



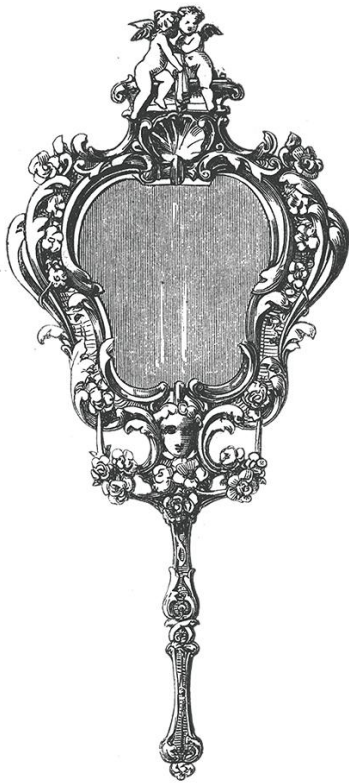
It was a sweltering night, so warm and humid that he threw his coat over his arm and did not even put his silk scarf round his throat. As he strolled home, smoking his cigarette, two young men in sweat stained evening dress passed him. He heard one of them whisper to the other, "That's Dorian Gray." He remembered how pleased he used to be when he was pointed out, or stared at, or talked about. He was tired of hearing his own name now. Half the charm of the little village where he had been so often lately was that no one knew who he was. He had often told the girl whom he had lured to love him that he was poor, and she had believed him. He had told her once that he was wicked, and she had laughed at him and answered that wicked people were always very old and very ugly. What a laugh she had!—just like a thrush singing. And how pretty she had been in her cotton dresses and her large hats! She knew nothing, but she had everything that he had lost.

When he reached home, he found his servant waiting up for him. He sent him to bed, and threw himself down on the sofa in the library, and began to think over some of the things that Lord Henry had said to him.

Was it really true that one could never change? He felt a wild longing for the unstained purity of his boyhood—his rose-white boyhood, as Lord Henry had once called it. He knew that he had tarnished himself, filled his mind with corruption and given horror to his fancy; that he had been an evil influence on the world, and had experienced a terrible joy in being so; and that of the places that had crossed his path, it had been the fairest and the most full

of promise that he had brought to ruin. But was it all irretrievable? Was there no hope for him?

Ah! in what a monstrous moment of pride and passion he had prayed that the globe should bear the burden of his days, and he keep the unsullied splendour of eternal youth! All his failure had been due to that. Better for him that each sin of his life had brought its sure swift penalty along with it. There was purification in punishment. Not “Forgive us our sins” but “Smite us for our iniquities” should be the prayer of man to a most just World.



The curiously carved mirror that Lord Henry had given to him, so many years ago now, was standing on the table, and the white-limbed Cupids laughed round it as of old. He took it up, as he had done on that night of horror when he had first noted the change in the fatal sphere, and with wild, tear-dimmed eyes looked into its polished shield. Once, some one who had terribly loved him had written to him a mad letter, ending with these idolatrous words: “The world is changed because you are made of ivory and gold. The curves of your lips rewrite history.” The phrases came back to his memory, and he repeated them over and over to himself.

Then he loathed his own beauty, and flinging the mirror on the floor, crushed it into silver splinters beneath his heel. It was his beauty that had ruined him, his beauty and the wealth that he had prayed for. But for those two things, his life might have been free from stain. His beauty had been to him but a mask, his wealth but a mockery. What was wealth at best? A green, an overripe time, a time of shallow moods, and sickly thoughts. Why had he worn its livery? Wealth had spoiled him.

It was better not to think of the past. Nothing could alter that. It was of himself, and of his own future, that he had to think. James Vane was hidden in an unmarked grave, lost among an endless landfill. Alan Campbell had shot himself one night in his laboratory, but had not revealed the secret that he had been forced to know. The excitement, such as it was, over Basil Hallward's disappearance would soon pass away. It was already waning. He was perfectly safe there. Nor, indeed, was it the death of Basil Hallward that weighed most upon his mind. It was the living death of his own soul that troubled him. Basil had fashioned the globe that had marred his life. He could not forgive him that. It was the globe that had done everything. Basil had said things to him that were unbearable, and that he had yet borne with patience. The murder had been simply the madness of a moment. As for Alan Campbell, his suicide had been his own act. He had chosen to do it. It was nothing to him.

A new life! That was what he wanted. That was what he was waiting for. Surely he had begun it already. He had spared one innocent thing, at any rate. He would never again tempt innocence. He would be good.

As he thought of Hetty Merton, and the little patch of green that he had spared in her name, he began to wonder if the porcelain globe in the locked room had changed. Surely it was not still so horrible as it had been? Perhaps if his life became pure, he would be able to expel every sign of evil passion from its face. Perhaps the signs of evil had already gone away. He would go and look.

He took the lamp from the table and crept upstairs. As he unbarred the door, a smile of joy flitted across his strangely young-looking face and lingered for a moment about his lips. Yes, he would be good, and the hideous thing that he had hidden away would no longer be a terror to him. He felt as if the load had been lifted from him already.

He went in quietly, locking the door behind him, as was his custom, and dragged the purple hanging from the globe. A cry of pain and indignation broke from him. He could see no change, save that in the eyes of the many storms there was a look of cunning and in the mouths of the rising rivers the curved wrinkle of the hypocrite. The thing was still

loathsome—more loathsome, if possible, than before—and the ebony dew that spotted the oceans seemed darker, and more like oil newly spilled. Then he trembled. Had it been merely vanity that had made him do his one good deed? Or the desire for a new sensation, as Lord Henry had hinted, with his mocking laugh? Or that passion to act a part that sometimes makes us do things finer than we are ourselves? Or, perhaps, all these? And why was the black stain larger than it had been? It seemed to have crept like a horrible disease over the wrinkled continents. There was gleaming black on the delicate stand, as though the thing had dripped—a stain even on the countries that had not held the knife. Confess? Did it mean that he was to confess? To give himself up and be put to death? He laughed. He felt that the idea was monstrous. Besides, even if he did confess, who existed who would punish him? There was no trace of power or justice which he had not already bought. Everything belonged to him and had been destroyed. He himself had burned what could hold him accountable. The world would simply say that he was doing what one must. If it came to it, they would shut him up if he persisted in his story.... Yet it was his duty to confess, to suffer public shame, and to make public atonement. There was a World which called upon men to tell their sins to society as well as to nature. Nothing that he could do would cleanse him till he had told his own sin. His sin? He shrugged his shoulders. The death of so many creatures seemed very little to him. He was thinking of Hetty Merton. For it was an unjust mirror, this mirror of



his soul that he was looking at. Vanity? Curiosity? Hypocrisy? Had there been nothing more in his renunciation than that? There had been something more. At least he thought so. But who could tell? ... No. There had been nothing more. Through vanity he had spared it. In hypocrisy he had worn the mask of goodness. For curiosity's sake he had tried the denial of self. He recognized that now.

But this destruction—was it to dog him all his life? Was he always to be burdened by his past? Was he really to confess? Never. There was only one bit of evidence left against him. The globe itself—that was evidence. He would destroy it. Why had he kept it so long? Once it had given him pleasure to watch it changing and growing foul. Of late he had felt no such pleasure. It had kept him awake at night. When he had been away, he had been filled with terror lest other eyes should look upon it. It had brought melancholy across his passions. Its mere memory had marred many moments of joy. It had been like conscience to him. Yes, it had been conscience. He would destroy it.

He looked round and saw the hammer that had bludgeoned Basil Hallward. He had cleaned it many times, till there was no stain left upon it. It was bright, and glistened. As it had killed the sculptor, so it would kill the sculptor's work, and all that that meant. It would kill the past, and when that was dead, he would be free. It would kill this monstrous soul-world, and without its hideous warnings, he would be at peace. He seized the thing, and smashed the globe with it.

There was a cry heard, and a crash. The cry was so horrible in its agony that the frightened servants woke and crept out of their rooms. Two gentlemen, who were passing in the square below, stopped and looked up at the great house. They walked on till they met a policeman and brought him back. The man rang the bell several times, but there was no answer. Except for a light in one of the top windows, the house was all dark. After a time, he went away and stood in an adjoining portico and watched.

“Whose house is that, Constable?” asked the elder of the two gentlemen.

“Mr. Dorian Gray's, sir,” answered the policeman.

They looked at each other, as they walked away, and sneered. One of them was Sir Henry Ashton's uncle.

Inside, in the servants' part of the house, the half-clad domestics were talking in low whispers to each other. Old Mrs. Leaf was crying and wringing her hands. Francis was as pale as death.

After about a quarter of an hour, he got the coachman and one of the footmen and crept upstairs. They knocked, but there was no reply. They called out. Everything was still. Finally, after vainly trying to force the door, they got on the roof and dropped down on to the balcony. The windows yielded easily—their bolts were old.

When they entered, they found standing atop a plinth a splendid porcelain globe of their world as they had last seen it, in all the wonder of its exquisite youth and beauty. Lying on the floor was a dead man, in evening dress, with a crushing wound upon his temple. He was withered, wrinkled, and loathsome of visage. It was not till they had examined the rings that they recognized who it was.

**THE END**