COLONIST OFFICE 1858.

# December, 1860.

## My First Christmas Dinner In Victoria.

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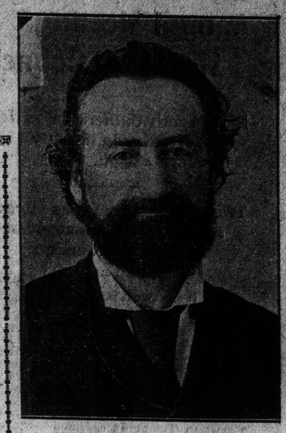


AMOR DE COSMOS.

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.—Matthew vii., 7-8.

On the 22nd day of December, 1860, nearly 48 years ago, I sat in the editorial room of the Colonist office on Wharf street, concocting a leading article. Mr. Amor De Cosmos the able editor and owner, had contracted a severe cold and was confined to his room at Wilcox's Royal Hotel, so the entire work of writing up the paper for that issue devolved upon me. The office was a rude, one-story affair of wood. It had been erected for a merchant early in 1858, and when he failed or went away the building fell into Mr. DeCosmos' hands. On the 11th December, 1858, Mr. De Cosmos established the Colonist, which has ever since filled a prominent and honorable position in colonial journalism. Our office, as I have remarked, was a rude affair. The accompanying picture will convey a better idea of its appearance than anything I might write. The editorial room was a small space partitioned off from the composing room, which contained also the little hand-press on which the paper was printed. A person who might wish to see the editor was forced to pick his way through a line of stands and cases at which stood the coatless printers who set the type and prepared the forms for the press.

The day was chill and raw. A heavy wind from the southwest stirred the waters of the harbor and hurling itself with fury against the front of the building made the timbers crack and groan as if in paroxysms of pain. A driving rain fell in sheets on the roof and drops of water which leaked through the shingles fell on the editorial table, swelled into little rivulets and leaping to the floor chased each other over the room, making existence therein uncomfortably damp. As I wrote away in spite of these obstacles I was made aware by a shadow that fell across my table of the presence of someone in the doorway. I raised my eyes and there stood a female—a rare object in those days, when women and children were as scarce as hen's teeth and were hardly ever met upon the streets much less in an editorial sanctum. I rose to my feet at once and removing my hat awaited results. In the brief space of time that elapsed before the lady spoke I took her all in. She was a woman of scarcely forty, I thought; of medium height, a brunette, with large coal-black eyes, a pretty mouth—a perfect Cupid's bow—and olive-hued cheeks. She was richly dressed in bright colors with heavy broad stripes and space-encircling hoops after the fashion of the day. When she spoke it was in a rich, well-rounded tone—not with the nasal drawl which we hear so much when across the line and which some Victoria school-girls and boys seem to delight in imitating in spite of the efforts of their teachers. Taken all in all I sized the lady up as a very presentable person. Having explained to her in response to an inquiry that the editor was ill she said that she would call again and away after leaving her card. Two days later, on the 24th of December, the lady came again.

"Is the editor still ill?" she asked.

"Yes; but he will be here in the course of a day or two."

"Ah! well, that is too bad," she said. "My business is of importance and cannot bear delay. But I am told that you will do as well."

I assured the lady that I should be glad to assist her in any way. Thanking me, she began:

"My name is Madame Fabre, my husband, who was French, is dead—died in California. I am a Russian. In Russia I am a princess. (She paused as if to watch the impression her announcement had made.) Here I am a mere nobody—only Madame Fabre. I married my husband in France. We came to California. We had much money and my husband went into quartz mining at Grass Valley. He did not understand the business at all. We lost everything. Then he died (and she drew a lace handkerchief from her reticule and pressing it to her eyes sighed deeply.) Alas! Yes, Emil passed from me and is now, I trust, in heaven. He left me a mountain of debts and one son, Bertrand, a good child, as good as gold, very thoughtful and obedient. May I call him in? He awaits your permission without."

I replied, "Certainly," and stepping to the door she called, "Bertrand! Bertrand! my child, come here, and speak to the gentleman."

I expected to see a boy of five or six years, wearing curls, in short trousers, a beaded jacket and fancy cap, who I would take on my knee, toy with his curls, ask his name and age and give him a "bit" with which to stuff his youthful stomach with indigestible sweetmeats. Judge my surprise when, preceded by the noise of a heavy tread, a huge youth of about seventeen, bigger and taller than myself, and smoking a cigar, appeared at the opening and in a deep gruff voice that a sea captain or a militia commander would have envied, asked—

"Did you call, mamma?"

"Yes, my dear child," she sweetly responded, "I wish to introduce you to this gentleman."

The "child" removed his hat, and I noticed that his hair was cut close to the scalp. Having been duly introduced at my request he sat down in my chair while I took a seat on the edge of the editorial table, which was very rickety and would scarcely bear my weight at the present day.

The parent gazed at her son fondly for a moment and then proceeded:

"Bertrand's fortune was swallowed up in the quartz wreck; but he is very sweet and very patient, and never complains. Poor lad! It was hard upon him, but he forgives all—do you not, dear?"

"Yes," rumbled the "child" from the pit of his stomach; but the expression that flitted across his visage made me think that he would rather have said "No," had he dared.

"That being the case I will now explain the object of my visit. As I have said, we have lost everything—that is to say, our income is so greatly reduced that it is now a matter of not more than $1,000 a month. Upon that meagre sum my dear boy and I contrive to get along by practising the strictest economy consistent with our position in life. Naturally we wish to do better and then go back to Russia and live with the nobility. Do we not, Bertrand?"

"Yes," rumbled the "child" from his stomach again, as he lighted a fresh cigar.

"Well, now, Mr. H.," the lady went on, "I want an adviser. I ask Pierre Manciot at the French Hotel and he tells me to see his partner, John Sere; and Mr. Sere tells me to go to the editor of the Colonist. I come here. The editor is ill. I go back to Mr. Sere and he says, see D. W. H.; he will set you all right. So I come to you to tell you what I want."

She paused for a moment to take a newspaper from her reticule and then continued:

"After my husband died and left the debts and this precious child (the "child" gazed abstractedly at the ceiling while he blew rings of smoke from his mouth) we make a grand discovery. Our foreman, working in the mine, strikes rich quartz, covers it up again, and tells no one but me. All the shareholders have gone—what you called "busted," I believe? We get hold of many shares cheap, and now I come here to get the rest. An Englishman owns enough shares to give him control—I mean that out of 200,000 shares I have got 95,000 and the rest this Englishman holds. We have traced him through Oregon to this place, and we lose all sign of him here." (Up to this moment I had not been particularly interested in the narration.) She paused, and laying a neatly-gloved hand on my arm proceeded:

"You are a man of affairs."

I modestly intimated that I was nothing of the kind, only a reporter.

"Ah! yes. You cannot deceive me. I see it in your eye, your face, your movements. You are a man of large experience and keen judgment. Your conversation is charming."

As she had spoken for ten minutes without giving me an opportunity to say a word, I could not quite understand how she arrived at an estimate of my conversational powers. However, I felt flattered but said nothing.

Pressing my arm with her hand, which gave me a warm feeling in the neighborhood of my heart, she went on:

"I come to you as a man of the world. (I made a gesture of dissent, but it was very feeble for I was already caught in the web.) I rely upon you. I ask you to help me. Bertrand—poor, dear Bertie—has no head for business—he is too young, too confiding—too—too—what you English people call simple—no, too good—too noble—he takes after my family—to know anything about such affairs—so I come to you."

Was it possible that because I was considered unredeemably bad I was selected for this woman's purpose? As I mused, half disposed to get angry, I raised my head and my eyes encountered the burning orbs of the Madame, gazing full into mine. They seemed to bore like gimblets into my very soul. A thrill ran through me like the shock from an electric battery, and in an instant I seemed bound hand and foot to the fortunes of this strange woman. I felt myself being dragged along as the Roman Emperors were wont to draw their captives through the streets of their capital. I fluttered for a few seconds like a bird in the fowler's net and then I gave up. The contest was too unequal. God help me! The eyes had conquered and I lay panting at the feet, as it were, of the conqueror. I have only a hazy recollection of what passed between us after that; but I call to mind that she asked me to insert as an advertisement a paragraph from a Grass Valley newspaper to the effect that the mine (the name of which I forget) was a failure and that shares could be bought for two cents. When she took her leave I promised to call upon her at the hotel. When the "child" extended a cold, clammy hand in farewell I felt like giving him a kick—he looked so grim and ugly and patronizing. I gazed into his eyes sternly and read there deceit, hypocrisy and moral degeneration. How I hated him!

The pair had been gone several minutes before I recovered my mental balance and awoke to a realization of the fact that I was a young fool who had sold himself (perhaps to the devil) for a few empty compliments and a peep into the deep well of an artful woman's blazing eyes. I was inwardly cursing my stupidity while pacing up and down the floor of the "den" when I heard a timid knock at the door. In response to my invitation to "come in" a young lady entered. She was pretty and about twenty years of age, fair, with dark blue eyes and light brown hair. A blush suffused her face as she asked for the editor. I returned the usual answer.

"Perhaps you will do for my purpose," she said timidly. "I have here a piece of poetry."

I gasped as I thought, "It's an ode on winter. Oh! Lord."

"A piece of poetry," she continued, "on Britain's Queen. If you will read it and find it worthy a place in your paper I shall be glad to write more. If it is worth paying for I shall be glad to get anything."

Her hand trembled as she produced the paper.

I thanked her and telling her that I would look it over she withdrew. I could not help contrasting the first with the last visitor. The one had attracted me by her artful and flattering tongue, the skillful use of her beautiful eyes and the pressure of her hand on my coat sleeve. The other by the modesty of her demeanor. The timid shyness with which she presented her poem had caught my fancy. I looked at the piece. It was poor, not but what the sentiment was there and the ideas were good, but they were not well put. As prose it would have been acceptable, but as verse it was impossible and was not worth anything.

The next was Christmas Day. It was my first Christmas in Victoria. Business was suspended. All the stores were closed. At that time in front of every business house there were wooden verandahs or sheds that extended from the fronts of the buildings to the outer edges of the sidewalks. One might walk along any of the down-town streets and be under cover all the way. They were ugly, unsightly constructions and I waged constant warfare against them until I joined the aldermanic board and secured the passage of an ordinance that compelled their removal. Along these verandahs on this particular Christmas morning evergreen boughs were placed and the little town really presented a very pretty and sylvan appearance. After church I went to the office and from the office to the Hotel de France for luncheon. The only other guest in the room was a tall, florid-faced young man somewhat older than myself. He occupied a table on the opposite side of the room. When I gave my order M. Sere remarked, "All the regular boarders but you have gone to luncheon and dinner with their friends. Why not you?"

"Why," I replied, with a quaver in my voice, "the only families that I know are dining with friends of their own, whom I do not know. I feel more homesick today than ever before in my life and the idea of eating my Christmas dinner alone fills me with melancholy thoughts."

The man on the other side of the room must have overheard what I said for he ejaculated:

"There's two of a kind. I'm in a similar fix. I have no friends here—at least none with whom I can dine. Suppose we double up?"

"What's that?" I asked.

"Why, let us eat our Christmas dinner together and have a good time. Here's my card and here's a letter of credit on Mr. Pendergast, Wells, Fargo's agent, to show that I am not without visible means of support."

The card read, "Mr. George Barclay, Grass Valley."

"Why," I said, "you are from Grass Valley. How strange. I saw two people yesterday—a lady and her "child"—who claimed to have come from Grass Valley."

"Indeed," he asked; "what are they like?"

"The mother says she is a Russian princess. She calls herself Mme. Fabre and says she is a widow. She is very handsome and intelligent and"—I added with a shudder—"has the loveliest eyes—they bored me through and through."

My new-found friend faintly smiled and said, "I know them. By and bye, when we get better acquainted, I shall tell you all about them. Meantime, be on your guard."

After luncheon we walked along Government to Yates street and then to the Colonist shack. And as I placed the key in the lock I saw the young lady who had submitted the poetry walking rapidly towards us. My companion flushed slightly and raising his hat, extended his hand which the lady accepted with hesitation. They exchanged some words, and then the lady addressing me asked, "Was my poem acceptable?"

To tell you the truth, Miss—Miss—"

"Forbes," she interjected.

"I have not had time to read it carefully." (As a matter of fact I had not bestowed a second thought upon the poem; but was ashamed to acknowledge it.)

"When—oh! when can you decide?" she asked with much earnestness.

"Tomorrow, I think"—for I fully intended to decline it.

She seemed deeply disappointed. Her lip quivered as she held down her head and her form trembled with agitation. I could not understand her emotion but, of course, said nothing to show that I observed it.

"Could you not give me an answer today—this afternoon," the girl urged.

"Yes," I said, "as you seem so very anxious, if you will give me your address I shall take or send an answer before four o'clock. Where do you reside?"

"Do you know Forshay's cottages? They are a long way up Yates street. We occupy No. 4."

Forshay's cottages were a collection of little cabins that had been erected on a lot at the corner of Cook and Yates streets. They have long since disappeared. They were of one story and each cottage contained three rooms—a kitchen and two other rooms. I could scarcely imagine a refined person such as the lady before me occupying those miserable quarters; but then, you know, necessity knows no law.

The girl thanked me and Barclay accompanied her to the corner of Yates street. He seemed to be trying to induce her to do something she did not approve of, for she shook her head with an air of determination and resolve and hurried away.

Barclay came back to the office and said: "I am English myself, but the silliest creature in the world is an Englishman who, having once been well off, finds himself stranded. His pride will not allow him to accept favors. I knew that girl's father and mother in Grass Valley. The old gentleman lost a fortune at quartz mining. His partner, a Mr. Maloney, a Dublin man and graduate of Trinity college, having sunk his own and his wife's money in the mine, poisoned his wife, three children and himself with strychnine three years ago. By the way, I met a Grass Valley man this morning. His name is Robert Homfray, a civil engineer. He tells me he is located here permanently. He and his brother lost a great deal of money in the Grass Valley mines, and we talked over the Maloney tragedy with the circumstances of which he was familiar, but the strangest part of the story is that three months ago the property was reopened and the very first shot that was fired in the tunnel laid bare a rich vein. Had Maloney fired one more charge he would have been rich. As it was he died a murderer and a suicide. Poor fellow! In a day or two I will tell you more. But let us return to the poetry. What will you do with it?"

"I fear I shall have to reject it."

"No, no," he cried. "Accept it! This morning I went to the home of the family, which consists of Mr. Forbes, who is crippled with rheumatism, his excellent wife, the young lady from whom we have just parted and a little boy of seven. They are in actual want. I offered to lend them money to buy common necessaries and Forbes rejected the offer in language that was insulting. Go immediately to the cottage. Tell the girl that you have accepted the poem and give her this (handing me a $20 gold piece) as the appraised value of her production. Then return to the Hotel de France and await developments."

I repaired to the cottages. The road was long and muddy. There were neither sidewalks nor streets and it was a difficult matter to navigate the sea of mud that lay between Wharf and Cook streets. The young lady answered my knock. She almost fainted when I told her the poem had been accepted and that the fee was $20. I placed the coin in her hand.

"Mamma! Papa!" she cried, and running inside the house I heard her say, "My poem has been accepted and the gentleman from the Colonist office has brought me $20."

"Thank God!" I heard a woman's voice exclaim. "I never lost faith, for what does Christ say, Ellen, "Ask, and it shall be given you, seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened.' On this holy day—our Saviour's birthday—we have sought and we have found."

This was followed by a sound as of someone crying, and then the girl flew back to the door.

"Oh! sir," she said, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your goodness."

"Not at all," I lied. "You have earned it and you owe me no thanks. I shall be glad to receive and pay for any other contributions you may send." I did not add, though, that they would not be published although they would be paid for.

A little boy with a troubled face and a pinched look now approached the front door. He was neatly but poorly dressed.

"Oh! Nellie, what's the matter?" he asked, anxiously.

"Johnnie," answered Nellie. "I have earned $20, and we shall have a Christmas dinner, and you shall have a drum, too." As she said this she caught the little fellow in her arms and kissed him and pressed his wan cheek against her own.

"Shall we have a turkey, Nellie?" he asked.

"Yes, dear," she said.

"And a plum-pudding, too, with nice sauce that burns when you put a match to it, and shall I have two helpings?" he asked.

"Yes, and you shall set fire to the sauce and have two helpings, Johnnie."

"Won't that be nice," he exclaimed gleefully. "But, Nellie, will papa get medicine to make him well again?"

"Yes, Johnnie."

"And mamma—will she get back all the pretty things she sent away to pay the rent with?"

"Hush, Johnnie," said the girl, with an apologetic look at me.

"And you, Nellie, will you get back your warm cloak that the man with a long nose took away."

"Hush, dear," she said. "Go inside now; I wish to speak to this gentleman." She closed the front door and asked me, all the stores being closed, how she would be able to get the materials for the dinner and to redeem her promise to Johnnie.

"Easily enough," said I. "Order it at the Hotel de France. Shall I take down the order?"

"If you will be so kind," she said. "Please order what you think is necessary."

"And I—I have a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?" she inquired eagerly.

"That you will permit me to eat my Christmas dinner with you and the family. I am a waif and stray, alone in the world. I am almost a stranger here. The few acquaintances I have made are dining out and I am at the hotel with Mr. Barclay, whom you know and, I hope, esteem."

"Well," she said, "come by all means."

"And may I bring Mr. Barclay with me? He is very lonely and very miserable. Just think, that on a day like this he has nowhere to go but to an hotel."

She considered a moment before replying; then she said, "No, do not bring him—let him come in while we are at dinner, as if by accident."

I hastened to the Hotel de France and Sere and Manciot soon had a big hamper packed with an abundance of Christmas cheer and on its way upon the back of an Indian to the Forbes house.

"How beautiful! What a sweet toque! how becoming that feather is; and those puff sleeves, too"—it was the year of balloon sleeves—"how angelic!"

The rustle of her silk skirt paralyzed them with delight as she tried to sweep the ground in the orthodox manner of her European kind, and she was at last hustled in triumph out of the station and hurried home to her other friends and relatives, to delight them with her newly-acquired manners and Parisian fashions.

I had very little difficulty in getting the necessary passes to permit me to start for the front, for I knew young Prince Komatsu when a naval student in London, and a letter to him made most things easy. However, at the last moment I was considerably delayed in procuring a servant-interpreter. The boy who applied to me was a bright, keen-looking lad from a club in Tokio. His ambition was to see his countrymen fight, and he was also in hopes of killing a few Chinamen himself.

"When can you come?" said I.

"At once," said he.

"Excellent," thought I.

In three days I had succeeded in getting my passes and a servant. There was one little hitch in the final proceedings which I had not anticipated, and that was to get my precious boy out of the country. Four whole days were spent on this little matter, in which months ago, I proposed to her and was accepted subject to the approval of the father. He refused to give his consent because, having lost his money, he could not give his daughter a dowry. It was in vain I urged that I had sufficient for both. He would listen to nothing that involved an acceptance of assistance from me, and he left for Vancouver Island to try his fortunes here. He fell ill and they have sold or pawned everything of value. The girl was not permitted to bid me good-bye when they left Grass Valley. After their departure the discovery of which I have informed you was made in the Maloney tunnel and as Mr. Forbes has held on to a control of the stock in spite of his adversities, he is now a rich man. I want to marry the girl. As I told you, I proposed when I believed them to be ruined. It is now my duty to acquaint the family with their good fortune and renew my suit. I think I ought to do it today. Surely he will not refuse me now when I take that news to him as he did on Christmas morning when I tendered him a loan."

I told him I thought he should impart the good news at once and stand the consequences. He left me for that purpose. As I walked into the dining-room, I saw the dear "child" Bertrand leaning over the bar quaffing a glass of absinthe. When he saw me he gulped down the drink and said:

"Mamma would like to speak to you—she thought you would have called."

I recalled the adventure with the eyes and hesitated. Then I decided to go to room 12 on the second flat and see the thing out. A knock on the door was responded to by a sweet "Come in." Mme. Fabre was seated in an easy chair before a cheerful coal fire.

She rose at once and extended a plump and white hand. As we seated ourselves she flashed those burning eyes upon me and said:

"I am so glad you have come. I do want your advice about my mining venture. In the first place I may tell you that I have found the man who owns the shares. He is here in Victoria with his family. He is desperately poor. A hundred dollars if offered would be a great temptation. I would give more—five hundred if necessary."

"The property you told me of the other day is valuable, is it not?" I asked.

"Yes—that is to say, we think it is. You know that mining is the most uncertain of all ventures. You may imagine you are rich one day and the next you find yourself broke. It was so with my husband. He came home one day and said, we are rich; and the next, he said, we are poor. This Maloney mine looks well, but who can be sure? When I came here I thought that if I found the man with the shares I could get them for a song. I may yet, but my dear child tells me that he has seen here a man from Grass Valley named Barclay who is a friend of that shareholder, and," she added, bitterly, "perhaps he has got ahead of me. I must see the man at once and make him an offer. What do you think?"

"I think that you might as well save yourself further trouble. By this time the shareholder has been apprised of his good fortune."

"What!" she exclaimed, springing to her feet and transfixing me with her eyes. "Am I, then, too late?"

"Yes," I said, "you are too late. Forbes—that is the man's name—knows of his good fortune and I do not believe he would sell now at any price."

The woman gazed at me with the concentrated hate of a thousand furies. Her great eyes no longer bore an expression of pleading tenderness—they seemed to glint and expand and to shoot fierce flames from their depths. They no longer charmed, they terrified me! How I wished I had left the door open.

"Ah!" she screamed. "I see it all. I have been betrayed—sold out. You have broken my confidence."

"I have done nothing of the kind. I have never repeated to a soul what you told me."

"Then who could have done it?" she exclaimed, bursting into a fit of hysterical tears. "I have come all this way to secure the property and now find that I am too late. Shame! shame!"

"I will tell you. Barclay is really here. He knew of the strike as soon as you did. He is in love with Miss Forbes and followed the family here to tell them the good news. He is with the man at this moment."

"Curse him!" she cried through her set teeth.

So Lady Macbeth plunged in a state of deep despair. I told her son that he should go upstairs and attend to his mother, and proceeded to the Forbes cottage. There I found the family in a state of great excitement, for Barclay had told them all and already they were arranging plans for returning to California and taking steps to reopen the property.

Miss Forbes received me with great cordiality and the mother announced that the girl and Barclay were engaged to be married, the father having given his consent at once. The fond mother added that she regretted very much that her daughter would have to abandon her literary career which had begun so auspiciously through my discovery of her latent talent.

I looked at Barclay before I replied. His face was as blank as a piece of white paper. His eyes, however, danced in his head as if he enjoyed my predicament.

"Yes," I finally said, "Mr Barclay has much to be answerable for. I shall lose a valued contributor. Perhaps," I ventured, "she will still continue to write from California, for she possesses poetical talent of a high order."

"I shall gladly do so," cried the young lady," and without pay, too. I shall never forget your goodness."

I heard a low chuckling sound behind me. It was Barclay swallowing a laugh.

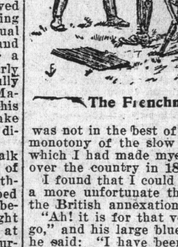
They went away in the course of a few days and we corresponded for a long time; but Mrs. Barclay never fulfilled her promise to cultivate the muse; nor in her several letters did she refer to her poetical gift. Perhaps her husband told her of the pious fraud we practiced upon her on Christmas Day, 1860?

But, whether he did so or not, I have taken the liberty, forty-three years after the event, of exposing the part I took in the deception and craving forgiveness for my manifold sins and wickednesses on that occasion.

What became of the Russian princess with the pretty manners, the white hands and the enchanting eyes and the sweet "child" Bertie? They were back at Grass Valley almost as soon as Forbes and Barclay got there, and from my correspondence I learned that they shared in the prosperity of the Maloney claim, and that Mme. Fabre and her [illegible] returned to Russia to [illegible] among her noble kin.

# More Stories of the War Path

By Frederic Villiers



The Frenchman.

Yes, I was down for a third time with the new Imperial complaint—appendicitis. It was in the days when surgical operations were not looked upon with so much favor as they are today, so I lay on my back waiting for my strong constitution alone to pull me through once more.

As yet I could hardly walk across the room in an upright position, and was still wretchedly weak, when one morning a telegram arrived from the editor of Black and White requesting me to go to Japan, for hostilities were impending between that country and China. The journey was a long one, and to be of any service to my paper I must start at once. I therefore seriously thought the matter over.

I was mending slowly but surely. The journey was easy enough, for I could lie on my back for at least three weeks of the time, and it would take a full month to get there. The long trip might, after all, be the very thing to set me up once more. I felt that the editor of my paper must not know of my trouble, or he might be thinking of sending a man physically sounder than myself. I therefore hired a broughman and stretched myself across the cushions till I arrived at the office. Then I boldly faced the stairs and the editor, and neither was any the wiser regarding my real condition. A trusty friend nursed me as far as Liverpool, and once on board the White Star liner I played the invalid till I reached New York.

We arrived at the terminus in Vancouver just within a few minutes of schedule time, though our train had been on a six days' journey. The good ship the Empress, with steam up, was waiting for us, and within a short time of our arrival left her moorings and moved out into the vast Pacific Ocean, making for Vancouver, the isle of perpetual spring. Is there a more lovely island anywhere in all the seven seas, or a place inhabited by more loyal, Early Victorian, drowsy, slow, but delightfully hospitable Britishers in all His Majesty's colonies? We called at this peaceful, evergreen, flowery isle to take off the mails, and then stood on our direct course for far-distant Japan.

One morning, when I was able to walk the deck, a smart-looking passenger of short stature, with large blue eyes, rather a heavy moustache and close-cropped beard came up to me and said: "I believe you are Mr. Villiers? I thought I would introduce myself, for I was at one time in the same profession as yourself, and I believe for the same paper, the Graphic. My name is Churchill."

Yes, I remembered Lord Randolph was commissioned by my late paper to go to South Africa for their new illustrated journal, the Daily Graphic. We often chatted about those adventures in South Africa, and sometimes when he was not in the best of condition, and the monotony of the slow journey up river, which I had made myself when we took over the country in 1886.

I found that I could not have hit upon a more unfortunate theme than that of the British annexation.

"Ah! it is for that very reason I must go," and his large blue eyes sparkled as he said: "I have been looking forward to that very journey for some time. You know, Villiers, that Burmah was my great political baby. It was through me that the country was annexed, and therefore I feel it my duty to see it. I must and will go."

Poor fellow! he carried out his project, and saw something of the huge slice of territory—a country larger than France—he had been directly instrumental in adding to the British Empire. But, as was feared, the strain was too much for him. He was seized with transient paralysis of the left arm, and eventually arrived in London in a semi-comatose state, from which he never rallied.

The majority of passengers on board were Japanese students returning to their country on account of the war, and I was able with their assistance to pick up a little of their language, so that when I landed I was quite able to inquire my way about. There was one little Jap lady passenger, dressed in the latest Parisian fashion, which suited her face and figure but little. She, as an American might say, "looked the funniest little freak outside a dime museum, and as homely as a mud fence"; but she flitted about the deck mightily pleased with her European attire.

Her costume was astonishing enough where all womankind was dressed in the same fashion; but when she arrived in Yokohama the grotesqueness of it amidst the picturesque kimonos and obies of her own countrywomen was simply too funny for words. I remember going up in the same train with her to Tokio, where I was about to present myself to the Jap War Office for the necessary permits to take me to the front. A small crowd of charming little Jap girls, in their sweetly pretty native costumes, were awaiting her arrival. As the funny little lady approached her sisters they all kowtowed to her with the greatest awe. At first I imagined that they must irresistibly go into paroxysms of uncontrollable laughter at the absurd little guy moving towards them; but no, they were simply wonderstruck with the novelty and beauty of her attire, and after the first serious welcome was over they crowded round her, squeezed and pinched her, stroked her hat and feathers, and gave way to expressions equivalent to those of their more Western sisters when thus moved to admiration, as such as,

"How beautiful! What a sweet toque! how becoming that feather is; and those puff sleeves, too"—it was the year of balloon sleeves—"how angelic!"

The rustle of her silk skirt paralyzed them with delight as she tried to sweep the ground in the orthodox manner of her European kind, and she was at last hustled in triumph out of the station and hurried home to her other friends and relatives, to delight them with her newly-acquired manners and Parisian fashions.

I had very little difficulty in getting the necessary passes to permit me to start for the front, for I knew young Prince Komatsu when a naval student in London, and a letter to him made most things easy. However, at the last moment I was considerably delayed in procuring a servant-interpreter. The boy who applied to me was a bright, keen-looking lad from a club in Tokio. His ambition was to see his countrymen fight, and he was also in hopes of killing a few Chinamen himself.

"When can you come?" said I.

"At once," said he.

"Excellent," thought I.

In three days I had succeeded in getting my passes and a servant. There was one little hitch in the final proceedings which I had not anticipated, and that was to get my precious boy out of the country. Four whole days were spent on this little matter, in which

My Hotel at Hiroshima.

found himself not quite equal to going on deck he would send for me to his cabin. Poor fellow! after about a quarter of an hour's conversation the trouble from which he was suffering was always apparent. He would then begin to stutter, and rapidly become incoherent. His vigilant medical attendant would knock at the cabin door, a signal for me to leave. In spite of his illness he would always insist on being smartly groomed, and was most particular about his beard being trimmed. He told me confidentially one morning that his valet was no ordinary mortal, but a past-master in the art of hair-dressing—that, in fact, he was one of the most promising young men from a famous establishment in Bond street. He added, with a smile, that it was an expensive luxury traveling with your barber, but what a comfort it was to be able to sit down and be sure of a clean shave, or the contour of your beard kept intact according to orders!

"Yes, even my wife, I believe, does not know of the accomplishments of my so-called valet."

Lord Randolph was on an extensive tour round the world, for the purpose of the thorough rest of mind and body it would give him, and his attendant was very anxious that he should keep to the ship and land as little as possible. I was, therefore, asked to dissuade him from a journey up the Irrawaddy to Mandalay which he was very keen upon doing. I pointed out to him the risk that he might run in picking up fever, as he figured the Japanese War Office, Foreign Office, the Home Office, and the local police. It was not only the question of the boy and myself, but also his father, his sister, and a third person figured in the transaction. And the third person was evidently the most important of the whole four. He was to be responsible for the boy's good behavior to me and the authorities. If the boy fell sick, or was killed, this person was also liable of any substantial loss

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Barclay and I reached our quarters at the Hotel de France about midnight. We were a pair of thoroughly happy mortals, for had we not, after all, "dined out," and had we not had a royal good time on Christmas Day, 1860?

The morrow was Boxing Day and none of the offices were opened. I saw nothing of the Princess; but I observed Bertie, the sweet "child," as he paid frequent visits to the bar and filled himself to the throttle with brandy and water and rum and gin and bought and paid for and smoked the best cigars at two bits each. As I gazed upon him the desire to give him a kicking grew stronger.

By appointment Barclay and I met in a private room at the hotel, where he unfolded his plans.

"You must have seen," he began "that Miss Forbes and I are warm friends. Our friendship began six