

"ELLA ZOYARA."

DEATH OF THE NOTED CIRCUS FEMALE IMPERSONATOR.

*From the San Francisco Chronicle.*

The death of Omar Kingsley closes the career of one who gained a wide-spread reputation as Ella Zoyara. For years he appeared as an equestrienne under this title in almost every country on the globe, and few of those who have witnessed the graceful performance of the beautiful Zoyara dreamed that the performer was a man. Letters and lovers were abundant, and among the latter figured no less important a personage than Victor Emmanuel, of Italy, who fell in love with the dashing young rider. Soldiers and civilians figured also on the list of Zoyara's lovers, and a dispute about her among the former finally caused her or him to be placed in durance vile at Manilla.

Kingsley was born in St. Louis, where his mother and sister still reside, about 1840. At the early age of 6 a traveling circus fired his fancy for sawdust and spangles, and he soon ran away from the parental roof. He apprenticed himself to Spence Stokes, a circus proprietor of Philadelphia. Stokes trained him to do an equestrian act, and he soon appeared under the name of Ella Zoyara. His beautiful boyish face, a profusion of rich black curly hair, and his slender form assisted the impersonation. He was advertised and rode under this name for several years, attracting no particular attention, but keeping the secret of his sex carefully concealed. He accompanied Spence to Europe, where he rode as a female in all the principal cities. In Moscow a Russian Count is said to have fallen madly in love with him, and offered Stokes a large sum for an introduction to the fair Zoyara. It was in the sunny clime of Italy, however, that the greatest conquest took place. Victor Emmanuel saw him at the circus, and afterward sent for him. He attended, though accompanied by his woman servant, without whom he rarely appeared in public. Emmanuel frequently attended the performance, and Zoyara called upon him. The King of Italy presented him with a magnificent black stallion, of which Stokes immediately took possession, and afterward sold when in financial difficulties in Madrid.

When Zoyara returned to New-York he was advertised as the greatest female rider that Europe had ever seen, and crowds were nightly attracted by his performances. He rode a graceful act, was more daring and brilliant than any equestrienne that had or has appeared before an American audience, while long experience enabled him to impersonate female character in a manner that almost defied detection. His sex was a secret even to many of those employed in the same establishment. He performed for one or two seasons in the eastern country, everywhere meeting with success, letters, and would-be lovers and husbands. During this time he was married to Sallie Stickney, an equestrienne, daughter of Robert Stickney, of Cincinnati. In 1863 he came to California and made his debut in this city in connection with John Wilson's circus. He traveled two seasons upon the Pacific slope, appearing as a female rider and carrying out the deception in a perfect manner. There are many men who still remember the beautiful Zoyara and her graceful performance in the ring. In 1865 he sailed for Australia, where he created at one time a great sensation. He had always appeared in female attire on steamers, on the streets, in hotels, and in the circus, so that the surprise of those who saw him come from the canvas one day, just after the performance, in male attire, and swearing like a Gulf pirate, was very great. Trouble with circus companions led to this episode. In 1867 he travelled with the same company through India, the Straits settlements, China, Japan, and the Philippine Islands. At Manilla a Spanish officer fell in love with Zoyara, and sought an introduction, but was refused. Some of his fellow-officers hinted that the fair rider was not a female, and he wagered that he was. A party of them went to the dressing-room, seized the subject of dispute as he came from the ring, and were about to strip the clothing from him when John Wilson rushed forward and knocked both of them down. A tumult ensued which ended in Wilson and Zoyara being placed in jail, where the sex of the latter was made known. They remained in durance for some time, and were finally sent out of the country. Wilson returned to this city in 1867, Zoyara coming with him. He performed throughout the United States, Mexico, and the Canadas for several seasons, still under the name of Ella Zoyara. When he became one of the proprietors of Wilson's Circus he made his first appearance as a male rider in this city. After this he rarely appeared as a female rider, doing so principally on the occasion of benefits, when the announcement that he would appear as Zoyara was sure to crowd the house. He left this city with Wilson's Circus, for Australia, in 1875, and, having appeared in the principal cities there, sailed from Melbourne to India in 1877, where he appeared up to the time of his illness and death at Bombay, which took place on the 3d of April last, of small-pox, thus closing a somewhat remarkable career.