

ROSINE'S ROMANCE.

When Miss Magnolia carefully withdrew the dress from the great cedar trunk, unpinned the old damask tablecloth which enveloped it and spread out its shining folds for the admiration of her niece, Rosalie, that young lady clasped her pretty hands and quoted Keats: "A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

Miss Magnolia nodded and smiled. She was small and round and brown as a maiden lady of decidedly certain age could be. But her heart, which had been full of sentiment once, was a warm and sensitive organ still. And she took a deal of interest in Rosine's romance.

"Yes, my dear, it is a thing of beauty. And to think that I wore it but twice. Dear, dear!"

"You had a lover, then, auntie?" inquired Rosine.

"Yes, pet, this was one of the dresses got for my marriage. But he went away—on business. It is just the gown for our fancy dress ball," hurried on Miss Magnolia.

"A trifle short, of course, but here is quite a piece turned in at the top that you could let down. You shall go as a lady of long ago."

"Not so very long ago, auntie," protested Rosine with a laugh, "but really I don't like to take it. It is too lovely."

"Not for a raiment of war. Remember you are going to conquer the dragon!"

"That is so, and the master should have written. 'Thrice is she armed who wears a pretty dress!'"

The foe against whom Miss Rosine Wilde proposed arraying herself was the obdurate uncle of her handsome lover. He had promptly and peremptorily opposed the marriage of his nephew. The young fellow would have ignored the refusal of his relative were it not that the old gentleman had always been very kind to him—had, indeed, taken the place of his dead father. So he decided that Rosine should meet his uncle and put his prejudice to rout.

"He's coming to visit an old friend of his," Cyril had said, "Judge Chartreau. You know the Chartreau family. Of course you have heard they are going to give a fancy dress ball next month in honor of the coming out of their daughter Lisette. You will receive a card. You will attend. You will meet Uncle Albert, and you will take his heart by storm."

Hopefully he had planned his scheme; enthusiastically had he explained it. But Rosine protested. It was to be a grand ball and she had nothing to wear. Besides, she did not like the idea of plotting to make a person like her. And—

"Bless you," cried Cyril, "he doesn't dislike you. I don't believe he even knows your name. His resentment is general, not particular. As soon as I told him I was in love with a Southern girl he—he (I have to drop into slang, Rosine)—sat square down upon me. It seems a Southern girl jilted him when he was young, and he is bound to save me from a like awful fate. But when once he sees you he is bound to capitulate. He is a regular old brick—Uncle Albert."

"But I have nothing to wear. And what is more, I cannot buy a dress for the Chartreau ball. We—Aunt Magnolia and I—are poor as the proverbial church mice."

But just then Miss Magnolia came to Rosine's relief, like a regular little fairy godmother.

"The very thing!" she cried. "My primrose satin!"

Rosine regarded her dubiously, delightedly. She knew her aunt had always guarded jealously her trunkful of treasures, her jewels, her laces, her rich, glistening brocade.

"Do you mean it, auntie?"

Miss Magnolia's bright old eyes winked very rapidly indeed.

"I do, my dear! I was young once myself!"

And that was how Rosine Wilde came to be the belle of Mme Chartreau's fancy-dress ball. The proposed festivity had been the talk of New Orleans for several weeks. The night, long anticipated, was cool, crisp and sweet. The broad-balconied old residence was brilliantly lighted. Many a carriage rolled up, rolled off. When Rosine descended from the barouche of her chaperon she felt a little nervous, a little elated and conscious that she was looking uncommonly well, as indeed she was. Quite a picture was the pretty young figure in the clinging gown of pale yellowish satin, picturesquely puffed and quaintly fashioned. The corsage cut round, revealed the arm, full throat. Dainty mouse-skin swathed arms, which if slender were also exquisitely rounded, and the small, olive-tinted face was lighted to loveliness by pearly black eyes.

A flash of adoration succeeded the serene nonchalance of Cyril Rodney's countenance as he caught sight of her. He made his way to her side.

"Queen Rosine," he murmured. "You're far by the prettiest girl here to-night. Poor Uncle Albert! How complete will be his surrender!"

She swept him a mocking courtesy.

"Ah!" she said, smiling, "if that conviction were but mine—"

The sentence ended in a long, soft sigh.

"Si le pas gague," he began. "Confound it! I never can get my tongue around your creolism. The saying is, however, that if they were no sighing in the world the world would stifle. Now, prepare to face the music."

Off he went. He soon returned and by his side was a sturdy old gentleman.

"The dragon!" he murmured. Silvery hair and a dark mustache had the dragon. A florid complexion had the dragon and a manner that was grave, dignified and courteous.

"Uncle Albert," explained Cyril with boyish eagerness, "this is Miss Rosine Wilde."

"Wide!"

The old gentleman was startled perceptibly. He looked at the

blushing girl, at the yellowish gown he bowed.

"And," avowed young Rodney, sending his sweetheart a swift smile of encouragement, "and—the young lady of whom I spoke to you."

"Oh!" exclaimed Albert Ellsworth. Then, interrogatively: "Was your father's name Clayton Wilde?"

Rosine assented.

"And your mother's maiden name was Magnolia Kingsley?"

"Oh, dear, no! Aunt Magnolia was never married. My mother's name was Madeline Kingsley."

"Eh?" cried the dragon. The florid color had faded from his cheeks. He was tugging nervously at his dark mustache. He looked agitated and perplexed.

"My mother died ten years ago," said Rosine, "and since then I have lived with Aunt Magnolia."

Mr. Ellsworth regarded her grimly.

"Is that," he asked, abruptly, "your aunt's gown you have on?"

The soft flush on the girl's cheek deepened.

"How in the world did you know?" she counter-queried.

A queer, wavering smile was his only reply.

A constrained silence ensued. Cyril gave his uncle an astonishing glance.

"So Magnolia is an old maid?" said Mr. Ellsworth abruptly.

"If she is," said Rosine, stung to defiance by a remark she considered rude, "it is because she proved true to a lover who proved unworthy of her."

"Eh?" ejaculated Mr. Ellsworth more sharply than before.

Suddenly he turned and walked away.

The following day he insisted on accompanying his nephew to the gaunt, ramshackle, once aristocratic old house in the French quarter, where Rosine lived. As they were passing the vaulted entrance to the little, flagged court-yard Albert Ellsworth caught sight of a familiar figure moving among the potted palms and boxes of blooms.

"Go on, lad," he said to Cyril. He had paused and was looking through the brief avenue of gloom to the brightness beyond.

Cyril was about to question this new vagary, when the thought of a peculiar possibility made him catch his breath and do as bidden. He knocked at the barred black door and was admitted to Rosine's radiant presence. Meanwhile his uncle went into the courtyard.

The little old lady standing by the banana tree looked up at the sound of the step on the stones.

"Magnolia," he cried.

Miss Magnolia gazed at him in a dazed, half-frightened way. Did ghosts ever appear in the daytime? Stouter than he whom she had known and with hair grown gray, but the same. Around her, in a fantastic dance, the broken fountain the long-leaved banana tree and the oleanders went whirling. She didn't faint, but she came nearer to it than she ever had come in her life.

"Did you think that I had deserted you, Magnolia? When I left you to go North on business I believed in you as I've never believed in anyone since. While away I heard and read that you had married that young Wilde I used to be so jealous of. So I went to Europe and stayed there."

"But Clayton Wilde married Madeline. I always told you he came to see her."

"Yes I know that—now. I was a fool to have been so easily convinced of your falsity. You haven't changed a bit. I knew you the moment I saw you."

Miss Magnolia smiled delightedly. She did not know he had expected to see her.

"I never forgot the dress you wore the last time I saw you," declared Mr. Ellsworth, waxing fervent. "I recognized it on your niece last night."

"Last night! Are you—surely you are not the dragon?"

"What—at?"

"The—dragon?" faltered Miss Magnolia.

Mr. Ellsworth still looked blank.

"That," murmured the little lady, feeling that she was in for it, and might as well make a clean breast of it, "was what Rosine and I called Cyril's uncle, and Rosine was going to conquer him."

He burst out laughing.

"Well, she did. The boy will marry Madeline's pretty daughter. And you, Magnolia—you'll marry me."

"Oh, dear, no! I'm too old."

"Not a day."

"And ugly—now."

"Loveliest woman in the world to me," insisted the dragon loyally.

"Bless you, my children," cried a voice from above.

The pair in the courtyard glanced up quickly. On one of the inner balconies stood Rosine and Cyril.

"Vanish, you scamps!" roared the dragon.

"I shan't allow you to marry a Southern girl," sir," shouted Cyril, as he and Rosine beat a brisk retreat.

Laughing and breathless they faced each other in the old drawing room.

"Everything is lovely, sweetheart!" cried Cyril in an ecstasy.—Waverly Magazine.

VANQUISHED BY A CHILD.

"Surely never was man more dutiful and affectionate to his mother than young Mr. Argyle is to you, Mrs. Dyer. I know no blood of yours runs through his veins, so I often wonder why it is he loves you so?"

"Yes, he loves me, and well he may. He has a kind and grateful heart, my young master; and I know whenever his eye falls on me, he is always thinking that it is for him I go through life a cripple."

"It is a strange story; out of fate, some would say. It was superstition and villainy that made Harry Argyle an orphan, and me so helpless."

"I was an orphan when Mrs. Armsfield took me to nurse her little daughter. She was kind,

indulgent, and the baby girl Minnie a loving child.

"Years passed on, and my little lady grew up and married. Her husband was the wealthiest man in our county. He idolized his beautiful wife, and she was as happy and merry as a bird. Mrs. Armsfield died when her daughter had been married only a few months, leaving all her property, which was considerable, to my young mistress, her only child, who grieved continually for her mother until the little Harry was sent to comfort her. Then we soon saw her smiling and cheerful again. But this did not last long."

"When little Harry was only six months old his father was thrown from his horse and hurt very severely; internally," the doctors said. He was never well afterward; and after lingering a few weeks he died, leaving all his wealth to his wife. I have heard that his friends, who knew of his determination, and his lawyer when writing the will, remonstrated with him against it. They advised the securing of his son's interests against any event which might occur; I suppose referring to a possibility of my lady's marrying again. But he said he would give it all to her. And so he left her when only 23, a prize to be fought for by all the fortune hunters far and near."

"I believe she loved me, next to her boy, better than any friend. There were distant cousins of her mother's, but she did not seem to care much for them."

"For three years after Mr. Argyle's death, she remained at home. When little Harry was nearly 4 years old, he grew puny and ailing, and our country doctor advised his being taken to the city to obtain the advice of a celebrated physician there."

"So we went to Baltimore, and remained several weeks with my young mistress' cousin. That was the beginning of her end."

"She was thrown into a great deal of company, and very much admired. The report of her riches was everywhere heard. At a musical she met a young Italian professor—a dark, wicked-looking man I thought him; but the girls, and my lady, too, thought him, and pretended to think, that he was handsome. He devoted himself very much to little Harry, and the child became very fond of him. I watched him. I knew what he was after—the surest way to the mother's heart."

"One afternoon he called to attend the ladies to a picture gallery. I went with them, taking care of Harry. Among the pictures was one of a fortune-teller. They were looking at that, when the conversation turned on the subject. My young lady was always superstitious. I could never tell how one of her education could think as she did."

"Poor child! That afternoon she expressed her ideas before that foreign demon, and made this remark:

"I have never had my fortune told, through fear, for I should certainly believe and yield to it; I could not resist."

"I saw the triumphant look come into the dark man's eyes. He knew her weakness, and would use it against her."

"In a day or two some one proposed a picnic. All agreed, and a grove a few miles out of town was chosen."

"My young lady was merrier that day than since her husband's death."

"Late in the afternoon, just before we left for home, there came along a woman begging, who said she would read the future to them. The girls were delighted, and one by one she took them apart and told her stories."

"My young lady refused. I begged her not to hear what the old crone wanted to tell her."

"The girls laughed and called her a coward, and then she yielded. 'I never shall forget the white scared face she brought back to us. She seemed to have grown old in those few moments.'

"After that day, the Italian was constant and persevering in his endeavors to win my young lady. Oh, how I pleaded with her—warned her against him! We went home. Soon he followed. She no longer listened to me, but said:

"It is my fate. The fortune teller told me the past, the present, all so true. I shall marry Signor Brignali."

"Well, well, in six months after she first met him they were married."

"It did not take many weeks before it was plain to see my young lady was not happy. She was very much afraid of her husband, and never would have him sit and talk with her as I used to, except when he went to the city for a few days. Then her old loving way would return somewhat. I could tell well enough that I was very much in the man's way. For some reason, he wanted me off. He would find fault, order me about, and once told me to find another home. She said:

"Perhaps you had better find another home, Hespsey—one where you will be happier."

"But I was not going while there was a chance of saving her, or watching over my little Harry. I knew she was dying slowly. I should stay and see the ending of her troubles."

"He went up to the city about a year after the marriage, and brought home with him his aunt, as he called her. My young lady grew more miserable after she came. The woman placed herself at the head of the table, and was the mistress."

"Against me Madame seemed to have a real hatred. She insulted me in every way she could. I was hard struggle to bear with her. I was often tempted to go. One day I was alone with my young lady, and she whispered, as if she was afraid of being heard, 'Stay with my child. Watch over him until I am gone, and then—'

What she was going to say I never

knew. They came in. A few days after this she was taken to her bed never to rise again. I was kept from the room. One time I was about making my way in with Harry when the old woman came out and stopped me. She made me very angry, and I talked very plainly to her."

"She forgot herself then, and her eyes blazed. She gave me a look such as one as I had only seen once before. I recognized her then—she was the fortune teller at the picnic. All was plain enough then, but too late to benefit my lady."

"I watched every movement of the two when they were out of the room: which was never together, one remaining to keep me away. From what I could make out, she was about to make her will. A lawyer came from the city to write it. I told the old woman I was going over to a neighbor's to make a little visit, to amuse Harry with the children. She was glad enough to have me away."

"I started, took the child to the gardener, and got him to keep him out of sight a little while."

"Watching my chance I stole back, and hid in the library, behind the curtains. They were at dinner, and I felt sure they would have to get through their work before 6 o'clock, as the lawyer was to go back at that hour."

"I had not long to wait. He came, with the tool who was to serve him."

"I heard him dictate the words which were to give him everything, and the guardianship of her child. 'I thought I should go mad.'"

"They went out. I flew to the gardeners, got my boy, and returned to the house. When I reached there the lawyer was just going to her room. They sent for the gardener and his wife, who were the only white servants save myself about the place, to witness the will."

"Then there came to me this thought: 'You must show the child to his mother. Get her to look at him, and all will be well.'"

"There was a window in my lady's room, from which was a little balcony, but only to be reached through her room: her bed was directly opposite. I must get to that window."

"I caught up that boy—ran out. Fortune favored me. They had been painting the house, and the ladder used by the men stood near. I called to one of the servants, who helped me move it. I mounted, with Harry in my arms. In a moment more I stood at the window; but what was my disappointment to find the curtain closely drawn! Not a glimpse of the room was visible. Quickly I drew the outer blinds from their fastenings, and gradually pushed them until closed, making the room, of course, quite dark. I thought the probability was that some one would come and draw up the curtain to get more light, and at that moment I would tap on the glass and show the child."

"I heard some one approaching. The curtain was put back. I could plainly see my young lady. And, oh heaven, she was propped up, and just placing her pen on the paper! I flung back the blinds, rapped sharply on the glass and placed Harry against it."

"The poor dying mother glanced towards the window, caught sight of her boy, raised her arms, and sprang forward, but falling quickly back—her life's blood flowing over and blotting out the words which would have made my baby penniless. I have served him at dreadful cost—his mother's life!"

"In my haste to get down the ladder, and out of the reach of those people, I fell, breaking my limb. I have never been able to use it but poorly since. The servant ran with the news to the neighbors, and many gathered round. I told my story, and begged protection of them for myself and Harry."

"There were whispers of poison being given to my lady. Physicians were summoned to make an examination. They found nothing to convict the people. But what looked very suspicious was, when 'twas known what the doctors were going to do, both husband and aunt disappeared, and have never been heard of since, taking with them the jewels, silver, and a large amount of money."

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