

Testing Prudence

By M. J. PHILLIPS

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Berkeley Marshall leaned luxuriously back in the shady chair, hoisted his feet to the bed and blew a ring of smoke ceilingward from his cigar.

"To recapitulate, I have peddled maps over three states, and the net profits of these adventures are \$531.62. I have a steady job during the college year waiting on table at three per cent and found. Furthermore, I have a dress suit and clothes and ties and things.

In due parliamentary form the Sylvan Cove question was put and carried unanimously, whereupon the boy—he was little more—bowed gravely to the calendar lady and thanked her for her kindness in voting with him.

Marshall found Sylvan Cove in the elaborate simplicity stage of summer resort development. Everything was costly, but very plain, for the Cove was inhabited each season mainly by wealthy people who had become accustomed to their money.

On the first day of his stay Marshall naively confided to his cousin that he believed Prudence Fairchild to be the prettiest girl at the Cove, whereupon Torrence grinned and replied, "Stung, are you?"

His approval of the tanned, red-lipped and wholesome young woman deepened during a long sail the next morning, when he discovered that her taste in books and tennis rackets was identical with his own.

Yet the fact of Miss Fairchild's wealth depressed him. "I've almost monopolized her since I've been here," he told himself, "and she'll think it's the blooming money. I suppose half this bunch that's hanging around her would marry a Digger Indian for the old man's pile. I wish she were poor!"

A certain sensitive pride, for he had a morbid fear that his attitude might be misconstrued, kept Marshall out of the girl's presence most of the time thereafter. Maybe she understood, for

the possession of much money often brings a woman bitter wisdom; maybe it was a feminine desire to repay him for his aloofness; at any rate, Miss Fairchild contrived to give Marshall a glance at parting, as he held her cool little hand, that thrilled his every pulse.

Now, a look such as that from a girl who is not a flirt dwells in her memory too. Miss Fairchild's cheeks were hot sometimes when she thought of it and of the answering glance of bewildered joy that flashed from Marshall's blue eyes.

The assurance with which he confiscated five of the dances on her card at the ball showed that Marshall remembered. They sat out two, which was delightful, but dangerous. There was little said, and the silence between them was intimate and significant.

Removed from the glamour of the lights and the music, from the half-shielded promise of her eyes and the intoxication of her beauty, Marshall was not satisfied. "If she were only poor!" he repeated to himself. "How can she know that it's she I want and not the money? Suppose that she thinks I'm a fortune hunter? And if the money makes any difference with her, then she doesn't care for me. I wish I knew. If you only could give me a sign, sweetheart, that you had faith in my love!"

It was lunchtime, and Marshall was at his accustomed table in the hotel. His musings were broken by the opening of the door. Miss Fairchild and Miss Burrows came in. They were accompanied by Bronson and Carrick, wealthy frat men of his own class.

Out of the corner of his eye Marshall saw Miss Fairchild start a trifle when she recognized him. When the party had been seated two tables away by young Condon, another student waiter, the girl's back was toward him. He had given her no opportunity for a greeting.

For it had flashed over the young man that the sign, either of favor or of contempt for his poverty and his menial occupation, must be given. The girl would show whether her nature were gold or dross. If she were ashamed of him, if she left the room without a word, he resolved to tear the love he felt from his heart and trample it under foot.

Marshall never knew what he did before the crucial time came, the moment of the party's rising from the table after lunch, but no detail of what followed escaped him. He saw the amused lift of Bronson's eyebrows, the scowl on Carrick's forehead and Miss Burrows' undisguised interest as Prudence Fairchild, eyes softly shining, came back to where he stood.

"If the mountain will not go to Mohammed," she said smilingly, "then of course Mohammed must come to the mountain. And I mean to quarrel with you some time for turning your back when I came in. But I shan't scold now; I'm leaving for home tomorrow, and I wonder, if I'll see you again."

"I will call tonight to say goodbye," he replied eagerly, "and I have something important to say, if I may see you alone. I think I've been waiting all my life to say it."

Her glance thrilled him as it had that September day at the seashore. "You may see me alone," she whispered.

The emotional temperament of the Italians is shown even in their "agony advertisements." This is from an Italian paper: "Yesterday when I saw you I had not then received your dear letter. Imagine in what state of desolation I had been. The day was to me a veritable agony. I could not discover a reason for your silence. You may guess how I suffered. But at last yesterday evening I again saw your adorable handwriting. Thanks, thanks, with the whole of my soul. Thus, at any rate, we may part with tranquil hearts. But when I think we shall never see one another again my soul freezes. Write to me often, for I have need of your gentleness, and I have a foreboding that I shall succumb to the pestilential climate of the country I am going to. And I shall write every other day to you. To you all my soul, all my love, sweetest and most adorable creature."

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