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The Man and the Demon.

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PART SECOND—THE DEMON.

(Conclusion.)

"Some brandy," said a pale featured man, coming up hurriedly to the bar of a small country tavern, and reaching out his hand eagerly.

"Nothing more at this bar without the money. That's decided!" was the tavernkeeper's firmly spoken answer.

"Just a single glass, for Heaven's sake! I'll settle all off to-morrow," urged the wretched man, as he leaned on the counter, and bent far over towards the shelves on which the decanters of liquor were ranged.

"Not a drop. And see here, Erskine, I don't want you about here any more—so just keep away for good and all. If you'll do that I'll wipe off old scores. If not confound me! if I don't clap you in jail for debt. I won't have such a drunken, good-for-nothing fellow hanging about my premises. It's disgraceful."

"That's hard talk, Grimes—hard talk!" said the poor wretch, "and you with so much of my money in your till. But come! don't be so close with me. There—do you see my hand," and he held out his arm, that shook with a strong nervous tremor—"I must have something to steady me, or I'm gone!"

"Not a dram more. I've said it, and I'll stick to it," coldly and cruelly answered the landlord. "And what's more, you've got to leave this bar instantan."

And as Grimes said this, he passed from behind the counter, with the evident intention of forcing his customer out of the house. A quick change was now visible, not only in the face of Erskine, but in his whole person. His hand, that lay trembling against the bar railing, at once became steady, and gripped the railing firmly; his stooping body, in appearance so weak and unstrung, rose up erect, while a fierce, defiant scowl darkened his countenance. By this time the landlord had left the bar and was within a few feet of him.

"I want you to leave here at once," said Grimes sharply, waving his hand, and nodding his head towards the door as he spoke.

"I'm not just ready to go now," was the cool reply of Erskine, as his now glittering eyes fixed themselves on the face of Grimes.

"Go you must! I've said it, and that ends it. If over you set your foot inside of my house again, I will cowskin you. Go!"

And he was about to lay his hand on Erskine, when the latter stepped backwards a pace or two, saying, as he did so—

"Don't touch me, Dave Grimes; I've got the devil

in me now, and had as lief kill you as look at you. So don't tempt me."

"Bah!" ejaculated the landlord contemptuously, advancing again upon the inebriate, and making an attempt as he did so to grasp him by the collar, for the purpose of choking him into submission. His hand scarcely touched the person of Erskine, ere the latter with a demoniac cry sprang upon him, with so sudden a shock as to bear him to the floor. As the landlord fell beneath his assailant, the grip of the latter was on his throat. To free himself from this, he deemed an easy thing; but for once he was in error. He was not now dealing, as he supposed, with a nerveless and exhausted drunkard, whom a child might overcome. The poor despised wretch was suddenly transformed through an influx of malignant passions into the disordered elements of his mind, to a fierce wild beast. There was an iron grip in his hand, as it tightened on the throat of his prostrate victim; while the terrible expression of his eyes and face too clearly indicated his purpose to commit murder. And fatal would have been the result, had not the timely entrance of a third person prevented the catastrophe.

"I told you the devil was in me," said Erskine, as he shook himself free from the hands of the man who dragged him from the fallen body of the landlord, and stood glaringly a fiend-like defiance upon the now thoroughly frightened Grimes.—"I meant to have killed you; and I feel like doing it yet. It would be nothing more than a just retribution. You beggar and destroy a poor wretch, both body and soul, while he has money to pay you for your hellish work; but when every sixpence he had in the world lies safely in your till, you would thrust him out with biting insult, even though he stands shivering in nervous exhaustion before you, and almost begs a mouthful of stimulant to save him from horrible madness. Dave Grimes, you may be thankful for your escape now, but the work shall be done more surely, if ever my hand reaches your accursed throat again. Give me some brandy!"

These last words were uttered in a loud, fierce, commanding voice. Grimes waited not for their repetition, but hurried into his bar, and taking a decanter of brandy placed it upon the counter. This was seized by Erskine, and a large glass filled more than half full of the drugged and fiery liquor, that poisoned while it fevered the system. At a single draught this disappeared, and his hand was on the decanter again, when both the landlord and the person who had just enter'd interposed to prevent him drinking any farther. Madly he resisted this interference, but there were two against him now, and, though he struggled