Just Married

PICTURES BY A. WEIL

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BY LOUIS JOSEPH VANCE

SYNOPSIS.

"Mad" Dan Maitland, on reaching his New York bachelor club, met an attractive young woman at the door. Janitor O'Hagan mistook him on the spot been within that day. Dan discovered a woman's finger pointing in dust on the desk along with a letter from his attorney. Maitland dined with Bannerman, his attorney. Dan set out for Greenfields, to get his family revels. During the walk to the country seat, he met the young woman in gray, whom he had seen leaving his bachelors' club. Her auto had broken down.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

Her superb composure claimed his admiration. Absolutely ignorant though she had been of his proximity, the voice from out of the skies evidently alarmed her not at all. Still bending over the lifted foot, she turned her head slowly and looked up; and "Oh!" said a small voice, tinged with relief. And coolly knotting the lace scale, she sat up. "I didn't hear you, you know."

"Now I see you," Maitland supplemented, unblushingly, "until a moment ago. I—er—can I be of assistance?"

"Can't you?"

"Idiot!" said Maitland, severely, both to and of himself. Aloud: "I think I can."

"I hope so"—doubtfully. "It's very unfortunate. . . . I was running rather fast, I suppose, and didn't see the slope until too late. Now," opening her hands in a gesture hopelessness charming with its suggestion of helplessness and dependence, "I don't know what can be the matter with the machine."

"I'm coming down," announced Maitland briefly. "Wait."

"Thank you, I shall."

She laughed, and Maitland could have blushed for his insanity; happily he had action to cloak his embarrassment. In a twinkling he was at the water's edge, pausing there to listen, with admirable docility, to her plaintive objection: "But you'll get wet and—and soil your things. I can't ask that of you."

He chuckled, by way of reply, slipping gaitlashes into the shallows and courageously wading out to the side of the car. Whereupon he was advised in tones of fortuned indignation:

"You simply wouldn't listen to me! And I warned you! Now you're soaking wet and will certainly catch your death of cold, and—and what can I do? Truly, I am sorry."

Here the young man lost track of her remark. He was looking up into the shadow of the motoring cap, discovering things; for the shadow was set at naught by the moon luster that, reflected from the surface of the stream, invested with a gentle and glamorous radiance the face that bent above him. And he caught at his breath sharply, without fears confirmed. She was pretty indeed—perilously pretty. The firm, resolute chin, the sensitive, sweet line of scarlet lips, the straight little nose, the brows delicately arched, the large, alert, tawny eyes with the dangerous street shadows beneath, the glint as of raw copper where her hair caught the light. Maitland appreciated them all far too well; and clutched nervously the rail of the seat, trying to steel himself, not to re-collect his routed wits and consider sensibly that it all was due to the magic of the moon, lending the witchery of this apparition that looked down into his eyes so gravely.

"Of course," he mumbled, "it's too beautiful to endure. Of course it will all fade, vanish utterly in the cold light of day."

Above him, perplexed brows gathered ominously. "I beg pardon?"

"I—er—yes," he stammered at random.

"You—or—what?"

Positively, she was laughing at him! He, Maitland the exquisite, Mad Maitland the imperturbable, was being laughed at by a mere child, a girl scarcely out of her teens. He glanced upward, caught her eye agleam with merriment, and looked away with much vain dignity.

"I was saying," he manufactured, "that I did not mind the wetting in the least. I'm happy to be of service."

"You weren't saying anything of the sort," she contradicted, calmly. "However—" She paused significantly.

Maitland experienced an instantaneous sensation as of fleeting ease, decidedly the reverse of comfortable. He shuffled uneasily. There was a brief silence, on her part expectant, on his, blank. His mental attitude remained hopeless; for some mysterious reason his nonchalance had deserted him in the hour of his supremest need; not in all his experience did he remember anything like this—awkward.

The river purled indifferently about his calves, ragrant breeze disturbed the tree tops and died of sheer lassitude; Time plodded on with measured stride. Then, abruptly, full-winged inspiration was born out of the chaos of his mind. Listening intently, he glanced with covert suspicion at the bridge; it proved untenanted, inoffensive of sinister, nor across there say sound of hoof or wheel upon the highway. Again he looked up at the girl; and found her in thoughtful mood, frowning, regarding him steadily beneath level brows.

He assumed a disarming levity of demeanor, smiling winningly. "There's only one way," he suggested—not too seriously—and extended his arms.

"Indeed?" She considered him with pardonable dubiety.

Instantly his purpose became as adamant.

"I must carry you. It's the only way."

"Oh, indeed no! I—couldn't impose upon you. I'm—very heavy, you know—"

"Never mind," firmly insistent. "You can't stay here all night, of course."

"But are you strong?" (She was yielding!) "I don't like to—"

He shook his head, careful to restrain the twitching corners of his lips.

"It will take but a moment," he urged, gravely. "And I'll be quite careful."

"Well—" She perceived that, if not right, he was stubborn; and with a final small gesture of deprecation, weakly surrendered. "I'm sorry to be such a nuisance," she murmured, rising and gathering skirts about her.

Maitland stoutly denied the hideous insinuation. "I am only too glad—"

She balanced herself lightly upon the step. He moved nearer and assured himself of a firm foothold on the pebbly river bed. She sank gracefully into his arms, proving a comfortable burden—weightier, in fact, than he had anticipated. He was somewhat staggered; it seemed that he embraced countless yards of ruffles and things ballasted with (at a shrewd guess) lead. He swayed.

Then, recovering his equilibrium, he incautiously glanced into her eyes. And lost it again, completely.

"I was mistaken," he told himself; "daylight will but enhance—"

She held herself coldsderately still, perhaps wondering why he made no move. Perhaps otherwise; there is reason to believe that she may have suspected—being a woman.

At length: "Is there anything I can do," she inquired, meekly, "to make it easier for you?"

"I'm afraid," he replied, attitude apologetic, "that I must ask you to put your arm around my ne—my shoulders. It would be more natural."

"Oh."

The monosyllable was heavy with meaning—with any one of a dozen meanings, in truth. Maitland debated the most obvious. Did she conceive he had insinuated that it was his habit to ferry armfuls of attractive femininity over rocky fords by the light of a midnight moon?

No matter. While he thought it out, she was consenting. Presently a slender arm was passed round his neck. Having availed only that, he proceeded to wade cautiously shoreward, the distance lessened perceptibly, but he contemplated the decreasing interval without joy, for all that she was of an appreciable weight. For all burdens there are compensations.

Unconsciously, inevitably, her head sank toward his shoulder; he was aware of her breath, fragrant and warm, upon his cheek. . . . He stopped abruptly, cold chills running up and down his back; he gritted his teeth; he shuddered perceptibly.

"What is the matter?" she demanded, deeply concerned, but pains not to stir.

Maitland made a strange noise with his tongue behind clenched teeth. "Urrrrgh," he said distinctly.

She lifted her head, startled; relief followed, intense and instantaneous.

"I'm sorry," he muttered, humbly, face aflame, "but you . . . tickled."

"I'm—so—sorry!" she gasped, violently agitated. And laughed a low, almost a silent, little laugh, as with deft fingers she tucked away the errant lock of hair.

"Ass!" Maitland told himself, fiercely, striding forward.

In another moment they were on dry land. The girl slipped from his arms and faced him, eyes dancing, cheeks crimson, lips a tense, quivering, scarlet line. He met this with a rueful smile.

"But—thank you—but," she gasped, explosively, "it was so funny!"

Wounded dignity melted before her laughter. For a time, there in the moonlight, under the scornful regard of the disabled motor car's twin headlights, these two rocked and shrieked, while the silent night flung back disdainful echoes of their mad laughter.

Perhaps the insane incongruity of their performance first became apparent to the girl; she, at all events, was the first to control herself. Maitland subsided, rumbling, while she dabbed at her eyes with a wisp of lace and linen.

"Forgive me," she said, faintly, at length; "I didn't mean to—"

"How could you help it? Who'd expect a walking brute like myself to be ticklish?"

"You are awfully good," she counted more calmly.

"Don't say that. I'm a clumsy lout. But—" He held her gaze inquiringly. "But may I ask—"

"Oh, of course—certainly; I am—was—bound for Greenpoint-on-the-Sound—"

"Ten miles!" he interrupted.

"The corners of her red lips dropped; her brows puckered with dismay. Instinctively she glanced toward the water-bound car.

"What am I to do?" she cried. "Ten miles! . . . I could never walk it, never in the world! You see, I went to town to-day to do a little shopping. As we were coming home the chauffeur was arrested for careless driving. He had bumped a delivery wagon over—it wasn't really his fault, I telephoned home for somebody to take him and my father said he would come in. Then I dined, returned to the police station and waited. Nobody came. I couldn't stay there all night. I phoned to everybody I knew, until my money gave out; no one was in town. At last, in desperation, I started home alone."

Maitland nodded his comprehension. "Your father—?" he hinted delicately.

"Judge Wentworth," she explained, hastily. "We've taken the Grover place at Greenpoint for the season."

"I see"—thoughtfully. And this was the girl who he had believed had been in his rooms that evening, in his absence! Oh, clearly, that was impossible, for today was Friday with him.

She interrupted his train of thought with a cry of despair. "What will they think?"

"I dare say," he ventured hopefully, "I could hire a team at some farm house—"

"But the delay! It's so late already!"

Indeniably late; one o'clock at the earliest. A thought longer Maitland hung in lack of purpose, then without a word of explanation turned and again began to wade out.

"What do you mean to do?" she cried, surprised.

"See what's the trouble," he called back. "I know a bit about motors. Perhaps—"

"Then—but why—"

She stopped; and Maitland forbore, to encourage her to round out her question. It was no difficult matter to supply the missing words. Why had he not thought of investigating the motor before insisting that he must carry her ashore?

The humiliating conviction forced itself upon him that he was not figuring to great advantage in this adventure. Distinctly a humiliating sensation to one who certainly was by way of having a fine conceit of himself. It requires a certain amount of egotism to enable one to play the exquisite to one's personal satisfaction; Maitland had enjoyed the possession of that amount, therefore his disapproval of self had been passably entire. Now—he could not deny—the boor had shown through the polish of the beau.

Intolerable—thought! "Cad!" exclaimed Maitland, bitterly. This all was due to hasty jumping at conclusions; if he had not chosen to believe a young and attractive girl identified with an—an adventuress, this thing had not happened and he had still retained his own good will. For one little moment he despised himself heartily—one little moment of clear insight into self was his. And forthwith he began to meditate apologies, formulating phrases designed to prove adequate without sounding exaggerated and insincere.

By this time he had reached the car, and—through sheer blundering luck—at once stumbled upon the seat of trouble—a clogged valve in the carbureter. No serious matter; with the assistance of a repair kit more than commonly complete, he had the valve clear in a jiffy.

News of this triumph he shouted to the girl, receiving in reply an "Oh, thank you!" so fervently grateful that he felt more guilty than ever.

Ruminatively munching on the end of contemplated abasement, he waded round the car, satisfying himself that there was nothing else out of gear; and apprehensively cranked up. Whereupon the motor began to hum contentedly; all was well. Satisfied with this success, Maitland climbed aboard and opened the throttle a trifle. They car roared, all the while with a swish, a gurgle, and a watery whoosh! It surged forward, up, out of the river, definitely on the shoreward.

At the top the amateur chauffeur shut down the throttle and jumped out, turning to assist the girl. She was by the step almost before he could offer a hand to help her in, and as she paused to render him the due meed of thanks, it became evident that she harbored little if any resentment; eyes shining, face aglow with gratitude, she dropped him a droll but graceful courtesy.

"You are too good!" she declared with spirit. "How can I thank you!"

"You might," he suggested, looking down into her face from his superior height, "give me a bit of a lift—just a couple of miles up the road. Though," he supplemented eagerly, "if you'd really prefer, I should be only too happy to drive the car home for you!"

"Two miles, did you say?"

He fancied something odd in her tone; besides, the question was superfluous. His eyes informed with pus element, he replied: "Why, yes—that much, more or less. I live—"

"Of course," she put in quickly, "I'll give you the lift—only too glad. But as for your taking my home at this hour, I can't hear of that."

"But—"

"Instead, what would people say?" she countered, obstinately. "Oh, no," she decided; and he felt that from this decision there would be no appeal. "I couldn't think of interfering with your . . . arrangements."

Her eyes held him for a single instant, instinct with mischief, gleaming with bewildering light from out a face schooled to gravity. Maitland experienced a sensation of having grasped after and missed a subtlety of allusion; his wits, keen as they were, recoiled, baffled by her finesse. And the more he divined that she was playing with him, as an experienced swordsman might play with an impertinent novice, the denser its confusion grew.

"But I have no arrangements!" he stammered.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Backache, pain through the hips, dizzy spells, headaches, nervousness, bloating, etc., are troubles that commonly come from sick kidneys. Don't mistake the cause—Doan's Kidney Pills have cured thousands of women afflicted in this way—by curing the kidneys. Mrs. C. R. Foreman, 113 S. Eighth St., Canon City, Colo., says: "Three years I suffered with rheumatism, dropsy and kidney complaint, and became utterly helpless. I found relief after using two or three boxes of Doan's Kidney Pills and kept on until cured. Doan's Kidney Pills have been a blessing to me."

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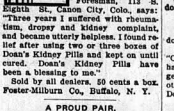

"What makes that peasant so proud to-day?"

"Oh, he has the biggest rooster in town—and his wife the biggest hat."—Flegende Blatter.

Forestalled.

"Well, Mrs. Dennis, what are you going to give Pat for Christmas this year?" inquired the recipient of Mrs. Dennis' regular washday visits, one day at the beginning of the festal season.

"Deed thin, ma'am, I don't know," replied Mrs. Dennis, raising herself from the washtub and setting her dripping arms akimbo. "I did be thinkin' I'd give him a pair of pants, but, Lord bless ye, ma'am, only last night didn't he come home wid a pair on."—Success Magazine.

God bless the man who first invented screens, and God pity the man who is too indolent or indifferent to place them between his family and the spreaders of deadly disease. There is absolutely no excuse for the man or woman whose place of habitation swarms with flies and whines with the voices of mosquitoes. They can be kept out, and 25 cents spent in keeping them out is equivalent to keeping out a doctor who would cost $25, or possibly to keeping out a much less welcome visitor.

Sees Extinction of Tuberculosis.

Dr. William Osler says: "Whether tuberculosis will be finally eradicated is even an open question. It is a foe that is very firmly intrenched in the human race. Very hard it will be to eradicate completely, but I know we think of what has been done in one generation, how the mortality in many places has been reduced more than 50 per cent.—Indeed, in some places 100 per cent.—it is a battle of years, and so long as we are fighting with hope, the victory is in sight."

The Novel Type.

In a late magazine story a perfectly lovely girl is described as follows: "She was very small and dark, and very active, with hair like the color of a chestnut burr, bright and dancing eyes and lamplight all snared up together, and lips like all crude scarlet, and over a shadowy little face and round as a child's good-by kiss."

How do you like it? Would a girl who answered this description be worth shucks in everyday experiences?—Atchison Globe.

WON'T MIX

Bad Food and Good Health Won't Mix.

The human stomach stands much abuse but it won't return good health if you give it bad food.

If you feed right you will feel right, for proper food and a good mind is the sure road to health.

"A year ago I became much alarmed about my health for I began to suffer after each meal no matter how little I ate," says a Denver woman.

"I lost my appetite and the very thought of food grew distasteful, with the result that I was not nourished and got weak and thin.

"My home cares were very heavy, for besides the care of my family I have also to look out for my aged mother. There was no one to shoulder my responsibilities, and come what might, I must bear them, and this thought nearly drove me frantic when I realized that my health was breaking down.

"I read an article in the paper about some one with the trouble, and thinking cured on Grape-Nuts food and acting on this suggestion I gave Grape-Nuts a trial. The first dish of this delicious food proved that I had struck the right thing.

"My uncomfortable feelings in stomach and brain disappeared as if by magic and in an incredibly short space of time I was myself again. Since then I have gained 12 pounds in weight, through a summer of hard work and realize I am a very different woman, all due to the splendid food, Grape-Nuts."

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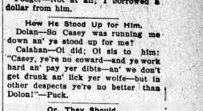
Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

NEVER DONE.



Silmkins—I—I hope you didn't mind my telling that little waiter he was $5 in the hands of the bill collector yesterday?

Foresman—Not at all; I borrowed a dollar from him.

How He Stood Up for Him.

Dolan—So Casey was running me down an' yo stood up for me?

Calahan—Ol did; Ol sis to him: "Casey, ye're no coward—and ye work hard an' pay yer dibts—an' we don't get drunk an' lick yer wolfe—but in other respects yo're no better than Dolon!"—Puck.

Or, They Should.

Shakespeare: Welcome ever smiles, and farewell goes out sighing.

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