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THE DAY MOON

By ALICE P. PHINNEY.

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Clad in cool white she sat on a green hill among the daisies and dreamily watched the pale day moon. An artist's portable camp stool and an easel stood beside her and in her hands was a palette, much daubed with green and yellow. The bees droned and all was sleepy and warm.

Then a man's voice quietly chimed in with her mood—

"There's a superstition about that, you know—"

"Yes?" she questioned without moving, and then, startled, she turned to see a tanned, white flannel clad young man standing behind her, his keen blue eyes thoughtfully considering the day moon.

"Funny so few ever write about that or paint it," he was saying. "Now I could place it over hazy hills, between columns of marble—" his long fingers tightened on the brush they held, "but that superstition—" He turned to her and she greeted him with a smile. But it was quite different from that intimate questioning "yes." Oh, it was entirely polite, the smile was, but very cool, for the girl had come back from the white day moon to this queer old world where there are men who have been introduced, and there are others (oh, quite attractive others) who have not.

The artist laughed good humoredly. "I didn't come up to talk of moons," he said, "and I apologize for being so informal, but I'm painting this landscape—" his sweeping gesture took in the sunny hills and the gleaming river—"and just as I was getting it my light yellows gave out—that's the main tone—and then I saw your easel and wondered if you, being a painter, too—"

"Of course," she admitted, "light yellows. One couldn't paint without them today. But the oil tubes aren't here yet. If you'll wait—"

She motioned to him to be seated.

"It's wonderful to paint," she said as he complied.

"Isn't it, though? And on a day like this."

She nodded and sniffed the sun-scented air delightedly. "Nature's just baking," she declared, and laughed as she added, "Cooking things always smell good to me."

The artist tapped the ground with his brush. "Nature," he said, "is the one artist who is practical. There are so few like that."

In the valley below was a white church, seeming ridiculously tiny as they looked down from the hill. The wee door swung open and—

"Why, that darling white speck," cried the girl. "It's a bride! And the black speck is the groom, and all the rainbow specks are—"

The artist watched them. "From this distance," he mused, "we can suppose them the ideal couple. Mother Nature is healthy, artistic and practical. We people can all be the first and then we have our choice between the other two."

He had often talked in this strain at the club.

"I hope," he added, "that one of those little specks can dream to some purpose and that the other can—boil eggs. They might use the day moon," he suggested.

"Oh," she remembered, "the day moon! What was that superstition?"

"An old Hindu thing, I think. Your watching it so intently made me recall it. On the noon of the full of the day moon one should pray to it for his heart's desire. But he won't receive it unless it is worthy and fairly practicable. It's best to sleep with a white cat until the new crescent appears, and there ought to be someone else who wants the same thing. They could vow for the practical."

"How keen you are for the practical." She turned to look at him.

"Well, being an artist I've had to cook for myself now and then. It makes a man think. I shall never marry an artist, while you, now, if you were to marry some intensely practical fellow—"

Suddenly he didn't want her to marry any too intensely practical fellow.

"But maybe you're not an awfully good artist," he suggested hopefully.

"I don't wonder our grandmothers laugh at us," she declared, rising briskly. "This way of discussing our most personal affairs in an impersonal way with utter strangers is funny."

He chuckled at her dainty decisiveness, and, rising, too, "Do you know I wish you weren't an artist?"

The girl was shading her eyes and looking off toward the hot, lazy river. A canoe, paddled by a strong, drab clad woman, glided ashore. The girl smiled.

"Ah, there's Annette," she murmured.

"Annette Fraser, the artist," he nodded.

The girl's hazel eyes doubtfully appraised the easel and stool. "I hope these are right."

She turned quizzically toward the artist. "Oh, by the way," she said, and there was amusement in her voice and, yes, apology:

"You see," she waved her hand toward the canoe, "Annette paints," she paused a moment; "I'm a teacher of cooking."

Quite abruptly she sat down among the daisies and lifted her eyes to the day moon.

"No!" he exclaimed, and quite abruptly he sat down on the green besmeared palette, but his eyes—well, he had forgotten the day moon.

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