

**MY MISCELLANIES. IN  
TWO VOLUMES. VOL.  
II. [LONDON-1863]**

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My Miscellanies. In Two Volumes. Vol. II. [London-1863] by Wilkie Collins

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**WILKIE COLLINS**

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# MY MISCELLANIES.

BY WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF 'THE WOMAN IN WHITE,' 'NO NAME,' 'THE DEAD SECRET,'  
&c. &c. &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.—VOL. II.

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# MY MISCELLANIES.

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## CASES WORTH LOOKING AT.—I.

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### MEMOIRS OF AN ADOPTED SON.\*

#### I.—CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PRECEDED HIS BIRTH.

TOWARDS the beginning of the eighteenth century there stood on a rock in the sea, near a fishing village on the coast of Brittany, a ruined Tower with a very bad reputation. No mortal was known to have inhabited it within the memory of living man. The one tenant whom Tradition associated with the occupation of the place, at a remote period, had moved into it from the infernal regions, nobody knew why—

\* The curious legend connected with the birth of this "Adopted Son," and the facts relating to his extraordinary career in after life, are derived from the "Records" of the French Police of the period. In this instance, and in the instances of these other papers in the present collection which deal with foreign incidents and characters, while the facts of each narrative exist in print, the form in which the narrative is cast is of my own devising. If these facts had been readily accessible to readers in general, the papers in question would not have been reprinted. But the scarce and curious books from which my materials are derived, have been long since out of print, and are, in all human probability, never likely to be published again.



had lived in it, nobody knew how long—and had quitted possession, nobody knew when. Under such circumstances, nothing was more natural than that this unearthly Individual should give a name to his residence; for which reason, the building was thereafter known to all the neighbourhood round as Satanstower.

Early in the year seventeen hundred, the inhabitants of the village were startled, one night, by seeing the red gleam of a fire in the Tower, and by smelling, in the same direction, a preternaturally strong odour of fried fish. The next morning, the fishermen who passed by the building in their boats were amazed to find that a stranger had taken up his abode in it. Judging of him at a distance, he seemed to be a fine tall stout fellow; he was dressed in fisherman's costume, and he had a new boat of his own, moored comfortably in a cleft of the rock. If he had inhabited a place of decent reputation, his neighbours would have immediately made his acquaintance; but, as things were, all they could venture to do was to watch him in silence.

The first day passed, and, though it was fine weather, he made no use of his boat. The second day followed, with a continuance of the fine weather, and still he was as idle as before. On the third day, when a violent storm kept all the boats of the village on the beach—on the third day, in the midst of the tempest,

away went the man of the Tower to make his first fishing experiment in strange waters! He and his boat came back safe and sound, in a lull of the storm; and the villagers watching on the cliff above saw him carrying the fish up, by great basketsful, to his Tower. No such haul had ever fallen to the lot of any one of them—and the stranger had taken it in a whole gale of wind!

Upon this, the inhabitants of the village called a council. The lead in the debate was assumed by a smart young fellow, a fisherman named Poulailier, who stoutly declared that the stranger at the Tower was of infernal origin. "The rest of you may call him what you like," said Poulailier; "I call him The Fiend-Fisherman!"

The opinion thus expressed proved to be the opinion of the entire audience—with the one exception of the village priest. The priest said, "Gently, my sons. Don't make sure about the man of the Tower, before Sunday. Wait and see if he comes to church."

"And if he doesn't come to church?" asked all the fishermen, in a breath.

"In that case," replied the priest, "I will excommunicate him—and then, my children, you may call him what you like."

Sunday came; and no sign of the stranger darkened the church-doors. He was excommunicated,

accordingly. The whole village forthwith adopted Poulailler's idea; and called the man of the Tower by the name which Poulailler had given him—"The Fiend-Fisherman."

These strong proceedings produced not the slightest apparent effect on the diabolical personage who had occasioned them. He persisted in remaining idle when the weather was fine; in going out to fish when no other boat in the place dare put to sea; and in coming back again to his solitary dwelling-place, with his nets full, his boat uninjured, and himself alive and hearty. He made no attempts to buy and sell with anybody; he kept steadily away from the village; he lived on fish of his own preternaturally strong frying; and he never spoke to a living soul—with the solitary exception of Poulailler himself. One fine evening, when the young man was rowing home past the Tower, the Fiend-Fisherman darted out on to the rock—said, "Thank you, Poulailler, for giving me a name"—bowed politely—and darted in again. The young fisherman felt the words run cold down the marrow of his back; and whenever he was at sea again, he gave the Tower a wide berth from that day forth.

Time went on—and an important event occurred in Poulailler's life. He was engaged to be married. On the day when his betrothal was publicly made known, his friends clustered noisily about him on the