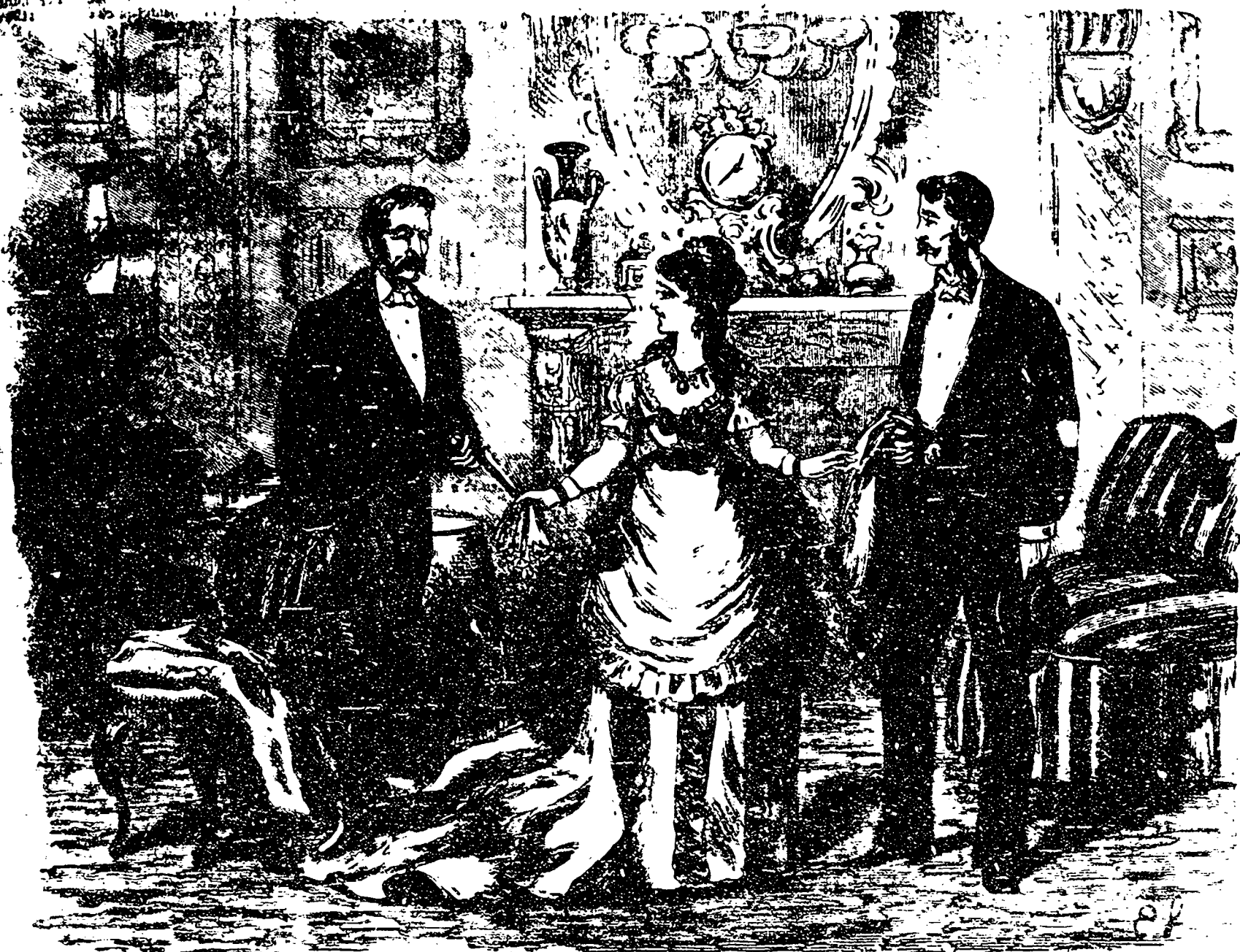


# THE MIRROR

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(For the Favorite.)

## HARD TO BEAT.

DRAMATIC TALK, IN FIVE ACTS, AND A PROLOGUE.

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OF MONTREAL.

Author of "From Bad to Worse," "Out of the Snow," "A Perfect Fraud," &c.

ACT I.

FRIENDS, OR RIVALS?

SCENE I.

A PERFECT MUFF.

August nineteenth, eighteen hundred and seventy: time, evening; scene, McVittie's billiard room, Montreal.

"Will you go up and play a game of billiards, Gus," said Frank Farron to his friend Gus Fowler, pausing in their walk up Notre Dame street, opposite the saloon.

"No, Frank, I am in a hurry; I want to go to the concert at St. Patrick's Hall to-night, and I cannot spare the time."

"Oh! come along! it's just half-past five, and it will only take ten minutes; you've lots of time, come along. Perhaps we shall meet Charlie."

"Who wants to see that muff? I'm sure I don't."

"Oh, Charlie isn't a bad fellow, altho' he is a perfect muff. Come, we could nearly have played a game while we have been talking."

"Well, I'll go up for a few minutes, but only to play one game."

Frank laughed; it was a weakness of his companion's to always say that he would only play "one game," but after that one game was played he would try "just one more" and then "just another," until many games had been played.

As they entered the room they met the object of their late conversation, Charlie Morton. He was standing near a table drawing on his coat, apparently having just finished a game. Sixteen years had passed lightly over his head, and he looked almost boyish yet. He was tall, well made and good-looking, with light auburn hair and blue eyes so peculiar to the Anglo-Saxon race. His light curly hair still grew thickly about the temples, and his long fair moustache hung with a graceful curl over a mouth which showed more lines of firmness than the other features gave any indication of. The peculiarities of his boyhood had matured with him in his advancing years,

and he presented rather an analogous appearance. He was very nearly being extremely handsome, but somehow, he wasn't. It was almost impossible to say in what particular point he fell short, but it was clear that he could not be called exactly handsome; good-looking he undoubtedly was, but that was all. So he came very near being intellectual looking; the clear high forehead, the full wide temples, the firm lines around the mouth, and the clean cut strong chin seemed to indicate intellect and strength of character; but then the quiet, almost stupid expression of the face, the want of any depth or brilliancy in the pale blue eyes, dispelled the idea, and it appeared that, altho' he might not be a fool, he did not possess any great amount of talent, and that he would never achieve greatness unless some terrible emergency called forth powers which now lay dormant. This was the "muff," as his companions called him—behind his back—and his appearance really did not greatly belie the cognomen.

"Well, Charlie," said Farron, "have you been getting your hand in? Let us make a match."

"No, Gus; I've played a couple of practice games with Johnnie, and I have scarcely any more time to spare."

"Oh!" said Farron, with rather a vociferous smile, "on duty to-night, I suppose?"

"I don't know quite what you mean by 'on

duty," replied Charlie, coloring up slightly; "I have an engagement this evening and I mean to keep it."

"Going to the concert, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"Alone?"

"No."

Mr. Farron did not pursue his inquiries any further, but smiled peculiarly with a half look towards Fowler, who also smiled.

Morton soon died for a moment as if about to resent the remark of his friends, but quickly recovering himself, he said, pleasantly,

"Boys, I haven't time to play a game, but I can wait long enough for us to take a drink. What will you have? Gus, what is yours, a cock-tail?"

"Sir," replied Fowler, with an assumption of utmost gravity, "the man who offers me a 'cock-tail,'—here he dropped the heroic, and added quickly, "offers me something I never refuse. Johnnie," to the bar-keeper, "mine's gin."

While the three friends were waiting for their drinks, an exquisitely dressed individual entered the room, and after a hasty glance around advanced with outstretched hand, towards Fowler.

The new comer was a "swell" of the first magnitude, his costume was in the acme of fashion, and his whole appearance denoted a man who having nothing to do devotes a large