

Matrimonial Adventures

Driftwood

BY
Courtney Ryley Cooper

Author of "The Cross-Cut,"
"The White Desert," "Dance
Falls at Home," "The Eagle's
Eye," etc.

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COURTNEY RYLEY COOPER

Courtney Ryley Cooper, author, lecturer, circus man and expert on jungle animals, began life as a clown in a small circus. Mr. Cooper says that he ran away from home for the first time to join the Buffalo Bill Wild West show at the age of five, and that after that, regularly two or three times a year, the rest of the Cooper family spent most of its time dragging him home whenever a circus came to his town, Kansas City. When he was fifteen he made the final breakaway, becoming a clown at the magnificent salary of five dollars a week. After about five years of this he began to mix the circus business with that of the newspaper and left the "white tops" to become a reporter for the Kansas City Star. He then successively was a special writer for the Star, the Chicago Tribune, the New York World and the Denver Post, when he again went back to the circus to become press agent of the Sells-Floto circus, and personal representative for Col. William F. Cody, "Buffalo Bill." Later still he became general manager of the Sells-Floto circus.

Following this he turned his attention to telling the rest of the world what he had learned of the land of the sadist ring and his stories and articles began to appear in all the large magazines of the United States.

MARY STEWART CUTTING, JR.
It was six-fifteen o'clock. In the kitchen the last touches had been given a meal which was a bit more extravagant than was customary in the household of Mr. and Mrs. John Carrington. The silver candlesticks were on the dining room table instead of the usual glass ones; the service had been polished with extra care that morning. At the side of each of the two plates was a sprig of orange blossoms, which had arrived, special delivery, from California, that morning. Just beyond the French doors leading to the living room was a large basket of roses. It was thus every year.

In the fireplace of the living room, the flames leaped in blue and green and violet colorings, the offgivings of driftwood, sending their colorations into the big, comfortable shadowy room and upon the woman who sat, just within the range of warmth, gazing into the flames. Mrs. John Carrington was waiting for her husband to come home to dinner in honor of their tenth anniversary.

Not that there was any doubt as to the time or manner of his arrival. Mr. and Mrs. John Carrington had a reputation—they were known as the happiest married couple of all their set—a set, incidentally, which included every worth-while name in the directory. In five minutes, Mrs. Carrington knew, there would sound the throbbing of a familiar engine from down the street and the squeaking of brakebands which always announced the homecoming of the best husband in town. John never failed, just as he never failed to telephone her precisely at eleven o'clock each morning, just as he never failed to remember her birthday, or to send the biggest basket of roses which he could afford, on their anniversary. Just as he never failed to take her to the theater on Thursday night, to the Country club for the Friday night dances, or—but the list is too long. John was the ideal husband. He never failed in anything.

Nor did she. For Medaine Carrington also had her place in the matrimonial sun. Even her enemies admitted that she was a perfect wife. The serenity of the Carrington home was something which could not be denied. Everyone knew of it, everyone spoke of it. John Carrington and his wife never had even quarreled!

Yet, as Mrs. Carrington watched the fire, it seemed that an expression, almost of utter fear, was in her eyes; the tapping of a shoe upon the soft rug gave evidence of nervousness, the quick knitting of her hands emphasized it. Now and then she turned her head toward the window—as though fearful of his coming, yet anxious that he be here. Then she would resume her former position, her eyes fraught with presentment, gazing into the big fireplace where the driftwood crackled and the flames leaped and scurried in vagrant colorings. The minutes passed.

A car stopped protestingly. A step sounded. The door opened. She turned with her usual smile.

"How are you, Dearest?"
"Same as usual, Sweetheart." He was hanging up his hat and overcoat. A moment more and he came behind her, to lay his hands on her shoulders for an instant. "How's my Sweetheart tonight?"

"Happy as always, John." She turned and kissed him lightly. "You were a dear to send me those roses. You never forget, John."

He straightened proudly.

"Why should I? Pretty fire."

"Yes—driftwood. I've been sitting here watching it, while I waited for you."

For a moment he, too, looked into the blaze.

"Beautiful. Driftwood, eh? Rather hard to get isn't it?"

She smiled.

"Yes—but then, this is our anniversary."

"That's right. That's right. I suppose the dinner's waiting?"

It was a useless question—asked merely for the sound of it. John knew that dinner was ready. It always was ready. The home of Mr. and Mrs. John Carrington was one in which nothing ever was awry. He went on:

"Yes, of course, it's waiting. Just a moment, Sweetheart, until I tidy up a bit and I'll be with you. Only a moment—"

He hurried up the stairs, while again the gaze of Medaine Carrington sought the flames, the gaze of one whose mind is peopled with anguish. But in a moment more, it had vanished. John was beside her, howling in mock overpoliteness, and offering his arm in an extravagant invitation to the table.

"Many congratulations today," he said as they seated themselves. "Four or five of the boys dropped in to tell me their troubles, and incidentally to say how much they envied us. Strange what a few little numbers will do, isn't it?"

"Marvelous." Her self-possession had returned; with him before her she was again the usual Medaine Carrington. "This is the tenth year, without a quarrel."

John laughed.

"And our idea may spread. Bentley's married you know—just last week. Came into the office today. Told him all about our system, and how it's worked out. 'All that you need for happiness, Bent,' I said, 'is to learn to count to a hundred.' Then, I went on and told him it had worked with us, how we simply schooled ourselves into the habit of counting to a hundred before we said an unkind word, how, if one of us was nervous or irritable, it became the duty of the other to hold in, and the wonderful result that we've attained. After all, dearest, it's all very simple, isn't it?"

"Extremely so." For just an instant her eyes clouded—only to brighten again. "I've never seen prettier roses than the ones you sent today, John."

"That's what you're always good enough to say. By the way, this roast is done to a turn. I never tasted better."

The meal progressed to a perfect conclusion—as it always did. Once more, they were before the driftwood flame. She took his hand in hers.

"After all, it's remarkable that two persons could go through ten years of married life without a quarrel, isn't it, John?"

He nodded. Then:

"Yes—in a way. Then again, all that is necessary is common sense."

"I suppose so. But haven't there been times when I have tried you terribly, when I've made you so angry that you couldn't hold your temper?"

"No, not once, dearest. One simply couldn't lose his temper with you."

"There—you mustn't say that. Besides, the main point, I suppose, is the fact that it's been accomplished. Ten years of married life, without even a quarrel!"

She rose then, and moved slowly into the shadows. Again her hands knitted unconsciously. An expression, as of acute pain came into her eyes. John did not see—he was gazing into the flames and watching the colorings as they came and went.

"Ten years without a quarrel! It's something to be proud of, something to boast about to your friends—and—"

"Yes, I suppose so."

There was something in her tone which caused him to look up quickly, to glance toward her as though she had uttered a desecration. The flickering of the fireplace caught her features, to display them as singularly pale, singularly drawn and indicative of suffering. He half rose—but she motioned him back.

"Please sit there, John, I've—something to tell you."

"Why, dearest? You seem so—"

"Don't—please." She gripped the back of a chair as though for support.

"I want to say it as quickly as possible. I'm going away, John." The voice was faint.

He was silent for a moment. At last:

"Well, if you feel that you should—of course, it would be better from a financial point if you waited a while, but if you really want to—"

"I don't mean that way, John. I'm not coming back."

"Not—?" He stared at her in non-plussed fashion for a long time before he rose. "Why Medaine?—I don't—!"

"I didn't think you'd understand."

"Not coming back? Why—?"

"Not coming back, John," she repeated, and this time the voice bore a certain note of harshness. "We're through!"

"Medaine!"

"Please!" She motioned him back.

"I know what I'm doing. I'm perfectly clear and sane. I've simply put up with you as long as I can stand it, and now I'm going away. You've become unbearable to me, and when a thing like that happens, the best thing to do is to get away. So I'm going."

She said it with more coolness than ever, and with an incisiveness that cut deep. There was the slightest twitching of John's fingers—then he turned away, and for a long moment was silent. At last, as though ensnared in mind, he moved again to his chair.

"You're tired, sweetheart. Tired out—nervous. Don't worry. Everything'll be all right. If you'll just tell me what's wrong, we'll find a way to

remedy it. Nothing in the world that can't be remedied, you know—"

"Except this. I'm tired of you, John. Sick of you."

"Sick? Tired?" He again faced her. "Sick of—?" Then for a long time he was silent again. "There, sweetheart, don't mind me. Of course you're tired. Ill, too. We'll talk it over in the morning—"

"There isn't going to be any morning, John. At least, not with you." She laughed. "Ten years is enough. I want someone else now."

"You?" He was on his feet in an instant, his fingers stretching wide, his brow working convulsively. "You—Medaine?"

"Exactly what I said."

"A man?"

"You don't suppose it would be anyone else?"

"But Medaine—"

"And I have your permission to go?" It seemed that there was a little sarcasm in her tone. "Of course, you know, I'd do nothing without your permission. I want to be frank with you, you know. You've supported me for ten years. You've given me everything in the world I could ask for, you've supplied me with all the money that anyone in my circumstances could wish for, and you've really made it possible for me to have the money to do what I wanted to do when the time came, and so I really should ask your permission. Especially when another man is involved."

"Do you mean—" coldness had come into his voice, "that you're going to take the money that you've saved as my wife to go to some other man?"

"I've said nothing like that, John. Merely frankness and fairness to let you know."

"Who is he?"

"A friend of yours. We needn't mention names."

"No?" There were no long pauses between John Carrington's words now. The whiteness of his cheeks; the lack of color in his lips, turning them ghastly blue in the light of the driftwood, the glazed yet flaming appearance of his eyes all gave evidence that temper had gone beyond control.

"No?" We needn't mention names. That's what you say, Mrs. John Carrington, but I've a different idea!"

"Your privilege! But the information won't come from me."

"I don't expect it. I can find out for myself, without the necessity of running down any lies which you might tell me. I'll find out—"

"I expect you to."

"I will!" John Carrington, the perfect husband, swung past his chair to face her, his hands gripped, the muscles of his jaws bulging as his teeth gritted. "Don't worry for an instant about that end of it! I'll find out."

"And then?" A peculiar glint had come into her eyes. "When you've found out? Murder, I suppose?"

"Murder?" he laughed at her. "Murder, over you? Over a woman who has no more sense of honor than to do the thing you've done? Murder? Hardly! Merely the satisfaction of knowing the kind of a person that would take up with a conscienceless woman. Nothing more."

"Very good excuses, John."

"For what?"

"The lack of backbone enough to even face a man who could steal your own wife from you. You wouldn't even have the strength to face him."

"No?" His hands worked as with a sudden spasm. "When I face something, it will be for stealing something—do you understand what I mean? When I face a man it will be because he's taken something from me that's worth while, and not ridged me of a blank featured incubus, a thing that's hung onto me like a leech, given into me at every twist and turn merely that she could rob me, someone so sweet and gushing that she's sickening, that herself hasn't any more strength than to take the word of the first man who flatters her and who is willing to run away with him simply because he tells her any mass of lies that happens to come into his head! That's when I'll face a thief, when he's stolen something—do you understand that?"

"And as for you—" he nodded toward the doorway—"you can go when and where you choose, and the sooner the better. I thought you were a woman when I married you. I've found out in the ten years that we've been living together that you're merely a spineless, resistless, shapeless mass of human putty. I didn't expect a thing like this—but I should have known that it would come. It was the only end possible, the only thing possible—from a person like you. Resistance? You haven't any? Strength of character? It doesn't exist. Spineless? It's the only word I can think of for you—the only—"

Then he halted, gasping. A warm, impulsive little form was close to him, her arms flung about his neck, her lips seeking his, and kissing him again and again.

"Oh, John, you're wonderful!" came all in a breath, "just simply wonderful! I—"

He strove to push her away, and failing, merely gasped the more. For she was talking again, her words streaming excitedly, delightedly.

"That's just what I've thought about you, John—what you've said about me—that you were spineless, resistless. But you're not, are you, John? You're—"

"Please—" He strove to break from her, but she held him tight, and a sudden pleading happiness in her tone.

"I don't have to go away now, John. My 'other man' has come to me. Don't you understand, dearest—don't you understand?"

"Huh?" It was the only word he could utter, as he stood there staring

at her, his arms flat at his sides, his lips open, his expression one of combined anger, dismay and wonderment. The soft arms tightened still more about his neck.

"Kiss me, John—please!"

"Hardly."

"But don't you understand? I was just trying to make you say the things you did say—it was the only way I could think to do it. Don't you see? I didn't know any other way in the world to make you quarrel with me, to forget that eternal counting to a hundred before you'd ever answer, to—"

"John, please—won't you kiss me? I don't love anyone in the world but you. I swear it—nobody in the world, John. Don't you see? I—I—"

Then the tears came—"I just couldn't stand it any—any more."

"Stand it—stand what?"

"Why—why, everything, John. You just can't endure things forever without salt and pepper. It isn't natural. It—it just got on my nerves until I thought I'd go crazy. I—"

"What's the—?" Frank amazement was his now. "I don't understand you—can't make you out, Medaine. Salt and pepper—?"

"Just what I mean, John. Put your arms around me, won't you please? Please, John?" She caught a hand and raised it to her shoulder, where it hung a moment, then dropped limply. But he did not resist her now, as he had done a moment before. "Tell me, John—"

"Is this the first time you've ever thought me spineless?"

He shook his head, saying silently what he would not say in words. It seemed to please her. She kissed him.

"And haven't you wondered often how on earth you ever married me? Haven't you wondered if I really had enough spirit to even have a quarrel with a tradesman? Haven't you, John? I've thought that about you—wondered how on earth you managed to transact your business, how you ever got the backbone even to discharge an employee. You've never shown it at home. I've tried to nuzzle you, anger you—and all you did was count to a hundred."

"That was our bargain." He said it somewhat grudgingly.

"Just the trouble—just what hurt me, that you'd stay by a silly bargain like that, John," she looked at him quickly, "during the time we've been married, have you really been happy?"

"I?" he paused. His lips pressed tight for an instant. Then: "If you want the frank truth—I haven't."

"Why?"

"Again a pause. Then:

"Oh, never mind."

"But I want to know, is it for the same reason that I haven't been happy—because everything has been just the same, just the regular monotony of sugar, sugar, sugar all the time and never a bit of bitter-sweet? Is that the reason, John? And I have been unhappy, John. I've known every minute what you were going to do. I knew the minute you were going to leave home, the minute you would telephone me, the minute you'd get here at night, and what you'd talk about at the dinner table. I knew to a dot what you'd do and say and how you'd act. And, John—a woman may say she wants that, but she doesn't. She wants a husband who'll be good to her most of the time, but who now and then—well, who won't. We can't be superhuman, John. It isn't in us. You've been on time to dinner for ten years. I haven't even had the excitement of scolding you for being late."

"I—?" Then, as if with an inspiration, she looked at him—"John, did you ever notice how an electrical storm clears the air? And how sultry it has been beforehand? We've never even had the chance to know how beautiful things can be after the clouds have gone. We've had nothing but sunshine—until it's blinded us and we haven't been able to see anything!"

Then she halted—suddenly beaming. A light of understanding had come into the eyes of John Carrington. The tired expression faded, to give way to one which Medaine had not seen in years. Slowly his arms raised and clasped about the form of his wife. He kissed her—slowly, as one who tastes long at a sweet he is loath to leave.

Ten years seemed to have rolled away, ten drab uneventful years which now bore no more importance in retrospect than the flatness of monotonous plains. A soft hand touched his temple and lingered there.

"We've just been driftwood, John."

He nodded and kissed her again. Then, like a streak, he turned from her and bounded up the stairs. Wondering, she heard him fumbling about in an upper room, banging at drawers and uttering strange things under his breath. A grunt. Another. Louder. Then:

"Medaine," came in bellowing tones, yet ones which seemed strangely fraught with happiness, "where in thunder are my pongee shirts?"

In the room below, Medaine smiled—the smile of a woman who has fought and won. She whirled toward the stairs and called snappily, yet with a glint of merriment in her eyes.

"Right where they've always been," came her explosive announcement, "right in the third drawer of the chiffonier. If you'll only take the time to look for them!"

Five minutes later a caller stepped on the veranda of the Carrington home. It was inevitable that he should glance through the window, to see within the living room two persons sitting before a driftwood blaze, hands together, arms about each others' shoulders, two radiant sweethearts watching the flickering of the flames. The caller sighed in envy.

"They've got the system," he announced to himself as he rang the bell. "Happiest darned couple in town."

FARM POINTERS

The new Carleton oat developed at the O. A. C. Experiment station has proved to be immune to covered smut as well as the most prolific bearer. The average for nine years at the Moro branch station was 49.8 bushels an acre—better than sixty-day and Swedish select, the varieties commonly grown and heretofore the best yielders.

Growing purple vetch for seed to sell to California orchardists for cover crops is an established industry in some parts of Oregon. Being plowed down when grown in the California orchards, the vetch cannot produce seed, so a new supply has to be bought every time a sowing is made. This makes a steady demand for the seed at good prices.

Infectious abortion of dairy cows, a disease estimated to cause an annual loss of some 2 million dollars, has been entirely eliminated from some herds by application of the blood tests conducted by the experiment station. Attempts are now under way to clean up entire communities. No cure is known but methods of spread are and control is possible. A new station bulletin tells how.

Ten important advantages of crop rotation are listed by the O. A. C. Experiment station soils department in a new bulletin, "Crop Rotation and Soil Fertility." As practiced at the station it doubled the average yield of beans over a 14-year period and greatly simplified the problems of best use of labor and water.

Sunflower silage lacks in palatability but has almost the same feeding value measured in milk yields as corn silage. The sunflower crop yielded the best tonnage an acre over a series of years, with oats vetch second and corn third.

COUNTY STATISTICS

Malheur County Real Estate Transactions Recorded During Week of June 9 to 16

Bert Lawrence et ux to W. R. Lofton-SE 1/4 NW 1/4 Sec. 10-12-23. \$5-12-23. \$1100.

Hazel S. Fenton et vir to F. J. Fitzer-Lots 2, 3, and 4 Block 107, Ontario. 6-9-23. \$100.

Fred W. Falconer et ux to Northwest Livestock Company-NE 1/4 and NE 1/4 Sec. 35-16-47. 5-31-23. \$1.

U. S. A. to Heirs of Ralph C. Lorenz-SE 1/4 Sec. 31 and W 1/2 Sec. 32-16-37. 4-9-23.

U. S. A. to Charles F. Hager-SE 1/4 Sec. 13-17-46. 3-14-23.

H. Lee Noe Sheriff to Bank of Jordan Valley- NW 1/4 NW 1/4, S 1/2 NW 1/4 and N 1/2 SW 1/4 Sec. 28-28-46. 5-17-23. \$2,935.42. (Redemption Certificate).

Geo. E. Davis to S. J. Bean-E 1/2 S 1/4, SW 1/4 SE 1/4, SE 1/4 SW 1/4 Sec. 13 also strip 12 rods wide off S. side of NE 1/4 SW 1/4 Sec. 13, also strip 15 rods wide off S. side NW 1/4 SE 1/4 Sec. 13-18-45. 3-1-23. \$100.

Charles G. Pinney et ux to Harry E. Butler-Lots 1 and 2 Block 21, Ontario. 6-9-23. \$800.00.

Robert Odell to J. G. Lamberson- 16, Block 20, Ontario. 4-7-23. \$10.

H. Lee Noe, Sheriff to E. L. Hamilton-N 1/2 NE 1/4, SE 1/4 NE 1/4 Sec. 13-5-44.

Kate Fiser et vir to B. L. Bull- 1/4 Sec. 11-13-19. \$1500.

Mary B. Bly to Edwin G. Wilson- W 1/4 E 1/2 SE 1/4 and E 1/2 W 1/2 SE 1/4 Sec. 2-18-46. 6-1-23. \$1000.

George H. Gibson to Lewis J. Olson S 1/2 NW 1/4 and N 1/2 SW 1/4 Sec. 12-39. 6-4-23. \$100.

Elsie A. Fairchild to J. T. Hale- E 1/2 SE 1/4 Sec. 8-18-47. 12-5-20. \$100.

T. G. Kelly to Union Central Life Insurance Company, Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 and S 1/2 NW 1/4 Sec. 2-15-40. \$100.

Myrtle L. Petrie to Thomas W. Thurston-Metes & Bounds in Sec. 18-18-45. 4-23-23. \$100.

Marriage Licenses Issued

Oscar J. Pinkston and Ida L. Lawrence 6-12-23.

Gilbert Allen Brown and Cecile Mary Logan 6-16-23.

Herbert C. Ader and Bonnie A. Matheny 6-16-23.

Complaints Filed in Circuit Court

Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco vs. Earl Weaver. 6-11-23. Recovery on Note.

Nyssa Arcadia Drainage District vs. First National Bank of Vale et al. 6-12-23. Injunction.

Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco vs. Trent Johnson et al. 6-12-23. Foreclosure of Mortgage.

W. L. Hutton vs. Ona P. Hathaway et al. 6-13-23. Foreclosure of Mortgage.

Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco vs. J. F. Weaver 6-14-23. Recovery on Note.

Finch, Van Syckin and Mc Connville and Company vs. Rose Moran-

tile Co. 6-14-23. Recovery on Note.

Lee Steers vs. John C. Acton of 6-23-23. Recovery of Money.

Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco vs. Ralph Harvey 6-15-23.

Basche Sage Hardkare Co., vs. Albert C. Lockett 5-16-23. Recovery on Note.

Complaints Filed in County Court

H. W. Steelhammer vs. Chas. W. Parrot Jr., 6-11-23. Recovery on Note.

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