

"A Man and His Wife"

John Hamilton Meets an Old Flame at the Theatre and Isabel Asks Her Name.

BY VIRGINIA TERHUNE VAN DE WATER.

When conditions are favorable it does not take very long to go from the One Hundred and Eighty-first street subway station to Ninety-sixth street. Isabel, in reckoning when she would reach home, had not considered the time needed to walk from the region of Riverside Drive to the station, nor from the Ninety-sixth street station to her home on Ninety-fourth street. She was so late that she ran the last block of her journey. Then the thought flashed through her mind that it would not hurt her husband to worry a little about her. Had she not worried about him last night?

She saw a look of relief cross John's face as she entered the door of the apartment. He was standing in the hall, just where she had stood last night when he returned from his club. A sudden realization of the reversal of the positions made her giggle nervously. John's face relaxed into a smile at the sound. Perhaps the same thought that had occurred to her occurred to him also, for the words of disapproval of her tardy arrival took a gentler form than he had planned to give them.

"Ah, my dear," he said. "I was wondering where you were, for you have never been out as late as this alone. It is dinner-time now."

"Yes," she agreed. "I was detained. I am sorry. I've been up to see Ida Ferris, and it took longer than I thought to come from her house. I hope you have not worried."

She felt very magnanimous as she expressed this hope.

"Not just worried," he told her. "But when one has a pretty wife one likes to see her whenever he comes home. I have planned a little treat for you this evening, dear."

"What is it?"

"I have bought tickets for the theatre," he replied.

Impulsively she went to him and put her arms about his neck.

"Thank you, dearest," she said gently. "It was sweet of you to do that."

"I wanted to give my darling little wife a treat," he returned. "She deserves it."

They Do Not Wipe Out the Bitterness.

It was his method of apologizing for his harsh speeches of the night before. Her manner of receiving the planned pleasure was her method of accepting his unspoken apology. Such adjustments are all very well in their way, but they did not wipe out the memory of the bitterness and injustice on both sides as a verbal and honest request for pardon would have done. Yet some married couples "make up" their quarrels in that way.

The conversation over the dinner table was agreeable, if slightly hurried. Cynthia had forgotten to cook the second vegetable that her mistress had ordered—a fact upon which John commented. But Isabel made no reply to his complaint. She had decided to change her street costume for a more elaborate gown in which to attend the theatre. So, leaving John alone to finish his coffee, she hastened to her room. She saw that her hair must be rearranged. Then the gloves she had selected were not as fresh as she thought they should be, and after she and John had reached the door of the elevator she ran back to get another pair. John frowned impatiently as he glanced at his watch.

"It is too bad, Isabel," he remarked. "that you stayed out so late this afternoon. You have had to rush to get ready—yet I'm afraid that we'll be late."

"I can't help it," she returned. There was silence between them until the theatre was reached. As is usual in New York playhouses the curtain rose ten minutes after schedule time and the young couple had plenty of leisure to remark to each other that, after all, they need not have hurried as much as they had done.

"Yet," John added, "you are not a rapid dresser, and if you had known how late you would probably have been."

Isabel bit back the sharp retort that she longed to utter. Why was it, she wondered, that she and John seemed so much more odd lately? She remembered Ida's simile of the swimmers. Were she and John coming to the surface and not close together? The idea filled her with sharp fear, and she felt for her husband's hand and gripped it tightly.

"What's the matter?" the man asked, practically. "What do you want?"

"Oh, nothing," she murmured. "Only I was just thinking that I could never spare you."

She did not know that she was looking at him with more affection than was in good taste in public. But her companion flushed, uncomfortably.

"For pity's sake, let go of my hand," he said, sotto voce. "There are some people I know right behind us, and they are looking at us."

The wife withdrew her hand quickly and, at the same moment, John turned.

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