CONDENSED CLASSICS

THE MOONSTONE

By WILKIE COLLINS

Condensation by
Miss Jessie A. Parsons, Smith College Library

When Wilkie Collins met Charles Dickens, his future was shortly decided. The lives of the two were intimately connected thereafter. Dickens was conducting "Household Words," and for it Collins contributed, as he did for "All the Year Round," also in charge of Dickens, a large number of tales.

The close friendship and co-operation of Dickens not only found the direction for Collins to follow, but it seemed to lead him to the type of story on which rests his fame, that in which the skillful unwinding of an intricate and exciting plot, and the construction of a thoroughly involved mystery baffles the reader in a maze of details and circumstances. He might lack humor, fail to appreciate the finer shades of character, but he certainly conceived some striking personalities; for his own type of story he was unsurpassed by any of his contemporaries.

"The Woman in White" (1860) was his great success; "The Moonstone" (1868) was a close second in the opinion of a large and devoted following of readers.

BEFORE the Mohammedan conquest the Moon-god, in his Brahmin shrine, wore upon his forehead one of the most beautiful diamonds in creation. "Partly from its peculiar color, partly from a superstition which represented it as partaking of the nature of the deity whom it adorned, and growing and lessening in unison with the waxing and waning of the moon it first gained the name by which it continues to be known in India to this day—the name of "The Moonstone." After passing from one lawless hand to another, in 1850, "after the lapse of eight centuries the Moonstone looks forth over the walls of the sacred city in which its story first began."

Throughout this long period the Moonstone had been sought diligently by three Brahmins and their successors. Their vigilance was, in 1848, rewarded by the sight of the resplendent gem gleaming on the bosom of a light-hearted girl. Rachel Verinder had received the Moonstone as a legacy from an unscrupulous uncle who was in high disfavor with the family. Knowing that the Moonstone brought ill-luck, the gift was made in revenge.

Although thoroughly admired at Miss Verinder's birthday dinner, the uncanny influence of the stone made itself felt in the atmosphere of the party. Two rival suitors were present—both cousins of Rachel Verinder. One, Godfrey Ablewhite, persuasive in manner and eloquent as chairman of many charitable organizations, lived in the neighborhood and had hitherto gained the advantage which propinquity gave him over Franklin Blake, lately returned to England, bringing the Moonstone, after several years spent on the continent. The latter was a guest of Mrs. Verinder three weeks before the birthday, where his graciousness and congeniality to Miss Verinder made him most welcome. Hence it was not surprising that Rachel fell in love with him and refused the importunities of Godfrey Ablewhite just before the birthday dinner. This major tension, accompanied by various misunderstandings on the part of other guests, ended in a dispute between the family physician and Franklin Blake over the latter's sleeplessness in which the doctor failed to convince him that medicine could triumph over his nerves.

On hearing a drum the guests rushed to the terrace to be confronted by three Indian jugglers. At a word from one of the diners, a celebrated Indian traveler, the intruders hurriedly retreated. This surprising turn of events argued for putting the Moonstone into especially safe keeping, but Miss Rachel, with ideas of her own, insisted on placing it in an unlocked Indian cabinet in her dressing-room. The company then dispersed, leaving Franklin Blake, who looked wretched, and Mr. Ablewhite together. After much urging Mr. Blake decided to take brandy and water to help combat his sleeplessness.

The household was startled next morning at the disappearance of the Moonstone. Franklin Blake, always alert, was instrumental in bringing in the nearest police. Rachel became exceedingly angry at their intrusion and was deeply offended with Franklin Blake for securing them. The chief of police succeeded in making a mess of affairs and was superseded by the famous detective Sergeant Cuff.

The chief of police had aroused the resentment of the servants by examining their boxes; Sergeant Cuff wished to begin with the personal effects of the family, not looking for the Moonstone but rather for an article of clothing bearing a paint stain from the door of Rachel's boudoir. Everyone acceded but Miss Verinder, who gave a most decided refusal. The only servant suspected by the sergeant was Rosanna Spearman, who had been rescued from misfortune by Lady Verinder. She was discovered by Sergeant Cuff to have bought a quantity of plain white cloth and made and laundered a new garment in her room when supposed to be ill with a headache. Miss Rachel's point-blank refusal to have her possessions searched and her decision to leave her home ended in gaining her point and the dismissal of the detective, who left the Verinder home convinced that Miss Rachel had disposed of the diamond through the connivance of Rosanna Spearman in order to pay some pressing debt.

Rachel and Lady Verinder spent some little time in London, where Rachel was ordered by her physician to have as much gayety as possible to counteract the depression of recent events. Franklin Blake left for the continent and Godfrey Ablewhite again resumed his attentions to Rachel. Shortly afer leaving Lady Verinder's country home for London, Godfrey Ablewhite was summoned to a strange house by an unknown person, bound, gagged and searched by a tawny-skinned individual. On the same day a notorious money-lender met with a like experience in the exact spot where Mr. Ablewhite was maltreated, only that in his case a receipt for a valuable left at a banker's was removed from his loose papers. The news of the disappearance of the Moonstone having reached London an ugly suspicion began to attach itself to Godfrey Ablewhite, only to be dissipated by the emphatic assertion of Rachel Verinder: "I know that Godfrey Ablewhite is innocent!" Soon after this Rachel became engaged to Mr. Ablewhite, although she told him her heart was elsewhere. He seemed, however, to be quite satisfied with this condition until after Lady Verinder's death when he had an opportunity to examine her will. When Rachel's lawyer found this out and communicated it to Rachel she dismissed Godfrey Ablewhite on suspecting him of wishing to marry her for pecuniary reasons. He accepted his dismissal more gracefully than his father, in whose house Rachel was residing after the death of her mother. Mr. Bruff, her lawyer, then made arrangements for her to live with one of her aunts.

At this time Franklin Blake was quickly summoned to England by the death of his father. In his unhappiness he visited Lady Verinder's old home, where he found things sadly changed, with no one in charge except a faithful old steward. This servant told him that there was a letter waiting for him from Rosanna Spearman, which her confidant would deliver into no other hands than his. The short letter contained directions to search on the seashore for a hidden box. This box held a garment stained with a smear of paint from Miss Rachel's boudoir and had on it the name of Franklin Blake. A long letter explained that the garment had been hidden there by Rosanna Spearman on account of her love for Franklin Blake and her hopes of shielding him from discovery. Immediately, knowing that there must be some mistake, Mr. Blake tried in vain to see Rachel in London by all fair means. His resort to a trick to accomplish this ends unfortunately and they part in great bitterness. Rachel's words: "You villain, I saw you take the diamond with my own eyes!" spurred him to do all in his power to prove his innocence.

He returned to the country house and soon met the assistant of the family physician with whom he had disputed at the birthday dinner. Doctor Candy had caught a severe cold that night, which with complications still affected him mentally and bodily. His assistant had taken in shorthand the doctor's delirious ravings, and after studying them had found out what was preying upon the doctor's mind. In the tumbler of water measured for Franklin Blake the night of the birthday a small quantity of laudanum had been placed. Sleep-walking results were immediately suspected and even Rachel was persuaded to have the experiment repeated under conditions as nearly as possible like those of the year before. Her aunt came with her to chaperon this strange house party, and all eagerly awaited the experiment. Franklin Blake walked in his sleep as far as the cabinet which held a mock diamond. Although he let this stone drop to the floor as the effects of the medicine were off his innocence was established and the two lovers were reconciled.

The time had nearly come when the money-lender was to take from the banker's vault the valuable which he had deposited there. Detectives watched the bank and several people near the money-lender were followed on wrong suspicion. A shrewd office boy took upon himself to follow a large man with a dark beard. This man had taken refuge in a low-class boarding house awaiting the sailing of his steamer for Rotterdam. Franklin Blake and Sergeant Cuff hastened to this house and found the man had been murdered, presumably by an Indian. The detective on removing the black beard and pasty complexion revealed to onlookers the fair hair and ruddy features of Godfrey Ablewhite.

Thus the Brahmin priests, after patiently waiting for eight centuries, were able to restore to the Moon-god his famous Moonstone.

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California Goat Ranch.

The Penobscot farm at Cool, Eldorado county, California, recently stocked a 3,000 acre ranch with milk goats, production to be used exclusively in the manufacture of goat milk cheese.

Big Saving in Hogs.

Discovery of a serum to prevent hog cholera, and its use as shown by the department of agriculture, has reduced losses from that disease by $40,000,000 a year.

What Tibet Is Like

Tibetan Houses in Robber-Infested Bad Lands.

(Prepared by the National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C.)

Few countries are more isolated than Tibet with the huge bulk of China hemming it in on the east, the world's greatest rampant of mountains to the south and west, and vast desert expanse to the north. Behind these bulwarks Tibet has existed for centuries, inhospitable to the knocking of modern ideas; and it is today, therefore, in institutions and customs, one of the most primitive of the larger continental countries which have any semblance of governmental machinery. Buddhism seems to have been the only one of the great forces molding the outside world which made itself felt behind Tibet's towering mountains; and even that force, having once gained success, has been almost swallowed up in the devil worship which is the highest religion that the Tibetans themselves have evolved.

Until a few years ago the West knew practically nothing of Tibet except the rather doubtful information brought to the outside world by a few adventurous travelers of the middle ages. Explorer after explorer during the past century was turned back with but a fleeting glimpse of the edge of the unknown land, usually in the sparsely settled regions of the north.

But though much of Tibet is unknown, civilization has set a few outposts in the eastern edge of the country close to the Chinese border, and so has come to know "provincial Tibet" fairly well. The valley of the Yangtze, where that greatest of Chinese rivers flows almost due south at the eastern end of the Himalayas, forms the southern portion of the border between China proper and Tibet. Theoretically Tibet is a vassal state of China, but actually since the Chinese revolution Tibet has kept all Chinese officials out and has swum free under her ruling priests. Even the region on the China side of the Yangtze is more Tibetan than Chinese.

This border region, which is better known to the outside world than any other part of Tibet, is a country of high plateaus and muntains. The principal city of the region, Batang, is one of the lowest points, yet its altitude is 9,000 feet above sea level, nearly twice that of Denver. Much of the surrounding plateau is 12,000 to 15,000 feet high. From this great upland rise numerous peaks 20,000 feet and more in height.

Tremendous Mountain Panorama.

The view from the summits of some of the passes that must be traversed in traveling about this marvelously rugged country can hardly be surpassed anywhere in the world. The panorama for hundreds of miles on a clear day is one of countless high peaks interspersed with greater snowy masses that exceed in height the topmost pinnacles of all other continents.

Below timber line are some fine forests, and the Alpine-like flowers of the short summer are exceedingly beautiful. Here and there among the mountains are clear, sparkling lakes, their waters so cold that in most of them fish cannot live.

Many of the Tibetans are nomads, tending flocks of sheep and yak on the uplands, and living in black, yak-hair tents. In those valleys which are low enough to permit the maturing of grain, other Tibetans practice a rude sort of agriculture.

In spite of the cold winters the tent is the year-around home of the nomads, and they seldom even enter a house. As the snow melts on the lower slopes of the mountains in the spring they follow their herds upward from the valleys in its train, until in mid-summer they are living far up in the highlands and on the sides of the peaks. When winter begins to set in they make the reverse journey, going down to the valleys only as fast as the descending snow line drives them.

The farmers of the lower valleys live in substantial houses of mud with flat roofs. These dwellings are not unlike the adobe houses of Mexico, but are decidedly more substantial, being constructed by the beating of mud into thick walls between forms of timber.

The farmers have few animals but utilize the yak for plowing, the animals being brought down from the highlands at the proper time. Wooden plows with a single handle are used.

The living quarters in the house of the valley folk usually consist of a single large room, in which all work, including the cooking, is done, and where the members of the family eat and sleep.

Few Comforts in the Home.

The comforts in such homes are very meager. In few establishments is there even the semblance of a bed. In the ordinary houses "going to bed" means merely loosening the girdle, opening the sheepskin garment, and curling up on the floor with the feet toward the stove, which is an essential feature of all habitations in this high, cold country.

The stove is built of mud, with a fireplace below and a hole in the top into which pots may be set for cooking. It is usually found on one side of the living room, and the members of the family, on retiring for the night, range themselves in a fan-shaped group about it.

Families possessing domestic animals share their houses with them. In two-storied houses the lower floor is the stable, and through it the living quarters are reached. In some one-storied houses the front portion is given up to the animals, while the family lives in the rear.

The two principal foods of the Tibetans, "tsamba" and "butter tea" seem to a westerner neither appetizing nor nourishing, but in spite of a cheerless climate the mountaineers manage to keep sturdy on them. Tsamba is made by parching barley and then grinding it into a sort of emergency ration, which on mixture with moisture is ready to eat. When Tibetans are on journeys or are wandering about with their flocks and herds, they carry tsamba in small leather bags inside their coats, thus always having at hand the materials for a hearty meal.

In preparing the other principal article of their diet the Tibetans first make a strong liquid by boiling the coarse Chinese tea which they prize most highly. The concoction is strained into a churn and to it are added a lump of butter, more or less stale, and a handful of salt. The queer mixture is then churned into an emulsion. The resulting liquid is neither tea, soup nor gravy but to an occidental is a sort of indifferent mixture of all of them.

Original Condensers of Milk.

The Tibetans of this region were probably the original users of condensed milk in the form of dry lumps, for they have prepared this article of food for many centuries. Fresh milk is poured into a churn which is never washed and the liquid therefore curdles almost the instant it comes into contact with the germ-incrusted walls of the container. It is then churned and the butter is extracted. After the butter is extracted the milk is boiled in a large iron pot until it reaches the consistency of thick syrup. It is then poured out in a thin sheet and allowed to dry, after which it is broken into small pieces and stored. The lumps often become as hard as stone, and to eat them dry is out of the question. The nomads solve the problem by substituting the dry milk for tsamba, soaking it in their butter tea. It thus becomes softened to some extent and can be chewed.

The marriage customs of the people of Tibet present a peculiar combination of monogamy, polygamy, and polyandry—the last particularly characteristic of the country, though monogamy is actually the prevailing system.

Personal Charm

Unselfishness is one of the keys to personal charm, which means good manners. The woman who would be a successful woman, a woman of charm, must be an unselfish woman. She must be unselfish in her own interests. She must repress natural instincts to be bad-tempered when she is tired, to retort sharply when contradicted on her own particular subjects. She must listen when she wants to talk, and she must never for one moment be off her guard in the world.—Exchange.

First Really National Bank

Bank of North America was the name of the first bank of a national character. It had a charter for ten years, from 1741, from the confederation, but doubt as to its legality led the bank to seek and obtain a charter from the state of Pennsylvania in 1783. In 1785 this latter charter was revoked, but in 1787 it was renewed. It was located at Philadelphia.

Where She Drew the Line.

I have a saucy niece who lives 'way down South. She was visiting her uncle one week-end with her sister and brother and her mother and father, and they had the nurse with them. She was rather naughty and her uncle was trying to make her mind. She looked him right in the eye, and threw back her head with the startling announcement: "I mind mammas and papas and nurses—but I don't have to mind uncles."—Chicago Tribune.

Timely

Lord Frederick Hamilton tells some excellent stories in "Here. There and Everywhere" Here is one of Archbishop Magee of England: When he was a bishop of Peterborough he met, in the poorer quarters of the town, a sailor who had just lurched out of a public house. The man recognized the bishop, and, raising his hand in a gesture of mock benediction, called out. "The Lord be with you." "And with thy spirits," answered Magee.

Source of Diamonds

While some diamonds are obtained from river sands, most of them are obtained by mining. The diamonds occur largely in a soft volcanic rock known as "blue ground." This rock is taken from the mines, spread out in the open air and allowed to decompose; it is afterward washed and separated.

Grease Spots on Wallpaper

To clean wallpaper of grease spots, buy an ounce of pipe clay at any drug store and make a thick paste. Apply to the spots and allow to remain on over night. In the morning rub off with a clean cloth. It makes the paper like new, removing all the spots.

Famous Blenheim Palace

Blenheim palace, the residence of the duke of Marlborough, is one of the finest in England. There are 120 rooms in the palace and 15 staircases. It is stated that $4,000 worth of putty is required every year to keep the window panes in repair.

Saki Next to Oldest Liquor

With the exception of grape juice, it is said that the most ancient alcoholic beverage is known as saki, the Japanese drink made from rice.

Another Version

The evil that men do lives after them; the good is often misconstrued by the attorney for the other side.—Southeast Missourian.

Sound Travels Far at Night

On calm nights the range of audibility of a sound is sometimes from ten to twenty times as great as it is during the day.

Technical

The dramatic triangle, Robert, is caused by people not being on the square.

Duty's Path Close at Hand.

The path of duty lies in what is near, and men seek for it in what is remote; the work of duty lies in what is easy, and men seek for it in what is difficult.—Mencius.

Lucidity Is Not Simplicity.

Lucidity is good everywhere, for all time and in all things, in a letter, in a speech, in a book, in a poem. Lucidity is not simplicity. A lucid poem is not necessarily an easy one.—Augustine Birrell.

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Evidently Did Not Fear Washington

David Burns owned the farm on which the executive mansion and many department buildings now stand at Washington, a thrifty Scot, who objected to giving the land for Lafayette square. When Washington reminded him he wold have been a poor tobacco raiser had the federal government not chosen his farm, he replied that but for a fortunate marriage Washington would have been an ordinary surveyor, but Washington got the land he wanted.

Seek Employment Worth While

Let your employment be such as may become a reasonable person; and not be a business fit for children or distracted people, but fit for your age and understanding. For a man may be very idly busy, and take great pains to so little purpose, that, in his labors and expense of time, he shall serve no end but of folly and vanity. There are some people who are busy, but it is, as Domitian was, in catching flies.—Jeremy Taylor.

Had Older Acquaintance.

Don and Hugh had been discussing their father. An argument arose. To prove his point, Don exclaimed, "Well, I guess I ought to know. I've known my father nearly three years longer 'n you have!"

Peculiarity of Judas Tree.

One of the curious things about the redoud, or Judas tree, is that it bears flowers on the old wood. Blossoms are found in abundance on twigs that are five or six years old.

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