



JULIA ARTHUR'S OWN STORY OF HER CAREER

Marriage — and the "Come-Back"

CHAPTER V.

MARRIAGE brings problems to every woman. To me it brought a large and very insistent one. Should I, or should I not, leave the stage?

As I confessed in a previous chapter, my marriage to Mr. Cheney was very sudden, and — to me as well as to my friends — wholly unexpected. There had been no time to make plans or to balance opposite sides of important questions. Mr. Cheney, however, had *not* married unexpectedly. He had considered every phase of the matter with his customary admirable forethought. He had found a thousand reasons why I should leave the stage — and he promptly mentioned all of them!

The only one in the thousand which seemed to me to have weight was the one on which he dwelt the least — that he strongly wished me to retire and make a home for us both. From the time of my early childhood I had never had a home, and he was convinced that I sadly needed one. Against this theory my mind presented arguments which I could not ignore. I was not cut out for a domestic woman, and I was very doubtful whether I could make any one else happy or be happy myself in a purely domestic environment. It must be remembered that I had been on the stage since I was thirteen, and that for several years before that I had been studying with the constant thought of the stage in my mind. I could not imagine any other life than the one I had always lived, and I was asked to give it up just when I had reached the goal of my ambitions. I was a star, newly risen, in a successful play, and there was every indication that we would hold our public in "A Lady of Quality" for several triumphant seasons.

Mr. Cheney had immediate answers for this last argument. He was an independent manager, and the way of independent managers is hard. He had to fight for every inch of progress he made, and his opponents were none too scrupulous in the weapons they used against him. Was the fight really worth while? He thought not.

IF I had married more deliberately, I would have remembered to wring a promise from Mr. Cheney to let me continue my work without argument. As it was, he was quite free to keep the question open, and he availed himself of this privilege to the fullest extent. I could see his side of the matter perfectly. The situation was getting on his nerves. He was a man with large business interests. He could give only a small part of his time to his theatrical venture, and it was obviously impossible for him to follow me around the country. He could only continue to do what he had been doing as my manager; he could meet the company occasionally and spend a day or two with us in some city where we were booked for a week's stay. Each time he returned to Boston alone he was increasingly unwilling to do so; and as he did not need the money we were making, our financial success was no poultice for his recurrent disappointments.

Notwithstanding all this, however, I remained on the stage for two years after my marriage. We finished the season in "A Lady of Quality," and went on with it again the following autumn — adding to our repertoire during the second season revivals of "As You Like It," "Ingomar," "Mercedes," and "Romeo and Juliet." At the opening of the third season after my marriage I put on, at the Park Theatre in Boston, "More than Queen," which had been written for Bernhardt, but was acted in Paris by Jane Hading.

We had a long run in Boston, during which my problem was temporarily laid on the shelf. I was at home, and all was serene. Then we came to New York with the play, and the problem revived and accompanied us. I don't know whether it was the problem or overwork, or both, that finished me; but before the season was over I developed a case of nervous exhaustion; and during the performance one night I fainted on the stage in the most spectacular manner.

That settled the problem! Of course the cure indicated was rest, complete freedom from anxiety and the tranquillity of a home atmosphere. Equally, of course, I had no idea that my retirement would be permanent. A year's rest at the most, I was sure, would set me up, and in the

meantime the cure was very pleasant. At first we lived quietly in the Cheney cottage at Middle Brewster, Massachusetts, and before the novelty of that environment could wear off Mr. Cheney launched me into the delights of building a home of our own.

FOR this we chose an ideal setting — Calf Island, in Boston Harbour — where we

sudden storms. Occasionally we had mishaps in our boats. Life was not monotonous. Part of our boathouse was the deck of a ship which was washed ashore more than fifty years ago; and we were careful to make the house and grounds fit their splendid setting of sea and sky. We called the place "The Moorings," and after a very little time there my old life on the stage became vague and dreamlike —

his performances. Whenever it was necessary to do any indoor "stunt" to amuse our guests, Mr. Cheney brought out the bones, and the audience was invariably delighted. The Balcony Scene, done by me and some amateur *Romeo*, would have been an anti-climax.

Mr. Cheney, who is an outdoor man, introduced me to Nature, whom I had never really met before. She charmed me. He taught me to manage boats, and he tried to teach me to swim, but that effort was a failure. Once, when I had been hurled rather abruptly into the water, to sink or swim, I sank, and there was considerable excitement before I was brought up to the surface again. When I was being revived in the boat, and thinking up a few things to say as soon as I could speak, I heard the cheerful voice of my husband reassuring our friends.

"I'm afraid she'll never learn to swim," and then he added plaintively, "the only time she doesn't kick is when she's in the water!"

One thing I did learn, and that was to be a housekeeper and a home-maker. I was too proud to fail in this field and, moreover, I was interested. "The Moorings" required a lot of work, and the best way to get that work out of other persons, I soon found, was to understand it myself. We had a big place. There was no telephone communication with the mainland, so our marketing had to be done by boat. We were nine miles from a lemon and from every other household necessity.

WE spent our summers at "The Moorings" for twelve years — going there in June, leaving the last of September, and filling it during the interval with our families and closest friends. Several of my sisters were usually with us, and the congenial spirits we met in Boston. One of our most valued guests was Clara Morris, who came to us while she was writing her reminiscences. She would read these aloud to us, to our delight; and then, to our even greater delight, would discourse by the hour of the more intimate reminiscences which she was *not* putting into print. She had the most extraordinary memory of any woman I have ever known, the keenest sense of humor, and the biggest heart. Her speaking voice seemed to be made up of sombre minor modulations, and she would tell the most amusing stories in a voice that would have brought tears to one's eyes if one had not heard her words.

She became the intimate friend of each of the dozen dogs we had on the place, and promptly re-named them all to please her own taste. One of them, "Bip," had a passion for being photographed. The moment a camera of any kind was produced, "Bip" raced excitedly into the foreground, attached herself to the most important person present, gazed soulfully into the lens, and remained absolutely motionless until the picture was taken. "Bip" enchanted Miss Morris, who re-named her "Dipsomania." "Scratch Wig," whose real name was "Nick," was another of her favourites. Long after her visits she wrote of these dogs in her letters to us, and recalled the most trivial characteristics of each. She and I had some wonderful walks together, tramping miles over the island, and always accompanied by half-a-dozen ecstatic dogs.

Every year my husband and I made two journeys to California, where Mr. Cheney's business interests called him. We travelled in our own car, spending two or three months on the road each time, and we associated exclusively and intimately with the workmen of railroads and mines, from the presidents down to the grade-gangs. Mr. Cheney's method of studying things was to study them from the ground up, and in following this plan we had some interesting experiences. One of these adventures nearly cost me my life. Our car was attached to a "working train" which was making a road-bed and laying the tracks of a new road. The work so fascinated me that when it was no longer possible to travel in our car I persuaded my husband to let me go with him on the working engine, which had a front attachment loaded with ties and rails, to be dropped into place as we moved along. Suddenly the workmen discovered a soft spot in the road-bed, caused by a hidden spring. We had to leave the engine and walk across a narrow foot-trestle, without sides, suspended over a great ravine. I followed the men light-heartedly. I was so uncon-

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In "More than Queen," which was staged about three seasons after Miss Arthur's marriage.

could live a life of splendid isolation if we wished, or leave it abruptly and within an hour be again in the heart of the city. To insure our isolation we bought the island, and to provide the needed excitement of existence we set up a small fleet of boats, of which the most ambitious is "The Jule." Incidentally, in building the house we had all the thrills that usually attend this experiment, as well as a few unusual ones thrown in for good measure. Several times we were marooned on the island by

almost as though I had lived it on some other planet.

OF course our first impulse was to fill the house with our old and new friends, and this we did. Oddly enough, I never even read aloud to those who came to us, nor did I get up nor take part in theatricals. Mr. Cheney, I soon discovered, was an expert artist on the bones — and while I shuddered when I first heard of this accomplishment, subsequently I really enjoyed