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OUR STORY TELLER.

Now fiction's groves we tread, where young romance, the glad senses in her sweetest trance.

JOHN BEALLE'S ACCIDENT, OR How Widow Dudu Treated Insanity.

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In the domains of Momo—he the God of Fools! things are considered fair as in love and war. Such, at least, was the private opinion, publicly illustrated, of John Bealle and his friend, John Smith—a brace of moderate wages, residing in the sister States of Alabama and Mississippi, whose constant exercise seemed to be the merciless exercise of each other in that species of fun, designated practical joking. The friendship of these gentlemen was of long standing; of such antiquity, indeed, that it might be said to have dated back to that remote period, when the memory of (young) men runneth not to the contrary. That these amicable relations were preserved through a series of years and a multiplicity of mad pranks, was mainly attributable to the circumstances, perhaps that in their joking ventures, they were very equally matched, and that the same was reciprocated on the part of both. It was on the other side of John of Mobile, was for the time un-punishable he set to work energetically, and labored, until from the depths of his invention, he dug up something which, to pay off old scores, and turn the laugh upon his friend—a well studied get even with so affront a manager of a hoax as the infimitable John of Bealleville.

It happened that in the last justice recollects between the individuals above named, the entire Smith family, and his numerous connections, had been, in the representative person of John, of Mobile, in continuingly "dead." Such a misfortune, occurring as it did on the eve of his departure from the city of Tuscaloosa, in whose atmosphere he had been sojourning during the sultry August month, to the lively village of Bealleville, in Mississippi, was really infernal, for the reason that want of time prevented his resort to the *lex talionis*, (law of retaliation) in order to revenge himself, and then being few objects along the road to divert it from his mind, he must, perforce, as he jugged long his lonely way, occupy his time in thinking. That his recollections were not of the most pleasant description might have been inferred from the soundness of his countenance, and the undesired applications of the spiritous animal he rode, and a fair idea to the nature of his mental occupation might have been had in the following words, which fell with emphasis and earnestness from his lips:— "I don't get even with him, damn my buttons!"

Having given audible expression to his resolution, and clenching it with resolute severity, our traveller seemed to think that he had done all that manhood could require at his hands at present; and banishing from his mind the late disturbing care he jugged on merrily, ate munched humming the air of some lady imported *schottische*, singing an affection description of his leave-taking with his 'Oan Mary Ann and winding up, gaily, by making the woods resound with the music and encouraging philosophy of 'Trust to Luck'.

Night coming on our musical way fater drew him in front of a commodious kitchen dwelling by the roadside, and alighting sought and obtained permission to pass the night. On entering the piazza, the new comar a nationly looking woman, somewhat past the meridian of life, of healthy, luxur appearance, dressed nearly in plain attire, with a rather comely set of features. In her general air and bearing, she who runs might have read, 'I am monarch of all I survey!'

'Warm and dusky traveling, sir, she said; have you ridden far to day?'

Mobile, but am traveling through the country, and am at present, making my way to the plantation of my friend John Bealle, in the neighborhood of Bealleville, in Mississippi. Do you know how far it is to Bealleville?'

'After giving the distance, and informing the traveller that she was well acquainted with the route, she said she would accompany him, and that she would stop at her house in passing that road—howing meanwhile, sundry encomiums on the good quality and amiable traits of the aforesaid Colonel, she launched out as follows:—

'Sake alive! That Mobile is an awful place. I wouldn't live there for all the money on earth! How can you live there! It's worse than some of them places in Scripture. I hate it; I despise it!—Nothing would do my old man Nimrod Dudu, about twelve years ago, but he must get on a steamboat and go down to sell our little cotton in the evening's pestiferous hole. Well, he came back after so long a time, but he was no more the same man than I am the same man; so altered, that nobody hardly knew him. Faint that day he naturally pined away, and pined away, until about a month after he got home, his whisker began to discolour with him, and he turned in and died. Do you know what I think was the matter with him?'

'Breathless and excited she paused, and keeping her eye fixed searchingly on the face of the guest, she leaned forward, and in a high staccato, whispered, pausing between each word, "I—think—he—was—poisoned!"

'Wanting a moment to allow her audient an opportunity of recovering from the shock which the astounding intelligence concerning the death of her Nimrod was expected to produce, she opened again with a revelation which she fully calculated would be as it had in her own mind, unquestionably added confirmation to the correctness of her surmise—pronouncing each word separately, in a whisper, and with startling emphasis:—

'And Col. Bealle—thinks—so—too!'

'When, madam, asked our traveller, working himself up to the old lady's high fever heat and showing an intense anxiety in his manner, "When did Col. Bealle say he thought so?'

'Only about six months ago, replied the widow. "Though I speculated that Nimrod never came to his death fairly, I kept my suspicions to myself for eleven long years, till I got so full of 'em that I think I should have burst if I hadn't told somebody.—But you look like a gentleman, and being that you are a friend of the Colonel's I'll tell you how I come to tell him. It was six months ago last Monday that the Col. came along this road, and put up here as he always does, to stay the night. After supper he took a seat, right where you are now sitting, and looking me straight in the eyes, says he to me, "Widow!—I declare to gracious, Mister, my heart jumps right spang up in my mouth as he spoke—widow, says he, "what is the matter? you look out o' sorts. Tell me what pesters you." And then Mister, if you could only have seen how he rolled around his eyes and held his breath as he went on to say—Widow Dudu, you've got something on your mind, tell it, don't let concealment, like a *verruca* in a nose bud eat up your damaged face." Merdy me! I never shall forget them words—the curst ones I ever heard. I just felt that the Colonel read it all from looks, so I made a clean breast of it, and told him my suspicions about Nimrod's death. When I was done the Colonel set a little while, looking at me dumfounded, then kinder pucker'd up his mouth, whistled a time, and then looking savagely riled, he said to me:—

'Widow, you're right; I think he must have been poisoned. I've heard of men being poisoned in Mobile before. It's a dangerous place; I always go there in fear and trembling; and the worst of it is, you can't find out who does the poisoning. I thought I was poisoned once myself, at Mobile, but it wore off. I sorter think a man gets poisoned generally who gets pisoned by some one who goes there, and no particular person does it. Not do I know what so 't'pison' they use; if they used minerals, it could be found out if the man had been dead fifty years; but if they used vegetables it couldn't be found out a minute and a half after he's dead. But I'll tell you what I'll do, widow; the next time I go to Mobile, I'll inquire around and see what I can pick up 'bout the way they pison them off there, and let you know; for I'm sure it would be a great comfort and consolation for you to

earn what killed your poor husband. Now warn't this kind of him, Mister! O, he is the best natured man that I ever saw!'

'Madam, solemnly responded the guest, I agree with you entirely in your estimate of my friend, Col. Bealle's character; there is not a higher or nobler heart, or more generous mind in the universe, and that is the reason why my fortune is so much improved.'

'Misfortune! I eagerly inquired the widow, "has any misfortune befallen the Colonel?'

'I am surprised,' replied the traveller, assuming deep seriousness, "that you have not heard of it. It occurred near seven months ago; whilst riding in a carriage in Mobile, the horses took fright, ran away, smashed up the vehicle, and poor John's head struck with such violence against the curbstone, that it adled his brain to the extent that he has been razz' off and on, ever since'

'Sains look down!' exclaimed the widow, with much feeling. "Oh, that rotten place, Mobile! Them it don't pison, it knocks out their brains with curbstones! Merdy on us, I shall never find out now whether it was *vegetables* or *minerals* killed my poor husband. How long ago did you say it was a nice accident happened? Seven months! Man alive, the Colonel was crazy then when he was here last, and rolled his eyes about so awfully. Oh, what a risk I run—all the white persons in this house—all night, with a crazy man, and the negroes sleep as sound as mill stones! The Lord make us thankful! Does he ever try to kill any body?'

'Never,' was the reply, 'except when the paroxysm is upon him; then he requires to be restrained by force; then he is really dangerous. As a general thing, he is mild, good natured and quiet; it is only when he gets into those destructive rages, that his friends know what brings them on, and being careful to avoid them, he goes along his business, and behaves with such good sense that an acquaintance who had never heard of his misfortune would never suspect that he was crazy.'

'And pray, sir, inquired the widow, with eager interest, "what are the things that throw him into the rages and convulsions?'

'There are only a few things,' replied the romancer, that produce this unhappy effect upon him. The taste of coffee, the sight of milk, or butter, or eggs, or fried chicken, or cotton in any shape, coming in contact with his skin, as sheets, towels or pillow-cases, &c. These things bring on a convulsion immediately, which lasts about two hours, and then he becomes perfectly quiet and tractable, and seems, after it is all over, to have no recollection of the fearful paroxysm through which he has passed. Still, there is one thing that excites him more ungenerably than any I have yet mentioned, and that is, being told he is crazy. With the information I have given you, if you will be upon your guard, and give your servants suitable directions, you may, in case Col. Bealle is passing here next week, and should stop to stay all night, have a tolerable comfortable time with him. But you must be careful, and remember the coffee, the milk, the butter, the eggs and the cotton sheets, pillow-cases, towels, &c.'

'Careful!' exclaimed the widow now fearfully excited; 'I'll take my affidavit that I will be careful that he nor any other crazy man sets foot in my house.—But what does the poor man eat, and on what does he sleep?'

'He is allowed nothing but the plainest and coarsest diet, was the ready reply,—"corn bread, lard, and water; as to sleeping, when linen sheets cannot be had, blankets are substituted, which are disagreeable enough this warm weather, but what cannot be cured must be endured!'

'Well, I am really sorry for him,' broke forth the true woman's heart in the widow's bosom. 'I am sorry for him as if he had been my own child and kin. But his no use for him to come here, and be wanting to stay all night.'

'Madam,' said the traveller, evincing much feeling, "I trust you will pardon me for saying that I think you are very wrong, for threatening to run away from your home an old friend like Colonel Bealle, whose misfortune should rather excite your compassion and kind offices, than provoke ill usage and harsh treatment.'

'Well,' said the widow, relenting, and showing, by her manner, that the appeal had not been made in vain. "I should certainly not be so unfeeling as to turn

old friend away from my house; but the Lord be praised! I do hope he may not come.'

The conversation had just reached this point, when, supper being announced, our imaginative Mobile friend did ample justice to the excellent fare under which the table groaned.'

The next morning, before our traveller set out, he took pains to thank his hostess's memory concerning the forbidden things which brought the paroxysm on his friend, duly impressing her with the fact that his friend became most outrageous and ungovernable, when told that he was crazy, and that he would deny his insanity most vehemently.

Thus having accomplished, to his entire satisfaction, his mission, our ingenious romancer suddenly found himself in the exact situation so graphically described by the historian, John Phoenix, of our ancestors, at the battle of Bunker Hill, viz: like them, he recollected that he had urgent and pressing business at home, that demanded his immediate presence; and acting on this opportune remembrance, grass did not grow under his horse's hoofs between the widow Dudu's and the city of Mobile.

In less than a week after the occurrence above related took place, and whilst they were all free in the memory of the widow, as well as every servant about the premises, John Bealle drove up to her gate, and springing quickly from his buggy, he bounded with a light step over the intermediate space between the gate and the house, and, before the old lady had time to satisfy herself fully as to his personal identity, he was winging her hand and greeting her in the most friendly and familiar style. If her defunct Nimrod, in all his gaudy clothes, had suddenly popped upon her and gone through the same mode of salutation, it is highly probable that she would have shown a greater degree of trepidation and amazement.—Partially recollecting herself after a moment's return, she began to greet her visitor in effusion, but it only ended in a faint and half hysterical "How-de-do, Col. Bealle!"

'Never better in my life as to health,—"On lord, look down and have mercy on us all!" petitioned the widow.

'Have you any fresh butter-milk in this house? the Colonel went on to inquire, without seeming to have noticed her fervent ejaculation.

'Where is your mistress?'

'Gone to bed, massa.'

'Gone to the d—Hell! Have you nothing else to eat but what I see before me?'

'No massa.'

'What's in that pitcher?'

'Water, massa.'

'Have you got any milk?'

'No massa.'

'Bring me some coffee.'

'Ain't none massa.'

'Any butter?'

'No massa.'

granted the negro, the picture of idiotic tright and stupidity.

'Has anything out of the common run, occurred to your mistress, reiterated the Colonel.'

'She burst forth from both her groes at once.'

'You black rascal, said the questioner warning up a little, if you don't find use of your tongue, I'll cut both your heads off.'

'O lord, lord! a groan of agony from their lips at once.'

'Well said the Colonel, addressing himself, "it is getting rather interesting, I believe that both mistress and negroes are afflicted with the same pious disease.'

Returning to the charge once more he said addressing the two negroes, "Has a campaigning been held about here, lately?'

'Yes massa Colonel, yes sar, both the darkeys replied in the replied in the same breath.

'Did many go religion?' inquired he.

'Lord bless you massa, said Toney, recov'ring somewhat the power of speech, "most everybody went up and took a chance.—Ole missus tried two days and then she cum through a-tarting.'

'Yes yes,' said the heretofore puzzled Colonel thinking aloud; "I understand the case now I think. If these campaigning do a great deal of good, they some likewise do much injury. The old lady has gone the e—got religion and got half crazy in the bargain—and now cuts her piety so thick that she must interlard her common conversation with it and "shedd the milk in the cocoa nut.'

Having at length satisfactorily settled in his own mind the cause of the eccentric behavior of Mrs Dudu and experiencing lively hints from his appetite our traveller was not slow in obeying the summons to the table which he had never failed to find loaded with the choicest and most savory accompaniments that the season and country afforded. His surprise may well be conceived as when taking a seat at the table and looking around he perceived nothing for his morning breakfast but

corn bread and bacon.

inquired of one of the two "big buck negroes" in attendance—neither of whom was the regular dining-room servants of the house, but who, for reasons best known to the widow had been especially detailed for the present service—follows:

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'No massa.'

'Bring me some coffee.'

'Ain't none massa.'

'Any butter?'

'No massa.'

After which complaining of fatigue he was escorted by a brace of stalwart 'chobies,' who kept in close attendance to the room in the second story. Here dismissing his sable servants, and closing the door he proceeded leisurely to divert himself to the bed into which he was about to spring on it were blankets and pillows without sheets, inwardly cursing the servants for their negligence in not putting on the bed and sheets on the bed, or at least in pillows he went to the door and endeavored to open it intending to call for the indispensable bed clothing. After turg'ng away violently for some time, he found that his labor was in vain; that the door remained firmly closed resisting his utmost strength. He next fell to kicking and thumping the door to burst it open, but that door was not to be burst open by kicks and thumps. All other resources failing he called aloud,

'Fire! Murder! Water! Man over-board! Woman drowning! Steamboat blown up! Cars run off! Hello! The Devil!'

No answer.

'Toney,' shouted the exasperated prisoner at the top of his voice. "Open the door or I'll set fire to the house!'

'Spec if you does you be fus one burn up,' answered the individual addressed, from the other side of the door.

'What's this door fastened for on the outside! Undo it, you infernal scoundrel or I'll break it down and cut your head off!'

Massa Colonel you better be still. Ole missus have door fastened and say you must not come cum out till mornin.'

After many bootless grays against the door, and repeated fruitless attempts to get further replies from the black sentinel outside, our traveler exhausted, took a seat on the side of the bed and began to ponder seriously on his situation. The more he pondered on the matter, the farther he was from arriving at a satisfactory conclusion. The current of his thoughts was about in this wise:—

'If they intend to murder me and rob me, so much pains would not have been taken to put me on my guard. But to be safe, I'll take out my pistols and have them handy; yet I know I shall have no need for them. And how extravagantly ludicrous and ridiculous the whole thing looks! If it wasn't that the old lady is one of the tober sided and conscientious of woman, I should largely suspect that there was some infernal hoax about the whole matter; but such a conjecture is the sheerest nonsense I have it; the old woman is decidedly superstitious and I heard some time ago about the spiritual rappers had been along this way: Yes yes, it is clear as mud—she's a medium! hal! hal! hal! and has had a revelation about me that has scared her wits away. What a fool I was not to see the thing before. What is this world a comin to.

It is unnecessary to pursue any further the Colonel's speculation. Lying down on the bed intending to continue his investigations into the mysterious affair he was so worn out by the fatigues of the day as to be overcome by sleep, and never waked until broad day-light next morning when he was roused by knocks at the door and the announcement that breakfast was ready. Hastily dressing himself and performing his ablutions in his room from whence the window had failed to remove the cotton towel he descended to the breakfast room. Saluting the mistress of the house as she sat, stiff as whalebone and backram at the head of the table guarded by her two herculean servants and looking as if she had variously made up her mind to face the music, he took a seat at the table a hasty glance at which told him that his breakfast was to be a piece of the same cloth as his supper it consisted of no other viands than corn bread and bacon and water.

'Mrs Dudu, said the Colonel, looking calmly at her and speaking in a mild tone of voice, do you believe in the bible?'

'I thank my God that I do, nervously responded the widow not at all relishing the unorthodox insinuation conveyed by the question.

Do you pretend to shape your conduct by its holy teachings? pursued the questioner.

'I endeavor with divine assistance to do so,' was the devout response.

'Did you ever read the 19th chapter in Leviticus? continued.

'I reckon,' said the old lady stammering, 'I have I have

Do you remember the divine injunction that chapter contains?'

'I don't know exactly, as I do,' answered the lady, troubled beyond measure and not at all prepared for the 'course of catechism' through which she was being put.

'You would be so good as to send for your bible I would like before we begin our breakfast to refresh your memory by reading to you a portion of the 19th chapter of Leviticus,' continued the same blunt questioner.

The widow was both astounded and disconcerted by this proposition. By this there is no intention to intimate that the Colonel's religious opinions were not of a most orthodox stamp; a more intimate friend than the widow had ever claimed to be might have been pardoned for being astounded, or for mistrusting his own senses, had he heard the Sacred Volume called for, at breakfast by the hero of our story. Of course the book was brought and placed before him and after turning over the leaves awhile he stopped and said:—

'My Dudu, I read from the 33 and 34 verses, 19th chapter of Leviticus the words: And if a stranger sojourn with thee thou shalt not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you, he shall be unto you as one born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself. For I am the Lord thy God.

'Now madam, with this precept staring you in the face, what an I to think of the manner in which I was vexed, worried and locked up and made a prisoner of me in our house last night! You seem confounded and well you may be.'

Indeed, Colonel, said the old lady in much confusion—for that scripture argument had opened all the avenues of her heart towards him—I am sure I did not mean to vex you or worry you. You know that my house is everything in it is at your service, for I haven't a friend in the world I sets more store by than I do you.—But you know

these things, they do, indeed, madam, replied the traveller, with some bitterness, I have had the pain and mortification of exemplifying in this house lately. I demand madam, to be informed why you directed your servants to fasten the door of my room last night as soon as I entered it, keeping me a prisoner until this morning.

O Lord, said the widow fearing to make the disclosure that would bring on the most ungenerable of the paroxysms, I can't tell you; it would be worse for us all if I told you. Beside you won't believe it. Lord have mercy on me.

There were such unmistakable evidences of real distress pictured in her countenance that, he forbore to press her after this pre-emptory fashion he had at first assumed, but adopting a more respectful tone, he said:

Well madam I certainly shall not insist on an explanation if it would be so very unpleasant to your feelings; though a man should be readily excused for speaking very tempestuously who has been ungenerously fastened up in a room all night and asks the reason. But let that pass. I presume there will be no harm in asking the cause of this scarcity of sheets bed spreads and pillow cases!—and—but I must not tell you it would make mischief; pray don't urge me plead the distressed woman so beseechingly as to disarm the gentleman from pursuing his enquiries further upon that point.

Madam your word shall be law, replied he gallant and good natured Colonel, since you request it and think mischief would come of it I shall not urge an explanation. Still you must excuse me for declaring your conduct is very strange and although unaccountable. I trust no mischief would ensue if you were to answer me as to whether the coons have swept your hen house that you banished the chicken from your table or that your hens have ceased to lay that you have no eggs; or that your coos have gone dry; that you have no milk or butter; and why is coffee interdicted on your table as an beverage?'

Spare me Colonel, piteously supplicated the widow; God knows I would tell you if I dared; but I would be running the risk of my life to do so. I don't think Christian people should fly in the face of Providence. If you knew all you wouldn't blame me or think hard of me indeed, you wouldn't.

This is decidedly interesting way it looks on the romantic, said the old lady, I