



Lunch for Two More.

By HARRIET L. HUNTINGTON.



THAT was the best breakfast I ever ate in my life," declared Dick Fowler with appreciative exuberance, as he came around the table to his wife. "Keep out of my hair!" he added warningly as she put up her hands. "You look so horribly correct," she said, contenting herself with pulling one small lock very gently, while he kissed her on the cheek and down behind each ear in the enthusiasm bred of her present merits of a housewife.

She followed him into the hall and opened the door for him. When he reached the sidewalk he turned and lifted his hat, with a parting smile that would have established him as a model for all the brides of the neighborhood, if they had been looking.

Amy walked back into the dining-room with quickening heart-beats and a deeper color glowing in her cheeks, as if she herself were the bride of a month instead of just rounding out the second year of her married life. Neither Dick's caresses nor his praise had become commonplace to her; she did not believe they ever would. He was too much of an artist in the one, and, because he was a very fastidious gentleman, too far from lavish with the other.

The breakfast had been good. The strawberries had revealed unexpected ripeness and sweetness for such early ones; the omelet—she never trusted Nora to make omelets—had been of feathery lightness; the rolls had been fresh and crisp and crusty, and the coffee of unimpeachable flavor and clearness. Still, it had been an extraordinary meal, and Amy Fowler was shrewd enough to know that its peculiar excellence lay in the mood of the man, in the flow of spirit natural to so fine and invigorating a morning, and—yes, she was very sure—in a little contrition, a secret desire to atone for yesterday's shortcoming by which an equally good dinner had been allowed to wait and spoil and grow cold, and finally be carried off by the cook, since she had no appetite to eat alone.

It was a new thing for Dick to be kept in town so late by business. It had happened two or three times in the past month. Once he had warned her in the morning that he might be detained; this last time he had not even sent her a telegram. A vague uneasiness had stirred in her, but this morning his return to the habits of their honeymoon made all her fears seem foolish and unworthy, and she went about her household duties with a singing heart.

An hour later, when Mrs. Chatworth walked in unceremoniously, dressed for the street and shopping-bag in hand she found Amy perched on a high step-ladder in a closet, handing down dishes and directions to the patient Nora.

"Oh, you gem of industry!" the visitor scoffed. "Look at this sun, and Easter almost here, and you thinking of nothing but cups and saucers! I want you to come with me and give your mind to fig-leaves for a while."

Amy's faint objections were soon overborne by Mrs. Chatworth's well-provided arguments. She descended from her high seat with a revised program for the day's work, at which Nora's hopeful expression brightened to one of cheerful approval. In a few minutes she had made herself ready for the trip.

"I wish I had known before Dick left," she said as they went down the steps. "I might have had him meet us for luncheon."

"Any one would think you were just married," her companion replied. "But then, your husband is still very boyish in some things. Does he say good-bye to you from the street every morning?"

"Oh, did you see that? No, I merely happened to go to the door with him this morning. We don't believe in public demonstrations as a rule."

"I thought it was something unusual, like Walter's giving me extra pin-money whenever he spends an evening at his club. He goes there so seldom that I

jewels, they say. From all I can gather, I believe he has been around with her for some time, and you know what a show of devotion he keeps up to this wife! I can't help wondering if it will lead to a divorce. She's a proud little thing. I'm really very sorry for her."

"I don't believe it's true!" said Amy hotly. "Mr. Mainwaring loves his wife, if ever a man did. Dick knows him well. I think it is dreadful to say such things. The whole thing may be perfectly innocent, if one knew all about it."

"Oh, of course you are welcome to your opinion," said Mrs. Chatworth, who never quarreled. "Perhaps you

like to do: take the car and go up to Marcel's. You know where I mean, don't you? It would be so much more pleasant."

"It would take longer," said Mrs. Chatworth dubiously. "Well, I don't care. It is nice there, I know."

"I am very fond of the place," said Amy, flushing. "Dick and I used to go there often."

II.

Amy Fowler was leading the way between the rows of tables at Marcel's her head very erect and her eyes fixed on the distant corner where she hoped to spy the coveted vacancy—their old corner. Half way down the room she heard an exclamation of surprise from Mrs. Chatworth, just behind her. She turned and faced her husband, sitting at a side table with a woman opposite him.

There was a moment of tingling silence, in which Amy caught the flash of startled discomposure as it vanished from her husband's face; she saw the young woman, handsomely dressed, good-looking, and unconcerned; and she saw the wide, inquiring eyes and uplifted brows of Mrs. Chatworth.

"Oh, here you are!" she cried. "I didn't see you. Isn't this a surprise? Mrs. Chatworth and I took a sudden notion to come in and do some shopping." She turned to the woman with a nod of recognition. Mrs. Chatworth, let me introduce my husband's cousin, Miss Johnston. One of my nearest neighbors," she explained confidentially to the young woman, who acknowledged the introduction with a slight bow and a look of calm, deliberate scrutiny.

"I had forgotten it was today Dick said he was to meet you," Amy rattled on, "so I had no idea of finding you both in this accidental fashion. Well, Mrs. Chatworth and I are hungry. All the large tables are taken, aren't they? Oh, we can manage very nicely here, I think; we won't mind if it is a little crowded, will we? You sit on that side, Mrs. Chatworth, and let me sit by Dick."

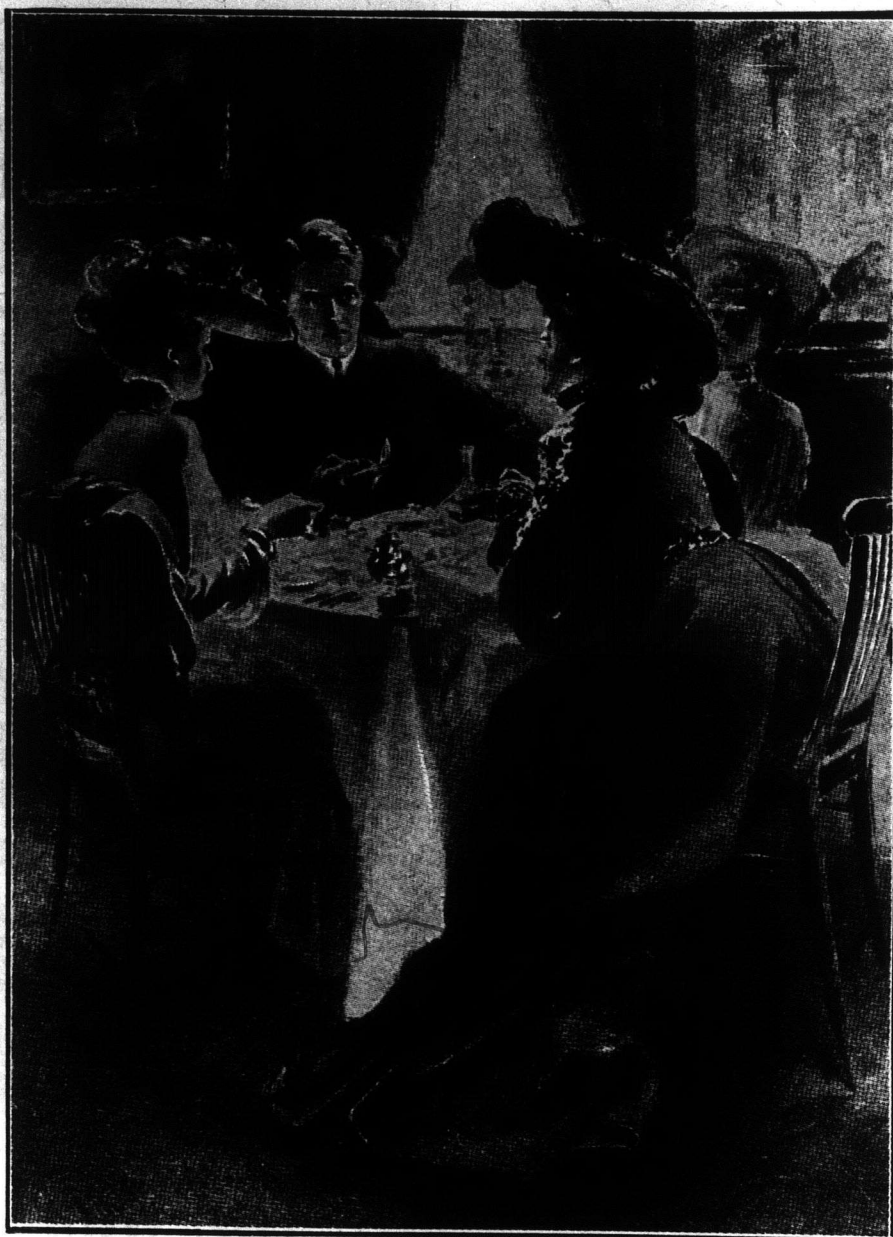
Fowler started to pull out a chair for his wife; then he stopped and looked up at her as if about to speak. She smiled down at him with a look of perfect understanding and slipped into the chair.

"You didn't think I was going to lunch with you today, did you, Dick? Neither did I, when you left the house. What are you going to have, Mrs. Chatworth? Dick, you order for me—you know what I like better than I do. Not too much—we haven't time. Yes, my favorite salad, of course. And, waiter, just a shred of green pepper with it. Do you know why I didn't see you when I first came in, Dick? It was because I was going straight to our old corner. We used to come here so much before we were married," she explained to the table at large. "It just seemed that I should find you over in that corner. But I didn't think of seeing—Ella today."

"Are you a commuter, too?" asked Mrs. Chatworth of her neighbor.

"Only temporarily," was the reply. Miss Johnston had not long interrupted her attention to the luncheon, which she seemed to be thoroughly enjoying.

"I didn't know you had relatives so near," pursued Mrs. Chatworth across the table. "Is Johnston your mother's family name, Mr. Fowler?"



"I have finished my shopping for to-day; and besides, I have an appointment."

don't make much out of it, though. I agree with you about sentiment in public; it is certainly in bad taste and it is usually so hollow. Of course you know about poor little Mrs. Mainwaring?"

"No; what do you mean? I thought she was a woman with everything in the world to make her happy."

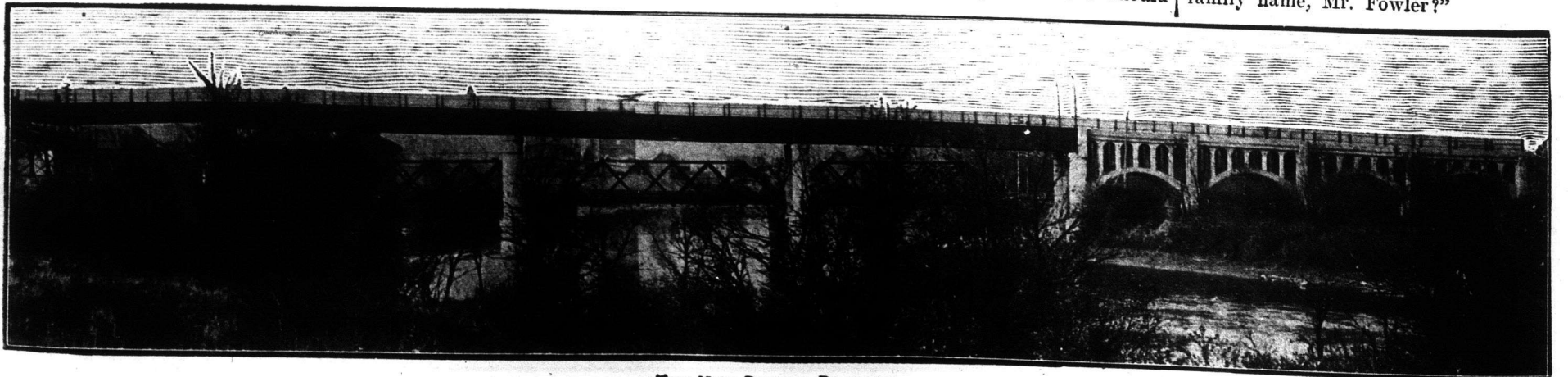
"I presume she thinks so, too. Poor thing, the delusion can't last much longer! Every one else knows about it already. Why, her husband was seen at the theatre in the city with a strange woman; they were having a lovely time in a box, and afterwards they were together at supper. She was decked with

wouldn't mind having your husband take strange ladies to theatres and supper while you stay at home. But I think Walter would find it rather exciting if I heard anything like that about him!"

On train and ferry the conversation turned to lighter topics, and, once under the spell of the great shopping centre of the city, the two women forgot all things outside.

"I don't know how you feel," said Mrs. Chatworth, after some hours of absorption, "but I am positively faint. I breakfasted early, and it's one o'clock. Shall we go upstairs for luncheon?"

"No," demurred Amy, "it will be so crowded! I'll tell you what I should



THE NEW BRIDGE, BRANDON.

Photo by Frank Gowan, Brandon.