

The Merry Widow

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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Continued from Last Week



CHAPTER III. The Garden Fete.

THE gardens of Mme. Sonia Sadown's villa, just outside Paris, were gayly decorated for a lawn fete. The grounds were dotted with laughing groups of brightly dressed men and women, for Sonia had particularly requested that all her Marsovian guests wear their picturesque native costume, and the result was a veritable kaleidoscopic carnival of color, a perfect riot of gorgeous hues and striking figures.

Ambassador Popoff, his long, lean figure draped in vivid green, was pacing the alleys of the garden near the entrance gate, pausing nervously now and again to scan late arrivals in search of some one. At length he descried the man he sought. Nish was just bustling into the grounds, and the ambassador at once beckoned to him.

"Now, then, Mr. Nish," cried Popoff as soon as the little clerk had shambled within earshot, "I told you to bring Prince Danilo here and not to leave him for an instant until—"

"He wouldn't let me stay," explained Nish. "He says he won't come. He's giving a party—if I may say so, a very gay!"

"And for the sake of a lot of pleasure seeking idlers the prince refuses to obey my orders and come to Mme. Sonia's?"

"Yes, your excellency. He positively refuses to come. And when I say 'positively' refuses I— Here he is now!" Danilo, resplendent in the uniform of a Marsovian captain of hussars, strolled nonchalantly forward, with a careless nod that quite ignored the ambassador's glare of reproof at his lateness.

"I understand, prince," began Popoff coldly. "that you positively refused to obey my—"

"So I did, so I did," assented Danilo cheerfully. "But at the last moment I changed my mind and my clothes, and here I am. I've postponed my party for an hour or so. You see, I remembered my promise to help you scare away from the widow any Frenchman who seemed inclined to make love to her. That's why I came."

"Good!" approved Popoff, rubbing his hands gleefully. "Very good! And where do you expect to begin?"

"With the most dangerous suitor. Who is he?"

"Well," replied Popoff confidentially, "I've had my eye on her, and it seems to me that De Joldon—"

"De Joldon!" exclaimed Danilo. "Impossible!"

"Why impossible, pray? I think I have as good eyes as any man. I think, sir, I can detect love when I see it. And from the way De Joldon looks at the widow—why, man, I don't know a single thing that doesn't point toward his being in love with her. If—"

"If I may say so, your excellency," put in Nish, shuffling nervously. "I think I could tell you of a 'single' thing, or, rather," he added, chuckling, "when I say 'single' I mean 'married.'"

"Mr. Nish," interrupted Popoff, "if you can stop wriggling around like an inebriated centipede long enough to talk plainly, will you do me the honor to put your blitherings into plain words?"

"Well, your excellency," stammered Nish. "I happen to know M. de Joldon is already head over heels in love with a lady who has a husband. He—"

"Mr. Nish," thundered Popoff, "you are demeaning yourself to the contemptible act of talking scandal! Are you aware of that, Mr. Nish? If so, go on talking it and tell me who she is."

"You fool!" whispered Danilo in Nish's ear. "Everybody but the ambassador himself knows it is Mme. Popoff whom De Joldon loves. Be careful!"

"Well, Mr. Nish," repeated Popoff majestically as he eyed the squirming clerk with lofty majesty, "I'm waiting to hear the name of the lady that De Joldon is in love with."

"He—be neglected to tell me, your excellency," sputtered Nish.

"Then," decided the ambassador, "I shall discover her by diplomatic means, and when I find who she is she shall away from the widow. Prince, will you help me in this?"

"Leave it all to me," suggested Danilo, with startling willingness. "Don't try to learn her identity yourself. Let me attend to the whole matter."

"All right," consented Popoff. "It will be a good lesson in diplomacy for you. Perhaps I can put you on the right track."

The ambassador drew an ivory fan from his pocket.

"Last night at the embassy ball," said he, "Nova Kovitch, who used to be one of my attaches, brought me this. He was crazy with jealousy. He'd just picked up the fan; said it was his wife's and that some man had written 'I love you' on one of the sticks. He was going home to beat his wife and make her confess who the villain was when I persuaded my wife to save poor Mme. Nova Kovitch by pretending the fan was her own. Ah, but my wife is a born diplomatist! Nova Kovitch was convinced, and I pocketed the fan for future reference."

Danilo took the trinket from Popoff's hands and read the penciled inscription.

"Why," he said on impulse, "this is De Joldon's handwriting! How does it happen that he—"

"Then," squealed Popoff in triumph, "it is Mme. Nova Kovitch he loves. The whole thing is absurdly simple when a brain like mine is brought to bear on it!"

Delighted with his own astuteness, the ambassador pattered off to join the other guests, leaving Danilo, fan in hand, blankly facing the astounded little clerk.

"You—you don't happen to be in love with me yourself?" she asked, a tinge of wistfulness in the light mockery of her tone.

"Certainly not!" he retorted, with suspicious promptitude.

"You're very, very rude!" she reproved. "But since you don't love me you ought to be able to give me good advice about accepting a man I really want to marry."

"Oh!" growled Danilo, chagrined. "Then there is some one you want to marry?"

She nodded.

"Whoever the man is, he's after your money," he sneered.

"No," she contradicted. "He is not—not this one."

"You said all men were alike."

"This man is different. He loves me."

"Then marry him! What is it to me? Marry any one you want to. I don't care. And I'll dance at your wedding. I'll dance till I wear holes through both my shoes."

"You silly boy!" she scoffed. "You're jealous!"

"Jealous?" he raged. "Jealous? I jealous? That's a good one!"

Words failed him, and he stalked away to a nearby summer house, where he paused, lost in seeming con-

or dance our wild national dances. Today's fete is a sort of farewell to old times."

"No; our dances and costumes would not appeal to a Frenchman. Who is it you are going to marry?"

"The engagement isn't announced yet," she evaded.

"Then," he returned, with a shrug, "I suppose I shall never know, for I leave early tomorrow."

"And you won't dance at my wedding?"

"I've told you I would not."

"If you won't," she cried, a sudden inspiration flashing through her mind and lighting her pale face to dazzling beauty, "dance with me now!"

She stretched out her slender white arms with an allure that no mortal man could resist.



CHAPTER IV. The Waltz.

"DANCE with me!" repeated Sonia.

The faroff orchestra had struck up a dashing, gay Marsovian air. Impelled by the music

"Possibly," he agreed. "You see, I, too, may prefer French partners."

She raised her great dark eyes to his, a world of meaning in them.

"Do you?" she asked, almost in a whisper.

The distant orchestra had been playing again, this time not a native air, but a dreamy, infinitely sweet Viennese waltz. The opening notes of the haunting melody, though softened by distance, were wafted none the less distinctly to the listening couple.



Again their eyes met. With a mutual impulse they drew toward each other. Then began a dance as different from the stilly conventional ballroom waltz as moonlight differs from a gasoline flare. With more than a hint of the free, marvelously graceful poses of Slavonic dancers, Danilo and Sonia began their wondrous waltz.

Throwing herself back into the strength of his circling embrace, the girl's outstretched arms swayed like wind-blown lilies in rhythm with the music, her light step scarcely touching earth as the prince guided her through the mazes of the dance.

It was a strange, dexterous blend of east and west, of lissom oriental posturing and of gliding, modern waltz steps—the very poetry of motion. Nor from the first note until the last strain of music died away did either dancer's eyes leave the other's.

Love, eager and eternal, was in the gaze of each. Eye said openly to eye



"A lady went into the summer house with a gentleman."

what sullen pride forced back from the lips.

Then a last dreamy chord and the music was hushed. Danilo and Sonia started, amazed, as though from some vision of paradise. The widow, fearful lest by impulsive word she might wreck her plan of bringing Danilo to her feet, darted breathlessly away to welcome a new group of guests. The prince, left alone, stared after her, open mouthed. A clapping of applauding hands aroused him.

"Bravo, bravo, my dear prince!" wheezed the ambassador, toddling forward. "What a delightful little dance! But it is customary to catch one's partner in a jiu jitsu grip like that, or as it is a fashion that has come in since my waiting days?"

The old bore's feeble jest brought Danilo quickly back to earth and to a sense of everyday surroundings.

"Were you looking for me?" he asked, none too civilly.

"Only to see if you had succeeded yet in finding who the lady is with whom De Joldon is in love. She must be made to win him away from any ideas of marrying the widow."

"To blazes with that and all the rest of your silly plans!" shouted Danilo. "Don't worry any more about the widow. It's no use, I tell you. She is going to marry a Frenchman in spite of us all! And," he went on bitterly, goaded by the chagrin and abject disappointment in Popoff's face, "I'm going to dance at her wedding!"

"Going to marry a Frenchman, is she?" yelled the distracted ambassador. "Preposterous! I'll find a way of stopping it! And it is De Joldon she thinks of marrying?"

"What's that to me? I don't know who she's engaged to, and—"

But Popoff waited to hear no more. Catching sight of Nish, he rushed upon that unhappy clerk.

"Find M. de Joldon!" he commanded. "Keep your eye on him all the rest of the evening. See if he makes love to the widow and report to me. I have already told Mme. Popoff to sound him on the subject. Among us all we ought to learn something before we're done."

"You'll learn 'something' if you keep on spying," muttered Danilo under his breath as he moved away. "But I'll bet a year's income it'll be something that will give you more surprise than pleasure."

Dusk was falling. Above the myriad colored lights that dotted the garden the moon was rising. Along one of the hedged paths leading to the summer house a man and a woman were

strolling—Mme. Natalie Popoff and M. de Joldon.

"And so your worthy husband set you the task of finding out whom I am in love with?" De Joldon was saying.

"Yes," the ambassador's young wife answered. "He is afraid you will marry the widow."

"Why shouldn't I?" queried De Joldon jokingly. "You told me to."

"But—but you won't, will you?" she pleaded. "Why don't you look at me? What are you looking at?"

De Joldon's eye had fallen on the fan where it lay forgotten on the table. "The fan you lost and that your husband pocketed," he said, handing it to her.

"Thank goodness!" Natalie exclaimed, seizing it; then:

"Lend me a pencil."

She wrote a sentence on the fan directly beneath the three words he had scribbled the night before at the ball.

"There," she sighed, handing it to him; "keep that as a reminder."

He held the fan up to the light and read:

"I—am—a—dutiful—wife."

"Remember that always," she adjured.

"Natalie!" he cried passionately.

"It is true—I am a dutiful wife. If I have been foolish enough to listen to your lovetalking, at least I have never encouraged it. I have always rebuffed you for conscience's sake. I am a dutiful—"

"Why remind me of the hopelessness of my love?" murmured De Joldon. "You may refuse to reciprocate it, but you cannot prevent my telling you—"

"But I can. After this evening we must not meet again. My husband trusts me. This must be our farewell interview. Don't try to alter my purpose. I have made up my mind. After this evening I shall never—"

"Natalie, you can't mean—"

"I do. This is the last talk we two shall ever have together."

"Then," implored De Joldon, "if it is really to be our farewell interview, why must we talk here in the garden, where at any moment others may come to claim your attention? Grant me a final half hour of your society all to myself. Let the talk be uninterrupted. Let us sit in the little summer house over there. See—it is empty."

They entered the little inclosed arbor. It was lighted by a string of Japanese lanterns, and two rustic chairs were at opposite sides of its round center table. There was a door at each end of the tiny room—an ideal spot for a tete-a-tete chat now that the moonlight had wooed most of the guests out of doors.

The light wicker door swung shut behind the couple. Natalie quite enjoyed the prospect of listening to her adorer's melodramatic words of farewell and of posing heroically as a self-sacrificing, dutiful wife. In half an hour at most she would rejoin her husband with the righteous consciousness in her heart of having dismissed forever the one man besides Popoff who had ever made love to her.

So interested was Natalie in De Joldon's parting speech that she did not hear the ambassador, just outside, declare excitedly:

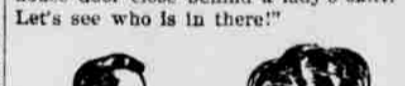
"Nish, I'm sure I saw that summer house door close behind a lady's skirt! Let's see who is in there!"

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To Be Continued Next Week.



ALL HER MARSOVIAN GUESTS WORE THEIR PICTURESQUE NATIVE COSTUMES.

"Nish," observed the prince, "do you suppose it's possible De Joldon can be in love with Mme. Nova Kovitch as well as with Mme. Popoff?"

"I'd—like to think so," murmured Nish as he started faithfully off in the wake of his chief. "I'd like to think so. It—would make it less exclusive, less of a monopoly. And to think his excellency never recognized his own wife's fan! Where ignorance is bliss why read up on divorce laws?"

Laying the fan on a nearby table, Danilo was turning away when a voice behind him called mockingly:

"Still in retreat? So you are afraid of me!"

Whirling about, the prince faced Sonia. She was bewitchingly pretty in the black and gold Marsovian dress that showed to fullest advantage every willowy line of her figure.

"I'm not retreating," he contradicted, "only skirmishing in light cavalry fashion."

"And you are going away like that? Oh, you stupid man!"

"I can't tell what you mean," he answered, puzzled.

"And I shan't tell what I mean," she rejoined. "By the way," she added, "how do you happen to be here? You declined my invitation."

"I'm here," he replied bluntly, "because I'm making it my business to get rid of every Frenchman who shows signs of proposing to you."

"But why?" she asked in wonder.

"For my own amusement; that's all."

templation of the little building's architecture.

The neglected fan lying on the table caught Sonia's eye. She picked it up idly and opened it. The words "I love you" met her gaze. Quickly she glanced at Danilo.

"I understand," she murmured to herself. "He vowed he'd never say it to me, so he's written it."

Noting that Danilo's back was toward her, she furtively lifted the fan to her lips and kissed the written words. Then she restored it to the table she whispered:

"Just the same, I'll make him say it. He shall!"

She crossed to where he stood.

"Have you nothing to say to me, prince?" she asked.

"Only one thing—goodby!"

"Goodby!" she echoed. "You're—you're not going?"

"I leave Paris tomorrow morning—the first train—forever!"

"Then you won't be here, after all, to dance at my wedding?"

"No!"

"But you promised. And now, I suppose, I shall never see you again, for when I'm married I shall live in Paris."

"I thought you were more patriotic."

She sighed. "It seems hard that you should turn your back on your native land, marry a Frenchman and settle here."

"Yet it is what I have decided," she answered. "This is probably the last time I shall wear our native costume

and her glance of daring. Danilo sprang forward.

In an instant the two were whirling madly amid the intricacies of a wild Russian dance such as has for countless centuries been performed from Siberia's ice plain to Tartar steppes—a dance of youth, agility, utter abandonment.

Yet as they came panting to a halt at the last crashing note of music the face of neither reflected the exhilaration the swift motion and stirring measures usually evoked. In fact, Danilo's brow wore a very perceptible scowl. Sonia, too, was downcast. Had her rash experiment failed?

"You didn't enjoy that," said she.

"Not especially," he confessed. "Did you?"

"No. You don't dance as well as you did."

"You've probably grown to prefer French partners," he replied, piqued at the reflection on his dancing.

"From all I hear," she retorted, "you have little right to reproach me on that score. You dance a good deal at Maxim's, don't you?"

"Now and then," he admitted.

"And with what sort of partners, I wonder?" she scoffed, a touch of scorn in her sweet voice.

"With polite ones," said Danilo jolly.

She winced ever so little at the reproof and went on.

"I suppose you dance better with them than with me."

Good Liniment.

You will hunt a good while before you find a preparation that is equal to Chamberlain's Liniment as a cure for muscular and rheumatic pains, for the cure of sprains and soreness of the muscles. In cases of rheumatism and sciatica it relieves the intense pain and makes sleep and rest possible. In cases of sprains it relieves the soreness and restores the parts to a healthy condition in one-third the time required by the usual treatment. It is equally valuable for lame back and all deep seated muscular pains. 25 and 50 cent sizes for sale by M. Clemens.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION.

Timber Land, Act June 8, 1878.

Roseburg, Ore., April 22, 1908.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 8, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1892,

PHILIP H. HARTH,

of Grants Pass, county of Josephine State of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 9781, for the purchase of the W. 1/4 NW. 1/4 of Section No. 34, in Township No. 35 South, Range No. 6 W. W. M. and will offer proof to show that the land shown is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Joseph Moss, U. S. Commissioner, at his office at Grants Pass, Ore., on Tuesday, the 8th day of September, 1908.

He names as witnesses: Albert D. Furness, of Leland, Oregon, George H. Aiken, of Grants Pass, Ore., Roy S. Wilson, of Grants Pass, Ore., and John Alverson, of Leland, Oregon.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 8th day of September, 1908.

BENJAMIN L. EDDY,

Register.