

LOU VENESTRE.

The softened splendor of an April sunset was streaming across a southern landscape as Lou Venestre, touching her mantle as she stepped sharply, and then holding the rein with a little, but firm and assured hand, let him dash on at a pace that left her small negro follower far behind.

Her dark eyes flashing with excitement and eagerness, and her black curls floating back in contrast to the plumes of her riding hat, the girl was just such a bright and sparkling picture as one liked to look upon in that misty sunset glory.

Scarcely pausing for a little darkey to throw open the avenue gate, she cantered through it and up to the very steps of her father's house, where several gentlemen stood talking earnestly. There reining him in so suddenly that he almost fell upon his haunches, she called out:

"Gentlemen, have you forgotten how to hurrah? Sumpter is ours!" and she lifted her plumed hat, waving it.

Before they could respond, her horse—already so restive as to almost defy control, had caught the gleam of the floating feathers, and, with a fright, wheeled, and, in spite of all her efforts to restrain him, shot on at a right angle down the ascent upon whose summit the house stood.

The gentlemen sprang and the negroes ran in all directions. Lou kept her seat bravely, but her strength was failing her, and the reins were slipping through her little fingers, when a strong hand fell upon the bridle and checked the frightened animal so quickly and so firmly as to leave him trembling in every muscle. In another instant she stood upon the ground, a little white-faced, but in no danger of fainting. Lou Venestre was not one of that sort.

Berrian Knowles, catching the direction she was taking, had darted at a thought across the garden and intercepted.

They were at some distance from the house, and the others, taking the route they did, had not come up. While he waited for Miss Venestre to recover her somewhat shaken equanimity, Knowles, letting the horse find its own way back, stood with his arms folded and his gray eyes fixed upon the distance.

He looked young—a sharp, clear face, though—decided as it was handsome, with a nervous tremor just now about the mouth, and a kindling light that belied the carelessness of his attitude.

Miss Venestre was herself very shortly; enough so, at any rate, to say, with slight impatience, yet feelingly: "You have saved my life, Berrian, and you stand there as though it was the commonest of incidents."

"Do I? It wasn't much I did, you know, and I was thinking how much more unmanageable a steed than yours our unhappy South had just mounted. Is this true about Sumpter?"

"That Sumpter is ours!" said the girl, with a sudden, eager glow upon her beautiful face. "Mr. Nugent told me; he was right from town. The news came by telegraph. It is flashing the length of the land by this time. May it strike as much consternation to cowardly Northern hearts as it stirs exultation in ours. Gentlemen—for the rest had come up by this time and were listening to the excited girl, forgetting in their eagerness to congratulate her upon her safety—

"Gentlemen, shall we have that cheer now?" And again the white plumes waved overhead.

The gentlemen responded in an excited and somewhat clamorous hurrah, in which, however, Berrian Knowles did not join, but stood apart with his brow knit and his lip curling.

Miss Venestre did not hurrah with the rest, which enthusiasm as she was, one might have expected. Her lips were smiling, but, though she was not looking at him, she was conscious of the half-contemptuous observation of young Knowles, and was saying to herself:

"He has never been the same since that six months at the North. I dare say now, judging by his pet Northern standard, he thinks my conduct highly unbecoming."

"Knowles don't seem to appreciate the news," said one of the gentlemen, glancing towards Berrian. "Why, men, this blow virtually makes an independent nation of us. It's the inauguration of such days as the South never saw—a glorious victory."

"One hundred men against ten thousand!—you may call that a glorious victory; I don't," said Berrian Knowles, hotly.

There was some commotion in the ranks of the others as he spoke, and Miss Venestre's face flushed, but as the argument was about to leap into stormy words she lightly led the way into the house, her hand within her father's arm.

Berrian did not follow at once. His blood was hot, and he waited, coming finally to the door, only to say good night to Lou.

Miss Venestre was not in the room. The gentlemen were talking excitedly and Knowles was quite sure he caught the echo of his own name as he crossed the hall. Mr. Venestre met him at the door, and with a hand familiarly on his shoulder urged him toward the others, saying:

"I have been defending you, Knowles, but I'm glad you've come to speak for yourself. These gentlemen have some of them been trying to persuade me you're not sound on Southern rights—eh?"

The young man's eyes glowed wide and bright. "Who says that?" he asked. "There, didn't I tell you so?" said Venestre, "sound and staunch. Of course he'll stand by us."

tained: "Good-by," and, bowing again to Mr. Venestre, left the house. "If that don't bring him to listen to reason I am mistaken," said Mr. Venestre to himself, as he re-entered the room.

At the avenue gate, just where he could not well pass until she moved away, Berrian found Lou, very erect, very pale, very heroically inclined, but very anxious. Perhaps she hoped Berrian had listened to reason as expounded by her father; but a glance at his face—pained and angry, but decided—convicted her that it was not so.

"Good by, then, Lou," he said, but he did not offer her his hand. "Good by," she said, feebly; and then still lower and quite huskily: "I haven't thanked you yet for the life you saved this afternoon."

"I am amply grieved," he said, bitterly—"good-by;" and as she mechanically moved aside he passed out, and she returned to the house and lay awake all night, heroic still, but with a vague sense of ingratitude and self-reproach.

But of course Berrian wouldn't hold out against such sound reasoning as her father and the rest had at their command. He would come over to the right side in the end, and all would be smooth again.

The following week Miss Venestre was visiting an old school friend some ten miles from her own home. Perhaps the fact that her friend's father lived nearer the Knowles plantation than Mr. Venestre did made the visit particularly agreeable just now. Lou was not very happy; she began to doubt the heroism of denouncing the man she loved because he did not see with her eyes.

"Such a mystery," said little Jennie Mayne, as she met her friend and conveyed her at once to her own sanctum, "such a mystery, and now you've come, you dear creature, we'll—well, you'll see," and Jennie's round eyes looked rounder and brighter than ever. Before Miss Venestre was fairly relieved of her hat and shawl she had unburdened herself in the very lowest whisper possible to be heard.

"It seemed that a few weeks before some one of those secret political organizations which were so rife at that time had met at Mr. Mayne's house, and with such adjuncts of mystery as to arouse to feverishness Miss Jennie's curiosity. To-night they were coming again, and she had succeeded in supplying herself with facilities for penetrating the mystery. In short, to-night she intended to listen in a safe place and know what it meant. Lou refused to have anything to do with it, and endeavored to dissuade her friend, but in vain.

For once little Jennie Mayne's insatiable curiosity was to be of some benefit to humanity.

Toward midnight, as Miss Venestre was dreamily folding the dark rings of her hair about her slender fingers, and wishing vaguely that Jennie would come, Jennie Mayne came gliding into the room looking like a little ghost, her face so white, and she trembling all over.

"Oh, Lou," she cried, clinging to her, "it's the vigilance committee or something of that sort, and they're going to arrest Berrian Knowles and try him to-night."

"What?" said Miss Venestre, rising and reaching for her shawl. "Lou, you can't do anything. It's too late. I tell you, Lou Venestre, they were getting ready to go to his house when I left them."

"Miss Venestre's face looked ghastly white, but she did not tremble. Removing Jennie's clinging hand from her forcibly, she begged her in low, brief tones to say nothing to any one that she had gone out. And while she spoke she was putting on her riding habit and her hat and all with such white-faced resolution that her scared friend ceased expostulation or inquiry, awed into silence.

Gliding noiselessly down the stairs and out at a back way, Lou Venestre stole like a shadow towards the stables. As she did so she glanced to where she had observed sometime in the evening that the horses of the party were tied among the trees. They were there still—most of them, certainly. Some impulse, fortunate as vague, moved her to turn her steps toward them, and with swift, deft fingers loose every one before she sought her own.

She had, as it happened, no difficulty in finding him, but more in getting him ready to ride. She succeeded, however, in all, and was leading him out just as the party came forth from the house to mount. As she rode away into the darkness she could hear the exclamations of dismay and perplexity—oaths and imprecations, and with hope stirring her frightened heart, she urged her horse over the road leading toward the Knowles plantation.

All seemed quiet as she approached, and leaving her horse partially hidden in the shrubbery, she passed through a side entrance with which she was perfectly acquainted, for the house in which she had once expected to live—his wife—was as familiar to her own. Two large watch-dogs met her, but knew her too well to growl, and finding the door, as she had hoped, unfastened, she entered.

As she approached she had caught the faint gleam of light from a room in which she knew Berrian was very fond of sitting, and toward this room, through several others, she now made her dauntless way. She had not come through so much to hesitate now through any maidenly scruples, and she knew well enough the importance of utter secrecy—even from the servants. So, with a care to wake no one, if, as seemed, all slept save him, she at last came to the door of the room in which she hoped to find him and knocked softly.

He opened the door himself, and started to see her as though she had been a spirit.

She told her errand briefly, her eager, scared eyes fixed upon his face, as she begged him to flee while there was time. He showed a strange oblivionness to the danger which menaced him. Standing with a careless elbow upon the mantelpiece he looked down upon the trembling, white-faced girl, wondering if she had indeed cared enough for him to come so far to warn him.

In reply to all her entreaties that he would hasten away he only smiled sadly, until she laid her little hands upon his neck pleading: "Dear Berrian, for my sake, and dropped her face upon his neck in a passion of tears.

"Is it for your sake?" he questioned.

"If I flee from these scoundrels it will be to join the Union army, if there is one. What then, Lou?"

"Anything! Oh, anything! so you go now."

"Shall that 'good by' be as though it had never been said?" and his arms clasped her.

"Yes, oh, yes, yes! dear Berrian, go while there is time."

"My darling, there is plenty of time, if, as you say, you turned their horses loose."

"Every moment is precious to put distance between them and you."

"Every moment with you is more precious still. I may never see you again. This is an awful struggle that we are entering upon; and death may find me far from you. Lou, your father has only children to console him—I have only you. Go with me and—would you be afraid? Am I selfish to ask it?"

It was no time to hesitate. Frantic almost with fear, as she recalled the vague and terrible stories she had heard of the proceedings of these vigilance committees, sick with the dread of never seeing him again, she decided almost instantly that she would go with him. Before morning they were miles away, in complete safety in time; and when, after some trying vicissitudes, Lou stood with her husband beneath the stary banner, she looked reverently up to it, her hand in his, saying:

"Thank God it protects us once more."

Lentes Opera in Dublin.

When, for my sins, I was the director of the Royal English Opera company, I found myself and nearly lost my company in the wilderness of Kilkenny during Lent.

We had been doing a good business in Ireland until Lent began; then the priests warned the parishioners not to attend the theatre, and our receipts dropped so low that I began to consider the advisability of reducing my troupe to a solo performer.

In this extremity, I descended upon Dublin and arranged with Manager Michael Gunn for a fortnight at Gaiety Theatre. He shook his head over the prospects; talked about Lent and was generally gruesome. But I had a Yankee notion about the engagement; gave oyster and plover sappers to the good fellows of the press at the Red Bank, and declared light-hearted that, with a trompe l'oeil mope, the house would be crowded even on Good Friday.

The first night came, and, with the critics and invited guests, the audience made a goodly show. As Manager Gunn described it, "You could not fire a cannon anywhere in the theater without hitting somebody."

We opened with The Bohemian Girl and at my particular request Rose Hersee, my prima donna, introduced the Minstrel Boy in the second act.

That was my Yankee notion. As the religious people would not come to the theater during Lent, I determined to rely upon the Fenians. Dublin was then in a state of semi-rebellion, and the Minstrel Boy was a seditious song.

At the first notes of the well-known air the gallery boys rose and cheered madly. Miss Hersee sang charmingly and was wildly encored. When the curtain fell almost everybody in the audience rushed out of the theater. Were they frightened away? Did they dread the police? The unhappy quarter of an hour of Rabelais was nothing to the interval for refreshments which I passed that night. The gray hairs about which you just had their origin on that evening.

Then the audience began to return, not by single spies, but in battalions. As if by magic, the empty theater began to fill from pit to gallery. It seemed as if everybody had gone home and brought his family, his friends and his retainers with him. The box-office accounts had to be re-opened, and Manager Gunn could not believe his eyes as the silver kept rolling in. There was no more chaff about firing off a cannon. The house was loaded to the muzzle.

In the third act, as soon as Miss Hersee appeared, the Minstrel Boy was demanded with shouts and cheers. She sang it three times, and the students in the gallery sang it all over again for a third encore. Kilkenny was avenged, and I paid salaries on the drumhead after the opera.

For two weeks The Minstrel Boy brought us crowded houses. I had it sung in every opera. When, in Marlans, Miss Hersee declined to sing it, I held Parkinson, my tenor, by the collar at the wings and would not let him go on to his heroine until The Minstrel Boy had his innings. Perhaps the Irish bal had seemed somewhat out of place in Fra Diavolo and Der Freischutz and Trovatore, but it brought in the money, and, for once, sacrificed Art to Profit.

When we left Dublin, amid flowers and tears and farewells and whisky, the people gave Manager Gunn the credit of my operatic innovation, and elected him Alderman by a majority that would have satisfied a Tammany candidate.

This is Lent and St. Patrick's week, and is there no hint to managers in my Dublin experience?—[Seraph in Music.

LONDON GROWING BETTER.—Has London deteriorated or improved during the last thirty years? Babylon has grown bigger; has it also grown better? An American who visited our metropolis thirty years since, and has now taken up his residence in our midst, answers these questions in a New York paper with a decided affirmative. London, he maintains, is much more habitable and convenient than it was. The underground railway, new bridges across the river, tram-cars, and omnibuses practically reduce the ever-extending area of the city within manageable limits. The moral improvement of London seems to him to have been even more remarkable. Professional beggars, with whom the streets swarmed in 1850, have almost disappeared, and what he calls "the revolting visibilities" of the "silent vice of capitalists" are no longer so openly shameless as of old. Prize-fighting has gone out of fashion, and most wonderful of all "the politeness of Paris," in so far as relate to the giving of information to the stranger in the street, "has been reproduced in London." In short, our American finds that "the lowest strata of our society are being gradually elevated in the direction of a better moral."—Pall Mall Gazette.

Bob Morris Ladder of Fame.

The ladder of fame is hard to climb. Indeed, one might go farther and say that it is difficult to find.

Once found the aforesaid ladder becomes no better vehicle to fame than a well greased pole toward a leg of mutton. Still, every body with the courage of the yoke at the fair, undertakes to mount it. How few ever reach the top.

A few rounds of the ladder suffice to tire the traveler. The steps are so slippery. And the prizes at the summit are often so few and unsatisfactory.

What is the ladder of fame? Well, few men are able to define or describe it.

Each man has his own notion of its character, and fame is "ignifatuus."

It would be a hopeless task so undertake to illustrate fame.

All one can do is to say something about the ladies. Actors have their own ideas of fame. Some of them think it consists of newspaper puff, others of popular admiration.

Again, a few believe it is made up of managerial favor and good salaries. This is a fair true.

For substantial reward in the shape of increased remuneration for services is always a good indication that an artist is becoming famous.

Then, too, fame is indicated by three-sheet posters and large type on the small bills.

The greater the artists' fame the greater the size of the letters in which his name is printed in the advertisement. But first the artist must be entitled to fame before he is treated to large type. Give us pause!

There is an exception even to this rule. It occurs when the artist or his manager wants to use the bills and advertising mediums for a "ladder of fame."

This is not uncommon. The public have very frequently been introduced to ladies and gentlemen on the stage, who had no more right to have been accounted famous than that given them by the bills.

To it will be seen that "nine sheet stands" and "six colors on the dead wall" of a good-sized factory or board fence is often a first-rate ladder of fame.

It is used by circus men most advantageously, and serves the turn of a dubious star quite happily.

Barnum's elephant climbs the ladder daily.

He does even more. He stands upon his trunk on the rounds thereof and carries conviction to the hearts of the little children.

This is, indeed, the elephant's surest ladder to fame.

It is much more easily mounted by him than by his biped rival.

You see what an elephant, giraffe or hyena may do with impunity, a flickering star in the dramatic profession should not even attempt.

The animals have only to look something like their pictures to satisfy the public.

The man or woman has to do twice as much as he or she promises. Why, then, will they attempt to rival the members of the menagerie? They thirst for fame, and will mount any ladder to attain it.

It matters not to them whether the elephant or tiger has used it successfully or no.

The steps seem to lead to the will-o'-the-wisp they are pursuing, so up they go. Aye, and down they come a few minutes later. This is an extraordinary age.

VETO OF THE CHINESE BILL.

WASHINGTON, April 4.—Following is the full text of the president's message vetoing the anti-Chinese bill: To the Senate: After careful consideration of Senate bill No. 71, entitled "an act to create certain provisions relating to Chinese immigration," I herewith return it to the senate, in which it originated, with my objections to its passage. A nation is justified in repudiating its treaty obligations only when they are then all possible reasonable means for modifying or changing these obligations by mutual agreement with the other party to the treaty. These rules of right of refusal to comply with them. These rules have governed the United States in its past intercourse with other powers as one family of nations, and it is the duty of the United States to adhere to this act which the faith of the nation as pledged to China it will consent and will endeavor to find another which will meet the expectations of both parties.

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into its over its lines of railway, San Francisco has an incalculable future, if our friendly and amicable relations with Asia remain undisturbed. It needs no argument to show the policy which we now propose to adopt must have direct tendency to repel oriental nations from the United States, and drive their trade and commerce into more friendly hands. It may be that the great and paramount interest of protection of our labor from Asiatic competition justifies us in permanent adoption of this policy, but it is wiser in the first place to make a shorter experiment with a view of hereafter maintaining permanently only such features as time and experience may command.

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