

Literature.  
TEMPTATION:  
OR  
The Lady of Ashurst.  
CHAPTER VIII.  
LEON'S ROOM.  
The door once closed upon his unwelcome visitors, Judge Ashley paced the floor in deep perturbation before he could summon courage to enter the adjoining apartment.  
When he at length did so, he approached the door of the tower, and spoke through it to his prisoner.  
"Leon, if I open the door and let you out, will you give me your word to make no attempt to escape? Will you submit to me as your judge?"  
No reply came, and after a pause he spoke sternly to Jupiter:  
"He is shamming. Go into my office and bring the cords which you find in the closet; also the handcuffs that the constable forgot and left here the day Smith was brought before me on a false charge."  
The negro became ashen grey with terror.  
"Oh, Marsa Judge, Marsa Judge, what am you agwine to do w' dem artings? Don't 'sgrawse yer only son by puttin' dem on to him. I'll never forgive you for it, marsa, never!"  
The Judge sternly replied:  
"It matters not now what he will do or feel. My duty is to perform an act of justice, even if my own son is the criminal to be punished. Do you obey my commands at once?"  
The old negro crept slowly into the next room, and after considerable delay returned, bringing with him the required articles.  
When he had placed them on the table, his master commanded him to close the window blinds and bolt them securely, while he locked the doors himself, and removed the keys. A large astral lamp which stood upon a stand, was then lighted, and its arrangements were completed.  
Commanding Jupiter to place himself near the lower door to aid him in overpowering the prisoner should he attempt to escape, Judge Ashley cautiously sprang back the bolt, and opened a crevice to take a survey of the condition of things within.  
Everything was perfectly quiet, and on unclosing the door, he saw that Leon had sunk down in an attitude of perfect immobility, apparently prostrated by the heat and the closeness of the atmosphere in his narrow prison. He made an effort to spring up, but the strong iron arms of his father were quick to grasp him, and with the reluctant assistance of Jupiter, the manacles were clasped upon his wrists in spite of all the resistance he could make.  
Ashley was then lifted to a chair to which he was bound almost in a state of passiveness; he lay back pale and fainting, bathed in perspiration, and with his frantic efforts to make a breach in the walls of his prison. After a few moments he gasped:  
"Water—water—I am perishing of thirst!"  
A pitcher of ice water stood on the table, and Jupiter hastened to offer a goblet of it to his parched lips. The Judge took it, and drank.  
"Go, Jupiter, and bring food hither, for I suppose he has eaten nothing since dinner yesterday. But beware of betraying him to the lowest of criminals. I ate no breakfast, and an hour hungry."  
The negro hastened to obey this command, for all his sympathies were enlisted in favor of his suffering young master. During the time of his absence the pole father at watching the averted face of his son, for Leon turned his head from him as far as possible, as if he wished to hide the cold, stern eyes so immovably fixed upon him.  
No word passed between them, though at intervals the Judge held water to his lips when he saw that he was suffering for it. This silence was more dreadful to Leon than the most bitter reproaches; for, knowing his father as he did, he trembled to imagine what it might be to him.  
Jupiter at length came back with a substantial breakfast, with which he fed the half-fainting prisoner. In spite of his present position and the prospect of the future, his appetite did not seem to have deserted him, and Judge Ashley looked on with contemptuous astonishment at the amount of enjoyment with which he devoured his food.  
Color returned to Leon's blanched features; fire once more flamed from his eyes, and he turned to thank his father and asked:  
"Why am I treated in this contemptuous manner? Is the tie of blood so slight that a parent can show no consideration for his son than if he were a dog? Or must he hesitate to throw even the meanest of his creatures into a den as that from which you drew me, only to bind me in fetters like the lowest of criminals? What do you intend to do with me, Judge Ashley?"  
"That you will know soon enough, sir," replied his father, with stern gravity, "your fate hangs as a grim shadow over you even now."  
Then turning to the negro he said:  
"Leave the room Jupiter, but keep watch near the door, and do not interrupt me, for I have a grievous task before me in dealing with the criminal it is my duty to judge."  
Jupiter reluctantly obeyed, and the eyes of the bound man followed his retreating figure with an expression of alarm he vainly endeavored to conceal. He felt that he was left in a more perilous position than when he was first brought here, for the mercy of a man who looked as if soft, or human feeling had died out of his heart. He made frantic efforts to release himself from his bonds, but they were in vain, for the strong hands that bound him had done their work too thoroughly to leave a hope of escape from the toils in which his own evil deeds had ensnared him.  
The Judge went to a wardrobe and took from it the cap of judgment he had long worn in the habit of using when sentencing criminals to death. He placed it on his table by his side, and then seating himself exactly in front of his son, spoke in his most solemn and impressive manner.  
"Leon Ashley, you are arraigned before me for crimes of the deepest dye. It falls to me to play the part of prosecutor, judge, and executioner in your case, unless you show cause why the last shall not be performed."  
A faint snarl curled the lip of the bound man, for he began to regard these preparations as a mere mockery designed to frighten him. He defiantly replied:  
"If you dared attempt such a thing, you would be more criminal than I have been. It is quite enough to humiliate me thus, without proceeding to the extremity you threaten."  
The father's stern face assumed its haughtiest expression, and he severely said:  
"You will even find that I am in sad earnest. Leon Ashley at this hour you are nearer your doom than you imagine."  
"Doom! what do you mean, sir? Of what do you accuse me, that can entitle me to endure the penalty of death?"  
"I arraign you for a trinity of crimes rarely perpetrated by one man. First, for bigamy; secondly, for burglary; lastly, for murder."  
His very lips grew white and rigid as he pronounced the last word, and he fixed his piercing eyes upon his son, as if he would read the very soul. A quick shudder convulsed his frame, for the manner in which this last charge was received, convinced him of its truth.  
The form of the accused seemed to collapse with terror, and his eyes raveled wildly from object to object, as the faintly repeated:  
"Murder! who dares accuse me of that? I am no Cain, take your cruel eyes from me, old man, and do not stare at me, degrading myself. I will deny this charge to the bitter end. Who says I destroyed Ernest Arden? Who says I destroyed Ernest Arden?"  
The Judge sunk back with a faint cry, and his confirmation of his worst fear, and

several moments elapsed before he could again speak. At length he said:  
"You have accused yourself. I spoke not of Ernest Arden, and if not guilty, why should you have thought of him? He is missing, and no one has been found, and your words assure me that by your hand he has fallen. Oh, Wretch! Wretched boy—was it not enough to break the heart of a hapless mother, and to deprive the life of this unfortunate youth? The rest I might have induced to forgive, but this crime can only be expiated in one way, and that is by the shedding of your own blood, and it is my purpose to save my name from utter disgrace by taking the law into my own hands."  
The words of the old man, as the listener grew larger and wider at the close of his words he furiously cried out:  
"What you will—you play the part of the avenger toward your own son! If you do, may the furies tear you, and the vulture of remorse prey upon your heart. But I tell you I did not kill Ernest Arden. He may be found yet, and then you will see how unjust your accusation is. I should I kill the brother of the woman I wished to make my wife? Unfetter my limbs, and cease to treat me as a condemned criminal for such a man's sake."  
He writhed so violently in his bonds that the bosom of his shirt came open, and the handle of a pistol was revealed. With swift motion he drew it from its concealment, and a pair of small, richly inlaid pistols, which had been a present from himself to his son, were seen.  
Both had been lately discharged, for they were blackened with smoke, and had evidently been recently discharged. He hoarsely said:  
"Perjure! behold the evidence which comes to convict you of lying when you stand upon the brink of doom. Believe me or not, as you choose, but you are now on trial for life, or death, and the judgment shall certainly be executed upon you."  
For an instant Ashley was overwhelmed by the proof thus summarily brought against him, but he quickly recovered, and doggedly said:  
"No jury could be found to convict a man on such evidence as this. Scarcely a day passes that I do not use my pistols, and you are aware that I always carry them about me. As to my life, you can take it if you have the audacity to do so; but in that event you will, in your turn, be amenable to the laws of your country, and all men will regard with horror the modern Bayard who condemned his own son to death."  
The Judge replied, with stern gravity:  
"Men will not know it, your doom will be secret, your name will be withheld."  
Leon turned his dilating eyes upon him in mingled fear and incredulity. He repeated, with a sneer:  
"Self-inflicted! Do you imagine that I am going to commit suicide at your command? If so, you greatly mistake my character."  
"It matters not, you will have no choice, you are prostrated by the heat, and the possibility of this punishment is shadowed forth to you. I am your father, and I will not be trifled with."  
He remained silent, with his head sunk upon his breast, and his father sat watching him, with such a chaos of wretchedness impressed in his proud heart, that he could not utter a syllable.  
Judge Ashley had cast his eyes upon him in disobedience, and centered all his hopes in his handsome and attractive son, who he fondly hoped was to be the prop of his old age, and the inheritor of his vast estate.  
On the score of family pride the old man was almost a monomaniac, and to preserve his name, he believed in the self-capable of making any personal sacrifice. He was working himself up now to that point at which he would reckon his life as a mere trifle, and which he felt must destroy him as surely as if slow poison had been infused into his system. His heart might break, but justice would be done upon the criminal even if the heavens should fall and crush him by his unnatural act.  
He was in deadly earnest in the assertion he made to his son, and he only waited for some suitable continuation of the crime of which he had accused Leon to pronounce upon him the fatal sentence of death.  
The next two hours were spent in so terrible a manner, as to leave their traces placed in deadly antagonism to each other. The Judge's mind was continually centered against such treatment, and implored to be left free to make his escape; but to this the Judge replied that escape was not possible, and that the punishment would be set upon the place, and any effort on the part of his son to leave the house would lead to his instant arrest.  
It was near ten o'clock when a messenger came in hot haste to the door of Ashurst, and gave Jupiter a note addressed to his master. The man rode away immediately, leaving the clue to the writer of the following lines:  
JUDGE ASHLEY:—The pond on Arden Place has been dragged, and the body of Ernest Arden recovered from it, with a wound in his side which is mortal. He either fell into the water, or was thrown in by his adversary, which has not yet been ascertained.  
Suspicion has fastened on your son, and persons have gone to Frederick to obtain a warrant for his arrest. If you are aware of his whereabouts, warn him of his danger, and aid him to get out of the country as soon as possible, for he would have little chance of escape if brought to trial.  
A FRIEND.  
Jupiter carried this message to his master, and with a scowl which he hid while he read it. As the Judge comprehended the sense of the lines, all hope seemed to die out of his heart. He turned toward his son, and an expression of iron determination, and said:  
"If I have hitherto wavered, and listened to the promptings of nature, that weak man is now at an end, Leon Ashley. Read your death warrant, for such this letter will prove to you."  
He held the page before the eyes of the bound man, which eagerly devoured them. For a moment he was crushed by the evil that so nearly approached him, and every shade of color fled from his features, but he presently said:  
"The letter shows more consideration for me than you have, for he warns me to fly, while you bind me to my fatal doom, and give me no chance to save my life."  
His father sternly replied:  
"What right have I, a sworn servant of justice, to permit so great a criminal as you to escape? You are condemned to death, and the same of those of which you are accused; why then shall I hesitate in your case, when I can compass the ends of justice without troubling the State with a deal with you? There is no doubt left in my mind, Leon Ashley, that you were the author of Ernest Arden's death."  
"That you were the hand which hurled his insensible form into the water."  
"In the last you wrong me, sir," said Leon, impulsively. "I acknowledge that I met in the grounds; he challenged me to a personal fight, and I accepted his defiance. We fought upon the bank of the pond, and Arden must have staggered toward its edge as the shot struck him, for when I recovered sufficiently to look around me, he was no more to be seen. Once his head arose above the surface of the water, but so far from drowning him, I would have made an effort to save him had it been possible to do so. This is the simple truth, believe it or not, as you may choose."  
With grim self-control the Judge received it, and closed the door upon him at once without replying to the mutely imploring glance of the negro.  
He trembled perceptibly as he advanced toward the chair occupied by his son, and with averted face said:  
"Drink this, Leon, and you will be free from the great evil that has befallen you, but his soul shrank and quivered before the dread necessity which ruled him, and the bitterness of death was realized in all its agonies. He was waiting for the action of his implacable father.  
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