

"It's a long time since I've met the other two who are coming this afternoon," says the hostess, "but I believe they are very good players."

She looks round smilingly and finds that this remark does not meet with success.

*The Other Two.* There is momentary pause, broken by the arrival, or, rather, the appearance, of the other two. They whirl in with a professional air of hurry, hardly stopping to greet their hostess, and deposit rackets, shoes, cases, coats, scarves, and sweaters in an astonishing pile. She has a firm jaw and muscular arms, and her pleated skirt is cut well above the knee. He is immaculate and bored.

Conversation dwindles as they take off sweaters and put on coats in a business-like manner.

"Well," says the hostess at last, bursting in where angels fear to tread, "how would it be if you two good players each took one of the others who don't play quite so well? That would make a very good game."

She faltered at the end of the sentence as she met their stony stare.

"I'm sorry, but we always play together," says the champion, adjusting her canary-coloured bandeau, "but of course if the others are not up to form that will be very unequal—it puts me off absolutely, but it cannot be helped. Will you toss for side?" she concludes, giving her racket some fierce preliminary swings.

*The Game.* The game begins in silence. The sunburnt girl serves two double faults, and giggles, and begins: "I'm awfully sorry, but I haven't —."

Her partner interrupts by telling her curtly to beware of Miss X.'s crossdrives.

On the other side of the net Miss X. is trying to be calm while her partner, nervously poaching, spoils her best shots and misses his own, and when it is too late shouts "Yours!" in stentorian tones.

There is a strained silence at the end of the set and still more strained smiles as the combatants return from the court.

"I'm so sorry you have to go," says the hostess a few minutes later. "I'd no idea you had to play somewhere else. You must come and have another game some time—it makes a delightful break, doesn't it?"

The sunburnt maiden helped herself to a large piece of cake.

"I'm afraid I played awfully badly," she apologised "but I simply haven't played for ages!"

"Nor have I," said he, "but it's jolly good fun—if people wouldn't take it so frightfully seriously!"

(*The Star.*)



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