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FEATURE SECTION

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Two Very Peculiar Wishes of the "Dollar Duchess"—Both Come True!

But Now That the American Heiress Has a Noble Husband and He Has Fought for Her Like a Knight of Old, She Never Wants Him to Risk His Life Again on the Field of Honor

The Duke of Torlonia, who so delighted his wife by avenging an insult to her beauty with his sword.

The Countess of Polfy, formerly Miss Dorothy Deacon, of Boston, one of the guests at the ball where the Duke of Torlonia had his hair pulled for slapping Count Lovatelli's face.

Mrs. Richard Washburn Child, wife of the new American Ambassador to Italy, whose first experience with Italian social affairs proved so exciting.

The "Dollar Duchess" of Torlonia, formerly Miss Elsie Moore, of Brooklyn, N. Y., whose happiness was made complete by the duel her husband fought to punish Count Lovatelli for caricaturing her, but who earnestly hopes he won't have to repeat his feat.

THOSE who knew the now famous "Dollar Duchess" of Italy when she was just Miss Elsie Moore, of Brooklyn, New York, U. S. A., remember that in her school days she cherished two wishes very dearly. She used to whisper them to her friends and tell how she hoped with all her heart that some day they would both come true.

The first of the wishes of Elsie's girlhood day dreams was that she might marry a man of title.

The second was that the man she married might love her enough to fight a duel over her—risk his life on the field of honor just as the knights of old used to do.

None of Elsie Moore's friends could see any reason why she wouldn't marry a foreign nobleman with castles and great estates and a long string of high-sounding titles. American girls had done it before, and Elsie was as pretty as any of them and as wealthy, too.

Her father, Charles A. Moore, was in democratic America the equal in power of almost any European nobleman. He was a friend of President McKinley and an influential political leader. During the Spanish War he had amassed a great fortune under the guidance of the late "Diamond Jim" Brady.

And sure enough, the first of Elsie Moore's wishes came quickly true. Soon after her debut she became the bride of Duke Marino Torlonia of Italy. He was considerably older than she, but the difference in their ages was more than atoned for by his numerous proud titles. He held not only the duchy of Torlonia, but that of Poli and Guadagnola and was also Prince of Civitella-Cesi.

The former Elsie Moore was delighted to have the first of her wishes granted, and she proceeded to lavish her fortune on the ducal household so generously that she was nicknamed the "Dollar Duchess."

But the duel wish—that was far more difficult. Those romantic affairs of honor are very few nowadays. The law and customs of the present forbid. Even for love of a beautiful woman, men of today seldom cross steel at dawn and fight to the death.

Yet, amazingly enough, the second wish of the "Dollar Duchess" has lately been granted, and under as dramatic and romantic circumstances as she could have asked. And this is how it all happened.

Last summer, the Duke of Torlonia determined that the beauty of his duchess should be immortalized in marble for the delight of future generations. Count Lovatelli, one of the most skillful and fashionable of Italian sculptors, was commissioned to make a bas-relief of her.

The critics of Rome who viewed the work of art when it was completed, gave it high praise and declared that the features of the American heiress and the spirit of the West, which they so strongly expressed, had been given life in the marble. Nor were the Duke and Duchess of Torlonia at all dissatisfied with the bas-relief. The trouble arose over the question of payment for the sculptor's work.

The duke sent Count Lovatelli his check for 1000 lire, which sounds rather handsome until you figure out that this sum now amounts to only $55 in American money. With the check the duke sent a note saying that he would have liked to make it more, if it were not for the high cost of living and such.

Count Lovatelli was frantic. He felt insulted. He got out bills to prove that the raw material for the sculptured likeness alone had cost 1000 lire. According to gossip, the count was so mad he made a nasty remark to the effect that any American girl who could pay as much as Miss Moore had for a fifty-year-old duke certainly could afford to pay more than $55 for an immortal artistic masterpiece.

Nor was the count satisfied with that mean dig. He craved action. He got out his chisel and went after the bas-relief. It was on that he took his revenge. He distorted the beautiful lineaments into a caricature.

Instead of the lily which one hand of the figure had held, the sculptor carved a purse from which protruded an unmistakable American dollar. The duke's note was appended to the marble and the whole placed on exhibition in Lovatelli's studio.

It is said that the Duchess Torlonia attempted to purchase the caricature and suppress it, but the count would not sell it to her at any price. So matters stood until the evening of the great ball in Rome for the benefit of the Anglo-American Hospital.

Held in the Grand Hotel, this was one of the most brilliant and distinguished affairs of the carnival season. All Rome was there, including the foremost of the American and English personages in the city. Richard Washburn Child, the new American Ambassador to Italy, and his wife were among the distinguished patrons of the affair.

Many eyes were also turned to the American woman who was Miss Dorothy Parker Deacon, of Newport and Boston, a sister of the present Duchess of Marlborough. Following the annulment by Church and State of her marriage to Prince Albert Radziwill she recently married the wealthy Joseph, Count of Polfy and Prince of Teano.

Lady Sybil Graham, wife of the British Ambassador, and many other prominent Britons were among those present. Wherever you looked you saw some one of note. Suddenly angry words rose above the sounds of music and laughter and the tap of dancing feet on the polished floor. The eyes of all were drawn to a stately stairway, where two men stood facing one another belligerently.

Duke Marino Torlonia, who had been descending with his wife, had encountered Count Filippo Lovatelli!

As the astonished dancers paused they saw the count swiftly draw back his right hand. They saw the "Dollar Duchess" flee hurriedly and join a circle of friends in a far corner of the ballroom. They saw the count's hand swing out and with the white gloves it held strike the swarthy cheek of the duke.

A spot of red burned bright in the cheek of the duke which had been struck, while the other cheek glowed crimson with anger to match it. According to the code of dueling, the duke should have promptly uttered his challenge and the two men should have bowed ceremoniously and parted, to meet the following dawn on the field of honor.

But the feud was too deep for ceremony. The count sprang at the duke and seized him by the hair, while women screamed and scurried away. Nobody can tell what might have happened if a tall, athletic non-combatant had not stepped between the noblemen.

The Duke and Duchess of Torlonia quickly left the ballroom. Mrs. Richard Washburn Child, with that tact for which American hostesses are famous, moved about calming the guests and trying to get the dancing started again. She deserves great credit for her presence of mind, for this was her first experience with Italian social affairs and as an American woman she was quite unaccustomed to seeing guests at a ball flying at each other's throats.

By this time the seconds for the two enemies were already in conference. Regardless of the strict laws in Rome against dueling, a meeting was arranged. The affront offered to the "Dollar Duchess" through the caricature of her likeness was to be sustained or avenged. It was to be coffee and swords at dawn.

The two noblemen and their seconds and physician in attendance repaired to the Aventine, one of the historic seven hills of Rome, while the sky was yet gray. They removed their coats and chose their rapiers.

The gentleman presiding in accordance with the rules of fencing stepped forward and elevated his sword. The two adversaries advanced, saluted each other punctiliously and crossed their blades over the sword of the referee.

"On guard!" the referee commanded. "En-garde!" Thrust, parry and ripste, they attacked one another with fiery enmity.

Rapier struck rapier and the Aventine Hill, which often had heard the clashing of steel in the tumultuous days when the barbarians had descended on Rome, heard that grim music once more.

A swift lunge and point slid past flesh; then a parry and a counter-attack. After each assault had reached its conclusion the referee parted the darting rapiers only to have them meet quickly again.

It was during the fifth assault, when the two men had been fighting with unabated fury for almost eighteen minutes, that the skillful Torlonia slipped his rapier past the parry of the count and buried it in his sword arm. Blood spurted from the wound. The sculptor's weapon fell to the ground. He stood proudly, arms at his side, awaiting the coup de grace which his opponent was privileged to give.

But the duke lowered his point and presented his foe with his life. Then he bowed and rebuked his second, while the physician examined the wounded count and pronounced him unfit to continue the combat.

The noblemen left the field of honor, both refusing to be reconciled. The offending piece of sculpture still remains in the possession of Count Lovatelli. Evidently the embers of the quarrel are smouldering and have not been quenched by the sculptor's blood.

The Duchess of Torlonia is said to be exerting every effort to prevent another encounter. Delighted as she is to have her girlhood's romantic dream of a duel come true, she feels that one such affair is quite enough. She cannot bear the thought of her fiery husband's risking his life again on the field of honor.

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