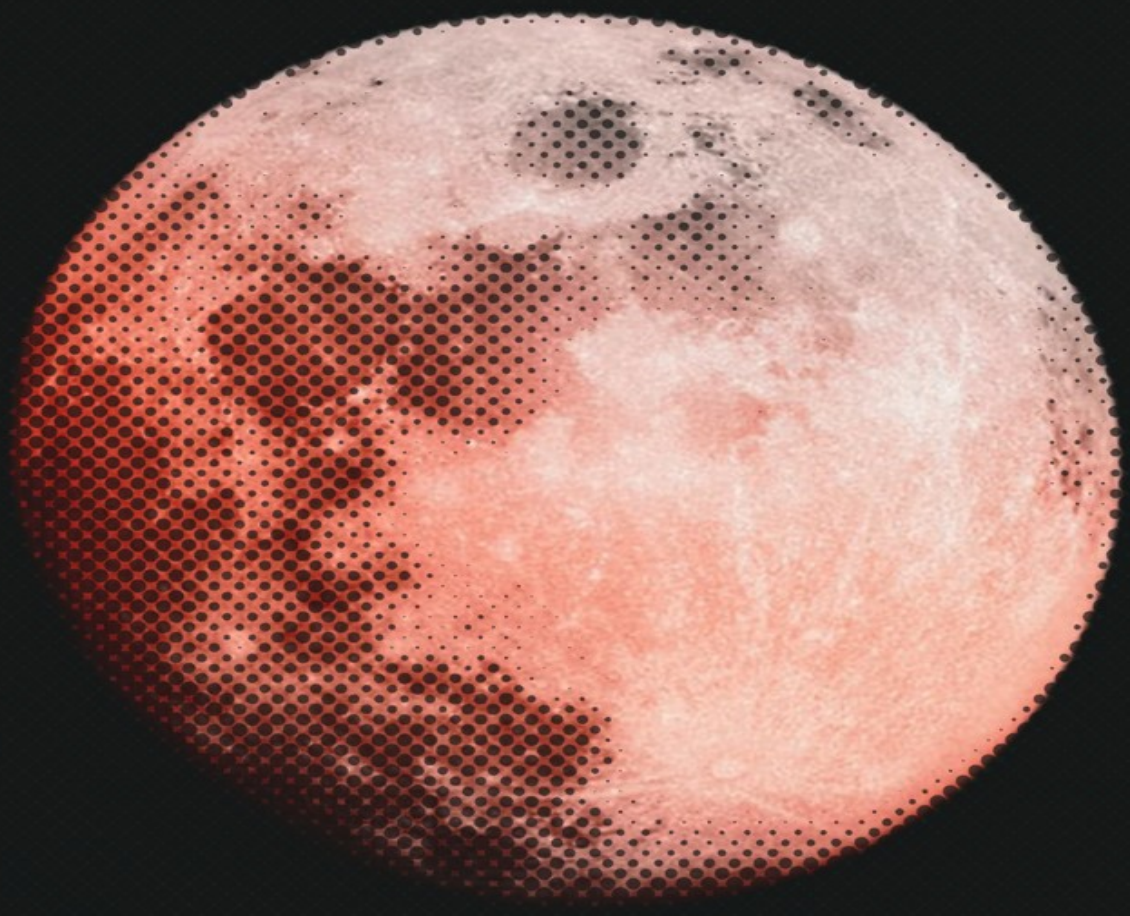
Andrew Caldecott



Not Exactly Ghosts

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A Room in a Rectory

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Narrow in bounds, but wide in variety, the garden of Tilchington Rectory was one of the most beautiful in the South Country. It lay in a hollow, some four to five chains broad, down the middle of which ran a small and clear brook marked on the ordnance map as R. Tilch, but beloved of its riparians as, simply, our stream. For half of its course through the Rectory grounds the little river was impounded by successive dams to form three pools. The two upper of these provided easy watering for vegetables, while the third—into which a waterfall splashed between two clumps of bamboo under overhanging fronds of *Osmunda* fern—was the central and distinctive feature of the flower garden. On either side were sloping lawns and to the north of it stood the Rectory house, mainly in the Georgian architecture, but partly Victorianised by plate-glass windows. From the third pool, the stream cascaded down through a rock garden to the level of its natural bed, along which it dimpled and chattered by the side of the gravelled carriage drive, past rose-garden and orchard, until it slipped away from the rectory precincts, over a stone sill set in a small arch beneath the boundary wall. All this description has to be in the past tense, because the Ecclesiastical Commissioners have since sold both parsonage and glebe, and, for all that the writer knows, the fell hand of the improver may have fallen upon house, garden and rivulet.

That future rectors of Tilchington would need to live in humbler and less lovely environment never entered the mind of the present incumbent as, on the 17th June, 1900, from a deck-chair on the further lawn, he gazed across ornamental water and flower beds towards a small shrubbery at the eastern end of the house where he had just finished clipping some too exuberant Portugal laurels. He now surveyed the result of his labour with something of that satisfaction which the author of Genesis ascribes to the Creator, who, looking upon his creation, saw that it was good. The Reverend Nigel Tylethorpe was, and appeared, a fortunate and happy young man of thirty or so: happy in his ancestry, in his inheritance from a lately deceased great-uncle of a comfortable financial competency, in education, in mental endowment, in physical looks, in athletic prowess and (for the living of Tilchington was worth over eight hundred a year) in early ecclesiastical preferment. Nor was his parish less fortunate in him than he in Tilchington. Mr Bugles, sexton and verger, had given words to general opinion when he remarked to the People's Warden at the flower show that 't'new parson be the sort of man as'll do us good without us noticing.'

From the shrubbery the Reverend Nigel's eyes passed, with a foreboding of more clipping to be done on the morrow, to the climbers on the house itself. Of these there was a profuse variety: a japonica, wistaria, jasmine, roses and two kinds of ampelopsis. An intrusion into their midst, which he did not admire, was a rectangular patch of thickly-set ivy, which rather ostentatiously concealed a shuttered window on the ground floor. A slight frown flitted across the

young man's face, and the pruning shears chattered impatiently in his hand as scissors do in a barber's. He would undoubtedly need to have a final battle with his housekeeper over that silly business of the disused room. Miss Roberta Pristin had served his predecessor for more years than the delicate conventions governing a woman's age would allow her to admit. At his death she had, with persuasive humour, asked Mr Tylethorpe to take her over with the rest of the Rectory fixtures. Except for this one matter of the locked room he did not regret having done so. A bachelor requires quasi-maternal attention, and Miss Pristin was quasi-maternal without being unduly familiar.

The young rector's thoughts were temporarily diverted from this matter of the empty room by the quarter chime of a clock in his dining-room, the french windows of which lay wide open. In another fifteen minutes, at half-past six, he would read the evening office in the chancel of his church, and so he must have a quick wash and brush up after his gardening. The next we see of him, therefore, is five minutes later as he passes across the narrow paddock separating rectory from churchyard. Mention may be found in more than one architectural handbook of the treasures and oddities of St Botolph's, Tilchington: the twelfth-century frescoes, the long tunnel-like hagioscope, the Early English colonnade set on Norman piers and capitals, the narrow chancel arch with remains of screen and rood, etcetera. Nineteenth-century restoration had been unusually discriminative and restrained; so much so that the west end of the building had been left just as it emerged from the demolition of a large and ugly gallery. To regulate the light

at the turn of the staircase, now no more, to this gallery a narrow lancet window in the western wall of the south aisle had been walled up and replaced at a higher level by a wood-framed, square-paned window of domestic pattern. The retention by the restorers of a sacred edifice of so secular a feature may have been due to the fact that the glass, though not stained, had received superficial pigmentation and bore a spirited, if unusual, representation of St Michael vanquishing the Prince of Evil.

Mr Tylethorpe resented the survival of a window so completely out of period with the rest of the church and, having read the office and re-hung his surplice in the vestry, he walked down the south aisle with intent to visualise what would be the effect of walling it up and re-opening the lancet window, should the necessary money and faculty be forthcoming. From such general observation, he proceeded to particular examination of the offending feature. There were nine panes, each one foot square, in a main frame of three by three; and the artist had had to dispose his figures accordingly. The top middle pane displayed the haloed head of Michael; the one below it his body; and the nethermost his feet planted firmly upon the prostrate form of Satan, whose proud and rather beautiful head projected from a scaly saurian body. By comparison the visage of the victorious archangel seemed commonplace and slightly bovine. The remaining panes on either side of the central three were taken up with Michael's wings above and with flames emanating from his trampled adversary below. In the two bottom corners, right and left, small oblong frames bore the legends 'Anno 1798' and 'Rev. xii. 7' respectively.

As Mr Tylethorpe glanced at these inscriptions a sudden bright beam from the westering sun flashed through the oblongs and disclosed to his view some very faint writing which a moment before had been invisible. The characters under 'Anno 1798' looked like 'NICOLAS PHAYNE PINXIT', and those under the biblical citation as 'YE TRIUMPH OF AUTHORITIE OVER INTELLIGENCE'. It took the Rector but a moment to realise that they had been imprinted by a die or stamp held upside down; unless, indeed, the writing was intentionally antipodean.

'So it really was him,' muttered the Rector ungrammatically as, standing before the carved list of former incumbents on a panel in the porch, he picked out the name of Nicolas Fayne, 1796-1801. From the porch to a tiny triangle of ground between a large yew tree, the south wall of the graveyard and the swing-gate at its south-west corner took but a minute of his homeward walk. Here again on a flat, heavy, horizontal tomb-slab level with the surrounding grass stood out the name of Nicholas Phaine ('Why couldn't he stick to one spelling?' grumbled the Rector); and, beneath it, the words: 'Found Dead January 27th MDCCCI.' So village tradition had been proved right about that window. Perhaps it might not be far wrong on one or two other points? The triumph of authority over intelligence, indeed! No wonder the inscription was all topsy-turvy: just as well that it had become illegible. Mental derangement was, of course, the most charitable, as it was the most rational, explanation.

The boom of his dinner gong reverberating across the paddock recalled the Rector from speculative reconstuctions

of parochial history to a pleasantly certain anticipation of the imminent repast. He had a good cook and a good cellar.

2

In conversation with his housekeeper after breakfast next morning Mr Tylethorpe declared an immediate intention to inspect the vacant room. Remembering previous parleys on this subject he felt some surprise that she expressed neither remonstrance nor apprehension.

'Very well, sir; and, of course, you'll need the key. I always keep it in this drawer; yes, here it be.'

On his way down the passage, he examined the wooden tab by which she had handed it to him. On it was neatly cut in capital letters:

SERMON CHAMBER
RE-OPENED 1858

and underneath in his predecessor, Mr Hempstede's, handwriting appeared in faded ink the injunction: 'Keep Locked'. The key turned readily in the keyhole; for, so long as Miss Pristin had been in charge, the room had been subject to a weekly sweeping. 'An empty place'll always get dirt from somewhere,' she used to say; 'what with rats and all.' With no inlet or outlet for ventilation other than the chimney, the Rector had expected the chamber to smell fusty and musty: he was relieved, therefore, to find its air not unduly oppressive, and proceeded to light the candle which he had brought with him for purposes of inspection. Only two thin streaks of daylight penetrated the shuttered and ivied window. The dimensions were commodious enough—some twenty foot square—for the library or study

which he so badly required. That all his reading and writing should be done in a dark corner of the dining-room, subject to the many interruptions inseparable from a punctual preparation and removal of meals, was fair neither to himself nor to the congregation that had to listen to discourses composed under such conditions. Carefully pacing the distance between the side walls and the central projection of fireplace and chimney in the southern wall he was gratified to find that his two glazed bookcases would exactly fit the recesses. The ceiling would require re-plastering; the walls, papering; and much of the floor, re-planking. The wainscot was rotten and must be replaced. A modern fireplace and mantelpiece were also desiderata, if he could afford them, as he thought he could. Gently locking the door behind him Mr Tylethorpe manifested his satisfaction with what he had seen by swinging the key wheel-wise by its tab and string as he returned, whistling, down the passage.

'I wonder, Miss Pristin,' he remarked as he gave it back to her, 'whether you would tell me all you know about that room. You've hinted at certain things, you know!'

'I can only tell, Sir, as I've already told; nor do I know no more. Him as was took in there, more nor a hundred year ago, is buried up by t' church yew, in that parcel of weeds as was never holied, they say. Nobody cared to bide where he were took, so they bricked up door and window and t' room had no hole to it for nigh sixty year. Then come old parson Witacre and set it open again; but for all he called it his "sermon chamber" no sermon did parson Witacre ever preach; for he had impeditations in his speech, and had to

hire a guinea curate over from Frampton for to read service whenever unavoidable. My dear late master, 'e come next; and how long it was afore he give order to lock up t' room I don't rightly know: but locked it were what time I come to him and ever after. I mind, Sir, one of them early days asking him to let me use it for linen and what not; but "No," he says; and "Why not?" say I. "Roberta," he answers, that kind and solemn as were always his way with me, "It is wiser to learn from precept than by suffering. You leave that room alone." Them were his words; and leave it alone I ever have, and will; except, of course, for the cleaning which is next to godliness and therefore done regular. That's all I know, Sir, and make of it what you will: but he were a wise and good man, were my late master; and "Leave it alone," he says, "for it be better to learn from precept than by suffering." Them were his words.'

The Rector smiled upon his housekeeper with condescending benevolence: 'Thank you very much, Miss Pristin. I do not of course question for a moment Mr Hempstede's decision to keep the apartment locked and in permanent disuse. In such matters each must be governed by his or her conscience and discretion. I myself naturally mislike the idea of associating the performance of any work pertaining to my sacred office with the reputed scene of a mysterious and violent death. I have, however, analysed my distaste and discovered it to be rooted in sentiment rather than reason; and it would be clearly wrong in me to allow sentiment to acquire the appearance, if not indeed the nature, of superstition. I shall, therefore, take immediate steps to have the room restored and redecorated; and,

although I shall certainly not allude to it by the name of sermon chamber, I intend to use it for writing my sermons and for reading. I have no doubt that your late master, if he were here with us today—and who shall say that he is not?—would appreciate my reasoning and applaud my decision. And by the way, Miss Pristin, don't forget to serve butter with the baked potatoes.'

On his way to the dining-room, the Reverend Nigel's conscience smote him for having been what he could not remember having ever been before: pompous and polysyllabic; quite eighteenth-century, in fact! Arrived at his desk he promptly penned a note to Messrs Burnidge & Hesselton, Builders and Decorators, of Minton Road, Trentchester, asking them to send a representative to advise regarding certain points of interior decoration contemplated by him at Tilchington Rectory. Within ten days the representative had come, inspected, advised, estimated, quoted, and eventually carried away in his pocket what he represented to his employers as 'quite a tidy little order'.

To the Rector's keen disappointment the repair and refurbishing of the room took no less than three months, although Burnidge & Hesselton's young man had indicated a maximum period of five weeks. There was not merely delay, but delay from unpleasant causes. Language used by the foreman plasterer, however interesting for a certain archaism and singularity, was nevertheless such as Mr Tylethorpe could not let pass without complaint. That the foreman regularly officiated as cross-bearer at the ritualistic church of St Terence, Trentchester (although pleaded in

extenuation by its scandalised Vicar) seemed insufficiently explanatory of his vocabulary or of its unrestricted use in a country rectory. From this time forward there unhappily came about a distance and a coolness between Father Prodnose and Mr Tylethorpe. The next untoward incident was the infliction of corporal chastisement by the paperhanger on his 'holiday apprentice', as he described a very youthful assistant. This in due course brought to Tilchington on investigatory visits an inspector of the Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children and a minor official' of the Paperhangers' Union. All such events wasted time; but what irritated the Rector beyond endurance was Miss Pristin's attitude of obvious unconcern towards what might be going forward, or not going forward, in the room under repair. If only she would quote his predecessor's injunction to 'leave the room alone', in reference to the present hindrances, he had his retort—and a very waspish one—ready for her. But she gave him no opening whatever for conversation in the matter, and it became annoyingly clear to him that the effect of Mr Hempstede's words on her simple but strong mind had been to place the room outside her range of thought or observation. It just did not exist for her; and Mr Tylethorpe felt as though he could have tolerated anything more easily than such total disinterest. It was perhaps well for both rector and housekeeper that, in mid-September, the former left for ten days holiday in Scotland, and did not return until the last week of that month when the room had been finished and the workmen gone.

He had left behind him a plan showing the disposition of furniture in his new study, and he was, therefore, able to ensconce himself in it on the very evening of his arrival, as soon as he had taken supper. A roaring fire of Welsh coal provided pleasant contrast to the equinoctially blusterous night without. Its reflection on ceiling, bookcases, armchairs, large writing-table, curtains and pictures suffused a general sense of cosiness and comfort. Mr Tylethorpe was specially pleased with the two pictures, the framing of which had been his last order before leaving for Scotland. They were not his own, but belonged to the church, being the largest of a series of water-colour drawings by an artist member of the Southshire Archaeological Society that had been kept rolled up in the iron chest which protected the parish registers. The one above the fireplace was a reproduction—one thirtieth the size of the original—of the Doom fresco above the chancel arch; while that on the opposite wall was a full-size replica of the picture painted on the square window, already described, in the south aisle. As the firelight alternately flickered and faltered, the face of the nether figure in the latter started into life and, as quickly, relapsed into a flat gloom. Its beauty in the original had not been lost in the copying, but the water-colour artist had introduced into its expression the vestige of a smile; faint, it was true, but sufficient to negative (what the subject so essentially demanded) an appearance of utter defeat and despair in the vanquished. The figure of the archangel, on the other hand, retained all the stolidity of its prototype in the window; and, from where the Rector now viewed the picture, it appeared almost as though St Michael, in the repletion of

victory, had allowed his eyes to close in sleep. Mr Tylethorpe felt much inclined to do likewise, for the grouse had been well hung and well cooked and his uncle's port better than any he had drunk on holiday. 'Bother you, Mike,' he apostrophised the angel, somewhat irreverently; 'it's your beastly festival that keeps me from enjoying my armchair: but I simply must finish my Michaelmas sermon.'

Refilling his pipe, he sat down at the writing-table to the notes which he had jotted down in the train. 'Why, to be sure,' he looked again towards the figures on the wall, 'I've dealt with only one side of the picture. I must fill in the other. For the next fifteen minutes his pen travelled over the paper rapidly and without pause: then, thrusting his notes into a drawer, he rose to have a look at his books. The older, calf-bound volumes of his uncle's collection made an odd miscellany: for instance, that set of *Annual Registers,* could there be anything still readable in them? He picked out one at random and sank sumptuously into an armchair. 'The Year's Poetick Review' looked promising, but the laureate flatulence of Pye quickly disgusted him. Here, however, was something more crisp and terse; and, by Jove, the very thing to round off the end of his sermon! He had read through the lines three times, admiring their relevance to the theme of his discourse, when the book slipped to the floor with a bang. What! Surely he had not fallen asleep? No: obviously not, because he had memorised the verses perfectly and would now write them down. He resumed his seat at the table for that purpose and soon had them on paper. But did the first line of the last verse begin, 'So sleep not' or 'So be not'? He had better verify. This should have been easy

enough, for he had not yet replaced the volume in the bookcase. Three times he went through 'The Poetick Review', the third time page by page; but the verses eluded re-discovery. Never mind! He had noted them down with sufficient accuracy for a pulpit quotation, and it was now quite time for bed: no need to be meticulous.

He placed a guard against the grate, turned down the reading-lamp, and, carrying a candle, stayed at the door for a parting look at his new-found cosiness. The fire still glowed, and the room seemed loath for him to go. He quite envied the shadow cast by the fire-screen on the further armchair; it seemed so to enjoy the red leather upholstery. As a coal fell and flared, it appeared indeed to assume a momentary substantiality. 'Good night,' said the Rector. If he had thought of it, that was the first time he had ever bidden good night to a shadow. But he was not thinking: long railway journeys are so dreadfully tiring.

3

Nigel Tylethorpe, though no orator, was by no means a bad preacher. This was because he took trouble to think of what he was going to say and to give his thoughts a clear and concise expression. Mr Bugles as usual was representative of majority opinion among the congregation when he remarked 'as how parson's sermons be well cooked and served up right-like, neither too warm nor too cold.' Many of his listeners however felt the peroration of his Michaelmas homily to have an unpleasant temperature: the sort of heat in fact that gives a chill. Having in the earlier stages of this discourse dilated upon the celestial ministry of angels (their service in heaven, errands upon earth, and

vigil over mankind), the Rector suddenly changed his tune to a minor key and gave to some of its chords a distinctly ugly modulation. Just as all good was impersonated in the Deity, so was all evil impersonated in the Devil. Analogous to the Former's army of angels were the black cohorts of the latter. People had become accustomed to a comfortable and one-sided belief in guardian angels, but when the average man spoke of his evil genius did he realise that he was naming a companion equally constant and quite as personal? It was necessary that all should face facts; especially elemental facts. To deny or ignore the emissaries of the Evil One was to provoke their attentions. With the eye of the spirit he felt that he could detect unbidden visitants among his congregation at that moment. They were about to sing hymn No. 335. Why the compilers of *Hymns Ancient and Modern* had placed it among their selections 'For the Young' he did not know. Perhaps it was because the words presented only one side, of a picture whose other side Age, preferring to pretend blindness thereto itself, must logically hide from the eyes of Youth. Opportunely enough, continued the Rector, he had recently come across in an old book certain verses which would serve to supplement the hymn and enable them to conceive the angelic and demonic ministries in a comparative and correct perspective. He thereupon recited the lines which he had memorised from his reading of the *Annual Register.* They ran as follows:

Around the mouth of Hell a band
Of fearful fiends for ever stand;
Their bat-like bodies tense and stark,
And on their heads the Beast's foul mark.

These, should some Holy One draw near
With store of love to give us cheer,
All-spoiling Satan with quick shout
Bids intercept and thrust him out.
On ev'ry Seraph in the sky
Keeps watch below a demon spy:
Doth angel guard thee overhead?
Two devils lurk beneath thy bed!
So sleep not swordless, nor confide
Too much to them of Michael's side;
Lest, when the door of death is slammed,
Thou find thyself among the damned.

Mr Tylethorpe had read in novels of people undergoing the sensation of seeming to witness their own speech and behaviour from a detached and exterior angle. Such a strange psychological experience was his at this moment. In the concluding part of his sermon the feeling was unmistakable: he listened to himself with growing surprise and disapproval. He misliked the lines that he quoted and, now that the hymn was being played over, he realised with a shock that (although to appear in the *Annual Register* they must have been written more than a century ago) they sounded nevertheless like a Satanic parody of the more modern verses they were about to sing. Others perhaps felt similarly; for the choir seemed half-hearted and in the middle of the last verse the blower let all the wind out of the organ. It was altogether a dismal performance and, helping after service to count the collection in the vestry, Mr Bugles was not quite his natural self.

'Them was true words as you uttered just now, sir; and as Solomon said, there be nought nastier than truth.'

'But where did Solomon write that, Bugles?'

'I don't rightly know, sir, for I mind my grandfather's telling as how it were one of his unrecorded sayings. They were wonderful wise men, was Solomon and my grandfather.'

As he walked down the churchyard path on his way back to the Rectory Mr Tylethorpe noted that such of his flock as he overtook, responded to his 'good evening' with a more than usual deference. Or was it apprehension?

The self-surprise which his Michaelmas sermon awoke in the young Rector yielded before long to a growing interest in what had been its subject-matter. The fallen angels were seldom absent from his thoughts. Milton's *Paradise Lost* assumed a more goetic than poetic value for him, and he would sonorously declaim Tartarean passages from it in the pulpit.

There was only one conventicle of dissent in Tilchington, and this belonged to Mr Nehemiah Gattle, owner of a small market garden. It owned no allegiance or affiliation to any of the free churches, but had been started for the spiritual government of Mr Gattle by Mr Gattle for Mr Gattle. Nevertheless it had attracted the more or less regular attendance of twenty or so free-lance religionists who, now that 'Hell was preached proper at the church', deserted Mr Gattle for Mr Tylethorpe. In vain did the former expostulate that at 'The Unsectarian Mission Hall' he had always preached an honest Protestant devil, and that the Rector's demons were dirty Romish impostors whom Satan would scorn to recognise. The names of Samael and Asmodai fell like magic music on the bucolic ear and, as the Reverend

Nigel's library on his new pet subject increased in quantity and diversity, a growing congregation would listen open-mouthed and enraptured to the legend of Lilith and other apocryphal narrations. A discourse on Isaiah xxxiv, 14, evoked an uneasy thrill; and another, upon the first six verses of Chapter ii of Job, was imaginative rather than exegetic. Even on Christmas Day the Rector focused his remarks on the astromancy of the Magi instead of on the sublime purpose of their journey: the sorcery of Simon Magus was somehow dragged into this untimely disquisition.

It was unfortunate for Mr Tylethorpe that there was no big house in Tilchington. The admonitions of a plain-speaking squire might have pulled him up at the brink whereon he now stood. As it was, the only person of any social position in the parish besides himself was a Mr Adrian Gribden, a letter from whom to an old college friend, written in January 1901, will throw light upon our story.

MY DEAR SMITH

I am so sorry you could not come for the New Year. There is little news to tell you, except that our worthy (?) incumbent intrigues me more and more. He is, believe me, surely and not slowly converting this countryside to a pseudo-mediaeval demonolatry. Those sermons I told you about in my last letter were in the nature of direct approaches to Manichaeism. Last Sunday he succeeded in being even more corruptive by prompting an undesirable reference to the Old Testament. You may remember that under a bequest of old Miss Hardham every seat in St Botolph's is provided with a copy of the Bible and Apocrypha. They are seldom opened, but

there was an audible turning of leaves when Tylethorpe, preaching on the prodigal son, remarked that those of us who remembered the twenty-eighth chapter of the first book of Samuel, and especially the twenty-fourth verse, would realise that the return of the prodigal was not the only return associated in Holy Writ with a slaughter of the fatted calf. The result of this reference was of course that every one of his listeners, from old Bugles down to the newest joined choir-boy, was quickly reading how the witch of Endor brought up the shade of Samuel from the grave. This continual harping upon the sinister and occult cannot be good for anybody and, if I mistake not, Tylethorpe himself begins to show nervous strain. For instance, he keeps turning to look behind him in an unpleasantly odd and furtive fashion and has taken to preaching not from the front of the pulpit but with his back to the wall at its side; just as though he feared that somebody might look or lean over his shoulder. This attitude so impressed me on Sunday that I found myself half expecting to see him suddenly propelled forward by some invisible and unwelcome agency! But enough of this nonsense. Do try to get down for a week-end soon. They have put on a good afternoon train leaving town at 4.23, if you cannot manage the 12.57.

Yours sincerely,
A. GRIBDEN

The concluding sentences of this letter represent Mr Tylethorpe in transition from the first stage of his soul's malady to the second; from the active and enjoyed pursuance of a morbid interest to a passive and involuntary obsession by it. Before, however, we pass to the second phase, let us take a peep into his study towards the close of

the first. He has again taken from his bookcase a volume of the *Annual Registers,* and it has again dropped from his hands during a perusal of the 'Poetick Review'. Asleep? No, hardly; because, as on a former occasion, he has memorised the lines he was reading. Can he find the page again? Bother it, no. Anyhow, he can jot them down from memory, and he does so. No authorship was subscribed, and he will send them tomorrow to the 'literary inquiry column' of the *Commentator* for identification. Here are the lines:

Down the chasms of the night
Flashed a comet, purple-bright,
Prone upon whose lambent tail
Clung an angel deathly pale.
All the heaven cried for shame
When was read the angel's name,
The dear sad name of Zadyra.
Fairest of all angels he
Had gazed upon the crystal sea;
Saw his image mirrored there
And cried, 'I am than God more fair!'
Which hearing, Uriel
Flung him from sky to hell.
The coward moon
Sank seaward in a swoon:
But the brave sun,
Seeing what deed was done,
Rode forth to shine on other worlds afar,
To us becoming no more than a star,
Because of what was wrought on Zadyra.
Nor was the Earth unchanged:
Great shapes arose and ranged
Along the mountain sides; but no man saw
What these forms were: for there was light no more.

Neither the literary staff of the *Commentator* nor any of its readers proved able to trace the authorship of these lines, nor even to elucidate the name Zadyra.

4

The second, some might call it the hallucinative, stage of Mr Tylethorpe's decline started with his suspicion, which rapidly ripened into conviction, that he was not in sole occupancy of his new study. A succession of dreams, each of which came to him while resting in one of the big armchairs, left him in no doubt as to who was sharing it. So vivid was the first dream that he would have mistaken it for reality but for two things. The first was that, though he was seated facing the fire, his view of the room was as though he were standing with his back to it. The second was that the furniture had become entirely different from that which he had so recently chosen and installed. In his dream the window was closely shuttered but not curtained, and the floor was uncarpeted. Under the far wall was a long and deep chest, the size and shape of a church altar. On the door side of the room were two cases of shelves, the one filled with books and manuscripts and the other with what looked like laboratory equipment. At a large and untidy writing table in the bow window sat a black-habited figure, engaged apparently in limning some design on a pane of glass. Against one of the table legs leant a nine-light wooden window frame, whose shape and dimensions Mr Tylethorpe at once recognised as those of the window in the south aisle of St Botolph's. On the table in front of the artist was propped a looking-glass into which he appeared to keep peering, and at his side lay a sketch in charcoal of an angel.