

ANNABEL

THE TEMPTATION.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

BARNARD HATER AND DICK MATTOCKS IN GREAT CONFERENCE, AS THEY SUPPER.

In a very short time he returned, and with him the landlord of the Blue Boar, a tall, stout, jolly looking fellow, with a frank English face, which indicated a generous, manly, straightforward nature.

"Good evening Mr Maddox," he said in loud hearty tones.

"Good evening, Mr Barstead," returned the official, as he invited him into the back parlour.

"Have you seen Dick Mattocks to-night?"

"He has just come in. He expects Mr Kidd to-night, and is to wait his coming."

"Ah, very good. You remember the scene in front of my house a good many weeks ago?"

"When that poor mad sister of his escaped from him and was re-captured? Of course, I do."

"You also remember the story she told—that she was not his sister, but a young lady whom some wicked people had confined under pretence that she was insane?"

"Ay, and that they might get an estate which she thought she had inherited. Poor thing, I was sorry for her, she seemed so fully to believe in her delusion."

"Mr Barstead," said the postmaster, "every word she said was true."

"Eh—what!" said the innkeeper, staring at the other with open eyes.

"True in every particular," added Maddox. "She is as sane as you or I. She is not his sister. It is a vile and fraudulent conspiracy which this gentleman has come to expose, and also to rescue the young lady. He waits your help. Of course you'll give it?"

"The innkeeper dropped into a chair speechless: the enormity of such a proceeding as the other indicated quite appalled him.

"Let me tell you the whole story," said Philip, and as briefly as he could he made the landlord acquainted with such particulars as were necessary to give the latter an understanding of the situation.

"His listener's warm English nature was roused as the youth proceeded, and by the time he had done Barstead was in a state of strong indignation.

"The scoundrels, the blackguards," he vociferated. "Blow'd if I didn't think that person fellow, Kidd, was a black sheep. I couldn't understand neither why Dick and him always asked a private room, and seemed particularly careful that no one should come near them. I might easily go to know what they were talking about had I thought it worth while, but in course it never occurred to me that it was anything like this—the infernal villains.

"Then you will give me your assistance in the matter?" said Philip.

"Of course I will. No honest man would refuse. I tell you what we'll do. There's a closet next the room they always get, the window of which opens into it. We'll go into that closet, and open the window a bit, and, by Jove, we'll hear every word they say, as easy as if we were in the room beside."

"A capital idea," cried Philip. "We may receive the most valuable information in that way. But one thing must be insured—that neither the one or the other gets away to Dugden."

"Ha! trust me for that," returned the innkeeper. "When the thing gets wind there's not a man in Guelph but will fall on them. You don't know as folks here, sir. A wrong like this to a poor defenceless girl fires us to a fierce pitch, and so far from letting them go to Dugden, life and limb won't be safe for them. Take my word for it, sir, Dick Mattocks won't set foot in the old house again so long as the young lady is there."

"And, take my word for it, Mr Barstead, that won't be long," said Philip. "This very night I shall proceed thither and bring her to the Blue Boar—that is," he added, shuddering and turning pale—"that is, if she can be removed, for heaven only knows the state in which I may find her."

He paused, for a rush of emotion came upon him, which threatened to unman him, but he resolutely strove against it, feeling that this was the time for prompt and decisive action alone. In a few moments he was again sternly calm and ready to accompany the landlord, and Jim across the square to the inn.

"Does Dick Mattocks know you?" asked Barstead, as he approached the door.

"He might recognize me," answered Philip. "He saw me only once, but in such circumstances as would cause him to remember me, even as I remembered him when I saw him in the post office."

"Then in that case we shall enter by the rear, so as to be out of his way. Follow me up the passage, gentlemen."

By way of this passage Barstead conducted them to his own parlor in the inn, which commanded a view not only of the front entrance but also of the general public room, in one corner of which sat Dick Mattocks, gazing in rather an abstract manner into the fire, a mug of beer standing at his elbow.

Not deeming that anyone was particularly observing him, Dick was allowing his natural expression to show itself, and certainly it was calculated to give anything but a favourable impression of his character—ferocity and brutality being strongly pictured on his ill-favoured countenance.

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The above prices are strictly cash. Towns people leave your orders early, and we will send them home for you. E. O'DONNELL & CO. Guelph, June 7, 1873. Wyndham Street, Guelph.

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