



Ryders' week-end when Bob Harmon was a member of the party. Everybody knows that Bob Harmon was desperately in love with her, and that he said he never would give her up until she was married to Dick. No man wants his girl skylarking with a man like Harmon.

"Oh, indeed," said Miss Bennett hotly. "Well, when people think they know so well what is good for other people, and the other people know they are perfectly competent to take care of themselves, and the people keep restricting the other people's liberty by their silly, offensive, and unmanly jealousy, and the other people are as patient, forbearing, and decent as they can be—and still other people keep interfering with the people and the other people—it's about time, I say, for the people to break their engagement with the other people."

With a corrugated brow Mr. Ardsley considered this for an instant. Then he roared. "What's the answer?" he asked finally.

She turned from him with a movement full of the rage that she was trying to repress. "It's not necessary for me to say again, I hope, that I absolutely decline the honor of your acquaintance."

His face grew serious. "Certainly not!" he said with emphasis. Lifting his hat he strode down the car to a seat in the corner. There, hunched against the window, he stared out at the approaching scenery.

THE gale had by no means gone down—rather it had increased. The car was going at top speed. It bounced up and down the tracks, jerked around corners, and seemed occasionally to vault the crossings. Doors rattled and windows shook. Miss Bennett and Mr. Ardsley continued to occupy it in frigid silence and isolation. Because of his superior weight, he was able to present a dignified appearance, but the girl was thrown back and forth in her seat. The fresh country slid by like a moving-picture show. The trees, mere green blurs, marched with the flying car. The hills seemed to be playing a dizzy game that confused the background.

Suddenly Ardsley jumped. "I think I ought to tell you, Miss Bennett," he called over the hubbub, "that I'm going out to the Riverview House in Concord to meet Dick Yerrington. He came on unexpectedly for a day or two and he invited me out for a game of golf. I thought you might wish to avoid him. I'll do my best to keep him away from the places that you're going if you'll only tell me where they are. What's the matter?"

Miss Bennett was staring at him, affrighted, her eyes big with excitement of some kind, her soft lips parted. "Oh, Mr. Ardsley," she exclaimed. Her voice had lost all its chill. It was sheerly a girl's voice, low, tremulous, appealing.

He left his place in the corner and took a seat again at her side. "Tell me what's the matter," he commanded.

"Oh, Mr. Ardsley, it's too perfectly dreadful for any words. Listen, I am going to the Riverview House, myself, to meet Rhoda. There was a note from her waiting for me when I got back from town, telling me that she was only going to be here for a day and a night and begging me to come to her as soon as possible. Oh, we must keep them apart! You can't realize how embarrassing it would be if they met. I know they haven't laid eyes on each other for six months."

"What shall we do?" he asked, immediately sympathetic.

She considered the question, her lids downcast, reverie lying like a shadow over her face. "Oh, I'll tell you." Her whole look bloomed in the smile of her sudden triumph. "I'll pretend to be sick and I'll make Rhoda stay with me every blessed minute. Not that it will be hard, for she's such a devoted dear when there's anything wrong. I'll pretend not to be able to go downstairs to eat, and we'll have dinner and breakfast served in our room. Then I'll get her home to my house the first thing to-morrow morning. If you keep Mr. Yerrington away all the afternoon, golfing—there isn't the slightest possibility of their meeting."

"You don't think it would be desirable

for them to er—er see each other," he said tentatively.

She stiffened immediately. "Certainly not. Nothing but pain for them both could result from such an encounter. Besides there's no knowing what ideas it might put into their heads. And they're the last people in the world who ought to be allowed to marry. They're not one least little atom in the world suited to each other. Don't you think so?"

"I—I don't know—I don't see why not," he stuttered weakly.

She gave him a glance of ineffable scorn. "It would be spiritual suicide." She brought the last words out with appalling distinctness. "Thank you," she added.

Somehow he felt dismissed. He arose forlornly and retreated again to the corner of the car.

THEY had passed through Lexington and again they plunged into open country on their way to Concord. He looked in her direction once or twice, but she had turned her head and was resting it against the arm which extended over the back of the seat. He could see the round of one cheek, over which her eyelashes hung, long, shadowy. Her upper lip protruded a little beyond the lower one, forcing it into ripples that ended at the corner of her mouth in a pool of soft shadow. Even as he slyly studied her, she jumped to an upright position and her eyes fixed themselves upon him. "Oh, Mr. Ardsley!" she called wildly.

Obediently he arose and walked to her side.

"I've been thinking about it all. It occurred to me that maybe Dick Yerrington may have heard that Rhoda was in Concord, and came out to see her. They may have met. How can we keep them apart?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so. He's been up here for two or three days, but he didn't mention her in his letter to me. Perhaps Miss Wrentham heard that he was here and—" He stopped overpowered by the blaze in his companion's eyes. "I think he would have mentioned it to me if he expected to see her," he ended lamely.

Miss Bennett sighed. "Oh, dear, I am worried," she admitted wistfully.

"Don't worry," he begged, dropping his voice until it was full of tenderness. "I don't think there's any need of that." "But—" she bit her lips and did not go on.

"We shall reach the Riverview House in another moment," he warned her.

"Oh!" She arose and walked to the other side of the car. He followed her, and, together, they stood, looking out. The tendrils of her feather played a soft tattoo on his cheek, but he did not mind it now.

The big colonial hotel came into view. Two figures—a young man and a young girl—came rushing down to meet the car.

Miss Bennett began to tremble. She seized her companion's arm in a grip that testified to the development of muscles, unexpected in a girl. "It's an appointment," she breathed.

The car stopped. He helped her off.

"Barb—dear—oh, Barb," the girl cried. "I've got such news for you." She was a little brunette creature, slender, sparkling.

"I know," Miss Bennett said, "you're married to Dick. I'm so glad, dear; it's perfectly lovely. I hope you'll be terribly happy."

Then she burst into tears.

MISS BENNETT and Mr. Ardsley were returning to the city over the same road that they had taken in the morning. This time they were in a motor-car.

It had been a long day full of pleasant companionship and the beauty of out-of-doors. Now they had just come from seeing the bridal pair off to their honeymoon.

The wind had infused Miss Bennett's eyes with a soft brilliancy. It had whipped into her cheeks a velvety flood of color that ran from her lashes down to the shadowy pits at the corners of her mouth. Her hair, a tangled iridescent mesh, was a swaying background for all this color.

"We shall be in town in another ten

(Continued on page 47)



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