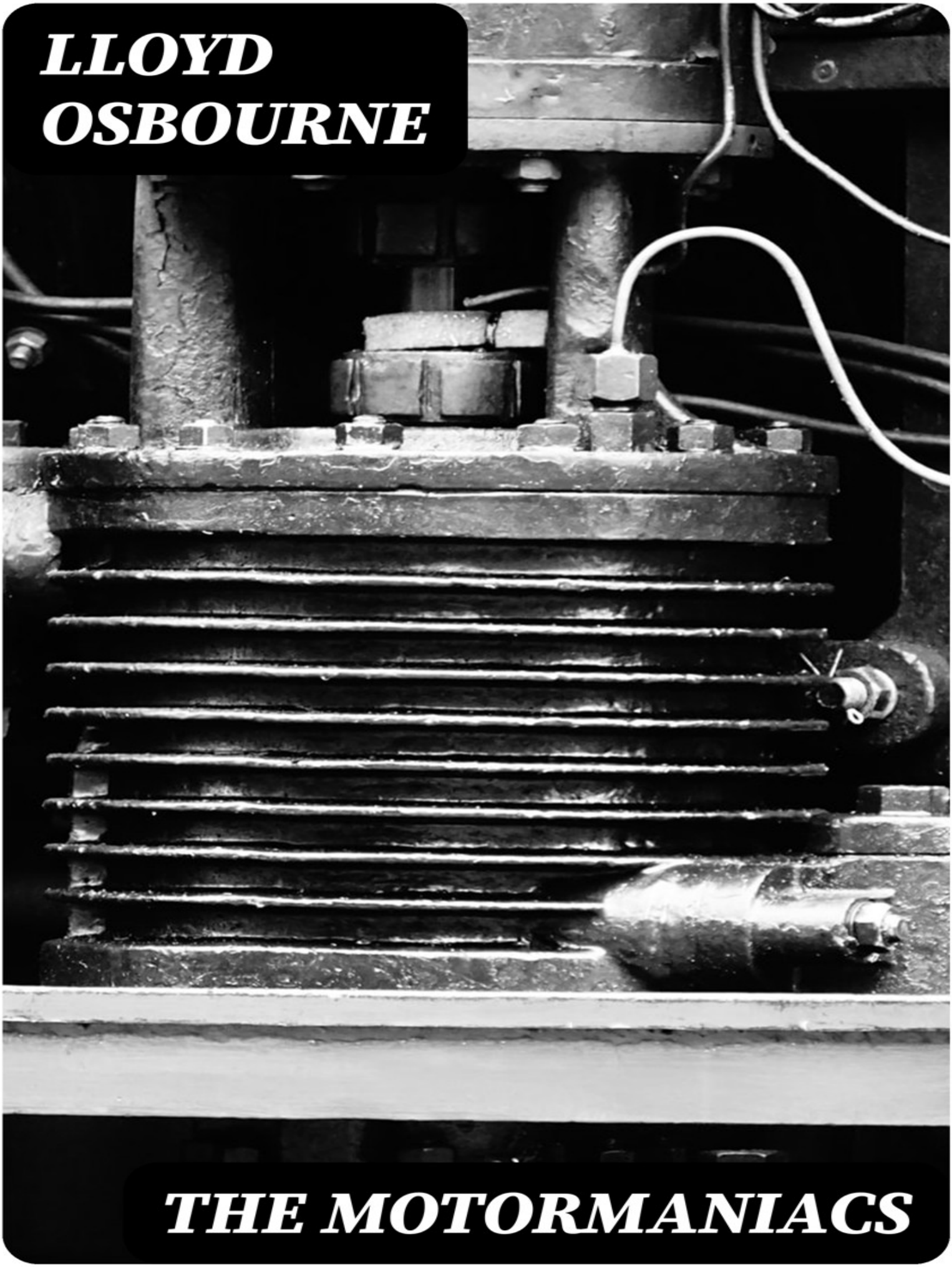
LLOYD OSBOURNE



THE MOTORMANIACS

Lloyd Osbourne

The Motormaniacs

EAN 8596547360544

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

CONTENTS: THE MOTORMANIACS THE GREAT BUBBLE SYNDICATE COAL OIL JOHNNY JONES

THE MOTORMANIACS

THE MOTORMANIACS

Table of Contents

"It's jolly to get you off by yourself," I said as we wandered away from the rest of the party.

"Then you are not afraid of an engaged girl," she observed

"Everybody else seems to be."

"I am made of sterner stuff," I said. "Besides, I am dying to know all about it."

"All about what?"

"What you found to like in Gerard Malcolm, and what Gerard Malcolm found to like in you, and what he said and what you said and what the Englishman said, and how it all happened generally."

"What you want to know would fill a book."

"You speak as if you mean it to be a sealed one."

"I don't see exactly what claim you have to be a reader."

"Well, I was the first person to love you," I said. "Surely that ought to count for something. It didn't last long, I know, but it was a wild business while it did. When I discovered you were just out for scalps—"

"And when I discovered you were the most conceited, monopolizing, jealous, troublesome and exacting man that ever lived, and that I was expected to play kitten while you did demon child—"

"Oh, of course, it was a mistake," I said quickly. "The illusion couldn't be kept up on either side. We only, really got chummy after we called it off."

"The trouble was that we were both scalpers, and when we decided to let each other alone—in that way, I mean—we built up a pleasant professional acquaintance on the ashes of the dead fires."

"Can't you make it a little warmer than acquaintance?" I protested.

"It was a real fellow feeling—whatever you choose to call it," she conceded. "You wanted to talk about yourself, and I wanted to talk about myself, and without any self-flattery I think I can say we found each other very responsive."

"I've rather a memory that you got the best of the bargain."

"There were hours and hours when I couldn't get a word in edgewise."

"And there were whole days and days—" I began.

"Now, don't let's work up a fuss," she said sweetly. "We won't have so many more talks together, and anyway it isn't professional etiquette for us to fight."

"Who wants to fight?" I said. "I never was that kind of Indian."

"Then let's begin where we left off."

"It used to be all Harry Clayton then," I remarked.

"Was it as long ago as that?" she asked. "Oh, dear, how time passes!"

"He joined the great majority, I heard."

"Oh, yes, he's married," she said. "He wasn't any good at all.
What can you do with a person who has scalps to burn?"

"That kind of thing discourages an Indian," I remarked.

"It robs the thing of all its zip, but I suppose there's a Harry
Clayton kind of girl, Loo."

"The woods are full of them."

"I am almost glad I've decided to bury the tomahawk."

"And leave me the last of the noble race?"

"You'll have to whoop alone."

"I'll often think of you in your log cabin with the white man," I said. "On winter nights I'll flatten my nose against the window-pane and have a little peek in; next day you'll recognize my footsteps in the snow."

"I'd be sure to know them by their size."

"I'm going to take ten dollars off your wedding present for that"

"It was one of our rules we could say anything we liked."

"It was a life of savage freedom. It takes one a little time to get into it again."

"You used to say things, too."

"I can't remember saying anything as horrid as that."

"Well, you couldn't, you know," she said, and put out the tip of a little slipper.

"I thought all the while it was to be Captain Cartwright—that
Englishman with the eyeglass."

"I thought so, too."

"I read of the engagement in the papers, and I can not recollect that it was ever contradicted or anything."

"Oh, it wasn't," she said. "Ax least, not till later—lots later."

"I suppose I ought to hurriedly talk about something else," I remarked.

"You needn't feel like that at all," she returned. "The captain and I are very good friends—only be doesn't play in my yard any more."

"I can't remember Gerard Malcolm very well," I went on. "Wasn't he rather tall and thin, with a big nose and a hidden-away sister who was supposed to be an invalid?"

"That's one way of describing him."

"I'd rather like to hear yours."

"Oh, I'm quite silly about him."

"That must have happened later," I said. "It certainly didn't show at the time."

"Everything must have a beginning, you know."

"That's what I want to get at,—what made you get a transfer from the captain?"

"It all happened through an automobile," she said.

"Oh, an automobile!" I exclaimed.

"It was an awfully up-to-date affair altogether!"

"I suppose it ran away and he caught it by the bridle at the risk of his life?"

"No, he didn't stop it," she said. "He made it go."

"It isn't everybody can do that with an automobile."

"You ought to have seen the poor captain turn the crank!" she exclaimed, with a little laugh of recollection.

"So the captain was there, too?" I said. "He never struck me as the kind of man that could make anything go, exactly."

"Oh, he didn't," she said.

"I am surprised that he even tried."

"But Gerard is a perfectly beautiful mechanic. You ought to see how respectful they are to him at the garage—especially, when there's a French car in trouble."

"They are respectful to me, too."

"That's only because you're rich," she returned.

"I own a French car and drive it myself," I said, "and—but I see there's no use of my saying anything."

"It's genius with Gerard," she said. "It makes one solemn to think how much he knows about gas engines."

"So that's how he did it!" I observed. "Different men have different ways to charm, I suppose. I don't remember that looks were his long suit."

"If you were a woman, that would be called catty."

"Oh, I don't want to detract from him," I said. "He used to dance with wall-flowers and they said he was an angel to his sister."

"It was that sister who was the real trouble," she said meditatively.

"What had she to do with it?" I asked.

"Oh, just being there—being his sister—being an invalid, yon know."

"No, I don't know, at all."

"The trouble is, I'm telling you the end of the story first."

"Let's start at the very beginning."

"In real life beginnings and middles and ends of things are all so jumbled up."

"When I went away," I said, "everybody thought it was Harry Clayton, with the Englishman as a strong second, and there wasn't any Malcolm about it."

"Do yon remember the flurry in Great Westerns?" she asked.

"That's surely the beginning of something else," I remarked,

"No, it's the beginning of this."

I've a faint memory they jumped up to something tremendous, didn't they?"

"It was the biggest thing of its kind ever seen on Wall Street."

"Wall Street!" I exclaimed. "The voice is Jess Hardy's, but —"

"Well, you can't buy a Manton car without a little trouble."

"Or twenty-five hundred dollars in a certified check."

"It's nearer three thousand, with acetylene lamps, top, baskets, extra tires, French tooter, freight, insurance, extra tools and a leather coat."

"You've got the thing down fine," I said. "You speak like a folder."

"Well, I didn't have any three thousand dollars," she continued, undisturbed; "all I had was an allowance of a hundred a month, a grand piano, a horse (you remember my, blood mare, Gee-whizz?) a lot of posters, and a father."

"He seems to me the biggest asset of the lot," I observed.

"I thought so, too, till I tried him," she said. "He had the automobile fever, too—only the negative kind—wanted to shoot them with a gun."

"Surely it's dangerous enough already, without adding that."

"For a time I didn't know what to do," she went on. "I thought I'd have to try the stage, or write one of those Marie Bashkirtseff books that shock people into buying them by thousands—and whenever I saw a Manton on the road my eyes would almost pop out of my head. Then, when I was almost desperate, Mr. Collenquest came on a visit to papa."

"I see now why you said Wall Street," I remarked.

"Mr. Collenquest is an old friend of papa's," she continued. "They were at the same college, and both belonged to what they call 'the wonderful old class of seventy-nine,' and there's nothing in the world papa wouldn't do for Mr. Collenquest or Mr. Collenquest for papa. I had never seen him before and had rather a wild idea of him from the caricatures in the paper—you know the kind—with dollar-signs all over his clothes and one of his feet on the neck of Honest Toil. Well, he wasn't like that a bit—in fact, he was more like a bishop than anything else and the only thing he ever put his foot on was a chair when he and papa would sit up half the night talking about the wonderful old

class of seventy-nine. Papa is rather a quiet man ordinarily, but that week it seemed as though he'd never stop laughing; and I'd wake up at one o'clock in the morning and hear them still at it. Of course, they had long serious talks, too, and Mr. Collenquest was never so like a bishop as when the conversation turned on stocks and Wall Street. When he boomed out things like 'the increasing tendency of associated capital in this country,' or 'the admitted financial emancipation of the Middle West,'—you felt somehow you were a better girl for having listened to him. What he seemed to like best—besides sitting up all night till papa was a wreck—was to take walks. He was as bad about horses as papa was about automobiles—and of course papa had to go, too —and naturally I tagged after them both—and so we walked and walked and walked.

"Well, one day they were talking about investments, and stocks, and how cheap money was, and how hard it was to know what to do with it, and I was picking wild-flowers and wondering whether I'd have my Manton red, or green with gilt stripes, when I heard something that brought me up like an explosion in the muffler.

"'I know you are pretty well fixed, Fred,' said Mr. Collenquest, 'but I never knew a man yet who couldn't do with forty or fifty thousand more.'

"'I don't care to get it that way, Bill,' said my father.

"'I tell you Great Western is going to reach six hundred and fifty,' said Mr. Collenquest.

"I picked daisies fast, but if there ever was a girl all ears, it was I.

"'I am giving you a bit of inside information that's worth millions of dollars,' said Mr. Collenquest in that solemn tone that always gave me the better-girl feeling.

"'My dear old chap,' said papa, 'I don't want you to believe I am not grateful for this sort of proof of your friendship; and you mustn't think, because I have strong convictions, that I arrogate any superior, virtue to myself. Every man must be a law to himself. I have never speculated and I never will.'

"Mr. Collenquest heaved a regular bishop's sigh, and stopped and put one foot on a log as though it was a toiler.

"'This isn't speculation, Fred,' he said. 'This is a fact, because I happen to be rigging the market myself.'

"'I don't care to do it,' said my, father, as firmly as before.

"'If it's just being a little short of ready money,' said Mr. Collenquest, 'well—my purse is yours, you know—from one figure to six.'

"My father only shook his head.

"'I said fifty thousand,' said Mr. Collenquest, 'but there is nothing to prevent your adding another naught to it.

"'It's speculating,' said my father.

"'Well, I'm sorry,' said Mr Collenquest. 'I'm getting pretty far into the forties now, Fred, and I don't think the world holds anything dearer to me than a few old friends like yourself.' He put out his hand as he spoke, and papa took it. It was awfully affecting. I looked as girly-girly as I could, lest they should catch me listening, and picked daisies harder than ever.

"'Of course, this is sacredly confidential,' said Mr. Collenquest, 'but I know you'll let it go no farther, Fred.'