

POE - DEEP INTO THAT DARKNESS PEERING  
VALDEMAR

There came a marked change over the countenance of the sleep-waker. The eyes rolled themselves slowly open, the pupils disappearing upwardly; the skin generally assumed a cadaverous hue, resembling not so much parchment as white paper; and the circular hectic spots which, hitherto, had been strongly defined in the centre of each cheek, went out at once, as in the extinguishment of a candle by a puff of breath. The upper lip, at the same time, writhed itself away from the teeth, which it had previously covered completely; while the lower jaw fell with an audible jerk, leaving the mouth widely extended, and disclosing in full view the swollen and blackened tongue. I presume that no member of the party then present had been unaccustomed to death-bed horrors; but so hideous beyond conception was the appearance of M. Valdemar at this moment that there was a general shrinking back from the region of the bed.

There was no longer the faintest sign of vitality in M. Valdemar -- and we concluded him to be dead; when a strong vibratory motion was observable in the tongue, and there issued from the distended and motionless jaws a voice -- such as it would be madness in me to attempt describing for the simple reason that no similar sounds have ever jarred upon the ear of humanity.

M. Valdemar spoke -- obviously in reply to the question I had propounded to him a few minutes before. I had asked him, you will remember, if he still slept.

"Yes; -- no; -- I have been sleeping -- and now -- now --I am dead."

No person present even affected to deny, or attempted to repress, the unutterable, shuddering horror which these few words conveyed.

M. Valdemar's condition remained in all respects as I have last described it. The only real indication of the mesmeric influence, was now found in the vibratory movement of the tongue, whenever I addressed M. Valdemar a question. He seemed to be making an effort to reply, but had no longer sufficient volition.

It was evident that, so far, death (or what is usually termed death) had been arrested by the mesmeric process.