

My Lady of The Flowers

By F. A. MITCHEL

During the siege of Paris in 1870 I threw down my palette and brushes and, taking a musket, went into the fortifications. There I was wounded and sent to a hospital.

Most of the women had left the capital before the Germans arrived. Some remained because they couldn't get away and a few to assist in taking care of the wounded soldiers. One morning I was lying on my cot in a ward where the beds lined the walls, leaving an aisle in the center. The door was opened by a nurse, and a lady entered carrying a basket of flowers. Stopping at the first cot, she took from the basket some of the flowers and handed them to the occupant with a few kind words. Then she passed to the next and the next, doing the same to each.

It was probably not five minutes from the time she entered the room before I was madly in love with her. She was beautiful, but it was not her beauty alone that enthralled me. There was about her a certain serene purity, a refinement and, above all, a gentle dignity that I had never seen combined in any woman. I must have forgotten to keep my admiration to myself, for she lowered her eyes under my gaze and instead of speaking to me as she did the others simply handed me the flowers and passed on.

From that moment my thoughts were all of her. At the same hour the next day I looked for her to come again, but she did not. Whether she went the round of the hospitals, visiting each once, or visited only ours I did not know. I only knew that I was disappointed that she did not come again.

The Prussians came and went. Their going left Paris in the hands of the commune. I left the hospital during the period of the commune supremacy. I was young, in love and of an artistic temperament. I longed to find the lady of the flowers and protect her from the misguided mob, who were spreading fire throughout the city.

But I did not dream of seeing her. Doubtless she was shut up in her home covering in garret or cellar fearing to be murdered. I roamed the streets looking at the burning of some public building, all the while dreaming of the lady of the flowers.

I was standing one day on the curb just outside the garden of the Tuilleries when, hearing shouts in the direction of the Place de la Concorde, I looked and saw a crowd of communists coming. When they came near me I perceived that their leader was a woman, and when she passed me I was filled with horror.

She was my lady of the flowers! What a change from that pitying figure scattering flowers and kind words among wounded soldiers to the leader of a mob! Her dress was now short, and on her head she wore a red cap. Her face was lighted with a zeal such as Joan of Arc's might have worn. For a moment I was too paralyzed to move, and then as the throng of wretched creatures passed on I dashed and hurried after them.

Guided by their leader, some of their number pushing a cart smelling of petroleum, they marched rapidly toward the palace of the Tuilleries and, leaving the street, joined a vast crowd of shouting madmen in the court. Carrying their petroleum to where others had placed kindling in the building, they poured it on the wood and ignited it.

I could not keep her whom I had called the flower lady, but now the petroleum lady, in view for the jostling crowd. But presently when a red flame burst forth I saw her standing on a barrel, her face lighted as I can imagine Joan's may have been in the moment of victory. The crowd surged forward and she was lost to view.

Then came the turn when the commune, after rolling like the crest of a wave about to break, went down with a crash. There was fighting, men and women, too—firing from behind barricades, from windows, from the tops of houses, at the soldiers in the streets. It was the last gasp of a mad effort for a Utopia. The barricades were taken, men on the roofs were picked off, and the firing degenerated into random shots.

Night came on, and I walked down a street where the last barricade had been defended. I had been hunting my lady of the flowers. Vainly I had sought her face among those bands that had held Paris for three days and the throat. I had not found her, and I thought I should go mad if I did not find her. I wished to draw her away, to beg her to abandon her road to ruin and let me love her forever. I came to the deserted barricade, climbed it, and stumbled down on the other side. There, lying on the pavement, lighted by a lamp in a window, was the white face of my lady of the flowers. With a cry I stooped and caught her in my arms. I hugged her to me to bring back the ebbing life. I covered her face with kisses.

Her eyes opened. She looked into mine and recognized me. She was too dazed to speak, but through those ghastly windows her soul came forth the most shining in a loving farewell. Our first meeting had been a flash of love. The interval had been a period of hate. Our parting was again a vision of our union. Now breathe grew shorter till at last they ceased. She was dead.

A LITERARY RIDDLE.

Who Was It Wrote the Tragedy of "Troilus and Cressida?" Andrew Lang has just propounded a puzzle in circumstantial evidence. "Who," he asks, "wrote 'Troilus and Cressida?'" You may answer, as you please, Shakespeare or Bacon. If you answer Bacon, Andrew Lang comes back with the query, "Would Bacon have said that Aristotle lived before the Trojan war?" Bacon was too learned a man to make such a mistake, which would be as bad as placing Abraham Lincoln among the signers of the Declaration of Independence.

If you answer Shakespeare, Andrew Lang shoots another query at you: "The author makes Ulysses and Achilles quote an author and discuss a pretty long and strange passage from that author who was Plato. How could Shakespeare have read Plato?" For Shakespeare knew no Greek, and in his day Plato had not yet been translated into English.

It is quite conceivable that Shakespeare might imagine that Plato and Aristotle lived many centuries before Homer, but it is inconceivable that the erudite Bacon should fall into such an error.

Andrew Lang does not pretend to solve the riddle. He frankly says, "I give it up."—New York World.

RISKY POSTAL SERVICE.

In Russia the Government Opens All Suspicious Packages. Our own service of mails is well organized. There is little doubt in the mind of the average person that when he posts a letter it will reach its destination.

But in other lands he might well fear for its safety. In Russia, for instance, any letter or parcel that is regarded with suspicion is immediately opened and its contents noted. A clever machine guns it up again, so that the recipient does not know that it has been tampered with.

In Lapland the mails are carried in sledges drawn by reindeers in the wilds of the Caucasus the postman holds a post of danger. He must be protected against brigands and against the weather, for he often has to climb mountains more than 12,000 feet high.

Asiatic Russia, which is apt to be marshy, has the buffalo post, and, of course, the progress made is very slow. Stiffness are more powerful than oxen, and they are used in Siberia for carrying the mail.

Other postmen in foreign lands are the swimming postman of India and the sking letter carrier of the Andes. For the latter place the Argentine government specially imports Norwegians.—Exchange.

Mexico's Smoking Mountain.

In 1807 I climbed two volcanoes in Mexico, Popocatepetl, or "the smoking mountain," about 17,800 feet, and Orizaba, the former the most famous because within view from Mexico City and thus a source of especial pride and admiration to the inhabitants, who have been loath to believe that any other of their mountains could be higher. Popo has a really splendid crater, about half a mile across and 1,000 feet deep. The walls are generally vertical, but in one or two places it is possible to descend. When workers are engaged in collecting sulphur machinery is used to hoist them up and down. From Popo's summit there is a glorious prospect, not alone of the immense crater, but of the beautiful "White Lady" (Istacibonita) reclining a thousand feet below, of Orizaba on the far horizon and of the charming valley of Mexico.—Annie S. Peck in Christian Herald.

Wellington's Integrity.

The Duke of Wellington was noted for his rigid integrity. Here is an instance which occurred in reference to his large estate. Some farm adjoining his lands was for sale, and his agent negotiated for him for the purchase. Having concluded the business, he went to the duke and told him he had made a capital bargain. "What do you mean?" asked the duke. "Why, your grace, I have got the farm for so much, and I know it to be worth at least so much more." "Are you quite sure of that?" "Quite sure, your grace, for I have carefully surveyed it." "Very well, then; pay the gentleman from me the balance between what you have already given and the real value of the estate."

Strong Circumstantial Evidence.

A young wife was in tears a few mornings ago when her mother called. When asked what was the matter she replied that her husband was out late the night before and had been to a drinking party. "What makes you think he had been to a drinking party?" asked the mother. "He came home," sobbed the young wife, "wearing a photograph born for a hat."—Kansas City Star.

More Careful Now.

The young wife had given her husband a dance. "You've improved wonderfully, Jack," she said as they sat down. "Don't you remember how you used to tear my dress?" "Yes," he replied. "I wasn't buying them then."—Boston Transcript.

Barks.

The class in natural history being asked the difference between a dog and a tree, the head boy answered, "A tree is covered with bark, while a dog seems to be lined with it."

Nelly Sleeps.

Hub (angrily)—Herd! What do you mean by waking me out of a sound sleep? Wife—Because the sound was too distressing.—Boston Transcript.

THE GNU IS A PUZZLE.

It Seems to Be a Cross Between the Horse, Cow and Deer.

Did you ever hear of a horned horse? It is called the gnu and is a native of South Africa. The gnu is a puzzle. We have called it a horse, but it is more like a cow. It really seems to be a cross between the horse, the cow and the deer. It has the head and horns of a cow, the tail, the mane and withers of the horse and the legs of a deer. Altogether the gnu is one of the most singular creatures on earth.

The gnu inhabits the hilly districts of South Africa, roaming all over the country in vast herds. As far as travelers have penetrated it is found, and it is fortunate that it is so, for the flesh of the gnu forms excellent food. Gnus are, however, extremely wild and, being very quick in their movements, are difficult to shoot. Upon the first alarm the whole herd scampers away in single file, following a leader. When seen from a distance they look like a troop of horses.

Their speed is very great, and when first disturbed they do not exert it, but kick out their heels and begin butting at anything that comes in their way, exhibiting the greatest fury. Unless hard pressed they seldom show fight, but when brought to bay they will defend themselves desperately. They dart forward upon their enemy with great fury, and unless he remains cool and collected he probably will not escape.

STEALING A RAILROAD.

Not in a Financial Way, but by Carrying It Off Seditiously. No stranger theft was ever committed than the "lifting" of an entire railroad, twelve and one-half miles in length, which once connected Birr and Portumna, in Ireland.

The line had cost \$450,000, and for years it did service for the Great Southern and Western Railway company until the year 1876, when the company, which had been running it at a loss, washed its hands of it. The line was derelict. Nobody wanted it. For a few years it stretched its useless length through north Tipperary. Then its neighbors began to turn covetous eyes on it.

Bolts and screws and other portable trifles began to vanish. A few prosecutions were instituted, but the thieves were not deterred. They encouraged, grew bolder. Farmers brought their carts and horses and loaded them with spoils of rails, sleepers, switches and semaphore. One goodly station vanished, to its last brick and beam in a single night.

They were great times for Tipperary. Boatloads of booty, hundreds of tons of rails, were sent away from Portumna by unlicensed "contractors," and the work of spoliation went on until not as much as a turntable was left.—Argonaut.

Dickens' Den.

Dickens' care for his material surroundings did not end with his bed room. His favorite writing place at Gadshill was a Swiss chalet in the shrubbery, and this he fitted up in most ingenious fashion. "I have put mirrors in the chalet where I write. He says in one of his letters, 'and they reflect and refract in all kinds of ways the leaves that are quivering at the windows and the great fields of waving corn and the tall dotted river. My room is up among the branches of the trees, and the birds and the butterfly fly in and out, and the green branches shoot in at the open windows, and the lights and the shadows of the clouds come and go with the rest of the company. The scent of the flowers and indeed of everything that is growing for miles and miles is most delicious.'—London Chronicle.

Judging the Colt.

The Arabs have two methods of estimating the height to which a colt will grow, the first being to stretch a cord from the nostril over the ears and down along the neck and compare this measurement with that from the withers to the feet and the other method being to compare the distance between the knee and the withers with that from the knee to the coronet. In the first method it is considered that a colt will grow as much taller as the first measurement exceeds that of the second, and in the second method if the proportion is as two to one, the horse will grow no taller.

Pedestrians.

A teacher in a primary school was endeavoring to make clear to her class the meaning of the words "equestrianism" and "pedestrianism" when she put this query to one small boy: "What is a pedestrian?" "He is one of those fellows," said the boy, "who makes an awful kick when an automobile runs him down."—New York Press.

No Further Delay.

Abner Slopank (desperately)—M-m-m! I name the day? Jemima Jones (deviously)—No! Abner Slopank (in alarm)—Why? Jemima Jones (frankly)—Because if you put it off as long as you did your proposal we never will be married. I'll name the day myself.—Cleveland Leader.

Harmonious.

"They say Mrs. Jelliffe has given up that pet white poodle of hers," said Mrs. Johnson. "Yes," said Mrs. Whilliger. "She's in deep mourning for Mr. Jelliffe, you know, so she has exchanged Toby for a black and tan."—Harper's Weekly.

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Relics of Pillories. Though the pillory has been abolished, there are still to be found in various parts of rural England relics of this old time method of punishment. One of the most complete examples may be seen within a few miles of the metropolitan border. In the picturesque village of Roydon, Essex, not only are the old stocks and whipping post still preserved, but close beside them stands also the wooden "cage" in which the roysterer of bygone days was incarcerated. Is there another such interesting relic of punitive relics to be found elsewhere in England?—London Graphic.

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Reassured. "Well, Bess, you needn't worry about that brother of yours in America. The paper says 'our foreign relations continue to be excellent.'"—London Illustrated. Cause and Effect. "Look head, doctah; I've taken youah advice and tried a cantah wound the park before breakfast, but it doesn't do my livah a bit of good." "Uhl! I'm afraid the good effects of the canter before breakfast are counteracted by the bad effects of the doctah after dinner."—London Tablet. Musical Criticism. The Musician—Hang it, Bill, don't you realize that one of you aboves equals in a B flat and the other in G major?—Lilo. An Eye For an Eye. "Mr. Speaker," said the congressman, "I have tried vainly to catch your eye and"— "Get down!" thundered the speaker. "I have tried vainly to catch your eye's general times when it was needed."—