Gen
Dew

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Gen
Dew

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Gen
Dew

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

EX LEGATO
MARLOW ALEXANDRI SHAW
Magistri
In Universitate Iovvensi
MCMIX-MCMXXIX

Class 828
Book C713mo
1890 cop. 2
Acc. 311000

Digitized by Google
Original from
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

UNIVERSITY OF IOWA
3 1858 031 443 918

Date Due

2 Sc'38	3 Apr'43	14 Mr'46
	6 Nov'43	13 Je'46
7 Fe'38	15 Dec'43	MAR 17 1948
23 Oc'39	20 Oct'44	5 Ag'48
	18 Oct'44	
27 De'39	3 Nov'44	3 Aug'53
11 Ja'40	16 Nov'44	
	17 Nov'44	
19 Mr'41	25 Apr'45	11 Apr'57
1 Oct'41		
4 Nov'41	21 May'45	
20 Dec'41	12 Jun'45	
5 Feb'42		
22 11 Dec'44		
26 Nov 45	26 Nov'45	
	26 Dec'45	
	24 Ja'46	
	1 Fe'46	

Library Bureau Cat. no. 1137

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

THE MOONSTONE.

A NOVEL.

By WILKIE COLLINS.

A. L. BURT COMPANY,
PUBLISHERS, NEW YORK.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

FEDERAL STATE AGENCY

Digitized by Google

Original from
UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

823
C713m
1890
cop. 2

THE MOONSTONE

PROLOGUE.

THE STORMING OF SERINGAPATAM (1799).

(Extracted from a Family Paper.)

I.

I ADDRESS these lines — written in India — to my relatives in England.

My object is to explain the motive which has induced me to refuse the right hand of friendship to my cousin, John Herncastle. The reserve which I have hitherto maintained in this matter has been misinterpreted by members of my family whose good opinion I cannot consent to forfeit. I request them to suspend their decision until they have read my narrative. And I declare, on my word of honor, that what I am now about to write is, strictly and literally, the truth.

The private difference between my cousin and me took its rise in a great public event in which we were both concerned — the storming of Seringapatam, under General Baird, on the 4th of May, 1799.

In order that the circumstances may be clearly understood, I must revert for a moment to the period before the assault, and to the stories current in our camp of the treasure in jewels and gold stored up in the Palace of Seringapatam.

II.

One of the wildest of these stories related to a Yellow Diamond — a famous gem in the native annals of India.

GEN.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

The earliest known traditions describe the stone as having been set in the forehead of the four-handed Indian god who typifies the Moon. 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 lustre 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. A similar superstition was once prevalent, as I have heard, in ancient Greece and Rome; not applying, however (as in India), to a diamond devoted to the service of a god, but to a semi-transparent stone of the inferior order of gems, supposed to be affected by the lunar influences — the moon, in this latter case also, giving the name by which the stone is still known to collectors in our own time.

The adventures of the Yellow Diamond begin with the eleventh century of the Christian era. At that date the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghizni, crossed India; seized on the holy city of Somnauth; and stripped of its treasures the famous temple which had stood for centuries — the shrine of Hindoo pilgrimage, and the wonder of the Eastern world.

Of all the deities worshiped in the temple, the moon-god alone escaped the rapacity of the conquering Mohammedans. Preserved by three Brahmans, the inviolate deity, bearing the Yellow Diamond in its forehead, was removed by night, and was transported to the second of the sacred cities of Indian — the city of Benares.

Here, in a new shrine — in a hall inlaid with precious stones, under a roof supported by pillars of gold — the moon-god was set up and worshiped. Here, on the night when the shrine was completed, Vishnu the Preserver appeared to the three Brahmans in a dream.

The deity breathed the breath of his divinity on the Diamond in the forehead of the god. And the Brahmans knelt and hid their faces in their robes. The deity commanded that the Moonstone should be watched, from that time forth, by three priests in turn, night and day, to the end of the generations of men. And the Brahmans heard and bowed before his will. The deity predicted certain disaster to the presumptuous mortal who laid hands on the

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

sacred gem, and to all of his house and name who received it after him. And the Brahmans caused the prophecy to be written over the gates of the shrine in letters of gold.

One age followed another—and still, generation after generation, the successors of the three Brahmans watched their priceless Moonstone, night and day. One age followed another, until the first years of the eighteenth Christian century saw the reign of Aurungzebe, Emperor of the Moguls. At his command havoc and rapine were let loose once more among the temples of the worship of Brahmah. The shrine of the four-handed god was polluted by the slaughter of sacred animals; the images of the deities were broken in pieces; and the Moonstone was seized by an officer of rank in the army of Aurungzebe.

Powerless to recover their lost treasure by open force, the three guardian priests followed and watched it in disguise. The generations succeeded each other; the warrior who had committed the sacrilege perished miserably; the Moonstone passed (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another; and still, through all chances and changes, the successors of the three guardian priests kept their watch, waiting the day when the will of Vishnu the Preserver should restore to them their sacred gem. Time rolled on from the first to the last years of the eighteenth Christian century. The Diamond fell into the possession of Tippoo, Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle of a dagger, and who commanded it to be kept among the choicest treasures of his armory. Even then—in the palace of the Sultan himself—the three guardian priests still watched in secret. There were three officers of Tippoo's household, strangers to the rest, who had won their master's confidence by conforming, or appearing to conform, to the Mussulman faith; and to those three men report pointed as the three priests in disguise.

III.

So, as told in our camp, ran the fanciful story of the Moonstone. It made no serious impression on any of us except my cousin—whose love of the marvelous induced him to believe it. On the night before the assault on Seringapatam he was absurdly angry with me, and with

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

others, for treating the whole thing as a fable. A foolish wrangle followed; and Herncastle's unlucky temper got the better of him. He declared, in his boastful way, that we should see the Diamond on his finger if the English army took Seringapatam. The sally was saluted by a roar of laughter, and there, as we all thought that night, the thing ended.

Let me now take you on to the day of the assault.

My cousin and I were separated at the outset. I never saw him when we forded the river; when we planted the English flag in the first breach; when we crossed the ditch beyond; and, fighting every inch of our way, entered the town. It was only at dusk, when the place was ours, and after General Baird himself had found the dead body of Tippoo under a heap of the slain, that Herncastle and I met.

We were each attached to a party sent out by the General's orders to prevent the plunder and confusion which followed our conquest. The camp-followers committed deplorable excesses; and, worse still, the soldiers found their way, by an unguarded door, into the treasury of the Palace, and loaded themselves with gold and jewels. It was in the court outside the treasury that my cousin and I met to enforce the laws of discipline on our own soldiers. Herncastle's fiery temper had been, as I could plainly see, exasperated to a kind of frenzy by the terrible slaughter through which we had passed. He was very unfit, in my opinion, to perform the duty that had been entrusted to him.

There was riot and confusion enough in the treasury, but no violence that I saw. The men (if I may use such an expression) disgraced themselves good-humoredly. All sorts of rough jests and catch-words were bandied about among them; and the story of the Diamond turned up again unexpectedly, in the form of a mischievous joke. "Who's got the Moonstone?" was the rallying cry which perpetually caused the plundering as soon as it was stopped in one place to break out in another. While I was still vainly trying to establish order I heard a frightful yelling on the other side of the court-yard, and at once ran toward the cries, in dread of finding some new outbreak of the pillage in that direction.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

I got to an open door, and saw the bodies of two Indians (by their dress, as I guessed, officers of the palace) lying across the entrance, dead.

A cry inside hurried me into a room, which appeared to serve as an armory. A third Indian, mortally wounded, was sinking at the feet of a man whose back was toward me. The man turned at the instant when I came in, and I saw John Herncastle, with a torch in one hand and a dagger dripping with blood in the other. A stone, set like a pommel, in the end of the dagger's handle, flashed in the torchlight, as he turned on me, like a gleam of fire. The dying Indian sank to his knees, pointed to the dagger in Herncastle's hand, and said, in his native language: "The Moonstone will have its vengeance yet on you and yours!" He spoke those words, and fell dead on the floor.

Before I could stir in the matter the men who had followed me across the court-yard crowded in. My cousin rushed to meet them, like a madman. "Clear the room!" he shouted to me, "and set a guard on the door!" The men fell back as he threw himself on them with his torch and his dagger. I put two sentinels of my own company, on whom I could rely, to keep the door. Through the remainder of the night I saw no more of my cousin.

Early in the morning, the plunder still going on, General Baird announced publicly by beat of drum that any thief detected in the fact, be he whom he might, should be hung. The provost marshal was in attendance to prove that the general was in earnest; and in the throng that followed the proclamation Herncastle and I met again.

He held out his hand as usual, and said, "Good-morning."

I waited before I gave him my hand in return.

"Tell me first," I said, "how the Indian in the armory met his death, and what those last words meant when he pointed to the dagger in your hand."

"The Indian met his death, as I suppose, by a mortal wound," said Herncastle. "What his last words meant I know no more than you do."

I looked at him narrowly. His frenzy of the previous day had all calmed down. I determined to give him another chance.

"Is that all you have to tell me?" I asked.

Digitized by Google

Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

He answered, "That is all."
I turned my back on him; and we have not spoken since.

IV.

I beg it to be understood that what I write here about my cousin (unless some necessity should arise for making it public) is for the information of the family only. Herncastle has said nothing that can justify me in speaking to our commanding officer. He has been taunted more than once about the Diamond, by those who recollect his angry outbreak before the assault; but, as may easily be imagined, his own remembrance of the circumstances under which I surprised him in the armory has been enough to keep him silent. It is reported that he means to exchange into another regiment, avowedly for the purpose of separating himself and *me*.

Whether this be true or not, I cannot prevail upon myself to become his accuser—and I think with good reason. If I made the matter public, I have no evidence but moral evidence to bring forward. I have not only no proof that he killed the two men at the door; I cannot even declare that he killed the third man inside—for I cannot say that my own eyes saw the deed committed. It is true that I heard the dying Indian's words; but if those words were pronounced to be the ravings of delirium, how could I contradict the assertion from my own knowledge? Let our relatives, on either side, form their own opinion on what I have written, and decide for themselves whether the aversion I now feel toward this man is well or ill founded.

Although I attach no sort of credit to the fantastic Indian legend of the gem, I must acknowledge, before I conclude, that I am influenced by a certain superstition of my own in this matter. It is my conviction, or my delusion, no matter which, that crime brings its own fatality with it. I am not only persuaded of Herncastle's guilt; I am even fanciful enough to believe that he will live to regret it, if he keeps the Diamond; and that others will live to regret taking it from him, if he gives the Diamond away.

Digitized by Google
Original from UNIVERSITY OF IOWA