Mr. and Mrs. Sallie

—being the Confessions of a new wife ···· by Gladys Baker



Illustrated by Paul Robinson

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AN ACQUAINTANCE BLOOMS INTO FRIENDSHIP

"The reason I cannot understand why so many girls in your country and this are cutting short their tresses is because in Russia a woman's hair is woven into our poetry, folk-lore and song," the young Cossack continued speaking. "We have grown to consider it a sacred symbol and in many instances the way a girl wears her hair has a special significance. For instance, unmarried Ukranian lassies wear their hair loose in a long single braid ornamented with ribbons and sometimes covered with flowers. This braid, or kosa, is a maiden's chief ornament, the cherished object of her care. Its unbraiding is the sign of the change which is coming upon her."

"And what of the married ones?" I inquired, eagerly interested in what he had said.

"Oh, they wear theirs in two braids wound around the head and covered with a kerchief."

"What enchanting sentiment," averred Barrington Pierce.

"Yes, it's all right, but personally my only objection to bobbed hair is that when I go into a barber shop I can never get a chair!"

The Cossack smiled.

"What do you think about it?"

He turned to Barry who was at my side.

"I'm afraid I'll never get used to it, though I'm quite sure there isn't a long-haired girl left in Paris. To find one would be equal the search for the proverbial needle in the haystack. My ideals of course are the lovely leading ladies of opera and I can never imagine Marguerite for instance with a boyish bob."

"Or Aida with a shaved neck!" concluded Curtiss.

We all laughed.

"Some of the opposing forces declare that the Bible forbids bobbing the hair," declared Lemoyne Danielle

"Really? That's interesting. Do you know where?" asked Andre Moliere.

"Yes, I do, although my knowledge of the Book of Books is scant. It's the fifteenth verse of the 11th chapter of First Corinthians—it reads—'But if a woman have long hair it is a glory to her, for her hair is given her for a covering'."

"Bravo! You did that with quite an air," Curtiss announced.

"I have an argument for those who bob," put in Andre Moliere. "I understand that a well-known scientist is contending that in the next generation we will all be hairless. One German thinker came out the other day in a concise article on the subject claiming that we lose, as we progress, more and more hair! Of course it's based on evolution because he mentioned the fact that each stage of development, beginning with the monkey, produces less and less hair."

"By jove, bald heads do give the effect of intelligence," exclaimed Curtiss. "And now that we are confronted with the facts in the case there isn't anything specially intellectual about a man with a shock of hair," he teasingly threw in Barry's direction because, like most musicians, he wore his not extremely, but moderately long.

While the others were laughing at Curtiss, Lemoyne leaning slightly across me said to Barry, at my right, "I didn't know how you felt about bobbing. I've often longed to cut mine but now, thank goodness, I did not."

It was a small thing in itself but her desire to please Barrington Pierce was plainly evident even in the most trivial affairs.

It was almost daybreak when we said good-bye. While the Cossack was busy Curtiss had adroitly paid the check. We exchanged cards and addresses and I had the psychic feeling that it was not the last time that our paths would cross.

The next afternoon there came a gentle tapping at my door. In response to my invitation to enter the door opened quickly and in walked Lemoyne.

"O, mon enfant!" she began, speaking French as she invariably did under great emotional stress, 'word has just come from my manager that I am to sing 'Manon' at the Opera Comique. It is my favorite role and the first time I've had the opportunity to do the part."

"How perfectly corking!" I interrupted, now wide awake, and catching the enthusiasm of Lemoyne who was informally ensconsed on the chaise-longue, "when? Oh, I hope while we are here."

"That's one reason I'm so happy about it all. Today is Monday, tomorrow's Tuesday and then—Wednesday is the night of nights—at least for Lemoyne. I've phoned Barry and you three will be in a box. I'll do it much better if he is there," she added aloud though I was sure she meant to frame the sentence only in thought.

"Today, tonight and tomorrow I'll be shut up with my teacher in order to rehearse. Of course it's in my repetoire—all opera singers know the famous roles," she answered the question I was about to ask.

"I hope I didn't wake you but I wanted you to know. I might as well tell you that you've won your way straight into my heart. It's intangible—this thing called friendship," she announced wistfully, "and not often in a lifetime does one have more than one real friend. The theosophists would say that in a former life you and I were attracted or closely connected in some way and held in an eternal bond—and perhaps that's the most intelligent answer for mutual attraction after all. You've never been a stranger to me although I've known you only a very short time. I hope I'm not being too sentimental," she apologized, "but I believe in presenting flowers, if one truly deserves them as we go along." She blushed slightly, almost self-conscious because of her frank revelation of her affection for me.

" I feel the same way about you, too," I agreed, "and I am so flattered that you like me. You, who have so many admirers and hundreds of friends—"

"Not friends, acquaintances, my dear. Until I met you, Sallie, I never had a real true friend, to whom I could unburden my heart."

"Why do you like me?" I asked. "There are others, great celebrities, who seek you out and worship at your shrine. You're a wonderful singer and I—well, I'm just little old me."

She laughed outright.

"But 'little old me' just happens to have that beautiful gift of understanding and of being interested in other people and of course, that is the real key to friendship. With the others I am always conscious of a great gulf of misunderstanding and doubt."

"Really?"

"Yes, I realize that so many of my so-called friends flock around me because I've been fortunate enough to acquire in a measure that subtle thing that the world calls Fame. Were I a nonentity, and still myself, how far would these same friends go? This business of worshipping those who have gratified their own ambition and forged ahead is not fair. Followers of the arts" she added, "get a full sense of satisfaction out of their work—a thrill that more than compensates for the struggle and sacrifices they usually have made to attain success and with it come the plaudits of the world. If I were not a singer but a mannakin in some obscure shop I would not be admired for myself or for my personality or my own individual attainments, no, I would be lost with those half-million other girls in Paris who are much more deserving because their work itself is without color or joy."

"I think you are wrong, Lemoyne," I said, "people would still seek you out for your charm."

"You haven't lived in the greater meaning of the word, mon enfant, nor have you perceived the husks on which most friendships are fed. Fame is the most overrated thing in the world, it is the 'open sesame' to anything its possessor might wish to obtain. It clothes one with popularity, golden opinions and endless praise. It even gives one the freedom of unconventionality (with no risk of being anathematized) even to the point of immorality at the same time the assurance that any abberation will be condoned on the ground of temperament. Temperament," she repeated, "that clever piece of propaganda put out by the artists themselves as an ex-

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