

A BOY ON A HONEYMOON

By Tom Masson

"DREAD it!" Tinkerton had always considered himself fortunate in falling in love with a girl who was so extremely sensitive as his girl was, and yet he was conscious, as Miss Clara Turer uttered these words, of a distinct sinking of the heart.

They were to be married on the next day, and as Tinkerton's prospective honeymoon rose before him he confessed that he felt the same way that she did.

It had been a custom in the Turer family for generations back to use Niagara Falls as a base of operations for honeymoons. The idea that they should go anywhere else, where they wouldn't be so open to suspicion, seemed, in the face of Miss Clara's mother and father, to be impossible.

And yet to Tinkerton, who, though warmly sentimental, hated to be conspicuous in any way, and treasured a certain sort of cosmopolitanism to himself, Niagara Falls was the last place on earth he cared to be seen at.

"I know just how you feel, dear," he said responsively, "and I echo your

sentiments. In two days from now we can picture ourselves sitting in the dining-room of the Catabat House, you in a light gray traveling suit, and I with a large white rose in my lapel.

"Darling?" you will say to me, 'how many lumps?'

"And I will respond with a languishing look, while three or four commercial travelers are drinking our health at the next table.

"No sugar for me, lovey dear—you are all my sweetness!"

"Oh, don't!" murmured Clara, burying her face in her hands. "It's awful! I know I shall be mortified to death. And it isn't going to make the slightest difference what we wear."

"That's so," said Tinkerton. "They say the general public can always spot a bride and groom. Hello, Bobbie! What are you up to?"

Miss Clara's nephew, Bobbie, who had come on a visit a few days before, sauntered in at this moment. In his hand he held an old shoe, that he was absorbedly filling with rice from a paper bag.

"Getting ready for to-morrow," he said with a smile of demoniacal joy.

Miss Clara shuddered, but Tinkerton, suddenly aroused by the force of an idea that came to him, stepped in front of the boy.

"Bob," he said solemnly, "don't you want to go to Niagara Falls with us?"

Bob almost dropped the shoe.

"You bet I do," he shouted. "Say, will you take me along?"

"Do you think you could get used to calling us papa and mamma?"

This was a staggerer, even for the blasé Bobbie. He looked from one to the other in bewilderment.

"What for?" he asked in wonder.

Tinkerton put his hand on the boy's shoulder, with a preliminary touch of paternalism.

"You see, Bob," he said, "it's this way. Your aunt here and I, as you know, are going off on a wedding trip. Now you know all the brides and grooms go to Niagara Falls, and everybody knows who they are. A bride and groom can be spotted as far as the eye can reach. But if you go along with us and call us papa and mamma, why everybody will think we are an old married couple."

He stopped and looked reassuringly at the doubtful face of his bride-to-be.

"And then," he added, "we can be as sweet to each other as we want, without being guyed. Bob, what do you say?"

"Of course I'll go," said Bob. "But, oh my! won't it seem funny to call you papa and mamma?"

"There," said Tinkerton, "it's all arranged. I'll get your things ready on the quiet and have them in the station and you can get into the carriage with us. My! But isn't this a relief?"

"Yes, dearest," said Clara, "it's simply fine. You are a genius."

The wedding, as weddings go, passed off smoothly. And in due course of time Tinkerton and his bride found themselves at the Catabat House at Niagara, accompanied by their proxy child. As they entered the dining-room with Bobby tagging on behind, it was with a deep sense of security. The best suite in the house was theirs. The atmosphere of love that hung around was undimmed by any cloud. Mrs. Tinkerton looked at her husband with the fondest eyes in the world, and Tinkerton returned her look to the full, conscious that Bob stood for everything. It was a great idea!

After awhile they became conscious that there were others present at the same table. A solemn-looking middle-aged man, accompanied by a prim little woman and a prim little girl, had come in and were sitting at the same table. Tinkerton looked up from his trance and

caught the eye of the man. It was evident amid the surroundings—for there were brides and grooms all around them—that a common tie united these two couples. The head waiter had reasoned, quite correctly, that these old married people would be better off all at the same table.

At the same time that Tinkerton caught the eye of the man, Mrs. Tinkerton caught the eye of the woman, and what was more important still, Bob caught the eye of the little girl. There was a genial request to pass the butter, an answering smile, and the acquaintance-ship was begun.

They all strolled out of the dining-room together. The man was communicative. It seemed to warm him up to meet another old married man.

"Yes," he said, as he offered Tinkerton a cigar as they sat on the piazza while the women at their side talked dress goods, "we come up here every year for a few days. It renews old memories. But it isn't very often that we have a chance to meet with people who have been married as long as you have."

"That's the way we feel," said Tinkerton. He was getting a little uneasy over the presence of Bob. Bob might forget himself. That boy was busy exchanging ideas with the little girl, whose mother called her Estelle.

"Bob," said Tinkerton, with a warning glance, "come here."

"Yes, papa," said Bob, who was up to his part.

"Why don't you take a walk with the little girl?" continued Tinkerton.

"That's a good idea," said Estelle's father.

The two children were gone sometime. Meanwhile Tinkerton and his bride talked with their new friends. Tinkerton felt inwardly elated. Everything was working so smoothly. It all seemed so easy. He thought that he would have the idea patented. He had in mind an advertisement that ran something like this:

"Bright children furnished on demand to young married couples on their honeymoon. Guaranteed to say papa and mamma on all occasions. All embarrassment avoided. Make your wedding trip in comfort."

Suddenly, however, he became conscious of the children's return. They were coming fast. Estelle led the way. She was running. There was a certain excitement about her. Tinkerton looked at his wife. By a common instinct they arose together.

"Oh, mamma!" said Estelle. "What do you think?"

Bob looked defiant.

"What is it, dear?" said Estelle's mother.

"That gentleman and lady," cried Estelle, "are this little boy's papa and mamma."

Tinkerton smiled. Their alarm had been unnecessary. Everything was all right.

"Well, my dear," he observed pleasantly, "there's nothing strange about that, is there?"

"No, sir," said Estelle; "but this little boy says you got a lot of presents at your wedding yesterday, and he wishes his real and truly papa and mamma were here to keep him company. Say, mamma, isn't it funny to have two kinds of papas and mammas?"

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