

**THE
DEATH OF GRIMALDI,**

OR THE
Fatal Secret;

THE INTERESTING TALE
ON WHICH IS FOUNDED THE TRAGEDY OF
FAZIO,

Now performing at the Theatre Royal Covent Garden.

“The venom clamours of a jealous woman
Poison more deadly than a mad dog’s tooth.”

SHAKSPEARE.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,
THE EXTRAORDINARY NARRATIVE
OF THE
SPECTRE OF SALON.

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.”

SHAKSPEARE.

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THE
DEATH OF GIRMALDI.

OR, THE
FATAL SECRET

DURING the civil wars of Genoa, an Italian, named Grimaldi, fled to Pisa, Money was the only object in the universe that could boast of his regard or friendship. He maintained that it was right to pursue fortune in any way, and to purchase it at any price whatever; and that people need be ashamed only of those means which happen to fail. It was a common saying with him, that those who have plenty of money are troubled with few qualms of conscience.

Such principles could not fail to lead him into the high road to wealth. He began at a very early age to lay the foundation of his fortune, and even in his youth he acquired the appellation of miser. With the talent of obtaining riches, he also possessed the rare qualification of keeping them. He lived quite alone, having neither dog nor cat in his house, because he would have been obliged to maintain them. For the same reason he kept no servant, as then he had no wages to pay. He was at the same time in perpetual fear of being plundered of his immense wealth; and robbery and theft were, in his opinion, crimes of a far deeper dye than murder or parricide. He was an object of universal detestation and contempt, but when he received an affront, he went home, and a look at his beloved hoard afforded abundant consolation.

The frugality of his meals, and the wretchedness of his attire, did not deceive the public in respect to his circumstances. These expedients of misers seldom answer the purpose for which they were designed. The cloak of indigence under which they hope to conceal their wealth often serves only to give others a higher opinion of their riches, and their apparent poverty becomes a sign that is hung out to invite thieves to enter.

One evening, when he had supped in company, but not at home, as may easily be imagined, he set out alone, and at a very late hour, to return to his habitation. By the way he was attacked by one of those lurking assassins, formerly so numerous in the cities of Italy. Grimaldi's breast was deeply pierced with a dagger, but he had still strength enough to enable him to escape from the murderer by flight. At this moment a most tremendous storm came on. Exhausted by his wound, and overcome by terror and the inclemency of the weather, Grimaldi entered a goldsmith's shop, which happened to be still open.

Fazio's efforts, like those of Grimaldi, were directed to the attainment of wealth, but he pursued a much more precarious way than usury. He was engaged in seeking the philosopher's stone. This evening he was making a great experiment, and had left his shop open on purpose to moderate the heat proceeding from his furnace.

With hasty steps Grimaldi entered. Fazio, the goldsmith, knew him, and asked what brought him out so late, and in such boisterous weather—"Alas!" sighed Grimaldi, "I am wounded!"—and instantly sunk into a chair—and expired.

The alarm of Fazio may be more easily conceived than described. He hastily tore open his clothes that he might breathe more freely, and tried every means he could think of to restore him to life, but in vain. Fazio then examined the body, and discovered the fatal wound in his breast. The wound had closed in such a manner, that the blood, unable to find a passage, had suffocated the unfortunate Grimaldi.

This extraordinary circumstance threw Fazio into the utmost perplexity. His neighbours were asleep, or had shut themselves up in their houses on account of the tempestuous weather. He had nobody at home but himself; his wife and two children were gone to his father's, whose death was hourly expected.

A bold idea suddenly rushed into his mind, but under all the circumstances of the case, it seemed extremely easy of execution. He was sure no one had seen Grimaldi enter his shop. The continuance of the rain and of the storm took from every person the inclination to look out of the window. On the other hand, Fazio was aware that if he made known Grimaldi's death, he should not himself escape suspicion. After maturely considering the affair, he immediately shut up his shop, and resolved to turn this adventure to his advantage; and, in his love of transformation, to try whether he could not change bad fortune into good, as he had before attempted to convert his lead into gold or silver.

Fazio either knew or suspected that Grimaldi was rich. He began to search his pockets, and found in them some money, and a large bunch of keys. This, thought he, is evidently a gift of heaven; the hand of providence is manifest in this event. That such a dreadful storm should take place to-night—that my shop should be open at so late an hour—that Grimaldi should be mortally wounded, and expire in my chair—are circumstances which could happen without its particular direction. He has no relation—perhaps not even a friend. Why should not one stranger be as good as another stranger? Fazio may as well be his heir as any one else. Nay, in fact, I have the best right to his property: had it not been for me he would have died in the street, and have been exposed to the rain all night. Who knows but that he came into my shop with the intention of making me his heir? His visit supplies the place of a will.—I will inherit his property in silence; that will be the most prudent, and the safest way; for were I to relate the whole affair to the magistrates they would not believe me. Grimaldi's corpse is in my house, and every body would look upon me as his murderer—without the possibility of proving my innocence. If I bury him without further ceremony, no suspicion can attach itself to me, because nobody knows any thing of the matter; and, in truth, it is not difficult to chuse between riches and the scaffold. I have at length found the philosopher's stone, which I have been so long in search of—I have found it without the aid of fluxes, furnaces, and crucibles.

Providing himself with a dark lanthorn, he proceeded to the execution of his design. The rain descended in torrents, and the thunder rolled most awfully, but Fazio neither felt the one nor heard the other; his whole soul was engaged with the thoughts of Grimaldi's treasures.

He tried the keys, opened the door, and went onward to the apartment in which Grimaldi lived. It was not large, but excellently well secured, having many more locks than doors. It may easily be conceived what was the first object of his search. Every key on the bunch was successively and rapidly applied to the desk, and he almost began to despair of being enabled to open it, for it had four or five locks on the outside, exclusive of those within. At length he effected his purpose. He found a small box full of gold rings, bracelets, and other valuables; and near it four bags, on each of which he read, with transport, the words—*Three thousand gold ducats!*

Trembling with joy, he seized the bags, but left the jewels untouched, as they might have led to a discovery. This done, as he was a lover of order, he put every thing exactly in its former position, locked up every thing as he found it, and returned home with his load, without being met or seen by a single creature.

The first thing he did was to convey his bags to a place of safety, and next to dispose of the body of the deceased. He lifted it up with as much ease as a feather, for the mere touch of the bags had communicated to him a degree of strength at which he himself could not help being astonished. He carried Grimaldi into his cellar, and dug a deep hole, in which he deposited him, with all his keys and clothes. This grave he covered with such care, that nobody could have discovered the least trace of what he had been doing.

Having accomplished this business, Fazio hastened to his room, not so much to count the money, as to feast his eyes with the sight of it. He found the number of pieces perfectly correct; not one was wanting; but he was dazzled with the magnitude of the sum. He first counted it, and then weighed it; his transports increased every moment. He conveyed the whole heap to a secret closet, burned the bags, and never took his eyes off them till they were consumed to the last atom; on which he scattered the ashes into air, for fear even they might betray him. At length he retired to rest, for he was greatly exhausted by his exertions and his excess of joy.

Some days afterwards, as nothing was seen or heard of Grimaldi, the magistrates sent proper persons to break open his house and apartments. They were surprised to find no traces of the master, but were still more astonished to discover no ready money.

Three months had now elapsed, and no tidings were heard of Grimaldi. As soon as Fazio remarked that his sudden disappearance ceased to be the subject of conversation, he began to drop obscure hints respecting his chemical discoveries. Some time afterwards, he even began to give his acquaintance to understand that he had produced a bar of gold. They laughed at him to his face, knowing how often he had been deceived in his operations. This time, however, Fazio steadily adhered to his assertion, prudently observing a gradation in his expressions of joy; and at length announced his intention of making a journey to France, to turn his bullion into money.

In order to secure himself the more completely from suspicion, he pretended to be in want of money for the journey, and accordingly borrowed one hundred florins on the security of a farm which had not yet evaporated in the smoke of his chemical researches. Half of this sum he kept himself, and gave the other to his wife, to whom he at the same time announced his intention of departing immediately. This intelligence affected her extremely. She feared it was the utter ruin of his circumstances that induced him to quit his country: she fancied she should never see him any more, and that she, with her two children, would soon be reduced to the lowest state of poverty and distress. She begged, she conjured him to stay—she had recourse to every expedient, both to reproaches and tears. She spoke with such warmth and affection, that Fazio, no longer proof against her intreaties, could not help communicating the secret, which he had previously determined to keep locked within his own breast as long as he lived. He took her by the hand, conducted her to the closet, related to her every particular connected with his extraordinary adventure with Grimaldi, and showed her his money, adding—“Have you now any doubt respecting the bar of gold?”

The reader may conceive the transports of Valentia, the wife of Fazio: she threw herself into his arms, and her thanks and caresses were now as warm as her reproaches and objections had before been violent. Numberless plans of future happiness and splendour were now formed, and immediate preparation made for his journey. On the day fixed for his departure, however, Valentia, who, as may easily be imagined, had been enjoined by Fazio to observe the strictest secrecy, did not fail to join with the whole family in opposing his journey, as she did before. She appeared the picture of despair; she lavished prayers and intreaties, accompanied with floods of tears, while her heart was the abode of joy. Fazio was looked upon as a fool—the whole city made him the butt of their ridicule, and he, in his turn, laughed at the whole city.

While he was on the way to Marseilles, his wife who remained at Pisa, continued to act the part she had assumed. She was constantly talking of her poverty, though her husband had left her much more than sufficient to supply all her wants during his absence. Every body pitied her condition, while she had no other sorrow than what she thought it necessary to affect.

Fazio exchanged his gold for good bills on opulent bankers at Pisa, on which he wrote to his wife that he had sold his bars, and was on his way home. This letter Valentia showed to her relations and acquaintance, and all who chose to read it. Every body was thrown into the utmost astonishment. Most still doubted of the reality of Fazio's good fortune, when he himself arrived at Pisa.

He appeared with an air of triumph, and related to every body the success which had crowned his perseverance; not forgetting to add that his bars had been tried, and proved to be

genuine gold, of the best quality. These verbal testimonies of his good fortune he supported by irrefragable evidence, and received of his banker nine thousand gold dollars, in hard cash. A proof of this kind silenced all doubts and objections; his story was related from house to house throughout the city, and his profound knowledge in the mysterious science of the transformation of metals was universally extolled. The same man who, a few months before, had been declared a downright fool, was now exalted by the very same people to the rank of a philosopher; and Fazio enjoyed the twofold gratification of being honoured for his wealth and his learning.

He had now no farther occasion to conceal his opulence, and enjoyed it to his satisfaction. He discharged the mortgages upon his farm, purchased a title at Rome, in order to unite rank with riches, bought a magnificent house and a couple of villas, and placed the remainder of his money in the hands of a rich merchant, for which he received ten per cent interest.

He now kept two men servants, two maids, and according to the custom of the age, two saddle-horses, one for his own use, and the other for his wife. Thus both enjoyed the pleasure of knowing they were rich, a pleasure which is more keenly felt by those who have languished in poverty. Valentia, who was now too fine a lady to superintend her domestic concerns herself, took into her house an old and ugly female, together with her daughter, who was young and handsome.

Fazio, in order to live in every respect on a footing with a gentleman, the fashionables of Pisa being much the same as those of other large cities, resolved to keep a mistress. He cast his eyes on the daughter of the old woman, who was a distant relation of his wife. Adelaide was in the age of love and coquetry, when one of these is more than sufficient to lead a young female into folly. She lent a willing ear to Fazio, and the connexion between them soon became so apparent, that he embroiled himself with his wife. Before Valentia discovered or obtained positive proofs of his infidelity, Fazio had squandered a considerable sum upon his beloved Adelaide.

Valentia was very jealous of her rights, and she was galled to see them in the hands of another. The seeds of discord were sown betwixt them. Valentia naturally grew peevish, and Adelaide saucy. One day they had such a violent quarrel, that Valentia turned the old housekeeper and her daughter out of doors. Fazio, on his return home, was highly incensed at this usage, which only served to strengthen his passion for Adelaide, for whom he immediately hired a convenient lodging. Valentia, who was naturally of an extremely violent temper, could no longer restrain her rage.

Fazio, having tried in vain all possible means to sooth or to deceive her, repaired to his country house, and sent for Adelaide thither. On hearing this intelligence, Valentia, who, in the explosion of her jealousy was more like a fiend than a woman, conceived the most atrocious design. Without thinking a moment on the fatal consequences with which such a step would infallibly be attended, she resolved to accuse her husband before the magistrates as the murderer of Grimaldi. This horrible idea she immediately put into execution, and Fazio, who was enjoying delicious moments with his mistress, little dreamt of the storm that was gathering over his head.

The magistrate having examined Valentia respecting all the circumstances of the case, sent people to dig in Fazio's cellar. The relics of Grimaldi were discovered, and the wretched Fazio was torn from Adelaide's arms, and conveyed to a loathsome dungeon. He, at first, denied every thing; but on being confronted with his wife, who was produced as his accuser, he exclaimed "Wretch, had I loved you less you would not have known my FATAL SECRET; out of affection for you I was weak, and you have brought me to this situation."

The torture, so dangerous to persons unjustly accused, extorted from the unfortunate Fazio a confession of all that he had done, as well as what he had not done. He acknowledged he had murdered Grimaldi, though innocent of the crime. The sentence passed upon him was, that his property should be confiscated, and himself suffer a public death upon a scaffold.

Valentia, as soon as she was dismissed, returned to her house, and to her great astonishment, found it occupied by the officers of justice, who had even driven her children from their home. This new misfortune was sufficient to plunge her into the lowest depth of despair—Her heart was

already wrung with remorse; for as soon as her revenge was gratified, her eyes were opened, and she saw all the indiscreet precipitation of her conduct, and was fully conscious of the terrible abyss of misery in which she had involved herself. Her soul was racked with anguish and remorse. She ran about with dishevelled hair, and in a state bordering on distraction, implored the judges to set at liberty her husband, whom she herself had given over to the axe of the executioner. The sight of her distressed children bitterly augmented the agony of her conscience.

This melancholy affair was the subject of general conversation. Valentia, abhorred by herself, enjoyed not even the consolation of exciting pity.—She was hated and avoided as a ravening beast, by both relations and acquaintance.

Fazio, meanwhile fell a victim to the cruel fate she had prepared for him. He was conducted through the principal streets to the place of execution. He mounted the scaffold with great fortitude, protested his innocence, and cursed the fatal jealousy of his wife. The sentence of the law was executed, and his body, as usual in such cases, was exhibited on the scaffold to the populace. Rage and despair in the mean time instigated Valentia to the most horrible of all deeds. Taking her two children by the hand, she drew them hastily along to the place of execution. She rushed through the crowd, who made way for her, and loaded her with execrations.

But Valentia heard them not. She reached the foot of the scaffold. With her children she ascended the fatal steps, as if for the purpose of once more embracing the corpse of her husband. Valentia led her children close to the bleeding body, and commanded them to embrace their dead father; at this sight, and at the cries of the wretched children, all the spectators melted into tears. But the maddened mother, having suddenly pierced the bosom of one with a dagger, rushed upon the other and extended him lifeless beside his brother. A general cry of horror rent the air. The people hastened to secure her; but she had already stabbed herself with the same dagger, and sunk lifeless on the bodies of her husband and children.

The sight of the two murdered children, and of the mother swimming in her blood, filled the **bo oms** of all the by-standers with mingled sentiments of pity and abhorrence. Astonishment and dejection took possession of the minds of all the inhabitants of Pisa; and the whole city wore the appearance of some general public calamity. They traversed the streets in gloomy silence; and fresh crowds were continually thronging to the scaffold, where the blood of the innocent children was mingled with that of the unhappy parents. Even the most obdurate hearts were not proof against the rising emotions of compassion.

The judges, moved with pity, permitted the family to inter the bodies of the parents out of the city. The two children were buried in the church of St. Catherine. The tradition of this melancholy catastrophe has been preserved to this day at Pisa, where the unhappy sufferers are still spoken of with sympathy.

THE
SPECTRE OF SALON.

OUR readers may attach what credit they please to the following history; but of this they may be assured, that, at the time it happened, it excited a general interest, and was, by most, implicitly believed; and that if any deception was practised, it was, at least, contrived with such subtlety as completely to escape detection, if not suspicion.

The little town of Salon, in Provence, which boasts of being the birth-place of Nostradamus, was in April, 1697, the first scene of the present history.

An apparition, which many people took to be no other than the ghost of Nostradamus himself, appeared to a private individual of that town, and threw him into not a little perplexity. It charged him in the first place, on pain of death, to observe the most inviolable silence respecting what it was going to communicate, and then commanded him, in its name, to demand a letter of recommendation from the intendant of the province, which should enable him, on his arrival at Versailles, to obtain a private audience of the king.

“What you are to say to the king,” continued the spectre, “you are not to know till the day before your arrival at court, when I will appear to you again, and give you the necessary instructions; but forget not that your life depends on the secrecy which I strictly enjoin you to observe, respecting what has passed between us, with every body except the intendant.”

With these words the spectre vanished, and left the poor man half dead with fear. Scarcely had he recovered himself, when his wife entered; and, observing his uneasiness, inquired the cause. The threats of the ghost, however, had made far too powerful an impression for her to obtain any satisfactory answer.

The evasions of the man, however, excited her curiosity still more, and the poor man, that he might have peace, yielded to her incessant importunity, and was at length weak enough to reveal the whole matter, and the next moment he paid for his indiscretion with his life.

The woman was exceedingly affrighted by this dreadful and unexpected catastrophe, but persuaded herself that what had happened to her husband was merely the effect of an imagination confused by a dream, and thought fit, for her own sake as well as out of regard for the memory of her deceased husband, to communicate the secret to none but a few relatives and friends.

It so happened, however, that the same visitor appeared to another inhabitant of the town, who had also the imprudence to disclose it to his brother, and was punished in a similar manner by sudden death. These two extraordinary incidents now became the subject of general conversation, not only at Salon, but throughout the whole country for more than sixty miles round.

In a few days the same spectre appeared to a blacksmith, living at the distance of only two houses from the persons who had died so suddenly. Rendered wiser by the misfortunes of his neighbours, he delayed not a moment to repair to the intendant. It was not without difficulty that he obtained the private audience directed by the ghost, and was treated as a man deranged in his intellects.

“I can easily conceive,” replied the smith, who was a sensible man, and known for such at Salon, “that the part I am acting must appear highly ludicrous in your excellency’s eyes; but if you will please to order your deputy to make inquiries concerning the sudden death of two inhabitants of Salon, who had received the same commission as I have, I flatter myself your excellency will send for me before the expiration of a week.”

An investigation having been made into the circumstances attending the death of the two persons alluded to by Francois Michel, having been made, he was actually sent for by the intendant, who now listened to his story with much greater attention than before, and after furnishing him with

dispatches to M. de Baobesieux, the minister and secretary of state for Provence, he supplied him with money sufficient to defray his expenses, and wished him a prosperous journey.

The intendant, apprehensive that so young a minister as M. Baobesieux might accuse him of too great credulity, and give the court a subject of laughter at his expense, accompanied the dispatches not only with the documents of the examination instituted by his deputy at Salon, but also annexed the certificate of the lieutenant of justice at the same place, properly attested and subscribed by all the officers.

Michel arrived in safety at Versailles, and was not a little perplexed as to what he should say to the minister, because the ghost had not yet appeared to him again, according to its promise. The very same night, however, the spectre threw open the curtains of his bed, desired him to be of good cheer, and told him word for word the message he was to deliver to the minister, and also what he was to say to the king, and to him alone.

“You will have,” it continued, “many difficulties to encounter, to obtain this private audience; but be not deterred, and beware of suffering your secret to be drawn from you by the minister, or any other person, as instant death would be the inevitable consequence.”

The minister, as may easily be imagined, did his utmost to get at the bottom of the secret, which the smith firmly refused to reveal, but observed that, to convince him what he had to communicate was no idle tale, he might tell his majesty, in his name, that he had seen the ghost himself, at the last hunt at Fontainebleau; that his horse had taken fright at it, and started aside; but that as the apparition had staid but a moment, his majesty had regarded it as a deception of the eye, and had taken no further notice of it.

This last circumstance struck the minister, and he now thought it his duty to inform the king of the smith’s arrival at Versailles, and the extraordinary business which had brought him thither—but what was his astonishment, when, after a moment’s pause, the monarch desired to speak with him immediately, in private.

What passed at this singular interview was never made public. All that ever transpired on the subject is, that the smith afterwards remained three or four days at court, and that he publicly took leave of the king, with his consent, when he was going out a hunting.

It is asserted that on this occasion the duke de Duras said aloud—

“Sire, if your majesty had not expressly commanded me to permit this man to approach you, I should never have allowed him, for he is certainly a madman.”

The king with a smile replied—“Dear Duras, how falsely do we often judge of our fellow creatures! He is more sensible than you, and many others, may suppose.”

These words made a deep impression. The courtiers used every endeavour, but in vain, to discover the subject of the smith’s interviews with the king and the minister Baobesieux.

The people, ever credulous, and consequently partial to the wonderful, imagined that the taxes occasioned by the long and expensive wars were the real motives of them, and hoped for a speedy alleviation of their burthens; but they continued till the peace.

The visionary, on leaving the king, returned to his own province. He was supplied with money by the minister, and was commanded to keep his errand a profound secret.

Roulet, one of the first artists of the age, designed and engraved a portrait of this smith. The face was that of a man between thirty-five and forty years of age; with an honest, open, though somewhat pensive countenance, and exhibiting what the French term a *phisionomie de caractere*.

FINIS.

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