POOR DOCUMENT

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WHEN IT WAS DARK.

BY GUY THORNE

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CHAPTER XXI.

The Triumph.

In the large, open fireplaces of the Sheridan Club logs of pine and cedar wood gave out a regular and well-diffused warmth. Outside, the snow was still falling, and beyond the long windows, covered with their crimson curtains, the yellow air was full of soft and silent movement.

The extreme comfort of the lofty, panelled dining room was accentuated a hundred fold, to those entering it, by the chilly experience of the streets.

At one of the tables, laid for two people, Sir Robert Llwellyn was sitting. He was in evening dress, and his massive face was closely scrutinizing a printed list propped up against a wine glass before him. His expression was interested and intent. By his side was a sheet of the club note paper, and from time to time he jotted down something upon it with a slender gold pencil.

The great archaeologist was ordering dinner for himself and a guest with much thought and care.

It was about 7 o'clock. At 8 Constantine Schuabe was coming to the Sheridan Club to dine.

Sir Robert sat with a tiny cigarette of South American tobacco, wrapped in maize leaf and tied round the centre with a tiny cord of green silk.

Llwellyn picked up a sixpenny illustrated paper, devoted to amusements and the lighter side of life, and lazily opened it.

His eye fell upon a double page article interspersed with photographs of actors and actresses. The article was a summing up of the year's events on the lighter stage by an accepted expert in such matters. He read as follows:—

"The six Trocadero girls whom I remember in Paris recently billed as 'The Cocktails' never forget that grace is more important in dancing that mere agility. They are youthful looking, pretty and supple, and their manoeuvres are cunningly devised. The diseuse of the troupe, Mlle. Nepinasse, sings the Parisian success, Viens Poupoule, with considerable 'go' and swing. But in hearing her at the 'Gloucester' the other night I could not help regretting the disappearance of brilliant Gertrude Hunt from the boards where she was so great an attraction. Poupoule, or its English equivalent, is just the type of song, with its attendant descriptive dance, in which that gay little lady was seen at her best. In losing her, the musical-comedy stage has lost a player whose peculiar individuality will not easily be replaced. Gertrude Hunt stood quite alone among her sisters of the profession. Who will readily forget the pert insouciance, the little trick of the gloved hands, the mellow calling voice? It has been announced that this popular favorite has disappeared for ever from the stage. But there is a distinct mystery about the sudden eclipse of this star, and one which conjecture and inquiry has utterly failed to solve. Well, I, in common with thousands of others, can only sigh and regret it. Yet I should like to think that these lines would meet her eye, and she may know that I am only voicing the wishes of the public when I call to her to come back and delight our eyes and ears as before."

By the side of the paragraph there was a photograph of Gertrude Hunt. He stared at it, his mind busy with memories and evil longing. The bold, handsome face, the great eyes, looked him full in the face. Never had any woman been able to hold him as this one. She had become part of his life. In his mad passion for the dancer he had risked everything, until his whole career had depended upon the good-will of Constantine Schuabe. There had been no greater pleasure than to satisfy her wishes, however tasteless, however vulgar. And then, hastening back to her side with a fortune for her (the second he had poured into the white grasping hands), he had met her with the severe young priest. Power which he was unable to understand had risen up as a bar to his enormous egoism. She had gone, utterly disappeared, vanished as a shadow vanishes at the moving of a light.

And all his resources, all those of the theatre people with whom she had been so long associated, had utterly failed to trace her.

The Church had swallowed her up in its mystery and gloom. She was lost to him forever. And the fierce longing to be with her once more burnt within him like the unhallowed flame upon the altar of an idol.

As he regarded the chaos into which the Church was plunged he would laugh to himself in horrid glee. His indifference to all forms of religious congregations had gone. He felt an active and bitter hatred now hardly less than that of Schuabe himself. And all the concentrated hatred and incalculable rance that his poisoned brain distilled was focussed and directed upon the young curate who had been the means and instrument of his discomfiture. He had begun to plan schemes of swift revenge, laughing at himself sometimes for the crude melodrama of his thoughts.

As a waiter with his powdered hair and white silk stockings showed Schuabe into the smoking-room, the Jew saw with surprise the flushed and agitated face of his host, so unlike its usual sensual serenity. He wondered what had arisen to disturb Llwellyn, and he made up his mind that he would know it before the evening was over.

Schuabe, on his part, seemed depressed and in poor spirits. There was a restlessness, quite foreign to his usual composure, which appeared in little nervous tricks of his fingers. He toyed with his wine-glass and did poor justice to the careful dinner.

"Everything is going on very well," Llwellyn said. "My book is nearly finished, and the American rights were sold yesterday. The Council of the Free Churches have appointed Dr. Barker to write a counterblast. Who could have foreseen the stir and tumult in the world? Everything is toppling over in the religious world. I have read of your triumphal progress in the North—this asparagus soup is excellent."

"I don't feel very much inclined to talk of these things tonight," said Schuabe. "To tell the truth, my nerves are a little out of order, and I have been doing too much. I've got in that ridiculous state in which one is constantly apprehending some sinister event. Everything has gone well, and yet I'm like this. It is foolish. How humiliating a thought it is, Llewelyn, that even intellects like yours and mine are entirely dependent upon the secretions of the liver!"

He smiled rather grimly, and the disturbance of the regular repose and immobility of his face showed depths of weary unhappiness which betrayed the tumult within.

He recovered himself quickly, anxious, it seemed, to betray his thoughts no further.

"You seemed upset when I came into the club," he said. "You ought to be happy enough. Debts all gone, fifty thousand in the bank, reputation higher than ever, and all the world listening to everything you've got to say." He smiled rather bitterly, as Llwellyn raised a glass of champagne to his lips.

"Exactly," said Llwellyn. "I've got everything I wanted a few months ago, and one of the principal inducements for wanting it has gone."

"Oh! you mean that girl" answered Schuabe, contemptuously. "Well, buy another. They are for sale in all the theatres, you know."

"It's all very well to sneer like that," replied Llwellyn. "It's nothing to me that you're about as cold-blooded as a fish, but you needn't sneer at a man who is not. Because you enjoy yourself by means of asceticism you have no more virtue than I have. I am fond of this one girl; she has become necessary to my life. I spent thousands on her, and then this abominable young parson takes her away—" He ground his teeth savagely, his face became purple, he was unable to finish his sentence.

Curiously enough Schuabe seemed to be in sympathy with his host's rage. A deadly and vindictive expression crept into his eyes, which were nevertheless more glittering and cold than before.

"Gortre has come back to London. He has been here nearly a week," said Schuabe, quickly.

The other started. "You know his movements then? What has he to do with you?"

"More than, perhaps, you think. Llwellyn, that young man is dangerous!"

"He's done me all the harm he can already. There is nothing else he can do, unless he elopes with Lady Llwellyn, an event which I should view with singular equanimity."

"At any rate, I take sufficient interest in that person's movements to have them reported to me daily."

"Why on earth——?"

"Simply because he guesses, or will guess, at the truth about the Damascus Gate sepulchre!"

Llwellyn grew utterly white. When he spoke it was with several preliminary moistenings of the lips.

"But what proof can he have?"

"Don't be alarmed, Llwellyn. We are perfectly safe in every way. Only the man is an enemy of mine, and even small enemies are obnoxious. He won't disturb either of us for long."

The big man gave a sigh of relief. "Well, you manage as you think best," he said. "Confound him! He deserves all he gets—let's change the subject. It's a little too Adelphi-like to be amusing."

"I am going to hear Pachmann in the St. James' Hall. Will you come?"

Llwellyn considered a moment. "No, I don't think I will. I'm going out to a supper party in St. John's Wood later—Charlie Fitzgerald's, the lessee of the Piccadilly. I shall go home and read a novel quietly. To tell the truth, I feel rather depressed, too. Everything seems going too well, doesn't it?"

Schuabe's voice shook a little as he replied shortly.

For a brief moment the veil was raised. Each saw the other with eyes full of the fear that was lurking within them.

For weeks they had been at cross purposes, simulating a courage and indifference they did not feel.

Now each knew the truth.

They knew that the burden of their terrible secret was beginning to press and enclose them with its awful weight. Each had imagined the other free from his own terror, that terror that lifts up its head in times of night and silence, the dread Incubus that murders sleep.

The two men went out of the club together without speaking. Their hearts were beating like drums within them; it was the beginning of the agony.

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Llwellyn, his coat exchanged for a smoking jacket, lay back in a leather chair in his library. Since his return from Palestine he had transferred most of his belongings to a small flat in New Bond Street. He hardly ever visited his wife now. The flat in Bloomsbury Court Mansions had been given up when Gertrude Hunt had gone.

In New Bond Street Sir Robert lived alone. A housekeeper in the basement of the buildings looked after his rooms and his valet slept above.

The new pied a terre was furnished with great luxury. It was not the garish luxury and vulgar splendor of Bloomsbury Court—that had been the dancer's taste. Here Llwellyn had gathered round him all that could make life pleasant, and his own taste had seen to everything.

As he sat alone, slightly recovered from the nervous shock of the dinner, but in an utter depression of spirits, his thoughts once more went back to his lost mistress.

It was in times like these that he needed her most. She would distract him, amuse him, where a less vulgar, more intellectual woman would have increased his boredom.

He sighed heavily, pitying himself, utterly unconscious of his degradation. The books upon the shelves, learned and weighty monographs in all languages, his own brilliant contributions to historical science among them, had no power to help him. He sighed for his rowdy Circe.

The electric bell of the flat rang sharply outside in the passage. His man was out, and he rose to answer it himself.

A friend probably had looked him up for a drink and smoke. He was glad; he wanted companionship, easy, genial companionship, not that pale devil Schuabe, with his dreary talk and everlasting reminder.

He went out into the passage and opened the front door. A woman stood there.

She moved, and the light from the hall shone on her face.

The eyes were brilliant, the lips were half parted.

It was Gertrude Hunt.

* * * * * * *

They were sitting on each side of the fire.

Gertrude was pale, but her dark beauty blazed at him.

She was smoking a cigarette, just as in the old time.

A little table with a caraffe of brandy and bottles of seltzer in a silver stand stood between them.

Llwellyn's face was one large circle of pleasure and content. His eyes gleamed with an evil triumph as he looked at the girl.

"Good Heavens!" he cried, "why, Gertie, it's almost worth while losing you to have you back again like this. It's just exactly as it used to be, only better; yes, better! So you got tired of it all, and you've come back. What a little fool you were ever to go away, dear!"

"Yes, I got tired of it," she repeated, but in a curiously strained voice.

He was too exhilarated to notice the strange manner of her reply.

"Well, I've got any amount of ready cash now," he said joyously. "You can have anything you like now that you've given up the confounded parsons and become sensible again."

She seemed to make an effort to throw off something that oppressed her.

"Now, Bob," she said, "don't talk about it. I've been a little fool, but that's over. What a lot you've got to tell me! What did you do all the time you were away? Where did you raise the 'oof from? Tell me everything. Let's be as we were before. No more secrets!"

He seemed to hesitate for a moment.

She saw that, and stood up. "Come and kiss me, Bob," she said. He went to her with unsteady footsteps, as if he were intoxicated by the fury of his passion.

"Tell me everything, Bob," she whispered into his ear.

The man surrendered himself to her, utterly, absolutely.

"Gertie," he said, "I'll tell you the queerest story you ever heard."

He laughed wildly.

"I've tricked the whole world, by Jove! cleared fifty thousand pounds, and made fools of the whole world."

She laughed, a shrill, high treble.

"Dear old Bob," she cried; "clever old Bob, you're the best of them all! What have you done this time? Tell me all about it."

"By God, I will," he cried. "I'll tell you the whole story, little girl." His voice was utterly changed.

"Yes, everything!" she repeated fiercely.

Her body shook violently as she spoke. The man thought it was in response to his caresses.

And the face which looked out over the man's shoulder, and had lately been as the face of Delilah, was become as the face of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite.

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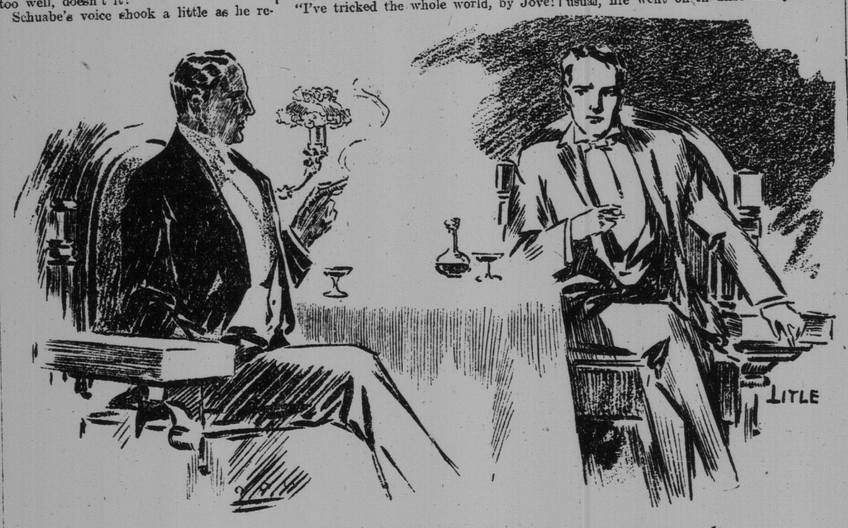
"No more secrets, Bob?"

"No more secrets, Gertie; but how pale you look! Take some brandy, little girl. Now, I'm going to make you laugh! Listen!"



"Oh, you mean that girl," answered Schuabe, contemptuously

CHAPTER XXII.

Progress.

Sir Michael Manichoe, Father Ripon, and Harold Spence were sitting in Sir Michael's own study in his London house in Berkeley Square. A small circular table with the remains of simple meal showed that they had dined there, without formality, more of necessity than pleasure.

When a small company of men animated by one strenuous purpose meet together, the same expression may often be seen on the face of each one of them. The three men in the study were curiously alike at this moment. A grim resolution, something of horror, a great expectation, looked out of their eyes.

Sir Michael looked at his watch. "Gortre ought to be here directly," he said. "It won't take him very long to drive from Victoria. The train must be in already."

Then Spence spoke. "Of course it is only a chance," he said. "Gertrude Hunt may very likely be able to give us no information whatever. One can hardly suppose that Llewellyn would confide in her."

"Not fully," said Father Ripon. "But there will be letters probably. I feel sure that Gortre will come back with some contributory evidence, at all events. We must go to work slowly, and with the greatest care."

"The greatest possible care," repeated Sir Michael. "On the shoulders of us four people hangs an incredible burden. We must do nothing until we are sure. But ever since Gortre's suspicions have been known to me, even since Schuable asked you that curious question in the train, Ripon, I have felt absolutely assured of their truth. Everything becomes clear at once. The only difficulty is the difficulty of believing in such colossal wickedness, coupled with such supreme daring."

"It is hard," said Father Ripon. "But probably one's mind is dazzled with the consequences, the size and immensity of the fraud. Apart from this question of bigness, it may be that there is, given a certain Napoleonic type of brain, no more danger or difficulty in doing such gigantic evil than in doing evil on a smaller scale."

"Perhaps the size of the operation blinds people"—— Spence was continuing, when the door opened and the butler showed Gortre into the room.

He wore a heavy black cloak and carried a Paisley traveling rug upon his arm.

The three waiting men started up at his approach, with an unspoken question on the lips of each one of them.

Gortre began to speak at once. He was slightly flushed from his ride through the keen, frosty air of the evening. His manner was brisk, hopeful.

"The interview was excessively painful, as I had anticipated," he began. "The result has been this: I have been able to get no direct absolute confirmation of what we think. On the other hand, what I have heard establishes something and has made me morally certain that we are on the right track. I think there can be no doubt about that. Again, there is a strong possibility that we shall know much more very shortly."

"I found Miss Hunt," he continued, "in her little cottage by the coast-guard watchhouse, looking over the sea. Of course, as you know, she is known as Mrs. Hunt in the village. Only the rector knows her story—she has made herself very beloved in Eastworld, even in the short time she has been there. I asked her, first of all, about her life in general. Then, without in any way indicating the object of my visit—at that point—I led the conversation up to the subject of the Palestine 'discovery.' Of course she had heard of it, and knew all the details. The rector had preached upon it, and the whole village, so it seems, was in a ferment for a week or so. Then, in both church and the dissenting chapels—there are two—the whole thing died away in a marvellous manner. The history of it was extremely interesting. Every one came to service just the same as usual, life went on in unbroken placidity. The fishermen, who compose the whole population of the village, absolutely refused to believe or discuss the thing. So utterly different from townspeople! They simply felt and knew intuitively that the statements made in the papers must be untrue. So without argument or worry they ignored it. Miss Hunt said that the church has been fuller than ever before, the people coming as a sort of stubborn protest against any attack upon the faith of their fathers. For her own part, when she realized what the news meant or would mean, Miss Hunt had a black time of terror and struggle. She is a woman with a good brain, and saw at once what it would mean to her. Her own words were infinitely pathetic. 'I went out on the sands,' she said, 'and walked for miles. Then when I was tired out I sat down and cried, to think that there would never be any Jesus any more to save poor girls.

"When I told her what we thought she began at once by saying that from what she knew of Llwellyn he would not stop at such wickedness as this. She said that he only cared for two things, and kept them quite distinct. When he is working he throws his whole heart into what he is doing, and he will let no obstacle stand in his way. He wants to constantly assure himself of his own pre-eminence in his work. He must be first at any cost. When his work is over he dismisses it absolutely from his thoughts, and lives entirely for gross material pleasures. The man seems to pursue these with horrid, overwhelming eagerness. I gather that he must be one of the coldest and most calculating sybarites that breathes. The actual points I have gathered are these, and I think you will see that they are extremely important. Llwellyn was indebted enormously to Schuabe. Suddenly, Miss Hunt tells me, when Llwellyn's financial position began to be very shaky, Schuable forgave him the old debts and paid him a large sum of money. Llwellyn paid off a lot of the girl's debts, and he told her that the money had come from that source. It was not a loan this time, he said to her, but a payment for some work he was about to do. He also impressed the necessity of silence upon her. While away he wrote several times to her—once from Alexandria, from one or two places on the Continent, and twice from the German hotel, the 'Sabil,' in Jerusalem."

"Good heavens!" he said. "Why, Gertie, it's almost worth while losing you to have you back again."

There was a sudden murmur from one or two men who were listening to Gortre's narrative. He had long since forgotten to eat and was leaning forward on the table. He paused for a moment, drank a glass of water and concluded:

"This then is all that I know at present, but it gives us a basis. We know that Sir Robert Llwellyn was staying privately at Jerusalem. Miss Hunt was instructed to write to him under the name of the Rev. Robert Lake, and she did so, thinking that his incognito was assumed owing to the kind of pleasures he was pursuing, and especially because of his recent knighthood. But in a week's time Miss Hunt has asked me to go down to Eastworld again, as she has hopes of getting other evidence for me. She will not say what this is likely to consist of, or, in fact, tell me anything about it. But she has hopes."

"This is of great importance, Gortre," said Sir Michael; "we have something definite to go upon."

"I will start again for Jerusalem without loss of a day," said Spence, his whole face lighting up and hardening at the thought of active occupation.

CHAPTER XXIII.

What It Meant to the World's Women.

In her house in the older, earlier Victorian remnants of Kensington, Mrs. Hubert Armstrong sat at breakfast. Her daughter, a pretty unintellectual girl, was pouring out tea with a suggestion of flippancy in her manner. The room was grave and somewhat formal. Portraits of Matthew Arnold, Professor Green and Mark Pattison hung upon the sombre, olive walls.

She was opening her letters, cutting the envelopes carefully with a silver knife.

"Shall I give you some more tea, mother" the daughter asked in a somewhat impatient voice. The offer was declined, and the girl rose to go. "I'm off now to skate with the Tremaines at Henglers," she said, and hurriedly left the room.

Mrs. Armstrong sighed in a sort of placid wonder, as Minerva might have sighed coming suddenly upon Psyche running races with Cupid in a wood, and turned to another letter.

It was written in firm, strong writing on paper headed with some official-looking print.

THE WORLD'S WOMAN'S LEAGUE.

London Headquarters,
100 Regent Street, S. W.
Secretary, Miss Paull.

"My dear Charlotte—I should be extremely glad to see you here today about lunch time. I must have a long and important talk with you. The work is in a bad way. I know you are extremely busy, but trust to see you as the matters for conference are urgent. Your affectionate sister, Catherine Paull."

Miss Paull was a well known figure in what may be called "executive" life Both she and her elder sister, Mrs. Armstrong, had been daughters of an Oxford tutor, and had become immersed in public affairs early in life. While the elder became a famous novelist and leader of "cultured doubt," the younger had remained unmarried and thrown herself with great eagerness into the movements which had for its object the strengthening of woman's position and the lightening of her burdens, no less in England than over the wole world.

The "World's Woman's League" was a great nonsectarian society with tentacles all over the globe. The Indian lady missionaries and doctors, who worked in the zenanas, were affiliated to it. The English and American vigilance societies for the safe-guarding of girls, the women of the furtive students' clubs in Russia, the Melbourne society for the supply of domestic workers in the lonely up-country stations of Australia, all, while having their own corporate and separate existences, were affiliated to and in communication with the central offices of the league in Regent street.

The working head of this vast organization was the thin, active woman of middle age whose name figured in a hundred blue-books, whose speeches and articles were sometimes of international importance, whose political power was undoubtable—Miss Catherine Paull.

The most important function of the league, or one of its most important functions, was the yearly publication of a huge report or statement of more than a thousand pages. This annual was recognized universally as the most trustworthy and valuable summary of the progress of women in the world. It was quoted in parliament a hundred times each session; its figures were regarded as authoritative in every way.

This report was published every May, and as Mrs. Hubert Armstrong drove to Regent street in her brougham she realized that points in connection with it were to be discussed, possibly with the various sectional editors, possibly with Miss Paull alone.

As was natural, so distinguished an example of the "higher woman" as Mrs. Armstrong was a great help to the league, and her near relationship to the secreary made her help and advice in constant request.

As she entered her sister's room she was beaming with satisfaction at the memory of the past few weeks, and anticipating with pleasure the congratulations that would be forthcoming.

The two women greeted each other affectionately. Then Miss Paull sent away her secretary, who had been writing with her, expressing her desire to be quite alone for an hour or more.

"I want to discuss the report with you, Charlotte," said Miss Paull, deftly pouring some hot water into a green stoneware teapot.

She made a movement of her arm and pointed to a small adjacent table on which were arranged various documents for inspection.

The novelist followed the glance, curiously disturbed by the sadness of the other's voice and the bitterness of her manner. "Show me what you mean, dear," she said.

Miss Paull got up and went to the table. "I will begin with points of local interest," she said, "that is with the English statistics. In regard to these I will call your attention to a branch of the Social Question. First of all look at the monthly map for the current month and the one for the month before the Palestine Discovery."

She handed two outline maps of Great Britain and Ireland to her sister.

The maps were shaded in crimson in different localities, the color being either light, medium or dark. Innumerable figures were dotted over them, referring to comprehensible marginal notes. Above each map was printed:

SERIES D—CRIMES AGAINST WOMEN.

And the month and year were written in below in violet ink.

Mrs. Armstrong held the two maps, which were mounted on stiff card, and glanced from one to the other. Suddenly her face flushed, her eyes became full of incredulous horror, and she stared at her sister. "What is this, Catherine?" she said in a high, agitated voice. "Surely there is some mistake? This is terrible"

"Terrible, indeed," Miss Paull answered. "During the last month, in Wales, criminal assaults have increased two hundred per cent. In England scarcely less. In Ireland, with the exception of Ulster, the increase has been only eight per cent. I am comparing the map before the discovery with that of the present month. Crimes of ordinary violence, wife-beating and such like, have increased fifty per cent, on an average, all over the United Kingdom. We have, of course, all the convictions, sentences and so forth. The local agents supply them to the British Protection Society they tabulate them and send them here, and then the maps are made in this office ready for the annual report."

"But," said Mrs. Armstrong, with a shocked, pale face, "is it certain that this is a case of cause and effect?"

(To be continued.)

ACCEPTS CALL TO SACKVILLE CHURCH

Sackville, Dec. 23—At the last meeting of the quarterly board of the Sackville Methodist church, which was held on the 7th inst., a resolution was passed by a unanimous vote inviting the Rev. John L. Dawson, B. A., at present in charge of the Gower street church, St. John's (Nfld.), to assume the pastorate of the Sackville church next June in succession to the Rev. George Steel.

On Saturday a telegram from Mr. Dawson was received by the recording steward, R. A. Truefman, accepting the invitation, subject of course to the approval of the transfer committee. Both Mr. Dawson and his wife are members of the Mount Allison class of 1875, Mrs. Dawson taking the degree in science. At the time of graduation the class numbered eight. Three of these are dead—Charles S. Gilbert, Leonard Allison and Fred. H. Wright—leaving as survivors, in addition to Mr. and Mrs. Dawson, Henry A. Powell, Hedley V. Williston and Matthew R. Knight. Prior to marriage, Mrs. Dawson was Grace A. Lockhart, daughter of the late Edward Lockhart, of St. John (N. B.)

ST. JOHN MAN AMONG SEVEN DROWNED FROM PARRSBORO SCHOONER

Tampa, Fla., Dec. 26—The three-masted schooner Sakata, of Parrsboro (N. S.), has been wrecked and its entire crew of at least seven men drowned except Mate John F. Williams, of St. John (N. B.) The drowned included John Conlon, managing owner of the schooner, and his son, both of Parrsboro; John Cox, of St. John, the steward, and four men.

The wreck was reported by Captain Lermond, of the schooner Helen Thomas, which arrived at Port Tampa today from Galveston. Captain Lermond first sighted the capsized schooner on Dec. 23. He sent a boat containing his second officer and five men to the wreck.

The men found Mate Williams clinging to the vessel and he had been without food or drink for four days. Hunger had forced him to eat a portion of his oilcoat. Williams has practically recovered from his experience. The wrecked schooner was bound for Havana.

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