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ONE raw November morning, I left my rooms near the British Museum and turned down Regent street. It was cold and misty: the air like shredded cotton−wool. Before I reached the Quadrant, the mist thickened to fog, with the colour of muddied water, and walking became difficult. As I had no particular object in view, I got into talk with a policeman, and, by his advice, went into the Vine Street Police Court, to pass an hour or two before lunch. Inside the court, the atmosphere was comparatively clear, and I took my seat on one of the oak benches with a feeling of vague curiosity. There was a case going on as I entered: an old man, who pretended to be an optician, had been taken up by the police for obstructing the traffic by selling glasses. His green tray, with leathern shoulder−straps, was on the solicitor's table. The charge of obstruction could not be sustained, the old man had moved on as soon as the police told him to, and the inspector had substituted a charge of fraud, on the complaint of a workman and a shopkeeper. A constable had just finished his evidence when I came into the court. He left the box with a self−satisfied air and the muttered remark that the culprit was "a rare bad 'un." I glanced about for the supposed criminal and found that he was seated near me on a cross−bench in the charge of a sturdy policeman. He did not look like a criminal: he was tall, thin and badly dressed in a suit of rusty black, which seemed to float about his meagre person; his complexion was tallowy−white, like the sprouts of potatoes which have been kept a long time in a dark cellar; he seemed about sixty years old. But he had none of the furtive glances of the criminal; none of the uneasiness: his eye rested on mine and passed aside with calm indifference, contemplative and not alarmed.

The workman who was produced by the police in support of the charge of fraud amused me. He was a young man, about middle height, and dressed in corduroys, with a rough jacket of dark tweed. He was a bad witness: he hesitated, stopped and corrected himself, as if he didn't know the meaning of any words except the commonest phrases of everyday use. But he was evidently honest: his brown eyes looked out on the world fairly enough. His faltering came from the fact that he was only half articulate. Disentangled from the mist of inappropriate words, his meaning was sufficiently clear.

He had been asked by the accused, whom he persisted in calling "the old gentleman," to buy a pair of spectacles: they would show him things truer−like than he could see 'em; and so he "went a bob on 'em." Questioned by the magistrate as to whether he could see things more plainly through the glasses, he shook his head:

"No; about the same."

Then came the question: had he been deceived? Apparently he didn't know the meaning of the word "deceived."

"Cheated," the magistrate substituted.

"No"; he hadn't been cheated.

"Well, disappointed then?"

"No"; he couldn't say that.

"Would he spend another shilling on a similar pair of glasses?"

"No," he would not; "one bob was enough to lose."

When told he might go, he shuffled out of the witness−box, and on his way to the door attempted more than once to nod to the accused. Evidently there was no malice in him.

The second police witness had fluency and self−possession enough for a lawyer: a middle−aged man, tall, florid and inclined to be stout; he was over−dressed, like a spruce shopman, in black frock−coat, grey trousers and light−coloured tie. He talked volubly, with a hot indignation which seemed to match his full red cheeks. If the workman was an undecided and weak witness, Mr. Hallett, of High Holborn, was a most convinced and determined witness. He had been induced to buy the glasses, he declared, by the "old party," who told him that they would show him things exactly as they were − the truth of everything. You'd only have to look through 'em at a man to see whether he was trying to "do" you or not. That was why he bought them. He was not asked a shilling for them, but a sovereign and he gave it − twenty shillings. When he put the glasses on, he could see nothing with them, nothing at all; it was a "plant": and so he wanted the "old party" to take 'em back and return his sovereign; that might have caused the obstruction that the policeman had objected to. The "old man" refuse to give him his money back; said he had not cheated him; had the impudence to pretend that he (Hallett) had no eyes for truth, and, therefore, could see nothing with the glasses. "A blamed lie, he called it, and a "do," an the "old man" ought to get six months for it.

Once or twice, the magistrate had to direct the stream of emphatic words. But the accusation was formal and precise. The question now was: How would the magistrate deal with the case? At first sight, Mr. Brown, the magistrate, made a good impression on me. He was getting on in life: the dark hair was growing thin on top and a little grey at the sides. The head was well−shaped; the forehead notably broad; the chin and jaw firm. The only unpleasant feature in the face was the hard line of mouth, with thin, unsympathetic lips. Mr. Brown was reputed to be a great scholar, and was just the type of man who would have made a pedant; a man of good intellect and thin blood, who would find books and words more interesting than men and deeds.

At first, Mr. Brown had seemed to be on the side of the accused: he tried to soften Mr. Hallett's anger. One or two of his questions, indeed, were pointed and sensible:

"You wouldn't take goods back after you had sold them, would you, Mr. Hallett?" he asked.

"Of course I would," replied Mr. Hallett, stoutly: "I'd take any of my stock back at a twenty per cent. reduction; my goods are honest goods: prices marked plain on 'em. But 'e would not give me fifteen shillings back out of my sovereign; not 'e; 'e meant sticking' to it all."

The magistrate looked into the body of the court and addressing the accused, said:

"Will you reserve your defence, Mr. Henry?"

"Penry, your worship: Matthew Penry," corrected the old man in a quiet, low−pitched voice, as he rose to his feet. "If I may say so: the charge of fraud is absurd. Mr. Hallett seems to be angry because I sold one pair of glasses for a shilling and another pair to him for a sovereign. But they were not the same glasses and, if they had been, I am surely allowed to ask for my wares what I please."

"That is true," interrupted the magistrate; "but he says that you told him he would see the truth through them. I suppose you meant that he would see more truly through them than with his own eyes?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Penry, with a certain hesitation.

"But he did not see more truly through them," continued the magistrate, "or he would not have wanted you to take them back.

"No," Mr. Penry acknowledged; "but that is this fault, not the fault of the glasses. They would show the truth, if he had any faculty for seeing it: glasses are no good to the blind."

"Come, come," said the magistrate; "now you are beginning to confuse me. You don't really pretend that your glasses will show the truth of things, the reality; you mean that they will improve one's sight, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Penry, "One's sight for truth, for reality."

"Well," retorted the magistrate smiling, "That seems rather metaphysical than practical, doesn't it? If your spectacles enabled one to discern the truth, I'd buy a pair myself: they might be useful in this court sometimes," and he looked about him with a smile, as if expecting applause.

With eager haste, the old man took him at his word, threw open his case, selected a pair of glasses, and passed them to the clerk, who handed them up to Mr. Brown.

The magistrate put the glasses on; looked round the court for a minute or two, and then broke out:

"Dear me! Dear me! How extraordinary! These glasses alter every one in the court. It's really astonishing. They don't improve the looks of people; on the contrary, a more villainous set of countenances it would be difficult to imagine. If these glasses are to be trusted, men are more like wild animals than human beings, and the worst of all are the solicitors; really a terrible set of faces. But this may be the truth of things; these spectacles do show one more than one's ordinary eyes can perceive. Dear me! Dear me! It is most astonishing; but I feel inclined to accept Mr. Penry's statement about them," and he peered over the spectacles at the court.

"Would you like to look in a glass, your worship?" asked one of the solicitors drily, rising, however, to his feet with an attitude of respect at the same time; "perhaps that would be the best test."

Mr. Brown appeared to be a little surprised, but replied:

"If I had a glass I would willingly."

Before the words were out of his mouth, his clerk had tripped round the bench, gone into the magistrate's private room and returned with a small looking−glass, which he handed up to his worship.

As Mr. Brown looked in the glass, the smile of expectancy left his face. In a moment or two, he put down the glass gravely, took off the spectacles and handed them to the clerk, who returned them to Mr. Penry. After a pause, he said shortly:

"It is well, perhaps, to leave all these matters of fact to a jury. I will accept a small bail, Mr. Penry," he went on; "but I think you must be bound over to answer this charge at the sessions."

I caught the words, "£50 a−piece in two sureties and his own recognisances in £100," and then Mr. Penry was told by the policeman to go and wait in the body of the court till the required sureties were forthcoming. By chance, the old man came and sat beside me and I was able to examine him closely. His moustache and beard must have been auburn at one time, but now the reddish tinge seemed only to discolour the grey. The beard was thin and long and unkempt, and added to the forlorn untidiness of his appearance. He carried his head bent forward, as if the neck were too weak to support it. He seemed feeble and old and neglected. He caught me looking at him, and I noticed that his eyes were a clear blue, as if he were younger than I had thought. His gentle, scholarly manner and

refined voice had won my sympathy; and, when our eyes met, I introduced myself an told him I should be glad to be one of his sureties, if that would save him time or trouble. He thanked me with a sort of detached courtesy: he would gladly accept my offer.

"You stated your case," I remarked, "so that you confused the magistrate. You almost said that your glasses were − magic glasses," I went on, smiling and hesitating, because I did not wish to offend him, and yet hardly knew how to convey the impression his words had left upon me.

"Magic glasses," he repeated gravely, as if weighing the words; "yes, you might call them magic glasses."

To say that I was astonished only gives a faint idea of my surprise and wonder:

"Surely, you don't mean that they show things as they are," I asked: "the truth of things?"

"That is what I mean," he replied quietly.

"Then they are not ordinary glasses?" I remarked inanely.

"No," he repeated gravely; "not ordinary glasses."

He had a curious trick, I noticed, of peering at one very intently with narrowed eyes and then blinking rapidly several times in succession as if the strain were too great to be borne.

He had made me extremely curious, and yet I did not like to ask outright to be allowed to try a pair of his glasses; so I went on with my questions:

"But, if they show truth, how was it that Mr. Hallett could see nothing through them?'

"Simply because he has no sense of reality; he has killed the innate faculty for truth. It was probably at not time very great," went on this strange merchant, smiling; "but his trader's habits have utterly destroyed it; he has so steeped himself in lies that he is now blind to the truth, incapable of perceiving it. The workman, you remember, could see fairly well through his spectacles."

"Yes," I replied laughing; "and the magistrate evidently saw a good deal more through his than he cared to acknowledge."

The old man laughed too, in an ingenuous, youthful way that I found charming.

At last I got to the Rubicon.

"Would you let me buy a pair of your glasses?" I asked.

"I shall be delighted to give you a pair, if you will accept them," he replied, with eager courtesy; "my surety ought certainly to have a pair"; and then he peered at me in his curious, intent way. A moment later, he turned round, and opening his tray, picked out a pair of spectacles and handed them to me.

I put them on with trembling eagerness and stared about me. The magistrate had told the truth; they altered everything: the people were the same and yet not the same; this face was coarsened past all description; that face sharpened and made hideous with greed; and the other brutalized with lust. One recognized, so to speak, the dominant passion in each person. Something moved me to turn my glasses on the merchant; if I was astounded before, I was now lost in wonder: the glasses transfigured him. The grey beard was tinged with gold, the blue eyes

luminous with intelligence; all the features ennobled; the countenance irradiated sincerity and kindliness. I pulled off the glasses hastily and the vision passed away. Mr. Penry was looking at me with a curious little pleased smile of anticipation: involuntarily, I put out my hand to him with a sort of reverence:

"Wonderful," I exclaimed; "your face is wonderful and all the others grotesque and hideous. What does it mean? Tell me! Won't you?"

"You must come with me to my room," he said, "where we can talk freely, and I think you will not regret having helped me. I should like to explain everything to you. There are so few men," he added, "who proffer help to another man in difficulty. I should like to show you that I am grateful."

"There is no cause for gratitude," I said hastily; "I have done nothing."

His voice now seemed to me to be curiously refined and impressive, and recalled to me the vision of his face, made beautiful by the strange glasses. ...

I have been particular to put down how Mr. Penry first appeared to me, because after I had once seen him through his spectacles, I never saw him again as I had seen him at first. Remembering my earliest impressions of him, I used to wonder how I could have been so mistaken. His face had refinement and gentleness in every line; a certain courage, too, that was wholly spiritual. Already I was keenly interested in Mr. Penry; eager to know more about him; to help him, if that were possible, in any and every way.

Some time elapsed before the formalities for his bail were arranged, and then I persuaded him to come out with me to lunch. He got up quietly, put the leathern straps over his shoulders, tucked the big case under his arm and walked into the street with perfect self−possession; and I was not now in any way ashamed of his appearance, as I should have been an hour or two before: I was too excited even to feel pride; I was simply glad and curious.

And this favourable impression grew with everything Mr. Penry said and did, till at last nothing but service would content me; so, after lunch, I put him into a cab and drove him off to my own solicitor. I found Mr. Morris, of Messrs. Morris, Coote and Co., quite willing to take up his case at the sessions; willing, too, to believe that the charge was "trumped up" by the police and without serious foundation. But, when I drew Mr. Morris aside and tried to persuade him that his new client was a man of extraordinary powers, he smiled incredulously.

"You are enthusiastic, Mr. Winter," he said half reproachfully; "but we solicitors are compelled to see things in the cold light of reason. Why should you undertake to defend this Mr. Penry? Of course if you have made up your mind," he went on, passing over my interruption, "I shall do my best for him; but if I were you, I'd keep my eyes open and do nothing rashly."

In order to impress him, I put on a similar cold tone and declared that Mr. Penry was a friend of mine and that he must leave no stone unturned to vindicate his honesty. And with this I went back to Mr. Penry, and we left the office together.

Mr. Penry's lodging disappointed me; my expectations, I am afraid, were now tuned far above the ordinary. It was in Chelsea, high up, in a rickety old house overlooking a dingy road and barges drawn up on the slimy, fetid mud−banks. And yet, even here, romance was present for the romantic; the fog−wreaths curling over the river clothed the houses opposite in soft mystery, as if they had been draped in blue samite, and through the water−laden air the sun glowed round and red as a fiery wheel of Phaeton's chariot. The room was very bare; by the broad low window stood a large deal table crowded with instruments and glasses; strong electric lamps on the right and left testified to the prolonged labours of the optician. The roof of the garret ran up towards the centre, and by the wall there was a low truckle−bed, fenced off by a cheap Japanese paper− screen. The whole of the wall between the bed and the window was furnished with pine−shelves, filled with books; everything was neat, but the

room seemed friendless and cold in the thick, damp air.

There we sat and talked together, till the sun slid out of sight and the fog thickened and night came on: there our acquaintance, so strangely begun, grew to friendship. Before we went to dinner, the old man had shown me the portraits of his two daughters and a little miniature of his wife, who had died fifteen years before.

It was the first of many talks in that room, the first of many confidences. Bit by bit, I heard the whole of Mr. Penry's history. It was told to me piecemeal and inconsequently, as a friend talks to a friend in growing intimacy; and, if I now let Mr. Penry tell his tale in regular sequence and at one stretch, it is mainly in order to spare the reader the tedium of interrupted narration and needless repetitions.

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"My father was an optician," Mr. Penry began, "and a maker of spectacles in Chelsea. We lived over the shop in the King's Road, and my childhood was happy enough, but not in any way peculiar. Like other healthy children, I liked play much better than lessons; but my school−days were too uneventful, too empty of love to be happy. My mother died when I was too young to know or regret her, and my father was kind, in spite of his precise, puritanical ways. I was the only boy, which perhaps made him kinder to me, and very much younger than my two sisters, who were grown up when I was in short clothes and who married and left my father's house before I had got to know them, or to feel much affection for them.

"When I was about sixteen, my father took me from school and began teaching me his own trade. He had been an admirable workman in his time, of the old English sort − careful and capable, though somewhat slow. The desire was always present in him to grind and polish each glass as well as he could, and this practice had given him a certain repute with a circle of good customers. He taught me every part of his craft as he had learnt it; and, in the next five or six years, imbued me with his own wish to do each piece of work as perfectly as possible. But this period of imitation did not last long. Before I reached manhood, I began to draw apart from my father, to live my own life and to show a love of reading and thinking foreign to his habit. It was religion which separated us. At school I had learnt some French and German, and in both languages I came across sceptical opinions which slowly grew in my mind, and in time led me to discard and almost to dislike the religion of my father. I mention this simply because any little originality in me seemed to spring from this inquiry and from the mental struggle that convulsed three or four years of my youth. For months and months I read feverishly to conquer my doubts, and then I read almost as eagerly to confirm my scepticism.

"I still remember the glow of surprise and hope which came over me the first time I read that Spinoza, one of the heroes of my thought, had also made his living by polishing glasses. He was the best workman of his time, the book said, and I determined to become the best workman of my time; and, from that moment, I took to my trade seriously, strenuously.

"I learned everything I could about glass, and began to make my own material, after the best recipes. I got books on optics, too, and studied them, and so, bit by bit, mastered the science of my craft.

"I was not more than nineteen or twenty when my father found out that I was a much better workman than his assistant Thompson. Some glasses had been sent to us from a great oculist in Harley Street, with a multitude of minute directions. They had been made by Thompson, and were brought back to us one afternoon by a very fidgety old gentleman who declared that they did not suit him at all. The letter which he showed from Sir William Creighton, the oculist, hinted that the glasses were not carefully made. My father was out, and in his absence I opened the letter. As soon as I had looked at the glasses, I saw that the complaint was justified, and I told the old gentleman so. He turned out to be the famous parliamentary speaker, Lord B. He said to me testily:

"All right, young man; you make my glasses correctly and I shall be satisfied; but not till then; you understand, not till then."

"I smiled at him and told him I would do the work myself, and he went out of the shop muttering, as if only half reassured by my promises. Then I determined to show what I could do. When my father returned, I told him what had happened, and asked him to leave the work to me. He consented, and I went off at once to the little workshop I had made in our back−yard and settled down to the task. I made my glass and polished it, and then ground the spectacles according to the directions. When I had finished, I sent them to Sir William Creighton with a note, and a few days afterwards we had another visit from Lord B., who told my father that he had never had such glasses and that I was a "perfect treasure." Like many very crochety people, he was hard to satisfy, but one satisfied he was as lavish in praise as in blame. Lord B. made my reputation as a maker of spectacles, and for years I was content with this little triumph. ...

"I married when I was about two− or three−and−twenty, and seven or eight years afterwards my father died. The gap caused by his death, the void of loss and loneliness, was more than filled up by my young children. I had two little girls who, at this time, were a source of perpetual interest to me. How one grows to love the little creatures, with their laughter and tears, their hopes and questions and make−believe! And how one's love for them is intensified by all the trouble one takes to win their love and by all the plans one weaves for their future! But all this is common human experience and will only bore you. A man's happiness is not interesting to other people, and I don't know that much happiness is good for a man himself; at any rate, during the ten or fifteen years in which I was happiest, I did least; made least progress, I mean, as a workman and the least intellectual advantage as a man. But when my girls began to grow up and detach themselves from the home, my intellectual nature began to stir again. One must have some interests in life, and, if the heart is empty, the head becomes busier, I often think.

"One day I had a notable visit. A man came in to get a pair of spectacles made: a remarkable man. He was young, gay and enthusiastic, with an astonishing flow of words, an astonishing brightness of speech and manner. He seemed to light up the dingy old shop with his vivacity and happy frankness. He wanted spectacles to correct a slight dissimilarity between his right eye and his left, and he had been advised to come to me by Sir William Creighton, as the glasses would have to be particularly well made. I promised to work at them myself, and on that he burst out:

"'I shall be very curious to see whether perfect eyes help or hurt my art. You know I am a painter,' he went on, throwing his hair back from his forehead, 'and each of us painters sees life in his own way, and beauty with certain peculiarities. It would be curious, wouldn't it? if talent came from a difference between one's eyes!'

"I smiled at his eagerness, and took down his name, then altogether unknown to me; but soon to become known and memorable above all other names: Dante Gabriel Rossetti. I made the glasses and he was enthusiastic about them, and brought me a little painting of himself by way of gratitude.

"There it is," said Penry, pointing to a little panel that hung by his bedside; "the likeness of an extraordinary man − a genius, if ever there was one. I don't know why he took to me, except that I admired him intensely; my shop, too, was near his house in Chelsea, and he used often to drop in and pass an hour in my back parlour and talk − such talk as I had never heard before and have never heard since. His words were food and drink to me, and more than that. Either his thoughts or the magic of his personality supplied my mind with the essence of growth and vigour which had hitherto been lacking to it; in a very real sense, Rossetti became my spiritual father. He taught me things about art that I had never imagined; opened to me a new heaven and a new earth and, above all, showed me that my craft, too, had artistic possibilities in it that I had never dreamed of before.

"I shall never forget the moment when he first planted the seed in me that has grown and grown till it has filled my life. It was in my parlour behind the shop. He had been talking in his eager, vivid way, pouring out truths and

thoughts, epigrams and poetry, as a great jeweller sometimes pours gems from hand to hand. I had sat listening open−mouthed, trying to remember as much as I could, to assimilate some small part of all that word−wealth. He suddenly stopped, and we smoked on for a few minutes in silence; then he broke out again:

"'Do you know, my solemn friend,' he said abruptly, 'that I struck an idea the other day which might suit you. I was reading one of Walter Scott's novels: that romantic stuff of his amuses me, you know, though it isn't as deep as the sea. Well, I found out that, about a hundred years ago, a man like you made what they call Claude−glasses. I suppose they were merely rose−tinted,' he laughed, 'but at any rate, they were supposed to make everything beautiful in a Claude−like way. Now, why shouldn't you make such glasses? It would do Englishmen a lot of good to see things rose−tinted for a while. Then, too, you might make Rossetti−glasses,' he went on, laughingly, 'and, if these dull Saxons could only get a glimpse of the passion that possesses him, it would wake them up, I know. Why not go to work, my friend, at something worth doing? Do you know,' he continued seriously, 'there might be something in it. I don't believe, if I had had your glasses at the beginning, I should ever have been the artist I am. I mean,' he said, talking half to himself, 'if my eyes had been all right from the beginning, I might perhaps have been contented with what I saw. But as my eyes were imperfect I tried to see things as my soul saw them, and so invented looks and gestures that the real world would never have given me."

"I scarcely understood what he meant," said Mr. Penry, "but his words dwelt with me: the ground had been prepared for them; he had prepared it; and at once they took root in me and began to grow. I could not get the idea of the Claude−glasses and the Rossetti−glasses out of my head, and at last I advertised for a pair of those old Claude−glasses, and in a month or so a pair turned up.

"You may imagine that while I was waiting, time hung heavy on my hands. I longed to be at work; I wanted to realize the idea that had come to me while Rossetti was talking. During my acquaintance with him, I had been to his studio a dozen times, and had got to know and admire that type of woman's beauty which is now connected with his name; the woman, I mean, with swanlike throat and languid air and heavy−lidded eyes, who conveys to all of us now something of Rosetti's insatiable passion. But, while I was studying his work and going about steeped in the emotion of it, I noticed one day half a dozen girls whom Rossetti could have taken as models. I had begun, in fact, to see the world as Rossetti saw it; and this talk of his about the Claude−glasses put the idea into my head that I might, indeed, be able to make a pair of spectacles which would enable people to see the world as Rossetti saw it and as I saw it when Rossetti's influence had entire possession of me. This would be a great deal easier to do, I said to myself, than to make a pair of Claude−glasses; for, after all, I did not know what Claude's eyes were really like and I did know the peculiarity of Rossetti's eyes. I accordingly began to study the disparate quality in Rossetti's eyes and, after making a pair of spectacles that made my eyes see unequally to the same degree, I found that the Rossettian vision of things was sharpened and intensified to me. From that moment on, my task was easy. I had only to study any given pair of eyes and then to alter them so that they possessed the disparity of Rossetti's eyes and the work was half done. I found, too, that I could increase this disparity a little and, in proportion as I increased it, I increased also the peculiarity of what I called the Rossettian view of things; but, if I made the disparity too great, everything became blurred again.

"My researches had reached this point, when the pair of old Claude− glasses came into my hands. I saw at a glance that the optician of the eighteenth century had no knowledge of my work. He had contented himself, as Rossetti had guessed, with colouring the glasses very delicately and in several tints; in fact, he had studied the colour−peculiarities of the eye as I had studied its form−peculiarities. With this hint, I completed my work. It took me only a few days to learn that Rossetti's view of colour was just as limited, or, I should say, just as peculiar, as his view of form; and, when I once understood the peculiarities of his colour−sight, I could reproduce them as easily as I could reproduce the peculiarities of his vision of form. I then set to work to get both these peculiarities into half a dozen different sets of glasses.

"The work took me some six or eight months; and, when I had done my best, I sent a little note round to Rossetti and awaited his coming with painful eagerness, hope and fear swaying me in turn. When he came, I gave him a

pair of the spectacles; and, when he put them on and looked out into the street, I watched him. He was surprised − that I could see − and more than a little puzzled. While he sat thinking, I explained to him what the old Claude−glasses were like and how I had developed his suggestion into this present discovery.

"'You are an artist, my friend,' he cried at last, 'and a new kind of artist. If you can make people see the world as Claude saw it and as I see it, you can go on to make them see it as Rembrandt saw it and Velasquez. You can make the dullards understand life as the greatest have understood it. But that is impossible,' he added, his face falling: 'that is only a dream. You have got my real eyes, therefore you can force others to see as I see; but you have not the real eyes of Rembrandt, or Velasquez, or Titian; you have not the physical key to the souls of the great masters of the past; and so your work can only apply to the present and to the future. But that is enough, and more than enough,' he added quickly. 'Go on: there are Millais' eyes to get too; and Corot's in France, and half a dozen others; and glad I shall be to put you on the scent. You will do wonderful things, my friend, wonderful things.'

"I was mightily uplifted by his praise and heart−glad, too, in my own way; but resolved at the same time not to give up the idea of making Velasquez−glasses and Rembrandt−glasses; for I had come to know and to admire these masters through Rossetti's talk. He was always referring to them, quoting them, so to say; and, for a long time past, I had accustomed myself to spend a couple of afternoons each week in our National Gallery, in order to get some knowledge of the men who were the companions of his spirit.

"For nearly a year after this, I spent every hour of my spare time studying in the National; and at last it seemed to me that I had got Titian's range of colour quite as exactly as the old glasses had got Claude's. But it was extraordinarily difficult to get his vision of form. However, I was determined to succeed; and, with infinite patience and after numberless attempts, success began slowly to come to me. To cut a long story short, I was able, in eight or ten years, to construct these four or five different sorts of glasses. Claude−glasses and Rossetti−glasses, of course; and also Titian−glasses, Velasquez−glasses and Rembrandt−glasses; and again my mind came to anchor in the work accomplished. Not that I stopped thinking altogether; but that for some time my thoughts took no new flight, but hovered round and about the known. As soon as I had made the first pair of Rossetti−glasses, I began to teach my assistant, Williams, how to make them too, in order to put them before the public. We soon got a large sale for them. Chelsea, you know − old Chelsea, I mean − is almost peopled with artists, and many of them came about me and began to make my shop a rendezvous, where they met and brought their friends and talked; for Rossetti had a certain following, even in his own lifetime. But my real success came with the Titian−glasses. The great Venetian's romantic view of life and beauty seemed to exercise an irresistible seduction upon every one, and the trade in his glasses soon became important.

"My home life at this time was not as happy as it had been. In those long years of endless experiment, my daughters had grown up and married, and my wife, I suppose, widowed of her children, wanted more of my time and attention, just when I was taken away by my new work and began to give her less. She used to complain at first; but, when she saw that complaints did not alter me, she retired into herself, as it were; and I saw less and less of her. And then, when my work was done and my new trade established, my shop, as I have told you, became the rendezvous for artists, and I grew interested in the frank, bright faces and the youthful, eager voice, and renewed my youth in the company of the young painters and writers who used to seek me out. Suddenly, I awoke to the fact that my wife was ill, very ill, and, almost before I had fully realised how weak she was, she died. The loss was greater than I would have believed possible. She was gentle and kind, and I missed her every day and every hour. I think that was the beginning of my dislike for the shop, the shop that had made me neglect her. The associations of it reminded me of my fault; the daily requirements of it grew irksome to me.

"About this time, too, I began to miss Rossetti and the vivifying influences of his mind and talk. He went into the country a great deal and for long periods I did not see him, and, when at length we met, I found that the virtue was going out of him: he had become moody and irritable, a neuropath. Of course, the intellectual richness in him could not be hidden altogether: now and then, he would break out and talk in the old magical way:

And conjure wonder out of emptiness,
Till mean things put on beauty like a dress
And all the world was an enchanted place.

But, more often, he was gloomy and harassed, and it saddened and oppressed me to meet him. The young artists who came to my shop did not fill his place; they chattered gaily enough, but none of them was a magician as he had been, and I began to realise that genius such as his is one of the rarest gifts in the world.

"I am trying, with all brevity, to explain to you the causes of my melancholy and my dissatisfaction: but I don't think I have done it very convincingly; and yet, about this time, I had grown dissatisfied, ill at ease, restless. And once again my heart−emptiness drove me to work and think. The next step forward came inevitably from the last one I had taken.

"While studying the great painters, I had begun to notice that there was a certain quality common to all of them, a certain power they all possessed when working at highest pressure: the power of seeing things as they are − the vital and essential truth of things. I don't mean to say that all of them possessed this faculty to the same degree. Far from it. The truth of things to Titian is overlaid with romance: he is memorable mainly for his magic of colour and beauty; while Holbein is just as memorable for his grasp of reality. But compare Titian with Giorgione or Tintoretto, and you will see that his apprehension of the reality of things is much greater than theirs. It is that which distinguishes him from the other great colourists of Venice. And, as my own view of life grew sadder and clearer, it came to me gradually as a purpose that I should try to make glasses that would show the reality, the essential truth of things, as all the great masters had seen it; and so I set to work again on a new quest.

"About this time, I found out that, though I had many more customers in my shop, I had not made money out of my artistic enterprises. My old trade as a spectacle−maker was really the most profitable branch of my business. The sale of the Rossetti−glasses and the Titian−glasses, which at first had been very great, fell off quickly as the novelty passed away, and it was soon apparent that I had lost more than I had gained by my artistic inventions. But whether I made £1500 a year, or £1000 a year, was a matter of indifference to me. I had doubled that cape of forty which to me marks the end of youth in a man, and my desires were shrinking as my years increased. As long as I had enough to satisfy my wants, I was not greedy of money.

"This new−born desire of mine to make glasses which would show the vital truth of things soon began to possess me; and, gradually, I left the shop to take care of itself, left it in the hands of my assistant, Williams, and spent more and more time in the little workshop at the back, which had been the theatre of all my achievements. I could not tell you how long I worked at the problem; I only know that it cost me years and years, and that, as I gave more time and labour to it and more and more of the passion of my soul, so I came to love it more intensely and to think less of the ordinary business of life. At length, I began to live in a sort of dream, possessed by the one purpose. I used to get up at night and go on with the work and rest in the day. For months together, I scarcely ate anything, in the hope that hunger might sharpen my faculties; at another time, I lived almost wholly on coffee, hoping that this would have the same effect; and, at length, bit by bit, and slowly, I got nearer to the goal of my desire. But, when I reached it, when I had constructed glasses that would reveal the naked truth, show things as they were and men and women as they were, I found that circumstances about me had changed lamentably.

"In the midst of my work, I had known without realising it that Williams had left me and started a shop opposite, with the object of selling the artistic glasses, of which he declared himself the inventor; but I paid no attention to this at the time, and when, two or three years afterwards, I awoke again to the ordinary facts of life, I found that my business had almost deserted me. I am not sure, but I think it was a notice to pay some debts which I hadn't the money to pay, that first recalled me completely to the realities of everyday life. What irony there is in the world! Here was I, who had been labouring for years and years with the one object of making men see things as they are and men and women as they are, persecuted now and undone by the same reality which I was trying to reveal.

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"My latest invention, too, was a commercial failure: the new glasses did not not sell at all. Nine people out of ten in England are truthblind, and could make nothing of the glasses; and the small minority, who have the sense of real things, kept complaining that the view of life which my glasses showed them, was not pleasant: as if that were any fault of mine. Williams, too, my assistant, did me a great deal of harm. He devoted himself merely to selling my spectacles; and the tradesman succeeded where the artist and thinker starved. As soon as he found out what my new glasses were, he began to treat me contemptuously; talked of me at times as a sort of half−madman, whose brain was turned by the importance given to his inventions; and at other times declared that I had never invented anything at all, for the idea of the artistic glasses had been suggested by Rossetti. The young painters who frequented his shop took pleasure in spreading this legend and attributing to Rossetti what Rossetti would have been the first to disclaim. I found myself abandoned, and hours used to pass without any one coming into my shop. The worst of it was that, when chance gave me a customer, I soon lost him: the new glasses pleased no one.

"At this point, I suppose, if I had been gifted with ordinary prudence, I should have begun to retrace my steps; but either we grow more obstinate as we grow older, or else the soul's passion grows by the sacrifices we make for it. Whatever the motives of my obstinacy may have been, the disappointment, the humiliation I went through seemed only to nerve me to a higher resolution. I knew I had done good work, and the disdain shown to me drove me in upon myself and my own thoughts."

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So much I learned from Mr. Penry in the first few days of our acquaintance, and then for weeks and weeks he did not tell me any more. He seemed to regard the rest of his story as too fantastic and improbable for belief, and he was nervously apprehensive lest he should turn me against him by telling it. Again and again, however, he hinted at further knowledge, more difficult experiments, a more arduous seeking, till my curiosity was all aflame, and I pressed him, perhaps unduly, for the whole truth.

In those weeks of constant companionship, our friendship had grown with almost every meeting. It was impossible to escape the charm of Penry's personality! He was so absorbed in his work, so heedless of the ordinary vanities and greeds of men, so simple and kindly and sympathetic, that I grew to love him. He had his little faults, of course, his little peculiarities; surface irritabilities of temper; moments of undue depression, in which he depreciated himself and his work; moments of undue elation, in which he over−estimated the importance of what he had done. He would have struck most people as a little flighty and uncertain, I think; but his passionate devotion to his work lifted the soul, and his faults were, after all, insignificant in comparison with his noble and rare qualities. I had met no one in life who aroused the higher impulses in me as he did. It seemed probable that his latest experiments would be the most daring and the most instructive, and, accordingly, I pressed him to tell me about them with some insistence, and, after a time, he consented:

"I don't know how it came about," he began, "but the contempt of men for my researches exercised a certain influence on me, and at length I took myself seriously to task: was there any reason for their disdain and dislike? Did these glasses of mine really show things as they are, or was I offering but a new caricature of truth, which people were justified in rejecting as unpleasant? I took up again my books on optics and studied the whole subject anew from the beginning. Even as I worked, a fear grew upon me: I felt that there was another height before me to climb, and that the last bit of the road would probably be the steepest of all. ... In the Gospels," he went on, in a low, reverent voice, "many things are symbolic and of universal application, and it alway seemed to me significant that the Hill of Calvary came at the end of the long journey. But I shrank from another prolonged effort; I said to myself that I couldn't face another task like the last. But, all the while, I had a sort of uncomfortable prescience that the hardest part of my life's work lay before me.

"One day, a casual statement stirred me profoundly. The primary colours, you know, are red, yellow and blue. The colours shown in the rainbow vary from red to blue and violet; and the vibrations, or lengths, of the

light−waves that give us violet grow shorter and shorter and, at length, give us red. These vibrations can be measured. One day, quite by chance, I came across the statement that there were innumerable light−waves longer than those which give violet. At once the question sprang: were these longer waves represented by colours which we don't see, colours for which we have no name, colours of which we can form no conception? And was the same thing true of the waves which, growing shorter and shorter, give us the sensation of red? There is room, of course, for myriads of colours beyond this other extremity of our vision. A little study convinced me that my guess was right; for all the colours which we see are represented to our sense of feeling in degrees of heat: that is, blue shows one reading on the thermometer and red a higher reading; and by means of this new standard, I discovered that man's range of vision is not even placed in the middle of the register of heat, but occupies a little space far up towards the warmer extremity of it. There are thousands of degrees of cold lower than blue and hundreds of degrees of heat above red. All these gradations are doubtless represented by colours which no human eye can perceive, no human mind can imagine. It is with sight as with sound. We know now that there are noises louder than thunder which we cannot hear, the roar that lies on the other side of silence. We men are poor restless prisoners, hemmed in by our senses as by the walls of a cell, hearing only a part of nature's orchestra and that part imperfectly; seeing only a thousandth part of the colour−marvels about us and seeing that infinitesimal part incorrectly and partially. Here was new knowledge with a vengeance! Knowledge that altered all my work! How was I to make glasses to show all this? Glasses that would reveal things as they are and must be to higher beings − the ultimate reality. At once, the new quest became the object of my life and, somehow or other I knew before I began the work that the little scraps of comfort or of happiness which I had preserved up to this time, I should now forfeit. I realised with shrinking and fear, that this new inquiry would still further remove me from the sympathy of my fellows.

"My prevision was justified. I had hardly got well to work − that is, I had only spent a couple of years in vain and torturing experiments − when I was one day arrested for debt. I had paid no attention to the writ; the day of trial came and went without my knowing anything about it; and there was a man in possession of my few belongings before I understood what was going on. Then I was taught by experience that to owe money is the one unforgivable sin in the nation of shopkeepers. My goods were sold up and I was brought to utter destitution" − the old man paused − "and then sent to prison because I could not pay."

"But," I asked, "did your daughters do nothing? Surely, they could have come to your help?"

"Oh! they were more than kind," he replied simply, "the eldest especially, perhaps because she was childless herself. I called her Gabrielle," he added, lingering over the name; "she was very good to me. As soon as she heard the news, she paid my debt and set me free. She bought things, too, and fitted out two nice rooms for me and arranged everything again quite comfortably; but you see," he went on with a timid, depreciating smile, "I tired out even her patience: I could not work at anything that brought in money and I was continually spending money for my researches. The nice furniture went first; the pretty tables and chairs and then the bed. I should have wearied an angel. Again and again, Gabrielle bought me furniture and made me tidy and comfortable, as she said, and again and again, like a spendthrift boy, I threw it all away. How could I think of tables and chairs, when I was giving my life to my work? Besides, I always felt that the more I was plagued and punished, the more certain I was to get out the best in me: solitude and want are the twin nurses of the soul."

"But didn't you wish to get any recognition, any praise?" I broke in.

"I knew by this time," he answered, "that, in proportion as my work was excellent, I should find fewer to understand it. How many had I seen come to praise and honour while Rossetti fell to nerve−disease and madness; and yet his work endures and will endure, while theirs is already forgotten. The tree that grows to a great height wins to solitude even in a forest: its highest outshoots find no companions save the winds and stars. I tried to console myself with such similes as this," he went on, with a deprecatory smile, "for the years passed and I seemed to come no nearer to success. At last, the way opened for me a little, and, after eight or ten years of incessant experiment, I found that partial success was all I should ever accomplish. Listen! There is not one pair

of eyes in a million that could ever see what I had taught myself to see, for the passion of the soul brings with it its own reward. After caring for nothing but truth for twenty years, thinking of nothing but truth, and wearying after it, I could see it more clearly than other men: get closer to it than they could. So the best part of my labour − I mean the highest result of it − became personal, entirely personal, and this disappointed me. If I could do no good to others by it, what was my labour but a personal gratification? And what was that to me − at my age! I seemed to lose heart, to lose zest. ... Perhaps it was that old age had come upon me, that the original sum of energy in me had been spent, that my bolt was shot. It may be so.

"The fact remains that I lost the desire to go on, and, when I had lost that, I woke up, of course, to the ordinary facts of life once again. I had no money: I was weak from semi−starvation and long vigils, prematurely old and decrepit. Once more, Gabrielle came to my assistance. She fitted up this room, and then I went out to sell my glass, as a pedlar. I bought the tray and made specimens of all the spectacles I had made, and hawked them about the streets. Why shouldn't I? No work is degrading to the spirit, none, and I could not be a burden to the one I loved, now I knew that my best efforts would not benefit others. I did not get along very well: the world seemed strange to me, and men a little rough and hard. Besides, the police seemed to hate me; I don't know why. Perhaps, because I was poor, and yet unlike the poor they knew. They persecuted me, and the magistrates before whom they brought me always believed them and never believed me. I have been punished times without number for obstruction, though I never annoyed any one. The police never pretended that I had cheated or stolen from any one before; but, after all, this latest charge of theirs brought me to know you and gave me your friendship; and so I feel that all the shame has been more than made up to me."

My heart burned within me as he spoke so gently of his unmerited sufferings. I told him I was proud of being able to help him. He put his hand on mine with a little smile of comprehension.

A day or two later curiosity awoke in me again, and I asked him to let me see a pair of the new glasses, those that show the ultimate truth of things.

"Perhaps, some day," he answered quietly. I suppose my face fell, for, after a while, he went on meditatively: "There are faults in them, you see, shortcomings and faults in you, too, my friend. Believe me, if I were sure that they would cheer or help you in life, I would let you use them quickly enough; but I am beginning to doubt their efficacy. Perhaps the truth of things is not for man."

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When we entered the court on the day of Penry's trial, Morris and myself were of opinion that the case would not last long and that it would certainly be decided in our favour. The only person who seemed at all doubtful of the issue was Penry himself. He smiled at me, half pityingly, when I told him that in an hour we should be on our way home. The waiting seemed interminable, but at length the case was called. The counsel for the prosecution got up and talked perfunctorily for five minutes, with a sort of careless unconcern that seemed to me callous and unfeeling. Then he began to call his witnesses. The workman, I noticed, was not in the court. His evidence had been rather in favour of the accused, and the prosecution, on that account, left it out. But Mr. 'Allett, as he called himself, of 'Igh 'Olborn, was even more voluble and vindictive than he had been at the police−court. He had had time to strengthen his evidence, too, to make it more bitter and more telling, and he had used his leisure malignantly. It seemed to me that every one should have seen his spite and understood the vileness of his motives. But no; again and again, the judge emphasised those parts of his story which seemed to tell most against the accused. The judge was evidently determined that the jury should not miss any detail of the accusation, and his own bias appeared to me iniquitous. But there was a worse surprise in store for us. After Hallett, the prosecution called a canon of Westminster, a stout man, with heavy jowl and loose, suasive lips, Canon Bayton. He told us how he had grown interested in Penry and in his work, and how he had bought all his earlier glasses, the Rossetti−glasses, as he called them. The cannon declared that these artistic glasses threw a very valuable light on

things, redeemed the coarseness and commonness of life and made reality beautiful and charming. He was not afraid to say that he regarded them as instruments for good; but the truth−revealing glasses seemed to excite his utmost hatred and indignation. He could not find a good word to say for them: they only showed, he said, what was terrible and brutal in life. When looking through them, all beauty vanished, the charming flesh−covering fell away and you saw the death's−head grinning at you. Instead of parental affection, you found personal vanity; instead of the tenderness of the husband for the wife, gross and common sensuality. All high motives withered, and, instead of the flowers of life, you were compelled to look at the wormlike roots and the clinging dirt. He concluded his evidence by assuring the jury that they would be doing a good thing if they put an end to the sale of such glasses. The commerce was worse than fraudulent, he declared; it was a blasphemy against God and an outrage on human nature. The unctuous canon seemed to me worse than all the rest; but the effect he had on the jury was unmistakable, and our barrister, Symonds, refused to cross−examine him. To do so, he said, would only strengthen the case for the prosecution, and I have no doubt that he was right, for Morris agreed with him.

But even the prosecuting witnesses did not hurt us more than the witnesses for the defence. Mr. Penry had been advised by Mr. Morris to call witnesses to his character, and he had called half a dozen of the most respectable tradesmen of his acquaintance. One and all did him harm rather than good; they all spoke of having known him twenty years before, when he was well−to−do and respectable. They laid stress upon what they called "his fall in life." They all seemed to think that he had neglected his business and come to ruin by his own fault. No one of them had the faintest understanding of the man, or of his work. It was manifest from the beginning that these witnesses damaged our case, and this was apparently the view of the prosecuting barrister, for he scarcely took the trouble to cross−examine them.

It was with a sigh of relief that I saw Mr. Penry go into the box to give evidence on his own behalf. Now, I thought, the truth will come to light. He stated everything with the utmost clearness and precision; but no one seemed to believe him. The wish to understand him was manifestly wanting in the jury, and from the beginning the judge took sides against him. From time to time, he interrupted him just to bring out what he regarded as the manifest falseness of his testimony.

"You say that these glasses show truth," he said. "Who wants to see truth?"

"Very few," was Penry's reply.

"Why, then, did you make the glasses," went on the judge, "if you knew that they would disappoint people?'

"I thought it my duty to," replied Penry.

"Your duty to disappoint and anger people?" retorted the judge, "a strange view to take of duty. And you got money for this unpleasant duty, didn't you?"

"A little," was Penry's reply.

"Yes; but still you got money," persisted the judge. "You persuaded people to buy your glasses, knowing that they would be disappointed in them, and you induced them to give you money for the disappointment. Have you anything else to urge in your defence?"

I was at my wit's end; I scarcely knew how to keep quiet in my seat. It seemed to me so easy to see the truth. But even Penry seemed indifferent to the result, indifferent to a degree that I could scarcely explain or excuse. This last question, however, of the judge aroused him. As the harsh, contemptuous words fell upon the ear, he leaned forward, and, selecting a pair of spectacles, put them on and peered round the court. I noticed that he was slightly flushed. In a moment or two, he took the glasses off and turned to the judge:

"My lord," he said, "you seem determined to condemn me, but, if you do condemn me, I want you to do it with some understanding of the facts. I have told you that there are very few persons in this country who have any faculty for truth, and that the few who have, usually have ruined their power before they reach manhood. You scoff and sneer at what I say, but still it remains the simple truth. I looked round the court just now to see if there was any one here young enough, ingenuous enough, pure enough, to give evidence on my behalf. I find that there is no one in the court to whom I can appeal with any hope of success. But, my lord, in the room behind this court there is a child sitting, a girl with fair hair, probably your lordship's daughter. Allow me to call her as a witness, allow her to test the glasses and say what she sees through them, and then you will find that these glasses do alter and change things in a surprising way to those who can use them."

"I don't know how you knew it," broke in the judge, "but my daughter is in my room waiting for me, and what you say seems to have some sense in it. But it is entirely unusual to call a child, and I don't know that I have any right to allow it. Still, I don't want you to feel that you have not had every opportunity of clearing yourself; so, if the jury consent, I am quite willing that they should hear what this new witness may have to say."

"We are willing to hear the witness," said the foreman, "but really, your lordship, our minds are made up about the case.

The next moment, the child came into the court − a girl of thirteen or fourteen, with a bright, intelligent face, a sort of shy fear troubling the directness of her approach.

"I want you to look through a pair of spectacles, my child," said Penry to her, "and tell us just what you see through them," and, as he spoke, he peered at her in his strange way, as if judging her eyes.

He then selected a pair of glasses and handed them to her. The child put them on and looked round the court, and then cried out suddenly:

"Oh, what strange people; and how ugly they all are. All ugly, except you who gave me the glasses; you are beautiful." Turning hastily round, she looked at her father and added, "Oh, papa, you are − Oh!" and she took off the glasses quickly while a burning flush spread over her face.

"I don't like these glasses," she said indignantly, laying them down. "They are horrid! My father doesn't look like that."

"My child," said Penry, very gently, "will you look through another pair of glasses? You see so much that perhaps you can see what is to be, as well as what is. Perhaps you can catch some glimpse even of the future."

He selected another pair and handed them to the child. There was a hush of expectancy in the court; people who had scoffed at Penry before and smiled contempt, now leaned forward to hear, as if something extraordinary were about to happen. All eyes were riveted on the little girl's face; every ear strained to hear what she would say. Round and round the court she looked through the strange glasses and then began to speak in a sort of frightened monotone:

"I see nothing," she said. "I mean there is no court and no people, only great white blocks, a sort of bluey−white. Is it ice? There are no trees, no animals; all is cold and white. It is ice. There is no living creature, no grass, no flowers, nothing moves. It is all cold, all dead." In a frightened voice she added: "Is that the future?"

Penry leaned towards her eagerly:

"Look at the light, child," he said; "follow the light up and tell us what you see."

Again a strange hush; I heard my heart thumping while the child looked about her. Then, pulling off the glasses, she said peevishly:

"I can't see anything more: it hurts my eyes."

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DEATH IN PRISON.

"Matthew Penry, whose trial for fraud and condemnation will probably still be remembered by our readers because of the very impressive evidence for the prosectuion given by Canon Bayton, of Westminster, died, we understand, in Wandsworth Prison yesterday morning from syncope." − Extract from the "Times", January 3, 1900.

FRANK HARRIS.