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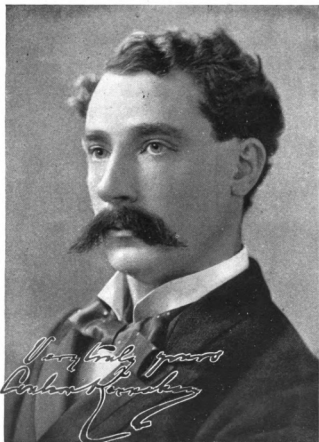


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Captain Shannon

CHAPTER I

WHO IS "CAPTAIN SHANNON" ?

THE year 18— will be memorable for the perpetration in England and in Ireland of a series of infamously diabolical outrages. On the scene of each crime was found — sometimes scrawled in plain rough capitals upon a piece of paper which was pinned to the body of a victim, sometimes rudely chalked in the same lettering upon a door or wall — this inscription — "By order. — Captain Shannon."

Who Captain Shannon was the police failed entirely to discover, although the counties in which the crimes occurred were scoured from end to end, and every person who was known to have been in the neighbourhood was subjected to the severest examination. That some who were so examined knew more than they would tell, there was reason to believe; but so dreaded

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assassins, who were probably the tools of the monster calling himself "Captain Shannon," in whose too fertile brain the crimes had, he believed, originated, and under whose devilishly planned directions they had been carried out.

The police had reason to suppose that the headquarters of the conspirators were in Ireland, in which country the majority of the crimes — at all events of the earlier crimes — had been committed.

He regretted to say, but it was his duty to say, that but for the disloyal attitude of a section of the Irish people — who, from dastardly and contemptible cowardice, or from sympathy with the assassins, had not only withheld the evidence, without which it was impossible to trace the various outrages to their cause, but had on more than one occasion actually sought to hinder the police in the execution of their duty — the conspirators would long since have been brought to book.

The Secretary then went on to denounce in the strongest language what he called the infamous conduct of the disloyal Irish. He declared, amid ringing cheers, that the man or woman who sought to shield such a monster as

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Captain Shannon, or to protect him and his confederates from justice, was nothing less than a murderer in the eyes of God and of man. He informed the House that although the Government had actually framed several important measures which would go far to remove the grievances of which Irishmen were complaining, he for one would, in view of what had taken place, strenuously oppose the consideration at that moment of any measures which had even the appearance of a concession to Irish demands. It was repression, not concession, which must be meted out to traitors and murderers.

Within a month after the delivery of this speech all England was horrified by the news of a crime more wantonly wicked than any outrage which had preceded it, a crime which resulted — as its perpetrators must have known it would result — in the wholesale murder of hundreds of inoffensive people against whom — excepting for the fact that they happened to be law-abiding citizens — the followers of Captain Shannon could have no grievance.

All that was known was that a respectably dressed young man, carrying what appeared to

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authority on explosives expressed himself as of opinion that no infernal machine capable of causing what had happened could be concealed in so small a compass as that suggested. But it was pointed out in reply that from arrests and discoveries which had been made in America and on the Continent, it was evident that the manufacture of infernal machines and investigations into the qualities of explosives were being scientifically and systematically carried on.

Though no connection had as yet been traced between the persons who had been arrested and the perpetrators of the recent outrages, the probabilities were that such connection existed, and it was asked whether it might not be possible that some one who was thus engaged in experimenting with explosives had discovered a new explosive, or a new combination of explosives, which was different from and more deadly than anything known to the authorities.

Into the probability or improbability of this and other theories which were put forward it would be idle here to enter. All that is known is that the train had only just entered the tunnel immediately to the west of Blackfriars station when there occurred the most awful explosion

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of the sort within the memory of man. The passengers, as well as the guard, driver, and stoker, not only of the train in which the explosion took place, but also of a train which was proceeding in the opposite direction and happened to be passing at the time, were killed to a man, and with the exception of one of Smith's bookstall boys, whose escape seemed almost miraculous, every soul in the station — ticket-collectors, porters, station-master, and the unfortunate people who were waiting on the platform — shared the same fate.

Nor was this all, for at the moment when the outrage occurred the train was passing under one of the busiest crossings in London — that where New Bridge Street, Blackfriars Bridge, Queen Victoria Street, and the Thames Embankment converge — and so terrific was the explosion that the space between these converging thoroughfares was blown away as a man's hand is blown away by the bursting of a gun.

The buildings in the immediate neighbourhood, including parts of St. Paul's station on the London, Chatham, and Dover railway, the offices over Blackfriars station, and De Keyser's Hotel on the opposite side of the way, were

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wrecked, and the long arm of Blackfriars Bridge lay idle across the river like a limb which has been rudely hacked from a body.

But it is not my intention to attempt any realistic description of the scene, or of the awful sights which were witnessed when, after the first paralysing moment of panic was over, the search for the injured, the dying, and the dead was commenced. The number of lives lost, including those who perished in Blackfriars station, in the two trains, in the street, and in the surrounding buildings, was enormous. Several columns of the papers next morning were filled with lists of the missing and the dead. One name on the list had a terrible significance. It was the name of the man to achieve whose murder the lives of so many innocent men and women had been ruthlessly sacrificed; the name of a man whose remains were never found, but whose funeral pyre was built of the broken bodies of hundreds of his fellow creatures,— the name of the Chief Secretary for Ireland.

CHAPTER II

CAPTAIN SHANNON'S MANIFESTO

ON the day of the outrage upon the Metropolitan railway a manifesto from Captain Shannon, of which the following is a copy, was received by the Prime Minister at his official residence in Downing Street. It was written as usual in roughly printed capitals, and, as it bore the Dublin postmark of the preceding day, must have been posted *before the explosion had taken place.*

"To the People of Great Britain and Ireland :

"Fellow countrymen and countrywomen,—
The Anarchistic, Nihilistic, Fenian, and similar movements of the past have all been failures. That fact there is no denying. I do not mean to say that there have been no results to the glorious war which has been waged upon a society which is content to stand by heedless and unconcerned while Russia's many millions of starving and suffering fellow-creatures are the slaves of a system by which the honour,

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liberty, and life of every man, woman, and child are at the mercy of a tyrant's whim and the whims of his myrmidons, — a society which looks on smiling while Ireland is groaning under the heel of English oppression, and while capitalists, who yawn as they seek to devise some new vice on which to squander the wealth which has become a burden to them, grind down and sweat the poor, setting one starving man to compete against another for a wage which can scarce find him and his in dry bread.

“A society which, calling itself Christian, and having it in its power to mend matters, can, unconcerned, endure such iniquities, is *blood guilty*, and so long as these things last, upon society shall its crimes be visited, — with society must all just men and true wage deadly war.

“What has been done hitherto has not been without results.

“But for the justice which was executed upon the arch-tyrant, Alexander of Russia; the blow which was struck at English tyranny by the destruction of Clerkenwell prison; the righteous punishment which befell those servants of tyrants and enemies of freedom, Burke and Cavendish, — but for these and other glorious deeds,

CAPTAIN SHANNON'S MANIFESTO

the bitter cry of the oppressed all over the world had passed unheard and unheeded; Ireland had not wrung from reluctant England the few paltry concessions that have been made, and the dawning of the great day of freedom had been indefinitely postponed.

"But notwithstanding all that has been done, the fact remains and cannot be denied that Nihilists, Anarchists, Fenians, and those who, under different names and different leaders, are fighting for freedom throughout the world have, up to the present, failed to accomplish the results at which they aim.

"And why?

"Because they have been scattered and separate organisations, each working independently of the other, and having no resources outside itself. So long as this sort of thing continues nothing can be hoped for but the throwing away of precious lives and sorely needed money to no purpose.

"But let these scattered forces combine into one organised and all-powerful Federation, and mankind will be at its mercy.

"This is what has been done.

"The World Federation of Freedom is now an accomplished fact, for *all the secret societies*

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“The other reason is that Ireland, when she is once set free, and in the hands of the Federation, is to be made the basis of future operations. It is very necessary that the Federation should have some such headquarters, and in regard to size (too large a centre is not desirable), shape, situation, and compactness, Ireland possesses peculiar natural advantages for the purpose. An island, surrounded on all sides as by sentries, by the sea, no hostile force can steal upon her under cover and unawares. She is practically the key to Europe, and as a vantage-ground from which to commence operations upon England her position cannot be bettered.

“Is there a single thinking man or woman who cannot see that monarchy and imperialism, peers, clergy, and class distinctions are doomed, and that their utter downfall is only a matter of time? Germany, Russia, Austria, Italy, France, and England are undermined to the very cores by Socialism and Anarchy. The mines which are to destroy society, as society now exists, are laid though they are out of sight, and at any moment the opportunity may come to fire the train. Such an opportunity once occurred

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in France; but what happened then, though it served to show what hatred of its rulers was seething unsuspected in the lowest stratum of society, was a mere accident. But if an accidental outbreak like the French Revolution could set rivers of blood running in France, what may we not expect from the Great Revolution which, when it comes — as come it must — will be the result, not of chance, but of long years of systematic propagation of socialistic principles among the masses, which will be the outcome of the most subtly-planned and gigantic scheme for the liberation of mankind which the world has ever known!

“There are people who will say that what happened on the other side of the Channel can never happen on this. But those who know what is going on in London, Manchester, Birmingham, and all the largest towns, know that we are living on the edge of a volcano; that England is riper for revolution today than France was in 1789, though the danger is as little suspected now as it was then, and that what happened then, and worse, may happen at any time in England unless her councillors have the foresight and the wisdom to

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give to the people what the people will assuredly otherwise *take*.

“It must be remembered that in England we have had for more than half a century a Queen who does not forget that during that time a complete revolution has taken place in many previously existing beliefs and systems, a Queen who knows that England will never tolerate another George IV., who recognises that what was patiently borne sixty, forty, and twenty years ago, will not be endured for a moment to-day, and has wisely avoided everything which can put royalty on its trial or the temper of the people to the test. Hence, though Englishmen know that a day of reckoning between royalty and the people is nigh, they have tacitly consented to put off that day so long as she lives, and to call upon some other and less fortunate sovereign to settle the account. But the account, too long overdue, will soon have to be settled. As well might one man hope to stand against an incoming sea, as well might the courtiers of old King Canute think by their chiding to stay the rude waves from wetting the feet of their royal master, as the rich few think that they can withstand the million of the poor

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when the poor shall arise in their might and their right to claim as their own the riches which their labours have accumulated. In whose hands are those riches now?

“For answer let them look to the words which are written in the very heart of their seething, starving London, over the portico of the Royal Exchange, ‘The earth is the Lord’s and the fulness thereof.’ Yes, the lords’,—this duke’s, that earl’s,—but not God’s— if a God there be— or the people’s.

“But it is to restore the earth and the fulness thereof to the people that the World Federation of Freedom is fighting. Its cause is the cause of the poor, and it is sacred. Long years of toiling for the bare necessities of life have so broken the spirit of the poor that they have become almost like beasts of burden that wince before a whip in the hands of a child, and bow themselves to the yoke at the bidding of a master whose puny life they could crush out at a blow. It is time that the poor should be made to see the terrible power which, if only by virtue of their swarming millions, lies at their command.

“It is for the people of Great Britain to make

CHAPTER III

THE "DAILY RECORD" TO THE RESCUE

THREE days after the explosion, the "Daily Record," which had from the first given exceptional prominence to everything connected with the outrages, issued a special supplement, in which, in a letter to the people of England, the editor said that in view of the infamous conspiracy which had been formed against the welfare of the British Empire, and against the lives of British citizens, the proprietors of the "Daily Record" had some months ago decided to bring all their resources, capital, and energy to bear upon the discovery of the promoters of the conspiracy. In the carrying out of this investigation, the services of the very ablest English and foreign detectives had been engaged, their instructions being that, so long as absolute secrecy was observed and ultimate success attained, the question of expense was to remain

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furnish proof of his identity, they would pay a reward of £20,000.

And in offering these rewards they made no exception in regard to the persons who were eligible to claim them. So long as the person claiming the reward or rewards had supplied the information which led to the arrest or arrests of the individuals indicated, the money should be faithfully paid without question or reservation.

Needless to say the publication of this letter, with the names, and in three cases with portraits, of the men who were asserted to be the leaders of the conspiracy, and the offer of such large rewards, created a profound sensation not only in England and Ireland, but in America and on the Continent.

One or two of the "Daily Record's" contemporaries did not hesitate to censure the action which had been taken as an advertising dodge, and a well-known Conservative organ declared that such a direct insult to the authorities was calculated seriously to injure the national prestige of England; that the Government had made every possible effort to protect society and to bring the perpetrators

TO THE RESCUE

of the recent outrages to book, and that the result of the "Record's" rash and ill-advised procedures would be to stultify the action of the police and to defeat the ends of justice.

On the other hand, the public generally — especially in view of the fact that the "Record" had succeeded in discovering who were the leaders of the conspiracy (which the police had apparently failed to do) — was inclined to give the editor and the proprietors credit for the patriotism they claimed, and it was confidently believed that the offer of so large a reward would tempt some one to turn informer and to give up his confederates to justice.

What the "Daily Record" did for England the "Dublin News" — which had been consistently loyal throughout, and the most fearlessly outspoken of all the Irish Press in its denunciation of Captain Shannon — did for Ireland. It hailed the proprietors and editor of the "Record" as patriots, declaring that, in view of the inefficiency which the Government had displayed in their efforts to protect the public, it was high time that the public should bestir itself and take the matter into its own hand. It reprinted — by the permission of the

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“Record” — the descriptions and portraits of the “suspects,” and distributed them broadcast over the country, and it announced that it would add to the amount which was offered by the “Daily Record” for information which would lead to the arrest of Captain Shannon the sum of £5,000.

CHAPTER IV

THE MURDER IN FLEET STREET

TEN A. M. is a comparatively quiet hour in Fleet Street. The sale of morning papers has practically dropped, and as the second edition of those afternoon journals, of which no one ever sees a first, has not yet been served out to the clamouring and hustling mob at the distributing centres, no vociferating newsboys, aproned with placards of "Sun," "News," "Echo" or "Star," have as yet taken possession of the street corners and pavement kerbs.

On the morning of which I am writing, the newspaper world was sadly in want of a sensation. A royal personage had, it is true, put off the crown corruptible for one which would press less heavily on his brow; but he had, as a pressman phrased it, "given away the entire situation" by allowing himself for a fortnight to be announced as "dying." This,

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flict among County Councillors," and the "Daily Chronicle's" most exciting contents were a poem by Mr. Richard le Gallienne and a letter from Mr. Bernard Shaw. Nor was anything doing in the aristocratic world. Not a single duke, marquis, earl, viscount, or baron was appearing as respondent or co-respondent in a divorce case, or as actor in any turf or society scandal, and there was a widespread feeling that the aristocracy, as a whole, was not doing its duty to the country.

As a matter of fact, one among many results of the sudden cessation, three months since, of every sort of Anarchistic outrage, had been that the daily papers could not seem other than flat reading to a public which had previously opened these same prints each morning with apprehension and anxiety. Though the vigorous action taken by the editor of the "Daily Record," in London, and of the "Dublin News," in Dublin, had not, as had been expected, led to the arrest of Captain Shannon or his colleagues, it had apparently so alarmed the conspirators as to cause them to abandon their plan of campaign. The general opinion was that Captain Shannon, finding so much

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out into the road shouting, "Murder! murder! police! murder!" at the top of his voice.

In an instant the restless, hurrying human streams that ebb and flow ceaselessly in the narrow channel of Fleet Street — like contending rivers running between lofty banks — had surged up in a huge wave around him. In the next a policeman, pushing back the crowd with his right hand and his left, had forced a way to the man's side, inquiring gruffly, "Now then, what's up? And where?"

"Murder! The editor's just been stabbed in his room by Captain Shannon or one of his agents. Don't let any one out. The assassin may not have had time to get away," was the rejoinder.

There are no police officers more efficient and prompt to act than those of the City of London, and on this occasion they acquitted themselves admirably. Other constables had now hurried up, and at once proceeded to clear a space in front of the "Record" office, forming a cordon on each side of the road, and allowing no one to pass in or out.

A messenger was despatched in haste for the nearest doctor, and when guards had been set

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at every entrance to, and possible exit from, the "Record" office, two policemen passed within the building to pursue inquiries, and the doors were shut and locked. Among the crowd outside the wildest rumours and speculations were rife.

"The editor of the 'Record' had been murdered by Captain Shannon himself, who had come on purpose to wreak vengeance for the attitude the paper had taken up in regard to the conspiracy."

"The murderer had been caught red-handed and was now in custody of the police."

"The murderer was concealed somewhere on the premises, and had in his possession an infernal machine with which it would be possible to wreck half Fleet Street."

(This last report had the effect of causing a temporary diversion in favour of the side streets.)

"The murderers had got clean away and the whole staff of the 'Record' had been arrested on suspicion." These and many other rumours were passed from mouth to mouth and repeated with astonishing variations until the arrival of the doctor, who was by various well-informed

THE MURDER IN FLEET STREET

persons promptly recognised as, and authoritatively pronounced to be, Captain Shaw, the Chief Commissioner of Police, the Lord Mayor, and Sir Augustus Harris.

Every door, window, and letter-box became an object of fearsome curiosity. People were half inclined to wonder how they could so many times have passed the "Record" office without recognising something of impending tragedy about the building — something of historic interest in the shape of the very window-panes and key-holes. One man among the crowd attained enviable celebrity by announcing that he "see the editor go up that passage and through that door — the very door where he'd gone through that morning afore he was murdered — scores of times, *and didn't think nothin' of it,*" which last admission seemed to impress the crowd with the fact that here at least was a fellow whose praiseworthy modesty deserved encouragement.

Meanwhile no sign of anything having transpired was to be seen within the building, and people were beginning to get impatient when, from somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Thames Embankment, came that sound so

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familiar to Cockney ears — a sound which no true Londoner can hear with indifference — the hoarse vociferation of the newsvendors proclaiming some sensational news. At first it was nothing but a distant babel, like the husky barking of dogs, but as it drew nearer the shouts became more distinguishable, and I caught the words, “ ‘Ere yer are, sir! ‘Sun,’ sir! Murder of a heditor this mornin’! ‘Ere yer are, sir!”

“That’s smart, that is!” said a fellow who was standing next to me in the crowd. “T. P. O’Connor don’t let no grass grow under his feet, ‘e don’t. Why, the murdered man ain’t ‘ardly cold, and ‘ere it is all in the ‘Sun!’”

“Shut yer jaw,” said a woman near him. “‘Tain’t this murder at all — can’t yer ‘ear?” And then as the moving babel, like a slowly travelling storm-cloud, drew nearer and nearer and finally burst upon Fleet Street, we could make out what the newsvendors were hoarsely vociferating.

“ ‘Ere yer are, sir! ‘Sun,’ sir! Murder o’ the heditor o’ the ‘Dublin News’ this mornin’. Capture o’ the hassassin, who turns hinformer. Captain Shannon’s name and hidentity disclosed.

THE MURDER IN FLEET STREET

The 'ole 'ideous plot laid bare. 'Ere yer are, sir!"

Elbowing my way as best I could through the crowd, I succeeded at last in getting within a yard or two of a newsboy, and, by offering him a shilling and telling him not to mind the change, possessed myself of a "Sun." This is what I read at the top of the centre page: —

"The editor of the 'Dublin News' was stabbed in the street at an early hour this morning. The murderer was captured and has now turned informer. The police refuse to give any information in regard to what has been divulged, but there is no doubt that Captain Shannon's name and identity have at last been disclosed, and that the whole hideous conspiracy is now laid bare. Further particulars in our next edition."

CHAPTER V

THE IDENTITY OF CAPTAIN SHANNON DIS- CLOSED AT LAST

THE news that the captured conspirator had turned informer and divulged the name and identity of Captain Shannon created, as may be supposed, the wildest excitement. Contrary to general expectation, the authorities seemed willing to accord information instead of withholding it, though whether this was not as much due to gratification at finding themselves in the novel position of having any information to accord, as to their desire to allay public anxiety, may be questioned.

The editor of the "Dublin News" had, it seemed, been speaking at a public dinner and was returning between twelve and one o'clock from the gathering. As it was a close night and the room had been hot, he mentioned to a friend that he thought he should walk home instead of driving. This he had apparently done, for a police constable who was standing

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An alarm was raised as already described, the doors locked, and every one within the building subjected to the severest examination, but all that could be discovered was that a well-groomed and young-looking man, dressed and speaking like a gentleman, had called some ten minutes before, saying that he had an appointment with the editor. He had sent up the name of Mr. Hiram B. Todd, of Boston, and the editor's reply had been, "Show the gentleman in." Why this unknown stranger was allowed access to an editor who is generally supposed to be entirely inaccessible to outsiders, there was not a particle of evidence to show. All that was known was that a minute or two before the murder had been discovered, the supposed Mr. Todd came out from the editor's room, turning back to nod "Good-morning; and thank you very much" at the door, after closing which he left the building. No cry or noise of scuffling had been heard, but, from the fact that the editor was lying face downwards over a table upon which papers were generally kept, it was supposed that he had risen from his chair and walked across the room to this table to look for a manuscript or mem-

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orandum. To do so he must have turned his back upon the visitor, who had apparently seized the opportunity to stab his victim to the heart, and had then left the office just in time to escape detection.

The importance of the arrest which had been made was fully realized when, two days after its occurrence, the name, personal description, and portrait of Captain Shannon were posted up on every police-station in the kingdom, with the announcement that the Government would pay a reward of £5,000 for information which should lead to his arrest.

He was, it seemed, the fourth man on the "Daily Record's" list, his name being James Mullen, an Irish-American, and was described as between forty and fifty years of age, short, and slightly lame. In complexion he was stated to be dark, with brown hair and bushy beard, but his most distinguishable feature was said to be his eyes, which were described as particularly full and fine, with heavy lids.

Then came the portrait, which, the instant I looked at it, startled me strangely. The face as I saw it there was unknown to me; but that somewhere and sometime in my life I had seen

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when I rushed out by the flutter of a garment in the act of vanishing.

But I was resolved that not all its freaks should avail it ultimately to escape me, for though I had to hunt it through every by-way and convolution of my brain, I was determined to give myself no rest till I had laid it by the heels, — and lay it by the heels I eventually did, as you shall shortly hear.

Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes is of opinion that "Memory, imagination, old sentiments and associations, are more readily reached through the sense of smell than by almost any other channel." The probable reason for this strange connection between the sense of smell and the mind is, he tells us, "because the olfactory nerve is the only one directly connected with the hemispheres of the brain — the part in which we have every reason to believe the intellectual processes are carried on. To speak more truly," he continues, "the olfactory nerve is not a nerve at all, but a part of the brain in intimate connection with its anterior lobes. Contrast the sense of taste as a source of suggestive impressions with that of smell. Now the nerve of taste has no immediate connection with the

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a box of vesuvians which an observant and enterprising match-vendor promptly thrust under my nose. As I struck the vile thing and the pestilent smell assailed my nostrils, the scene I was seeking to recall came back to me. I was sitting in a third-class smoking carriage on the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway, and opposite to me was a little talkative man who had previously lit his pipe with a fusee. I saw him take out the box evidently with the intention of striking another, and then I heard a voice say, "For heaven's sake, sir, don't stink the carriage out again with that filthy thing! Pray allow me to give you a match."

The speaker was sitting directly in front of me, and as I recalled his face while I stood there in the street with the still unlighted cigar between my lips, the open box in one hand and the now burnt-out fusee arrested half-way toward the cigar-tip in the other, I knew that his face was the face of Captain Shannon.

CHAPTER VI

I MAKE UP MY MIND TO FIND CAPTAIN SHANNON

THE striking of that fusee was a critical moment in my life, for before the thing had hissed itself into a black and crackling cinder I had decided to follow up the clue which had been so strangely thrown in my way. My principal reason for so deciding was that I wanted a rest — the rest of a change of occupation, not the rest of inaction. I am by profession what George Borrow would have called "one of the writing fellows." But, much as I love my craft, and generous and large-hearted as I have always found literary men — at all events, large-brained literary men — to be, I cannot profess much admiration for the fussy folk who seem to imagine that God made our world and the infinite worlds around it, life and death, and the human heart, with its joys and sorrows and hope of immortality, for no other reason than that they should have something to write about.

FINDING CAPTAIN SHANNON

Instead of recognising that it is only life and the unintelligible mystery of life which make literature of any consequence, they seem to fancy that literature is the chief concern and end of man's being. As a matter of fact, literature is to life what a dog's tail is to his body — a very valuable *appendage*; but the dog must wag the tail, not the tail the dog, as some of these gentry would have us to believe. The dog could, at a pinch, make shift to do without the tail, but the tail could under no circumstances do without the dog.

You may screw a pencil into one end of a pair of compasses and draw as many circles of different sizes as you please, but it is from the other end that you must take your centres, and what the pivot end is to the pencil, life must be to literature.

Hence it is my habit every now and then to put away from me all that is connected with books and the making of books, and to seek only to live my life, and to possess my own soul and this wonderful world about us.

At the particular date of which I am writing, the restlessness which is so often associated with the literary temperament was upon me.