

**FRIDOLIN'S
MYSTICAL
MARRIAGE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649588893

Fridolin's Mystical Marriage by Adolf Wilbrandt

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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BY

Adolph Wilbrandt, a

FROM THE GERMAN BY CLARA BELL

NEW YORK

WILLIAM S. GOTTSBERGER, PUBLISHER

11 MURRAY STREET

1888

FRIDOLIN'S MYSTICAL MARRIAGE.

CHAPTER I.

DEARLY beloved reader, permit me to lead the way into a house in Berlin, across the court-yard, and up to the third floor, into a room in which, you feel at once, without any help of mine, what sort of a man it belongs to. If four walls covered with prints and photographs from the most famous pictures in the world — if a dozen plaster-casts from the antique — if bas-reliefs, statuettes, portfolios, fragments of carving and artistic "properties" of every description crowding every square inch of space — if the impossibility of stirring without doing some mischief among all this decorative lumber can suffice to prove to you that their owner is a dilettante in art, a single glance will be enough. A man so clever as I take you to be, will discern at the second glance that he has a particular predilection for Raphael's earlier Madonnas as well as for Rembrandt's etchings; from

which you may venture to conclude that two Spirits rule his mind: one which yearns for the tender grace of the South, while the other has the sombre humor of the North.

If you will now step out on to the balcony, which has been very tastefully turned into a little garden, but from which the marauding sparrows and pigeons fly in positive terror the instant the latch of the window is touched, you may further infer that the absent proprietor loves flowers and hates birds. The image of a very eccentric personage rises before your fancy and as you look into the room again and perceive that, though it is still early twilight, all the gas is lighted and a dozen tapers to boot, you understand that he has a passion for ample illumination. Now look at the chimney-piece and you will understand that this lover of light must be a man of strong natural affections; for there — a most unæsthetical sentimental break in the artistic decoration of the room — behold a long row of small photographs in vulgar frames: worthy but utterly commonplace old men and old women, in garments of unfashionable cut; children with their mouths puckered up ready for a whimper, and held in the arms of unspeakably proud and plain mammas; a few pretty comfortable-looking dames in caps (these, you

think, he must have loved but they married other men) and lastly a few groups of young men, with boldly-tied cravats and a perfectly inspired growth of hair; these likenesses have dedicatory inscriptions. "To his dear Master," "To his Fridolin," and so on.

Who is this Fridolin? One more investigating glance, at a calendar hanging on the door, will reveal him to you. The days of the week are colored in turn, red, blue, and green; only the Sundays are left white. Against a saint's day here and there you see written, in a minute professorial hand: "4 to 5," or " $\frac{1}{4}$ to 6." This settles the question. You are sure now that this bitter-sweet dilettante, who seems to love method and his fellow-men and light and flowers, while he does not love birds, is a Professor of Art whom his devoted but flippant disciples call "Fridolin," who lives in his favorite ideals and whom it might be very pleasant to know — provided one were not a sparrow.

And so, without my having had to tell you anything about him, simply and solely by the acuteness of your own intuition, you have conjured up for yourself a fairly distinct idea of this man, and spared me the effort which so often makes the narrator a terror to his reader: that namely of be-

wildering your brain with a tedious and circumstantial description.

At the same time I must warn you that you are in error if, made bold by success, you try to picture his personal appearance and embody the sum total of these gentle qualities in a pale and elegant being with thin, beardless lips, a voiceless smile and modest retiring manners. Yes — mistaken — for you can have no idea of the trick Nature played him. Quite the reverse! The clock is striking five and in he comes — a radiant creature, rather like Count Egmont with a splendid light beard, and a thick Apollo-like curl on his forehead; a large nose which the judicious stars that watched over him stayed in its growth at precisely the right moment; broad shoulders and a deep chest. He glances round, that noble nose seems to scent mischief, it curls, it sniffs suspiciously, and above it appears a deep and sinister line of command which has its duplicate over his gracefully twisted moustache. He shakes his waving locks, he stamps his foot, he marches majestically to the bell and rings so violently that the bell-pull curtsies to the carpet. Again he pulls — then he stands and waits. Who is the victim to his fury? It must be dangerous to appear in the presence of this indignant Egmont — unless for

the Duke of Alva himself. How came this lover of flowers and Madonnas to put on such a face and form? Can you, most sapient of readers, have made some mistake? We must wait till some one comes. — Dame Therese Ritter appears.

A tall woman with a tall snow-white cap, and hair already turning grey, but with a remarkably fresh-colored, pleasant and good-humored countenance.

"You rang?" says she, in a no less pleasant and good-humored voice, while she looks at him gently but quite composedly.

"You found that out did you!" he retorts. "Yes my dear — I did ring. I rang because you never as long as you live will think of having anything done that I desire. Why has not this room been fumigated? You know I hate this confounded smell of coal-smoke — that it makes me sick. — Why do you neglect me? Why do you not do as I ask you?"

"I do not neglect you," replied the good woman gently. "I always does as you asks me; and I will fumigate your room."

"Always do — not does. Does for the third person do for the first," he corrected her.

"I always do," she repeated timidly.

"Yes — you will fumigate it now. Now —