

**AS TALKED IN  
THE SANCTUM**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649065318

As Talked in the Sanctum by Rounsevelle Wildman

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

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**ROUNSEVELLE WILDMAN**

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THE SANCTUM**



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in the Sanctum*



*Rounsevelle Wildman*  
Author of

*"Tales of the Malayan Coast"*  
etc.

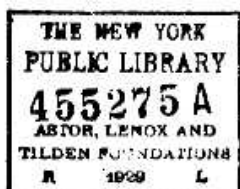


*Boston  
Lothrop Publishing Company*

A-

UNIVERSITY  
PUBLIC  
1 1894 1894

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BY LOTHROP  
PUBLISHING  
COMPANY.



North's Press  
J. E. Cushing & Co. — Berwick & Smith  
Newwood Mass. U.S.A.

NEW YORK  
PUBLIC LIBRARY  
ASTOR, LENOX AND  
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS

To

*Collis P. Huntington*  
*in grateful remembrance of*  
*many kindnesses . . . .*

*Hong Kong*  
*11 November, 1899*

*William 18 Nov. 1929*

## *As Talked in the Sanctum*

### I

WE were speaking the other day of magazines, — cut and uncut, — and I maintained with some warmth that, to me, a magazine was incomplete unless it was accompanied by a paper-cutter. Possibly I was thinking somewhat vainly of a certain paper-knife that represented a Malayan *kris*, with a handle inlaid with yellow gold from Mt. Ophir, — albeit I was serious in my advocacy of the uncut pages of my favorite magazines.

Both the Poet and the Contributor smiled pityingly at my flushed face, and said that I would soon be insisting upon having all our printing done on an old Franklin press, and



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the staff putting on perukes, as it is the fashion nowadays to prefer the things that were to the things that be.

There is something deliciously fascinating to me in a big arm-chair, a magazine redolent of the odors of the press, an open fire, and a paper-cutter—not a penknife. I smoke; so, if I am allowed, I add a Havana to the list.

I am jealous of my solitude at such times. I love the sharp buzz and low crinkle of the stiff paper as the blade runs swiftly up the virgin page. A little shower of finely powdered flakes, dry and impalpable, marks the course of the ivory knife, and sifts softly down on my sleeve.

I can change the arch-fire for a burst of summer sunshine and the shady nook of a deep veranda; I can substitute for the leather-bound chair a long rattan one, but the neatly trimmed pages of a modern magazine irritate me,—my harmless illusion that was created for me is gone.

There is no privacy in the machine-made thing.

I would as soon think of throwing the Sanctum open to the world, as lose my evening dissipation with magazine and paper-cutter. In my fancy I am on a voyage of discovery to scenes and lands that have been my day-dreams. As I cut the first page I find myself in Egypt,—in the shadow of the pyramids, with the yellow Nile flowing, calm and stately, between rows of yellow palms,—in the narrow, tortuous streets of Cairo, among Jews and Copts, Hindoos and Medes, men in skirts and women in pantaloons, dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Cappadocia, in Pontus and Pamphylia,—amid strings of camels laden with red beans and golden-yellow lentils,—water-carriers hugging uncanny goatskins, and naked Nubians staggering under great hair sacks of corn. I turn over the pages; my paper-cutter sings quietly; a little flurry of white dust falls unnoticed on my clothes, and I have

taken up the thread of a serial where I laid it reluctantly by the month before.

For a half-hour I read, and cut, and read, and forget the spluttering fire before me. Possibly I am living with Bret Harte's characters, — my old, true friends, — here on this sunny Pacific slope, or, mayhap, with Mr. Howells' people of society and business; or, now, Stevenson, Kipling, or Craddock cause the pages to sparkle. But my voyage is not ended, when I at last draw a deep sigh as I come to the dreaded words, "Continued in our next." In a moment my eyes run down a charming bit of verse of society, and up to a well-known name that beckons me on to a tour through the galleries of the Louvre, or down the dim, translucent aisles of the Cathedral of Cologne, with its marvellous windows and lace-like stone carvings.

My knife severs two more pages. "What next?" I think. I am not disappointed. I meditatively run my ivory plaything through my hair as the last treasure of the