

**A MINION  
OF THE MOON**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649051274

A Minion of the Moon by T. W. Speight

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**T. W. SPEIGHT**

**A MINION  
OF THE MOON**





“ Good people, your money or your lives ! ” he said.

— Page 4

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MINION OF THE MOON

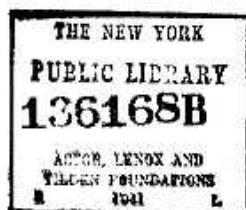
BY  
T. W. SPEIGHT

AUTHOR OF

"THE MYSTERIES OF HERON DYKE," "HOODWINKED," "BY  
DEVIUS WAYS," "THE HEART OF A MYSTERY," ETC.



NEW AMSTERDAM BOOK COMPANY  
156 FIFTH AVENUE NEW YORK MDCCCXCVII



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# A MINION OF THE MOON.

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## THE PROLOGUE.

### CHAPTER I.

#### "WE FLY BY NIGHT."

WHEN the nineteenth century was still a puling infant scarcely able to stand alone, and not yet knowing what to make of the strange hurly-burly into which it found itself born, Abel Ringwood and Sarah his wife were respectively landlord and landlady of the King's Arms, a noted commercial hotel and posting-house at Appleford, a town in the North of England, on one of the great coach roads from the south to Scotland. All His Majesty's mails, which travelled by that route, stopped to change horses at the King's Arms, and, as there was a great deal of private posting by noblemen and rich commoners in those days, the hotel stables had seldom fewer than from twenty to thirty horses in them at one time.

In view of the fact that Appleford was—and is—on the high-road from the south to Gretna Green, it was hardly to be wondered at that a week seldom passed without one or more runaway couples stopping to change horses at the King's Arms, and then hurrying on again, helter-skelter, as hard as they could go. Thus there was nothing out of the common when, about six o'clock on a certain December evening, a post-chaise dashed up to the hotel door containing a runaway couple and a lady's maid.

The gentleman, although he seemed in a desperate hurry to get on, induced the young lady to alight in order to re-

lieve her cramped limbs while fresh horses were being put into the chaise, and the lamps freshly trimmed. She declined all refreshment, but he partook of a glass of sherry and a biscuit, while a glass of steaming negus was handed to the maid inside. The young lady, who was dressed from head to foot in expensive furs, was exceedingly pretty, with large, pathetic-looking eyes, and a wistful smile. The gentleman was enveloped in a long military cloak, and was evidently connected with the army. In three minutes and a half they were on the road again. Everybody there, down to the stable-boy, wished them God-speed and a happy ending to their adventure. The evening was clear and frosty; there had been a slight fall of snow in the afternoon, which still lay crisp and white on the hard roads; the moon would rise in less than an hour.

No long time passed before it was known throughout the hotel who the runaways were. The post-boy whispered the news to John Ostler, who, a few minutes later, told it to his mistress. The lady was Miss Dulcie Peyton, the niece and ward of Sir Peter Warrendale, of Scrope Hall, near Whatton Regis. The gentleman was a Captain Pascoe, the heir of an old but impoverished family.

According to report, Sir Peter had set his heart on his niece's marrying some one who was utterly distasteful to her, and, with more anger than politeness, had shown Captain Pascoe the door when that gentleman had called upon him to ask permission to pay his addresses to Miss Dulcie. It was further reported that for the last three months or more the poor young lady had been virtually a prisoner, never on any pretence being allowed outside the precincts of the park; and that Sir Peter vowed a prisoner she should remain till the last hour of his guardianship had struck, which would not be for three long years to come. But "bolts and bars cannot keep love out," nor in either, for that matter. The pretty bird had escaped from its cage, and everybody devoutly hoped that it would not be recaptured.

The runagates had not been gone more than forty min-

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