

**FROM MIDNIGHT
TO MIDNIGHT: A
STORY**

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From Midnight to Midnight: A Story by Mortimer Collins

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MORTIMER COLLINS

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TO MIDNIGHT: A
STORY**

FROM
MIDNIGHT TO MIDNIGHT

A Story

By MORTIMER COLLINS

AUTHOR OF 'SWART ANNE PAGE,' 'TRANSMIGRATION,' ETC.



A NEW EDITION

London
CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

1883

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P R E F A C E.

A WORD of explanation concerning this story may be of use to the reader. A critical friend of my husband's remonstrated with him on the frequent digressions in his novels, and recommended him to set himself the task of writing a story in which all the incidents should happen in a month, and therefore be so closely packed that there would be no room for digression. My husband laughingly replied that there was no difficulty in such a task, and that he would undertake to write a novel in which all the incidents should take place in twenty-four hours.

"FROM MIDNIGHT TO MIDNIGHT" was the result. Fortunately this method of working

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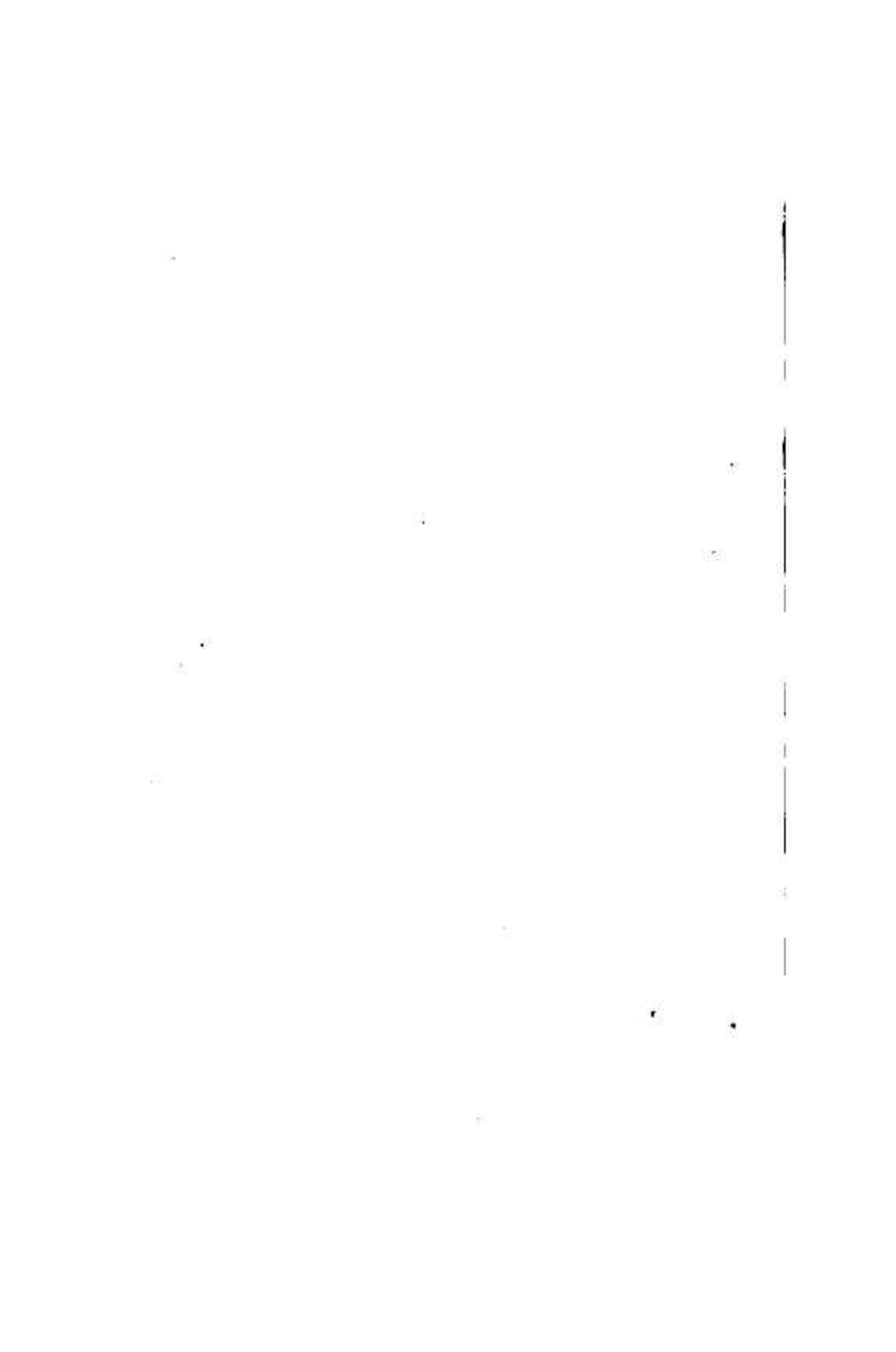
did not prevent digression ; I say fortunately, for I think most readers will agree with me, that it is not the characters in these works that interest them most, but the man, Mortimer Collins himself, who seems ever present. That an author should thus obtrude himself upon his readers is certainly wrong from an artistic point of view : but the obtrusion on the part of Mortimer Collins is a pleasant one, and has caused many students of his works to declare that they felt for him the affection of a personal friend.

FRANCES COLLINS.

EASTBOURNE,
February, 1883.

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FROM
MIDNIGHT TO MIDNIGHT.

CHAPTER I.

A TIGER AT MIDNIGHT.

'... improbaque tigris
Indulgent patientiam flagello.'

Martial I. cv.

MIDNIGHT in S. James's Square. A lovely summer midnight: the moon at the full: the season at its height. Even London was delightful. Even the minor M.P.s, who smoke on the river terrace, heedless of what the great leaders of the nation are doing, until the division-bell rings, were rather less stupid than usual as they saw the silver image of the moon upon the immemorial Thames. It may seem strange that the reflex of sunshine caught at night upon a burnt-out

satellite should have anything of stimulus in it; but the fact remains. Even London is lovely in a summer moonlight.

On the steps of a club in S. James's Square stood a group of young men, who were just beginning to spend the evening. They were all patricians, it was easy to see by their easy association with each other, and their cool contempt for everyone else. The central figure of the group was the Honourable Lionel Vance, a younger son, who was something in some public office, and whose pallid complexion, dark hair and eyes, and curious felicity in both compliment and sarcasm, caused him to be much admired and a good deal imitated.

'Where do you go to-night, Vance?' asked one of his friends, who believed that wherever *he* went must be the most fashionable resort of the evening.

'I don't know,' said Vance. 'There's Lady Randan's rout, but one meets such a crowd. Mrs. General Gregory, the American woman, has a Spiritualist soirée . . . but that