And So They Were Married

By HAZEL DEYO BATCHELOR

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START THIS STORY TODAY

SOMETHING about life as she had felt it react upon her of late made Ruth determine to note very carefully that night just Scott's attitude toward her. She determined to be fair and not to allow her imagination to color anything. She wanted to carefully weigh everything, and to discover, if possible, what it was that their marriage lacked. It is the hardest thing in the world for a woman to act naturally when she has something on her mind, but when Scott returned that evening Ruth put forth her best efforts. She was cheerful, she met him at the door with her face held up toward him for his kiss, and it was then that she noticed what she thought was the first difference in Scott. He did kiss her perfunctorily. It was not imagination, it wasn't that she had declined to be pessimistic and see things wrong, it was true.

Scott held his newspapers in one hand and a package in the other, therefore his hands were not free. Once he would have flung whatever he had in his hands away so that he might gather her closely in his arms. Tonight he stooped and kissed her lips as he might have kissed those of his sister Alice.

Ruth's heart contracted suddenly, even while she struggled to be fair, but she determined not to let her thoughts color her manner, and she hurried around getting the things on the table and chatting to him lightly as she worked. That was when she noticed something else. Perhaps it was because she was looking for things tonight, but Scott paid very little attention to what she was saying. He continued reading the papers and looking up occasionally to give her a yes or no. She knew that half the time he was not conscious of what she was saying.

Ruth had the curious sensation that she was playing a game, and her sense of humor saved the situation from being too serious.

They sat down to the table, and Scott without anything but dinner to distract his attention, made some cursory remarks.

"What did you do today? See any one in particular? It's been hot, hasn't it?"

Ruth, remembering back, recollected that those same remarks had done duty ever since she could remember. She even recollected some of her own which might have compared favorably. "Anything new at the office?" And then before he could answer, a quick resume of the pretty little details that fill a woman's life when she is at home most of the day.

Involuntarily they had both given up conversation for the time being and ate dinner in silence. Ruth was amazed that she hadn't noticed this as a concrete fact before, that she had evidently taken it for granted and then wondered afterward why she was restless and bored.

When she brought on the simple dessert she saw Scott reach for his paper, and she did not repulse him, for she wanted to think, and to think clearly if she could. She knew that Scott loved her, and she knew that she loved him. But she saw only too clearly that they were in a dangerous rut. They had reached the point where they took each other for granted, where, having discarded the meaningless little endearments that constitute almost entirely the first few months of married life, they had not substituted for them something else, something more meaty, that they might discuss, that might mean mental common ground.

Ruth stacked up the dishes outside and then went into her room, powdered her nose and then went back to Scott. He looked up as she came in and asked indifferently:

"Want to go to a movie or shall we take a bus ride?"

This had been quite a common and ordinary end to one of their days, Ruth remembered suddenly. No wonder they had grown to take each other for granted; there was no surprise in life any more, no mystery, everything was stale and commonplace. In a way she and Scott were as bad as Elsie Banning. She was confessedly bored and trying to remedy it, while they, satisfied that they were respectable, were contented to settle down into stale married life.

Ruth, not wanting the warm air of the movies, suggested a bus ride. If Scott had thought anything about it, he would have noticed something unusual in the way she accepted his suggestion. Ruth had so much of the enthusiast about her that she was always eager to do even the smallest thing. If the truth be known, Ruth, being the woman, was far more willing to sink into the conventional rut of marriage than was Scott, being the man, or would have been if she hadn't seen how things were heading.

On the bus Scott sat in silence, smoking a cigarette, thinking his own thoughts and absolutely unconscious of those that were absorbing his wife's mind as she sat so quietly beside him. Hitherto Ruth had been content to sit silent like this; tonight she was only too conscious that they had done this every night, and it frightened her. But what was a married woman to do under such circumstances? she reflected. They hadn't money that would enable her to get out of the rut; their manner of living made it almost necessary to do things at regular intervals. Why was it that the woman always had to think of the way out, for she certainly did? Then suddenly Ruth remembered Scott's vacation of three weeks which was coming very soon. Perhaps something would happen then. Perhaps under different circumstances she would find a way out. The thought gave her new hope, something to look forward to, it brought back some of her natural optimism.

(The next episode of this serial will begin on Monday. It is called "Ruth, and the Younger Set.")

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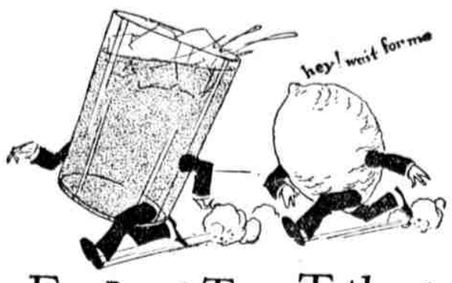

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(Market)

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(Market)

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(Gallery, Market)

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(Central)

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