

# I, THE KING

By WAYLAND WELLS WILLIAMS.

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(Continued from Yesterday.)

"That old thing? No—what am I thinking of? He goes to Cleveland with all the junk."

"Junk!"  
"Well, it is, heaven knows."  
"Woman, have you no sentiment?"  
"Sentiment be hanged," said Mary, gritting her teeth as she stuffed a pair of slippers into the box. "I want nice things."

"And you shall have them."  
"Well, I'm sorry you won't forgive me about my Queens. I thought it was going to be such a pretty scene. I never believed I'd live to regret a virtuous youth."

Mary sat back on the floor, cross-legged, and pondered. "I wonder, Kit, if I do if there were Queens in the future? . . . I don't know. I positively don't know. But it doesn't matter, I shan't bother about it." She scrambled to her feet. "That's the encouraging thing about it—we're such nice people!"

The word "encouraging" hit him squarely between the eyes. Why on earth should they have to be encouraged? He thought on the whole it was better to ask, frankly, and did. Mary looked up from a littered desk, and laughed. "Sounds ominous, doesn't it? Why, I just meant that people sometimes have difficulty in living up to the contract of marriage, because, with the best intentions in the world, they haven't perfect control over their emotions. But breeding—niceness—has the strongest control of all, and that's what encouraging, because we're both nice. There's only this desk to do. Will you be nice and quiet while I tear up letters?"

She was so unfeignedly light, and so sensible, that he was able to forget the blow and reply correctly in her own mood: "Love letters?"

"Yes, some of them."  
"He lit a cigaret and sat down. 'I'll be quiet as a mouse, dear, as long as I hear you tearing.'"

III.  
They spent July in London, with week-ends in the country. They found Boon there, he having been recalled just before their marriage, and he introduced them to people. In a short time they found themselves with a mixed, intelligent, bewildered crowd of men and women engaged in trying to pick up the broken threads of peace. There was a curiosity about them all, and especially about them all, they saw the rich of

1914 poor, and the poor of that time rich; they forgot birth and breeding and pursued money; sickened of it and went back to birth; narcotized their puzzled brains with alcohol and the hope of sudden wealth. They sought new and preferably exotic jobs; they flocked to the theater, they set up shops, they played the Stock Exchange, they apprenticed themselves as motor car salesmen and plumbers' assistants. Most of their enterprises went to pot, and none of them kept them in town over week-ends; but always, over all the doubt and disappointment, they kept up a chipper of persiflage, thoroughly mondain, frankly superficial and, in its pathetic, courageous way, highly diverting.

The Newells spent their first week-end with a score of them as the guests of one Sir Joseph Johnson, a wheel-maker, whom the war had made rich. He had a fat, genial wife and a large early Victorian house on the Thames near Reading; as he made no pretense of being better than he was, and spent freely, his house parties were well attended. On the Friday afternoon the two were turned loose, without introductions, in a huge hall where people were having tea. Kit was instantly taken in charge by a small creature in black, with yellow hair and long jet earrings. She looked like Maude Adams and talked like Alfred Jingle, and as she talked her blond eyebrows were continually raised to an incredibly high arch.

"How d'you do. Come over and sit by me. Tea? Been to Lords lately? . . . What, don't like cricket? . . . Oh, merican! Fancy! Rippling—Eddie, angel? . . . Neva mind now. I've got an American. Americans don't know cricket, fancy. Where shall we go now? I say, are you married?"

"Yes," said Kit, smiling, "and my name's Newell, but you might as well call me Kit right off."  
"Angelic of you! My name's Vi. But how 'pallying dull of you to be married. Spoil your week-end, won't it? Heveva!"

Kit laughed out, everything about her so plainly said "Come on, boys!" He explained that he was on his honeymoon, but that he would be a brother to her; he was told in return that she was a duck, a scrub, an angel, rather a silly; that she was a widow, but not averse to a lark.

It was clear that she was the focal female figure in the gathering. People came up as she sat there, and she sent them off, teased them, patted them on the head, insulted them, all with a sure light touch that made them come again.

"Tibby darling! Bridge? Right—but I've lost my eyeglass. Will you—angel! Queenie, what a cherubic scarf! Love scarfs—Victorian. Ed, wardian, then. Bertie, seraph, take care on the river tonight! Moonlight, Italian lakes, Lamartine—No moon? Tarsome of it. Tarsome of you to know. D'you know, some one's got to find my hankie. Ange!—yes—hell, I think. Don't bother, Bertie's gone after it. My eyeglass—archangel! Where was it—you asked my maid? I say, did you kiss her? Ha ha! Yes, simply palling, isn't that? Cora, my ford a pretty one. Bertie, angel—but 's not the right one. Billiard room, perhaps. Coronet. Viscountess. Sorry, Bert, in for bridge. Tib, you carry me!"

She was interested to learn that Kit was a friend of Boon, and spent the first evening in the business of drawing him out on the subject. She had heard of Cora, and was relieved to discover that she was not fabulously rich; but she remained nervous, having a constitutional dread of American female charm. It became quite clear to Kit, as to every one else within a five-mile radius, that she was strongly attracted toward Boon.

"You see, Kit, there's this. Tib's (Boon's baptismal name was Tibbald, spelt Theobald) 'now has a fairish chance of succeeding to Quayne. His most dangerous uncle—F. O. man, charming—has just died. No issue. Next uncle's a moron. Shut up, keepers and things. Pretty safe—though he might sneak off to a registry. Quayne himself's simply doting. Widower, only son died last year, daves, Tubercular joints. Frightful. That leaves only Tibs and his father. And Quayne's well off. Hasn't sold his place, at least. Well, see? Good enough—but just as good for Cora, what?"

"I don't think Cora cares much for him," said Kit. "What she's after is a peer and a rich one. See here, if you asked Cora over here, and gave her a shot at a peer or two, I don't think she'd stand in your way about Boon. Why not try it?"

This he thought a sensible proposition, or at least quite sensible enough to appeal to the mind of his recipient, but Lady Fieldes (she spelt it fieldes) seemed distinctly to act on it. She said he was a cherub, flicked her earrings, dropped her gold cigaret case,

and temporized. And this alternation of quasi-seriousness and pleasant fatuity endured through the week-end.

"I've got an idea," Kit told Mary, when they were back in the Ritz, "that she doesn't care about Boon or any one else. That she's perfectly content as she is, and is just titivating herself with the idea of marrying again."

"Possibly," said Mary. "I like her clothes. Where do people get the idea that Englishwomen always dress badly?"

"And she's got a house just off Cavendish Square, which is a very nice neighborhood, and no country place to eat up her income. A widow, a peeress, young and attractive, comfortably off—you can be darned sure she isn't going to throw it away without getting something better in return. Canny little thing, for all she's so feminine. Too feminine, I don't like that limpet type. Can't you imagine how soft and jelly-like she'd feel clinging to your shoulder? Ouf! . . . And yet she intrigues me, some how."

"And so she intrigues you," amended Mary sitting before her dressing table sewing something. "I used to hear all about complexes in Green-wich Village. Your repulsion probably means you really like her quite a good deal."

Mary had a way of saying blasting things. This one made him feel limp and unclear for a moment; then he shook it off, got up, pulled down his waistcoat and walked up behind Mary. He leaned over and put his cheek on her as he loved to do. "You and your complexes!" he whispered. "Drive!"

(To Be Continued Monday.)  
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## New York --Day by Day--

By O. O. MINTYRE.

New York, Nov. 28.—This is one of those barren days when I can hear the faint rustle of my audience reaching under the seats for their hats. Nothing comes to a solid hour of chronicling after a solid hour of attempting to grab something out of the ether.

Yet I must make the gesture. And fill the space. I am filled with self-pity. I never have one. No matter where I happen to be I must do the daily grind. I had rather hoped to be fired by fall.

My mail is also unsuggestive. The skies are a drizzle. A man next door has the whooping cough. And the way he whoops, my dears, Raymond Carroll sends me a photo of himself in front of a Paris cafe. In front of him is planted an appetit. Business of Olan-bing.

The phone rings and a nit-wit inquires: "Have you ever been goose bit by a mocking bird?" The voice was suspiciously like Verne Porter, editor of the Smart Set. And I replied: "No, but I have heard phoansants sing the mayonnaise." Lew Comedy.

Across the way in an office there is a man who works all day at a typewriter as though he must do just one more letter and catch a train. He wears a green eyeshade and looks like Calvin Coolidge. An old organ grinder wheezes out a tune at the curb.

On one of the windows in gold letters by "Harley P. Lott—Aluminum Pots." Make your own lyrics. I'm too tired. That fellow is whooping again. The phone rings. And it is a lady bootlegger who is told there is no interest.

For a half hour I have been entertaining by tearing the lining out of an old house shoe. At times the strain made me puff, but I have. I must say with due modesty, done a neat job. It was just as fascinating as a loose tooth.

There used to be a writer who in the hours of mental paucity would lock himself in the bathroom and Gsing hymns. After that he found he could write. I thought of trying it but didn't for two fair reasons. I can't sing and don't know any hymns.

There is a yawning gap still to be filled. Thoughts stray. I am thinking somehow of the night I sat next to Charlie Chaplin in a New York cafe. He was alone and nipping at a mouse of chicken. Every eye seemed to be directed his way. Here was a man who had reached the top side of his hour. But he had an expression of sadness. With a cigaret he sat for a long time with unwinking eyes, as though carved. A dramatic critic came by and interrupted the reverey for a moment or so. Others came at intervals. Finally he departed in that brisk, mignon manner he has. And at 2 o'clock in the morning in the same neighborhood he was pacing up and down on the sidewalk—hatless and apparently distressed. I sometimes wonder if fame ever really brings happiness.

The happiest fellow I know is a counter man in a Sixth avenue quick lunch. He whistles, sings and laughs at his work. He has a cheery word for every customer. And he is always shouting pleasantries to the cook with the orders. He has his heroes—Baby Ruth and Ring Lardner. He works from 9 at night to 6 in the morning. I asked him once if his temper was ever ruffled. "No," he said, "I like folks too much. Life has been sweet to me. I've got a good job, a wife and two healthy brats and \$400 in the bank toward a home."

Famous people are denied the human warmth and personal contact that makes for happiness and content. Nothing seems to me so depressing as an atmosphere of aloofness.

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