A BOTTLE OF MADEIRA.

By Angelo Lewis.

"You have an uncommonly cosy den here, Armstrong," said my friend Macpherson, as he turned his chair to the fire. "And this is a capital weed. Just one thing more, and our Elysium would be complete."

"And what may that be?" I inquired.

"A bottle of that wonderful old Madeira your pater used to bring out on high days and holidays. But I suppose that's all gone long since."

"Not quite, I fancy. I brought the remainder of the governor's wine with me when I came here, and I'm pretty sure there was a dozen or so of the old Madeira. I can't say whereabouts in the cellar it lies, but if you'll come down and hold a candle for me, I'll see if I can lay my hand upon a bottle."

"Agreed, nem. con. I'd hold a candle to a much blacker personage than yourself, upon such an inducement."

The time was about 8 o'clock on a December evening. The place, my private sitting room on the first floor of the Whittlebury bank, of which I had been appointed manager some two years previously. Dick Macpherson, my visitor, was an old school fellow, who had just completed a three years' term of service as surgeon on H. M. S. Orion, and pending his appointment to another ship, had come down to spend a week or two with me at Whittlebury. Dick was a character in his way. He was accustomed to describe himself as a thoroughbred mongrel; half Scotch, half Irish; half sailor, half surgeon. Though still young, being barely thirty, he was not exceptionally skillful in his own profession, but had a useful amateur knowledge of several others. He was a clever mechanic, and his knowledge of chemistry, like Sam Weller's of London, was "extensive and peculiar." His special hobby, however, was electricity, which he maintained to be not only the light and the power but the medicine of the future, and he was never so happy as when devising new uses for it. He had been greatly disgusted, on his arrival, to find that the bank was unprovided with electric bells, and gave me no peace until I consented to let him supply the deficiency. In vain I represented to him that electricity was an unknown force in Whittlebury. He retorted that in such case the bank, as representing finance, thrift, and other commercial virtues, was the more bound to set an example in the right direction; and already, in one corner of my sitting room, lay a collection of bells, batteries, wires and pushes, to be used in the execution of the work.

The building, I may here state, had not been originally erected for a bank, but was an old-fashioned private house, which had been adapted to that purpose. The basement consisted of four roomy vaults, originally intended as cellars. Three of them, indeed, were still used for that purpose: one for coals, one for my private store of wine, and one as a receptacle for lumber; while the fourth had been converted into a "strong room." The walls and floors of the "strong room" were lined with concrete; the arch of the vault cased with boiler plates, and the wooden door replaced by a double door of wrought iron, secured by combination locks. Within stood a couple of strong safes—one large, one small—of the most approved construction. The only daylight admitted to the vault found its way through four circular pieces of thick glass, each six inches in diameter, let into the flooring of the room above (my private office), and the only access to the basement, including the strong room, was by spiral iron stairs leading from the same room.

The ground floor consisted of two rooms only, the larger being the public office of the bank, the other my private office, above mentioned. The latter was a small room at the rear of the building, and had originally been a kitchen. When, however, the house was adapted to its present purpose, the kitchen had been transferred to the topmost floor, where also were the apartments of the caretaker—a sturdy Irishman, named O'Grady—and his wife. There were three rooms on the intermediate floor; two being bedrooms, and the third the room in which we were seated on the evening of my story.

I lighted a candle, and we made our way downstairs to the cellar. After some little search, we came upon a bin which I found to contain the last survivors of the famous Madeira. I took out a bottle, and was just closing the cellar door, when a strange sound struck my ear. First came two or three strokes, as of a hammer, but dull, as if the striking implement was muffled in some way; then the "scrunch" of a chisel; and finally a dropping sound, as of falling mortar. With a warning glance at Macpherson, I opened the door of the strong room adjoining, and silently stepped inside. The sounds were here more distinctly audible; and we could fix with tolerable certainty the spot from which they proceeded, which was the lower part of the left-hand wall.

Closing the door, I led the way up the spiral stairs into my private office. "What do you make of that Mac?" I said, as I placed the bottle on the table.

"Judging by the sound, I should say someone was chipping a hole through the wall, presumably to rob the bank," replied Macpherson.

"That is precisely my own impression. What a stroke of luck that you should have chanced to ask for that bottle of Madeira. Well, forewarned is forearmed; we shall be ready for them. I'll just go and get my revolver, and then I'll mount guard, while you go and fetch the police.

Macpherson looked at me thoughtfully. "Excuse me, old man, but wouldn't that be a little bit premature? In the first place, it is just possible that the sound we have heard is capable of some innocent interpretation, and we may get laughed at for raising a false alarm. In the second place, if our underground friend is a burglar, wouldn't it be as well to let him make the case a little clearer against himself? I don't know what thickness of wall he has to tackle, but judging by the look of the material, and the very small quantity of stuff that seems to fall after each blow, I should fancy he had still a longish job before him."

"That's true enough. That wall is eighteen inches thick, and of the toughest concrete made. Of course, we don't know how long the gentleman on the other side has been pegging away at it; but judging from the sound, he has a good deal to do yet."

"Then we need not decide anything in a hurry. Pull that cork, Geoff, and we'll see if we can't devise some sort of a trap for him. There's nothing like a glass of good wine to help the imagination."

I drew the cork, and fetched a glass from the cupboard. "Help yourself, Dick, but you must excuse my joining you. Nothing stronger than water will pass my lips till this matter is over."

"Every man to his taste," replied Dick, holding the wine critically between himself and the light, then sipping it with reverential gusto. "I work best on this sort of thing. Now, to return to the business in hand. I would much rather capture this gentleman, if we can, without calling in the police till we are ready to hand him over to them."

"So would I, if I were under no personal responsibility. But suppose our plans failed and the bank was robbed! A pretty mess I should be in."

"No doubt you would. And, if, therefore, at any moment you cease to have perfect confidence in our defensive arrangements, by all means call in the police at once. But I don't think you will need them. You agree with me that there is no fear of an entrance being effected tonight?"

"Not the slightest, I should say. It is mere speculation, of course, but I should think the burglar has a full week's work before him."

"Good. Then let us see, in the first place, whether we can fix any probable time for the final attack. Is the bank particularly rich just now?"

"On the contrary, just now the cash in hand is lower than usual. But next Monday is quarter-day, and for some days after that we shall have an exceptionally large amount in hand, as a number of rents and other accounts are paid in about that time."

"Then if, as we may assume, our underground friend knows his business, he will endeavor to get in about a week hence. By the way, who is your neighbor on that side?"

"A French gentleman, the Count de la Roche. But, good heavens! the count can't have anything to do with it. Why, he has £500 in the bank at this moment."

"That sounds respectable, but it is not conclusive. I am glad to hear it, though, for in that case we are pretty sure to have warning of the attack. When the count draws out his £500 we may reckon that he has got pretty nearly through the wall."

"I don't quite follow your logic."

"It is clear enough. It is not worth any man's while to steal his own money; and if he made the attempt, and failed, he might have trouble in getting it afterwards. Ergo, if the count is the culprit, he will draw it out just before the attempt is made."

"But why should he have deposited it at all?"

"Doubtless, to disarm suspicion. But we need not take it for granted that the count is the man. It may be some other inmate of his household. What sort of a man is the count?"

"A thorough Frenchman, dark, short and stout, with a pinched-in waist and small hands and feet. Very polite and complimentary. Smokes a very expensive brand of cigars, which are got down from London on purpose for him. Dresses smartly, and is never without a flower in his buttonhole."

"How long has he been here?"

"About three months, as near as I can recollect. Yes, he opened his account with us on the first of October, and he had then been in the town some three or four days. He told me that he desired to open a drawing account as a temporary accommodation, and that he should always keep a good balance. Under such circumstances I accepted him without hesitation."

"And what family has he?"

"His household consists of his wife, a good-looking, rather over-dressed woman, who speaks no English, and a foreign servant, called Antoine. An old woman belonging to the town assists in the housework, but she does not sleep in the house. Antoine is cook, butler and general factotum."

"What is Antoine like?"

"I should take him to be a native of the South of France. He is very dark, with crisp, black hair, coming low down over his forehead, and thick, red ears, with gold rings in them. Smells of garlic, and smokes cigarettes all day long."

"A very good fancy portrait of a French forcat. But one can't go much by description. We shall know Antoine better by and by, no doubt. In the meantime, the first thing to do is to make sure that nobody effects an entry without our knowledge."

"How do you propose to prevent it?"

"That is an easy matter. I shall rig up an electric alarm across the piece of wall they are working on. The plant provided for our bell-hanging arrangements will be just the thing. If you will lend me a hand, I will have it fixed in no time."

We set to work accordingly. Our first task was to fix two bells, one in my private office and the other in my bed room, and to carry wires from them to the strong room. So far, we were able to work at our ease, and to converse when necessary. Now, however, we had to deal with the very wall behind which the concealed workman was engaged in his felonious task. Still, with unfailing regularity came, first, the tap, tap of the mallet, then the scrunch of the chisel, and the fall of the displaced material. As we could hear him so plainly, it was conceivable that he might hear us also, and we therefore had to work in absolute silence. I held the candle while Macpherson attached with sealing wax a number of silk threads, crossing the walls in various directions, and connected in some way, which I was not electrician enough to appreciate, with the wires of the bells.

After half an hour of this work, Macpherson gave me a nod of satisfaction, indicating that all was complete; and we returned to the office above.

"Thank goodness, that's over!" I said. "Now, will you kindly explain how it works? I thought silk was a non-conductor."

"So it is," he replied. "The principle is just this. No part of that wall can be displaced without making a pull upon one or other of those threads. The moment that happens, the circuit is completed mechanically and the bell rings. It's not easy to explain, save on the spot, but I'll guarantee that it works all right. By Jove, it is half-past 12. I'll have just one more glass of the Madeira, and then to bed, to think out my plan for catching the thieves."

We retired to rest, but I for my part could not sleep. At half-past 2 I got up, and, partially dressing myself, stole downstairs and paid a visit of inspection to the strong room. All was quiet, the midnight excavator having apparently suspended his labors for the night. Thus satisfied that there was no immediate danger, I returned to my bed, and slept soundly till daylight.

Macpherson met me at the breakfast table with a triumphant air. "My plan is complete," he said. "Electricity will tell us when our thieves break through the wall, and chemistry shall capture them for us. Did you ever hear of the Grotta del Cane?"

"The name sounds familiar. Somewhere in Italy, isn't it?"

"The Grotta del Cane is a cavern near Naples, the soil of which generates carbon dioxide, commonly called carbonic acid gas. This gas, being heavier than air, does not disperse, but lies at the bottom of the cave, to a depth of a couple of feet or so. If you send a dog into the cavern he becomes asphyxiated. A man can walk about upright without danger, but if he were to kneel down or stoop below the level of the gas, he would be asphyxiated in like manner."

"Very interesting from a scientific point of view. But I don't see the connection with thief-catching."

"Just this; I propose to turn your strong room into an artificial Grotta del Cane."

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure. And suffocate our chief cashier, or myself, the first time we go into the room!"

"Not at all. The gas will not be generated till the thieves are actually in the strong room. To operate upon the safes, they must of necessity work at a low level. The gas will rise by degrees, as the bottom of the cellar fills. Their only warning will be a slight difficulty in breathing, which (if they notice it) they will put down to the closeness of the vault. A little later they will find they can't breathe at all; but by that time it will be too late, and they will fall insensible."

"Good heavens! you would not kill them?"

"No; my intentions are not quite so bloodthirsty as that. We shall lug them out, and bring them to life again by one or other of the artificial respiration processes. First, however, we shall call in a policeman or two to look after them during convalescence."

"And where is the gas to come from?"

"That's very plain sailing; I shall generate it when wanted, pro re nata, as we doctors say. In the first place, I shall cover the floor of the strong room, to a depth of two or three inches, with a mixture of sawdust and ordinary washing soda, which is a coarse form of sodium bicarbonate. I suppose you can get me half a hundredweight without any difficulty?"

"I dare say I could, but it is a queer order for a bachelor to give. My oilman will think I am going to do my own washing."

"Never mind what your oilman thinks! Then I shall want half a gallon or so of rough sulphuric acid, commonly known as oil of vitrol. Lastly, an empty beer or wine cask to hold the diluted acid, and a few yards of soft metal tubing, such as gasfitters use. This tubing, first punctured freely with holes, will be embedded in the soda and connected with the barrel. At the right moment we turn on the diluted acid, and the strong room will be half-full of carbonic acid gas in ten minutes."

"But if you mix an acid and an alkali, won't there be a warning fizz?"

"Very little. The sound you hear on mixing a seidlitz powder is mainly caused by the small area within which the effervescence is confined. In an open space, like the floor of a cellar, it will be barely perceptible, and I shall further diminish it by sifting fine earth all over the soda, which will make all look ship-shape, while it won't interfere in the least with the chemical process. The sawdust mixed with the soda is to prevent the gas being generated too rapidly."

"You seem to have worked out your scheme pretty minutely."

"I have, to the smallest detail. I laid awake half the night thinking it out. The only risky element will be getting the rascal (or rascals) out of the strong room afterwards. Carbon dioxide is no respecter of persons, and will knock us over as readily as a bank burglar. However, by using due caution, and holding our breaths while we have to stoop, we may venture in far enough to slip a cord round the body of each fellow, and then we can drag him out from a safe distance."

I was carried away by Macpherson's enthusiasm, and after a little further conversation I agreed, though somewhat against my better judgment, to let him try his plan. He set to work at once, and before midnight of the same day his arrangements were completed. The sulphuric acid, diluted with water to four gallons, and contained in an old wine cask, was placed in a cupboard in my private office. The tap communicated with an India rubber tube, and this with sundry lengths of composition pipe, perforated at intervals, which were lying, embedded in soda and sawdust, on the floor of the strong room. Above this was sprinkled a layer of fine earth, restoring the floor to its ordinary cellar-like appearance. The mysterious knocking was resumed from 8 o'clock till 1 a. m., but the operator did not seem to make any perceptible advance

II.

Six days passed without any change of the situation, save that the sound of the excavations in the cellar became daily more audible, showing that the intervening wall was growing thinner. By careful observation of the sound we satisfied ourselves that the concealed operator was working at a space of wall some two feet square, probably intending, when this was sufficiently reduced in substance, forcibly to break away the thin remaining partition.

On the seventh day, however, I had a visit from the count. He had that morning received a letter from his son, a captain in a crack French regiment. Ce cher Alphonse had been playing baccarat, it seemed, and to meet his losses the count was compelled to withdraw for the moment the whole of his balance in the hands of the bank, though it would be replaced a few days later by remittances from other sources.

I instructed a clerk to see how the count's account stood, and the balance having been ascertained, he drew a cheque for the amount and departed with the money. "The plot thickens," said Macpherson, when I told him of the visit. "The grand coup is in all probability for tonight."

We watched accordingly. So soon as we had dined, we took our first position in my office. Our first proceeding was to cover up the bull's-eyes in the floor, that no light might shine through to the vault beneath. Macpherson next muffled the clapper of the electric alarm, so that it should give no sound beyond a faint tapping, sufficient to call our own attention, but not loud enough to be heard beyond the room in which we were. We wore felt slippers, that our footsteps might be noiseless. I had brewed a supply of strong coffee, to help to keep us wakeful, and on the table lay a couple of revolvers, and some lengths of sash-line wherewith to bind our expected captives. O'Grady was told to hold himself in readiness to come down to us instantly on receiving an agreed signal.

These preparations made, we sat down to beguile our vigil with a gome of chess. At ordinary times we were very equally matched, but on this occasion Macpherson found me an easy victim. I could not keep my thoughts from wandering to the possible issues of the coming struggle. If all went well, I had but little to gain; whereas if (an awful "if" that) Macpherson's plan broke down, and the attempt at robbery succeeded, my career as a bank manager would be utterly blasted. At this moment I must own I heartily regretted that I had allowed myself to be drawn into so Quixotic an enterprise, when I might have saved myself all anxiety by placing the matter in the hands of the proper guardians of the peace, or simply reporting it to the directors.

Macpherson, on the contrary, appeared to be troubled by no misgivings, and played even better than usual.

"Fail!" he said, when I suggested the possibility of such an event—"we can't fail; any more than I can fail to win this game, which I undertake to do in four moves. Check!" I made the best fight I could, but in four moves I was checkmated. I was nettled at my defeat, and determined that he should not again win so easy a victory. With a strong effort of will, I concentrated my whole attention on the game, and thenceforth played as coolly as though the hidden enemy were a hundred miles away. We played on with varying fortune till about 11, when the faint "ting" of the electric alarm, followed by a heavy thud in the vault beneath, warned us that the burglars had made good their entrance. With a meaning glance at me, Macpherson lighted a night light, which stood carefully screened in one corner, and then extinguished the lamp, leaving the room in a dim twilight, just sufficient to enable us to move about. He then removed the cover from one of the bull's-eyes in the floor, from which a view could be obtained of the partion of the vault where we anticipated that the entrance would be effected.

A broad ray of light came up through the bull's-eye. Going on our knees we could see that an oblong slab, like the panel of a door, had been forced from the wall, and lay in fragments on the floor beneath. In the vault stood Antoine with his back towards us, while through the black opening left by the missing masonry some other person, whom we conjectured to be the count, was handling crowbars, wedges, and other burglarious-looking implements. When all were handed in, the person on the other side began to creep through the opening, but, to our astonishment, it was not the plump figure of the Count that appeared, but that of a much younger and slighter man, with fair, close-cropped hair. We looked at each other in perplexity. Suddenly the truth flashed upon me. "Madame, without her wig!" I whispered.

Again a head appeared at the opening, and, aided by his friends, the Count scrambled through, though with difficulty, for his broad shoulders all but stuck in the narrow opening. The burglars now proceeded, by some method which was not quite clear to me, to fix sconces, holding lighted candles, to various parts of the wall. They made a rapid examination of the two safes, and then, without further loss of time, the Count and Antoine set to work on the door of the larger, while the third man began like operations on the smaller.

So soon as they were fairly at work Macpherson crossed the room to the barrel containing the diluted sulphuric acid, and turned on the tap, after which he returned to his post of observation by my side. "Keep your eye on that fellow working at the bottom of the smaller safe. He is nearer the floor. The gas will reach him before it touches either of the other two." I watched, scarcely venturing to breathe, such was the intensity of my excitement. Some ten or twelve minutes passed, and I began to fear Macpherson's plan was a failure, when the man he had indicated dropped the tool he was using; and, after swaying from side to side for a moment, fell forward on his face insensible. His fall did not for the moment attract the attention of his comrades, busy as they were in their own share of the work. Presently, however, as the atmosphere became more and more vitiated, the candle lowest in position began to burn less brightly, and at last the failure of light became so marked that the "Count," who was working at the upper part of the larger safe, turned round and looked at the candles with a puzzled air; finally snuffing them with his fingers, as if hoping to cure the defect in that way.

Finding that his expedient had not the desired effect, he turned round again, apparently to consult with his colleagues. Meanwhile, however, the noxious gas had reached the level at which Antoine was working, and with a brief convulsive fight for breath, he threw up his arms, and fell senseless like the first victim. Never have I seen such an expression of terror as came over the face of the so-called Count, as he gazed on the the fallen bodies of his accomplices. Already alarmed by the burning blue of the candles, it seemed to him no doubt that his companions had been struck down by some supernatural power. Panic-stricken, he made a rush for the hole in the wall, but it was too late. In the midst of his struggles to escape the deadly gas overtook him, and he, too, fell back insensible.

"Not a bad night's work," said Macpherson, aloud, as he rose from his knees and proceeded to stop the flow of the acid. "Now we will ring for O'Grady, and then we must make all haste to lug these fellows out of that room. I did not bargain for three of them, and every minute the gas becomes more deadly. Remember what I told you. Venture in only just far enough to get a rope round your man, and hold your breath while you stoop to do it."

At this moment O'Grady appeared, looking a little bewildered, for we had not told him why his presence would be required.

"O'Grady," I said, "burglars have broken into the strong room, and I want you to fetch the police."

"Bur-r-r-glars, is it?" replied O'Grady, peeping down through one of the bull's-eyes. One or two of the candles happened to have been fixed above the level which the gas had reached, and these still burned brightly, though the rest had long since gone out.

"Ghost of Moses! but they're all dead oor-r-r-rpses!"

"Not yet," said Macpherson, "but they soon will be unless we get them out pretty quickly."

"But how the blazes did ye kill them? Oh, sure, it's some of them ilictric divilments of Mister Macpherson's."

"Never mind that now, man, hurry for the police, and you shall know all about it afterwards."

Fortunately the police station was only just over the way. O'Grady started, leaving the door open behind him, and in a few minutes was back again with a sergeant and two constables. Meanwhile, Macpherson and myself had opened the strong room, and with some difficulty had succeeded in getting out the man nearest the door, who happened to be Antoine.

"Shall we tie his hands?" I inquired.

"Never mind that now," replied Macpherson. "He's safe enough for the time; and meanwhile the gas is spreading. Give me the rope again, and stand ready to pull."

I handed him the rope, in which we had made a loop about three feet in length. Carefully holding his breath he slipped this over the body of the next man (the sham Countess de la Roche), and by hauling on the cord we managed to pull him through the doorway.

What O'Grady had told the sergeant I cannot say, but the puzzled look on his face, as he flashed his bull's-eye on the forms of the two men lying in the passageway outside the strong room, was most comical.

"What's this, gentlemen—murder?" he inquired, looking from me to Macpherson as if uncertain which of us to "run in."

"Only burglary, at present, Mr. Jackson," I replied; "and there are two of the burglars for you. The other is still in the strong room, and we shall be glad of your help to get him out."

"That's soon done," said the officer, preparing to enter.

"Stop a bit," interrupted Macpherson; "it's not quite so easy as it looks. That room is filled breast-high with a poisonous gas, which has knocked over those fellows as you see them. In the upper part of the room, where those candles are burning, the air is pure enough, but below that level it is suffocating. Our best plan will be to walk in and stand three on each side of that fellow. I will call 'one,' 'two,' three!' at the word 'two,' each must dip down and lay hold of him, and at 'three' lift him up and carry him out, but don't breathe while you are stooping, or you will be knocked over as he is. Come along, O'Grady," for O'Grady, though plucky enough in a general way, had began to back towards the stairs, with every appearance of terror.

"Is it in there, along with thim ilictric divils? Bedad, I lave that to my betthers. The climate is too unwholesome for the likes o' Tim O'Grady."

There was no time to argue the point. The remainder of the party marched into the strong room, and following the directions of Macpherson, we succeeded in getting out the remaining burglar.

"Why, good gracious," exclaimed the superintendent, "it's the count!"

"Yes," I said, "the count, and Antoine, and madame; all three of them."

It's a big haul," said the seargeant, "and such blackguards deserve all they get. But I'm afraid you gentlemen will get into trouble for killing them."

"No fear of that," said Macpherson. "Just get them across to the lock-up, and I'll come and bring them to life again. Will you come over and see the fun, Armstrong? It won't take more than half an hour or so."

"Thanks, old fellow, but not with that hole in the wail. I think I had better remain on the bank premises."

"And I'll send a couple of men to look after the house next door," said the sergeant.

The three insensible men were removed on stretchers; a grim procession. Macpherson followed them to the police station, but instead of the anticipated half-hour, it was more than three hours before he returned, and he looked completely exhausted. "I have had an awful fright," he said. "The other blackguards came round in twenty minutes or so; but the young one, the sham madame, I really thought he was done for. He had a longer dose of the gas than the other two, and it was just touch and go with him. All's well that ends well, and it's been an extremely interesting experiment from a scientific point of view, but I really think, the next time I want to capture a burglar, I shall drop science and call in the police to collar him."

Which is decidedly my own intention.

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HE FOUND LOST SYRIANS.

San Francisco Call.

Among the arrivals at the Occidental is the widely known pioneer missionary and preacher, Canon J. D. Good, of British Columbia.

Canon Good says his long residence among the Indians there warrants him in saying that the latter are of Syrian origin, and are in fact Syrians now, having the customs and language. He is a very able philologist as well as a daring explorer and missionary.

He has had many thrilling experiences among the Shuswap and Lilooet Indians, on the Fraser and Thompson rivers. For twenty years he was in the saddle every day, and traveled over a vast expanse of very wild country, teaching the Indians and rendering aid to pioneer whites.

It is conceded that the reverend gentleman has done more to subdue the Indians than all other agencies combined.

Canon Good has been thirty-five years in general mission and church work in British Columbia, he having come from England, via San Francisco, in 1861. Though for some years past rector of St. Paul's church at Nanaimo, he has always maintained a deep interest in the Indians thereabout, who were his original proteges.

The intrepid missionary some years ago published a dictionary and grammar of the Indian language. The book gave him a high standing, which he has ever since maintained, and has been sought for far and near. The Smithsonian institution at Washington, D. C., has been especially interested in his researches and conclusions, and at his suggestion has sent men to British Columbia to collect the folklore of the Indians.

"I first went to Nanaimo," said the distinguished missionary preacher, "and remained there till 1866. After that I was twenty years on the mainland, in charge of a large area. I founded the mission Yytton, at the junction of the Thompson river with the Fraser. It is a large mission now. The Thompson River Indians are all civilized and Christianized. They mine, farm, raise cattle, and do everything that white men do, being useful factors in civilization. There are industrial schools all through the country, and there is quite a staff of clergymen and teachers now where I once had so much to do alone.

"There are 2,500 of the Thompson River Indians, and besides these there are several hundred Shuswap and Lillooets. The latter tribes speak cognate tongues. The Dominion government now gives large amounts annually in support of the Indians. It is turned over to whatever denomination is working among them. This plan has been found to work exceedingly well."

The missionary is an able Greek, Hebrew and Latin scholar. He says his study of the language of the Indians of that section has convinced him that they are of Assyrian origin, and are to all intents and purposes Assyrians as they now are. Many of their words now in use are Assyrian.

"I was astonished at the richness of this language," he said, "and its wonderful capacity for acurate expression. The language was metaphysical in the highest degree. The more I studied it the more I was charmed with it. The language wss developing all the time new beauties.

"I found many pure Syrian words in it—as, for instance, Eneas and Solomon-Chute, among proper names. The words of the language are historical and traditional, and observe the same laws as those of the Syrian language.

"I think the language of the Thompson river Indians is one of the Turanian tongues. There are direct Syrian words in it.

"Then there are other evidences that these Indians are the Syrian descendants. Their medicine man is the same as the Syrian seer. The burial customs are to this day the same. Besides this there is the character of the people, who are Syrians in thought, habits of life and general customs.

"In studying their language one can see that dynasties have risen and fallen; that there have been great governments, and able men, and a high state of civilization at times. The indications are all there. It is the language of a refined people. It has fallen now to a low state; is probably worse now than it ever was. Yet it is a rich fund for the philologist.

"My opinion is that the Syrians came over to this country when the land and water were differently arranged. It was no old storm-driven cause that landed by chance a few people here, who thus increased to tribes. I gave up that view, which was for a long time held by eminent men. When I became a close student of the Indians there and their language, I simply laughed at the preposterousness of it.

"I had occasion to thus express myself to some noted German philologists who were recently sent out to the Indians to make investigations concerning them. They told me that I was evidently right; that at least the lone canoe theory could not account for the characteristic Indian population of that region. They informed me that the ideas of European scientists were undergoing a good deal of change.

"There are ten different tongues spoken by the Indians of British Columbia as a whole. The Blackfoot Indians, who practically include the coast Indians, are quite different from the Thompson river Indians of whom I speak.

"For this reason I lately wrote the Smithsonian institution, giving the facts in full, and asking that competent men be sent on to collect the folklore. I have received a reply, saying that just as soon as one of their men finishes some important work he is now on he will come at once. The folklore exceeds in interest anything I ever read.

"When I first went among the Indians they had their war chiefs as well as their civil chiefs—the same as the Greeks. All I saw in every way convinced me and I have during the ensuing years been very freely confirmed in my convictions that these Indians are Syrians."