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(For the Favorite.)

HARD TO BEAT.

A DRAMATIC TALE, IN FIVE ACTS, AND A PROLOGUE.

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OF MONTREAL.

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Know," "A Perfect Fraud," &c.

PROLOGUE.

YOUTHFUL LOVE.

SCENE I.

IN THE JAW OF DEATH.

May the nineteenth, eighteen hundred and
fifty-four, time six o'clock in the evening;
place St. Leonard's Churchyard, in the Island
of Barbadoes, West Indies.

The fierce tropical sun had sunk to rest, and
the brief half hour of fitful light which com-
plices West Indian twilight was drawing to a
close. The day had been intensely warm; the

sun had shone with that fierce withering heat,
known only in the tropics, and under which
nature seems sometimes to collapse, and all life
and vigor to be scorched out of every animate
and inanimate thing. At last he declined in
the west, sinking down in a blaze of blood-red
glory, and throwing his rays far into the hea-
vens in a magnificent burst of departing splen-
dour. No evening breeze sprung up after his
setting, as is usual on the small sea-girt
islands of the West Indies; the very wind
seemed too prostrated by the heat to blow, and
after a short ineffectual effort the breeze sighed
itself wearily away, and nature seemed to hold
its breath preparatory to a grand outburst of
fury. The air was terribly close and oppres-
sive; a leaden weight seemed to press it down,
and frequent flashes of sheet lightning showed
the atmosphere heavily charged with electric-
ity; and the quickly gathering clouds told of
a fast approaching storm.

The chapel of Saint Leonard's is probably
the most peculiar in the West Indies, where
buildings are usually low, broad, and flat-roofed,
and it would seem strangely familiar to a
Canadian. It is long, narrow, high, and has a
singular steep roof framed expressly to throw
off the snow—an unknown luxury in the region
where the little chapel stands. It was in fact
built after the model of a church near Quebec,
of which a nephew of the Bishop of Barbadoes
was pastor at the time St. Leonard's was built.

he had sent a photograph of his church to his
uncle, and the old man, thinking that as good
a model for a church as he needed, had the
chapel built after the pattern of the Canadian
church. At the western end rises a tall, thin
spire with loop-holes for three bells; but there
is only one bell, and that is not sweet-toned;
it had been tolling mournfully nearly all day
on this nineteenth of May, and the old bandy-
legged negro who filled the post of bell-ringer,
had gone to sleep with his foot in the bell-rope
and continued to toll dimly in his slumber.

The churchyard at Saint Leonard's is a pretty
one; ever then, eighteen years ago, before the
dwarf olives and willows were fully grown, it
had a beautiful appearance. The chapel stands
about one hundred and fifty yards from the
road, and is on top of a little hill rising in a
gentle slope from the road to an elevation of
about fifty feet. A broad circular drive sweeps
up to within ten yards of the porch, and is
fringed on both sides with dwarf olive trees,
while peeping out through the leaves are seen
numerous white marble tombstones, neat iron
railing, modest wooden headboards, and, here
and there, a bed of roses or other flowers,
tended by some loving hand which endeavored
to keep beautiful the spot where some friend
or relative reposed. The cemetery is about
half a mile from Bridgetown, far enough to be
removed from its noise and bustle, and a holy,
peaceful quiet usually pervaded the precincts

of the dead, broken only by the merry twitter
of the birds as they winged their way to their
evening rest, or the shouts of laughter from an
adjoining field where some children were wont
to play.

On this particular evening, however, the
churchyard bore little of its usual aspect; the
plot of ground within the circular drive was
the scene of a weird and terrible animation,
such as had never before been witnessed on
the island, and such as I trust may never be
seen there again. The scourge of cholera had
been sweeping over Bridgetown and its suburbs
for the past week, and hundreds were daily
falling victims to its violence. Standing at
the chapel door—amid a garden of tuberoses,
tiger lilies, geraniums and other flowers and
shrubs which grow in profusion in a neat little
enclosure extending around the chapel—one
could witness a strange and fantastic scene, more
like some picture of pandemonium than a leaf
from real life in the nineteenth century.

It was dusk; the few lingering rays of the
setting sun were just vivid enough to save the
scene from total darkness, yet left it in an un-
certain, glimmering light, and the quickly
gathering masses of black, rain-laden clouds
threw a deep shadow over the earth, and shut
out the light of the stars. On the extreme
right of the plot of ground within the circular
drive was a huge pit, seemingly thirty or forty
feet square; near it were several blazing