

The Widow's Arrival.

CHAPTER II.

He left soon after, arranging to have Alice join him later in the Summer, but, owing to the loss of a distant relative, the heir of whose modest estate she was, her coming had been greatly delayed. It was now more than a year since Tom and she had parted in Washington. In the meantime Tom had whiled away his leisure hours in the some what narrow circle of Sitka society, but in that narrow bound he had found a fair Russian flower that he knew bloomed for him. Though Tom had never made love to Natalia—he was too honorable for that—they had been together constantly, and each knew instinctively what was in the other's heart.

"I believe I'll go and tell Natalia all," Tom continued to muse, "right now, for of course as a gentleman and officer, I am bound to keep my word, and my word is given to marry Alice, hang it! I wish I had never been born. She, too, poor girl, may discover that my love has somewhat cooled. If it ever was love, it never was the same feeling I have for dear little Natalia, bless her loving heart."

So Tom went to Natalia and told her that he was engaged and that another month would see him married.

Her delicate face whitened, but, controlling herself, she said:

"I congratulate you, Mr. Douglas." Then, bursting into tears, she turned away. The sight of her tears was too much for Tom. Embracing her tenderly, he said: "I love but you, Natalia, darling. Oh, that I had found you first! My fondness for Alice was but a fleeting thing and my love for you will last forever."

Pressing warm kisses on her lips, he held her close.

"Leave me, Tom. It is right for you to keep your word, but you should have told me of your engagement before. We had best part now. Good-bye."

"But can't I come and see you, Natalia, as usual?"

"Why certainly not, Mr. Douglas. It would only be painful, for we can never, from this time forward, be anything but the most formal of friends."

Tom was touched by the simple dignity of the young Russian girl, whose quiet life had been spent by the seashore under the shadow of the mountains, far from the noise of city or town, so he bowed to her will. Their parting was a heart-breaking one to both.

"Natalia, I can't bear to leave you, dearest."

"There, go now. This is only foolish."

"Well, then, let me kiss you for the last time, darling?" he pleaded.

Natalia put up her little tear-stained face, and Tom silently kissed her and went away.

That month passed only too quickly for poor Tom, who looked with dread towards the coming of the steamer. He studiously avoided Natalia, denying himself the regular afternoon walk to the Indian River, which is the event of the day to all the white people at Sitka. He kept close to his rooms when on board ship, cursing the mistake of his life which was so soon to make an unwilling bridegroom of him.

"To Natalia, whose soft, brown eyes were red with weeping, life seemed a dreary blank now that the daily visits of Tom had ceased. There appeared in her mental horizon nothing for which to live. She wondered how she had existed before he came to Sitka. But then she had been busy with her lessons, and now, in the idea of her old-fashioned father, her simple education was complete and was time for her to marry one of the Russian lads that sought her hand.

The next "steamer day" Tom Douglas was seen rushing madly to Natalia's home. The neighbors who, of course, had noted his long absence, were greatly surprised.

"Natalia, Natalia," he cried, as soon as she came into the quaint drawing-room to receive him. "I have come to ask you to be my wife. Dearest, say yes at once."

"Why, Tom, are you crazy? What has become of Alice?"

"Well, by George, Natalia, she is married! Just think of it, married! A pardoned convict's feelings of relief are not to be compared with mine. You see, soon after she left Washington she met an old sweetheart whom she had cast off to marry Mr. Deering, whose position and prospects seemed better. In the meantime this fellow had made a fortune, and as he was on his way to Alaska for a pleasure trip, they decided to make it also a wedding trip and break the news to me in person. Rather awkward, you might think, but I congratulated them with all my heart, and thank my stars for my freedom. Come, little girl, put on your hat and I'll take you down to the steamer to introduce to her my fiancée, because you say 'yes,' don't you dear?"

"I suppose so, Tom, but it's all so sudden. Shall I wear my Leghorn hat?"

Never a Shadow Since.

BY CLARA ASPEN.

"But isn't she pretty, though?" murmured Mrs. Lambert.

Mr. Lambert responded with a look too full of gratification for words.

They were not quite in their dotage, these two old people, but they were very old, and the appearance of their long expected niece in their home had produced upon them an overwhelming sensation.

Not only was it a novelty to have a young person in the house, but such a perfectly radiant creature was rare in any house.

Such a face of roses and lilies, with burnished curls of gold drooping on the low brow—sweet eyes of dark violet, and heaven's own smile!

Nothing like Juliet Fave's beauty was ever seen at Walnutville, and the old people were sure, with her gentle manners, that she was good as she was pretty.

She was the youngest child of Mrs. Lambert's youngest sister, lately deceased, and she had come to the Lilies to reside permanently.

"Sixteen! Old enough to come out," murmured Mrs. Lambert. "And such a little lady! Lydia Bellingham, has no such girl among hers!"

Now it had secretly vexed dear Mrs. Lambert that Mrs. Bellingham, her social rival, had always a crowd of pretty granddaughters and nieces at her house, making the

place, since young ladies are irresistibly attractive, very popular. But not one was to compare with the lovely Juliet.

Juliet, escaping after two hours' examination, from her relatives' presence, was allured down the main walk of the old garden.

It was indeed a garden of lilies. Yellow day-lilies drooping in beds, white ones gleamed, and clumps of spotted tigers glowed in the sun, while the red velvety amaryllis burned like fire among the green.

Coming at length to the water, the girl uttered a cry of delight; for dappled with sunshine; shimmered hosts of lovely white water lilies. She clasped her jeweled hands in ecstasy.

She was certainly charming in her azure dress and with pretty uncovered head at the edge of the water; and perhaps the occupant of a little canopied boat up the river thought so, for silently the boat glided away from its moorings among the willows and came slipping along the dark waters of the pool.

"Would you like some lilies?" asked a baritone voice.

And turning, startled, Juliet saw the handsomest young man she had ever seen in her life sitting in the stern of the pretty boat, his hat in his hand. The voice, the attitude, the courteous question, disarmed apprehension.

"Yes, I should," she replied, with only a natural constraint.

In an instant the young gentleman had changed his seat and shot among them. In a moment he had a great, fragrant, dripping handful, and the young girl's eagerness and delight brought a smile to his rather gloomy countenance.

"Oh, I never saw anything so beautiful!" she cried.

"I suppose they are pretty," replied the young man; "but I've seen them every June for five years, and they haven't the charm of novelty for me. Indeed, nothing here has. You are a stranger, are you not?"

He had pushed his boat among the rushes to had her the flowers, and sat looking over his shoulder at the roseate face she turned to him.

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AN ENGLISH COMMENTARY.

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