

VIOLET'S STORY.

Violets lie hidden in mossy nooks, waiting for fond eyes to discover their sweetness. Perhaps Violet Marten's parents hoped for such a fate for their darling when they named her.

Her eyes are not blue, but violet, said the young father.

And Violet is such a pretty name, said the young mother; let us name her so.

And violet was christened in the little village church, and grew up from a pretty baby and a beautiful child to be a sweet, pure, fair, young girl, and sang in the choir so sweetly that strangers wondered to hear her there, and men nearly twisted their necks off as they sat in the front pews, to see the face of the singer.

Hither, to the quiet Yankee village, came one summer Otto Balche, who had trained I know not how many professional singers—a wonderful teacher and a rare musician; and going, for a rarity, to church, he heard the voice to some purpose: sought out the girl; and taught her, in true artist generosity and enthusiasm, all that could be taught in one summer.

Little the good Yankee mother guessed what the nice old German gentleman, who liked to sing with Violet, was doing for her child; but Violet, artist at heart herself, quite understood.

That was a happy summer. Violet looked back upon it now with many tears. That fall a pestilence had swept through the village, and the good mother and father, almost young people yet, were smitten by it, and lay under some willow in the church-yard. And the old home was in stranger hands. And Otto Balche had gone home to the Fatherland and there died. And the fair, pure, lily-like girl was earning her bread as a chorus singer in an opera troupe, and boarding in a by-street with an old laundress.

She knew no one. The girls and women shocked her by their Bohemian ways. Of the men she was shy. They were not a bit like the members of the village church, or any other men she had ever met. The manager she knew, for he gave her her orders and fixed her salary. And a mild-looking lame gentleman who sat in the ticket office gave her a kindly good-day, or good-night, when she passed him, which seemed to comfort her. He was not like the others; he was a gentleman, though evidently not a rich one. And there was something in that crutch with its worn velvet handle which awakened her womanly commiseration, and made her voice and smile, and she answered, more gentle than she knew.

The opera was over one night, in the frosty mid-winter. The important personages had gone home in carriages. The chorus girls and women had been gaily whisked away by escorts, or surlily dragged away by husbands or had gone home strong in numbers, linked arm in arm. The fair-faced Yankee girl, in her black silk alpaca, and quiet shawl and hood, peeped out into the night with her violet eyes, and waited for a band of jolly singers to pass by ere she encountered the ordeal of her run home—that dreadful quarter of an hour, through which her heart beat with terror and ached with loneliness.

Her little feet, venturing forth at last, pattered over the pavement at a swift rate; but she was more nervous than usual, and this time surely some one was following her. At the corner of the dusky street in which her lodging lay, she could not avoid glancing around, to convince herself that her fears were without foundation, and as she did so, her eyes met those of a man, flashy, half tipsy, and indescribably insolent, who caught her by the arm.

Stop a minute, he said. What's the matter? I've been waiting for you an hour. You mistake: I don't know you. Let me go, said Violet.

The man laughed. Look here; be quiet. Don't take airs, he began. You're a mighty pretty girl. Who are you.

Let go my arm, said Violet, terrified by hearing another step approaching.

But the man rather in malicious fun than anything else, held her faster.

Give me a kiss, and may be I will, he said. He advanced his face to hers, his breath reeking with the fumes of liquor. Violet grew faint.

Suddenly another hand touched her arm. She was gently taken under protection.

This lady is under my care, said a voice that she knew.

And she looked up into the face of the gentleman whose good-night had been the

kindest word yet spoken to her in that dismal opera-house.

The tipsy man drew back. He was a big fellow, and for a moment he doubled his big fists quite savagely. Then he muttered: I don't want to interfere. If women will walk the street, what can they expect? and sauntered off sullenly.

Let me see you safe the rest of the way, Miss Marten, said her new friend to Violet, who was now sobbing despite her efforts to be calm. You were very much frightened? Yes, sir.

You are always nervous during this late walk home? I'm afraid so. I have been used to being taken care of. Before papa died, I never lived in a city, or alone.

You shall not be so terrified again, said the gentleman. If you will allow me, I will see you safe every night.

Oh, how kind; but it will be so much trouble, said Violet naively.

He laughed. A trouble! no, a very great pleasure. Besides, it is nothing new either. I have taken the liberty of walking behind you to see no harm befall you every night for weeks. You are not used to it like those others, and you looked so frightened when you peered out into the street. You'll excuse me I know.

It was so very good of you, said Violet. To think that any one cared whether I was frightened or not. I don't know how to thank you.

He gave her a smile that made his face beautiful in an instant, and coming to the door, bade her good-night.

So it began. As long as she made one of the company, Arthur Hurst saw Violet Marten to her home after the opera was over, and a very pleasant intimacy was the first result. Long walks out of town on Sunday afternoons—holiday hours, in which Violet sang her repertoire of songs through for her friend, and when they talked to each other as only those who like each other will ever do.

His was a blighted life in some sort. A motherless boy, whose intemperate father had, in a wild moment, brought upon the child the accident which had marred proportions originally cast in nature's fairest mould. His ventures in after-life had proved fruitless. His little hoard had melted away under ill-considered speculations, and with failing health and courage, he had settled down to the monotonous life he now led.

There is nothing to look forward to he said. I earn my pittance. I read my books. I rest, when I can, under green trees. So my life goes. At last I shall rest for ever in some quiet spot. It would be no different were I as ambitious as I used to be. The grave ends all, for all of us.

And Violet told him of her home, of her parents, and of old Otto Balche.

The rehearsals and the chorus singing were brighter tasks, now that this friendship had dawned. Violet began to feel almost happy again.

After they had parted at the door, and the old woman with whom she boarded had appeared in slippers and a night-cap and shawl, to give her her poor little supper, she used to go up to her garret and lie awake, thinking of Arthur Hurst. She was so sorry for him, and so thankful to him. She longed to be rich, that she might secretly bestow upon him great gifts. The pain-lined face was beautiful to her; indeed it was an exquisite face, but for those lines: Great Spanish eyes, a soft, full-lipped mouth, and hair that curled close about white temples. His infirmity was only pitiful to her not repulsive.

My friend she had called him for a long while, when one day, coming down the long, dark passage that led to the regions which lay behind the stage, she espied him, herself unseen. He sat in his little den, counting or sorting tickets, his mind hardly on them. The sadness of his face was intense. All the disappointments and losses of his life seemed written there. Violet stood still, and looked.

My darling! she said to herself, under her breath, my own poor darling!

And then she knew that she loved him, and sped away, fearing nothing so much as that he should see her, dreading nothing so much as a meeting with him then. But from that moment, whatever the rest of the world saw in Arthur Hurst, she saw only her idol. Man loves the woman who is beautiful to him; to woman, the man she loves becomes beautiful.

She was a little colder to him after this, I think, fearing lest she should seem too warm, for there had been no lovers' talk between them, nor had he ever so much as held her hand in his longer than for a courteous greeting. She did not know how very beautiful

she was, nor did it ever enter her mind that he might think himself an unlikely object for woman's tenderness. Love's blindness was upon her, and love's timidity.

The time passed on. Her engagement drew to a close, and to her surprise, a new prospect offered. Her voice had been heard by a country manager who desired some one to sing for him, and she could not refuse the opportunity. Yet, as the time approached for departure, bitter tears rained down upon her pillow. In leaving the city and her so-called lodgings, she left also her one friend; not her lover, but the man she loved. The beautiful girl felt that she was leaving all life held of sweetness. And he—he would forget her, she said to herself. What was there in her to remember? Quite hidden within her soul lay these regrets and fears. They had their last Sunday walk together, their last hour in the lodging-house parlor, where she had sung to him so often. And she said as much quietly, and he drew closer to her, and for the first time took her hand.

I may write, and hear from you? he asked. O yes! I shall be glad. I shall be lonely, He put the hand to his lips.

Let me prophesy, he said. There are days before you in which you will win gold and fame. You will have so many friends, so many flatterers, that you will quite forget the little man who told you from the first what you would one day do. You will forget to write at last, and then I shall hear—he paused—all sorts of pleasant things of you, he added lightly, having begun very gravely. Good-bye.

He kissed her on her forehead, and was gone. She felt the pressure of those lips upon her brow for many days. She had longed to fling her arms about his neck and give him a woman's passionate farewell kiss, but she dared not. And she went upon her new path next day sore of heart, despite the little triumph of advancement. And those letters, not very frequent, were the brightest spots of all her life.

The prophecy was in a fair way of fulfillment, as far as her success went. It grew fashionable to praise Violet's singing. She travelled over the country, and won new laurels everywhere. Admirers flocked around her. Serenades were given her. \*Diamonds were buried in flowers and flung at her feet. And a lover, handsome, young and wealthy, pursued her from place to place, refusing to believe himself rejected, and vain and courageous enough to believe that success was at last to be his meed.

Surely this was enough to intoxicate any girl's heart, but Violet was one who remembered well. She never forgot the friend who had been so kind to her in her saddest and loneliest hour, any more than she forgot the mother and father who slept in the old church-yard, or good Otto Balche, who had taught her that which won this great success for her. And at night, when all the applause had faded into silence, when the lights that had shone upon her beauty were quenched, and the flowers that had been cast at her feet were slowly withering, Violet sat alone in her beautiful room, only the moonlight falling over her, and looking toward that quarter of the heavens under which lay the distant city where Arthur Hurst still dwelt, thought of her love for him and wept, and would have flung away all the meed of gold and fame that she had now, gladly and joyously, if in exchange had been given her the consciousness that that great love had been returned—the love that was growing a bitter load within her heart, as love long masked by pride must ever be to any woman.

Charles Moreland was very much in love with Violet. He had fluttered like a butterfly among many flowers, but this was, in very truth, the sweetest one to him. He longed to take it from the garden where all could see and praise, and transplant it in the shelter of home. The great empty rooms of Moreland House were waiting for a mistress. His heart had found one long ago, and there were no living relatives who had the right or the will to sneer at his espousal with a public singer. And Violet was a lady, every inch, and spotlessly pure as when, a slim, fair girl, she sang in the old church choir. She had no favored lover—that he saw. She did not hate him. He could please her and make her gay. She would never take costly gifts from him, but she did not refuse his flowers, his books, his attentions. She had told him a dozen times that she never intended to marry. What of that? She did not wish to abandon her profession as yet, perhaps. They were both young. He would wait. So he had followed her from town to town, for a year and more. She met no accepted lover in any of them. Now and then a little lame gentleman, grave of face and of manner, was in her

company, and she seemed very kind to him—very friendly. Of course Charles was not jealous of him, especially as he was rather shabby, and evidently poor. Besides, he had been mean enough to listen to their conversation once, and it was very commonplace. He paid compliments in every sentence—any lover would.

A little trying Charles Moreland began to find it, but he was all the more determined to succeed—all the more in love. Besides, there would be a triumph in winning love from a heart that seemed a stranger to it—passion from a girl as calm as any piece of carved marble, as far as he could guess.

Little he knew of hours when she had paced the floor, wounding her soft palms with her taper nails, whispering to herself wild words of love and agony, and asked Heaven, in her bitterness, why the power was given her to win all hearts save the only one which seemed to her worth the winning? Her lover thought her cold. Red heat is all that some people wot of. They know it by its glow. But there is also white heat, and it is most potent.

In real life there is often little to write down from day to day. To Violet came her pleasant triumphs to which she had grown used. Her frequent flatteries and her constant suitor's wooing, all indifferent common-places enough, though she would once scarcely have believed an angel who should have told her that this should be her life.

The "points" in her life were the evenings when, from the stage, she saw Arthur Hurst sitting in the seats below, and sang so gloriously that the critics grew wild in her praise next day. And the mornings which followed them, when a slow step came to her parlor door, and opening it, the dear eyes smiled upon her. And this for three long years—three years which were the heyday of her life, in which renown was given her, and wealth grew to be hers, and love was cast at her feet; yet which were bittered in every hour, because the man she loved from her heart's core was nothing but a friend.

Do you know Bethelport, where, on the very sea verge a white town lies, the streets all planted with great trees, from the midst of which two taper spires arise? Beyond lie hills that grow purple in the sunset, and rosy white at dawn. They think no little of themselves at Bethelport. They have a Library and a Lyceum, and a hall where High Art is encouraged by the aristocracy of the place. Managers who produce Shakespeares are welcome, though the fairest burlesque troupe in the world would play to empty benches.

Here, one bright day, Violet Marten came to sing—her beauty at its height, her voice at its best, her poor heart at its sorest. She had of late made her letters tell a little of her tenderness to Arthur Hurst; at least, had not been cold or distant. She had not veiled her eyes when they last met, nor striven to disguise the love in them; and there was no change in him. As one suffering much pain gives way to irritation at last, so her long-enduring heart took refuge in a certain sad anger. She walked on the beach in the early morning light, and thought bitterly. Suddenly a voice was at her ear.

Miss Marten—Violet, I must speak to you.

She turned. Charles Moreland stood there. His face was flushed and troubled—half sad, half angry. He put his hand upon her arm.

[CONCLUDED IN OUR NEXT.]

"WOMEN," exclaimed an enthusiastic advocate of the "rights" of the sex to commissions in the navy, "have always occupied positions of responsibility in the navy. Yes, from the earliest times, for wasn't Lot's wife an old salt?"

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