

Matrimonial Adventures

Pursuit

BY Henry Sydnor Harrison

Author of "Queed," "V. V.'s Eyes," "Angela's Business," "Saint Teresa," etc.

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A FEW WORDS ABOUT HENRY SYDNOR HARRISON

It is like shaking hands with an old friend to see the name of Henry Sydnor Harrison. Some years ago his first book, "Queed," gave him instant place as one of our foremost American novelists. Then, at intervals—for Mr. Harrison is an author who works long and with infinite care—came "V. V.'s Eyes" and "Angela's Business," both startling successes. "Saint Teresa" established him as a front-rank American author.

He started writing when he first left college, and mainly at night, because, he said, he had to make a living. He joined the staff of the Richmond Times-Dispatch. He laughed when I asked him what he did there. "I was paraphraser, at first," he said, "then editorial writer, and often poet." At the end of five years, having saved some money, he resigned to see if he could make his way at writing alone.

To get a short story from Mr. Harrison is an event, his time is so fully occupied with work scheduled ahead. But like the others in the Star Author Series of Matrimonial Adventures, he made the opportunity to contribute. "Pursuit" may be a bit cynical, but it gives much food for thought and reflection.

MARY STEWART CUTTING, JR.

It was the evening of May Hesketh's picnic supper, small but memorable; and now the clocks, had there been any on the island, would have pointed close to midnight. What was so rare as this night in June? Sailing wisps of cloud shredded the face of the high moon; the blackness of the woods, the glades and dells, the vine-covered rocks and the empty quarry, were stippled and patched with silver; the lake was a sheet of silver stretching far away to lose itself in a lovely dusk. Through the verdure a soft breeze whispered; from the water floated voices of the merry-makers, receding; and the woman stealing on light feet up the path, a slim and not incongruous figure in her white bathing dress, with unbound dark hair streaming to her waist, reflected that, for an hour at least, she would be alone here.

But it was not so. From the impenetrable shadows, as she neared the ruined cabin, the figure of a man abruptly emerged upon the path; he stood confronting her. She started a little, and then she saw, with a wild shout of satisfaction, that this man was her husband.

"You!" she said, with the faintly mocking air she had long ago learned for him; "but fancy meeting you here!"

"You—you looked like a—" he began a little confusedly; and then, breaking off, he cleared his throat and started again, more authoritatively: "I don't say I approve of that suit, but—but it does seem to fit in with the surroundings somehow. You might almost have been mistaken—at a distance, that is—for a hamadryad. But—"

"And what may they be? Something very nice to be mistaken for, may I hope? But I supposed you'd gone in the launch—"

"No—no. I'm tired of drunks," said he, continuing to stare at her. "And besides, swimming at night—ah— affects my sinus—as you once used to know. But you—why did you come back? You—you forgot something?"

She was smiling faintly; her dark eyes decided him.

"I almost forgot myself, if you count that! But not, in your sense, I'm not forgetful, only punitive. My sinus is sound, but my temper uncertain. So I didn't go. A sweet night, isn't it? Well!"

"But—what is it? Why, what happened?"

"Oh, that. Yes, to be sure. I was unexpectedly kissed, you see. In the dark behind the bonhouse, just as we were ready to start—oh, most ferociously, I assure you. Really that made me angry, though of course not so angry as I seemed. So I'm letting him paddle himself over alone—"

Her husband's dim, heavy face seemed to darken. "Him? Who was it?"

"My dear Horace, you'll agree that kissing and telling isn't quite the act of a lady? No, no! But I'm interrupting your reverie—"

"No!—tell me! I—I want to know!"

"Your air of interest is awfully civil, Horace. But I can't really believe that you've begun at this late date to take an interest in my private life!"

Her merriment exasperated him, clearly.

"Howard Witheredge, I suppose—d—n his impudence! What you can see in that—"

"Oh, name me no names, please! And the incident's really not worth mentioning—I'm merely disciplining a beau, that's all. So we two have the pretty wilds all to ourselves, only think! Charming conjugal! But be-

sure I won't intrude, no, I'm off to dress—goodby!"

"No, no! Don't go, I—"

Having controlled himself with an obvious effort, the man resumed with awkward carelessness:

"Ah—it seems too bad for you to miss your moonlight dip, when you enjoy it so—merely on account of the behavior of an alcoholic cad. I was about to say—I'll paddle you over to the Pulpit myself."

She eyed him quizzically and all at once was aware of the beating of her heart!

The two stood close together, in the darkness and beauty of the woods. The man's ponderous dignity was manifestly a little strained. Why? For a long time past, indeed, it had been evident that she had undermined his case in their relationship. For weeks she had been conscious, in her withdrawals and through the silences that she had made so common between them, that he regarded her with a new attentiveness. But he had stopped there; his pride—or some cowardice perhaps—had restrained him from word or act. Was it the romantic solitude now, and the sudden sight of her in her wood-nymph's guise? Was it the thought of those kisses she had just taken from another? What? Into her husband's eyes had come a look she had not seen these three years; and she wondered suddenly if, here and now, beyond all calculation, her great moment had come at last.

But do you think that she would yield anything to him? Not she.

"Ironically grave, she answered: "You are always kind, Horace. But of course I'd not dream of imposing on you that way."

"No imposition at all. I'd enjoy it. We find ourselves deserted—each by our own choice—what more logical than to join forces, eh?"

"Logical!"

"And—and pleasant," said he with his labored lightness. "Why not? Or—if you don't care to join the party now—after what happened—why, we might just paddle about for a while. The night—the night's fine," said Horace.

"Canoeing in the moonlight with one's husband! My dear man, do you want to make me the laughing stock of the county?"

Her laughter, thrilling unexpectedly, took him quite aback; stung him, too, as she saw with pleasure.

"A very little of that sort of thing," said she, "and gossip would soon begin connecting our names!"

"I don't think you run many risks of that," he retorted, with marked stiffness. "And I wish you'd cease this—this extravagant way of talking—it's provoking. Now come along. I—we'll enjoy it."

"On the contrary, I should die of shame."

"You're being absurd. Come!"

"A thousand thanks, but no."

There was a silence. The breeze fluttered her long hair.

"I see you actually prefer the society of drunken male flirts to that of . . . And this is typical, too—"

He finished, all but impulsively for him: "I'm sure you can't realize, Laurel, how little we actually see of each other—these days."

Ah, but did she not realize!

She leaned back against the slender bole of a white birch and stared up at him liquid eyed.

"How little! Why, Horace—good gracious! That's literally all I can say—good gracious! Seven days a week under the same roof, but separated a single day in—"

"I know, I know!" he said in another tone, embarrassed. "It seems odd. I own—I'd hardly think it was possible. And still . . . I was of course sure you weren't conscious of it, but—"

He hesitated, peering at her with his short-sighted eyes; and then the natural man let go a little more of the unnatural constraint.

"Why, Laurel! You go out somewhere every evening, with or without me, or if you don't go out, you have people in. At odd moments, when there are, in the little between times, as I might term them, you're always reading, or studying, or practicing something, or else you're writing letters or you have a headache. Saturdays and Sundays and usually week days, too, you have people staying in the house, all over the place. Noise and dancing and parties and rushing about—never a quiet moment of—of just the domestic sort—"

"You certainly make it sound different from the home life of our dear Queen! I'd no idea it was so bad as that—"

"I understand it, if anything. But—well, we won't go into it now. My point is, here, by chance, we have a quiet hour for once—charming nature and no noise—no drunks. Well, don't let's spend it standing on these rocks, when the lake's right there. Come!"

She shook her head in silence, faintly smiling. Gently, she released the hand that he had abruptly clutched. She thought that his massive face paled a little then.

From far away over the water came the faint muffled echoes of song; the sound but accentuated the pervasive stillness. On the solitary trail the husband and wife steadily eyed each other, and she was thrilled with the knowledge of her immeasurable victory. In that second, her mind's eye flashed backward; she thought of Anders Carthew, and the time and scene which had been the turning point of her life.

When she had married this man, glowering at her now in the primal woods, he loved her madly, and she, as she had soon understood, was actually all but indifferent to him. Within six months her interest in him had become acute and constant; while he, incredibly, was detected in recur-

ring lapses of ardor. After two years she adored him without restraint, and for days and weeks together he was frankly bored with her. Why? Was it the everlasting law of things that a relation can support only so much love, as a bucket holds so much water? Certainly her efforts to charm this grave senior by doubling her wifely thoughtfulness and sweet subjections, had but increased his ennui. There had come the inevitable day when she, with floods of tears, had packed her trunks and gone off on the usual indefinite visit to her mother.

So far their story had followed a familiar course. Would that have been the end of it, right there, but for Anders Carthew? Nothing seemed to her more certain. Beyond doubt Anders, who was twice her age, and had taken an interest in her, paternal or otherwise, from her sixteenth year, had penetrated her with a new and startling concept. For Anders wouldn't accept, he would hardly listen to, her own ready formula, long since smoothed by women of all ages. "Oh, no," he had said, in his merciless kind way. "It isn't that you love him too well! That's letting yourself down too easily. It's simply that you love him with too little pride—and no good sense at all." And a little later, when she had conquered her first furious indignation and sat down again, he spoke words which she took at last for truth, and which filled her in the end with an overmastering purpose. For Anders had said that a man's necessity is not to be loved, but to love; and that, to love, his fixed need is to pursue—and conquer.

So, she, because she had a will, and it seemed that her whole life was at stake, had actually achieved this impossible. She had warped her nature, she had broken her heart to pieces; she had recovered the reserves of maidenhood, made herself again mysterious to this once familiar; she had fanned the last flickering ember to a flame. Now here he stood suing her in the romantic night—her Horace, bored no longer, and still, and still . . . Was it not ironical that, here in the instant of her tremendous triumph, her mood should be so skeptical and cool? . . . How large was Horace's nose, she unsentimentally considered, how halting his tongue, how really small his vanity and caution. Had something then permanently passed away? In the long process of repression, of moral separation, so painful at first, had she wrought in herself an irreparable change?

She wondered, smiling shadowily, in that second of thick silence. Now the man, having drawn back a step, spoke abruptly:

"Look here, what's come over you?"

"Come over me?"

"You've changed so much—just in this last year—that you're like another person—a stranger."

To be sure, her heart swelled a little at that.

"But you hardly offer that as a complaint, Horace? Hastily recalling our past, I feel sure you must find any change in me an improvement."

"That's just the tone I don't like from you, Laurel. This constantly evasive manner. Flippant, I am bound to call it, and—and provoking. I think the time's come to remind you that a husband has some rights—and I'm not getting mine."

"But—why, all this is news to me, my dear. Your rights. I'd thought you were frightfully fatigued with them, whatever they are, years ago, and gladly—"

"Never!—no! Ridiculous. I—"

"Ah, that poor memory of yours, failing you again, I see!" said she, shaking her finger in a manner insufferably satirical; and resumed demurely: "But of course I'm glad that you've forgotten that day—when, I, sobbing like a deserted village lass, most crudely taxed you with having ceased to love me, and you, poor dear, could only reply, 'There, there!'—most soothingly, I own, yet it mortified me at the time, I remember. You've forgotten explaining to me that life wasn't meant to be an unending song of romance, that it was normal and necessary that the disturbing heyday of love should descend to afternoon, to twilight—"

"So that's it!" he interrupted suddenly. "You've never gotten over that one little scene—a mere incident?"

"Oh, I remember—I've been thinking back a good deal, here lately," he went on, rather thickly. "You went off on a visit to your mother's then, and when you came back, the change had come—that was the time. You'd assumed this singular and unwifely attitude. This unfair—"

"What adjectives, my dear Horace. Was it unwifely or unfair to learn the lesson my own husband set me?"

"That's more flippancy—you know it is. Look here—I wish to know. Did you then—or have you at any time since—come to take an interest in—somebody else?"

She looked up through the black leaves toward the moon, an odd tumult in her breast, and laughed a little.

"Your questions astound me, of course. And I'd supposed that even a wife was entitled to some privacy. Remember, Horace, I've never questioned you, though all the world has known when you've looked over the fence. But the breeze is freshening, and I've detained you long enough. Now I'll dress, waiting in the cabin—"

"Not so fast, not so fast!" said her husband, blocking her way. "We've started a conversation—we'll finish it now—"

"Oh, pardon me, I thought you had finished."

"No, I've not finished. Laurel, I wish to know plainly. Are you trying to say, by—all this—that you no longer love me?"

"Oh! Really!—I'm afraid I've never

thought to ask myself such a question."

"Ask yourself now. I insist—it is my right."

Her merriment died.

"I am. And, Horace," she said, regarding him dully—"honestly—I don't know the answer."

Yet in that moment, exactly, she seemed to herself to have the answer. Yes, something had gone out of her, now and forever. Funny, but you couldn't crack and make over your nature for nothing.

"Oh, you don't know?" he said darkly. "Well, the time's come for you to find out—"

"Why? What's your interest in the ancient point? Haven't I the best authority for saying that love wasn't meant—"

"That's enough of that; I won't have this attitude any longer. Plenty of time—and kisses, too, it seems—for every whippersnapping nincompoop—nothing at all for the man you married—"

"But, my dear Horace, I can't turn myself on and off like a hot-water faucet! And the nincompoops never taught me that the heyday of romance—"

"Stop provoking me this way—!"

"Willingly. Good-by! But, indeed, you mustn't think of me as a stranger, Horace. I assure you I'll always think of you as among my very best friends."

His dim face became flooded with color.

"You're my wife, do you understand that? My wife!"

"Wife is a relative term," she said, a little faintly, again seeking to pass him. "But I'll leave you now."

"I'm d—d if you will," said the man, in a terrible voice.

And, his dignity broken altogether, he seized her furiously in his arms.

The violence of that embrace astonished her. Still more surprising, perhaps, was the wave of resistance, of instinctive repulsion even, that swept through her.

She succeeded in extricating herself and backing away rapidly, shaken and angry, vigorously rubbed with the palm of her hand the cheek her husband's lips had just grazed. Still her fixed smile mocked him.

"Don't you think, all things considered, that's quite a liberty?"

He lunged for her, saying gutturally: "I'll show you a liberty! You forget yourself—you need to be taught—"

"No!—positively, you don't know me well enough for this! Please!—You brute!"

She managed again, though with difficulty, to free herself from those violent clutching arms. Her light airs were gone. She had thought just now that if Horace touched her she might actually hate him; it had not occurred to her that she would fear him, yet so it was. Now, as he came after her again, muscularly potent and altogether wilful, panic, suddenly and unaccountably, took possession of her. Without having planned anything of the sort, she wheeled abruptly in her tracks and fled away from him.

If that was a confession of weakness, unluckily it did not settle her difficulty on the spot. With dismay she heard the large feet of Horace pounding after her down the path.

She ran as for life.

It was a sight for the gods, no doubt. In the still midnight, beneath the serene moon, in this lonely place, wildly and primitively beautiful, through the groves and among the crags sped the slim white-clad wife, dark hair flowing after; and hard behind, grunting and snorting, menacing, too, chased the heavy-built man, her husband. Different from the home life of the queen, indeed!

On the open path his clumsiness was equalized. She looked back, fearfully, over her shoulder; he was gaining on her, no doubt of that. Instantly she left the path, scrambling over the rough boulders which flanked it here plunging into the copses, if such they were, bounding away through the virgin woods, sure-footed as a fawn. With a wild bursting of foliage and crackling of boughs, Horace leaped after her. On the difficult terrain her superior nimbleness gave her advantage; the distance between them steadily widened. Once she heard his hoarse voice panting, "Stop! I tell you, stop!" Now the strange thrill of the chase, the throbbing excitement of the quarry, set her blood afire. She thought, "Pursue, and love!" and, laughing frantically to herself, flew the faster. And then, as she sped across a sweet open space, a glide no doubt, powdered with bright moonlight, she glanced back again, unwisely; alas, her foot caught in a trailing vine and she pitched to the sward. The misfortune, which wasn't rectified in a second, cost her her lead. Releasing herself, rising dizzily, she found the pursuer almost upon her—almost, but not quite. She just eluded his fingers, breathlessly dodging; she doubled and turned; and so, in a moment, suddenly, she found her feet set on the winding path again, and lo, just ahead, was the old landing, and beyond, open water.

She had forgotten the water; she welcomed the sight of it now. She was quite spent, and those resolute feet were close behind. Flying over the loose board, the harried wife dove cleanly into the haven of the lake.

That Horace would follow her in this maneuver had not occurred to her. He was an indifferent swimmer, and his sinus, as we know, was sensitive. Never having seen him angry before, however, she had no doubt underestimated the force of his rages. In fact, the conquering male did not hesitate an instant. His ponderous body flying out feet first, broke water hardly a second behind her own.

Unhappily for her, the lake was shallow here; a tall man could stand

on the bottom, and Horace was tall. In fine, while she was still submerged, her foot was roughly seized; coming up, spluttering, she found herself effectually imprisoned.

Thus the man, like Neptune with a mermaid, had his way. The stars looked down upon the odd conjugal caress. Upon the woman's lips, gasping and watery, the lips of Horace, just as gasping, came waterily down. Though her heart hammered with a wild excitement, there was now no strength in her. After an instant, her feeble struggles ceased; another instant and, marvelously, resistance seemed no longer of any importance. Under this masterful embrace the wife's will, her whole being, indeed, seemed all at once, mysteriously, to dissolve within her.

"You witch! I will adore you forever," panted Horace wetly.

And then her bare dripping arms, lifting, went round his neck.

Under the impulse of his great love, the days and the weeks that followed became for the wedded pair like a new and richer honeymoon. Her elusiveness faded; her reticence and reserves, all the provocative withdrawals, learned after how much tribulation, came to seem not only superfluous, but altogether unworthy. Since Horace gave so lavishly, how inconceivably mean-spirited to dole back to him with a thrifty and calculating hand!

Willingly, young Laurel let her self go.

The new banhs brought their unexpected blessing. Now God was ready, in the old phrase, to smile upon this union. There came another June and then another, and Laurel's first child was six months old.

Otherwise perhaps it would hardly have been bearable.

She sat in her room near the screened open window, nursing her boy, whom she had no thought of weaning as yet. The sultry afternoon was quiet. From the piazza below floated up the voice of her husband, all exchanging domestic news with his adoring mother, arrived the day before for her yearly visit; but she did not need that sound to make her remember his nearness. On the stand beside her lay a note from Howard Witheredge, who had lately "come into her life" again; she had just been thinking that nothing could be more symbolical than that.

Her name came vaguely wafting up to her.

"Laurel's stoutered," said her mother-in-law, rocking comfortably, though with a touch of asthma. "It's not unbecoming to her. I think she has—settled—somehow, Horace? She has gained in poise?"

"Yes, she's matured very much since the baby came," said Horace, and yawned a little.

"She is charming still. And a more exemplary and devoted wife I never saw. That pleases me so much. Do you know, my son," continued Mrs. Seymour, suddenly, "two years ago when I were here—that spring—I was rather afraid she was drifting away from you—just a little!"

"Really! What an idea! . . . No, I remember that summer on the lake particularly," said Horace thoughtfully. "We had a wonderful time."

"Oh, it's evident enough that I was mistaken!" said his mother archly. "She absolutely worships you, that's as clear as noonday."

"Oh, yes," said Horace. "There was a little silence. Down in the pasture-lot, behind the barn, the buxom new dairy maid was climbing over the stile. The lass had a trim leg. Having adjusted his glasses a little, Horace satisfied himself on that point.

"In fact, if the dear creature has a fault at all," he finished indolently. "I'd say that she loves me a little too well."

SHOWS HIMSELF TO FAITHFUL.

Tradition of Rising of Martyred Priests' Coffin Has Strong Hold in New Mexico.

To the Church of St. Augustine at Isleta, N. M., there attaches a queer legend. It is the tradition of the rising of Padre Padilla's coffin. Among the Franciscan friars who accompanied Coronado on his famous march to what he called Quivira—country of the Wichita Indians in Kansas—was Padre Juan de Padilla. This intrepid servant of God (when Coronado turned homeward), remained with a view of christianizing those Indians. He was killed by them, and now tradition has it that somehow in the heavenly ordering, the body of the martyred padre got miraculously transferred from Kansas to a place under the church altar at Isleta, and that periodically the coffin, which was a section of a hollow cottonwood trunk, rises plainly to view in the church, disclosing to whomsoever may be present, the padre, rather mummified, but still in his black whiskers.

Fine for the Bath.

The efficacy of common salt as a gargle for the throat, a dry shampoo for the hair or for a five-minute morning rub, is a well-recognized fact. A towel, especially prepared for the latter use, however, gives a sense of well being that little else can equal. To prepare it, dissolve one cupful of either table or sea salt (preferably sea salt) in a quart of hot water. When cool immerse a large Turkish towel, allowing it to remain for 15 or 20 minutes or until the salt is all absorbed. Hang it up and let it drip dry, without wringing. On arising in the morning rub the body vigorously with the dry salted towel. It will give a wonderfully stimulated, invigorated feeling.

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When red, rough and itching, by hot baths of Cuticura Soap and touches of Cuticura Ointment. Also make use now and then of that exquisitely scented dusting powder, Cuticura Talcum, one of the indispensable Cuticura Toilet Trio.—Advertisement.

Good Luckee.

The boss sent the bookkeeper out to buy him a ticket to Chicago. After several hours the bookkeeper came back with the ticket. "Took you a long time" granted the boss. "Well, I was just behind a girl who was planning her next summer's tour."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Looking Him Up.

"Why are you going to the title guarantee company?" "Papa is talking of buying me a duke."

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