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SCHWARTZ

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Schwartz

A History. From "Schwartz" by David Christie Murray

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I was expatriated by a man with an axe. The man and the axe were alike visionary and unreal, though it needed a very considerable effort of the will to hold them at mental arm's length. I had work on hand which imperatively demanded to be finished, and I was so broken down by a long course of labour that it was a matter of actual difficulty with me when I sat down at my desk of a morning to lay hold of the thread of last night's work, and to recall the personages who had moved through my manuscript pages for the past three or four months. The day's work always began with a fog, which at first looked impenetrable, but would brighten little by little until I could see my ideal friends moving in it, and could recognise their familiar lineaments. Then the fog would disperse altogether, and a certain indescribable, exultant, feverish brightness would succeed it, and in this feverish brightness my ideal friends would move and talk as it were of their own volition.

But one morning—it was in November, and the sand-tinged foam flecks caught from the stormy bay were thick on the roadway before my window—the fog was thicker and more obdurate than common. I read and re-read the work of the day before, and the written words conveyed no meaning. In a dim sort of way this seemed lamentable, and I remember standing at the window, and looking out to where the white crests of the waves came racing shorewards under a leaden-coloured sky, and saying to myself over and over again, 'Oh, that way madness lies!' but without any