

**AN OPEN
QUESTION.
A NOVEL**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649381326

An open question. A novel by James De Mille

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JAMES DE MILLE

**AN OPEN
QUESTION.
A NOVEL**



The finding of the treasure.—Page 6.

AN OPEN QUESTION.

A NOVEL.

BY

JAMES DE MILLE,

AUTHOR OF

"THE LADY OF THE ICE," "THE AMERICAN BARON," ETC., ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALFRED FREDERICKS.

NEW YORK:

D. APPLETON AND COMPANY,

549 & 551 BROADWAY.

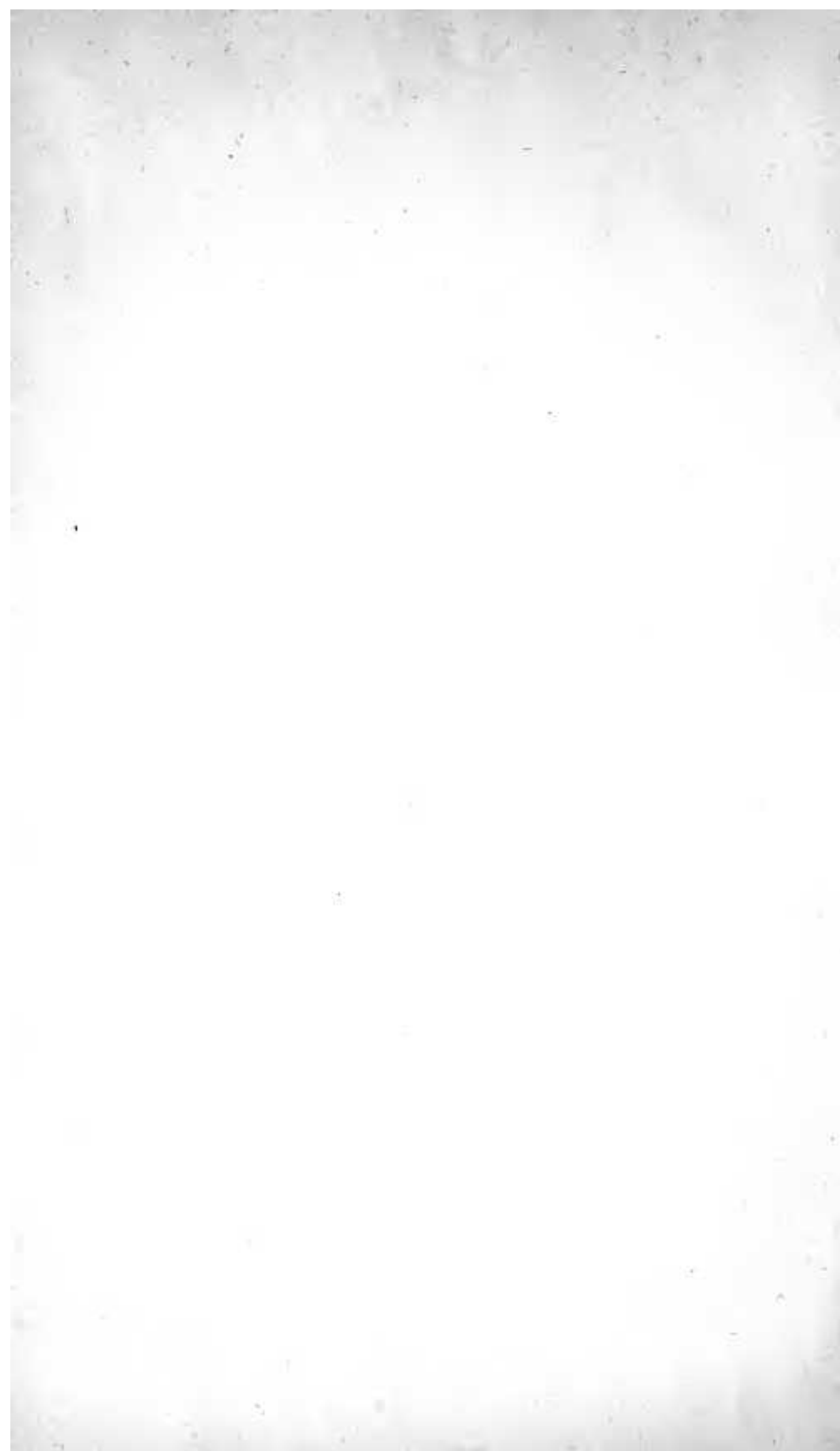
1873.

955
D381
p

ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1872, by
D. APPLETON & CO.,
In the Office of the Librarian of Congress, at Washington.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER	PAGE	CHAPTER	PAGE
I.—THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE MONK		XXVI.—BETRAYED	108
ALOYSIUS	1	XXVII.—FILIAL AFFECTION	112
II.—THE CATACOMBS	5	XXVIII.—SELF-SACRIFICE	116
III.—THE HIDDEN TREASURE OF THE CÆSARS	9	XXIX.—A STRANGE MEETING	120
IV.—A STROKE FOR FORTUNE	13	XXX.—THE STORY OF INEZ	124
V.—VILLENEUVE	17	XXXI.—IN PRISON	128
VI.—IS IT DELIRIUM?	22	XXXII.—LIGHT ON THE SITUATION	131
VII.—THE GOLD CRUCIFIX	27	XXXIII.—A FLIGHT FOR LIFE	136
VIII.—THE EBONY CASNET, AND ITS STRANGE CONTENTS	32	XXXIV.—A FRESH INVESTIGATION	139
IX.—A CURIOUS FANCY	36	XXXV.—THE TWO BROTHERS	144
X.—THE FATAL DRAUGHT	40	XXXVI.—RUTHVEN	148
XI.—DEAD OR ALIVE?	44	XXXVII.—HUSBAND AND WIFE	153
XII.—DR. BLAKE'S STRANGE STORY	49	XXXVIII.—REVIVING OLD ASSOCIATIONS	156
XIII.—MAKING INQUIRIES	55	XXXIX.—THE TEMPTER	160
XIV.—MRS. ELMEN	59	XL.—RENEWING HIS YOUTH	164
XV.—INEZ RECEIVES A LETTER	63	XLI.—REPENTANCE	169
XVI.—FATHER MAGRAH	67	XLII.—THE TWO FRIENDS	173
XVII.—FAMILY MATTERS	72	XLIII.—A REVELATION	177
XVIII.—MORDAUNT MANOR	76	XLIV.—ALL THE PAST EXPLAINED	182
XIX.—THE LOST ONE FOUND	80	XLV.—THE TENDERNESS OF JESSIE	186
XX.—AT HOME	84	XLVI.—BEFORE HIS JUDGE	190
XXI.—BAFFLED FANCIES	88	XLVII.—DE PROFUNDIS CLAMAVI	194
XXII.—THE RETURN OF ANOTHER MES- SENGER	92	XLVIII.—BACK TO LIFE	198
XXIII.—BLAKE TAKES LEAVE OF HIS FRIENDS	96	XLIX.—MRS. WYVERNE	202
XXIV.—DESCENSUS AVERNI!	100	L.—A MOTHER'S PLOT	206
XXV.—THE CITY OF THE DEAD	104	LI.—A DISCOVERY	210
		LII.—CLARA MORDAUNT	214
		LIII.—GOING TO PRAY AT CLARA'S GRAVE	219
		LIV.—CONCLUSION	226



AN OPEN QUESTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE MANUSCRIPT OF THE MONK ALOYSIUS.

DR. BASIL BLAKE had plain but comfortable apartments in Paris, on the third story, overlooking the busy Rue St. Honoré. A balcony ran in front of his windows, upon which he could step out, whenever he felt inclined, to watch the crowds in the street below. On the present occasion, however, the balcony was deserted, the windows were closed, and Dr. Blake was seated in an arm-chair, with a friend opposite in another. It was now midnight, but, late as it was, this friend had only come in a few minutes before; and, by the attitude, the actions, and the words of both, it was evident that they were intending to make a night of it. Bottles, decanters, glasses, cigars, pipes, and tobacco, lay or stood upon the table; and Dr. Blake was even now offering a glass of Burgundy to his visitor.

Dr. Basil Blake was a young man, with a frank face, clear eyes, open and pleasing expression. His friend was a fellow-physician—Dr. Phelim O'Rourke—with whom Blake had become acquainted in the course of his studies in Paris, and who, in every respect, presented a totally different aspect from his own. He was much older, being apparently between forty and fifty years of age. His frame showed great muscular strength and powers of endurance. His hair was curling and sprinkled with gray. His nose was straight and thin. He wore a heavy beard and mustache, which was not so gray as his hair, but dark, shaggy, and somewhat neg-

lected. His eyes were small, dark, keen, and penetrating.

"I wouldn't have bothered yeas at this unseasonable hour," said O'Rourke, who spoke with a slight Irish accent, "but the disclosures that I have to make require perfect freedom from interruption, and ye see ye're all the time with yer frind Hellmuth through the day, and so I have to content myself with the night, ayvin if I were not busy myself all through the day. But the fact is, the matter is one of the most immense importance, and so ye'll see yourself as soon as ye're infarramed of what I have to tell. Ye know I've alriddy mentioned, in a casual way, that my secret concernns money. Yis, money! gold! treasure!--and treasure, too, beyond all calculation. Basil Blake, me boy! d'ye want to be as rich as an imperor? Do ye want to have a rivivane shuparior to Rothschild's? Have ye ivir a wish to sittle yerself for life? Answer me that, will ye?"

Saying this, O'Rourke slapped the palm of his hand emphatically upon the table, and fixed his small, piercing black eyes intently upon Blake.

"Ob, by Jove!" said Blake, with a laugh, "you're going too far, you know. Don't exaggerate, old fellow—it isn't necessary, I assure you. Money, by Jove! I'd like to see the fellow that needs it more than I do. I'm hard up. You know that, don't you? Don't I owe you five pounds—which, by-the-way, old chap, I shall be able to—"

"Tare an ages!" interrupted O'Rourke, "don't be ather talking about such a paltry matter as five pounds. By the powers, but I expect, if I can only injuce ye to give me a lift in

my interprise, that before long ye'll look upon five pounds as no more than five pence, so ye will, and there ye have it."

"Go ahead, then, old fellow; for, by Jove I do you know, you make me wild with curiosity by all this mixture of illimitable treasure and impenetrable mystery."

"Mind, me boy," said O'Rourke, "I ask nothing of ye—only yer hilp."

"And that I'll give, you may be sure. As for any thing else, I'm afraid you can't get it—not money, at any rate; blood out of a stone, you know—that's about it with me."

O'Rourke bent his head forward, and once more fixed his keen gaze upon the frank, honest eyes of Blake.

"It's in Rome—that it is," said he.

"Rome?" said Blake.

"Yis—the trisure—"

"Rome? ah! Well—it's very convenient. I was afraid it would involve a voyage to California. Rome—well, that's a good beginning at any rate."

"It is—it's mighty convenient," said O'Rourke. "Well, ye know, I've been in Rome ever and over, and know it like me native town. I've been there sometimes on professional juties, and sometimes on archayological interprises, and sometimes on occasion of any shuperminint ayelestinastical ayvint. I may mintion also that I've got a rilative living there—he's dead now—but that's nothing; he was second cousin to me first wife, and, of course, in a ferryn country, such a near relationship as that brought us very close together, and I attladid him professionally, free of charge, on his dying-bed. It was from this rilative—Malachi McFee, by name—that I obtained the inferrumation that I'm going to convey to you. The poor divvie was a monk in the monastery of San Antonio. I saw a good deal of him, off and on; and one day he had a fall in the vaults of the monastery—he had a very bad conclusion; mortification set in, gangrane, and so forruth—so he died, poor divvie. It was on the death-bed of poor Malachi that I heard that same; and ye'll understand from that what credibility there is in the story, for a man on his death-bed wouldn't be ather speakin' any thing but the truth, unless he could get some real future binifit of some sort out of it, pecuniarily, ather he was dead, or before, but that's neither here nor there."

O'Rourke paused here, and looked sharply at Blake.

"D'ye care to hear it now?" said he.

"Care to hear it? of course. Don't you see that I'm all ears?"

"Very well," said O'Rourke, "so here goes."

As he spoke, the deep toll of a neighboring bell sounded out as it began to strike the hour of midnight. O'Rourke paused again, and listened silently to the solemn sound, as one after the other the twelve strokes rang deeply out upon the still night air, and, even after the full number had sounded, he sat as though listening for more. At length he drew a long breath, which sounded like a deep sigh.

"I don't know how it is," said he, "but there's nothing in all the wide wurld that affects me like the toll of a bell at midnait. I mind me, it was in such a night as this, and the bell was tolling just this way, when poor Malachi died. Well—well—he's dead and gone. *Requiescat in pace*—"

"That same Malachi," continued O'Rourke, "was, as I said, a monk in the monastery of San Antonio, at Rome. Have ye iver been in Rome? No? Thin there's no use for me to tell you the situation of the monastery, as ye wouldn't understand. It's enough to say that Malachi was a monk there. Now, ye must know that San Antonio, like many other monasteries, has a divvie of a lot of old manuscripts in the library—some copies of classics, some thaological, and some original—the work of the monks. This Malachi was one of the most erudite and profound scholars that I iver saw. He had all thin old manuscripts at his fingers' ends—ivery one of them. Now, what I have to tell you refers to one of these manuscripts, that was hauled forth by poor Malachi out of a forgotten chist, and studied by him till he began to think there was in it the rivilation of some schoopiduous secret. It was written in Latin, of course. Ye know Latin, I suppose—a little. Yis—yis. I know what the ordinary iducation amounts to, but could ye read a manuscript written in Latin, in a crabbed hand, full of contractions and corrections? I don't think it. I have that manuscript, and I've read it; and I know that the number of min who could take up that and read it as it stands is not Lagin by any means. I haven't the manuscript here. It's home, with my valuables. It isn't a thing