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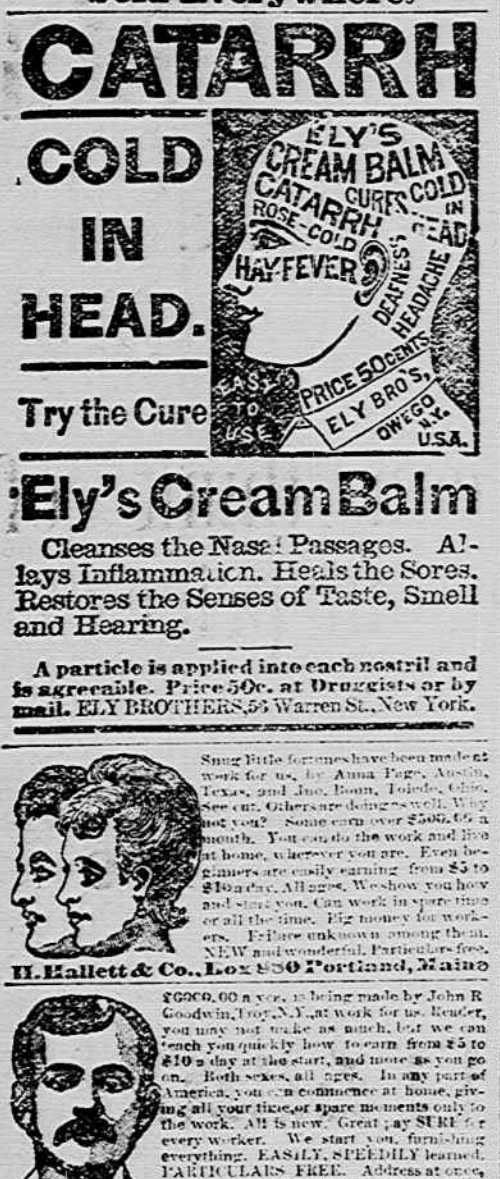
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Beatrice Randolph.

By JULIAN HAWTHORNE.

CHAPTER I. SYNOPTIC. IN CHAPTER I of the novel, a prominent impresario, confides to Hamilton Jocelyn, a man about town, that Marana, a Russian prima donna, engaged at enormous expense to open his new opera house in New York, has called that she cannot keep her contract.

CHAPTER II. JOCELYN, acting as a friend of all concerned, arranged temporary quarters for Beatrice in New York and secures a chaperon for her, inadvertently showing himself to be a man of shady antecedents, living by his wits.

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done it remained. Well—it was too late to turn back now.

The long hours passed on, and as the evening approached she found herself thinking not of Ed, but of another person, who had come into her mind, not by her own invitation, but involuntarily; or possibly he had been in the background all the while, and advanced as the other receded.

The prima donna longed with all her soul to be as frank and undisguised as she was. She felt that she could not be so until she had been through the ordeal that she had to go through.

CHAPTER VIII. THE SUCCESS AND GLORY OF HER CAREER. As her voice flowed out and abroad from her lips it seemed to vibrate to the very soul of the audience.

CHAPTER IX. HOW SHE WAS BETRAYED AND SLANDERED. One forenoon, as Wallie Dinsmore was seated in his study, with his slippers and feet pointed toward the fireplace,

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He visited his daughter twice or three a week, besides being present at her performances; but it afforded him a certain gratification to surround their interviews with an elaborate network of secrecy and intrigue, as if he were an enamored Montaigne seeking to commune at peril of their lives with a "Jovial Calicut."

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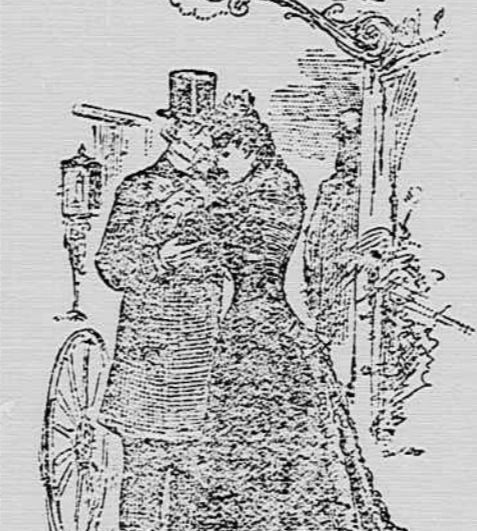
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She turned again and threw her arms about Randolph's neck.

"Have you any smoking tobacco?" returned Geoffrey, taking a pipe from his pocket.

"I guess you'll find some Cavendish in the jar. You know where the matches are."

Geoffrey supplied himself, and then drew a chair to the other side of the fireplace and smoked for several minutes in silence.

"No, what was it?" "Sundramide."

"Your theatre seems to suit her." Wallie remarked, "By the way, there must be a column about last night in the paper."

"There is none," said Geoffrey, with a laconic conviction.

"I'm inclined to think, and so I'm puzzled."

"There will be stories about any woman," rejoined Geoffrey, "mostly lies."

"I'm so much out of the way of making calls that I'm surprised to find myself here. You have a great many calls."

"Well, a good many come, but I see very few—only old friends. And of course," she said, "I have a great many calls from the friends of the friends."

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"Who were the men?" "That would be telling. Why do you ask?"

As Geoffrey made no reply, but smoked with a good deal of sterness, Wallie continued after a while, "I suppose your wisdom teeth are out, young man?"

"She's a lady, and I wish her treated as such, that's all!" said Geoffrey.

"What were you saying about a cottage at Newport?"

"Before this topic could be gone into the friends were interrupted by the entrance of another caller—Mr. Alexander Randolph.

"Who the devil he?" demanded Geoffrey, knocking out his pipe.

"Never met him till this autumn. He won't hurt you. Sit still."

"Ah, good morning, Mr. Dinsmore." "I said Randolph, entering in state with his great eyebrows and imperial; "I can remain but a moment. Here he caught sight of Bellingham. "Am I in the way?"

"In the way of making the acquaintance of Mr. Bellingham—Mr. Randolph," said Wallie. "Sit down, gentlemen. Have a cigar, Mr. Randolph?"

"I thank you—never before luncheon. To come to the point at once—I am of course a great gentleman to extend a complimentary breakfast to Gen. Inigo on the 14th of this month. Can we count upon your attendance?"

"The 14th? Let me see," said Wallie, opening a drawer in his desk and taking out a memorandum book. "Yes, there seems to be nothing on that day. Much obliged to you, and the committee, Mr. Randolph."

"The hour is 1 o'clock," said Randolph. "Gen. Inigo deserves a breakfast," Wallie remarked. "He deserves three meals a day. He has catered very well for us."

"That seems to be the general impression," said Randolph, giving a twist to his eyebrow.

"Just as you discuss the prima donna," Wallie continued. "You know her, of course, Mr. Randolph?"

"I—ah—I have—that is, slightly. I have heard her sing; I may have met her socially; one meets so many people it is difficult to say."

He colored while he spoke and seemed a good deal confused.

"She's a very pretty woman, and seems to be a virtuous as well as a pretty, strange to say," the other went on. "There's a discrepancy between her conduct and her history."

Mr. Randolph colored still more.

"I'm an old-fashioned man, sir," he said, whisking a silk handkerchief over his coat tail pocket and passing it over his forehead. "In my day we—we took the virtue of a lady for granted; and I must say I—of course, I have no right to be the champion of this lady, but she is open, fearless, full of restless life."

"Any man has a right to respect a woman he believes honest, and that makes others do so in his presence. If that's old-fashioned, Mr. Randolph, count me in!"

"Thank you, sir," returned the other. He rose and put back his handkerchief in his pocket.

"I must leave you, Mr. Dinsmore," he added. "A man like myself has a great many affairs on hand. We shall look for you on the 14th, then. Good morning; good morning, Mr.—ah—Bellingham."

"I am more puzzled than ever," said Wallie, when Randolph was gone.

"What now?"

"In the first place he couldn't quite make up his mind whether he met her or not, then he got flurried because I suggested there had been stories about her; and, finally, he took to flight rather than discuss her any more. Now if he doesn't know her, why should he flare up so about her and if he does know her, why does he pretend he doesn't?"

"He's an old-fashioned man," began Geoffrey.

"That's gammon," interrupted Wallie, "and you know it. The fall of man is an older fashion than Mr. Randolph. Did any sane man, young or old, ever get into a state of mind because the correctness of an opera singer he didn't know was called in question? I can't make it out—unless he means to marry her."

This speculation was received by Geoffrey in dead silence, and for a considerable time neither of the men said anything. At last the question of the cottage at Newport brought up once more and canvassed until they parted.

Bellingham walked slowly toward Madison square, with Mr. Randolph. Among other things, on his mind. Still meditating he turned up Fifth avenue, and before long found himself opposite Mlle. Marana's hotel. It occurred to him that he had never yet called on her in her own apartments, and he resolved to repair that neglect. Accordingly he went to an office and inquired if she was at home.

The clerk glanced at the key-board and said "Yes" abstractedly. Bellingham got into the elevator and went up.

The passage-way, after the bright sunlight of the street, seemed rather dark. Not knowing which way the numbers ran, he remained for a moment where the elevator left him. Just then a door came toward him, and he was surprised to find himself standing in the doorway of the room which Mr. Randolph had just issued. It bore Mlle. Marana's number. He knocked, and Mme. Demax opened to him. On his inquiring whether the prima donna were engaged, the lady said she would see. So he walked in, and stood by the window, and in a few minutes Mlle. Marana appeared. She greeted him with small civility, and he felt that he had felt very slightly misgiving he may have felt was immediately dissipated.

"I began to think you were never going to come," she said.

"I'm so much out of the way of making calls that I'm surprised to find myself here. You have a great many calls."

"Well, a good many come, but I see very few—only old friends. And of course," she said, "I have a great many calls from the friends of the friends."

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"I saw you at the opera last night," rejoined the prima donna, recovering herself. Bellingham merely nodded, and she you disappointed?" she asked falteringly.

"No, I was like the rest of the audience," he replied in a dry tone.

"You are not like the rest of the audience to me," she said, "ever since the first night I have sung to you. I wouldn't tell you, only—thinking about you?"

"I know nothing about you," returned Bellingham roughly.

"I speak as if you didn't care to know anything," she said, holding up her head.

Bellingham controlled his rising temper. A weaker man would have protected himself by irony or sarcasm, but he said exactly what he thought.

"I care more about what concerns you," he said, "than about anything else. But I won't look away when I am being deceived. You and this Randolph are both pretending to be strangers to each other. I saw him come out of this room just before I came into it. Do you deny that he was here?"

"He was here," answered she, turning pale.

"There is only one other question. Are you going to marry him?"

This was so unexpected that she laughed. "It was a nervous, almost hysterical laugh, it is true, but Bellingham naturally did not understand it. "I am not going to marry Mr. Randolph," said the prima donna, with a heartbroken sense of humor.

"And you will not tell me what your relations are with him?"

"No; they are very peculiar relations. I have always been alive and getting desperate. You must think what you please—think the worst you can, it makes no difference. I will tell you nothing."

Bellingham gazed at her fixedly. "I cannot believe that you are a wicked woman," he exclaimed at length. "Why did you not tell me so before? Why did you not tell me so before? Why did you not tell me so before?"

"I have never been spoken to like this," she said, in a faint, panting voice. "Will you leave me, please? Will you leave me?"

Bellingham moved to depart, but he stopped and turned back.

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"What now?"

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