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GONE WRONG!

A NEW NOVEL. BY MISS RHODY DENDRON,

Authoress of "Cometh Down like a Shower," "Red in the Nose is She," "Good! Buy Sweet Tart!" "Not Slily, But don't Tell."

Chapter VII.—*What the Author says.*

DUSOVER BELJAMBE stretched out a strong, gentle arm, and pulled her tenderly towards him. The moon steals up quietly, inaudibly, and, looking down with its own sweet, shy, silent, askant yet benignant gaze on the lovers, dashes some of her night light on his grand, recumbent form and dark, hairy face, forming a sombre ground against her pale, smooth one.

Let no one think that I am holding this pair up for imitation. My opinion is that DUSOVER is an unmitigated scoundrel, and BELLA, to say the least of it, a Slyboots. I warn my readers against falling in love with either of them, though I confess I do write this sort of character *con amore*, and I admit that it is *not* a labour of love for me to be obliged to introduce such a namby-pamby, wishy-washy milksop—excellent moral character though he be—as the Rev. THOMAS HASSOCK. If we cannot all be saints, we can all be sinners; if we cannot all be strong, and, what the world calls, vicious, let us be weak, and, what the world calls, virtuous. Am I all my fancy paints others? Am I all that the fancy of others paints me? Do I recommend you all to be DUSOVER BELJAMBES and BELLA ST. JOHN VILLIARSES? Not I. If I write their characters so well, and give novel-reading young ladies and gentlemen such graphic and alluring descriptions of probable, but questionable, situations, as fire your uninventive imaginations, do I thereby offer them a temptation to rush off and imitate my heroes and heroines? If I tell you that DUSOVER, in kissing and hugging little BELLA, and BELLA, in allowing herself to be kissed and hugged, were utterly and entirely in the wrong, that such conduct, though represented as irresistibly nice, was intrinsically naughty, am I not a Great Moral Teacher? And are not such great moral teachers always listened to with the deepest attention? Am I not, in fact, the great moral benefactor of the present generation? Certainly. Then, *Liberavi animam meam*, and, on we go again, worse than ever.*

"Perhaps," said DUSOVER, painfully gnawing his heavy black moustache, and looking up searchingly under her green eyes, "when I have told you what I have to tell you—the secret of my life—you will never speak to me again."

She threw her white arms round his neck, and stroked his hairy face.

"DUSOVER," she said, steady and distinct, "if I were to have my head cut off this moment without knowing anything about it, I would not move for your sake."

He gazed on her with his dark, luminous eyes, that seemed aflame with demoniac tenderness in their cavernous ghostly depths. Then, in his deep, bell-like tone he spoke.

"You have noticed my rough-hewn massive features?"

She had; she could not deny it, had she indeed wished to do so. She had scanned his features as often as she had scanned his poetic spondaean feet, and so she answered, as in a happy, baleful trance, "Yes, my own, old, wicked, darling DUSOVER! I have!"

He caught her to him, and held her as a strong man on the edge of a precipice might grip a lamp-post that kept him from destruction. Craning his long, sinewy neck over her head, he took one deep, exhausting draught from his great, big, imperial-quarto-brandy flask.

Then his voice came, sounding unsteady, and thick.

"You have observed my great thick moustache?"

"Yes," she answered, with wondrous soothingness.

"You have not forgotten when you first saw me standing before the hotel door at Wollum?"

"Forgotten you!" she exclaimed. "Were it as many years, as it is minutes ago, that I first saw you, I should not have forgotten the moment when you were in your neat, gentlemanly dress, your knickerbockers displaying those two full-rounded calves—

DUSOVER BELJAMBE stopped her almost savagely.

"Hush!" he said, as his penthouse brows drew together savagely, and he bit his lips morosely. "Tell me, has any one dared to breathe a word against me behind my back?"

"Not a soul," answered BELLA, with a pretty, dimpling laugh, and closing her eyes so as to give DUSOVER scope to gloat over those fringed wonders, while she, nervously, intertwined her pale, pink, warm fingers.

DUSOVER gave a great sigh of relief.

"You must know all," he said, pulling at his grand quarto-flask, under his big, drooping moustache.

"I am not inquisitive," answered BELLA, coldly; "but go ahead, dear boy, and tell me everything about yourself. †

Their faces are close together, and she can see the wild, honest anxiety looking through those open windows.

"You have noticed my magnificent, big shoulders?"

"Yes."

"You have observed my tawny, brown hair, and lion-coloured beard?"

"Yes," answered BELLA, looking up wistfully into that haughty face, and those wicked, miserable eyes. "Yes."

"Would you like to see me without these appendages?"

BELLA raised her chestnut-shaped head, and slightly shrinking, as if from a great loathing, said brokenly, "Go on. Don't mind me."

He nerved himself to the task, for task it was to him.

* By the Editing Committee.—It is with pleasure that we print the above brilliant apology by the distinguished Authoress, inserted at our request. We were quite sure she meant no harm, and we only wanted her to be explicit upon that point. Our Maiden Aunt wishes to record that, in her opinion, the apology was not in any way necessary, and is entirely useless. She is in the minority.—Ed.

† What the Editor says.—"Dear Madam, do young Ladies talk like this? 'Go ahead,' &c. We can't believe it."—ED.
What the Authoress says.—"'Mine do. I don't follow a fashion, I lead. *Am I writing this Novel, or are you?*"—R.D. [R.B.?]