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WIDOW
PHILLIPS'
REVENGE

By John Arthur
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When Farmer John Phillips got tangled up in a thrashing machine, he left a widow behind him, and he hadn't been buried four weeks when people began to wonder if she wouldn't get married again as soon as decency permitted. Of course most of them concluded that she would, and they added another conclusion to it—viz, that they pitied her second husband. As a wife the woman had always seemed to feel a bit above other farmers' wives, and as a widow it was their duty to gossip and make things unpleasant for her.

For a time the second husband was an unknown quantity, but at length farmhouse gossip pitched upon Deacon Spooner. He was well to do and a widower, and it had long been suspected that he had his eye out for a second wife. Gossip was wrong, however. In the dim past Mrs. Phillips had had occasion to give the deacon a blowing over a sale of a load of hay, and, as she did it in plain English and used lots of exclamation points, he had never found it in his heart to forgive her.

"Me marry the Widder Phillips?" exclaimed the deacon as he heard the story floating about. "Say, now, I don't want to speak ill of any of my neighbors, but if she was the last woman on earth I wouldn't think of marryin' her. She's bad tempered, extravagant and spiteful, and if she didn't bring me to the poorhouse I'd be expectin' she'd pizen me!"

Every word he uttered found its way to the widow in due time, as a matter of course, but she refused to make any criticisms in reply. In time the deacon calmed down, and the gossip died out, but after events proved that the widow was only biding her time.

One summer day, almost a year after her bereavement, Deacon Spooner started for the village in his rockaway. At the west corner of the widow's farm and in plain sight of the house was half an acre of bog or swamp, and in this sweet flag grew plentifully. It had always been the custom for everybody to climb the fence and help himself, and Deacon



"WIDDER, I CAN'T TALK OF LOVE NOW."

Spooner hadn't foregone it because of the strained relations. On this day, as he came opposite the bog, the old horse made as if to bolt, and the deacon pulled him up and said to himself:

"I feel as if I was goin' to have heartburn, and I guess I'll climb over and dig a root or two of that flag. I can't see my way clear to marry the Widder Phillips, but that's no reason why I shouldn't take a morsel of root."

The deacon didn't have to hunt far for the flag, but as he was digging out a root his feet slipped into a hole, and he found himself stuck fast. There was quicksand at the bottom of that hole. He seized the hummocks and bushes around him and made a brave struggle, and it was only when he felt the sands about his knees that he began yelling for help. He hadn't hooted over three or four times when the Widow Phillips appeared. She carried an umbrella, a chair and a new tablecloth she was hemming. She came sauntering down to the bog and placed her chair and tied the open umbrella to its back and sat down before she even looked at the deacon. Then she gave him a long stare of surprise and said:

"I think I have seen you before. This is Deacon Spooner, isn't it?"

"Of course it's me," replied the deacon, "and I've got mired in this tarnal bog of yours and want help to get out. Is your hired man around?"

"He may be somewhere about, but there is no hurry. If you hang to the roots as hard as you can, it will probably be an hour before you sink out of sight. Deacon, you must know that I am a widow!"

"Yes, I do. Wasn't I at the funeral?"

"Yes, I am a widow," she sighed, "but of course I expect to marry again. You also expected that I would, didn't you?"

"Mebbe I did," suddenly replied the deacon.

"I am sure you did or you would not have said so to everybody before John had been dead six weeks. You

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also expected that I'd set my cap for you."

"No, I didn't."

"But you took pains to say that you wouldn't marry me if I was the last woman on earth. Have I got such a homely face on me?"

"I can't say you have. But are you goin' to let me go down out of sight?"

"And what about my disposition, deacon? How did you learn that I was bad tempered, extravagant and spiteful? Did John go around complaining of me? Did I drive him away from home? Did I land him in the poorhouse?"

"I don't skakely believe I could have said any such things," replied Deacon Spooner, who was down to his hips now and his teeth chattering with fear.

"There is a lot more," quietly resumed the widow—"enough to keep you busy for half a day—but we won't go over it. I don't believe you said all those harsh things against me out of spite. It was rather because you loved me. People often do talk against those they love, you know. How much do you love me, deacon?"

"I—I hadn't said I loved you 'till," he stammered.

"No, but you will. Up to this time you have been too shy and bashful, but now you are going to speak right out."

"Widder, I can't talk of love when I'm bein' sucked down to my death."

"But it's just the time, deacon. You may feel that you want to die for me. If so, here's your chance. Are you asking for my heart and hand?"

"N-no, I'm askin' for your hired man to help me out of this."

"Oh, but you are mistaken. You feel that no other woman in the world can make you happy. Under the circumstances, deacon, and knowing that you are noble, tender hearted, considerate and generous, I feel that I must say 'Yes,' though I didn't intend to marry again. Take me, deacon, and try to overlook my many faults."

"And we are goin' to get married!" gasped the deacon as he spread his arms abroad to keep from sinking farther.

"Of course. I believe you are not in favor of long engagements; neither am I. Shall we say two weeks from today. It will also astonish the neighbors, this turn about of yours, but we don't care for them. Aren't you happy, Josiah?"

"N-no! I'm in a fix here, and I don't believe you mean what you say, and—"

"Poor Josiah! I must see what I can do for you. Here comes William. Now, William, a couple of rails off the fence. Get them under his arms—so. Now bear down on the ends, now catch his hands and haul him out and lay him on the grass and scrape him off. Use him tenderly, William, for he loves me so. You'll excuse me, dear Josiah, but I've got to run up to the house to see if the bread in the oven is all right."

"Widder," called the deacon as she was moving away, "I've changed my mind, and I'll be hanged if I won't marry you!"

"And I've changed mine," she replied as she halted and bowed, "and I'll be hanged if you do!"

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There is no spot in all Mexico as dearly beloved as the little town of Guadalupe, which is two and a half miles north of the City of Mexico.

The little village has only 5,000 souls, but many more thousands visit the place on certain days in the year when pilgrimages are made to the holy shrine of Guadalupe.

The 1st of January and the 12th of each month the faithful visit this place and toll up the hill on which it is said that the virgin Guadalupe appeared to Juan Diego, an Indian boy.

According to tradition, Juan was trudging over the hill of Tepeyac on his way to the city on the morning of Dec. 9, 1531, and as he reached the eastern slope of the hill he heard sounds like music. He stopped to listen, and at that moment a cloud appeared and in the midst of it a beautiful lady. She told him to go to the bishop in her name and to tell him that it was her wish that a church should be built on that spot, where she would always be found to give aid to all in trouble. Juan Diego hurried to the bishop with the story of the virgin, but no attention was paid to it. Upon his return home the lady appeared again in the same spot and urged Juan to go again to the bishop.

The following day was the Sabbath, and after mass Juan found the bishop and repeated the message once more. The bishop told him to bring a sign from the virgin. Juan saw the virgin again upon his return home, and she promised to give him a sign, which she did on Dec. 12 as he was going to confession. He passed this time near the foot of the hill, where she appeared once more, and while in conversation with Juan she stamped her foot by way of emphasis, and water flowed at once from the dry, barren hillside, and two holy wells mark that spot today.

The virgin then told Juan to climb to the summit of that barren rocky hill and he would find roses growing there, which he was to gather and carry in his "tilma" to the bishop. Juan did as he was told and found the loveliest roses growing just where she had told him to search for them. He gathered them all and placed them in his "tilma," a sort of blanket.

When he arrived at the house of the bishop and opened the blanket, the roses fell to the floor, and a picture in colors appeared on the blanket representing the virgin as she had appeared to Juan. The bishop fell on his knees in prayer and arose with a promise to build a chapel on the spot the virgin had designated.

Bishop Zumarraga set about to build the church, and when it was completed the "tilma" was placed above the altar in a frame of gold and silver.

That little chapel has since been replaced by the magnificent church to be seen today. There are also two other churches to mark the spot on which the roses were gathered on the summit and at the holy well where the virgin first appeared to Juan. This miracle was recognized in 1603, and in 1754 it was fully sanctioned and confirmed by a papal bull. Later, in 1824, congress decreed Dec. 12 to be a national holiday.

Hidalgos took a picture of Guadalupe for his standard, around which rallied the first army of the revolutionists, and the happy issue that her assistance gave to that war endeared her still more to the people. This picture on the "tilma" is a wonderful piece of work. Artists from all over the world have examined it and have testified that it is of no known style of painting. The Indian garment of its still fiber is of a coarse weave. The picture appears on both sides of the cloth and is as bright as new, although said to be over 200 years old. The Church of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, in which this marvelous picture hangs, is said by experts to be one of the richest and handsomest on earth today. Its treasures are counted by millions. It was dedicated May 1, 1700, and is 184 feet long by 422 feet wide. It has a vaulted roof, supported by Corinthian columns. The whole is surmounted by a dome, the lantern of which is 125 feet above the floor. The building cost \$1,381,000. The jewels, gold and silver plate and other rich belongings nearly all belong to the government and are estimated at \$2,000,000 more.

The church possesses a very costly crown for the virgin. It is of solid gold and weighs many pounds. There are six shields on the crown for the six archbishops of Mexico, and they are all surrounded by diamonds. There are a number of angels, each having an immense ruby on the breast, while the rest of the surface of the crown is covered with sapphires and emeralds. This crown is surmounted by the Mexican eagle, holding aloft a large diamond cross.

The poor pilgrims are not able, many of them, to form an idea of the richness of this church, with its communion rail and balustrades from the sanctuary to the choir of solid silver. They are three feet high, with a top molding a foot wide and a still more massive base. The sacred vessels are all of pure gold embedded with precious stones. The choir has some fine carvings done in ebony and mahogany. The finest is a basso relievo above the stalls, illustrating the litany of the virgin.

Artists were brought from France to paint the frescoes on the walls, and the paintings and statues were the work of the best European artists and sculptors. The organ in itself represents a small fortune.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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