

"But our honeymoon. Can you bear to give it up? We shan't have any honeymoon."

Gwen tossed her head; the light of battle shining in her eyes.

"I'm going to have it. It's my very own honeymoon, and nothing in the world shall take it from me. Nothing *can*, so long as you love me, and are kind. We haven't as much money as we expected—very well, then, we'll have to change our plans. We'll use our wits and think of something we can do which will cost a quarter as much, and be four times as nice. That's easy. Everything is easy when you are just married to the very nicest person in the whole big world. Kiss me and smile, and don't dare to look grumpy, or I shall think you have married me for my fortune—fifty pounds a year and a grand piano—and fifteen silver bon-bon dishes. That's better. Now you look more like yourself. Let's turn out your pockets and see how much worldly pelf we still own between us."

Gwen took a tiny purse from her pocket as she spoke and rained the contents on her lap. Pat dived into his trousers pocket and added his quota to the store; dived again and produced two sovereigns and two first-class return tickets to —, which done, Gwen proceeded to add up the combined amount.

"Three, five, six—six sovereigns in gold, one in silver, that's seven. Seven pounds—four shillings—and eightpence. How much can we honeymoon for seven pounds four shillings and eightpence? How much does it cost to live in an hotel?"

"Getting on to a pound a day per head, in the swaggers ones, that's to say, like the one which we're bound for to-day. The cheaper ones will do you for ten and six. Even so, with the extras that always crop up, we could only last out for three or four days. It's hopeless to think of it. It's the most confounded hard luck I ever heard."

"Dear boy, it might be worse. Millions of people have honeymoons on less than that and manage to be happy and comfortable."

"I suppose they do, for a couple of days at Margate or Southend, and then make straight for home. I don't care a hang about other people. I'm thinking of ourselves. 'What in the world shall we do?'"

"Wait," cried Gwen breathlessly, "wait."

She sat bolt upright in her seat, her lips pressed together, her eyes wide and intent. One saw at a glance that something had been said which had brought with it an inspiration, which she was engaged in turning over in her fertile brain. Her husband watched her; his face full of tender regret. His little wife, who was beginning her trials and disappointments so early. Seven pounds for a honeymoon! Great Cæsar's ghost!

"Pat!" cried Gwen breathlessly. "Why shouldn't we 'make for hime,' instead of a big formal hotel?"

Her face shone with happy anticipation, but so far from being infected by her enthusiasm, her bridegroom's voice rang with horrified reproach.

"Gwen! Go back? To town? Back to the fuss and bustle and the whole crowd of relations flocking round us, questioning, advising, interfering. How *can* you? It would be hateful!"

"It would indeed. I quite agree. You don't understand what I mean. Listen now, and don't interrupt. You won't agree at first, men are such conventional dears, but if you think it over, you will see its points. What do we want most of all? To be alone together, far from the madding crowd. I've always been so thankful I wasn't born a grandee who was so fated to go off for a honeymoon accompanied by a maid and a valet, to stay at a mansion 'kindly lent for the occasion,' crammed with other menials, all employed in staring and taking notes. Even in an hotel there are waiters. How could we have cosy little meals with waiters standing behind our chairs, and handing dishes with a basilisk calm, while you ask me if I take pepper, or I ask you how many pieces of sugar—and we blush and upset our wine. The couples have the best of it who are quite alone. Pat, it's impossible to pay board and lodging out of seven pounds; let's cut the lodgings and go home. Listen! Listen! This is what I suggest." She drew nearer to him, fixing him with her eyes, holding upward a dramatic hand. "To-morrow morning we hie back to town, carrying the simplest things we possess, packed in two handbags, leave our heavy luggage in the left-luggage office, take a cab to the corner of the road, and steal softly into our house by the back door. That back door is going to be our salvation. How thankful we ought to be that we have

not only an 'airey' like so many town houses. There's nothing down that lane but other back doors and the doctor's stable. It will be easy to run the blockade, and once inside the rest is easy. You said yourself that the house looked wonderfully in order. All the absolute needfuls are there, and the rest we can do without. And there we'll be, and there we'll stay—a pair of Babes in the Wood, lying *perdu* in their own house, while all the world supposes them to be miles away, and there'll be no one to stare, and no one to quiz, and I'll cook your little meals, and you'll brush my little boots, and we'll play at love in a cottage, and it will be just the loveliest, most amusing game that ever was played. Well?"

Her husband smiled at her with fond admiration. It was a mad scheme, of course; quite, quite mad and impracticable, but there was no denying that it had its points. His expression brightened; his voice held a lingering regret.

"You romantic little schemer! I don't care one rap where I am, so long as I am with you. That's the one point that matters, but it's impracticable, dear. There are a dozen things. Fires, for instance. Couldn't have a fire, because the smoke would give you away. All very well to talk about

may be the largest city in the world, but have you ever tried avoiding anyone in it? I have. You run bang into him at the next corner."

"In the West End. Yes, just so. But we'd avoid the West End, and spend our time in the London that's as far away from Hyde Park as John o' Groat's House, or a good deal farther. We'd get into a taxi at the corner, and whirl out of the danger zone, and then—then we'd be in a new land, among new people, and see all sorts of interesting places and things that no born Londoner knows out of a guide book. We'd go to theatres where the stalls cost a shilling, and dine in fascinating restaurants for eighteenpence a head, including wine; or if we were tired we'd taxi back with an armful of plunder, and spend a cosy evening in our rooms. Don't make any more objections, Pat, if you love me. I'm so in love with the idea. I—I really am beginning to be *glad* you lost that money. It's going to be the most original honeymoon that was ever spent."

"A honeymoon in hiding!" said Pat softly. He made no further objection, but took his wife's hand in his, and held it firm and close. "I—I don't believe there's another girl in the world who would have been such a brick. Arrange it as you like, darling. I don't care. So long as I'm with you."

CHAPTER III.

THE honeymooners had been two days established in their own house. They had flown back to town winged with horror at the surprising inroads made in their small capital in twenty-four hours' sojourn in a fashionable hotel, and had succeeded in raiding their lawful dwelling with unexpected, almost disappointing, ease. A taxi conveyed them to the corner of the street, where they had divided company, Pat making boldly for the front door, prepared with an explanation of his mission, if by chance he were intercepted *en route*, while Gwen waited trembling at the corner, attired in an inconspicuous blue serge costume, with a motor veil swathed closely round her head. Each carried a tightly packed handbag, supplemented, in the bride's case, by a basket of provisions, while the bridegroom's pockets bulged wide, and beneath the flap of his coat lurked a quart bottle filled with paraffin oil. He felt as if every eye in London were focused upon him as he ascended the steps of his own house and turned the key in the lock, but in reality no single person troubled to cast a glance. The opposite neighbors had their windows tightly swathed in Nottingham lace, and took far more interest in the Fiji mission than in the inhabitants of the surrounding houses. The old maid to the left was confined to bed with a cold; the large family to the right were engaged in their own pursuits; the policeman was pacing the extreme end of his beat; the pedestrians saw no cause for suspicion in the innocent spectacle of a young man opening a door by means of a latch key. Pat dropped his impedimenta on the nearest table, and hurried down the passage to find the key of the back door, and give admittance to his waiting spouse.

"Welcome home, Mrs. Hilbert by the back door!" he whispered gaily, and they danced an impromptu gavotte along the passage.

"Home, home, sweet, sweet home! Mustn't all the dear little chairs and tables be pleased to see us?"

Under Gwen's able management the empty shell of a house soon attained comfort, so far at least as two rooms were concerned. The spare bedroom, in which various boxes had been locked away, could still remain locked by day, hiding all sign of occupation; and by way of sitting-room, choice fell upon a small apartment on the second floor which had been destined to be used as a general writing and work room, for the use of both husband and wife. Two considerations prompted this choice; in the first place, the room was situated on the second floor, thereby a few minutes' grace would be vouchsafed to its occupants if the officious relations carried out their threat of paying a surprise visit to the house; the second, and almost more important reason lay in the fact that one entire end of the room was filled in by a fixture cupboard, which would offer a convenient hiding-place from an attacking force.

A former tenant had erected this cupboard; may his tribe increase! It was divided into three partitions, the centre, filled with deep, capacious shelves, the two side spaces left open, and sur-

Continued on page 48



"The next moment she burst into a peal of laughter."

meals, but how can you cook without fires? And neighbors? Neighbors would hear sounds, and give the alarm. And lights? The gas is not turned on. Can't get it turned on without giving away the show. We'd be run down in a day."

Gwen rolled her eyes to the hat rack in dramatic impatience.

"The denseness, the stupidity of men! They've no invention in them. We wouldn't have a fire, stupid. I can do all the cooking that's needed on the little oil stove I had in my diggings, and warm myself at it into the bargain. You'll have to turn up your coat collar and go out for oil, while I keep guard at the back door. In days to come, when you are court physician with a handle to your name, you'll love to think how you smuggled in that oil. You'll be prouder of it than any of your honors. The neighbors will be too much engrossed with their own affairs to listen for odd noises; we mustn't make odd noises, anyway. Everybody is agreed that there is no light so pleasant and becoming as candles. So much for that. What's the next objection?"

"What could we do? Supposing, even, that all went right in the house, how could you propose to pass the time? The moment we stepped out of the door, we should meet every single soul we knew, or had ever met. There'd be a fatality in it. London