

BILINGUA — ТЕКСТ НА ДВУХ ЯЗЫКАХ



Герберт Уэллс

Человек-невидимка

Herbert Wells

The Invisible Man

Lingua

+ АУДИОПРИЛОЖЕНИЕ



Bilingua (ACT)

Герберт Уэллс

**Человек-невидимка / The
Invisible Man + аудиоприложение**

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Содержание

Дорогие друзья!	6
Herbert Wells	7
Chapter I	7
Chapter II	9
Chapter III	11
Chapter IV	13
Chapter V	16
Chapter VI	17
Chapter VII	19
Chapter VIII	22
Chapter IX	23
Chapter X	26
Chapter XI	27
Chapter XII	29
Chapter XIII	31
Chapter XIV	32
Chapter XV	35
Chapter XVI	36
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	37

Герберт Уэллс
Человек-невидимка / The
Invisible Man + аудиоприложение

Wells Herbert
The Invisible Man
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Желаем успехов!

Herbert Wells

The Invisible Man

Chapter I

The Strange Man's Arrival

The stranger came early in February, one wintry day, through a biting wind and a driving snow, walking from Bramblehurst railway station, and carrying a little black portmanteau in his thickly gloved hand. He was wrapped up from head to foot, and the brim of his soft felt hat hid every inch of his face but the shiny tip of his nose. He walked into the "Coach and Horses" more dead than alive, and flung his portmanteau down. "A fire," he cried, "in the name of human charity! A room and a fire!" He followed Mrs. Hall into her guest parlour. Then a couple of sovereigns flung upon the table.

Mrs. Hall lit the fire and left him there while she went to prepare him a meal. A guest at Iping in the wintertime was an unheard-of piece of luck, and she was resolved to show herself worthy of her good fortune. She carried the cloth, plates, and glasses into the parlour and began to lay them. Although the fire was burning up briskly, she was surprised to see that her visitor still wore his hat and coat, standing with his back to her and staring out of the window at the falling snow in the yard. He seemed to be lost in thought. She noticed that the melting snow that still sprinkled his shoulders dripped upon her carpet.

"Can I take your hat and coat, sir?" she said, "and give them a good dry in the kitchen?"

"No," he said without turning.

She was not sure she had heard him, and was about to repeat her question.

He turned his head and looked at her over his shoulder.

"I prefer to keep them on," he said with emphasis, and she noticed that he wore big blue spectacles, and had a bush side-whisker that completely hid his cheeks and face.

"Very well, sir," she said. "As you like. Soon the room will be warmer."

He made no answer, and had turned his face away from her again, and Mrs. Hall laid the rest of the table things and went out of the room. When she returned he was still standing there, like a man of stone, hiding his face and ears completely. She put down the eggs and bacon, and called rather than said to him, "Your lunch is served, sir."

"Thank you," he said at the same time, and did not stir until she was closing the door. Then he swung round and approached the table with a certain eager quickness.

As she went behind the bar to the kitchen she heard a sound repeated at regular intervals. Chirk, chirk, chirk, it went, the sound of a spoon being rapidly whisked round a basin.

"Oh," she said. "I forgot the mustard!"

Then she filled the mustard pot, and carried it into the parlour.

She rapped and entered promptly. As she did so her visitor moved quickly, so that she noticed a white object disappearing behind the table. It seemed he was picking something from the floor. She put down the mustard pot on the table, and then she noticed the overcoat and hat had been taken off and put over a chair in front of the fire. She went to these things resolutely.

"I suppose I may have them to dry now," she said.

"Leave the hat," said her visitor, in a muffled voice, and turning she saw he had raised his head and was sitting and looking at her.

For a moment she stood gaping at him, too surprised to speak.

He held a white cloth—it was a serviette he had brought with him—over the lower part of his face, so that his mouth and jaws were completely hidden. But it was not that which startled Mrs. Hall. It

was the fact that all his forehead above his blue glasses was covered by a white bandage, and that another covered his ears, leaving not a scrap of his face exposed excepting only his pink, peaked nose. It was bright, pink. He wore a dark-brown velvet jacket with a high, black collar turned up about his neck. The thick black hair gave him the strangest appearance. This muffled and bandaged head was very strange.

He did not remove the serviette, but remained holding it, as she saw now, with a brown gloved hand, and regarding her with his inscrutable blue glasses.

“Leave the hat,” he said, speaking very distinctly through the white cloth.

She placed the hat on the chair again by the fire.

“I didn’t know, sir,” she began, “that-” and she stopped embarrassed.

“Thank you,” he said drily.

“I’ll have them nicely dried, sir, at once,” she said, and carried his clothes out of the room. She glanced at his white-swathed head and blue goggles again as she was going out of the door; but his napkin was still in front of his face. She shivered a little as she closed the door behind her, and her face was eloquent of her surprise and perplexity.

The visitor sat and listened to her retreating feet. He glanced inquiringly at the window before he removed his serviette, and resumed his meal. He walked across the room and pulled the curtain down. This done, he returned to the table and his meal.

“The poor soul has had an accident or an operation or something,” said Mrs. Hall. “And the glasses!”

She hung his muffler on a hanger.

“And holding that handkerchief over his mouth all the time. Talking through it!.. Perhaps his mouth was hurt too-maybe.”

When Mrs. Hall came to the stranger again, her idea that his mouth must also have been cut or disfigured in the accident, was confirmed. He was smoking a pipe, and all the time that she was in the room he never loosened the silk muffler he had wrapped round the lower part of his face to put the mouthpiece to his lips. He sat in the corner and spoke now, having eaten and drunk, with less aggressive brevity than before.

“I have some luggage,” he said, “at Bramblehurst station,” and he asked her how he could have it sent. He bowed his bandaged head. “Tomorrow?” he said. “There is no speedier delivery?” and seemed quite disappointed when she answered, “No.”

“Will you get me some matches?” said the visitor. “My pipe is out.”

Mrs. Hall gasped at him for a moment and went for the matches.

“Thanks,” he said concisely, as she put them down, and turned his shoulder upon her and stared out of the window again.

The visitor remained in the parlour until four o’clock. The most part he was quite still during that time; it would seem he sat in the growing darkness smoking in the firelight-perhaps dozing.

But he was audible pacing the room. He seemed to be talking to himself. Then the armchair creaked as he sat down again.

Chapter II

Mr. Teddy Henfrey's First Impressions

At four o'clock, Teddy Henfrey, the clock-jobber, came into the bar.

"Oh, Mrs. Hall," said he, "this is terrible weather for thin boots!"

The snow outside was falling faster.

Mrs. Hall agreed, and then noticed he had his bag with him.

"Now you're here, Mr. Henfrey," said she, "I'd be glad if you have a look at the old clock in the parlour."

And leading the way, she went across to the parlour door and rapped and entered.

Her visitor, she saw as she opened the door, was seated in the armchair before the fire, with his bandaged head drooping on one side. The only light in the room was the red glow from the fire-which lit his eyes like adverse railway signals, but left his face in darkness. She had lit the bar lamp, and her eyes were dazzled. But for a second it seemed to her that the man she looked at had an enormous mouth wide open-a vast and incredible mouth. It was the sensation of a moment: the white-bound head, the monstrous eyes, and this huge mouth below it. Then he stirred, started up in his chair. She opened the door wide, so that the room was lighter, and she saw him more clearly. The shadows, she thought, had tricked her.

"Would you mind, sir? This man is going to look at the clock," she said, recovering from the momentary shock.

"Look at the clock?" he said, staring round in a drowsy manner, and then, getting more fully awake, "certainly."

Mrs. Hall went away to get a lamp, and he rose and stretched himself. Then Mr. Teddy Henfrey, entering, was confronted by this bandaged person.

"Good afternoon," said the stranger, regarding him-as Mr. Henfrey says-"like a lobster."

"I hope," said Mr. Henfrey, "I won't disturb you."

"Not at all," said the stranger. "Though, I understand," he said turning to Mrs. Hall, "that this room is really to be mine for my own private use."

"I thought, sir," said Mrs. Hall, "you'd prefer the clock-"

"Certainly," said the stranger, "certainly-but, as a rule, I like to be alone and undisturbed. But I'm really glad to have the clock," he said, seeing a certain hesitation in Mr. Henfrey's manner. "Very glad."

Mr. Henfrey had intended to apologise and withdraw, but this anticipation reassured him. The stranger turned round with his back to the fireplace and put his hands behind his back.

Mrs. Hall was about to leave the room, when her visitor asked her if she had made any arrangements about his boxes at Bramblehurst. She told him she had mentioned the matter to the postman, and that the carrier could bring them tomorrow.

"You are certain that is the earliest?" he said.

She was certain.

"I should explain," he added, "what I was really too cold and fatigued to do it before, that I am an experimental investigator."

"Indeed, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

"And my baggage contains apparatus and appliances."

"Very useful things indeed they are, sir," said Mrs. Hall.

"And I'm very anxious to get on with my inquiries."

"Of course, sir."

"My reason for coming to Iping," he proceeded, "was a desire for solitude. I do not wish to be disturbed in my work. In addition to my work, an accident-"

“I thought so,” said Mrs. Hall to herself.

“-necessitates a retirement. My eyes are sometimes so weak and painful that I have to shut myself up in the dark for hours. Lock myself up. Sometimes. Not at present, certainly. So the stranger in the room is a source of excruciating annoyance to me-these things should be understood.”

“Certainly, sir,” said Mrs. Hall. “And may I ask-”

“I think, that is all,” said the stranger.

After Mrs. Hall had left the room, he remained standing in front of the fire, glaring at the clock-mending. Mr. Henfrey wanted to delay his departure and perhaps fall into conversation with the stranger. But the stranger stood perfectly silent and still. So still, it got on Henfrey’s nerves. He felt alone in the room and looked up, and there, grey and dim, was the bandaged head. It was so uncanny to Henfrey that for a minute they remained staring blankly at one another. One must say something. Should he remark that the weather was very cold for the time of year?

“The weather-” Henfrey began.

“Why don’t you finish and go?” said the rigid figure, evidently in a state of painfully suppressed rage. “All you’ve got to do is to fix the clock.”

“Certainly, sir-one minute more,” and Mr. Henfrey finished and went.

But he went feeling excessively annoyed.

“Damn it!” said Mr. Henfrey to himself, going through the thawing snow; “seems like the police is wanting him.”

At the corner he saw Hall, who had recently married the stranger’s hostess at the “Coach and Horses.”

“How do you do, Teddy?” he said, passing.

“You got a strange man at home!” said Teddy.

“What’s that?” Hall asked.

“Strange looking customer stopping at the ‘Coach and Horses,’” said Teddy.

And he gave Hall a vivid description of his grotesque guest.

“I’d like to see a man’s face if I had him stopping in my place,” said Henfrey. “But women are very trustful. He’s taken your room and he hasn’t even given his name, Hall.”

“You don’t say so!” said Hall, who was a man of sluggish apprehension.

“Yes,” said Teddy. “For a week. Whatever he is, you can’t get rid of him under the week. And he’s got a lot of luggage, so he says. Let’s hope it won’t be stones in boxes, Hall.”

Henfrey left Hall vaguely suspicious.

“I suppose I must see about this,” said Hall.

Instead of “seeing about it,” however, Hall on his return was severely scorned by his wife, and his mild inquiries were answered snappishly.

“You women don’t know everything,” said Mr. Hall, resolved to ascertain more about the personality of his guest at the earliest possible opportunity. And after the stranger had gone to bed, which he did about half-past nine, Mr. Hall went very aggressively into the parlour and looked very hard at his wife’s furniture, just to show that the stranger wasn’t master there. Then he instructed Mrs. Hall to look very closely at the stranger’s luggage when it came next day.

“Mind your own business, Hall,” said Mrs. Hall, “and I’ll mind mine.”

She subdued her terrors and went to sleep.

Chapter III

The Thousand and One Bottles

So it was that on the ninth day of February, at the beginning of the thaw, this stranger appeared in Iping. Next day the strange man's luggage arrived-and very remarkable luggage it was. There were a couple of trunks indeed, but in addition there were a box of books-big, fat books-and a dozen or more crates, boxes, and cases, containing objects packed in straw, as it seemed to Hall, glass bottles.

The stranger, muffled in hat, coat, gloves, and wrapper, came out impatiently to meet the cart. "Come along with those boxes," he said. "I've been waiting long enough."

Fearenside's dog caught sight of him, and began to bristle and growl savagely, and when he rushed down the steps it sprang straight at his hand.

"Whup!" cried Hall, jumping back, for he was no hero with dogs, and Fearenside howled, "Lie down!" and snatched his whip.

They saw the dog's teeth had slipped the hand, heard a kick, and heard the rip of the stranger's trousers. Then the dog retreated under the wheels of the waggon. It was all the business of some seconds. No one spoke, everyone shouted. The stranger glanced swiftly at his torn glove and at his leg, then turned and rushed swiftly up the steps into the inn. They heard him go to his bedroom.

Mr. Hall met Mrs. Hall in the passage.

"Carrier's dog," he said, "bit the stranger."

He went straight upstairs, and the stranger's door being ajar, he pushed it open and was entering without any ceremony.

The curtain was down and the room dim. He noticed something strange, what seemed a handless arm waving towards him, and a face of three huge indeterminate spots on white. Then he was struck violently in the chest, hurled back, and the door slammed and locked. It was so rapid that it gave him no time to observe. He was wondering what it might be that he had seen.

A couple of minutes after, he rejoined the little group that had formed outside the "Coach and Horses." There was Fearenside telling about it all over again for the second time; there was Mrs. Hall saying his dog didn't have the right to bite her guests; besides women and children, all of them saying fatuities.

Mr. Hall, staring at them from the steps and listening, found it incredible that he had seen anything so very remarkable happen upstairs. Besides, his vocabulary was too limited to express his impressions.

"He doesn't want to get help, he says," he said in answer to his wife's inquiry.

"I'd shoot the dog, that's what I'd do," said a lady in the group.

Suddenly the dog began growling again.

"Come along!" cried an angry voice in the doorway, and there stood the muffled stranger with his collar turned up. "The sooner you get those things in the better!"

His trousers and gloves had been changed.

"Were you hurt, sir?" said Fearenside. "I'm sorry the dog-"

"Not a bit," said the stranger. "Never mind. Hurry up with those things."

He then swore to himself, so Mr. Hall asserts.

The first crate was carried into the parlour, and the stranger began to unpack it, scattering the straw on Mrs. Hall's carpet. And from it he began to take bottles-little fat bottles containing powders, small and slender bottles containing coloured and white fluids, fluted blue bottles labeled "Poison", bottles with round bodies and slender necks, large green-glass bottles, large white-glass bottles, bottles with corks, bottles with bungs, bottles with wooden caps, wine bottles, salad-oil bottles-putting them in rows on the chiffonnier, on the mantel, on the table under the window, round the floor, on the

bookshelf-everywhere. Quite a sight it was! Crate after crate yielded bottles. Besides the bottles were test-tubes and a carefully packed balance.

And directly the crates were unpacked, the stranger went to the window and set to work, not troubling about the box of books outside, nor for the trunks and other luggage that had gone upstairs.

When Mrs. Hall took his dinner in to him, he was already so absorbed in his work, pouring little drops out of the bottles into test-tubes, that he did not hear her. Then he half turned his head and immediately turned it away again. But she saw he had removed his glasses; they were beside him on the table, and it seemed to her that his eye sockets were extraordinarily hollow. He put on his spectacles again, and then turned and faced her. She was about to complain of the straw on the floor when he anticipated her.

“I wish you wouldn’t come in without knocking,” he said in the tone of abnormal exasperation.

“I knocked, but seemingly-”

“Perhaps you did. But in my investigations-my really very urgent and necessary investigations-the slightest disturbance, the jar of a door-I must ask you-”

“Certainly, sir. You can turn the lock if you’re like that, you know. Any time.”

“A very good idea,” said the stranger.

“This straw, sir, if I might remark-”

“Don’t. If the straw makes trouble put it down in the bill.”

And he mumbled at her-words suspiciously like curses.

He was so odd, standing there, so aggressive and explosive, bottle in one hand and test-tube in the other, that Mrs. Hall was quite alarmed. But she was a resolute woman.

“In which case, I should like to know, sir, what you consider-”

“A shilling-put down a shilling. Surely a shilling is enough?”

“So be it,” said Mrs. Hall, taking up the table-cloth and beginning to spread it over the table.

He turned and sat down, with his coat-collar toward her.

All the afternoon he worked with the door locked and, as Mrs. Hall testifies, for the most part in silence. But once there was a smash of a bottle and then a rapid pacing athwart the room. She went to the door and listened.

“I can’t go on,” he was raving. “I can’t go on. Three hundred thousand, four hundred thousand! Cheated! All my life it may take me!.. Patience! Patience indeed!.. Fool! fool!”

There was a noise in the bar, and Mrs. Hall had very reluctantly to leave. When she returned the room was silent again. It was all over; the stranger had resumed work.

When she took in his tea she saw broken glass in the corner of the room under the mirror, and a golden stain that had been carelessly wiped. She drew attention to it.

“Put it down in the bill,” snapped her visitor. “For God’s sake don’t worry me. If there’s damage done, put it down in the bill!”

* * *

“I’ll tell you something,” said Fearenside, mysteriously. It was late in the afternoon, and they were in the little beer-shop.

“Well?” said Teddy Henfrey.

“This chap you’re speaking of, what my dog bit. Well-he’s black. Leastways, his legs are. I saw through the tear of his trousers and the tear of his glove. Well-there wasn’t none. Just blackness. I tell you, he’s as black as my hat.”

“Oh God!” said Henfrey. “But his nose is pink!”

“That’s true,” said Fearenside. “I know that. And I tell you what I think. That man is piebald, Teddy. Black here and white there-in patches. And he’s ashamed of it. I’ve heard of such things before. And it’s the common way with horses, as any one can see.”

Chapter IV

Mr. Cuss Interviews the Stranger

I have told the circumstances of the stranger's arrival in Iping, in order that the curious impression he created may be understood by the reader. Hall did not like him, and he talked of getting rid of him; but he avoided his visitor as much as possible.

"Wait till the summer," said Mrs. Hall sagely, "when the artists will come. Then we'll see."

The stranger did not go to church, and indeed made no difference between Sunday and the irreligious days, even in costume. He worked, as Mrs. Hall thought, very fitfully. Some days he would come down early and be continuously busy. On others he would rise late, smoke, and sleep in the armchair by the fire. His temper was very uncertain. He seemed under a chronic irritation of the greatest intensity. His habit of talking to himself in a low voice grew steadily, but though Mrs. Hall listened conscientiously she could not understand what she heard.

He rarely went out by daylight, but at twilight he would go out invisibly, whether the weather were cold or not, and he chose the loneliest paths. His spectacles and ghastly bandaged face under his hat frightened labourers. Children as saw him at nightfall dreamt of devils, and it seemed doubtful whether he disliked boys more than they disliked him.

It was inevitable that a person of so remarkable an appearance should form a frequent topic in such a village as Iping. Opinion was greatly divided about his occupation. When questioned, Mrs. Hall explained very carefully that he was an "experimental investigator." When asked what her investigator did, she would say with superiority that most educated people knew such things as that, and would thus explain that he "discovered things." Her visitor had had an accident, she said, which temporarily discoloured his face and hands.

But some people said that he was a criminal trying to escape from justice by wrapping himself up so as to conceal himself altogether from the eye of the police. This idea sprang from the brain of Mr. Teddy Henfrey. Mr. Gould, the teacher, said that the stranger was an Anarchist in disguise, preparing explosives.

Another view explained the entire matter by regarding the stranger as a harmless lunatic. That had the advantage of explaining everything.

But whatever the people in Iping thought of him, they, on the whole, agreed in disliking him. His irritability was an amazing thing to these quiet villagers. The frantic gesticulations, the headlong pace after nightfall, the taste for twilight that led to the closing of doors, the pulling down of curtains, the extinction of candles and lamps—who could agree with that? When he passed down the village, young humourists would up with coat-collars and go pacing nervously after him. There was a song popular at that time called "The Bogey Man". So whenever some villagers were gathered together and the stranger appeared, this tune was whistled in the midst of them. Also little children would call "Bogey Man!" after him.

Cuss, the general practitioner, was devoured by curiosity. The bandages excited his professional interest, the report of the thousand and one bottles aroused his jealous regard. All through April and May he coveted an opportunity of talking to the stranger, and at last, went to the "Coach and Horses". He was surprised to find that Mrs. Hall did not know his guest's name.

"He gave his name," said Mrs. Hall, "but I didn't rightly hear it."

She was ashamed.

Cuss rapped at the parlour door and entered. "Pardon my intrusion," said Cuss, and then the door closed.

Mrs. Hall could hear the murmur of voices for the next ten minutes, then a cry of surprise, a chair flung aside, a laughter, quick steps to the door, and Cuss appeared, his face white, his eyes huge. He left the door open behind him, and without looking at her strode across the hall and went

down the steps, and she heard his feet hurrying along the road. He carried his hat in his hand. She stood behind the door, looking at the open door of the parlour. Then she heard the strange laughing, and then footsteps came across the room. She could not see his face where she stood. The parlour door slammed, and the place was silent again.

Cuss went straight up the village to Bunting the vicar.

“Am I mad?” Cuss began abruptly, as he entered the shabby little study. “Do I look like an insane person?”

“What’s happened?” said the vicar.

“That chap at the inn-”

“Well?”

“Give me something to drink,” said Cuss, and he sat down. Then told the vicar of the interview he had just had.

“I went in,” he gasped, “he had his hands in his pockets as I came in, and he sat down in his chair. I told him I’d heard he took an interest in science. He said yes. Then he sniffed. I kept my eyes open. Bottles-chemicals-everywhere. Balance, test-tubes, and a smell of evening primrose. I asked him if he was researching. He said he was. A long research? ‘A damnable long research,’ said he. ‘Oh,’ said I. He had been given a prescription, most valuable prescription-what for he wouldn’t say. Was it medical? ‘Damn you! That’s none of your business!’ I apologised. He read the prescription. Five ingredients. He put it down and turned his head. Draught of air from window lifted the paper. He was working in a room with an open fireplace. I saw a flicker, and there was the prescription burning and lifting chimney ward. He rushed towards it just as it whisked up the chimney. So! He lifted his arm. And that time...”

“Well?”

“No hand-just an empty sleeve. Lord! I thought, there’s something odd in that. What the devil keeps that sleeve up and open, if there’s nothing in it? There was nothing in it, I tell you. Nothing, absolutely nothing! I could see right down it to the elbow, and there was a glimmer of light shining through a tear of the cloth. ‘Good God!’ I said. Then he stopped. Stared at me with those black glasses of his, and then at his sleeve.”

“Well?”

“That’s all. He never said a word; just glared, and put his sleeve back in his pocket quickly. ‘How the devil,’ said I, ‘can you move an empty sleeve like that?’ ‘Empty sleeve?’ ‘Yes,’ said I, ‘an empty sleeve.’ ‘It’s an empty sleeve, is it? You saw it was an empty sleeve?’ He stood up right away. I stood up too. He came towards me in three very slow steps, and stood quite close. ‘You said it was an empty sleeve?’ he said. ‘Certainly,’ I said. Then very quietly he pulled his sleeve out of his pocket again, and raised his arm towards me as though he would show it to me again. He did it very, very slowly. I looked at it. ‘Well?’ said I, clearing my throat, ‘there’s nothing in it.’ I could see right down it. He extended it straight towards me, slowly, slowly-just like that-until the cuff was six inches from my face. Queer thing to see an empty sleeve come at you like that! And then-”

“Well?”

“Something-exactly like a finger and thumb it felt-nipped my nose!”

Bunting began to laugh.

“There wasn’t anything there!” said Cuss. “It’s all very well for you to laugh, but I tell you I was so startled, I hit his cuff hard, and turned around, and ran out of the room.”

Cuss stopped. There was no mistaking the sincerity of his panic.

“When I hit his cuff,” said Cuss, “I tell you, it felt exactly like hitting an arm. And there wasn’t an arm! There wasn’t the ghost of an arm!”

Mr. Bunting thought it over. He looked suspiciously at Cuss.

“It’s a most remarkable story,” he said.

He looked very wise and grave indeed.

“It’s really,” said Mr. Bunting, “a most remarkable story.”

Chapter V

The Burglary at the Vicarage

The facts of the burglary at the vicarage came to us chiefly through the stories of the vicar and his wife. It occurred in the morning. Mrs. Bunting woke up suddenly in the stillness that comes before the dawn, with the strong impression that the door of their bedroom had opened and closed. She did not arouse her husband, but sat up in bed listening. She then distinctly heard the bare feet coming out of the dressing-room and walking along the passage towards the staircase. As soon as she felt assured of this, she aroused Mr. Bunting as quietly as possible. He put on his spectacles, her dressing-gown and his slippers, and went out to listen. He heard quite distinctly a noise at his study downstairs, and then a sneeze.

At that he returned to his bedroom, armed himself with the poker, and descended the staircase as noiselessly as possible. Mrs. Bunting came out, too.

The hour was about four. There was a faint shimmer of light in the hall. Everything was still except the faint creaking of the stairs under Mr. Bunting's tread, and the slight movements in the study. Then something snapped, the drawer was opened, and there was a rustle of papers. Then came an imprecation, and a match was struck and the study was flooded with yellow light. Mr. Bunting was now in the hall, and through the crack of the door he could see the desk and the open drawer and a candle burning on the desk. But the robber he could not see. He stood there in the hall undecided what to do, and Mrs. Bunting, her face white and intent, crept slowly downstairs after him. One thing kept Mr. Bunting's courage; the persuasion that this burglar was a resident in the village.

They heard the chink of money, and realised that the robber had found the gold-two pounds ten in half sovereigns altogether. At that sound Mr. Bunting, gripping the poker firmly, rushed into the room, closely followed by Mrs. Bunting.

"Surrender!" cried Mr. Bunting fiercely, and then stooped amazed. Apparently the room was empty.

Yet their conviction that they had, that very moment, heard somebody moving in the room had been certain. For half a minute, perhaps, they stood gaping, then Mrs. Bunting went across the room and looked behind the screen, while Mr. Bunting peered under the desk. Then Mrs. Bunting turned back the window-curtains, and Mr. Bunting looked up the chimney and probed it with the poker. Then Mrs. Bunting scrutinised the waste-paper basket and Mr. Bunting opened the lid of the coal-scuttle. Then they stopped and stood with eyes interrogating each other.

"I could have sworn—" said Mr. Bunting. "The candle! Who lit the candle?"

"The drawer!" said Mrs. Bunting. "And the money's gone!"

She went hastily to the doorway.

There was a sneeze in the passage. They rushed out, and as they did so the kitchen door slammed.

"Bring the candle," said Mr. Bunting.

As he opened the kitchen door he saw through the scullery that the back door was just opening, and the faint light displayed the garden beyond. He is certain that nobody went out of the door. It opened, stood open for a moment, and then closed with a slam. As it did so, the candle Mrs. Bunting was carrying from the study flickered and flared. It was a minute or more before they entered the kitchen.

The place was empty. They examined the kitchen, pantry, and scullery thoroughly, and at last went down into the cellar. There was not a soul to be found in the house.

Chapter VI

The Furniture That Went Mad

On Whit Monday Mr. Hall and Mrs. Hall both rose and went noiselessly down into the cellar. Suddenly Mrs. Hall remembered that she had forgotten a bottle of medicine from their sleeping-room. Mr. Hall went upstairs for it.

On the landing he was surprised to see that the stranger's door was ajar. He went on into his own room and found the bottle as he had been directed.

But returning with the bottle, he noticed that the bolts of the front door had not been shot, that the door was in fact simply on the latch. He distinctly remembered holding the candle while Mrs. Hall shot these bolts overnight. He stopped, gaping, then, with the bottle still in his hands, went upstairs again. He rapped at the stranger's door. There was no answer. He rapped again; then pushed the door wide open and entered.

It was as he expected. The bed, the room also, was empty. On the bedroom chair and along the bed were scattered the garments and the bandages of their guest. As Hall stood there he heard his wife's voice coming out of the depth of the cellar.

"George! Have you got the bottle?"

At that he turned and hurried down to her.

"Janny," he said, "Henfrey told the truth. He is not in the room. And the front door is open."

At first Mrs. Hall did not understand. Hall, still holding the bottle said, "He is not here, but his clothes are. And what is he doing without them? This is very strange."

As they came up the cellar steps they both heard the front door open and shut, but seeing it closed, they did not say a word to each other. Mrs. Hall ran upstairs. Someone sneezed on the staircase. Hall, following six steps behind, thought that he heard her sneeze. She, going on first, was under the impression that Hall was sneezing. She flung open the door and stood regarding the room.

She heard a sniff close behind her head, and turning, was surprised to see Hall a dozen feet off on the topmost stair. But in another moment he was beside her. She bent forward and put her hand on the pillow and then on the clothes.

"Cold," she said. "He's out for an hour or more."

As she did so, a most extraordinary thing happened. The bed-clothes gathered themselves together, leapt up suddenly and then jumped over the bed. Immediately after, the stranger's hat hopped off its place, and then dashed straight at Mrs. Hall's face. Then swiftly came the sponge from the washstand; and then the chair, flinging the stranger's coat and trousers carelessly aside, and laughing drily in a voice singularly like the stranger's, turned itself up at Mrs. Hall. She screamed, and then the chair legs came gently but firmly against her back and impelled her and Hall out of the room. The door slammed violently and was locked. The chair and bed seemed to be executing a dance of triumph, and then abruptly everything was still.

Mrs. Hall was in a dead faint. Mr. Hall got her downstairs.

"These are spirits," said Mrs. Hall. "I know these are spirits. I've read in papers about them. Tables and chairs are leaping and dancing..."

"Take some medicine, Janny," said Hall.

"Lock the door," said Mrs. Hall. "Don't let him come in again. I guessed-I might have known. With such big eyes and bandaged head... He has never gone to church on Sunday. And all those bottles. He's put the spirits into the furniture... My good old furniture! In that chair my poor dear mother used to sit when I was a little girl. And it rose up against me now!"

"Just a drop more, Janny," said Hall. "Your nerves are all upset."

They sent Millie, the servant, across the street to rouse up Mr. Sandy Wadgers, the blacksmith. Would Mr. Wadgers come round? He was a very clever man, Mr. Wadgers, and very resourceful.

“This is witchcraft,” was the view of Mr. Sandy Wadgers.

They wanted him to lead the way upstairs to the room, but he preferred to talk in the passage. There was a great deal of talk and no decisive action.

“Let’s have the facts first,” insisted Mr. Sandy Wadgers. “Let’s be sure we’d be acting perfectly right.”

And suddenly and most wonderfully the door of the room upstairs opened of its own accord, and as they looked up in amazement, they saw descending the stairs the muffled figure of the stranger staring with those unreasonably large blue glass eyes of his. He came down slowly, staring all the time; he walked across the passage, then stopped.

“Look there!” he said, and their eyes followed the direction of his gloved finger and saw a bottle by the cellar door. Then he entered the parlour, and suddenly, swiftly, viciously, slammed the door.

Not a word was spoken until the last echoes of the slam had died away. They stared at one another.

“Well, I’d go in and ask him about it,” said Wadgers to Mr. Hall. “I’d demand an explanation.”

The landlady’s husband rapped, opened the door, and began, “Excuse me-”

“Go to the devil!” said the stranger in a tremendous voice, “Shut that door after you.”

So that brief interview terminated.

Chapter VII

The Unveiling of the Stranger

The stranger went into the little parlour of the “Coach and Horses” about half-past five in the morning, and there he remained until near midday, the curtains down, the door shut.

Thrice he rang his bell, the third time furiously and continuously, but no one answered him.

“I’ll teach him a lesson, ‘go to the devil’ indeed!” said Mrs. Hall. Presently came a rumour of the burglary at the vicarage. No one dared to go upstairs. How the stranger occupied himself is unknown.

He would stride violently up and down, and twice came an outburst of curses, a tearing of paper, and a violent smashing of bottles. The group of scared but curious people increased.

It was the finest of all possible Mondays. And inside, in the darkness of the parlour, the stranger, hungry we must suppose, and fearful, hidden in his uncomfortable hot wrappings, pored through his dark glasses upon his paper or chinked his dirty little bottles, and occasionally swore savagely at the boys outside the windows. In the corner by the fireplace lay the fragments of smashed bottles, and a pungent twang of chlorine tainted the air.

About noon he suddenly opened his door and stood glaring fixedly at the three or four people in the bar. “Mrs. Hall,” he said. Somebody went and called for Mrs. Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared after an interval. Mr. Hall was out. She came holding a little tray with a bill upon it.

“Is it your bill you’re wanting, sir?” she said.

“Why wasn’t my breakfast laid? Why haven’t you prepared my meals and answered my bell? Do you think I live without eating?”

“Why isn’t my bill paid?” said Mrs. Hall. “That’s what I want to know.”

“I told you three days ago I was awaiting a remittance”.

“I told you two days ago I wasn’t going to await any remittances.”

The stranger swore briefly but vividly.

“And I’d thank you kindly, sir, if you’d keep your swearing to yourself, sir,” said Mrs. Hall.

The stranger stood looking like an angry diving-helmet.

“Look here, my good woman-” he began.

“Don’t call me ‘good woman’,” said Mrs. Hall.

“I’ve told you my remittance hasn’t come.”

“Remittance indeed!” said Mrs. Hall.

“In my pocket-”

“You told me three days ago that you hadn’t anything but a sovereign.”

“Well, I’ve found some more-”

“Ul-lo!” from the bar.

“I wonder where you found it,” said Mrs. Hall.

That seemed to annoy the stranger very much. He stamped his foot.

“What do you mean?” he said.

“That I wonder where you found it,” said Mrs. Hall. “And before I take any bills or get any breakfasts, or do any such things whatsoever, you got to tell me one or two things I don’t understand, and what nobody doesn’t understand, and what everybody is very anxious to understand. What have you been doing with my chair? How was your room empty, and how did you get in again? The people in this house usually come in by the doors-that’s the rule of the house, and you didn’t. How do you come in? And I want to know-”

Suddenly the stranger raised his gloved hands, stamped his foot, and said, “Stop!” with such extraordinary violence that he silenced her instantly.

“You don’t understand,” he said, “who I am or what I am. I’ll show you. By Heaven! I’ll show you.”

Then he put his open palm over his face and withdrew it. The centre of his face became a black cavity.

“Here,” he said. He stepped forward and handed Mrs. Hall something which she, staring at his face, accepted automatically. Then, when she saw what it was, she screamed loudly, dropped it, and staggered back. The nose-it was the stranger’s nose! pink and shining-rolled on the floor.

Then he removed his spectacles, and everyone in the bar gasped. He took off his hat, and with a violent gesture tore at his whiskers and bandages.

“Oh, my God!” said someone.

It was worse than anything. Mrs. Hall, standing open-mouthed and horror-struck, shrieked at what she saw. Everyone began to move. They were prepared for scars, disfigurements, but nothing! The bandages and false hair flew across the passage into the bar. Everyone tumbled on everyone else down the steps. For the man who stood there was a solid gesticulating figure up to the coat-collar of him, and then-nothingness, no visible thing at all!

People down the village heard shouts and shrieks. They saw Mrs. Hall fall down, and then they heard the frightful screams of Millie, who, going from the kitchen at the noise of the tumult, had come upon the headless stranger from behind.

After that everybody began to run towards the inn, and in a minute a crowd of perhaps forty people, swayed and hooted and inquired and exclaimed and suggested. Everyone seemed eager to talk at once. A small group supported Mrs. Hall, who was in a state of collapse. There was a conference:

“O Bogey!”

“What has he been doing, then?”

“Hasn’t he hurt the girl?”

“He has run at her with a knife, I believe.”

“A man without a head!”

“Nonsense! It’s just a trick.”

Trying to see in through the open door, the crowd formed itself into a straggling wedge.

“He stood for a moment, I heard the girl scream, and he turned. I saw her skirts, and he went after her. It didn’t take ten seconds. He came back with a knife in his hand. Not a moment ago. He went through that door. I tell you, he has no head! At all.”

The speaker stopped to step aside for a little procession that was marching very resolutely towards the house; first Mr. Hall, very red and determined, then Mr. Bobby Jaffers, the village constable, and then Mr. Wadgers. They had come to arrest the stranger.

People shouted.

“With the head or without any head, it doesn’t matter,” said Jaffers, “I will arrest him, in any case.”

Mr. Hall marched straight to the door of the parlour and flung it open.

“Constable,” he said, “do your duty.”

Jaffers marched in. Hall next, Wadgers last. They saw in the dim light the headless figure facing them, with a crust of bread in one gloved hand and a chunk of cheese in the other.

“That’s him!” said Hall.

“What the devil is this?” came an angry question from above the collar of the figure.

“You’re a rare man, indeed, mister,” said Mr. Jaffers. “But with the head or without any head, duty is duty!”

“Keep off!” said the figure, starting back.

Abruptly he whipped down the bread and cheese. Off came the stranger’s left glove and was slapped in Jaffers’ face. In another moment Jaffers had gripped him by the handless wrist and caught his invisible throat. They came down together.

“Get the feet,” said Jaffers.

Mr. Hall, endeavouring to act on instructions, received a kick in the ribs. Mr. Wadgers retreated towards the door, knife in hand, and so collided with Mr. Huxter and the carter coming to the rescue of law and order. At the same moment down came three or four bottles from the chiffonnier.

“I’ll surrender!” cried the stranger, and in another moment he stood up, a strange figure, headless and handless-for he had pulled off his gloves. “It’s no good,” he said.

It was a very strange thing to hear that voice coming as if out of empty space. Jaffers got up also and produced a pair of handcuffs. Then he stared.

“Darn it!” said Jaffers, “I can’t use them as I can see.”

“Why!” said Huxter, suddenly, “that’s not a man at all. It’s just empty clothes. Look! You can see down his collar. I could put my arm-”

He extended his hand, and he drew it back with a sharp exclamation.

“I wish you’d keep your fingers out of my eye,” said the aerial voice. “The fact is, I’m all here-head, hands, legs, and all the rest of it, but I’m invisible.”

The suit of clothes, now all unbuttoned and hanging loosely upon its unseen supports, stood up. Several men had entered the room, so that it was crowded.

“Invisible, eh?” said Huxter. “Who ever heard of that?”

“It’s strange, perhaps, but it’s not a crime. Why is the policeman here?”

“Ah! that’s a different matter,” said Jaffers. “I got an order and it’s all correct. Invisibility is not a crime, but the burglary is. A house was broken into and money was taken.”

“Well?”

“And circumstances certainly point-”

“Nonsense!” said the Invisible Man.

“I hope so, sir; but I’ve got my instructions.”

“Well,” said the stranger, “I’ll come. I’ll come. But no handcuffs.”

“It’s the regular thing,” said Jaffers.

“No handcuffs,” stipulated the stranger.

“Pardon me,” said Jaffers.

Abruptly the figure sat down, and before any one could realise what was happening, the slippers, socks, and trousers had been kicked off under the table. Then he sprang up again and flung off his coat.

“Stop that!” said Jaffers, suddenly realising what was happening. He gripped at the waistcoat; it struggled, and the shirt slipped out of it.

“Hold him!” said Jaffers, loudly. “Once he gets the things off-”

“Hold him!” cried everyone. A white shirt was now all that was visible of the stranger.

The shirt-sleeve sent Hall backward, and in another moment the garment was lifted up and the shirt hit the man’s head.

“Hold him!” said everybody. “Shut the door! Don’t let him get out! I got something! Here he is!”

Sandy Wadgers got a frightful blow in the nose. He opened the door. The hitting continued. Jaffers was struck under the jaw, and, turning, caught at something that intervened between him and Huxter.

“I got him!” shouted Jaffers, wrestling with purple face and swelling veins against his unseen enemy.

Then Jaffers cried in a strangled voice, and his fingers relaxed.

There were excited cries of “Hold him!” “Invisible!” and so forth, and a young fellow caught something and fell over the constable’s prostrate body. Across the road a woman screamed as something pushed her; a dog, kicked apparently, yelped and ran howling. The Invisible Man ran away. People stood amazed and gesticulating, and then came panic. But Jaffers lay quite still, face upward and knees bent.

Chapter VIII

In Transit

The eighth chapter is exceedingly brief, and relates that Gibbons, the amateur naturalist of the district, while lying on the hill without a soul within a couple of miles of him, as he thought, and almost dozing, heard close to him the sound as of a man coughing, sneezing, and then swearing savagely to himself. Gibbons looked out but saw nothing. Yet the voice was indisputable. It was the swearing of an educated man. It grew, diminished again, and died away in the distance. It lifted to a sneeze and ended. Gibbons had heard nothing of the morning's events, but the phenomenon was so striking and disturbing that his philosophical tranquillity vanished; he got up hastily, and hurried down the hill towards the village, as fast as he could go.

Chapter IX

Mr. Thomas Marvel

Mr. Thomas Marvel was a person of copious, flexible visage, with a cylindrical nose, a liquorish, ample, fluctuating mouth, and an eccentric beard. He wore a furry silk hat, and the frequent substitution of shoe-laces for buttons, marked a bachelor.

Mr. Thomas Marvel was sitting with his feet in a ditch by the roadside, about a mile and a half out of Iping. His socks were torn out, his big toes were broad like the ears of a watchful dog. In a leisurely manner-he did everything in a leisurely manner-he was going to try on a pair of boots. They were the best boots he had had for a long time, but too large for him. Mr. Thomas Marvel hated roomy shoes, but he hated damp as well. But he could not understand which he hated most, and it was a pleasant day, and there was nothing better to do. So he put the four shoes in a group on the turf and looked at them. And seeing them there among the grass, it suddenly occurred to him that both pairs were ugly to see. He was not at all startled by a voice behind him.

"They're boots, anyhow," said the Voice.

"They are-charity boots," said Mr. Thomas Marvel; "and I can't decide which is the ugliest pair here."

"Hm," said the Voice.

"I've worn worse boots. But not so ugly. My old boots-I am sick of them. They're good enough, of course. And if you'll believe me, I've got nothing in the whole country, but these boots. Look at them! Ugly, right? What a country! What people!"

"It's a terrible country," said the Voice. "And people are like pigs."

"That's it!" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Lord! And their boots!"

He turned his head to the right, to look at the boots of his interlocutor, and lo! Where the boots of his interlocutor should have been were neither legs nor boots. He was in a great amazement.

"Where are you?" said Mr. Thomas Marvel over his shoulder. "Am I drunk? Have I had visions? Was I talking to myself? What the-"

"Don't be alarmed," said a Voice.

"None of your jokes," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rising sharply to his feet. "Where are you?"

"Don't be alarmed," repeated the Voice.

"You'll be alarmed in a minute, you silly fool," said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "Where are you? Let me catch you."

There was no answer. Mr. Thomas Marvel stood bootless and amazed.

"Peewit," said a peewit, very remote.

"Peewit, indeed!" said Mr. Thomas Marvel. "This is no time for foolery."

The field was desolate, east and west, north and south; the road ran smooth and empty north and south, and, save for that peewit, the blue sky was empty too.

"I know," said Mr. Thomas Marvel, shuffling his coat on to his shoulders again. "It's the alcohol! I might have known."

"It's not the alcohol," said the Voice. "Don't worry."

"Oh!" said Mr. Marvel, and his face grew white. "It's the alcohol!" his lips repeated noiselessly. He remained staring about him, rotating slowly backwards. "I could have sworn I heard a voice," he whispered.

"Of course you did."

"It's there again," said Mr. Marvel, closing his eyes and clasping his hands with a tragic gesture. He was suddenly taken by the collar and shaken violently, and left more dazed than ever.

"Don't be a fool," said the Voice.

"I got crazy," said Mr. Marvel. "It's no good. It's because of those damned boots. Or it's spirits."

“Neither one thing nor the other,” said the Voice. “Listen!”

“Crazy,” said Mr. Marvel.

“One minute,” said the Voice.

“Well?” said Mr. Thomas Marvel.

“You think I’m just imagination? Just imagination?”

“What else can you be?” said Mr. Thomas Marvel, rubbing the back of his neck.

“Very well,” said the Voice, in a tone of relief. “Then I’m going to throw little stones at you till you think differently.”

“But where are you?”

The Voice made no answer. Whizz came a little stone, apparently out of the air. Mr. Marvel was too amazed to dodge. Whizz came another little stone, and ricocheted from a bare toe into the ditch. Mr. Thomas Marvel jumped a foot and howled aloud.

“Now,” said the Voice, “am I imagination?”

Mr. Marvel lay quiet.

“If you struggle,” said the Voice, “I shall throw the stone at your head.”

“Oh-oh,” said Mr. Thomas Marvel, taking his wounded toe in hand. “I don’t understand it. Stones are flinging themselves. Stones are talking. I’ll surrender.”

“It’s very simple,” said the Voice. “I’m an invisible man.”

“Tell me something more interesting,” said Mr. Marvel. “Where you’ve hid-how you do it-I don’t know.”

“That’s all,” said the Voice. “I’m invisible. That’s what I want you to understand.”

“Anyone can see that. There is no need for you to be so confounded impatient, mister. But tell me: where do you hid?”

“I’m invisible. That’s the great point. And what I want you to understand is this-”

“But where are you?” interrupted Mr. Marvel.

“Here! Six yards in front of you.”

“Oh, come on! I am not blind. You will tell me now that you are just air. I’m not ignorant.”

“Yes, I am air. You’re looking through me.”

“What! And you have nothing? Only your voice?”

“I am just a human being-solid, needing food and drink, needing covering too-But I’m invisible. Do you see? Invisible. Simple idea. Invisible.”

“What? Are you a real man?”

“Yes, real.”

“Let me touch your hand,” said Marvel, “if you are real. Lord!”

He felt the hand that had closed round his wrist with his disengaged fingers, and his fingers patted a muscular chest, and explored a bearded face. Marvel was very surprised.

“Great!” he said. “It’s even better than cock-fighting! Most remarkable! And there I can see a rabbit clean through you, a mile away! Not a bit of you visible-except-”

He scrutinised the apparently empty space keenly.

“Have you eaten bread and cheese?” he asked, holding the invisible arm.

“You’re quite right, and it’s not quite assimilated.”

“Ah!” said Mr. Marvel. “Sort of ghostly, though.”

“Of course, all this isn’t half so wonderful as you think.”

“It’s quite wonderful enough for my modest mind,” said Mr. Thomas Marvel. “How did you manage it? How the devil is it done?”

“It’s a long story. And besides-”

“I tell you, I can’t believe it,” said Mr. Marvel.

“What I want to say at present is this: I need help. I have come to that. I was wandering, mad with rage, naked, impotent. And I saw you-”

“Lord!” said Mr. Marvel.

“-then stopped. ‘Here,’ I said, ‘is an outcast like myself. This is the man for me.’ So I came to you. And-”

“Lord!” said Mr. Marvel. “But may I ask-How is it? And what help do you need? Invisible!”

“I want you to help me get clothes and shelter and then, with other things. I’ve left them long enough. If you won’t-well! But you will-you must.”

“Look here,” said Mr. Marvel. “I’m too flabbergasted. Don’t touch me any more. And let me go. It’s all so unreasonable. Empty hills, empty sky. Nothing visible for miles except the nature. And then comes a voice. A voice out of heaven! And stones! Lord!”

“So,” said the Voice, “you have to do the job I’ve chosen for you.”

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were round.

“I’ve chosen you,” said the Voice. “You are the only man except some of those fools down there, who knows there is an invisible man. You have to be my helper. Help me-and I will do great things for you. An invisible man is a man of power.”

He stopped for a moment to sneeze violently.

“But if you betray me,” he said, “if you don’t do the things I want-”

He paused and tapped Mr. Marvel’s shoulder smartly. Mr. Marvel gave a yelp of terror at the touch.

“I don’t want to betray you,” said Mr. Marvel. “All I want to do is to help you-just tell me what I must do. Lord!”

Chapter X

Mr. Marvel's Visit to Iping

After the first gusty panic had gone, the people of Iping became argumentative and sceptic. It is so much easier not to believe in an invisible man; and those who had actually seen him dissolve into air, or felt the strength of his arm, could be counted on the fingers of two hands. And of these witnesses Mr. Wadgers was presently missing, and Jaffers was lying stunned in the parlour of the "Coach and Horses." By the afternoon even those who believed in the Unseen were beginning to think that the Unseen had gone away for ever. And with the sceptics he was just a jest.

About four o'clock a stranger entered the village. He was a short, stout person in an extraordinarily shabby top hat. He moved with a sort of reluctant alacrity. He turned the corner of the church, and directed his way to the "Coach and Horses."

This stranger was talking to himself. He stopped at the foot of the "Coach and Horses" steps, and entered the house. Finally he marched up the steps, and by Mr. Huxter saw that he turned to the left and opened the door of the parlour. Mr. Huxter heard voices from within the room.

"That room's private!" said Hall, and the stranger shut the door clumsily and went into the bar.

In a few minutes he reappeared, wiping his lips with the back of his hand with an air of quiet satisfaction. He stood looking about him for some moments, and then Mr. Huxter saw him walk towards the gates of the yard, upon which the parlour window opened. The stranger, after some hesitation, leant against the gates, produced a short clay pipe, and prepared to fill it. His fingers trembled while doing so. Strange behaviour of the man's prompted Mr. Huxter to maintain his observation.

Suddenly the stranger stood up abruptly and put his pipe in his pocket. Then he vanished into the yard. Mr. Huxter leapt round the counter and ran out into the road to intercept the thief. As he did so, Mr. Marvel reappeared. He had a big bundle in a blue table-cloth in one hand, and three books tied together in the other. He saw Huxter, and turned sharply to the left, and began to run.

"Stop, thief!" cried Huxter, and set off after him.

Mr. Huxter's sensations were vivid but brief. He saw the man just before him. He saw the village flags, and some people. He bawled, "Stop!" again. Suddenly his shin was caught in some mysterious fashion, and he was no longer running, but flying through the air. He saw the ground suddenly close to his face. And subsequent proceedings interested him no more.

Chapter XI

In the “Coach and Horses”

In order to understand what had happened in the inn, it is necessary to go back to the moment when Mr. Marvel first came into view. At that moment Mr. Cuss and Mr. Bunting were in the parlour. They were seriously talking about the strange occurrences of the morning, and were, with Mr. Hall's permission, making a thorough examination of the Invisible Man's belongings. The stranger's scattered garments had been removed by Mrs. Hall and the room tidied up. And on the table under the window Cuss had noticed three big books in manuscript labelled “Diary.”

“Diary!” said Cuss, putting the three books on the table. “Now, at any rate, we will learn something.”

The Vicar stood with his hands on the table.

“Diary,” repeated Cuss, sitting down, putting two volumes to support the third, and opening it. “Hm-no name. Lord! Only figures.”

The vicar came round to look over his shoulder.

Cuss turned the pages over with a face suddenly disappointed.

“Dear me! Only figures, Bunting.”

“There are no diagrams?” asked Mr. Bunting. “No illustrations throwing light-”

“See for yourself,” said Mr. Cuss. “Some of it's mathematical and some of it's Russian or some such language (to judge by the letters), and some of it's Greek. You can understand Greek I suppose.”

“Of course,” said Mr. Bunting, wiping his spectacles and feeling suddenly very uncomfortable-for he had no Greek left in his mind worth talking about; “yes-the Greek, of course, may give us a clue.”

“I'll find you a place.”

“I'd rather glance through the volumes first,” said Mr. Bunting, still wiping his glasses. “A general impression first, Cuss, and then, you know, we can try to find the clue.”

He coughed, put on his glasses, coughed again. Then he took the volume Cuss handed him. And then something happened.

The door opened suddenly.

Both gentlemen started violently, looked round, and were relieved to see a rosy face beneath a furry silk hat.

“Whisky?” asked the face.

“No,” said both gentlemen at once.

“Over the other side, my man,” said Mr. Bunting. “And please shut that door,” said Mr. Cuss, irritably.

“All right,” said the intruder and he vanished and closed the door.

“A sailor, I think,” said Mr. Bunting. “Amusing fellows, they are.”

“It quite made me jump,” said Cuss. “The door was opening like that.”

Mr. Bunting smiled as if he had not jumped.

“And now,” he said with a sigh, “these books.”

Someone sniffed as he did so.

“One thing is indisputable,” said Bunting, drawing up a chair next to that of Cuss. “Very strange things happened in Iping during the last few days-very strange. I cannot of course believe in this absurd invisibility story-”

“It's incredible,” said Cuss, “incredible. But the fact remains that I saw-I certainly saw right down his sleeve.”

“But did you-are you sure? Hallucinations are so easily produced. I don't know if you have ever seen a really good conjuror.”

“I won’t argue again,” said Cuss. “We’ve discussed all that already, Bunting. And now there are these books. Ah! Greek letters certainly.”

He pointed to the middle of the page. Mr. Bunting flushed slightly and brought his face nearer, apparently finding some difficulty with his glasses. Suddenly he felt a strange feeling at the nape of his neck. He tried to raise his head, and encountered an immovable resistance. The feeling was a curious pressure: a heavy, firm hand bore his chin to the table.

“Don’t move, gentlemen” whispered a voice.

Mr. Bunting looked into the face of Cuss, and saw a reflection of his own astonishment.

“I’m sorry to treat you like this,” said the Voice, “but it’s unavoidable. Since when did you learn to pry into an investigator’s private memoranda?”

Two chins struck the table simultaneously, and two sets of teeth rattled.

“Where have they put my clothes? Listen,” said the Voice. “The windows are fastened and I’ve taken the key out of the door. I am a strong man, and I have the poker—besides being invisible. There’s not the slightest doubt that I could kill you both and get away quite easily if I wanted to—do you understand? Very well. If I let you go, will you promise not to try any nonsense and do what I tell you?”

The vicar and the doctor looked at one another.

“Yes,” said Mr. Bunting, and the doctor repeated it.

Then the pressure on the necks relaxed, and the doctor and the vicar sat up, both very red in the face and wriggling their heads.

“Please keep sitting where you are,” said the Invisible Man. “Here’s the poker, you see.”

“When I came into this room,” continued the Invisible Man, after presenting the poker to the tip of the nose of each of his visitors, “I did not expect to find it occupied, and I expected to find, in addition to my books of memoranda, my clothing. Where is it? No—don’t rise. I can see it’s gone. Though the days are warm enough for an invisible man, the evenings are quite chilly. I want clothing—and I must also have those three books.”

Chapter XII

The Invisible Man Loses His Temper

At this point the narrative should break off again. While these things were going on in the parlour, and while Mr. Huxter was watching Mr. Marvel smoking his pipe against the gate, not a dozen yards away were Mr. Hall and Teddy Henfrey discussing the event in Iping.

Suddenly there came a violent thud against the door of the parlour, a sharp cry, and then-silence.

“Hallo!” said Teddy Henfrey.

Mr. Hall understood things slowly but surely.

“That isn’t right,” he said, and came round from behind the bar towards the parlour door.

He and Teddy approached the door together, with intent faces.

“Something wrong,” said Hall, and Henfrey nodded.

Whiffs of an unpleasant chemical odour met them, and there was a muffled sound of conversation, very rapid and subdued.

“Are you all right there?” asked Hall, rapping.

The muttered conversation ceased abruptly, for a moment silence, then the conversation was resumed, in hissing whispers, then a sharp cry of “No! no, you don’t!” There came a sudden motion and a brief struggle. Silence again.

“What the devil?” exclaimed Henfrey.

“Are you all right there?” asked Mr. Hall, sharply, again.

The Vicar’s voice answered with a curious jerking intonation:

“Quite right. Please don’t interrupt.”

“Odd!” said Mr. Henfrey.

“Odd!” said Mr. Hall.

“They say, ‘Don’t interrupt,’” said Henfrey.

“I heard this,” said Hall.

“And a sniff,” said Henfrey.

They remained listening. The conversation was rapid and subdued.

“I can’t,” said Mr. Bunting, his voice rising; “I tell you, sir, I will not.”

“What was that?” asked Henfrey.

“He says he will not,” said Hall. “Was he speaking to us?”

“Disgraceful!” said Mr. Bunting, within.

“Disgraceful,” said Mr. Henfrey. “I heard it. Who’s that speaking now?” asked Henfrey.

“Mr. Cuss, I suppose,” said Hall. “Can you hear anything?”

Silence.

“Sounds like throwing the table-cloth about,” said Hall.

Mrs. Hall appeared behind the bar. Hall made gestures of silence. This aroused Mrs. Hall’s opposition.

“What are you listening there for, Hall?” she asked. “Do you have nothing better to do?”

Hall and Henfrey, rather crestfallen, tiptoed back to the bar, gesticulating to explain to her.

At first she refused to understand. Then she insisted on Hall keeping silence, while Henfrey told her his story.

“I heard him say ‘disgraceful’; that I did,” said Hall.

“I heard that, too, Mrs. Hall,” said Henfrey.

“So-” began Mrs. Hall.

“Hsh!” said Mr. Teddy Henfrey. “Do you hear the window?”

“What window?” asked Mrs. Hall.

“Parlour window,” said Henfrey.

Everyone stood listening intently. Abruptly Huxter's door opened and Huxter appeared, eyes staring with excitement, arms gesticulating.

"Stop thief!" cried Huxter and ran across the oblong towards the yard gates, and vanished.

Simultaneously came a tumult from the parlour, and a sound of windows being closed.

Hall, Henfrey, and the rest rushed out at once into the street. They saw someone whisk round the corner towards the road, and Mr. Huxter executing a complicated leap in the air that ended on his face. The people in the street were standing astonished or running towards them.

Mr. Huxter was stunned. Hall and the two labourers from the Tap rushed at once to the corner, and saw Mr. Marvel vanishing by the corner of the church wall. They have made the impossible conclusion that this was the Invisible Man suddenly become visible. But Hall had hardly run a dozen yards before he gave a loud shout of astonishment and went flying sideways, clutching one of the labourers and bringing him to the ground. The second labourer resumed the pursuit, but fell down. Then, as the first labourer stood up, he was kicked sideways by a blow that might have felled an ox.

When Hall and Henfrey and the labourers ran out of the house, Mrs. Hall remained in the bar. And suddenly the parlour door was opened, and Mr. Cuss appeared, and without glancing at her rushed at once down the steps toward the corner.

"Hold him!" he cried. "Don't let him drop that parcel."

He knew nothing of the existence of Marvel. The face of Mr. Cuss was angry and resolute.

"Hold him!" he bawled. "He's got my trousers! And all the Vicar's clothes! I'll get him in a minute!" he cried to Henfrey as he passed the Huxter, and, coming round the corner to join the tumult, was promptly knocked off his feet. Somebody in full flight trod heavily on his finger. He yelled, struggled to regain his feet, was knocked against and thrown down again, and became aware that he was involved not in a capture, but a rout. Everyone was running back to the village. He rose again and was hit severely behind the ear. He ran back to the "Coach and Horses", leaping over the deserted Huxter, who was now sitting up, on his way.

Behind him he heard a sudden yell of rage. He recognised the voice as that of the Invisible Man.

In another moment Mr. Cuss was back in the parlour.

"He's coming back, Bunting!" he said, rushing in. "Save yourself!"

Mr. Bunting was standing in the window and clothing himself in the paper.

"Who's coming?" he said.

"Invisible Man," said Cuss, and rushed on to the window. "He's mad! Mad!"

In another moment he was out in the yard.

"Good heavens!" said Mr. Bunting. He clambered out of the window, adjusted his costume hastily, and fled up the village as fast as his fat little legs would carry him.

From the moment when the Invisible Man screamed with rage, it became impossible to give a consecutive account of affairs in Iping. Possibly the Invisible Man's original intention was simply to take the clothes and books. But then he began to fight.

After that the Invisible Man amused himself for a little while by breaking all the windows in the "Coach and Horses," and then he thrust a street lamp through the parlour window of Mrs. Gribble. And after that he left, and he was neither heard, seen, nor felt in Iping any more. He vanished absolutely.

Chapter XIII

Mr. Marvel Discusses His Resignation

When the dusk was gathering, a short man in a shabby silk hat was marching through the twilight on the road to Bramblehurst. He carried three books bound together, and a bundle wrapped in a blue table-cloth. His rubicund face expressed consternation and fatigue. He was accompanied by a voice, and ever and again he winced under the touch of unseen hands.

“If you run away again,” said the Voice, “if you attempt to run away again-”

“Lord!” said Mr. Marvel. “Oh, that hurts!”

“On my honour,” said the Voice, “I will kill you.”

“I didn’t try to run away,” said Marvel. “I swear I didn’t. I didn’t know where to turn! How the devil could I know that?”

Mr. Marvel became silent. He blew out his cheeks, and his eyes were eloquent of despair.

“It’s bad enough to let these yokels explode my little secret, without your trying to go away with my books. No one knew I was invisible! And now what am I to do?”

“What am I to do?” asked Marvel.

“Everybody knows that now. It will be in the papers! Everybody will be looking for me!”

Mr. Marvel’s pace slackened.

“Go on!” said the Voice sharply. “Don’t drop those books, stupid. The fact is, I shall have to make use of you... You’re a poor tool, but I must.”

“I’m a miserable tool,” said Marvel.

“You are,” said the Voice.

“I’m the worst possible tool you could have,” said Marvel. “And I’m not strong at all.”

“No?”

“And my heart is weak.”

“Well?”

“I haven’t the nerve and strength for the sort of thing you want.”

“I’ll stimulate you.”

“I wish you wouldn’t. But I can mess up your plans, you know. I am cowardly and miserable.”

“You’d better not,” said the Voice.

“It’s better to die,” said Marvel. “It’s not fair. You must admit... It seems to me I have the right-”

“Go on!” said the Voice.

Mr. Marvel mended his pace, and for a time they went in silence again.

“It’s devilish hard,” said Mr. Marvel.

This was quite ineffectual. He tried again.

“What will I get for that?” he began.

“Oh! Shut up!” said the Voice. “Just do what you’re told. You’re a fool, but you’ll do it.”

“I tell you, sir, I’m not the man for it.”

“If you don’t shut up I shall twist your wrist again,” said the Invisible Man. “I want to think.”

Presently two oblongs of yellow light appeared through the trees, and the square tower of a church loomed through the gloaming.

“I shall keep my hand on your shoulder,” said the Voice, “all through the village. Go straight through and try no foolery.”

“I know that,” sighed Mr. Marvel, “I know all that.”

The unhappy-looking figure in the obsolete silk hat passed up the street of the little village with his burdens, and vanished into the gathering darkness.

Chapter XIV At Port Stowe

Ten o'clock the next morning found Mr. Marvel, unshaven, and dirty sitting with the books beside him and his hands deep in his pockets, looking very weary, nervous, and uncomfortable, and inflating his cheeks at infrequent intervals, on the bench outside a little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe. Beside him were the books, tied with string. The bundle had been abandoned in the woods beyond Bramblehurst, in accordance with a change in the plans of the Invisible Man. Mr. Marvel's hands would go ever and again to his various pockets with a curious nervous fumbling.

When he had been sitting for an hour, an elderly mariner, carrying a newspaper, came out of the inn and sat down beside him.

"Pleasant day," said the mariner.

"Very," said Mr. Marvel.

"Just seasonable weather for the time of year," said the mariner.

"Quite," said Mr. Marvel.

The mariner's eyes examined Mr. Marvel's dusty figure, and the books beside him. As he had approached Mr. Marvel he had heard a sound like the dropping of coins into a pocket.

"Books?" the mariner said suddenly.

Mr. Marvel looked at them.

"Oh, yes," he said. "Yes, they're books."

"There are some extraordinary things in books," said the mariner.

"I believe you," said Mr. Marvel.

"And some extraordinary things out of them," said the mariner.

"That's true," said Mr. Marvel. He eyed his interlocutor.

"There are some extraordinary things in newspapers, for example," said the mariner.

"There are."

"In this newspaper," said the mariner.

"Ah!" said Mr. Marvel.

"There's a story," said the mariner, fixing Mr. Marvel with an eye that was firm and deliberate; "there's a story about an Invisible Man, for instance."

Mr. Marvel scratched his cheek and felt his ears glowing.

"What will they be writing next?" he asked faintly. "Australia or America?"

"Neither," said the mariner. "Here."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel, starting.

"When I say here," said the mariner, to Mr. Marvel's intense relief, "I don't of course mean here in this place, I mean hereabouts."

"An Invisible Man!" said Mr. Marvel. "And what does he do?"

"Everything," said the mariner, controlling Marvel with his eye, and then amplifying, "everything."

"I haven't seen papers for four days," said Marvel.

"He was at Iping," said the mariner.

"Indeed!" said Mr. Marvel.

"He started there. And where he came from, nobody doesn't seem to know. Here it is: 'Peculiar Story from Iping.' And it says in this paper that the evidence is extraordinary strong."

"Lord!" said Mr. Marvel.

"Yes, it's an extraordinary story. A clergyman and a doctor saw him, or to be exact, didn't see him. He was staying, it says, at the 'Coach and Horses,' and no one was aware of his misfortune, until his bandages on his head were torn off. It was then observed that his head was invisible. They tried

to catch him, but casting off his garments, he succeeded in escaping. And he had seriously wounded our constable, Mr. J. A. Jaffers. What a story, eh?”

“Lord!” said Mr. Marvel, looking nervously about him, trying to count the money in his pockets. “It sounds most astonishing.”

“Indeed! Extraordinary, I call it. I have never heard of Invisible Men before.”

“And that’s all what he did?” asked Marvel.

“It’s enough, isn’t it?” said the mariner.

“Did he go back to Iping?” asked Marvel. “Just escaped and that’s all, eh?”

“All!” said the mariner. “Why! Isn’t it enough?”

“Quite enough,” said Marvel.

“I should think it was enough,” said the mariner. “I should think so.”

“He didn’t have any pals-it doesn’t say he had any pals, does it?” asked Mr. Marvel, anxious.

“You want more of them?” asked the mariner. “No, thank Heaven, he didn’t.”

He nodded his head slowly.

“It makes me uncomfortable, the thought of that chap running about the country! He is free. And they say he may go to Port Stowe. Just think of the things he might do! Let’s suppose he wants to rob-who can prevent him? He can trespass, he can burgle, he could walk through a cordon of policemen! And wherever there was wine he liked-”

“He’s got an advantage, certainly,” said Mr. Marvel.

“You’re right,” said the mariner. “He has.”

Mr. Marvel looked about him, listened, bent towards the mariner, and lowered his voice:

“The fact is-I know something about this Invisible Man. From private sources.”

“Oh!” said the mariner, interested. “You?”

“Yes,” said Mr. Marvel. “Me.”

“Indeed!” said the mariner. “And may I ask-”

“You’ll be astonished,” said Mr. Marvel behind his hand. “It’s tremendous.”

“Indeed!” said the mariner.

“The fact is,” began Mr. Marvel in a confidential tone. Suddenly his expression changed marvellously. “Oh!” he said. His face was eloquent of physical suffering.

“Wow!” he said.

“What’s up?” said the mariner.

“Toothache,” said Mr. Marvel, and put his hand to his cheek. He took his books. “I must go, I think,” he said.

“But you were going to tell me about this Invisible Man!” protested the mariner.

“Hoax,” said a Voice.

“It’s a hoax,” said Mr. Marvel.

“But it’s in the paper,” said the mariner.

“Hoax, I tell you,” said Marvel. “I know the chap that told this lie. There is no Invisible Man whatsoever.”

“But how about this paper? Do you mean to say-?”

“The paper lies,” said Marvel, stoutly.

The mariner stared, paper in hand.

“Wait a bit,” said the mariner, rising and speaking slowly, “Do you mean to say-?”

“I do,” said Mr. Marvel.

“Then why did you listen to me? Why didn’t you stop me? Eh?”

Mr. Marvel blew out his cheeks. The mariner was suddenly very red indeed; he clenched his hands.

“I have been talking here for ten minutes,” he said; “and you, you little pig, couldn’t have the elementary manners-”

“Come up,” said a Voice, and Mr. Marvel was suddenly stood up in a curious spasmodic manner.

“You’d better get away,” said the mariner.

Mr. Marvel went away, but the mariner still stood for some time. Then he turned himself towards Port Stowe.

And there was another extraordinary thing he heard, that had happened quite close to him. That was a vision of a “fist full of money” travelling along by the wall. Another mariner had seen this wonderful sight that morning. He had tried to catch the money and had been knocked down. The story of the flying money was true. And all about that neighbourhood, money had been floating quietly along by walls and shady places. And then the money had ended its mysterious flight in the pocket of the gentleman in the obsolete silk hat, sitting outside the little inn on the outskirts of Port Stowe.

It was ten days after-and the mariner collated these facts and began to understand how near he had been to the wonderful Invisible Man.

Chapter XV

The Man Who Was Running

In the evening Dr. Kemp was sitting in his study in the belvedere on the hill overlooking Burdock. It was a pleasant little room, with three windows-north, west, and south-and bookshelves covered with books and scientific publications, and a broad writing-table, and, under the north window, a microscope, minute instruments, and scattered bottles of reagents. Dr. Kemp's lamp was lit, albeit the sky was still bright. Dr. Kemp was a tall and slender young man, with flaxen hair and a moustache almost white. His work would earn him, he hoped, the fellowship of the Royal Society, so highly did he think of it.

His eye caught the sunset blazing at the back of the hill. For a minute perhaps he sat, pen in mouth, admiring the rich golden colour above the crest, and then his attention was attracted by the little figure of a man, running towards him. He was a short little man, and he wore a high hat, and he was running very fast.

"Another of those fools," said Dr. Kemp. "Like that ass who ran into me this morning round a corner, with the "The Invisible Man is coming, sir!" One might think we were in the thirteenth century."

He got up, went to the window, and stared at the dark little figure.

"He is in a hurry," said Dr. Kemp, "but he doesn't seem to succeed. Asses!"

Dr. Kemp walked back to his writing-table.

But those who saw the fugitive nearer, and perceived the terror on his face, did not share in the doctor's contempt. As the man ran he chinked like a well-filled purse. He looked neither to the right nor the left, but his eyes stared straight downhill to where the lamps were being lit, and the people were crowded in the street. A foam lay on his lips, and his breath came hoarse and noisy.

And then presently, far up the hill, a dog playing in the road yelped and ran under a gate. Then something-a wind-a pad, pad, pad, – a sound like a panting breathing, rushed by.

People screamed. They were shouting in the street before Marvel was halfway there. They were slamming the doors behind them, with the news. In a moment, fear had seized the town.

"The Invisible Man is coming! The Invisible Man!"

Chapter XVI

In the “Jolly Cricketers”

The “Jolly Cricketers” is just at the bottom of the hill, where the tram-lines begin. The barman talked of horses with an anaemic cabman, while a black-bearded man in gray ate biscuit and cheese, drank beer, and conversed with a policeman off duty.

“What’s the shouting about?” said the anaemic cabman.

Somebody ran by outside.

“Fire, perhaps,” said the barman.

Footsteps approached, running heavily, the door was pushed open violently, and Marvel, weeping and dishevelled, rushed in, made a convulsive turn, and attempted to shut the door.

“Coming!” he bawled, his voice shrieking with terror. “He’s coming. The Invisible Man! After me! Help! Help! Help!”

“Shut the doors,” said the policeman. “Who’s coming? What’s the matter?”

He went to the door, and it slammed.

“Let me go inside,” said Marvel, staggering and weeping, but still clutching the books. “Let me go inside. Lock me in-somewhere. I tell you he’s after me. I escaped. He said he’d kill me and he will.”

“You’re safe,” said the man with the black beard. “The door’s shut. What’s it all about?”

“Let me go inside,” said Marvel, and shrieked aloud as a blow suddenly made the fastened door shiver. There was a hurried rapping and a shouting outside.

“Hello,” cried the policeman, “who’s there?”

Mr. Marvel cried, “He’ll kill me-he’s got a knife or something. Help me!”

“Come in here,” said the barman.

And he held up the flap of the bar.

“Don’t open the door,” Mr. Marvel screamed. “Please don’t open the door! Where shall I hide?”

“This, this Invisible Man, then?” asked the man with the black beard. “I guess it’s about time to see him.”

The window of the inn was suddenly smashed in, and there was a screaming and running to and fro in the street. The policeman had been trying to see who was at the door.

“It’s him,” he said.

The barman stood in front of the bar-parlour door which was now locked on Mr. Marvel, stared at the smashed window, and came round to the two other men.

Everything was suddenly quiet.

“I wish I had my truncheon,” said the policeman, going to the door. “When we open the door, he will come in. We can’t stop him.”

“Don’t hasten to open that door,” said the anaemic cabman, anxiously.

“Draw the bolts,” said the man with the black beard, “and if he comes-”

He showed a revolver in his hand.

“That won’t do,” said the policeman; “that’s murder.”

“I know what country I’m in,” said the man with the beard. “I’m going to let off at his legs. Draw the bolts.”

“Not at my neck,” said the barman.

“Very well,” said the man with the black beard, and drew the bolts himself. Barman, cabman, and policeman looked at each other.

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