



Rosalind.

AS YOU LIKE IT, ACT 3, SC. 3.

New York: D. Appleton & Co. 216 & 218 Broadway.

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ROSALIND.

ROSALIND was the only child of the reigning Duke of a French province; while she was yet almost an infant, Frederick, a younger brother of her father, usurped his throne, and drove him and his followers into exile. Duke Frederick had also a young daughter, Celia; and that she might not pine in her new home, he detained his niece, Rosalind, to be her playmate. In Celia's own beautiful words: they

* * * * "Slept together,
Rose at an instant, learn'd, play'd, eat together;
And wheresoe'er they went, like Juno's swans,
Still they went coupled and inseparable."

Thus were they reared in the ducal palace as sisters; till one day, grown to be lovely maidens, they witnessed in company the then favorite pastime at court, of wrestling, and Rosalind fell in love with one of the competitors,—a tall, elegant young stripling, who came off victor from the contest. But unhappily for the princess Rosalind, the handsome stranger proved to be Orlando, son of Sir Rowland de Bois, who had been in his lifetime a fast adherent to the deposed Duke; and this so aroused the anger of Duke Frederick, that he not only dismissed the young man, but ordered Rosalind, who had displeased him by her fearless expressions of

sympathy with the son of her father's best friend, to quit the palace at once, and seek the exiled Duke's retreat—the forest of Arden.

Celia's prayers to her father in behalf of her cousin were in vain; so, true to her sisterly affection for Rosalind, she determined to share her banishment. The better to conceal their flight, they set out on their journey disguised as peasants; and to insure themselves against annoyance, Rosalind, who was the taller and more courageous of the two, assumed the attire of a country lad, calling herself *Ganymede*; while Celia, the pretty shepherdess, took the name of *Aliena*, sister to *Ganymede*.

With but few adventures they came to the forest of Arden, wherein Orlando had also taken refuge from a cruel, jealous brother, who sought his life. Orlando, ardent and romantic, had by no means received unmoved the delicate sympathy of the fair Rosalind; on the contrary, he had cherished the memory of it so tenderly, that before long his love for her became as absorbing as it was hopeless. To the great marvel of our princesses, as they continued their journey through the forest, they found the bushes hung with amorous sonnets in praise of Rosalind's beauty, and the young trees eloquent with her name, cut in their tender bark; but after a while the mystery was joyfully explained, to one at least, by the appearance of Orlando.

With the coquetry of a true woman, certain that she was beloved, Rosalind, still disguised, amused herself by teasing her lover into a frenzy of passion, "piquing and soothing him by turns."

The gentle Celia also found a lover in the now repentant Oliver, Orlando's brother; and finally the nuptials of the two couples, sanctioned and blessed by the good Duke, were celebrated in the grand old forest.

As if nothing should be withheld, necessary to complete the happiness of their wedding-day, a messenger arrived with the

news that Duke Frederick had been brought suddenly to repent of his injustice to his elder brother, and that, converted from wickedness and the world, he had put on a religious life—relinquishing the crown to the brows that should wear it of right, and restoring all their lands to them that were exiled.

Rosalind, of all her "infinitely various" sisterhood, is most universally the pet, as combining in her single person qualities which appeal to all classes of men and women. She has wit to charm the intellectual; a fund of lively romance for the sympathetic; fresh beauty, and a hearty, ringing vitality, for the merely material; and store of tender, graceful, womanly virtues to delight the popular heart—which, certainly, on such a subject, must be esteemed infallible.

Notwithstanding that the princess Rosalind was born and bred among the formal etiquettes of a court, and accustomed to the sumptuous luxury of ducal palaces, it is plain that she has pined and wilted in so artificial an atmosphere, till, casting it like a tiresome garment, she bounds, full of ardent, exuberant life, into the green midst of Arden. We cannot easily recognize our Rosalind in the languid court-lady of legitimate caprices and vapors, who "shows more mirth than she is mistress of;" nor ever in the meek victim of whom her uncle, the duke, draws this melancholy picture, impossible to a true conception of such a very madcap of animal spirits:

* * * * Her smoothness,
Her very silence, and her patience,
Speak to the people, and they pity her.

Rosalind smooth, and silent, and patient—above all, pitied!

Is there; in that, a trace of her spirited, self-reliant, voluble self? Could we not far more readily believe, of our gallant little *Ganymede*, that she had restored his lawful throne to her father by sheer dint of her wits, and her sure trick of reaching the hearts of "the people," than that they had simply looked on and pitied her?

Rosalind's character is made up of apparently irreconcilable attributes: she is endowed with exquisite sensibility, yet with ready, dazzling wit; she is intensely romantic, but without a sigh of sentimentalism; her heart is brimful of tenderness, while she conceals its dearest passion beneath a saucy, playful raillery, which would be giddy, were it not for its good sense, and acute insight into human nature. The more Orlando mopes, and grows "deject and wretched," under the teasing treatment of the fascinating *Ganymede*, the more ingenious is she in the contrivance of her pretty tortures, which every now and then reveal charming glimpses of the love-full heart under all.

The dialogues between Orlando and *Ganymede*, wherein she personates his lady-love, sparkle throughout, replete with playful coquetry, arch libels on "the fair Rosalind," and flashes of humor so keen that they have become proverbial—"familiar in our mouths as household words:"

Ros. Now tell me how long you would have her after you have possessed her.

Orl. Forever, and a day.

Ros. Say a day without the ever. No, no, Orlando; men are April when they woo, December when they wed. Maids are May, when they are maids; but the sky changes when they are wives. I will be more jealous of thee than a Barbary cock-pigeon over his hen; more clamorous than a parrot against rain; more new-fangled than an ape; more giddy in my desires than a monkey.

I will weep for nothing, like Diana in the fountain; and I will do that when you are disposed to be merry. I will laugh like a hyen, and that when thou art inclined to sleep.

Orl. But will my Rosalind do so?

Ros. By my life, she will do as I do!

Ros. There is none of my uncle's marks upon you: he taught me how to know a man in love. * * * *

Orl. What were his marks?

Ros. A lean cheek—which you have not; a blue eye and sunken—which you have not; an unquestionable spirit—which you have not. * * * * * Then your hose should be ungarter'd, your bonnet unbanded, your sleeve unbuttoned, your shoe untied, and every thing about you demonstrating a careless desolation.

Love is merely a madness; and, I tell you, deserves as well a dark house and a whip as madmen do; and the reason why they are not so punished and cured is, that the lunacy is so ordinary that the whippers are in love too.

* * * * * Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them—but not for love.

Break an hour's promise in love! He that will divide a minute into a thousand parts, and break but a part of the thousandth part of a minute in the affairs of love, it may be said of him that Cupid hath clapp'd him o' the shoulder, but I warrant him heart-whole.

Farewell, monsieur traveller! Look you lisp, and wear strange suits; disable all the benefits of your own country; be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are; or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola.

But to do her wit and ready repartee full justice, we should be

compelled to transcribe half the play; let us pass then from what Rosalind says, to what is said of her.

Of her person no descriptive passages are given, save as she appears in the character of *Ganymede*; of these, that of Phebe, a shepherdess, who becomes enamored of the sprightly boy, is best known:

Think not I love him, though I ask for him;
'Tis but a peevish boy—yet he talks well.
But what care I for words?—Yet words do well,
When he that speaks them pleases those that hear.
It is a pretty youth—not very pretty;
But sure he's proud;—and yet his pride becomes him.
He'll make a proper man. The best thing in him
Is his complexion: and faster than his tongue
Did make offence, his eye did heal it up.
He is not tall—yet for his years he's tall.
His leg is but so-so;—and yet 'tis well.
There was a pretty redness in his lip—
A little riper and more lusty red
Than that mix'd in his cheek; 'twas just the difference
Betwixt the constant red and mingled damask.

And Oliver says of her:

The boy is fair,
Of female favor; and bestows himself
Like a ripe sister. * * *

There is nothing of Rosalind more Rosalindy than her "Conjuration" in the Epilogue:

* * * * My way is to conjure you; and I'll begin with the women.—I charge you, O Women, for the love you bear to men, to like as much of this play as pleases them. And so I charge you, O Men, for the love you bear to women (as I perceive by your simpering,

none of you hate them), that between you and the women the play may please. If I were a woman, I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me, complexions that liked me, and breaths that I defied not; and, I am sure, as many as have good beards, or good faces, or sweet breaths, will, for my kind offer, when I make curt'sy, bid me Farewell.

Though, properly, it is the actor, speaking for himself (the women being played by boys in Shakspeare's time), who says, "If I were a woman," Rosalind, speaking for *Ganymede*, could say nothing more characteristic.