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ORIGINAL NOVELETTE.

VIROQUA;

OR, THE VICTIM OF PASSION.

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CHAPTER VII.

THE COFFEE HOUSE.

The court of examination, was progressing as usual, the next day after Albert's imprisonment, and Tenzle was there, but from some cause, the case was not called up. On that day as the reader has already been informed, the lawyer said Albert and heard his story. The next day said court was also in session and Mr. Tenzle was again present. That morning Albert's was the first called up, but as his name was mentioned the attorney arose, and asked for a postponement of this examination, which request, he stated he made for the prisoner's sake, and from the fact that the coroner was necessarily absent, together with weighty reasons of his own. According to his wish the hearing was put off for another day, and Albert left still in his most miserable condition. Having made this explanation we will again advance with the events of our history.

It was on the night of the same day that closed our preceding chapter, that the drinking saloon of one of the principal coffee-houses of the city, was crowded with a motley assemblage of men who were indulging in the bacchanalian beverage, that sparkled basalisk-like, upon a table that stood in the centre of this department. The evening was somewhat advanced—being about twelve o'clock—yet the company seemed not to think of dispersing. Indeed it was a motley assembly. The landlord, a robust, good natured looking fellow, was standing aloof, deeply engaged in conversation with an individual, whom at this instant we recognize as Tom Leroy, and occasionally glancing upon his chattering guests while they were vehemently progressing in their evening pastime. About a dozen, consisting of mechanics, mercantile and professional men, were seated around the table, drinking, smoking, laughing and talking gaily and often vociferously upon whatever subject chance might happen to throw among them. The innumerable amount of themes discussed in so short an allotment of time, and the various moods inspired by each topic upon each person, was no doubt amusement to the host, for truly he seemed to receive it for such, as when by times he would cease talking; the different and confused sayings would reach his ear, and alternately cause a look, a smile, or a burst of laughter to emanate from him.

"Aw; yer' bone—mawgint'ent in its flavay," retained an exquisite, speaking of the wine.

"It's past doubt the meenest trash trash in zing," sang out a merchant speaking of counterfeits.

"If it is so sir, it's devilishly mixed," said a lawyer in reply to some suppositions concerning politics.

"Whether or not the day lies about yating around in it is doubtful," said one, in conversation with another about horse medicine.

"It is true I presume, that no one ever used his stuff a year without being afflicted with both mental and physical derangement, succeeded ultimately by death," rejoined a physician in speaking upon some kind of patent syrup.

All this time the host was growing more and more intoxicated from the potatoes he had taken during the evening.

"It's a heinous affair, and never to be expiated but by the severest penalties of our law!" exclaimed a disciple of Blackstone, while talking of the late murder of the stranger at the Pass.

"Think you he'll be expiated to-morrow?" asked one while talking of a citizen who was in debt and about to leave the city.

"It is generally reported that he is a great rascal," said a merchant speaking of some one of his customers.

"Now suppose you see arsenic in this glass," said a doctor while holding up his glass and demonstrating some metaphysical proposition.

The host was now perfectly, in a rage. He had been hearing these snatches of conversation, and being rendered much more sensitive than usual, by imbrication, could restrain himself no longer.

"Hie—arsenic the devil!" he vociferated, "arsenic—hie—eh! it's a base—hie—hie—my coat-tail, gone; by—hie—thunder!" he exclaimed as the door slammed shut, caught and retained that part of his coat as he was in the act of confronting his company, "first there's a cursed lie—hie—never pison my liquors, haint here—hie—proof, that they're—hie—good? Haven't I bin—hie—a usin' of 'em for the hie—last fifteen year and have they—hie—pisoned me? It's a cursed—hie—d—hie gentlemen!"

"Why that's the noise landlord!" asked all in a voice, looking wildly at the host.

"What's the hie—noise! who said my Maders was his—mean trash—who said my handy had—hie—arsenic in it? and who said I was a great—hie—rascal, and would be—hie—expasped? Out from my—hie—premisses!" he shouted stamping his foot upon the floor.

"No one," answered one of the men seeing in a moment the mistake of the landlord.

"Ah, hie—ha—ha—no one mine host; but what a capital joke," he continued turning to the company, "he has only noticed, hie—a few disconnected sentences, and imagined we were disparaging his drinks, ah—ha—ha—ha!"

"I'm not—hie—misaken sirs—out of this or I will call the police, you slandering, snuffing vapors! Oh! he still cried, again stamping the floor and making violent gesticulations.

"You are entirely under mistake sir; but we will leave you."

Thus the party thinking it the more polite to make an exit, threw a ten-dollar note upon the table, and left for their several homes.

"The next room to this is his library," intimated Strawson, as they entered.

"A light by—!" exclaimed Leroy in a loud whisper, almost forgetting himself in the surprise.

"Open the door quick and light," commanded Strawson.

"At this moment they heard voices within. A dark lantern was soon lighted and a survey taken of the place. A curtained bedstead stood in one corner, which was the only resort of concealment in the room.

"Dovse the gim," again commanded Strawson, "and if its necessary you know how to get under that bed—but no blood split—remember—if possible." Thus concluding the room was again darkened and he drew closer to the door of the library.

"Tenzle, as sure as shooting!" he mentally muttered. True enough; there was the barrister seated with the corner of a centre-table on which was burning a lamp.

"Now," said the lawyer, "after what this old woman told me, or the hints she threw out, all of which were frightfully allied to circumstances with which I am conversant—I mean the old hag I mentioned awhile ago, as having seen when I left the prison to-day I am placed in a strange dilemma."

"Did she mention her name to you?"

"Yes, and that is one circumstance that puzzles me deeper."

"Why? what was it?"

"Mrs. Beaumont she said."

"Possible?"

"Yes, so," replied Tenzle thoughtfully.

"It might prove yet, a most remarkable occurrence."

"Yes."

"It isn't possible that she could be his mother?"

"How?" exclaimed the lawyer awaking to consciousness, "I too thought such a thing might be possible!"

"Indeed it might."

"A face though to such romance—it is becoming only to a novelist while we must deal in realities. What think you Judson of our esteemed friend and citizen Morton?"

"Nor I," concurred the other.

"And by the way, old boy I've got a job for you to-night," said Leroy slapping him familiarly upon the shoulder.

"What—saying it out?"

"Well you see as I was tellin' you, I was up to old Morton's a postin' him, an' when I mentioned that ar' package backed to Albert Beaumont, and signed Albert Eaderton, he got all-fired wrothy and swore he must have it at the risk of his life, so you see just to make another little pull, I offers my services and so did Strawson, to get it for him."

"Hie—well?"

"So he accepts, and now I'm here a wantin' you to go in for me, how much do you say old fellow? That's devilish good of you."

"Excellent have some more. Hie—well I want say hardly; tough chicken suit it is."

"Can't say; they say the old un, and at home."

"Well—hie—that's something in favor of 'em."

"I should rather imagine it was, that if Strawson has documents enough to put us through."

"Well say a double X for this job?"

"Pitch-forks and pistols! For this little adventure?"

"Why?"

"Why that would knock our profits into a smashed squash sard! Say an X and we're partners."

"Well rather 'an miss the hie—sport I'll say an X."

"I'll bargain then."

"I wonder why Strawson aint here dere this time?"

"Can't say—hie's devilish tardy, pon my soul."

"Have some more—hie—sie and I'll help the boy shut up," saying which Morton arose from his chair and left the room.

"Fifty apiece for this night, and five a piece for help, leaves a clean forty-five!" soliloquized Leroy immediately after Morton had closed the door.

In a few minutes the host returned accompanied by Strawson, who in the mean time had arrived. Quaffing another draught of the intoxicating fire, and providing themselves with a willow-bush of the same, the trio issued from the doggery.

The night was clear and still. Luna was travelling high up in the heavens, swaying with that calm, unruffled influence, that casts such a sensation of languishment upon the beholder, and adds such a serene beauty to every object of earth. Following the several streets and alleys that lay between them and their destination they stopped before a large house, standing back from the pavement and surrounded by a green yard, in which several foliated trees stood, whose darkling shadows cast a sombre silence over and about the edifice. This was corner Judson's residence. After, silently reconnoitering the premises, they concluded to enter by a back-window, that looked out from the second floor. Having gained an ascent to the roof of a back-porch, the window was quietly hoisted and each stealthily clambered in. Here they found themselves in a large hall.

"This is the identical hall he mentioned," whispered Strawson walking noiselessly towards a flight of steps.

"Who mentioned?" inquired Dick.

"Morton."

"Yes he give us full instructions," added Leroy, "turn up these stairs boys." Having ascended the steps he said:

"Now we are out of hearing, old Morton says they all sleep down on the floor."

"Which way now?" inquired Dick as they stopped in another hall immediately above the first one they entered.

"Let me see—yes here's the door he mentioned to the right, that opens into a narrow passage."

"Dark as hie—ll by jove!" ejaculated Leroy as they opened the door.

"He said this door would be locked," observed Strawson as he passed through.

"The more's unlocked the better," returned Dick.

"I speak it ominous of ill luck," whispered Strawson.

"Why Mr. Juggler?"

"It appears to me that if the corner wasn't in his sanctum the door would have been locked."

"Well we'll see."

"Here we turn through this door."

"Unlocked too by the Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Dick in a superstitious whisper.

and he saw a man, gave the alarm, and they took to flight—each one his own way.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISH BEAUMONT.

"HA VILLAIN! YOU KNOW ME THEN?" Let the dark deeds of thy past, now come forth to torture thy seated and guilty conscience! Let the charnel depths of thy crime-black heart, now yield up their horrors to light! Monster, well may you tremble!"

Thus fearfully commenced Mijah Beaumont, while the iron-nerved and pious Morton stood pale and paralyzed before her, and the innocent Viroqua Levy still lay unconscious upon her chair.

"Ye Gods!" he only uttered with a groan.

"Nay; thy false groans will avail thee naught. They are too false—false as the oasis with which thou didst once perfume thy soul! Look, dissembling demon upon the wreck of the most damning treachery! Look upon me thou incarnate fiend—look on me," she almost screamed, "and behold the wretched victim of the vilest passion! See this bearded, haggard skeleton, once the airy, virtuous maiden form—now the guilty remains of the most damning vows and helish treachery! See this tormented throne of reason, once the shrine of purity—now raked almost to destruction with thoughts of the most accursed inconstancy and remorse. See this hearted heart, once a source of hope—now crushed to despair by the rankling coils of demon-spawned duplicity!"

Here for a moment she paused and bent a piercing gaze upon the face of the criminal, who still stood statue-like before her. And what a withering look! It seemed as though her eyes bristled with barbed arrows of remorse; the deadliest; only awaiting a fitter period to drive themselves fatally to his heart. Unable longer to bare such desperation he recoiled to his chair and buried his feverish temples beneath his hands.

"So, despicable wretch shall thy deeds of wickedness recoil upon, and crush thee. Ha! well thou knowest the cause of my wretchedness! Thou, monster, art that serjant villain! Thou art the plotter of that fatal treachery—thou art the black-hearted source of that most direful remorse, and thou—vilest hypocrite; art the seamer of this miserable destiny! Now I tear that veil of feigned forgiveness—Rememberest thou, Mijah Beaumont? Rememberest thou when she was young and uncontaminated by villain's? Rememberest thou her, when her form was unblemished and unnumbered by sorrow and despair?—When her cheeks were ruddy with the tint of girl-hood's beauty—when her voice rang with the music of happiness—before her lips were beamed with tears of anguish and remorse—when her hand was white with innocence—before her brow was maddened with false vows—before her heart was broken with wrongs and disappointments—when she was virtuous—before she was reduced by thy helish machinations to the haggard, despoiled thing that now stands before you? Ha! I have goodly stored as he writhed in agony. "Thou knowest," she again commenced, "how you thy guilty mind hovers all this past wickedness! Like a vulture, it shall hover over thy pray, then fall upon thee and devour thee! Thou art the plotter of that fatal treachery—thou art the seamer of this miserable destiny! Now I tear that veil of feigned forgiveness—Rememberest thou, Mijah Beaumont? 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