

THE PETERSON PLAN

By Henry P. Benton.

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In the first days of their engagement Ralph and Cynthia loved each other to distraction. Ralph Blair was twenty-five, and had a prosperous future in the office of the telephone company; Cynthia was just a nice American girl of a well-to-do family. There



Instead It Looked Worse.

could not have been a more average couple in the world.

That was just why they loved each other so much. They had grown up in the same circle in the same town; they had always been expected to marry, and they were to be married—at the end of the year.

"I tell you, I'm as happy as a king, old man," said Ralph to his chum, Peterson. "It seems as though I want to sing all the time."

"How long have you been engaged?" asked Peterson gloomily.

"Two weeks," answered Ralph ecstatically.

"Wait till it's two months," said Peterson darkly.

Henry Peterson was nearly thirty. His life was supposed to have been permanently blighted by an unfortunate and mysterious love affair a year previously. The discriminating, indeed, claimed that they could see signs of a swift recovery, but nevertheless Peterson, as a gloomy ascetic, convinced of the hollowness of life and experienced in the ways of women, occupied a romantic niche in the minds of his friends of both sexes which he did nothing to destroy.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Ralph Blair hotly.

"I mean," answered Peterson, "speaking quite impersonally, of course—I mean that woman must be kept in subjection in order to insure happiness. The worst of it is, they are so cunning."

"Cynthia isn't cunning!" exclaimed Ralph indignantly. "At least, not in the way you mean."

"They are all cunning," insisted Peterson. "At first they are as meek as milk; then, when they have wound their tentacles firmly round their victims they begin to exercise their power. Little by little they claim dominion; at last