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A TALE OF TWO IDOLS.

IN TEN SHORT CHAPTERS, AND WITHOUT A MORAL.

I

"I can't say," said the monarch, "that may be just as it happened, true or else a bam."

—Keats.

A bronzed, athletic, self-sufficing young gentleman, who made his home in Residence, stood one evening at his open window, smoking his long pipe and seeming to think that the world was pleasant in the early Spring time, under a sunset sky. April was a fortnight old.

Now the solitary horseman who used to be met with in the first chapter, slowly wending his way, just before sundown, over the desolate but picturesque road that led to the lonely grange whose broken turret caught a gleam from the sinking sun, cannot be introduced into the College quad, where he would be so obviously out of place; but had some maiden, fancy-free, chanced to stray into this precinct of the gownsmen, —sweet girl undergraduates roam now through all the groves of Academe,—she would at once have observed the dark, keen-eyed youth looking down from his little dormer window, and would probably whisper to herself that he was handsome. Were he to overhear this soft-voiced soliloquy, he would lazily decide that on the whole she was right; partly because he thought so himself, and in part out of his good humour. He used to say, "My name is Easy."

Yet when some one who had just entered the room called, from behind him, "Jack!" he turned from the window. "Well?" he said; "oh, it's you, Evans," and he continued smoking.

"Where are your matches?" asked Evans, poking around for them on the mantel.

"On the table," came the answer, as Evans knocked over something that fell to the floor with no little noise. He lighted the lamp, and picked up what proved to be a stone image, not as large as a tennis ball,—a small head carved grotesquely, with the face half man's, half dog's, and polished to a dull reddish brown. He was about to replace it on the mantel, when a second little reddish-brown head, almost its exact counterpart, caught his eye. He examined both with curiosity.

"Two of a kind, eh?" he ejaculated. "I say, Wiley, where did you get these idiotic graven images? I never noticed them before."

"They were given me."

"Well, isn't there any more about them?" insisted Evans.

"They seem the work of some Indian,—quite a masterpiece, you know,—regular old master, hey? I tell you the noble red man,—that is, of course, the original Isaacs,—knew a thing or two about the fine arts. Sculpture, now, for instance!"

"If you'll be quiet, Evans, I'll tell you how I came to get those stone heads," Wiley said. "When I was coming down the lakes last August, on the *Algonquin*, we passed through the locks at the 'Soo' about seven one morning, and that afternoon we were steaming down the channel below Garden Island, when two men put out in a small boat from one of the little islands to meet us. The water was like glass,—not a breath of air stirring; and the soft, blue, cloudless sky seemed —"

"Oh, come off, now," broke in Evans.

"Well," Wiley went on, laughing, "the *Algonquin* slowed up for the two rowers. Their little yacht, as they told us later,

had been wrecked in the channel through their own carelessness, and they had been camping on one of the islands, waiting for the next steamer down. As they came towards us, their boat, which was large and rather clumsy, was pretty well laden, but all the passengers were looking on from the upper deck, and the two rowed with laborious gracefulness, as if the eyes of all Europe were on them. When they came alongside, the ropes were lowered to them from the davits, and they made them fast to their boat."

"And they were lifted on board, boat and all?" asked Evans.

"They were only about halfway up the *Algonquin's* side, when something gave way at one end of their boat, and those two travellers, with all their belongings, were spilled into the placid deep, like peas out of a pod."

"They weren't drowned?"

"No; they were fished out wet and bruised,—it's a wonder they weren't killed. Now, as the *Algonquin* had way on, and was moving all the while, you can imagine where the different articles of their outfit were by this time,—*rari nantes in gurgite vasto*. To make an end of it, all they saved was their boat and the clothes they were wearing. It was a moving accident."

"Who were they?"

"I knew one of them well,—Mr. Pearson, a lawyer, of Chicago. It was he gave me those stone heads. They were the only things left in the boat,—jammed down in a corner."

"Why, it must have been Elsie Fraine's uncle," said Evans.

"Yes, he is. I think he said he got them somewhere on Lake Superior."

Evans stared at the little images for a long time before saying suddenly that he had "best get back to his room, as he had intended to do some work that night." He turned with his hand on the door.

"So you know Elsie Fraine, Jack?"

"Used to be acquainted with the whole family when they lived in Winnipeg."

"Is that so? Why—"

"Oh, yes, I'm an old friend. If you want me to put in a word for you—"

"No, no," laughed Evans, opening the door. "The exams," he said, coming back, "are deucedly close now, aren't they? Oh, as to Miss Fraine, I was just surprised that you should be acquainted with her,—that is, you never spoke of her before, you know. But about the exams, now. Laborious days and nights devoid of ease were never much in my line,—that sort of thing. I used to like classics, but Greek prose, now! I'm disgusted with it all."

"Well, *de disgustibus*,—you know the rest," answered Wiley. "But I'll give you a pointer, Fred. To write Greek prose, you must first of all get a clear idea of the force of the optative; and that you cannot have until you've got yourself into the corresponding mood in English,—which is, of course, the potative mood. Come down to the *Caer Howell*."

And the room was left in the care of the little household gods on the mantel, above the fire in the grate, fallen now to a mass of red coals, the heart of a mellow glow which lingered about the fireplace. Now and then the light flickered vaguely about the framed testamur which hung above the mantel, sealed duly, and setting forth at length, in

"Choice Latin, picked phrase, Tully's every word,"

Joannem Wiley boni socii admisisse in gradum. The rest of the room would have been in shadow but for the bright cone