

WARNING TO JEALOUS WIVES.

The young Countess Von F., a beautiful and elegant Parisian, though only wedded two years, was conscious of a slight inclination on the part of her handsome husband, which caused her many sighs and tears.

While her husband visited his club, as he said, his wife, who was formerly never absent from his side, remained alone in her large hotel.

"Will you not attend the masked ball at the opera next Tuesday, dear friend?" said she one day at table to the Count.

"Next Tuesday! My dear child, the ball clashes with the meeting of my club, which I am compelled to attend as I belong to the committee."

"Do you not love me sufficiently to give it up for my sake?"

The Count gave such urgent reasons for his presence that his wife, who was a yielding disposition, ceased to urge him any further. Formerly she had sacrificed her own wishes to accompany him to the fashionable balls of Paris, and now he refused to gratify her in so small a matter. "If you do not," he said, "I intend to visit the ball without her, for never before had he been willing to miss one under any circumstances. What little was needed to confirm her jealous suspicion, Hermine Von Cum, her most intimate friend, supplied.

"I will wager," said Hermine, "that your husband will not fail to attend the ball. The clubs never meet on such occasions, for every one wishes to go to the ball."

"That would be dreadful," answered the poor young wife sadly. "Oh! if I could only know the truth of it!"

"That can easily be found out, my poor Charlotte."

"But how?"

"You know your husband's carriage; his whole bearing, in fact, and how he will probably dress. I will provide two tickets, and we can attend as simple dominoes. An hour is sufficient time to search the salon through. If you do not find him, you can feel satisfied that he has told you the truth."

"Provide costumes and tickets!"

The fatal Tuesday arrived. After a 5 o'clock dinner, the Countess kissed her wife and went to his club. Charlotte dried her tears when she found herself alone in her boudoir. The dread of finding her husband at the ball wrung her heart.

At 10 o'clock Hermine arrived; at 11, both ladies, provided with half-masks and dominoes, left the hotel. A hack conveyed them to the opera. The hall was unusually full. Elegant masks glided hither and thither through the brilliantly lighted salon. Charlotte hung with beating heart on the arm of her friend; in every mask she imagined she saw her unfaithful husband. Two female figures prepossessing the salon soon attracted attention. A Pasha in flowing costume soon followed them.

"Hermine," whispered the Countess, "that Turk who follows us so persistently is, I really believe, my husband! Look—it is just his figure and bearing! Perhaps he has recognized us."

"Well, if it is so, it is just as it should be. For he now sees that you have found out his duplicity. He goes to the ball without you, therefore you have the right to go without him. Hush! See! He approaches a group of females—he speaks to the Obelisk—he will go nearer, and listen to what he is saying."

The Pasha seized the hand of the Obelisk, a beautiful, voluptuous figure, and drew her into the dance. They disappeared in the mazourka, which was just beginning. Charlotte would have sworn that the Pasha was her husband, and that he had donned this dress in honor to his companion. Her sufferings were intense. The more she watched him the more fully convinced she became that it was indeed he. It was precisely his manner in dancing; it was his brown hair curling on the neck; it was his beautiful goatee showing 'neath the mask; it was, in a word, his elegant tourture, which always distinguished him in any crowd. And how tenderly his arm embraced the light, elastic form of the Obelisk, who floated light as a sylph through the dance. Suddenly both dancers disappeared.

"Come, come," whispered Hermine, as she drew her friend after her.

"Where?"

"Into the alcove into which the Pasha went," Charlotte allowed herself to be drawn forward without resistance; before the two ladies could reach the alcove situated in a corner of the large salon, they were surrounded by a party of Fanchettes and Harlequins who were fully availing themselves of the unrestrained liberty of the scene, they struck at each other with their clattering sticks, they groaned, yelled and battered each other with the coarsest jests. Another crowd of comic masks soon joined them, and in a few moments the friends were separated. Poor Charlotte found herself alone in the crowd of Harlequins, who with jokes and grimaces, danced around her. Peals of laughter from the spectators greeted their manoeuvres, which naturally induced them to double their insults.

Charlotte was ready to faint; she feared some one would, or had already, perhaps recognized her. To her pleading gestures they answered with laughter. The tumult grew worse just as a new mask stepped into the alcove. "The Harlequins must have been intoxicated. A man's tall form parted the melé. He wore an elegant domino, a fine half mask and a black cap with a white plume flowing over the shoulder.

"Back!" cried he, in a loud voice, and his eyes flashed with anger, "this lady is under my protection."

At the same time he pushed the Harlequins aside. A loud murmur ran, but the domino took no notice whatever of it.

"I pray you take my arm, madam," said he, calmly.

"Take me out of the salon, sir, I conjure you," begged the distressed lady. The domino quickly obeyed. Five minutes later they stood on the portal of the Opera House. Charlotte clung, half-dead, to the arm of her protector. She could scarcely stand. A fierce snow-storm had set in; the night was cold and raw.

"A carriage, sir," murmured she; "I am so exhausted I cannot walk."

The domino called for a hack. As bad luck would have it, there was just at that moment not one to be had. The icy wind threw clouds of snow over the thinly clad lady.

"Here we cannot remain," muttered the domino compassionately.

"For mercy's sake do not carry me back to the salon!"

"But you are unwell, madam. Where shall we go? Ah! just opposite is a cafe still open. Follow me: I will procure a hack there."

The Countess submitted. Her little feet, encased in white satin slippers, must wade through the snow. From behind with cold and exuberant she entered the cafe, where she sank down in a swoon. The domino was much concerned for his companion.

"Madam, you cannot go home in this situation. You must refresh yourself. Allow me to prescribe for you; pray be my guest. Waiter, the bill of fare. Two bottles of champagne."

Charlotte tried to refuse, her generous protector would not hear a word.

"We will sup together, madam; then I will order a carriage, and you can go quietly home."

To be continued.

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