

Latest Amazing Love Affair of Isadora Duncan

How the Celebrated Barefoot Dancer Was Won by the Young Russian Poet, Who Found Her Growing Fatness Adorable Enough to Sing About Instead of Something To Be Laughed At or Pitted



Serge Yessenin, Miss Duncan's gifted poet-husband.



Above—Miss Duncan and some of the young women who she has taught to enjoy dancing as the ancient Greeks did in their bare feet.

On the Right—Isadora Duncan's charming foster daughter and pupil, Therese Duncan, now Mrs. Bourgeois of New York.

Photographed by Alfred Cheney Johnston

Below—A recent photograph of Miss Duncan showing some of the effects of her losing fight against fatness.

smiles are exchanged, make a most interesting story.

Isadora Duncan departed, much heralded, for Russia to become the head of the Department of Dancing of the Soviet Government, which was determined that the arts should not be neglected. On arrival, Miss Duncan met, with several disappointments, which was nothing unusual for the Soviet Government. "The Soviet Government promised me a thousand pupils," she said, "but I received only forty, and found it necessary to contribute toward their food out of my own money."

Not only was the class very small, but it is said that the teacher did not give full satisfaction. A teacher is supposed to illustrate her subject, and this, in the opinion of some Russians, Isadora was not fully equipped to do.

As is well known she had been growing steadily stouter for some years before leaving for Russia. In fact, her losing fight against fatness is said to have been one of the reasons why she left France. The dancer may have expected to be able to reduce on Russia's scanty rations, or she may have thought that the Russians like 'em plump.

But the Russians don't. Witness their slim and sylph-like Pavlova.

It was a case where beggars might not choose, for the native dancers had been scattered. They had fled to safer and healthier climes. Many of the ballet had been appropriated by Soviet officials. As Isadora was about the best thing in the way of dancers to be had under the Bolshevik rule, she continued to hold the chair of dancing in the Soviet school.

The story is that Isadora remained fat, even grew fatter in spite of the poor fare. But romance came to her nevertheless, romance in the shape of the young symbolist poet, Serge Yessenin, with his bushy yellow hair and his raiment of blue suit and white canvas shoes.

Of Serge it has been said by compatriots and fellow-authors that he is one of the most gifted Russian poets writing today. He is a young man of peasant origin and the peasant motif prevails throughout his poetry. He is a member of the Imagist group of poets and hence writes mostly of landscapes. His imagery he draws from such homely objects as plows, horses and clods of earth—also from revolutions.

"My friends consider him the greatest poet in the world," Miss Duncan declared.

But what is said to have been one of the most attractive things about Serge to Isadora was the way her growing avoirdupois inspired his poetic genius. While others saw in her fatness only a thing for ridicule or pity Serge, according to gossip here, found it something adorable—something well worth celebrating in some of the most impassioned verses he has written.

It was the fervor with which he sang her fatness, so Paris hears, that finally won Isadora to the young poet. And their love thus far seems to be an ideal arrangement on both sides. The stouter she grows the greater inspiration Serge Yessenin finds for his poetic imagination and the better reconciled the

dancer becomes to any loss of popular favor which may result from her losing fight against fatness.

How could any woman help being pleased with such gems of literature as Isadora Duncan's artistic bulk is said to have inspired? Here is one, for example, which they say in the cafes here helped win the poet his dancing bride.

The snow
The beautiful, white snow
Covers the Russian landscape
Like a blanket.
It covers the field,
Like a sheet,
It covers the cottage,
Like a pillow.
Within, the boiling samovar dances over the flames.
Like a dancer.
It has round, generous curves,
Has the samovar,
Like my love.
And it puffs when it dances,
Like one over-exerted.

The imagery of this fragment has been a great deal admired here, especially the smile of the samovar, which, as everybody knows, is Russian for tea-kettle.

There is symbolism for you, say those who quote. No wonder Isadora Duncan married her young poet-lover.

The marriage, by the way, took place in a police station in Moscow, Miss Duncan expressing the desire that she retain her American citizenship which would afford passport conveniences. The couple took a very costly honeymoon by airplane to Berlin (the fare was 100,000,000 roubles apiece), where she visited Elizabeth Duncan, who is running a school on the palace grounds at Potsdam.

The inspiration for the following fragment is evident, say those who quote it as a prime example of the Imagist school. It has been entitled, "The Danseuse and the Wolves."

Over the hard, smooth crust
Of the snows of Siberia's winter
The moon casts a gem-like luster.

The stark, silvered trees stand forth
Toyl-like,
Almost Tolstol-like.
On padded feet the wolf-pack glides
Ringing about the peasant's hovel with
A circle of greedy, green eyes in the night.
Suddenly a shape slips forth from those
Terror-huddled in the cot.
It is a woman, a fair woman.



Isadora Duncan as she looked before growing avoirdupois had begun to lessen the airy gracefulness of her face and figure.

PARIS, June 15.

OVER the dancing waves of the Atlantic Ocean Isadora Duncan, the dancer, will travel to America next fall, according to an announcement here. With her will be a husband and twenty-three children. The husband is her own, but the children are related to her only as dancing pupils.

Many interesting tales are beginning to be told about the boulevards of Miss Duncan's career as head of the Russian Soviet National School of Dancing. But a more favorite topic is her romance with Serge Alexandrovitch Yessenin, the twenty-seven-year-old Russian poet, whom she describes as her first and last husband. This romance has many elements that seem to make it the most amazing of all this celebrated dancer's love affairs.

It was the American poet Loggoffellow who first sang the barefoot boy in the United States. It was Isadora Duncan who first danced the barefoot girl there. Isadora Duncan has been long absent in Russia from her native land, but her pupils have gone dancing on.

The wolves close in, but she dances.
Barefoot upon the snow, she trips before them.
The woman looks luscious—
The limbs she waves make the wolf mouths water.
But, they only watch, fascinated.
She capers, unharmed, from their midst.
Art!

It was by such flights of poetic fancy as these, that Yessenin is said to have won the dancer and become an important part of the expedition she is leading toward New York. But the plan of Isadora Duncan to make an American tour in the fall with twenty-three of her Russian pupils between the ages of four and eleven, may not be successful. By the American laws her marriage has made her a Russian citizen, and this makes the

curing of the necessary passport a difficult proposition. Isadora's aspirations for a passport are not aided by the story that she danced, barefooted and barelegged, underneath the window of Lenin, who was an interested and appreciative spectator of the performance.

So Isadora after all may not visit that country, where criticisms of her have ranged all the way from a remark by a society woman that she looked "like an exquisite figure on an old vase that we are allowed to admire with perfect propriety" to a church resolution, that her dancing "whatever the motive is the grossest violation of the proprieties of life and we trust it may never be repeated in our fair city."

If Isadora Duncan does succeed in reaching America she may be the guest in New York of a charming relative and pupil of hers—a foster daughter, Therese Duncan (Mrs. Bourgeois). Admirers say that the dancing of this lady is as fine as was Isadora's at the height of her fame.