

# Just What Is Reno Like

BY GRACE HEGGER LEWIS

Reno is a phenomenon of America and has a distinct social significance. The recent change in the residence requirement has made it even more popular as a divorce centre. The former wife of a well-known novelist pictures the human side of that interesting city.

WITH each announcement from Paris of another divorce denied or deferred comes the conviction that Reno, Nevada, is the safest place for an American to obtain a legal severing of the marital bond. This decision made, the next bewildering thought is, "What is Reno?"

Until recently women formed eighty per cent of the applicants who came here, and, though that has been reduced to fifty-five, to the eye at least as you walk along the main street—called Virginia—there seems a preponderance of women strangers over men. True, a Reboux hat and a Patou *ensemble* are necessarily a little more striking than the standardized business suit of the American male, but what it really means is that it is far easier for the Paris costume to come out here than for the husband whose Wall Street operations made that costume possible. On the other hand, the clerk making his modest hundred or so a month can better afford to leave his job and find another in Reno while "serving his time" than can his wife with her established household and two children. And because to a man the breaking up of a home rarely suggests quite the catastrophe that it does to a woman, and because from an early age men learn to adapt themselves to a changing environment, Reno

had best be explained from the woman's point of view.

If you have travelled seldom, if you have never been farther west than Hoboken, there is added to the misery of the final step which you have just promised to take the confusion of a long journey into the unknown. Friends, lawyers, and doctors, too (for no sensitive woman can face divorce without a nerve-strain), may give advice and even first-hand information about life in this unique city, but none of it serves quite to eliminate the trepidations about an experience which usually has no precedent.

No matter what the cause which has resulted in the cleavage, the psychology of the women, Reno bound, is significantly alike. Even if, as often happens, your husband-to-be sees you aboard the train with books and flowers and sustaining promises of a new happy future, once the train has started you retire to your seat with tears in your eyes and a feeling of being a marked woman from that moment. When the conductor asks you for your ticket you hand it to him with a sense of shame, and though you may have bought a thrifty round-trip ticket to San Francisco, nevertheless the Pullman ticket is inscribed Reno, and should the conductor note the fact in a loud voice, you cower a little or

look impersonally out of the window as if the ticket were no affair of yours. If you are all alone, without mother, child, friend, or maid, your aloneness increases with every day. A spirit of adventure may buoy you up for a while, but as Wyoming mountains succeed Nebraska plains you realize there will be no dear familiar faces at this journey's end—you are on your own, for better, for worse.

The trains from the east and the trains from the west all arrive in and depart from Reno in the dark hours. You hope to descend unobserved, but a number of men passengers are walking up and down the platform for a breather, and when they see your luggage being piled up by the porter you at once become a person of interest.

"There goes one of them," you overhear. You begin to feel as if you had an infectious disease.

It is not so bad when your lawyer or the friend of a friend is there to welcome you, but suppose you are alone? The hotel bus, where is it? . . . There are two other people already in it. You look at them surreptitiously. They, also? As in a nightmare all things are out of focus, even the Reno porter and the bus-driver. . . . Weeks later, when your life has become pleasantly adjusted, you pay a visit to the railway station. A nice station, a cheerful station, certainly not the one at which you alighted that sinister first night.

There are a number of good hotels, but you have been told to choose the newest one. The hall is bright and modern and welcoming, the bellboys uniformed and polite. The night clerk accepts your arrival as a matter of course, and you sign yourself Mrs. G. H. Smith, New York—the initials are

your own, not your husband's, and somehow a compromise with the future. You enter a charming bedroom, agreeable in color and comfort. It is still cold and the bellboy demonstrates with enthusiasm the working of a tiny thermostat.

"Push this way for 'on' and 'warm,' and this way for 'off' and 'cool.'"

"S-s-s-s-s-s-s!" goes the thermostat, eager to oblige.

"I should so like a bath. Is there hot water at this hour?"

"You bet!" and he turns on a steaming faucet.

"Can I have breakfast in my room?"

"You bet! Just call room-service."

"Thank you. Good night."

"You b— Good night!"

The next morning is always the next morning, thank heaven! If the sun is shining, and it sunshines with more than a fair frequency in Nevada, there is something very exciting and hopeful about looking out of the windows and seeing mountains everywhere, some snow-capped and aloof, and others violet and blue and bare and humped like sleeping elephants. And in the foreground the important little Truckee River rushes by on its business of irrigating the arid land, and a half-dozen white edifices proclaim themselves public buildings by their look of impersonality. There are no leaves on the trees now, but here's a park and there's another—how pretty it must be in the summer-time! Perhaps it won't be so bad after all. You decide not to think until after breakfast.

The orange juice and the coffee and the toast are all good. You are actually happy at this moment. After months of nerve-tattering indecision to find your-

self here at last is a positive relief. You feel remote and safe. No one can touch you for a little while. You are no longer a situation, a case; you belong to yourself again. No telephones, not even many letters, for you told so few people you were coming.

The morning paper seems a bit slim after *The Times*, but then what paper wouldn't! If you have travelled a great deal you know the local advertisements will reveal as adequately as any Baedeker the size and quality of the town. Five movie houses and a preference for Wild West films. No spoken drama apparently, or concerts. "Professional cards" of lawyers, chiropractors, spiritualists, and beauty culturists. Ranches and poultry and wedding-rings for sale. "Drive-It-Yourself" cars and "Used Not Abused" automobiles.

And the impressive list of furnished rooms and apartments, "three months or longer" and "close to the court-house." Obviously there are other ways of living than in this hotel. Perhaps you had better see first what the town has to offer.

If you are met by your lawyer, he and his wife will be most kind and help you to get settled as quickly as possible. But perhaps you have not yet chosen your Reno representative or you want to put off the committing moments of that first interview. (In parenthesis I may say—see your lawyer at once. Fears are laid and doubts removed and time saved, and the casualness with which he treats what to you has been a solitary and tragic instance makes you feel consolingly commonplace.)

It requires not a little courage to make that first trip down-stairs, though if there is mail for you it is something to have gained stature in the eyes of the

clerk. "Just where is my mail box?" you ask. . . . Later, so well do you know the exact position of 217, you can see if it is full or empty at fifty feet.

The residential section seems to lie to the right, and so does an imposing building with Corinthian columns and broad steps, which must be the court-house. Your court-house where your case will be tried. You feel quite possessive about it. In a paper shop you buy a small map of Reno and get the lay of the streets so as to answer the advertisements.

Your first call is upon a large, old-fashioned residence. The landlady has a drug-store prettiness rather dazzling in the morning sunlight; she is most affable and shows you the vacancy. The doors inside seem many because they are all numbered. Does each number conceal a waiting woman, counting three months, two months, one month more? Number 6 on the second floor is thrown open. Mission furniture, deliriously shaded lamps, a little kitchen, and a not too modern bathroom.

"And the bed-room?"

"Right here," and with a deft movement the landlady seizes a knob and what has seemed like a combination desk, bookcase and "whatnot," staggers toward you, and there is a folding bed. This Victorian horror has come back to the Middle and the Far West, but so changed for the better, so much more compact and sanitary, that after seeing a half dozen of the better types the first prejudice weakens. . . . Then follow clean rooms, dirty rooms, overfurnished and underfurnished, and newly erected apartments, but all with kitchenettes more or less well equipped. (Cooking is one of the recognized ways of passing the time in Reno. Also cooks are few

and rather expensive.) You even look at a few houses and half-houses.

At last back to Virginia Street, which at first glance is like the Main Street of any Middle Western town, until you lift up your eyes to the hills—and to the second-story windows upon which are gold-lettered an extraordinary number of lawyers' names (there are over eighty in this city of sixteen thousand) and companies selling mining stock. Flower shops and beauty parlors and displays of black chiffon nightgowns suggest a demand which is being supplied. A lordly Rolls-Royce, driven by a foreign chauffeur, is parked by a muddy Ford, held together by faith and a piece of string, out of which steps a cowboy in overalls, high-heeled boots, and a two-gallon hat. A fat Indian woman, in wide pink gingham skirts and a purple plaid shawl, with a papoose strapped to her back, stands giggling at the Nile-green "braziers" and brief panties. Four girls with pretty bare heads and pretty almost-bare knees are exchanging wisecracks with four youths in cream-colored corduroy trousers—the co-eds from the State University on the edge of town. Reno's latest resident begins to take heart—this is a place with character, with color, and, you are suddenly conscious, with air to make you hungry.

The hotel dining-room and the lounge are one, which gives an individuality to both that is rather charming. The linen, silver, and glass shine, and the elderly waiter is benign. There is a moderately priced table d'hôte, but why not try something local, or at least Californian? . . . Abalone of course, the abalone of the songs of George Sterling and Jack London.

"Have you any fresh vegetables?"

"How about some cauliflower or a

hot artichoke? And a little mixed salad first while your fish is frying?"

"Cauliflower, I think. . . . No, no coffee now. Perhaps after."

While you are eating your salad, which is always served first out here—a rather unvarying combination of lettuce, a celery stalk, two unripe olives and three ripe ones, a segment of pickle, three points of tinned asparagus, and perhaps a scattering of crab flakes—the waiter asks you if you are here for the "cure."

"The what?"

"'Cure,' that's what they call it, being here for three months. . . . Did you ever eat abalone before? . . . I like fish myself. Used to work in a fish house in San Francisco, and you'd be surprised to know how many kinds of fish you really can eat. I bet you've never eaten octopus? You have! In Italy? Is that so! Well, when I tell most folks what a really tasty fish it is, they just won't believe me."

All the morning you have been wilfully fleeing from thought, but when the radio plays something which might be "After My Laughter Come Tears" sung in a sobbing baritone to a saxophone obbligato, you find yourself plunging out of the dining-room and into the elevator and asking faintly for your floor. Now is the time to call up whatever names have been given you before you left, or to send around by hand your letters of introduction. For at some minute during that first day there is going to sweep over you the realization of the inevitability of what you are about to do, and that whether you like it or not, in Reno you must stay for the next three months. You hear the whistle of the train, but that train is not yours to take. The mail planes swoop over the mountains to the Pacific and the At-

lantic, motor-cars are headed for Oregon and Arizona, but unless you wish to extend the length of your stay in Washoe County you must obey the law which says: "Legal residence is defined as being that place where the person shall have been actually, physically, and corporeally present within the State or county, as the case may be, during all the period for which such residence is claimed."

So, I repeat, rush to the telephone, scribble notes to the friends of friends, and as a few hours later you are drinking tea or dining with a stranger who so very quickly ceases to be a stranger, your first bad moments are over. There will be others, of course, but none in which you quite so seriously weigh the advantages of the cup of hemlock versus a leap into the conveniently close Truckee River.

At that first tea you remark the resemblance to your first tea at a European spa. Instead of asking, "Who is your doctor?" you inquire "Who is your lawyer?" Then: "How long have you been here? Where are you staying? Do you feel the altitude? Are your rooms sunny? Are you sleeping well? Have you an appetite? Where are the best restaurants? Can you get a decent shingle? How do you amuse yourself all day? Is there any night life?"

Then some one says: "How did you register? What? As Mrs. G. H. Smith of *New York*? Oh, you have lost *one day!* Go right down at once and ask the clerk to let you change that to Reno, or you'll lose another day of your three months."

As now you ask these questions with intense interest, so later do you proudly answer them when the next newcomer appears. There is a universal freemasonry, a breaking-down of social bar-

riers, a sympathy which has not a chance to grow cold because the time is so short and the arrivals and departures so frequent.

"Are you settled?"

That, for your peace of mind, you must be as soon as possible. If you are alone and can afford it, the best place to stay is at a hotel. The new one has been planned to include one-room apartments comfortably and attractively furnished, with a let-down bed that in the day successfully hides behind silk-curtained French doors. This large room has a dining-room recess and a kitchenette with an air-cooled ice-box, large electric stove, cupboards, and all manner of tucked-out-of-sight conveniences which even to the woman who does not like to housekeep, cry out to be used. The hotel supplies you with pretty china, glassware (even cocktail glasses), silver, kitchen utensils, and linen daily renewed. This arrangement is not only adequate but rather fun, like playing house, especially for the lone woman who heretofore has had the responsibility of a large ménage. For her who brings a relative or a friend, little children and nurses and governesses, it is a simple matter to enlarge her apartment by engaging adjoining bed-rooms. If she herself does not want to cook, local people can be had in by the day to prepare one or more meals. Of course if the family is sizable it is much more economical to take a house or a part of a house, for the rents are not high. In either case, if you have a devoted cook who would follow you into exile, bring her by all means. She will be appreciated by both you and your friends.

One almost unvarying development of a week's sojourn in Reno is the shyly expressed desire to economize by even the most extravagant.

"I can see no reason for keeping my maid here. I think I'll send her back, give up the two bed-rooms, and use that funny let-down thing. I hear they are quite comfortable. . . . You know I used to rather like to cook. Coffee and toast in the morning I could certainly achieve, and even an egg for lunch. I think this would be a marvellous place to diet. . . . As a matter of fact I brought only my oldest clothes, and I am going to wear them all out and leave them behind when I go. I think I'll even go light on the lipstick and let the poor old face have a rest."

Three days later this same woman is seen coming out of the Piggly Wiggly with a bag of groceries under each arm, and one week later she is asking you to dinner, and with an excited face and rolled-up sleeves she serves you a properly seasoned soup and a steak of a rareness and a thickness unknown to the Far West,—and a chocolate soufflé! "My dears, quick! before it falls!"

"How do you amuse yourself all day?"

After you have unpacked, rearranged the furniture, added your framed pictures, cigarette boxes, travelling clock, cushions, and books, and bought flower-vases at the "five-and-ten" and filled them, to sit with hands folded in your lap seems the most desirable entertainment in the world. But your new-found friends are sewing—tapestry, underclothes, rompers for a faraway nephew—and you become aware of your idle fingers. And when these women are not sewing they are riding horseback, playing golf and tennis, taking clogging or ukulele lessons, studying French, Italian, Spanish. There are baths where you can bake happily in electric ovens and be rubbed with the Mormon salt of

the great lake of Utah, or a masseuse will bring sleep to you on those bad nights we all dread.

When you have an odd moment you can have your fortune told by the stars, the cards, the palm of your hand, or by clairvoyancy, or by way of semi—or dead—trances. This necromancy is especially adapted to the ninety-day-resident point of view, for there are always mysterious allusions to papers, delays, money contests, and speedy remarriages.

"Now is your hardest time, dearie, but money and sunshine and roses are ahead. . . . *You* won't need to advertise for a man! But what's this knave of clubs? Three times he has come up. That mean anything to you, girl?"

"No, I don't like dark men."

"We-e-ell, he's not so very dark—not as dark as the knave of spades. . . . Come again—four-bits, 'please."

Those who are not keen about riding and walking have been glad that they have shipped a motor in advance of their arrival. The roads are splendid, even the desert roads, and with a picnic-basket along there are dozens of possible objective points, though of course more in the summer than in the winter when the snows close the trails through the mountains. Once away from Virginia Street, you can still find the West of the 1870's. At this very moment there is a Gold Rush on in Wahmonie, that reminds the old-timers of the three great camps of Tonopah, Goldfield, and Cripple Creek. So fast has this district grown that they have already petitioned Washington for a post-office.

Just a few miles from Reno is the famous Virginia City, where were made the fortunes of a number of our Eastern millionaires. To see one's first mining town, even a deserted one, is to receive an absolutely new sensation. It is

like nothing else but itself. Approach Silver City, another mining settlement five miles from Virginia City, by way of Carson, the capital. You leave the sagebrush desert, climb a slow grade to a hilltop, and there, without warning, you behold an explosion of the earth into cones of every color, with wooden shanties scattered like driftwood amid unfamiliar structures and rusted machinery for which you have no name. You draw nearer with an excitement which dies down into uneasy silence as you climb farther up the steep main street. Lace curtains still clothe the windows, dark gray wash flutters from the lines, a door whines upon its hinges. Where are the threads of smoke, the cries of little children? You are grateful when a dog slinks out from beneath a sagging porch, but he does not bark. Gone, gone is that community of tens of thousands that dug silver ore worth millions out of those blue and yellow and rose pointed hills.

Virginia City beyond is still alive, though its vast numbers have been reduced to eight hundred or so. But boys and girls are tumbling out of school, and the motor-bus is making ready for its descent down the perilous Geiger Grade over which competitions used to be held between the Wells Fargo stage and the Pacific Line Express as to which would make the twenty-one miles between Virginia City and Reno in the better time. It had been done in one hour and five minutes, they said, though you risked your life and your horses to do it. Sixty years ago if a miner wanted a bath he had to pay one dollar a gallon for water, which had to be hauled nine miles, and eggs often fetched a dollar each. Yet in 1878 the International Hotel (burned these ten years) served a twelve-course Christmas dinner, be-

ginning with turtle soup with old sherry and ending with "fancy ornamental cake," and with a wine list to choose from that contained Château Yquem and Oregon cider. And the thrilling thing is that all these tales seem plausible and not remote as you stand talking to some old miner in front of the Crystal Bar. He is not a bored attendant in a museum; Virginia City is his home, and perhaps he'll join you at this famous old bar in a glass of near-beer instead of a whiskey punch or a brandy sling.

If after emerging from your first inertia you want to see more of Western life than a visit to Virginia City provides, a week on a dude ranch is full of novelty for the tenderfoot. Nevada has been slower than Wyoming in developing this form of outdoor sport, so there are only a few ranches near Reno which take guests. One there is in particular near glorious Pyramid Lake where the cheerful and kindly owner and his wife will feed you and sleep you, and mount you on docile little horses, and answer your silly questions, and lend you "chaps," and even take you on the rounding up of the cattle. Indeed, if you don't spend a few days on some ranch before leaving Reno, you will return to your home wondering if the Cowboy West still exists.

And what of the evenings in town?

For those women who wish to live quietly, who are using these three months to re-establish tranquillity in their souls and renew strength in their bodies, the evenings mean reading and early to bed. But if a congenial group is formed they put on their black chiffon dinner-dresses or rose chiffon tea-gowns (if they be all living in the same hotel) and take turns dining with each

other. It all seems rather like boarding-school again with small dinners instead of fudge parties.

On the other hand, there is a night life, an all-night life. Said one proud native son: "This place is a regular little Monte Carlo. Most any kind of game and most any kind of drink. When it comes right down to it we have most of the entertainment to offer you can find in any other big city." More, I should say, for it all still has a local flavor, and there is a cheerful openness about it that is a relief after the furtive hip-pocket gaiety of "those other big cities."

My first introduction to a bar was under what might almost be called Y. W. C. A. auspices. One restaurant I had come to patronize frequently for dinner (I had a cook who came only for lunch) because the proprietor appreciated my appreciation of food, and rather liked ordering me something "extra special." This evening five women were dining with me, dining most "extra special."

"I wonder if you ladies would care for a little drink before dinner—on the house, of course," said Louis, the proprietor, leaning over me in a fatherly way. "No, not here, but at my club. We could go now while you are waiting for the quail." Thrilled, the six women followed the kindly little man down the street, he seemingly delighted rather than embarrassed by his harrem.

The club proved to be a shop, and then an empty room, and then a door, and then a hall, and then a door, and then the bar. A real bar, a mahogany bar, a foot-rail bar, a bar with shining assorted glasses and bottles and pretzels and a great mirror and a lovely painted nude and a row of slot-machines in which by inserting a quarter or a four-

bit piece or a silver dollar, you might get back some of the shining accumulation of other people's bad luck.

Said Louis, the *beau chevalier*: "Say, I put in four-bits for you." Round spun the dial, a pause, then a roar, and out tumbled \$2.50!

"Let's try another slot!—and another and another," and soon the \$2.50 had gone back, as usual, to the gentleman who rents these machines all over town.

Road-houses there are also, from an elaborately urban one to the simplest of dance-halls. The urban one runs rather to gold paint and dim lights, but the dancing and singing are good, you can win or lose at roulette, twenty-one, and craps, and you can be as gay or as quiet as you like. . . . Undoubtedly there are people in Reno who prefer sleeping in the day rather than at night, but that, as in any community in any part of the world, is a matter of taste and endurance. Nevada has a climate suitable to both.

Inevitably with such a constantly changing society, the surface life of Reno takes on the aspect of a summer or winter resort. Everlasting gossip, and a positive riot of speculation when a noticeably attractive new man appears. Is he alone, is he getting a divorce, is he somebody's "sweetie"? That will somehow be answered within twenty-four hours. No man need be lonely here, or a pretty woman either if she is the "good fellow" type and takes the world as it comes. Unless a man has a job he is apt to find time hanging rather heavier on his hands than do the women. Frequently he will try to sell automobiles on commission, and, as the result, when a new woman arrives at the hotels she is bom-

berded the first few days by agreeable male voices asking her over the telephone if they cannot possibly give her a demonstration this lovely afternoon in this or that car. Obviously this often leads to a temporary friendship, if not to the sale of a car. . . . Nor are the friendships made here always temporary. Women have come to divorce and remained to stay—have married their lawyers and their doctors, and seemingly have found life as a Reno tax-payer enjoyable. Bridge is enormously important, whether preceded by lunch or dinner, and if you like the game and are properly introduced by your lawyer's wife, as often happens, Reno will make you welcome in her homes.

The social order? There is no social order. You who would disdain to listen to your servants' gossip at home, find yourself entranced by the remarks of your housemaid as she tidies your room each morning. The maid is quite likely to be a nurse in training, earning some extra money to finish her course, or she may be from New York, too, working her way while she gets her divorce. She sympathizes with you acutely when you have had a bad night, for she also may have had a bad night and for much the same reasons. You are delighted to know that the noise down the hall last night was a wedding—"divorced at seven and married at eight. Oh, my, yes, that often happens." . . . "And Charlie, the soda-water clerk, the tall dark one, has just married Mrs. Brown's Swiss governess, and they were afraid to tell her for fear she'd stop it. They're going to live in Los Angeles." . . . "Didn't you know the housekeeper had been fired? Partly because when she saw a 'Do Not Disturb' sign on the door she just had to know *who* was not to be disturbed."

One of the maids had been the best girl bronco-buster in Nevada, and she had silver spurs and a tooled Spanish saddle to prove it. A more tender, loyal person than this "buckeroo" there never was, who worried about certain of her "ladies" when they were ill or depressed as if they were her own children.

This particular West, at least, still has a real democracy, which is only vaguely conscious of social distinctions. A garage assistant may be the best golf-player at the country-club. At the most fashionable night-club you will find yourself playing roulette beside your hairdresser, who remarks: "Your hair is certainly looking better for those treatments." We had our favorite waiter at one of the cafés, and, the *pièce de résistance* chosen, he would take pleasure in surprising us with the etcetera. After a few weeks of his service we had our little family jokes. He was a man of sixty, a deft waiter, and so thoughtful. One evening he said to a charming woman whose husband was a great banker: "Just think of me talking to you like this in the East. It wouldn't have been possible, and that's why I came out here and why I stayed. I'm a man here. I wasn't in the East."

The newest hotel is adjacent to the court-house. If your apartment is on the court-house side, to you, in your morbid state when you arrive, it seems like living in death-row with your eyes always on the death-chamber. You learn that those two whitely opaque windows on the second floor hide the two judges on their separate benches, and that one of them will eventually pass sentence upon you.

Monday is Divorce Day—the day for trying uncontested cases. You wake up to see an unusually long line of cars

parked at an angle on both sides of the broad street. Groups of two and three women are seen ascending the court-house steps, the most nervous one the plaintiff, the others a friend and the landlady who must swear to the fact that the plaintiff has been residing under her roof for the full three months.

The average uncontested case takes no more than fifteen minutes. It is one of the sources of amusement in Reno to attend court Monday morning, but the first time you witness the simplicity with which an uncontested case is conducted and the speed with which it is dismissed, you think: "Is it possible that this is the culmination of months, years, of misery and wracking indecision, and of the nervous fears of the last ninety days?"

Cases are frequently heard in small rooms, but technically this is regarded as open court the same as if heard in the larger chambers, and since the door is left ajar any one may enter—if he very much wishes.

Later on a Monday morning the same groups come down the court-house steps, usually smiling, even hysterically laughing, and often accompanied by a future husband.

The husband-to-be of the divorcée-to-be has a certain funny-paper humor for the spectators. He makes his appearance in Reno from one day to three months before the granting of the decree. I remember one afternoon sitting in a booth having my hair washed and observing across the way a great mound of a woman submitting luxuriously to what seemed like a tiny lawn-mower being run over her face and shoulders which were shining with grease.

"Whatever is being done to her?" I asked.

"That's a contouration facial," my

shampooer answered, with the hauteur of the initiated.

At that instant a small and elderly man edged down the narrow passage, and outside the now closely curtained booth opposite he paused and called softly: "Yoo-hoo."

An arm swept back the curtain, the mammoth lady smiled, and the small gentleman tenderly leaned over and kissed her cold-creamed cheek, and murmured, "See you later, darling," and was gone.

I caught my operator grinning. "Yesterday he gave her a permanent wave and to-day the facial. This morning she got her divorce, and to-night they got married."

To me this was a romance founded on realism, and I prophesy that they will live happy ever afterward.

When you ask the permanent residents of Reno just what effect this daily contact with the divorce colony has upon their private lives, they will say, "None." It is true the abnormal sustained can become the normal, but what a strange normal it is! It is normal for the benevolent hotel manager to see freshly arrived women on the verge of tears changing their minds and their apartments three times the first week. It is too hot, too cold, too high, too low, too small, too large, too quiet, too noisy. Patiently he will show another arrangement, for he knows the manifestations so well. The doctors are only too familiar with the effects of worry, loneliness, and altitude. They can divide your symptoms and recovery neatly into weeks. The beauty parlor attendants prescribe for the inevitable lifeless hair and dry skin, and throw in a kind word or two which looses a flood-gate of confidences. "I know, I

know," they'll say, "we've been through the mill ourselves." No father confessor has listened to greater intimacies than do the masseuses. And before your three months are up you in turn will be the repository of the marital secrets of many of those who serve you. Bellboys and telephone operators and room-service waiters, as well as the housemaids, may be three-month-job-holders, and if you are sympathetic you will hear their stories, too.

When it comes time to pay your last bill at the grocer, does he bow politely and say: "Thank you, madam, for your patronage"? No, he holds out a friendly hand, you shake, and he smiles: "Pleasant journey! Better luck next time!"

It is a divorce atmosphere, say what the residents will, and there is no getting away from it.

"Are you not depressed by this never-ending stream of unhappy men and women flowing past you?" I inquired of one of the judges.

He smiled with great sweetness, and said: "No, because so often the judgment I hand down means freedom to be happy once more. My mail is full of letters from people who have been here and who write me of their new-found joys. What more can a judge ask for?" And that is an angle which must not be overlooked!

Because the three-months divorce law has been in operation less than two years it is still a source of discussion as to whether or not the State is satisfied with the change, and whether or not it will bring back the six-months requirement. However, since the new law has

gone into effect the number of cases has more than doubled, and as Paris is increasingly regarded as a City of Doubt for divorcing aliens, there is no reason to believe that Nevada will repeal.

Barely have you made friends before you begin to lose them. "I get my divorce *next Monday!* I can't believe it! But I bought my ticket to-day." Perhaps you will see her poring over the steamship news and checking off sailings to Europe. "My dear, I have just invested in a new hat—I simply have to have on something new when I step off the train."

Then the day, or rather the night, of departure is here, for those who are going east usually take the 9.25. Her friends give her a farewell dinner, and then *en masse* escort her to the railway station. The train pulls in. Books, boxes, mysterious white tissue-paper packages, are tucked in her arms. "You will write!" "Of course, we'll meet again!" "We shall miss you so!" "Do telephone mother that I am quite well and happy now."

All over the platform are other such groups. The corsage bouquets are not needed to single out the lucky ones who are leaving. The train moves. Some one on the platform dances up and down and waves her arms. "See you in a week! Just one more week!" Another looks rather near tears—two months seem very far away.

A strange railway-station this; like no other in the world. Said some one, with sardonic pleasantry: "You come in with the tied and go out with the untied."