

**ONESIMUS
TEMPLETON; A
PSYCHICAL ROMANCE**

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Onesimus Templeton; a psychical romance by W. J. Colville

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A PSYCHICAL ROMANCE

BY
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THE "PROBLEM OF LIFE"

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ONESIMUS TEMPLETON.

CHAPTER I.

ON THE THRESHOLD.

On a bright summer evening in 1887, a party of friends were gathered on the balcony in front of an old-fashioned but comfortable house on Sycamore Avenue, almost in the heart of the business centre of New York. The house, though a very large and roomy one, attracts but little attention from the busy throng, as it is situated on one of those little frequented thoroughfares which still remain as mementoes of the old Dutch settlement of a by-gone day.

No. 312 Sycamore Avenue is at least one hundred years old, and has a wonderful, though but little known history. Like many residences of similar type, it has the reputation of being haunted, and for that reason the present tenant, Dr. Bernard Maxwell, is allowed to occupy a house of twenty-three rooms on payment of an annual rent of \$750. The owner is a quaint old German with astrological proclivities, and though he is rarely in the city, between proprietor and tenant a feeling of generous friendship subsists though the two men are about as unlike in appearance, disposition and sentiment as two human beings can well be.

Gerald Gustav Mackenberger (the owner of the property) is a man over sixty, delighting in solitude and given over to the most ardent advocacy of stellar fatalism, while his tenant, Dr. Maxwell, is a handsome, cheerful, healthy man of forty, looking scarcely more than thirty. On the eventful evening

when our story opens, Dr. Maxwell, a rising physician of the Electric School was entertaining a party of friends from Vermont, prominent among whom might have been discerned the striking and by no means unpleasing figure of the Rev. Onesimus Templeton, pastor of the Baptist Church at Saddlerock, Vermont. Mr. Templeton was the possessor of a face which could not but attract attention, for though not beautiful, it was strong and earnest, and the eyes shone with a yearning pleading light, as though an unsatisfied but aspiring soul was ever reaching through them to catch some knowledge from the heavenly spheres as yet denied it. In general appearance Mr. Templeton might be described as tall (five feet, ten inches or thereabouts), slender, narrow-chested, and inclined to stoop; hair and eyes very dark; hands small and delicate for one so tall, but not lacking in nervous power or sinuous determination. Raising his voice above the voices of his companions, who were all buzzing together after the manner of people gathered outside a drawing-room window after dinner on a summer's night, his whole attitude one of earnestness and deep conviction—the reverend Onesimus, addressing a portly lady at his side, exclaims: "My dear Mrs. O'Shannon, I tell you there never was and there never can be such a phenomenon as the one you have just described. The law of nature renders it impossible, unless (lowering his voice to an awe-struck, and certainly impressive undertone), which, heaven forbid, some imp of darkness should have been permitted to read the thought in your misguided daughter's mind."

"I tell you what it is, Mr. Templeton," replied the lady thus vehemently and awfully addressed, "if you are going to insinuate that my daughter Matilda is in league with the Evil One, you may as well stop your endeavors to convert me to your opinions on any subject; for a better, purer girl than my child you won't find this side the Atlantic, though I do say it, who being her mother should let others sound her praises."

"What's all this loud talking about between you two this evening," breaks in a cheery, rich, round voice and Dr. Bernard Maxwell, turning an amused glance on the excited combatants who were evidently amusing the passers-by, suggests that for the present, at least, all heated discussions on psychology shall be abandoned, and the evening devoted to more rational and edifying enjoyment, "for (said the good doctor, smiling), when any two persons set out to convince each other by means of verbal strife, no possible progress in the work of mutual conviction can be made, as the needful conditions for making ideas plain to the understanding are of necessity absent, when either party is excited or in the least belligerent."

By way of turning the subject into a more attractive and gracious channel, without, however, altering the tide of the discourse, Dr. Maxwell (who was a brilliant conversationalist as well as a man of rare scientific and literary attainment), began to relate an incident of his recent voyage from Paris on the magnificent steamer, *La Gascogne* of the justly celebrated *Transatlantique* line. He spoke as follows:

"As I was sitting on deck one gorgeous evening in May, the sun slowly sinking beneath the waters as one never sees it set on land, I heard, or thought I heard a low, sweet, girlish voice whispering in my ear, 'Bernard, take care, I implore you, or the electric battery for which you paid 6,000 francs in Paris will be utterly destroyed. I can see where it is, if you cannot!' The voice, and more than that, the thrill accompanying the mystic utterance, so powerfully impressed me that I was being addressed by Heloise De-Montmartre (the daughter of the dearest friend I have in all the world, and the man to whom I owe almost all my present success in my life's undertakings), that I hastened to my stateroom, and immediately discovered that my most valuable instruments and apparatus were in immediate danger of ruin by water. Hastily calling a steward, who quickly stopped the leakage from the wash bowl, I just prevented the water from

soaking into the very place of all others from which I was particularly anxious to exclude all dampness. Ruminating on this extraordinary incident, I returned to my folding chair on deck, and resuming my old position, gazing out upon the water which the moon's soft rays were just beginning to glorify, I fell to meditating on the wonderfully complex problem of mental interaction never wholly absent from the minds of students of the nervous systems of men and animals, which has been for many years my specialty. As I pondered with ever increasing surprise upon this most timely experience which enabled me in the very nick of time, to save my battery from serious injury, I saw a thin blue cloud cross the sky, and from this cloud (apparently of ether), small but intensely bright electric sparks proceeded. Thinking it might be merely an optical delusion, I rubbed my eyes and looked again, determined this time not to be mistaken, when a soft, silvery laugh sounded at my elbow, and the clear, sweet tones of Heloise De Montmartre's peculiarly liquid and unmistakable voice sounded clearly enough to me, though I am convinced no other person heard any sound. She said, 'Why, Bernard, have you forgotten what papa told you when we parted that I should always be able to warn you when anything specially needed your attention? and here I am to fulfil my father's word.'

"Almost dumbfounded, I answered her in thought, my lips, however, moved but in inarticulate utterance: 'But pray tell me where you are now and what you are doing?' No sooner had I given the words (mentally) to the ether, than a reply came close to my ear: 'Why, here, of course, talking to you. Papa's entertaining company in our salon, and I've retired early; my body is slumbering as peacefully as usual in my own room in the house you know so well, 33 Avenue de l'Imperatrice, but I can't stay any longer now, so good-bye, Bernard, and don't forget the alligator.' With these words the voice became silent and the mysterious presence had vanished from my side. I was alone, intensely alone it

seemed after this experience, though the deck was well filled with passengers walking slowly and talking quickly as steamer passengers usually do on a balmy moonlight night in Spring."

"Oh, do tell us about the alligator," broke in Lydia O'Shannon (a graceful girl of eighteen summers), "I do so love queer pets. Is there an alligator in the house, and how did you get him?"

"Well (said Dr. Maxwell, laughing), if you are a good girl, you shall see him to-morrow; he's asleep now in my aunt's bath-tub; he and she are great friends. Prof. De Montmartre gave him to me three years ago when we were travelling together in Florida. He seems to have grown up as a member of our family, never snaps or tries to bite, but why should he, when we treat him kindly and hold him under due restraint; is it not man's prerogative to hold the lower creation in subjection? What say *you* to this, Mr. Templeton, does the theology of the Baptist Church tolerate so much of theosophy?"

"I really cannot decide such a question without giving it long and prayerful consideration," responded the minister addressed, "but anyway, I shall be delighted to see your alligator whenever it is convenient to you to show him to me. Can we not step inside now and have a little music? Your electric system of lighting is such an improvement over old methods, we don't dread the heat generated by it."

So saying, Mr. Templeton, accompanied by Mrs. and the Misses O'Shannon, moved into the large, roomy *salon* devoted to almost every conceivable modern use. Elegantly but simply furnished, it portrayed clearly the disposition of the man who rented it; no sign of niggardliness on any hand, neither any presumptuous display; all things solid, substantial, comfortable, cheerful, and withal beautiful.

Just as the friends were composing themselves and assuming a listening attitude, for Miss Lydia O'Shannon was taking her seat at the grand piano, which was one of Leven-