

rence which had left an eternal stain on our family name, would find every one of us in the grave. Evidently, then, the five figure of the symbol indicated the five years that had elapsed before the death of the murderer, and the ten years that should pass away before the whole family would be annihilated.

"Arriving at this conclusion, I resolved to destroy completely the infernal machine, with a hope of averting the catastrophe, but fearing the wrath of my brothers, I decided finally only to disable it, so that it could not be set in motion again without great difficulty. With this intention I stole into the room where it stood. Having some mechanical dexterity, and remembering the construction of the clock from the time when I had watched the man examine it, I determined to injure the peculiar escapement so that the injury would be barely perceptible, and yet would effectually prevent the ratchet wheel from performing its revolutions. To make doubly sure I meant also to remove some minute pinion, so that any but the most thorough attempts at repair would be baffled. I confess that a nervous thrill passed over me when I found myself alone and face to face with the mysterious machine which I now considered the cause of all our ill-fortune. I paused to regard it for a moment, and I plainly heard the regular ticking of the huge pendulum, which seemed to me be repeating solemnly the words—five—ten—five—ten—five—ten. Suddenly there was a swift buzzing of wheels and the clock began striking. Instinctively I counted, though with an indescribable sensation of dread—one—two—three—four—five—six—seven—eight—nine—ten! I glanced at the dial. The hands pointed to half-past six, yet I had counted ten strokes of the bell. 'Was it premonition?' I asked myself. At first I thought it must be a mistake on my part, but some further consideration showed me that it was indeed a repetition of the ten figure of the symbol. Being the youngest son, my hour, as affairs were going, would come last, or, according to my interpretation of the symbol, in the tenth year after the murder. It was a warning to me in person that my days were exactly numbered. As I fully realized this, the angry blood flew to my temples, and I lost all self-control. Enraged and desperate, I forgot everything but the infernal machine before me. I grasped a heavy oaken chair, and concentrating all my fury into one tremendous, crushing blow, I shattered the clock into a thousand fragments. At the same instant I received a peculiar and violent shock as from an electric current of intense power. The chair was stricken from my hold, and a strange, tingling sensation, first perceptible at the ends of my fingers, spread almost instantaneously over my entire person. I fell back and sank, as it seemed to me, into a bed of the softest down, with an indescribable sense of comfort and delicious languor. My body appeared to have lost all weight, and was wafted gently off into ethereal space. A delightful feeling of eternal rest and tranquillity pervaded the whole universe as I drifted airily on and on. My will-power had forsaken me, but after a time I succeeded in concentrating my

thoughts enough to wonder what had befallen me. Whither was I drifting? Was I dead, and was this my spirit only that was thus drifting—drifting? Would I—could I—remain forever in this blissful condition, drifting without time, without care, through all eternity? Suddenly a sweet voice whispered in my ear: 'Prepare thy soul; ten minutes past five is the hour, and the year is not far hence.' The voice died away, and darkness fell in place of the glorious light. A cold, chilling sensation swept over me, and I strained my eyes into the deep gloom. I found myself on earth, and recognized the outlines of my father's old chamber, with the fragments of the clock scattered about me. The tomb-like stillness frightened me. I sprang to my feet and rushed in terror to my own apartment. My brothers soon discovered that I had ruined the clock, and they were very angry. When I attempted an explanation they said I was a fool, and refused to listen. At this I lost my temper and we had a great quarrel, the result of which was that I decided to take my share of the estate, or rather its equivalent in money, and depart from the wretched place altogether. I breathed easier, however, because the clock was in a condition beyond the possibility of repair, and I had a faint hope that with the destruction of the odious thing the remainder of our family might escape the fate which I firmly believed had been marked out for them. I went to Paris, and tried to forget the whole of our unfortunate history and lose sight of the hateful symbol in a mad whirl of pleasure. But to no purpose. I had been there only a few months when I received news of the sudden and peculiar death of the eldest of my remaining brothers. I made a calculation, and found that he had died just two years after my father, and therefore seven after the day of the murder. I was now sure that I was not the victim of an absurd superstition or a diseased imagination. Indeed, I was positive that my solution of the clock-symbol was the correct one, however strange it might seem. Accordingly I knew I had but three more years of this life left to me, and I again warned my remaining brothers that they had respectively one year and two years more to live. For my own part I was driven half mad by the vision of the old clock, which was constantly before me, the hands fixed at ten minutes past five, and the dial sometimes presenting the outlines of ghastly heads. Every clock I saw intensified this hideous vision, and I soon grew to hate the very sight of one. I longed for some desert land or mountain fastness, away out of the world, where there should be no clocks. At last in my despair I resolved to flee to America, and somewhere in the vast solitudes of the Great West find some lonely vale where I could live secluded and alone. I would spend the remainder of my days there, regardless of time, in reckless adventure and careless ease.

"Having learned to speak English from my mother, when a child, I found no difficulty with the language on my arrival. I made no haste to reach the mountains, for I tried to banish entirely all thoughts of time. I strove to consider myself still in that outer world that had appeared to me in my vision, where time and distance