

# FEDORA

BY VICTORIEN SARDOU

(Continued)

One result of her thinking was that she sent for her majordomo, a Frenchman whom she had secured at an enormous price, because she knew she would need the services of a man who could use all Paris, if that were necessary.

"Monsieur Paul," she said to him, "I want you to get for me this afternoon at any cost an equipment with which I can astonish Paris. I say nothing of details. I leave everything to you. I wish Paris tonight to talk of the Russian princess who drove on the boulevard this afternoon."

Monsieur Paul did not say it would be difficult; he merely bowed and waited an impatient while to give the princess an opportunity to give further orders if she wished. Then he left, and that afternoon the Princess Fedora Romanoff rode in an equipage which had been made for the wife of an American millionaire, and for which the major domo paid a price that was fabulous.

Before she went for her drive she wrote a note to the ambassador in which she said:

"I shall be at home tonight, and will be glad if you will call upon me. I wish to consult with you."

She wrote this note in accordance with an arrangement with the ambassador to that effect.

## CHAPTER V

Without including in unnecessary figures of speech, it may fairly be said that Fedora passed the time, until she dressed for her drive, in a state of feverish unrest. Perhaps if she had loved her fiancé more she would have been less thirsty for vengeance on his destroyer; but, after all, that is a speculative matter.

She certainly was intense in her hatred of Boris Ipanoff; but that did not prevent her taking a natural interest in her personal appearance; though, for that matter, the success of her plans, aside from any personal feeling, made it necessary for her to appear at her best.

Nature alone had done as much for her as even a woman could demand. And, in addition, the resources of Parisian art had been called into service; and it must be confessed that Parisian art can, at least, set off even the most perfect beauty.

When the Princess Fedora stood ready to leave the house that afternoon she was a creature to look twice at and to delight in. Even Marka stood off and admired, and she was accustomed to the beauty of her mistress in all its most alluring aspects.

"Mon Dieu!" she exclaimed, for she relieved her feelings always in French now. "Mon Dieu Madame la Princesse, but you are beautiful!"

Fedora glanced again in the mirror, and said rather more grimly than was pleasant:

"I am glad of it. I hope I shall look so to men."

"But they will be ravished," said Marka, in a tone that was partly conviction and partly wonder; for as yet she had not been admitted to Fedora's confidence, and did not understand why her mistress should speak so openly of a feeling that all women might have, but most would sedulously conceal.

Fedora turned to leave the room, Marka holding the portiere aside for her. Suddenly she gave her that little toss which indicates a new idea, and she stopped and began taking off the gloves which fitted her plump hands so perfectly.

"Give me my driving gloves, Marka."

"Yes, madam," said Marka, with a little start, as she hastened to obey. "Er—er—madam knows there are six horses?"

"Yes, I know that," answered Fedora, shortly, and Marka, like a well-trained maid, said no more; but she shrugged her shoulders when she was alone, and muttered:

"Does she think she is on her

own estate? All Paris will be talking of her tonight. What has come over her?" and then she ran to the window to see the start.

It was a striking equipage certainly. The carriage and equipments were modest and elegant; but six spirited horses, each held by a groom, made a very pretty showing; and when three of the horses were coal black and three were snow-white the showing was more than pretty—it was striking. Three blacks were on one side, and three whites were on the other.

A footman sat behind, and another held the door of the carriage open; the six grooms held the prancing horses; the coachman held his beautiful reins and his long whip, and sat as if it did not matter to him how long he waited. He was an Englishman, and understood his business.

Fedora stood for a moment, and scanned the equipage with a calmly critical air; then she said in that matter-of-course way that it is impossible to question:

"She has done it well, I will drive."

If Fedora had been, as it were, but a Russian, or perhaps it would have been the same if he had been an American, these might have been some attempt made to dissuade her. As it was, the footman shut the door as if he had expected to do nothing else, and the coachman moved, without any loss of dignity, to the lower seat.

A moment later Fedora was perched on the driver's cushion, and was taking the reins from the hands of that picturesque person. He abated nothing of his immobility, but nevertheless stole a glance out of the corner of his eye at the dictates of that feeling which he had in common with the rest of mankind—self-preservation. He had an interest in knowing how far his life was to be endangered by his altogether charming mistress. One glance was enough. He saw the reins slip naturally between the correct fingers, saw even that the little hands could also hold the whip in a properly knowing way, and it is enough to say that from that moment he not only felt that his life was safe, but that his mistress was a woman whom he might consistently respect.

"Ready," she said, shortly, and the grooms loosed their hold on the fretting animals.

They danced and plunged for a moment, and then under skillful guidance passed out of the courtyard, and turned into the street. It was beautifully done, and Fedora felt a pleased flush mount to her face. It was not quite a flush either, but rather a glow of color, which remained like the bloom on a sun-kissed peach.

There was so much of robust health in the princess that it was impossible for her not to enjoy the situation in all its aspects—whether as a mere drive behind six fine horses; as the center of a genuine sensation, from the very moment of her start; as a consciously beautiful woman under peculiarly favorable circumstances; or as triumphantly accomplishing the first part of her plan.

She knew she was creating a sensation. Oh, it was more than that; it was a furor, and nothing less. Grant that it was not the first time that six horses of striking appearance had been driven along the Bois, grant that such had been driven by the fair hands of a woman grant even that the fair hands had been those of a pretty woman, and it must still be admitted that a combination of all these things could not but produce a sensation of the liveliest kind.

At any rate, it was talked of at the cafes that night, and in the lobbies of the theaters and the opera, in fact, everywhere that le monde was to be found. And that were repeated; there were many picturesque things said that these things were said; she drove like an Englishman; the turnout was tres chic; she was a Russian princess; a widow; immensely wealthy; beautiful—ah—h! Not spirituelle, but, ah—h! such hair! such eyes! such color!—the peach

bloom had been noticed. But these are only the truths were not true, as that it was her custom, on her own estate, to harness ten wild horses at once and drive them over the steppes. The Frenchman never stops at a little improbability.

Well, she was the talk of Paris that night and it did not make her blue eyes any less bright to be conscious of it. No doubt Nemesis herself, being a woman, enjoyed many little triumphs of this sort that were incidental to the main object of her existence.

When Count Rouvel, the ambassador, called that evening, he bowed with rather more emphasis than he had done before in meeting the princess, and he permitted himself to note the charms of the woman, as well as the claims of the accredited princess.

The cessation of the afternoon had not been without its effect on the count. Fedora saw it, but, being a widow, it did not trouble her very much, knowing how to remove any wrong impressions from his mind. She disregarded his faint glow of gallantry with a cool carelessness that was without any sign of embarrassment, and was quite as free from any bravado.

The count recognized his error, and became the obliging ambassador in a moment. This pleased Fedora, and she dropped her haughty air as a garment, and met the diplomat frankly. He was delighted. He had been set straight without any loss of self-respect, and he admired the woman who had done it.

All this was before a word had passed between them. He had looked, and used his eyes. She had—well, what he had done is simply indescribable; but by the time he was seating himself the two were in rapport as treating diplomats.

"Thank you for coming," said the princess.

"The gratitude is mine that I am permitted to come." This not gallantly, but respectfully polite.

"I hope you have heard that I drove on the Bois this afternoon."

"All Paris is frantic."

"That is what I had hoped. Do you know the Countess Olga Soukareff?"

The count just fingered his gray moustache. That was his only sign of embarrassment. Was the princess trying to surprise his knowledge by the abrupt question? No, evidently not. The count smiled.

"I think every Russian knows her," he said. "Yes, I know her."

"Does it necessarily condemn a woman who knows her?"

"No; but a woman would need to have courage. There are ladies of social standing who visit her salon—women of wit. It needs that. She goes everywhere. She is interesting—men find her fascinating. She encourages geniuses."

"I would like her to visit me," he said. "I would like to visit her. After that I will hold a salon too. You will always be welcome."

"And you would like me to be the intermediary?"

"I would not compromise you in any way. If you may not do it then procure me the right person."

"There would be no question of compromise. I can do it as well, perhaps, being ambassador, a little better than any one else. Your position would be less equivocal if introduced by me."

He looked meaningfully at her; but she answered in a way that proved that she was acting with open eyes.

"Do not think of me, but do this for me, and I shall be grateful to you."

"It shall be done. When?"

"As quickly as may be. Of course I have an object in it; but no one will suspect it, and haste cannot matter."

"Perhaps I can bring her here tonight."

"It was in the hope of it that I drove the six horses this afternoon."

"Permit one who has grown

gray in diplomacy to bow to you." "As much audacity as wit, count. You go at once, then?"

The count had risen to go, and he smiled an assent.

"Yes. If it were not to please you, I would wish to go, in order that I might hear what is being said in a salon where there is more wit than anywhere else in Paris."

## CHAPTER VI

After all that has been said, the Countess Olga can need no introduction. It may be noticed that no one, looking at her, would have suspected her of being what she was.

Rather under the middle height, pleasant, dimpled face, sparkling eyes, good-natured mouth. That is what most persons saw—most persons, and not all persons, because the lips could curl out of their good nature, and shoot very sharp shafts of wit and sarcasm if there were occasion.

She had not been rich in Russia, but she lived like an exiled queen in Paris. No one knew how; but it was a fact, and a pleasant fact to more than one impetuous man of wit or genius.

The Count Rouvel had said only the truth when he had told Fedora that he was anxious to hear what was being said in the salon of the Countess Olga.

According to the easy usages of the Countess Olga's salon, he was not announced on his arrival, but was permitted to enter as quietly as he chose. There was an unusual number present, considering the earliness of the hour, and the count was delighted to discover, by the first words he heard, that he had not been wrong in his prognostications—the Princess Fedora's drive was the subject of almost universal conversation.

There was a mixture of all sorts and conditions of men in the room, mostly, but not all, Russians; and, to one who knew them all as the count did, it was a singular sight to see socialists and nihilists, exiles, fugitives, and representatives of the government all mingling together on friendly terms on this common ground.

He was greeted with nods, smiles, and witty salutations as he passed from group to group, but he did not stop until he was on the outskirts of the largest gathering in the salon. It was here that the countess held her court, for it was little else.

"And nobody knows her?" he heard the countess say.

"Only that she is the widow of the old Prince Romanoff," some one said in response.

"She cannot be well known even in St. Petersburg," said another; "for I never saw her as heard of her."

"Ah," laughed the countess, "the prince's devotion in the first place and his grief at his death in the next must have kept her out of society. But surely some one must know something about her. Where is Ipanoff? He is the latest arrival; he may know."

"I may have heard of her, but I do not remember," said a quiet, deep voice.

"I might have known that," said the countess. "For she is only a woman."

"It is a misfortune, certainly," said the same voice as quietly as before, and the countess laughed merrily.

"Ipanoff, you amuse me," she said.

"It is a man's office to amuse your sex, I believe," was his answer, not surlily given, but with even calmness.

"I think you are right, but an I to learn nothing of this Russian princess who in one afternoon makes all Paris talk? If I can learn in no other way I will call upon her."

There was a general murmur of low laughter at this threat, as it seemed, and the countess looked around with a slightly flushed face.

"But I will," she said, with a certain vexation in her tone.

If the opportunity had been made for him, the count could not have been better suited. He gently pushed his way through the circle, and with a bow of salutation, said:

"And you would do well, countess. She is a woman you would

like."

"Ah, Count Rouvel. Then you know her? Tell me about her."

"Tell you what? You know she drove her six horses like an Englishman, and made all Paris talk; what more is there to tell?"

"It is said she is young and beautiful, to say nothing of being as rich as an American."

"Yes, she is all that."

"Well, well, well! Don't you see that I am dying of curiosity. What has she done over there that she comes here and makes her debut in such a fashion? Oh, don't tell me she has come here just to come here?"

"But I know nothing that she has done. I believe she is here, simply to be here like—well, like many of us."

"Very well added. But you said I would like her—why? I don't like women because they drive six horses."

"She is beautiful, she is young, she is rich, she is witty."

"Ah, that last exceeds the rest, but why, why, did she drive those six horses? That is what still puzzles me."

"She asks for motives in a woman," murmured some one.

"She is herself a woman," said another.

"Oh, no," said the first speaker, "she is not."

"What and then?" demanded the countess.

"An exception," interjected the count, "before the person addressed could make the complimentary answer he had at his tongue's end."

The countess led the laughter that followed, and then turned to Rouvel once more.

"But if she is all that you say, she belongs to the regulars, and would faint with horror at even an intimation of a visit from the Countess Olga Soukareff."

The count shrugged his shoulders as if half weary of the subject, and answered:

"Yes, she belongs to the regulars, as you say, but I thought the Countess Olga was afraid of nothing."

"Afraid? Oh, it is not a question of fear. I am not afraid."

"No," said the count, carelessly. "I suppose not. Well, let it go, but I should have liked to see you two meet."

The countess looked up quickly, with a gleam of mischief in her eyes.

"And I would like nothing better than to gratify the Count Rouvel," she said. "It rests only with him, it seems to me."

"But how?" he asked, with an air of surprise.

"You know her. Take me to her."

A smile of amusement passed around the circle at the manner in which the diplomat had been entrapped, and all waited to see how he would extricate himself. He looked for a second as if he did not relish the trick; then with an air of recovering himself, he lifted his eyebrows, and answered:

"I should feel it an honor. My carriage is at the door; will the Countess Olga do me the honor of accepting my escort?"

He threw such an air of feeling that he had turned the tables on her into his tone and manner, and the spectators of the little passage at wits laughed so merrily that the countess threw her head up.

"If my guests will excuse me, I shall be only too happy to accept your offer, and if they will await my return," she went on triumphantly, "I will make a report to them of my adventures."

The scrutiny was all turned on the count now, but his face was inscrutable. He simply bowed and said:

"At your service."

The countess flashed a glance around the faces watching her and asked for her maid.

## CHAPTER VII

The Count Rouvel would have liked, had it been possible, to warn the Princess Fedora of the spirit in which the Countess Olga was prepared to visit her; but as it was not possible, and as he was not in any way responsible for the consequences of the meeting, he prepared himself for whatever enjoyment there might be for him.

As for the countess, she realized that she was in a false position almost before she committed herself to going with the count; but, as she felt that the count was in an even more false and unpleasant position than herself, she was not

disposed to blame him.

She was not disposed to blame herself either, and, since it was necessary to make somebody responsible, she very logically turned the resentment she naturally felt toward Fedora.

She chatted very pleasantly with the count during the ride to Fedora's; but all the while she kept up an under-current of thought of how to extricate herself from the predicament she had forced herself into with as much celerity as possible.

She pictured Fedora to herself as almost unapproachable in the pride and hauteur of beauty, station, wealth, and youth, and conceived the project of first shocking her by frankness and then bearing her down by the aplomb and savoir faire which her peculiar experience of the world had brought to her. As for Fedora—well, it required no acting on her part to look beautiful, and her taste was too good to permit her to overdress for the occasion. She looked charming, and as one would look who anticipated spending an evening at home, and had everything to make her happy and contented.

The little bonjour in which she sat was elegant, but what struck one most was a certain sense of luxury. This was premeditated on her part, and was a part of a plan already well laid out; but it would probably have been so in any case, since the almost barbaric warmth of her temperament would have induced it.

When the count and the countess were admitted by the footman, the former said:

"Tell the princess that the Count Rouvel and—"

"And a friend," interjected the countess.

"And a friend," said the count, "have done themselves the honor to call to pay their respects."

Presently Marka came to them and begged them to excuse the informality, and to go to the boudoir of Madame la Princesse, since the salon was at that moment so cheerless.

"This is kind of you, my dear count," said Fedora, greeting him with a pleased smile.

"The Countess Olga Soukareff," said the count, introducing his companion at once.

"Of whom you have heard, no doubt," added the countess, as she bowed low with a slight exaggeration of courtesy.

"Oh, yes," answered Fedora, with a frank smile that might be a confession of complete knowledge or of simple pleasure.

"Yes," said the countess, with a curl of her lip, "I don't doubt that the name of the Countess Olga is used as a warning in every well-regulated family in St. Petersburg."

"I do not know," answered Fedora, a little wonderingly. "Perhaps so. I have always wished to meet you."

"As one would go to the menagerie to see a newly discovered wild animal, perhaps."

Fedora laughed.

"Perhaps, or as one would go to see a young woman who had driven a six-in-hand on the Bois, Countess," she said, laughing merrily.

The countess bit her lip for a second, and then laughed as frankly as Fedora. It was not at all as she had foreseen, and it was as if the tables had been turned upon her; but she was too good-natured and frank herself not to admire the same qualities in another, and in a moment she abandoned any thought but that of meeting her hostess on common ground.

"Yes, that is true," she admitted. "All Paris is wondering what sort of Amazon it is who comes suddenly upon the Bois and drives a six-in-hand like an Englishman, and I wondered like the rest. Only I was fortunate to find a person who had the happiness to know you—I think it must be a happiness—and—well, I made it impossible for him to refuse to bring me here. If there is an impropriety in it, I am the one at fault."

"Impropriety! Oh, but I am afraid you will not believe me if I say it was the thing of all others that I have wished for—to know you; but it is true."

"To know me! But why, then should the Princess Fedora Romanoff wish to know the Countess Olga Soukareff?"

"Why? Oh, you ought not ask

## Your Liver is Clogged up

That's Why You're Tired—Out of Spirits—Have an Appetite.

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS will put you right in a few days. They do their duty.

Cure Constipation, Biliousness, Indigestion, and Sick Headache. Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.

Genuine has her Signature

Warranted

Small Pill, Small Dose, Small Price.