

THE VAMPIRE OF THE VILLAGE

At the twist of a road in the hills, where two trees stood up like pyramids much taller than the small village of Potter's Pond, just a group of houses, there once walked a man in a costume of a very interesting cut and colour, wearing a bright magenta jacket and a white hat on top of black beautiful hair.

The riddle of why he was wearing clothes so old, yet wearing them with such a fashion, **was but one of the many riddles¹ that were eventually solved in solving the mystery²** of his fate. The point here is that when he had passed the trees he seemed to have disappeared; as if he had faded into the dawn or been blown away upon the wind of morning.

It was only about a week afterwards that his body was found nearby, broken upon the rocks of a garden leading up to an old house called The Grange. Just before he had disappeared, **he had been overheard**

¹ **was but one of the many riddles** — загадка ... была лишь одной из многих загадок

² **were eventually solved in solving the mystery** — которые были разгаданы, когда тайна открылась

apparently arguing¹ with some bystanders, and calling their village ‘an ugly little hamlet’; and it was thought that he had provoked the local patriotism and eventually been its victim. At least the local doctor said that the skull was hit hard and that might have caused death, **though probably only made with some sort of club**². This fitted in well enough with the idea of an attack by rather violent villagers. But nobody ever understood how to find any particular villager; and the inquest returned a version of murder by some persons unknown.

A year or two afterwards the question was reopened in an interesting way; a series of events which led a certain Dr Mulborough, called by his friends Mulberry because **there was something rich and fruity about his body shape and rather red face**³, travelling by train down to Potter’s Pond, with a friend whom he had often asked upon such problems. **In spite of the somewhat heavy appearance of the doctor**⁴, he had a keen eye and was really **a man of very remarkable sense**⁵; which he thought that he showed in giving advice to a little priest named

¹ **he had been overheard apparently arguing** — слышали, как он якобы ругался

² **though probably only made with some sort of club** — хотя и был нанесен всего лишь какой-то дубинкой

³ **there was something rich and fruity about his body shape and rather red face** — было что-то насыщенное и сочное в его телосложении и довольно красном лице

⁴ **In spite of the somewhat heavy appearance of the doctor** — Несмотря на несколько тяжеловесный внешний вид доктора

⁵ **a man of very remarkable sense** — человеком поразительного ума

Brown, **whom he get familiar with over a poisoning case long ago**¹. The little priest was sitting opposite to him, with the face of a quiet baby listening to instruction; and the doctor was explaining the real reasons for the journey.

‘I cannot agree with the gentleman in the magenta coat that Potter’s Pond is only an ugly little hamlet. But it is certainly a very distant and quiet village; so that it seems quite strange, like a village of a hundred years ago. **The spinsters are really spinsters — damn it, you could almost see them spin**². The ladies are not just ladies. They are gentlewomen; and their chemist is not a chemist, but an apothecary; pronounced potecary. They think that doctors like myself just help the apothecary. But I am seen as rather a new addition, because I am only fifty-seven years old and have only been in the county for twenty-eight years. The lawyer looks as if he had known his job for twenty-eight thousand years. Then there is the old Admiral, **who is just like a Dickens illustration**³; with a house full of swords and fish and even with a telescope.’

‘I think,’ said Father Brown, ‘there are always a certain number of Admirals left on the shore. But I never understood why they get so far inland.’

¹ **whom he get familiar with over a poisoning case long ago** — с которым он давно познакомился во время дела об отравлении

² **The spinsters are really spinsters — damn it, you could almost see them spin** — Старые девы действительно пряжи — черт побери, можно практически видеть, как они прядут.

³ **who is just like a Dickens illustration** — который вылитая иллюстрация к Диккенсу

‘Certainly no lifeless place in the depths of the country is finished without one of these little creatures,’ said the doctor. ‘And then, of course, there is the proper sort of clergyman; Tory and High Church dating from Archbishop Laud; more of an old woman than any of the old women. He’s a white-haired old bird, more easily shocked than the spinsters. Indeed, the gentlewomen, though Puritan in their principles, are sometimes pretty plain in their speech; as the real Puritans were. Once or twice I have heard old Miss Carstairs-Carew use **expressions as lively as anything in the Bible**¹. The dear old clergyman is busy reading the Bible; but I think he closes his eyes when he comes to those words. Well, you know I’m not very modern. I don’t enjoy this fooling around of the **Bright Young Things**² —’

‘The Bright Young Things don’t enjoy it,’ said Father Brown. ‘That is the real tragedy.’

‘But I am naturally more in touch with the world than the people in this old village,’ said the doctor. ‘And I had reached a point when I almost welcomed the Great Scandal.’

‘Don’t say the Bright Young Things have found Potter’s Pond after all,’ said the priest, smiling.

‘Oh, even our scandal is on old-established melodramatic lines. **Need I say**³ that the clergyman’s son promises to be our problem? **It would be almost ir-**

¹ **expressions as lively as anything in the Bible** — выражения столь же хлесткие, как в Библии

² **Bright Young Things** — золотая молодежь

³ **Need I say** — Нужно ли упоминать

regular, if the clergyman's son were quite regular¹. So far as I can see, he is very lightly and almost poorly irregular. He was first seen drinking ale outside the Blue Lion. Only it seems he is a poet, which in those parts **is next door to**² being a criminal.'

'Surely,' said Father Brown, 'even in Potter's Pond that cannot be the Great Scandal.'

'No,' replied the doctor seriously. 'The Great Scandal began like this. In the house called The Grange, placed at the end of The Grove, there lives a lady. A Lonely Lady. She calls herself Mrs Maltravers (that is how we put it); but she only came a year or two ago and nobody knows anything about her. "I can't think why she wants to live here," said Miss Carstairs-Carew; "we do not visit her."'

'Perhaps that's why she wants to live there,' said Father Brown.

'Well, her loneliness is seen as strange. She annoys them by being good-looking and even what is called good style. And all the young men are told that she's a vampire.'

'People who lose all their kindness generally lose all their logic,' said Father Brown. 'It's rather funny to complain that **she keeps to herself**³; and then accuse her of vamping all the men.'

'That is true,' said the doctor. 'And yet she is really rather a strange person. I saw her and found

¹ It would be almost irregular, if the clergyman's son were quite regular — Было бы необычно, будь сын священника обычным

² **is next door to** — недалеко от

³ **she keeps to herself** — она сторонится людей

her interesting; one of those brown women, long and elegant and beautifully ugly, if you know what I mean. She is rather smart, and though young enough certainly gives me an impression of what they call — well, experience. What the old ladies call a Past.’

‘**All the old ladies having been born this very minute**¹,’ observed Father Brown. ‘**I think she is said to have vamped the priest’s son**².’

‘Yes, and it seems to be a very awful problem to the poor old priest. She is supposed to be a widow.’

Father Brown’s face became red with anger which it seldom did. ‘She is supposed to be a widow, as the priest’s son is supposed to be the priest’s son, and the lawyer is supposed to be a lawyer and you are supposed to be a doctor. **Why in thunder**³ shouldn’t she be a widow? Have they one reason for thinking that she is not what she says she is?’

Dr Mulborough suddenly straightened his broad shoulders and sat up. ‘Of course you’re right again,’ he said. ‘But we haven’t come to the scandal yet. Well, the scandal is that she is a widow.’

‘Oh,’ said Father Brown; and his face changed and he said something soft and unclear, that might almost have been ‘My God!’

‘First of all,’ said the doctor, ‘they found out one thing about Mrs Maltravers. She is an actress.’

¹ **All the old ladies having been born this very minute** — Эти старые дамы, надо полагать, сами только родились

² **I think she is said to have vamped the priest’s son** — Небось говорят, что она кровь сосет из сына священника?

³ **Why in thunder** — Почему, черт возьми

‘I thought so,’ said Father Brown. ‘**Never mind why**¹. I had another thought about her, that would seem even more unimportant.’

‘Well, at that moment it was scandal enough that she was an actress. The dear old priest of course is heartbroken, to think that his white hairs should be brought to the grave by an actress and adventuress. The spinsters cry altogether. The Admiral says he has sometimes been to a theatre in town; but refuses that such things were among us. Well, of course I’ve no particular protest of that kind. This actress is certainly a lady, if a bit of a Dark Lady, **in the style of the Sonnets**²; the young man is very much in love with her; and I am no doubt a sentimental old fool in having some feelings for the stupid young man who is walking round the Grange; and I was getting thoughts that this village was ideal, when suddenly the thunderbolt fell. **And I, who am the only person who ever had any sympathy with these people, am sent down to be the messenger of doom**³.’

‘Yes,’ said Father Brown, ‘and why were you sent down?’

The doctor answered with a sort of sigh:

‘Mrs Maltravers is not only a widow, but she is the widow of Mr Maltravers.’

¹ **Never mind why** — Неважно, почему

² **in the style of the Sonnets** — в духе сонетов [Имеется в виду, например, Шекспировские сонеты — прим. авт.-сост.]

³ **And I, who am the only person who ever had any sympathy with these people, am sent down to be the messenger of doom** — И я, единственный, кто всегда сочувствовал этим людям, ниспослан, как глашатай рока.

‘It sounds like a shocking news, as you put it,’ said the priest seriously.

‘And Mr Maltravers,’ continued his medical friend, ‘was the man who was probably murdered **in this very village**¹ a year or two ago; supposed to have been hit on the head by one of the simple villagers.’

‘I remember you told me,’ said Father Brown. ‘The doctor, or some doctor, said he had probably died of being hit on the head with a club.’

Dr Mulborough was silent for a moment frowning, and then said sharply:

‘Dog doesn’t eat dog, and doctors don’t bite doctors, not even when they are mad doctors. **I wouldn’t cast any reflection on the previous doctor in Potter’s Pond, if I could avoid it**²; but I know **you are really safe for secrets**³. And, **speaking in confidence**⁴, my predecessor at Potter’s Pond was a great fool; a drunken old idiot and absolutely incompetent. I was asked, originally by the Chief Constable of the County (for I’ve lived a long time in the county, though only lately in the village), to look into the whole case; the evidence and papers of the investigation and so on. **And there simply isn’t any question about it**⁵.

¹ **in this very village** — в этом самом селе

² **I wouldn’t cast any reflection on the previous doctor in Potter’s Pond, if I could avoid it** — я бы не стал бросать тень на предыдущего доктора Поттерс Понда, если бы мог избежать этого

³ **you are really safe for secrets** — вам можно доверять секреты

⁴ **speaking in confidence** — говоря по секрету

⁵ **And there simply isn’t any question about it** — Здесь не в чем сомневаться

Maltravers may have been hit on the head; he was a traveling actor passing through the place; and Potter's Pond probably thinks it is all in the natural order that such people should be hit on the head. **But whoever hit him on the head did not kill him**¹; it is simply impossible for such injury to do more than knock him out for a few hours. But lately I have managed to turn up some other facts concerning the matter; and the result of it is pretty dark.'

He sat looking at the landscape as it fell past the window, and then said more sharply: 'I am coming down here, and asking your help, because there's going to be an exhumation. They think that he has been poisoned.'

'And here we are at the station,' said Father Brown happily. 'I suppose your idea is that poisoning the poor man would be among the household tasks of his wife.'

'Well, **there never seems to have been anyone else here**² who had any connection with him,' said Mulborough, as they got off the train. 'At least there is one strange old friend of his, a broken-down actor, hanging around; but the police and the local lawyer seem sure that he is an unbalanced gossip; with some obsession on an argument with an actor who was his enemy; but who certainly wasn't Maltravers. A repeating case, I should say, and certainly nothing to do with the problem of the poison.'

¹ **But whoever hit him on the head did not kill him** — Кто бы ни ударил его по голове, он не убил его

² **there never seems to have been anyone else here** — кажется, тут никогда не было кого-либо ещё

Father Brown had heard the story. **But he knew that he never knew a story until he knew the characters in the story**¹. He spent the next two or three days visiting the main actors of the drama. His first interview with the strange widow was short but bright. He brought away from it at least two facts; one that Mrs Maltravers sometimes talked in a way which the Victorian village would call sarcastic; and, second, that unlike few actresses, **she happened to belong to his own church**².

He was right not to figure out from this alone that she was innocent of the said crime. He knew well that his old church had several notable poisoners. But he easily understood its connection, in this sort of case, with a certain intellectual liberty which these Puritans would call immorality; and which would certainly seem to them to be almost cosmopolitan. Anyhow, he was sure she could count for a great deal, whether for good or evil. Her brown eyes were brave to the point of battle, and her mouth, playful and rather large, suggested that her purposes touching the priest's poetical son, **whatever they might be**³, were of pretty deep nature.

The priest's poetical son himself, asked during vast village scandal on a bench outside the Blue Lion, gave an impression of low mood. Hurrel Horner, a

¹ **But he knew that he never knew a story until he knew the characters in the story** — Но он знал, что никогда не понял бы всю историю, если бы не познакомился с ее персонажами

² **she happened to belong to his own church** — оказалось, что она принадлежит к его (католической) церкви

³ **whatever they might be** — какими бы они ни были

son of the **Rev.**¹ Samuel Horner, was a strong young man in a light grey suit with a touch of something extravagant in a light green tie, in other cases mainly notable for his brown hair and a permanent grimace on his face. But Father Brown had a way with him in getting people to explain at length why they didn't want to say anything. About the general gossiping in the village, the young man began to curse freely. He even added a little gossip of his own. He told with anger about some past relationship between the Puritan Miss Carstairs-Carew and Mr Carver the lawyer. **He even accused that legal character of having attempted to force himself**² to befriend with Mrs Maltravers. But when he came to speak of his own father, whether out of good manners or loyalty, or because his anger was too deep for speech, he said only a few words.

'Well, there it is. He holds to the opinion that she is an adventuress; a sort of barmaid with golden hair. I tell him she's not; you've met her yourself, and you know she's not. But he won't even meet her. He won't even see her in the street or look at her out of a window. An actress would make his house and even his holy presence dirty. If he is called a Puritan he says he's proud to be a Puritan.'

'Your father,' said Father Brown, 'is supposed to have his views respected, whatever they are; **they**

¹ **Rev.** — преподобный (reverend)

² **He even accused that legal character of having attempted to force himself** — Он даже обвинил этого юриста в том, что тот и сам пытался

are not views I understand very well myself¹. But I agree he is not supposed to say anything about a lady he has never seen and then refuse even to look at her, to see if he is right. That is illogical.’

‘That’s his strongest point,’ replied the young man. ‘Not even one quick meeting. Of course, he is against my other theatrical tastes as well.’

Father Brown quickly followed up the new opening, and learnt much that he wanted to know. The young man was almost entirely into dramatic poetry. He had written tragedies in verse which had been liked by good judges. He was no fool with fear of stage; indeed he was no fool of any kind. He had some really original ideas about acting Shakespeare; it was easy to understand his having been extremely glad by finding the brilliant lady² at the Grange. And even the priest’s intellectual sympathy softened the rebel of Potter’s Pond so much that at their parting³ he actually smiled.

It was that smile which made Father Brown realize that the young man was really unhappy. So long as he frowned, it might well have been only low spirit⁴; but when he smiled it was somehow a more real sign of sadness.

¹ they are not views I understand very well myself — это не те взгляды, которые я сам хорошо понимаю

² it was easy to understand his having been extremely glad by finding the brilliant lady — легко было понять его безмерную радость от того, что он нашел прекрасную даму

³ at their parting — при расставании

⁴ So long as he frowned, it might well have been only low spirit — Пока он хмурился, казалось, что причиной тому плохое настроение

The priest continued to think about that conversation with the poet. An inner feeling told him that the strong young man **was eaten from within by some grief**¹ greater even than the ordinary story of ordinary parents being a difficulty to the course of true love. It was all the more so, because there were not any other reasons. The boy already had literary and dramatic success; his books might be said to be very popular. **Nor did he drink or spend away his well-earned money**². At his well-known visits at the Blue Lion he drank only one glass of light ale; and he seemed to be rather careful with his money. Father Brown thought of another possible difficulty in connection with Hurrel's large earnings and small expenses; and **his brow darkened**³.

The conversation of Miss Carstairs-Carew, **on whom he called next**⁴, was made to paint the priest's son in the darkest colours⁵. But because it was about him having all the vices which Father Brown was quite sure the young man did not have⁶, he put it

¹ **was eaten from within by some grief** — его изнутри пожирало какое-то горе

² **Nor did he drink or spend away his well-earned money** — Он также не пропил и не растратил свои честно заработанные деньги

³ **his brow darkened** — он нахмурился

⁴ **on whom he called next** — которую он навестил затем

⁵ **was made to paint the priest's son in the darkest colours** — явно должен был послужить тому, чтобы выставить сына священника в негативном свете

⁶ **But because it was about him having all the vices which Father Brown was quite sure the young man did not have** — Но поскольку разговор был о том, что он [сын священника] обладал всеми грехами, которые, как полагал отец Браун, не были ему свойственны