

The Merry Widow

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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Continued from Last Week



CHAPTER V. To the Rescue.

NISH, who had obediently followed De Joldon and Natalie at Popoff's orders until they had entered the summer house, now wriggled forward in confusion on hearing the ambassador's voice.

"Did you call me, sir?" he asked. "I most surely did call you, Mr. Nish," cried Popoff. "And I told you I was certain I saw a lady, or, rather, a lady's skirt, disappearing into that summer house. Who was she?"

"I—I don't know, your excellency," tremblingly lied Nish.

"You ought to know!" scolded Popoff. "You were standing nearer the summer house than I was. Didn't you see her at all?"

"Yes, sir—yes, I saw her, if I may say so, but I don't know who she was. I really don't!"

"Was she alone?"

"No, your excellency, not quite alone. There was, if I may say so—there was a gentleman with her. At least he looked like a gentleman, but I didn't recognize him either."

"Well, well, well!" chuckled the ambassador, seating himself in a garden chair and eyeing the summer house with delightful interest. "A little flirtation, eh? Gone in there to whisper sweet nothings where no one can interrupt 'em. I wonder who they are! Now, I really wonder! Mr. Nish, I would not for the world have you think I am the least bit curious. But—I'll just sit here awhile, for a joke, and watch them come out. In the meantime, Mr. Nish, you might slip around to the rear of the summer house and see if there is another door there. If there is, you might lock it. Understand?"

"Ye-yes, your excellency!" mumbled panic-stricken Nish, scuttling away among the bushes. The little clerk never paused until he had found Sonia, to her he poured forth the whole story, gazing with wild horror as she broke into a peal of uncontrollable laughter.

Suddenly she grew sober. "Her husband will never forgive her," she murmured, half to herself. "He will never understand that it's just a silly, harmless, sentimental talk they're having."

Memories of the ways of jealous Marsovian husbands flashed into her mind. In that primitive fatherland wives had been beaten—yes, and murdered—for less. Something must be done, and done quickly.

"Don't worry!" she consoled the terrified Nish. "Say nothing to any one else. I'll get Mme. Popoff out of the scrape if I can."

Before Nish could reply she had disappeared down a path leading to the rear door of the summer house.

Meantime Popoff, his curiosity mastering him, had left his seat. Stealing forward on tiptoe, he put his eye to the keyhole of the wicker door.

He had scarcely bent over this when Danilo, happening to pass by on his way to the gate, paused in amazement at sight of the Marsovian ambassador thus assuming the role of Paul Pry.

"Why, hello, old chap!" cried the prince. "What are you up to?"

"Hush!" warned Popoff in an excited whisper. "A lady went into the summer house a few minutes ago with a gentleman. I can't see them very clearly. There's too much fuff in the keyhole. But they're sitting opposite each other with only a little table between them. The lady's back is to me, but it somehow looks familiar. The man is talking as earnestly as if he were trying to borrow money. Now he's bending across and kissing her hand, and she doesn't seem to mind. It's—why, bless my soul, it's that fellow De Joldon! Well, well! Of all things! Now, if only the lady would turn her face so I could see her!"

"Come away, sir!" begged Danilo, the whole situation bursting upon his mind. He caught Popoff's sleeve, but the ambassador shook him off.

"Let me alone!" he whispered. "Can't you see what it all means? It means we've found the lady De Joldon's in love with, the very woman we've both been looking for! And now if she'll just turn her head a little I'll be able to see her face, and then—"

"Then you don't know who she is?" queried Danilo.

"No. But I'll—"

"Then take my advice and don't try to find out. Let well enough alone. Come away, old chap, and—"

"No, no! There, you pulled my head away just as she was turning around. I'd have seen her in another second."

They're getting up. Maybe they'll go out by the other door, and then I shan't be able to know who—"

"Let me do the looking," suggested Danilo. "If either of us has to play the eavesdropper I'll—"

"No. It is my place," asserted Popoff. "But I'll bet you a hundred francs it's Mme. Nova Kovitch."

"It would be like stealing a drunken man's watch. I won't take the bet. Come away, sir, and let the matter drop where it is. For your own happiness—"

But Popoff was once more at the keyhole.

"They're standing up to go," he reported. "Now she's beginning to face this way. It's—Oh, good Lord!"

The poor old man staggered away from the door as though struck between the eyes. Reeling to a chair, he collapsed and buried his face in his hands.

"No, no! It can't be! It can't!" he moaned. "And yet I could hardly be mistaken. My wife! And—"

"Brace up, your excellency!" entreated Danilo in genuine distress. "Pull yourself together. There are people coming along the walk. Don't make a scene. Perhaps you were mistaken."

"No; I saw her!" groaned Popoff.

"Let me tell you a little fairy story: There were once a prince and a princess. They loved each other. But the prince was poor and dared not tell of

his love for fear of being thought a fortune hunter. His silence made the princess angry. So she went and promised her hand to another man, and they all lived miserably unhappy ever after. And the moral of that stupid little story is that I'm sick of respectability, and I'm awake from my crazy dream of love, and I'm going back to Maxim's, and you can all go to—Marsovia!"

"He loves me! He loves me!" panted Sonia under her breath.

"I'll denounce her before them all! Come out of there," he bellowed, rushing forward, "both of you! Come out!"

He threw the summer house door wide open and shrank back, incredulous, aghast.

On the threshold stood De Joldon and—Sonia!

"What—what does this mean?" gurgled the confused ambassador, "this—this change and—"

"You called to us to come out," returned Sonia calmly. "May I ask what you wanted of us?"

"Sonia!" gasped Danilo. And through the confusion of many excited voices she heard him and thrilled to the note of anguish in his half stifled cry.

"If—if it was you who were in there with M. de Joldon," stammered Popoff, "where is my wife?"

"Here I am, dear," answered Natalie, stepping out of the crowd, with which she had mingled after her hurried exit through the rear door of the summer house. "Here I am! What is the matter?"

"Matter enough!" cried her husband. "I could have sworn I saw you sitting in that arbor with M. de Joldon."

"My dear!"

Natalie's exclamation was a triumph of shocked propriety.

"He was kissing your hand, I thought," went on the dazed ambassador.

This time Natalie moved away from him in offended dignity. But Popoff

hastened to throw his arm about her and draw her back.

"I was wrong," he assured her—"a blunder of eyesight! I apologize! I'm sorry. I—"

"I begin to understand," put in Sonia, stepping forward in fear lest Natalie overdo her pose of virtuous indignation. "It seems that the Marsovian ambassador has done me the honor to listen at a keyhole in hopes of overhearing my conversation. Sooner than disappoint him, M. de Joldon, will you please repeat to him just what you said to me in there?"

De Joldon understood. If Natalie was to be saved, if Sonia was not to be talked about, heroic measures were necessary.

"I asked Mme. Sonia Sadova," said he, "to do me the honor to become my wife."

Danilo stood motionless, his lips set in a white line, amid the buzz of congratulations and laughter that followed De Joldon's announcement. Sonia noted his agony and said joyfully to herself:

"My prince, I think I've won! You'll have to speak, soon or late, now, and when you do—"

"And Marsovia loses the twenty millions!" Popoff muttered, recovering his self-possession and somewhat befuddledly remembering his country's needs.

"Prince," called Sonia mischievously, "I haven't heard your congratulations yet. You don't look as happy as you might at the news."

"Happy!" echoed Danilo, with a scornful, mirthless laugh. "Why shouldn't I be? Accept my congratulations, my paternal blessing and anything else you choose to levy on me for. My own motto is, 'Love when you may, propose seldom and carry—not at all!'"

"Let me tell you a little fairy story: There were once a prince and a princess. They loved each other. But the prince was poor and dared not tell of

his love for fear of being thought a fortune hunter. His silence made the princess angry. So she went and promised her hand to another man, and they all lived miserably unhappy ever after. And the moral of that stupid little story is that I'm sick of respectability, and I'm awake from my crazy dream of love, and I'm going back to Maxim's, and you can all go to—Marsovia!"

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ferent from the usual habits of the place as to come in for not a few amused glances from their neighbors. They were Mme. Natalie Popoff, Mme. Nova Kovitch and Casca and St. Brioché. The visit was Natalie's idea.

"Because you love me?" she suggested. He broke into a discordant, miserable laugh.

"Don't laugh that silly way!" she reproached sharply.

"I am sorry you don't like it," he observed. "It's the only way I know."

"Then don't laugh at all. The laugh is on my side, anyway."

"On your side?"

"Yes. You are angry at what happened this evening. But it wasn't I who was in the summer house with M. de Joldon."

"But I saw you there," he declared.

"I took another woman's place to get her out of an awkward scrape with her husband—with M. Popoff. She was—"

"And I never even guessed it!" cried Danilo, his sullen face breaking into a smile of utter relief. "What a fool I was! I was green and yellow with jealousy. I—"

He caught himself up, but it was too late. Sonia's eyes danced.

"But since you don't love me," she asked, "why were you yellow and green with—"

"Because green and yellow are our national colors. I am nothing if not patriotic. You see—"

"Mme. Sadova—prince!" gurgled Popoff, trotting up to them, unable longer to restrain his anxiety. "I hope it is all settled. All nicely arranged, eh?"

"If you mean is madame to marry De Joldon," answered Danilo, "she is not."

"But this evening," ejaculated Popoff, "in the summer house?"

"She took another woman's place," replied the prince, disregarding Sonia's warning gesture.

"Dear me!" squealed Popoff, his curiosity reviving. "Who was she?"

"Excuse me, your excellency," remarked Nish, who had entered with Nova Kovitch and had hovered aimlessly about waiting to get in a word, "but here is a fan that was picked up in the summer house after the party. You told me to search the place, and I did. If I may say so, I—"

"Same old fan!" commented Popoff, idly opening it. Then, with a jump as his eye vaguely caught the sentence Natalie had scribbled beneath De Joldon's avowal, he screamed:

"My wife's handwriting! Then it was my wife after all!"

"Sir," quoted Nova Kovitch, "Caesar's wife should be above suspicion."

"But Caesar never brought his wife to Paris!" wailed Popoff. "This is bad for me."

"No, no!" pleaded Natalie, who at sight of the fatal trinket had left her table and run forward. "It's all a horrid mistake. I can explain. I—"

"Silence!" commanded Popoff in his most magisterial manner. "Madame, under section 4 of the Marsovian code I hereby divorce you. This fan is sufficient evidence."

As Natalie started back, dumb with horror, Popoff turned impressively to Sonia and, to the widow's amused dismay, sank on one knee before her.

"Mme. Sadova," he declaimed. "I am free, and in the name of our fatherland I beseech you to become my wife!"

Sonia was seemingly blind to the white misery in Natalie's face and the look of angry surprise in Danilo's. She answered, with perfect composure:

"My dear M. Popoff, I am deeply honored by your proposal, but before I accept it—"

"I must see his excellency," insisted a portly man behind them, his voice booming through the whole room. "He is here, and I—Oh!" he broke off on sight of Popoff. "Here you are! I—"

"My dear Nova Kovitch," pettishly interrupted the ambassador, "is it necessary to hunt for me with a brass band? Couldn't you—"

"I'm sorry to interrupt you," answered Nova Kovitch, "but here's a dispatch from the Marsovian ministry. It seemed to me important, and I brought it on."

Popoff took the slip of paper and read aloud:

"If Mme. Sadova's twenty millions are allowed to leave Marsovia we are a bankrupt country."

"There, Prince Danilo," continued the ambassador, turning on the young man in melodramatic appeal; "you see it's right up to you! Your country appeals to you to save it! You are Marsovia's last hope. Marry the widow and—"

"I'll marry no one!" fared up Danilo. "To the deuce with matrimony and Marsovia and myself! I'm done with all; dreams of love and all that nonsense. I'm free, and I'm going to make a night of it. I!"

He paused and stood silent, dumfounded. Down the little flight of stairs leading into the room a woman was advancing alone.

"Sonia!" exclaimed Danilo. With a word of excuse to the others, he hurried across and met the widow as she reached the foot of the steps.

"You're here," he muttered in horrified wonder—"here alone?"

"Yes," replied Sonia coldly. "Is it any affair of yours?"

"First the summer house," he went on as in a daze, "then Maxim's."

"Quite so. Is that all you have to say?"

"No," he retorted; "I have one thing more. You should not marry De Joldon."

"No! Why not, pray?"

"Because I—"

He checked himself. She finished

the sentence for him.

"Because you love me?" she suggested. He broke into a discordant, miserable laugh.

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"I love you, Danilo. I have always loved you."

"Tut, tut!" fretted Popoff, pushing peevishly between them. "This'll never do. You can't marry her, prince. You'll both be paupers."

"Not quite," gently corrected Sonia. "I shall lose my money. It is true, but only because I am going to give it all to my husband."

[THE END.]

Poor Jones! Missionary—Can you give me any information about Deacon Jones, who labored among your people three years ago? Canibal—Well, the last I heard about him he had gone into consumption.—Judge.

Trees by the Roadside.—The German province of Hanover owns 1,976 miles of highways, of which there are 175,794 fruit trees—pear, cherry, plum and apple—sufficient, if set out eighty to an acre, to form an orchard of more than 300 square miles, says the Syracuse Post-Standard. The fruit raised on these trees is a source of income for the province, which sometimes makes \$40,000 a year by selling the products of this elongated orchard. The province maintains a nursery of 403 acres to supply young trees for roadside use and for promoting the interests of fruit culture. The profit from a tree is very small, but the Hanover people do not worry about that. Shade is afforded in summer, the roadbed is free from dust, the presence of trees retards the washing out of the soil from the banks into the roadside ditches, and the attractive appearance of the roadsides stimulates an interest in tree culture and benefits the province in many other ways. They find it worth while.

DeWitt's Kidney and Bladder Pills are prompt and thorough and will in a short time strengthen weakened kidneys and allays troubles arising from inflammation of the bladder. Sold by Model Drug Store. 4-3 124

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NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Department of the Interior. Roseburg, Ore., July 7, 1908.

Notice is hereby given that ETTA E. WAUGHTAL of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Oregon, who, on July 7, 1908, made Timber and Stone Application No. 974, for W 1/4 SW 1/4 and SE 1/4 SW 1/4 Section 8, Township 8 N., Range 6 West, Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make Final Timber and Stone Proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before Joseph Moss, U. S. Commissioner at Grants Pass, Oregon, on the 5th day of October, 1908.

Claimant names as witnesses: George H. Aiken, of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Oregon; George W. Kearns, of Grants Pass, Oregon; Josephine Co., Oregon; William C. Smith, of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Oregon; Oliver Brown of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Oregon.

BENJAMIN L. EDDY, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Roseburg, Ore., May 6, 1908.

Notice is hereby given that ROY S. WILSON of Grants Pass, Oregon, who, on March 19, 1908, made Timber and Stone application, No. 9965 for W 1/4 SE 1/4 S. W 1/4 NE 1/4 SE 1/4 NW 1/4 Section 14, Township 34 South, Range 7 West, Willamette Meridian, has filed notice of intention to make final proof, to establish claim to the land above described, before Joseph Moss, U. S. Commissioner at his office at Grants Pass, Oregon, on the 15th day of September, 1908.

Claimant names as witnesses: George H. Aiken, of Grants Pass, Oregon; Phillip H. Harth, of Grants Pass, Oregon; George H. Stover, of Grants Pass, Oregon; Roy Garoutte of Melin, Oregon.

BENJAMIN L. EDDY, Register.

NOTICE FOR PUBLICATION. Timber Land, Act June 3, 1878. Roseburg, Ore., April, 1908.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1892,

JOHN B. STENTZ of Olympia, county of Thurston, State of Washington has this day, July 23, 1907, filed in this office his sworn statement No. 9508 for the purchase of the N 1/4 of NW 1/4 and N 1/4 of NE 1/4 of Sec 3, Twp 35 S., R 7 W being lots 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Section No. 3 in Township No. 33 South, Range No. 7 West W. M., and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before Register and Receiver at Roseburg, Ore., on Saturday, the 10th day of October, 1908.

He names as witnesses: Joseph E. Verdin, of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Ore.; Martin A. Couger, of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Ore.; James T. Burns of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Ore.; Frank W. Cripp, of Grants Pass, Josephine Co., Ore. Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 10th day of October, 1908.

BENJAMIN L. EDDY, Register.



"I'M AWAKE FROM MY CRAZY DREAM OF LOVE, AND I'M GOING BACK TO MAXIM'S."

"My own wife and De Joldon! And he kissed her hand."

"Oh, I dare say she was more kissed against than kissing!" Danilo observed consolingly. "But be careful, sir. A whole lot of people are within earshot."