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Introduction

In 1766 the great German philosopher Immanuel Kant published a short and intriguing work under the title *Träume eines Geistersehers, erläutert durch Träume der Metaphysik*. The standard translation of this title runs: *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer, Elucidated by Dreams of Metaphysics*, but the word here rendered as “spirit-seer” is the same one – *Geisterseher* – that I have translated as “ghost-seer” in the later work by Friedrich von Schiller (final edition: 1798). What are we talking about when we talk about spirits, or ghosts? Kant’s essay focuses precisely on this issue, and he addresses the existence both of spirits (in the sense of disembodied centres of consciousness) and of ghosts (in the sense of uncanny apparitions). *Can* we intelligibly talk about either, when their status is so ambiguous (are they mental or physical, dead or alive, subjective or objective, natural or supernatural, illusory or real)? What does it mean to claim that one “believes in ghosts”? What *rational* objections can be made to their existence? One such objection would be this: the concept of a disembodied entity that can nonetheless be perceived by the senses of an embodied human being is incoherent. And what *empirical* objections? One might run: almost all cases involving the “supernatural” turn out, on investigation, to be explicable by purely natural causes, and in many cases to be the product of deliberate deception on the part of some impostor.

The particular *Geisterseher* that Kant wished to subject to his powerful philosophical scrutiny was his long-lived near contemporary, Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772). Swedenborg began his productive career as a scientist, well-versed in the study of nature, mathematics and the technological innovations of the early eighteenth century: a widely travelled, sociable, cosmopolitan

figure who in many ways embodied what was to become the ideal of the Enlightenment man of reason and experiment, adept in the abstractions of algebra, but equally able to turn his hand to practical inventions. His labyrinthine ingenuity found ample scope when he started to publish Sweden's first real scientific journal, the aptly named *Daedalus Hyperboreus*. For thirty years he was occupied in the administration and improvement of his country's mining industry, but still found time to travel and develop his increasingly complex speculations on the nature of the world, which, published as the *Principia rerum naturalium* (*Principles of Nature*), envisaged matter as composed of infinitely divisible, swirling particles. He also proposed ideas about the way the sun, and its orbiting planets, originated in a single nebula (a theory that was further developed by Kant and Laplace), and did research into animal and human physiology and psychology that looked forward to later investigations into the localization of thought processes in the brain. But however good his credentials as a scientist, Swedenborg's impact – seen in the influence he had on profoundly counter-Enlightenment thinkers such as Blake, Balzac, Baudelaire, Emerson, Yeats and Strindberg – was the result of a religious crisis documented in his *Journal of Dreams* (1743–44), which relates his dreams and visions, his spiritual experiences and his powerful sexual fantasies and obsessions. A vision of Christ in 1744 led to his decision to abandon his scientific interests: thereafter he devoted himself to voluminous tomes subjecting the Bible to his own idiosyncratic but systematic interpretations, and explicating his view of the “correspondences” between the physical world and the celestial realm: the *Principles of Nature* gave way to the *Heavenly Arcana*, the *Apocalypse Explained*, *On Heaven and its Wonders* and *On Hell*. There is an undeniably dispassionate, if not exactly scientific, tone to these works: Swedenborg never lost the habit of writing in a dry, curiously analytical way even about angels and spirits. But his works created a new sect, and by the 1780s there was a Swedenborgian Church in London. Its successors, such as the New Church, with

various branches such as Michael Church in Stockwell, still draw inspiration from Swedenborg's visions.

It was not just as a speculative theologian that Swedenborg attracted the interest of his contemporaries, however, but as a mystic who experienced at first hand the paranormal. Kant was fascinated partly by the theology – what credence could be given to Swedenborg's spirit world? – and partly by the clairvoyance: thus he recounts some of the most celebrated anecdotes concerning Swedenborg's gifts of second sight and precognition. In 1759 Swedenborg had just returned from England to Gothenburg in Sweden, and at a gathering in the house of a merchant that same evening suddenly became profoundly agitated, announcing that there was a terrible fire raging in Stockholm, a good 250 miles away; he then left the room, only to return reporting that the fire had been checked. It took two days for the news of the fire to reach Gothenburg: the details agreed with Swedenborg's report. In 1761, summoned by a princess to give proof of his supernatural abilities, Swedenborg apparently discovered something known to her that he himself could have learnt from no living human being. And on another occasion, the widow of a Dutch envoy at the Swedish court asked Swedenborg to discover whether her late husband had in fact paid off a goldsmith's bill for which she was being pestered: Swedenborg, apparently after communication with the spirit world, came back to tell her that a receipt would be found in the hidden compartment of a desk that she thought had been completely emptied.

Kant's attitude to these stories, and to Swedenborg's pretensions to, as it were, insider knowledge of a world transcending the experience of most ordinary mortals, was a mixture of caustic irony and curious respect. His essay was written at a transitional time in the development of his own thinking: he had become sceptical about the rationalist metaphysics of Leibniz and Wolf, but had not yet embarked on his "critical" philosophy which would attempt to legislate on what could and could not intelligibly be said about the kinds of vision Swedenborg enjoyed, or the validity of the

apparently supernatural experiences to which he was prone. For the time being, Kant was content to comment that, however much it may seem a “contemptible business” for a sensible philosopher even to lower himself to examine such superstitious and credulous nonsense as Herr Swedenborg’s fantasies, they are not innately any more dubious than the other “dreams” he scrutinizes with an equally satirical eye – those of metaphysics. Why, he asks, should it be more creditable to be taken in by “the pretence of reason” than by an “incautious belief in misleading stories”?

This was not to be Kant’s last word on such issues, of course, and his critical philosophy (from the *Critique of Pure Reason* – first edition 1781 – onwards) was to move from the ironic and mutually demystifying juxtaposition of “metaphysical” and “mystical” dreams to a much more strenuous and probing attempt to allot distinct spheres of validity to different kinds of language and experience (epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, religious). But his discussion of Swedenborg in *Dreams of a Spirit-Seer* anticipates Schiller’s *Ghost-Seer* in theme as well as title. The Prince in Schiller’s tale is brought up a Protestant who has indulged in pietistic “enthusiasm” but, in increasing reaction against the puritanical, life-denying and punitive nature of his childhood religion, becomes at first merely lukewarm to his faith, and then, on exposure to mysterious experiences that parallel many of those associated with Swedenborg, demonstrates a fascination for the paranormal. The latter is clearly more alluring than the dreary pieties of German Protestantism, but the Prince also goes out of his way – like a good detective – to find the all-too-human interests that motivate the “impostors” and their tricks (all done, he claims – and the story tends to corroborate his conclusion – with smoke and mirrors). But just as Swedenborg’s life story embodies a conversion narrative, Schiller’s tale relates how the Prince goes through a whole sequence of such “conversions”. He starts as a devout Protestant and then becomes a sceptical enquirer into the paranormal. Then he passes through a phase of libertinage in the corrupt but enticing atmosphere of Venice, with its masks and its mirror-makers and its elite intellectual club, the

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Bucentauro, where even cardinals can apparently indulge in licentious freethinking. Here, the Prince tries to make up for his own intellectual “backwardness” (in some ways that of the petty states of the Holy Roman Empire which Schiller knew all too intimately) by catching up with the latest ideas, only to fall prey, given his lack of independence of mind, to the most garbled and superficial aspects of “enlightened” thought. The Prince’s oscillations between faith and scepticism, love of magic and wariness towards the “beyond”, religious enthusiasm and nihilistic despair, mirror those of another German hero, Faust: both succumb, at least for a while, to a longing for the intoxications of the fleeting moment as a way of deadening the pain of their conviction that we can know nothing *certain* – part of the crisis, again, that Kant’s philosophy tried to register and solve. And although Schiller’s Prince has been able to resist the temptations of the supernatural, he seems less immune to the charms of beauty, in the shape of the woman he sees in church. The scene in which he falls in love with her – though he himself, like any good lover, rejects the language of love as being inadequate to the singularity of its object – is clearly a replay of the earlier scene of conjuration in the pavilion on the Brenta. There, an apparent impostor had exploited the paraphernalia of religion (and more particularly of baroque Catholicism, albeit tinged with Freemasonry: altar, crucifix, incense, apron, Chaldee Bible, skull, careful effects of light and dark) to create an atmosphere conducive to belief in spectral apparitions and communications with the spirit world. He had failed, at least in the Prince’s case. But if, as is likely, the same network of impostors, with the fascinatingly demonic Armenian at their head, is *also* responsible for stage-managing this encounter with the woman in the church, the techniques are the same: to induce an openness to “spirits” (or the Spirit) by exposing the victim to a particularly suggestive atmosphere – in this case, what seems to be Palladio’s great church of the Redentore, embellished with a beautiful and mysterious woman who clasps the crucifix with the same fervour as the Sicilian in the earlier episode. But in this latter case, the “trick” works, and the Prince experiences a

deluded erotico-mystical flight of fancy – or a profound religious experience – and accepts the supernatural (the Christ figure held in the hand of the beautiful woman).

What is the story ultimately about? It remains unfinished, although, when published in instalments in Schiller's journal *Thalia*, *The Ghost-Seer* aroused considerable interest, with the public clamouring for more. Yet Schiller grew increasingly tired of it, and found – not untypically, in his case – that he had become more interested in the philosophical questions it raised than in telling a story. This is a pity, because the captivating narrative, the tales within tales, the many parallels, echoes and mirrorings, the masks that hide other masks, the impostor caught out by his own imposture – or is he? – and the growing sense of paranoia, all make Schiller's story, as it stands, an outstanding piece of Gothic fiction. (A long and rather rambling 'Philosophical Conversation from *The Ghost-Seer*', now usually – as in my translation – omitted from the story, or published as an appendix, dwelt at length on these more abstract issues.) The Armenian (or Russian, or whatever), that "Unfathomable" man of a thousand masks, ageless and ubiquitous, who has drawn his wisdom from the Pyramids, seems for all his supernatural powers to have a very earthly agenda – luring the Prince into a crime that will yield him a crown, perhaps? Or maybe the Armenian is luring him into the bosom of what the Prince's sister scornfully calls, in a mocking allusion to *extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*, "the only church outside of which there is no salvation": Catholicism.

For Schiller, as for his age, religion and politics were inseparable, and some of the piquancy of the story for his first readers would have stemmed from the fact that the Duchy of Württemberg, predominantly Protestant, had a childless Catholic duke, and the question as to whether his Protestant brother (or *his* offspring) might eventually provide the Duchy with a Protestant ruler was vexed by the fact that the latter's family seemed prone to converting to Catholicism. As usual, the Jesuits were imagined to be behind it all. But religion and epistemology were inseparable too: if faith declines, can we be sure of anything? The Prince is weak,

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easily led and far from embodying the ideal of rational autonomy that Kant – and to some extent Schiller – established as a new moral guiding principle. Schiller may well have meant his story to be a horrible example of how easily such a person – too modern for the old certainties of an “unexamined” faith, but too old-fashioned to be able to grasp the full depth of the philosophical issues at stake and produce a mature, independent and responsible answer to the temptations of self-indulgent freethinking – is tempted, when the hocus-pocus of necromancy fails, to fall back on Catholicism. “In Rome you will find out” is one of the story’s unfulfilled promises. But the Prince’s love for the mysterious stranger, however much it may be caught up with a wider nexus of religious and political scheming, goes beyond that. Despite its stereotypical language, it powerfully rekindles Neoplatonic ideas and those of courtly love of using beauty – sexual beauty – to awaken a sense of the divine. The “apparition” in the church of the Redentore is not so different from that of Beatrice Portinari in Florence’s Santa Maria dei Fiori, revealing to the young Dante what will be, in more than one sense, the love of his life. Repeatedly, Schiller’s story shows how something apparently real turns out to be “just” an image – a picture, copy or counterfeit; and yet he sets his story in a country, and a city, which contains some of the most powerful images ever made. Why should they not, like human love, be just as effective in granting intimations of another dimension as are the deliverances of “reason” and the “eternal laws of nature” to which the Prince initially appeals?

Schiller’s story is a ghost story, but also a love story. Veronese’s *Marriage Feast at Cana*, whose power the narrator rather grudgingly acknowledges, is a notoriously sumptuous celebration of human nuptials blessed by the divine, and it is a sign that the Prince cannot yet synthesize the fragmented forms of love into a whole when he rejects the Florentine artist’s insistence that his three paintings – Madonna, Héloïse and Venus – must be bought as a job lot. The three women represent, respectively, heavenly love, sacred and profane love (Héloïse was the lover of Abelard as well as being a mystic

and a nun) and sexual love. By accepting only the Madonna, the Prince loses them all. Schiller's story is also a story about spirit and its fraught but all the more intimate relations with flesh. It probes the absurdities to which credulous human beings are prone, but also – perhaps against its own intentions – suggests that the ideal of rational autonomy is meaningless unless it also acknowledges our inevitable heteronomy, our enthrallment to others – to other worlds, in all their spookiness and at times tawdry allure; to other people; to the various “others” of reason, such as love and beauty; or quite simply to unreasonable artifices such as paintings and music (Biondello's flute) and, of course, to stories. And it suggests the ease with which Catholicism falls prey to superstition, corruption and idolatry, while suggesting that the Protestant alternative is not only equally authoritarian and credulous, but doesn't on the whole produce anything like such good visual art.

Hegel, for all his rationalism, wrote, not long after *The Ghost-Seer*, of the “cunning of reason”, as if reason behaved not like Schiller's Prince, in “detective” mode, availing himself of the straightforward austerities of logical deduction and scientific methodology, but more like Machiavelli's Prince, relying on a zigzagging path of masquerade and duplicity to achieve his ends. Schiller's story suggests that faith too has its cunning, however improper he makes it seem. Perhaps the last word goes to another prince (quoted by Schiller's Prince), also caught in an age tugged between Protestant and Catholic world views, and exposed both to a radical scepticism and to the temptations of ghosts (and spirits, and maybe Spirit):

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

(*Hamlet* Act 1, Sc. 5, ll. 168–69)

– Andrew Brown

The Ghost-Seer

Book One

I AM ABOUT TO RECOUNT an incident that will seem incredible to many, but of which I myself was to a large extent an eyewitness. The few people who are acquainted with a certain political event will find in this story – if indeed they are still alive to read these pages – a welcome explanation of it all; and even without this key, it will perhaps serve others as an important contribution to the history of the way the human mind can be deceived and go astray. Readers will be amazed at the bold objectives which wickedness is capable of devising and prosecuting; they will be amazed at the strangeness of the means that it can muster to assure itself of these objectives. Clear, unadorned truth will guide my pen, for by the time these pages appear in the world I will be no more and will have nothing to win or to lose from the report I am setting down.

It happened on my return journey to Courland in the year 17—, at carnival time, when I was visiting the Prince of —— in Venice. We had got to know each other while serving in the army of ——, and here renewed an acquaintance that peace had interrupted. As I in any case wished to see the most notable things in this city, and the Prince was merely waiting for bills of exchange to arrive so that he could travel home to ——, he easily persuaded me to keep him company and delay my departure for a while. We agreed not to separate for as long as our stay in Venice lasted, and the Prince was kind enough to suggest I share his own lodgings in the “Moor”.

He was staying here in the strictest incognito, as he wanted to live independently, and his restricted allowance would not have permitted him to maintain the eminence of his rank. Two gentlemen on whose absolute discretion he could fully count

were, together with a few trusty servants, his only entourage. He avoided extravagance, more out of temperament than thrift. He shunned pleasures; at the age of thirty-five he had withstood all the allurements of this voluptuous city. The fair sex had until now remained a matter of indifference to him. Deep seriousness and a dreamy melancholy were the dominant tone of his character. His likes and dislikes drew no attention to themselves, but they were stubborn to an excessive degree; he formed attachments slowly and soberly, and his devotion was warm and permanent. In the midst of a noisy tumult of people he went on his way alone; locked up in his fantasy world, he was very often a stranger in the real one. No one was more innately prone to let himself be directed by others, although he was by no means weak. At the same time he was level-headed and reliable once won over to a cause, and he had the courage both to combat one acknowledged prejudice and to die for another.

As the third prince of his house, he had no real prospect of ever reigning. His ambition had remained dormant, and his passions had taken another direction. Happy not to depend on the will of anyone else, he was not tempted to rule over others: the tranquil freedom of private life and a taste for intelligent company marked the limits of all his wishes. He read widely but indiscriminately; a neglected education and early service in the army had prevented his mind from maturing. All the knowledge that he picked up later on merely increased the confusion of his ideas, since they were built on no firm ground.

He was a Protestant, like his whole family – by birth, not by investigating the matter, which was something he had never done, even though at one period of his life he had been a religious enthusiast. He was, as far as I know, never a Freemason.

One evening, while strolling through St Mark's Square as we habitually did, completely disguised by our masks and isolated from the rest of the crowd – it was starting to get late and the press of people had dispersed – the Prince noticed that a masked man was following us wherever we went. It was an Armenian,*

walking along by himself. We started to walk more quickly and tried to throw off the masked man by frequently changing our route – but in vain: he stayed right behind us.

“You haven’t by any chance become embroiled in a love affair here, have you?” the Prince finally asked me. “Husbands in Venice can be dangerous.”

“I don’t know a single lady in the place,” I replied.

“Let’s sit down here and speak German,” he continued. “I am starting to imagine we’ve been mistaken for someone else.”

We sat on a stone bench and waited for the masked man to walk past us. He immediately came right up to us and sat down next to the Prince. The latter took out his watch and said to me loud and clear, in French, as he rose to his feet: “It’s past nine o’clock. Come. We are forgetting that they are waiting for us in the ‘Louvre’.” He said this merely so as to throw the masked man off our trail.

“*Nine o’clock*,” the masked man repeated, again in French, emphatically and slowly. “Congratulate yourself, Prince,” he added, calling the Prince by his real name. “*He died at nine o’clock*.” Whereupon he stood up and left.

We looked at one another in consternation.

“Who has died?” the Prince finally asked, after a long silence.

“Let’s follow him,” I said, “and demand an explanation.”

We looked in every nook and cranny of St Mark’s Square – the masked man was nowhere to be found. Feeling dissatisfied, we returned to our hotel. On the way, the Prince said not a word to me, but walked to one side, alone, seemingly profoundly agitated, as he later confessed to me was the case.

When we were back home, he opened his mouth for the first time.

“It is perfectly ridiculous,” he said, “that a crazy fellow should be able to destroy one’s peace of mind with two words.” We wished each other goodnight, and as soon as I was back in my room, I jotted down in my notebook the day and the time at which this had happened. It was a Thursday.

The following evening, the Prince said to me, "Why don't we go for a walk across St Mark's Square and see if we can find our mysterious Armenian? I am longing to know how this comedy is going to turn out." I was happy to do so. We stayed in the square until eleven o'clock. The Armenian was nowhere to be seen. We did the same thing on the following four evenings, and met with no more success.

When we left our hotel on the sixth evening, I had the bright idea – whether involuntarily or deliberately, I cannot remember now – of leaving the servants with directions of where we could be found if anyone should ask after us. The Prince noticed my wise precaution and approved it with a smile. There was a dense throng in St Mark's Square when we arrived. We had hardly walked thirty paces when I again spotted the Armenian, speedily working his way through the crowd and apparently looking for someone. We were just about to reach him when the Baron von F— from the Prince's retinue came breathlessly up to us and handed the Prince a letter.

"It is sealed in black," he added. "We guessed that it must be urgent."

This was a veritable thunderclap for me. The Prince had stepped under a lamp and started to read.

"My cousin has died," he exclaimed.

"*When?*" I interrupted vehemently.

He looked back over the letter. "Last Thursday. At nine o'clock in the evening."

We had no time to recover from our amazement, for the Armenian was already standing among us.

"You have been recognized here, my lord," he said to the Prince. "Hurry back to the 'Moor'. There you will find the representatives of the Senate. Have no misgivings about accepting the honour that is to be shown you. The Baron von F— forgot to tell you that your bills of exchange have arrived." He melted back into the crowd.

We hurried hack to our hotel. There everything turned out to be just as the Armenian had announced. Three *nobili* of the Republic

were standing ready to greet the Prince and accompany him with all pomp to the Assembly, where the aristocracy of the city were expecting him. He barely had enough time to convey to me, with a brief gesture, that I should sit up and wait for him.

At around eleven o'clock at night he returned. He came solemnly and pensively into the room and seized my hand, having dismissed the servants. "Count," he said, alluding to Hamlet's words, "there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophies."

"My lord," I replied, "you seem to be forgetting that you will be going to bed much richer in expectation." (The deceased had been the heir to the throne, the only son of the reigning —, who was old and sickly and without hope of producing a new heir. An uncle of our Prince, also without heirs and without prospect of getting any, was now the only person standing between him and the throne. I mention this circumstance as it will be play a part later on in the story.)

"Do not remind me of it," said the Prince. "And even if a throne had been won for me, I would have more to do at this time than brood over such a trivial event. If this Armenian has not simply guessed—"

"How would that be possible, Prince?" I cut in.

"Then you will see me exchange all my princely hopes for a monk's habit."

The following evening we arrived earlier than usual in St Mark's Square. A sudden shower forced us to shelter in a coffeehouse, where people were gambling. The Prince went and stood behind the chair of a Spaniard and observed the game. I had gone into a neighbouring room where I read newspapers.

A short while afterwards I heard a noise. Before the Prince's arrival, the Spaniard had been losing repeatedly; now he was winning at every turn of the cards. The whole game had changed remarkably, and the bank was in danger of being required to pay out to the gambler who had been emboldened by this happy turn of events. The Venetian who kept the bank told the Prince in an

insulting tone that he was disturbing the game and should leave the table. The Prince gazed at him coldly and stayed where he was; he maintained the same demeanour when the Venetian repeated his insult in French. The latter thought that the Prince could not understand either language, and turned with a contemptuous laugh to the others.

“So tell me then, gentleman, how am I to make myself understood to this bumpkin?” he exclaimed. Whereupon he stood up and made as if to seize the Prince by the arm, whereupon the latter lost patience, grabbed the Venetian with his strong hands and threw him roughly to the ground.

The whole house was in uproar. Hearing the tumult, I rushed in and instinctively called him by his name.

“Take care, Prince!” I added without thinking. “Don’t forget we are in Venice.” The Prince’s name imposed a general silence, from which soon arose a murmur that struck me as menacing. All the Italians present crowded together into small groups and stood to one side. One after the other they left the room, until the two of us were left alone with the Spaniard and a few Frenchmen.

“You are lost, my lord,” the Frenchmen told him, “unless you leave town immediately. The Venetian you have treated so badly is rich and of high standing – it will cost him a mere fifty sequins to get rid of you.”

The Spaniard offered to fetch the guards to ensure the Prince’s safety, and was even ready to accompany us home himself. The Frenchmen were also willing to do so. We were still standing there considering what to do when the door opened and several servants of the Inquisition entered. They showed us orders from the Government requesting us both to follow them immediately. Strongly guarded, we were led to the canal. Here a gondola was awaiting us, in which we were required to embark. Before we stepped out of it, our eyes were blindfolded. We were taken up a long stone flight of steps and then through a long winding corridor, over vaults, as I deduced from the multiple echoes that resounded beneath our feet. Finally we came to another flight of twenty-six

steps that led us downwards. The staircase opened onto a hall, in which our blindfolds were removed. We found ourselves in a circle of venerable old men, all dressed in black; the whole room was hung with black drapes and dimly lit, and there was a deathly hush in the whole gathering which made a fearful impression. One of the old men, presumably the senior State Inquisitor, approached the Prince and asked him solemnly, as the Venetian was brought up to him, "Do you recognize this man as the same who insulted you in the coffeehouse?"

"Yes," replied the Prince.

Thereupon the Inquisitor turned to the prisoner: "Is this the same person whom you intended to have murdered this evening?"

The prisoner replied yes.

Immediately the circle drew back, and we were horrified to see the Venetian's head being separated from his body.

"Are you satisfied with this amends?" asked the Inquisitor.

The Prince was lying in a faint in the arms of his escort.

"Now go," continued the Inquisitor with a dreadful voice, turning towards me, "and in future be less hasty in your opinion of justice in Venice."

Who the hidden friend had been who had availed himself of the quick arm of the law to save us from certain death, we could not guess. Dumbstruck with horror, we reached our residence. It was past midnight. The Chamberlain von Z— was impatiently waiting for us on the steps.

"What a good thing it was that you sent me a message!" he said to the Prince, lighting our way for us. "The news that the Baron von F— brought home from St Mark's Square soon afterwards had put us in a state of mortal fear for your safety."

"I sent you a message? When? I don't know a thing about it."

"This evening, after eight o'clock. You sent us word that we shouldn't worry in the slightest if you came home later than usual this evening."

At this point the Prince looked at me. "Did you perhaps take this precaution without my knowledge?"

I knew nothing about it.

"But you must have done so, Your Highness," said the chamberlain, "for here is your repeating watch that you sent along as a guarantee."

The Prince reached for his watch case. The watch really was missing, and he recognized the one held out as his own.

"Who brought it?" he asked in consternation.

"A stranger in a mask, wearing Armenian dress; he left straight afterwards."

We stood there looking at one another. "What do you think of all this?" the Prince finally said after a long silence. "There is a hidden guard keeping watch over me here in Venice."

That night's dreadful scene made the Prince fall into a fever that obliged him to keep to his room for a week. During this time our hotel swarmed with people from Venice and abroad, all drawn by the Prince's newly revealed status. People vied with one another in offering their services to him, and each one tried in his own way to make himself useful. Our adventure with the Inquisition was not so much as mentioned. Since the Court of ——— wished the Prince's departure to be further deferred, several money-changers in Venice received instructions to pay out considerable sums of money to him. So it was that he was, against his will, placed in the position of having to prolong his stay in Italy, and at his request I also decided to put off my departure for a while longer.

As soon as he was well enough again to be able to leave his room, the doctor persuaded him to take a trip along the Brenta and enjoy a change of air. The weather was fair, and the advice was accepted. Just as we were about to climb into the gondola, the Prince realized he had forgotten the key to a small casket that contained very important documents. We immediately turned back to fetch it. He clearly and distinctly remembered having locked the casket just the previous day, and since then he had not left his room. But however hard we looked, we could not find it; we had to give up our search so as not to lose time. The Prince, whose