

MY LITTLE NUN.

Ab, lady, it is in Italy only, where blue skies are. Here, with the great brown mountains tipped with snow, they shine gloriously; and, lady, there are eyes in Italy as blue as its own bright skies, hair as rich as the brown mountains, and faces fairer than the drifted snow.

I was a soldier there. In Placenza is a castle built on a precipice, high above the lake, where the clear waters sleep calmly in the moonlight, and splash gently in spray under the glittering sun.

Down by the crag is a straggling village, and near, black, dark and dismal, is a monastery and a gray stone church, ornamented inside with rich paintings, statues of nobles of years ago. Here I was once sick, wounded and dying.

I was only a poor French soldier, fighting for "free Italy," and, as it is sometimes our soldiers' chance, after a long, wild charge, I was left one day upon the field.

I could not complain when I was taken with the rest of the wounded to the hospital. Parbleu! I would have died there, but one night, just after vesper, I felt a soft, cool hand on my hot, mad head, and a voice so soft and sweet, said,—

"Poor signor, may be he has a sister or mother at home; take him to us."

And so I was taken away, where I did not know or care, my head so pained me. I knew when I felt the soft, cool hand on my head that I must rest and pray. Ah! such a cool, soft hand! It held me down; it chained my life and soul and being. When a sweet voice prayed for my poor self I lived again, and, when I was better, I lay on my couch in the glorious sunlight, and heard her read to me, it seemed more and more like my dreams of home and love. So it was that my little nun came to be all in all to me.

She was only a little nun—fair, delicate and frail, with soft brown eyes, and a sweet, sad face, and I, French soldier of the Guard; but sometimes strong men will weep childish tears, and one time when I stood to say good-by, it was terrible agony to me.

"Lady," I said, "Sister Inez, you have told me to call you, you know that I love you, and that my life is yours. Three leagues behind the mountains yonder is a blue sea. There are swift vessels there, and beyond the sea is free America, where all are as they please in religion and love; come with me, come!"

I knelt so at her feet as I had never before knelt, even to my God.

"Inez, come with me, to America, and you can there be free."

"No, signor,"—she withdrew her hand, "God is every where!" and she turned and left me.

I was wild. She had been so much to me, and now—nothing. She had nursed me and watched and I, when I was stronger, had gone and brought her flowers, while we sat and talked of fair France or sunny Italy.

She and the abbess lived alone; war had frightened the rest away, and so it was, perhaps, that I had been allowed to be with her at all; and she had grown very dear to me.

Lady, you smile, I see, but then we men have mad passions sometimes, and so when weeks after our trumpets blew shrill triumph over Solferino and Magenta, and I wore on my breast the cross of the legion—"as the bravest of all!"—I would have given it and them for one bright hour, as of days past, in the old monastery at Placenza.

Did I think of her? Yes, always; under the blue skies, they were as her eyes to me; and at night, waking and dreaming, she was my all.

You have never been with a fierce army, elated with victory, I know, and so cannot even dream of the weary, wayworn days and nights there are sometimes.

Of advance, retreats and bivouacs in the mountains or on the plains; of white tents, sentinel calls, and camp fires, songs and rhymes have enough been sung and said; but never yet have the feelings of all the hearts of all those hosts been ever strung into any poetic rhyme or gentle fancy, if they were, what could they tell? All my thoughts tended to one end. I must see her again.

But my duty kept me; and though sometimes in all those weary weeks I caught in the distance gleams of Placenza's castle crag, never could I be near to her in this home in the mountains.

Well, after Magenta there were rumors of peace, and in the time it came, and the weary, gallant troops were ordered home.

How weary was that journey to me; and when in Lorraine once more I asked for leave to return and it was given, with what glad steps did I turn to glorious Italy.

Days seemed almost as long as years until, in the bright midnight, I stood in the village below the castle.

On the past evening the Austrians had evacuated the place, blown up their stores and arsenal, and fled slowly away, carrying with them many curses loud and deep from the villagers, who hated them, as might be believed, most heartily. Their magazines, which had been set on fire, were still mouldering when I arrived, and the grey smoke rose heavily from the crest of the mountain.

I asked if any harm had been done to the monastery; but no one knew. Where were the abbess and the nuns? No one could tell. I rushed up, the great rock lay covered with smoke. Here were the monastery and church, partly in ruins. I ran, I called,—

"Inez, Inez! It is I—I, answer me, Inez!"

On—on I ran to where the devotional cell used to stand, and I tried to climb over an old abutment, when there came a roar, a shock, and all seemed falling around me. There arose dark clouds of dust and smoke, and I fell to the ground. Quickly I sprang to my feet, and saw that a portion of the wall, which had been on fire, had fallen, carrying with it part of the place in ruins. Nothing deterred, I hurried on, until stopped by a projection of wall, torn, jagged and ruined. Here I halted, despairing; I could go no further. Turning, I saw the window of a cell and a crucifix, where the bright rays of the sun streamed through, and there, on a pallet, lay Inez, deathly pale.

In the niche of the wall was a crucifix; by her side were a cowl and gown, with a cross and beads. Over her fair, pale forehead fell her brown hair, like clouds on the snow in the mountains. Near the pallet on the floor were the fragments of an exploded bombshell.

My God! Inez was dead! Holy Mary! stay—I thought her lips seemed to move. With one mad bound I burst upon the casement, and stood in her sacred cell, where, probably, man never stood before. I went, I stooped and lifted her. Kneeling, I kissed her pale lips—

"And was she dead?"

"Inez, dear, this lady wishes to see you. Here, lady, is Inez, my little nun wife, dearer to me than all the world besides, who, though found by me in a monastery, in a sister's dress, was only placed there with the lady abbess for protection while her father fought for Italy. They are both dead, and Inez alone remains. Inez, my pure, fair wife, who has never been, yet will always be, my little nun."

THE RESCUED CAPTIVE.

One day in spring, a border ranger was making his way through the deep labyrinthine forests of Southern Ohio. He had been on a hunting expedition, and weary, lame and hungry, he was making his way home. Suddenly coming on a small pond, he stopped to drink and wash out his gun, which had grown so foul with frequent firing, that at last he could not make it go off. He pushed his way through a copse of willows to a little beach by the pond, when, lo! from the thicket, at a short distance from him, appeared the figure of an Indian, covered with dust and blood, and a number of fresh scalps dangling from his belt, making his way likewise to the water. They knew each other at a glance. The ranger's gun was useless, and he thought of rushing upon the Indian with his hatchet before he could load his rifle, but the Indian's gun was in the same condition as his own, and he, too, had come to the edge of the pond to quench his thirst, and hastily scoured out his foul rifle. The condition of the rifles was instantly seen by the enemies, and they agreed to a truce while they washed them out for the encounter. Slowly, and with equal movements, they cleaned their guns, and took their stations on the beach.

"Now, Monewa" (the Indian's name), "I'll have you," cried Derner (the ranger's name); and with the quickness and steadiness of an old hunter he loaded his rifle.

"Na, na, na, na, na, na," replied Monewa, and he handled his gun with a dexterity that made the bold heart of Derner beat faster, while he involuntarily raised his eyes to take the last look of the sun.

They rammed their bullets, and each at the same instant cast his ramrod upon the sand.

"I'll have you," shouted Derner again, as in his desperation he almost resolved to fall upon the savage with the butt-end of his rifle, lest he should receive his bullet before he could load.

Monewa trembled as he applied his powder-horn to the priming. Derner's quick ear heard the grains of his powder rattle lightly on the leaves which lay at his feet. Derner struck his gun breech violently upon the ground—the rifle primed itself! He aimed, and the bullet whistled through the heart of the savage. He fell, and as he went down, the bullet from the muzzle of his ascending rifle whizzed through Derner's hair, and passed off, without avenging the death of its master, into the bordering wilderness. The ranger, after he had recovered the shock of his sudden and fearful encounter, cast a look upon the fallen savage. The paleness of death had come over his copper-colored forehead. Around the spot where his bones repose, the towering forest has now given place to the grain field, and the soil above him has been for years, furrowed and re-furrowed by the plowshare. Derner took the Indian's back trail, with the resolution of ascertaining what he had been up to. Following on for several miles, he came to a place where Monewa had left several other Indians for the purpose of cleaning his gun. And, now to his surprise, for the first time he discovered that the back trail led in the direction of his home.

On reaching his home he found the dwelling a smoking ruin, and all the family lying murdered and scalped, except a young woman who had been brought up in the family, and to whom Derner was ardently attached. She had also been taken alive, as was ascertained by examining the trail of the savages. Derner soon discovered that the party consisted of four Indians and a renegade white man, a circumstance not uncommon in those early days, when, on account of crime or for the sake of revenge, the white outlaw had fled to the savages, and was adopted on trial into the tribe.

It was past the middle of the day, and the

nearest assistance was at some considerable distance. However, as there were only four to contend with, he decided on instant pursuit. As the deed had been very recently done, he hoped to come up with them that night, and perhaps before they could cross the Ohio River, to which the Indians always retreated after a successful incursion, considering themselves in a manner safe when they had crossed to its right bank, at that time occupied wholly by the Indian tribes.

After following the trail of the savages for some time, the Ranger came to the place, where Monewa had left them. A half hour later (by signs known only to experienced woodmen) he became convinced that some one else was also upon the trail of the Indians. After a great amount of maneuvering and strategic reconnoitering, he learned that it was a ranger like himself, and no other than his old friend Joshua Fleetheart, who never came across an Indian's trail without following it. Derner now pushed rapidly forward, and soon came up with his friend. Ardent and unwearied was the pursuit of the rangers: the one excited to recover his lost mistress, the other to assist his friend and take revenge for the slaughter of his countrymen, slaughter and revenge being the daily business of the borderers at this portentous period. Fleetheart followed the trail with the sagacity of a bloodhound, and just at dusk traced the fugitives to a noted war path, nearly opposite the mouth of Captiner Creek, emptying into the Ohio, which, much to their disappointment, they found that the Indians had crossed by forming a raft of logs and brush, their usual manner when at a distance from their villages. By examining carefully the appearances on the opposite shore, they soon discovered the fire of the Indian camp in a hollow way a few yards down the river. Lest the noise of constructing a raft should alarm the Indians, and give notice of pursuit, the two hardy adventurers determined to swim the stream a few rods below. This they easily accomplished, being both of them excellent swimmers; fastening their clothes and ammunition in a bundle on the top of their heads, with their rifles resting across their shoulders, they reached the opposite shore in safety. After carefully examining their arms, and putting every article of attack and defense in its proper place, they crawled very cautiously to a position which gave them a fair view of their enemies, who, thinking themselves safe from pursuit, were carelessly reposing around their fire. They instantly discovered the young woman, apparently unhurt, but making much moaning and lamentation; while the white man was trying to pacify and console her with the promise of kind usage and an adoption into the tribe. Derner, hardly able to restrain his rage, was for firing and rushing instantly upon them. Fleetheart, more cautious, told him to wait until daylight appeared, when they could meet with a better chance of success, and of also killing the whole party: but if they attacked in the dark a part of them would certainly escape. As soon as the daylight dawned, the Indians arose and prepared to depart.

Derner, selecting the white renegade, and Fleetheart an Indian, they both fired at the same time, each killing his man. Derner rushed forward, knife in hand, to relieve the young woman, while Fleetheart reloaded his gun and pushed in pursuit of the two surviving Indians, who had taken to the woods. Fleetheart soon came up with them, and taking steady aim, shot the smallest one dead in his tracks. As soon as his gun was discharged, the other sprang toward him, tomahawk in hand. They seized each other, and a desperate scuffle ensued. Fleetheart, casting his eye downward, discovered the Indian making an effort to unshathe a knife that was hanging at his belt. Keeping his eye on it, he let the Indian work the handle out, when he suddenly grabbed it, jerked it out of the sheath, and sunk it up to the handle in the Indian's breast, who gave a death groan and expired. After taking their scalps, Fleetheart and his friend, with the rescued captive, returned in safety to the settlement.

AN EXTRAORDINARY WOOING.

A correspondent of the "Indianapolis Herald" tells the following anecdote of Professor Foster, who filled, with much ability, one of the chairs of the faculty of the college in Knoxville, Tenn.

Professor Foster was educated in the sciences usually taught in college, but his ignorance of the common affairs of life rendered him a remarkable man, furnishing a rare subject for the study of human nature in one of its multifarious phases. Being advised by some of his friends to get married, he, with child-like faith and simplicity, accepted their advice, and promised to do so if he could find a young lady willing to have him. They referred him to a number of the best young ladies in the city, any one of whom, they had no doubt, would be willing to accept his hand and make him happy. He was one of the most kind-hearted of men, as void of guile as offence, and an entire stranger to the forms and ceremonies of modern courtship. He couldn't see the necessity of consuming a year or two in popping the question—"Sally, will you have me?" So he went that very day to the residence of the nearest young lady who had been commended, and being welcomed and seated in the family circle, as he always was, wherever known he at once made known the object of his visit, by saying, in a clear and distinct voice:

"Well, Miss Sarah, my friends, who advised me to get married, recommend you and a num-

ber of other young ladies to me as suitable persons, and I have called to see if you are willing to marry me."

Had an earthquake violently shaken the premises, the household could not have been more astonished. Like a frightened roe, Sarah started to run, when her mother caught her and said:

"Why, child, don't be frightened; the professor won't hurt you."

Being again seated, a deep blush succeeded the paleness which had been caused by the startling announcement, and she rallied enough to be able to say to the professor that as his proposition was so entirely unexpected she must have some time to consider the matter. This he granted, but said:

"As I am anxious, in case of your refusal, to see the other young ladies to-day, I can wait only one hour for your answer."

Knowing the worthiness, sincerity and simplicity of the professor, the matron took her blushing daughter up-stairs for consultation, while the father was left to entertain his proposed son-in-law as best he could under the novel circumstances. Of course, the discussion of the sudden proposition between Sarah and her mother was private, and cannot be given in full. The most essential points of it, however, were told afterwards. It was readily admitted that he was entirely worthy of Sarah's hand and heart.

"But mamma," said Sarah, "how would it look to other people for me to have to give an answer in one short hour—only sixty minutes—jump at a hasty chance—and to think how my young friends would jeer and laugh at me. Wouldn't they tease me to death? No, ma, I can never face that music."

"But stop, my child, and listen to me. There is not a young lady in the city that would not jump at the offer made you. Let them laugh. Girls must have something to laugh at, but it won't hurt you. Tell him yes, emphatically. If he were a stranger, whose antecedents were unknown to us, however prepossessing in person and manners, or profuse in his professions of love, I would withhold my consent. But we have long known him; his moral character is without reproach, he is amiable, kind-hearted and sincere, a fine scholar, with an honorable position in the college, and he makes no false preferences. You know just what he is. What more do you want?"

"But, mamma, I don't know that he loves me. He hasn't even said so."

"Oh, well, daughter, never mind that. Generally those who are loudest in their professions of love, have least of the pure article. You can teach him by example to love you. It is far better than precept."

Leaning her head upon her mother's bosom, Sarah said in a submissive tone:

"Well, ma, just as you say—I'll tell him yes; but although the hour isn't half out, we'll not go down until the last minute of the hour."

At the expiration of the fifty-ninth minute they returned to the professor and papa. Sarah still blushing, but more calm than before. Then, with a firmness that astonished herself as well as her parents, she extended her hand to the professor and said:

"Yes, sir, if papa consents."

He gave his consent without hesitancy, and it was readily agreed by all that the wedding should take place a week from that time. Then Professor Foster, with his usual calmness, conscious of having done his duty, withdrew to report progress to his friends.

Well, in due time, the professor went to the clerk for his licence. The clerk informed him that the law required a bond and security in the sum of \$1,250, to be void on condition that there was no legal objection to the proposed union of the two persons named. The professor very promptly replied, "Oh, never mind the bond, Mr. Clerk; I will pay \$1,100 down, and will hand you the balance in a day or two." After further explanation by the clerk, the professor complied with the law and obtained his licence.

At the appointed time the wedding came off in the best style of the city, and the company enjoyed the occasion with the greatest zest. The hours flew like humming-birds. As the clock struck twelve the professor picked up his hat and started to his boarding house. His principal attendant surmising his intention, followed to the front door, and informed him that matrimonial etiquette required him to stay and board and lodge at the house of his father-in-law until he and his wife wished to live by themselves.

Finally the happy couple went to housekeeping, and never were man and wife more heartily congratulated or more highly esteemed than they were. They were the favorites in the city. Never was a wife more lovely or husband more kind or devoted, but he didn't know anything about providing for the larder, only as she taught him. One little incident may suffice to illustrate. She told him one day to get some rice. "How much?" inquired the clerk. "Oh, not much," said the professor; "I reckon three or four bushels will do for the present." The clerk was very sorry to say they had not so much on hand, but that they would soon have more. The clerk persuaded him to try and make out for two or three days with some fifteen or twenty pounds. Sarah and the clerk were not the only ones who laughed over the incident. He never called for the three or four bushels afterward.

If the professor and his wife are still living, they must be well stricken in years, and if they see this brief sketch of their early lives, and find any errors in it, they will pardon the writer.