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"NASCENTE LUNA."

I saw a stretch of chrome sky,
Like some cold ocean cleaved in,
Peaceful and wide its spume lay,
And purple waves tumbled in
A little shallow blue bay
Upon its beach to shore.

This crash, sometimes the twilight or night,
Ellipse out across the twilight yet,
Through gray vapors and the glitter
Lost to a black star set.
While Venus's pale and fairy prow
Sails drifts along the summer blue.

She's lifted from ocean to shore with flowers,
And bears and flags and fleur-de-lis,
With souls of sailors who have sailed
Ah, and if we could only guess!
She rides upstream! remote,
This little slender silver boat.

—London Spectator.

HIS RULING PASSION.

Phineas Gunny was crushed; he had always been crushed; he expected to always be crushed. Life's sweets had all turned to gall for him; even forbidden fruit only produced vinegar. Othello was forbidden fruit to him; for though he had been an actor for fifteen years, the most important part for which he had ever been cast was Ludovico. At heart, Phineas was a powerful tragedian; in fact, he was only a "utility" man in the Globe theater at Cohonk.

He had run away from home at the age of twenty and gone upon the stage. He had a burning, withering desire to rival Forrest, who was then just beginning to be famous. It was in the good old days, before the "combination" had made nearly every actor a wanderer on the face of the earth. Phineas applied for an engagement at the stage door of the Momus theater, in Whitlestown, where there was a respectable stock company.

The stage manager put him on among the supers. In one year he had risen to the high post of captain of the "——."

He vowed that he would be a great actor, if it took twenty years' study. That study he began at once. Determined as he was to reach the top of the ladder, he resolved to fill his soul with noble thoughts. Therefore he began to study Othello.

No matter what Iago's fortune dealt him, the soul of Phineas Gunny, reveling among the sublimities of the great Venetian tragedy, withstood them smilingly.

Years rolled on. The opportunity to play his beloved part—although he knew it so well that he could have begun at the last line and played it through backward—never presented itself. He had seen every tragedian of prominence play the part. He was very familiar with it. In fact he was so familiar with it that he was unable to learn anything else, and always stuck once or twice in every part he played, no matter how short it was.

At the end of his first fifteen years in the profession, he found himself doing the utility parts at the Globe theater, in Cohonk, as has been stated. The desired opportunity had not yet come. No manager had ever been able to see beneath Phineas Gunny's commonplace exterior a soul full of Othello. Yet it was there.

One morning the manager, Mr. Michael Francis, walked upon the stage, and called to crowds his stage manager, Mr. Orpheus Smith, and said:

"Orpheus, my boy, my daughter is coming home for a rest."

The manager's daughter, Miss Virginia Francis, was the leading lady at a theater in New York. She was only twenty-three, but had made such a hit on her first appearance that the New York manager, hearing of her, went to Cohonk to see her, and engaged her at once.

Two days later the young lady arrived. She was a beautiful girl. Tall, dark eyed, intelligent in conversation, she was a perfect queen among the complacent young ladies of the Globe company. She walked upon the stage during rehearsal the day after her arrival, and sat down beside her father.

Phineas Gunny was leaning against the wind machine at the back of the stage when she entered. He did not raise his eyes, for he was mentally doing the fifth act of "Othello." Presently he heard his cue, and advanced to speak his lines. It was then that he caught sight of the young lady. For a moment he was speechless. He stared at her intently, until the prompter exclaimed:

"Go on, Mr. Gunny; you've played this part a dozen times."

With an effort Phineas recovered himself, and went on with his lines. When he made his exit, Virginia turned to her father and said:

"Papa, who is that tall, homely man, who stared so oddly at me?"

"That, my dear, is Mr. Phineas Gunny."

"Heaven! What a name for an actor!"

"Yes, he's a little bit eccentric, but useful in small parts."

When Phineas had reached the shelter of the wings, he turned to the nearest person, who happened to be the "second old woman," an irritable grumpy and said:

"Mrs. Thompson, can you tell me who that young lady is, sitting beside the manager?"

"That's his daughter."

Phineas stood and gazed at her long after he had finished his part and was at liberty to leave the theater. A new feeling dawned in his heart. He could not tell what it was, but he knew that he could not take his eyes away from the face of Virginia Francis. He dined feebly at her until the rehearsal was ended and she arose, with her father, to leave the house.

This with a heavy sigh, which startled him, he turned away. He walked home beneath a dark pall then. He climbed up to his attic chamber and took off his coat. He placed himself before his looking glass and began to play Othello. In a few moments he paused. What was the matter? Could it be possible that he was becoming tired of his great role? Never! He began again. He washed up his scene with redoubled energy. It was no use. Instead of his own face, he saw in the glass that of the manager's daughter. Othello at last had encountered a rival. The horrible truth dawned upon the mind of Phineas Gunny that instead of his master passion he now had one. The first was Othello; the second Virginia Francis.

"This," he reflected, "is too much. Love, that has hitherto shunned the poor utility man and contented his attentions to the heroes of the boards, the juvenile and the sighing gentlemen, now comes to him. Why have I to do with love? Alas! I can only worship her at a distance."

And he was as good as his word. He watched her every movement, whenever she was in the theater. As for her, it would be foolish to say she did not notice him. She was a woman and an actress, and admiration was the perfume of her life. Therefore she quickly saw that Phineas admired her. Nay, more, she perceived that he was deeply in love with her.

"Poor fellow!" she reflected, "he has fallen hopelessly in love with me. It is too bad. I didn't mind the sighs of the fashionable young men in New York, because I knew they bestow them upon every actress in the city. But the poor fellow, he is in earnest, and yet he does not dare to speak to me."

These thoughts grew in Virginia's mind. She found herself continually watching Phineas to see if he was watching her. He daily became more moody and melancholy, and she daily became more sorry for him. At length, one morning, while she was sitting at the prompt table during a "shortcut," she saw Phineas standing well back in the first entrance and devouring her with his eyes. She arose and carelessly walked up to the back of the stage, and then, passing behind the wings, she came down behind Phineas and attracted his attention by a little cough.

He started and began to tremble when he saw her.

"Why do you stare so at me?" she asked.

"'S death!" said Phineas in a low voice. "I may not tell thee that, Woman, I have only two passions. One is to play Othello and the other—is a secret which must not pass my lips."

"Poor fellow," she said very softly, as she turned away.

"Perdition catch my soul, but I do love thee!" exclaimed Phineas under his breath.

She heard him. She felt that she ought to have been very angry, but in spite of herself she was pleased.

The next time she passed Phineas in the scenes she completely upset that gentleman by bestowing upon him a smile and a bow.

The days rolled on, and Phineas Gunny's new passion grew. As for the young lady, her pity for her strange lover also grew. She always spoke to him kindly, which added fresh fuel to the fire which was consuming his being. Thus matters went on until Virginia had been in Cohonk two weeks.

The climax of that enterprising city then conceived the brilliant idea of giving a grand benefit to the young lady whose talents shed lustre upon the town.

Manager Francis was, of course, delighted, and announced that his daughter would appear on June 7 in her famous role of Desdemona.

The play was at once put in rehearsal. Phineas, of course, was cast for Ludovico, and had to endure the misery of rehearsals of hearing his favorite part butchered by the leading man, Oscar Montrose.

Then Phineas gnawed his lips. Then his heart beat in anguish unspeakable. He knew how he could play that part, and his soul burned with anguish to do so with his beloved Virginia as the Desdemona. But his wishes were of no use. He and he could not be brought so nearly together. At rehearsals he stood in the entrance and murmured the well known lines while Montrose was murmuring them on the stage.

Virginia, who had fallen into a habit of watching her queer lover, saw him as he was going through his daily performance. She found an opportunity to speak to him.

"What were you muttering here a few moments ago?" she asked.

"I was speaking," he replied, "as they should be spoken, the sublime lines of Othello."

"Do you know the part?"

"Do I know it? For fourteen years it has burned and seethed in my brain! Othello is my one grand passion—or was. I have learned the business of all the prominent characters, but that one I shall never play."

"Why?"

"Because I have never yet met the one who could play Desdemona. But I know that my time will come, but until then I must go on, on, on—Ludovico."

At last the fatal night arrived. All Cohonk turned out to do honor to its late benefactress.

At half past 7, the people were crowding through the doors, and as Manager Francis peered through the "peep hole" his heart was very glad. As he stood there the stage manager rushed up to him with an open letter in his hand.

"Mr. Francis!" he exclaimed, "Montrose has sent me a note saying that he fell down upon his ankle and sprained his ankle so that he cannot walk, and consequently cannot play. What's to be done?"

"Done!" We must change the bill. Let us go and see Virginia."

The manager led the way to his daughter's dressing room and found that she had not yet begun to dress. She opened the door for the two men, and saw by their faces that something was wrong.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"Montrose is drunk and can't get out of the house."

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Virginia.

"My child," said her father, "we must change the bill to 'Iscariot.' I am up in the part, and——"

"I do not wish to play Desdemona; I hate the part. Is no one up in Othello?"

"Not a soul."

Virginia looked perplexed for a moment. Then she suddenly lighted up.

"Papa," she exclaimed, "there is a man in the company who knows that part perfectly."

"Who?" asked the manager.

"Mr. Gunny."

"Good heavens! Virginia, he is crazy."

"No, he plays Othello."

"How do you know that?"

"He told me so."

"Orpheus, call Gunny."

In a few moments Gunny appeared.

"Gunny," said Mr. Francis, "do you know Othello?"

"I am a letter-perfect, sir, in the whole part; do you want me to prompt?"

"No! I want you to play Othello."

Phineas staggered back against the doorframe.

"Are you ill? Are you afraid to try?"

"Afraid! For fourteen long years I have hungered and thirsted for a chance to play that part, and now it has come, Sir, you are my lone lamb."

"Don't thank me, my daughter insisted upon it."

Poor Phineas was overcome. He gasped two or three times, and then spoke:

"Indemnifie, I cannot tell you of my gratitude. I will show it in my acting."

"Well," said Francis, go and dress while I go and make an apology to the audience."

Phineas called successfully as he walked away. Mr. Francis went before the curtain after the overture and said:

"Ladies and Gentlemen—It is with great regret that I announce the sudden illness of Mr. Montrose. His part will be taken at half an hour's notice by Mr. Gunny, for whom I bespeak the kind consideration of the audience."

Mr. Francis retired amid distinct murmurs of disapproval.

The curtain arose. Roderigo, Brabantio and Iago went through with their scene. Then Iago and Othello made their appearance. A murmur of surprise and approval ran through the house. Phineas had thrown his whole soul into his makeup. He looked the part to perfection. But the actors standing in the wings were smiling in anticipation of the coming fiasco. Phineas played his opening lines in much the same manner as he had previously played Ludovico. Francis breathed more easily.

"Gunny will be a mighty weak Othello," thought he, "but I don't believe they'll pay him."

Matters went on roughly until Phineas came to the speech to his ancestors to the duke. Up to that time he had felt as one in a dream. The old familiar words suddenly awakened him to a sense of his situation—

Her father loved me, oft invited me.

That line awoke the slumbering fire in Phineas Gunny's soul. He looked at Francis standing in the entrance, watching him. His somewhat loved Forrest. He began to act. He finished the speech amid a spontaneous burst of applause.

From that moment he played Othello as he had never played it before. Before his old looking glass in the end of the third act he had Virginia were enthusiastically called before the curtain. Francis stood astonished in the prompt entrance. His daughter ran to him and threw her arms about his neck.

"Papa!" she cried; "I have never played Desdemona as I am playing it tonight; I never had such an Othello!"

The enthusiasm of the house increased. Phineas was improving in every act. The murder scene was electric. The curtain fell, and again Phineas led the glowing Virginia to the footlights.

When they had left the stage she looked at him with delight and wonder in her eyes.

"Oh, you're an angel!" she exclaimed. "You are simply great."

Phineas sank down into a chair and burst into a flood of tears.

"At last," he sobbed, "after fourteen years, Mademoiselle, you are the ideal Desdemona."

Arising, he offered her his hand, and begged permission to lead her to the dressing room. She assented. As the door he paused and said:

"Miss Francis, I have had only one passion, and that was to play Othello. I love the man better than having played it with you. I should like to play it with you all the rest of my life."

"And I would play Desdemona," she murmured, "with you as Othello, all the rest of my life."

"Then let us do so," he said. "I love you. Hurry me and we'll play the piece around the world."

"You love me!"

"Ever since I first saw you, Othello has been only a secondary passion. Could you learn to love me?"

"Yes."

He turned to leave her. She laid her hand on his arm.

"I could not learn to love you—because I have already learned it."—Santanette in New York Press.

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