

A HAPPY RELEASE.

It was "steamer day" at Sitka, and amid all the joyous stir and excitement that the monthly boat brought was one forlorn, unhappy man. Tom Douglas watched his friends as they eagerly opened their letters and listened with assumed interest to the bit of news they were anxious to share, for at Sitka the population throng to the wharf when the steamer's whistle is heard and wait the coming of the ship and the distribution of the mails. The people crowd into the tiny postoffice on the dock and watch impatiently for the longed-for home letters.

But Tom's home letter was not a comfort to him. "Well, she is really coming," he thought, "a month from to-day, if the steamer is on time, I will be a married man—worse luck. How can I ever—Natalia, dear little girl! I wouldn't willingly hurt her tender feelings for a million dollars, as hard up as I am," and Tom whistled ruefully.

Tom Douglas was a naval officer, and before being stationed at Sitka he had been on duty a winter in Washington, where he had plunged into society with that gay abandon that only a sailor knows, for after three years at sea a young fellow is quite ready for the rush and whirl of the gay capital. All houses were open to the handsome Lieutenant, but there was one where he was especially welcome. The hostess was a pretty widow of some twenty-six or twenty-seven years of age. Her husband, who had died soon after their marriage, seemed not to have laid a very strong hold on her affections, for after mourning him decorously for a year she blossomed into the gay, est of the gay, and her house became a center for the young officers who had been the friends of her husband.

It was there that Tom spent most of his time. He dropped in during the morning and discussed the newest gossip or the latest magazines and came in for a cup of tea in the afternoon and remained till her cozy parlor was empty save for himself and her.

"Are you going to the assembly to-night?" he would ask. "Will you be there, Tom?" Mrs. Deering had such a good-fellowship way of using her friends' first names.

"Yes, I presume so."

"Well, then, I am going," the little widow would reply. And that was the way the winter passed—Tom running in at all hours, privileged to smoke or to read, to talk or listen, the most indulgent of all her callers. When his orders came for his immediate removal to Alaska he put the document in his pocket and went, as usual, to the cheery home of Mrs. Deering. He told her the news and was really surprised and flattered by her reception of it. She took both his hands in hers, and the tears gathered in her bright eyes.

"Oh, Tom," she said, "I hate to have you go." Now, it never had occurred to Lieutenant Douglas before, but at this moment the idea did come to him that he was in love with the widow. He drew her to him and kissed away her tears, and before he knew it he was engaged to Alice Deering.

able for that—they had been together constantly, and each knew distinctly what was in the other's heart. "I believe I'll go and tell Natalia all," Tom continued to muse, "right now, for, of course, as a gentleman and officer I am bound to keep my word, and my word is given to marry Alice, hang it! I wish I had never been born. She, too, poor girl, may discover that my love has somewhat cooled. If it ever was love it never was the same feeling I have for dear little Natalia, bless her loving heart."

So Tom went to Natalia and told her that he was engaged and another month would see him married.

Her delicate face whitened, but controlling herself, she said:

"I congratulate you, Mr. Douglas." Then bursting into tears, she

turned away. The sight of her tears was too much for Tom. Embracing her tenderly, he said: "I love you, Natalia, darling. Oh, that I had met you first! My fondness for Alice was but a fleeting thing, and my love for you will last forever."

Pressing warm kisses on her lips he held her close. "Leave me, Tom. It is right for you to keep your word, but you should have told me of your engagement before. We had best part now. Goodbye."

"But can't I come to see you, Natalia, as usual?" "Why, certainly not, Mr. Douglas. It would only be painful, for you can never from this time forward be anything but the most formal of friends."

Tom was touched by the simple dignity of the young Russian girl, whose quiet life had been spent by the seashore under the shadow of the mountains, far from the noise of city or town, so he bowed to her will. Their parting was a heart-breaking one to both.

"Natalia, I can't bear to leave you. I must have you, dearest."

"There, go now. This is only foolish."

"Well, then, let me kiss you for the last time, darling," pleaded Tom.

Natalia put up her little tear-stained face, and Tom silently kissed her and went away.

That month passed only too quickly for poor Tom, who looked with dread toward the coming of the steamer. He studiously avoided Natalia, denying himself the regular afternoon walk to the Indian river, which is the event of the day to all the white people at Sitka. He kept close to his rooms when not on board ship cursing the mistake of his life, which was soon to make an unwilling bridegroom of him.

To Natalia, whose soft brown eyes were red with weeping, life seemed a dreary blank now that the daily visits of Tom had ceased.

There appeared in her mental horizon nothing for which to live. She wondered how she had existed before he came to Sitka. But then she had been busy with her lessons, and now, in the idea of her old-fashioned father, her simple education was complete, and it was time for her to marry one of the Russian lads who sought her hand.

The next "steamer day" Tom Douglas was seen rushing madly to Natalia's home. The neighbors, who, of course, had noted his long absence, were greatly surprised.

"Natalia! Natalia!" he cried, as soon as she came into the quaint drawing room to receive him. "I've come to ask you to be my wife. Dearest, say yes at once."

"Why, Tom, are you crazy? What has become of Alice?"

"Well, by George, Natalia, she is married! Just think of it—married! And I am the happiest man on earth. A pardoned convict's feelings of relief are not to be compared to mine. You see, soon after I left Washington she met an old sweetheart whom she had cast off to marry Mr. Deering, whose position and prospects seemed better. In the meantime this fellow had made a fortune, and as he was on his way to Alaska for a pleasure trip they decided to make it also a wedding trip and break the news to me in person. Rather awkward, you might think, but I congratulated them with all my heart and thanked my stars for freedom. Came, little girl, put on our hat and I'll take you down to the steamer to see the bride, and I'll introduce to her my fiancée, because you say 'yes,' don't you, dear?"

"I suppose so, Tom, but it's all so sudden. Shall I wear my leg-iron hat?"

How a woman swims. Chicago Record.

There is this peculiarity about a woman's swimming—she will either swim "dog" or "frog" fashion, the former being the easier, the latter the correct way.

A woman rarely if ever uses the overhand stroke to any advantage. There are women known to have done so, but they find it impossible to keep it up or make any progress. All men use it to the exclusion of other methods. That it is swifter is shown, as swimmers all adopt it in racing. This may be another reason why all women swim slowly. The arm in this stroke is brought backward, then over the head and plunged forward, the shoulder being entirely out of the water at each stroke. This motion seems to precipitate the body through the waves, the action being rarely graceful, but forcible. It is exactly as if one were pulling himself through the water by means of a taut rope.

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W. C. T. U. SELECTIONS.

The Masters on a Strike. There's a cloud on the church at Millville. There's a frown on the deacon's face.

As an army of ribs arose, Marched down the aisle and out the door. Like women in Sunday clothes; Leaving behind in mute surprise Just seventeen pair of masculine eyes.

Responding to such a call. "The Sabbath school right after church For old and young alike."

And there in the house sat seventeen men. And only one teacher in sight. A smile quivered over the pastor As he glanced at Deacon Ross

And announced, "The ladies will meet At the house of—no one knows; The Y. P. S. C. E. to-night Will be led by Miss—" the speaker paused.

And the deacon blinked at his feet. "The Women's Home Missionary Society Will pack their barrels—" but no, The women had struck, the society's gone

And the barrels will have to go. "We'll open the service with number six." And he glanced at the choir around; But for choir and organist, leader and all Only one bass singer was found.

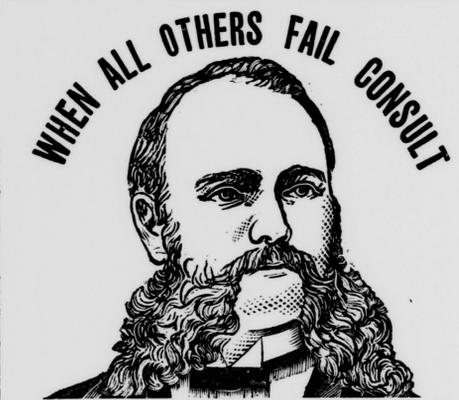
Then up rose the deacon again—"I never afore seed the like, I never afore heard a sermon through Without a woman in sight. And if that woman wants ter speak, I move we hear her to-night."

There's a smile on the church at Millville. There's a gleam in the deacon's face. There's a cyclone of women's prayers and songs, Filling with joy the place.

Sentiment Changing. One of the old time arguments against woman's suffrage was, "If women vote they will have to be blacksmiths and sheriffs." The validity of the argument never impressed us, but it has now transpired that woman can and do perform the duties of both offices, without the power of the ballot.

More than one village smith has been recorded and now comes the announcement of the appointment of a woman sheriff in Green county, Missouri—Mrs. Helen C. Stewart, to succeed her husband who died in office a few weeks ago. The press report voluntarily remarks: "She is amply qualified to fill the position." There are countless cases where women have performed the actual work of their husbands, when disqualified by sickness, but only the "new man" is generous enough to appoint her to the honors of the position when death removes the husband.

Gratifying. London Fun. "That boy of yours, madam," remarked the ticket inspector as he punched the half-fare ticket, "looks remarkably well developed for a child under 12."



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