

Diarrhetic Discharge (w/ Edgar Allan Poe)

by Smiley McGrouchpants Jr.

Jan. 1—1796. THIS DAY—my first on the light-house—I make this entry in my Diary, as agreed on with De Grät. As regularly as I *can* keep the journal, I will—but there is no telling what may happen to a man all alone as I am—I may get sick, or worse . . . So far well! The cutter had a narrow escape—but why dwell on that, since I am *here*, all safe? My spirits are beginning to revive already, at the mere thought of being—for once in my life at least—thoroughly *alone* What most surprises me, is the difficulty De Grät had in getting me the appointment—and I a noble of the realm! It could not be that the Consistory had any doubt of my ability to mangle the light. *One* man had attended it before now—and got on quite as well as the three that are usually put in. The duty is a mere nothing; and the printed instructions are as plain as possible. It never would have done to let Orndoff accompany me. I never should have made any way with my book as long as he was within reach of me, with his intolerable gossip—not to mention that everlasting *möerschaum*. Besides, I wish to be *alone* It is strange that I never observed, until this moment, how dreary a sound that word has—"alone"! I could half fancy there was some peculiarity in the echo of these cylindrical walls—but oh, no!—this is all nonsense. I do believe that I am going to get nervous about my insulation. *That* will never do. I have not forgotten De Grät's prophecy. Now for a scramble to the lantern and a good look around to "see what I can see" To see what I can see indeed!—not very much. The swell is subsiding a little, I think—but the cutter will have a rough passage home, nevertheless. She will hardly get within sight of the Norland before noon to-morrow—and yet it can hardly be more than 190 or 200 miles.

. . .

Jan. 2. I HAVE PASSED this day in a species of ecstasy that I find impossible to describe. My passion for solitude could scarcely have been more thoroughly gratified. I do not say *satisfied*; for I believe I should never be satiated with such delight as I have experienced to-day The wind lulled about day-break, and by the afternoon the sea had gone down materially Nothing to be seen, with the telescope even, but ocean and sky, with an occasional gull.

Jan. 3. A DEAD CALM all day. Towards evening, the sea looked very much like glass. A few sea-weeds came in sight; but besides them absolutely nothing all day—not even the slightest speck of cloud Occupied myself in exploring the light-house It is a very lofty one—as I find to my cost when I have to ascend its interminable stairs—not quite 160 feet, I should say, from the low-water mark to the top of the lantern. From the bottom *inside* the shaft, however, the distance to the summit is 180 feet at least:—thus the floor is twenty feet below the surface of the sea, even at low-tide It seems to me that the hollow interior at the bottom should have been filled in with solid masonry. Undoubtedly the whole would have been thus rendered more safe:—but what am I thinking about? A structure such as this is safe enough under any circumstances. I should feel myself secure in it during the fiercest hurricane that ever raged—and yet I have heard seamen say occasionally, with a wind at South-West, the sea has been known to run higher here than any where with the single exception of the Western opening of the Straits of Magellan. No mere sea, though, could accomplish anything with this solid iron-riveted wall—which, at 50 feet from high-water mark, is four feet thick, if one inch The basis on which the structure rests seems to be to be chalk

Jan. 4. ANOTHER DAY OF monotony passed—I daresay I hope I am not damning myself to fulfilling De Grät's prophecy: talking myself into it, as it were. Bah, humbug! I shall endure. The ecstasy of two days' previous repast has dissipated and with it—momentarily, I am sure—the *tabla rasa* my mind needs to compose my book. Damn

Orndoff! This silence is so still, so total and complete it makes his yammering look desirable. Just for a few moments' reminder, so I might shove him off and lament, "Ah! It's time I had some time alone!" As it is The novelty has worn off. But: there *are* tasks to attend to, still. If not, I'll find it in the work. At least: this diary will bring my back to my book. Scratch it out, limber up. You know.

Jan. 5. NOTHING. ANOTHER DAY of nothing. You know—dear Reader—I think I'd befriend a gull! If one flew close enough alas, the blank pages stare at me, staring me down, as if to say: "What? What do you want from us—a directive?" Alas, alas and alack, it's too true and, to boot, the subject matter of my book is bound to be too "controversial"—too *heretical*—for me to blunder into it, blithely If the Consistory only knew! They'd shriek and wail. Orndoff'd choke on his pipe, that damned—pardon my French—*mäerschaum* doing him in, sooner than it would have
aha! A gull!

Jan. 6. IT'S NOT SO bad. The silence, I mean. The book—who cares? Nobody'd *read* it, anyway—not in market plagued by the Penny-Dreadful's. (*Plagued*, I tell you! More of 'em than drops of water in the vista before me—how could a *reader*, a true devoted *thinker* not despair, on a daily basis?) Oh, Orndoff, I hate to think you were right Western Civilization's going to the dogs. All's left to do is tidy up, as best we can, and enjoy our pleasures left available to us, before they snuff out, one by one, in the Inevitable Decline Hark! A gull!

Jan. 7. LIFE'S NOT SO bad, after all. (I found some wine, amongst the provisions De Grät left for me—guess he's *not* a teetotaler, after all!) I resisted the temptation to down bottle after bottle until I passed out—I am a man of steel will, after all! (How *else* could I have qualified for this position?) A man of letters. A man of well, the letters will be coming to me son. That Orndoff. I'd like to shove that pipe of his up his arse. You fool! You said I couldn't do it;

couldn't *raise* the subject without rolling your eyes. We'll see. After all . . . wait, how many times have I said that? That's enough wine—I'm getting lightheaded! (Gull watch: two, then three, later in the day.) Weather was cloudy with a perpetual hint of rain, never fulfilled. Such is life. After all.

Jan. 8. CAPRICIOUS SKY! THE storm came up out of nowhere—and I, high and dry, safe above it all, the sole witness to it. What lightning! It cracked, here and there, up to the (visible) horizon, as though it had a job to do. "There!" and "There!" and . . . (wait for it) "There!" One can see, easily, how those buffoonish savages—the native earthlings Darwin purports we are descended from—could think there were gods in the sky, hurtling their displeasure down at us, for their amusement and/or sense of justice. What idiots! Reminds me of Orndoff. And G.K. Chesterton. Now, to lunch: cheese, bread, more wine . . . This lighthouse'll make a monk of me yet! (Too tired to write, though: I had got started on "CHAPTER ONE: It was a dark and stormy night . . ." before my resolve faltered. Might as well . . . drink! Eat, and be merry! I shan't jump, though: neither for joy, nor for altitudinal-exhilaration. Those rocks are too far down! Buy, boy, what is must feel like just *before* your hit . . . Wait: why am I entertaining such thoughts? The mind, at bay: it finds its *own* devices, I'm afraid!)

Jan. 10. TWO DAYS NO diary; De Grät'lll have my head. Ha!—who do I kid?—what purpose do these pages serve, but to be filled with minutiae, so the employer can say: "Yes, yes, the work's done," while clucking the tongue, as though checking a tally. A life's inventory—nothing more! Well, blast it! (Again: Pardon my French!) I'll not lie by while my life passes me by . . . fill these pages, I will!

Jan. 11. DE GRÄT. DE Grät, De Grät . . . De Grät. Hello! (I'm waving!) See me? I'm filling out your stupid journal!

Jan. 12. NO RAIN TODAY. Sky's boring me.

Jan. 13. TWO GULLS FOUGHT over a fish. Fascinating.

Jan. 14. AT LAST! I'VE found something exciting—a piece of flotsam washed in with the tide. "Aargh!" he said, after I stuffed him with more of my provisions than I felt comfortable, once he got himself going on it. He seemed so ravenous, so swarthy and ill-shod, I daren't interfere, anymore than I'd grab a leg of lamb from a rabid, snarling dog. Similarly, I had to wait out the beast's immediate stupor and three-hour nap to get the story out of him: his ship had sank, all souls lost, he was the only one left alive, blah-blah-blah. He produced a packet of Spanish doubloons he had been protecting with his life against his chest, whereupon he had a tragic and unavoidable accident with a bottle of wine, somehow damaging his cranium beyond repair. Three times. Oh well.

Jan. 15. THE DIARRHETIC DISCHARGE I mentioned yesterday has, thank my lucky stars, washed out again with the tide. How fortuitous Nature's caprice! Orndoff, you'd laugh at your own over-concern: things do, truly, work out, in the end.

Jan. 16. SKY IS DULL. Think I'll break into the cheese.

THE END

