

kissing his daughter's fresh cheeks, "and when I look at your blue eyes, I even feel certain."

The next day Mina returned to the handsome sleeper. Sure that he would not waken till her father willed it, she gazed at him quite at ease.

"Is it possible that the Comtesse Pimprenelle did not love him," she said to herself. "Hardhearted old thing! She deserves to be as unattractive as she is. To have nearly caused the death of this lovely Marquis! Poor Zephyrin, how he suffered. But I shall make up to him for it all, I love him so!"

And to begin the compensation, Mina bent and touched the brow of the sleeper with her lips.

Whether the kiss awoke him, or whether the spell had lost its power, no one can say, but at that instant the Marquis half opened his eyes, and seeing a feminine form bending over him, he murmured:

"O, Flore! My sorrow has touched your heart, you have come," and he raised Mina's hand to his lips.

Mina, confused, drew away her hand and ran back to the library. But she lingered near enough to hear the young man say:

"What a sweet dream!" An instant later he called Phoebe, who awoke and barked joyously, while her master walked about the room. Then he sat down before the harpsichord and began to sing:

"Aimable Flore,  
Vous que j'adore!"

M. de Rosenberg entered. Mina threw herself into his arms.

"Dada, papa, he is awake; but he loves her still; he will never love me!"

"We shall see about that; ah! he is awake. Go to your chamber, my child, and do not leave it until I send for you. Above all, do not cry. I want you to keep your eyes bright."

M. de Rosenberg pushed open the door and laid his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Well, Villery, how goes it this morning?"

"Ah! my dear Rosenberg, I was happy in a dream. Flore was there, and—but what do I see?" he exclaimed, fixing a frightened look on his friend. "What has happened to you, Rosenberg?"

"I will tell you about that; my hair and beard seem to you to have whitened suddenly; it is a long story."

"For you to have changed so in one night you must have had some horrible grief. Rosenberg, you should not have hidden your trouble from me."

"I have no trouble, Villery. Let us speak of yourself. You have slept well? Had sweet dreams?"

"Ah! Rosenberg, I have had all sorts. First, I thought I was with Flore, and she doted me disdainfully. I left her, intending to throw myself in the lake, when you stopped me and promised me an easier death. You brought me here, made me lie down; then you stared at me fixedly and I fell asleep. The sleep was agreeable; it has rested me. I dreamed vaguely of music and perfumes; but this morning, just now, I had a pleasant dream: a sweet voice murmured near me 'I love you,' and I felt a kiss on my cheek."

"Ah! ah! a kiss, now truly?"

"I opened my eyes. I half saw a form I tried to seize, but which escaped me. I thought that I was, I believed for an instant that Flore had repented of her cruelty and had come to comfort me."

"No; she did not come, but I think she repents her cruelty and if you still wish to live for her sake will now permit it."

"She must be greatly changed."

"She is, indeed, greatly changed."

"You really think she will deign to bestow her hand upon me?"

"I am very sure of it."

"What enchanter has wrought this miracle?"

"Time."

"Time! Since yesterday?"

"Since yesterday my black hair has grown white. Cannot the heart of Mine, de Pimprenelle change like the face of your old friend?"

"Ah, Rosenberg; how happy I should be. But are you sure?"

"I am sure she regrets you and that she will be glad if you still love her."

"If I still love her! Can you doubt it? Ah! come, Rosenberg, come; let us go and find her."

"Come!" said M. de Rosenberg, quietly.

The corner of the park that we saw at the beginning of our story was partly torn away; the bench was broken, the Sphinx had lost her head, the nymph also; it could easily be seen that the destructive agents of the Revolution had passed over the place.

An old and wrinkled woman, in whom it would have been difficult to recognise the brilliant Comtesse de Pimprenelle, was seated on the debris of the bench. Marthon—the lively, bright Marthon—grown yellow as parchment and sulky as an owl, was kneeling as she leaned against the pedestal of the statue. The Comtesse was thinking of other days, and she sighed.

"Do you guess my thoughts, Marthon?" she inquired, turning to her maid.

"It would not be difficult. Madam dreams of the days when she was beautiful, when all the court was at her feet. I also dream of my youth. It is long ago now."

"That abominable Revolution made us grow old."

"Yes, and the years also."

"How sad it is to be alone! If I had known—"

"Madame would have married; and she would have done well; she had enough to choose among. But was she too disdainful! When I think of all the lovers she cast off! Above all, that poor Marquis de Villery. I was sorry for him. He was so handsome, kind, and generous. One evening he was seated where Madame is now, and he gave me ten louis only because I announced that Madame was coming to talk to him. Ten louis—and the day after that he went to America. But what is the matter with Joseph? See how he is running!"

As she spoke a domestic in livery arrived all out of breath.

"Monsieur le Marquis de Villery, returned yesterday, asks if Madame la Comtesse will receive him?"

"The Marquis de Villery!" repeated the Comtesse, overcome with astonishment.

"Well," thought Marthon, "when one speaks of a wolf he comes out of the woods. Madame is lucky; she may marry him yet."

"Madame will not receive him?" asked the valet, taking the lady's silence for a refusal.

"What! not receive him! You forget, Joseph. M. de Villery, an old friend, whom I highly esteem. Run and tell him that I await him."

The valet bowed and obeyed.

The Comtesse passed her hand rapidly over her hair, arranged her curls, her lace, her skirts, and recalled her smiles.

"Am I looking well, Marthon?" she asked, anxiously.

"Certainly, Madame," then she muttered between her teeth: "As well as one can at sixty."

M. de Rosenberg and de Villery advanced.

"Good Heaven!" cried Marthon. "Look at M. de Villery! Madame, he is exactly the same as on the evening we were talking about. Well, America must be a land where people keep young. I wish we had both been there, too."

The Comtesse was petrified with amazement.

Zephyrin advanced, his eyes lowered; he saw a skirt and lace, and not daring to look his divinity in the face he dropped on one knee.

"Permit me, Madame, to repeat to you to-day what I said yesterday."

"Yesterday!" cried Flore.

"The time must have seemed to him short," thought the maid.

The rather cracked voice of Mme. de Pimprenelle made this young man raise his eyes. For one instant he stared at the old face to which rouge and white powder gave an artificial vivacity; at the sunken eyes, at the grinning smile, and through it all, seeing something which resembled the Flore of olden days, he gave a scream of fright, rose, and fled.

"What does that mean?" cried the Comtesse, with irritation.

"Pray pardon my friend, Madame,"

replied Rosenberg with a mischievous smile; "he has just returned from the Wild West, where he has grown a little savage. It is not surprising that he could not hide his emotion on seeing the changes brought about by years. He will soon return to present his excuses and respects."

M. de Rosenberg, bowing politely, took leave, and hurried after his friend.

"Rosenberg! Rosenberg! what has happened?" demanded the Marquis. "The change in you and in Flore cannot have been the work of a single night; you are deceiving me. I want to know the truth."

M. de Rosenberg then told the youthful old man all that had happened.

"Come, now," he said at last, "did I not do well? Are you not cured of your love and glad you did not drown yourself for the sake of that old woman?"

"I agree with you," said Zephyrin. "And when I think of my dream this morning and remember that kiss! Ah! what a pity it was only a dream!"

"And if it were not?"

"What!"

"If the kiss were really given by a lovely girl of 16 what would you say?"

"I should be the happiest of men, for I must love some one. Think, Rosenberg, my heart was filled with Flore for forty years and now it is empty."

"We shall try to fill it," returned Rosenberg. "Be patient and at present let us sit down to eat; you have not dined for forty years, my friend."

A splendid repast has been prepared.

M. de Villery, in spite of his long fast, did not do it much honour; he was preoccupied with the thought of the gentle sylph who had visited him.

Mina appeared at dessert, dressed in white with a blue ribbon in her hair.

"Well," said M. de Rosenberg to his friend, "how do you like my daughter?"

"I find her so charming," answered the Marquis, "that I ask your permission to offer her my heart and hand."

"You have it, my friend."

"Mademoiselle," said the Marquis, courteously, bowing before the young girl, "will you be Marquis de Villery?"

Mina blushed and made no reply; but she held out her hand to the young man, who kissed it.

A few days after Mina's marriage with the Marquis was celebrated, and never was seen a lovelier bride or a more devoted bridegroom; the Comtesse de Pimprenelle was punished for her pride.

Zephyrin and Mina were as happy as the people in fairy stories, and lived to see an amiable family grow up around them. The Marquis had the charming manners of the old Court; his political ideas were a little behind the times, but that was excused by all who knew of his strange adventure, and there were few who had not heard of de Villery's long sleep.

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