

FEDORA

BY VICTORIEN SARDOU

(Continued)

One, two, three days went by, and the countess received no word from the princess. Neither had she seen or heard anything of Lasinsky, which she considered singular under the circumstances. Nor again did she see anything of Boris, which, however, did not strike her as so strange.

But one afternoon she saw Lasinsky on the Bois, as she was driving, and she noticed that he had tried to avoid being seen. Nothing more was needed to cause her to drive up and call to him.

"My dear Lasinsky," she said, reproachfully, "why have I seen nothing of you? After what passed between us the other day, I thought we should meet often."

"Frankly," said Lasinsky, and immediately Olga knew he was going to tell an atrocious falsehood. "I have thought it all over calmly, and I have decided to think no more of the matter. If she is not for me, why let it be. I would advise you to the same course. If a man does not care for a woman it will be worse than useless for her to pursue him."

"You puppy!" was all Olga said to him. But she drove away thinking, if Lasinsky was so well satisfied it was safe to assume that he was on the high road to success. Evidently he had discovered how to get along without her, and he was fool enough to insult her. Good! But she had a card to play yet.

She drove to the apartments of Boris Ipanoff, and sent her card up. "Here is a man," she said to herself. "He does not understand double dealing. It will be the truth or nothing from him. Women and leaves—how much alike they are!"

There came down word from Boris that he could see her, if she would come up, or if she would wait he would come down to her. She went up. She was obliged to wait in the drawing-room for some minutes. Then he came in.

"My God, Ipanoff! what is the matter?" "No wonder she asked. He was haggard and wild-eyed. "Matter? Nothing. But no; that is a lie. Everything is the matter. I am dying every day. Don't ask me to tell you anything. I will not. I am glad you have come to see me. You are my friend, Olga?"

His friend and she loved him with a woman's devotion. "Yes, Ipanoff, I am your friend, and I know what is the matter. You do not need to tell me. You love the Princess Fedora."

"How did you know? But it does not matter. Yes, I love her." "Then why are you sorrowful?" "If you do not know that, you know nothing. Any man must love her. I suppose, so it would be easy to guess that I, too, love her."

"But she does not love you?" "Ah, my God! that is what I do not know."

"Ipanoff, I am your friend, your true friend; will you not let me help you? A woman can sometimes help. I already know some things that you do not. Tell me what you know, and trust me to help you."

"Help me? I think you cannot do that, but I would like to tell you. I am not much as I was a few days ago, am I? Well, I know what it is to love now. My God, what a passion!"

He buried his throbbing head in his hands, and did not lift it until roused by the pitiful touch of her hand. "You told me she was irresistible," he said, suddenly lifting his head. "I did not understand you then, and I think you did not know yourself. It was that night at your salon. I sat at the piano, she stood beside me. There it is all told. I became mad in a moment. Love! My God! does love pour through your veins like fire? Does it make one reel and tremble? Does it make a strong man weak as a babe at the touch of a woman's hand?—that woman's hand? If that is it, I was in love."

"My poor Boris!" murmured Olga, tears in her eyes. "Well, I will not say why, for I do not know, but she asked me to call upon her the next day. I went. If I was mad before, there is no word to describe my condition when I left her. Before that I had tried to break away from my infatuation. From that time I yielded to it. That she would love me I never dreamed, though there were times when I could almost think so. The next day I went again. I hardly knew what I did. When I am with her I cannot seem to do anything coherently. I told her I loved her."

Again he buried his face in his hands. "What did she say?" whispered Olga. "She said she loved me," answered Boris, lifting his face, now doubly haggard, and drawn with the agony of recollection. "She said she loved you?" repeated Olga, still in a whisper, as if she

could not trust herself to speak aloud.

"Yes, and I—I thought it only right, brute that I was—I told her without reasons, brutally, without preface. She ran from me, and I have not seen her since that moment. She refuses to see me, to let me say one word of explanation. She has forbidden me the house. And she is dying, too. My God! she does love me, I know she does. Could a woman love a man one moment, and hate him the next? Tell me, Olga: you ought to know."

"When a woman loves, she loves, Ipanoff. If she loved you at all she would love you still. She would love you through everything. Why did you leave St. Petersburg, Ipanoff?" "What does it matter who knows now! I killed Vladimir Boroff in a duel."

"It was you did it, then?" exclaimed Olga. "That is what she cried out. I killed him fairly, Olga. I gave him a chance for his life. It was his or mine. But she does not know that. The papers said Vladimir had been murdered, and I said to her only that I had killed Vladimir. I would have explained, but she gave me no chance, but ran away from me as if I was accused."

"Write to her." "She would not read what she would not hear. Anyhow I must tell her."

"Does Lasinsky know anything of this?" "Lasinsky? No. How should he?"

"I did not know. Boris, I am going to see Fedora Romanoff, and she shall hear your explanation."

"If you could persuade her to see me, to give me but five minutes. If you could do that, Olga!" "I will try."

She left him without any attempt at consolation, and drove to the Princess Fedora's. Instead of sending her card up by her footman she carried it herself, and was admitted to the reception room.

Marka came to her there, and was commencing to say that her mistress was not well enough to see any one, when the countess stopped her with a smile.

"That is a good girl, but you need not tell me it. I want to see the princess because I think I can do her good."

The tears started to Marka's eyes. "Ah, madame la countess, if you only could!"

"If I have the opportunity, I am sure I can. Now go back and tell her anything you think will induce her to see me, I am her friend."

Marka needed no urging, for she had begun to be afraid for her mistress. Presently she returned with an overjoyed countenance.

"She will see you." Fedora was hardly less changed than Ipanoff, and Olga started at the sight of her.

"My dear princess, you have been ill. Why did you not let me come to you before?" "It is nothing," said Fedora. "It will soon pass away."

"Yes, if you take the right medicine," said Olga. Come, let me prescribe!"

Fedora smiled faintly. "I assure you I need no medicine. I shall be quite well in a day or two."

"Bah," said Olga, suddenly, "why should I beat about the bush with you. I know your ailment. It is Boris Ipanoff."

Fedora clutched at her throat convulsively. Olga went quickly on: "You believe him to be the—"

"Stop! stop!" gasped Fedora. "You don't know what you are saying. You will kill me if you go on!" Then suddenly she gained control of herself, and went on calmly: "You think I love him—Boris Ipanoff. No, you are wrong. I do not. It was a mistake. Let us not talk of him. You and he may talk of me if you like, but not you and me of him."

Olga's eyes flashed. "He and I may talk of you? Are you so ungenerous as that? Yes, he and I have talked of you, and I know what you would insinuate—that I love him. Well, I do. I love him so well that I have undertaken to mediate between him and the injustice you are doing him. He killed Vladimir Boroff in a fair duel. Are you not ashamed of what you have done?"

Olga was furious. "Fedora was calm as marble now. She arose from her seat, and stood patiently waiting for Olga to cease. Then she said, simply: "It is a mistake. I do not love him. It does not matter to me what he did or did not do. I think you will excuse me, and she left the room."

Olga few after her, crying: "Forgive me, princess, I was wrong; but Fedora was out of sight and hearing, and Olga heard her shutting herself into a room beyond."

"My blundering tongue!" said Olga, and left the house, but as she stepped into her carriage she murmured, "I am glad I thought of it. I will write to my dear friends who are afraid to love me in St. Petersburg, but who cannot do enough for

me in Paris, to tell me something about Fedora Romanoff. She may have a history, if she is young and beautiful, and did captivate me." And when she reached home she set down and wrote to a person who was more even than a grand duke, and there is but one higher—the Czár.

CHAPTER XVII

"Killed him in a fair duel!" gasped Fedora, as she shot the bolt in the door behind her, "and I saw the sword-thrust in his back. Murderer! though I love him; murderer! I will keep my oath."

She sank into a chair panting and exhausted, as if she had been taking some fatiguing bodily exercise.

"Though I love him! No, I hate him, I hate him. He killed my Vladimir. He told me so. My God! shall I lose my mind?"

There came a knock at the door. "Who is there?" "I, Ma-ka. There is a messenger with a letter. He says it is important."

Fedora opened the door. "From whom?" "He would tell me nothing. I think he is from St. Petersburg."

"Let me see him." Marka ran off, and presently returned with a thickset, harsh-featured Russian. Marka would have lingered, but the man looked at her, and Fedora with a suspicion of what he was, sent the girl away.

"From whom do you come?" asked Fedora. "General Boroff. Here is a letter from him. I was to give it into your own hands."

Fedora took the letter into her hands with a sort of terror. She tore the covering, and was going to read it. Then she looked at the man.

"You are tired?" "I have come without stopping." She rang for Marka. "See that this man is well cared for."

"I have a comrade with me. General Boroff said he would be cared for, too."

Fedora shuddered, she could not tell why. "See that his comrade is also taken care of."

Not until the man was gone and the door shut did she open the letter to read it.

"I know what it will say," she murmured. "These two men have come to take him back to St. Petersburg. Then he will die, and my vengeance will be complete. My God! and she stared at the letter as if it fascinated her."

"My dear princess:—Your telegram was received. You have done splendid work. It will be impossible to have the man Ipanoff extradited. There is some hitch in the laws, but he shall not escape us. I have arranged it with the French ambassador. The two men who bring this for the execution of Boris Ipanoff. It will have to be done quietly, but there will be no outcry by the police. That will be arranged through the Department of Justice. Arrange with the men upon a time, have the murderer Ipanoff in your house by appointment, a secret one if possible. When he leaves you it will be to pay the penalty of his crime."

She read on to the end without a pause, but as the last word passed under her eye, she pushed the paper from her with a shuddering terror.

"It is another murder," she whispered. "God of mercy! must I do this, too?"

She held her temples in her hands, and gazed into space. "Must I? Must I? Was it in the oath? What did I swear to? I cannot remember. But I hate him! Oh, I hate him! He is the murderer of Vladimir! Then he must die! She sprang to the bell, and rang it.

"Tell the man who brought the letter to come to me. No matter what he is doing. He must not delay. He must come at once. My God!" she muttered, as Marka ran off, "if I stop to think I shall never do it. And it must be done. I hate him! If he says I love him, he lies. I hate him."

The man, finishing a mouthful, came and stood waiting. Fedora motioned Marka to go. "Then she closed the door, and motioned the man nearer. She whispered: "You know your errand?"

"To quietly execute Boris Ipanoff," he answered, in a matter-of-fact way. "When?"

"The sooner the better. We are ready any time. Tonight if it suits you."

"What time tonight?" "Could you manage it at midnight?"

"If I have to do it?" "Get him here."

"I will have him here." "Then all you need to do is keep him here until midnight, and let him go then. We will attend to the rest."

"You—you will not—not—in the palace." The man laughed. "Don't fret. There won't be any muss."

She stared at him in horror.

"Go, go!" The man returned to his disturbed meal. Fedora arose, and groped like a blind person to her escritoire. She sat down at it, and placed paper before her, taking a pen in her hand. She dipped the pen in the ink and tried to form letters on the paper. Her hand shook so that she could not. Again and once again she essayed it.

At length she dropped the pen and staggered to the bell. Marka, with a face full of woe, entered quickly. "Marka," said Fedora, without looking at her, "you love me? you are faithful to me?"

"To the death," sobbed Marka, for the strain of the inexplicable suffering of her mistress told upon her.

"To the death," repeated Fedora. "To the death. Yes, I knew it. Marka, I want you to go to the Count Boris Ipanoff."

"Oh, yes, madam." "That makes you glad, Marka?" "Oh, yes, madam, for you would not send me but with a kind message would you?"

Fedora laughed. Marka shuddered to hear it. "Yes, it is a kind message; tell him that I would like to see him to-night, at ten o'clock tonight."

"I am so glad, my princess!" "Yes, he will be glad, too, will he not? He, ha!"

"Yes, he'll be glad. He loves you so much!"

"And I, Marka, do I not love him? It will be all over now—all that folly of loving him away from me. Ha, ha! Am I not happy, Marka? Go, Marka! Why do you stand there looking at me? Ha, ha! He will want to know. Ha, ha, ha!"

Marka left, and Fedora fell headlong on the floor, murmuring, as she fell: "It is not a murder, it is an execution!"

CHAPTER XVIII

Marka, who was so hard with her own lover, could not be swift enough in the service of the lover of her mistress. She caught up her hat and cloak, and ran out of the house as if she were afraid her mistress would change her mind and call her back.

She knelt the first step, promised the driver an extra fee for haste, and then began to adjust her hat and cloak to the angle and the fold that her feminine fancy had decided was most becoming.

It is natural for a woman to like an errand of mercy, and when the beneficiary is a handsome, stalwart man who has appealed to her sympathies by the fervor and strength of his passion, the errand becomes a positive joy. Marka passed the time picturing the delight of Boris Ipanoff.

A pretty maid goes everywhere. Marka passed the concierge with a smile, only asking to be directed to the apartments of the Count Ipanoff. The valet opened the door.

"The Count Ipanoff is in? Tell him a messenger is here from the—no, tell him Marka is here."

Presently she heard the voice of Boris crying: "Marka! My God! what has happened?" and the next moment he came running to where she stood. Tell me quickly, Marka.

"Good news! good news!" cried Marka, joyously. "Good news!" he repeated, hoarsely. "What can be good news?" The valet stood at a respectful but listening distance, and Marka whispered: "I want to see you alone."

He led her into his parlor, and shut the doors. Then stood looking hungrily at her. "You said good news, Marka."

"My mistress sent me." "Yes, yes." "She said, tell him to come to me at ten o'clock tonight."

"She said—I am to go to her at ten tonight." He looked as if he doubted. "Yes," answered Marka, plyingly. "She will see me?"

"She sent me to say so." "My God, my God!"

"If I will come? If I were dying I would go to her. At ten tonight, Marka, she would not send for me if she did not love me, would she? Tell me that she would not! What was the message? How did she word it? How did she look? Tell me, my good Marka."

"I am sure she loves you. I would know it by her looks. And she has suffered so, since that day. You will hardly know her. The message was only what I tell you, except that you were not to speak of it to any one."

"No, I will not speak of it. At ten tonight. Heaven! can it be true? You are sure, Marka? If it were a mistake—"

"Oh, sir, she sent for me, and told me to come. Oh, there is no mistake. You may be sure of that."

He sank into a chair, and then started up again, and began to pace the floor.

"At ten tonight, you said, Marka? At ten tonight! Marka, you are a blessed messenger. How can I repay you for what you have done for me? If it had not been for you all these days—Marka, and he laughed with feverish gaiety, "in the old, ancient days, when a messenger brought good news—wait a moment!" He hurried from the room, and presently returned with a morose

case. "In the olden time a messenger was rewarded with gifts. Here, Marka, choose!" and he opened the box, and put it into the hands of the astonished girl.

It was full of costly jewels thrown together in confusion. A cry of admiration broke from her lips. Then she turned pale, and snatched her head. "Such things are not for me, sir," and she shut the box with a sigh, and handed it to him.

"Not for you!" and he laughed joyously. "For the bearer of such tidings nothing can be unsuitable. You will not choose? Then I will for you."

He opened the case again, and tossed and tossed over the contents with a careless finger. Presently he drew out a necklace of diamonds.

"There, Marka! If you cannot wear it you can sell it. It is better than giving you money. That would be like a payment for service. We make such odd distinctions in this world, do we not? You take the jewels, and you accept a gift. You take money, and it is a payment. Oh, take them, my girl."

"Thank you," faltered Marka, trying hard to resist the temptation to snatch the glittering jewels from him. "They are not for me. Such jewels are for my mistress."

"Your mistress, Marka! Do you think one of these things should ever be honored by being worn by your mistress? Never," he exclaimed, with a sudden passion of hatred. "I would throw them in the gutter rather. No, Marka. If I thought you would wear these diamonds you should not have them. They are for no honest woman to wear. No, Marka, take them, and sell them. Or if you would rather, I will give you something else. Ask for what you will. I do not know why I have kept these things. Will you have the jewels or not?"

She hesitated no longer. "I may tell the princess that you gave them to me?"

"Tell her what you like. Tell her you came to a man who hated life; you left one who loved it. Ah, I do not know how I shall bridge the time till ten o'clock; but, at least, I shall live. Why, I may think of her now. I did not believe you at first, Marka; but it has gradually been coming to me that you have told me the truth, and you may see for yourself that I am happy."

"I like to see you smile in that way," said Marka, enjoying his happiness with him, and unconsciously counting the diamonds in the necklace.

"If I had been able to believe you at once it might have done me harm, perhaps it is said joy never kills, though that is so. I think it must be so, for it makes life strong in me. At ten o'clock tonight! Must you go out of my sight. You are a sort of evidence to me that I am not dreaming, that I am to see my love tonight."

"It is no dream, sir. I would stay if I dared, but I am afraid I may be needed at any moment. You must expect to see her changed."

"Yes, yes; but she will soon be herself again. When she has heard what I have to tell her she will—"

"You must be very gentle; you must humor her. She is so nervous."

"Trust me this time, Marka." "Ah, sir, I am so glad it is coming right again. A little longer, and my mistress would have been mad or dead."

"My poor love!" "At ten o'clock then?"

"If I do not die of joy in the meantime, Marka, I will be at the door on the stroke of ten."

Marka tripped away with a happier heart than she had had in many days. Suddenly he called after her: "Was the Countess Olga at the palace today?"

"Yes." "Thank you. That is all." Marka hurried home, and Boris Ipanoff shut himself in his chamber to enjoy in solitude the ecstasy of anticipation.

"That good Olga," he murmured. "I owe her a debt of gratitude."

CHAPTER XIX

Fedora looked up, hollow-eyed, when Marka returned. "You saw him?"

"Oh, yes." "Will he come?" "He is so happy he can hardly wait for the time."

The eager look died out of the haggard face, and one of despair took its place.

"My God!" she whispered to herself, "he will come!" "He was so unhappy, my princess," went on Marka, rapidly, "and at first he did not believe me. Ah, you should have seen him when I came away. And see! he gave me this for the good news I took him."

She held up the necklace gayly, but with some trepidation, too, not knowing how her mistress might view the matter. Fedora looked at them dully. "Diamonds! Ah, well, why not? Diamonds from him!" she cried, with a sudden change of tone. "His diamonds! Ah, Heaven! no. Give them here, Marka! You shall not take them. He shall have them back. Give them to me, I say!" Marka tremblingly handed them to her, and she held them unsteadily. "Give me my jewel case, Marka; bring it to me." Then whispering to herself, "Diamonds for such an errand! Give me the jewel-case."

(To be Continued)

HELP YOUR NEIGHBOR TO REGAIN PROSPERITY

What a Nation of Self-Helpers Could do—All Are Interested in the Movement

The Kingston "Whig" had an editorial the other day which contains food for thought for all of us. We are all interested in the early return of prosperity, and if each will work along the lines suggested by the Kingston "Whig," there is no doubt that prosperous times will soon be with us again.

"The man that's able to work and is out of work is the kind of man that we are determined to make into a busy producer. This is a problem for practical people. We can't afford to leave this problem to the charitable organizations. Canada is a poor land for organized charity. This is no country of alms. It is a land of self-helpers. Suppose that for every man, woman and child in Canada a hundred dollars were spent every year in buying Canadian goods. Total \$800,000,000. That is more than half the total amount of goods turned out of Canadian factories. That eight hundred millions of goods made, means more than \$150,000,000 paid out in wages. Add that \$150,000,000 to the gross amount of money spent for Canadian goods, and you add enough to keep the machine going as near as possible to a peak load. Bear in mind that every dollar spent for Canadian goods adds at least 20 cents to the amount paid in wages. It means at least twenty cents more to spend for goods made in Canada. The man who gets the wages becomes a partner with the man who buys the goods, to keep up the grant total of goods made by the workers of Canada, for Canadians. This is the practical side of self-help. It's the wages paid to the workers that represents the business done in the factories and the prosperity that affects everybody's pocket."

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