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The Terrible Mysteries
of the
Ku-Klux-Klan,,

by
M.D. Scalpel
(pseud. Edward H. Dixon)

1868
New York

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PREFACE.

THE fearful and powerful order of the *Ku-Klux Klan* has recently sprung into notorious and terrible publicity.

Coming silently and swiftly into the most populous tracts of the Southern country, it has taken the administration of justice into its own hands, and made itself a terror to all evil-doers. It is especially the dread of the Emancipated Slaves of the Loyal Leagues, who attribute to it a supernatural origin and aid, believing that the dead soldiers of the war rise at midnight "and ride forth to slay."

It is only positively known of the *Ku-Klux Klan* that it had its origin in Middle Tennessee some three months since; and thence it spread its branches, in various directions, through the South—some say wherever a Loyal League has been organized among the Freedmen.

It is only necessary to read the terrible confession that follows, to be convinced of its perfect truth.

The imagination of man portrays nothing in all fiction darker or more horrible than the real experience of this wretched man.

Some weeks since he was found by the police of a Southern city talking wildly and making strange gestures. He was brought to the station, and thence to my hospital, where, for some days, I feared the terrible fever he suffered from would unhinge his mind completely. It did not, however; for he recovered sufficiently to make, at broken intervals and with many

long interruptions from exhaustion, the recital I have written down *verbatim*, as it fell from his lips.

In the latter narration he became fearfully excited and seemed to suffer unspeakable agony of mind and body; yet he seemed to feel it absolutely essential to his peace to finish the confession before he died. But his wish was not granted, as will be seen.

The man was wounded, bruised, and foot-sore; *and just above his heart was the festering and inflamed wound in the form of a roughly-drawn "K."*

He was led by agencies, he believed, not of this world, to join the fearful *Ku-Klux Klan*, and his very heart was frozen in him by the horrors of that dark Association.

The supernatural parts of his narrative I do not pretend to explain; whether they were the results of overwrought nerves, or of other-world agencies I leave to the reader.

The suppression of names—of localities and of individuals—is made for obviously prudent reasons; as it would not be pleasant for the writer to be branded, quartered, or roasted by the terrible brotherhood of the *Ku-Klux Klan*.

"SCALPEL," M. D.

April 15th, 1868.

THE TERRIBLE MYSTERIES

OF THE

KU-KLUX KLAN.

CHAPTER I.

THE MYSTERIOUS K. K. K.

I AM a business traveller for one of the largest Boston houses ; and I have crossed every foot of the mountains of East Tennessee, any time—night or day—for the last fifteen years.

Besides, I was four years a Union soldier ; and I have slept in the midwinter snows and in the burning summer nights on almost every hillside, from Cumberland Gap to the Line.

The little town of —ville is as well known to me as our own warehouse ; and both before and since the war I have known every man, woman, and child—white, black, and pumpkin-colored—in its small limits.

When I rode into —ville, and dismounted from my horse before the small tavern, on an evening of March last, I noticed the very quiet town was unusually quiet. In fact, it seemed as if a pall was hanging over the village ; and the few people I passed looked as if they were going to a funeral.

Even the generally jolly faces of some of the Great Emancipated looked long and blank ; and though I knew every mother's

son of them, and was always a special favorite when I passed through town, I only got a few solemn nods. Cuffee looked like the mute at a funeral, and with only a grunt and never a show of his ivory, invariably dodged back into his hovel.

When I dismounted, and patted my tired steed on the neck, I had to call twice in my loudest voice before I could wake up an answer. Then Cæsar, who was always the most prompt of "men and brothers," appeared, looked at me doubtfully, and then came out of the stable, followed close by his own special freed woman, and three freed pickaninnies, clinging to the skirt of his hostler's shirt.

"Hello, Cæsar!" I cried. "What's the row?"

"En't no row, Mass' Tom," he answered, glumly; and he never grinned once.

"The Devil! Who's dead? All the town?"

"En't nobody gone dead," replied the black Knight of the Rueful Countenance, very shortly.

I looked at Cæsar narrowly; for I never before had seen that representative of the "Buro" without a set of splendid ivories showing half-way round his head. He was as blue as such a black fellow could be. His wife, too, looked as if her pet cow had just run with the calf; and even the freed-children, dressed principally in a dirty shirt, seemed to be reflecting on their last sound licking.

"Dinah, will *you* tell me what's got into everybody?" I asked as I threw my saddle-bags over my arm. "The whole town's in mourning, it seems to me."

But Dinah only shook her head mysteriously, and then scratched it suspiciously, while the small Loyal-leaguers clung closer to her dress and rolled their eyes frightfully at me.

"Well, I'll be ——! (I think I swore). "Well, Cæsar, take good care of Stonewall; rub him down well, and don't feed for a half-hour."

"Yessah!" was the only word from the usually talkative negro, and I entered the house.

The one large room—parlor, reading-room, dining-room, and bar in one—was empty, except the jolly landlord and a quiet stranger to whom he was talking earnestly. As I entered, Pete strolled off and loafed behind the bar with his hands in his pockets.

"Well, you can tell me what's got into the town, Pete," I said, offering my hand. "Has everybody joined the Methodists or got the ague? What's the matter with 'em all?"

"Wall, I reckon there ain't nothing much the matter," Pete answered glumly, and as he shook hands he glanced furtively at the stranger.

"Nothing much! Why, the whole town's in mourning. Come, let's have some apple-jack."

Pete put the bottle and one glass on the counter.

"Why, ain't you going to drink?" I asked in great surprise, for Pete was the neatest hand in Tennessee for getting outside of five fingers of "greased lightning." But he only shook his head solemnly, and once more shot a quick glance at the stranger.

I turned round, thinking it meant I should ask him to join me; but there was something in the man's looks that checked the words on my lips. He was a stranger in —ville, for I knew every face for a dozen miles round; and a striking looking stranger he was.

Six feet tall and splendidly formed, the figure was clothed in a pair of well-worn army pants and a Confederate gray coat, threadbare and patched, but scrupulously clean. The dingy gray velvet collar still showed the marks of what seemed to be a wreath and stars carefully picked out from the cloth, and there were lines left by double chevrons on the worn sleeves. But the face was what struck me most.

Pale, clear, and firm-set, the features were yet clear as if cut in marble—the slope of the long jaw and the pressure of the thin lips showing firmness and strength of will. The high broad forehead was bordered by masses of long fine hair, white as snow, pushed back from the temples, but falling low on the shoulders; and a heavy moustache of the same color drooped long and pendant from the upper lip. But the eyes most attracted my astonished gaze. They were not large, but they were of that peculiar cold gray that hides such depths of possible fire and energy; and the deep blue circles around them threw them into greater relief, as he gazed steadily out of the open door. The hands crossed on the table before him were long and thin, but full of nervous strength;—but they never moved as I turned, and he seemed perfectly unconscious of my fixed gaze. For I was astonished at such a stranger in Pete's bar-room, and I turned a look of inquiry at the latter as I jerked my thumb over my shoulder at the former.

Pete only shook his head, took one hand from his pocket and removed the bottle I had lessened by two inches, and said vaguely:

“Goin' to storm to-night.”

“D—ned if I don't hope so,” I answered. “A good wetting will do you fellows good up here. The whole of —ville is gotten as cantankerous as a hospital. Order me some supper, Pete, unless your pork's got the measles too.”

Pete walked off to the kitchen without a word, and I lit my pipe and turned toward the stranger. I felt oppressed by the general gloom over the town, and felt as if I must talk.

“Do you think it will storm, stranger?”

The man never answered. His eyes were fixed on the blue mountain-top just visible through the open door, and his lips were moving as if in a sort of prayer. Once in a-while he shivered slightly and the clasped hands shut hard on each other,

while the long ends of the gray moustache quivered as if in a high wind.

I muttered an oath or two to myself, and felt deucedly uncomfortable. Neither from nature nor habit am I a nervous man; but there was something about the stranger that made me restless, and I strolled out of the door into the low porch, and thence toward the stable. My horse, at least, was a companionable brute, and I'd take a look at him before supper was ready.

Stonewall was already rubbed down and comfortably munching his feed when I entered the stable: but in the stalls near him stood five foaming and splashed horses—all showing signs of a long and hard journey. I was surprised at this, for I had seen no one arrive at the tavern, and the stable was empty; and besides, —ville did not often have six travellers in one night.

But it was none of my business, and I patted my horse, talked to him and got a whinny in return, and was about leaving the stable when I heard a hissing sound from the only empty stall. Closer inspection showed me a pair of rolling eyes—nearly all white—and then the crouching form of my old friend Cæsar. Still further in the dark, huddled behind him were Dinah and her little ones, still clinging to her skirts.

The hiss was repeated.

"Well, this is too much!" I grumbled. "Are all the d——d niggers and white men in —ville in league to run me mad? What in the d——l do you mean, you ebony rascal?"

"S—sh—sh! Mass' Tom. Bress de Lor'! don't talk so loud!" and the black's eyes rolled up as if he had a colic.

"Not talk, d——n you! Why not? I'm the only man in town that can!"

"Sh—sh! Um's done come!"

"Who's come, you blacking-box?"

"Dem's done come, O gorry!" the negro repeated; and he squirmed round and then stood up with his knees shaking.

I lost all patience. "Confound you, what do you mean?" I cried, seizing him by the collar and shaking him savagely. "Who do you mean by *dem*?"

The negro's teeth chattered more with fright than my shaking, and his eyes rolled more than ever as he gasped—

"O Lor'! I dunno—but dey's come! dey's dun come!"

"Tell me what you mean, you black imp, or by—"

I stopped short, for the negro seemed to melt out of my grasp. He fell upon his knees—his teeth chattering and his great red mouth hanging wide open. Dinah dropped by his side, and even the crouching children stared full while they whimpered.

Four pair of staring, frightened eyes were fixed upon the wall behind me, as if fascinated; and turning round, I saw traced upon it as if by magic, in blood-red lines—

K - K - K !

I was rather startled, myself; and the negroes' fright was too real to get anything out of them—so I strolled back to the house. On the way I passed the old smithy. On its soot-blackened walls the three red letters stared me in the face. This time I started as if shot.

What could it mean?

As I stepped on the porch I looked over the distant mountain. Its top was no longer blue, but black in the gathering twilight; but it stood out bold and clear against the inky background of thunder-cloud. For Pete's unlikely prophecy was about to be fulfilled. A fearful storm was coming toward us. I already felt its chill breath; and even as I gazed, the forked lightning

flashed out clear and red upon the mountain's brow, and the twining, glaring lines formed plainly into the mystic shapes—

K-K-K!

Just then Peter, the smartest mulatto in —ville appeared from the kitchen.

"Ham and eggs ready, Mass' Tom. Glad to see you, sah—take your supper on the porch or in the kitchen?"

I voted for the kitchen; and was soon deep in the mysteries of Peter's small kingdom.

"What's the matter with the town and with you all?" I said at last. "The whole of —ville is blue as indigo."

Peter's countenance fell suddenly to zero.

"O gorry, Mass' Tom, I dunno; but dey's mos' awful doin's all round dis place. De poor nigger ain't goin' to stand no sort of chance. O gorry! I dun gone clean outen my head."

"But what is it?" I asked again.

"Oh dis yer Klu-Klan. Dey's gwine to roast all the poor niggers alive and den eat um!"

I laughed; but poor Peter was evidently in earnest, for he grew a shade less dingy, and his eyes were starting out of his head.

"But what is the Klu-Klan, as you call it?" I persisted, getting grave again.

The mulatto looked round fearfully as I mentioned the name.

"O Lor' bress us, Mass' Tom, don't call he name so loud. O Lor'! O Lor'!"

"Don't be an ass, Peter," I said sternly. "All —ville seems to have gone crazy. You know a name can't hurt you, so tell me what it means. And what are these letters all about

town, that seemed to scare Cæsar and Dinah out of their wits?"

"Dat's it, O Lor'! dat's it," answered Peter with a groan, as he rocked from side to side, and looked quickly over his shoulder and all around him.

"It's *what?*" I said impatiently. "Why can't you answer, instead of standing there staring?"

"Dey's a secret 'siety, Mass' Tom, and dey's dun swearsed to kill all de niggers wot's b'longed to de League. O gorry! dey's gwine to roast um libe and kickin'!"

"Serve 'em right," I grumbled. "What business have you blacks got joining Leagues. You better work and support your families."

"Dat's so, Mass' Tom, dat's so! But we's dun j'ined, and we all 'longs to de League now. We's dun swearsed and cussed our souls ef we leave it. Why every nigger dis side de mountains 'longs to de League."

"Oh, he does; then every nigger this side the mountains deserves to be well licked and set to work."

"But, Mass' Tom, dis yere Klu-Klan's gwine to do wuss dan dat. Dey's gwine to roast de niggers, and gib dere souls to the Big Deth."

"Pshaw," I said, "what a booby you are. Who's told you this nonsense?"

"Oh, bress you, t'aint no nonsense. All de ~~de~~ dead rebels dun come back to life, and dey libs in de woods and eats de little niggers at night. And den the libe rebels wot's left, dey jines um, and dey's all going to roast de niggers. O Lor'! O Lor'!"

"And is this what's scared the whole village into a set of idiots?" I asked.

"You'd be scart, too, Mass' Tom," the fellow answered, doggedly, "ef you'd seen wot we's seen. T'other night dis nigger

was coming over Fish-guts Creek, and a whole army of them dead rebels ride rite down on him. Dere was more dan hundred thousand; and dey all had on black masks and long shinin' swords; and dey ride rite ober the water and rite ober dis yere nigger, and dere hosses nebber make no sound at all. Bress God, Mass' Tom, dis nigger dun hab a fit, rite dere in Fish-guts Creek!"

Peter paused, with his eyes staring out of his head and his wool standing on end with horror. I whistled, and prepared to sit down to my smoking dish of eggs and bacon and soft cornbread.

"'Taint no use whis'lin,'" he said, with a gasp. "It's so, Mass' Tom—it's so! And I hearn the tall white cap'n say, 'Peter,' says he—'you's sekketterry of a Unun Leager Lodge,' says he—'and you' sole its gwine to fry in hell,' says he. And den, Mass' Tom, I drawed my franchy 'lection suffering-paper on to him, and I says, jist like our school marster—I says—'I'se a man and a brudder, and I kin vote!' and den dey all gi'e a hoss larf, and dey all say—'Hale to the Arch Wite Deth!' Den I seed my franchy paper warn't no use; and de Wite Deth he kick me wid he fut, and I den hab a fit, rite dere in Fish-guts Creek."

"So this Klu-Klan is only in this part of the country, is it, Peter?"

"O, Lor' bress your soul, no—Dey's got wot dey calls ramfurations in ebery town and ebery village in dis yere State; and dey's got de dead and de libe, and dey's got heben and hell both to work; and, by gosh! de niggers dun gone up! O Lor'! O Lor'!"

I thought very seriously at this. I had heard some rude rumors of a great secret organization through the South—with anti-negro-rule projects for its foundation, and with pretended supernatural aid. I knew the negroes had a great dread of it; but I had never come upon such real proof of their fear as this. There must be some ground for it, I thought.

Perhaps there was a meeting-place in the mountains near—ville. I remembered the stranger I had seen in the bar-room—Cæsar's fright at the sight of the red letters—and all the general strangeness of the town. Yes—the strange red K's must have something to do with it. I would ask.

“So there's a secret society sworn to roast the nigger leagues, is there, Peter?”

“Sure as you's born, Mass' Tom.”

“And they live round here, do they?”

“O, gorry! dey libs everywhere. Las' week Cæsar wus coming from yaller mountain—and dat's forty mile off, Mass' Tom—and he hab a load o' feed in de wagin. A ole feller he ax Cæsar fur a lift, and he git in de feed an' he ride till nite. And all de time he wus axing Cæsar 'bout de Loil League, an' tellin' him wot a cuss it wus fur de niggers. Den wen nite cum, de ole fellow he git out an' he say 'good-bye, brudder,' and Cæsar go to shake he hand. All at wunst he fizz up jis like a pop-cracker, an' Cæsar he didn't hab holt o' no han' at all—only he hab a skeleton fist in his'n, an' he couldn't let go of it for more 'n a mile. Oh, bress God, Mass' Tom, it's too bad. Oh, gurroo! gurroo! We's gwine to be roasted, body an' soul!”

“And have these red letters I see on—”

“Ss—sh! Hush, Mass' Tom!” cried Peter, looking more and more scared. “Don't say nuthin' 'bout them—*don't*, Mass' Tom!”

“Why not? I'm not a 'Loil League,' and they won't roast me!”

The negro looked all around carefully and in dreadful fright while I spoke. Then he came close to me and whispered in my ear—

“'Tis de debble, an' nuthin' else. De debble he cums 'hind a nigger an' he writes dem wurds over he head. I tell you, Mass'—*Oh! Wah! wah! wah!*”

With a wild yell Peter kicked over the table, ruining my untasted supper, and sending me into the other corner of the kitchen. Then with one bound he fled from the room and raced away from the house like one possessed. Much astonished and more angry I picked myself up; and there in plain letters—staring me full in the face—was printed bloody red over the kitchen fireplace—

Κ - Κ - Κ !

CHAPTER II.

THE AWFUL WHITE ARCH DEATH.

THE bar-room was empty when I entered again, and a roaring fire of crackling logs was piled upon the broad hearth. It was the only cheerful thing I had seen, and I looked upon it as a friend, and spread my fingers out over the bright tongues of flame that licked the back of the chimney as if with a thirsty relish.

Then the storm burst in all its wild fury. Great sheets of rain washed down on the little town, as if they would sweep it down the mountain-side. The wind roared like a thousand bulls, and the frail tavern shook and reeled as the blasts struck it. The whole air grew blacker and blacker as night fell, the blinding flashes of fierce lightning incessant for seconds, and then ceasing suddenly, only making the darkness more intense in the intervals. And the hoarse deep voice of the thunder roared and muttered like the agonized voices of damned spirits.

Terrible and fearful was the storm! I crouched over the

fire, and forgot hunger, and business, and sleep. Many nights I had laid in winter tempests and summer storms in those mountains, wrapped in a thin blanket and half-starved on soldier's fare; but never had I felt the awful strength of the elements as I did now!

Wilder and wilder raged the storm! Blacker and darker grew the air! Brighter and more blinding glared the fearful lightning!

How long I crouched by the fire I cannot tell. Perhaps I slept, perhaps I fell into a trance. I lay with my eyes closed, and the beating of my heart sounded in my ears like a hundred drums.

"Brother!"

Distinctly on my right hand and on my left sounded two voices.

My heart stood still—my blood curdled in my veins. On my right hand spoke the voice of my twin-born, who died in the front on Shiloh's awful day!

At my left I recognized the voice of my little boy brother, starved to death in the prison-pens of Andersonville! They were there, close beside me! The dead had risen; and with my eyes still shut, *my heart* saw the noble visage with the glow of battle only deepened by the bloody gash on the brow. My heart saw the pale pinched features of the starved boy, yet radiant with immortal joy. And then my heart went out of me and embraced these two—and then it was at peace.

"Brother, the hour has come!"

Through the wild roar of the thunder and the hoarse ravings of the wind, the two voices were clear and distinct. And my heart answered and said—

"I am ready. Speak on!"

"The hour has come. Oppression has driven the crushed children of the South, to turn and sting. The powers of the

other world have come to aid. Are you ready? The hour has come!"

"I am ready!" I said the words calmly and with fixed purpose. "I am ready. Speak on."

"You are a chosen agent," both voices said. "Prepare and obey the words to come." Then my heart went out in a great cry—"Shall I revenge you, brothers!" The figure on my left hand moved its noble head in prompt denial, but a frown contracted the gory forehead; the figure on the left smiled with surpassing sweetness, and the fair white brow was raised and the thin lips moved as if in thanksgiving.

"Revenge is of the earth!" It was the right hand voice that spoke—"Justice is ours! Your living brothers in the South need your care. Danger, from the tyrant and his tools, threatens ruin to our common land. Beware!"

Then the voice on the left said softly, "Love thy country; love thy brothers of the South; forgive their oppressors, but smite and fear not! Behold thy master! Farewell!"

The house shook to its foundations, swayed from side to side. The thunder roared hoarser and more near. The flames on the broad hearth danced and writhed in a thousand fantastic shapes; then they wreathed themselves into the gigantic form

K - K - K !

Suddenly the bolt fell. The chimney was struck by a fearful thunder blast, and through the ghastly rent the forked lightning licked its hissing tongues. The clouds of smoke rolled up dense and solid on the breast of the night wind. Then they opened, and lo! standing in a gush of dazzling light, his feet hid in luminous clouds, was a splendid majestic figure.

Of towering height and solemn presence, he bore in his left hand the flags of the Union and of the South, wreathed in Olive and draped with streaming crape. His white right arm, bare to the shoulder, was raised aloft and held a shining blade, from which trickled goutts of blood.

One by one these ran down the white right arm, and dropped upon the pure white robes that clothed the noble form. One by one the red drops fell upon his breast, one over the other, till they slowly but accurately formed a huge K upon the snow-white vestment.

Then the thunder pealed till the house shook fearfully. Gradually the luminous clouds rolled away from the base of the figure. The white feet were bare—one resting upon the giant form of a jet black monster.

Huge, knotted muscles strained over the hideous black form, writhing and twisting like venomous snakes. Strong, talon-like hands ended the long arms; and on each huge wrist were the shattered links of a silver-chain.

But the face! O, Heaven! that face! Matted locks of crisp and bloody wool were dragged over the low, flat forehead; huge, bloodshot eyes rolled and glared in their straining sockets; while the flat nose was pinched with a fearful snort. The thick, red lips were drawn back in a hideous grin; and the sharp, white teeth clashed and ground till the white froth spun from them; and ever and anon the blood-red tongue rolled far down in the rabid jaws!

If a thousand devils had concentrated all their malignant gall into one foul body, it could not have equalled the fearful expression of the monster's face.

One talon-like hand grasped a flaming torch, bloody and clotted with long locks of woman's hair; the other clutched with terrible strength at the Olive-leaves that trailed from the draped flags. Once the fiendish shape half rose from the foot that held

it down, while it chuckled with hellish laughter, and yelled hoarsely—

“Obi! My God! I am de marster!”

Then the noble form above it looked down, and I saw the splendid, glorified face was that of the stranger of the evening. The same clear, calm features—the same deep eyes—the same silver moustache and long, flowing locks of snowy white.

Louder the thunder rolled! More fearful flashed the lightning! Faster the goutts of blood dropped from the sword and ran down the white right arm!

The second letter on the white garment is finished. Two blood red K's, show themselves glowing on the champion's breast.

Faster the blood goutts fall!

More furious grow the struggles of the ebony monster!

The last K is nearly finished. The giant form strains with the force of a thousand devils—the huge hand grasps the olive leaves—it tears the crape upon the flags—it almost touches the folds of the starry banner!

Then the shining blade falls like a gleam of light—its point is pressed to the demon's breast—and with a wild yell he rolls upon his belly, grovelling and clanking the broken chains upon his wrists.

Then the lightnings dazzle me. The thunder roars in wordless speech that seems to cry—*Hail! All hail!*

Far over the mountains the echoes roll—*Hail! Hail! All hail!*

Then all the voices of the night—far and near—farther and farther—losing themselves in illimitable distance join in a chorus—

“HAIL TO THE WHITE ARCH DEATH!!”

Even over the awful tumult come to me two silvery voices—

“Come, brother! Come!”

And falling on my face, I answer, "*I come, brothers! "Hail to the High Arch Death!"*"

* * * * *

I lay upon my face, I know not how long, in a stupor-like death. When I first heard sounds of this world again, they were voices in high dispute. There were oaths, and threats, and cries of—"No!" "I will!"—mixed in a confused murmur—then I plainly recognized the voice of Pete, the landlord.

"I say you shall not!" he was saying. "I know him well, and he's under my roof. I'll answer for him."

"I will, I say!" a high, strong voice cried. "Dead men tell no tales, and we don't know what he has heard. This will end it; and he's only an infernal Yankee pedler after all."

I distinctly heard the click of a pistol.

There was a rush and a short scuffle. Then I felt a heavy weight removed from my chest, and, opening my eyes for the first time, saw a singular sight.

In the bar-room, before the hearth of which I was stretched, were a dozen stalwart men, each one with the well-worn pants of a rebel cavalryman, and each one with an army shirt of bloody red flannel.

Every face was covered by a crimson mask with a black flap; *and every right arm was bare to the shoulder!*

Directly above me two men had grappled in a fierce wrestle, tugging and straining, but neither striving to strike or injure the other.

Suddenly a voice singularly soft, clear, and sweet, but with a ring of command, said:

"Cease! I will speak to him."

At the first word the struggling men ceased their movement, and stood silent and still; and even with my half-waking vision I noticed they made a strange gesture. Each raised his bare right arm, placed the back of his hand upon his forehead, and

spread the fingers wide above his brow. Then, with a swift interlacing of the fingers of the other hand, formed three plain K's above his head. This done, the bare arm was crossed on the chest, and the fingers formed a K over the heart; and each stood at rest.

Even while I noted this, I raised myself slowly upon my elbow, and turned toward the voice that last spoke. I was dizzy and sick, as if from a fearful fall; and mechanically raising my hand to my forehead, I found it blackened with soot and moistened with blood. I noticed around me fragments of brick and mortar; and as I glanced up at the chimney I saw the lightning playing in the dark clouds through a wide rift in its back. It had evidently been shattered by the lightning, and I had been knocked down with the fragments. Even as I lay, a noble form advanced toward me. He was clothed like the rest, except that his shirt and mask were pure white, and on the breast were woven the mystic letters, K-K-K. From the black drop of his white mask drooped the ends of a snow-white moustache, and long locks of white hair mingled with the roll of his shirt-collar.

It was he—the champion of my vision—the **WHITE ARCH-DEATH!**

“Thou knowest thy danger?” he asked, in a voice the strong ring of which sounded into my soul. “Dost thou know that thy life is not worth the asking?”

I shook my head. I was stunned.

“We are a secret band,” he continued. “We are sworn by bonds thou couldst not understand to keep our secret safe—yea, even by blood, if need be. Thou hast seen us, and thou knowest —”

“That your purpose is a holy one!” I cried. “I hate the tyrants that oppress you. I am with you at heart. Hail to the *White Arch-Death!*”

There was a stir among the men at the words. A dozen pistols were pointed at me, and a dozen pair of burning eyes peered through the masks, eagerly watching the chiefs for a signal. My life hung on a thread. My words showed I knew more than was safe. My fate seemed sealed.

The Arch-Death waved his hand calmly. The pistols disappeared, and again the bare right arms, after making the signal K's above their heads, came to rest over their hearts.

"Thou knowest our secret," the Arch-Death said, gravely. "Listen. Thou must die, or thou must be ours—body, blood, and soul."

"I am ready," I answered; for the voices of my brothers, as heard in my vision, seems to cry, "Brother, come!"

The white mask paused.

"Reflect," he said, "thou wilt have to pass through horrors to freeze thy very soul. Thou wilt taste the terrors of hell and the pains of the rack before thou canst come to thy membership. If thou dost falter but a single second, slow torture and eternal pains in the world to come are thine! Choose! Wilt thou risk this, or die here quickly, and without pain?"

Once more the voices of my vision called plainly aloud, "Brother, come!"

I looked steadily into the eyes of the White Mask, and I answered—

"I have chosen. I am yours—body, blood, and soul. I am ready. Hail to the White Arch-Death!"

As I spoke the words, two black masks were at my side. In the second's glance I was allowed, I would have sworn that under those black drops were the faces of my brothers. I was only allowed a second. My eyes were swiftly bandaged—there was a flash—a pungent odor in my nostrils—and I lost all power of mind and body as I sank back upon the floor.

CHAPTER III.

THE WILD AND FROZEN PATH.

WHEN I woke, I was moving rapidly through the night air, supported on my horse by a strong hand on either side. My eyes were still tightly bandaged; but the cold rain driving in my face refreshed and steadied me. I gave a gasp of relief. The hands supporting me were removed; but we still rode rapidly on, the trot of three horses over a wet road, the splash of the fearful rain, and the near roll of the loud thunder. On we went in dead silence, the road getting rougher and wilder, the streams more frequent and broader, and the great rocks obstructing the way. I should think we had ridden some six miles when we suddenly stopped. I heard the right and left hand horsemen dismount, and by a sort of magnetism knew I was to do the same. By the same intuition I floundered after them up a steep and narrow path, guided only by the sound of their feet.

Great rocks were piled in the pathway which seemed to be the dry bed of a stream. Huge boughs crossed the path and struck and bruised me; and great spikes of the mountain-thorn tore my clothes and lacerated my flesh. I was burning with fever; and my head split, almost, from the wound in my forehead and the fearful pressure of my blindfold.

Often I fell, cutting myself on the hard rocks—sometimes I almost lost the sound of the tread before me. But I felt only one desire in my heart—one object burning in my brain—one wish in my soul!—and that was to go on—on—ever on! To solve the great mystery before my brain burst with the strain.

Upward and onward I toiled. My breath grew short—cold sweat stood on my limbs—and the drenching rain grew colder, and the storm wilder and more fierce as we ascended.

Suddenly we stopped. I heard the two voices I knew so well, on each side.

“Brother, we can go no further. Look for thyself!”

I tore the bandage from my eyes. All was dark as the blackest midnight. Then a terrific thunder-clap came, and a blinding flash of lightning seemed almost to sear my eyeballs. By its repeated flashes I began to see where I stood. I was upon the top of a high mountain, amid tangled undergrowth and jagged rocks, unfamiliar to me who knew the mountain paths so well. There was no semblance of a path, no guide by which I might discover my way.

All was wide, desolate, waste! And the utter solitude was terrible. A great groan escaped me. It was answered by a voice out of the darkness:

“Proceed, and tarry not. Thy destiny awaits thee.”

The voice was drowned in the roaring of the thunder. A fearful sheet of lightning seemed to descend in solid masses on the scrub-trees; but I saw no one.

On I plunged, straight ahead as I could guess, ever ascending, ever getting colder and colder. At every step the footing became less secure. The rocks, worn smooth by the rush of the mountain rains, were sheeted with thin ice as slippery as glass. Often a false step brought me heavily to my knees, and more than once I trod upon a hole filled with rotten leaves and glazed with ice and sunk to my arm-pits amid nests of slimy, creeping reptiles, that made my flesh crawl at the touch.

On! ever on!

I thought, saw, felt nothing but the burning dread to be too late.

The secret! the dread mystery!

I *must* get it, or die, body and soul!

At length I reached a vast shelving rock, sloping slightly

toward me, but worn smooth, and now slippery as glass with its coat of thin ice.

Fearfully cold was the wind that struck upon me as I left the slight shelter of the low trees, and tried to stand upon the rock. Sheets of driving rain, swept down upon me by the piercing wind, froze in my beard and in my drenched clothes.

All around me the dead silence was appalling, broken only by the thunder, and in the intervals of blinding flashes the darkness seemed thick enough to clutch in my hands.

The footing on the rock was impossible to hold. I fell—rose—fell again, and lay half stunned and half frozen.

But the one idea in my mind urged me on—*on!*—*on!!*

Clenching my teeth, I squirmed upward on my hands and knees, and reached a crevice, where I was obliged to rest to breathe.

Just then a series of vivid flashes showed me two strange monsters—huge, hairy, and hideous, with uprooted saplings in their paws—crouching near me.

As darkness fell upon us, a horrible voice growled close into my ear—

“Turn back, rash fool! We are spies of the god Obi! We guard the Freedmen of the Loyal Leagues! Thy mission is known! Turn back while there is yet time!”

“I fear you not,” I answered; and my teeth chattered with cold but not with fright.

“Liar, you do fear!” and a grating laugh echoed nearer still.

The next flash showed me both monsters standing near with uplifted clubs.

“Liar and coward, will you turn back?” they growled huskily.

“No!” I cried. “I must and will advance. I defy you and the devils you serve!”

“Fool! to advance is death!”

“To turn back is death; I must go on.”

And I turned to crawl away with my stiffening limbs, and expecting the huge clubs to fall and crush me. Only a mocking laugh, however, came after me; and I toiled on, half dying with exhaustion and excitement.

For several minutes I squirmed along, no thought in my mind but the one wild idea to get to the secret—to become a brother of the *Ku-Klux Klan*.

Suddenly a flash, brighter and more continuous than had yet come, half blinded me; and then it showed me my fearful danger!

I had crawled to the very edge of the rock, where it overhung a huge chasm—black as death even in the lightning. And even over the wild roar of the tempest, I could hear the surging of a mighty mountain-stream over its rocky bed, hundreds of feet below. I was on the fearful brink of a ghastly precipice.

I dared not move till the next flash showed me more. A single false turn would dash me into the awful abyss below; and I should be lost, body and soul!

With my heart growing cold, I waited for the lightning!

It came vivid and blinding; but only showed the fearful blackness in the depths of the terrible chasm below me, and nothing more.

Once more I waited; and this time I could see that the opposite brink was but a dozen feet before me. And yet that fearful chasm, with its hungry waters roaring far below, and its black jaws stretching wide to the right and left, must be crossed, or I must turn back. Once more I groaned aloud in my agony.

One more flash came at the moment; and on the opposite brink I thought I descried the figure of a man.

My heart stood still and my breath stopped while I waited the next flash. It came steady and bright; and there, sure enough, on the opposite brink stood the figure of a man, with a drawn sword pointed upward in his hand.

I summoned all my strength, and yelled wildly to him through the tempest.

There was no answer.

Once more I yelled, throwing my whole soul into the despairing cry.

This time the man heard me; and through the darkness came a faint response.

Waiting the lull of the tempest, I cried again, "I am a lost brother! How shall I come?"

After a moment the answer came: "The bridge is blown down by the storm." Again I yelled almost despairing, "Can I not cross?"

"Yes. Watch the next flash!"

Broad and white over the abyss glared the lightning. By its gleam I saw the man opposite standing by a pine sapling rooted in a rift on the very edge of the precipice. He bore his weight on it, and the green-leaved head of the pine bowed over the chasm toward me.

"Watch the flash," he shouted, "then take hold and jump."

It was a fearful venture. The top of the tree was filled with sheeted ice. It did not reach all the way across, and I would have to jump in the uncertain light, and trust to the uncertain hold I could take.

But there was no alternative. I was fast freezing to death where I stood. I *could not* turn back; and the plunge into the gulf below, if I missed my hold, would not be worse than I now felt.

I held my breath and watched the flash. Then with a desperate strength I leaped for the pine, and grasped the slippery leaves in a frenzied clutch. Slowly the branches slipped through my fingers; but I clung with fierce strength, and the tree rose just in time to swing me in the darkness upon the opposite ledge.

At that second I lost my hold and tottered on the brink; but a strong arm grasped me, and a strong voice said shortly—

“Welcome, brother!”

The next instant a brandy-flask was in my lips, and the strong fluid had sent the blood coursing afresh through my veins, and given me new life.

“Come, brother!” the sentry now said. “We will seek the *Den of the Red Death!*”

CHAPTER IV.

THE SILENT SQUADRON OF THE PALE HORSE.

HOLDING me fast by the hand, my companion led the way rapidly over the still uncertain and slippery road, down what seemed to be a rent or chasm in the heart of the mountain. As we descended, the path became narrower and firmer; the wind ceased to strike us; the thunder roared less loudly and more distant; and the still frequent flashes of lightning seemed to play far above our heads without illuminating the gorge through which we passed.

Suddenly we stopped.

My guide turned his face toward what seemed the solid rock, and struck it sharply three times with his sword. The whole glen echoed with the clang of the steel against the rock.

A sound like the rolling of a huge steam-engine answered from the heart of the rock, and then from what seemed to me within it, a voice said—

“Who calls at the Den of the Red Death?”

My guide made the mystic sign of the K's I had seen in the tavern, before he answered—

“A chosen brother seeks the Red Death!” And the voice within replied—

"Let him speak if he is chosen."

Then I answered—

"Brother, I come."

"Art thou chosen?" the voice asked.

"I am chosen."

"Who has sent thee hither?"

"I come at the word of the High White Arch-Death!"

As I spoke the name, the rumbling noises in the rock sounded nearer and louder, and a murmur of many voices—before me—above me—to the the right, and to the left—all cried, "Hail! all hail to the White Arch-Death!"

Then all was still again, and my guide had disappeared.

I stood alone before the rock. I waited long; but at last the rumbling noise was repeated, and a new voice in the heart of the rock said to me—

"Brother, art thou ready?"

"I am ready," I answered.

"Hast thou passed the sentries?"

"I have passed them all."

"Hast thou sworn?"

"I have sworn."

"Thou art ready to meet the terrors that will blast thy soul and sear thy brain?"

"I am ready."

"Repeat thy oath."

"I am a Brother of the White Arch-Death. I swear by my body, by my blood, and by my soul!"

"Hide thy face, Brother."

I muffled my head in my coat, and waited. There was a sound like thunder, and I felt a gush of cool, soft air fan my face. Then the voice said—

"Look up, and advance."

I raised my head, and lo! the rock had opened, and a long,

dimly-lit pathway was before me. I stepped boldly into it, and passed on over the dry sandy road within.

There was another thunder roar; and, looking back, I saw the wall of rock had closed behind me.

“Look only forward! Brother, we are near!” said two clear voices, and I felt my brothers were by me as they had been in my vision.

Soon I saw a glimmer far ahead. I kept on through the passage-way, and at last perceived the light of two torches. They were borne by black masked figures like those at the tavern.

These, too, had the red shirt and the bare right arm; but each held aloft a shining sword-blade, upon the point of which was a grinning skull, and through its eyes and mouth shone a strong white light.

“Follow, and speak not,” one of the torch-bearers said, and we moved on.

The way became wider and higher, and the fresh air blew freer and cooler on my face. At last we emerged from the mountain, and passed through a rocky and wild road leading into an open field. The storm had ceased, and the moonlight fell clear and white upon the singed and burnt grass of the field before us.

Through its middle ran a narrow stream, and in the moonlight I saw that both sides of the bank were covered with hastily-made graves, some with head-boards and others without, some perfect, and some torn open and showing ghastly bones and festering corpses.

At the near side of the stream was a small mound with a shattered piece of mountain cannon, rusted and bursted. It seemed that this had been a barbette for a cavalry fight; and as I looked more nearly, I saw that pieces of bursted shells and skeletons of horses lay around the mound, and that the earth

was ploughed up and torn in pieces as if by a fierce cannonade. From the foot of the mound ran the shattered remains of a narrow bridge, rotting to decay, and shaking in the night wind.

Altogether, the spot was one no soldier could mistake. It was the scene of a fierce and fatal fight, and the victims had been buried on the spot where they fell, friend and foe mingled together, and sleeping the sleep of death side by side.

We had left the path, and were on the edge of the battle-field.

Suddenly my conductors turned their heads and listened.

"The bugle sounds the Assembly," one said.

"The Silent Squadron of the Pale Horse approacheth," the second replied.

"Halt!" said the first, and we all stood still on the edge of the battle-field.

"Thou hast not tasted the fearful goblet, and thou mayst look," the first speaker said to me. "But we who bear its sacred fire in our veins, may not see and live."

Then both set their grinning torches upright in the soft ground, and both threw themselves on their faces.

Suddenly, in the misty moonlight, figures seemed to grow out of the air.

On the mound was the indistinct, pale figure of a mounted bugler, thin and vapory, and yet perfect in outline. As I glanced around, by every grave stood the misty, ghost-like shadow of a cavalry-horse, pawing the ground without a sound, and seeming to snort with his fleshless nostrils. The bugler put his bugle to his lip. There was no sound; but in my very heart I felt the chill notes of "Boots and Saddles" forming like drops of ice.

Suddenly, by the side of every ghostly steed stood a ghostly rider, fully armed, and ready to mount.

Every shadowy horseman placed his foot in the stirrup. At the same moment every one vaulted into the saddle and gath-

ered up his reins. The sabres flew about the horses' flanks, the bit-chains shook, the stirrups struck against the spurs, and the horses reared and plunged; but there was not a sound in the still night-air.

The bugler placed himself at the head; a tall figure on a plunging horse rode to his side. He opened his lips, and I could see, not hear, the words of command—

“Draw—sa—bres! Forward—*march!*” A thousand pale blades flew out in the moonlight—a thousand scabbards fell against the boots without a sound. The bugler placed his bugle to his lips, and the phantom squadron rode over the creaking bridge, and filed away into the mist beyond.

As they disappeared, the last file turned in his saddle, and beckoned me to follow.

I saw the face of my twin-brother—the gory gash upon his forehead, the great drops of blood falling from it.

Once more he beckoned.

I staggered to the bridge. It was slippery and wet. I looked down, and saw it was drenched with blood; while great gouts fell into the dark water below, and were whirled away with the eddies in long red streaks.

Reeling, slipping, falling, but still clinging to the bloody fragments of the bridge, I at last reached the other side. It was too late: the last pale horse had disappeared into the mist; and I sank senseless upon the field of the Silent Squadron.

CHAPTER V.

THE DEN OF THE RED-DEATH.

WHEN I came to myself, I was in a cave, lofty and spacious, but only dimly lighted. Little by little I became accustomed

to the dim half-light, and distinguished the objects around me. The centre of the cave was vacant; and in it was spread a black cloth, with a huge white skull sitting in the middle and a pair of highly-polished thigh bones crossed in each corner. In a semi-circle, before the face of the skull, were three K's, worked in glowing red, that seemed to send out rays of light.

On three sides, around this cloth, but not touching it, stood a crowd of men, all silent as the grave—each one with the crimson mask and black flap, the crimson shirt and each one with the right arm bare to the shoulder. They were close together, and seemed to me to be thousands; but I could only see a line of heads gradually dying into the black shadows that lined the sides of the cave.

On the fourth side of the cave, just facing where I stood, was a sort of throne, with three broad steps leading to it. These steps were covered with black cloth, and on each one was a huge K, worked in the same dazzling shining-red as those on the centre seat. On the throne sat a tall figure, shrouded from head to foot in the folds of blood-red drapery. The mask he wore was of the same flickering, shining crimson as the K's upon the cloth; and the flap that fell from his mask was of duller blood-red color, and formed the drapery for his whole figure. His head was shaven clean, except three long locks of fiery red hair—one upon the crown of his head and one upon each temple. The only part of his figure showing was the bare right arm, gleaming white among the red drapery; and one bare white foot, resting on the curly wool of a negro's head, freshly severed from its body. The blood was still dripping from the neck and mingling with the dark stains of the black cloth on which it rested.

Behind this figure was a misty cloud of half-illuminated smoke, that seemed rising from some gum, or incense, burnt at his back.

On the first step below him stood two figures, dressed exactly

like him, except that each had upon his shaven head but a single lock of blood-red hair. The figure on the right had the starry flag of the Union—that on the left the tattered and battle-stained flag of the Southern Rebels.

Both flags were draped with crape; and from both hung long tendrils of cypress leaves and willow.

On the second step stood three huge brothers of the band, dressed like all the others I had seen, and each holding aloft a naked sword, and carrying in his left hand a long brazen trumpet.

Upon the third or last step below the throne stood four glistening and shining skeletons, each holding in its fleshless arms a jet black negro baby, squirming and striving to get free.

From the eyes and nose and mouth of each horrible skull gleamed a dazzling white light, that lit distinctly everything around it, and threw its rays far into the darkness of the Den.

There was dead stillness in the cave. Then the Red Figure on the throne rose, and raised its arms aloft.

With a single impulse, every brother in the cave made the sign of the K's above his head, and then dropped his hand over his chest, the fingers forming a K over the heart.

Then the white foot of the Red Figure pressed upon the severed head under it. The eyes, protruding from the sockets, rolled wildly, the black tongue thrust itself out, and the white teeth clenched upon it; and drops of blood ran faster from the neck. At this a hoarse murmur ran through the cave, low but terrible.

“Death to the negro race! Hail Brother Red-Death!”

And the red figure answered:

Hail Brothers Ku-Klux-Klan!

Then he dropped his arm, and the long, white forefinger pointed straight at me.

"Welcome, Brother, if brother thou art to be?" he said.
 "Art thou ready?"

And I answered in the dead silence:

"I am ready!"

"Thou fearest not the test?"

"I fear it not."

He turned to the figure that held the Union flag:

"Mighty starry Ku—Worshipful Brother of the firmament
 —interrogate the candidate.

The giant standard-bearer slowly turned to me, opened the flag, and waved it slowly over the skeleton lamps.

At the first wave, the whole assemblage cried, with the peculiar deep murmur:

"Hail to the Ku!"

At the second wave all cried:

"Hail to the Klux!"

At the third, a roar like thunder shook the cave with the cry:

"*Hail! All Hail to the Ku-Klux Klan!*"

At that cry, the skeletons crushed the negro babies till they shrieked with agony; and again all was still.

Slowly the Starry Ku advanced down the steps and stood upon the centre-cloth at the right of the giant skull.

"Brother—if brother thou art—answer, and answer truly;" he said.

"I will answer truly," I said.

"Thy name is Thomas ——."

"It is."

"Thou art 40 years old on the 10th of next May."

"I am."

"Thou wast born in Penobscot, Maine."

"I was."

"Thou art a pretended traveller for a business house in Boston."

"I am a pretended business traveller."

"Thou art really a secret agent for William H. Seward, as a spy upon the negro lodges of the League."

Great wonder was upon me at my mission being known. I only answered :

"I am."

"You have passes of safety—the grips and secrets from Benjamin F. Butler and from Thaddeus Stevens."

"I have."

"Do you desire to serve your country from a pure heart, or from love of Seward's gold?"

"From a little of both. My motives are mixed."

"Why do you wish to become a brother of the Klan?"

"Because I feel I am called, and because I believe it the best society the world ever saw."

"What are your principles about reconstruction?"

"I believe in equal rights of States, and unmixed suffrage."

"Do you have any other belief?"

"I do. I believe in Sergt. Bates and the old flag forever!"

Again the Starry Ku waved the flag. Again the hoarse murmur rose: "*Hail to the Ku!*" And then the whole assembly burst into a wild roar :

*"The Star Spangled Banner, oh, long may it wave!
O'er the land of the white, and the free nigger's grave."*

Then the silence fell again like a pall over the whole assembly, and the Starry Ku stood stock still.

The Red Death turned to the bearer of the Southern flag :

"Down-trodden, conquered Klux," he said: "thou shalt interrogate the brother of the Klan."

The bearer of the Southern banner waved his flag once.

Every man in the assembly bowed his head, and the murmur

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was almost inaudible: "*Bless the Conquered Klux!*" Once more he waved the banner over the skeleton lamps, and their bony arms squeezed the negro babies as if they were bagpipes, while a shrill yell of agony rose from every pickaninny throat.

Slowly, and with faltering tread, the conquered Klux came down the steps and upon the centre-cloth, till he stood beside the starry Ku, but on the left of the huge skull.

"Brother, if brother thou art," said the *Klux*, "answer, and answer truly."

"I will answer truly."

"Didst thou belong to the Union army?"

"I did."

"Wherefore didst thou draw thy sword against thy brother? Was it for love of the negro?"

"It was not."

"Dost thou hate the negro?"

"I hate him from my heart."

"Why do you hate him?"

"Because of his color and because of his smell; but most of all because he made me fight my Southern brother."

"Dost thou love thy Southern brother?"

"Better than I love my soul."

"Then what did you fight against him for?"

"For eleven dollars a month."

"Did you receive a bounty?"

"I received seven or eight."

"Now that this cruel war is over, do you love your Southern brother more than ever?"

"More than ever."

"Your mission from William H. Seward is to dismember and destroy the negro leagues?"

"It is."

"What is his purpose in doing so?"

I hesitated a moment. The eyes of the Klux blazed through his mask.

"Dost thou repent?" he cried. "Art thou not a brother of the Klan, body, blood, and soul?"

"I am—body, blood, and soul. Seward wishes to destroy the negro to get the Southern vote for Johnson for the next presidency."

"I know it. Thou hast answered truly. 'Tis well."

Both the standard-bearers turned toward the Red Death.

"Direful Red Death, the brother is ready. He can be admitted—body, blood, and soul!"

"He shall pass the terrors of the initiation. He shall enter the horrid gates of hell. He shall become a purified bloody brother of the Holy Klan," the Red Death said.

And again the murmur rose once more: "Hail to the bloody brother! All hail to the Ku-Klux Klan!"

"Let the Grand Recording Cyclops read the Book of Klan from the foot of the Veiled Throne," said the Red Death. "Let the bugles of the Giant Bloodsuckers sound for the Cyclops. Prepare!"

Swiftly the three huge sword-bearers came from the second step, and stood upon the centre cloth. Each one raised his gleaming blade, and struck a fearful blow upon the huge skull.

It sounded like a great gong. The dull echoes rumbled through the cave, the great jaws clashed together, and the polished cross-bones at the corners of the mat danced and rattled in horrid chorus.

Then each giant Bloodsucker placed his brazen trumpet to his mouth and pealed a terrific note. The cave shook—the Klan bowed their heads—the masses of smoke behind the Red Death became denser and more luminous. Out of the heart of the smoke a terrible voice cried:

"Hail to the Red Death! The Grand Cyclops answers hail!"

"Let the Book of Klan bray," answered the Red Death, "signing a K with his bare right hand."

"Prepare! The Grand Cyclops is ready," answered the voice.

A bandage was pressed upon my eyes, and in the dead silence I heard every word that follows strike upon my straining ear, as if it was the blow of a sharp hammer.

CHAPTER VI

THE KU-KLUX-KLAN

"Is a band of the brothers of blood, bound body and bone—blood and brain, mind and soul—for to-day and for ever—one and indivisible—to destroy the Tyrant!"

"The Ku-Klux Klan is of three parts—the Ku, the Klux, and the Klan.

"The Mighty Starry Ku represents that mysterious branch which loves the union of the States now and forever. But while it loves the Union, the Starry Ku believes it can only be preserved by Justice, by Right, and by Law. Justice is sleeping—Right is dead—worms eat the festering corpse of Law.

"The Starry Ku will use the sword of the sinner to smite the sinner's hip. He is pledged in the bloody goblet to smite and spare not. The day is born of night. Out of rottenness cometh health. The live lion is begotten on the dead ass!"

"The starry Ku embraces the Klux, and the Klux opens her arms, and the Klan claps its hands!"

"Hail to the Ku-Klux Klan!"

The voice of the Red Death spoke here.

“Brother—if brother thou art—dost thou understand?”

And I answered, “I do!”

“What is the mighty starry Ku?”

I tried to speak, but a fearful terror seized me. I gasped for breath: I was drunk.

“*Speak, and fear not!*”

The voice was a new one in the Den, and yet familiar. It was further off than the Red Death—but sweet and clear. Yes, it was the voice of the White-Arch Death.

“Speak, and fear not,” he repeated. “Who is the starry Ku—the Right Hand of the Ku-Klux Klan?”

Then I spoke:

“I believe the mighty starry Ku to be the power of the United States Government, as represented by its soldiers stationed in the South. I believe many of these are members of the holy Klan, and will strike for the white race, and crush the negro under their heel! I believe the Sinner to be the Radical Congress, and that its own sword will smite the hip when the Klan is ready for the spring, The health to be born out of rottenness, is the reconstruction of the States after the negro race is swept away.”

Then the voice said—

“Brother—and brother thou mayst be—thou hast read rightly the first page of the Book of Klan!”

Three times the swords struck upon the huge skull, the thigh-bones rattled, and then all was still.

Again the voice of the Grand Cyclops sounded in the stillness:

“*Second to the mighty starry Ku is down-trodden, conquered Klux.*”

“*The Klux is the living dead, and it is the strength of weakness.*”

“Bound hand and foot with cords that gall and eat into running sores the dead flesh, the living Klux riseth and walketh abroad in the black night.

“She openeth her arms ; she receiveth the starry Ku. Bitter as wormwood and gall is the milk of her breast. But she nourishes the wolf and the adder upon it.

“She bares her breasts to the night ; she cries aloud to her children, ‘Come to be nourished, that ye may grow strong and venomous ! Come to thy mother, that she may give thee to suck of the milk of hate. Then will ye wax strong to sting and to rend the Black Dragon that fattens upon your heart’s blood !’

“The Klux is dead ! She is murdered and burned and blown into the winds in fine dust. But out of the ashes the young Phoenix doth rise ; and the Klux, though dead, yet liveth.

“Yea, the Klux liveth—she openeth her breast and taketh to it the mighty starry Ku,—and the Klan claps its hands !

“Hail to the Ku-Klux Klan !”

Once more the Grand Cyclops ceased ; and once more the White-Arch Death spoke—

“Brother, and brother thou mayst be, speak and fear not. What is the down-trodden conquered Klux ?—the left hand of the Ku-Klux Klan ?”

And I answered with joy, for I felt my trial was over :

“I believe the down-trodden conquered Klux to be the South. She is dead, because she is disarmed ; and the negro race is placed by her enemies over the old masters of her soil. But she liveth, because her spirit is unconquered ; and she means yet to rise in secret against the oppressor. I believe that she is bound hand and foot by laws that she spurns and hates ; and that she rises and walks, because the spirit of her children can yield its rights but not its honor.

“And I believe the black night is the negro rule over the lords of the land ; and that the Southern people receive the

Northern soldiers who join them—the wrongs and oppressions they exhibit being the bitter milk. And I believe the Black Dragon is the chain of secret negro Leagues and Lodges, that the vile slaves of the Radical Congress have netted over the face of the South; that the Southern army is dead but that its organization and its spirit can never die; and that out of its destruction arises a secret League sworn by solemn oaths to destroy the oppressor, and to crush the egg of the Dragon while there is yet time.”

Once more the voice of the Arch Death spoke :

“Brother, for thou art nearly a brother, thou hast read aright the second page of the Book of Klan.”

Then there was a murmur through the den, but it took no shape in words, and once more the swords clashed on the skull. The skull answered louder than ever, and the cross-bones rattled and danced.

Then in the silence that followed, the Grand Cyclops spoke again :

“Mighty and mysterious is the awful Klan! Filled with fearful wrath it is!

“The Klan is every thing and it is nothing; it is still while it moveth everywhere, and speaketh loudest while silent.

“Where the night is darkest, the Klan seeth best. Where the dragon’s eggs are nearest hatched, there presseth its foot most heavy!

“Motionless and silent is the Klan, yet it moveth swiftly, and the clamor it maketh is loud.

“The dragon squirmeth in his fright, and the Klan claps its hands.

“Hail to the Ku-Klux Klan! for thus it is made.

“There is an awful father, and he hath ten sons, and each son is a RED DEATH, who called the Father the WHITE-ARCH DEATH.

“And of the ten sons each hath ten sons, one of whom knoweth not the other, nor knoweth any of these the Awful Father of his father.

“But each of the ten sons who is a RED DEATH is a father of all the sons of the other nine sons, each of whom is a RED DEATH also.

“Countless are the eggs of the dragon, but not so countless as the children of the Awful Father of ten sons, who hath each ten sons.

“And the children of the White Death shall crush the eggs of the dragon; and thereat the Klan is glad, and the Klan claps its hands!

“Hail to the Ku-Klux Klan!”

The voice of the Grand Cyclops ceased. In the silence the Arch Death called aloud:

“Speak once again, Brother; for thou art near a brother, and tell me what is the mysterious Klan, the body of the Right Hand and of the Left Hand?”

And I spoke boldly and answered; for in my heart I felt the truth. I said:

“The Klan is the holy company of the true men of north and south who work in silence and in secret, and do most where the negro leagues have their lodges most frequent. And I see the Awful White-Arch Death is the great head of the order. The ten Red Deaths are the chiefs of the ten principal Dens; and each of these is divided into ten chapters, none of which know the officers or meeting-places of the others. And I understand that a Red Death may preside at his own Den, or at that of any other Red Death; but that these lesser Dens know not who is the head of the order.

“Furthermore, I understand that numerous as are the negro Lodges, still more numerous do the Dens spring up around them; and that while silent itself, it causes great trepidation as

to its acts. And the mighty Starry Ku, the Conquered Klux, and the Grand Cyclops, I believe to be officers of the Royal Chapter of the Order—the Den of the White-Arch Death!”

I paused a moment. There was a murmur like the wind in the pines; and a thousand voices cried:

“Welcome, brother! For brother thou art!”

Then I said:

“I believe I am in the Royal Chapter now—even in the presence of the awful White-Arch Death. Hail! All Hail to the Ku-Klux Klan!”

“Welcome, brother!” said the voice of the White Death. “Welcome, for thou art here indeed—Behold!”

The fold fell from my eyes, and I dropped upon my knees and signed the K's above my brow.

CHAPTER VII

THE FEARFUL INITIATION.

THE clouds of luminous smoke behind the Red Death had rolled away to each side, and in the opening they left stood revealed the figure of my vision. The White-Arch Death was there with the same drapery of snowy cloth, the same bare arm, and the same uplifted sword.

Under his bare white foot was the prostrate and gigantic negro figure—the red eyes rolling, the teeth clanging together, and the long black hands grasping upward and rattling the chains.

Only the face was different, and that was covered with a white mask—the long hair and moustache of snowy hue mingling with its white flap.

But the Arch Death had the same majestic presence as in the vision; and the whole crowd of the Klan within the Den bowed their heads, and made the mystic sign of the K over their heads and upon their hearts.

Forth from the centre of the cloud, at the feet of the Arch

Death strode the Grand Cyclops. His form was shrouded in black drapery; and in the centre of the forehead of his black mask was a flaming single eye, rolling and flashing with fiery light.

Both his arms were bare, and in his hands he carried a blood-red volume, with a skull resting on the open leaves. As he passed the throne of the Red Death, the latter rose, made the sign of the K, and following behind him, both descended the steps of the throne, and stood upon the black centre-cloth. And the Red Death swung in his bare right hand the ghastly severed head.

Then the four skeletons moved from their places—the white light in their skulls gleaming and dazzling through the opening in them. Slowly, and as if of their own will, they moved to the four corners of the cloth, and there stood still.

“Brother, advance to thy initiation!” cried the Grand Cyclops.

Tremblingly I advanced on the cloth, and stood before the huge white skull.

“Kneel!” said the Red Death; and I knelt upon the three K’s, worked before the skull.

The starry Ku and the conquered Klux came upon my right hand and my left, while the Grand Cyclops and the Red Death stood before me side by side.

Once more the luminous clouds rose and rolled over the White-Arch Death, veiling him from my sight.

The starry Ku opened his cypress-draped flag, and waved it over my head, as he chanted:

“Brother, that art to be, dost thou swear by thy body, by thy blood, and by thy soul, to be a true and bloody brother of the Den of the Red Death for ever and aye! Dost thou swear by the heart of thy mother, by the soul of thy father, and by the bones of thy ancestors, to cling to the starry Ku—to honor his flag from this night and forever, and to do what thou art bid, blindly and without question—even to the damning of thy soul for ever!”

I trembled as I answered:

“I swear!”

“Mighty Arch Death! awful father of the Ku! the brother

swareth!" cried the Grand Cyclops, making the sign of the K.

"It is well. Record the oath!" said the voice from the luminous clouds.

The first of the Giant Bloodsuckers advanced to one of the skeleton lamps. He raised his gleaming sword, and plunged its sharp point deep into the bowels of the negro baby in the bony arms. The infant yelled in agony.

The teeth of the skeleton chattered; a hoarse, hellish laugh echoed through the Den, and the light in the skeleton skull was suddenly extinguished. The Grand Cyclops deposited his book upon the white skull.

The first Giant Bloodsucker advanced and handed him the dripping sword. With its point he traced some strange characters upon the page, and with every crimson line the parchment seemed to shrivel, and wreaths of light blue smoke rose from the letters. As he wrote, he spoke aloud each word he traced.

"Faara-fa-faroor-ka-Deathika-somik-kee-Khuu-Baa-Ku-Ku!"

"It is done, O Father! O Awful White-Arch Death, the oath is recorded," said the Cyclops.

"It is well! Let him sign!" the voice from the smoke said.

The Cyclops handed me the bloody sword and pointed to the page.

With trembling hand I signed a mark, and the blue smoke rose in a puff, and a hot blue flame ran up the blade and scorched me till I dropped the sword with a cry.

Once more the hoarse, fearful laugh echoed through the cave, the dead bones clanged and rattled, and the Grand Cyclops called:

"He hath signed!"

And the voice from the cloud cried:

"It is well. Let him give the bloody kiss of Ku."

Then the Red Death swung three times in air the ghastly severed head he held, as if it were a censer, and at each swing streams of blood from the open arteries flew over me and filled my hair and my eyes. Then he held the grinning face close to mine, and whispered in a hiss:

"Kiss the lips of the victim of the Ku! Kiss in sign of deadly hate!"

I loathed the act, I turned giddy and faint; but somehow my lips were pressed to the bloated, frothy tongue protruding from the head.

Once more the horrid laugh arose, ghastlier and more fearful than ever. Once more the bones rattled, and the voice from the cloud said :

“Behold the perfect brother of the Ku !”

“Welcome, brother,” the Cyclops cried, and the whole assembly echoed :

“Welcome, brother! Hail to the perfect brother of the Ku !” And then a sound as of ten thousand mighty chicken-cocks arose, clucking and crowing, as the whole Den cried :

“Hail to the *Ku-Ku !—Ku-Ku !—Ku-Ku !*”

Then a wild chorus broke out. The Giant Bloodsuckers seized the thigh-bones, and beat wildly upon the skeletons like huge drums, the Cyclops beat his book upon the huge skull, and the whole Klan sang :

“Steel of North cuts Radical Plan—
Bloody and swift is the Ku-Klux Klan !”

And again I noticed the *Ku-Klux Klan* sounded like the crowing of a thousand roosters.

“*Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux !*” and then a sharp, high “*Kl-a-a-n !*”

Then the conquered Klux opened his banner, and waved it over me, chanting :

“Brother that is to be, dost thou swear to love the Klux, to honor none but the Klux, and to obey blindly—even to the murder of the whole negro race, to the drinking of negro blood, and to the feeding on the flesh of live ebo-shins? And dost thou swear this, or let thy soul perish in flames forever?”

Breathless and giddy, I gasped :

“I swear !”

“Awful Father! he hath sworn !” said the Klux.

“’Tis well. Let the oath be recorded !” answered the White-Arch Death from the cloud.

The second Giant Bloodsucker advanced, plunged his sword into the second negro baby. A wilder yell of infant torture rose,

and the light in the second grinning skull-lamp went suddenly out. The Klux took the sword, and handed it to the Cyclops, who spoke the words he wrote—

“*Negroke—kill—bloodikina—damnika—kel-i-nigge—Hell-iku!* Awful White Arch, the record is here!”

“It is well. Let him sign!” came from the cloud.

Again I took the sword—again I signed the burning sign, and once more I kissed the horrible, grinning lips of the severed head.

“Hail!” the Cyclops cried. “Hail to the perfect brother of the Klux!”

Strange noises were in my ears; my head spun and my heart beat in my throat; but I heard the horrid laughter, the beating of the thigh-bones on the skeletons, while the whole Klan sang:

“No meat eat we but raw freedman—
Bloody black me for the Ku-Klux Klan—
Ku-Klux!—Ku-Klux!—Ku-Klux!”

“Quivering flesh, black blood in the pan;
Hungry and fierce is the Ku-Klux Klan!
Ku-Klux!—Ku-Klux!—Ku-Klux!”

The third Bloodsucker plunged his sword into the third negro baby, and the third skull-lamp was extinguished.

Then the Cyclops wrote, reading aloud the oath:

“I am perfect brother of the Klan—body and brains, and blood and soul—for ever and for aye—for good and for bad—even to the bottom of the lowest hell! *Negriga—Hell-ika—Deth-is—for all—Black-a-man!*”

And the voice from the cloud said once more:

“Let him sign!”

Once more I signed with the flaming sword; once more I kissed the revolting skull; and, then, sinking into a half-stupor, I heard dimly the yells of demon laughter, the wild rattling of clashing bones, and the fierce cries of, “Hail, perfect bloody brother of the Klan! Hail to the Ku! Hail to the Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux! Hail to the Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux—*Kl-a-a-n!*”

Then there was a dead stillness. The clouds of luminous smoke grew blacker; the single skull-lamp, left in the head of a skeleton, grew fainter. It was only by straining my eyes that I could see beyond the cloth I stood on, and that the whole Klan had fallen upon their faces.

“Awful Arch Death,” said the Red Death, “the brother hath sworn! I shall proceed to chant the

“*Litany of Klan.*”

"Death to the tyrant and to his tools! Fire and blood and the sharp steel to his black brother! Negrike—Hell—a!"

Then all the prostrate brothers groaned the last word—"Hella!"—and a goblin response, like the clucking of ghostly fowls, came:

"Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux Kla—an!"

"Starving we crave food, even the blood of the enemy of Klan, and even the blood of his black brother—*Fire—ika! Deth—ee!*"

"Deth-ee! Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux Kla—an!"

"Dead brothers rise for live brothers' wrongs. Dead riders ride dead horses for vengeance on black-deeds and black-leagues. Pale Death gleams on black life—*Pale—ika!*"

"Pale-ika! Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux—Ku-Klan,!"

"Live kisses Dead and love kisses Hate—Hell in life and glory in blood—red blood of black. *Tarooka—Bull—ika!*"

"Bull—ika! Ku-Klux—Ku-Klux—Ku-Klan!"

As the strange chorus ceased, the Cyclops closed the book with a clang, there was a thunderous roar through the Den, and the dark clouds opened with a dazzling white light.

The Awful Arch Death waved his gleaming sword aloft, and then struck it fiercely upon the writhing black monster under his foot. The beast howled with a terrible howl, and crawled away from the blade down the steps of the throne to where I stood.

His motion was a sinuous squirm upon his belly, and with every squirm the broken chains clanked and rattled with a hollow sound.

Slowly and with majestic motion the White-Arch Death followed the Beast, holding the wreathed flags above its head, and with the gleaming sword pointed toward its heart.

Reaching the skull the Beast ceased to move, and the White Death once more placed his bare foot upon its head. Then the thunder rumbled through the cave, the clouds rolled once more over the luminous light behind the throne, and all was dark save the single light in the skeleton's skull. All the Klan were prostrate on their faces save the three Giant Bloodsuckers, the Red Death, the Grand Cyclops, the Starry Ku, and the Conquered Klux. These knelt around the huge white skull, each one pointing his right arm upward and his left downward at angles to his body, forming of himself a giant K.

Then the White Death spoke, and his voice sounded awful in the gloom and stillness:

"Brother, the awful hour has come. The last rites are ready. Prepare!"

I closed my eyes where I knelt. My brain reeled, and I could not answer.

The White Death raised his sword on high. The Red Death seized the huge skull and turned it over, forming a vast bowl.

Then the gleaming sword descended and entered the left side of the Black Monster. As it cut the flesh, a hissing sound came up from it, and a blue flame ran licking up the blade. There followed a gush of dark blood, which fell in torrents into the white skull, while the Red Death chanted:

*"Black blood of sin and red blood of Klan, mingle, mingle.
Black blood of black sin—Run-ika!—Run-ika Ku Klux!"*

The White Death turned with solemn tread and approached the last lamp-skeleton. The negro baby in its arms squirmed fearfully, and yelled with unearthly yells.

Then the Giant Bloodsuckers raised the huge skull in their arms and held it high over the skull lamp, while the Red Death took the small skull from the closed book and held it under the black baby.

Once more the gleaming sword was raised on high. Then it entered the body of the black child with a fierce hiss—and the stillness of death was on the Klan. Drop by drop the red blood fell into the skull, and at every drop a puff of fœtid, suffocating smoke rose from the vessel.

And the Red Death chanted:

Old black blood of old black sin, and young red blood of young black sin—mingle, mingle.

Run-ika, Run-ika! Ku-Klux! Ku-Klux!"

Singing this ghastly chant he raised the skull and poured the red blood into the large skull over the lamp. Then the Arch Death moved slowly round the circle—followed in order by the Starry Ku, the Conquered Klux, the Grand Cyclops, and the Red Death. Each one took up a thigh-bone from the mat, and then they moved slowly round and round the skull-cauldron over the lamp. As they moved, they all chanted low:

"Boil-ika, bubblika—Hellika hot!
Boil-ika, negrika—Devila pot.
Boil black blood of big black man—
Drinka hotta blood—Ku-Klux Klan!"

Still moving round the pot and chanting, the White-Arch Death broke off leaves of the Olive that wreathed the flags, and threw them into the boiling blood. Then he stirred them with a thigh-bone. The Starry Ku and the Klux threw in

leaves of Cypress and Willow from their flags—all stirring the hissing mass. Then they stopped.

The White Death stood upon the centre K worked upon the cloth. On the right hand K stood the Starry Ku; on the left, the Conquered Klux.

The Giant Bloodsuckers removed the awful pot and placed it before the White Death.

The last skull-lamp went out, and all was darkness save a little glow from the boiling fluid.

Then the Red Death chanted:

“Brother, prepare, for the soup is done—
Blood of the old and young have run:
Plunge in thy right arm far as you can—
Wish in the oath of the Ku-Klux Klan!”

One of the giants seized my arm, tore the sleeve away, and plunged my arm into the bubbling fluid. *It was icy cold!*

I shuddered and groaned with the horrible chill; and a half-suppressed murmur came from the brothers on the mat:

“Whita right-ika baboon—na negrika—Hellika hot!”

And from every hidden face in the Klan, answered the chorus:

“*Hellika—Hot!*”

Then the Grand Cyclops took the small skull and dipped it full of the fluid. This he handed to the Arch Death, who made over it three times the sign of the K. Then the Red Death advanced, and kneeling before the Arch Death, dipped his three red locks of hair into the bowl. Then turning, he pressed the bloody right lock upon my right eye, the left lock upon my left eye, and the centre lock upon my nose—making at each pressure the sign of the K. As he signed each K the White-Arch Death said:

“Be bold, be vigilant! See nothing, smell nothing, but the hated race! *Negrika Dethee! Hellika—Hot!*”

And the many voices murmured, *Hellika—Hot!* Then the starry Ku and the conquered Klux advanced; and, kneeling, dipped their single locks into the bowl. Each advanced, and making the sign of the K, pressed a lock against my ear—the Ku against the right ear, the Klux against the left. And the White-Arch Death said:

“Be bold, be vigilant! Hear nothing—list nothing—but the word to slay; and spare not the hated race. *Negrika, dethee! Hellika—Hot!*”

And once more the murmur rose from the thousand tongues, “*Hellika—Hot!*”

Then the Arch-White Death approached, and handed me the horrid cup, making the sign of the K three times.

“Drink—drink deep! Pledge the Klan in the Bloody Goblet, and be a perfect brother of the Bloody Ku-Klux Klan!”

I placed the fearful mixture to my lips. It tasted strong, but not unpleasant. I swallowed one mouthful! It seemed to warm my very heart. It tingled in my throat, and warmed my stomach. I closed my eyes, and drained the cup.

It fell from my hand. I stretched upon the mat. Even then I heard the fearful refrain:

“Hellika—hot! Hellika—Hot!

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LIST OF DOOM.

WHEN I opened my eyes, after the draught, the White Death was invisible; the Red Death sat upon his throne—the Ku and the Klux were by his side, as before, and the white skull was grinning empty, as if it had not been touched. Only the skeleton lamps were changed; and they stood at the four corners of the mat, with their fires out.

There was no light, but a little glow from the clouds behind the Red Death. Out of these the White Death spoke:

“Brother, read the List of Doom.”

And forth from the cloudy curtain came the voice of the Grand Cyclops:

“*Northica—Thaddica Ste. Bigga Raddi-kalla.* Di-deddee—First on the List of Doom: for many as the sands are the sins of his hate. He dieth the dog’s death. It is written he lives not past the 29th Kino of De-meberraka, of the 18th Lika Bin-overry.

The Cyclops paused. The Arch Death spoke from the cloud:

“Rise, chosen instrument of the Bloody Ku! Avenger on Thaddikka Ste.—appear!”

Swift up sprang a prostrate brother. He stepped on the cloth, held aloft in his bare right arm a gleaming dagger.

“Ready, awful White-Arch Death,” he cried. Then prostrating his forehead on the white skull, he returned silently to his place.

The Cyclops read again:

“*Benika—Effe—But. Spooney-ka,* and nearly as miserable *Charlika—Some-nerry-a-pumpkina.* Second and third on the List of Doom, for too creeping to live are the toads of the mire and the crawling maggots in the festering body of Sam. To these *Dethika cruelle* on the 4th *Massime* of the 18th *Balrooka.*”

“Rise, appointed avenger!” said the Arch Death. “Punisher of women wrongers—appear!”

In the light of the luminous cloud gleamed a delicate, snow-white arm. The hand was slender enough for a female's. I felt sure it was a woman's; and it held a huge needle.

"Ready for work, awful White Death!" the avenger said, and retired, after bowing on the skull.

And the voice of the Cyclops said:

"*Brutale Brouniloa — Chee-Govinorka! Hangee-di-di- Hangee deade. Aprilo firtee—nunner savika!*"

"Rise, chosen avenger of the Bloody Klux!" said the Arch Death. "Agent of Death for Brouniloa—appear!"

Up sprang a silent brother. Wildly he waved a hempen noose; then he sank upon his face once more.

And again the Grand Cyclops spoke from the cloud:

"*Stantonika Warrman—Drinka dethee Hotta Hellica cuppa —Drinka the 2d masspallita Novo—1868.*"

Silently and without waiting the call, a silver goblet appeared in the outstretched hand of a brother. From its top rose poisonous and deadly fumes. To smell them was to faint—none could drink and live.

The arm poured a few drops of the fluid upon the skull. It smoked and simmered there, and then all was still.

Once more the Cyclops spoke:

"Latest upon the list of Doom—written in letters of hate for his hate to the Ku-Klux Klan:

Georgika Generale, Brother black to the Starry Ku—badde hatika Klan—kille—dethee—soon. Hellika—Hot! Hot!"

And the voice of the White Death called from the cloud:

"Avenger of the Klan! Chosen instrument of the *dethika Mede—Rise—Appear!*"

There was dead silence. None rose. The gloom grew deeper.

"They know not, Awful Father!" cried the Red Death.

Then my heart leapt.

"Hail! Awful White Death," I cried. "I know the victim. I have read his proclamation in the New York *Herald*. I hate him with my body and my bones! I will be the avenger. I swear by—!"

"Swear not," said the awful voice. "Before thou art fit to become a chosen instrument, thou must see the full horrors that await thee. Canst thou stand the fearful mysteries veiled behind the mirror of Destiny?"

"I can try," I answered.

"The fearful mysteries thou hast seen are as nothing. No horror thou hast felt is as a drop of the sea compared to the Black Terror thou wilt behold in the mirror of Destiny. Canst thou sustain the trial?"

And again I answered:

"I will try."

The White-Arch Death stepped through the cloudy curtain. He descended the steps into the darkness of the Den, followed by the Red Death and the Grand Cyclops. He stopped before me and said:

"Before thou seest the terrible Mirror of Destiny, thou must receive the holy K of Blood. Bare thy heart!"

I opened my breast.

With a swift motion the Arch Death cut a deep K just over my heart. The blood dropped slowly from the wound.

"Record the oath, Brother Grand Cyclops, and thou, Brother Red Death, prepare the seal!"

The Cyclops took from behind his ear a huge jet-black pen. I saw it was made from the leg-bone of a negro. The Red Death struck the skull of a skeleton lamp with his sword. The blue fire blazed up again, and he placed the blade within the flame, and held it there.

The Cyclops dipped his pen in the blood that flowed from my wound, and wrote in the book, as he spoke the oath:

"I swear by the soul of my father and the bones of my ancestors; I swear by my brains and my blood; by my liver and my soul; by my lungs and my stomach—body, blood, and soul, that I will not reveal what I see in the Mirror of Fate! And if I reveal one sight I there see, may I suffer it all. *Hellika!*"

"Dost thou swear?"

"I swear."

"Sign!"

I seized the pen, and, in my own blood, wrote my name under the terrible oath.

"Brother Red Death, seal the bond!"

The Red Death moved his sword from the skeleton forge. I saw the point was white-hot; and with that he seared the edges of the wound, and left a bubbling, broiling, livid K over my heart.

"'Tis finished!" cried the White Death. "Behold!"

The thunder rolled. The curtain of clouds grew luminous—dazzling—unbearably bright. They rolled slowly apart—and there was—

* * * * *

O Heaven! I cannot tell the fearful sight. Yet I must try. I looked and saw—I—I saw—

* * * * *

Down devils! Ha! ha! I WILL tell. There, amid the squirming, fearful—shapes of— Ha! ha!—I saw the —! Yes! I DID see the horrible —! O Death! Ha!

* * * * *

