ning up and down them.

There could be no mistake. The object was a woman, and her garments were in tatters. We could not hear a sound.

I looked round at my wife and the servants. They saw this weird object as distinctly as myself. It was more like a gigantic bat than a human being; and yet that it was a woman we could not doubt, for the arms were now and then thrown above the head in wild gesticulation, and at moments a profile was presented, and then we saw, or thought we saw, long flapping hair unbound.

"I must go back to the ladder," said I. "You remain where you are, watching."

"Oh, Edward, not alone!" pleaded my wife.

"My dear, who is to go with me?"

I went. I had left the back door unlocked, and I ascended the staircase and entered the passage. Again I saw the shadow flicker past the moonlit patch on the wall opposite the window.

I ascended the ladder and opened the casement.

Then I heard the clock in the hall strike one.

I heaved myself up to the sill with great labour and endeavoured to thrust my short body through the window when I heard feet on the stairs, and next moment my wife's voice from below, at the foot of the ladder. "Oh, Edward, Edward! please do not go out there again. It has vanished, all at once. There is nothing there now to be seen."

I returned, touched the ladder tentatively with my feet, refastened the window, and descended, perhaps inelegantly. I then went down with my wife, and with her returned up the bank to the spot where stood clustered our servants.

They had seen nothing further, and although I remained on the spot watching for half an hour I saw nothing more.

The maids were too frightened to go to bed, and so agreed to sit up in the kitchen for the rest of the night by a good fire, and I gave them a bottle of sherry to mull and make themselves comfortable upon and to help them to recover their courage.

Although I went to bed I could not sleep. I was completely baffled by what I had seen. I could in no way explain what the object was and how it had left the leads.

Next day I sent for the village mason and asked him to set a long ladder against the well head of the fall pipe, and examine the valley between the gables. At the same time I would mount to the little window and contemplate proceedings through that.

The man had to send for a ladder sufficiently long, and that occupied some time. However, at length he had it planted, and then mounted. When he approached the dormer window

"Give me a hand," said I, "and haul me up; I would like to satisfy myself with my own eyes, that there is no other means of geting upon or leaving the leads."

He took me under both shoulders, and heaved me out, and I stood with him in the broad lead gutter.

"There's no other opening whatever," said he, "and Lord love you, sir, I believe that what you saw was no more than this," and he pointed to a branch of a noble cedar that grew hard by the west side of the house.

"I warrant, sir," said he, "that what you saw was this here bough as has been carried by a storm and thrown here—and the wind last night swept it up and down the leads."

"But was there any wind?" I asked. "I do not remember that there was."

"I can't say," said he; "before twelve o'clock I was fast asleep, and it might have blown a gale and I hear nothing of it."

"I suppose there must have been some wind," said I, "and that I was too surprised, and—the women too frightened, to observe it," I laughed. "So this marvellous spectral phenomen receives a very prosaic and natural explanation. Mason, throw down the bough, and we will burn it to-night."

The branch was cast over the ledge, and fell at the back of the house. I left the leads, descended, and going out, picked up the cedar branch, brought it into the hall, summoned the servants, and said, derisively—"Here is an illustration of the way in which weak minded women get scared. Now we will burn the burglar or ghost that we saw. It turns out to be nothing but this branch, blown up and down the leads by the wind."

"But, Edward," said my wife, "there was not a breath stirring."

"There must have been. Only where we were we were sheltered, and did not observe it. Aloft, it blew across the roofs, and formed an eddy that caught the broken bough, lifted it, carried it first one way, then spun it round and carried it the reverse way. In fact the wind between the two roofs assumed a spiral movement. I hope now you are all satisfied. I am."

So the bough was burnt, and our fears—I mean those of the females, were allayed.

In the evening, after dinner, as I sat with my wife, she said to me, "Half a bottle would have been enough, Edward. Indeed, I think half a bottle was too much; you should not give the girls a liking for sherry, it may lead to bad results. If it had been elderberry wine that would have been different."

"But there is no elderberry wine in the house," I objected.

"Well, I hope no harm will come of it, but I greatly mistrust—"

"Please, sir, it's there again."

The parlour maid with a blanched face was at the door.

"Nonsense," said I, "we burnt it."

"This comes of the sherry," observed my wife. "They will be seeing ghosts every night."

"But, my dear, you saw it as well as myself!"

I rose, my wife followed, and we went to the landing as before, and sure enough, against the patch of moonlight cast through the window in the roof, was the arm again, and then a flutter of shadows, as if cast by garments.

"It was not the bough," said my wife. "If this had been seen immediately after the sherry, I should not have been surprised, but—as it is now it is most extraordinary."

"I'll have this part of the house shut up," said I. Then I bade the maids once more spend the night in the kitchen, "and make themselves lively on tea," I said—for I knew my wife would not allow of another bottle of sherry being given them. "To-morrow your beds shall be moved to the East wing."

"Beg pardon," said the cook, "I speaks in the name of all. We don't think we can remain in the house, but must leave the situation."

"That comes of the tea," said I to my wife. "Now," to the cook, "as you have had another fright—I will let you have a bottle of mulled port to-night."

"Sir," said the cook, "if you can get rid of the ghost, we don't want to leave so good a master. We withdraw the notice."

Next day I had all the servants' goods transferred to the east wing, and rooms were fitted up for them to sleep in. As their portion of the house was completely cut off from the west wing, the alarm of the domestics died away.

A heavy stormy rain came on next week, the first token of winter misery.

I then found that—whether caused by the cedar bough, or by the nailed boots of the mason, I cannot say, but the lead of the valley between the roofs was torn, and water came in, streaming down the walls, and threatening to severely damage the ceilings. I had to send for a plumber, as soon as the weather mended. At the same time I started for town to see Mr. Framett. I had made up my mind that Fernwood was not suitable, and by the terms of my agreement I might be off my bargain if I gave notice the first month, and then my tenancy would be for the six months only. I found the squire at his club.

"Ah!" said he, "I told you not to go there in November. No one likes Fernwood in November, it is all right at other times."

"What do you mean?"

"There is no bother except in November."

"Why should there be bother, as you term it, then?"

Mr. Framett shrugged his shoulders. "How the deuce can I tell you? I've never been a spirit and all that sort of thing. Mme. Blavatsky might possibly tell you. I can't. But it is a fact."

"What is a fact?"

"Why, that there is no apparition at any other time. It is only in November, when she met with a little misfortune. That is when she is seen."

"Who is seen?"

"My Aunt Eliza—I mean my great aunt."

"You speak mysteries."

"I don't know much about it, and care less," said Mr. Framett, and called for a lemon squash. "It was this. I had a great aunt who was deranged. The family kept it quiet, and did not send her to an asylum, but fastened her in a room in the west wing. You see, that part of the house is much separated from the rest. I believe she was rather shabbily treated, but she was difficult to manage, and tore her clothes to pieces. Somehow she succeeded in getting out on the roof, and would race up and down there. They allowed her to do so, as by that means she obtained fresh air. But one night in November she scrambled up there, and, I believe, tumbled over. It was hushed up. Sorry you went there in November. I should have liked you to buy the place. I am sick of it."

I did buy Fernwood. What decided me was this: The plumbers, in mending the leads, with that ingenuity to do mischief which they sometimes display, succeeded in setting fire to the roof, and the result was that the west wing was burnt down. Happily, a wall so completely separated the wing from the rest of the house—that the fire was arrested. The wing was not rebuilt, and I—thinking, with the disappearance of the leads, that I should be freed from the apparition that haunted them, purchased Fernwood. I am happy to say we have been undisturbed since.

(The end.)