

Professor Eavy's Wedding Day.

The professor was, as often before, on fire incited by his enthusiasm. You would have thought that, on his wedding day, with his bride not a gunshot distant (and yearning for him), he would have given her the first place in his mind, at least for the time being. But no such thing.

His friend, Mr. Greeley, with whom he had dined in the Crewe refreshment room, had tried to get in word to remind him that the train might start at any moment. But Professor Eavy waved the interruption aside. His subject absorbed him. Mr. Greeley had referred to the idea of turning England into a sort of hot-house for winter living and, having already fought hard with the subject, the Professor was worried on it.

"My dear sir, it all starts from untenable hypothesis that men and women are perfectible, alike physically and mentally. Winter giveth houses—addictives! We don't want to develop extreme susceptibility to atmospheric changes. Our British forefathers were wise in their simple garment of a wild beast's pelt. What we need is hardening. Mr. Greeley, Give up wearing over-coats; sleep with open windows, no matter what weather; take full breaths two or six times every hour, and laugh and cry according as circumstances and the quality of our emotional endowments urge us. Then, if you like—but hide my coat!"

The Professor's eyes rested on the clock above, instead of the "refreshment" girl, who was smiling while she listened.

"You must hurry, or you'll be too late. I tried to tell you."

Mr. Greeley shrugged his shoulders as he followed the conscience stricken bridegroom. But already, the latter had learnt of the calamity. His eyes protruded wistfully as he gazed at the official who was informing him that the London express had left two minutes ago.

"My poor wife!" exclaimed the Professor as he turned away.

"There is another in about forty minutes, sir. It will get you there only an hour after this one," the official continued.

But the Professor would not be comforted.

"I can never forgive myself Greeley," the lady asked, smiling and offering her hand.

"You demand, and in a very mournful plight," said the Professor, after a moment's hesitation.

"Do you not remember me? I had the pleasure of being introduced to you at Sir John Mayday's house—Madame Jekinoff."

The Professor eyes brightened at the news.

"To be sure, to be sure!" he exclaimed. "You illuminate the darkness of my ignorance about the ethical side of anarchism. I am charmed to see you again. But—"

He sighed profoundly.

"I have lost my seat in the train that has just left," he added.

Hearing this the lady laughed musically.

"How perfectly coincident!" she cried. "I also was to go to Euston, but I remembered that it was necessary to telegraph to my poor husband, and—well, also am left behind. Fortunately my luggage consists of only this."

She exhibited a neat little sealskin bag. To the Professor it seemed that there was another coincidence in the fact that she, like his poor abandoned Maria, also wore a sealskin jacket.

"It is not curious, monsieur," the lady continued, addressing Mr. Greeley.

But this gentleman had no more time to spare. He lifted his hat, wished his friend a speedy deliverance from his anxieties, and went his way.

"Now," thought the lady, "I shall have no difficulty, for I do not think there was a greater simpleton in all that gathering of simpletons than this muddle-headed specimen."

"We may, perhaps, finish our journey together, Professor!" she suggested.

"It will, of course, give me great pleasure, Madame Jekinoff," said Professor Eavy, though with some perplexity. "But perhaps you are not aware that—"

"That this is your wedding day? Why, to be sure I am, dear Professor. I was present and admired Mrs. Eavy's gown more than I can say. I propose to spend all the time sympathizing with you both, and especially with her—poor lady!"

"With your knowledge of the mechanism of the feminine mind in all circumstances

"Exactly," said the lady, smiling a responsive smile. "Come, come; we shall do very well and I will, if you wish it, be meddlesome. Oh, but that will never do. No other woman must come between the bridegroom and his bride on their wedding day. I will wish you an obliged 'farewell' at Euston and leave you alone with my sincere good wishes."

After this pretty speech, nothing remained for the Professor but to resign himself to his fate. He had full faith in the practicality of his dear Maria, who was no more a chicken than Madame Jekinoff herself. When she arrived at Euston, she would no doubt take a cab and drive to Marr's Hotel and there await him—probably in a temper, for she was sufficiently human.

II.

Madame Jekinoff was charming all the way from Crewe to Euston. She allowed

the Professor not a moment for meditation, and it may safely be said that his Maria occupied his thoughts for barely ten minutes of the whole journey.

Especially amiable was the lady at the two stations where the train stopped. The ticket collector at Willesden had not the least doubt that the parties were both poor and dear to each other. Madame Jekinoff desired no less. She had never laid herself out, she believed, to better advantage.

Once or twice, while listening to her and gazing into her ingenuous (much too ingenuous) brown eyes, "Professor Eavy was oppressed by suspicions. Now that he remembered it, there might even be justification for such doubts, for had not Mr. Cordew, at Sir John Mayday's hinted to him that 'yonder sparkling cosmopolitan' (meaning his *friie vie-vie*) was running up monstrous tales at the tradesmen, and that these persons were already beginning to fear the worst about her? Furthermore, among the lady's tales in the train were a select few that hinged on larceny. These seemed to amuse Madame Jekinoff, and yet, if she was to be believed, she was the victimized heroine in each of them.

However, no sooner did his companion detect the fading light of direct interest in Professor Eavy's spectacles than she changed the conversation and became strenuously diverting. So it was to the end. As the train clattered along the rails, the passengers both felt vastly relieved, though, of course, for different reasons.

"Good-bye, dear Professor, and thank you infatuated for your protecting care!" said the lady as the train stopped, smiling tenderly upon him and offering him her small gloved hand. The couple of crowdfoot of anxiety which had a minute earlier gripped themselves by her lustrous brown eyes had gone. Her carriage was waiting, and the two or three police present in plain clothes had (she could tell that much) no particular cause on.

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