THEIR LAST DINNER

By VIRGINIA LEILA WENTZ

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She had promised him the evening a week before, and when he asked her where they should dine she had answered:

"At our little French restaurant—don't you remember? It will be like old times." Old times meant the days when they had worked together as reporters on a local paper. That was two years ago.

So tonight, down in the old fashioned southwest quarter of the city, they sat at one of the square tables. The low cellinged room was presided over by a plump, kindly host. Apparently monsieur had not gained a single wrinkle in these two years!

Ah, and here, too, came their old waiter, with one of those smiles of the waiter who is at the same time an old friend. Of course he didn't know anything about his patrons' lives during the past two twelvemonths. He assumed that they were married.

"We have one of madame's favorite dishes tonight," he said, addressing Muriel. She flushed slightly.

Presently the girl ceased her flow of light hearted chatter and began turning her cup about in a slow, mechanical fashion.

"Billy," she said, "it has happened." She spoke in that soft, low tone women use for words they feel will wound. "Yesterday Mr. Nicholas Broser asked me to become his wife."

"BILLY," SHE SAID, 'IT HAS HAPPENED."

The man waited for the servant to remove some of the dishes before he answered, with a bitter laugh:

"I suppose, the offer not being a total surprise, you gave him your decision, Muriel?"

"Now, don't be disagreeable. Did we not agree long ago to be sensible, you and I? We both love luxury so well that it would be a positive crime to dispense with it for the sake"—

"We've sold our souls for it!" the man broke in.

"How melodramatic!" exclaimed the girl with a little mock smile. "As a matter of fact, I'm to have a gorgeous automobile, a beauty of a yacht and more money than I, even I, can spend. So when he comes tomorrow night for his answer I'm going to say yes. And you, Billy, when will you marry your heiress? You know, she thinks the world of you—every one says so—and you have only to ask her!" Muriel spoke gayly, notwithstanding the sadness in her eyes.

The man didn't seem to hear her question or her badinage. He was watching a little stray curl which the draft from the open door was blowing across her temples, and he was doing battle with his thoughts.

"Why haven't you Nicholas Broser's money?" Muriel remarked after a long silence. "I don't believe there is a man in the whole world so fitted to be the master of vast estates. Charles II. must have been like you, I think, except that you have none of his vices."

"Thanks," returned her companion listlessly, still watching the stray curl.

"I don't like one bit to think that this is our last dinner, Billy; not—one—little bit."

"Our last dinner!" exclaimed the man, forgetting the curl and suddenly seeking Muriel's eye.

"Of course. I shall be true to Mr. Broser, in the letter at least."

Her companion made no reply. Then Muriel went on in a light tone, as if she felt that silences were dangerous:

"Just fancy, we had decided to marry—poverty and all. Instead of living the existences we are both fitted for we should have to settle down in a Harlem flat. Ugh! A Harlem flat, with the proverbial goat browsing around and doing stunts with the tin cans; a Harlem flat, with all the attendant miseries of 'L' rides; a Harlem flat, decorated with cheap bric-a-brac"— She broke off and began another sentence, playing idly with her mother's wedding ring.

"But we do not know—we could make even a Harlem flat look pretty. I saw a lot of bric-a-brac this morning, as dainty as it was cheap. Nowadays poor people can have dainty things as well as rich people if they have taste and a knack of developing resources. Billy, I often think about that Harlem flat, and"— She chanced to look up from the ring, and the pain in the man's face stopped her words.

"I never knew before that you liked to torture people, little woman," he said.

"I didn't mean—I didn't suppose," she began; then she added softly, leaning forward:

"Anyhow, we can both remember. And, after all, isn't a memory that will live better than a dead romance?" There was a suspicion of a sob in the girl's voice, and as she drew on her gloves Billy saw a glittering tear fall upon her hand.

When he had received his check and paid the waiter, he rose abruptly and crossed over to lay Muriel's wrap about her shoulders.

"You won't make it too hard for me—to give you up?" whispered she as his hand rested for one second upon her arm.

He drew himself up proudly to his full six feet of height, and in a voice which she had never heard before he said masterfully:

"Tomorrow morning I want you to be ready to go out with me. I shall call at 10 o'clock."

"Where?" Muriel said, turning to look up at him. "To go where?"

"To hunt that Harlem flat," he answered as he pushed back her chair from the table.

Muriel adjusted the emerald fleur-de-lis at her slender waist. Dark lashes, down swept, hid the gaze that Billy knew, but he saw the flush which surged quickly over her oval cheeks and brow. And he was satisfied.

There, sitting at his pay desk, the plump, kindly host was busy making change for his waiters. As his two old customers passed him he looked up to give them a parting salutation, to hope that they had been served well, that they had enjoyed his bordeaux, that they would come often again. But, alas, it was necessary that monsieur's good intention should cover the deed. He had no chance to speak—they did not look his way; they were engrossed in each other.

"Mon Dieu! How happy they seem! Marriage goes well with them," he thought to himself as he went on making change for another waiter.

How the Baby Assists.

Reader, gentle or otherwise, have you ever noticed how the young father and mother of a first baby carry on a conversation?

If you have you must have wondered how in the world they managed to talk to each other before the baby became a member of the family.

The following is a sample talk in a family of three, one of which trio is a baby a year old.

Mamma (with infant on her lap)—Baby, ask popper if he will div mommer ze paper.

The paper is given.

Papa—Baby, ask oor mommer if she knows where popper's slippers are.

"Tell popper his slippers are in the hall closet, girly baby." The slippers are found and put on.

"Baby, has oo been a good 'ittle totkins today?"

"Girly baby, tell oor popper dat oo's been de bestest, doodest, sweetest 'ittle popsy wopsy in the town, so oo has."

"I'ze dlad to hear dat, baby. Popper's own daughter girly must always be dood as a doll."

"Baby, now tell popper baby totkins is goin' sleepies and can't talk any more. By, by, popper!"

"By, by, totkins!"

Where Metals Boil.

Krafft has determined the boiling point of certain metals by the use of vessels of quartz heated by an electric furnace. Zinc sublimes below 300 degrees and at 640 degrees distills fairly quick. The corresponding temperatures for cadmium are 322 degrees and 448 degrees. Selenium distills quickly at 380 degrees, tellurium at 550 degrees, boiling being observable at 535 degrees. Lead boils rapidly and distills at 1,160 degrees. Tin proves very refractory, no distillation occurring even at 1,100. At 605 degrees antimony sublimes slowly and at 775 to 780 degrees distills rapidly. Sublimation of bismuth commenced at 540 degrees; the sublimate assumed the form of drops at 930 degrees, and the metal boiled briskly at 1,050 degrees. A slight mirror of silver appeared at 1,090 degrees, and rapid vaporization proceeded at 1,340 degrees. Copper and gold boil at too high temperatures to be examined even in silica. With the former a slight amount of sublimate formed at 1,315 degrees; with the latter extremely little vapor arose even at 1,375 degrees, which is near the point at which the resistance of silica breaks down.—Scientific American.

The Gender of Arkansas.

"The life of a schoolteacher would be sorely monotonous," said a teacher of a boys' school, "if it were not for his sense of humor and the really funny things which happen every day in the schoolroom. One day, for instance, I had up my smart class in grammar and set the boys parsing. I called to Moses, a colored boy, to parse Arkansas, and he said 'Arkansas,' with emphasis on the second syllable. I corrected his pronunciation, and he went on:

"'Hark-en-saw is a noun, objective case, indicative mood, comparative degree, third person, passive and nominative case to scissors.'

"'You haven't said what gender, Moses,' I remarked.

"'Feminine gender,' quickly remarked my smart scholar.

"'Why, sir?' I asked, somewhat puzzled.

"'Becos it's got Miss Souri on the norf, Louisa Anna on the souf, Mrs. Sippi on the east and ever so many more shemales on the west.'

"It was so well done I joined in and encouraged the laugh which followed the smart boy's humor."

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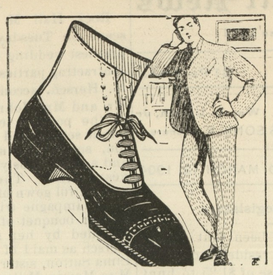

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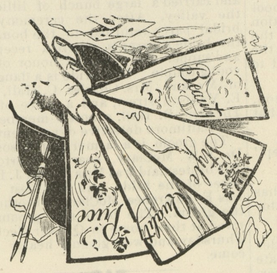

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