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MIDNIGHT.

Sail on, O silvery moon, through placid plains,
Of cold blue ether, for the world is low—
Still, as Old Time, thy glory count and wane,
And bears the secrets of the long ago.

The white tombs glisten on the churchyard rise,
The dim woods sleep in shadows at thy feet;
A silent world beneath thy watch-light lies,
Ere yet the stillness and the morning meet.

Sail on, O stately, silvery moon, until
A reckless world forgets the tranquil night;
And newer sins, and joys, and sorrows fill
A later story for thy morrow's light.

—Once a Week.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

A TALE OF MONTREAL LIFE.
BY J. A. PHILLIPS.
CHAPTER VI.
OUT OF THE THEATRE.

Mr. Robert Brydon did not return to his boarding-house after he parted with Arthur, but went to the Saint Lawrence Hall and took a room for the night, or rather morning. He was very drunk, but not nearly so bad as Arthur, and he awoke about ten o'clock the next morning, with just a slight headache, and feeling as he expressed it, "rather seedy." He was too old a campaigner to care much for that, so he took a good cold bath, ordered a "John Collins," imbibed it with evident relish and started for a long walk. He walked his headache off, then had breakfast, and afterwards called at the office of Lubbeck, Lownds & Co. to see if Arthur had come down. The clerk in charge told him that Arthur had not been at the office that morning, and while they were talking together Jessie and Frank came in to say that Arthur was not very well, and would not be at the office all day. Jessie looked very pale and worn, and her eyes showed signs of recent tears. Mr. Brydon politely raised his hat, and Frank elevated her aspiring nose and quietly looked him down. Mr. Brydon had a very fair share of assurance, but the calm, quiet, unflinching stare of Frank's clear grey eyes took all his impudence out of him, and he actually tried as hard as he knew how to blush, as he put his hat on again and turned away. The girls did not stay long, and as soon as they were gone Mr. Brydon addressed himself to the clerk again, saying curiously:

"Mrs. Austin, I presume?"

"Yes."

"And the lady with her?"

"Her sister, Miss Frank."

"Ah! thanks. Please tell Mr. Austin that Mr. Brydon will call on him at eleven to-morrow morning. Good day."

"Her sister, Miss Frank," soliloquised Mr. Brydon. "That reduces matters a little, two into two hundred thousand goes one hundred thousand times. Very neat, very neat, indeed; and worth looking after. Miss Frank is a fine-looking girl too, plenty of bone and lots of muscle, not much beauty to boast of, but a good, healthy-looking girl, and I don't care much about beauty; I must make Austin introduce me; the spec would not be a bad one, and I mean to go in for it. I must think of other matters though, I must not neglect business, and my business at present lies in the epistolary line."

He strolled back towards the Hall, and on the way stopped at a stationer's and bought a pack of envelopes and a quire of note paper. He then went into the reading-room at the Hall and addressed himself to his task. The letter seemed to be a very particular one, for he shivered fore it up and re-wrote it; at last he seemed satisfied with his efforts; he read the letter over carefully, sealed and directed it, and then went over to the Post Office and mailed it for the States.

Arthur Austin passed a miserable day; Jessie uttered no word of complaint, but her pale face and sad expression reproached him more than any words of hers could have done. He fully realized how foolish and cruel he had been, and firmly determined that he would never yield to temptation again. He attempted no explanation with Jessie, but was even more tender and loving to her all day than usual, as if to offer some sort of mute apology for the pain and sorrow he had caused her on the previous night. He went to business the following morning, not feeling very well yet, but sufficiently recovered to attend to his duties. Punctual to his appointment arrived Mr. Brydon, looking as fresh and bright and as scrupulously clean and polished as usual.

"Ah, dear boy, charmed to see you again. Quite recovered, I hope, from the effects of Wednesday night?"

"Nearly so, but not quite. Come into the private office, I want to speak to you."

They entered the private office, and Arthur carefully closed the door. He stood by the table for a few seconds watching his companion, who had seated himself in the large easy chair and was quietly surveying the room, and then said:

"Brydon, we must come to terms."

"Exactly, dear boy, nothing will suit me better."

"I have told you I have very little means of my own. I can make you a small allowance, and I am willing to do it if you will keep my secret until I can find some means to get out of the terrible difficulty I am in. My present salary is eighteen hundred dollars a year; I am willing to allow you fifteen dollars a week, which is as much as I can afford, and is more than you could work for in Montreal."



WITH A LOOK OF DEADLY HATRED ON HER FACE, RAISED HER BOW, AND AIMED THE POINT OF THE ARROW DIRECTLY AT ARTHUR'S HEAD.

"Very liberal, dear boy, very liberal, but I really don't like to accept. You see I asked you to provide for me, but I don't exactly like the idea of being pensioned off. I like to make a show of doing something, even if I don't do it; but, 'pon my word, I feel such a desire for hard work coming over me that I really think I should do something if I had the chance."

"I know of no place that would suit you."

"I do."

"Where?"

"Here. Lubbeck, Lownds & Co. want a book-keeper; behold an excellent one who wants the place; double or single entry, sterling or currency, it's all the same to me. You know, dear boy, that I am competent, and if the duties are too arduous you can help me. As for salary, give me what you yourself received before the late happy little event, and if it does not suffice for my modest bachelor wants, I can borrow from you what I may require. Consider the thing done, dear boy, consider it done."

"I do not like the idea," said Arthur. "I scarcely have the right to employ any additional help during Mr. Lubbeck's absence, especially in the dull season, when I can easily do all the work. Besides, to tell the truth, Brydon, if I have got to buy your silence—as I suppose I must—I don't care to see any more of you than I cannot avoid."

"That's unkind, dear boy; don't let your mind be prejudiced against me. I want to do the square thing; you're up, I'm down; you've got a rich wife, I haven't a red cent to bias myself with; you've got a secret, I know it; let us pull together. Two heads are better than one, and perhaps together we may find a way of disposing of Mrs. Austin, No. 1. Better let me be your friend, dear boy, as I have been since boyhood; think it over well before you decide; I have a special reason for becoming connected, even in a humble way, with the eminent house of Lubbeck, Lownds & Co., and I hope you will not thwart my wish. It gives a man an air of respectability, you know, to be attached to a great house, and I really need a little respectability in Montreal."

"Arthur said for a minute or two, thinking. He did not wish to have Brydon in the office with him; but then it may only be for a short time. Cullen must be back in two or three weeks at the latest, and he would then know the truth of falsehood of Brydon's story; if it was false

he would simply have to dismiss him; if it was true, he felt sure he could hit on some way by which he could make sufficient of a case against Miss Effie Barron to obtain a divorce from her, and then he would marry Jessie over again. He thought it would be better to have Brydon under his eye, even to be friendly with him, as he may, perhaps, gain from him Effie's present address, or the name under which she acted. He had the power, if he pleased to exercise it, of employing or discharging any one in the office during Mr. Lubbeck's absence; and so, after a slight pause, he said:

"Brydon, I agree with you; it is better that we should be friends. You can take the position of book-keeper to the firm as soon as you please."

"To-morrow morning, dear boy, to-morrow morning."

"Very well; your salary will be eight hundred dollars. I shall expect you, of course, to keep the regular office hours, nine to five, and to make a show of doing your work, even if you are not competent to do it."

"Not competent, dear boy, not competent! I can keep a set of books backwards. Not competent, indeed, it must be a queer set of books Lubbeck, Lownds & Co. keep if I am not competent to keep them."

"Very well then, old fellow, you shall keep them. Everything else satisfactory?"

"Everything except one trifling matter which is scarcely worth mentioning. I should like to be introduced to your charming little wife, and her particularly masculine-looking sister. Nothing like cultivating the domestic virtues, dear boy, and you know I always was fond of ladies' society."

"I see no advantage to be gained from your having an acquaintance with my wife."

"But I see considerable advantage to be gained from an acquaintance with her charming sister."

"What! have you designs on Frank? Why, Brydon, you are the most extraordinary chap I ever met. So you want an opportunity to win Miss Frank, and her hundred thousand dollars; well, I don't think there is the least chance for you, but you may try."

"Thank, dear boy; as to the chance I am somewhat egotistical, and think that when a kindred soul like mine becomes acquainted with a kindred soul like mine, it will be a case of 'Veni, Vidi, Vici,' as we say in the classics."

"Which in your case will mean, 'I came, I saw, I got kicked out.'"

Leave for Cullen to go to New York was easily obtained from the Chief, and the detective accordingly started on his voyage of investigation. He was away for three weeks, during which time he did not write, and Arthur became very anxious to know something of his success. At last one morning he walked into the office very quietly and gave his report. He had been successful and unobtrusive; he had established beyond a doubt that Miss Effie Barron did not die at Savannah at the time her death was reported to have taken place. He had visited Savannah and discovered that there were no such persons as the doctor and undertaker from whom Arthur had received letters; he had made inquiries and found that Miss Barron had been ill—or had pretended to be—but had recovered and left Savannah, it was thought for Charleston; he had gone to Charleston, but could find no trace of her. He next tried New York; the Dramatic Agencies knew nothing of her; she had never been of much importance in the profession, and very little importance was paid to where she might be. One agent thought she was dead, another that she was married and had left the stage. He had inquired at the St. Charles Hotel, where Brydon said he had seen her, but no one knew her by name, or recognised her photograph or description; the proprietor said the photograph resembled a Mrs. Cranston who had boarded at the hotel some two or three months previously, but it could not be her, as her husband was with her and she was much stouter than the photograph appeared to be. Application to the police evoked nothing, and a pathetic advertisement in the Herald inviting Effie Barron to communicate with "an old admirer" and hear of "something to her advantage" brought forth no response. Cullen was, therefore, obliged to return very little wiser than he went, except that he had established the truth of Brydon's assertion that Effie Barron had not died at Savannah at the time Arthur Austin supposed she had.

This news was not very satisfactory to Arthur, but he was compelled to be content with it; Cullen had evidently done all in his power, and he must now trust to finding out something from Brydon. That gentleman developed a new quality; he got fond of work; he actually

helped himself zealously to work, keeping the books and accounts of Lubbeck, Lownds & Co., and being a good accountant, he soon got them well in hand, and managed to make himself tolerably well acquainted with the position, financial standing, resources, &c., of the house. He found out that a large amount of money was kept in the banks during the winter season, when trade was almost at a standstill, and that a still larger sum was temporarily invested in stocks and other easily convertible securities. He found, without much trouble, that the amount so invested reached the sum of something like seventy-five thousand dollars, and he used frequently to be awake at nights thinking about these "available funds," as he used to call them. He was steady and attentive to business, and really assisted Arthur a good deal. They got on very well together, Arthur trying to disarm any suspicion Brydon may have of him, and Brydon endeavoring to dispel any feelings of resentment which Arthur may have against him on account of the rascally trick which had been played on him. The constant strain on Arthur's nerves, the constant dread of discovery, the fear of Brydon's reversion at any moment, and the uncertainty of his position, operated on him terribly. Never accustomed to exert much self-control, and not naturally possessed of a very strong will, he easily gave way to temptation again, and sought from the use of stimulants to fortify his courage or deaden his sensibilities to the danger of his position. Many and many a night Jessie would wait up for him, and although he seldom came home in as healthy a condition as he was on the first night he met Brydon, still he never came home sober. He loosened his collar and unbuttoned his dress, let his head grow and took no pains with himself. In his embraces Mr. Brydon was his constant companion; but what was poison to Arthur Austin seemed meat to him, and except an occasional headache and once in a while a little flush in the face, or eyes a trifle bloodshot, he showed no signs of his disposition, and did his work as well as if he had kept perfectly sober. To be sure he did not drink near so hard as Arthur, who drank with the reckless avidity of a man who wants to drink himself drunk, but still he drank a great deal, and nothing but the excellence of his constitution could have stood it so well. Nothing more was said by him about being introduced to Jessie and Frank, and Arthur thought he had given up the idea, when one evening, about a week after Cullen's return, the sisters called at the office for Arthur, and went into the private office with him. They had not been in there more than two or three minutes when Mr. Brydon wrote on a slip of paper "Introduce me," and entering the private office under a pretence of getting a letter signed for the mail, handed it to Arthur, who, after a moment's hesitation, complied, and introduced Mr. Robert Brydon to his wife and sister-in-law.

Mr. Brydon did not stay long in the room; he exchanged a few commonplace remarks with Frank, paid Jessie a little compliment about how pleased he was to see his old friend so happily married, excused himself on the plea of business, and bowed himself out. He had accomplished what he wanted, the tea was broken, and he could cultivate the acquaintance at his leisure. He could be very pleasant and amiable if he pleased, and his easy, rattling style had made him quite a favorite among the ladies at one time of his life, and he had no doubt he had enough of the old fascination left to interest Miss Frank. To be sure that independent young lady had not seemed much impressed at first sight, and had slightly elevated her nose—she had a trick of doing it when anything did not please her—but Mr. Brydon did not take that very seriously to heart, his self-conceit being more than sufficient to make him believe that he could easily overcome any little prejudice about a first impression.

He did not know when a new clerk, Arthur, said Jessie, when Brydon left the room; "he seems very gentlemanly, too," she added, as the memory of the compliment Brydon had paid her recurred to her. Jessie had only been married about a month, and any compliment about her marriage still made her blush and feel very happy.

"He's a snob," said blunt Frank, "and don't like him."

"Oh! Frank; I'm sure he seemed very polite, and quite a gentleman. Who is he, Arthur?"

"I told you his name, darling, Robert Brydon. For the rest he was a schoolmate of mine, and is an old friend."

"There, Frank," said Jessie, triumphantly; "he is an old friend of Arthur's. How could you call him a snob?"

"Because Arthur isn't a snob, it doesn't prove that none of his schoolfellows or acquaintances are not," said the persistent Frank. Mr. Brydon may be a very nice gentleman, but I should never accuse him of judging from present appearances. But never mind him; come, Arthur, let us go home; dinner will be waiting."

Three months slipped quietly away, and brought nothing very momentous with them. Mr. Brydon showed Arthur a letter dated and postmarked "Paterson, N. J.," which was evidently written by Effie Barron, and addressed to Mr. Brydon, New Orleans. That ingenious gentleman having contrived, through the medium of a friend, to write a letter from New Orleans and receive an answer there, while he quietly remained in Montreal. The letter was a mixture of bad grammar, bad spelling and bad temper; it was written in answer to one from Brydon informing Effie that he had traced Arthur to New Orleans, only to find that he had accepted a five years' engagement in the Fiji Islands, and that he had left for his new home about a month before he, Brydon, had reached the Crescent City. Miss Effie wrote in a very bad literary style her "rec-omp of a husband," as she called Arthur, very literally, and concluded with a threat which he sincerely hoped she would carry out, namely, that she intended to apply for a divorce on the ground of desertion