

"NASCENTE LUNA."

I see a stretch of shining sky
Like some fair ocean sunset-lit,
Peaceful and wide its spaces lie,

WHO RANG THE BELL?

One of the strangest stories I have heard was told me by an aged gentleman who had spent his youth in the provincial city where the event related by him had occurred.

Therefore, we will give the family name as Mildon, and their abode as the populous and gay town of X--.

The leading part in the little drama is played by one Charles Mildon, a fashionable young gentleman, mixing in respectable society, of popular manners and many accomplishments, but also, unfortunately, of extravagant habits, and, it seems clear, of those darker shades of vice which frequently underlie these.

He lived alone in quiet, genteel lodgings, where it appears that the character he maintained was fairly good. If at times he got into debt, he presently got out of it, owing to the good offices of an old bachelor uncle who had repeatedly come to his rescue; but to request that assistance should be fetched to his rescue, to enter his house and discover the true state of matters, a curious and eager crowd soon secured the presence of the proper functionaries.

But a single glance round the interior changed the aspect of things. Faces grew pale and solemn, and defensive missiles were grasped, the excited crowd was pressed back, and further help summoned.

From mouth to mouth went the grim whisper: "Murder!"

In less than half an hour it was noised abroad all over X-- that a terrible and mysterious tragedy had been enacted in the house of old Mr. Mildon.

It was only to be expected that the old gentleman's nephew was speedily on the scene. The succor of his aged and infirm relative, so awfully left alone, naturally demanded that.

But young Mr. Mildon had also some information to volunteer.

During the afternoon of that day, he had himself visited his uncle. He remembered the exact hour of his arrival for while awaiting admittance he had casually glanced at the clock in a neighboring steeple.

shut within the house, left, in short, on a chair in his uncle's room. He had, he said, hesitated for a moment what he should do. He presumed the housekeeper had gone out marketing, possibly taking advantage of his visit to do so without leaving her master alone; therefore any ringing on his part would be as futile as the runaway ring had been, so he had decided to go quietly and hatless to his own lodgings, which were, fortunately, not far off, intending to return in the course of the evening, when the housekeeper would have resumed her post.

Young Mr. Mildon's communication was certainly important. It opened up two or three matters:

Had the housekeeper really been absent from the house at the time of the runaway ring? If not, what had been the hindrance to her answering it?

Young Mr. Mildon was asked why he had not called her, instead of answering the door himself? Was it because he had thought it likely she was out? He answered at once that he had not thought about it. The bell had rung and it had been neglected. He had gone to the door simply as the most direct and natural thing.

Another question was, "Who rang the bell?"

Was this mysterious runaway the same who subsequently returned and committed the dreadful crime? Had his heart failed him on the first occasion? Or had he gained an inkling that the house just then had a stalwart guest as well as its usual feeble and aged occupants? He himself had not approached any of the windows during his visit. His uncle had sat in his accustomed chair by the window, a watcher outside might have observed the old gentleman turn to speak to somebody in the room. But there had certainly been nothing to show that this interlocutor was other than the old servant.

Mr. Mildon, the uncle, confirmed his nephew in every respect. There was young Mildon's hat on the chair, where he had left it. The old gentleman had little to add. After his nephew had left him to attend to the ringing bell he had heard the street door slam sharply, and looking from the window, had seen his nephew go off, bareheaded, and had guessed accurately enough at the apparent state of matters. He had returned to his newspaper reading and had not troubled himself further for some time. Then it occurred to him that his housekeeper was late in bringing up tea, and that he had rang his bell--and rang it again and again, with a little effect as the runaway ring had produced. At last he had managed to hobble out of his room and as far as his stairhead, whence, looking over the banister he had caught a glimpse of the skirts of the woman behind the hall door. His only idea had been that his old servant had been seized with a fit, and he had at once given the alarm. From the stairhead it was impossible for him to see the other protruding figure at the top of the kitchen stairs.

Young Mr. Mildon expressed the liveliest interest in the mysterious ringing of the bell. He seemed to lay great importance on that point.

Another difficulty was presently found attaching to this tragedy. It was impossible to gain any conclusive idea as to what had been the weapon which had produced such deadly results. In the case of each woman the fatal wound had been a blow on the skull--so direct, so well aimed, and so incisive that it had needed no repetition. But doctors differed as to what instrument was likely to effect its purpose in the peculiar way manifest. It seemed that no clue to the identity of the criminal was likely to come from this direction.

Another moot point was the possible motive for the crime. Its two victims were respectable old women, little likely to provoke enmity of the violent kind. The motive could scarcely be plunder, for nothing in the house had been removed or even tampered with. Spoons and other silver table articles lay on the kitchen dresser, just in the order in which the housekeeper herself had evidently arranged them. Also, there was a large sum of money on the premises, for the elder Mr. Mildon had considerable house property in X--; and as it was just after quarter day his rent receipts had been large and he had delayed to bank them, a fact which might well have been suspected by many people. This money was kept in an old-fashioned bureau, at the back of Mr. Mildon's room. It was found intact, and the old gentleman himself could testify that there had been no attempt on the part of any stranger to enter his apartment. If anybody had entered the house with this object why had he not effected it? The crippled invalid upstairs would have been even more easily disposed of than the old woman below. One detective suggested that the old gentleman had never left his chair by the window, whence any deed of violence might have been seen by passersby. But another replied that such a murderer as this would scarcely have been defeated in this way, since a few ingenious sounds on the stairhead would certainly have easily decoyed the old man to the door of the apartment.

"Gentlemen," said the younger Mr. Mildon, "the great question is: Who rang the bell?"

Among the detectives and legal functionaries who met in conclave with the very few witnesses who had any testimony to offer, there was one young man who filled such a subordinate place that he had scarcely any right to speak in the councils of his seniors and superiors; and certainly he received very little encouragement when he ventured to suggest that he had his own doubts as to the innocence of young Mr. Mildon himself.

The others scorned him. Had not young Mr. Mildon come on the scene of his own free will and volunteered a statement which set him in the line of suspicion? "He could scarcely help that," murmured he of the doubt; "for, even if his uncle had forgotten or overlooked his visit, his hat would have been found in the house and he would have been called upon to account for it."

ence of all motive whatever. He, of all people, was most likely to know of the money his uncle had in the house, and where he kept it; yet he had certainly been in the old gentleman's room, everything there had been at his mercy, and still the invalid was safe and his stores intact. To those plans the young man, whom we will call Talford, could find no answer; yet he did not say he surrendered his suspicions. He was silent but not convinced.

Months passed on and the great crime committed in the little house in X-- seemed likely to be relegated to the list of unsolved mysteries. Talford himself had ceased to take any active interest in the matter; and the impression which had once been so strong upon his mind was wearing faint, so that probably, in time, he himself would have grown incredulous of it.

This Mr. Talford had a watch which gave him a good deal of trouble, and at last he took it to a friend, a skilful mechanic, who, he thought, might cure its aberrations. The man looked at it carefully--said he thought he saw what wrong--a rather peculiar defect--and proceeded to rummage in a drawer for a tool he needed to remedy it. He did not readily find it, and summoned his wife to his aid. While they were looking for this minor implement he remarked by the way that he did not see his best hammer either. Talford, who was standing idly by, was aroused by the woman's answer, which came in the form of this inquiry:

"Have you ever had it since you lent it to young Mr. Mildon?"

Her husband thought not, now he came to think of it. Talford struck into the conversation: "What was the hammer like?"

"O, not an ordinary hammer--a watchmaker's hammer--like this," and the shopkeeper produced a tool which Talford saw at once was well adapted to produce those fatal and peculiar wounds which had aroused so much speculation.

"Do you use these tools much?" he asked carelessly.

"Not very much, or I should have missed my best one sooner. I should think it is nearly a year since I lent it to Mr. Mildon."

"That signifies that it had been in his possession for some time before the murders. Talford took leave of the friendly shopkeeper and hastened away. His old impression was now as vivid as ever, and he had something more tangible to back it. He was resolved on a bold stroke. He would take counsel with nobody, but would venture a great deal and win or lose all.

He put a pair of handcuffs in his pocket and made a comrade accompany him on a piece of important business. They wended their way to the street where the younger Mr. Mildon lived in lodgings which he had occupied for a long while. Talford left his comrade to wait on the pavement, and repaired to the house alone.

"Was Mr. Mildon at home?" he asked of the woman who opened the door. Yes, he was at home in his own room. Then the visitor would go to him there; he need not be announced; when Mr. Mildon was him he would understand.

Young Mildon rose from his writing desk on the entrance of his unsuspected guest. His face was perfectly unconscious, without either surprise or alarm. For one moment the two men looked at each other in silence. If Talford's conviction wavered, certainly his determination did not.

Laying the "darbies" on the table he said: "Mr. Mildon, I am prepared for violence, but you will oblige me if you will quietly produce the watchmaker's hammer with which you murdered your uncle's housekeeper and her friend."

Whether it was the sudden revelation of the discovery of the much-debated weapon, or an idea that Talford would never have acted as he did without some strong evidence to justify him, cannot be explained. But young Mildon, without a word of protest, turned on his heel, went to a chest of drawers, unlocked one, and displayed to Talford the terrible implement. It lay among his handkerchiefs and neckties. He had never even cleaned it. Dry blood was on it, and there were one or two adhering hairs. Yet what seemed such an utter carelessness had come nearer to achieving security than any amount of restless precaution might have done.

The whole of Charles Mildon's original account was proved to be perfectly true! He had only omitted its most important parts!

It was true that the old housekeeper had admitted him and that she had appeared just as usual.

He had omitted to say that he had instantly felled her to the ground with a blow which needed no repetition. That he had next been startled by the appearance of another old woman coming up the kitchen stairs, but that his surprise had not unnerved him for the prompt commission of a second murder, which had formed a part of his original plan.

Then he had passed by the two dead women and gone to his uncle's apartment. He had found the old man seated at the window as usual, but on this he had reckoned, and had laid his plot accordingly. After a little conversation he had asked for a small money loan. His uncle had so often been complaining that he had little fear of a rebuff. Had the uncle left the window to take a few sovereigns from his bureau his nephew would have felled him to the ground and possessed himself of the whole hoard. But to his surprise and discomfiture the old gentleman proved utterly obdurate. Instead of lending the money he gave him a lecture loading him with reproaches. The nephew showed a submissive front, wondering all the while what other dodge he could invent to entice his uncle from his window seat. One occurred to him at last. An anxious and dependent man is often thirsty. He knew his uncle kept divers liquors in a cupboard at the back of the room.

"Well, uncle," he said, sadly, "you can't think how your words upset me--and your severity is such a disappointment to me I really feel quite faint. You won't give me any more help you say? I will not ask it. I will only ask for a drink of something--even a glass of water. You will not refuse me that?"

"You may take it for yourself," the uncle had declared. "You know where the bottles and glasses are kept. It is part of your abominable idleness that an active young fellow like you should sit there asking a poor old cripple to hand him a drink."

To keep up appearances young Mildon had gone to the cupboard and helped himself to some beer. Then he had removed his seat. To wait for his uncle to move, could be, of course, but a question of time, and the stakes he had already risked were too terrible to allow of any impatience. Leaving personal interest aside, he had striven to divert and interest the old gentleman in local gossip and political debate and was flattering himself that he was allaying his uncle's irritation in the most satisfactory manner, when he had been suddenly confounded by a brisk, peremptory ringing of the street door bell. His uncle had at once vaguely wondered who it was likely to be coming at that particular hour, when he was seldom disturbed. The nephew had wondered far less vaguely what course he had better pursue, since he knew too well that there was no living person below to attend to the bell. Of course, he expected a repetition of the ringing. There had been a sound in the first as if the person producing it would not brook long delay nor readily give up.

In his desperation, Young Mildon caught at his uncle's wonder who it could be, and reiterated it. Then he made a feint of listening, and remarked that as the housekeeper did not seem on duty, he would go and attend to the door himself. Accordingly he rushed away, past the two corpses in the hall, and had opened the door warily, that the caller should not catch a glimpse of the horrible sight within. He had trusted to some dark inspiration of the moment to get quit of the malapropos guest. To his astonishment, nobody stood on the doorstep. Probably this somewhat shock even his iron nerve, for, instead of retiring again, with the sufficient explanation of a runaway ring, he had stepped out upon the street to reconnoitre, not, however, forgetful to draw the door behind him fairly close. Then it had unaccountably slammed, and retreated, hatless and utterly defeated in his nefarious objects, had been the only course left him. It had, at least, given him opportunity to consider his position, and assume the part of an innocent witness.

Once fairly at bay, under the energetic promptitude of Talford, he dropped his mask forever. And his subsequent passage to execution was very straight and short.

There is much to reflect on in such a story. Did the door bell ring only in young Mildon's guilty imagination, and was his idea vivid enough, according to some modern theories, to impress his uncle's mind with a similar idea? A draught will often close a door left slightly ajar. There is nothing unnatural or even unusual in that. Some will be inclined totally to dismiss our telephonic suggestion and to fall back on the simpler one of a mere runaway ring. Admit this, and we have at once, in its time and circumstance, a marvelous coincidence with the needs of the occasion.

And then we have to admit another coincidence in the slamming of the door. Neither that nor the ringing of the bell were in the least remarkable in themselves. They were the most commonplace of occurrences. All their wonder lies in the part they played in this tragedy.

Does not the multiplication of coincidences tend to suggest the existence of a law not fully manifest? A whole philosophy may underlie the answer to the question, "Who rang the bell?"--[Argosy.]

Foreign Postal Savings Bank.

The British postal savings banks are open for the receipt and payment of money daily to depositors, and one shilling (twenty-five cents) or any number of shillings are received. If a person desires to deposit less than one shilling he may purchase penny stamps and paste them on a card, and when the number reaches the amount of one shilling they make the deposit. The number of Great Britain in the year 1891, amounted to 8,776,566, the amount so deposited being more than \$100,000,000. The number of depositors and the amount of money deposited increased from year to year. In England and Wales, one individual in every seven makes deposits, the average balance due to each depositor being about \$75. The regulations permit persons depositing at one Postoffice, to draw against their deposit at any other Postoffice, and thirty per cent of the transactions are made in this manner. The employers of labor encourage the use of the Postoffice Savings Bank.

In Italy the postal savings bank system was established in 1876. In 1889 the number of deposits was over 2,000,000 and the amount deposited 181,328,710 lire.

In Austria the number of depositors in 1890 was 63,775 and the number of deposits made during the year was 1,277,805, amounting to 21,048,026 florins.

In Hungary, Russia and Finland post-office savings banks are also in successful operation. In nearly all of these small deposits may be made by purchasing stamps and affixing them to a card.

The officials of nearly all countries where postal savings banks are in operation state that they do not interfere in any way with other banks, but on the contrary, are generally found helpful to them. In nearly all cases a low rate of interest, of from two to three per cent, is paid. The Director-General of Posts of France says: "Far from interfering with private savings banks, this law contains a number of provisions by which these banks have benefited. Postal savings banks have not been established to compete with the private banks, but with a view to giving savings banks to localities where they do not exist and where they probably never would have been established by private effort."--[St. Louis Star-Sayings.]

A small tuft of white roses are frequently used in place of the regulation orange blossoms.

THE JOKER'S BUDGET.

JESTS AND YARNS BY FUNNY MEN OF THE PRESS.

The Dime Museum on its Travels-- For Services Rendered--In the Morning--Gave Herself Away, etc., etc.

THE DIME MUSEUM ON ITS TRAVELS.

The Sword Swallower--Great Scott! This won't do! There are thirteen of us sitting down to dinner!

Two Living Skeletons--Thirteen nothing! There are only twelve. You've miscounted the two-headed girl. --[Chicago Tribune.]

FOR SERVICES RENDERED.

American Tourist--How much is my bill? Parisian Host--One hundred francs.

"How much?" "One hundred and twenty francs." "But you said one hundred at first." "Certainly. Twenty francs more for answering monsieur's question. One hundred and forty francs, please."--[Indianapolis Journal.]

IN THE MORNING.

"I wish I was an oyster," said Johnny, "for then I could stay in bed in the morning!" "Meby," said Fred doubtfully, "but it's likely's not they'd git ye up with a pair o' tongs."

GAVE HERSELF AWAY.

Bloobumper--I read to-day an account of how a female forger donned man's attire, and for a long time eluded arrest, but at last she gave herself away.

Spatts--She stopped to look into a milliner's window, I suppose? Bloobumper--No; in a moment of absent-mindedness she asked a woman if her hat was on straight. --[Harper's Bazar.]

AN UNAPPRECIATED SINGLER.

"So you went to sing in the choir?" "Yes." "What part?" "Well, I went in as first bass, but they changed it to short stop when they heard my voice."--[Washington Star.]

AN UNKNOWN PERSON.

"There was a gentleman in here to see you, Mr. We. I asked if he was your name," said the boy, "and he said never mind."

"Well, when he returns," said the editor, "get rid of him. I know no one of that name."

JOHNNY'S REFORMATION.

Mother--I am glad little Johnny is at last beginning to realize the necessity of cleanliness. He has been upstairs washing himself for nearly an hour."

Little Dick (breathlessly)--Mamma Johnny wants you to give me a penny to buy a pipe. "A pipe?" "Yes, m. We jus' broke th' other one, an' can't blow any more bubbles." --[Good News.]

AND HE KEPT ON WALKING THE FLOOR.

"What did you name your baby?" "Well, at first she was as good as gold--never whimpered--hair all worn off the back of her head with lying on it--and we called her Stella."

"Well?" "Well, since she began crying all night with teething we have changed her name to Tuscarora."--[Chicago Tribune.]

A SIMILAR PROCEEDING.

"This business of tracing one of my lost manuscripts makes me think of a dog I once owned," said Scribbler.

"In what respect?" queried Mawson. "He had a habit of chasing his own tail," replied Scribbler. --[New York Herald.]

A SPECIAL OCCASION.

Johnny--Do you say your prayers every night? Jimmy--I do whenever I've gotter sleep in the folding bed. --[Indianapolis Journal.]

HOW TO EAT ASPARAGUS.

"I wish I knew," said the boarder, looking at the bunch of asparagus on his plate and handling his knife and fork with some degree of hesitation and uncertainty, "just how asparagus ought to be eaten."

"It ought to be eaten sparingly," grumbled the landlady, under her breath. "It cost me fifteen cents a bunch."

A WISE WOMAN.

Husband--Where is the hatbox? Wife--In the attic. "If you saw it in the attic, why didn't you bring it down?" "I didn't see it."

"Then how did it get there?" "No one that I know of." "Then how in creation do you know it's in the attic?" "I heard you up there yesterday driving a nail."--[New York Weekly.]

KNITTING.

Museum Visitor (to a missus man)--So you can knit with your toes, eh? But suppose you broke a leg? Armless Man--Well, I reckon it would begin to knit right away.

THE ONLY WAY OUT.

Mr. Newsome (showing visitor through his reputed ancestral halls)--And this is the suit my great-grandfather wore when he gave up his heart's blood during the Revolution.

Miss Gotham (looking in vain for bullet holes or sabre rents)--Ah! was your great-grandfather killed while in bathing, Mr. Newsome?--[Puck.]

HE WEATHERED THE STORM.

Chappie--Once I was in a terrible storm at sea. The waves rolled mountain high. Miss Pinkerly--Dear me! Weren't you afraid? Chappie--No, indeed. I was weal bawve. My sister was with me. --[New York Herald.]

AT THE BASEBALL GAME.

Now doth the downtown merchant gaw Off from his office sneak, On plea of illness dire at home, One afternoon each week; And as he cheers the baseball game With loud ecstatic joy, He sees upon the bleaching boards His clerks and office boy! --[New York Herald.]

FIREPROOF.

Witherby--I hear that your house burned down last night. Was anything saved? Winks--Yes. The mortgage.

COMING TO A BUSINESS BASIS.

Banker Scadds--No, sir! Emphatically no! I consider your request for permission to pay your addresses to my daughter an act of unpardonable presumption, sir. For a young physician on a starvation practice to aspire to the hand of an heiress of millions is, I repeat, presumptuous.

Young Physician--Yes, sir. Any of the family want vaccinating? No? Then good morning. --[Chicago Tribune.]

AMPLE JUSTIFICATION.

Guest (Oklahoma Hotel)--Wasn't there some shooting at the other end of the table a minute ago? Waiter (replacing his smoking revolver)--Yes. Dude from the East. Wanted a nspkin. Say, if you're done with that knife and fork why in thunder don't you pass 'em to the next man! --[Chicago Tribune.]

A QUEER EXODUS.

Wife--Dear me, it's a rainy Saturday, and I'll have the children racing about the house all day and breaking things.

Husband--What have you usually done on rainy Saturdays? Wife--I generally send them in to play with the neighbors' children, but all I know have moved away. --[Good News.]

NOT SURPRISED.

Neighbor (breathlessly)--Oh, Mrs. Hardluck, your little son Johnny found a dynamite bomb, and took it into a stable down town and broke it with an axe, and blew up the stable and all the buildings around it.

Mrs. Hardluck--Land sakes! I wonder what that boy will be up to next. --[Good News.]

HE LOST HER INTEREST.

"I have been in nineteen engagements," boasted Colonel Battle, the old war horse.

"And how many times have you been married?" asked Miss Elder, with deep interest. --[Detroit Free Press.]

THE BEST FOOT KILLER.

Cholly--Do you object to cigaretttes, Miss Budd? Miss Budd--Oh, not in the least. They are doing a wonderful service for mankind. --[Judge.]

CAREFULLY INSTRUCTED.

Little Boy--Please gimme some smashed potatoes. Mother--You should not say smashed; say mashed. What made you so late to dinner? Little Boy--There was a--a mash-up on th' railroad. --[Good News.]

HAMPERED BY FASHION.

Conductor--Come, now, get aboard. Lady (frantically)--How can I? The car behind is on my trail. --[Cloak Review.]

A SENSIBLE GIRL.

He (timidly)--Now that we are engaged, I presume I may--may--kiss you as much as I please, mayn't I? She (encouragingly)--Yes, indeed. Make the most of your time, dear. There's no telling how long an engagement will last nowadays, you know. --[New York Weekly.]

MARRIED LIFE WAS NOT HAPPY.

"Why do you always employ women as type-writers?" asked Mrs. Curtain Lecture.

"So that I can have some one to dictate to," replied the unhappy man. --[New York Press.]

SCALING DOWN.

Little Boy--Mamma, may I go fishing? Mamma--No, my son, I'm afraid you'll get drowned; but you may go around to the grocery and buy me a mackerel. --[Good News.]

AN IMPROVEMENT.

Husband--How do you like your new girl? Wife--Well, she works me a little harder than the last one, but she is more respectful. --[New York Weekly.]

TIME'S CHANGES.

Maddox--Jay Gould was once a me-senger boy. Gazette--Is that so? Well, there's nothing slow about him now. --[Detroit Free Press.]

YE MODERN POET.

Winks--I can tell a poet the moment I see him. Minks--How? Winks--He never looks like one.

ONE TOO MANY.

First Boy--Which does th' whippin' in your family, y'r father or y'r mother? Second Boy--Both. First Boy--Hah! I don't think that's fair.

ALIKE.

"I know a belle who is a regular circus." "Because she has three rings, I suppose--all engagements rings."

The attentions of electricians is drawn to a singular incident which occurred in Berlin. An electrical workman in testing his coils to see if the current was flowing was in the habit of putting the two ends of the wires in his mouth. He gradually absorbed so much of the soluble salts of copper from the wires as to cause his death. The galvanometer is now substituted in the Berlin workshop for the rough and ready test formerly employed, the danger of which was not before realized.