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curtsy, graceful despite the brevity of her wet skirt.

"Thank you, thank you, Mr. Walker! I've been a cowardly little sample of effete civilization, a mere remnant of Grandmother's maxims! Watch me put your counsel to the test—and don't be surprised or frightened at anything you may see or hear!"

With a swift, swooping motion she was across the float, and for a moment she poised above the river like some exquisite bird, ready for flight. I was still protesting, when I heard her reassuring laugh flung back at me like a parting message, and a moment later her high, musical whistle cut clean through the noise of many voices and the lapping tide. Standing there on the edge of the dark water, I watched her small head and the flash of her arms as she swam outward.

AT the sound of that sweet, clear whistle I saw Tony Wade turn his head as though startled, and I wondered if he recognized it. But his companion demanded all his attention—suddenly she seemed to have become ignorant and helpless! I believe that she belongs to the class of women who would traffic an immortal soul to obtain the undivided attention of men, of all men!

As it happened, I knew more of her than I had cared to acknowledge to Elizabeth Lee; for I knew a man who had once loved her with his whole soul, whom she had used and played with and deceived and discarded, the last at a time when he was ill and in trouble financially. The story was not mine to tell; but it had made its imprint on my mind.

It was growing late; most of the bathers had gone home. After the long, hot day a little wind whirled gaily from the west. Nearby I could hear the blond woman talking to Tony; then suddenly from far out in the river came a shrill scream, a woman crying for help.

Instantly there was confusion behind me, the attendants of the place calling to one another, a medley of profanity. I realized that there was trouble launching the boat kept on hand in case of accidents. I was enraged with myself because I could not swim, and that I was not much more proficient with the oars; in short, that I was a Miss Nancy scribbling professor, and not a man, like Tony.

Being a very stupid person, it did not immediately dawn upon me that there was any connection between Elizabeth Lee's last speech to me and that cry for help.

Then I heard a woman's shrill protest nearby. "Tony, are you going to leave me to drown?"

Wade's voice answered, a curious disdain in it. "You've been faking all the afternoon—the fiends alone know why! Somebody out there is really in danger, and I am going to help her. You can get to shore alone perfectly well."

At that I found myself laughing and thankful nobody heard me; for out in the river I saw the dot that was Elizabeth's head, and remembered her impish mirth and her admonition that I was not to be frightened by anything I heard or saw.

With a queer mixture of relief and irritation I watched Tony swim mightily straight toward that dot on the rippling water, now gleaming in the late sunlight.

I saw the angry face of Tony's blond as three minutes later she climbed the steps of the bathhouse. There was no doubt that she could swim magnificently, when she could no longer hold a man at her side by the ancient appeal of helplessness.

Yet I realized that she had not recognized Elizabeth's whistle. Her anger was impersonal, that of the pure egoist enraged that a stranger even in dire need should interfere with her mere whim. By which token I wondered whether she had as yet annexed the affections of Tony. She had the grace to wait for a moment to watch the lifeboat approach the two figures in the river. Presently they were safely aboard, and the blond disappeared in the bathhouse.

I chuckled to myself. "If you but knew the identity of the little person Tony has just rescued, my lady!"

BUT I was not chuckling a few minutes later. Before they got in I was horrified to see that the girl was lying flat on the bottom of the boat. I waded in beyond my depth, and almost had to be rescued in my turn, playing the part of fool generally. Tony was holding the girl's head on his knee, and he reassured me; but with a face nearly as white as Elizabeth's.

"She was all right when I reached her—kept afloat in spite of that beastly cramp. But when we got her into the boat she fainted."

He carried her up to the middle of the pavilion, somebody brought brandy, and after a long moment her eyes opened. It was Tony who bent over her and spoke in a voice

I had never heard before in all the years I had known him.

"Betty, Betty! Oh, little lost girl, are you quite safe?"

Possessive tenderness and clean man's love were in his eyes. Whatever the cause of their foolish quarrel, no other woman had stolen his heart!

Elizabeth lay still for a moment, looking at him. Then she spoke to me in a soft, weak little voice. "Mr. Walker, I'm sorry I frightened you; but, you see, playing the part of the pursuing woman scared me so that at the last I crumpled to bits. It was lucky that Tony got there in time!"

She smiled at me, her whimsical, boyish smile, and I was glad she did not realize the inner turmoil that shook me.

Wade looked at us both with his honest, uncomprehending eyes; but the girl sat up a little and her face went pink, as if a white rose had miraculously turned crimson.

"I can't play the game through—even to win!" she said suddenly. "Tony, I cheated you! When I called for help I was all right, I had no cramp,—I only wanted you to leave that other woman and come to me,—but when I had called and you came, I wanted to die with shame—and by way of punishment I almost did!"

The crimson flush had faded. She was

THE REAL LOBSTER PALACE

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versation is supposed to consist of a big blue-eyed baby stare terminating with a high kick that sends somebody's silk hat kiting toward the ceiling.

Although what George Ade has termed "Waldorf finance" (that is, the capitalization of the gold-mine ideas that come with the fourth highball) unquestionably figures to some extent in the table conversation of the "lobster palace," I cannot but help believe from long experience, observation, hearing, and participation that the talk one hears in the "lobster palace" is much the same as the talk one hears in the lobby of a hotel in, say, Dayton, Ohio, on the veranda of a summer hotel at Asbury Park, or in the dining room of any hotel in any city above thirty thousand anywhere in the United States. The only difference is that in the "lobster palace" you hear more of it.

AT one table in the "lobster palace" on any night you may hear a man and his wife talk coolly and calmly of the price of food or the lovely house they are planning to buy for ten dollars down and ten dollars a month at Evergreen-on-the-Trolley-Line. At another, you may hear a group of men discussing the pitching record of Mathewson, the fine shirts you can buy at So-and-So's this week at half price, a good cure for a cold in the head, or the sorrowful fact that Ronald Bozenhauser's little son has the measles. And at still another table where a somewhat less conventional coterie of men and women are enjoying a good meal you may overhear a staccato and mixed chattering having to do with what a beautiful girl Mary Umhumum is, and how bad it is she's going to marry that awful young Freddy Slouchsky, or what a shame it is that Mrs. So-and-So is becoming so fat, and how bald her husband is getting lately.

It is not to be denied that a stranger, entering a "lobster palace" for the first time in his life, is duly impressed. He is, however, impressed not so much with what he sees as what he believes he sees. He hears the band playing a lively tune, he observes a crowd of people eating and drinking, he is jostled by a waiter in his flight, and he says to himself, "Ah! here is life!"

Let him go back to his home, light all the lights, ask his daughter to play "That Melodious Rag" loudly on the piano in the next room, and sit down to a midnight supper with his wife—and in reality he will be in intrinsically the same atmosphere; that is, deep down at the bottom. What he sees in the "lobster palace," generally speaking, is only the home scene multiplied by five hundred. There is more of the music, more of the lights, more of a crowd, more color, more food, more drink, more noise; but 'way down deep it's all much the same. You don't believe me? Then remember analogously that a three-ring circus is only a one-ring circus multiplied by three, and that, intrinsically, one is just like the other; that a "lobster palace" is to a restaurant in, say, Louisville, Kentucky, what New York is to Louisville. It is the size that makes the difference, the size and the crowd. A ball is simply you and your best girl dancing a waltz multiplied by one hundred.

The crowd fools you. It takes you off your guard. So the stranger becomes dazzled.

a gallant little figure, facing the man she loved with white cheeks and wide, burning eyes. My heart came up in my throat—and I forgot myself, my own hurt. What would that fool Tony Wade do now? I was conscious of a determination to thrash him if in his literal mindedness he took the wrong turn.

For a long minute he stared at Elizabeth, then he turned swiftly and inquiringly to me. I answered his unspoken question snappily enough.

"Yes, it was a hoax, in the beginning," then, as he still looked at me, I flung at him words as heavy as stones. "My God, Tony, you aren't the only man who loves her! But you're the only man she loves!"

I got up to leave them; but I could not go fast enough, for I heard Tony gasp, and at the same time a little sob from Elizabeth. Then he said:

"Betty, what do I care how it happened, so long as I have you now? Oh, Girl, I'll never let you go, never again!"

I turned at the door and saw him kiss her, exactly as though they two were alone in the universe—as indeed they were.

And then I recognized the fact that it was up to me to take the other woman home, since Tony had forgotten her very existence.

There is nothing like a crowd to set the imagination going. The stranger remembers all he has heard and read on the subject of "lobster palaces," and his mind starts working up grand and exciting pictures. He sees an elderly man seated across the table from a young girl, and his imagination whispers to him, "There is an old goat flirting with a chorus girl"; when, as a matter of fact, in all probability the elderly man is just showing his young daughter "the sights" instead of allowing her to see them undraped or with a party of young people.

The stranger sees a man in evening dress at a table surrounded by three women in handsome gowns, and his imagination tells him, "Gay spendthrift, wasting his fortune in riotous living with giddy companions!" He sees the man opening lots of champagne, and he is positive he is not mistaken. He doesn't realize that the man may be simply a wine agent "pushing" his own goods, his own brand; that this is merely a curious phase of his business. If the stranger looked closely he would observe that the labels on the bottles on this man's table were not concealed by the ubiquitous napkin, and that the bottles were not left hidden in the ice bucket on the floor. They are placed where all can see them and where all can see the name of the fluid they contain. The stranger probably does not know, either, that the handsomely dressed women may be there for the express purpose of showing off some modiste's new styles of gowns. There are lots of women who make a living in this way, as restaurant models, you know. They don the dresses and show them off in public places.

The stranger sees a young fellow seated at a nearby table with a flashy girl, and his imagination slips him the hint that here is a young millionaire blowing in his fortune on an actress. As a matter of fact, what the young fellow is doing is blowing in five dollars of his hard-earned thirty dollars a week salary on some girl he likes—and that's all there is to it. You will find fools in all communities. But the stranger thinks he sees, and believes, and eventually goes back home and spreads, the infamy of the "lobster palace."

TO conclude this gentle muckraking treatment of the widespread and erroneous conception of the typical Broadway night-time restaurant,—and may it not be without its element of uplift born of a better understanding!—let me give you my idea of the typical outsider's idea of the New York "lobster palace."

His definition: A New York lobster palace is an elegant, exclusive place where you can't get in unless you wear a dress suit and order champagne and lobsters; where you've got to give the head waiter fifty dollars for a table; where Lillian Russell, August Belmont, Andrew Carnegie, Tetraxini and other famous people hang out every night in the week; where the cork is pop-pop-pop until dawn; where merry-making is prolonged until far into the next afternoon; and where everybody dances on the tables and breaks at least a half dozen electric lights before being quelled. In the language of a well known song, may the outsider know better now!