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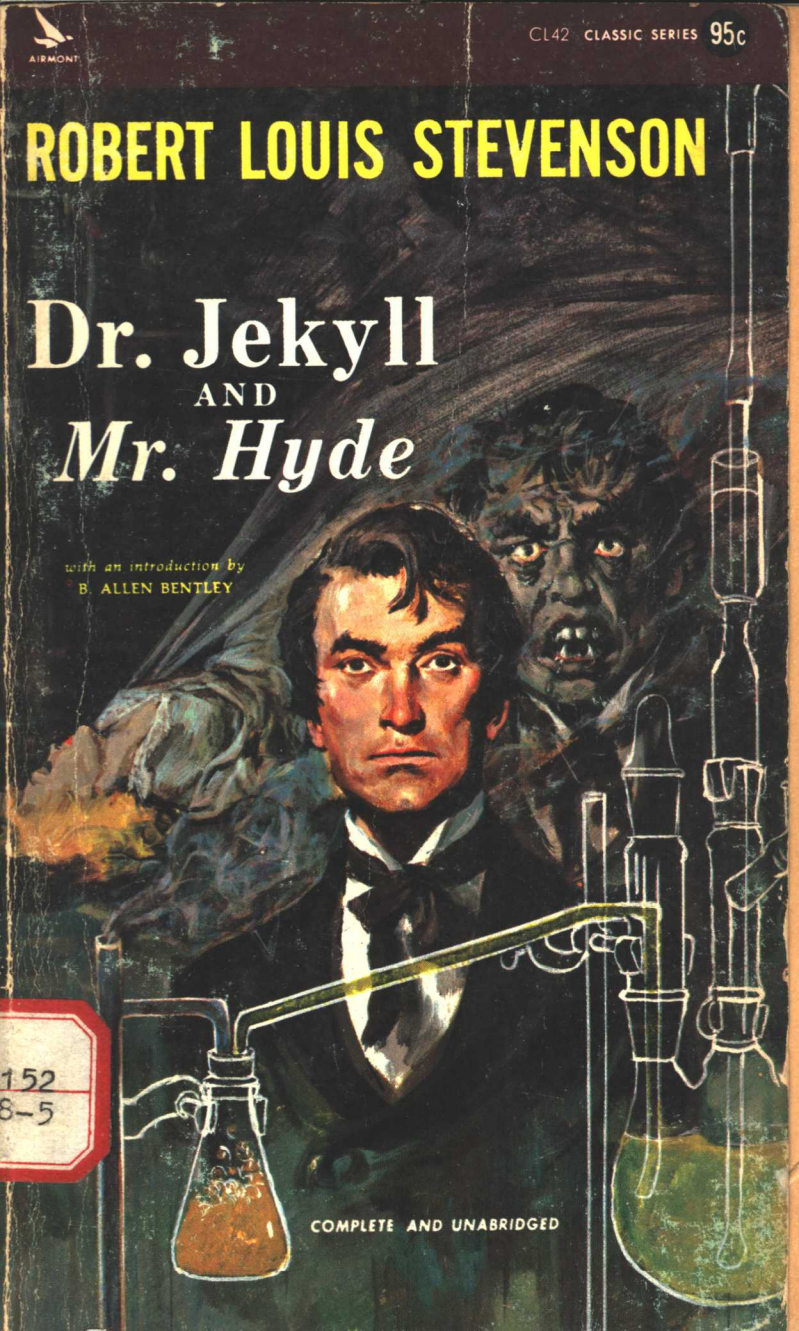
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Dr. Jekyll AND Mr. Hyde

with an introduction by
B. ALLEN BENTLEY



COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

THE STRANGE CASE OF

DR. JEKYLL and MR. HYDE

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

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Contents

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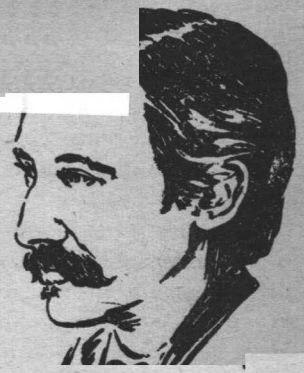

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Introduction

There does not exist in English literature—or in any other literature as far as I know—another kind of writing quite like Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. The novel (if novel it may be called) defies classification; its origin is attended by the peculiar and mysterious circumstances that often surround the creation of a prodigy or a great classical form. We are told, for instance, that the entire structure of *Jekyll and Hyde* unfolded before the author in clear lines and detail in a nightmare. He had gone to bed brooding over his ill health and awoke in extreme agitation; he began to write furiously, completed the first draft and the final polished work in six days. During this week, Stevenson remained completely undisturbed, locked in his study, denying access even to his wife and adopted son. One is immediately struck by the awesome parallel of this episode in the life of the author with that passage in "Henry Jekyll's Full

Statement of the Case" wherein Jekyll, no longer able to control his hideous metamorphoses into Hyde, remains locked in his study and refuses admission to servants and friends.

In support of the strange isolated quality of this piece of literature, one notices an almost systematic recurrence throughout the work of dreamlike or surrealistic settings. When Utterson, the lawyer, first sees the stunted figure of Hyde and "tunes in," as it were, to the aura of evil which envelops him, Stevenson offers us a weird and jumbled panorama of streets, a deathlike silence, an utter absence of life—some spatial eternity of infinite cold and darkness. This same setting translates itself into a counterpart in the dream of Utterson that night, in which he could see the Juggernaut Hyde "glide more stealthily through sleeping houses, or move the more swiftly and still the more swiftly, even to dizziness, through wide labyrinths of the lamp-lighted city, and at every street corner crush a child and leave her screaming." Hyde's second appearance is marked by the same plane-setting—stark, empty, impersonal as a sheet of graph paper, the black and white of night and snow intensifying the skeletal starkness and the points or co-ordinates marked in three dimensions by tall street-lamps. The only sound is the beat of the monster's muffled feet. Just after the murder of Sir Danvers Carew, the fog-shrouded sections of London in which the horrible beating had occurred presents itself to Utterson "like a district of some city in a nightmare." The night when Poole summons Utterson to help him break in upon his incarcerated master, Jekyll, is wild, cold, snowy; the moon is tilted at a crazy angle, and there arises in the "diaphanous and lawny texture" of the clouds surrounding it the implication of ghosts dancing throughout the episode. Finally, the comfortable interior of Jekyll's study is islanded by a wasteland of rooms strewn

with crates, abandoned laboratory apparatus, rows of empty chairs, and a dome of glass which filters through a ghostly incandescence from the foggy sky.

Setting is not the only element which constitutes the novel's singular character. Hyde himself, quite apart from his distorted frame and ugly countenance, carries an emanation about him which Stevenson states is the very substance of evil. The nameless chemical process which translates Jekyll into Hyde and vice versa is imbued with wondrous alchemical potentialities: the phosphorous salt, the ruby liquid are the solid and fluid states of the body which can flux and change into various molds. And then there is the lack of motive for Hyde's brutal trampling of the child and the killing of Carew. These elements refine the figure of Hyde into the quintessence of loathsome evil arising out of the magical blackness of hell, and this portrait—so purged of humor, of any touch of humanity, beauty and feeling—is unrivaled by its closest parallels in this genre: Wilde's *Portrait of Dorian Gray*, Henry James's *Turn of the Screw*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

A comment is required upon the structure of the novel. In one sense it is a novel of discovery, and hence the crisis appears at that point at which we establish the common identity of Jekyll and Hyde: the transformation described in Lanyon's narrative. The climax is the catastrophe which annihilates Hyde and Jekyll together: Hyde's swallowing poison on the forced entry of Poole and Utterson. The spokesman of the tale is, of course, Utterson, but when his researches into the strange relationship of Hyde and Jekyll are impeded by inaccessibility to the scene or time of important actions, plot material is filtered to us through Utterson by means of written accounts—that of an eyewitness and Jekyll's friend, Dr. Lanyon, and Henry Jekyll's own confession. The structure, then, is a

hinged and interlocking series of revelations which synthesize into one absolute reality and one extended experience of horror.

What is the reality that Stevenson re-creates in *Jekyll and Hyde*? It is the dual nature of the personality of man —the co-existence within the human body and soul of goodness, morality, and idealism in equilibrium with an equal energy of evil, depravity, and sadism. Stevenson's analysis of this psychological structure results in the total separation of the two fields into isolated characters, marshaled at every point into pure contrast and yet, inevitably, synthesized into one human being at once agonized and glorious. And it is primarily the precision and completeness, the utter credibility of the conception and execution (and *Jekyll and Hyde* is foreboding and startling in the realism of its characters, its human emotions and reactions) that make this work an enduring classic—classic in the sense of its being an archetypal statement of a theme subsuming all other relative or modified renditions of the theme within its scope.

Stevenson suggests—if power is greater on either side —that evil is more native to the structure of man. Hyde experiences delirious freedom in his abandonment to licentiousness; Jekyll suffers the pangs of age and the rigours of self-control. The good doctor loses the power to control by his weird chemistry the materializations of his alter ego, and Hyde takes over the plastic structure of Jekyll's body.

Both Lanyon's and Jekyll's accounts are breathlessly shocking revelations. They leave the reader stunned and disturbed about what lurks in the caverns of his own soul. The entire story is enveloped in the despairing sobs of the lost Jekyll as he shuns the sight of any man, the ominous sense of disintegration which turns Lanyon's hair white overnight and destroys him in three weeks.

But what emerges from the clear dimensions of this most thrilling of horror tales is the apprehension that the two living figures which sprang from the creative furnace of Stevenson's mind—one angelic, the other demonic—exist not only within the printed pages of a book which alters our view of human life, but within ourselves.

It is a peculiar feature of the field of Romantic literature that the lives of the authors provide the creative mainspring, if not the very substance, of their imaginative creations. This is particularly true of Stevenson, whose biography reveals a dual set of experiences that in a remarkable way parallels the contrasted natures of Jekyll and Hyde. Dogged by ill health all his life—he traveled the world over in search for a climate and location to soothe his general fatigue and tuberculosis—he knew, on the one hand, darkness of soul, infirmity of mood, sadism and despair, and on the other, hope, a generous love of life, and an imagination from which sprang fantastic and paradisal worlds. In spite of his infirmity he knew success, affluence, and a glowingly happy life with Fanny Osbourne, an American divorcee, and her son, Lloyd, for whom Stevenson wrote the sunny epics of the bright side of his imagination: *Treasure Island, The Black Arrow, Kidnapped,* and *The Child's Garden of Verses.*

Jekyll and Hyde undoubtedly sprang in fiery conception from the depths of Stevenson's awareness that, in a very real way, the double nature of Dr. Jekyll was contained within his own personality. The side of Hyde had been built up by a consistent set of experiences through his life: a rigidly moralistic, uncompromising, and unimaginative father, a superstitious nurse, early poverty, a detestation of sterile social convention, and a lurid tendency to examine the baser side of men's souls. The sunny

optimism of his nature, on the other hand, built itself into the conception of the good Dr. Jekyll, and the two forces, the two personalities, were christened to go forth on their strange track of vacillating struggle.

The captivating power of *Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* lies largely in the truth that it arose from the author's profound conviction of the dualism at the root of the nature of man, as that conviction arose, not merely from the observations of other men, but as it broke from his own soul, in dream, in thought, and in every episode of his glorious and tormented life.

B. ALLEN BENTLEY

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Story of the Door

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

go to the devil in his own way." In this character, it was frequently his fortune to be the last reputable acquaintance and the last good influence in the lives of down-going men. And to such as these, so long as they came about his chambers, he never marked a shade of change in his demeanor.

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

aside occasions of pleasure, but even resisted the calls of business, that they might enjoy them uninterrupted.

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

Two doors from one corner, on the left hand going east, the line was broken by the entry of a court; and just at that point a certain sinister block of building thrust forward its gable on the street. It was two stories high; showed no window, nothing but a door on the lower story and a blind forehead of discolored wall in the upper; and bore

in every feature the marks of prolonged and sordid negligence. The door, which was equipped with neither bell nor knocker, was blistered and distained. Tramps slouched into the recess and struck matches on the panels, children kept shop upon the steps; the schoolboy had tried his knife on the moldings; and for close on a generation no one had appeared to drive away these random visitors or to repair their ravages.

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

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

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

"Well, it was this way," returned Mr. Enfield; "I was coming home from some place at the end of the world, about three o'clock of a black winter morning, and my way lay through a part of town where there was literally nothing to be seen but lamps. Street after street, and all the folks asleep—street after street, all lighted up as if for a procession and all as empty as a church—till at last I got

into that state of mind when a man listens and listens and begins to long for the sight of a policeman. All at once I saw two figures: one a little man who was stumping along eastward at a good walk, and the other a girl of maybe eight or ten, who was running as hard as she was able down a cross street. Well, sir, the two ran into one another naturally enough at the corner; and then came the horrible part of things; for the man trampled calmly over the child's body and left her screaming on the ground. It sounds nothing to hear, but it was hellish to see. It wasn't like a man; it was like some damned Juggernaut. I gave a view halloa, took to my heels, collared my gentleman, and brought him back to where there was already quite a group about the screaming child. He was perfectly cool and made no resistance, but gave me one look, so ugly that it brought out the sweat on me like running. The people who had turned out were the girl's own family; and pretty soon the doctor, for whom she had been sent, put in his appearance. Well, the child was not much the worse, more frightened, according to the Sawbones; and there you might have supposed would be an end to it. But there was one curious circumstance. I had taken a loathing to my gentleman at first sight. So had the child's family, which was