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# The Merry Widow

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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A strange smile stole across her face as she came very close to where he stood, so close that the faint perfume of her hair was sweet in his nostrils; so close that her breath was warm upon his lips; so close that his bewildered soul struggled in vain to hide from the glory in her eyes. Her voice was a musical whisper as she asked:

"You'll never say to me 'I love you?'" There was an infinity of allurement in the tempting words. Danilo, with a mighty effort, shook off the spell and shouted:

"Never! Never! Never!"

"That's a comfort!" she said coldly, drawing away and seeking to veil her

keen disappointment. "But," she added more softly, "why not say it if you really want to?"

"I don't want to!" he declared suddenly. "And you promise faithfully you'll never say to me, 'I love you?'"

Again she was perilously close to him. Again his eyes tore themselves free from the pleading seductiveness of hers as he reiterated:



## CHAPTER III. The Garden Fete.

THE gardens of Mme. Soula Sadova'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 Soula had particularly requested that all her Marsovia guests wear their picturesque native costume, and the result was a veritable kaleidoscope 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 de-

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—he 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 use her influence to lure De Joldon 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.

To Be Continued

Feline Fishers.

The ancient Egyptians used to fish with cats on the Nile. The animals were trained to enter the water and seize the fish, which were then taken away by the fishermen.

Banana Skin Soap.

Banana skins are utilized in soap-making on the west coast of Africa. The skins are rich in alkali, so they are burned to an ash, and this mixed with water and palm oil goes to make a cleanser which is in demand among the whites as well as the natives.

The Mirror and Death.

Covering the mirror when there is death in the family originated in the superstition that goblins, sprites, elves or other uncanny creatures would crowd to the glass to look on.

The Lion's Face.

"No one can look into the face of the king of beasts," says an animal trainer, "without receiving a more or less conscious uplift. His face is the absolute embodiment of strength, determination, power and fearlessness. He is the only king on earth that looks the part. There are lines of majesty and of power in repose in his countenance not found elsewhere except in the sphinx and in the somewhat idealized portraits of Washington."

An Oily Nose.

A red, oily nose should be bathed with borax water and afterward anointed with camphor water.

Chicago to Hongkong.

From Chicago the distance to Hongkong is, via New York and Suez, 12,522 miles; via San Francisco, 8,265 miles; via New Orleans and Panama, 11,742 miles, and via Tehuantepec, 10,220 miles.

Water.

No penetrating is water at high pressure that only special qualities of cast iron will withstand it.



"NEVER! NEVER! NEVER!"

"I promise! I'm not going to make a fool of myself or be made a fool of."

"Is that a declaration of war?" queried Soula.

"No—of friendship. Do you mean to say I asked you to be my wife you would merely laugh at me?"

"Probably. All men are alike."

"They are not, and in time I'll prove it to you."

Before she could answer the ambassador and several of the guests came into the room. At first opportunity Popoff drew Danilo aside.

"Prince," said he impressively, "you have now been attached to this legation nearly four months and—"

"Few of my attachments last so long," observed Danilo.

"You refer to your love affairs? I have heard of them. They have brought you to the brink of ruin. You are almost penniless. Here is my plan to save you, also to give you a chance to save your country from bankruptcy. I want you to marry."

"To what?" cried Danilo.

"To marry—beautiful woman, my boy—twenty millions—Mme. Soula Sadova! Hey?"

"Never!" returned Danilo, angrily, as he rose to end the interview.

"Then a Frenchman will marry her, and her fortune and our country will be ruined."

"I won't marry her," repeated Danilo, "and she won't marry me. But for my country's sake I'll keep any Frenchman from marrying her."

"But how?"

"You shall see!"



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