

WIVES I HAVE MET—By Nat Goodwin

"NAT Goodwin's Book," which Richard G. Bedger of Boston has just published, tells all about the author's encounters with Hymen, sketches the character of each of the feminine parties to the contract and throws in for good measure some humor and philosophy based on the several experiences. All the information vouchsafed in this article has been gathered in the afore-mentioned book.

Nat Goodwin has had five wives. Their portraits, stretched in a row across the cover of his book, testify to the fact that all were beautiful. Their names were respectively, Eliza Weatherby, Nella Baker Pease, Maxine Elliott, Edna Goodrich and Margaret Moreland. The last is the present Mrs. Goodwin, having been married to the author since May of last year.

Eliza Weatherby, one of the most beautiful actresses that ever graced the stage, came to this country originally with Lloyd Thompson. From her salary she supported a widowed mother and five sisters. Mr. Goodwin met her when they were cast for the same company of Rice & Goodwin's "Evangeline," and friendship soon ripened into love. They were married by the Rev. M. Kennedy of New Rochelle on June 24, 1877.

The first Mrs. Goodwin, who was ten years older than her husband, is apparently the only real wife the author ever had. He characterizes her among the five as "the wife who mothered me" and writes of her in the highest terms of affection and appreciation. They played together after their marriage until illness forced her retirement from the stage. When she died she left her entire fortune to her husband, an action which was doubly gratifying to him, in that it enabled him to cancel all his debts and served as a sort of vindication from the accusations of neglect and cruelty which his villifiers heaped upon him. Of her he says:

"Eliza Weatherby was one of the most beautiful women whom I have ever known, and one of the most self-sacrificing wives that ever blessed man with devotion and love.

"I was only a stripling when I married this beautiful creature. Moreover I was unreliable and, I confess, unappreciative of what the fates had been so kind as to bestow upon me. Many have accused me of 'wanton neglect,' I may have neglected her, but only for the companionship of men. She never complained and during the ten years of our happy married life there was never one discordant note. She was ten years my senior and treated me more like a son than a husband, but, like the truant boy who runs away from school now and then, I was always glad to return and seek the forgiveness that an indulgent mother always gives a wayward child. Our own home near Boston was a little paradise, I was seldom away from it and together we spent many, many happy hours, surrounded by our little sisters and my friends—who were always her friends. She was domesticated to a degree and never cared for the theatre. A loving sister, a dutiful daughter, a loving wife, she is resting in Woodlawn and the daisies grow over her grave."

Mr. Goodwin's second and third wives were thrust on him by circumstances. First, for number two.

Along in the early nineties Nat was living with John Mason in a flat on Twenty-eighth street. He began to weary of single life. Mrs. Nella Baker Pease, wife of a Buffalo dilettante, appeared nightly in his audience and made herself conspicuous by offensive applause. She was a gifted woman possessed of many talents, music being the principal one. The author characterizes her as "the best amateur piano player I ever heard."

When playing in Buffalo, he was introduced to all of her family, including the dilettante husband, whose income proceeded from a rich father, and discovered that her home was nothing short of a whitened sepulchre. He promised to get her out of it by fitting her for the stage and enlisting the aid of his friends to get engagements for her. His mother became interested in Mrs. Pease's troubles and invited her to spend a few days in their Boston home. She came, and remained several months. When the author returned from his tour to the parental roof-tree, he found Mrs. Pease still present, and, being subsequently thrown with her a great deal, found her very attractive and entertaining. He was just about to place her in Steele Mackay's charge, when her dilettante husband suddenly served him with papers charging alienation of the lady's affections.

And there you are! Mr. Goodwin, always galling, gave up a prima donna to whom he had become greatly attached and married the pianist. The birth of their son was the happiest event in the author's life, just as his death was the saddest. But Mrs. Goodwin was a changed woman from that day. She became insanely jealous of the child, and the curtain is charitably dropped on their lives. In 1896 her husband secured a divorce from her by agreeing to pay her \$20,000. His comment is that "wives came high, even in those days."

Maxine Elliott was the third.

Mr. Goodwin met her at a banquet in San Francisco just prior to his Australian tour. He was attracted by her marvelous beauty and decided that she, instead of Blanche Walsh, should be his leading lady. Everybody told him that Maxine was a rotten actress, and the papers were full of roasts on her work, but he would not listen. When he went home and told his manager this is what happened:

"Why, you're crazy!" he shouted. "She's beautiful to look at, but she can't act; she hasn't the emotion of an oyster! Blanche Bates is playing rings around her in Frawley's company! Get Bates if you can, but pass up Elliott! Read what the San Francisco papers say about her! Go to sleep and in the morning I'll try to engage Blanche Bates for you!"

"I only wish I had followed his advice, but Fate was peeping over my ramparts! And he caused me to pass a very restless night!"

"Dressing in my best regalia the next morning I called upon Miss Elliott at the Baldwin Hotel. In a few moments I was ushered into her presence and quickly told her of my purpose. It appeared to appeal to her, but there were several barriers in the way. She was about to sign with Harry Miner and Joseph Brooks for the following season. I soon learned that that part of it could be easily arranged, as no documents were signed nor material secured. Her little sister Gertrude must also be looked after. I said I would engage her whole family, if she so desired.

"As I look back to that little impromptu business talk I can see the demure, simple, intelligent Gertrude Elliott, whose fawn-like, penetrating eyes and shell-like ears drank in every word of our conversation. I recall the awe with which she reviewed every act and speech of her beautiful sister!

"Fate plays pranks with us all and shifts about to suit its pleasure. Why did he concentrate his force upon one sister at that interview and demand obedience?"

"There were two prizes in that room for me to select. As usual I drew the blank!

"Had I not made those two engagements the pages of history would have been greatly changed. Had the little Kentucky family held

aloof there would have been no Maxine Elliott theatre in New York; Forbes-Roberison would never have met the sweet Gertrude; the latter would never have been launched as a star; Maxine would not now be a retired actress, rich and famous; Clyde Fitch's career would have been postponed, and the avenues of my poor life would have been broader and less clogged with weeds."

They sailed for Australia, where they had a most successful season. Now it so happened that Maxine had filed suit for divorce against her husband on almost the identical day that Nat was arranging to separate from his second wife. Neither knew of the action of the other until the decrees were granted, when the papers began to bristle with scandal about the coincidence. Maxine and Gertrude were almost prostrated with humiliation, which did not decrease as the time for returning to America approached:

"I'll never go back to that beastly country," wailed Maxine. "Just see what they say about you and me," and she thrust an armful of newspapers at me. "Never mind me," I replied. "Think of yourself." And when I discovered that that attempt at consolation was no good, I added, "Why, it will all be dead by the time we get back." Maxine was not to be comforted, however. She was sure our arrival in America would result in a fresh outburst of scandal. "Maybe it will," I agreed, "but we haven't done any wrong, any harm, so why should we worry?" Maxine wrung her hands and sobbed. "We know our behavior has been absolutely right," I urged. "We know," said Maxine, "but the world does not know." And I confess I could find nothing to say to that. I was rattled. A chicken I had bought on my way home from the track and had put on a spit to roast over my grate fire was a mass of charcoal when I finally discovered it. At dinner I upset a bottle of claret all over the table cloth and spilled a pot of hot tea into Gertrude's lap. It was the most inharmonious meal I ever ate. I was rattled!

"And all the time Gertrude said nothing. That is, up to the moment that scalding tea hit her. Then she let go!

"You two people are acting like a couple of fools," she began succinctly. "There's only one way out of it and you have got to take it."

"What is it?" Maxine and I asked.

"Cable America you're engaged and are to be married some time next season."

"I left the room. At the theatre Maxine and I made no reference to Gertrude's suggestion. On our return to the hotel I tried to excuse myself from our usual supper. But Max, with a merry little twinkle in her eyes, said, 'Oh, come on.'"

"What do you think of Gertrude's suggestion?" asked Max.

"What do you think of it?" I parried.

"I'm game," said Max.

"You're on," said.

"And thus began my romance."

Mr. Goodwin doesn't remember the date of the marriage. It is very difficult for him to remember dates. He knows the place, however. It was the Hollander hotel in Cleveland.

"Max received two wedding presents—a diamond ring from me and an anonymous letter from some 'Christian lady' warning her against the 'Monster' who had lured her into 'Holy Matrimony!'"

"We were very happy—at least I was—for a few months. I made the mistake of introducing her to few conspicuous, powerful financiers who gave her tips on the stock market (and casual luncheons!). They also gave me tips. Mine lost invariably. Hers always won. How very strange! "As we toured through the country to splen-