The Tremaynes and the Masterful Monk

By Owen Francis Dudley

Will Men Be Like Gods?
The Shadow on the Earth
The Masterful Monk
Pageant of Life
The Coming of the Monster

These five books constitute the first five of the series of which *The Tremaynes and the Masterful Monk* is the sixth.

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A Most Hateful and Lovable Tale

By
OWEN FRANCIS DUDLEY

Problems of Human Happiness. VI.

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The Tremaynes and the Masterful Monk: A Most Hateful and Lovable Tale.

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We have made no intentional change from the original text except to correct mistakes in spelling and punctuation.

DEDICATED TO THE CHILDREN
WITH WHOM I HAVE SPENT
GLORIOUS DAYS IN THE BAYS
AND ON THE CLIFFS OF
NORTH CORNWALL

Author's Note

This present volume is the sixth of a series dealing with problems of human happiness.

Will Men be like Gods? is an answer to Humanitarianism; *The Shadow on the Earth*, to the Problem of Evil; *The Masterful Monk*, to the present attack on man's moral nature; *Pageant of Life*, to the particular moral cowardice of the moment; *The Coming of the Monster*, to Bolshevism.

The Tremaynes and the Masterful Monk is a character study. May I mention, by way of apologia, that I have not hesitated to reveal the character of Gordon Tremayne in all its naked ugliness; otherwise the full nature of his redemption would be missed.

We are apt, rather smugly I think, to place certain characters beyond redemption. My choice of Gordon Tremayne has been deliberate, for the reason that humanly he seemed unredeemable. In the event he proved otherwise—owing to the monk acting on the principle of the potentially reclaimable deep down.

The Gordon Tremaynes of this world are not uncommon, whose cruelties cry to Heaven for vengeance, and yet remain untouched by law.

Beyond human reach they may be, but not beyond reach of the Divine.

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Soliloquy

Under the rock black depths of water swirled gently. There was something cruel about those black depths, as about the sheer drop of the cliffs.

The Atlantic, stretched before him, became blue away from the vicinity of the cliffs—almost sapphire towards the horizon. Behind him towered the lowermost of five great granite bastions—the Rumps, that from a distance looked like giants ascending to the headland's summit.

He had been standing on the summit ten minutes before, after climbing the headland's broad back from the cove where he had bathed, a mile away.

He was thinking, on this day of June in 1928, of how he had last stood upon that summit twenty years or so ago, Anselm Thornton, a very young man, more concerned with the whereabouts of Coppinger's Cave than the mysterious grandeur of Cornish cliffs; doubting whether in those days he had ever sensed the haunting mystery of this rock-bound coast. There was a twenty-mile vista from the top.

He was fairly sure that he had sat on this very sun-baked rock, all those years ago. He had certainly climbed down the Rumps, and it fitted in with his mood to believe that this was the very rock.

It seemed very long ago—that pre-war summer holiday.

He had still been at London University on the verge of his Anatomy Degree, and had joined the family at Polzeath

Bay where a house had been taken. He could remember the family's divided opinions on how to spend a holiday in North Cornwall. His father had betaken himself with his clubs daily to the St. Enodoc Golf Links near by. His sisters and himself had started off each morning after breakfast with haversacks of food on their backs, exploring the coast, bathing, climbing, discovering caverns. His mother, very nervous of falls down cliffs and currents round rocks, and full of warnings, would drive out to meet them at an agreed place for lunch or tea, one of the bays or village coves. They made fireplaces of stones on the rocks and boiled the kettle.

He wondered why he had been alone that day on the Rumps. He had an idea that his sisters had gone in to Bodmin to do "shopping." Sisters had a habit of "shopping" on the slightest pretext. He probably remembered the Rumps so clearly just because he had been alone; things impressed themselves more when one was alone.

The monk—for a monk he was now—unslung from his back a haversack, and regarded it smiling to himself. It was the very same haversack he had carried on his back that summer holiday twenty years ago. He had found it in a lumber-room at Besley Court, where he had put in a couple of days with his father on his way down here. There was a cut in the canvas that his mother had mended with black thread—all those years ago. He touched it with his fingers. She had died last year. He saw the waters for a moment through a mist. . . . God rest her!

The haversack contained a medicine bottle of cold tea, and some Cornish "splits" with an interior of butter and jam. It had also contained the lunch he had eaten at Lundy Bay earlier on. He consumed the "splits" watching lazily the sparkle of a myriad diamonds on the ocean's sunlit surface—as alluring as the glitter of dripping trees after a storm. He threw the last half of a "split" to a gull which swooped and caught it in its

beak. Then he drank the cold tea, lit a cigarette, and leaned back against the rock.

Twenty years?

The war had been a chasm in those years; a dividing line.

That summer holiday had been a holiday of pre-war youth—of his own pre-war youth. Revisiting these haunts had released a flood of memories. He had been in a very reminiscent mood all this week. It was partly freedom from his fellow-beings, and being alone with his own thoughts. The hotel in Daymer Bay, where there was no need to speak to anyone, had contributed.

It was of his own choosing. He had asked his Father Abbot in London for a week away from everything and everybody—that incessant life of seeing people and public speaking. He had been given three weeks. He had looked forward to it hungrily, greedily—to this rugged stretch of North Cornish coast where one really could be alone. A car, placed at his disposal, had added to his sense of freedom; he had only to drive himself in to Wadebridge, say his Mass there, and return to Daymer Bay in time for breakfast. He had used it for Trebarwith Strand and Trevose Head, and one or two further bays; otherwise he had used his own legs everywhere—and hands. The cliffs between Tintagel and Bedruthan demanded both—and a good head; but nothing more.

Trevose Head had made him acutely reminiscent. He had only remembered when he was actually climbing down and recognised a rock below, that last time it had been Cyril Rodney who had climbed down with him and stood upon that rock. It had come back vividly, even Cyril's remark about some show in London, just when he was endeavouring to impress him with the majesty of Atlantic rollers.

Cyril Rodney.

Doing his Gunnery at Woolwich at the time. On a week's leave with them at Polzeath.

That pre-war youth of his had been intertwined with Cyril's as with no one else's. So had his life at the Front. They had been through that long Valley of the Shadow of Death together, and together come through alive. And then, as though by heaven's own timing, Cyril's hour had struck.

Cyril's hour!

Russia. Archangel. A tree in a pine-forest. Cyril hanging there amidst the blinding snow. The Reds marched off singing. Cyril crucified for saluting a crucifix.

The monk for the second time that afternoon saw the ocean before him through a mist. . . .

One had been taken, the other left. . . .

Cyril, so great in that giving of all. . . .

Cyril was a memory now; a living memory undimmed by time.

Sometimes he wondered how far that act of Cyril's had borne upon his own life. There had been nothing to tell him so; but the notion had clung that Cyril, in those last moments hanging there, had asked that the other's life be spared. Only by a miracle had he been found—bound and helpless and all but frozen to death. One thing he knew, that indirectly it had ended his professional medical career. Within a few months of that happening he had been a novice at the monastery of Issano—giving his all, though in another way.

Issano?

He wondered when he would be back at Issano. It was his spiritual home to which he always returned.

And would return again.

Issano, England. England, Issano.

Would his life be always——

The Abbot had called him an adventurer—"an adventurer for God." He smiled to himself. "Adventurer"? There was truth in it. He had been an adventurer all these twenty years.

Medical Student. Surgeon at Guy's. Never content with his profession alone. Adventurous work in the East-End, the hop-fields of Kent—costers, barrel-organs, bruisers, down-and-outs. . . .

That had been before the War.

The War had been the Great Adventure. . . .

The Abbot, however, had not meant that kind of thing. It was after his first return from England minus a finger but plus a public speaker's reputation, that the Abbot had given him the name.

He looked at his right hand—at the stump of his middle finger.

Eric.

Eric Esterton.

Had he never known Eric Esterton, the finger would still have been there. Eric, brought down from the mountains to Issano—broken for life in his prime. He had exerted all his medical knowledge, and nursed him back to the living death of a shattered cripple. Sent him back to his people in England, on an ambulance—a Catholic. He had been in England himself the following year, and witnessed the tragic triumph of Eric's end—Eric taking a bullet, intended by a maniac for his brother. The same revolver that had done it, had cost the monk his finger.

Eric.

That supreme act! "Greater love . . ."

Eric, also, was a living memory that time would never dim.

Other lives had been closely linked with his own since last he had sat on this rock.

Basil Esterton. Eric's brother.

The monk smiled to himself. Basil, who had turned up at Issano on a wild impulse to "try his vocation"—partly the death

of Eric, and partly the girl he had "loved and lost." The monk had turned schemer as well as adventurer, with the result that they were now happily married.

He had seen Basil and his wife on his visit to England last year, under the unusual circumstances of an unlooked-for sequel to that happening in the pine forest near Archangel, seven years before. Every detail of that sequel was still vivid in his mind—that melodrama almost, but for its ugly reality. . . .

The Red gang's leader, Roslavl, learning somehow that the Medical Officer left for the wolves, had escaped. That thwarted vicious criminal tracing him to England. Tracking him down. There was to be no mistake a second time. There would have been no mistake, in that Sussex lane near the Estertons', had he been where Roslavl had calculated.

An adventurous night!

His own thirteen stone landing on Roslavl out of the darkness. A desperate fight for life. Roslavl lying senseless on the road, disarmed of revolver and knife. The hideous ending to it. Roslavl recovering and tricking him, only to run blindly into a car. Killed horribly.

An hour later, a begrimed and hatless person with torn clothes, had presented himself at the Estertons' for dinner.

The monk closed his fists and regarded them. They were useful fists, despite the missing finger. There was a mark on one of the knuckles left there from Roslavl's teeth. "The mark of the adventurer," the Abbot had dubbed it, when he had returned to Issano once more. He could only protest that he never sought these adventures.

They just happened.

The Tremaynes. . . .

Allen and Gordon Tremayne.

The Tremaynes occupied a compartment of their own in his life.

His mind travelled back again. This time to a Herefordshire orchard . . . Springtime . . . Apple-blossom . . . Some boys playing cricket. . . .

"I think," he said to himself, "I could write a book about the Tremaynes." He lay back on the rock and gazed up into the blue.

"But would people believe it?"

The monk never has written that book.

He has however supplied me with the material. And very much more material than he could have given me on that day in June of 1928, in Cornwall. For the climax of the tale, like the tale, was yet to come. I can tell you more—had he not climbed down the Rumps that afternoon, the strange climax might never have been.

I am going to write the tale myself. I shall enjoy writing it, if only because of its uncanny interest; quite frankly it will read almost incredibly in places.

I can see already that it will fall into three divisions—comprising the events preceding that day in 1928, and the events following that day.

For the rest, I can do no more than put it all together to the best of my ability.

Part I

The Problem of Gordon Tremayne

The Tremaynes and the Masterful Monk

Chapter I

They leaned over the gate to watch.

The boy at the wickets was regarding the disaster wretchedly—the off stump leaning at an angle, the centre one pitched into its neighbour. They saw him drop his bat on the grass, and heard, "You wait!" from the bigger boy, who was wicket-keeping. At the other end of the pitch the fielding team, in the capacity of one bowler and one general fieldsman, were capering with glee.

"Just you wait!"

The crestfallen batsman moved away from the ominous note in the wicket-keeper's voice. From remarks flung unpleasantly after him, the two men at the gate were able to gather that he had let down his side with a duck. The gyrations of the opposing team caught the wicket-keeper's eye:

"Shut up, you two! . . . You've not won."

They slowed down simultaneously to a standstill and stuck their hands in their pockets, regarding him coming towards them.

"We got forty-three. You only got thirty," one of them retorted courageously, but carefully.

"There's going to be a second innings," he commanded, and began peeling off a pair of tattered professional gloves. They

looked at each other.

"One innings, you said."

"Yes, one innings."

"Liars!" was shouted.

They turned their backs and strutted off, to receive the wicket-keeper's gauntlets in the neck. At the further end of the orchard they stopped and held counsel. The ex-batsman was watching hopefully. The two "liars" returned with immense dignity. One of them picked up the gauntlets; the other went to the stumps and repaired the havoc.

"You field!" called the now ex-wicket-keeper, who seemed to be recovering his temper. He picked up the ball. The duck-maker took up his position in the field.

The second innings began.

The two men at the gate regarded each other amusedly, lit cigarettes, climbed over and spread their khakied persons on the grass. With the heavily blossomed apple-trees in between, they could watch the game unobserved.

"Do you know them?"

Captain Thornton moved to get a better view between the trunks; his cane indicated the fielding team: "I believe they're the two Tremaynes. Dunno the others. Old Tremayne's in Army Boots. You've probably sent dozens of 'em over the top."

"Oh? . . . I'll ask the Quartermaster."

"Rum world, Thornton," came somewhat irrelevantly after a time. The same thought had just struck Thornton. He looked at his watch and then extended his wrist under the other's nose and showed him the time. Captain Cyril Rodney regarded the dial with a grin:

"Three-thirty? . . . Is today Tuesday?"

"It was, this morning."

There was another interval.

"Damned rum world."

Thornton lay back and contemplated the spread of apple-blossom accentuating the blue of heaven through the gaps. Near Soissons at this precise moment on Tuesday of last week an unholy barrage had landed on their gun-line without warning and worked red havoc. "Rum world." Cyril probably preferred last Tuesday.

Damn the War. He wanted to forget it.

He watched Cyril out of the corner of his eye—leaning on his elbow following the game in progress on the sunlit space in the centre. The boys' voices came at intervals, disturbing the drowsy hum of the afternoon.

He began lazily trying to recall the names of the two Tremaynes, but without success. The shimmering of the apple-blossom was becoming soporific. The boys' voices receded into the distance . . .

He was awakened from his doze by Cyril's cane beating a tattoo on his gaiters.

"Sorry, old man—but there's another War on."

He sat up by slow degrees, looked at his watch which informed him that it was four o'clock, and suggested yawningly that they'd better get back to tea. Cyril's cane caught him bending as he rose:

"There's another War on. Wake up, man!"

"This'll make the third," and his own cane retorted on the other's person. He was informed:

"Those kids have been scrapping like hell."

He had forgotten the cricket, and looked in the direction of the pitch. The game appeared to be over. The four boys were standing about in a self-conscious manner.

"We're spotted," said Thornton. It occurred to him that two

officers in khaki were trespassing.

"Let's clear." They made their way towards the gate. Cyril looked back over his shoulder:

"That big Tremayne kid wants booting."

It appeared that the Tremaynes had lost the second innings, that the "young 'un" had made another duck, and that he had been getting it in the neck from his brother when they were observed. Thornton remembered that ominous, "Just you wait!" They climbed over, walked down the road until they were out of sight, and then stopped, the same thought in both minds.

"Reconnoitre?"

"Yes. Take cover."

They returned cautiously under cover of the hedge, stooping as they neared the gate. Cyril in front went down on one knee and inspected through the bars. He watched and Thornton saw his expression change.

"What's up?"

"I'm going to damn well stop that."

Cyril gathered himself together and vaulted the gate, and next moment was striding over the grass through the trees. Thornton stood there for a moment and then did the same. He caught up Cyril slowing down in an uncertain way, and motioning him to halt. They remained there under the trees without emerging into the open, unnoticed as yet by the boys. Thornton wondered what Cyril had seen to rouse him. There was no sign of a scrap; some sort of game seemed to be in progress.

The two Tremaynes were standing in the centre of the pitch. The bigger one was holding a cricket-stump with the point a few inches from his brother's nose. The two other boys were looking on. They were looking on however in an uncomfortable way. One of them called:

"Oh, shut up, Gordon. Leave him alone."

The stump did not move. Instead, the holder of it began in a slow monotone:

"Shall I jab your eyes out, or split your head? . . . Shall I jab your eyes out, or split your head? . . . Shall I jab your eyes out, or split your head? . . ."

Cyril turned, with a puzzled look on his face.

"What the devil—— He was hitting at him just now."

Thornton was nonplused too. If it was a game, it was an exceedingly poor one. The younger Tremayne's lips were pursed tight, and he was standing unnaturally stiff and straight, with his eyes on the point before his nose. And then Thornton saw what Cyril had seen from the gate.

The stump was drawn away, poised like a javelin and then thrown just missing the left side of the boy's face. Another stump was picked up and thrown, just missing the right side.

Tremayne minor had not flinched.

A third stump was raised at arm's length and came slashing down, just missing his head.

Tremayne minor had not moved.

The stump pointed and the operation was repeated. Six times it descended before the ordeal was over.

"Good old Allen!" came from the others.

Thornton breathed relief. It was merely a darned silly test of pluck, or something. He felt an intense desire, however, to boot that Tremayne boy they called—Gordon.

The desire increased as he saw the stump point again. Young Allen had been about to move off.

"I've not finished. You stay there!"

The tone of the command conveyed plainly that Tremayne major had been thwarted of some satisfaction. Thornton appreciated for the first time that there was more than a game in this.

"Oh, chuck it, Gordon! . . . Come on!"

He flung over his shoulder:

"Mind your own business, you two! This is for the second duck."

Young Allen remained there; but his nerve was going.

"Stand up, you funk!"

Allen did so. His face had gone white. The point of the stump came towards his nose again:

"Shall I jab your eyes out, or split your head? . . . Shall I . . ."

There was a nasty pleasurable sound in it now which Thornton did not like. He didn't care whether it was their business or not. Cyril had decided the same, and was out in the open and on the pitch before himself. Tremayne major's back was towards them and he didn't see them approaching. Cyril strolled up behind him noiselessly.

"Shall I jab——"

"Thank you."

A hand reached out, took hold of the stump, removed it with a twist, and dropped it on the ground. Tremayne major found himself gaping at six feet of khaki. There was no time allowed for the expression of his feelings. Cyril changed his cane into his right hand. There was a business-look in his eye:

"Now, young fellow-my-lad!"

The cane measured the distance, and presented its point before Tremayne major's nose. He stared at it in stupefaction.

"Stand up to it!"

His speech returned with a splutter:

"I——I was only playing."

"Stand up, you funk!"

Tremayne major suddenly lost his head, kicked out wildly at the khaki legs, missed, and received a stinger on the calf for his pains.

"You dare! . . . You dare touch me!"

It was a coward's defiance.

"Here, you two! . . . Allen!"

The three of them however remained where they were, petrified by this turn in the proceedings. He was cringing next moment, as the cane straightened out again.

"Stand up, you funk!"

The cane was raised. Tremayne major's elbow went up to shield himself. He was showing real fright now.

Cyril lowered the cane quietly, tucked it under his arm, and remarked drily:

"I was only playing."

He went nearer.

"You measly bully! . . . And you dirty funk! . . . Come on, Thornton."