

# Curious Kink in "Dickie" Davis' Character

## Gladly Lets One Woman Divorce Him but Binds Another to be His Widow All Her Life

THE pen that Richard Harding Davis wielded during more than two decades of weaving with it the masterful romances and tales of adventure that made him famous, often imprisoned by the scratch of a word or a phrase on his manuscript sheet a beautiful heroine—dooming her to the sorrows of a shattered romance, or binding her in marriage to her hero.

The scratch of "Dickie" Davis' pen molded the lives of the mannikins he made so real in his novels and plays.

Now the last scratch of that once prolific pen—idle because "Dickie" Davis is dead—has molded the life of golden-haired Bessie McCoy, the vivacious dancer, the marvel of mimicry and twinkling toes, the girl who set Broad-

romance, of life tasted in every quarter of the globe, in the fire of hostile guns of battling armies during twenty years of war, of adventures at home and abroad, of hard work on novels that flung his name around the world—and of two romances and a tragedy of his own.

Who hasn't read "Soldiers of Fortune," and "Ranson's Folly," and "Gallagher," and his later books, the most recent the product of months spent on battle-grounds of the present European war? But not so many of the vast army of readers know the stories he didn't write—of the whirlwind transatlantic courtship of his first wife when he was just achieving fame, and of his second courtship with the last girl in the world that the Rialto thought he would court, the beautiful "Yama Yama girl."

Richard Harding Davis had a way of startling people—if not with the novels and stories he wrote, then with the distinctive things he did. His first courtship, seventeen years ago, was startling.

more had wished "the greatest joy in the world, my dear." But the first Mrs. Davis was not happy during the ensuing years. The couple went to Paris on their honeymoon. In Paris, presently, Mrs. Davis' friends soon began to whisper to each other. "It is unfortunate Cecil had such odd ideas. Who ever heard of a platonic marriage?"

Who indeed? A few antiquated cranks might perhaps advocate it, but a woman who was young and beautiful! It seemed unbelievable. Yet many believed the strange story of the Chicago girl, who is said to have told her novelist lover that she would marry him only for companionship. "A girl needs some one to take her about," she is supposed to have told him. "We will simply be as brother and sister."

Confidants of the pair said that this strange pact was kept. But after three years Novelist Davis and his bride were seldom seen together. Mrs. Cecil Clark Davis was an artist of talent and she



RICHARD HARDING DAVIS  
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MRS. RICHARD HARDING DAVIS (BESSIE McCOY)



way after when she was the "Yama Yama Girl" and "Dickie" Davis was courting her.

Bessie McCoy—Mrs. Richard Harding Davis—is a widow now, after less than four years a wife. And a widow she will remain for many years—until the fame she knew will have been forgotten and the sheen of youth will have gone from her golden hair.

The last scratch made by Novelist Davis' pen so decreed—unless she finds herself willing to renounce a fortune to marry again.

It is a fortune of a quarter of a million dollars that may sometime hang in the balance. That represents the wealth that flowed to Richard Harding Davis, newspaper reporter, author, war correspondent and playwright, who died in April as he sat in his home near Mount Kisco, N. Y., dictating a telegram.

It now belongs to one-time Bessie McCoy and to Hope Davis, the little daughter of theirs who was born on January 7, 1915. It belongs to them in trust, the income of perhaps \$15,000 a year to be paid to "Dickie" Davis' widow until little Hope Davis is twenty-one years old.

The novelist's pen, as he wrote his will, set down the words "as long as she remains my widow." He stipulated that when their daughter reaches twenty-one each should receive half of the income of his estate.

In the meantime the fascinating "Yama Yama girl," who married "Dickie" Davis on July 9, 1912, although she was "the only girl who wouldn't read his stories," is cast for the role of widow. She left the stage when she married. Now she has a role in life's drama which, if she casts it aside for a new love, will mean that she will be cut off from the novelist's fortune.

In such an event all of the income of the quarter of a million dollars will be paid to little Hope Davis until she becomes of age. Then she will receive half of the principal and the balance will remain in trust for her for life.

Thus did "Dickie" Davis write the last chapter in his own life's drama, providing for his widow—as long as she should remain so—out of the generous profit of the books that Bessie McCoy once said she just simply couldn't "get through" because they "made her sleepy."

It was a life filled with thrills and

His second was startling in a different way. People called him "the graven image" then, and the Rialto couldn't understand why he should pursue Bessie McCoy, the dancing enchantress, his antithesis of type.

Now, recovering from the shock of his death, crumpled up in a telephone booth in his home, the Rialto and thousands of literary folk who knew him quirked an eyebrow at the unexpected pursuit in his will that leaves his fortune to his beautiful actress wife—"as long as she remains my widow."

The novelist happened to be in London in 1899 when he did the thing that turned the eyes of the world from the printed pages of his books to the man himself. He called a messenger boy and brusquely directed him to proceed immediately to No. 1801 Prairie ave., Chicago, Ill., United States of America, with a package and a letter.

The coat was great, of course, but the messenger boy carried out his mission. And shortly the world knew that the package contained an engagement ring for Miss Cecil Clark, daughter of a telephone magnate. They were married later that year.

At that wedding in 1899 the maid of honor was Miss Ethel Barrymore, the famous actress. At Richard Harding Davis' second marriage thirteen years later, Miss Barrymore—by that time, of course, Mrs. Russell Colt—was the matron of honor.

To the first Mrs. Davis, Miss Barry-

pursued her art studies and her ambition. She was usually at her father's home in Chicago.

It was then, after some years had passed and "Dickie" Davis had become more famous, that he, pursuing his own ambition, including the work of his pen and his travels among warriors, began to pursue the twinkling toes of a dancer.

He had been living at his 365 acre estate, Cross Roads farm, six miles from Mount Kisco, north of New York. There he had been delegated as one of the aristocratic deputy sheriffs of Westchester county. He was ever the "graven image," the well groomed, immaculate, dignified Davis, not a snob his intimates said, but commonly known as "the man who never laughed." He was too reserved to laugh, his friends said, too fond of his forbidding and gloomy club and his aristocratic hotel.

His reserve broke down under the charm of Bessie McCoy. Her tousled golden hair, framing a sparkling, bewitching face, he had seen on the stage of the Globe theater in New York. He saw that same face, of the "Yama Yama Girl," staring at him from billboards. He lost all his reserve, and he went and got a newspaper man to introduce him to the dancing enchantress.

Once he intruded upon the stage while she was rehearsing a dance. He made a

critical remark. Instantly she banished him. But he came back, chastened, and the romance grew. It was rumored they'd marry—if he were free.

"I can't be," the Rialto said. "Why, they'd have nothing to talk about. He hates dancing. She loathes reading."

However, like the well-manuevered plot of a Davis novel, the tangle was untangled. And presently, in 1912, the first Mrs. Davis sued for divorce, declaring her husband was "in love with another woman," whom she preferred not to name.

The novelist did not contest the suit. So in the early summer of 1912 they were divorced. A fortnight later the impossible did happen and Richard Harding Davis and Bessie McCoy were married in a law office in Greenwich, Conn. Ethel Barrymore was there again to stand up for "Dickie" Davis' second bride and Gouverneur Morris, novelist, stood up for him.

That marked the departure of the "Yama Yama Girl" from the stage. The marriage license had disclosed that her real name was Elizabeth Genevieve McCoy, and that she was twenty-four years old, just half Davis' age then.

The second Mrs. Davis, the widow who now has a fortune if she does not marry another, may never have read her husband's novels, but she joined with him in the worship of his ideals, that were bound up in the work of his pen. For when their baby was born, they named her Hope—after "Hope," the heroine of his first successful novel, "Soldiers of Fortune."

Little Hope Davis' picture, in all her adorable loveliness, stood on "Dickie" Davis' abandoned desk, where it was always before him when he wrote. It remained there in the silent house after he died.

There he left her, bearing the name of the heroine he created in a book, to share with the "Yama Yama Girl" the fruits of his life that began in 1864. "Dickie" Davis was born, the son of L. Clarke Davis, for many years a newspaper publisher, and of Rebecca Harding Davis, herself a novelist and essayist of distinction.

Even in his student days, while he was attending Lehigh and Johns Hopkins universities, he began writing short stories. In 1887 he got a \$7-a-week job on the Philadelphia Record. Three months later he landed on the Philadelphia Press at \$9. He lived on his meager salary, too, though the Davis family was well off and socially prominent in Philadelphia.

Two years later, while working for the Philadelphia Telegraph, he "covered, the Johnstown flood, and the same

year he got an opportunity to go to England with an all-American cricket team. There the famous Whitechapel murders occurred and he was on the spot to write about them.

Ever after that he was "always on the spot," at coronations of kings and emperors, at great disasters, at world events, and at every war, beginning with the Greco-Turkish war. Perhaps his best known war correspondent work, aside from that in Europe recently, was at the Russo-Japanese war and at the Spanish-American war. He was in the thick of the latter, and when he died this is what his friend, Theodore Roosevelt, said of him:

"I feel the deepest regret for the death of Mr. Davis, not only because he has been my close personal friend, but because he has been standing for that which is finest and highest in American citizenship. I mourn his loss. He was one of the three honorary members of my regiment in Cuba. His death is a loss to American letters and to American citizenship."

"Dickie" Davis—as his intimates knew him—always preferred to be known as a "reporter" rather than an "author." But he was more the latter, for after his return to America in 1891 he joined the staff of the New York Evening Sun, and within a few years had branched out as a real author and war correspondent.

It was during his newspaper days, particularly in Philadelphia, that he gained the idea for the first short story that won him fame, "Gallagher." That has been hailed as one of the best American examples of the short story art, along with his later story, "The Bar Sinister."

Especially during the past fifteen or eighteen years Davis had made large sums from his writings. It was a common thing for him to receive \$1,000 or \$1,500 for a short story. His novels were all popular and paid well. Of his plays the real productive ones were "Soldiers of Fortune" and "Ranson's Folly," adapted from his earlier novels, and "The Dictator."

Out of these plays he probably made \$150,000. And it is estimated that during his writing career Davis made fully half a million dollars with his pen.

He died, leaving a comfortable quarter of a million, leaving scores of short stories, many novels, a few plays, leaving a fifteen-months-old daughter, leaving a widow with a fortune—"as long as she remains my widow."