

Variety

Good friends all! Seems scarcely any end to the delightful variations you can offer in the bread you bake.

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One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER XII.

DRIVES AND DINNERS.

Theo comes early on the following morning, to see if I will go with her. Adrian answers for me.

"Yes; she will be very glad, for I am obliged to leave her, and I don't like her remaining indoors alone—she gets mopeish."

"Where are you going?" says Theo, becoming dull all at once.

"War office. Pleasant prospect, isn't it?" with a gay laugh.

"Then why do you go? Come with us, instead, this very eagerly."

"Duty calls—" begins Adrian, tragically.

"Oh, don't talk to me about duty!" she says, impatiently. "I thought you were going to dine at Richmond last night; and, instead, it seems you were at the Gayety."

At this Adrian laughs outright.

"Well, we were too late to go to Richmond. How do you know whether we were there or not?"

"Oh, I heard of you!" says she, in a lofty tone, whereat Adrian laughs again.

"Ah, I see you are vexed! But to tell the truth, baby here was seedy, and had been alone all the morning, and I knew the best thing for her was quietness."

"Well, the horses won't stand much longer. Will you come with me, Audrey?"

I would fain get off it, if I could, but Adrian insists, and says, if Theo is going past the war office, he will go with us that far. Of course, Theo will go anywhere for him, so we start immediately, and everything is very bright until we two were alone.

"What are you going to do tomorrow?" says Theo, in a tone of the utmost indifference.

"We are going into Devonshire."

My sister starts violently.

"Devonshire!" she repeats, sharply. "What in the world are you going there for?"

"Because I am tired of London," I reply.

"But Sir Adrian is not."

"He says he is," I answer; "and I suppose he knows best."

"Ah, I suppose," says Theo, looking

dreamily at nothing, "that he is going to please you?"

"Exactly," I answer, pleasantly.

"Still—in a tone of virtuous indignation—I do wonder at your dragging him away just in the nicest part of the season, too."

"Is it the nicest part of the season?" I ask, innocently. "I thought day was considered so. Not that it could make much difference to you or me."

"Why?"

"Because, of course, he will be perfectly happy wherever we are, and we shall have to go back to Idleminster in a fortnight, in any case."

"I am so glad you have so good an opinion of your own powers of fascination," says Theo, with a sneer; "but perhaps Adrian will not find Devonshire such an Elysium as you fancy."

"Oh, yes, he will," I return confidently, "so long as I am there."

"Really, Audrey," she says, with a scornful laugh, "your conceit is absolutely absurd."

"I can't see it," I rejoined. "If a man who has not yet been married two months cannot be happy anywhere with his wife, why—"

"Ah, yes—if yours were an ordinary marriage," she murmurs.

"But," I go on, vexed now, and determined to sting her, if I can, "I can quite understand that to you, who sold yourself for a title and a little money to a man you absolutely detested, the prospect of a fortnight without society, must seem appalling."

Now, Adrian and I, on the contrary, love each other so much that the society of others is a nuisance and a bore." She does not answer, and I continue: "Yes, you are quite right; ours was not an ordinary marriage."

We turn into Regent Street as I speak, and then our conversation is ended, for both of us have various shops to go to. I think I have convinced Theo that it is of no use trying to sting me, for, during the remainder of the time we are together, she is wonderfully pleasant and civil, and says, as she drops me at the door that she supposes we shall be in town on our way back to Idleminster.

"Very likely," I answer, sweetly—I can afford to be gracious, having won a victory; "if so, I'll let you know."

"Do," she says, cordially; "and any time you have nothing to do, you might drop me a line, just to say how you are getting on."

I do not make any promises, and as I go upstairs, I wonder if Theo has forgotten that, since we were at school together, she has never had

time to correspond with me at all. Adrian is waiting for me, with such a martyr expression of countenance, that I am compelled to laugh violently.

"Whatever is the matter?" I ask.

"Oh, baby!" he exclaims; "how soon can we get out of London? To-day?"

"We have to dine at the Herberts," I reply.

"Can't we send an excuse?"

"Of course, we can; but don't you think it's a little 'low,' throwing people over at the last moment? Besides, what excuse can we possibly make?"

"Oh, say some one is ill, and we're obliged to leave town! I'm sure it would be true enough. I am ill, awfully ill—in fact, nearly dead; and there would be no sham about our going out of town, you know."

"Oh, you arch deceiver!" I laugh. "What a tissue of fibs you would burden your conscience with, just to avoid a nice dinner party!"

"And don't you think it's just as bad," he retorts, "to go grinning and flattering, and saying you've had a most delightful meeting, when you've been wishing yourself in New Zealand, or Kamschatka, all the while?"

"You might avoid both by maintaining a discreet silence," I observe. "You know, it's not absolutely necessary to say if you've had a pleasant evening or not; and the etiquette books say it's not proper at all."

"Where in the world did you ever see a book on etiquette?" demands Adrian.

"Oh, Lasselles had one just before he was married, when he was trying to improve his manners!"

"Poor beggar!" says he, in a commiserating tone.

"You may well say that," I answer, pityingly.

Of course, we go to Mrs. Herberts, though I do not think Adrian enjoys it very much. I am sure I do not, for I am a long way from him, and, what is still more annoying, on the same side of the table, so that I cannot possibly see him. My neighbors, too, are very stupid, for on one side I have a young gentleman who says "Ah, yes!" to everything I say, and on the other an old gormand, whose only remark is that the turtle soup is unusually good. As I happen to dislike that delicacy beyond everything, I am not much edified by his praise of it. When our hostess makes a move, I am heartily glad, for now the first half of the entertainment is over. Presently Mrs. Herbert and another lady go to see the children. I am invited, but decline, civilly. Besides that I am not deeply interested in are not much in my way.

As I do not know either of the ladies who are left—for all but three have gone babyward—I select a comfortable chair, and begin turning over the pages of a huge photograph album; but I am not permitted to remain in peace. My retreat is invaded by a lady, upon whom, to my knowledge, I have never set eyes before. She is a gay, young thing of five-and-thirty or so, and wears a gown which our French neighbors would call décolletée, but which I consider neither more or less than innocent.

"Do you know what is the name of that gentleman who took me in to dinner?"

"No?" I answer, a little startled by this abrupt question. "I didn't see you at dinner."

"I sat between Lord Mondys and this man," she says, affectedly; "such

a charming man, and so very handsome."

"Oh, Adrian," I say to myself, "what a wretch you are!" Then, aloud: "Oh, it would be Sir Adrian Charteris!"

"Sir-Adrian-Charteris," she repeats, evidently thinking she has made an impression. "And do you know him?"

"Oh, yes."

"He is very nice, isn't he?"

"Very," I say, emphatically, whereat she looks at me sharp, as if to ask am I in the field, too.

"Are you staying long in town?" she inquires, after a pause, during which the runaway ladies have returned.

"No; we are going to Devonshire to-morrow. I am quite tired of London."

"Really!" with opened-eyed, incredulous wonder. "I always think the country so stupid, except, perhaps, in a large house, where there is plenty of fun and flirtation."

"Yes? But you see, I don't want flirtation."

"Ah, how strange! Why?"

"Because my husband would not like it."

"Oh, you are married! I did not know. You look so very young to be married."

(To be continued.)

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