t of
                                                                                                                                                                                                    ng, I fancied
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              I perceived, and for the
ottering of his lofty reason upon her throne. The verses, w
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    not accurately, thus: I. In the greenest of our valleys, By
                                                                                                                                                                                                   The H aunted
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                lace," ran very nearly, if
ood angels tenanted, Once a fair and stately palace-- Ra
                                                                                                                                                                       t palace--reared its hea d. In t he m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                onarch Thought's domin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      on-- It stood there! Never seraph spread a pinion Over
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         Iden Time long ago) And every gentle air that dallied,
                                                                                                                                                                           s roof did float an df low; (Th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       --was in th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    e o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             valley Through two luminous windows saw Spirits r
                                                                                                                                                                             winged odour we nt away. Ill.
oving musically To a lute's well tuned law, Round a
                                                                                                                                                               bout a throne, where sitting (Porphyrog
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              I befitting, The ruler of the realm was seen. IV. And
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    owing, flowing And sparkl ing eve
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 rmore, A troop of Echoes whose sweet duty Was
                                                                                                                                                                e door, Through which came flowing,
                                                                                                                                                                  wit and wisdom of their king. V. But evil
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             things, in robes of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               sorrow, Assailed
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    the monarch's high estate; (Ah, let us mourn, fo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      dim-remembered story, Of the old time entom
                                                                                                                                                                   !) And, round about his home, the glory
                                                                                                                                                                     Through the red-litten windows, see Vas
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         discordant melody; While, like a rapid ghastl
                                                                                                                                                                     rong rush out forever, And laugh--but s
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         estions arising from this ballad, led us into a
                                                                                                                                                                     nifest an opinion of Usher's which I ment
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ty (for other men* have thought thus,) as o
                                                                                                                                                                    maintained it. This op inion, in its general
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            getable things. But, in his disordered fanc
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               zation. I lack words to express the full ext
                                                                                                                                                                  haracter, and tresp as
                                                                                                                                                                                                        sed, under certain c
                                                                                                                                                                                                         ever, was connected
                                                                                                                                                                  erspread them, an do f the decayed trees whi ch stood around--above all, in the long u
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    ndisturbed endurance of this arrange
                                                                                                                                                                   till waters of the ta rn. It is evidence-the evidence of the sentience--w as it to be seen, he
                                                                                                                                                                                                               f their own about the waters and the walls . T
                                                                                                                                                                   tion of an atmospher e o
                                                                                                                                                                                                               s had moulded the destinies of his famil
                                                                                                                                                                                                                ne. Our books--the books which, for ye
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                s, had formed n
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         o small portion of the mental exist
                                                                                                                                                                                                                  keeping with this character of phant
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ether over such works as the Verv
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 m. We pored tog
                                                                                                                                                                    Belphegor of Machia velli; the Heaven and Hell of Swedenborg; t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  Subterranean Vo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           yage of Nicholas Klimm by Holbe
                                                                                                                                                                   ud, of Jean D'Indagine, and of De la Chambre; the Journey into the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             d the City of the Sun by Campan
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 tance of Tieck: an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             here were passages in Pomponi
                                                                                                                                                                   a small octavo edition of the Directorium Inquisitorum, by the Dominican Eymeric de Gironne; and t
                                                                                                                                                                  Satyrs and OEgipans, over which Usher woul d sit dreaming for ho
                                                                                                                                                                 urious book in quarto Gothic--the manual of a forgotten churc
I of an exceedingly rare and c
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               um Secundum Chorum Eccles
                                                                                                                                                                 elp thinking of the wild ritual of this work , a
iae Maguntinae. I could not h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               nd of its probable
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  fluence upo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               n the hypochondriac, when, o
                                                                                                                                                               me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 reserving her corpse for a for
ne evening, having informe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  tention of p
tnight, (previously to its final
                                                                                                                                                                interment), in one of
                                                                                                                                                                                                       the numerous vaults within the main walls o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 he building
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   The worldly reason, howeve
r, assigned for this singular
                                                                                                                                                             proceeding, was
                                                                                                                                                                                                        e which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. Th
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 rother had
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  been led to his resolution (s
o he told me) by considerati
                                                                                                                                                             on of the unus
                                                                                                                                                                                                           character of t
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  malady of the de
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uiries on the part of her me
                                                                                                                                                             dical men, and
                                                                                                                                                                                                          he remote an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    xposed situation of the burial-ground o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   f the family. I will not deny t
hat when I called to mind th
                                                                                                                                                            e sinister count
                                                                                                                                                                                                      nce of the perso
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    hom I met upon
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               e staircase
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     , on the day of my arrival at
the house, I had no desire
                                                                                                                                                            to oppose what
                                                                                                                                                                                            I regarded as at best
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     a harmless, an
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               by no mea
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 At the request of Usher,

                                                                                                                                                            I per sonally aided him i
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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    mbment. The body having
                                                                                                                                                                                                            n the arrang
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been encoffined, we two al
                                                                                                                                                                     bore it to its r est
                                                                                                                                                                                                             . The vault
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      which we place
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               t (and wh
ened that our torches, half
                                                                                                                                                                     mothered i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       atmosphere, g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      opportunity for investigati
                                                                                                                                                                                                             s oppressi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       of admission for light; lyi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               , at great
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      depth, immediately benea
                                                                                                                                                                                                               ut means
th that portion of the build
                                                                                                                                                                                                              was my own sleeping apartment. It had b
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              n used,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     apparently, in remote feud
al times, for the worst pur
                                                                                                                                                                                                  donjon-keep, and, in later days, as a place of dep
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              it for po
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      wder, or some other highly
combustible substance, a
                                                                                                                                                                        s a portion of its floor, and the whole interior of a long archway thr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ah whic
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      h we reached it, were caref
ully sheathed with copper.
                                                                                                                                                                       The door, of massive iron, had been, also, similarly protected. Its im
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            nse weig
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ht caused an unusually sh
arp grating sound, as it m
                                                                                                                                                                   oved upon its hinges. Having deposited our mournful burden upon tre
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      in this region of horror, w
e partially turned aside the
                                                                                                                                                                  yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking simi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      litude between the brother
and sister now first arrest
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     ords from which I learned t
                                                                                                                                                                ed my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few w
                                                                                                                                                             elf had been twins, and tha t sympathies of a sc arcely intelligible nature had always
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      existed between them. Ou
                                                                                                                                                             not long upon the dead-f or we could not reg
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ard her unawed. The disease which
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      had thus entombed the la
r glances, however, rested
dy in the maturity of youth,
                                                                                                                                                                           eft, as usual in all maladies o
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                strictly cataleptical character, the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    mockery of a faint blush up
                                                                                                                                                                                                       iously lingerin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               mile upon the lip w hic h is so te
on the bosom and the face
                                                                                                                                                                            d that sus pic
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    rrible in death. We replaced
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   nto the scarcely less gloom
and screwed down the lid,
                                                                                                                                                                                               ec ured the door of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               on, made our way,
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     e days of bitter grief hav
y apartments of the upper p
                                                                                                                                                                                               ouse. And now, som
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    an observable change cam
e over the features of the m
                                                                                                                                                                               I disorder of m y friend. His or dinary
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 manner had vani
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   occupations were neglected
or forgotten. He roamed from
                                                                                                                                                                              mber to chamb
                                                                                                                                                                                                        er with hurried, uneq
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 ual, and objectles ss tep. The
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    pallor of h
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   is countenance had assume
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                huskiness of his tone was he
d, if possible, a more ghastly
                                                                                                                                                                          ut the lumino us ness of his eye
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 d utterly gone out. The once occa
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  haracterized his u tterance. There
ard no more; and a tremulous
                                                                                                                                                                ver, as if
                                                                                                                                                                                of extrem et error, habituall
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                                                                                                                                                                                 g with so me oppressive se
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               he necessary courage. At time
is unceasingly agitated mind
                                                                                                                                                       was labourin
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  et, to divulge whi ch he strug
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               gled for t
s, again, I was obliged to reso
                                                                                                                                                                                   he mere in ex plicable vagaries
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               cancy for long hours, in an atti
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               zing upon va
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              n terrified--that it infected me. I
tude of the profoundest attenti
                                                                                                                                                                                    listening to some imaginary so
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  d. It was no wond er
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               nditio
felt creeping upon me, by slow
                                                                                                                                                                               in degrees, the wild influences of
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  s own fantastic y et
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         impress
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              ives u
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               pers
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             tions. It was, especially, upon re
tiring to bed late in the night of t
                                                                                                                                                                    h or eighth day after the placing of the l
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         he donio
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                n, that I
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            ed the full power of such feeling
                                                                                                                                                     vent
s. Sleep came not near my couch
                                                                                                                                                                     he hours waned and waned away. I stru
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           ion over me. I endeavoured to be
lieve that much, if not all of what I
                                                                                                                                                                     as due to the bewildering influence of the e g
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         draperies, which, tortured into mo
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          and ta
tion by the breath of a rising tempe
                                                                                                           st, s wa
                                                                                                                                                            ed f itfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ere fruitless. An irrepressible trem
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   orts w
                                                                                                              d, at lengt
or gradually pervaded my frame; an
                                                                                                                                                             , there sat upon my very heart an incubus of utterly causeless alarm. Shaking this off with
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         p and a
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 strugg
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        le, I uplifted myself upon the pillow
                                                                                                                                                            rkness of the chamber, hearkened--I know not why, except that an instinctive spirit promp
s, and, peering earnestly within the i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ted me--to certain low and indefinite sounds wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      ich came, through the pauses of the
                                                                                                                 ntense
                                                                                                  hence . Overpo
                                                                                                                                                                by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothe
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              s with haste (for I felt that I should sleep
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     no more during the night,) and ende
storm, at long intervals, I knew not w
                                                                                                                                            red
avoured to arouse myself from the piti
                                                                                                                                    which I h
                                                                                                                                                                 ad fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment. I had taken but few turns
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 in this manner, wh
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    step on an adjoining staircase arreste
                                                                                            able condition into
                                                                                                                                                                  Usher. In an instant afterwards he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entere
d my attention. I presently recognized i
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   d, bearing a lamp.
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 untenance was, as usual, cadaverously
                                                                                                                t as tha
                                                                                                                                          t of
wan--but, moreover, there was a species
                                                                                                                                                                    ity in his eyes--an evidently restrained hysteria in his whole demeanour. His air app
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    alled me--but anythi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               ng was preferable to the solitude which
                                                                                                                                                                    s a relief. "And you have not seen it?" he said abruptly, after having stared about h
had so long endured, and I even welcom
                                                                                                               ed his prese
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    im for some mome
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              nts in silence--"you have not then seen it
                                                                                                                                    nce a
?--but, stay! you shall." Thus speaking, an
                                                                                                                                                                  ully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            e impetuous fury of the entering gust nearl
                                                                                                                             ving caref
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    the storm.
y lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a te
                                                                                                                                                          et sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whi
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  had appare
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          ntly collected its force in our vicinity; for the
                                                                                                                                stuous y
                                                                                                                                                         n of the wind; and the exceeding density of the clouds (which hung so low as to press u
re were frequent and violent alterations in the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               on the turre
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         ts of the house) did not prevent our perceiving
g the lifelike velocity with which they flew care
                                                                                                                                                         Il points against each other, without passing away into the distance. I say that even thei
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             rexceeding
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      density did not prevent our perceiving this--yet
                                                                                                                                                       flashing forth of the lightning. But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vap
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    all terrestrial objects immediately around us, we
we had no glimpse of the moon or stars--nor w
                                                                                                                                    ous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion. "Vou mu
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  all not behold this!" said I, shudderingly, to Usher
re glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly lumin
, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the wind
                                                                                                                                        ow to a seat. "These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon--or it may be that the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               y have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of th
                                                                                                                                       and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favourite romances. I will read, and you shall listen;--and so we will pass aw
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             ay this terrible night together." The antique volume
e tarn. Let us close this casement;--the air is chilling
which I had taken up was the "Mad Trist" of Sir Launc
                                                                                                                                elot Canning; but I had called it a favourite of Usher's more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           unimaginative prolixity which could have had interest
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        ight find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full
for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, h
                                                                                                                                owever, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, in
                                                                                                                                   which I should read. Could I have judged, indeed, by the wild overstrained air of vivacity with which he hearkened, or apparently hearkene
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     d, to the words of the tale, I might well have congratulated
of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly
                                                                                                                                  t well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the h d Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had d rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the planking
myself upon the success of my design. I had arrived at tha
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  ermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               runken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who,
will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus: "An
in sooth, was of an obstinate and maliceful turn, but, feeling the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            s of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith
                                                                                                                                     noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarmed and reverberated throughout the forest." At the termination of this sentence I started, an e that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly, to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of ch ibed. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the rattling of the sashes of the casements, a
sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once
concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)--it appeared to m
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    aracter, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cra
cking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly descr
                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 nd the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the s
                                                                                                                                            urbed me. I continued the story: "But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perc ard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver; and upon the wall there hung a shield of shining brass with this legend enwritten—W e dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred ha
ound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or dist
of a scaly and prodigious demeanour, and of a fiery tongue, which sat in gu
d he shall win; and Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of th
et ragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withat so piercing, that discharge the was an ethigon of with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withat so piercing, that in this instance, if did actually here (although this posses) are unusual screaming or grating sound-the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjuned up for the dragon's unmatural shriek as described by the organ of the properties of the properti
whereof was never before heard." Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a f
                                                                                                                                           eeling of wild amazement--for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, p
at crowded upon me as I pondered. I was forced to fall back upon the unsatisfactory conclusion, that while, beyond doubt, there are combinations of very simple natural objects which have the power of thus affecting us, still the analysis of this power lies among considerations beyond doubt, there are combinations of the precipious by the precipious of the particulars of the percipious of the scene, of the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for perhaps to annihilate its capacity for perhaps in this management of the percipious brink of a plack and lurid tank lay in unruffled lustree by the dwelling, and gazed down--but with a shudder even more thrilling than before--upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the even the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the even the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a distant part of the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than the country--a letter from him--which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than the country--a letter from him--which, with a view of attempting the nature of the country--a letter from him--which, with the nature from him--which with the nature from him--w
or late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrisive charty, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacles, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisated deeds. In the first indicacles, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognisated deeds of munificent yet unobtrisive charts, as the formal to the orthodox and easily recognisated deeds of munificent yet unobtrisive charts, as the formal to the orthodox and easily recognisated deeds of munificent yet unobtrisive charts. In a passionate devotion to the intricacles, perhaps, look in the direct, income and the orthodox and easily recognisated deeds of munificent yet unobtrisive charts. In a passionate devotion to the intricacles, perhaps, look in the direct, look in the family branch to the orthodox and easily recognisated easily to the orthodox and easily recognisations. In the direct, look, in the direct, look, in the direct, look in the look in the look in the direct, look in the look i
eaven, but which had reeked up from the decayed trees, and the silent tarn--a pestilent and mystic vapour, dull, sluggish, faintly discernible, and leaden-hued. Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feat use seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the exte
rnal air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it
became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn. Noticing these things, I rode over a short causeway to the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress
to the studio of his master. Much that I encountered on the way contributed, I know not how, to heighten the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the ebony blackness of the floors, and the phan tasmagoric armorial trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy--while I hesitated not to acknowledge how familiar was all this--I still wondered to find how unfamiliar were the fancies which ordinary images were stirring up. On
one of the staircases, I met the physician of the family. His countenance, I thought, wore a mingled expression of low cunning and perplexity. He accosted me with trepidation and passed on. The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master. The room in which I found mysel
was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within. Feeble gleams of encrimsoned light made their way through the trellised panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more promin
ent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattere d about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all. Upon my entrance, Usher rose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which ha
d much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality--of the constrained effort of the ennuye man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. S urely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the man being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousne
ss of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely-moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a
want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the prevailing character of these features, and of the exp
ession they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer textur
e, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with an incoherence-an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to ove
rcome an habitual trepidancy--an excessive nervous agitation. For something of this nature I had indeed been prepared, no less by his letter, than by reminiscences of certain boyish traits, and by conclusions deduced from his peculiar physical conformation and temperament. His action was alternately viv
acious and sullen. His voice varied rapidly from a tremulous indecision (when the animal spirits seemed utterly in abeyance) to that species of energetic concision--that leaden, self-balanced and perfectly modulated guttural utterance, which
h may be observed in the lost drunkard, or the irreclaimable eater of opium, during the periods of his most intense excitement. It was thus that he spoke of the object of my visit, of his earnest desire to see me, and of the solace he expected me to afford him. He entered, at some length, into what he conceive
ed to be the nature of his malady. It was, he said, a constitutional and a family evil, and one for which would undoubtedly soon pass off. It displayed itself in a host of unnatural sensations. Some of these, as he detailed the
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