THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE

Robert Louis Stevenson

With an Introduction by
Ben Palpant

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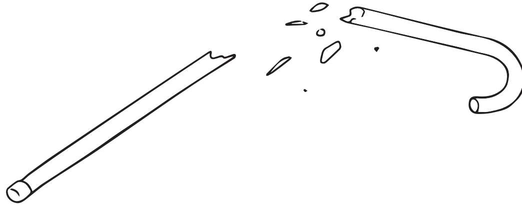

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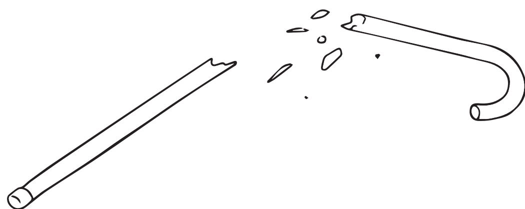


INTRODUCTION

Robert Louis Stevenson wrote several celebrated stories, including *Treasure Island* and *Kidnapped*, but *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is his best-selling work. Forty-thousand copies sold within the first six months of publication. In this novella, London lawyer Gabriel Utterson uncovers a strange and startling connection between his friend, the respectable doctor Henry Jekyll, and the sinister Edward Hyde. *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* is an arresting portrait of one man's struggle with the human condition.

The World Around

The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde was first published in January of 1886. In that year, the Statue of Liberty—the symbol of freedom found in America—was dedicated, the last major US-Indian war ended when Apache Chief Geronimo surrendered, Karl Benz built and drove the first automobile, and Sigmund Freud opened his practice in Vienna. The 1880s marked the second industrial

revolution and a major shift in convenient transportation, including the production of railroads. The economic boom enjoyed by western countries also enabled the rise of the skyscraper. These economic changes resulted in social changes that included a widened margin between the rich and poor. More germane to Stevenson's story are the breakout discovery of multiple personalities and a report from the Pall Mall Gazette on prostitution in London. In the late 1880s, the term "double consciousness" was coined after French doctors reported "a boy called Louis who had exhibited as many as five separate personalities.... Louis could jump between different mental ages or between states of abject hysteria, cunning criminality, and apparently normal boyhood at the appropriate trigger."* The wider fascination with psychic splitting coincided with Stevenson's writing of this, the first popular psychological thriller, a book that would open the door for the likes of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle and his famed Sherlock Holmes stories.

In July 1885, one year before *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* was written, the *Pall Mall Gazette* published a report on child prostitution in London. As W.T. Stead, the editor, rummaged the streets, he "reported rumours of a monstrous libertine who 'may be said to be an absolute incarnation of brutal lust.... Here in London, moving about clad as respectably in broad cloth and fine linen as any bishop, with no foul shape or semblance of brute beast to mark him off from the rest of his fellows, is Dr —.'"† While it is unclear whether this report was the seed idea for Dr. Jekyll, it is clear that it awakened Victorian readers to the reality that "one might smile, and smile, and be a villain" (*Hamlet*, Act 5.1).

* Roger Luckhurst, "Introduction" to *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Other Tales*, by Robert Louis Stevenson (Oxford: OUP, 2008), xviii.

† Luckhurst, xxv.

About the Author

Robert Louis Stevenson, born in 1850, suffered for his entire life from a pulmonary lung disease which was never definitively diagnosed and that rendered him an invalid, dependent upon his parents for much of his life. The most formative period of Stevenson's life was his childhood, which he spent in his room, alone with books and his imagination, the fertile soil out of which sprang his most popular tales. Perhaps the combination of loving adventure coupled with the inability to *go* on adventure birthed his vigorous writing style and his adventure stories.

Despite his limitations, contrary to popular artistic leanings, he strove to thrill himself and he strove to thrill his readers. Nihilistic tales were popular in his days and artists of every kind posed as pessimists. "Stevenson seemed to say to the semi-suicides drooping round him at the cafe tables, drinking absinthe and discussing atheism: 'Hang it all... Painting pasteboard figures of pirates and admirals was better worth doing than all this, it was fun; it was fighting; it was a life and a lark; and if I can't do anything else, dang me but I will try to do that again!'"[‡]

His stories swing wildly between pure adventure and rich philosophical allegory, but they all pay tribute to human desire and the often depraved nature of those desires. Perhaps this theme of human corruption was residual leftover from his parents' Calvinism which he exchanged for agnosticism. He rejected their theological and moral views in favor of a morally illicit lifestyle which he considered less hypocritical.

While Stevenson never believed in the Resurrection, Chesterton points out that Stevenson's stories repeatedly bear witness to the Fall. "We say lightly enough of a good man that he is a Christian without

‡ G.K. Chesterton, *Robert Louis Stevenson* (Miami, FL: HardPress Publishers, 2013), np.

difficult as Hyde grew more powerful. When he realized that he would soon permanently become Hyde, Jekyll made one last-ditch effort to hold off the transformation long enough to write a confession and inform the world of Hyde's (and his) true nature.

He suspects that Hyde will either kill himself or be hanged for his crimes, but he closes his letter convinced that Henry Jekyll will be no more.

Worldview Analysis

I still remember the spreading cultural shock in the late 80s when we learned that a man named Ted (such a harmless, regular, vanilla name) confessed to thirty brutal homicides which he committed in seven states over a four-year period. Ted Bundy was an all-American nice guy; in fact, the Mormon missionary who baptized Bundy said he was the type of guy you would want dating your sister, and while Bundy was on trial, his mother told the media, "He's my pride and joy. He wouldn't do anything wrong. We've always been proud of him. He's the kind of a son who never forgot Mother's Day."[*] Who would know a son better than his mother? And how could it be possible for a guy who never forgot Mother's Day to be a serial killer?

None of us actually wanted to face the fact that we are, like Ted, capable of gross sin, so we wrote him off as a wacko. We decided that he was an outlier—a pedestrian version of Hitler, with a bad circuit breaker in his head. We conveniently leveraged his heinous crimes to defend our own not-so-badness: "I'm not perfect, but I'm no Bundy." For our present purposes, we might as well have said, "I'm a sinner, but at least I'm no Mr. Hyde."

Our comments were a convenient ploy to keep the reality of our sinful nature at bay. Ted did not make it easy on us. He said,

* Stephen C. Smith, "Momma's Boy to Murderer: Saga of Ted Bundy," *Lakeland Ledger*, August 19, 1979.

"well-meaning, decent people will condemn the behavior of a Ted Bundy, while they're walking past a magazine rack full of the very kinds of things that send young kids down the road to be Ted Bundys."* He was convinced, and I think correctly, that a pornographic culture like ours is an incubator for monsters despite its best efforts to hide behind a shiny veneer. Our culture tell us to be pious, dutifully appearing to meet social norms.

With or without a respectable piety, God is unambiguous about the corruption of the human heart: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Paul declares in Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." For this reason, Paul agonized that "in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me" (Rom. 7:18-20). Stevenson echoed this mystery when he wrote, "It follows that man is twofold at least; that he is not a rounded and autonomous empire; but that in the same body with him there dwell other powers tributary but independent."†

Dr. Jekyll is the everyman, suffering the common lot of humanity. None of us is immune to the heart's corrupt nature and each of us "is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (Jas. 1:14-15). A "good man" and a "bad man" share the same systemic corruption. Only God's grace keeps them both from succumbing to the rapacious appetites of Hell.

* "Psychopath Ted Bundy's Interview Before Execution," YouTube video, January 23, 1989, posted by "Zeke Reloaded," accessed on June 12, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hVyhKgd9_No..

† Claire Harman, *Myself and the Other Fellow: A Life of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), 167.

Indeed, Jonathan Edwards, writing one hundred years before Dr. Jekyll came on stage, said "if it were not for the restraining hand of God upon them, they would soon break out, they would flame out after the same manner, as the same corruptions, the same enmity does in the hearts of damned souls."‡

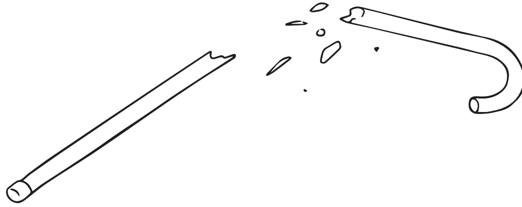
Every one of us, whether Ted Bundy or Miss Goody-Goody, is alienated from God and suffers from the disintegration of the person caused by sin. The old man living in us (Rom. 6:6-10) will not be stifled, and we rightly fear he will reveal himself. We feel shame for our natural leanings, but our fear of being discovered magnifies the shame ten-fold. Like Dr. Jekyll, we cover our proclivities with lies and shams, with posturing and preening, and we are rarely honest enough with God or with ourselves to confess the truth and seek the healing that can only come by the blood of Christ.

The universal fallenness of man is a reality, whether in a prudish culture like the Victorian, or a pornographic one like our own. The great enigma that Stevenson offers the Victorians and us is Dr. Jekyll, a man who appears virtuous, but who is corrupt where it matters most in his heart.

The view that Victorians were prudish and repressive is a generalization and exceptions abound, but there is no doubt that the upper class valued external piety. Dr. Jekyll was the prototypical Victorian gentleman: well-mannered, well-dressed, well-polished. Stevenson's story hit where it hurt, reminding Victorian pietists (whether Stevenson meant to or not) that people are corrupt and cannot heal themselves by simple will-power.

This reality is true for individuals and for the societies comprised by those individuals. For example, the industrial revolution that came just prior to the Victorian period afforded more wealth and power to

‡ Jonathan Edwards, *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God: A Casebook*, ed. Wilson H. Kimnach, Caleb J.D. Maskell, and Kenneth P. Minkema (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2010), 37.



STORY OF THE DOOR

Mr. Utterson the lawyer was a man of a rugged countenance that was never lighted by a smile; cold, scanty and embarrassed in discourse; backward in sentiment; lean, long, dusty, dreary and yet somehow lovable. At friendly meetings, and when the wine was to his taste, something eminently human beaconed from his eye; something indeed which never found its way into his talk, but which spoke not only in these silent symbols of the after-dinner face, but more often and loudly in the acts of his life. He was austere with himself; drank gin when he was alone, to mortify a taste for vintages; and though he enjoyed the theatre, had not crossed the doors of one for twenty years. But he had an approved tolerance for others; sometimes wondering, almost with envy, at the high pressure of spirits involved in their misdeeds; and in any extremity inclined to help rather than to reprove. "I incline to Cain's heresy," he used to say quaintly: "I let my brother go to the devil in his own way." In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good

influence in the lives of downgoing men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanour.

No doubt the feat was easy to Mr. Utterson; for he was undemonstrative at the best, and even his friendship seemed to be founded in a similar catholicity of good-nature. It is the mark of a modest man to accept his friendly circle ready-made from the hands of opportunity; and that was the lawyer's way. His friends were those of his own blood or those whom he had known the longest; his affections, like ivy, were the growth of time, they implied no aptness in the object. Hence, no doubt the bond that united him to Mr. Richard Enfield, his distant kinsman, the well-known man about town. It was a nut to crack for many, what these two could see in each other, or what subject they could find in common. It was reported by those who encountered them in their Sunday walks, that they said nothing, looked singularly dull and would hail with obvious relief the appearance of a friend. For all that, the two men put the greatest store by these excursions, counted them the chief jewel of each week, and not only set aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

It chanced on one of these rambles that their way led them down a by-street in a busy quarter of London. The street was small and what is called quiet, but it drove a thriving trade on the weekdays. The inhabitants were all doing well, it seemed and all emulously hoping to do better still, and laying out the surplus of their grains in coquetry; so that the shop fronts stood along that thoroughfare with an air of invitation, like rows of smiling saleswomen. Even on Sunday, when it veiled its more florid charms and lay comparatively empty of passage, the street shone out in contrast to its dingy neighbourhood, like a fire in a forest; and with its freshly painted shutters, well-polished

brasses, and general cleanliness and gaiety of note, instantly caught and pleased the eye of the passenger.

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two storeys high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower storey and a blind forehead of discoloured wall on the upper; and bore in every feature, the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels; children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the mouldings; and for close on a generation, no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

Mr. Enfield and the lawyer were on the other side of the by-street; but when they came abreast of the entry, the former lifted up his cane and pointed.

"Did you ever remark that door?" he asked; and when his companion had replied in the affirmative. "It is connected in my mind," added he, "with a very odd story."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Utterson, with a slight change of voice, "and what was that?"

"Well, it was this way," returned Mr. Enfield: "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once, I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of

maybe eight or ten who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of the thing; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut. I gave a view-halloa, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl's own family; and pretty soon, the doctor, for whom she had been sent put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse, more frightened, according to the Sawbones; and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was only natural. But the doctor's case was what struck me. He was the usual cut and dry apothecary, of no particular age and colour, with a strong Edinburgh accent and about as emotional as a bagpipe. Well, sir, he was like the rest of us; every time he looked at my prisoner, I saw that Sawbones turn sick and white with desire to kill him. I knew what was in his mind, just as he knew what was in mine; and killing being out of the question, we did the next best. We told the man we could and would make such a scandal out of this as should make his name stink from one end of London to the other. If he had any friends or any credit, we undertook that he should lose them. And all the time, as we were pitching it in red hot, we were keeping the women off him as best we could for they were as wild as harpies. I never saw a circle of such hateful faces; and there was the man in the middle, with a kind of black sneering coolness—frightened too, I could see that—but carrying it off, sir, really like Satan. `If you choose to make capital out of this accident,' said he, `I am naturally helpless. No gentleman but wishes to avoid a scene,'

says he. `Name your figure.' Well, we screwed him up to a hundred pounds for the child's family; he would have clearly liked to stick out; but there was something about the lot of us that meant mischief, and at last he struck. The next thing was to get the money; and where do you think he carried us but to that place with the door?—whipped out a key, went in, and presently came back with the matter of ten pounds in gold and a cheque for the balance on Coutts's, drawn payable to bearer and signed with a name that I can't mention, though it's one of the points of my story, but it was a name at least very well known and often printed. The figure was stiff; but the signature was good for more than that if it was only genuine. I took the liberty of pointing out to my gentleman that the whole business looked apocryphal, and that a man does not, in real life, walk into a cellar door at four in the morning and come out with another man's cheque for close upon a hundred pounds. But he was quite easy and sneering. `Set your mind at rest,' says he, `I will stay with you till the banks open and cash the cheque myself.' So we all set off, the doctor, and the child's father, and our friend and myself, and passed the rest of the night in my chambers; and next day, when we had breakfasted, went in a body to the bank. I gave in the cheque myself, and said I had every reason to believe it was a forgery. Not a bit of it. The cheque was genuine."

"Tut-tut," said Mr. Utterson.

"I see you feel as I do," said Mr. Enfield. "Yes, it's a bad story. For my man was a fellow that nobody could have to do with, a really damnable man; and the person that drew the cheque is the very pink of the proprieties, celebrated too, and (what makes it worse) one of your fellows who do what they call good. Black mail I suppose; an honest man paying through the nose for some of the capers of his youth. Black Mail House is what I call the place with the door, in consequence. Though even that, you know, is far from explaining all," he added, and with the words fell into a vein of musing.

From this he was recalled by Mr. Utterson asking rather suddenly: “And you don’t know if the drawer of the cheque lives there?”

“A likely place, isn’t it?” returned Mr. Enfield. “But I happen to have noticed his address; he lives in some square or other.”

“And you never asked about the—place with the door?” said Mr. Utterson.

“No, sir: I had a delicacy,” was the reply. “I feel very strongly about putting questions; it partakes too much of the style of the day of judgment. You start a question, and it’s like starting a stone. You sit quietly on the top of a hill; and away the stone goes, starting others; and presently some bland old bird (the last you would have thought of) is knocked on the head in his own back garden and the family have to change their name. No sir, I make it a rule of mine: the more it looks like Queer Street, the less I ask.”

“A very good rule, too,” said the lawyer.

“But I have studied the place for myself,” continued Mr. Enfield. “It seems scarcely a house. There is no other door, and nobody goes in or out of that one but, once in a great while, the gentleman of my adventure. There are three windows looking on the court on the first floor; none below; the windows are always shut but they’re clean. And then there is a chimney which is generally smoking; so somebody must live there. And yet it’s not so sure; for the buildings are so packed together about the court, that it’s hard to say where one ends and another begins.”

The pair walked on again for a while in silence; and then “Enfield,” said Mr. Utterson, “that’s a good rule of yours.”

“Yes, I think it is,” returned Enfield.

“But for all that,” continued the lawyer, “there’s one point I want to ask: I want to ask the name of that man who walked over the child.”

“Well,” said Mr. Enfield, “I can’t see what harm it would do. It was a man of the name of Hyde.”

"Hm," said Mr. Utterson. "What sort of a man is he to see?"

"He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something down-right detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked, and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I really can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him. And it's not want of memory; for I declare I can see him this moment."

Mr. Utterson again walked some way in silence and obviously under a weight of consideration. "You are sure he used a key?" he inquired at last.

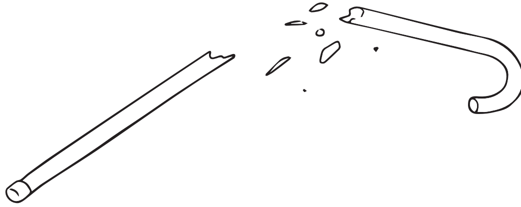
"My dear sir..." began Enfield, surprised out of himself.

"Yes, I know," said Utterson; "I know it must seem strange. The fact is, if I do not ask you the name of the other party, it is because I know it already. You see, Richard, your tale has gone home. If you have been inexact in any point you had better correct it."

"I think you might have warned me," returned the other with a touch of sullenness. "But I have been pedantically exact, as you call it. The fellow had a key; and what's more, he has it still. I saw him use it not a week ago."

Mr. Utterson sighed deeply but said never a word; and the young man presently resumed. "Here is another lesson to say nothing," said he. "I am ashamed of my long tongue. Let us make a bargain never to refer to this again."

"With all my heart," said the lawyer. "I shake hands on that, Richard."



SEARCH FOR MR. HYDE

That evening Mr. Utterson came home to his bachelor house in sombre spirits and sat down to dinner without relish. It was his custom of a Sunday, when this meal was over, to sit close by the fire, a volume of some dry divinity on his reading desk, until the clock of the neighbouring church rang out the hour of twelve, when he would go soberly and gratefully to bed. On this night however, as soon as the cloth was taken away, he took up a candle and went into his business room. There he opened his safe, took from the most private part of it a document endorsed on the envelope as Dr. Jekyll's Will and sat down with a clouded brow to study its contents. The will was holograph, for Mr. Utterson though he took charge of it now that it was made, had refused to lend the least assistance in the making of it; it provided not only that, in case of the decease of Henry Jekyll, M.D., D.C.L., L.L.D., F.R.S., etc., all his possessions were to pass into the hands of his "friend and benefactor Edward Hyde," but that in case of Dr. Jekyll's "disappearance or unexplained absence for any period