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**TOO MUCH OF THE
SAME THING**
A Man and Wife Decide to Try
Effects of One Evening of
Separation.
By F. A. MITCHEL

While Donald and Rosamond Burke were courting the hours they could spend together were interminable. Donald would go home, after sitting sometimes till 2 o'clock in the morning, wondering what in the world they had found to talk about. Rosamond would go up to her room regretting that the next evening she must pass without her lover, for her father would not consent to his calling oftener than twice a week.

But there came a time after their marriage when this was changed. To their surprise the evenings began to seem long. Then Donald about 9 o'clock would stretch himself on a lounge and go to sleep. If any friend dropped in there was instant relief. Both husband and wife would brighten up, the hours would fly, and bed time would come too soon.

But they lived in a city where distances were great, and not being especially intimate with their neighbors, there were few to drop in on them socially. They had both been in society before marriage, but as soon as they became engaged they were sure they would never care to keep up the work attending a membership of a large social circle or enjoy the society of any one except each other. They had therefore dropped out entirely.

Donald was a thinker. When anything went wrong he was accustomed to think out the cause. "Cause and effect rule the world" was a favorite phrase of his. When he found that instead of spending six hours on a stretch with Rosamond and wishing they were eight he could now scarce spend one without being bored he set himself about looking for the cause. Not long after he had found it he said to his wife one day at dinner:

"My dear, I wish to call your attention to a matter concerning your providing our food. Don't continue to place on the table any one article continuously. No matter how much one likes tomatoes, if we have them every day we will grow tired of them."

"Just so," said madam.

"And the same cause pertains to another matter of much greater importance. For the same reason that a person can't eat tomatoes every day continuously he or she can't associate with any one person exclusively. There is no truer adage than 'Variety's the spice of life.'"

"I see what you mean. I have noticed it for some time—you have become tired of me."

Some time was occupied in getting over this obstacle to a plan Mr. Burke had formed, and, forcing his wife to admit that they would be better off if they were not so closely tied together, then he continued:

"I propose that one night in the week—say Saturday—we each go out somewhere separately and see other persons besides ourselves. We need not say where we are going, though that shall be optional."

"I know very well where you will go. You will be behind the scenes at the theater. That was your favorite way of spending an evening before we became engaged."

"I don't think," replied the husband, "that I would care to return to that. I shall probably go where I can meet intellectual persons. Where do you expect to go?"

"I can't go anywhere without an escort."

"Humph! I did not think of that. Whom do you propose to call in for the purpose? Your brother Tom, I suppose."

"I shall call on any one I choose. Tom wouldn't do at all. He has too much on hand to give his time to me."

Donald was not so infatuated with his plan after this. There was a great disadvantage in it on his part. He could go alone, but his wife must have an attendant. This attendant might be an attractive man. It would be necessary that the escort should know that the reason he was called upon to take the lady out was because she was tired of her husband. Donald didn't like the scheme so well as he had thought he did. But he had gone too far to recede.

When the first Saturday came round on which the couple were to see others besides themselves before Donald went to business his wife said to him:

"I think, dearie, that you had better dine at your club or somewhere else, and I will dine at Mary Edwards'. She says she will be delighted to have me. So goodby till we meet tonight. Don't be out after 11."

"Why can't we dine at home?"

"Why, I've thought that a dinner at the club with some of your old friends would do you good."

Donald made no reply to this. He kissed his wife goodby, or, rather, suffered her to kiss him. He was thinking that this dining apart would prevent his knowing who would be his wife's escort, and in that he was very much interested.

After business he repaired to his club and looked about for some of his old friends with whom to dine. It was astonishing how the men about the club had changed since he had

been married. In all the years of his membership he had not noticed so great a dropping away of old and a coming of new faces as had taken place in the brief period of his marriage. It did not occur to him that he had been standing still as a club member while the club had been marching on. Only two or three members whom he knew well were there, and they were either going home for dinner or had engagements to dine elsewhere. One old friend touched a sore spot in Burke's breast by saying: "Hello, old man, got back to the club, have you? They all do in time, but it generally takes longer than in your case."

"I've not come back to the club permanently," replied Burke with offended dignity. "I've come because—because—there is no dinner served at home today."

"I see, cook got on a rampage and lit out. That's one of the troubles of married life, you know."

Burke dined alone in a room big enough to seat 200 persons, and there were just twenty men in it. Nothing tasted good to him, and he only half finished the bottle of wine he ordered. Having finished his meal, he went into the lounging room to smoke. There was no news in the evening papers to speak of, and as for the Parisian illustrated journals with their vivid pictures that used to be so attractive to him, they disgusted him.

He received a pleasurable sensation in being called to the telephone. Rosamond's voice made his heart throb quicker.

"Is that you, dearie?" she asked.

"Yes, sweetheart."

"Having a good time?"

"Pretty good. How about you?"

"Oh, I'm having a splendid time! Mary invited my escort to dine with us. He and I are just going out together."

Mr. Burke made no reply to this. He was thinking about the escort.

"Give my love to the chorus girls," came from Mrs. Burke.

"Eh?"

"Ta-ta! My escort is waiting for me. I hope you'll have a jolly evening. Don't stay out all night."

A click, and Mr. Burke knew that there was nothing further to be said. It was just as well, for he had nothing to say outwardly, though he had a lot to say inwardly.

Several ways of passing the evening suggested themselves to him. He would go to a theater where he had been once well known behind the scenes. In the morning, if his wife did not give a good account of herself, he would fling chorus girls at her. Another plan was to go to the club library and read till midnight. A third was to go home and hide in a room on the top story and let his wife worry till 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. He hoped by that time she would be hysterical.

He tried the library; but, finding that he had read one page over several times and still did not know what was in it, he went to the theater, sat a while in it, he went to the theater, sat a while looking at a play he had formerly thought very funny, but which now tired him; then went around to the stage door and was admitted by the same official he had known when a bachelor.

How tawdry the scant costumes of the ballet girls! How frightful the paint and powder! Burke left the theater and when outside among the glaring electric signs debated how he would get through the rest of the evening. Looking at his watch, he saw that it was only 9 o'clock. What would he do with the rest of the evening?

He returned to the club, knocked the balls about on the billiard table, looked at his watch three times in half an hour and at 10 o'clock went home. It was the stillest house he ever entered. He walked the floor till 11. If his wife had gone to the theater she would likely be home within a few minutes. Between 11 and a quarter past seemed two hours. Going to the front door, he opened it and looked out. No wife in sight. Slamming the door behind him, he strode away to Mary Edwards'. Pulling the bell violently, he was admitted by the lady herself.

"Where's my wife?" he asked sharply.

"Upstairs getting on her wraps to go home. The carriage will be here in a few minutes."

"Where's her escort?"

"What escort?"

"Is that you, dearie?" came a lugubrious voice from a landing above.

Down came Mrs. Burke.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said.

"Mary has been very good to me, but I've been worrying about you so that—"

"Worrying about me? Why, haven't you been anywhere?"

"Nowhere but here."

"There's the carriage," remarked Miss Edwards, hearing a sound of wheels without.

"I've had a horrid evening," said Mrs. Burke as they drove home locked in each other's arms.

"So have I," replied the husband.

"I don't like your plan at all."

"Nor I. We won't do it again, will we?"

"No, indeed."

"I bored Mary dreadfully. She tried hard to amuse me, but failed."

"I dined alone at the club and had a miserable time of it."

"What did you do after dinner?"

"I went to the theater."

"Behind the scenes?"

"Yes, but the girls were not as attractive as before I met you, dearie."

Burke gave the cabman a five dollar bill without calling for change.

"Reckon them's just married," remarked the cabman to himself as he drove away chuckling.

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