



Miss Lydia Lopokova, Whose Acting Won Not Only the Critic's Pen but His Heart.



Romance of the Actress and the Critic



"As the evening went by Mr. Broun was perceptibly moved to get closer to this charming actress. 'We would rather etc.,' he wrote of her next morning."

Just This Once We Take Our Readers Behind the Scenes in the Great Busy Life of the New York Newspapers and Tell Them the Love Story of a Dramatic Critic and the Actress He Couldn't Criticise

To the general public, who read accounts of romances, thrilling adventures, crises and big human events in the daily papers, the life of those who prepare the stories in succinct and engagingly readable form is generally unknown. Does the newspaper reporter, who describes great happenings from first-hand observation, who touches upon rosy adventures, who ferrets out crimes and rubs shoulders with the notables of the day, ever himself figure in romantic happenings such as he records? Except in fiction the hazards, exploits and romance of the reporter are seldom if ever told. Likewise is it with the stage. As the newspaper reporter presents the actual drama of life day by day, the actor and actress on the stage present fictitious drama. To those who breathlessly watch a thrilling play, the actual life of those who mimic human emotions and passions is generally unknown. Does the actress ever herself figure in a romance as thrilling as the one in which she is starred before the footlights? Does her own heart ever actually throb with the tumultuous emotions she simulates so realistically? About the life of those who serve the public through the newspaper and the theatre there has been preserved a professional secrecy not without the glamour of mystery. However, for once we shall raise the curtain and permit you to get a peep at a drama of love and adventure in the newspaper office and the stage. Permit us, therefore, kind ladies and gentlemen, to introduce Miss Lydia Lopokova, Russian dancer and actress, and Mr. Heywood Broun, newspaper man and dramatic critic of a New York morning paper. Lydia Lopokova came to the United States at the age of seventeen—the romantically sweet age of seventeen—with the Russian dancers, headed by Ballet Master Koseff. That was just three years ago. Fair-haired, blue-eyed, a tiny creature only 4 feet 7 inches on tip toes, Lydia Lopokova won the plaudits of enthusiastic audiences. For two years she continued her career, with glorious success. But Lydia Lopokova was not satisfied. Something was amiss in her life. The handclapping and enthusi-

asm of charmed audiences failed to thrill her. The large salaries offered by managers brought no satisfaction. She had got what she came to America for. But there was a certain futility in it all. What was the matter? One day Lydia Lopokova realized what was troubling her. She had won fame through her feet. She desired fame won by her head. She charmed vast audiences with her toes. She wished to grip and hold them by the genius of her brains. Pre-eminently successful as a dancer, she decided to give up dancing. She would act. Miss Lopokova heard of the Washington Square Players. These consist of a coterie of ambitious amateurs whose purpose is to present "good and strong stuff" in the drama. They didn't care particularly about popular success. They had rented a little theatre, called the Bandbox, and gave a repertoire of one-act plays—by Maeterlinck, Wedekind, Oscar Wilde, Schnitzler, and original productions by members of the group themselves. Miss Lopokova joined the company. She forgot all about the fame of the Imperial Royal Ballet of Moscow. She studied seriously, humbly. What if she, famed throughout Europe as a dancer, was studying with amateurs! The opportunity to study was all she desired. She played with the high-brow Bohemians without any salary whatever. Critics attended the productions at the Bandbox. Newspaper critics are regarded as a serious, grave, hard-headed, unfeeling, analytical lot. They are considered—and generally are—above being influenced. What they say of a play, or the work of an actor or actress, has much weight. The Washington Square Players awaited the verdict of the critics after each new performance with mingled eagerness and anxiety. Lydia Lopokova was no exception to the other members of the company—she read the critics' reports eagerly. Miss Lopokova made her debut with the Washington Square Players last October in a playlet called "The Anticks," by Percy Mackaye. The criticisms of the play, it must be confessed, lacked enthusiasm—all save one. Miss Lopokova's eyes, as she read the review in one of the morning papers, opened wider and wider. For she read the following: "After watching Lydia Lopokova ramp through Percy Mackaye's 'The Anticks' we felt a glowing enthusiasm for all the world. We regret now wasted adjectives and we pine for every superlative with which we have lightly parted. All words denoting, connoting or appertaining in any way to charm we would bestow on Lydia Lopokova. 'As Julie Bonheur, a Casack girl, she

is a mite mighty in enticement. Never have we— But no; we'll set no time limit on our opinion, for Julie herself complains: 'These Yankees, they say only that: I love you always, forever! Why not they say: I love you—all this week?' "And so until Tuesday, October 12, we will continue to maintain that Lydia Lopokova is the most charming young person who has trod the stage in New York this season. But she did not tread. She did not even walk. She skipped, she danced, she pranced and as she as not she never touched the stage. Or so it seemed. "We would rather see Lydia Lopokova rise to her full four feet seven inches on extended toes than watch two hundred chorus girls climb to the roof of the Hippodrome on their rope ladders of electric lights." Miss Lopokova did not express her sentiments. The manager did. "Lydia, you've got to meet the chap who wrote that. It's a good thing to keep on the good side of a fellow who's so enthusiastic as that. The Washington Square Players can stand boots." So the meeting was arranged. Heywood Broun, the author of this perferid criticism, was not given unduly to gratuitous praise. He had studied the drama in Professor Baker's class at Harvard. He had ambitions regarding play writing himself. He took himself and his work with the greatest seriousness. He was just twenty-eight. However, after sitting through Miss Lopokova's performance, studying it with critical gravity and analytical discernment, he had gone away and indulged in a poetic, exuberant rhapsody. It was after a performance one night when the players had retired to a restaurant next door to the Bandbox where they refreshed themselves with talk about art and more material things that the actress and the critic met. Miss Lopokova, four feet seven, rose and took the hand of the young, bashful, serious critic, six feet three. She looked at him coyly and gratefully. "That was very nice which you wrote about me, but I do not think it was quite true." Miss Lopokova lived up to the principles of a serious profession in not being what the general public often consider actors and actresses—aggressively self-conceited, vain and desirous of flattery. Mr. Broun was pleased by her sincerity and modesty, and the next day recorded his romantic meeting in his paper. Why postpone telling the inevitable? They fell in love with each other. In fact, Mr. Broun had fallen in love with the "mite mighty in enticement" the first night he saw her. Was he partial in his overprofuse, rhapsodical praise? Although a newspaper man and critic, he was human, and, without question, believed all he wrote of the dancer who was learning to act. For our brains accept what our hearts feel. Dutifully Mr. Broun continued to attend first nights, and gravely reported his verdict on new plays. When she was not engaged at the Bandbox, he took Lydia Lopokova with him, and together they considered the merits of productions. When she acted, to her colleagues' observed, Lydia performed with an unwonted spirit and fire. When Heywood Broun pounded the type-

writer at the newspaper office, he entered into his work with an added inspiration and vim. For to both the actress and critic the curtain had gone up upon actual life colored with the rose-light of romance. The actress and the critic were constantly together. They had dinner with the other players at "Polly's"—a picturesque rendezvous off Washington Square where food is eaten at hardwood tables and you don't get napkins. They went together to Bohemian studio affairs on Sundays. The former dancer told of her ambitions to become a great actress, the critic of his ambitions to write immortal dramas. Why should she not become a great actress?—Mr. Broun was sure she would. Why should he not write great plays?—Miss Lopokova was sure he could. Why should she not act in these plays—and why should they not work together? "You did awfully well last night—you are improving rapidly," he would tell her. "Heywood is making his way quickly—he sold an article to a magazine last week," the actress proudly related to her best friend. "Miss Lopokova is a wonderful girl," Heywood Broun would inform his mother at breakfast, after having taken the actress home as usual the night before. "Have you considered what a plucky fight she has been making?—being a foreigner, with all the disadvantages of struggling with English!" The climax of the romance was announced to the friends of Miss Lopokova and Mr. Broun on New Year's Day. On January 4, 1916, they took the public into their confidence. Mr. Broun did not permit his own paper to have a beat on the publication of the news of the betrothal, but had it sent through a friend's offices to the entire press of New York. "We're going to be married next Autumn," they confessed. "Oh, no, we are not going to change our plans of work—we are going to do better and better." Miss Lopokova will continue working toward the realization of her ambition, to become a great actress, and Mr. Broun intends to utilize his professional experience in the writing of plays. Can they fail to succeed with the inspiration of working together with Romance guiding them by the hand? Neither has any doubts in this respect.

Miss Lopokova As She Appeared in the Russian Ballet.



Mr. Heywood Broun, the Critic, Who Will Marry the One Actress He Couldn't Criticise.