

AT NIGHTFALL.

COMING along by the meadows,
Just after the sun went down,
Watching the gathering shadows
Creep over the hillsides brown;

Coming along in the gloaming,
With never a star in the sky,
My thoughts went a-roaming, a-roaming,
Through days that are long gone by.

Days when desire said, "To-morrow,
To-morrow, heart, we'll be gay!"
Days ere the heart heard the sorrow
Which echoes through yesterday.

Life was a goblet burnished,
That with love for wine was filled;
The cup is bruised and tarnished,
And the precious wine is spilled.

But to the traveler weary,
Just coming in sight of home,
What does it matter how dreary
The way whereby he has come?

Coming along by the meadows,
And watching the fading day,
Dusky than night's dusky shadows
Fall shadows of yesterday.

In the northern sunset's glimmer
The Great Bear opened his eyes;
Low in the east a shimmer
Showed where the full moon would rise.

Lights in a window were gleaming,
And some one stood at the gate,
Said: "Why do you stand there dreaming
And why are you home so late?"

Yesterday's shadow and sorrow
That moment all vanished away!
Here were to-day and to-morrow—
What matter for yesterday?

—Good Words.

UP THE RIVER WITH A LUNATIC.

ALF DIXON, Tom Giffard and I had gone up the river camping out; we had done our second day's work. It was early morning on the third day, glorious weather. I was in the boat, getting the steering lines in order; Giffard and Dixon were on the bank, talking to Dr. Rawle. As I understood it, the doctor was at the head of a private asylum for lunatics. He was Giffard's friend, not mine. He had been taking a constitutional when he happened to fall in with us just as we were sitting down to our open-air breakfast; the chance meeting led to Giffard inviting him to share our gypsy meal. He did.

He was a pleasant fellow, not too old and not too young. I liked him exceedingly. We talked of things in general, and of lunatics in particular. Something led to his mentioning—I think it was speaking of the cunning of a certain class of lunatics, and the difficulty of keeping them within four walls—the fact that one of his inmates had escaped a day or two previously, and had not yet been retaken. This was the more singular as it was tolerably certain he had not gone far, and search had been made for him in every direction.

As Giffard and Dixon were saying good-by, preparatory to getting into the boat, the doctor laughingly said: "Should you happen to come across him, I shall consider you bound to bring him back safe and sound. He's a man of forty-four or forty-five, tall and bony, iron-gray hair, and has a curious habit of showing his teeth and winking his left eye. Don't look out for a ravaging lunatic; for on most points he's as right as you and I. He's wrong in two things. Whatever you do, don't let him lose his temper; for whenever he does, though ever so slightly, he invariably goes in for murder—he's all but done for two keepers already. And don't talk to him of England or Englishmen; for if he should get upon his native land, he'll favor you with some observations which will make you open your eyes."

We laughed. Alf and Tom shook hands with him, and got into the boat. We promised, if we should happen to meet him, we would certainly see him returned to safe custody. Alf stood up and shoved us from the shore; we sang out a last good-by, and left the doctor standing on the bank.

It was a beautiful morning. The river was delicious, clear as crystal; we could see the bottom, and every stone and pebble on it; just a gentle breeze fanning the surface of the waters into a little ripple. We lit our pipes and took it easily. I am a good bit of a traveler, know many lovely nooks and crannies in foreign lands; I have lived abroad as much as at home; but I will match the higher reaches of our own Father Thames for beauty and for charm against any scenery in Europe. And on an early summer morning, after a spell of glorious weather, it is in all its prime; the water so cool, so clear; the banks so green, so charming; the stately trees on either side; the mansions seen over the meadows, or peeping out among the trees. You may choose your Rhine, your Garda, or your Maggiore, or your golden Bay of Naples, but leave Cookham and old Father Thames to me.

Presumably we had come for river beauties and the camping-out—presumably; but as a matter of fact there was a young lady lived not so far ahead, a mutual friend, Lilian Travers. Separately and jointly we had a high opinion of Miss Travers, not only of her beauty, but of other things as well; and having come so far, we hoped we should not have to return until at least we had had a peep at her. Unfortunately, though we knew Miss Travers, we had no acquaintance with Mr.—there was no Mrs. We had met the young lady at several dances and such like; but on each occasion she was under the chaperonage of old Mrs. Mackenzie. Apparently Mr. Travers was not a party man. But Lilian had promised to introduce us to him whenever she got a chance, and we were not unhopeful she would get that chance now. So you see that little excursion riverward had more in it than the eye.

We went lazily on, just dipping the oars in and out; smoking, watching the smoke circling through the clear air. All thoughts of the doctor and his partings had gone from our minds. We talked little, and that little was of Lilian and the chances of our meeting. We had gone some two or three hundred yards; we were close to the shore. Alf could almost reach it by stretching out his oar. We were dreaming and lazing, when suddenly some one stepped out from among the trees. He was close to us—not a dozen feet away.

He was a tall man, rather over than under six feet. He was dressed in a dark brown suit of Oxford mixture; he had a stick in his hand, wore a billy-

cock hat, and his coat was buttoned right up to his throat. He had light whiskers, a heavy, drooping mustache, hair unusually long, iron-gray in color. He might be a soldier retired from his profession, or an artist out painting; he certainly looked a gentleman.

We were passing on, when he raised his stick, and shouted out, "Stop!"

It was a regular shout, as though we were half a mile from him. We stopped, although it was an unusual method of calling attention.

"Gentlemen," he said, still at the top of his voice, "I should be obliged if you could give me a seat. I have a long way to go, and I am tired."

We looked at him and at each other. It was a free-and-easy style of asking a favor; but he seemed a gentleman, and an elderly one, too. Common politeness dictated civility.

"I am afraid," said Alf, "we have hardly room; she's only built for three."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," he said; "you can put me anywhere, or I'll take an oar for one of you."

I was on the point of advising a point-blank refusal, not appreciating his off-hand manner; but Alf thought differently.

"All right," said he; "we don't mind, if you don't. Steer her in, Jack."

I steered her in. No sooner were we near the shore than, quite unexpectedly, he stepped almost on my toes, rocking the boat from side to side.

"Hang it!" I said; "take care, or you'll have us over."

"What if I do?" he returned. "It'll only be a swim; and who minds a swim in weather like this?"

We stared at him; the coolness, not so cool, they hardly took their eyes off him for more than a second at a time. His behavior before their furtive glances was peculiar; he saw he was being watched; he couldn't sit still; he looked first at one bank, then at the other; his eyes traveled everywhere, resting nowhere; his hands fidgeted and trembled; he seemed all of a quiver. I expected him to break into a paroxysm every second. If I hadn't called out he would have run us right into the shore; when I called he clutched the other string violently, jerking the boat almost round. I heartily wished him at Jericho before he had come near us.

No one spoke. We went slowly along, watching each other. At last he said something.

"I—will get out," he said, in an odd, nervous way.

"With pleasure," said Alf; "in a minute."

"Why not now? Why not now, sir?" he said, seeming to shake from head to foot.

"Where are you going to get?—into the river?" I admired Alf's coolness; I envied him. I only hoped he wouldn't let carry him too far.

The man glowered at him; for a moment he looked him full in the face. I never saw a look in a man's eyes like that in his. Alf returned look for look.

Slightly, almost imperceptibly, he quickened his stroke. A little lower down was a little hamlet with a well-known inn and a capital landing-stage. When we came alongside, the stranger said, "This will do; I'll get out here."

He turned the boat inshore. No sooner were we near enough than he rose in his seat and sprang on to the beach. There were several people about, watermen and others. Alf was after him in an instant; he rose almost simultaneously and leaped on shore; he touched him on the shoulder.

"Come," he said, "when are you going to start?"

"Perhaps," said Alf, a bit nettled, "as you're in our boat a self-invited guest, you'll let us choose our own time."

The stranger said nothing; he sat stolid and silent. Tom and Alf set off rowing; the stranger steered right across the stream.

"Where are you going?" said Alf. "Keep us in."

"I'm going into the shade; the sun's too strong."

He had the lines; we could hardly insist on his keeping one side if he preferred the other. He took us right to the opposite bank, under the shadow of the willow-trees. For some minutes neither of us spoke. With him cramming me on my seat, and ramming his elbows into my side, my position was not pleasant. At last I let him know it.

"I don't know if you are aware you are occupying all my seat."

He turned on me short and sharp. All at once I noticed his left eye going up and down like a blinking owl; his mouth was wide open, disclosing as ugly a set of teeth as I should care to see. Like a flash Dr. Rawle's words crossed my mind: tall, strong, about forty-five, iron-gray hair; a habit of showing his teeth and winking his left eye. Gracious powers! was it possible we had a lunatic with us unawares? I know the possibility, nay, the probability, of such a thing made me feel more than queer. If there is anything in the world I instinctively fear, it is mad persons. I know little of them—have never been in their company. Possibly my ignorance explains my dread; but the idea of sitting in the same boat and on the same seat with a man who—

Dr. Rawle's warning, "Don't let him lose his temper, or murder will ensue," made me bound from my seat like Jack-in-the-box. The boat tipped right out of the water, but I didn't care. The man was glaring at me with cruel eyes; my muscles were strung, my fists clinched; every moment I expected him at my throat.

"What the dickens are you up to?" said Alf. "What's the matter with you?"

"Excitable temperament, hot-blooded youth," said the stranger.

I could have said something had I chosen, but I preferred discretion, I didn't like his eyes.

"No-o—nothing," I said. "I think I'll sit in the bow."

"I didn't wait to learn if anyone had any objection, but swinging round, I scrambled past Alf, and tripped full length on to Tom's seat. The boat went up and down like a swing; it was a miracle he wasn't over."

"Is the fellow mad?" roared Alf.

At the word "mad" the stranger rose up straight as a post. "Mad!" he said; "do you know, sir?" He checked himself and sat down. "Pooh! he's only a boy."

Passing Tom I whispered in his ear. "The lunatic," I said.

"What?" said Tom, right out loud.

"Hold your row, you confounded donkey! It's the man from Dr. Rawle's."

"The—"

He was going to say something naughty—I know he was; but he stopped short, and stared at him with all his eyes. Either Alf overheard me, or else the same idea occurred to him at the same moment, for he stopped dead in the middle of a stroke, and inspected the man on the steering seat. Tom and Alf went on staring at him for a minute or more. I kept my head turned the other way to avoid his eyes. All at once I felt the boat give a great throb. I turned: there was the stranger leaning half out of his seat, looking at Alf in a way I shouldn't have cared to have him look at me.

"What's the meaning of this insolence?" he said.

The question was not unwarranted; it could not have been pleasant to have been stared at as Alf and Tom were staring then.

"I beg your pardon," said Alf, cool as a cucumber. "To what insolence do you refer?"

Tom actually chuckled; I couldn't have cracked for a good deal; it seemed to me not only impudent, but risky; I couldn't forget Dr. Rawle's words about his homicidal tendencies. He turned red as a lobster; I never saw such an expression come over a man's face before—perfectly demoniacal. To my surprise he sat down and spoke as calmly and deliberately as possible.

"Thank you," he said; "I shall not forget this."

There was a sound about his "I shall not forget this" I did not relish. Alf said nothing. Tom and he set off rowing as coolly as though nothing had happened. I extemporized a seat in the bow, and tried to make things as comfortable as possible.

I noticed, although Alf and Tom were so cool, they hardly took their eyes off him for more than a second at a time.

His behavior before their furtive glances was peculiar; he saw he was being watched; he couldn't sit still; he looked first at one bank, then at the other; his eyes traveled everywhere, resting nowhere; his hands fidgeted and trembled; he seemed all of a quiver. I expected him to break into a paroxysm every second. If I hadn't called out he would have run us right into the shore; when I called he clutched the other string violently, jerking the boat almost round. I heartily wished him at Jericho before he had come near us.

No one spoke. We went slowly along, watching each other. At last he said something.

"I—I will get out," he said, in an odd, nervous way.

"With pleasure," said Alf; "in a minute."

"Why not now? Why not now, sir?" he said, seeming to shake from head to foot.

"Where are you going to get?—into the river?" I admired Alf's coolness; I envied him. I only hoped he wouldn't let carry him too far.

The man glowered at him; for a moment he looked him full in the face. I never saw a look in a man's eyes like that in his. Alf returned look for look.

Slightly, almost imperceptibly, he quickened his stroke. A little lower down was a little hamlet with a well-known inn and a capital landing-stage. When we came alongside, the stranger said, "This will do; I'll get out here."

He turned the boat inshore. No sooner were we near enough than he rose in his seat and sprang on to the beach. There were several people about, watermen and others. Alf was after him in an instant; he rose almost simultaneously and leaped on shore; he touched him on the shoulder.

"Come," he said, "when are you going to start?"

"Perhaps," said Alf, a bit nettled, "as you're in our boat a self-invited guest, you'll let us choose our own time."

The stranger said nothing; he sat stolid and silent. Tom and Alf set off rowing; the stranger steered right across the stream.

"Where are you going?" said Alf. "Keep us in."

"I'm going into the shade; the sun's too strong."

He had the lines; we could hardly insist on his keeping one side if he preferred the other. He took us right to the opposite bank, under the shadow of the willow-trees. For some minutes neither of us spoke. With him cramming me on my seat, and ramming his elbows into my side, my position was not pleasant. At last I let him know it.

"I don't know if you are aware you are occupying all my seat."

He turned on me short and sharp. All at once I noticed his left eye going up and down like a blinking owl; his mouth was wide open, disclosing as ugly a set of teeth as I should care to see. Like a flash Dr. Rawle's words crossed my mind: tall, strong, about forty-five, iron-gray hair; a habit of showing his teeth and winking his left eye. Gracious powers! was it possible we had a lunatic with us unawares? I know the possibility, nay, the probability, of such a thing made me feel more than queer. If there is anything in the world I instinctively fear, it is mad persons. I know little of them—have never been in their company. Possibly my ignorance explains my dread; but the idea of sitting in the same boat and on the same seat with a man who—

Dr. Rawle's warning, "Don't let him lose his temper, or murder will ensue," made me bound from my seat like Jack-in-the-box. The boat tipped right out of the water, but I didn't care. The man was glaring at me with cruel eyes; my muscles were strung, my fists clinched; every moment I expected him at my throat.

"What?" said Tom, right out loud.

"Hold your row, you confounded donkey! It's the man from Dr. Rawle's."

"The—"

He was going to say something naughty—I know he was; but he stopped short, and stared at him with all his eyes. Either Alf overheard me, or else the same idea occurred to him at the same moment, for he stopped dead in the middle of a stroke, and inspected the man on the steering seat. Tom and Alf went on staring at him for a minute or more. I kept my head turned the other way to avoid his eyes. All at once I felt the boat give a great throb. I turned: there was the stranger leaning half out of his seat, looking at Alf in a way I shouldn't have cared to have him look at me.

"What's the meaning of this insolence?" he said.

The question was not unwarranted; it could not have been pleasant to have been stared at as Alf and Tom were staring then.

"I beg your pardon," said Alf, cool as a cucumber. "To what insolence do you refer?"

Tom actually chuckled; I couldn't have cracked for a good deal; it seemed to me not only impudent, but risky; I couldn't forget Dr. Rawle's words about his homicidal tendencies. He turned red as a lobster; I never saw such an expression come over a man's face before—perfectly demoniacal. To my surprise he sat down and spoke as calmly and deliberately as possible.

"Thank you," he said; "I shall not forget this."

There was a sound about his "I shall not forget this" I did not relish. Alf said nothing. Tom and he set off rowing as coolly as though nothing had happened. I extemporized a seat in the bow, and tried to make things as comfortable as possible.