

Marriage for Two

By Arthur Somers Roche

The Story Thus Far:

SHORTLY after an interview in which Helen Wilson tells Larry Tracy that she wishes to break their engagement so that she can marry the rich, middle-aged Frank Burton and Larry vows to marry the first girl who will have him, Larry rescues from a park bench a poverty-stricken and starved though beautiful girl, Joyce Carroll.

Believing that this might repay him for his kindness, Joyce consents when some days later Larry asks her to marry him.

To escape publicity they go to Biarritz, where they take a villa. Shortly after their arrival Larry, suddenly overcome with emotion, draws Joyce to him and kisses her. She threatens to leave him if such a thing should ever occur again.

Twice Larry has evidence of the strangeness of Joyce's past. A man named Ratty Rogan, in New York, unsuccessfully attempts to tell Larry something of his wife. Another time Joyce gives 40,000 francs to a woman of the demimonde in the Casino and tells Larry she lost it at the tables. Larry later starts to question this woman but is overcome with disgust at himself and leaves her.

Joyce is popular at Biarritz; especially with Billy Valdemagala, a Spaniard, and Jeanne Mazell, a lovely American blonde; also with Mr. Weedon, whom she instinctively dislikes.

One night at a fashionable restaurant Larry goes outside and suddenly comes upon Helen Wilson. The meeting ends in a kiss. They are interrupted by Weedon, who is both insinuating and insulting. Larry knocks him down and returns to the restaurant.

He suddenly realizes that he loves Joyce, and will always love her no matter what may happen. He goes straight to her and tells her this, and also that he has just kissed Helen. Joyce is horrified, but regains her composure as Helen, Mrs. Wilson and Burton come up. Burton dances with her and tells her that he hired detectives to learn all about her, and if she does not keep Larry away from Helen, he will tell all he knows and ruin Larry financially.

VIII

LDLY, she wondered what was the color of Burton's eyes. For as she looked at them they seemed to change from palest gray to deepest green. She had a queer feeling that all of the man was like this, thus his features might seem to change under emotion, and that beneath his features his character would also change. This, of course, could not be true. Nevertheless, she was willing to believe that there could be such extraordinary diversity in the traits of Burton that one might be justified in imagining that two souls dwelt within the single body.

His eyes—his expression, too—had been pleasant enough until the very minute that he had said that Larry might lose every cent he owned in the world, and then the eyes had become frightening in their pale glare. Almost like madness. . . . But not that, really. Merely the inflexible will showing through. . . . It took will to amass fifty millions, and more will to keep it. She imagined someone trying to take Burton's money away from him. At the thought she smiled.

"Find it funny?" he asked.

"No," she soberly answered.

"Why the smile?" he persisted.

She told him the inconsequential thought that had drifted, from nowhere, into her mind.

"Glad you got the angle," he commented. "You're right. Nobody's getting my money. Nor anything else I happen to own—or want. Or, if anyone does, then I get something in return. Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"Do about it?" Now he *was* funny, and her smile was not speculative but was the product of genuine amusement. "Mr. Burton, aren't you being rather ridiculous?"

"If it's ridiculous to realize that I'm thirty years older than Helen, that she happens to be in love—as much as she can be in love—with your husband, and that he's probably still in love with her—"

"That isn't very complimentary to me," she interjected.

She stared at him. The shallow blue eyes took on an opacity that made them hard to fathom. "What happened out there—it didn't mean what—we thought it meant?"

"You and I aren't passing compliments," he dryly rejoined. "This is business. I'm not saying that you couldn't make Tracy forget all about Helen. As a matter of fact, I think you can. The point is—you've got to."

"You win all your business battles this way?" she inquired.

"I win them any way I can," he replied. "But I *win* them. Never forget that, Mrs. Tracy."

"And even unwilling brides—"

"You have too much sense to talk that way," he interrupted. "Helen's a young girl. She'll be twenty times as happy with me as with Tracy. Only—she doesn't realize that yet. I know her, I understand her—and as for her unwillingness—I'll take care of that after I'm married to her. Well, where do we stand?"

NOW her smile was neither speculative nor derisive. It was wise, wiser than her years.

"Together, Mr. Burton."

He nodded. "I thought so." Admiration crept into his glance. "You're an unusual woman, Mrs. Tracy."

"You're not an ordinary man," she laughed.

He accepted the statement, complimentary or flattery, quietly.

"I guess I'm not," he admitted. "Ordinary men don't do what I've managed to do."

"I wasn't thinking of your money," she said.

"I know. You mean—my coming out frankly—well, a man can have the wrong kind of vanity. I haven't got that kind. I know that when a young girl accepts me, she isn't lying awake nights thinking of my eyes."

"Then why not," Joyce ventured, "look for a woman who—"

"We do what we have to when it comes to love," he answered. "We never love the kind we want to love."

They circled the room in silence.

"I said a minute ago," he finally broke the pause, "that I didn't have a certain kind of vanity. But I have another. I don't want—I'm not going to be made ridiculous, Mrs. Tracy. I want Helen to understand—right away—that Larry Tracy belongs to you."

"Don't ask too much too quickly, Mr. Burton," she advised. "And—I think we've said enough, don't you?"

He looked down at her face. "Well, I guess we have," he said.

His features relaxed, and that inner meanness of which she had been conscious from the moment of meeting him, became, in his complacency, an almost outwardly visible thing. She had had experiences, this girl, with many kinds of men, but Burton was beyond anything she had thus far encountered.

Victory. That was all that counted with Burton. That the victory was petty, unworthy, unfairly gained—these things could not matter to Burton. She could imagine him, if need seemed to arise, cheating at cards, and accepting his winnings with the same complacency that was in his expression now. He had gained Helen Wilson's promise to marry him by the force of his fortune. He now believed that she would fulfill that promise because of a threat that he made to Joyce. And he would probably, married to Helen, parade her with pride, as though his own innate charm had won beauty to his side.

A mental nausea suddenly attacked her. Here were people who saw the

best, ate the best, drank the best, lived the best, had the best, and ought, by reason of their opportunities, to think the best and be the best. They might not be of the world's aristocracy, but they were of the world's smart, and aristocracy no longer held itself aloof but tried to join the smart.

In Burton's lapel was a little silk-covered button. France had deemed something he had done worthy of honor. It didn't matter that the Legion was nowadays granted almost as freely as concessions at Coney Island—after all, it was the Legion. This man Burton had the entrée, she knew, to the sanctums of the great. If he went to London, the American ambassador would make appointments for him with England's highest. The White House doors were never barred against him. Newspapers took pains to chronicle his lightest word, his casual comings and goings. Matrons—witness Mrs. Wilson—were glad to give him opportunity with their daughters.

SHE wondered if ever there had been a time when brains and character had really amounted to more in the world of affairs than cunning and meanness. Probably not. Probably history lied about the past as current reporting lies about the present. There'd probably never been a time when meanness was not in the ascendancy, because meanness will work for petty ends and character will not.

Burton was not the only person here who inspired contempt. Helen Wilson's mother had snobbery and greed written plainly on her face. Jeanne Mazell was nice, and so were one or two other of these people gathered here, notably



Illustrated by Joseph Simont

Billy Valdemagara. But even he, aristocrat by birth and a gentleman by happy accident, seemed to chum around with swine. How could a man like Paul Weedon be accepted, for even a single second, unless those who accepted him had traits of character so like his that contempt did not occur to them?

She despised herself that she did not release herself from Burton's arms instantly. Had there been only herself to consider, she might have done so. But the man had threatened Larry's fortune, and she did not believe that he uttered threats lightly.

She frowned faintly. How could it be possible for Burton to ruin Larry? But she knew that there were intricacies of finance incomprehensible to her. Somehow she believed that Burton could do what he said he'd do. And once again, the utter absurdity of the whole situation swept over her, so that she was smiling when Billy Valdemagara thrust his red head through the press of dancers and cut in.

"I AM disappointed in you, Mrs. Tracy," said the Spaniard.

"In me? I'm afraid that you're a fickle man, Billy," she laughed. "A while ago I flattered myself that I had won a heart, but now—"

His freckled face wrinkled in a grin at her obviously sham pathos.

"That was before I found you smiling at the dull Burton," he explained. "Be-

hold me, languishing on the outskirts of the dance floor, waiting a reasonable time before cutting in upon that odious man, saying to myself, 'No, it is not right that you should place so much charm before Mrs. Tracy,' reminding myself, again and again, that Larry is my friend.

"And then, finally, I approach you, and Burton has made you smile. It is a shock, Mrs. Tracy, a distinct shock. Had any of these other women been pleased with him, I would have dismissed it from my thoughts. They are obvious creatures who cannot understand the obvious. But you—I thought better of you."

"Some day I'll explain the smile," she said. "Just now, suppose we let it be understood that I felt your yearning and my lips merely expressed the anticipation in my heart."

The marquis beamed upon her. As outward expression of his inner feelings, he whirled her amazingly around, and Larry Tracy, looking on, marveled once again at the exquisite grace of the woman he had married. For Valdemagara danced with a rhythm unknown to many professionals. Yet Joyce followed his every step with utter ease and with an abandon that only superb ability could save from awkwardness.

Mrs. Wilson had left to dance with someone and he and Helen were alone. "Larry," said the girl, "I'm afraid."

"Of whom?" he asked.

"Of your—wife," she replied. She rushed into words. "Larry—she—she looked at me as though she knew—what had happened out there." She glanced toward the cliff. "How could she?"

"I told her," he answered.

"Told her?" She was unbelieving. "Why, Larry—what can she think—of me?"

"I've been wondering," he bitterly replied, "what she's thinking of me."

"Is she—will she—divorce you?"

He shook his head. "I'll never let her do that."

"You'll not let her! Larry, what do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, "that I love her."

SHE stared at him. The shallow blue eyes took on opacity that made them hard to fathom.

"Then—what happened—out there—didn't mean—what we thought it meant?"

"How could it?" he asked. "Helen, you don't love me. If you did, our engagement would never have been broken. Your mother could never have made you do that. Not if you'd cared."

"Perhaps," she said, "you'd never have let me, if you'd really cared."

He stared at her. "That may be true," he admitted. "But—that's all ended now. What—just happened—I know you didn't mean it. The impulse—"

"Are you being chivalrous, Larry?" Her voice was mocking.

He shook his head. "I'm just trying to be truthful."

"Sometimes women prefer falsehoods," she reminded him.

"There's been enough of that between us," he retorted.

"You mean—on my side?"

He leaned forward and touched the hand that lay idly on the table edge.

"Helen, let's be friends."

"Why?" she asked.

"Well, why not?" he inquired.

"Do you think we can be?"

"We can try," he told her.

"Have you never heard of the woman scorned?" Her voice was light.

"If I thought you meant that, I feel badly," he rejoined. "But a moment—after what we'd been to each other—"

"Of course I don't mean it. And—you're right," she said. "The moon, the surf, the sight of each other—only—you had no right to tell your wife, Larry. What on earth does she think of me?"

He made no reply to this, for Mainwaring, one of the nondescript but well-mannered members of the colony, bowed before her and begged for a dance.

Larry reached for a drink. He needed one, had earned one, he felt. In the short space of thirty minutes, he had been spiritually unfaithful to his wife, had discovered that he loved her, had broken the chains—forever—of a previous love affair, had told his wife what he had done—Oh, it was too mixed up. He drank deeply of the champagne and refilled his glass.

HE WAS lifting it to his lips when Jeanne Mazell's bright voice rebuked him.

"Larry Tracy, put that down," she ordered.

"Why?" he mildly inquired.

"Because you're one American abroad who isn't going to drink too much," she told him.

"Seen signs of my approaching surrender to the demon?" he laughed.

She nodded. "A very beautiful sign."

"And that cryptic remark is, I suppose, perfectly clear?"

"Don't be silly, Larry. Everyone here knows about you and Helen Wilson. But they needn't know that seeing her has upset you."

"Will a second glass of champagne inform them of that?" he asked.

"Too many second glasses will," she replied. "I should think," she went on, "that ordinary good taste would have kept her away."

"Thinking aloud is sometimes rude, Jeanne," he warned her.

"And there are worse things, my silly friend, than rudeness," she retorted. "Larry, do you realize how lovely Joyce is?"

"I'm beginning to," he said.

"Other men don't need as long as you seem to," she said. "Billy Valdemagara has gone in at the deep end already."

"Billy always does, doesn't he?" he commented.

She shook her head.

"Not this way, Larry."

"Well, you should know. He's been your pet particular private beau for—how long, Jeanne?"

"Not ever," she answered. "Billy hasn't ever been any woman's tame cat. Billy likes me, and I like Billy. I'm only fonder of two men, my husband and you, Larry."

"That's sweet of you, Jeanne," he told her.

"I'm not being sweet. I'm being honest. I like you, Larry. And I've fallen in love with your wife. Larry, no man can be blamed (Continued on page 32)



As a dip into adventure and wickedness the midnight swimming party left much to be desired

Wings of Destiny

By George Weston

The Story Thus Far:

MILLARD DELAVAN, an orphan, the son of a once-famous actor, is dismissed from the United States air force on the charge made by Captain Lastry of striking an officer, Captain Lastry himself, and of cheating at cards. Stacked against him are the facts that he is adept at card tricks and that he comes of German people.

Major Henrichs, thinking the charges absurd, befriends the boy and through the major's brother, Judge Henrichs, he secures a job with the Arrow Aero Manufacturing Company only to lose it through Captain Lastry, who happens to be in charge of inspecting the planes.

At Judge Henrichs' home Millard meets Joyce Van Deusen, a lovely young girl, and her attractive aunt, Mrs. Van Deusen, who tells him that she and his father were very close friends, that he had wanted to marry her, and that she had been shocked at his death and had always believed that the revolver had gone off accidentally. Millard realizes with inward horror that this must be the woman, about whom he had heard so vaguely, who had "made a monkey out of his father and sent him home." He also now realizes that his father's death must have been suicide.

He meets, again through the judge, Madame Mitzi Seidler, who turns out to be a German agent and when the judge, who is to be appointed head of the United States Intelligence in Switzerland, offers him the job of working against her and of preceding him to Switzerland, he jumps at the chance.

III

DELAHAN had hardly stepped off the gangplank upon the deck of the Paris when he saw Mitzi staring at him, as Penelope might have stared at Hermes in the days of the Trojan wars.

"But Mill!" she exclaimed, sweeping forward and leading him away from the crowd at the head of the runway. "This is from heaven! After this I shall sail more regularly, to have you come and say good-by to me."

But seeing from his manner that she must vary the melody, she added, "No? I haven't guessed it? Then—I have a rival to whom you have come to say farewell! So be it! I shall stalk you around the ship until I see her; then halfway over, when she leans over the rail, I shall push her into the sea!"

"Wrong again," said Delavan, beginning to smile in spite of himself—for he was cast for a cynical, bitter part that morning instead of a smiling one. And frowningly checking the liveliness of her fancy, he told her in three words, "I'm sailing, too."

"Oooh!" she cooed beneath her breath. "Fairies, you have done your work; behold him!" But seeing again that she was on the wrong key she continued more seriously, "You are joining the American army at the front?"

Here at least was the cue for bitterness—a bitterness springing so deeply from the soul that it couldn't help but sound convincing even to practiced ears.

"The American army?" he echoed. "You think I ever want to see it again? You haven't heard how I earned my dishonorable discharge? How I was pitched out by the scruff of the neck—for cheating—for cheating at cards?"

THEY had stopped at the rail, at a place overlooking the stern where the deck was deserted; and as though to comfort him Mitzi slipped her hand around his elbow and patted his arm.

"Oh, I heard some fool tale," she said in a low voice, as caressing as her hand. "Of course I didn't believe it. And yesterday noon Judge Henrichs told us how it happened, when Joyce and I were having lunch with him. . . . But tell me," she continued. "Where are you going now? You have some plans, of course?"

"If you can call them plans," he told her. "I simply had to get away from New York. So I'm special European representative of the Arrow Aero Company with headquarters somewhere in Switzerland. And there I'll take orders for planes, or act as trouble man, or instructor, or anything else that looks either interesting or useful."

This last phrase was his saving clause. The rest he hated, although it was technically true.

Through the pressure of Judge Henrichs the Arrow Aero Company had appointed him their Swiss representative. And even as children will sometimes tell any tale as long as they have their fingers crossed, so Delavan sought conso-

lation in the words "or anything else that looks either interesting or useful. . . ."

"Where are your headquarters in Switzerland?" she asked.

"That's been left to me," he carelessly replied. "I'm to look things over and use my discretion. Wherever the bright flowers of excitement bloom the thickest, I suppose."

The deep roar of the siren interrupted them—a poignant, almost shuddering note as though the ship knew the perils of the submarine zone through which she must pass before she could ever tie to dock again.

"Five minutes before sailing," said Mitzi, glancing at the zirconed dial on her wrist. "I was waiting for a letter when I saw you. Do you mind? . . ."

He returned her to the head of the gangplank and found his stateroom. His baggage had already been placed, and on the dresser two letters were waiting for him.

One was from Judge Henrichs—a short but heart-warming wish of good luck. The other was from Joyce.

Dear Mr. Delavan [it began]: Judge Henrichs told me the queerest tale today—about the way you left the army—and I'm terribly sorry that I shan't be able to see you off tomorrow and tell you personally that I don't believe it.

It all sounded so perfectly absurd that I couldn't help thinking of Alice

in Wonderland—only, of course, it must be simply tragic for you.

Please let me hear from you whenever you have time, and I shall always be glad to write you the news from here.

With love from "your dear child,"

JOYCE.

"THERE!" thought Delavan, feeling a choke in his throat. "At least she believes in me." And not yet cured, as you will see, of the dreaming of dreams, he imagined himself doing some wonderful deed of heroism and marching home, wounded, at the head of a victorious army. But instead of marching he should have been resting from his wounds, for a week later all the bells of the city tolled their sad, solemn notes, and as his body was slowly borne along on a gun carriage Joyce ran out from the reverent crowds and cried in broken tones, "Oh, Mill . . . Mill. . . . You know I always believed in you! . . ."

They had turned the corner of Sandy Hook when he met Mitzi again. The deck steward gave them chairs together on the promenade deck; and for the first

few minutes they sat in silence, Delavan watching the parade of passengers go past, and Mitzi watching the keen-faced young man by her side.

"Do you know," she murmured once, "without moving my head I can tell every time an army officer goes by? You frown to yourself; and although of course you don't actually grit your teeth I can see you grinding them together in your mind."

"Do you blame me for that?" Delavan shortly asked.

"Blame you?" she echoed. "If I were you I'd want to grind something else besides teeth!"

And yet, as the voyage proceeded, there were few American officers above the rank of lieutenant with whom Mitzi didn't take a turn around the deck, either in the sunswept afternoon or the more confidential hours of evening.

Illustrated by
O. F.
Schmidt

