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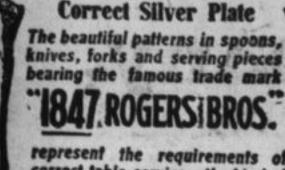
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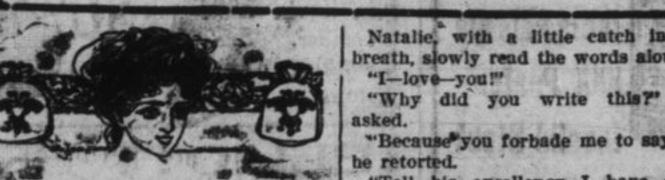
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The Girl With the Millions. HE widow just now is th queen of our diplomatic chess board," sighed the Marsovian will be here tonight. My husband is hanging over the banisters watching

"Butrwhat reason?" "Oh, he has exactly twenty millio reasons for"-

"I don't understand," murmured M "No? Them you are probably the only bachelor in Paris who doesn't. She was the daughter of a poor Marsovian farmer - no dowry but her beauty. An enormously rich old banker named Sadowa, wealthlest man in Marsovia, fell in love with her, mar-

000,000." "And now I suppose she has come to Taris to spend it?"

ried her and did her the exquisitely

"Oh, the money is safe enough for him?" the present, I believe, in the Bank of

breath, slowly read the words aloud:

"Tell his excellency I have come ack," broke in a voice at the door. As a servant hurried off with the message the speaker waddled into the room. He was a stout, ungainly little tume of Marsovia. Bald of head, popping of eye and with abnormally long red mustache, his was a personality to

The newcomer was Nish, messenger and clerk of the embassy. At his appreach Natalle and De Jolidon slipped away to the ballroom. A moment later a tall, fean, fussy man with hooked nose and mincing gait trotted down the stairway and into the salon. "Well, Mr. Nish," he asked peevish-

excite laughter in a mummy.

ly, "did you find Prince Danilo at "No. your excellency," faltered the

"Did you go thence, as I told you, to the American par at"-

grace/ul favor of dying a week later. there tonight."

> "Oh, yes, your excellency, I found him-that is to say, 1"-

THE MERRY WIDOW.

Marsovia. But my husband wants it to stay there. So does the Marsovian government. Ours is not a rich country, M. de Jolidon. That's why a new white heir appears in my worthy husband's head every time one of your Parislant lady killers makes love to her. It's all absurdly simple."

"Well," laughed De Jolidon, "his ha! edn't turn whiter on my account I'll be the one Frenchman who won't make love to Mme. Sadowa."

"But you must." You must marry her, at any rate."

"Are you mad, Natalie, or is this". "It Is no joke, and I'm not mad I've thought it all out."

The ambassador's wife glanced nervously about her. She and De Jolidon were ensconced in an alcove of the

It was the night of the embassy ball. From the adjoining ballroom came the strains of a waitz and the soft gliding of hundreds of dancing feet. Guests were passing and repass'tag along the great hallway and broad stairs at the rear of the salon. But for the moment the two had the

room to themselves. ")Listen," she said. "My husband suspecks nothing thus far, but he is cer- I really need him he refuses to tain to in time unless"-

"Thaless I divert his thoughts by marryir g some one else? I can't, and you Nish; "scarcely as bad as all that, if knew I can't, for I"-

"Hush! You mustn't say it. I am a dut Iful wife. And-what are you doing ?" she queried as he snatched up her fan from the table. With the if he promised he'll come! Diplomatpericil that dangled from his dancing cand De Jolidon scribbled three words on sone of the ivory sticks of the fan, then handed it to his hostess

"Oh, you found him at last? That's better. Where?" "At Maxim's, your"-

"Maxim's, eh?" snorted Ambassador Popolf scornfully. "Idling away his time, as usual, when"-

"Oh, no, your excellency, not exactly 'ldling,' if I may say so. He seemed very busy. There were a number of bottles and"-

"Was he sober?" "Not distressingly so, your excellency. In fact, if I may"-"Did you give him my message? Did

"I gave it word for word, sir. I told him his country was calling for him and that your excellency desired his immediate presence at the embassy." "Well, what was his answer?"

"He said, 'Give my country my r gards and tell it to go to"-"Where?" snapped Popoff as Nis paused in embarrassment.

"I'd-I'd rather not say, sir; no place I'm at all familiar with." "Oh, the ingrate," wailed Popoff

"the ingrate! Here he has been employed at the embassy all these months, and I've winked at his loafing and his dissipation, and the very first minute

Oh, no, your excellency," pleaded I may say so-not 'refused' exactly. He will come. At least he promised

"Ah, that lifts a load from my brain ically speaking, Prince Danilo's word is as good as his bond."

"Diplomatically speaking, your excellency," affirmed Nish, "he agrees to magnum of champagne that was in the ce pall beside him when I left."

"How much of it was gone?" "The cork was not yet drawn, but"the lookout for him. Mi

"I fancy it will be cheaper than fill-

word from a servant had already pot tered out of the room as fast as his somewhat shaky old legs would carry him, and the voluble Nish ran alons

A commotion swept through the scattered groups in the foyer-a murmur, a rustle, a whisper that resolved tself at last into the excited phrases "The widow has arrived!" "Twenty

millions and unincumbered!" "Wide of Sadowa, the animated money bag! "A Monte Cristo fortune for son lucky man!" "Her name is Sonia Sa dowa; twenty millions-red hair too but a beauty!" "Twenty millions

"The Merry Widow!" Down the stairway from the dress ing rooms and into the salon swept i woman-young, beautiful, vivacious. light of mischief danced in her gree

Her masses of auburn hair shope an aureole above her rather pale, delicate face. About her hovered a half score of gallants, all vying for a word, a look, from the beauty (and fortune) of the Paris season.

Two men-the Marquis of Cascada and the Count de St. Brioche-were lucky enough to claim for a mo or two her attention.

"No, no!" Sonia was saying in protest. "At home, in Marsovia, men don't make such pretty speeches. Courtship "Yes, sir. But he was not at home | there is very primitive and marriage is for life. When a man makes love to "Odd. He's usually very much at another's wife, he is promptly shot. home there, I'm told. So you failed When a wife firts, her husband beats in your mission? You couldn't find her black and blue-a good plan. Why not try it in Paris?"

"Delightful!" exclaimed Cascada. "Do you know, madame, we have been counting the moments until you appeared?" "I can well believe it," assented So-

nia. "It must have been just like counting money." "Oh, madame!" protested the group, horrified. "Don't I know?" retorted Sonia, a

little bitterly. "It's always like that. People count me like so much money. If it is coarse for me to say so, remember I'm a farmer's daughter and that in my country people call a spade

Popoff and Natalle came hurriedly in to pay their respects to the guest upon whom Marsovia's hopes so depended. At a sign from the ambassador the others drew back. "So you were shocking some of our

Paris gallants?" beamed the ambassador. "What a child of nature you "You mean," countered Sonia, "that I am a peasant dressed up. How I wish

sometimes that I were a real peasant "Ah!" chuckled Popolf. "Child of nature, true child of nature, always remembering the dear old days on the farm-the bleating of the pigs, the new

laid milk, the tomatoes freshly dug up and all the simple joys of the country! But I want you to meet tonight some of our Marsovian nobility for instance, Prince Danilo, a charming young fellow. He'll be here presently. Danilo is"-But the mischief had died out of Sonia's eyes. Her face was paler than

was its wont, and there was a stern look as of pain about the daintily chiseled mouth. "I have already met Prince Danilo," she said curtly.

"Really?" cried Popoff. Then, noting her change of expression, he added with apprehension:

"I hope it was not on one of his wet days—a charming, lovable youngster in spite of his"-"I am not interested in hearing about

him," broke in Sonia in a curiously level, emotionless voice. "It was long ago that we met. He will have forgotten me even as-as I have forgotten him. Let us talk of something else,

Even Popoff could see something was seriously amiss.



CHAPTER II. Old Love and New.

ELL, here I am," announced a tall, slender youth, entering the deserted salon a few minutes later with Nish at his side. "I'm here at my country's call, all right, but my confounded country doesn't seem to be on hand to meet

His graceful walk was not wholly steady, and there was a flush on the handsome young face. The late arrival was Prince Danilo of Marsovia, attache of the Marsovian legation at Paris. As a diplomat he had scarcely scored a specess, for he had a delightfully normal aversion to work and a simple, unfailing joy in the amuse-

ments of Maxim's and his clubs. "I'll hunt up his excellency at once," Nish was assuring the prince. "Areare you quite in condition to see his

if I may"-"Oh, I'm all right enough," yawned are in love with my fortune Good- say to you, 'I love you!" Danilo, "only I forgot to go to bed last | by." night. If I could reel off a few yards of sleep"-

"Perhaps I could find you some place "I'd prefer a desk, if you can find one. I always sleep best at my desk.

"There is a couch, sir, over in the couch. There lay the man, sound whisper as she asked: corner behind the paims. How would asleep, his face still covered by the that do? You could get a nice nap handkerchief. Sonia touched his hair. there, and in a little while I'd find his "Scat?" roared Danilo, giving his

say so, why do you waste your life in ation when you might marry an settle down? Just think now! Would your own be better worth while than "You leave it to me?" retorted Da nilo. "Then I make it clubs."

"But, if I may say so"-"You may not," interrupted Danilo crossing to the couch and throwing self at full length among its cush ions. "By by! "If you're waking, call

face and in a moment was soun asleep, leaving Nish to tiptoe on search of Popost.

For a few minutes no sound audible in the empty salon save the distant swell and fall of dance music unctuated by the slumbrous prince' beavy breathing.

Then Natalie hurried in with D

folidon. Both looked anxious "How careless of me!" the ambi sador's wife was exclaiming. can I have dropped the miserable fan's If my husband should pick it up and find on it those words you were foolish enough to write- I wonder if I left were sitting there. Let's go back and

They turned back, almost collidi with Sonia, who was entering, Cas-

cada directly behind her, "Oh, Mme, Sadowa," asked Natalie, you haven't seen anything of a white ivory fan? I've looked everywhere, now. It's forgotten."

a thorough search here already." Natalle, thanking her, hurried with her cavaller to the stairway.

cada interrupted her. "That can wait," he pleaded, "but I cannot. Won't you hear me?" "Certainly," assented Sonia cheerfully. "You are going to propose, aren't

"Ah, you read my secret!" "It required little cleverness, You men are all alike."

"But no man ever before loved as I love?" protested Cascada, his voice unconsciously rising in his emotion, "You are all the world to me. Until I met you I never thought I could"-"Ring off!" grumbled Danilo in his sleep, vaguely bothered by the loud

Sonia started. "Some one is here!" she whispered, pointing toward the hidden couch.

"You are mistaken," contradicted Cascada, "and even if it were so I am willing for all the world to know how

THE LATE ARRIVAL WAS PRINCE DANILO.

'A long, blissful, sonorous snore from love to me because they can't get it

Sonia laughed, her eyes alight with "Men are not all fortune hunters,"

"Snoring and romance don't go well "So they all say. Each says 'I love

as the snoring doesn't seem likely to | "They do?" cried Danilo, in rage at

stop the romance must. You say you, the strong insinuation. "Well, here's

are in love with me, and I know you one that doesn't. I for one shall never

"You misjudge me cruelly?" Cascada | She came very close to where he stood:

"Oh, no, I don't! Men are all alike, hair was sweet in his nostrils; so close

As the discomfited marguis made his lips; so close that his bewildered soul

nowadays,

way wrathfully from the room Sonia struggled in vain to hide from the glory

together, marquis," she observed, "and you? Each means my fortune."

them are after my money and make

A strange smile stole across her face.

so close that the faint perfume of her

that her breath was warm upon his

(To be Continued.)

he denied hotly. "I for one"-

"Danilo!" gasped the widow, starting

dazed and blinking. His wanderacredulously at her.

"Sonia!" he exclaimed. "Sonia!" Then, recovering himself, he bowed

stiffly and said: "I beg your pardon, madame." "No: I beg yours," she replied

"Not in the very least."

"Yet you called my name." "You were asleep then. That was "And now I am awake-to the joy of

seeing you again." "The joy is all your own. Is it so surprising to find me in Paris? I am

"I congratulate you on both, especial-

"Yes, freedom is one of your fads, I reedom from marriage. Do you still nake a habit of avoiding marriage-

onia, you are unjust. If it had rested with me you should be my wife now, not another man's widow." "If it rested with you?" she min

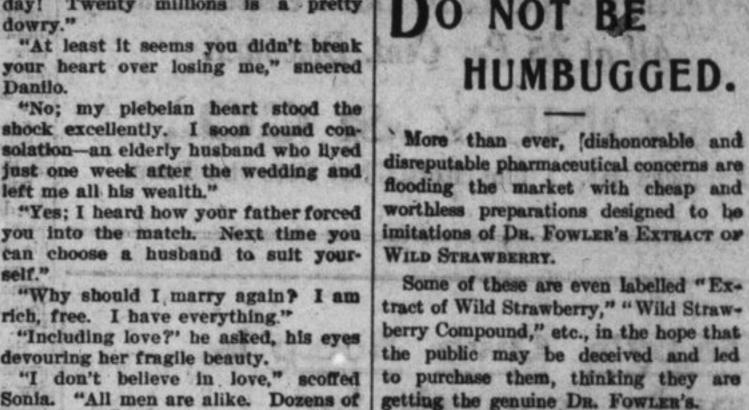
"By you, perhaps-never by me." "Oh, no! I remember it every now it is hard to think of myself as the back little Marsovian peasant maid to whom the dashing cavalry officer, Prince Sonia idly began her search, but Cas-Danilo, was once engaged and whom his rich old uncle at the last moment forbade, to marry because of her pov-erty. How differently that same rich old uncle would look on the match today! Twenty millions is a pretty

> "At least it seems you didn't brenk your heart over losing me," sneered

"No: my plebeian heart stood the shock excellently. I soon found consolation-an elderly husband who lived fust one week after the wedding and left me all his wealth."

"Yes; I heard how your father forced can choose a husband to suit your-"Why should I marry again? I am

rich, free. I have everything." "Including love?" he asked, his eyes devouring her fragile beauty. "I don't believe in love," scoffed Sonia. "All men are alike. Dozens of



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