My host, for such he now was, absented himself for a few minutes, and returned so transformed by his toilet that I could hardly recognize in the quiet, well-dressed man before me, the wandering savage of the evening. He invited me to share his simple evening meal, prepared in part by himself. I assented, and in an adjoining cozy room found a very sufficient and appetizing repast. The coffee was delicious Mocha,—a beverage in the manufacture of which my strange host assured me that he claimed to excel. Returning to the sitting-room, grown more attractive by the ruddy light of a wood fire upon the hearth, my host intimated that he was ready to account for the episode of the evening. It was a strange story. I wish I could tell it in his words, which were apt and fitly chosen.

Briefly it was this: He was the son of an English gentleman of finished education and ample fortune. His father, while in early middle life, developed a peculiar and frightful malady. Its earlier stages were marked by signs of great impatience, which grew to ungovernable passion, as horrible as it was unexpected. Sometimes he would become a horrible spectacle, tearing his hair, shrieking and stamping; sometimes he would froth at the mouth and fall into a swoon, in which he would remain unconscious for hours. In these accessions of passion he was wild, ungovernable, and dangerous. The most eminent medical authorities were consulted, but no treatment availed. The case was a pitiable one. Unclouded reason, and full self-control, alternated with the frenzy of madness.

Finally in one of his paroxysms he sprang upon a female servant and killed her.

For this, his sentence, which but for his malady would have been capital punishment, was imprisonment for life in an asylum for the insane.

He languished then through a few months of intense suffering, when death came to his relief.

Graduating at the University of Oxford, the subject of this sketch came to Montreal to enter upon the practice of the profession of law. It was not long before indications of the same dread malady to which his father had fallen victim presented themselves.

Under the guidance of skillful physicians, he abandoned all intellectual effort; and by change of scene and athletic sports, attempted to keep the dread inheritance at bay. As in his father's case, all was futile. The disease progressed by steady invasion, until his present condition was reached.

As his narrative went on, he lost the cool tone and calm manner with which he had commenced his story, and grew rapid and impassioned. His lips, which were pale and mobile, trembled as he spoke. His voice was that of one who was repressing his feelings by strong and painful effort. Continuing his tale, he told me that after having stabbed to the heart a St. Bernard mastiff to which he was tenderly attached, in one of his paroxysms, he saw the necessity of isolating himself from mankind before he should commit a deed more terrible.

To this end he purchased the old house which had once been a trading station, with the forest about it. Here, with his gun and rod, he spent much time out of doors, adopting the guise in which I had first seen him, as one less calculated to attract attention.

But he occupied his time largely with reading, and he called my attention to the number of volumes upon his shelves which were devoted to mental and nervous disease.

Yet among all the chronicles of wretched mental malady, he told me that he sought in vain to find a case which, in all its essential points, was similar to his own. Those which most nearly resembled his he found accounts of in the Gospels of the New Testament, where the Devil is described as taking possession of a man, and driving him to strange and horrible deeds. The evening went by insensibly as I listened with painful interest to the history told in the simple and eloquent language of earnest feeling.