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LADY NORA WIDOW BY BERTHA W. OLAY. CHAPTER XXVIII.

The small drawing room of the house in Rutland Gardens is used by Lady Nora as her own special dressing room, and the heavy brown plush curtains between it and the larger parlour are always kept drawn, except on the occasions when she receives her friends. It is a nest of luxury in which Lady Nora, like a gorgeous little tropical bird, rests amidst flowers and scents and radiant colours.

Nora murmurs, red with rage, but taking her cue from "my friend, Mademoiselle Gantier," as she touches Miss Della's hand with her finger tips. "I am glad to see you looking so well, Mrs. Glynn," Lady Pentreath says, coldly shaking hands. "I fancied from your letters, Lady Nora, that your daughter-in-law was in bad-health," she adds almost sternly, turning on her.

"I never said so, I think," Lady Nora says sweetly, seeing that nothing but placidity will save her in this emergency. "I could certainly wish that dear Yolande was much stronger and brighter than she is. We were discussing costumes for a fancy ball," she adds boldly, knowing that nothing can save her from an explanation, since Lady Pentreath is standing within the portiere, and with her eyeglasses up, is surveying the room with a cold scrutiny from which nothing escapes, and mademoiselle is shaking hands warmly with Major Hutchinson and Mr. Sarjent. By this manoeuvre she prevents their taking their leave, as Lady Nora has hoped they would; and, as the Countess is looking at them, Lady Nora has no recourse but to introduce them.

The next moment mademoiselle, with demonic glee, is rapturously admiring the "Circassian Slave" dress, and expatiating on all its enormities of abridged skirts, spangled full trousers, little fly-away, armless vest, turban, and ropes of pearls, white Lady Nora is alternately red and white with vexation, Yolande is hot with discomfort and regret, and the two men are in tortures of suppressed mirth at the amazement and disgust visible in Lady Pentreath's face, who is well known to be of Evangelical views and extremely rigorous and strict-laced in her opinions.

"You absolutely intend wearing that thing, Lady Nora," she asks, pointing a finger of righteous indignation at the spangled trousers. "I intend going to a ball and dancing in it!" — and, though Lady Nora has no scruple about telling an untruth now and then, nothing can clear her from the heinousness of this intention in the Countess's mind. "If she has a chance of escape, mademoiselle destroys it with her horrible, ill-timed praises and suggestions.

"I really is not an indecent dress, I think, Lady Pentreath," she says meekly and suavely. "Those tulle trousers veil the form, so to speak — don't they, Lady Nora?" "Veil the form!" repeats Lady Pentreath, in withering accents. "The idea of any woman wearing a costume which is apologized for as not indecent because it has some tulle arrangements to veil the form!"

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Advertisement for 'TUBULAR SEPARATOR CAN BE KEPT CLEAN' by P. J. WILKINSON, Cambray. Includes an illustration of a tubular separator.

"Pray don't, my dear!" she is conscious at last what Lady Pentreath is saying, and she hears her clicking medicine glasses and bottles, and measuring out something that has a chemist's shop odour. "Pray do not give way, Yolande! Hysteria may supervene, and there is nothing more destructive to the nervous system! Ten drops of this, dear — Doctor Suthely Smith's prescription."