

the heat had upset my nerves that night, nor were they soothed when suddenly from the red head floating upon the water came a flute-like and educated voice, saying—

"Cease deriding the unfortunate, children, or I will come out of this marble bath and tickle you."

Thereat they laughed all the more, and began to pelt the bather with little stones and bits of stick.

At first I thought of interfering, but as it occurred to me that the man would probably be violent or abusive if I spoke to him, and as, above all things, I disliked scenes, I made up my mind to fetch a policeman, whom I knew I should find round the corner about a hundred yards away. I walked to the corner but did not find the policeman, whereon I started across the square to look for him at another point. My road led me past the fountain, and, as I approached it, I saw that the water-loving wanderer had been as good as his word. He had emerged from the fountain, and, rushing to and fro raining moisture from his wide coat, despite their shrieks half of fear and half of laughter, he grabbed child after child and, drawing it to him, tickled and kissed it, laughing dementedly the while, in a fashion which showed me that he was suffering from some form of mania.

As soon as he saw me the man dropped the last child he had caught—it was little Tottie Smith—and began to stride away towards the city at the same slow, regular, purposeful gait with which I had seen him approach the fountain. As he passed he turned and made a grimace at me, and then I saw his dreadful face. No wonder it had looked red at a distance, for the *erythema* almost covered

it, except where, on the forehead and cheeks, appeared purple spots and patches.

Of what did it remind me?

Great Heaven! I remembered. It reminded me of the face of that girl I had seen lying in the plaza of San José, in Mexico, over whom the old woman was pouring water from the fountain, much such a fountain as that before me, for half unconsciously, when planning this place, I had

reproduced its beautiful design. It all came back to me with a shock, the horrible scene of which I had scarcely thought for years, so vividly indeed that I seemed to hear the old hag's voice crying in cracked accents, "*Si, señor, viruela, viruela!*"

I ought to have sent to warn the police and the health officers of the city, for I was sure that the man was suffering from what is commonly called confluent smallpox. But I did not. From the beginning there has been something about this terrible disease which physically and morally has exercised so great an influence over my destiny, that seemed to paralyse my mental powers. In my day I was a doctor fearless of any other contagion; typhus, scarlatina, diphtheria, yellow fever, none of them had terrors for me. And yet I was afraid to attend a case of smallpox. From the same cause, in my public speeches I

made light of it, talking of it with contempt as a sickness of small account, much as a housemaid talks in the servants' hall of the ghost which is supposed to haunt the back stairs.

And now, coming as it were from that merry and populous chamber of life and health, once again I had met the Spectre I derided, a red-headed, red-visaged Thing that chose me out to



*Rushing to and fro, he grabbed child after child.*