

Conan Doyle's Illustrated Story.

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THE
Occasional Magazine,

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

Vol. I.

JUNE, 1895.

No. 3.

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OUR BULLETIN BOARD.

An Incident of a Season.

We regret to say that by an unfortunate mistake, the publication of Mr. Lawrence Gent's story, "An Incident of a Season," has been delayed. It will be given to our readers, without fail, in our next, the July number.

A New Writer.

We publish in this number an original short story by a new writer, Mr. Alfred Erwin.

Our Next Number.

Our next number will contain an unusually fine variety of illustrated stories and articles—Look for it.

Our Change of Name.

With our next, the July number of this magazine, the name will be changed from "The Occasional," to "The Maritime Monthly." The reason of this change is because we think that under our new name we will have a greater opportunity of reaching all classes of readers over the Maritime Provinces. We take this opportunity of thanking our readers for their kind patronage of our journal, and hope that it shall be still more abundantly given under our new title. The magazine will justify its title by giving to its readers articles pertaining to different and interesting parts of the Maritime Provinces, such as the article on the Evangeline land which will appear in our next number.

Short Story Contest.

A Prize of \$25.

We invite the readers of the "Occasional" in all parts of the Dominion to participate in this competition. The lists are open to all.

Conditions.

The only conditions we impose is that competitors must be resident in Canada, and that each competitor shall send in 5 paid yearly subscriptions to the "Occasional." The MSS is to be signed with initials or a pen name, and the authors name must be sent separately in a sealed envelope, together with MSS to us by the 15th of September, and the winning story will be published in the October number, and the

\$25.00

awarded to the winner.

No story must be less than 2000 words or more than 4000 words.

SMITH & WILLIAMS.

109 HOLLIS ST.,

HALIFAX, N. S.



"My God the thunderbolt that it was!"

THE Occasional Magazine,

PUBLISHED MONTHLY.

Vol. I.

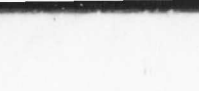
JUNE, 1895.

No. 3.

A FOREIGN OFFICE ROMANCE.

BY A. CONAN DOYLE.

(Copyright, 1894, by the Author.)



There are many folk who knew Alphonse Lacou^r in his old age. From about the time of the revolution of '48 until he died in the second year of the Crimean war, he was always to be found in the same corner of the cafe de Provence, at the end of the Rue St. Honore, coming down about 9 in the evening and going when he could find no one to talk with. It took some self-restraint to listen to the old diplomatist, for his stories were beyond all belief, and yet he was quick at detecting the shadow of a smile or the slightest little raising of the eyebrows. Then his huge rounded back would straighten itself, his bulldog chin would project, and his rs' would burr like a kettledrum. When he got as far as "Ah, monsieur r-r-r-rit!" or "Vous ne me cr-r-r-royez pas done!" it was quite time to remember that you had a ticket for the opera.

There was his story of Talleyrand and the five oyster shells, and there was his utterly absurd account of Napoleon's second visit to Ajaccio. Then there was that most circumstantial romance (which he never ventured upon until his second bottle had been uncorked) of the emperor's escape from St. Helena—how he lived for a whole year in Philadelphia, while Count Herbert de Bertrand, who was his living image, personated him at Longwood. But of all his stories there was none which was more notorious than that of the Koran and the foreign office messenger. And yet when Monsieur Otto's memoirs were written it was found that there really was some foundation for old Lacour's incredible statement.

"You must know, monsieur," he would say, "that I left Egypt after Kleber's assassination. I would gladly have stayed on, for I was engaged in a translation of the Koran, and between ourselves I had thoughts of embracing Mahometanism, for I was deeply struck by the wisdom of their views about marriage. They had made an incredible mistake, however, upon the subject of wine, and this was what the mufti who attempted to convert me could never get over. Then when old Kleber died and Menou came to the top, I felt that it was time for me to go. It is not for me to speak of my own capacities, monsieur, but you will readily understand that the man does not care to be ridden by the mule. I carried my Koran and my papers to London, where Monsieur Otto had been sent by the first consul to arrange a treaty of peace, for both nations were very weary of the war which had already lasted 10 years. Here I was most useful to

Monsieur Otto on account of my knowledge of the English tongue, and also, if I may say so, on account of my natural capacity. They were happy days during which I lived in the square of Bloomsbury. The climate of monsieur's country is, it must be confessed, detestable. But then what would you have? Flowers grow best in the rain. One has but to point to monsieur's fellow-country-women to prove it.

"Well, Monsieur Otto, our ambassador, was kept terribly busy over that treaty, and all of his staff were worked to death. We had not Pitt to deal with, which was perhaps as well for us. He was a terrible man that Pitt, and wherever half-a-dozen enemies of France were plotting together, there was his sharp-pointed nose right in the middle of them. The nation, however, had been thoughtful enough to put him out of office, and we had to do with Monsieur Addington. But Milord Hawkesbury was the foreign minister, and it was with him that we were obliged to do our bargaining.

"You can readily understand that it was no child's play. After 10 years of war each nation had got hold of a great deal which had belonged to the other, or to the others' allies. What was to be given back? And what was to be kept? Is this island worth that peninsula? If we do this at Venice will you do this at Sierra Leone? If we give up Egypt to the Sultan, will you restore the Cape of Good Hope? which you have taken from our allies the Dutch? So we wrangled and wrestled; and I have seen Monsieur Otto come back to the embassy so exhausted that his secretary and I had to help him from his carriage to his sofa. But at last things adjusted

themselves, and the night came round when the treaty was to be finally signed.

"Now you must know that the one great card which we held, and which we played, played, played at every point of the game was that we had Egypt. The English were very nervous about our being there. It gave us a foot on each end of the Mediterranean, you see. And they were not sure that that wonderful little Napoleon of ours might not make it the base of an advance against India. So when Lord Hawkesbury proposed to retain anything, we had only to reply, "in that case, of course, we cannot consent to evacuate Egypt," and in this way we quickly brought him to reason. It was by the help of Egypt that we gained terms which were remarkably favorable, and especially that we caused the English to consent to give up the Cape of Good Hope; we did not wish your people, monsieur, to have any foothold in South Africa, for history has taught us that the British foothold of one half-century is the British empire of the next. It is not your army or your navy against which we have to guard, but it is your terrible younger son, and your man in search of a career. When we French have a possession across the seas, we like to sit in Paris and to felicitate ourselves upon it. With you it is different. You take your wives and your children, and you run away to see what kind of place this may be, and after that we might as well try to take that old square of Bloomsbury away from you.

"Well it was upon the first of October that the treaty was finally to be signed. In the morning I was congratulating Monsieur Otto upon the happy conclusion of his labors. He was a little pale shrimp

of a man, very quick and nervous, and he was so delighted now at his own success that he could not sit still, but ran about the room chattering and laughing, while I sat on a cushion in the corner, as I had learned to do in the east. Suddenly, in came a messenger with a letter which had been forwarded from Paris. Monsieur Otto cast his eyes upon it, and then, without a word, his knees gave way, and he fell senseless upon the floor. I ran to him, as did the courier, and between us we carried him to a sofa. He might have been dead from his appearance, but I could feel his heart thrilling beneath my palm.

"What is this then?" I asked.

"I do not know," answered the messenger. 'Monsieur Talleyrand told me to hurry as never man hurried before, and to put this letter into the hands of Monsieur Otto. I was in Paris at midday yesterday.'

"I know that I am to blame, but I could not help glancing at the letter, picking it out of the senseless hand of Monsieur Otto. My God! the thunderbolt that it was! I did not faint, but I sat down beside my chief and I burst into tears. It was but a few words, but they told us that Egypt had been evacuated by our troops a month before. All our treaty was undone then, and the one consideration which had induced our enemies to give us good terms had vanished. In twelve hours it would not have mattered. But now the treaty was not yet signed. We should have to give up the cape. We should have to let England have Malta. Now that Egypt was gone we had nothing to offer in exchange.

"But we are not so easily beaten, we Frenchmen. You English misjudge us when you think that

because we show emotions which you conceal, that we are therefore of a weak and womanly nature. You cannot read our histories and believe that. Monsieur Otto recovered his senses presently, and we took counsel what we should do.

"It is useless to go on, Alphonse," said he. This, Englishman will laugh at me when I ask him to sign.'

"'Courage!' I cried; and then a sudden thought coming into my head—'How do we know that the English will have news of this? Perhaps they may sign the treaty before they know of it.'"

"'Alphonse,' he cried, 'you have saved me! Why should they know about it? Our news has come from Toulon to Paris, and thence straight to London. Theirs will come by sea through the Straits of Gibraltar. At this moment it is unlikely that anyone in Paris knows of it, save only, Talleyrand and the first consul. If we keep our secret we may still get our treaty signed.'"

"Ah, monsieur, you can imagine the horrible uncertainty in which we spent the day. Never, never shall I forget those slow hours during which we sat together, starting at every distant shout, lest it should be the first sign of the rejoicing which this news would cause in London. Monsieur Otto passed from youth to age in a day. As for me, I find it easier to go out and meet danger than to wait for it. I set forth, therefore, towards evening. I wondered here, and wondered there. I was in the fencing-rooms of Monsieur Angelo, and in the salon-de-boxe of Monsieur Jackson, and in the club of Brooks, and in the lobby of the chamber of deputies, but nowhere did I hear any news. Still, it was possible that

Milford Hawkesbury had received it himself just as we had. He lived in Harley street, and there it was that the treaty was to be finally signed that night at 8. I entreated Monsieur Otto to drink two glasses of Burgundy before he went, for I feared lest his haggard face and trembling hands should rouse suspicion in the English minister.

"Well, we went round together in one of the embassy's carriages, about 7.30. Monsieur Otto went in alone; but presently, on excuse of getting his portfolio, he came out again, with his cheeks flushed with joy, to tell me that all was well.

"'He knows nothing,' he whispered. 'Ah, if the next half hour were over!'

"'Give me a sign when it is settled,' said I.

"'For what reason?'

"'Because until then no messenger shall interrupt you. I give you my promise, I, Alphonse Lacour.'

He clasped my hands in both of his. "I shall make an excuse to move one of the candles on to the table in the window," said he, and hurried into the house, whilst I was left waiting beside the carriage.

"Well, if we could but secure ourselves from interruption for a single half-hour the day would be our own. I had hardly begun to form my plans when I saw the lights of a carriage coming swiftly from the direction of Oxford street. Ah, if it should be the messenger! What could I do? I was prepared to kill him—yes, even to kill him, rather than at this last moment allow our work to be undone. Thousands die to make a glorious war. Why should not one die to make a glorious peace? What though they hurried me to the scaffold? I should have sacrificed myself for my country. I had a little

curved Turkish knife strapped to my waist. My hand was on the hilt of it when the carriage which had alarmed me so rattled safely past me.

"But another might come. I must be prepared. Above all, I must not compromise the embassy. I ordered our carriage to move on, and I engaged what you call a hackney coach. Then I spoke to the driver, and gave him a guinea. He understood that it was a special service."

"You shall have another guinea if you do what you are told," said I.

"All right, master," said he, turning his slow eyes upon me without a trace of excitement or curiosity.

"If I enter your coach with another gentleman, you will drive up and down Harley street and take no orders from anyone but me. When I get out, you will carry the other gentleman to Watier's club in Bruton street."

"All right, master," said he again.

"So I stood outside Milord Hawkesbury's house, and you can think how often my eyes went up to that window in the hope of seeing the candle twinkle in it. Five minutes passed, and another five, Oh, how slowly they crept along. It was a true October night, raw and cold, with a white fog crawling over the wet, shining cobblestones, and blurring the dim oil-lamps. I could not see 50 paces in either direction, but my eyes were straining, straining, to catch the rattle of hoofs or the rumble of wheels. It is not a cheering place, monsieur, that street of Harley, even upon a sunny day. The houses are solid and very respectable over yonder, but there is nothing of the feminine about them. It is a city to be

inhabited by males. But on that raw night, amid the damp and the fog, with the anxiety gnawing at my heart, it seemed the saddest, weariest spot in the whole wide world. I paced up and down, slapping my hands to keep them warm, and still straining my ears. And then suddenly out of the dull hum of the traffic down in Oxford street I heard a sound detach itself, and grow louder and louder, and clearer and clearer with every instant, until two yellow lights came flashing through the fog, and a light cabriolet whirled up to the door of the foreign minister. It had not stopped before a young fellow sprang out of it and hurried to the steps, while the driver turned his horse and rattled off into the fog once more.

“ Ah, it is in the moment of action that I am best, monsieur. You, who only see me when I am drinking my wine in the Cafe de Provence, cannot conceive the heights to which I rise. At that moment, when I knew that the fruits of a 10-years's war were at stake. I was magnificent. It was the last French campaign, and I am the general and army in one.



“‘Sir,’ said I, touching him upon the arm, ‘are you the messenger for Lord Hawkesbury.’

“‘Yes,’ said he.

“‘I have been waiting for you half an hour,’ said I. ‘You are to follow me at once. He is with the French ambassador.’

“I spoke with such assurance that he never hesitated for an instant. When he entered the hackney coach and I followed him in, my heart gave such a thrill of joy that I could hardly keep from shouting aloud. He was a poor little creature, this foreign office messenger, not much bigger than

Monsieur Otto, and I—monsieur can see my hands now, and imagine what they were like when I was seven-and-twenty years of age.

“Well, now that I had him in my coach, the question was what I should do with him. I did not wish to hurt him if I could help it.

“‘This is a pressing business,’ said he. ‘I have a dispatch which I must deliver instantly.’

“Our coach had rattled down Harley street, but now, in accordance with my instructions, it turned and began to go up again.

“‘Hullo,’ he cried. ‘What’s this?’

“‘What then?’ I asked.

“‘We are driving back. Where is Lord Hawkesbury?’

“‘We shall see him presently.’

“‘Let me out!’ he shouted. ‘There’s some trickery in this. Coachman, stop the coach! Let me out, I say!’

“I dashed him back into his seat as he tried to turn the handle of the door. He roared for help. I clapped my hand across his mouth. He made his teeth meet through the side of it. I seized his own cravat and bound it over his lips. He still mumbled and gurgled, but the noise was covered by the rattle of our wheels. We were passing the minister’s house and there was no candle in the window.

“The messenger sat quiet for a little, and I could see the glint of his eyes as he stared at me through the gloom. He was partly stunned, I think, by the force with which I had hurled him into his seat. And also he was pondering perhaps what he should do next. Presently he got his mouth partly free from the cravat,

“‘You can have my watch and my purse if you will let me go,’ said he.

“‘Sir,’ said I, ‘I am as honorable a man as you are yourself.’

“‘Who are you, then?’

“‘My name is of no importance.’

“‘What do you want with me?’

“‘It is a bet.’

“‘A bet? What d’you mean? Do you understand that I am on the government service, and that you will see the inside of a jail for this?’

“‘That is the bet. That is the sport,’ said I.

“‘You may find it poor sport before you finish,’ he cried. ‘What is this insane bet of yours, then?’

“‘I have bet,’ I answered, ‘that I will recite a chapter of the Koran to the first gentleman whom I should meet in the street.’

“‘I do not know what made me think of it, save that my translation was always running in my head. He clutched at the door-handle, and again I had to hurl him back into his seat.

“‘How long will it take?’ he gasped.

“‘It depends on the chapter,’ I answered.

“‘A short one, then, and let me go!’

“‘But is it fair,’ I argued. ‘When I say a chapter I do not mean the shortest chapter, but rather one that should be of average length.’

“‘Help! help! help!’ he squealed, and I was compelled again to adjust his cravat.

“‘A little patience,’ said I, ‘and it will soon be over. I should like to recite the chapter which would be of most interest to yourself. You will confess that I am trying to make things as pleasant as I can for you?’

"He slipped his mouth free again.

"Quick, then, quick!" he groaned.

"The Chapter of the Camel?" I suggested.

"Yes, yes."

"Or that of the Fleet Stallion?"

"Yes, yes. Only proceed!"

"We had passed the window and there was no candle, I settled down to recite the Chapter of the Stallion to him.

"Perhaps you do not know your Koran very well, monsieur? Well, I knew it by heart then, as I know it by heart now. The style is a little exasperating for any one who is in a hurry. But then what would you have? The people in the east are never in a hurry, and it was written for them. I repeated it with all the dignity and solemnity which a sacred book demands, and the young Englishman he wriggled and groaned.

"When the horses standing on three feet and placing the tip of their fourth foot upon the ground, were mustered in front of him in the evening, he said, "I have loved the love of earthly good above the remembrance of things on high, and have spent the time in viewing these horses. Bring the horses back to me." And when they were brought back he began to cut off their legs and—

"It was at this moment that the young Englishman sprang at me. My God! how little can I remember of the next few minutes! He was a boxer, this shred of a man. He had been trained to strike. I tried to catch him by the hands. Pac, pac, he came upon my nose and upon my eye. I put down my head and thrust at him with it. Pac, he came from below. But ah, I was too much for him.

hurled myself upon him, and he had no place where he could escape from my weight. He fell flat upon the cushions, and I seated myself upon him with much conviction that the wind blew from him as from a burst bellows.

"Then I searched to see what there was with which I could tie him. I drew the stings from my shoes, and with one I secured his wrists, and with another his ankles. Then I tied the cravat round his mouth again, so that he could only lie and glare at me. When I had done all this, and had stopped the bleeding of my nose, I looked out of the coach, and ah, monsieur, the very first thing which caught my eyes was that candle, that dear little candle, glimmering in the window of the minister. Alone, with these two hands, I had retrieved the capitulation of an army and the loss of a province. Yes, monsieur, what Abercombie and 5,000 men had done upon the beach at Aboukir was undone by me, single-handed, in a hackney coach in Harley street.

"Well, I had no time to lose, for at any moment Monsieur Otto might be down, I shouted to my driver, gave him his second guinea, and allowed him to proceed to Watier's. For myself, I sprang into our embassy carriage, and a moment later the door of the minister opened. He had himself escorted Monsieur Otto downstairs, and now so deep was he in talk that he walk out bareheaded as far as the carriage. As he stood there by the open door, there came the rattle of wheels, and a man rushed down the pavement.

"'A despatch of great importance for Milord Hawkesbury!' he cried.

"I could see that it was not my messenger, but

a second one. Milord Hawkesbury caught the paper from his hand, and read it by the light of the carriage lamp. His face, monsieur, was as white as this plate before he had finished.

“‘Monsieur Otto,’ he cried, ‘we have signed this treaty upon a false understanding. Egypt is in our hands.’

“‘What?’ cried Monsieur Otto, ‘impossible!’

“‘It is certain. It fell to Abercombe last month.’

“‘In that case,’ said Monsieur Otto, ‘it is very fortunate that the treaty is signed.’

“‘Very fortunate for you, sir,’ cried Milord Hawkesbury, and he turned back to the house.

“Next day, monsieur, what they call the Bow street runners were after me, but they could not run across salt water, and Alphonso Lacour was receiving the congratulations of Monsieur Talleyrand and the first consul before ever his pursuers had got as far as Dover.”



The Lost Elixir.

BY AUSTIN DOBSON.

"One drop of ruddy human blood puts more life into the veins of a poem than all the delusive 'aurum potable' that can be distilled out of the choicest library."—LOWELL.

I.

AH yes, that "drop of human blood!"—
We had it once, may be,
When our young song's impetuous flood
First poured its ecstasy;
But now the shrunk poetic vein
Yields not that priceless drop again.

II.

We toil,—as toiled we not of old;—
Our patient hands distil
The shining spheres of chemic gold
With hard-won, fruitless skill;
But that red drop stills seems to be
Beyond our utmost alchemy.

III.

Perchance, but most in later age,
Time's after-gift, a tear,
Will strike a pathos on the page
Beyond all art sincere;
But that "one drop of human blood"
Has gone with life's first leaf and bud.



John Philip Sousa.

A CHARACTER SKETCH.

The visit of John Philip Sousa and his famous band of musicians to this city, marks an important era in musical circles.

The "Cosmopolitan" a short time ago, devoted considerable space to a detailed history of this band, and pays a high compliment to Mr. D. Blakeley, an experienced business man and a great lover of music, who in conjunction with Mr. Sousa originated what is now admitted to be the best concert band in America.

In John Philip Sousa, we have a man of high personal character, conspicuous musical abilities, a graceful and forceful leader, in fact a born conductor, and a composer of no mean ability. His "Washington Post" march is probably more familiar to our citizens than any of his others. It is recorded that, Jean de Resque, the popular opera singer, so much admired this march that he carried it off to Europe with him, and when ever one of his horses started in a race, the band had orders to play this lively American air, which was soon to be heard whistled on the streets from Paris to St. Petersburg.

It is said that the royalties on his marches yield him a greater annual revenue than that received by any civil or military officer in the U. S. Government, the President alone excepted. This band represented America at the World's Fair and carried off more honors than any other band.

The thousands of people that attend the great St. Louis Exposition and Manhattan Beach every year are attracted principally by Sousa's Band.

It is the object of this sketch to give the people in the Maritime Provinces an idea of the reputation this band enjoys in America. W. S. B. Mathews, a distinguished musical author and critic, and editor of a magazine called "Music" declares that Sousa stands at the head, and that he has attained a

standard of finished and sympathetic intelligence such as he has never before recognized in a band.

The people in the Maritime Provinces have always been regarded as a music loving people and it is to be hoped that they will uphold this reputation by patronizing this renowned musical organization that has been brought here at so great a cost.

HENRY HUDSON.



The House of Melancholia.

BY ALFRED ERWIN.

. . . . A brave man faces the foe,
Alone and sees Death grin in his teeth,
But, shutting his lips, fights on to the end
Without speech, without hope.

Songs from Vagabondia.

I.

"Howard, Howard!"

The thin strident voice penetrated through the mazes of slumber, calling him back to the consciousness of his care weighted life. He awoke with a start.

"Howard! Howard!"

The voice, fraught with fear, sent a thrill of answering alarm through him.

"Yes, mother?" he replied; sitting up in bed and gazing into the night-gloom with bewildered eyes.

"Dress, and come down at once, I want you."

He arose and lighted a lamp. The tiny upspring-flame showed a room, small, and carpetless, but lined about with books; its sole other furniture being the low bed, a table, and one chair. A picture or two, also, hung upon the white-washed wall.

He hastily drew on his clothes, wondering with vague anxiety what cause his mother had to cail him from sleep so late as this—for a glance at his watch told him that it was long past midnight—and in this household living by the tenets of a strict rule-bound sect eleven o'clock, even, at night should be an hour given to sleep. Completing his hasty toilet he turned down the wick of the lamp, and left the room. As

he pulled the door open a piece of paper which had been laid upon the knob fluttered down to the floor. He picked it up—it was a note addressed to himself. He opened it and read—

“Howard,

I am going to camp out to-night on Macnab's Island, and with Burke and Curtis too, so that shows you what I care for what *you* say. You can tell mother if you like, I don't care.”

His face hardened as he read and he crumbled the paper up and threw it into a corner of the room. He then went down stairs, and emerging into the hallway below he saw his mother standing in the doorway of a lighted room awaiting him.

Mrs. Stannard was a tall large woman, with a handsome pale face and thick black hair. Her pose was essentially stately and refined as she stood there in the doorway awaiting him. But her eyes were full of some inscrutable vexatious expression; and he, taking up the taskwork of his life, tried in perplexity to read it. For the peace of sleep had passed away and the old haunting trouble was with him as of old. The one passion of his days now was the fear that the tragedy of this house might be reenacted and that the doom of lunacy that hung over his mother's soul might be fulfilled—and the struggle to prevent it.

As he came up his mother retreated into the room and he followed her. As he entered she broke into strange broken wailing, crouched in a chair and all the dignity of her bearing gone.

“Oh, Howard he's dead, he's dead! she cried.

He went quickly to her side and knelt down, taking her hand. Had the end come now? he thought.

"Be still mother," he said, "be still."

"Be still? Be still when Robbie is lying out in the darkness somewhere dead? Oh, I know he must be dead—my dear, dear, boy!"

A wave of tragic grief spread over her face, and her eyes gazed, wide open, over his head, fixed in wild sorrow.

Then her mood changed strangely. She drew herself up straight in her chair. Her face grew harsh and stony—but her eyes kept that strange wildness which perplexed Howard so. When she spoke again her voice was shrill and querulous.

"How dare Robert stay out of the house at this time of night! It is easy to see that there is no man about now. Oh, what a thing it is for a woman to be left alone to battle for a family of unthinking, selfish, boys! What liberties they take—"

"Hush, mother, please," whispered Howard, "I know where Robert is and I will go and bring him home."

He arose to his feet. His mother clutched his hand.

"Howard, but suppose he is dead! Oh, where *is* he now! Howard, listen—" she spoke in a low deeper, truer voice, her large well lighted eyes gazing into his—"listen; last night I had a dream. I saw your father again as he was the night when he went mad. It seemed to me that I awoke—as I did that night—and heard him talking with some one in his study! and it was late, very late, at night. I was very uneasy, who could be with him? I arose from my bed, and walked out of the room and through the hall to his study. I opened the door softly, and I might have slammed it open for all the difference it

would have made! A candle burned low in the room. Your father was sitting by the table—and when I saw him I knew that Death was welcome—yes Death was welcome. He, the pious preacher, the man of God—and oh! the man I loved!—was sitting there with eyes blazing in the craze of drink, gibbering senseless words, a liquor bottle at his hand, a drunken beast! Then he raised his head and saw me—and cursed me!—yes and *struck* me!—oh, why should that come again to haunt me! And then, it was just so in my dream as it happened, he fell on the floor screaming in madness. My God! how true it all was! And next day he was taken to the mad house. Howard, do you know that afterwards I found the closet in his room full of liquor bottles, empty and full? Oh, Howard sometimes I think that I too am going mad, yes—”

“Hush, mother,” he said, his cheek blanching.

“Yes, but it is so. In the night time—I can never, never, sleep, Howard, save when the dreams come—I wonder about the house when every one else is sleeping, thinking—thinking—thinking.

And to-night I looked into Robert’s room and he was not there—“her voice became shrill and false once more—” oh, how selfish you are! You would let him die out in the cold night! Why don’t you bring him home to me?”

“Yes, yes, mother, I will go now,” he said, soothingly, “stay here quietly until I come home.” He went out into the hall and put on his overcoat and cap. He felt he could not stay within the close house, with the moodful woman any longer, and wait for Robert’s return. Dull anger burned within him at the errant one. How dare he bring this

added care and trouble on his overburned shoulders ! He went to the front door and so into the street, his mother following. When he turned the street corner on his way southward he looked around and saw her standing in the doorway, with a lamp in her hand the light of which shone on her pale sad face.

II

The long street stretched before him to the south, the white dust upon it glimmering palely. The houses on each side towered up with an uneven broken skyline, mere masses of shapeless black, with here and there a vague dim touch of whiteness ; and the lighter sky roofed the dark street like a corridor, in which his footsteps echoed out.

He felt like some poor adventuring dwarf in the household of a giant—the mere houses seemed so huge and awe inspiring to him, lost in their shadow as he walked among them.

The city was sleeping, quiet and silent. Once he saw a ruddy light shining from a window, and he wondered who there was accursed with sleeplessness—or sorrow. The moon burned dimly behind a cloud. A few soft stars shone in the misty sky. A salt chilly wind blew in off the sea, and the dust arose now and then in a wan ghostly cloud. The night—calm was soothing and sweet : yes, but he could not still the spectres of his troubled soul. Oh, the pain of the world, and the sorrow that comes to some ! Back in that little house so like the others about it one woman waked to her tragedy—and blessed sleep ruled in the households of its neighbours. Ah, yes, sorrow and pain were real things—and they were fast twined in his life.

He was the eldest of the two sons. Robert was nineteen and he was twenty-two. It was three years now since his father had gone mad that fatal night; and not one day since then, had he been free from care and anxiety. Robert was a wild lad, perverse and wilful; and all his efforts to induce him to take to steady work and avoid his loose companions had been unavailable. Howard had to work hard, very hard, to support his mother and his brother. And then the wearying care and terror with which he watched the curse of lunacy, which had fell upon his father, coming also unto his mother, whom he loved so well!

It was a life that fell heavily and cruelly upon him, unnaturally so; for he was one to whom quiet and peace were very dear, and to have been able to sit contentedly among the books that lined his little room, poring in them, and writing forth his idyllic fanciful imaginings would have been sweet indeed. But then, that could not be; life held grimmer things for him.

The houses that lined the street became less frequent, after a while, and alternated with open fields on one side, and stretches of sea-beach on the left side, and soon they ceased altogether and he moved rapidly along a road that ran close to the water, and patches of woods took the place of the houses. In the north, to his back, Halifax lay. On the Dartmouth shore opposite a few far spaced lights shone, and he could see the lighthouse beacons seaward. The harbour water held a wan light and lay calm and still, lapping very gently on the beach. A track of starlight, more beautiful and more rare than moonlight, stretched across the water from a

great golden star low down in the Eastern sky. Faintly luminous clouds still veiled the full moon. A white thread of tinkling foam ran across the coal-black beach. The wind moved lowly in the trees.

Sometimes the glimmering road ran among trees that nearly met overhead, and then the road went dark, and the stars showed but through a narrow gulf, and he walked in gloom. He went through such a place, after walking some mile and a half, when on the point of the peninsula on whose base the town lays. He went on in the darkness hearing faint sounds about him, the whispering of trees and murmur of hidden water, seeing gleamings of faint lighter spaces among the black mass of trees; hectic maples, perchance; which, had the light of the sun shone would have blazed forth in all their evanescent glory of glowing colours, yellow and purple, gold and red. Then on a sudden, through the trees which grew shoreward, he caught sight of the red glow of a leaping fire burning soundlessly to him out in the dark blot over the water, which showed where MacNab's Island lay.

He knew at once that it must be the campfire where his brother lay and he quickened his pace and soon he was clear of the forest, on the extreme point of the cape.

He saw the wide harbour-mouth and the vast sea beyond—veiled by the night. The further shore of the harbour to the East and the shores of the bay that runs inland to the West were all clothed with undistinguishable forest trees, and black as if they were painted so. In front, out a little way, the water was slowly breaking over a reef with sudden flashes of white foam.

All this he saw but did not notice. Immediately in front of him on the beach there was a boat-house of which he had a key; for he kept a boat there although he had not used it for a long time. He went in, lighted a lantern he found there and drew out his boat, taking his oars and rowlocks. He ran the boat down the slip, launched it, and rowed away, his beacon-light the blazing fire on the island, a mile and more distant.

The boat was light and he went fast. The water seethed about him. With every backward reach of the oars a shower of brilliant phosphorescent drops followed like a wing.

Bright wavering lines streamed away from the bows, and fire broke flashing out when the oars dipped gurgling in.

The mystic night was close about him, there in the wide spaces; and the loneliness was awesome—yet intoxicating in the freedom it gave from the confined city ways. For the first time Howard understood his brother's passion for the vagabondage of the open air and woods and sea. He fully felt its charm—but then his thoughts reverted to the doomed sorrowing woman he had left alone, and bitterness fell on him more at the thought of Robert's neglect and carelessness. What right had he to throw off all care and duty and leave him and a feeble woman to fight the hard battle alone!

He now bent still more sturdily to his oars and soon the revolving light on Chebucto Head flashed out his way, and he knew he had reached the half of his journey.

When he looked the other way, to the Dartmouth

shore, he could dimly see the vague grim mass of the mad house wherein his father was confined.

It was then that he heard the sound of oars.

"Boat ahoy!" someone cried, look where your'e going.

III.

The voice was that of Curtis, one of the dissolute vagabonds that Robert consorted with. He turned around and saw a small row-boat looming near, rowed by two men.

"Is Rob, with you?" he called out.

"Good God!" cried Curtis, "its his brother!" Two strokes brought Howard alongside. The men had stopped rowing in startled surprise. Howard got into their boat.

The body of his brother was lying beneath the thwart, the pale face turned to the stars.

"My God! what has happened?" he exclaimed. Curtis dropped his head.

"He went in swimming while it was dark, and,—and, got tangled in the eel-grass. We are bringing him home." The men started rowing for the Halifax shore. The other boat had drifted away. Howard crouched down by the body. His thoughts were in a ghastly turmoil. Sorrow for the dead one and his fate—keen sorrow—and a vision of the mad woman looking out into the night and waiting, waiting—for this! Oh, how was he to tell her? Or did she know? She had said: "He is dead." Perhaps in some strange manner it had been told to her. Oh, the sickening misery of it all! He felt as if he too was going mad.

The two men rowed in silence, casting uneasy

glances at the crouched form and dead body in the stern. They were afraid that Howard would break out into some tirade of reproach against them for the manner in which they had led his brother into their idle dissolute courses—and so to his death. And beside, they were genuinely sorry for his fate.

But Howard did not think of that. The greater shame and sorrow of the more immediate tragedy held him fast.

The phosphorescent glow still broke out about them when the oars dipped, and streamed away from the bows. The wind moved a bit brisker now, and little waves slapped against the boat. The moon had broke out from the clouds, and flooded the dark water with a wide path of silver. Behind them the fire still glowed in the dark bulk of the island.

Soon they came to a little wharf; citywards.

"You men bring Ro—it, home. You know where the house is?"

"Yes," said Curtis.

Howard stumbled out of the boat and walked slowly up the street—homewards.

It was still some hours before the dawn, but he became conscious that the sky was suffused with light. A bit ahead it was filled with a great, red and crimson glow. A fire engine vomiting golden sparks came thundering around a corner, and he heard voices shouting and a great stir of people.

He turned the corner into the street where he lived. The place was filled with a swaying crowd, who were yelling hoarsely—for upon the roof of the blazing house a woman was standing . . . laughing high and wild and madly.

The red flames were all about her. Clouds of

ruddy waving smoke and streams of lurid sparks shot up into the air. The red light fell on the upturned faces of the people.

Howard buffeted and fought a slow way through the crowd—screaming out in his agony. It was his mother!

A ladder was against the house and men tried to climb it, fighting the flames and deathly smoke. But then the end came, and a fearful cry went up from the crowd—the roof of the house sank through with a burst of flame and the women disappeared.

* * * * *

The two men came around the corner of the street just then—bearing the body of the boy, wrapped in a torn boat sail.

A Conceit.

BY MORTIMER COLLINS.

O TOUCH that rosebuds! it will bloom—
 My lady fair!
 A passionate red in dim green gloom,
 A joy, a splendor, a perfume
 That sleeps in air.

You touched my heart: it gave a thrill
 Just like a rose
 That opens at a lady's will:
 Its bloom is always yours, until
 You bid it close.

The Passing Show.

Richard Harding Davis, says Mascot, was traveling in a Pullman Car, and the incredulous newsboy tried to sell him a book. He deposited half a dozen paper covered novels at the young novelist's side. They were untouched. On his next trip the boy picked out the literature of Hall Caine, and left a bundle of views of the Yellowstone Park, as a bait. But Davis remained unmoved.

"Don't you want to read the Jungle Book, by Rudyard Kipling?" "I have read it," replied Davis, looking out the window. "Maybe you have not seen Trilby, by Du Maurier?" persisted the youth.

"I have read it," responded Davis.

The newsboy glared incredulous hatred at Mr. Davis, and put another book under his nose; "The Exiles, by Richard Harding Davis."

"I wrote it," replied Davis.

The boy picked up his books, looked contemptuously at Davis, and said, "Young gent, don't you be so gay."

Andrew Lang has written a novel which is named *A Monk of Fife*; and it is being published serially in the *Monthly Packet*. This is the second novel Mr. Lang has written, and it is to be hoped that *A Monk of Fife*, will be more successful, than *The Mark of Cain*, his first novel which though full of exciting incidents and fine style, in some unaccountable manner, fell flat.

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