

"You talk as they write in novels," said Alice. "I've read about just such things in them. Wouldn't it be grand if I should turn out to be some great personage in disguise?"

The mention of novels reminded Father Beret of that terrible book which he last saw in Alice's possession, and he could not refrain from mentioning it in a voice that shuddered.

"Rest easy, Father Beret," said Alice. "That is one novel I have found wholely distasteful to me. I tried to read it, but could not do it. I flung it aside in utter disgust. You and Mother Rousillon are welcome to hide it deep as a well for all I care. I don't enjoy reading about low, vile people and hopeless unfortunates. I like sweet and lovely heroines and strong, high souled, brave heroes."

"Read about the blessed saints, then, my daughter. You will find in them the true heroes and heroines of this world," said Father Beret.

M. Rousillon changed the subject, for he always somehow dreaded to have the good priest fall into the straits of argument he was about to begin. A stray sheep, no matter how refractory, feels a touch of longing when it hears the shepherd's voice. M. Rousillon was a Catholic, but a straying one, and he had promised the dying woman who gave Alice to him that the child should be left in his care, a Protestant, without undue influence to change her from the faith of her parents. This promise he had kept with stubborn persistence, and he meant to keep it as long as he lived.

A few weeks had passed after M. Rousillon's return when that big hearted man took it into his head to celebrate his successful trading ventures with a moonlight dance given without reserve to all the inhabitants of Vincennes. It was certainly a democratic function that he contemplated, and mistle to a most picturesque extent.

Rene de Ronville called upon Alice a day or two previous to the occasion and duly engaged her as his partner, but she insisted upon having the engagement guarded in her behalf by a condition so obviously fanciful that he accepted it without argument.

"If my wandering knight should arrive during the dance, you promise to stand aside and give place to him," she stipulated. "You promise that?"

"You see, I'm expecting him all the time. I dreamed last night that he came on a great bay horse and, stooping, whirled me up behind the saddle and away we went!"

There was a childish, half bantering air in her look, but her voice sounded earnest and serious, notwithstanding its delicious timbre of suppressed playfulness.

"You promise me?" she insisted.

"Oh, I promise to sink away into a corner and chew my thumb the moment he comes!" Rene eagerly assented. "Of course I'm taking a great risk. I know, for lords and barons and knights are very apt to appear suddenly in a place like this."

"You may banter and make light if you want to," she said, pouting admirably. "I don't care. All the same, the laugh will jump to the other corner of your mouth; see if it doesn't. They say that what a person dreams about and wishes for and waits for and believes in will come true sooner or later."

"If that's so," said Rene, "you and I will get married, for I've dreamed it every night of the year, wished for it, waited for it and believed in it, and—"

"A very pretty twist you give to my words, I must declare," she said, "but not now by any means. Little Adrienne Bourcier could tell you that. She says that you have vowed to her over and over that you dream about her and wish for her and wait for her, precisely as you have just said to me."

Rene's brown face flushed to the temples, partly with anger, partly with the shock of mingled surprise and fear. He was giddy, and the giddy showed in his eyes and paralyzed his tongue, so that he sat there before Alice with his under jaw sagging ludicrously.

"Don't you rather think, M. Rene de Ronville," she presently added in a calm, advisory tone, "that you had better quit trying to say such foolish things to me and just be my very good friend? If you don't do, which comes to the same thing. What's more, I won't be your partner at the dance unless you promise me on your word of honor that you will dance two dances with Adrienne to every one that you have with me. Do you promise?"

He dared not oppose her outwardly, although in his heart resistance amounted to furious revolt and riot.

"I promise anything you ask me to," he said resignedly, almost sullenly. "Anything for you."

"Well, I ask nothing whatever on my own account," Alice quickly replied, "but I do tell you firmly that you shall not maltreat little Adrienne Bourcier and remain a friend of mine. She loves you, Rene de Ronville, and you have told her that you love her. If you are a man worthy of respect you will not desert her. Don't you think I am right?"

Like a stung and crippled moth vainly trying to rise once again to the aluring yet deadly flame, Rene de Ronville essayed to break out of his embarrassment and resume equal footing with the girl so suddenly become his commanding superior, but the effort disclosed to him as well as to her that he had fallen to rise no more. In his abject defeat he accepted the terms dictated by Alice and was glad when she adroitly changed her manner and tone in going on to discuss the approaching dance.

"Now, let us make one request of you," she demanded after awhile. "It's a small favor—May I ask it?"

"Yes, but I don't want it in advance."

"I want you to wear, for my sake, the buff gown which they say was your grandmother's."

"No, I won't wear it."

"But why, Alice?"

"None of the other girls have anything like such a dress. It would not be right for me to put it on and make them all feel that I had taken the advantage of them, just because I could. That's why!"

"But, then, none of them is beautiful and educated like you," he said. "You'll outshine them anyway."

"Have your compliments for poor pretty little Adrienne," she firmly responded. "I positively do not wish to hear them. I have agreed to be your partner at this dance of Papa Rousillon's, but it is understood between us that Adrienne is your sweetheart. I am not, and I'm not going to be either. So for your sake and Adrienne's, as well as out of consideration for the rest of the girls who have no fine dresses, I am not going to wear the buff brocade gown that belonged to Papa Rousillon's mother long ago. I shall dress just as the rest do."

It is safe to say that Rene de Ronville went home with a troublesome bee in his bonnet. He was not a bad hearted fellow. Many a right good young man before him and since has loved an Adrienne and been dazzled by an Alice. A violet is sweet, but a rose is the garden's queen. The poor youthful frontiersman ought to have been stronger, but he was not, and what have we to say?

The dance did not come off. It had to be postponed indefinitely on account of a grave change in the political relations of the little post. A day or two before the time set for that function a rumor ran through the town that something of importance was about to happen. Father Gibault, at the head of a small party, had arrived from Kaskaskia, far away on the Mississippi, with the news that France and the American colonies had made common cause against the English in the great war of which the people of Vincennes neither knew the cause nor cared a straw about the outcome.

It was Uncle Jason who came to the Rousillon place to tell M. Rousillon that he was wanted at the river house. Alice met him at the door.

"Come in, Uncle Jason," she cheerily said. "You are getting to be a stranger at our house lately. Come in. What news do you bring? Take off your cap and rest your hair, Uncle Jason."

The scapless old fighter chuckled raucously and bowed to the best of his ability. He not only took off his queer cap, but looked into it with a startled gaze, as if he expected something infinitely dangerous to jump out and seize his nose.

"A thousand thanks, m'am'selle," he presently said. "Will ye please tell M'sieu' Rousillon that I would wish to see 'im?"

"Yes, Uncle Jason; but first be seated and let me offer you just a drop of eau de vie, some that Papa Rousillon brought back with him from Quebec. He says it's old and fine."

She poured him a full glass, then, setting the bottle on a little stand, went to find M. Rousillon. While she was absent Uncle Jason improved his opportunity to the fullest extent. At least three additional glasses of the brandy went the way of the first. He grinned atrociously and smacked his corrugated lips, but when Gaspard Rousillon came in the old man was sitting at some distance from the bottle and glass, gazing indifferently out across the veranda. He told his story curtly. Father Gibault, he said, had sent him to ask M. Rousillon to come to the river house, as he had news of great importance to communicate.

"Ah, well, Uncle Jason, we'll have a nip of brandy together before we go," said the host.

"Why, yes, low' one ag'in' the broilin' weather," assented Uncle Jason. "I don't mind 'em' one."

"A very rich friend of mine in Quebec gave me this brandy, Uncle Jason," said M. Rousillon, pouring the liquor with a grand flourish, "and I thought of you as soon as I got it. Now, says I to myself, if any man knows good brandy when he tastes it, it's Uncle Jason, and I'll give him a good chance at this bottle just the first of all my friends."

"It surely is delicious," said Uncle Jason, "very delicious." He spoke French with a curious accent, having spent long years with English speaking frontiersmen in the Carolinas and Kentucky, so that their lingo had become his own.

As they walked side by side down the way to the river house they looked like typical extremes of rough, unburned and weather-tanned manhood—Uncle Jason a wizened, diminutive scrap, wrinkled and odd in every respect; Gaspard Rousillon towering six feet two, wide shouldered, massive, lumbering, muscular, a giant, with long curling hair and a superb beard. They did not know that they were going down to help dedicate the great northwest to freedom.

(To Be Continued.)

Improved Sextant.
[London Globe.]

A serious defect of the ordinary sextant is that it measures the altitude of the sun above the apparent rather than the actual horizon. The usual "dip table" corrects errors due to the altitude of the observer above the sea level; but, of course, takes no account of the variations of the height of the horizon, owing to the atmospheric conditions. Lieutenant J. P. Bliss of the United States navy has devised a sextant having a prism for measuring the actual dip of the horizon. It is illustrated in the Scientific

American and may be useful on cable ships or pilot waters, as well as for ordinary navigation.

The "telescope" is an apparatus presented to the Academie des Sciences, Paris, and invented by M. Torres, for maneuvering machines at a distance by the wireless telegraph. The wireless signals move a needle on a dial step by step and thus by means of a rubbing contact and another electrical apparatus, control the mechanism. The idea was patented some years ago by Tesla, but perhaps this new application has advanced the subject.

Mexico Alert.
Mexico is building port works on her Pacific coast. Her long frontage on the world's greatest ocean gives her an interest, and a great one, in the vast sea stretching between her and Asia. Railways are now heading for Topolobampo and Manzanillo. Fleets of ocean steamers are to connect her ports with Manila, Yokohama, Shanghai and Hongkong. As in a vision, Baron von Humboldt saw Mexico become "the bridge of the world's commerce, and the Scotsman Patterson declared long ago, that the isthmus of Tehuantepec would be the "key of the universe," and now across Tehuantepec a British contractor of world-wide fame is getting a great railway in readiness for interoceanic traffic.

The Mexican who is blind to his country's glorious future, who cannot see what his children are to possess, is blind indeed.

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