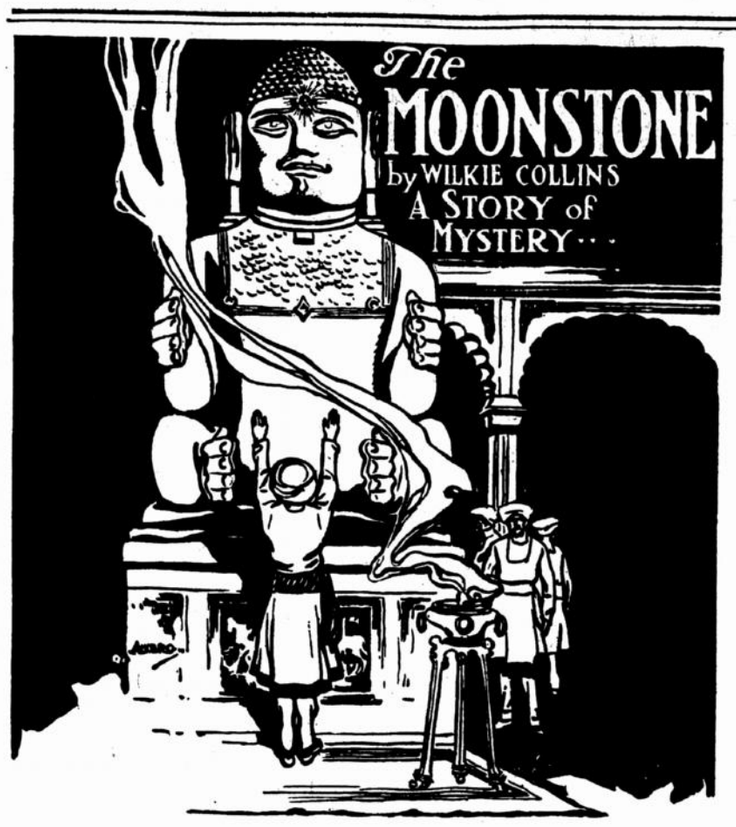

PROLOGUE.

The moonstone has first reposed in the forehead of an Indian idol. As centuries went by, ill luck following it, it passed into Mohammedan hands, but always through the ages three Brahman priests kept secret watch over it. John Herncastle, an English officer, during the storming of Seringapatam, stole the stone, killing its guardians. Gabriel Betteredge, house steward for Julia, Lady Verinder, explains how the stone came into the house in which he serves.

The Arrival of Franklin Blake.

MY lady's eldest sister married the celebrated Mr. Blake, equally famous for his great riches and his great suit at law. How many years he went on worrying the tribunals of his country to turn out the duke in possession and to put himself in the duke's place; how many lawyers' purses he filled to bursting, and how many otherwise harmless people he set by the ears together disputing whether he was right or wrong, is more by a great deal than I can reckon up. His wife died, and two of his three children died before the tribunals could make up their minds to show him the door and take no more of his money. When it was all over and the duke in possession was left in possession Mr. Blake discovered that the only way of being even with his country for the manner in which it had treated him was not to let his country have the honor of educating his son. "How can I trust my native institutions," was the form in which he put it, "after the way in which my native institutions have behaved to me?" Add to this that Mr. Blake disliked all boys, his own included, and you will admit that it could only end in one way. Master Franklin was taken from us in England and was sent to institutions which his father could trust, in that superior country, Germany. Mr. Blake himself, you will observe, remaining snug in England to improve his fellow countrymen in the parliament house and to publish a statement on the subject of the duke in possession, which has remained an unfinished statement from that day to this.

Our nice boy didn't forget us after he went abroad. He wrote every now and then; sometimes to my lady, sometimes to Miss Rachel and sometimes to me. We had had a transaction together before he left, which consisted of his borrowing of me a ball of string, a four bladed knife and seven and sixpence in money, the color of which last I have not seen and never expect to see again. His letters to me chiefly related to borrowing more. I heard, however, from my lady, how he got on abroad as he grew in years and stature. After he had learned what the institutions of Germany could teach him, he gave the French a turn next and the Italians a turn after that. They made him among them a sort of universal genius, as well as I could understand it. He wrote a little, he painted a little, he sang and played and composed a little, borrowing, as I suspect, in all these cases just as he had borrowed from me. On Thursday, May 25, we were to see for the first time what our nice boy had grown to be as a man. He came of good blood, he had a high courage and he was five and twenty years of age by our reckoning.

The Thursday was as fine a summer's day as ever you saw, and my lady and Miss Rachel, not expecting Mr. Franklin till dinner time, drove out to lunch with some friends in the neighborhood.

When they were gone I went and had a look at the bedroom which had been got ready for our guest and saw that all was straight. Then, being butler in my lady's establishment as well as steward—at my own particular request, mind, and because it vexed me to see anybody but myself in possession of the key of the late Sir John's cellar—then, I say, I fetched up some of our famous Latour claret and set it in the warm summer air to take off the chill before dinner. Concluding to set myself in the warm summer air next, seeing that what is good for old claret is equally good for old age, I took up my beehive chair to go out into the back court when I was stopped by hearing a sound like the soft beating of a drum on the terrace in front of my lady's residence.

Going round to the terrace, I found three mahogany colored Indians, in white linen frocks and trousers, looking up at the house.

The Indians, as I saw on looking closer, had small hand drums slung in front of them. Behind them stood a little, delicate looking, light haired, English boy carrying a bag. I judged the fellows to be strolling conjurers and the boy with the bag to be carrying the tools of their trade. One of the three, who spoke English, and who exhibited, I must own, the most elegant manners, presently informed me that my judgment was right. He requested permission to show his tricks in the presence of the lady of the house.

Now, I am not a sour old man. I am generally all for amusement and the last person in the world to distrust another person because he happens to be a few shades darker than myself. But the best of us have our weaknesses, and my weakness, when I know a family plate basket to be out on a pantry table is to be instantly reminded of that basket by the sight of a strolling stranger, whose manners are superior to my own. I accordingly informed the Indian that the lady of the house was out, and I warned him and his party off the premises. He made me a beautiful bow in return, and he and his party went off the premises. On my side, I returned to my beehive chair and set myself down on the sunny side of the court and fell, if the truth must be owned, not exactly into a sleep, but into the next best thing to it.

I was roused up by my daughter Penelope running out at me as if the house was on fire. What do you think she wanted? She wanted to have the three Indian jugglers instantly taken up, for this reason, namely, that they knew who was coming from London to visit us and that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

Mr. Franklin's name roused me. I opened my eyes and made my girl explain herself.

It appeared that Penelope had just come from our lodge, where she had been having a gossip with the lodge-keeper's daughter. The two girls had seen the Indians pass out after I had warned them off, followed by their little boy. Taking it into their heads that the boy was ill used by the foreigners—for no reason that I could discover, except that he was pretty and delicate looking—the girls had stolen along the inner side of the hedge between us and the road and had watched the proceedings of the foreigners on the outer side. These proceedings resulted in the performance of the following extraordinary tricks:

The chief Indian, who spoke English, said to the boy, "Hold out your hand." The boy shrank back and shook his head and said he didn't like it. The Indian thereupon asked him, not at all unkindly, whether he would like to be sent back to London and left where they had found him, sleeping in an empty basket in a market, a hungry, ragged and forsaken little boy. This, it seems, ended the difficulty. The little chap unwillingly held out his hand. Upon that the Indian took a bottle from his bosom and poured out of it some black stuff like ink into the palm of the boy's hand. The Indian, first touching the boy's head and making signs over it in the air, then said, "Look!" The boy became quite stiff and stood like a statue, looking into the ink in the hollow of his hand.

The Indians looked up the road and down the road once more, and then the chief Indian said these words to the boy, "See the English gentleman from foreign parts."

The boy said, "I see him."

The Indian said, "Is it on the road to this house and on the other that the English gentleman will pass by us today?"

The boy said, "It is on the road to this house and on no other that the English gentleman will pass by you today."

The Indian put a second question after waiting a little first. He said, "Has the English gentleman got it about him?"

The boy answered, also after waiting a little first, "Yes."

The Indian put a third and last question, "Will the English gentleman come here, as he has promised to come, at the close of day?"

The boy said, "I can't tell."

The Indian asked why.

The boy said: "I am tired. The mist rises in my head and puzzles me. I can see no more today."

With that the catechism ended. The chief Indian said something in his own language to the other two, pointing to the boy and pointing toward the town in which, as we afterward discovered, they were lodged. He then, after making more signs on the boy's head, blew on his forehead and so woke him up with a start. After that they all went on their way toward the town, and the girls saw them no more.

The moral was, as I thought, first, that the chief juggler had heard Mr. Franklin's arrival talked of among the servants out of doors and saw his way to making a little money by it; second, that he and his men and boy (with a view to making the said money) meant to hang about till they saw my lady drive home and then to come back and foretell Mr. Franklin's arrival by magic; third, that Penelope had heard them rehearsing their hocus pocus, like actors rehearsing a play; fourth, that I should do well to have an eye that evening on the plate basket; fifth, that Penelope would do well to cool down and leave me, her father, to doze off again in the sun.

Before I had time to doze off again I was disturbed by a rattling of plates and dishes in the servants' hall, which meant that dinner was ready. I was just stretching my legs when out bounced another woman on me. Not my daughter again; only Nancy, the kitchenmaid, this time. I was straight in her way out, and I observed as she asked me to let her by that she had a sulky face, a thing which as head of the servants I never allow on principle to pass me without inquiry.

"What's wrong now?" I said.

"Rosanna's late again for dinner," says Nancy. "And I'm sent to fetch her in. All the hard work falls on my shoulders in this house. Let me alone, Mr. Betteredge!"

The person here mentioned as Rosanna was our second housemaid. Having a kind of pity for our second housemaid—why you shall presently know—and seeing in Nancy's face that she would fetch her fellow servant in with more hard words than might be needful under the circumstances, it struck me that I had nothing particular to do and that I might as well fetch Rosanna myself, giving her a hint to be punctual in future, which I knew she would take kindly from me.

"Where is Rosanna?" I inquired.

"At the sands, of course," says Nancy, with a toss of her head. "She had another of her fainting fits this morning, and she asked to go out and get a breath of fresh air. I have no patience with her."

"Go back to your dinner, my girl," I said. "I have patience with her, and I'll fetch her in."

Well, I took my stick and set off for the sands.

I am sorry again to detain you, but you really must hear the story of the sands and the story of Rosanna—for this reason, that the matter of the diamond touches them both nearly.

Rosanna (to put the person before the thing, which is but common politeness) was the only new servant in our house. About four months before the time I am writing of my lady had been in London and had gone over a reformatory intended to save forlorn women from drifting back into bad ways after they had got released from prison. The matron, seeing my lady took an interest in the place, pointed out a girl to her named Rosanna Spearman and told her a most miserable story, which I haven't the heart to repeat here, for I don't like to be made wretched without any use and no more do you. The upshot of it was that Rosanna Spearman had been a thief, and, not being of the sort that get up companies in the city and rob from thousands instead of only robbing from one, the law laid hold of her, and the prison and the reformatory followed the lead of the law. The matron's opinion of Rosanna was, in spite of what she had done, that the girl was one in a thousand and that she only wanted a chance to prove herself worthy of any Christian woman's interest in her. My lady, being a Christian woman if ever there was one yet, said to the matron upon that, Rosanna Spearman shall have her chance in my service. In a week afterward Rosanna Spearman entered this establishment as our second housemaid.

Not a soul was told the girl's story excepting Miss Rachel and me. My lady, doing me the honor to consult me about most things, consulted me about Rosanna. Having fallen a good deal latterly into the late Sir John's way of always agreeing with my lady, I agreed with her heartily about Rosanna Spearman.

A fairer chance no girl could have had than was given to this poor girl of ours. None of the servants could cast her past life in her teeth, for none of the servants knew what it had been. In return she showed herself, I am bound to say, well worthy of the kind treatment bestowed upon her. Though far from strong and troubled occasionally with those fainting fits already mentioned, she went about her work modestly and uncomplainingly, doing it carefully and doing it well. But somehow she failed to make friends among the other women servants, excepting my daughter Penelope, who was always kind to Rosanna, though never intimate with her.

Having now told the story of Rosanna, I have only to notice one out of the many queer ways of this strange girl to get on next to the story of the sands.

Our house is high up on the Yorkshire coast and close by the sea. We have got beautiful walks all around us in every direction but one. That one I acknowledge to be a horrid walk. It leads for a quarter of a mile through a melancholy plantation of firs and brings you out between low cliffs on the loneliest and ugliest little bay on all our coast.

The sand hills here run down to the sea and end in two spits of rock jutting out opposite each other till you lose sight of them in the water. One is called the North Spit and one the South. Between the two, shifting backward and forward at certain seasons of the year, lies the most horrible quicksand on the shores of Yorkshire. At the turn of the tide something goes on in the unknown deeps below which sets the whole face of the quicksand quivering and trembling in a manner most remarkable to see and which has given to it among the people in our parts the name of the shivering sand.

I saw no sign of the girl in the plantation. When I got out through the sand hills on to the beach, there she was, in her little straw bonnet and her plain gray cloak that she always wore to hide her deformed shoulder as much as might be—there she was, all alone, looking out on the quicksand and the sea.

She started when I came up with her and turned her head away from me. Not looking me in the face being another of the proceedings which as head of the servants I never allow on principle to pass without inquiry, I turned her round my way and saw that she was crying.

"Now tell me, my dear," I said, "what are you crying about?"

"About the years that are gone, Mr. Betteredge," says Rosanna quietly. "My past life still comes back to me sometimes."

"Come, come, my girl," I said; "your past life is all sponged out. Why can't you forget it?"

She took me by one of the lappets of my coat. I am a slovenly old man, and a good deal of my meat and drink gets splashed about on my clothes. Sometimes one of the women and sometimes another cleans me of my grease. The day before Rosanna had taken out a spot for me on the lappet of my coat with a new composition warranted to remove anything. The grease was gone, but there was a little dull place left on the nap of the cloth where the grease had been. The girl pointed to that place and shook her head.

"The stain is taken off," she said, "but the place shows, Mr. Betteredge—the place shows!"

A remark which takes a man unawares by means of his own coat is not an easy remark to answer.

"What makes you like to be here?" I asked. "What is it that brings you everlastingly to this miserable place?"

"Something draws me to it," says the girl, making images with her finger in the sand. "I try to keep away from it, and I can't. Sometimes," says she in a low voice, as if she was frightened at her own fancy—"sometimes, Mr. Betteredge, I think that my grave is waiting for me here."

"There's roast mutton and suet pudding waiting for you!" says I. "Go in to dinner directly. This is what comes,

Here—Four Hours Before We Expected Him—Was Mr. Franklin Blake.

Rosanna, of thinking on an empty stomach!" I spoke severely, being naturally indignant, at my time of life, to hear a young woman of five and twenty talking about her latter end.

"Look!" she said. "Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it terrible? I have seen it dozens of times, and it's always as new to me as if I had never seen it before."

"I looked where she pointed. The tide was on the turn, and the horrid sand began to shiver. The broad brown face of it heaved slowly and then dimpled and quivered all over. "Do you know what it looks like to me?" says Rosanna, catching me by the shoulder again. "It looks as if it had hundreds of suffocating people under it, all struggling to get to the surface and all sinking lower and lower in the dreadful deeps. Throw a stone in, Mr. Betteredge. Throw a stone in, and let's see the sand suck it down."

Here was unwholesome talk. My answer—a pretty sharp one in the poor girl's own interests, I promise you—was at my tongue's end when it was snapped short off on a sudden by a voice among the sand hills shouting for me by my name. "Betteredge," cries the voice, "where are you?" "Here!" I shouted out in return, without a notion in my head who it was. Rosanna started to her feet and stood looking toward the voice. I was just thinking of getting on my own legs next when I was staggered by a sudden change in the girl's face.

Her complexion turned of a beautiful red, which I had never seen in it before; she brightened all over with a kind of speechless and breathless surprise. "Who is it?" I asked. Rosanna gave me back my own question. "Oh, who is it?" she said softly, more to herself than to me. I twisted round on the sand and looked behind me. There, coming out on us from among the hills, was a bright eyed young gentleman dressed in a beautiful fawn colored suit, with gloves and hat to match, with a rose in his buttonhole and a smile on his face that might have set the shivering sand itself smiling at him in return. Before I could get on my legs he plumped down on the sand by the side of me, put his arm round my neck, foreign fashion, and gave me a hug that fairly squeezed the breath out of my body. "Dear old Betteredge," says he, "I owe you seven and sixpence. Now do you know who I am?"

Lord bless us and save us! Here, four good hours before we expected him, was Franklin Blake!

Before I could say a word I saw Mr. Franklin, surprised to all appearance, look up from me to Rosanna. Following his lead, I looked at the girl too. She was blushing of a deeper red than ever, seemingly at having caught Mr. Franklin's eye, and she turned and left us suddenly in a confusion quite unaccountable to my mind without either making her courtesy to the gentleman or saying a word to me, very unlike her usual self; a civiler and better behaved servant in general you never met with.

"That's an odd girl," says Mr. Franklin. "I wonder what she sees in me to surprise her?"

"I suppose, sir," I answered, drolling on our young gentleman's continental education, "it's the varnish from foreign parts."

I set down here Mr. Franklin's careless question and my foolish answer as a consolation and encouragement to all stupid people, it being, as I have remarked, a great satisfaction to our inferior fellow creatures to find that their betters are on occasions no brighter than they are. Neither Mr. Franklin, with his wonderful foreign training, nor I, with my age, experience and natural mother wit, had the ghost of an idea of what Rosanna Spearman's unaccountable behavior really meant. She was out of our thoughts, poor soul, before we had seen the last flutter of her little gray cloak among the sand hills. And what of that? you will ask naturally enough. Read on, good friend, as patiently as you can, and perhaps you will be as sorry for Rosanna Spearman as I was when I found out the truth.

The first thing I did after we were left together alone was to make a third attempt to get up from my seat on the sand. Mr. Franklin stopped me.

"There is one advantage about this horrid place," he said—"we have got it all to ourselves. Stay where you are, Betteredge. I have something to say to you."

While he was speaking I was looking at him and trying to see something of the boy I remembered in the man before me. The man put me out. Look as I might, I could see no more of his boy's rosy cheeks than his boy's trim little jacket. His complexion had got pale. His face at the lower part was covered, to my great surprise and disappointment, with a curly brown beard and mustache. He had a lively touch and go way with him, very pleasant and engaging, I admit, but nothing to compare with his free and easy manners of other times. To make matters worse he had promised to be tall and had not kept his promise. He was neat and slim and well made, but he wasn't by an inch or two up to the middle height. In short, he baffled me altogether. The years that had passed had left nothing of his old self except the bright, straightforward look in his eyes. There I found our nice boy again, and there I concluded to stop in my investigation.

"Welcome back to the old place, Mr. Franklin," I said. "All the more welcome, sir, that you have come some hours before we expected you."

"I have a reason for coming before you expected me," answered Mr. Franklin. "I suspect, Betteredge, that I have been followed and watched in London for the past three or four days, and I have traveled by the morning instead of the afternoon train because I wanted to give a certain dark looking stranger the slip."

Those words did more than surprise me. They brought back to my mind in a flash the three jugglers and Penelope's notion that they meant some mischief to Mr. Franklin Blake.

"Who's watching you, sir? And why?" I inquired.

"Tell me about the three Indians you have had at the house today," says Mr. Franklin without noticing my question. "It's just possible, Betteredge, that my stranger and your three jugglers may turn out to be pieces of the same puzzle."

"How do you come to know about the jugglers, sir?" I asked, putting one question on the top of another, which was bad manners, I own.

"I saw Penelope at the house," says Mr. Franklin, "and Penelope told me."

I was somewhat dissatisfied with my daughter, not for letting Mr. Franklin kiss her—Mr. Franklin was welcome to that—but for forcing me to tell her foolish story at secondhand. However, there was no help for it now but to mention the circumstances.

[To be continued.]

Bookkeeping.

The double entry system of bookkeeping was first used in Italy in the latter part of the fifteenth century.

A Column of Smiles For Everybody

A Desperate Charge.

"They charged like demons," said the retired colonel excitedly. "I never saw anything to touch it. The way they charged positively staggered me."

"Whom does he mean?" whispered the man who had just come in to his neighbor. "Is he talking about one of his old battles?"

"No," replied the other. "He's talking about the holiday he spent at the Swiss hotel."—Liverpool Mercury.

Reformed.

"Pa, Jimmy Green, the toughest fighter in our gang, has reformed. He says it's wrong to fight."

"Do you believe him?"

"I would but for one thing."

"What's that?"

"He never talked that way until he broke his arm."—Detroit Free Press.

A Devotee.

She had a vast amount of money, but it had come to her quite recently. One day an acquaintance asked her if she were fond of art.

"Fond of art!" she exclaimed. "Well, I should say I was. If I am ever in a city where there's an artery I never fail to visit it."—Lippincott's.

No Late Hours There.

Guest—What possessed you to move away off here to the extreme edge of the city?

Host—The trolley cars stop running at 10 p. m.

"What of that?"

"Wait till you see my pretty daughters."—New York Weekly.

Wifely Tact.

Poet—The editor of that new magazine said he'd pay for my stuff as soon as the paper was an assured success.

Wife—But how can they ever succeed if they publish such stuff as that?—New York Globe.

Inevitable Displeasure.

"There is no use of trying to please everybody," said the ready made philosopher.

"But you don't make an effort of any kind."

"There you are! You blame me for being absolutely harmless!"—Washington Star.

Their Division.

"I see where a criminal lawyer has taken his daughter into partnership with him. How do they divide the cases?"

"He takes the fellow-nies, and she, the mis-demeanors."—Baltimore American.

Seeking the Lost.

"What is the poet gabbling about?"

"His lost Lenore."

"He'd better put an ad in the lost column. By the way, what is a lenore?"—St. Louis Globe-Democrat.

One Brand.

"Mary," queried the teacher, "can you tell me what human nature is?"

"Yes, ma'am," was the reply. "It's people before they get into society."—Chicago News.

Satirical.

Willie Willis—What's a "satirical touch," pa? Papa Willis—It's the fellow who borrows money of you and then kids you about it whenever you meet.—Puck.

Obeying Orders.

"'See America first!'" didactically quoted the professor.

"I have already done so," replied J. Fuller Gloom. "I was born here."—Judge.

Tell Him No Fine Yarns.

"Men never brag to me about how much money they have."

"They don't. Who are you?"

"I'm a bill collector."—Detroit Free Press.

Different Opinions.

"I don't think a college educati amounts to a great deal."

"Don't you? Well, you ought to f my boy's bills and see."—Boston I ord.

Filling the Bill.

"I want to give a swell luncheon What would you suggest as the firs article on the menu?"

"Dried apples."—Baltimore Americ can.

What concerneth every man is not whether he fail or succeed, but that he do his duty.—Ian Maclaren.