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LITERATURE

Three Shots with a Revolver.

I.

Naturally, considering the nature of my calling, I have been always particularly attracted by the scores of stories—not, I am inclined to think, always based upon actual occurrences—which tell of the ingenious plots contrived by scoundrels to gain possession of other people's jewels, especially diamonds. In other cases such stories are, of course, but pure fiction. But as to those which profess to narrate facts, whether plain or colored, I have too much reason, from personal experience, to suspect that the real owners of jewels have, very often, more to do with their disappearance than easily imagined brigands, swindlers or thieves. Nevertheless, there is enough substratum of truth to make even purely invented stories of this kind probable. Mine is not an invented story; but my reason for telling it is not so much its truth as its supremely extraordinary character. Its like, in any single detail, never happened to anybody else in the world. Were it not for this I would assuredly refrain from adding to the pile of jewel-stories in which some jeweller's agent plays the part of hero or victim. For I was myself agent to a very great firm of jewellers in London—I need not say to whom—when there happened to myself the terrible experience, terrible almost beyond the power to describe, which I am, for the first time in my life, about to try to tell in words.

I remember, as if it were yesterday, how one of our partners called me into his private room and said to me:

"Morris, I must ask you to be good enough to start for Paris this very evening—that is to say, by the very first possible train. You know that parure of the Princess Mouranov that we had to put into new settings?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, you know the Princess as a customer; she is rather flighty, but she's too big a gun for us to disregard her whims. The parure is just out of hand, and was to have been delivered to her in Portland place to-morrow morning; but—it's just like her—she's taken it into her head to set off on a voyage to America, and, an hour after she took the whim into her head, she was off, so I hear. It's just like her, anyhow. I believe she goes to Patagonia, where her diamonds—that is to say, her parure—she thinks, will we indespensible to her. I shouldn't have thought so myself, but I suppose she knows. Anyhow, she's going to spend the whole of to-morrow in Paris, and her diamonds must be delivered to her there, and paid for—you understand. If we don't deliver the parure, she'll never forgive us; and if she dosen't pay before going off Heaven knows where, why, we shall never forgive ourselves. You'll have to be sharp, for it doesn't follow that she'll stay in Paris a whole day because she says she will; and you'd better avoid having to follow her, if you possibly can."

"Naturally! Where is Madame to be found?"

"At a place called Les Bosquets. It's outside Paris; but here's the address written down. I needn't tell you to be cautious—"

"Why?" asked I. "It all seems simple enough. I've only got to give the parure to the Princess—into her own hands, of course—receive the money, and take a receipt and come away. There will be no difficulty about the Princess's money, I suppose?"

"No. But, don't you see, I'm afraid you're still a trifle young, Morris. Those Mouranov diamonds are as well known to all the diamond-hunters in Europe—as they swarm abroad—as they are to me. Better than they are to you by a long way. By some means or other, you may take your oath, one of these gentry will know you to have the charge of them. It's no good taking precautions against that; they'll know all the same, and precautions are only a way of putting people on the trail. Take care you go to the right house, my friend. Take care that you see the right lady. Don't eat and don't drink, however much you may be pressed, till you're safe back at your hotel. Don't shut your eye till it is all over. If a strange woman speaks to you, cut her dead; if a strange man, knock him down. And—

"Well, what else? But I'll take care of myself, never fear."

"You're an unusually handsome man, you know," said he, with a wink and a knowing smile, "and I suppose, like all handsome men, you're a bit of a lady-killer—without meaning it, you know, and you're not a blind horse, whatever you may be. Paris is a lively place, you know, for a man of your make, with diamonds next his heart worth thousands of pounds. It is not the man I am afraid of in your case, it is the women."

Every man likes that sort of chaff, and I was really weak enough in those days to take an especial pride in what I could not help knowing to be my personal advantages. So I was in the best temper when I answered moderately,

"Well, sir, nobody knows everything about all women; but I do think I know enough about a few to guess a good deal what the rest may be up to. I don't think I'm likely to be come over that way. And I should think this little fellow," I added, showing him a new revolver, "will be enough for common odds, not in petticoats."

"Don't put yourself in a position that will oblige you to use it," said my employer.

"And you won't if you keep clear of the common odds—in petticoats, you know. I must be off now. Call at my house for the parure in an hour."

Full of confidence in my own resources, and proud of the trust that had been placed in me, and altogether in a well-satisfied and fearless frame of mind, I started with the Mouranov parure by the next train for Dover. The magnificent parure was safely packed by my employer himself before my own eyes, and I placed the pocket securely in a case which I fastened round my neck and waist under my clothes with a couple of light but strong steel chains. In effect, the parure was absolutely safe from secret theft—effectually from any violence short of downright murder. I had bidden my mother and sisters a hurried good-by, without telling even them of the invaluable charge I carried about me. And I arrived at one of the first hotels in Paris without the smallest adventure of any sort or kind. To imagine that any of the fraternity of diamond-hunters, male or female, had been watching my journey, or could even be aware of it, was simply absurd. To all with whom I came into any slight contact en route I must have been an ordinary Englishman, making an ordinary trip to Paris—nothing more. And, for that matter, except with booking-clerks and so forth, I don't think I had exchanged a word with a fellow creature all the way. That I had never once closed my eyes, I knew.

II.

I had just ordered some refreshment after my journey before proceeding to Les Bosquets, when—

"M. Alfred Morris from London?" asked one of the waiters.

"Yes," said I, though wondering how my name could possibly be known to him, seeing that I had but just arrived, and had not even written my name on the list of persons staying in the hotel. Was my "Yes" a piece of imprudence? I hardly know to this hour.

"A young lady," he said in English, "has been waiting for one hour to see monsieur."

A young lady, in Paris, waiting to see me! What could that mean? My employer's warning came instinctively to my mind. But I could not very well refuse to see her; indeed, it might prove important that I should see her. And certainly no possible harm could come of my seeing her in a large and crowded hotel.

"Mademoiselle waits in the *salon*," said the waiter. So to the *salon* I went, more curious than anxious about who the young lady might be who expected me in Paris and who knew my name so well.

She was a stranger—a young Frenchwoman, rather pretty and exceedingly well dressed, and yet with something about her that showed that she did not wholly belong to the *beau monde*, if that be the right term to use, for I don't pretend to be a French scholar.

"M. Alfred Morris, from London," asked she, in precisely the same words as the waiter, but in a voice and accent which made the words sound very differently indeed, and made the girl herself look really instead of only passably pretty. Indeed, hers was one of the sweetest voices I had ever heard.

"At your service, mademoiselle," said I, with a bow.

She smiled; and her smile was very sweet indeed. "I am truly fortunate," she said. "I was beginning to fear you would never come."

"And may I ask, mademoiselle, with whom—"

"Assuredly, monsieur. I am Mlle. Lenoir, principal *Demoiselle de Chambre* of Mme. la Princesse de Mouranov—"

"Ah!" sighed I, a little disappointed. It was no adventure, then—only the affair of the parure, after all. Still—well, considering everything, that was perhaps all the better. Adventures, till the receipts were exchanged, would certainly be *mal à propos*.

"Yes, of Mme. la Princesse de Mouranov," repeated she. "I am in all the confidence of Madame's toilet—you comprehend?"

She was speaking in very good English, with an accent that improved my native language, it seemed to me. "Madame received a telegram from London from your firm, saying you would be here to-day. It was a careful telegram, monsieur, and that was well. It is not prudent to let all the world know what you carry—without doubt nearest your heart, monsieur! Have I not reason—I? But madam has changed her plans—that is the habitude of madam. I always know what madam will do next, for it is always what she shall not say. She was for America last night; to-day she is for Biarritz. But she will want the pa—the affair monsieur knows of—all the same, all the more. Even so, she was going to Les Bosquets; in fine, she is not at Les Bosquets, but at the Villa Stefania, her own little house where she goes to be alone. Ah, madam will love to be alone at times—sometimes for one whole half-hour, monsieur! But she must have the parure on the instant and in her own hands, so I come from madam myself to conduct you to Villa Stefania without delay."

All this was fully in accord with all that I had ever heard of the eccentric restlessness of this great Russian lady, nor had I the faintest reason, after hearing of the telegram from my employers, to doubt the simple good faith of so pretty and altogether attractive a young lady as Mlle. Lenoir. Still there was one obvious precaution that I ought to take, and I did take it, for I wish to make it absolutely clear that I acted in all respects as the most prudent of men could have done.

"Mademoiselle will permit me to ask," said I, "simply as a matter of business form, if she has the written authority"——

"Of Madame la Princesse? Assuredly," said she, with a bright smile. "It is good to treat with a monsieur of the prudence of monsieur!" She handed me at once a little sealed note, perfumed and gracefully written, that ran as follows:

VILLA STEFANIA, Jan. 12.

M. Alfred Morris, on the part of Messrs. ——, will have the goodness to accompany the bearer, Mlle. Lenoir, to the Villa Stefania, without any delay, there to execute the commission with which he is charged. STEPHANIE DE MOURANOV.

I have that note still, to remind me of——. But the end has not yet come. Suffice it that doubt, under the circumstances, never entered my mind; nor, I dare to swear, would it have entered the reader's, had he to judge before the event, as I had to do.

I found Mlle. Lenoir an exceedingly pleasant companion on the way to Villa Stefania, which fancifully-named residence we reached in about an hour and a half, partly by rail and partly *en voiture*. I supposed it some eccentricity on the part of the Princesse that she did not, as she certainly might have done, send us a carriage to convey us the whole way. Perhaps she was one of those people who take a pleasure in little mysteries and pointless conspiracies. Mlle. Lenoir talked the whole time about all sorts of things and places, and I found her sympathetic, intelligent, and singularly well informed, as well as charming. I even began to flatter myself that I had made a by no means unsatisfactory impression upon mademoiselle.

Villa Stefania, where we arrived after darkness had fallen, I could not very distinctly see; but I made out that it was a small house, probably not long built, standing alone and apart from all other dwellings in a sort of shrubbery and approached through a tiny court past the lodge of the *concierge*. We were at once admitted with ut any ringing or waiting. Mademoiselle conducted me up a staircase and along a passage, both scarcely half lighted, into a room so dark that I could scarcely see where I was or anything at all.

"Imbeciles!" cried Mlle. Lenoir. "Not a light in the *salon*, not even a candle! That is how one is served when one has twenty servants, monsieur, each with his duties; we must have a twenty-first to do nothing but see that the sconces shall not be empty in the *salon*—unless, perhaps, it shall be some fancy of madame, for nobody to know you are here. I will see. Monsieur is a brave man? He is not afraid of being left alone in the dark till madame shall arrive? It will be in one moment, monsieur. Madame is anxious, very anxious, for the——"

I thought my being asked to wait in pitch darkness a little odd, but I could only say:

"It is many years since I believed in Bogy, mademoiselle."

"*Bien*. It shall not be long." And she was gone, closing the door behind her, if my ears told truly.

Without believing in Bogy, it is not a pleasant thing to be left alone in a strange room in the dark, all the same—fancies will come into one's head, especially when the seconds grow into minutes without counting themselves on a visible watch-face, and when one has on one's person diamonds worth many thousands of pounds. Everything was all right, of course; and yet I could not help wishing that the Princess Mouranov had received me at Les Bosquets by the light of at least one candle, if not of day. And, though I was but a tradesman's employee, common French courtesy should not have kept me quite so long waiting for a light, even though a fine lady might not be ready to see me the very instant I arrived. I felt my way to a very comfortable sofa, on which I sat down, and waited on, waxing impatient, and feeling rather like a prisoner condemned to the dark cell. Manners forbade me to doze or whistle, and——

But impatience was soon to change into something more.

III.

Was that sound of voices in the room or not? If not in the room, close to the room it must have been for I heard them plainly—sometimes darkness itself will strangely sharpen our ears, and there are certain words which once heard sharpen them yet more keenly.

I heard three voices. One was Mlle. Lenoir's. One was a strange woman's. The third was a man's

"Neatly trapped enough," said the last so slowly in the German manner that they brought their whole significance home to my dull British ears.

"But for the rest," said Mlle. Lenoir, "what ought one to do? If he goes back to England"——

"He must not go back to England," said the voice of the other woman—it was singularly cold, firm and clear. "He must not leave France; he must not leave Paris till we are safely gone. Those diamonds"——

"If the worst comes to the worst," said the man, "what then? We are man to man. If he does not behave himself he will have to reckon with me. These things are awkward, because of the police. But"——

"He will not resist," said Mlle. Lenoir. "And if he does"——

I thought I heard a sigh, so sharp had my ear grown. But from whom came the sigh? Whether from Mlle. Lenoir or the other woman I could not tell.

"If he does," said the man, "he it on his own head, whatever comes. You understand me, my friend. I do not like too much blood; but if there be resistance there must be—what there must be. He must not trace the diamonds, nor you."

It had passed through my ears to my sinking heart long ago. Fool that I had been to listen to a woman's story, however plausable it might seem! Some plot, invented and carried out with fiendish cunning, had brought me into a den of robbery and murder. I was to wait for death in that lonely house and that horrible dark chamber!

What in the name of heaven, in the name of desperate helplessness, was I to do? The voices grew confused, then ceased altogether. I was alone. Nobody knew me in Paris; nobody would miss me there. If I did not return my employers would have set me down as having run off with the jewels: my mother and sisters would believe me guilty, and break their hearts and starve. Could I escape from the house? Impossible—through unknown passages and a locked door!

Instinctively I felt for my revolver, useless as it must be in a dark room. The murderer, or the murderers, knowing the premises, could be upon me at any moment and have me down before I could know of their approach, and one must have some faint light for an aim. I had known that all sorts of atrocities are even more common in Paris than in London; but how could I dream that such a doom as this, all for believing the smooth tongue of a pretty serpent, would ever be mine? I say I felt for my revolver, though knowing all the while how vain a toy it would be now. A knife for close quarters would have been ten times its value, and that too would have been vain. I don't think myself less brave than other men, yet I could not help a groan of dispair at the thought that I was about to be murdered so helplessly, so hopelessly. How soon would it be?

I drew out my revolver, and in doing so a little fusee-box, with a few wax matches in it fell on the floor. One moment's light would be something, though the last gleam I was ever to see. I groped for the box, found it at my feet and struck one of the matches. Heaven! what met my eyes? The gleam of the flame had indeed come not a moment too soon.

Straight in front of me, coming towards me through an open door, was as evil-looking a ruffian as I had ever seen; a murderous ruffian, if ever there was one, hideously livid, and with eyes that glared towards mine. Thank heaven for that one gleam of light! It might be enough for a straight aim. No time must be lost. I am no fighting man, heaven knows. But—I fired.

For a moment the smoke clouded my eyes. But I heard a cry. The flame from my match had not wholly died. And by its light I saw—— Great heavens! I had not had one murderer to deal with. A whole gang of brigands were upon me and my diamonds. What was to be done?

Five more brigands at least were there. Well, I dared not pray for so hopeless a thing as life, but I would at least be true to my trust and sell it dearly. My name, my honor, might yet be saved. First to right, then to left I fired and fired again—twice—three times——

And then the match went out, and left me to the mercy of the robbers and cut throats into whose hands I had been drawn by a woman's words.

IV.

Suddenly a blaze of light filled the room, so bright that my eyes, till now blinded by darkness, were more blinded still.

"What madman is here?" cried a woman's voice—that other woman's, not Mlle. Lenoir's.

"O! O! O! My poor, dear, beautiful boudoir! Send for the gendarmes!"

Was I alive? I suppose so, since I could still hear and see. And how can I describe the scene that I beheld?

I was in an elegantly-furnished room. On my left hand, with clasped hands, gazed at me with a face full of amazement, was Mlle. Lenoir. On my right, looking at me with wild looks of anger, despair and terror, was a handsome lady, who resembled a queen of tragedy.

"O Amelie!" cried the latter.

"O Madame la Princesse!" echoed Mlle Lenoir.

"My favorite clock!" moaned the right hand lady.

"And three whole nights"—— mademoiselle was beginning, when I felt my arms grasped tightly behind my back, and a man's stern slow voice in my ear:

"Who are you? Are you a madman or brigand? What does this mean? Who are you that make havoc with the boudoir of Madame la Princess de Mouranov? Who, I say?"

I must confess it at last! I am a little near-sighted, and, by the dim light of the match, had mistaken the sixfold reflection of myself in the panels of an octagonal room lined with large mirrors for a band of murderers.

And that talk of death and diamonds behind the wall? Well, as I learned afterwards, the Princess Mouranov was, as it seemed half the world knew, busily occupied in flying from the pursuit of a husband from whom she was trying to keep not only herself but her famous diamonds. Her eccentric movements had baffled him for long, but the temporary sojourn of her parure with our firm had nearly put him on the traces. Read the talk by the light of this and you will understand—even the big talk of madame's last champion, a German Baron, who did meet the Prince in mortal fight with swords, and come off second best with a gash that went through his sword arm. Who has got the diamonds now I neither know nor care.

But as for revolvers—well, if you must keep such awkwards things at all, you can't spend three shots from one better than in obeying the precept:

Brisez le miroir infidele
Qui vous cache la verite.

Smash every lying looking-glass, whether it tells you are a murderer, or whether—as is more common—it tells you, as my own once upon a time used to tell me, that I was a handsome as well as a near-sighted man. Alas, since that terrible night no looking-glass dares to tell me that I am handsome any more, for I never saw an uglier ruffian in my life than my own double seeing by the light of that fusee.

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Dear Sir—I most cheerfully add my testimonial to the great number you are daily receiving in favor of your VEGETINE. I have been troubled with rheumatism for several years; also with blotches and pimples breaking out upon my face and neck.

A friend recommended VEGETINE, and, after using several bottles, I have had no more trouble with rheumatism, and the blotches on my face and neck have disappeared. I have recommended VEGETINE to some of my friends who were troubled with rheumatism, and they have used it with good success, and I will recommend it to all who are troubled in the same way.

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Vegetine Cured his Daughter.

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Dear Sir—My daughter has been afflicted with nasal catarrh, affection of bladder and kidneys, and is of scrofulous diathesis, and, after having exhausted my kill and the most eminent physicians of Selma, I at last resorted to the use of your VEGETINE (without confidence), and, to my great surprise, my daughter has been restored to health. I write this as a simple act of justice, and not as an advertising medium.

Respectfully,
T. E. CALLIER, M. D.

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76 COURT ST., ROME, N. Y., July 10, 1879.

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Dear Sir—One year ago last fall my little boy had a breaking out of Erysipelas and Salt Rheum, his face being one mattered sore of the worst description. Noticing your advertisement in the papers, I purchased two bottles of the VEGETINE, and, with the two bottles my son was cured. I never saw anything like the VEGETINE; it worked like a charm. I have been city watchman in Rome for years. This testimonial is gratuitous.

Yours respectfully,
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MRS. G. R. THATCHER.

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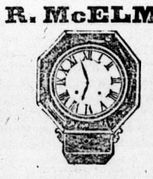

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Cumberland Hotel,

PARRSBORO', N. S.

TWENTY yards from Railway Station. Sample rooms. Livery stable.

sept7 THOS. MAHONEY.

UNION HOTEL,

(Formerly Ritchie's Hotel,)

Hopewell Corner, - - N. B.

G. W. SHAW, Proprietor.

HOUSE central. Guests treated kindly, and every attention paid to comfort. Terms moderate. july22

INTERCOLONIAL RAILWAY.

1881 SUMMER ARRANGEMENT 1881

ON and after MONDAY, the 6th June, the Trains will run daily (Sunday excepted) as follows:

WILL LEAVE SACKVILLE:

Express for St. John and Quebec, 12.18 a.m.
Express for Halifax and Pictou, 4.00 a. m.
Express for Halifax and Pictou, 1.04 p. m.
Express for St. John,..... 2.12 p. m.

WILL LEAVE DORCHESTER:

Express for St. John and Quebec, 12.43 a.m.
Express for Halifax and Pictou, 3.35 a. m.
Express for Halifax and Pictou, 12.37 p. m.
Express for St. John,.....2.39 p. m.

D. POTTINGER,
Chief Superintendent.

Railway Office, Moncton, N. B., May 30th, 1881.

The Great American Remedy for COUGHS, COLDS, ASTHMA, BRONCHITIS, LOSS OF VOICE, HOARSENESS AND THROAT AFFECTIONS.

Prepared from the finest Red Spruce Gum. (Delicious Flavor.) Balsamic, Soothing, Expectorant and Tonic. Superior to any medicine offered for all the above complaints. A scientific combination of the Gum which exudes from the Red Spruce tree—without doubt the most valuable native Gum for Medicinal purposes.

Every one has heard of the wonderful effects of the Spruces and the Pines in cases of Lung Disease.

In France the physicians regularly send their consumptive patients to the pine woods and order them to drink a tea made from the Spruce tops.

GRAY'S SYRUP OF RED SPRUCE GUM.

In this preparation the Gum never separates, and all its anti-spasmodic, expectorant, tonic, and balsamic properties are preserved.

This Syrup, carefully prepared at a low temperature, contains a large quantity of the finest picked Gum in complete solution.

Its remarkable power in relieving certain forms of Bronchitis, and its almost specific effect in curing obstinate hacking Coughs, is now well known to the public at large.

Sold by all respectable chemists. Price, 25 and 50 cents a bottle.

The words "Syrup of Red Spruce Gum" constitute our Registered Trade Mark, and our wrapper and labels are also registered.

KERRY, WATSON & CO.,
Wholesale Druggists,
Sole Proprietors and Manufacturers,
Montreal.

NOTICE.

ALL PERSONS having any legal claims against the Estate of the late G. B. Estabrooks, Hotel Keeper, will please file the same duly attested, with the undersigned, within three months from this date; and all persons indebted to the said Estate are requested to make immediate payment to

JANE L. ESTABROOKS,
Administratrix;
or THOMAS ESTABROOKS,
Administrator of Estate
of G. B. Estabrooks.

Sackville, N. B., Aug. 17th, 1881.

All persons having unsettled Accounts with the firm of G. B. Estabrooks & Sons are duly requested to make immediate settlement of the same with Thomas Estabrooks, who is authorized to receive all monies due and settle all accounts of the said firm.

THOMAS ESTABROOKS,
ARTHUR ESTABROOKS,
Surviving Partners.

Sackville, N. B., Aug. 17th, 1881.

MAIL CONTRACT.

SEALED TENDERS, addressed to the Postmaster General, will be received at Ottawa until noon, on FRIDAY, 21st OCTOBER, for the conveyance of Her Majesty's Mails, on a proposed Contract for four years, twice per week each way, between BAYFIELD and PORT ELGIN, from the 1st January next.

The conveyance to be made in a suitable vehicle drawn by one or more horses, subject to the approval of the Postmaster General.

The Mails to leave Port Elgin on Tuesday and Friday of each week at 7 o'clock, a. m., reaching Bayfield in three hours from hour of despatch. Returning, to leave Bayfield same days at 11 o'clock, a. m., reaching Port Elgin in four hours from hour of despatch.

Printed notices containing further information as to conditions of proposed Contract may be seen, and blank forms of Tender may be obtained at the Post Offices of Bayfield, Emigrant Settlement and Port Elgin.

JOHN McMILLAN,
P. O. Inspector.

Post Office Inspector's Office, St. John, 9th Sept., 1881.