

NOT IN THE PLAY

Actor Found Martyrdom to Which He Resigned in Sainly Manner.

By MRS. GENERAL PICKETT.
I was growing stout. My usefulness in life is limited to being wounded in battle every night in a war drama and rescued by the hero who dashes past on horseback and bends down at full gallop to lift me from the ground in his strong left arm, his right dangling helplessly in a sling, and rides triumphantly off the field with me.

"By the Lord Harry," said the hero one night when he had dropped me after we had achieved our exit, "if you gain another sixteenth of an ounce the company will be wrecked."

The prospect threw me into a state of extra blueness, which ought to have relieved me of many pounds. While I was in this state of woful, if prosperous looking, uncertainty, I recovered consciousness one evening in the second act on the hospital cot, where the hero was in the habit of depositing me after my rescue, and saw a new face bending over me with an expression which must have looked very sympathetic from the front. Heretofore I had been accustomed to opening my eyes upon a shock-headed boy with a pug nose and a habit of jabbing me on the forehead when he ought to have smoothed my pillow affectionately.

"Where am I?" I said in the lines of the play, feebly, but with due reference to the pit and gallery. Then in an undertone—"you are an angel. Tell me who you are and how you came."

"You are safe, rescued by the heroism of your noble captain," she replied for the information of the audience. To me privately—"Don't be a goose and spoil the play."

I watched her as she performed the duties which the playwright had prescribed as necessary to my restoration to active service in my country's cause, my heart sinking as I realized that it was all for the entertainment of the soulless public. When her blue eyes were turned upon my face in tender solicitude, I fell into deep depression, reflecting that it was only in accordance with explicit stage directions. It was not long before the state of my mind began to prey upon me to an alarming extent.

"By me halldom!" exclaimed the hero—not that the hero knew what his halldom was any more than I did. He had been reading historic novels of the middle period with a view to discovering a character worthy of his histrionic ability—"me worthy squire, thou art becoming a lean and hungry Cassius! Gadsooks! I could circle the tower with thee by the strength of my good right arm!"

After a time Lois told me her sorrowful little story.

"If people had not fancied that I was pretty it might not have happened," she said despairingly. "Why did they ever think so?"

"I suppose, because they are not blind."

"Don't be stupid in real life. It's bad enough on the stage. I didn't mind it as long as it was only papa and the aunts and uncles who thought so. Your own people have a right to think anything they want about you. But when Mr. Bracebrook took to thinking so, it was more than I could stand."

"Who is Mr. Bracebrook?"

"Oh, he is a—a man—a rich man."

"If I were a girl I would rather a rich man would think me pretty than a poor one," I said with a sinking of the heart as I reflected how insignificant would be the value of my opinion of any girl's beauty.

"You never were a girl. You don't know anything about it. Mr. Bracebrook is sixty-seven years old."

"There is no law either in nature or courts of state that requires a man to lose his sight at sixty-seven."

"No, but I am—seventeen."

"Adorable age!"

"And he wanted to marry me and—that is all, except that papa wanted him to and that was the worst of all."

"Oh, so you ran away and came here?"

"Papa and your manager are old friends. Once when we were rehearsing for a charity play the manager came and watched us and gave us pointers. He told me that if ever I should want to go on the stage in real earnest I must come to him. I thought then that I never should, but I reckoned without Mr. Bracebrook."

I grew bold in the presence of her despair.
"There is one way out."
"One way is enough."
"If you are willing to take it."
"Anything would be better than going back."
"You would have to marry me."
"Oh!"

A look of horrified surprise swept over her countenance and then she laughed.

"I should not want you to sacrifice yourself."

"Please don't hesitate on that account. I have always longed for a martyrdom to which I might be resigned in a saintly manner."

"Then we both laughed, I from sheer happiness, for I knew that she had seen all these weeks how things stood with me, and did not approve—at least, as compared with Mr. Bracebrook—and she—well, I don't know why she laughed unless it might have been with the hope of escape."

"We'll have to run away between my carrying you off and your restoration to your sorrowing friends at the end of the play."

That evening when I captured her we went out into the street. There was a little church off at the far end of the town, the pastor of which was a friend of mine. He often exhorted me to forsake the evil of my way. He had promised to marry us at the altar of his church at ten o'clock.

I called a cab and in a moment we were rattling along the street. We had proceeded about half the distance when I observed a hansom following us around the corner.

As we stopped at the church door and I assisted Lois to alight the other cab drove up and an old gentleman stepped out. I needed no word to tell me who he was. He came hurriedly toward us, his gaze fixed earnestly upon Lois. She turned her face toward him, the light from the street lamp falling full upon it and her coils of shining black hair. He drew back and bowed apologetically.

"I beg your pardon. In me you see a broken-hearted father who seeks his daughter. Something I heard at the theater made me think that this might be she. I am wrong. She is fair and has golden curls."

"You need not apologize," I said.

"Much as I love the oriental coloring wherein this lady walks in beauty like the night, I could almost wish that she rivaled the lily in fairness and was crowned with a wreath of tresses like the golden flood of Pactolus. Not only that you might be pleased with a daughter, but that she might have the comfort of a father's presence at this time."

"If there is anything I can do for an orphan maid it will be a comfort to my own heart to be permitted to do it."

"You are very kind, sir. We have come to this church to be married. If you, a kind-hearted stranger, with a daughter whom you love, would give her away in marriage, it would be a pleasant thing for her and I should feel less like a robber."

"I do not know you, but I suppose she does, and if she is satisfied why should I refuse?"

"I am Oswald Svensen of the Gloria theater, a player of many parts on the stage, and only one, that of honest man, off the boards. The lady is Miss Elsie Marchmont of the same company."

That really was her stage name, so it was true enough.

I trembled lest he should interrupt the ceremony at the name of the bride, but he only started slightly and then seemed to reflect that he had not heard aright. The preacher was wretchedly hoarse.

On the church steps the old gentleman turned to us and said:

"I wish you young people all the happiness that I could wish of my own daughter in like circumstances. I must go elsewhere to find her."

The look of sadness in his face struck to the heart of Lois.

"Do not seek her farther," she said, pulling the wig off her head and letting the waves of gold fall around her.

"I cannot wash off the paint until I finish the play, but then you will see the same little white face that has worried you all my life."

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Presence of Mind.
"Yes, sir," said the old-time manager. "It was a terrible moment. The theater was on fire and over a thousand people sitting there in front. I was afraid of a panic, but suddenly the inspiration came. I sent Miss Scrawney out upon the stage to recite 'Carlew Shall Not Ring Tonight.'"

"Yes," said the excited listener. "The house was empty in just three minutes by the watch!" said the manager.—Harper's Weekly.

About a Woman.
Mr. Gudeman—Little boys shouldn't fight. Won't you let me help you out?

Moggy—Sure! As it is going to be for blood, you might stand over her and catch de lady in case she swoons!—Puck.

Discipline.
He—Do you think the family will consent?
The Politician's Daughter—Well, they aren't instructed as yet, but they are bound by the unit rule, and you've got me on your side, and what she says goes!—Puck.



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