

monotonously and meaningless as rain upon a cottage thatch. As he proceeded droning out his details a singular rage took possession of me; and I believe I should have throttled him where he stood had I not seized my hat and abruptly quitted the office.

It seemed to me that the open air would bring relief; but it did not. I walked not with my accustomed firmness of tread, but with a jerkiness, as a jumping-jack might if endowed with automatic motion. Somehow I scarcely knew when my feet touched the ground; it seemed that I was stepping upon air. A friend met me, and, with a familiar slap upon the back, asked me to take a drink. I started, and shrunk as his hand fell upon me as though from a thunder-bolt—it seemed a tripphammer delivered between my shoulders. His face was familiar to me as my own, but I looked into it with a frightened expression which prompted the inquiry:

"What the devil ails you?"

"A little under the weather," I replied.

"A drink will set you all right," he returned, and then I explained to him that I was forbidden stimulants.

"Devilish dangerous," he said, "quitting so suddenly; you can't stop a horse at full speed without flinging him flat on his haunches. I wouldn't dare go back on my whisky in that style nohow. It would bring on a spell of the Jim-Jims sure!"

But I was true to my pledge and my physician, and my friend left me with a pitying look.

"Rats in your boots to-morrow morning," he said, "and no mistake. I'm betting on it."

Feeling it useless to make any attempt at dinner, and fully assured that I would cut but a sorry figure in the after-talk, I made my way to my room, remarking to myself in a patronizing way that a good night's sleep would restore me to my normal self.

I was utterly prostrated, mentally and physically. In the course of the evening a number of friends dropped in; I was reclining on the sofa. Requesting them to excuse me from rising, on the plea that I was thoroughly tired out by the duties of the day, I retained my position, but it was useless to endeavor to take part in the conversation. And very soon, in spite of my endeavors, I dropped off to sleep, if sleep it could be called, for at intervals of every few minutes I awoke with a sudden start and clutch, the impression upon my mind being that I was falling from some place. So busily engaged were my friends in discussing an absorbing topic of the day that they did not notice my nervousness, but seeing that I was indeed fatigued they each and all took early leave.

I went to bed. So thoroughly exhausted was I, for I had slept very fit-

fully the two preceding nights, that I dropped into a heavy slumber as soon as my head touched the pillow. In the dream which came to me I found myself on a very steep roof. It was impossible to stand up, so sharp was the incline, and I threw myself flat on my face, clutching at the shingles. But all was useless; slowly but surely I slipped toward the eaves. I dug my nails into the wood in a fierce endeavor to avert the fate which threatened me; but all effort was in vain. Occasionally a protruding nail-head offered me a momentary respite, but the hold was insufficient, and soon I was again slipping down, down toward the eaves. It seemed hours—hours of agony and apprehension. At last the eaves were reached and the end seemed immediate. My legs dangled in air; my hands clutched the tin water-spout which ran along the edge of the roof in one last, wild effort at self-preservation; it gave way under my weight—and with all the breath gone out from my body I awoke. At least ten hours seemed to have been consumed.

Looking at my watch I found it was precisely seven minutes since I had got into bed.

Thankful, most thankful, that it was all a dream, and that I had not indeed fallen from the roof of a four-story frame-house, with a tin water-spout clattering about my ears, I closed my eyes and endeavored to again compose myself to slumber. To my surprise my eyelids seemed lined with blue, and they were as transparent as flame. This scarcely seemed in accordance with the eternal fitness of things, and I popped my head under the bed-clothes to secure opaqueness; but still my eyelids, lined with blue flames, flickered and glowed as queerly as ever. And I thought of what my friend had said about the Jim-Jims.

Very soon again, however, I was asleep. How long I slept I do not know. But I was awakened with a boom in my ear like the tolling of a mighty bell. Boom—boom—boom—every stroke smote on my aural sense, echoing and vibrating through my brain until I was nearly deafened. I sprang up instinctively and the sound ceased; I laid my head down again and it recommenced. Wishing to time the hour of the unusual disturbance I touched the stop of the watch, which lay under my pillow. All was quiet at once. Here was a clue to the mystery. I released the stop and again the bell thundered in my ears. Each nerve strained to a tension like that of a harp-string, the ticking of the watch under my head was sonorous as the tones of a great bell. And so it was with every sound of the night. I never was subject to physical fear, but now I started at a breath. A mouse gnawing at the door made a noise as though a legion of burglars, with a full equipment of

carpenters' saws, were attempting to cut their way into the apartment. I propped myself up in bed, revolver in hand, ready to deliver a volley at the first man who crossed the threshold. My movements alarmed the mouse, probably—at least I heard no more of burglars.

Again I fell asleep. My dreams were all of violence and blood, but strangely vivid. After a prolonged battle with bearded ruffians I thought one stole upon me in my sleep and was filling my mouth with pitch.

I awoke nearly stifled, and tearing black *gobs* from my mouth, with an impression that a man was standing over me. And indeed in the darkness I distinctly saw the outline of a man a few feet distant from my bedside. Quietly grasping the pistol which always lay ready to my hand, I cocked it quickly and noiselessly, when it occurred to me that perhaps it was my chum, who, sleeping in an adjoining room, had occasion to come into mine for something. As I gazed the figure assumed a new shape—that of a grinning skeleton. And while I looked a whole procession of skeletons filed in and marched in solemn procession through the room. The bar of moonlight upon the walls shining through the lattice-work of the blinds, began to dance and burn in varicolored flames. And I said to myself, "Here are the Jim-Jams!"

The first idea that occurred to me was that a pistol, under the circumstances, was scarcely the thing to have within convenient and ready reach. So I deposited it safely in the wash-bowl. Then I sat up in bed and prepared to enjoy myself as much as could be expected under such strangely abnormal conditions. There were more flames and burning wheels, spiral rockets and scintillations and corruscations of all kinds than I ever saw on any Fourth of July day. Dragons flew and aerial toads hopped through the air. My skeleton friends ranged themselves for the Lancers and went through that dance in grand style, butting their bare skulls together in the courtliness of their bows, and shaking their fleshless shins in the wild ecstasy of convulsion and involution till they rattled like castanets.

I was fully conscious the while that the scene was unreal, that all was an illusion. But still the figures and flames were as plain to me as the light is at this moment. The only alarm which I felt arose from an apprehension that this might be the beginning of a really serious attack; that I might lose the control of myself which I then possessed, and come to regard the shapes as real—become, in short, a "demoniac maniac." As it was I had no other fear. That one apprehension aside, the whole thing seemed an entertainment, gotten up for my special amusement, and I was sitting apart in a private box. In-