

VALDIMIR THE MONK.

BY SYLVANUS COBB, JR.

mad spirit of a vengeance such as mine can not be trifled with.

CHAPTER III.

That night Ruric Neval had strange fancies while waking, and strange dreams while sleeping.

Ruric asked this question of himself a hundred times. He would begin and lay down all the premises in his mind, and then he would try to make the deduction; but no reasonable one could arrive at.

Within one of the sumptuously furnished apartments of the palace of the Duke of Tula, sat Rosalind Valdal.

Rosalind sat there, in the apartment which was hers for her private use, and she was sad and thoughtful.

"How now, Zenobia?" asked Rosalind, as she noticed the girl hesitate.

"There is a gentleman below who would see you," the girl replied.

"Tell him I can not see him," said Rosalind, trembling.

"But this is Ruric Neval, my mistress," Rosalind uttered the fair maiden, starting up, while the rich blood mounted to her brow and temples.

jevous dimples, he opened his arms and clasped the fondly loved one to his bosom.

Happy Ruric! Happy at that moment—forgetting all else but the love that gleamed out upon him then, he clasped the cherished object ardently to his bosom.

"He is here very often, and he has forced himself upon my companion hip when, if he had sense, he must have known I liked it not."

"I will tell you. Yesterday the Count came to my dwelling, accompanied by Stephen Urzen. He had a paper drawn up by the Duke's own hand, in which I was made to say—or rather, by which the writer said—that he disclaimed all pretensions to your hand, and that he wished not to marry you—that he freely gave you up, meaning to seek within the sphere of his own social circle some companion when he wished.

"I understand. You wish to retract nothing?"

"No. Listen; I will tell you all since I seek your aid."

And thereupon Ruric related all that had occurred at the time of the Count's visit to his shop.

"Good!" uttered Alaric, as the gun-maker finished. "He must challenge you and then you'll punish him. He's too proud now. He can handle some of the lilytoes who associate with him; and perhaps he thinks he can do the same when he comes out among the harder men. But never mind—I will be punctual and faithful."

Ruric reached home just as his mother was placing the board for dinner. He often went away on business, and she thought not of asking him any questions.

CHAPTER IV.

In the afternoon Ruric retired to his shop, where he went to work upon a gun which had been ordered some days before.

"Do you mean the black monk—Valdimir?" asked the young man, starting.

"And did you let him have one?"

"Why—he said he knew the Count, and that he was a proud, reckless fellow, and worth but little to society. That was all. He did not seem to care much about it any way; only he said he should have done just as you did, and that every law of justice would bear you out. He had more curiosity than interest, though I am sure all his sympathies are with you."

"Very well," returned Ruric. "It can matter little what the monk thinks about it, though I would rather have him know the truth if he must know anything, for I would not be misunderstood."

"I understand it all now, my master; and I trust you are not offended at the liberty I took in telling him."

grating nature has for the time leveled all distinction of caste between us. Your blood alone can wash out the stain.

"Are you acquainted with Alaric Orsa, a lieutenant of the guard?"

"Yes, sir—I know him well."

"Only on one point," said Urzen, with some little show of confusion.

"I do, sir," returned Urzen, in a choking tone.

"Then wait a moment, and I will give you a message to Orsa."

"Dear Alaric—I send this to you by the same hand that bore it to me, and you are hereby empowered to act for me, and you are deemed proper. I shall be governed strictly by your arrangements."

"And the weapons?" asked Ruric.

"I thank you, Alaric, for your kindness thus far, and you may rest assured that I shall be prompt."

"Suppose I call here in the morning for you," suggested the visitor.

"I should be pleased to have you do so."

"I will, then. I shall be along in good season with my sledge, and we will both reach the ground together."

"I will speak, my dear mother," returned the youth in a tremulous tone, for his parent's kindness had moved him.

"I must meet him."

"Then," said the mother, in a low, calm tone, but with much effort, "you shall not feel that your mother thwarted your design."

"No, no, my mother," cried Ruric, quickly and earnestly.

"I am aware of that, my mother. But do you not know that we are all prone to overlook our own powers when wondering upon the feats of others!

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