

H. G. WELLS
The Invisible Man

CHAPTER I

THE STRANGE MAN'S ARRIVAL

The stranger came early in February, one wintry day. He came through a biting wind and a driving snow. He was walking from **Bramblehurst**¹ railway station. He was carrying a little black portmanteau in his thickly gloved hand. He was wrapped up from head to foot. The brim of his soft felt hat hid every inch of his face **but**² the shiny tip of his nose. He walked into the "**Coach and Horses**"³ more dead than alive. Then he flung his portmanteau down.

"A fire!" he cried. "I need human charity! A room and a fire!"

He followed **Mrs. Hall**⁴ into her guest parlour. Then a couple of sovereigns flung upon the table.

Mrs. Hall lit the fire and left him there. After that she went to prepare him a meal. A guest at **Iping**⁵ in the wintertime was a piece of luck. She carried the cloth, plates, and glasses into the parlour and began to lay them. Although the fire was burning up briskly, she was surprised: her visitor still wore his hat and coat. He was standing with his back to her and staring out of the

¹ **Bramblehurst** — Брэмблхёрст

² **but** — *зд.* кроме

³ "**Coach and Horses**" — «Кучер и кони» (*название трактира*)

⁴ **Mrs. Hall** — миссис Холл

⁵ **Iping** — Айпинг

window at the snow in the yard. She noticed that the melting snow dripped upon her carpet from his shoulders.

“Can I take your hat and coat, sir?” she said, “and bring them to the kitchen? They will be dry.”

“No,” he said. He did not turn.

Why? She wanted to repeat her question. He turned his head and looked at her over his shoulder.

“I prefer to keep them on¹,” he said with emphasis.

She noticed that he wore big blue spectacles. Also he had a side-whisker that completely hid his cheeks and face.

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

He made no answer. He turned his face away from her again. Mrs. Hall went out of the room. When she returned he was still standing there. He was like a man of stone. He was hiding his face and ears completely. She put down the eggs and bacon, and told him,

“Your lunch, sir.”

“Thank you,” he said and did not stir until she was closing the door. Then he approached the table with quickness.

As she went behind the bar to the kitchen she heard a sound. That sound repeated at regular intervals: Chirk, chirk, chirk. It was the sound of a spoon.

“Oh,” she said. “I forgot the mustard!”

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

She entered promptly. As she did so her visitor moved quickly. She noticed a white object that disappeared behind the table. The man was picking something from the floor. She put down the mustard pot on the table. Then she noticed the overcoat and a hat on a chair in front of the fire. She went to it resolutely.

“I suppose I may take it now,” she said.

“Leave the hat,” said her visitor.

¹ I prefer to keep them on — я предпочитаю, чтобы они были на мне

She turned. He raised his head. He was sitting and looking at her. For a moment she was looking at him, too surprised to speak.

He held a white cloth, a serviette, over the lower part of his face. His mouth and jaws were completely hidden. And his forehead above his blue glasses was covered by a white bandage. Another bandage covered his ears. She saw only his bright, pink, peaked nose. The man wore a dark-brown velvet jacket with a high, black collar. The collar was turned up about his neck. The thick black hair gave him the strangest appearance. This muffled and bandaged head was very strange.

He did not remove the serviette. He was holding it with a brown gloved hand. And he was looking at her through his inscrutable blue glasses.

“Leave the hat,” he said.

He was speaking very distinctly through the white cloth. She placed the hat on the chair again.

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

“Thank you,” he said drily.

“I’ll make them dry, sir, at once,” she said, and carried his clothes out of the room.

She glanced at his white head and blue goggles again. His napkin was still in front of his face. She shivered a little as she closed the door behind her. She was very surprised and perplexed.

The visitor sat and listened to her steps. He glanced inquiringly at the window before he removed his serviette. Then he walked across the room and pulled the curtain down. After that, he returned to the table and his meal.

“This poor man had an accident or an operation or something,” said Mrs. Hall. “And the glasses!”

She hung his muffler on a hanger.

“And he is holding that handkerchief over his mouth all the time. He talks through it! Perhaps his mouth was hurt too—maybe.”

When Mrs. Hall came to the stranger again, her ideas about the accident were confirmed. The man was smoking a pipe. All the time that she was in the room he never loosened the silk muffler. He wrapped it round the lower part of his face to put the mouthpiece to his lips. He was not hungry anymore. He sat in the corner and spoke, with less aggressive brevity than before.

"I have some luggage," he said, "at Bramblehurst station. How can I send it here?"

He bowed his bandaged head.

"Tomorrow?" he said. "There is no speedier delivery?"

He was disappointed when she answered, "No."

"Will you get me some matches?" said the visitor.

Mrs. Hall looked at him and went for the matches.

"Thanks," he said concisely, as she brought them. Then he began to stare out of the window again.

The visitor remained in the parlour until four o'clock. He was sitting in the darkness and smoking his pipe—perhaps dozing.

Sometimes he was walking. He was talking to himself. Then the armchair creaked and he sat down again.

CHAPTER II
MR. TEDDY HENFREY'S
FIRST IMPRESSIONS

At four o'clock, **Teddy Henfrey**¹, the **clock-jobber**², came into the bar.

"Oh, Mrs. Hall," said he, "this is the terrible weather indeed!"

The snow outside was falling fast.

Mrs. Hall agreed, and then noticed a bag with him.

"Now, Mr. Henfrey," said she, "can you look at the old clock in the parlour?"

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

Her visitor was sitting in the armchair before the fire, his bandaged head was drooping on one side. The only light in the room was the red glow from the fire. It lit his eyes, but his face was in darkness. Mrs. Hall lit the bar lamp, and her eyes were dazzled. For a second it seemed to her that the man had an enormous mouth wide open, and it was a vast and incredible mouth! She saw the white-bound head, the monstrous eyes, and this huge mouth below it. Then he stirred. She opened the door wide. The room was lighter, and she saw him more clearly. The shadows, of course, tricked her.

"**Would you mind, sir?**"³ This man will look at the clock," she said. She was shocked.

¹ **Teddy Henfrey** — Тедди Генфри

² **clock-jobber** — часовщик

³ **Would you mind, sir?** — Не возражаете, сэр?

“Look at the clock?” he said, “certainly.”

Mrs. Hall went away to get a lamp, and he rose and stretched himself. Then Mr. Teddy Henfrey entered and saw this bandaged person.

“Good afternoon,” said the stranger.

“I hope,” said Mr. Henfrey, “I won’t disturb you.”

“Not at all,” said the stranger. “Though, I understand,” he told Mrs. Hall, “that this room is my private room. Am I right?”

“I think, sir,” said Mrs. Hall, “you prefer that the clock—”

“Certainly,” said the stranger, “certainly—but, as a rule, I like to be alone and undisturbed.

But I’m really glad to have the clock,” he added. “Very glad.”

Mr. Henfrey wanted to apologize and go away, but this anticipation reassured him. The stranger turned round with his back to the fireplace and put his hands behind his back.

Mrs. Hall was ready to leave the room, when her visitor asked her to make some arrangements about his boxes at Bramblehurst.

“Your boxes will arrive tomorrow, sir,” she said.

“You are certain that is the earliest?”

She was certain.

“I want to explain,” he added, “what I was really cold and fatigued to do it before. I am an **investigator**¹.”

“Yes, sir,” said Mrs. Hall.

“And my baggage contains apparatus and appliances.”

“Very useful things, sir,” said Mrs. Hall.

“And I’m very anxious to get them soon.”

“Of course, sir.”

“I came to Iping,” he proceeded, “because I desire solitude. I do not wish to be disturbed in my work. In addition to my work, an accident—”

“Oh, I was right,” said Mrs. Hall to herself.

¹ **investigator** — исследователь

“—requires a retirement. My eyes are sometimes so weak and painful that I must **shut myself up**¹ in the dark for hours. Sometimes. Not at present, certainly. So the stranger in the room is a source of annoyance to me. Do you understand?”

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

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

Mrs. Hall left the room. He was standing in front of the fire, and glaring at the clock. Mr. Henfrey wanted to delay his departure and to talk to the stranger. But the stranger was silent. Henfrey did not like it. He felt alone in the room and looked at the bandaged head.

“The weather—” Henfrey began.

“Why don’t you finish and go?” said the man. He suppressed rage. “Fix the clock and leave the room.”

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

But he was annoyed.

“**Damn it!**”² said Mr. Henfrey to himself; “**seems like the police is wanting him**”³.”

At the corner he saw Mr. Hall, the husband of the stranger’s hostess at the “Coach and Horses.”

“How do you do, Teddy?” Hall said.

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

“What’s that?” Hall asked.

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

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

“I like to see a man’s face if this man stops in my place,” said Henfrey. “But women are very trustful. He took your room and he didn’t tell his name, Hall.”

“Really?” asked Hall.

¹ **shut myself up** — запереться

² **Damn it!** — Проклятье!

³ **seems like the police is wanting him** — похоже, что его разыскивает полиция

“Yes,” said Teddy. “He will stay for a week. You will see him soon. And he’s got a lot of luggage, so he says. Let’s hope there are no stones in his boxes, Hall.”

Hall was suspicious.

“I suppose **I must see about this**¹,” said Hall.

But at home, his wife severely scorned him, and did not answer his inquiries.

“You women don’t know everything,” said Mr. Hall.

The stranger went to bed about half-past nine. Mr. Hall went very aggressively into the parlour. He wanted to show that the stranger wasn’t master there. Then he instructed Mrs. Hall to look very closely at the stranger’s luggage.

“**Mind your own business**², Hall,” said Mrs. Hall.

And she went to sleep.

¹ **I must see about this** — я должен навести здесь порядок

² **mind your own business** — занимайся своим делом

CHAPTER III

THE THOUSAND AND ONE BOTTLES

It was on the twenty-ninth day of February, at the beginning of the thaw. Next day the strange man's luggage arrived. It was a very remarkable luggage. There were a couple of trunks indeed, but in addition there were a box of books—big, fat books—and a dozen or more crates, boxes, and cases. They were containing objects packed in straw, glass bottles, Hall thought.

The stranger was muffled in hat, coat, gloves, and wrapper. He came out impatiently to meet the cart.

"Come along with those boxes," he said. "I wait."

Fearenside's¹ dog saw him, and began to bristle and growl savagely. When the man rushed down the steps, the dog sprang straight at his hand.

"Whup!" cried Hall and jumped back. He was afraid of dogs. Fearenside howled, "Lie down!" and snatched his whip.

The dog's teeth slipped the hand. The people heard a kick, and the rip of the stranger's trousers. Then the dog retreated under the wheels of the waggon. It happened very fast. No one spoke, everyone shouted. The stranger glanced swiftly at his torn glove and at his leg, then turned and rushed swiftly up the steps into the inn. He went to his bedroom.

Mr. Hall met Mrs. Hall in the passage.

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

¹ **Fearenside** — Фиренсайд