

at the very bottom he found it, the old tin box, a queer little casket to hold dead hope and abandoned ambition. He opened it and fingered the tubes of color, rejecting this one, choosing that. At last he had three and banged the tin box shut.

The mere touch of the paints gave him a thrill.

He squeezed paint into the gasolene, first from one tube, then another. He stirred, evenly, patiently. The colorless fluid became red, then changed to fiery orange. He added vermilion. Now it was flame, hue of sunsets, of great falling coals from smoldering logs, or the wild spurts of hot color that one sees when the flare of converters leaps into the blackness of night.

"Glory," said Martha; "I'll look like a hula girl!"

Lowden did not reply. Speculatively he watched his brew, squeezing, stirring, trying the tint on a dust cloth, salvaged from the pantry. At last he spoke, triumphantly, authoritatively.

"Give me the dress."

He dipped it in, swirled it round and round, lifted it and looked at it critically, put it back in the bowl, while Martha gazed fascinated at the limp, wet, brilliant silken garment: "That color's glorious!" she said at last.

He gently squeezed and patted the dress. "We must hang it up somewhere now, outdoors preferably. I think it's going to be all right. It'll smell to heaven—you'll have to put it where it can be warm all day tomorrow or it'll whiff up the whole dance. And it'll need pressing."

"Give me the bowl of gore and the murderer's toga," said Martha. "Talk about crime! Alec, Alec, you impetuous, hot-headed youth—"

"Cut it out," said Alec Lowden, but he felt a cheerful warmth at the words. "Run along, destroy the evidence, and conceal the body. I must clean this stuff off my hands. By this time tomorrow we'll be going it." He burst into song:

"Will you not come to the ball
You are the fairest of all.
Tiddy-tum, tiddy-tum, tum tum,
tum—"

He took a few fantastic steps: "Martha, I'm beginning to anticipate a pleasant occasion."

"So'm I," said Martha grimly, retreating to the kitchen with the bowl and gown.

Lowden tapped cautiously at the little hot third-floor room that was Martha's. "She's gone," he whispered.

"Are you ready? Does it smell much?"

Martha flung open the door and stood before him in the flame-colored dress. "How does it look?" she asked. "I can't help thinking it's pretty decent if it is the loudest garment in the world. It isn't so very whiffy."

He leaned his tall body against the wall and looked at her carefully, critically. He had been right! Martha was wonderful.

He grinned. "You'll do. Now I want you to go down to Marie's room and make up. Not much—but a little lip rouge, a dash of powder, and a very, very little color high on your cheeks."

"I hate paint—makes me feel as if my face wasn't clean."

"You do as I tell you. There's a reason."

He would not say so, but he thought her too lovely, too exquisite for the aim they sought. Martha would have a better time if she were not too different.

"I had only these old black slippers," she said, thrusting out a slim foot. "I say, Alec, you look spiffy yourself. I never saw you all dolled up before."

"Then we're ready, as soon as you get the old war paint on. Hurry! Your mother's in the parlor talking to Pentz. We'd better sneak out the side door."

"Not much. The time for concealment's past. Come along, let's start something."

Mrs. Cleburne, holding forth a steady monologue to Mr. Pentz, stiffened and stared. Mr. Pentz for a moment did not identify the tall man in evening clothes, nor the dark, brilliant girl by his side.

"Martha!" exclaimed Mrs. Cleburne, regaining power of speech. "Mr. Lowden! What—where—"

"Alec and I thought we'd look in at the club dance, mother," said Martha, languidly elegant. "I've taken your gray cape—"

"But—but—that dress—"

Mrs. Cleburne pointed a trembling finger.

"Oh, just a little trifle I had sent over from Paris," answered Martha airily. She bestowed on Mr. Pentz a knowing twinkle.

"Why, you look a perfect peach!" exclaimed that gentleman, gurgling.

"Thanks, old dear," said Martha. "That was just what I wanted to know. But I'm afraid we must run along."

As they stepped into the cool warmth of the summer night, Alec said softly, "First round, and a knockout." In the semi-darkness Martha smiled ironically: "Old Pentzy did play up. I hope all this

doesn't bring on one of mother's attacks."

"What do you mean attacks?"

"Oh, temper, mostly, sometimes indigestion. But she calls it heart trouble."

"Martha," said Lowden, "you have a hard life. But don't let it make you hard."

"Thanks, grandpa," she retorted. But she gave his arm a friendly pressure. "Oh, heavens, I'm getting excited," she said after a moment. "Alec, do you—do you really think I'll have any sort of time?"

"I do think you're going to have a good time, Martha. Every one here knows every one else so well that a new girl is a sensation. That's what you'll be, practically a new girl."

"And, after all—it doesn't matter either way," said Martha. Then she burst out: "It does matter, awfully. You'd never know how terribly I wanted to go to this little tuppenny-ha'penny dance. I felt as though it were a symbol—that if I didn't go it meant that I'd be shut up there in the kitchen forever-and-ever. I care awfully about having a good time."

Since they were late, there was no one in the clubhouse dressing room. Martha settled herself before the dressing table, and went over her makeup with the utmost care. This slim creature of flame and cloud entranced Martha. She ran downstairs to Alec, securely gay.

"Oh, let's get in before the music stops," she cried.

"They had not gone once around the big ballroom before the questions began.

"Why, who is that?"

"Who's the tangerine?"

"Who's the vamp in red?"

Gus Kramer, dancing with Marie, craned his neck. "Say—isn't that your sister Martha?"

"Mercy—no! Martha here? Gus, you'd better get spectacles."

"Well, it looks like her. Look—over there, with that tall old chap from your mother's boarding house."

The music stopped and Marie had time for a good look. The crowd was clapping for an encore, but Marie pushed through them, Gus close behind her.

"How did you get here?" she demanded bluntly.

Martha turned carelessly. "Oh, hello, Marie. Hello, Gus! How jolly to see you. Isn't the music nice?"

"Give me the next dance?" Gus asked eagerly.

"No—but the one after that," Martha smiled at him, provocatively. The music began again, and she drifted away with Alec.

"But where did she get that dress?" Marie asked Gus, piteously. "She—she didn't have it yesterday. I don't believe mother knew she was coming."

"Oh, wake up," remarked Gus cavalierly. "Martha's of age. She sure looks like a queen tonight. I

always thought Martha would be good-looking if she'd only get the plumage. There's something peppy about her . . . those eyes of hers."

Marie grew rigid with anger. Gus—raving about Martha. And Martha, dancing past her debonairly, was further offense.

"You're getting on all right," Lowden assured Martha. "Wait till the end of this dance. You'll be the center of a raging mob."

"I hope so," said Martha. "It's fun, isn't it?"

The music stopped. As when a kaleidoscope is turned, the rose and blue and white and maize and emerald frocks moved, interweaving, towards the chairs against the wall or the long windows that were on the veranda. Simultaneously the black coats took a pattern of their own—largely converging on the point of flame that was Martha.

"The next, Martha," . . . "Aw, look, Gus, I spoke first." . . . "Give me the two after that." . . . Miss Cleburne, please, let me make you up a program" . . . "Cut it—we agreed there'd be no programs at these dances. First come, first—"

"The next dance is Gus's, said Martha. "And the one after that is Mr. Lowden's. I'm not going to promise more than two ahead." She rightly gauged the value of uncertainty. Gus carried her off in triumph, Marie sat abandoned and forlorn in spite of the peach-bloom taffeta. Alec dropped down beside her.

"Give me the next, won't you?" he asked good-humoredly.

"All right," agreed Marie drearily. Then, turning to him, for, after all, he was like one of the family, she complained: "I don't know what to make of Martha. And where did she ever get such a loud dress? And she's painted—Martha—painted!"

"The men seem to like it," Lowden pointed out to her gently. "After all, she's not made up any more than—well, for instance."

"But that's different." She was naive in her selfishness. "Martha's not—not—" Her slow mind fumbled for words.

"Come along, the music's starting," Lowden said, and Marie rose. She did not talk while they danced, but kept looking after Gus and Martha.

Martha came back to Alec, triumphant. "Gus wants to take me out in his car tomorrow night," she confided. "He upbraids me for never letting him know what sort of girl I really am. What sort of girl am I, Alec, do you think?"

"If you asked the girls here tonight they'd say you are a designing little cat. If you asked the men they'd say 'Some peach.'"

"And which, would you say?"

"Fifty-fifty. Martha—are you flirting with me?"

"I'd flirt with old Mr. Pentz tonight. Me for the primrose path

after this. And, by the way, do you want to dance with me again? If so, speak up quick."

"Conceit. No; I'll resign in favor of youth. Give me the last dance, and I'll be satisfied."

"The question is—will I be?"

"Martha, you are trying to flirt with me. Listen, you rapacious infant. I'll sit on the side lines and cheer for you. And in case anyone fails you, I'll leap in and claim the dance. How is that?"

"Very noble. Incited, I imagine because you're getting winded from unusual exercise. Alec, . . . isn't Marie one wild woman?"

"Wild is right."

"I've been thinking things out. Last night I had one idea—well, now I've two. I'm going to spring the latest when I get home."

A squad of pleading youths swept her away from him. True to his promise, he dropped into a dim corner and watched her gayety. She was radiant, illumined—but not for a moment did she lose her head.

"Charm," thought Lowden, observing her, "is woman's sword and shield—also, sometimes her greatest self-intoxicant. I wonder . . ."

He drifted back to the days when he, too, had youth and heedlessness and irresponsibility, and a profound belief in himself. Paris with its violet veils of mists, its teasing sunshine on gray streets, its luring vistas, its little parks of sparkling green—and he in the midst of it, painting all day, dancing all night, wasting himself as all young things do, certain that in the end, his talent would carry him through. And he had talent! Even now he was sure of that. How had he lost his faith in the magic of his hands? He looked down at them musingly. They were the same hands that had made the sketches that had won his master's praise, his high, approving word. And again he felt in them the same tremor of excitement that had thrilled him when he handled the long untouched tubes of paint last night.

What if he should get out his palette and set it, stretch a bit of canvas and seek again that old discarded magic? This room now—arched, glowing; these figures, amusing modern types, all of them; Martha, in her provocative scarlet-orange, to dominate and accent them all.

"I'll be getting painter's colic next," he tried to laugh at himself. But the temptation stayed. Why not try it? A man had a right to play with his chosen toys.

He had almost forgotten to watch for Martha, but suddenly she was standing beside him.

"It's the last dance," she said. "Sorry to disturb your slumbers."

"You didn't disturb my slumbers—only my dreams," he said.

After the dance, as they came out on the veranda, Gus Kramer stopped them.

"I'm sure you're too tired to walk," he said to Martha, ignoring Alec. "I can run Marie round home and be right back after you. Please wait."

"No," said Martha. "I'd rather walk with Alec."

"If you're tired I'll get the village taxi," Alec offered, as Gus and Marie turned away toward his car.

"Tired—nonsense. I'm all keyed up for the approaching scene at home."

There was a light in the parlor of the Cleburne house.

"The lions are in there, waiting to be fed," said Martha. "Wait on the side porch."

"Make it snappy," he whispered. She straightened herself and walked in the half-opened door. Lowden stopped in the hall, a shameless eaves-dropper.

"Before you begin, either of you," he heard Martha's crisp tones, "you may as well listen to me. I've found out a lot of things tonight. I've found out that I don't need to drudge and carry the burden I've been carrying. I've found out that I can dance and have a good time like other girls, a little better than most of them. And so, from this time on, I intend to do it. If you want to play fair and give me my share, all right. If you don't, I'll take it anyway. But I'm going to share a few things. For instance: You, mother, after this, will make the dinner desserts. You're a wonderful cook and you may as well help. And you, Marie, will take over the third floor—sweeping, dusting, bed-making, scrubbing the bath—everything that I've been doing on both floors, up until now; and I'll see to it that you do it right. If you don't—you lose Gus. You saw him tonight. Do you want him, or not?"

Inarticulate noises of fury indicated that Marie wanted Gus.

"Well, then, look out. And thanks very much for your white dress. This is it—dyed. The color doesn't suit you, so I'll keep it. Goodnight."

Alec fled silently to the side porch. She found him there a moment later.

"That was my second right idea," Alec; I wasn't seeing true. And something else is right, though I'd never dreamed it could be. Namely, the copy book."

"The copy book?"

"Yes, the copy book. Don't you remember how we used to write: 'Life is what we make it.' I always distrusted that sentiment. But it's true—to the extent of our own capacity, that is."

There was a halting silence. Alec lit a cigaret.

"What was your other idea—the first one?" he asked curiously.

"Oh—that. Why, I meant to vamp Gus and snatch him away from Marie. It was easier than I expected. Only—"

"Only—"

"Only I don't want him. I don't want a man who can be caught by a red frock and a smear of paint. Too cheap. I wouldn't have him for a gift."

"There aren't any men around here who are fit for you, Martha," Alec spoke the words sincerely, honestly.

He became aware of a tingling, electric silence.

"Oh . . . I . . . don't . . . know!" drawled Martha, with uttermost meaning. Then she jumped up and vanished in the house. He heard her running upstairs, the distant slam of her door.

He sat up and stared out into the night. The darling little scamp! The little hascal! Did she mean it? Did she? After all, he was only 12 years older than she—the dreams of earlier evening came back with a snap. For a girl like Martha any man, even a failure, might achieve the impossible. What a pal, what a wife she would make! She'd never be satisfied with a failure.

But if there was anything in that copy-book stuff she'd talked about—there must be! He would get out his paints again and go at it. Per—the little rascal! Did she mean it?

He came in, stepping blithely, smiling to himself. Life is what we make it. And tomorrow is always a new day. A new day—with Martha. Oh, boy!

(Copyright, 1923.)

The United States submarine S-1 is the first of its kind built for the navy to carry the new type navy seaplane, which is assembled on the deck of the under-water craft preparatory to flight. The plane, when dismounted, is carried on the top of the submarine, in a tanklike container.

ABE MARTIN On Fighting Wrinkles



There's lots o' readin' matter goin' th' rounds these days on how t' promote long life an' preserve beauty an' youthfulness, an' keep nimble an' graceful. An' we often read interviews with ole timers in which they tell how they stay young an' fit by keepin' sweet tempers, an' keepin' th' conscience open t' inspection, leavin' t' backer an' alcohol alone, keepin' th' feet dry, being' optimistic, an' keepin' th' mind an' hands employed. Tell Binkley's gran'maw lived till they had to feed her with a funnel. They took care o' her jest like she wuz a baseburner, an' they'd poke anything in th' funnel that would pass through it. Anything left at th' dinner table, scraps o' this or that, coffee grounds, or anything, they just poked in th' funnel. If they wuz goin' t' be away fer a day or two they jest heaped th' funnel up an' let it work through as their gran'maw needed it. She hung on an' on, an' they never did know jest when she died. Gittin ole hain't much of a stunt. We git ole in years in spite o' anything we kin do, but keepin' th' school boy face an' elastic step is another proposition. We wuz talkin' t' a feller th' other day that we hadn' seen for twenty years an' he looked exactly like he did when we first met him. He's been travelin' constantly since th' late fifties. He's had t' put up with all sorts o' hotels an' boardin' houses an' railroad accommodations. He never played golf in his life, an' wuz never in a beauty parlor, or had a hot towel on his face. He don't ride horses or take hikes. He has no health buildin' hobbies like indoor ball an' other lively sports. He gits scarcely any exercise, an' don't use no wrinkle fillin' face creams. He's been all over the world time an' time agin, an' has appeared before all th' crowned heads o' Europe, an' millions an' millions o' plain people in this country. He only smiles when th' occasion warrants it, an' he eats pork, hot bread, an' absolutely no carrots, an' he drinks coffee. All this talk about receptions, an' seein' people, an' handshakin' killin' Presidents is bosh, fer "Zip," P. T. Barnum's original "What Is It," hain't done nothin' else but mingle with crowds an' brass bands an' shake hands since 1857, an' he hain't got a gray hair or a wrinkle.

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