

JOLLY OLD UNCLE JOSH

(Continued from last page.)

these workmen here are also expert doctors of sick natches. "Say, Uncle," interrupted Polly, "I'm not exactly what you'd call a new woman, but really I do wish you'd get me a bicycle, 'you do eh?' Well, not unless you promise me you won't wear bloomers. Mr. Taylor here has a large assortment of first-class silent steeds and both you and Charley should have no trouble in making a selection. Pick 'em out, and it didn't take the young folks long to act on that suggestion.

Woman-like, Polly was discussing the merits of how she would arrange her new house and was interrupted by Uncle Josh. "And these house fiks remind me," said he, "that I haven't got your dishes yet. The most famous stock in extent, quality and completeness is at N. B. Howden's. But the average reader need not be told what an array of tableware Polly had to select from. There isn't, positively, a thing in the line of china, crockery, glass or porcelain needed for use in the new part of the house that cannot be found at N. B. Howden's in infinite variety and at wonderfully low prices. They also have a splendid stock of lamps of every description and tinware in abundance. Polly's large order suggested her thorough appreciation.

"Now I reckon the next thing on the program would be carpets," suggested the old man, "and right next door is Swift Bros., who are recognized headquarters for fine floor coverings, and the beauty of it is they are satisfied with a moderate profit too. A few moments later Polly was reeling in a perfect clyde of beautifully designed carpets, including velvet, axminster, wiltons, moquette, brussels and ingrain of every conceivable pattern and shade. She also found a profusion of rugs, matting and oilcloths. She bought liberally. Their curtains of lace in exquisite patterns, drapery which make the home so charming, snowy and tastefully figured table linen, towels and table scarfs she bought also at Swift Bros., and the buying was rendered a pleasure by the kindly way in which her wants were attended to and often anticipated by the genial proprietors and courteous clerks.

After this visit, Uncle Josh suggested a resort to some place of refreshment. At the table the old man waxed philosophical. "Never neglect your larder," said he. "That important adjunct to housekeeping controls masculine temper. To that end you must patronize a grocer on whom you can depend for honest goods. Through a long term of dealing I have found A. W. Littleproud perfectly reliable. You will find him a careful dealer, always fully stocked with every possible thing in the line of staple and fancy groceries, fresh first-class, no-shelf-worn goods there, fresh fruits and vegetables of all kinds, while the prices are down to brass tacks. To keep peace in this family get all your groceries of Littleproud."

At this point, somewhat to the confusion of Charley, the old man indulged in a half serious criticism of his personal appearance. "You are decidedly off style for a townsman," said he, "and we'd better go see Hindson Bros., the merchant tailors and men's furnisiers, about some new duds. They have a big assortment of suitings from which you may select, and on good fits and first-class workmanship I tell you Hindson Bros. can't be beat. I bet you'll look more like a newly married man when you get fagged out in one of their stylish suits." Charley left his measure but before leaving, having found goods and prices irresistible, Charley also invested in a complete outfit of gent's furnishings, from the late style hat to dozen shirts. As men's fashionable outfitters this house is not surpassed in the county.

"By the way," remarked Uncle Josh, as they reached the street, "I must run down to Thomas & Kenward's bank and get another check book. Come along with me and get acquainted, for of course you will do business with them and it is always more pleasant to be personally acquainted with the people you do business with. You will find them ever ready to extend any accommodations compatible with business principles.

I see you are sadly in need of a pair of shoes Polly, so suppose we call upon my friend A. McDonnell across the street, his stock of shoes can't be equalled in style and extent in this section. Come in, look it over and get acquainted. It might have been policy not to have extended that invitation, had not Uncle Josh known what wise economy it is to trade at this store, for Polly found goods and prices so seductive that she purchased an outfit from a ten dollar to a handsome walking boot. Charley invested in gent's fine shoes, while Uncle Josh indulged in a stout farm boot. No one needing footwear can resist the styles and prices offered by A. McDonnell.

"Oh, say, Uncle," exclaimed Polly, "where can I go for dry goods? This dress is hardly suitable, I must admit." "Well, my girl, if you want to select from one of the most popular establishments in the town, I will direct you to McKenzie, Petch & Co., who carry a stock of dress goods that for variety and real value is seldom seen outside the largest metropolitan cities. They carry all the latest weaves in fashionable dress goods and you are sure to be guided right in your selections. You will find McKenzie, Petch & Co. pleasant to deal with and the employees polite and expert, while the prices cannot be duplicated. After Polly had selected a couple of handsome dress patterns she accosted Uncle Josh with another very natural question for a woman.

"Where would you advise me to go for millinery? You mentioned it right at the proper time, laughed the old man. Step right upstairs and you will soon see that McKenzie, Petch & Co. keep on hand one of the complete stocks of millinery to be found in the town. You can get what you want there, the latest styles and lowest prices being their motto. Miss Brush has charge of that department, and her experience guarantees that when you have purchased of her you have the thing according to fashion and a satisfaction that your work has been done by a competent artist. In a few hours there never was a happier girl than Polly.

But it must not be supposed that the

young woman had fully finished the arrangements for her personal adornment. "What good will these fine dresses be if I do not engage a dress maker?" she queried. "Jes so, jes so," laughed Uncle Josh. "It does take you lady folk to think of things, but fortunately it will not take long to settle that matter. Right across the street is Miss Cameron's dressmaking shop and I think she is the work done right. She is an up-to-date dressmaker and employs a corps of competent assistants." Subsequently the dresses were placed in the hands of Miss Cameron whose reputation for perfect fitting, neat and careful sewing and that most important feature of dressmaking, "style," has extended far beyond the village of Watford. When finished, Polly's dresses were so becoming that Charley declared he'd fallen in love with her sooner had she been a patron of Miss Cameron.

"Half!" commanded Uncle Josh, as the party came in front of McLaren's handsome drug store, "Walk right in." "Why Uncle, we're not sick, and—" "Guess I know that, but I suspect it won't be long before this young man begins to take an interest in matters of pace and—" "U-n-c-l-e!" "What, my girl, any more?" Polly may find some toilet articles she wants. Sure enough, before leaving she was loaded down with combs, brushes, face powders and ounces upon ounces of fine imported perfumes. "Don't forget," added Uncle Josh, "to come here with your prescriptions. I have McLaren, and his clerks are competent pharmacists and use pure reliable drugs."

"Yes, and I must have an album, Uncle Josh," quoth Polly, "and—" "Yes, and a Bible with a reasonably big family register," interrupted the old man, "so just step into McLaren's book store, next room. You'll find many articles indispensable for the parlor as well as the library there, and as for variety, he has an unequalled stock. So here Polly's purchases included miscellaneous books, fancy stationery, the latest agonies, bric-a-brac of all manner for the centre table, and finding an immense assortment of magazines, periodicals and newspapers, she subscribed for everything in sight. Polly remarked to the generous old uncle, "Why, I don't know when to quit buying, McLaren sells such nice goods, and so cheap, too."

"And another place I wish to take you, children, to is to A. Dunlop's flour mill," remarked the old man. "Your introduction to Watford would not be half complete without. Talk about flour, why bless you there ain't no flour that can come up to Dunlop's. It's made from choice selected wheat and bread made from it does not become dry and stale but retains its softness and the natural flavor of the wheat for several days. All good housewives use it. Ask you grocer for a sack. Then as to feed, this mill is headquarters for that. They handle everything from golden oats down to corn cobs, serve customers with promptness and dispatch. I've been dealing with Mr. Dunlop for a long time, and I tell you he is a good man to tie to."

Returning from the flour mill, Uncle Josh was noticed to examine his pocket-book rather lugubriously. "I declare," he exclaimed, "my balance is almost exhausted and I must step over to S. W. Louks' wooden mill and dispose of my chip. He's bought my wool for several years past, always gives me the top notch price and I couldn't think of selling to anybody else. Then it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to see Mr. Louks about your blankets and yarn for next winter. If it keeps on chilly like this you could use such articles to advantage yet this summer. All the cloth woven at this mill is noted for its smoothness of finish, even texture and firmness. While Uncle Josh was disposing of his wool to Mr. Louks, Polly wisely made the purchases he suggested.

"By the way," remarked the old man, as they reached the street, "I must get some farm machinery, and I know of no better place to go than Thom's Implement Works. Thom himself is a good judge and keeps the Deering mowers and binders, known as the best of the world over, and I guess the Watford plows and disc harrows are of a high class, just what any thing of the kind made elsewhere. And then I have known Thom for the past 20 years and he can be depended upon for the strictest integrity in business transactions. His aim is to give everyone satisfaction, and his opinion on farm machinery is worth something. I like to know for their own sake."

"Say, Uncle Josh," interrupted Charley, "is there a good horsehoe in town?" You know how particular I am about my mare, Kitten," "That's right," he replied, "and we shan't have any bother about her either. The only scientific horsehoeer in town, I think, is D. A. Maxwell. He understands the construction of a horse's foot, just what kind of a shoe is required, how to make and put it on. That reminds me that I promised to get Polly a nice buggy. Maxwell is the man for that. He manufactures buggies, carriages and road carts that for high-class workmanship are unsurpassed, and he doesn't charge any fancy prices either. He uses the best of material and allows nothing to go into his vehicles that will not stand the strongest strain, while the trimmings, painting and decorations are up to a very high standard. The high quality of Maxwell's makes is evidenced by the fact that he always carries several red tickets at the East Lambton Fair." Polly got a dandy buggy.

"And in the matter of insurance," continued the old man, "that is of importance. You will want a risk on your new house, and fire and lightning insurance on your farm property; then you can't do a more sensible or satisfactory thing than to give your wife a paid-up policy in life insurance. My old friend, J. H. Hume, not only has lines of the solidest and best companies, but he is an expert and trustworthy underwriter. He has a large number of companies, all of which belong to the old reliable category, being well known for their prompt and satisfactory adjustment of losses. It's better to be safe than sorry and you'll surely be safe in the Hume agency."

"And as you are going to keep a horse," said Uncle Josh, "of course, you'll need harness. The best horse milliner of this section, to my notion, is F. J. Hughes. He uses only first-class material and gives personal supervision to the minutest detail of manufacture. There is nothing in harness that cannot be had of him—heavy and light,

single and double, plain and fancy, work and buggy harness. He has all of them in stock, besides every other kind of harness imaginable and the finest lot of lap robes, whips, and valises you ever laid your eyes upon." After a visit to the harness store Charley said he thought "if a man couldn't get satisfied it would be his own fault," and he expressed himself pleased with Mr. Hughes candor and fairness.

"Low makes!" suddenly exclaimed Uncle Josh, "all this trading and shopping round town has caused me to forget one of the greatest essentials to future existence. I have heard it said that newly married folks could live on love and scenery, but an old man of experience knows better—your table would look slim without bread; it's the staff of life, you know. Polly you must meet G. H. McLachlan, the baker. His bread, pies, cakes and nicknacks are conceded by all to be the finest on earth. Remember, Charley, there is no use of your 'sotey sotey' bothering herself much about baking, so long as there's good baker in town like McLachlan. Thither the trio repaired and regaled themselves in a treat of exquisite ice-cream, which Charles declared surpassed even the dreams of an epicurean god.

Yes, and while we are on this important topic of gastronomy, we must not forget meat. It goes hand in hand with bread. Now to locate a meat market where you can get fresh wholesome meats at all times. Sutton Bros. is the firm to supply you. This is the boss meat market in the town and is popular with everybody who is particular to have the best. The reason for this is all because they are very careful in the selection of stock and get the freshest of everything and keep nothing but the very best. To keep your 'hobby' in a good humor, Polly, trade at Sutton Bros. every time."

"Now," cried the old gentleman, "now for a picture of this crowd, in good old country fashion, we'll go to the photograph gallery, and Taylor's is just the place for that. His pictures are wonderful in fidelity and finish. I want one full-size photo for my study and some small ones for my friends. Taylor has the soul of a true artist; all his work is a labor of love, in which he will not stop short of perfection, and as he is famous for successful enlarging, I want to give you a life size representation of 'yours truly.'" (Uncle Josh's picture may be seen at Taylor's studio any time the reader desires to call.)

En route to their home the party called at THE GUIDE-ADVOCATE office. "You'll want the news every week," remarked Uncle Josh, "and as this paper gives all the local happenings and is the favorite paper of the county I'll subscribe." Upon seeing up the wonderful events of the day Polly began to volubly express thanks. "You have bought us everything," she exclaimed.

"Only one thing," replied Uncle Josh, reflectively, "but I can remedy that. Cameron Bros., the furniture men, always has a nice line of them and you can get one whenever you want it; I'll pay for the best."

"W-h-y," exclaimed Polly with great surprise, "Uncle, what can it be?" "Well, it's a baby buggy, and—" But Polly had fainted.

THE BARONESS IRMA'S BETROTHAL.

By Mary E. Mullah.

In one of the turret rooms of Reitzenberg castle a young girl, arrayed in a simple dress and white apron, sat sewing industriously. At the sound of footsteps she paused in her work; at the sight of a Hussar officer in uniform she reddened with vexation. Yet there was nothing in Albrecht von Reitzenberg's appearance to annoy her; and the contrary, he was young, very good-looking, tall and of dignified bearing.

"Will you allow me to come in?" he asked, standing on the threshold. The girl took up her work again. "You can come in if you wish," she said indifferently.

He walked across the room. "I have a proposal to make to you, Baroness Irma. Will you give me your attention for a little while?" She looked at him indignantly; she had a sweet oval face and deep gray eyes.

"I prefer not to listen to you, Count Albrecht."

"I thought you would say so!" (there was something like a ring of triumph in his voice), but indeed my proposal is very harmless. Let us come to an understanding."

There was uncertainty, distrust in her eyes. "Yes," continued the young officer. "I know that you have every reason to be offended. You have been most unfairly treated."

"I have been invited to this house under false pretenses. I came because I thought that the visit would give pleasure to Frau von Wolde, who fills, or is supposed to fill, the place of my mother. I am sorry to speak disrespectfully of your cousin, but—"

"Not at all. You are perfectly right, and my relative, Frau von Wolde, is in the plot, and has been from the beginning. I know all about it now. My old uncle has just enlightened me. I, as the heir of Reitzenberg castle—you will excuse my mentioning my name first—have received orders to offer my hand and my debts in marriage to the Baroness Irma von Buchow, who, on attaining her majority, will become possessed of

so large a fortune that she could free the Reitzenberg estate with a stroke of her pen. Nay, hear me out. This lady was to have been kept in ignorance of the plan, but that her friend and chaperon could not resist the temptation of giving her a hint as to how matters stand after she had become the guest of the castle. Is this so?"

"Yes." She stood by his side now, and the sunlight just touched the coils of her auburn hair. "I have been deceived, cruelly deceived."

"Under the circumstances, nothing remains for me but to give you the opportunity of expressing your opinion as to this tyrannous family compact, even more decidedly than you have done already. Baroness Irma of Buchow, will you give me your hand in marriage?"

"Count Albrecht von Reitzenberg, I thank you for the honor which you have shown me. I will not."

They stood facing each other, and as Irma looked at her strange wooer she saw a faint smile in his eyes. Her own anger was beginning to evaporate; he really was behaving well, considering that the Reitzenbergs were renowned for their hasty tempers.

"You admit, she said with a pause, 'that I have been awkwardly placed?'" "I admit that you have been inopportunist, abominably treated! I blush to think that a member of our family could have dreamt of such a theme. In order to show you how penitent I am, now that I have received my dismissal, I will immediately leave this house, and rid you of my presence."

"If you do that, Count Albrecht, I shall be worse off than ever. You don't know your cousin Frau von Wolde. She would insist upon my remaining here for three months, as was arranged, she will argue, and make me dislike you more than ever, if—"

"If possible?" His good humor was irresistible. She burst into a merry laugh.

For another half hour the rejected suitor remained in conversation with the heiress, and at the end of that time they, too, had a plot. Albrecht was to remain at the castle, and he and the Baroness Irma were to pretend to be on amicable terms, and the two conspirators (the count and the chaperon) were not to learn until the last day of the visit expired that their hopes had failed.

"I will endeavor to make your visit as little irksome to you as possible," explained the heir of Reitzenberg; "and we can behave as if there were no enmity between us."

"Yes" (there was still a little doubt in her voice and manner). "I think that I can trust you."

"Come," he said gently, "Baroness Irma, it is a truce between us signed and sealed?" He took her hand in his, and bending over it, raised her fingers to his lips.

The master of the castle was the first to commence hostilities. One day, towards the end of three months' visit, Irma came into the drawing-room to find the whole party awaiting her arrival, and in an instant she perceived that something was wrong. Frau von Wolde had been shedding tears, and the old count's brow was clouded with anger, and Albrecht—Irma hardly dared to look at him, so changed was his aspect. It was too clear that the termination of the pleasant companionship of the last few weeks was to be war.

"My dear Baroness Irma," said the count, advancing to meet his young guest with ceremonious politeness, "I am exceedingly pleased to see you. Your visit here has given me great satisfaction. You honored this house with your presence, with full consent of your guardian and my esteemed cousin, Frau von Wolde. I had hoped, not without grounds, that the friendship between you and my heir was gradually ripening into a deeper and lasting feeling. The alliance is one which must give satisfaction to all interested in our families. Imagine my distress on hearing to-day from my nephew that you have refused this proposal of marriage!"

Irma looked towards Count Albrecht; something that she read in his wrathful mien made her hesitate as she answered: "It is quite true; we are friends, and nothing more."

"It cannot be, my dear young lady, that so young a maiden should have given away her preference without the consent or knowledge of her guardian? Answer me candidly; are your affections already engaged?"

The color surged into Irma's cheeks and left them pale again. She glanced at Frau von Wolde. There was no help for her there. "That is a question which you have no right to

ask, Count Reitzenberg, and which I refuse to answer. I must beg you to excuse me?"

"The Baroness Buchow is right!" burst in Albrecht. "She has suffered enough at our hands already. She shall not be shrewd in her will. If she honors me with her friendship, I accept it gratefully. Listen to me, my uncle. I refuse to be a party to your scheme."

He rose and held the door wide open. There was no smile on his face now; his eyes were full of trouble as they rested on her. He did not offer to take her hand in farewell. He stood there in mute distress as she passed by—a fair, girlish figure in her white dress, her laces and blue ribbons—and she passed him without a word. The truce between them was over!

The forest spread its wide wings even as far as the castle garden. Irma loved the green paths and quiet shades, and here she came with her book the morning after her interview with the count, and pretended to read. But though she kept her eyes on the pages, she read there only Count Albrecht's parting words—he accepted her offer of friendship gratefully? Driven to bay, as it were, in order to save her, that was what he had said. During the last three months she had come to understand something of his uprightness, his high sense of honor. He would never marry a woman—though she was a princess—to whom he could not give his love.

"It was my fortune," sighed Irma, "that made him nearly hate me at first?" Did he hate her now?

She shut up her book and wandered still farther into the wood, down a hillside covered with fern and moss, towards the stream that ran between high rocks, chattering and foaming on its way. On the farther side of the stream was a tract of open country, dotted with clumps of trees and underwood and bright with heather. The stepping-stones were half covered with water to-day; the current was running fiercer than its wont. She bethought herself of a rustic bridge a few yards farther down.

The bridge hung high in the air, supported by rough pine stems; it was a picturesque but a fragile affair. Half way across Irma put her hand on the rail—how noisy the stream was—it snapped off at her touch, one wooden plank tumbled under her feet, another fell with a splash into the water. She had plenty of courage; she was light and active. She knew, moreover, that she could easily leap that formidable looking gap and gain the bank. She was about to make the attempt, when she was stopped by a peremptory shout.

"Gently, gently! Jump from that projecting stem; it is safe!"

She looked up; on the edge of the heather-covered rock stood Albrecht Reitzenberg. She paused uncertain, half inclined to retract her steps. Perceiving her hesitation he raised his voice and shouted still louder above the clamor of the rushing water. "Can you hear me, Baroness Irma?" She nodded assent.

"Step there—to the left. Do not look back!"

Involuntarily she obeyed. He held out his arms; the gulf yawned between them; he could be of no help.

"The stem will bear your weight. Do not be in too great a hurry."

"Why does he look so grave?" thought Irma; "is he still angry?"

"I had better return the way I came, Count Albrecht. Do not trouble on my account."

"No; do as I direct you. You see which is the best place to stand? Drop your book, it might be in your way, and jump as far as you can. Now!"

One spring, and Irma was safe on the moss and heather, while the bank on which she had thought to stand slipped slowly but surely into the foaming water. Albrecht held her hands clasped in his.

"Thank heaven that you are safe!" he cried. "O Irma, my Irma, I could not stop you. I came just too late for that. I could only look on in agony! Are you frightened? Are you hurt?"

"I am not hurt. I did not know that it was dangerous; I did not, indeed."

She saw him turn pale at the thought of her peril, and the tears which she had not shed for herself fell fast for his distress.

"The bridge should have been destroyed long ago; it should be done to-day. I did not dare to join you, or to speak till you had passed the worst. If you had been killed—ah! I cannot bear to think of it—I should never have known another day's happiness, and it would have been my fault—mine! How could I let you wander about alone when I was longing to be with you? My Irma, my best-loved. Thank Heaven that I have you safe at last. Surely we have played at being friends and enemies long enough? Look at me and say that you love me!"

When he had made her an offer of marriage three long months ago, she had been ready, ay, very ready, with her refusal. Now, when her whole heart was his, she could find no words amidst her tears except, "I love you! I love you!" It was enough for him. "My bride, my wife!" he said, and held her in his arms.

The green ferns rustled and whispered, the beeches tossed their boughs in the sunlight, the red squirrels played in the oak trees, the whole wood was full of life and joy at that moment when the lovers plighted their troth.

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