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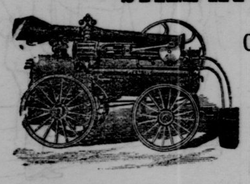

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A ROMANCE OF THE XIX CENTURY.

Certainly it is impossible to play Desdemona in the opera of "Othello, the Moor of Venice," without being deeply moved. Still, exciting as the part may be, that was not the only cause of Katrinka's agitation. When the dark shade of the curtain descended like a pall before the death-bed on which the prima donna was lying, she continued pale and speechless; it seemed as though the Moor's dagger had really pierced her heart. The tenor, I think it was Bordogni, was alarmed. He raised her gently in his arms and was about carrying her out into the open air, when Count Arnold came up. The Count lavished every attention upon her, and presently a gentle sigh escaped her, her heavy eyelids opened, and she recognized him.

"Alas! you are not gone then, Arnold," she murmured.

"I had not the courage," he replied, brokenly.

"And I too feel that I have not strength to endure a second partiug," cried Katrinka, unconscious that she was giving utterance to her secret thoughts.

The count seized her hand in transport.

"You love me, then," he exclaimed; "you love me, you who yesterday bade me adieu so coldly and indifferently!"

The lady hid her blushing face with her hands. "Alas!" she replied, "must we not quit each other still? I am as far beneath you in rank now as I was yesterday—but this interview is too harassing—it would destroy the little srength I have left. Au revoir, count."

"No, I will not quit you till you promise to see me to-morrow."

"Everybody is watching us here, and if I was to receive your visit to-morrow, the poor orphan's fair fame would be gone for ever. Be generous, Arnold."

The young man only settled himself more firmly than ever in his seat.

"Well," she said at last, "I am going to sing to-morrow at Mr. ——, the banker's, country seat. You are invited to the concert. There I may perhaps have an opportunity to see you, and to say to you what will forever part us. Be that as it may, you shall know all."

The count turned pale, and came near fainting in his turn.

"You see," said the prima donna with deep grief, "a single word has been enough to inspire you with doubt, perhaps with contempt of me. Suspend your bad opinion of me for awhile, however. In the melancholy story I have to tell, you will find no trace of guilt or remorse."

He fell at her feet, and his looks pleaded eloquently for pardon. It was granted, and the lovers separated with one of those long and meaning glances which rend while they also delight.

* * * * * *

The next day both were present at the fete. A more luxurious one was never given. Three different theatres had been erected in the spacious park; the one for Potter and his comrades of the "Varietes," another for vaudevilles, and the third for opera. In the back ground were seen preparations for extensive fire-works, and long lines of tables loaded with every luxury.

At a signal given by the host the concert began, and presently it was Katrinka's turn to appear. As soon as she came forward a low murmur of admiration broke from the audience. She had never looked so pretty, so cheerful and smiling. No sooner, however, had she begun her aria than she was seen to tremble and turn pale. She shuddered, but overcame her emotions sufficiently to begin the air, "Si padra m'abbandano," and the audience hung upon every sound that fell from her lips, when all at once the two other theatres opened, and the plaintive wail of the cantatrice was drowned in the noisy merriment of a couple of broad farces, both performed together. The next moment boxes and galleries gave away, and the audience were precipitated to the ground. The fireworks began to go off, and being skilfully aimed at the lights, speedily put them out. In a few moments it was pitch dark, confusion reigned supreme, and the forlorn guests were struggling and shrieking in the dirt and mud of the park. In the centre of this horrible scene stood its author, enjoying, with a Satanic smile, this, one of his 'good jokes.'

In the first moment of confusion, Katrinka felt herself grasped by a pair of vigorous arms, which soon removed her from the scene, and after placing her in a carriage, their owner, Count Arnold, took a seat beside her and his horses flew along the road to Paris. Katrinka seemed paralyzed by terror; her teeth chattered, and she kept murmuring to herself, "'Tis he 'tis he!"

Arnold endeavored to calm her agitation.

"Oh!" she cried, "if you only knew what gloomy recollections the sight of that man calls up!"

"Whom do you mean, dearest. Woe to the man who dares disturb you tnus!"

"Oh! pray be silent!" she exclaimed; "promise me that you will avoid that man, avoid him as you would the Evil One himself. I promised to tell you my story to-day and the sight of that man is only too natural an introduction to it. Listen, Arnold."

THE PRIMA DONNA'S STORY.

"It is the fashion to extol Napoleon's soldiers; but these men, such heroes on the field of battle, were often worse than brutes after a victory. Eight and twenty years ago they overran Germany, and one of them fell, seemingly lifeless, at the gate of a chateau he had helped to plunder. The old man who had inhabited the smoking ruins gave shelter to his wounded enemy, and by his cares restored him to health. His guest repaid the debt of hospitality by seducing his only daughter. Her father threatened the outrager of his family's honor with death, but his daughter interposed to save the vile wretch she called her husband.

"'Be it so,' said her parent, 'let him assume in the sight of God and man the name you gave him—poor girl, that will be ample atonement for your error!" His daughter had a fortune of a hundred thousand francs, inherited from her mother, and the seducer promised to do anything that was required of him. They were married, and went to Paris. Alas! her father's prophecy was but too well fulfilled.

"The officer lived as though his wife's fortune was inexhaustible. He spent his whole time among his comrades, and never troubled his head about the welfare of the woman who had sacrificed everything for his sake, nor of the little daughter she had borne him. He became a gambler, with the usual result—one morning found a bloody corpse lying at her threshold. Her husband had been coward enough to take his own life.

"Without a friend, without resources, in a strange land, she still struggled to bear up against her misfortunes. She educated her daughter in the principles of religion, inculcated the duty of industry and frugality by example as well as precept, and never lost hope or courage until she felt the approach of death. Then, indeed, oh, how the thought of leaving her only child a helpless orphan afflicted her spirit!

"One morning her daughter had been to pray at her mother's tomb, and was on her way homeward, when a carriage stopped before her, and its occupant beckoned her to approach.

"'Where have you been?' said the strange gentleman, abruptly.

"'At my mother's tomb.'

"'Is your father alive?'

"'I am an orphan.'

"'Do you live with a relation?'

"'My mother was a German, and I have no kindred in Paris.'

"'How many lovers have you?'

"She eyed him with a look of so much purity and innocence that he felt almost ashamed of his brutal question.

"'Get up into my carriage.'

"She hesitated, but he caught her by the arm and lifted her up to the seat.

"The carriage stopped in front of a beautiful residence in the Rue de St. Antoine. The stranger helped the yonng girl out of the carriage and rang a bell, which summoned a respectable-looking old woman.

"'Here is your new mistress,' he said, and turned toward his carriage. The orphan ran after him. 'Sir,' she cried, 'I prefer death to dishonor.' He only laughed and patted her on the cheek.

"'Don't be frightened before you are hurt,' he said; 'there's no harm meant you. I am rich, and like to do good after a fashion of my own, that's all. I happened to meet you, saw you were pretty, and determined to give you what I bestowed upon a vile wretch who deceived me. Enjoy your good fortune fearlessly. I'll not even come to see you unless you wish it.'

"And in fact six months passed before she again beheld her generous benefactor. The woman who waited upon her was intelligent and affectionate. She employed masters in every branch of education. And when the unknown benefactor made his appearance at last, the young girl took pleasure in exhibiting her acquirements, to show him that she was not altogether unworthy of his bounty. Instead, however, of seeming pleased at her progress, this strange being began to find fault with her, and forbade her taking any more lessons; he then left her and did not show himself again for four years. Her governess advised her not to follow his directions, but to continue her studies so as to be able to support herself in case she should again become the victim of adversity. She did so, and made rapid advances, especially in music.

"One morning the stranger came to pay her a visit. She reproached him tenderly for having been so long absent. He made no reply except to say:

"'My dear, I should like to see you in the dress you wore the day I first met you.'

"She hastened to comply with his desires, and presently re-appeared in her former plain dress.

"'Would you not like to visit with me the place were chance first threw you in my way?'

"'Surely,' replied the orphan, joyously, 'my gratitude, great as it is, will become still more ardent on revisiting the scene of my loneliness and suffering.'

"She entered the carriage with him. When they had reached the precise spot where he had first met her, he requested her to alight. She had hardly done so before the carriage drove off and left her standing here, astonished and alarmed.

"She began to think as soon as she recovered a little from her surprise, what was to be done, and she determined to take a hack and go back alone. When she reached her late abode she knocked and called till she was weary, but the door remained closed. Only imagine my despair, Arnold, for you have doubtless perceived that I was telling you my own story. Alone, abandoned, in the middle of Paris, without means, without a shelter, without a protector! Oh, what I suffered!

"The coachman was waiting, and I had not even money enough to pay him. I took out my ear-rings and sold them to a jeweler. I paid the coachman and sat down on a bench, almost frantic. After I had prayed I determined not to be discouraged. The first thing to be provided was a lodging—no easy matter, as all the money I had was what was left over of the price of my ear-rings. I discovered that in changing my dress I had kept a pretty watch, which I found on a mantel-piece the day I entered my late residence. I went back to the jeweler's to sell it. He eyed me suspiciously, and offered me sixty francs. I agreed to take it at once, for I had no idea of the value of the watch. He detained me a few minutes under some pretext, and I saw a police officer come in.

"'Sir,' said the jeweler, 'this young girl has offered me a watch set with jewels for sixty francs, which is worth ten times as much. I have reason to believe it is stolen; will you be good enough to take her before the magistrate?'

"I was led away and thrown into prison, for I hardly knew what answer to make to the magistrate's questions, and the account I gave him of my adventures he treated as an idle fable.

"I went to prison, Arnold! Oh, if you could but know what I suffered, confined as I was with the most abandoned of my sex! Alas! this was but the first blow; contempt and disgrace were to be my lot; yes, contempt and disgrace! for the court, too, refused to believe me innocent. I was acquitted, because nobody appeared to claim the stolen goods, as they told me; but the juege accompanied my dismissal with the bitterest reproaches. He took special care to tell me that it was only the want of proof that enabled me to escape the punishment I so richly deserved. 'In the house in which you pretend to have lived for years,' he said, 'not a soul knows you. The highly respectable gentleman that owns the property declares that your story is utterly false. You may go now, but the arm of the law will soon seize you again!'

"Do not expect me to tell all the trials, all the sufferings I went thro'. A long series of misfortunes led me to Italy; where I made my debut at La Scala, and earned a share of glory and renown! Let it be enough, Arnold, for you to know that the daughter has done nothing to disgrace her mother, who, she hopes, is still looking down upon her from her heavenly abode!

"Judge of my affright, my dear friend, when, a few minutes ago, I recognized in the person who gave the entertainment we just quitted, that same infernal being who has played so strange a part in the drama of my life—that stern, cruel old man who rescued me from want only to plunge me into it again with tenfold cruelty—who might have established my innocence by a single word, and yet left me alone without friends or means of defence, before a tribunal which overwhelmed me with unmerited reproaches! Arnold, when that painful, degrading thought comes me, it tortures—it kills me! Oh, leave me, let me go! you can never be the husband of one whom the judges of the land have called 'thief thief!'"

"My dear angel of purity, why lay such weight on the ill-treatment of the world which now admires and worships your adorable talent?—What matters it if the crown of thorns has once pierced your forehead, now that it is radiant forever with the halo of glory? What matters the past, when henceforth my love is the only future to which you are to look forward?"

* * * * * *

A few days afterwards the public learned, with a mixture of pleasure and regret, that the distinguished cantatrice was about to quit the stage, and to encircle her pure brow with a countess' coronet.

THE END.

"Out of the Current."

"He fasts enough that has a bad meal."

"Time marks his lines of travel in wrinkles."

"Contempt should be the best concealed of our sentiments."

What loneliness is more lonely than distrust?

Everybody drags its shadow, and every mind its doubt.

Languages begin by being a music, and end by being an algebra.

He who thinks himself good for everything is often good for nothing.

The more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint.

Doubt springs from the mind; faith is the daughter of the soul.

The gods have a curse for him who willingly tells another the wrong.

The world is a book, the language of which is unintelligible to many people.

"STEER N. W."

About two years ago I left the service. I was tired of it; as I wanted some more exciting employment I joined a whaler. We were unlucky—some how I bring no luck anywhere—and were nearly empty. We were cruising up here to the north, and were thinking of making for home, as the weather had changed—for the ice forms precious quick in those latitudes when it once begins. The captain naturally wanted to hang on to the last chance of another haul.

One bright afternoon, just after eight bells, I made up the log and took it to the captain's cabin. I knocked at the door, and as nobody answered, I walked in. I thought it odd the captain hadn't answered me, for there he was sitting at his desk, with his back to me, writing. Seeing he was employed, I told him I brought the log, laid it down on the table behind him, and, as he made no answer, I walked out. I went on deck, and the first person I met was the captain. I was puzzled—I could not make out how he got there before me.

"How did you get up here?" I asked; "I just left you writing in your cabin."

"I have not been in my cabin for the last half hour," the captain answered; but I thought he was chaffing, and didn't like it.

"There was some one writing at your desk," I said; "if it wasn't you you had better go and see who it is. The log is made up. I have left it in your cabin, sir," and with that I walked sulkily away. I had no idea of being chaffed by the captain, to whom I had taken a dislike.

"Mr. Brown," said the captain, who saw I was nettled, "you must have been mistaken; my desk is locked. But come—we'll go down and see about it."

"You see, Mr. Brown," he said, laughing, "you must have been mistaken; the desk is locked."

I was positive. "Somebody may have picked the lock," I said.

"But they couldn't have closed it again," the captain suggested; "but to satisfy you I will open it and see if the contents are safe, though there is not much here to tempt a thief."

He opened the desk, and there—stretched across it—was a sheet of paper with the words, "Steer N. W." written in an odd, cramped hand.

The captain looked at the paper and then handed it to me.

"You are right, Mr. Brown; somebody has been here. This is some hoax."

We sat there some time talking and trying to guess what could be the object of such a joke—if joke it was mean't to be. I tried to identify the back of the man I had seen at the desk with that of any of the crew. I could not do it. It is true I had at first taken the man for the captain, but now points of difference suggested themselves. I had not looked very attentively at the figure, but still I was under the impression that the coat it had on was brown, and the hair which appeared under the cap, seemed, as I remembered it, to have been longer and whiter than the captain's. There was only one man on board who resembled in in the least tne figure I had seen. I suggested to the captain that it might have been old Shiel, the boatswain. He did not like to suspect the old man, who was a great favorite; besides, what motive could he, or indeed anyone else have had in trying to change the course of the vessel?

Not to appear to suspect any one in particular, the captain determined to have up all the crew. We had them up, one by one. We examined them and made all those who could write, write "Steer N. W.," but we gained no clue. One thing was very clear—it could not have been old Shiel, who was proved to have been forward at the time I was in the captain's cabin. The mystery remained unsolved.

That evening I sat drinking my grog with the captain in his cabin. We were neither of us inclined to be talkative. I tried to think of home and the pleasure it would be to see the old folks again, but still my thoughts always wondered back to that mysterious writing. I tried to read, but caught myself furtively peeping at the desk, expecting to see the figure sitting there.

The captain had not spoken for some time, and was sitting with his face buried in his hand. At last he looked up and said:

"Suppose we alter her course to northwest, Mr. Brown?"

I don't know what it was; I cannot hope to make you understand the feeling in my mind that followed those words—it was a sense of relief from a horrible nightmare. I was ashamed of the childish pleasure I felt, but I could not help answering eagerly, "Certainly, shall I give the order?"

I waited no longer, but hurried on deck and altered the course of the vessel.

It was a clear, frosty night, and as I looked at the compass before going below I felt strangely pleased, and caught myself chuckling and rubbing my hands; at what, I cannot say—I didn't know then, but a great weight had been taken off my mind.

I went down to the cabin, and found the captain pacing up and down the small space. He stopped as I came in, and, looking up, said abruptly:

"It can do no harm, Mr. Brown."

"If this breeze continues," I answered, "we can hold this course for thirty hours or so; but then, I should think—"

"But then—we shall find ice. How's the wind?"

"Steady, north by east."

We sat down and finished our grog. I had the morning watch to keep next day. I was too restless to sleep after it, so I kept on deck the whole day. Even that did not satisfy me. I was continually running up into the tops with my glass, but every time I came down disappointed. The captain was as unquiet as myself. Something was expected to happen, but of what it would be we could form no idea. The second officer, I believe thought us both crazy; indeed, I often wondered myself at the state I was in. Evening came and nothing had turned up. The night was bright and the captain determined to carry on under easy sail till morning.

Morning came, and with the first gray light I was on deck. It was bitterly cold. Those only who have seen them can form an idea of the delicate tints of the morning sky in those northern seas. But I was in no humor to appreciate the beauties of nature. There was a mist low down on the horizon; I waited impatiently for it to lift. It lifted soon, and I could not be mistaken—beyond it I could see the shimmer of ice. I sent down to tell the captain, who came on deck directly.

It's no use, Mr. Brown," he said; "you must put her about."

"Wait one moment; the mist is lifting more and it will be quite clear directly."

The mist was indeed lifting rapidly. Far to the north and west we could see the ice stretched away in one unbroken field. I was trying to see whether there appeared any break in the ice toward the west, when the captain, seizing my arm with one hand and pointing straight ahead with the other, exclaimed:

"Good heavens! there's a ship there!"

The mist had risen like a curtain, and there, sure enough, about three miles ahead, was a ship seemingly firmly packed in ice. We looked at the boat for some time without saying a word. There was some meaning after all in the mysterious warning, was the first thought that suggested itself to me.

"She's nipped bad, sir," said old Shiel, who, with the rest of the crew, was anxiously watching our new discovery. I was trying to make her out with the glass when the flash of a gun quickly followed by the report, proved that she had seen us. Up went the flag, union downward. We needed no signal to know her distress. The captain ordered the second officer off into the boat. I saw him as he made his way over the ice with a few of the men toward the ship. They soon returned with eight of the ship's crew. It was a dismal account they gave of their situation. They might have sawed their way out of the ice, but the ship was so injured she could not have floated an hour. The largest of their boats had been stove in, the others were hardly seaworthy. They were preparing, however, to take to them as a last resource when our welcome arrival put an end to their fears. Another detachment was soon brought off, and the captain, with the remainder of his crew, were to follow immediately.

I went down to my cabin and tried to think over the singular fate which had made us the preservers of this ship's crew. I could not divest myself of the idea that some supernatural agency was connected with the paper in the desk, and I trembled at the thought of what might have been the consequences if we had neglected the warning. The boat coming alongside interrupted my reverie. I a few seconds I was on deck.

I found the captain talking to a fine old sailorlike looking man, whom he introduced to me as Captain Squires. Captain Squires shook hands with me and we remained talking some time. I could not keep my eyes off his face; I had a conviction that I had seen him somewhere, where, I could not tell. Every now and then I seemed to catch at some clue, which vanished as soon as touched. At last he turned round to speak to some of the men. I could not be mistaken—there was the long, white hair, the brown coat. He was the man I had seen writing in the captain's cabin.

That evening the captain and I told the story of the paper to Captain Squires, who gravely and in silence listened to our conjectures. He was too thankful for his escape out of such imminent peril to question the means by which it had been brought about. At the captain's request he wrote "Steer N. W." We compared it with the original writing. There could be no doubt of it. It was in the same odd, cramped hand.

Can anyone solve the mystery?

"Travel improves superior wines and spoils the poor; it is the same with the brain."

Men would not live long in society if they were not the dupes of each other.

Manners are the hypocrisies of nations; the hypocrisies are more or less perfected.

It is with happiness as with watches—the less complicated, the less easily deranged.

"Rivals who blow out each other's brains for the eyes of a coquette, prove that they have none."

In condemning the vanity of women, men complain of the fire they themselves have kindled.

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