POOR DOCUMENT

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A LOST LEADER

A FASCINATING STORY OF MODERN LIFE

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CHAPTER XXVIII—(Continued.)

"Parkins—is dead!" Mannering said, hoarsely. "He has been dead for many years."

"He is living in Leeds today," Fardell answered. "A journalist from the Yorkshire Times was with him for two hours this afternoon."

"Blanche—I was told that he was dead," Mannering said.

"Then the story is true?" Fardell asked.

"Not as you have told it," Mannering answered.

"There is truth in it?"

"Yes."

Richard Fardell was silent for several moments. He paced up and down the room, his hands behind his back, his eyebrows contracted into a heavy frown. For him it was a bitter moment. He was only a half-educated, illiterate man, possessed of sturdy common sense and a wonderful tenacity of purpose. He had permitted himself to indulge in a little silent but none the less absolute hero-worship, and Mannering had been the hero.

"You must come with me at once and see this man," he said at last. "He has not yet signed his statement. We must do what we can to keep him quiet."

Mannering took up his coat and hat without a word. They left the hotel, and Fardell summoned a cab.

"It is a long way," he explained. "We will drive part of the distance and walk the rest. We may be watched already."

Mannering nodded. The last blow was so unexpected that he felt in a sense numbed. His speech only a few hours ago had made large inroads upon his powers of endurance. His partial recantation had cost him many hours of torture, from which he was still suffering. And now, without the slightest warning, he found himself face to face with a crisis far graver, far more acute. Never in his most gloomy moments had he felt any real fear of a resurrection of the past such as that with which he was now threatened. It was a thunderbolt from a clear sky. Even now he found it hard to persuade himself that he was not dreaming.

They were in the cab for nearly half an hour before Fardell stopped and dismissed it. Then they walked up and down and across streets of small houses, pitiless in their monotony, squalid and depressing in their ugliness.

Finally Fardell stopped, and without hesitation knocked at the door of one of them. It was opened by a man in shirt-sleeves, holding a tallow candle in his hand.

"What yer want?" he inquired, suspiciously.

"Your lodger," Fardell answered, pushing past him, and drawing Mannering into the room. "Where is he?"

The man jerked his thumb upwards.

"Where he won't be long," he answered, shortly. "The likes of 'im having visitors and one a toff, too. Say, are yer going to pay his rent?"

"We may do that," Fardell answered. "Is he up stairs?"

"Ay!" the man answered, shuffling away. "Pay 'is rent, and yer can chuck 'im out of the winder, if yer like!"

They climbed the crazy staircase. Fardell opened the door of the room above without even the formality of knocking. An old man sat there, bending over a table, half dressed. Before him were several sheets of paper.

"I believe we're in time," Fardell muttered, half to himself. "Parkins, is that you?" he asked, in a louder tone.

The old man looked up and blinked at them. He shaded his eyes with one hand. The other he laid flat upon the papers before him. He was old, blear-eyed, unkempt.

"Is that Master Ronaldson?" he asked, in a thin, quavering tone. "I've signed 'em, sir. Have you brought the money? I'm a poor old man, and I need a drop of something now and then to keep the life in me. If yer'll just hand over a trifle I'll send out for—eh—eh my landlord, he's a kindly man—he'll fetch it. Eh? Two of yer! I don't see so well as I did. Is that you, Mr. Ronaldson, sir?"

Fardell threw some silver coins upon the table. The old man snatched them up eagerly.

"It's not Mr. Ronaldson," he said, "but I daresay we shall do as well. We want to talk to you about those papers there."

The old man nodded. He was gazing at the silver in his hand.

"I've writ it all out," he muttered. "I told 'un I would. A pound a week for ten years. That's what I 'ad! And then it stopped! Did she mean me to starve, eh? Not I! John Parkins knows better than that. I've writ it all out, and there's my signature. It's gospel truth, too."

"We are going to buy the truth from you," Fardell said. "We have more money than Ronaldson. Don't be afraid. We have gold to spare where Ronaldson had silver."

The old man lifted the candle with shaking fingers. Then it dropped with a crash to the ground, and lay there for a moment spluttering. He shrank back.

"It's 'im!" he muttered. "Don't kill me, sir. I mean you no harm. It's Mr. Mannering!"

CHAPTER XXIX.

The old man had sunk into a seat. His face and hands were twitching with fear. His eyes, as though fascinated, remained fixed upon Mannering's. All the while he mumbled to himself. Fardell drew Mannering a little on one side.

"What can we do with him?" he asked. "We might tear up those sheets, give him money, keep him soddened with drink. And even then he'd give the whole show away the moment any one got at him. It isn't so bad as he makes out, I suppose?"

"It's not so bad as that," Mannering answered, "but it is bad enough."

"What became of the woman?" Fardell asked. "Parkins' mistress, I mean?"

"She is my wife," Mannering answered.

Fardell threw out his hands with a little gesture of despair.

"We must get him away from here," he said. "If Polden gets hold of him you might as well resign at once. It is dangerous for you to stay. He was evidently expecting that fellow Ronaldson tonight."

Mannering nodded.

"What shall you do with him?" he asked.

"Hide him if I can," Fardell answered, grimly. "If I can get him out of this place it ought not to be impossible. The most important thing at present is for you to get away without being recognized."

Mannering took up his hat.

"I will go," he said. "I shall leave the cab for you. I can find my way back to the hotel."

Fardell nodded.

"It would be better," he said. "Turn your coat collar up and draw your hat down over your eyes. You mustn't be recognized down here. It's a pretty low part."

Nevertheless Mannering had not reached the corner of the street before he heard hasty footsteps behind him, and felt a light touch upon his shoulder. He turned sharply round.

"Well, sir!" he exclaimed. "What do you want with me?"

The newcomer was a tall, thin young man, wearing glasses, and although he was a complete stranger to Mannering he knew at once who he was.

"Mr. Mannering, I believe?" he said, quickly.

"What has my name to do with you, sir?" Mannering answered, coldly.

"Mine is Ronaldson," the young man answered. "I am a reporter."

Mannering regarded him steadily for a moment.

"You are the young man, then," he said, "who has discovered the mare's nest of my iniquity."

"If it is a mare's nest," the young man answered, briskly. "I shall be quite as much relieved as disappointed. But your being down here doesn't look very much like that, does it?"

"No man," Mannering answered, "hears that a bomb is going to be thrown at him without a certain amount of curiosity as to its nature. I have been down to examine the bomb. Frankly, I don't think much of it."

"You are prepared then to deny this man Parkin's story?" the reporter asked.

"I am prepared to have a shot at your paper for libel anyhow, if you use it," Mannering answered.

"Do you know the substance of his communication?"

"I can make a pretty good guess at it," Mannering answered.

"You really mean to deny it, then?" the reporter asked.

"Assuredly, for it is not true," Mannering answered. "Pray don't let me detain you any longer!"

He turned on his heel and walked away, but the reporter kept pace with him.

"You will pardon me, but this is a very serious affair, Mr Mannering," he said. "Serious for both of us. Do you mind discussing it with me?"

"Not in the least," Mannering answered, "so long as you permit me to continue my way homewards."

"I will walk withm you, sir, if you don't mind," the reporter said. "It is a very serious matter indeed, this! My people are as keen as possible to make use of it. If they do, and it turns out a true story, you, of course, will never sit for Leeds. And if on the other hand it is false, I shall get the sack!"

"Well, it is false," Mannering said.

"Some parts of it perhaps," the young man answered, smoothly. "Not all, Mr. Mannering."

"Old men are garrulous," Mannering remarked. "I expect you will find that your friend has been letting his tongue run away with him."

"He has committed his statements to paper," Ronaldson remarked.

"And signed them?"

"He is willing to do so," the reporter answered. "I was to have fetched them away tonight."

"You may be a little late," Mannering remarked.

The double entente in his tone did not escape Ronaldson's notice. He stopped short on the pavement.

"So you have bought him," he remarked.

Mannering glanced at him superciliously.

"Will you pardon me," he said. "if I remark that this conversation has no particular interest for me! Don't let me bring you any further out of your way."

Ronaldson took off his hat.

"Very good, sir," he remarked. "I will wish you good night!"

Mannering pursued his way homeward with the briefest of farewells. The young reporter retraced his steps. Arrived at Parkin's lodgings he mounted the stairs, and found the room empty. He returned and interviewed the landlord. From him he only learned that Parkins had departed with one or two gentlemen who had come to see him that evening and that they had paid his rent for him. The reporter was obliged to depart with no more satisfactory information. But next morning, before nine o'clock, he was waiting to see Mannering, and would not be denied. He was accompanied too by a person of no less importance than the editor of the Yorkshire Times himself.

Mannering kept them waiting an hour, and then received them coolly.

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Polden," he said, glancing at the editor's card. "I have already had some conversation with our young friend there," he added, glancing towards the reporter. "What can I have the pleasure of doing for you?"

Mr. Polden produced a sheet of proofs from his pocket. He passed them over to Mannering.

"I should like you to examine these, sir," he said.

"In type already!" Mannering remarked, calmly.

"In proof for our evening's issue," Polden answered.

Mannering read them through.

"It will cost you several thousand pounds!" he remarked.

"Then the money will be well spent," Polden answered. "No one has a higher regard for you politically than I have, Mr. Mannering, but we don't want you as member for West Leeds. That's all!"

"It happens," Mannering said, "that I am particularly anxious to sit for West Leeds."

"You will go on—in the face of this?" the editor asked Mannering.

"Yes, and with the suit for libel which will follow," Mannering answered.

The editor shrugged his shoulders.

"Do me the favor to believe, Mr. Mannering," he said, "that we have not gone into this matter blindfold. We had a preliminary intimation as to this affair from a person whose word carries considerable weight, and our investigations have been searching. I will admit that the disappearance of the man Parkins is a little awkward for us, but we have ample justification in publishing his story."

"I trust for your sakes that the law courts will support your views," Mannering said, coldly. "I scarcely think it likely."

"Mr. Mannering," Polden said, "I quite appreciate your attitude, but do you really think it is a wise one? I very much regret that it should have been our duty to unearth this unsavory story, and having unearthed it, to use it. But you must remember that the issue on hand is a great one. I belong to the Liberal party and the absolute Free Traders, and I consider that for this city to be represented by any one who shows the least indication of being unsafe upon this question would be a national disaster and a local disgrace. I want you to understand therefore that I am not playing a game of bluff. The proofs you hold in your hand have been set and corrected. Within a few hours the story will stand out in black and white. Are you prepared for this?"

Mannering shrugged his shoulders.

"I am not prepared to resign my candidature, if that is what you mean," he said. "I presume that nothing short of that will satisfy you?"

"Nothing," the editor answered firmly.

"Then there remains nothing more," Mannering remarked, coldly, "than for me to wish you a very good morning."

"I am sorry," Mr. Polden said. "I trust you will believe, Mr. Mannering, that I find this a very unpleasant duty."

Mannering made no answer save a slight bow. He held open the door, and Mr. Polden and his satellite passed out. Afterwards he strolled to the window and looked down idly upon the crowd.

"If I act in accordance with the conventions," he murmured to himself, "I suppose I ought to take a glass of poison, or blow my brains out. Instead of which—"

He shrugged his shoulders, and rang for his hat and coat. He was due at one of the great foundries in half an hour to speak to the men during their luncheon interval.

"Instead of which," he muttered, as he lit a cigarette, "I shall go on to the end."

CHAPTER XXX.

The sunlight streamed down into the little grey courtyard of the Leon D'or at Bonestre. Sir Leslie Borrowdean, in an immaculate grey suit, and with a carefully chosen pink carnation in his buttonhole, sat at a small table having his morning coffee alone. His attention was divided between a copy of the Figaro and a little pile of letters and telegrams on the other side of his plate. More than once he glanced at the topmost of the latter and smiled.

Mrs. Mannering and Hester came down the grey stone steps and crossed towards their own table. The former lingered for a moment as she passed Sir Leslie, who rose to greet the two women.

"Another glorious day!" he remarked. "What news from Leeds?"

"None," she answered. "My husband seldom writes."

Sir Leslie smiled reflectively, and glanced towards the pile of papers at his side.

"Perhaps," she remarked, "you know better than I do how things are going there."

He shook his head.

"I have no correspondents in Leeds," he answered.

At that moment a puff of wind disturbed the papers by his side. A telegram would have fluttered away, but Blanche Mannering caught it at the edge of the table. She was handing it back when a curious expression on Borrowdean's face inspired her with a sudden idea. She deliberately looked at the telegram, and her fingers stiffened upon it. His forward movement was checked. She stood just out of reach.

"No correspondents in Leeds," she repeated. "Then what about this telegram?"

"You will permit me to remind you," he said, stretching out his hand for it, "that it is addressed to me."

Her hands were behind her. She leaned over towards him.

"It can be addressed to you a thousand times over," she answered, "but before I part with it I want to know what it means."

Borrowdean was thinking quickly. He wanted to gain time.

"I do not even know which document you have—purloined," he said.

"It is from Leeds," she answered, "and it is signed 'Polden.' 'Parkins found, has made statement, appears tonight.' Can you explain what this means, Sir Leslie Borrowdean?"

Her voice was scarcely raised above a whisper, but there was a dangerous glitter in her eyes. There were few traces left of the woman whom once before he had found so easy a tool.

"I cannot tell you," he answered. "It is not an affair for you to concern yourself with at all."

"Not an affair for me to concern myself about!" she repeated, leaning a little over towards him. "Isn't it my husband against whom you are scheming? Don't I know what low tricks you are capable of? Isn't this another proof of it? Not an affair for me to concern myself about, indeed! Didn't you worm the whole miserable story out of me?"

"My dear Mrs. Mannering!"

She checked a torrent of words. Her bosom was heaving underneath her lace blouse. She was pale almost to the lips. The sudden and complete disuse of all manners of cosmetics had to a certain extent blanched her face. There was room there now for the writing of tragedy. Borrowdean, still outwardly suave, was inwardly cursing the unlucky chance which had blown the telegram her way.

"Might I suggest," he said, in a low tone, "that we postpone our conversation till after breakfast time? The waiters seem to be favoring us with a great deal of attention, and several of them understand English."

She did not even turn her head. Thinner a good deal since her marriage, she seemed to him to have grown taller, to have gained somehow in dignity and presence as she stood there before him, her angry eyes fixed upon his face. She was no longer a person to be ignored.

"You must tell me about this—or—"

"Or?" he repeated, stonily.

"Or I will make a public statement," she answered. "If you ruin my husband's career, I can at least do the same with yours. Politics is supposed to be a game for honorable men to play with honorable weapons. I wonder if Lord Redford would approve of your methods?"

"You can go and ask him, my dear madam," he answered. "I am perfectly ready to defend myself."

"Defend! You have no defence," she answered. "Can you deny that you are plotting to keep my husband out of Parliament now, just as a few months ago you plotted to bring him back? You are making use of a personal secret, a forgotten chapter of his life, to move him about like a puppet to do your will."

"I work for the good of a cause and a great party," he answered. "You do not understand these things."

"I understand you so far as this," she answered. "You are one of those to whom life is a chessboard, with one aim to make the pieces work for you, and at your bidding, till you sit in the place you covet. There isn't much of the patriot about you, Sir Leslie Borrowdean."

He glanced down at his unfinished breakfast. He had the air of one who is a little bored.

"My dear lady," he said. "Is this discussion really worth while?"

"No," she answered bluntly, "it isn't. You are quite right. We are wandering from the subject."

"Let us talk," he suggested, "after breakfast. Give me back that telegram now, and I will explain it, say, in the garden in half an hour. I detest cold coffee."

"You can do like me, order some fresh," she answered. "If I let you out of my sight I know very well how much I shall see of you for the rest of the day. Explain now if you can. What does that telegram mean?"

"Surely it is obvious enough," he answered. "The man Parkins, whom you told me was dead, is alive and in Leeds. He has seen Mannering's name about, has been talking, and the press have got hold of his story. I am sorry, but there was always this possibility, wasn't there?"

"And this telegram?" she asked.

"I know Polden, the editor of the paper, and he referred to me to know if there could be any truth in it."

"These are lies!" she declared. "You were the instigator. You set them on the track."

"I have nothing more to say," Borrowdean declared, coldly.

"I have," she continued. "I shall take this telegram to Lord Redford. I shall tell him everything!"

A faint smile flickered upon Borrowdean's lips.

"Lord Redford would, I am sure, be charmed to hear your story," he remarked. "Unfortunately he started for Dieppe this morning before eight o'clock, and will not be back until tomorrow."

"And tomorrow will be too late," she added, rapidly pursuing his train of thought. "Then I will try the Duchess!"

He started very slightly, but she saw it.

"Sit down a moment, Mrs. Mannering," he said.

She accepted the chair he placed for her. There was a distinct change in his manner. He realized that this woman held a trump card against him. Even in her hands it might mean disaster.

"Blanche—" he began.

"Thank you," she interrupted, "I prefer Mrs. Mannering."

He bit his lips in annoyance.

"Mrs. Mannering, then," he continued, "we have been allies before, and I think that you will admit that I have always kept faith with you. I don't see any reason why we should play at being enemies. You have a price, I suppose, for that telegram and your silence. Name it."

She nodded.

"Yes, I have a price," she admitted.

"Remember that after all this is not a great issue," he said. "If your husband does not get in for Leeds he will probably find a seat somewhere else."

"That is false," she answered. "If your man Polden publishes Parkin's story my husband's political career is over, and you know it. Do keep as near to the truth as you can."

"I will give you," he said, "five hundred pounds for that telegram and your silence."

She rose slowly to her feet. A dull flush of color mounted almost to her eyes. Borrowdean watched her anxiously. Then for a moment came an interruption. The Duchess was descending the gray stone steps from the hotel.

She had addressed some word of greeting to them. They both turned towards her. She wore a white serge dress, and she carried a white lace parasol over her bare head. She moved towards them with her usual languid grace, followed by her maid carrying a tiny Maltese dog and a budget of letters. The loiterers in the courtyard stared at her with admiration. It was impossible to mistake her for anything but a great lady.

"You have the air of conspirators, you two!" she remarked, as she approached them. "Is it an expedition for the day that you are planning?"

Blanche Mannering turned her back upon Borrowdean.

"Sir Leslie," she said, "has just offered me five hundred pounds for a telegram which I have here and for my silence concerning its contents. I was wondering whether he had bid high enough."

The Duchess looked from one to the other. She almost permitted herself to be astonished. Borrowdean's face was dark with anger. Blanche Mannering's apparent calmness was obviously of the surface only.

"Are you serious?" she asked.

"Miserably so!" Blanche answered. "Sir Leslie has strange ideas of honor, I find. He is making use of a story which I told him once concerning my husband to drive him out of political life. Duchess, will you do me the favor to let me talk with you for five minutes, and to make Sir Leslie Borrowdean promise not to leave this hotel till you have seen him again."

"I have, no intention of leaving the hotel," Sir Leslie said, stiffly.

Bernice pointed to her table.

"Come and take your coffee with me, Mrs. Mannering," she said.

* * * * * * *

Mannering passed through the day like a man in a nightmare. He addressed two meetings of workmen, and interviewed half a dozen of his workers. At midday the afternoon edition of the Yorkshire Times was being sold in the streets. He bought a copy and glanced it feverishly through. Nothing! He lunched and went on with his work. At three o'clock a second edition was out. Again he purchased a copy, and again there was nothing. The suspense was getting worse even than the disaster itself. Between four and five they brought him in a telegram. He tore it open, and found that it was from Bonestre. The words seemed to stare up at him from the pink form. It was incredible.

"Polden muzzled. Go in and win."

The form fluttered from his fingers on to the floor of his sitting-room. He stood looking at it, dazed. Outside a mob of people, standing round his carriage, were shouting his name.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Mannering threw up his window with a sigh of immense relief. The air was cold and fresh. The land, as yet unwarmed by the slowly rising sun, was hung with a faint autumn mist. Traces of an early frost lay in the brown hedgerows inland; the sea was like a sheet of polished glass. Gone the smoke-stained rows of shapeless houses, the atmosphere polluted by a thousand chimneys belching smuts and black vapor, the clanging of electric cars, the rattle of all manner of vehicles over the cobbled streets. Gone the hoarse excitement of the shouting mobs, the poisonous atmosphere of close rooms, all the turmoil and racket and anxiety of those fighting days. He was back again in Bonestre. Below in the courtyard the white cockatoo was screaming. The waiters in their linen coats were preparing the tables for the few remaining guests. And the other things were of yesterday!

Mannering had arrived in the middle of the night unexpectedly, and his appearance was a surprise to every one. He had knocked at his wife's door on his way downstairs, but Blanche had taken to early rising, and was already down. He found them all breakfasting together in a sheltered corner of the courtyard.

Berenice, after the usual greetings and explanations, smiled at him thoughtfully.

"I am not sure," she said, "whether I ought to congratulate you or not. Sir Leslie here thinks that you mean mischief!"

"Only on the principle," Borrowdean said, "that whoever is not with us is against us."

"We are all agreed upon one thing," Berenice said. "It was your last speech, the one the night before the election, which carried you in. A national party indeed! A legislator, not politician! You talked to those canny Yorkshiremen with your head in the clouds, and yet they listened."

Mannering smiled as he poured out his coffee.

"I talked common sense to them," he remarked, "and Yorkshiremen like that. We have been slaves to the old-fashioned idea of party government long enough. It's an absurd thing when you come to think of it. Fancy a great business being carried on by a board of partners of divergent views, and unable to make a purchase or a sale or effect any change whatever without talking the whole thing threadbare, and then voting upon it. The business would go down, of course!"

"Party government," Borrowdean said, "is the natural evolution of any republican form of administration. A nation that chooses its own representatives must select them from its varying standpoint."

"Their views may differ slightly upon some matters," Mannering said, "but their first duty should be to come into accord with one another. It is a matter for compromises, of course. The real differences between intelligent men of either party are very slight. The trouble is that under the present system everything is done to increase them instead of bridging them over."

"If you had to form a government, then," Bernice asked, "you would not choose the members from one party?"

"Certainly not," Mannering answered. "Supposing I were the owner of Redford's car there, and wanted a driver. I should simply try to get the best man I could, and I should certainly not worry as to whether he were, say, a churchman or a dissenter. The best man for the post is what the country has a right to expect whatever he may call himself, and the country doesn't get it. The people pay the piper, and I consider that they get shocking bad value for their money. The Boer war, for instance, would have cost us less than half as much if we had had the right man to direct the commercial side of it. That money would have been useful in the country just now."

"An absolute monarchy," Hester said, smiling, "would be really the most logical form of government, then? But would it answer?"

"Why not?" Borrowdean asked. "If the monarch was incapable he would of course be shot!"

"A dictator—" Bernice began, but Mannering held out his hands laughing.

"Think of my last days and spare me!" he begged. "I have thirty-six hours' holiday. How do you people spend your time here?"

Bernice took him away with her as a matter of course. Blanche watched them depart with a curious tightening of the lips. She was standing alone in the gateway of the hotel, and she watched them until they were out of sight. Borrowdean, sauntering out to buy some papers, paused for a moment as he passed.

"Your husband, Mrs. Mannering," he said, drily, "is a very fortunate man."

She made no reply, and Borrowdean passed on. Hester came out with a message from Lady Redford—would Mrs. Mannering care to motor over to Berneval for luncheon?? Blanche shook her head. She scarcely heard the invitation. She was still watching the two figures disappearing in the distance. Hester understood, but she spoke lightly.

"I believe," she said, "that the Duchess still has hopes of Mr. Mannering."

"She is a persistent woman," Blanche answered. "They say that she generally succeeds. Let us go in."

* * *

Bernice was listening to Mannering's account of his last few days' electioneering.

"The whole affair came upon me like a thunderclap," he told her. "Richard Fardell found it out somehow, and he took me to see Parkins. But it was too late. Polden had hold of the story and meant to use it. I never imagined by that Parkins had been talking and this journalist had got hold of him by accident. Now I understand that it was Borrowdean who was pulling the strings."

She nodded.

"He traced Parkins out sometime ago, and knew exactly where he was to be found."

"I think," Mannering said, "that it is time Borrowdean and I came to some understanding. I haven't said anything about it yet. I don't exactly know what to say now. You are a very generous woman."

She sighed.

"No," she said, "I don't think that. Sir Leslie is a schemer of the class I detest. I listened to him once, and I have regretted it ever since. Yet you must remember this! If it had not been for him you would have been at Blakeley today."

His thoughts carried him backwards with a rush. Once more the thrall of that quiet life of passionless sweetness held him. He looked back upon them curiously, as a man who has passed into another country. Days of physical exaltation alone with the sun and the wind and all the murmuring voices of nature, God's life he called it then. And now! The stress of battle was hard upon him. He was fighting in the front ranks, a somewhat cheerless battle, fighting for great causes with inefficient weapons. But he could not go back. Life had become a more strenuous, a more vital, a less beautiful thing! He felt himself ageing. All the inevitable sadness of the man in touch with the world's great problems was in his heart. But he could not go back.

"Yes," he said, quietly, "I owe that much to Borrowdean."

"There is a question," she said, "which I have wanted to ask you. Do you regret, or are you glad to have been forced out once more upon the world's stage?"

He smiled.

"How can I answer you?" he asked. "At Blakeley I was as happy as I knew how to be, and until you came I was content! But today, well, there are different things. How can I answer your question indeed? Tell me what happiness means! Tell me whether it is an ignoble or a praiseworthy state!"

Berenice was silent. Into her face there had come a sudden gravity. Mannering, glancing towards her, was at once conscious of the change. He saw the weariness so often and zealously repressed, the ageing of her face, the sudden triumph of the despair which in the quiet moments chilled her heart. It seemed to him that for that moment they had come into some closer communion. He bent over towards her.

"Ah!" he murmured. "You too are beginning to understand. Happiness is only for the ignorant. For you and for me knowledge has eaten its way too far into our lives. We climb all the while, but the flowers in the meadows are the fairest."

She shook her head.

"The little white flower which grows in the mountains is what we must always seek," she answered. "The meadows are for the others."

"We are accursed with this knowledge, and the desire for it," he declared, fiercely. "The suffering is for us, and the joy for the beasts of the field. Why not throw down the cards? We are the devil's puppets in this game of life!"

(To be continued.)

VICTIM OF THE TRUSTS.

Mrs. Pneer—"You're putting nearly as much wrapping paper as beefsteak on those scales and making me pay meat prices for it."

Marketman—"Yes, ma'am, and I'm letting you have all that wrapping paper with a full knowledge of the fact that the price of it, owing to the soulless greed of the wood pulp monopoly, is going up right along. Anything else this morning, ma'am?"—Chicago Tribune.

A LETTER BY THE LATE J. W. LAWRENCE ON THE I. C. R. AND VALLEY ROUTES

The Telegraph has received a copy of the Montreal Daily News of July 15, 1867, containing a letter on the railroad situation of that day by J. W. Lawrence. In view of present day discussion over railway routes in this province and St. John's position in the matter, this letter of forty years ago will be found of interest:

To Hon. William McDougall, Minister of Public Works, in Canada:

Sir,—In the act of union is the following section: "Inasmuch as the provinces of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick, have joined in a declaration that the construction of the Inter-Colonial railway is essential to their consolidation, it shall be the duty of the government and parliament of Canada to provide for its commencement within six months after the union, the railway to connect the city of Halifax with the St. Lawrence."

THE ROUTE.

There are three routes by which the road can be built, the Northern, Central and Western, my remarks shall be confined to the first and last.

The chief argument in favor of the North Shore route is its supposedly military superiority, being the most distant from the American border.

The Western route is universally admitted to possess commercial advantages over its rival, and there are some who maintain that its closer proximity to the States is an advantage from even a military point of view.

THE WESTERN ROUTE.

The Hon. E. D. Chandler, a delegate to England in 1852, wrote: "We pressed on Earl Derby the route by the city of St. John and its valley, as it was admitted by all to be the best and only profitable one in a commercial point of view, and as the whole cost of its construction was to be borne by the three colonies, it could not be expected that any other line with a view to imperial objects would ever be sanctioned by the colonial legislatures."

The testimony of the Hon. Francis Hincks, who was a delegate from Canada at the same time, is as follows: "The North Shore line was distant from the more populous settlements of New Brunswick and from her principal cities of St. John and Fredericton, and would pass through a thinly settled country to the St. Lawrence. In a commercial point of view the two lines do not admit of comparison, while the section of line between River du Loup and Quebec would be less than thirty miles distant from the American frontier, and would be nearly if not quite as much exposed to the enemy as that passing by the valley of the St. John."

The Hon. John A. Macdonald, now premier of Canada, and the Hon. John Ross, the president of the Grand Trunk railway, wrote the colonial secretary in 1858: "That the North Shore route was considered by the colonies, and especially by New Brunswick as being comparatively of little value, except in a military point of view. It was long and circuitous; it would pass through a country but little settled, and could not be expected to make any returns on the cost of construction for years. The line by the city of St. John and its valley promises great commercial advantages and a fair pecuniary return, and it is understood in Canada that competent military men do not now consider it objectionable as a military road; nay there are strong reasons for its selection as such, at all events there is no difficulty in finding a line combining the requisites of a military and commercial one." For the past sixty years, summer and winter, troops of the line and horse artillery, with their munitions of war, have always followed its course.

So limited is the trade of the four North Shore counties through which the Northern line would pass, that notwithstanding an expenditure of $5,000,000 in the construction of a railway connecting their gulf with the city of St. John, they are unable to sustain a steamer between it and their ports for the seven months of the year they are open, without a government subsidy, while the traffic of the River St. John is so extensive as to maintain a fleet of magnificent boats.

MILEAGE OF THE TWO ROUTES.

	Miles.
Quebec to Halifax by North Shore..	656
Quebec to Halifax by Western..	672
Quebec to St. John by North Shore.. ..	575
Quebec to St. John by Western..	411
Quebec to Fredericton by North Shore..	645
Quebec to Fredericton by Western..	360

These are all unbroken land routes.

MILES TO BE BUILT.

	Miles.
In Quebec by the Northern route..	167
In New Brunswick by the Northern route....	238
In Nova Scotia by the Northern route..	80
Total..	485

	Miles.
In Quebec by Western route....	50
In New Brunswick by Western route....	281
In Nova Scotia by Western route..	80
Total..	411

COST OF THE NORTH SHORE LINE.

Mr. Sandford Fleming says: "It would not be at all safe to estimate it until the surveys are extended to all points, at a less sum than $20,000,000.

The British government will conditionally guarantee the interest on $15,000,000 at four per cent.

Interest on which....	$ 600,000
Sinking fund of one per cent........	150,000
$5,000,000 not guaranteed at six per cent..	300,000
Involving an annual payment of....	$1,050,000

COST OF THE WESTERN LINE.

Mr. Walter M. Buck estimates the cost at $33,400 per mile; by allowing an additional $5,000 per mile its total cost will be under $16,000,000, the interest on which, without the imperial guarantee, would be $960,000 per annum. Should the guarantee be obtained for this route the total interest and sinking fund would be reduced to $810,000.

CLAIMS OF THE WESTERN LINE.

By this route St. John, the commercial centre of New Brunswick, with its fine and ever open harbor, would be 164 miles, and Fredericton, the capital of the province, 280 miles nearer Ottawa than by the Northern route.

The large section of Nova Scotia, embracing the flourishing counties of Yarmouth, Digby, Annapolis, Kings and Hants, with a daily line of steamers crossing the bay in three hours to St. John, would be brought into connection with it, and Annapolis, the ancient capital of Nova Scotia, with its prospective railway, would be only 470 miles distant from the city of Quebec, while by the Northern route the distance would be 771 miles.

These are most important considerations, and attainable without depriving the Eastern section of that province of any of the advantages derivable from the adoption of the Northern route, as by it the same mileage is constructed in the counties of Cumberland and Colchester to Truro, thence over the present line to the city of Halifax, the general terminus of the passenger travel to and from Europe, with the additional attraction of a choice of routes of an unbroken ride round the head of the Bay of Fundy, or down the Annapolis line and cross to St. John and up its valley on to the west. The distance from Halifax to the city of Quebec by this route is only 60 0miles.

The claims of the Western line therefore on the support of Nova Scotia are great. It should not be forgotten that the Western line is one unbroken chain of railway passing through and connecting the commercial and business centres of the dominion together from the Atlantic to Huron, and resting not on its Western march until it reaches the Pacific.

All of Canada to the westward of River du Loup is interested in the adoption of this line, and their extensive and extending commerce require at all seasons of the year the most direct route to and from the ocean. Commercial men to secure the shortest possible road would consider it economy to spend, were it necessary in its construction, a larger sum than would be required to build a longer and circuitous one, knowing that the saving in time, freight, fares, running expenses and maintenance, would far more than compensate for the extra cost. To spend $20,000,000 on the Northern or military line, when $16,000,000 will build a military and commercial one, and also secure a fine harbor open at all seasons of the year, 164 miles nearer to the graineries and products of the west, there is every reason to believe will never be sanctioned by the government, parliament or people of Canada.

If commerce is king, the demands and requirements of commerce must be met. The freight alone on 1,000,000 of barrels, or its equivalent, for 164 miles additional carriage, at twenty cents per barrel by the Northern route to St. John, would involve an additional cost of $200,000, or $50,000 in excess of the sinking fund. Passengers would not only be subjected to a loss of ten hours on their journey, but require to pay $4 additional fare.

The Grand Trunk railway knows the injurious results of constructing railways through thinly populated sections of the country, conditional on receiving government aid. The line from Quebec to River du Loup is a case in point; it has entailed on the company an annual loss of over one-quarter of a million of dollars. The Hon. John Ross, when president, in a memorial to the government of Canada, stated: "The Eastern section of the road was a dead weight, involving an expenditure not only crippling but ruinous."

CONCLUSION.

Better then, if the imperial guarantee cannot be obtained for the route which commerce and trade demands, and which in the opinion of competent military men, as stated by Sir John A. Macdonald, "is not considered objectionable as a military road; nay there are strong reasons for its selection as such," a road which the statesmen of Canada prefer and commend, and which can be built with a less expenditure and more economically worked and upheld, and will embrace the line of railway from St. John to Moncton and secure to the three millions of our fellow subjects in the growing and fast extending west, and to the fine harbor of St. John, without taxing their products or their imports, with an extra freightage of 164 miles with all its attendant disadvantages; better the road should be constructed without the imperial guarantee.

It is to be hoped that after mature consideration the government and parliament of Canada will come to that determination, and relieve the British government of the guarantee which to them at all times has been embarrassing and unpopular, and "one of her majesty's principal secretaries of state of the onerous and thankless office of designating the route." An act of self-reliance like this, of building the line on a commercial basis and independent of imperial aid, by a route where the increased earnings of the road would more than compensate for its loss, would raise Canada and Canadian credit in the estimation of British statesmen and the British public.

I have the honor to be,
Your Obedient Servant.
J. W. LAWRENCE.
St. John (N. B.), July 6, 1867.

THE SHANNON'S BELL IN SHEDIAC CHURCH?

(N. Y. Evening Post).

A recent announcement that the flag of the American frigate Chesapeake would be sold in a London auction room on Jan. 29 brought a query from Halifax (N. S.) as to what had become of the bell of the British frigate Shannon, whose victory in the duel off Boston on June 1, 1813, was one of the few placed to the credit of the nation she represented.

The Chesapeake was towed to Halifax after the fight, and her colors subsequently found their way to England, having been taken thither, it is said, by a midshipman attached to the Shannon. The flag passed from one person to another until it fell into the hands of T. G. Middlebrook, a collector of relics connected with historical events. Perhaps some patriotic American will attend the Middlebrook sale and find a way to send the colors back to their native land.

According to the Halifax despatch, the Shannon's bell was taken from the frigate and hung in a church at Shediac (N. B.) This despatch says:

"The bell was sent to Shediac by the British authorities at the request of William Hanington, a retired army officer, who was the first English settler in that section. An immense amount of land was given to Hanington, and when other English settlers arrived, he built the Anglican church of St. Martins-in-the-Wood. The Shannon's bell was hung in the tower in 1815, and remained there until a large bell was placed in position by Hanington's descendants nearly twenty years ago.

"At that time the Rev. Dr. Charles E. MacKenzie, archdeacon of Columbus (O.), and a native of Pictou, was rector of Shediac, and he had the old bell taken to a neighboring mission church at Cocagne, Kent county (N. B.) Soon after its removal Mr. MacKenzie went to the United States and the bell was never hung. It remained in the church until a few years ago, when it mysteriously disappeared.

"Persons living near the church say that a stranger appeared one day, and, without consulting the church officials, forced open a window and carried off the bell. The bell weighed about ten pounds and was 15 years old. It was cast in England for the British warship Helena, and was on board that ship until the Helena was dismantled at Portsmouth. Then it was transferred to the Shannon."

It is probable that the bell disappeared long before the time indicated—if the Shediac object was genuine—for it now hangs in a niche of the wall of a warehouse at his majesty's dockyard, Ireland Island, Bermuda. It has been there certainly for twenty-five years, and possibly longer. The size of the bell corresponds to that of the one described by the Halifax correspondent. It was cracked by a shot during the fight, and the crack was afterwards sawed out so that the sound might not be affected.

Bermuda historians have never thought it worth while to mention how and when the bell reached the colony, but there is no reason to doubt that it belonged to the frigate, for the dockyard authorities would hardly have erected a relic, and identified it with the Shannon unless they had been sure of its genuineness.

ANOTHER SLASH IN OCEAN RATES

New York, Jan. 15—Following the refusal of the Cunard company to come to terms today, the International Mercantile Marine Company again cut its eastbound steerage rates on boats of the White Star and American lines, making a total reduction in this class of $11.25 since the rate war began. The cut was met by the Cunard company, and it is probable that further reductions will be made in the next few days. An official of one of the steamship companies concerned said today that a rate of $10 to Europe might soon be offered.

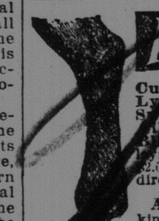
A TRIFLE DAMP.

Golfer—"An' what like a day had ye here yesterday, Macpherson?"

Macpherson—"Oh, an awfu' day! It was just pourin'!"

Golfer—"Weel, weel, an' in the toon we just had a local shower."

Macpherson—"Ah, weel, I can assure you it wasna local here whatever!"—Punch.



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