

squarely and asked himself if this were not a symptom of being in love, he answered it as fairly as he could out of an experience that covered Chic Warren's pre-nuptial brain-storms; a close observation of several dozen honeymoon couples on shipboard, to say nothing of many inchoate cases that started there; and, finally, the case of Teddy Hamilton.

The leading feature of all those distressing examples seemed to indicate that, while theoretically the man was in an ideal state of blissful ecstasy, he was, practically, in a condition bordering on madness. At the very moment he was supposed to be happy, he was about half the time most miserable. Even at his best, it did not make for comfort. Poor Chic ran the gamut every week from hell to heaven. It was with a sigh of relief that Monte was able to answer his own question conscientiously in the negative.

Monte was not in love; that was certain. Marjory was not in love; that also was certain. This was why he was able to light his cigarette, lean back his head on the pillows she arranged, and drift into a state of dream content as she read to him. The only objection he could see to an indefinite continuation of this happy arrangement was that, in the course of time, his shoulder was bound to heal. And then—he knew well enough that old Dame Society was even at the end of these first ten days beginning to fidget. He knew that Marjory knew it, too. It began the day Doctor Marcellin advised him to take a walk in the Champs Elysées.

He was perfectly willing to do that. It was beautiful out there. They sat down at one of the little iron tables—the little tables were so warm and sociable now—and beneath the whispering trees sipped their café au lait. But the fact that he was able to get out of his room seemed to make a difference in their thoughts. It was as if his status had changed. It was as if those who passed him, with a glance at his arm in his sling, stopped to tell him so.

It was none of their business. Yet he knew that, with every passing day that he came out into the sunshine, these same people were managing to make Marjory's position more and more delicate. It became increasingly less comfortable for her and for him when they returned to the hotel.

Therefore he was not greatly surprised when she remarked one morning:

"Monte, I've been thinking over where I shall go, and I've about decided to go to Etois."

"When?" he asked.

"Very soon—before the end of the week, anyway."

"But look here!" he protested. "What am I going to do?"

"I don't know," she smiled. "But one thing is certain; you can't play sick very much longer."

"The doctor says it will be another two weeks before my arm is out of the sling."

"Even so, the rest of you is well. There isn't much excuse for my bringing in your breakfasts, Monte."

"Do you mind doing it?"

"No."

"Who is to tie on this silk handkerchief?" He wore a black silk handkerchief over his bandages.

She met his eyes a moment, and smiled again.

"I'm going to Etois," she said. "I think I shall get a little villa there and stay all summer."

"Then," he declared, "I think I shall go to Etois myself."

"I'm afraid you mustn't."

"But the doctor says I mustn't play golf for six months. What do you think I'm going to do with myself until then?"

"There's all the rest of the world," she suggested.

Monte frowned.

The next suggestion that leaped into Monte's brain was obvious enough, and yet he paused a moment before voicing it. Perhaps even then he would not have found the courage had he not been rather panic-stricken. He had exactly the same feeling, when he thought of her in Etois, that he had when he thought of Edhart in paradise. It started as resentment, but ended in a slate-gray loneliness.

He could imagine himself as sitting here alone at one of these little iron tables, and decidedly it was not pleasant. When he pictured himself as returning to his room in the hotel and to the company of the hotel valet, it put him in a mood that augured ill for the valet.

FOR the present Marjory was absolutely indispensable. She ought to know that a valet could not adjust a silk handkerchief properly, and that without this he could not even go upon the street. And who would read to him from the American papers?

There was no further excuse, she said, for her to bring in his breakfasts; but if she did not sit opposite him at breakfast, what in thunder was the use of eating breakfast?

"Marjory," he said, "didn't I ask you to marry me?"

She nodded.

"That was necessary in order that we might be engaged," she reminded him.

"Exactly," he agreed. "Now there seems to be only one way that we may keep right on being engaged."

"I don't see that, Monte," she answered. "We may keep on being engaged as long as we please, mayn't we?"

"It seems not. That is, there isn't much sense in it if it won't let me go to Etois with you."

"Of course you can't do that."

"And yet," he said, "if we were married I could go, couldn't I?"

"Why—er—yes," she faltered. "I suppose so."

"Then," he said, "why don't we get married?"

She did not turn away her head. She lifted her dark eyes to his.

"Just what do you mean, Monte?" she demanded.

"I mean," he said uneasily, "that we should get married just so that we can go on—as we have been these last ten days. Really, we'll still only be engaged, but no one need know that. Besides, no one will care, if we're married."

He gained confidence as he went on, though he was somewhat afraid of the wonder in her eyes.

"People don't care anything more about you after you're married," he said.

"They just let you drop as if you were done for. It's a queer thing, but they do. Why, if we were married we could sit here all day and no one would give us a second glance. We could have breakfast together as often as we wished, and no one would care a hang. I've seen it done. We could go to Etois together, and I could pay for half the villa and you could pay for half. You can bring Marie, and we can stay as long as we wish without having any one turn an eye."

He was growing enthusiastic now.

"There will be nothing to prevent you from doing just as you wish. You can paint all day if you want. You can paint yards of things—olive trees and sky and rocks. There are lots of them around Etois. And I—"

"Yes," she interrupted; "what can you do, Monte?"

"I can watch you paint," he answered.

"Or I can walk. Or I can—oh, there'll be plenty for me to do. If we tire of Etois we can move somewhere else. If we tire of each other's company, why, we can each go somewhere else. It's simple, isn't it? We can both do just as we please, can't we? There won't be a living soul with the right to open his head to us. Do you get that? Why, even if you want to go off by yourself, with Mrs. in front of your name they'll let you alone."

At first she had been surprised, then she had been amused, but now she was thinking.

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"It's queer, isn't it, Monte, that it should be like that?"

"It's the way it is. It makes everything simple and puts the whole matter up to us."

"Yes," she admitted thoughtfully.

"Of course," he said, "I'm assuming you don't mind having me around quite a lot."

"No, I don't mind that," she assured him. "But I'm wondering if you'll mind—having me around?"

"I didn't realize until this last week how—well, how comfortable it was having you around," he confessed.

She glanced up.

"Yes," she said, "that's the word. I think we've made each other comfortable. After all—that's something."

"It's a whole lot."

"And it needn't ever be anything else, need it?"

"Certainly not," he declared. "That would spoil everything. That's what we're trying to avoid."

To his surprise, she suddenly rose as if to leave.

"Look here!" he exclaimed. "Can't we settle this right now—so that we won't have to worry about it?"

He disliked having anything left to worry about.

"I should think the least you'd expect of me would be to think it over," she answered.

"It would be so much simpler just to go ahead," he declared.

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