

One in a Thousand, BUT TRUE TO THE LAST

CHAPTER IX.
IN THE SEVENTH HEAVEN.
"Oh, Theo, Theo!" he cries, "what a bewitching little mortal you are!" I look at him in blank amazement. "Why, whatever put that into your head?"

"What? That you are such an enchanting little woman? Why, you did, of course," he says, gayly. "No—to call me 'Theo'?" "Did I, really? Slip of the tongue, my darling, that was all." "Well, but you don't know Theo; you never saw her," I argue.

I hardly notice that he does not answer me, for he stops my mouth with kisses, and we go wandering off into that "happy hunting ground" which some people term "the seventh heaven." Somehow, Adrian and I do not want to talk; we are quite happy in each other's presence. He tells me, that so long as I am within sight and within reach, he does not want or wish for anything in the whole world. I do not answer this at all. I only ruffle my head against his shoulder, and express my satisfaction in a ridiculous murmur, which would sound utterly idiotic to any but the man who is in love with me.

Our engagement is not to be a long one, and the wedding is fixed to take place on St. Valentine's Day. I have hard work to get everything ready for the touseau of Sir Adrian Charteris' bride must of necessity be handsome. As soon as the New Year is turned, I go back to Thorn-ganby Manor, and Loys goes with me, for Teddy takes his long leave late, and the party is quite a large one. Theo cannot join us, for toward the end of January comes a daughter to the house of Lasselles, so Theo is incapacitated from travelling. She is not very strong—none of the Luttrells are—and does not recover sufficiently soon to come to the wedding. I have made a vigorous stand against having any display whatever. One of the girls from Rest comes over to act as bridesmaid, and I tell Sir Adrian to give her something worth having to commemorate the event.

"You know, dear," I say, wisely, "when there are eight or ten young women to give to, it stands to sense they can't expect anything of value; but, when one does all the business, and holds both fan and gloves and bouquet, why, she deserves something better."

So Adrian drives me into the nearest town, and we choose a handsome pearl-and-diamond ring, such as makes Constance almost wild with delight. I carry out my plan of a plain wedding to such an extent that I am married in my travelling dress. We have no fuss whatever—no trembling, as if we were going to be led to execution. I get up and come down to breakfast as if nothing particular was going to happen. Then we go quietly out to church, and I am given to the man who loves me and whom I love. Why should it be otherwise? I lay my hand in his without a single misgiving.

When it is over, the old rector, who has known me from a baby, and who christened me, claims the first kiss, and calls me by my title. I sign my maiden name for the last time—and never did any girl do so with less regret or more blissful hope in the future. I see myself, "in the long vista of years to come," always as Adrian's happy wife—now in foreign lands, quite alone with him, gazing on wild, lovely views; then living a peaceful, social life in our own country; or, again, I picture myself grown older and the mother of all children—but the pictures are all more or less alike, and my husband is the principal figure in each. "My husband"—how strange it sounds! I look at his sisters' husbands, for they are both here—I see Lasselles, vis-



count though he be, with the physique of a ciller and the manners of a plowboy; I see Teddy Vincent, nice, good-natured, gentlemanly boy, so is, but with just brains enough to carry him through the world—and then I compare them with the man I have just taken till death shall part us. I thank Heaven for the man who has been given to me—a man whose outward appearance is a fitting index of his mind.

We go back to the Manor, and have a merry breakfast with only one speech from the old rector, who hopes we shall be very happy and prosperous; to which Adrian replies in a very few words; and then, the marriage being announced, we go away to begin a glorious life together. We have two whole months before us, and we decide that we will spend them in our native land.

"What is the use of wasting time among stupid foreigners," says Adrian, "who will disgust and bore us beyond everything? Suppose we go for a week to some quiet seaside place, just till we get tired of each other, you know"—with a laugh—and then we can go up to town, and see everything there is to be seen. For we shan't get more than a week's leave for ever so long."

I agree to this, because, so long as I am with him, I am perfectly indifferent to the place I am in; so he comes to pass that our journey ends at Saltburn, and we find ourselves the sole occupants of the huge hotel facing the sea.

"Well, this is a hole, and no mistake!" says Adrian, when he goes to the window and surveys the dull-looking (splanade, and the cold, gray sea beyond.

"Isn't it?" I remark. "Well, go out and see what the town is like when we've had some tea."

My husband puts his arm round my waist and draws me close to him. "How soon do you intend to get

tired of me here?" he says, lovingly. "Can't say. Time will show," I answer. "It's better than the Channel and Paris." When we were children, we all used to talk how, when we got married, we would go to Paris—and so the others did. I vowed I wouldn't. Oh, here is tea! You will have a cup?"

He tells me that he will, and, when we have had it, we sally forth into the bleak gloaming together. Alas for my idea of a town! It consists of one street, wherein are some shops just ordinary seaside shops. However, to my comfort, there is a confectioner's of more than ordinary licentiate, and we go in and purchase largely.

"I declare, they never gave us any of the cake!" laughs Sir Adrian, when the young woman's back is turned. "A awful shame to do us out of our own bridecake! I vote we buy one for ourselves?"

"Very well," I agree; "but get a good one." "Have you any—any wedding cakes?" he says, stammering a little, in spite of himself.

"Certainly, sir," answers she, looking at us curiously.

"Well, we want one—a good one, but not too big."

I feel I am abominably red, and I wish Adrian had not been so silly. Finally, he buys one that I am certain we shall never eat all of ourselves, and we get out into the fresh air, I, for one, being thankful to cool my burning face.

"I wasn't going to be done out of my cake," he says, triumphantly. "I suppose Loys is stuffing that child of hers with it, and chuckling to think she has outwitted us."

"Goodness, no, you stupid!" I answer; "they don't give cake to babies of that age!"

"Oh, don't they? Well, how should I know?"

We manage to remain a week at Saltburn, and I write to Loys that he are not in the least tired of each other, and could stay there all the time we have leave, but we think it will be so many months before we shall be able to get to town again.

Our existence is simplicity itself; each day is exactly like its predecessor. We do not go upon the sands such—they are not attractive—nor upon the pier at all; but we take tickets for the valley—and we certainly get our money's worth for our money. Morning, noon and night we are there; even after dinner I put on my sealskin, and we go for an hour or more, watching the stars come out, and listening to the waves breaking on the rocks and sands. Fortunately, we have neither snow nor rain, but it is bitterly cold, and I am sure, were we anything but a newly married couple, we should both be dead of rheumatism, or some lung complaint. As it is, we leave Saltburn unscathed, and find ourselves in London, very tired, but quite ready for any enjoyment that may come in our way.

They are very happy, those days; we do not meet with many people that we know, and the few that we do meet we do not cultivate. We are quite happy by ourselves. We spend our mornings in picture galleries chiefly, where we do not look at the pictures, but lie back on the velvet seats and talk nonsense. In the evenings we go to the theatres, or concerts, and between whiles we do a little shopping—and I am afraid we must plead guilty to very often going down Bond Street and looking into the brilliantly lighted windows. One night I insist upon dragging Adrian down the Lowther Arcade, and fill his pockets and hands with sixpenny articles, which, as he grumbles, I shall never use nor look at again.

"Didn't I ask you yesterday to have a string of real ones," he says, in an aggrieved voice, when I expend a shilling over a string of large, blue beads, "and didn't you tell me you didn't like them?"

"Yes, dear."

"Then what do you want to buy such rubbish for?"

"Well, because they are so pretty."

"I'll tell you what it is," he says, when we emerge into the Strand again. "I shall steal your purse to-morrow before we come out," and then we both laugh as if something very amusing or witty has been said. The sort of incognito under which

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We have been keeping ourselves cannot last forever. People find us out, and, as the season begins, we are drawn into its vortex whether we will or no. I am a little disgusted myself, for I have been very happy during the past month; but Adrian says we shall be dull enough when we get to Ideminstre, so we have to submit as gracefully as we can. In the third week in March, Theo writes to me that they are coming up to town on the following day, and we shall have several people to dine with us in the evening. I write to ask her and Lasselles to join us.

During the afternoon I receive a note to tell me that they will come, and show it to Adrian, who says he hopes I shall not be nervous in giving this, my first dinner party.

(To be continued.)

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