

SET IN A SILVER SEA!

(FOR THE RECORD-UNION.)

A ROMANCE BY B. L. FARJEON.

AUTHOR OF "BLADE OF GRASS," "BREAD AND KISSES," "JOSHUA MARVEL," "KING OF NO-LAND," "THE BELLS OF PENRAVEN," ETC.

CHAPTER XVI.

RANF AND MAUVAIN.

"From the date of this conversation my steps were no longer dogged. I was left to do as I pleased with my days, most of which I spent in the deserted house, feasting on old wine and old books. I spared neither, and did not abuse them. The wine created for me an ideal world, in which I performed vainglorious deeds; the books bore better fruit. There were in the library many manuscripts relating to botanical science, and these were especially attractive to me, for the reason, perhaps, that the surrounding forests afforded practical illustrations, and that my time was my own to search for them. I became (I have no doubt superficially) learned in the growth and life and affinities of plants, and my studies—which were of infinite value to me in what I choose to call soul-development—led me to the discovery of a Dream-flower, from which I distilled a liquid the mere inhalation of which is sufficient to produce sleep, and, often, beautiful and remarkable dreams. The Dream-flower is growing now upon this mountain of snow.

"So passed my early life, Evangelic; for it is to you I am speaking. Your spirit, dear one, seems to be hovering over me in this but; you are but a child now; when you are a woman, love me not less. You will live to hear words of deep devotion from men's lips, but there is no being who would endure more for your sake than Ranf the deformed.

"My mother said to me: 'Ranf, the old lord is dead.'

"A well I answered.

"A new man reigns, his son. We shall have fine times again."

"Is he better than the lord who is dead?"

"Fresher, younger, with blood not yet ripened. The old lord let things run to waste. He has palaces in which he has not set foot for years. Think of that."

"I am thinking of it. What will be done with those palaces now?"

"They will be inhabited again. The old lord in his youth led a riotous life, the young one will do the same. There will be hunting and feasting and love-making. Ah, Ranf, I, too, was young once."

"Naturally. Is this new lord rich?"

"He could not count his money."

"Ah! Others will do it for him."

"Ranf, said my mother, 'you talk as if you knew the world.'"

"One does not need to mix with it to know it."

"She came close to me. 'You are mistaken; you know nothing; you will be wiser in time.'"

"I hope so. Wisdom shall have a welcome."

"It is as bitter as gall; you will wish you were a hind."

"Why?"

"She touched my hump, and pointed to my crooked limbs. 'You are a spoilt man,' she said."

"Well, I said, pretending to care nothing for her croaking, 'if I am spoilt for this world, I am not for the next.'"

"There is no next," she muttered gloomily; "this is the end of everything."

"I did not argue with her; one must decide for oneself; there is no proof that can be demonstrated. To pay another man to make a faith for you is to reduce religion to the level of a trade."

"The thought disturbed me. 'How will it be with you, Ranf, when the new lord comes this way? Will he leave you your palace, or fill it with his lackeys?' There was but one reasonable answer, and I said, 'Ranf, you are no longer a king.'"

"But I consoled myself with the reflection that I had made good use of time and opportunity."

"I felt the necessity of being more cautious than hitherto in my visits to the deserted mansion. A curious temptation assailed me. 'If, thought I, 'I went to meet this lord, and send him into a sleep from which he would not wake, I should be safe, and we both should be happy. I could do so with my dream-flower.'"

"Since the news of the succession of the new lord the woman whom I must continue to call my mother had shown a hideous desire to decorate herself with gewgaws and fine clothes, of which, to my surprise, she had a supply. I had no idea that she possessed hidden treasure."

"Why do you make yourself so gay?" I asked.

"To please the young lord," she answered.

"Do you think he will fall in love with you?"

"She leered at me. I had never any respect for her; my feeling now was one of abhorrence."

"One night, as I was about to leave the deserted house, the feeling came upon me that it might be the last time I should ever be able to command its treasures; I walked through every room, and bade farewell to familiar objects; they were nearer to me, and more endeared, than any human creature."

"My presence proved to be correct. The next morning when I stole cautiously to the spot, I observed signs of life about the house; persons whose faces I could not distinguish were moving through the rooms. My reign was over."

"I retreated immediately, and so as not to give my mother a clue I passed the day in a remote part of the forest."

"Upon my return to our hut my mother said she had news for me; the new lord would soon present himself; his agents and servants were preparing the estate for his examination; she had seen them, and had spoken to them."

"They are taking account of everything, Ranf. There is a steward, with a sharp face, who looks as if he would like to count the trees and birds."

"Did he take account of you?"

"Yes, and set down my name and yours."

"Why mine?"

"You belong to the new lord, as I do. Were you not born on his land? Have you not thriven on it?"

"And upon his books and wine," I

added, mentally, and said aloud: "I am no slave."

"You are a fool if you rebel against a powerful master. The Mauvains are not to be defied by such as you."

"We shall see."

"I had no thought of defiance. It was only that I would not tamely submit to slavery."

"Where are the men now?" I asked.

"They have gone in the direction of a beautiful house which the old lord built when he was young. It has not been inhabited for years. Come, I will show it to you."

"It was a dark night, and I followed her to my old haunt. It was ablaze with light. Sounds of loud laughter and singing floated through the air."

"They are enjoying themselves, Ranf."

"Yes; the new reign has commenced well."

"The cellars are filled with rich wine."

"Why did you not tell me before. We would have feasted on it."

"I dared not speak of the place, Ranf; I dared not go near it. I lived there when I was a girl."

"And that made you afraid of it?"

"Strange things were done there. The old lord was wild and reckless, headstrong, bloody."

"Headstrong and bloody enough for murder?"

"Speak low. A young lady was brought there against her will. The old lord had taken a fancy to her, and he stole her from her friends. She went mad, and one morning was found dead in the grounds."

"Did she die a natural death?"

"No one knew."

"You are mistaken, mother. Even I know, who never heard the tale before. The Mauvains must be a brave race of men."

"You are right, Ranf; they are as brave as lions and as fearless."

"We had approached close to the house, and were seen. Half-a-dozen drunken roysters rushed towards my mother and seized her. She cried for help, and in a moment I was engaged in a desperate struggle. Truly I found my strength prodigious, and my veins thrilled with exultation as I flung the men from me and stamped upon them. Their shouts brought others out, and they came with torches, and some stood about and laughed at the fight. I have the scene before me now, Leontine; a patch of light, with torches waving; deep darkness beyond; and I and twenty men struggling like demons. My mother had escaped in the confusion, and I, taking advantage of the opportunity, found a favorable moment to leap into the darkness."

"It is an imp of hell, I heard the men cry, as I escaped."

"I overtook my mother; she was in an agony of fear."

"There is an end of us," she whimpered; "I wish you had died at your birth."

"It might have been as well," I said.

"If you did not want help you should not have called for it."

"They will come to-morrow and whip you."

"It will cost them something. I owe them gratitude; but for them I might not have known how glorious it is to be strong."

"My mother spoke truth. In the morning the men came to our hut, and, being now sober, conquered me more easily than I had expected. There were plenty of them, and I gave them marks to show for their pains; but my resistance was useless; I was bound with ropes, set astride a horse, and led towards the house of which I had been master for so many years. My enemies were free of their words, and mocked my deformity, and taunted me in brutal fashion for my ugliness and crookedness. They had a monkey with them, and they strapped it on to my hump, and jeered at it and flouted the pair of us, saying we were brothers, and that one mother bore us. When I shut my eyes in the endeavor to forget them, they spat in my face. These were men, Leontine. Would beasts have behaved so?"

"I could not learn what they intended to do with me. They threatened so many things; to burn me, to drown me, to hang me, to whip me to death. Could I have invoked annihilation at any moment during that humiliating ride, I should not have hesitated."

"We arrived at the house; I was lifted from the horse, and, with the monkey still fastened to my shoulders, was set on a high. My tormentors forced themselves into a mock court of justice; I was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to be thrown upon a stack of damp straw, which was to be fired at every point; if I escaped suffocation by smoke I was to be tried again. Now, while the straw was being collected and piled up in an open space at some distance from the house, an unexpected incident in the drama occurred. A company of gentlemen on horseback suddenly made their appearance. They were handsomely dressed, and in gay spirits. They reined up in front of me."

"I was seized with a desire to mock my fate and make light of it, not doubting that their mood would fall in with that of my persecutors."

"My lords and gentlemen," I said, endeavoring to incline my head towards them, 'you have arrived in time for the conflagration; a man is about to be burnt. It is a sight worth paying for, and you shall witness it for nothing.'"

"They inquired my meaning."

"Ask your equals," I said, pointing to the men who were approaching me for the purpose of executing their threat."

"The gentlemen—one in particular—frowned, and I saw that my judges were disconcerted by their appearance."

"Did he take account of you?"

"Yes, and set down my name and yours."

"Why mine?"

"You belong to the new lord, as I do. Were you not born on his land? Have you not thriven on it?"

"And upon his books and wine," I

was so slavish and obsequious and the lies they told so outrageous, that I laughed aloud in scorn of them."

"What have you to say?" asked the gentleman.

"First," I replied, 'that if I am to be punished for fighting single-handed against twenty, there is no reason why another should suffer. If you do not care to do justice to a man, do justice to a monkey.'"

"The gentleman appears to like my humor; the monkey was unstrapped from my shoulders and I was then ordered to tell my story. I told it, and offered to prove it upon the bodies of two of the most powerful of my enemies. There was something in me that attracted them, some dare-devilry or defiance of fate, or perhaps something in my speech different from what they might have expected from a being of my stamp. My proposal was hailed with a shout of laughter."

"It shall be so, Knight of the Hump," said the chief; "I am master here."

"You are Mauvain, then," I said audaciously, "the new lord."

"I am," he replied, seemingly amused at my boldness.

"My mother has told me of you. 'Now shall have fine times,' she said, 'we the old lord is dead.' They have commenced well for me."

"Is your mother here?" he inquired.

"No," I said, 'ashamed of bringing me into the world, she is praying for my soul while I go out of it.'"

"You have a nimble tongue, hunchback."

"There is no hump on it, my lord. If I am to fight I must be unbound."

"By his order the ropes were taken from my body, and I gave a leap in the air. A fantastic spirit animated me, and my wits were sharpened by the opportunity given me for quip and repartee. A ring was formed, within which the tournament was to be held. Whichever one of the three combatants stepped outside this ring was to be driven in with whip and thong."

"The gentlemen entered into the affair with keen enjoyment; it was rare sport for them."

"My antagonists entered the ring, stripped to the waist. They were fine stalwart men, and their muscles stood out like whipcord. I measured them with my eye; they looked on me with scorn. I thought to myself that it would have been chivalrous on the part of the gentlemen to have suggested that the battle about to be fought was unequal, but no such idea occurred to them."

"If I kill these men, I said to Mauvain, 'what will happen to me?'"

"I will hold you free," he replied; 'if you come off victorious, you shall enter my service, and be dressed in silk.'"

"Ah," I said, with a grimace, 'the tailor will have a difficult job.'"

"Whereat the gentlemen laughed again."

"Now, whether they wished me to be victorious or not I cannot say; I know that they betted on the result of the battle, and as they would have done if beasts were about to fight instead of men."

"What is your name, hunchback?" asked Mauvain.

"Ranf," I answered.

"I shall stake money on you."

"You are a good judge. If I lose you can cut off my hump. If I win, I cry halves."

"The signal was given for the battle to commence. There were no set rules; we were to fight in any way we pleased. For a moment or two we gazed at each other in silence; then the two men advanced towards me, one undertaking to seize me, while the other looked on and bided his time. I gave him no time to bide. Slipping past the active one, I seized the other, and flung him like lightning over my shoulder. He fell upon his head, and lay motionless. Before my remaining enemy could take advantage of me, I confronted him. I saw him turn pale, and I played with him; I allowed him to grip me, but he could have made as much impression upon steel as he made upon me. Never till this moment was I aware of my full strength. Gradually I slid my hands from his shoulders to his wrists, until I held his arms in my left hand as in a vice, while my right was free to kill him, if I cared to do so."

"What do you think?" I said, as I looked him straight in the face."

"That you are leagued with the devil," he muttered, writhing in mortification and shame at his disgrace."

"It was you who spat in my face," I said; 'the devil I am in league with is a foolish devil. Go; I give you your life.'"

"I hurled him from me, and he fell, stunned, to the ground. Then I stepped to Mauvain, and said: 'I am ready for another two.'"

"You have done enough," said Mauvain, flinging me some money."

"It was the first money I had ever owned. I looked around upon the men who had insulted me, and gathering the money, I threw it among them, as carelessly as it had been thrown to me."

"I will buy the hunchback of you," said one of the gentlemen to Mauvain."

"He is not for sale," replied Mauvain."

"So, I was a commodity, to be bought and sold. My flesh and blood did not belong to me."

"Within a month my mother and I were established in Mauvain's household, and had soft beds to sleep in. My mother was in her glory; I sighed for my old life. If I had met with one of those human sympathies or kindness, it might have been different with me; but I was surrounded by hatred. I was feared for my strength, and men were careful not to provoke me, but none would associate with me. They would not admit me into their pastimes; when I spoke they answered in monosyllables, or turned from me in contemptuous silence; they would not eat or drink with me; they would not touch my hand in token of friendship. It was with women as with men, and that hurt me more sorely; fresh young beauty that I innocently admired, as I would a flower or any other fair evidence of nature, shrunk from me as from a pestilence. Not one kind word, not one gracious look fell upon my heart to blossom into gratitude or affection."

"It was monstrous. What crime had I committed that I should be thus abhorred? The crime of having been born?"

"The deepest affliction of all was that I myself, in the exercise of my own instincts, found justification for the contempt and hatred of men. Else, why should I, as I did, turn sympathetically to objects of beauty in inanimate or inanimate nature; why should I, as I did, love to gaze upon

what was fairest and brightest in creation? Had I been well-shaped and straight-limbed, would it have been with me as with others, and should I have regarded physical misfortune with aversion? I think not, if it had appealed to me, as I, in my first communion with mankind, appealed to those with whom I was thrown into association."

"Mauvain took me with him into the busier world, where I learned to know mankind better than in his beautiful country home. It did not improve upon more intimate acquaintance. I thought it an honor when Mauvain lent me to his artist friends as a model for stone or carving, but when I saw myself depicted as a fool to beauty, and recognized that the moral lesson sought to be conveyed made me spiritually as well as bodily hideous, I felt as if I should have loved to cut the canvas to shreds and shatter the marble to fragments for the injustice perpetuated upon me. All this embittered me, and made my way of life harder and harder as the years rolled on."

"Fond of his pleasures, and unscrupulous in the pursuit of them, Mauvain was also an ambitious man, and his ambition, leading him to political intrigue, brought him to a crisis in which his life was in danger. He was compelled to fly the country."

"Of all his numerous friends, of all who served him, he chose me to assist him in his escape. It needed caution and courage, for enemies were searching for him, and there was a price upon his head. I knew that I could earn this money, I knew that his life was in my hands, I knew that he had no feeling of regard for me, and that he had only used me for his sport and pastime, but I did not betray him. The service he required of me I performed faithfully, and he received it with unthankful indifference."

"It was early morning, and we stood upon the seashore. The vessel which was to convey him to a land of safety lay a mile off, its sails ready for the flight. A boat awaited him. He was about to step into it without a word, when he turned to me with a sudden impulse, and said: 'What are you going to do?'"

"To be my own master," I replied; 'I have had one; I am glad to be rid of him.'"

"He laughed gaily; he was a man of courage, and though every additional moment might be fatal, he lingered because it was his whim to linger."

"You are a bit of a student, Ranf," he said; 'Heaven knows how you acquired your knowledge, but you have some, and I think you understand human nature. I am curious to know why you have served me faithfully in this last perilous mission. You might have earned money by giving me up. You have no love for me, I know; you know I have nothing but contempt for you; you might have had my life. Why have you served me now, at the risk of your own?'"

"Question for question," I said; 'answer mine first. Why of all the men by whom you were surrounded did you intrust your life to my keeping?'"

"Because," he replied, with a frank smile, 'of all the men by whom I was surrounded you were the one who, giving evidence against me, would be least likely to be believed. No one trusts you, Ranf. Had you said to my enemies, 'Search to the left,' they would have searched to the right. Had you told them the truth, they would have instantly concluded you were putting them off the scent. That is the reason I employed you.'"

"You had not even respect for me?"

"Not the slightest, hunchback."

"His contemptuous tone did not sting me; I was used to it."

"We are not," I said, 'equals even at this moment, when your life hangs upon a thread.'"

"Equals!" he exclaimed. 'To prove to you how far we are removed, I have a mind to stop and show you how a gentleman can die.'"

"Do not trouble yourself," I said, with some sort of admiration for him; 'death comes from one cause in man and gentleman; it is really whether one can or cannot breathe. So we are very far removed! Intellectually?'"

"As far as the poles."

"It is a comforting belief. Now I will answer your question."

"Aye, do; I had almost forgotten it."

"You want to know why I have saved your life at the risk of my own. I will tell you. You have never stepped between me and my affections. Not in one of your pleasures have I taken an interest. Not for one of the women you have followed have I felt a spark of admiration. I have laughed at you often; you thought they were your slaves. You were mistaken; you were theirs. My mind is not as crooked as my body, and it might have been that some woman, or some child, who touched your inner life might also have touched mine. If that had been the case, and you had wronged, or wronged me, I should have harbored a thought of yours, towards the being I had an affection for."

"Proceed. I do not know when I have been so interested."

"I cast my eyes to the ground, and searched for the largest pebbles on the shore. I deliberately selected two, and holding them in one hand, ground them to powder."

"Symbolical," said Mauvain, 'and expressive.'"

"But," said I, 'these stones have no soul; you have, and it should not have escaped me.'"

[To be continued.]

VERY FAR AWAY.

One touch there is of magic white
Upon the snow-capped mountain's side,
That so far falls the dying light
Lands, where the dark sleep onward go
Upon the golden highway broad
That leads up to the isles of God.

One touch of light more magic yet,
Of rarer snow 'neath moon or star,
Where, with her graceful sails all set,
Some happy vessel veer afar,
As if in an enchanted sleep,
Stoers off the tremulous silver deep.

O'erlip! O sail! far must ye go
To see the sunset's golden glow,
O'er golden spaces of the sea,
From mysteries of the luvant night,
Such touch comes never to the boat,
Wherein across the waves we float.

O gleams more magic and divine,
Life's white sail ye still refuse,
And flying on before us glide,
Upon some distant bark ye choose,
By night or day, across the spray,
That sail is very far away.

—William Alexander.

WHAT is better than a promising young man? A paying one.

FROM PARIS.

ABOUT NEW DRAMAS AND HOW TO GET A PLAY ACCEPTED.

Reception of the Swedish Arctic Explorer—Curious style in Art—April Oddities—Etc.

PARIS, April 3, 1880.

The debut of Henri de Bornier in the world of letters took place some four years ago, when his tragedy of "La Fille de Roland" was played at the Theatre Francais.

Sarah Bernhardt personated the principal character, and by her superior talent added much towards the success of the piece. So charming was she as La Fille de Roland that a rich Spanish gentleman begged the fair actress to pose in her picturesque costume for a large portrait, to be painted by one of his patriots, the well-known artist, Mr. Palmaroli. I saw the portrait on several occasions, but in an unfinished condition, for although the obliging actress was willing the Spanish gentleman should be possessor of her portrait, her numerous occupations and the demands for her society left her little time or inclination to perform such hard work as posing. She has since become more identified as Diana Sol in Victor Hugo's drama of "Hernani," for the public to long associate her with the tragic heroine, and doubtless the fire of enthusiasm which she kindled in the breast of the Spaniard had since died away. Henri de Bornier is

A WRITER OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

An initiator of the classics, and he has taken for his models Corneille and Racine. This circumstance has taken away much of his merit in the eyes of the progressive literary, for since the Romantic school established by Victor Hugo, no wonder why an author should rake among the ashes of the classics, which have been consigned to the flames of the literary revolution. He is of light complexion, has a great amount of patience, it would be easy to call into existence a whole nation of De Borniers. The Romantic school requires a greater spontaneity of thought and permits of greater breadth of expression; it is maintained and blended most harmoniously; besides, the dramatic effects derived from the situations he has created, the contrasts of character well sustained, all contribute towards producing a satisfactory work which has been thoroughly gone by the refined society of Paris.

Henri de Bornier has one particular merit, in that his efforts have been patriotic. In his "Attila" he has chosen among all the different legends recounted of this noted barbarian those which might be the better adapted to the theatre, and weaving them together has created

A CHARMING HISTORY.

The barbarian is killed on his wedding night by the French heroine, who like another Judith, sacrifices herself for her country. The verses are full of noble sentiment, and to listen to them is like a moral bath, which purifies and elevates; and let it be said to the honor of Parisians, there are always crowded houses to hear the French hero, whose love and appreciation them. Alas! how far we are behind the French in that respect; for should an English or American author have the hardihood to write a tragedy, what theatrical director would have the courage to put it on the stage, and who of us would have the patience to go and listen to it? Art is well encouraged and patronized in France, and aside from the Grand Opera and Opera Comique, there are two theatres controlled by the Government, the Theatre Francais and the Odéon, or, as it is often called, the second Theatre Francais. These opera and theatres are forced to open their doors to the young actors and actresses, and particular encouragement is given to serious works elevated as to subject and style. Much astonishment has been expressed that M. de Bornier's new tragedy was not represented at the Odéon, and particularly as the doors of that theatre had already been opened to him, and even before he had earned the reputation that "La Fille de Roland" brought him. Our readers may not probably be aware that the Theatre Francais of Paris, of wide-world fame, is conducted on different principles from perhaps any other theatre in the world. The principal actors and actresses are sociétaires. The profits are divided among themselves, and on the presentation of each new piece they, after hearing it read, vote on its acceptance or refusal. The Director's influence is comparatively slight, and the more expeditious and sure means of having a piece accepted is to choose the actress or actor who would play the principal part, and by expatiating upon the brilliant reputation he would earn for himself, flatter his pride and vanity, and let him go that he goes to each of his comrades, and like any other politician, says: "Vote for my protegee this time, and next time I shall vote for yours. Several pieces have found their way into the Theatre Francais in that manner. When "La Fille de Roland" was read before the sociétaires Sarah Bernhardt saw therein a grand role for herself, and used her influence for its acceptance. The majority consented, for the reason that they thought the public care little for tragedy now, and that the piece would not keep the boards long. The play had great success, much to the chagrin of the majority of the sociétaires, who are comedians and who were prevented from appearing before the public. Therefore, remembering the exasperating success of "La Fille de Roland," M. de Bornier was requested to carry the play to carry his wares to another market, and leave them to their comedies and arbitrariness. The spirit of rivalry took possession of the Director of the Odéon, and no means were spared to mount the piece with all the elegance and éclat the Theatre Francais could have made use of. The best artists were employed in the painting of the decorations and the designing of the costumes, and through a careful selection, superior artists were brought together, who, through ambition and emulation,

SURPASSED THEMSELVES.

And won fresh laurels while aiding to crown the author. M. de Bornier is a person of fifty years of age, and although he has appeared late in the literary field he comes so well armed that he has immediately been placed in the front ranks. Some two years ago he was proposed as a candidate for the Academy, but did not succeed in being elected; however, his chances are good for a future election, and why not? so many of the members have entered with far less fervor and important baggage than that of "La Fille de Roland" and "Attila."

Last evening took place at the Grand Opera the fifth representation of "Aida," M. Verdi has been the recipient of so much attention and admiration from the Parisians that he has found it a difficult thing to tear himself away from their embraces. He was invited the other day to breakfast at the Elysees, where, in his honor, M. Grevy, the President, had invited some of the sociétaires and officials. After breakfast M. Grevy presented the renowned maestro with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. A number, in fact, the greater number, of the Grand Opera were not able to be present at the first representation of "Aida,"

owing to its taking place not only in Lent but Holy week, and they specially requested M. Verdi to again conduct the opera in person for their benefit. The accommodating composer acquiesced, and appointed yesterday evening, the fifth representation, for that event. It is scarce necessary to add that the same enthusiasm reigned as on the previous occasion, and that Verdi was received with all the furor of an Italian audience.