

MILICENT

By Louis Weitzenkorn

Her Diamond Collar Links the
Two Ends of Infinity and
Changes a Selfish
Woman's Heart.

There are two buildings in New York as far apart as the stars. Nay, as far apart as the opposite ends of infinity. Yet in a sense they move in circles and infinity may some time—the paradox is excusable—join without smashing up the solar system or the real estate business.

One of these buildings faces the viaduct of the New York Central railroad, and electric trains with each other in passing this mass of brick, to drown out the noise of the fish and cabbage peddlers in the street below the windows of the building and below even the wheels of the trains.

Old clothes men with adenoids wander by through the long hours of the day crying pitifully for trousers without more than one rent in the leg, or for shoes which perhaps a modern Cinderella with a No. 8 foot and a double A pocketbook may some day put upon her graceful appendages when the soles are renewed. Children slip by this house on roller skates and banana peels. Joe, of perennial ice, coal and wood fame, Joe the ubiquitous, except when one wants ice on the Fourth of July or coal on Christmas, is always getting a ton of coal or a half ton of ice tumbling into his cellar—which is part of the building.

The name of the building is the Albenmarle, a misnomer, for by all the laws of the appropriate it should be called the Redman. In it, out of it, and around it, the atmosphere rings, howls, screeches and whistles. It is chaos done into brick and mortar.

There are 24 families in the Albenmarle, and as one ascends the brass rodded stairway upon worn and frayed matting one hears the turmoil within. There is Mrs. Shamus O'Hara, widowed, before prohibition, by the Golden Pheasant cafe on One Hundred and Third street. A moaning mechanical piano below her has prevented the good widow reading the society notes in her favorite evening newspaper, and, in spite of herself, she is trying to transpose "How Yuh Gonna Keep 'Em Down on the Farm After They've Seen Paris" into "The Yearning of the Green." An amateur trap drummer somewhere in the reaches of the building is playing two-four time in accompaniment, and Mrs. O'Hara's symphony is also diluted with the wails of the 10-month-old Erdman baby in the apartment above her.

With William Erdman and his pale and hopeless little wife, the house is typified. Mrs. O'Hara, with the help of roomers and the workmen's compensation act, affords the high rent of \$25, while young Erdman, a guard on the subway, pays but \$22. Erdman's baby has just been weaned, so the father knows Grade "A" milk costs 15 cents a bottle, while loose milk, "an might'll be, Mr. Erdman, not so kosher, 'leven cents." William buys the 11-cent grade, which his wife boils, and for every bottle the youngster drinks the father opens and slams 30 heavy train doors.

There are other tenants worthy of description, to be sure, but it is Mrs. O'Hara and her evening newspaper who touches the outside world of Millicent, and it is the Erdman baby who—

By the broad stone of the doorstep, engaged in his 14-hour day of argument, is Billett, the janitor. At least upon the pay roll of Judson T. Walters, who owns this shelter, he is titled janitor, but by all the just laws of the angels it will be Mrs. Billett who shall have the credit in heaven. Billett, like so many of his tribe, has constituted himself a buffer state between tenant and landlord. Complaints come to Billett and die with him. Demands for garbage collection, when forced upon him with a hard and reddened flat beneath his nose, are referred to Mrs. Billett, whose poor arms can hardly lift the dumbwaiter upon its ropes.

So the tenants of Judson T. Walters thrive in their building, enjoying life as they may under the high ceiling of living, about which are forever talking and comparing notes on peddlers, grocers and other small tradesmen, or boycotting, insulting and even assaulting, as the case deserves, the purveyors of food and drink. And in the Hotel Van Buskirk, at the pleasant end of infinity, dwells Mr. Walters and his wife, and Millicent, the daughter of a human habitation which furnishes jazz for the tin ear and symphony for the connoisseur. It reaches out one arm across half the world for melody which desires a half dozen French snails, and another into an adjoining state for the prothonotary of a Pennsylvania town seeking a boiled New England dinner.

Should the well known and oft sung Ah-koond of Swat honor the Van Buskirk with his patronage, it will print its menus in Swatland. It will curl hair, manicure fingers, shine shoes, press trousers, be supercilious or informal, as one may desire. It will rent a suite of rooms to a king and in the chambers adjoining furnish shelter to whispering revolutionaries. The cascades of its sale a manger are more fitting as an accompaniment to a honeymoon than Niagara falls. In short, the Van Buskirk, with its Allee des Jardins, in which flutter the parakeets of New York, its checkroom boys, its head waiters, its messengers, its actors looking like millionaires, and its millionaires looking like actors, its wireless service, personal physicians, dentists at all hours, has held the proud boast that it can furnish anything except a navy, please anyone except members of the Anti-Saloon league, and never lose its smile.

That was before the time of Millicent. Millicent came to the Hotel Van Buskirk with Mr. and Mrs. Walters. A suite of three rooms and a bath were furnished to the couple and one room and bath to Millicent. Mr. Walters could have been completely satisfied with a large clothes closet and a cuspidor, only that his wife knew more about spending money than he knew about making it, which the size of his income being taken into consideration, is knowledge raised to the 10th power. Mrs. Walters could awaken at 2 o'clock in the morning and be, as she would put it, de rigor. Mr. Walters could emerge from a Turkish bath looking as if he had just been in the path of an invading army.

Millicent, being a French poodle, had it on both of them. Perhaps the reader should early have been warned that this was to be a dog story and the heroine a French poodle. Millicent was a French poodle of a particularly obnoxious breed. To all those who have been sniffed, smelled, snarled and growled at by French poodles, or if they have been honored enough, or been licked, sat upon, rubbed against, or been favored by that perennial catarrh which a French poodle drops upon one from its red eyes, some slight picture of Millicent can thus mentally be gathered up.

Millicent had the soul of a jilted dance hall artist and the temperament of a retired harem wife. She would coil herself, perfumed in attar, upon the huge downy cushions furnished by Mrs. Walters, where she grunted, wheezed, or snapped as the occasion demanded. For Mrs. Walters Millicent designed to grunt and wheeze. She patronized her mistress as an ancient nabob might have favored a willing slave.

To Judson T. Walters, Millicent was about 10 pounds of incipient hydrophobia. To the train of maids, valets, waiters, porters and hotel clerks, and even the manager of the Hotel Van Buskirk, Millicent was "that damn dog in 908."

"Oo is muzz, and 'tte, wittle beebey," Mrs. Walters would say, in that phraseless what-ever tragedy may be in this story and the subtle connecting link between those ends of infinity,

the Albenmarle tenement, and the magnificent Hotel Buskirk. With her baths, her manicures, her massage, her curling, and her daintiness, especially prepared foods, Millicent was exalted above the canine proletariat. She was kissed by Mrs. Walters, held up to the tobacco breath of her "biggy poppa," who was the irritated Mr. Walters, and to her door there ran an almost unending stream of growling and sullen servants.

It was at this stage of the proceedings in the life and adventures of Millicent that Mr. Walters took to solitary drinking. Like a moving picture vampire, if Mr. Walters can be imagined in such an insidious role, he coddled the bartender of the Van Buskirk, attempted to drink the vile soft concoctions which answered to the former highball and fizz, until finally, in a fit of desperation, he bared his woes.

"Mike," said Mr. Walters, after many hopeless attempts at "Orange Blossoms" and the like, "I'm the father of it."

"The father of what?" demanded Mike, picking up the half drained Orange Blossom from the bar and smelling it suspiciously.

"Of that dog!"

"You?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Walters, the tears welling into his voice.

Mike looked around. The few faces at his bar were familiar. He dodged out of sight a moment and then, reappearing, said cryptically:

"Take twenty," said Mr. Walters, shoving two tens at the bartender. "I'll be back for another when it's gone."

Mr. Walters took the carefully wrapped bottle and vanished to his dissipation. It might be argued that a man of the caliber of Judson T. Walters would have walked into suite 908, arranged Millicent carefully upon a mound as a fullback would the ball at the start of a Harvard-Yale game, and place kicked the French poodle through the window into the great beyond nine or more floors above the asphalt of obliteration. For Judson T. Walters, as hundreds of New York flat dwellers have occasion to know, is one of the largest, shrewdest and, between the hours of 10 o'clock in the morning and 4 o'clock in the afternoon, hardest of landlords to be found in the area between Rochelle and Coney Island. Yet, like thousands of other business men, he was of sentimental nature, which only by dint of long cultivation could be subdued during his work day. And his particular sentiment was Mrs. Walters.

Mrs. Walters had everything that Judson T. Walters valued in vicariousness. She had youth, beauty and what he called "the continental poise." If he amassed the dollars, she adorned them and softened their commercialism. When he drew upon his bank for several thousands, he saw the money transmuted into a lovely woman, gowned adorably, scintillating with just the right jewels, smiling, graceful and quite the center of all pictures in which she chose to place herself. What he could not understand was Millicent, and yet a psychologist could have explained Millicent to him in such a fashion that his heart would have leaped for joy.

One of the first events in the crescendo chain of Millicent's tragedy was several columns of notoriety furnished the hotel when Mrs. Walters casually stepped into a Fifth Avenue jeweler and purchased a diamond dog collar for Millicent. Millicent flashed her way about the city in the Walters' limousine, and two hours later every city editor in New York had dispatched photographers and reporters to the Van Buskirk.

In the morning Mrs. Walters, her dog, the hotel, Mr. Walters, and Mike the bartender were gloriously displayed upon the first page

and "Jumped inside." Chambermaids, clerks, bellboys were interviewed and even the members of the corporation which owned the Van Buskirk. Then an evening paper, the favorite of the stout Mrs. O'Hara back in the Albenmarle, appeared with this editorial theme, heavily leaded, down two columns of its back page:

"Bolshevism and Diamond Dog Collars."

"How Silly Women with Too Much Lettuce on Their Hands Are Giving Foundation to Anarchists and the I. W. W."

Several effects followed quickly upon these events. One of the most potent was the bill which Mr. Walters received from Millicent's jeweler calling for the payment of \$5,000. Mr. Walters proceeded to raise rents generally, and in particular those of the Albenmarle. Also, he became disinterested.

Then, whether it was from her sudden leap into fame or from some underdone slices of roast beef, Millicent, like an actress emerging from the white light of notoriety, likewise fell into a distemper. Mr. Walters found herself at war on all fronts.

I have, since reaching this point of my chronicle, made a special study of distempers. French poodles, and my observations lead me to assert that they are difficult to get along with. The virus of distemper is frequently in the teeth and nails, and from Millicent it was communicated to one manicure, one bathmat, one coffee-pot, one dietitian (maie) and one bellboy.

From such small numbers grow general strikes. "What's the verdict?" he said, sitting down. "I'm sorry, Mr. Walters. We'd like to accommodate you and Mrs. Walters here, but—"

"Not the dog?"

"Not the dog."

"Is that an ultimatum?"

"I'm sorry, I assure you. But—well, our help are threatening to quit, many of the guests are complaining—"

Mr. Walters walked out to the elevators and prepared to settle his domestic problem. At heart he had an instinctive sympathy for his wife, but he now prepared himself for a dissembling and hypocritical role.

When he entered his apartment his face be-came that of a man just emerged from battle. It was a purely histrionic mask and in a jerky, angry voice he informed Mrs. Walters of his interview with the manager below. It was almost the truth that he repeated to her with just sufficient fiction to place the hotel official in the role of a hard hearted, merciless animal

hater, a man without respect for his guests, a coward, bullied by his employees and fearing the loss of Mrs. Walters' patronage as a severe blow to the social patronage of the Van Buskirk.

It was a long story he told, and Mrs. Walters, holding Millicent upon her lap, listened carefully until her husband, by reason of touching every note from injured innocence to sacrifice, ended with this remarkable word performance:

"You see, dear? Now don't you worry your little head any more. Just listen to me. I

raised the devil with the manager about this thing. I told him we wouldn't stay in this place another day. He begged me to be reasonable. Well, I finally said I'd put it up to you. Now, honey, I've got a vacant apartment in the Albenmarle—one of the tenants—was—quit, and there's four big rooms which we could turn into a wonderful little home for Millicent, and you could get some one to take especially good care of her there. Jacobs could bring her to you here every day, and this blasted hotel would lose that amount of money we are paying for Millicent's room and bath. What do you say?"

"The idea of revenge struck Mrs. Walters, but with feminine instinct she drew back for questions.

"Is this place—what did you say it was named?"

"The Albenmarle." Mr. Walters almost choked upon the resonant word.

"Is it far from here?"

"It's on Park avenue."

"Oh, really? Then it must be lovely," said Mrs. Walters, whose knowledge of Park avenue extended not quite so far as the New York Central kept in its tunnel. "I'll take her there myself."

"Now, dear, I wouldn't do that," remonstrated her husband, conjuring up a picture of the tenement. "You're worn out. Let Jacobs take her over in the car." Then, he added quickly, as an addendum, "I'll tell you what, I'll take the poor little thing over myself."

Again Mrs. Walters' instinct lifted within her, or, in common parlance, she "smelled a rat." After a moment's thought she suddenly rose.

"No, dear. I'll take her there. Muzza won't let her little pettums get lonesome, will muzza? Would you mind calling the car, dear?"

Walters hesitated. He knew what a revelation the Albenmarle would be to his dainty wife when she saw it. Yet his turgid words of "Park avenue" had led him to a point from which withdrawal would seem suspicious. He felt his wife's questioning stare. Well, either way, he was caught. He sighed and went to the telephone.

It was an hour later that Mrs. Walters glided softly over the cross streets of the city to Park avenue. With Millicent upon her lap, and the limousine filled almost to bursting with the dog's cushions, her basquette, her soaps, her perfume, her manicuring set, and a hundred other of the poodle's toilet and dietary necessities, Mrs. Walters puzzled upon the strangely changed attitude of her husband toward the dog. Once she was tempted to return and demand an explanation, for she felt certain the farther up Park avenue the car proceeded and the dingier the buildings grew, that there had been collusion against her and her pet.

Then she decided to gather up all the evidence possible and for the moment Millicent was forgotten as she gazed out of the window of her automobile at the range of railway, where the New York Central lifted itself from the depths of the asphalt into long streamers of glittering rails, semaphores, and periodic trains far into the upper reaches of the city. The car went on, the viaduct blotted out her view to the

left, and on her right there reared the red brick tenements with their windows like sugary eyelids, their gaping doorways like the worn and rosy mouths of tinseled Coney Island monsters. She saw the cobble street lined with pushcarts, with hordes of women bargaining for groceries, for stockings, for lamp wicks; a street that was the longest and narrowest department store in the world.

The sight fascinated her. Never before had Jacobs driven her into this quarter of New York City, nor, for that matter, into any other quarter where the fringe of gentility was even mated or stringy. The cool and jeweled sweep of Fifth avenue, the long curves of Riverside drive, those boulevards of the city, she knew. But the pushcart district, the red brick barracks, the rumbling viaduct of the Central, this was new land, and something inside of her pained just a little.

The car turned to the left and passed under the viaduct, then went slowly north a few yards and came to a halt. Mrs. Walters looked out. She saw a half dozen dirty children gazing with awe at her, and one or two of greater temerity came close to the car and rubbed their dirty fingers down the glass of its paint. She saw a lolling figure upon the stone steps of the building, a which she had stopped suddenly straightened when Jacobs, her chauffeur, spoke to him. Then the figure quickly took a pipe from his mouth, removed a soiled and shapeless mass of cloth from his head and unlabeled in her direction. With a shock as of cold water striking her, Mrs. Walters realized that she was before the Albenmarle—her husband's choice of a residence for Millicent.

In the next moment Jacobs had opened the door of the car.

"Beg pardon, ma'am, but this is it. Would you like to speak to the superintendent?"

Again there came a suggestion in her mind to turn back without further effort, and she clasped the woolly poodle closer to her. But a new curiosity was mounting within her, transcending her feeling of outrage, and she nodded assent to the man's question.

The children, meanwhile, had crowded up to the running board and she was treated to a fringe of comment, a pale, childish reflection of parental judgment which caught and held her attention.

"Gee, look at the pup!"

"How d'yer keep her clean?"

"Say, missus, let me toot your horn, will yuh?"

"Hey, Moishe, she's kissin' it."

"Give us a ride, missus, will you? We ain't never been in one of the things."

At this remark, Mr. Billett, humbled now that he faced the scintillating wealth of his employer, pushed the children roughly from the car and addressed himself to Mrs. Walters.

"Don't mind them kids, lady. They don't know no better. Did yuh wanta see me?"

"Are you the superintendent of this—the Albenmarle?"

"Yes'm, I'm the janitor. The name's kinda rubbed off, though."

"Is there a vacant apartment in the building?"

"Yes'm, fourth floor," Billett, from force of habit, almost quoted the rental, and was about to invite this magnificent person in when second thought prompted him to wait.

"I should like to see it," said Mrs. Walters, rising from her seat and preparing to alight.

"Sure, missus, I'll take yuh up. It's not what yuh're used to, I'm thinkin', though."

As she passed over the sidewalk to the doorway of the Albenmarle, the eyes of the children followed her wistfully. The sight of Billett, however, and the remembrance of his daily curses and threats kept her at a distance, but the moment Mrs. Walters had disappeared into the shadows of the entrance they crowded in, talking and exclaiming and making childish speculations as to whether the "swell" was coming to the place to live.

Mrs. Walters followed the janitor in. The odor of cooking offended her nostrils and she was amazed at the din that assailed her eardrums as she climbed the three tortuous flights. Then she found herself in a narrow chester bed of rooms that seemed to run into each other as if the walls were gelatinous and could hardly hold up. They were covered with a dark brown paper that in places hung in strips or showed grayish where the plaster was revealed in uneven spots.

"Would you mind opening a window, Mr. Billett?"

"Billett, ma'am, William Billett."

"Thank you, Oh, Mr. Billett, did you say people lived here and just moved out?"

"Yes'm, they was pay twenty-two an' we had to raise it to thirty. They—"

"Thirty? Thirty dollars a month for this?"

Her arms gave an involuntary jerk, and Mrs. Walters squeaked in pain. Mrs. Walters looked at the dog, and then something on the floor caught her eye. She walked over and touched the object with her foot. It was a doll, a small, celluloid doll, such as babies play with in their tubs. It was streaked with dirt and something red and sticky like soft candy or jelly seemed to have been smeared upon its face.

"Is there a baby here, too, Mr. Billett?"

"Yes'm, the Erdmans have a k— a baby. They took a furnished room downstairs—"

"A furnished room—one room—one like these?"

"Yes'm," said Billett deprecatingly. "Some people do as much to save money."

"But—Mr. Walters mind was in a confusion of cross thoughts and pictures, "but how can three—and a baby live in one room? Oh—"

And then, as she looked at the separate rooms of this apartment her mind selected details, evidence against the man who had tried to trick her, who owned this rookery. Judson T. Walters was due to stand trial.

She noted the bathroom, a compartment about two feet by four, in which a 6-year-old child would have been cramped. The plumbing shaky and dripping. The tub gray and leaden, the floor eroded by water, the planking loose and soft. In her mind she ticked the multitude of noises, the water roaches, the windows, warped, bulging in their frames like things overgrown.

As she took in these details, Billett kept up a running fire of remarks, about the work he did, about the work of his wife, which she carefully minimized, the irritability of the tenants, the general uselessness of doing anything for them.

"A tribe of Indians'd treat a house better'n this," she heard the janitor say. "They ain't no use doin' anything for them, Mrs. Walters. They wouldn't appreciate it."

Mrs. Walters finished her survey and started toward the door. She descended the dark and odorous stairs amid the mad symphony of piano, drum and varied human voices. She shuddered as she entered the street, and she saw the light of the avenue, into the midst of a score of waiting children, who greeted her and her poodle with more exclamations.

A stout woman with a copy of an evening paper in her hand was also occupying the stone step of the entrance as she passed, and a cutting remark came to her ears.

"The lady ain't gon' to take the apartment. Git out of the way, kids, so the pup kin breathe."

"You shut up," growled Billett, who had also heard the words. "Who'd live here with the likes of you blockin' the door?"

Mrs. Walters walked to her waiting car, but the sting of those last words of the stout woman had brought the crimson to her cheeks, and it was almost in a whisper that she directed Jacobs to return to the Van Buskirk. Then she gave the expectant Billett a tip, the door of her limousine was slammed, and in the next moment, to a chorus of childish shouts, she was carried away.

On the return trip of her automobile Mrs. Walters missed the panorama of the city upon which at first she had been so intent. Instead, through her mind, as if it were a film screen, there ran a recurrence of the pictures she had left behind her in the tenement. And, like a film, every appearance of words that flashed upon her mental vision burned whitely in this phrase:

"Git out of the way, kids, so the pup kin breathe."

She wrenched herself free from this distressing repetition and tried to think of the more immediate problem that she was approaching at the rate of 20 miles an hour.

What would be the result of her interview with Mr. Walters? She resented bitterly his attempt to get rid of Millicent by placing the poodle in the tenement and she was grim with determination to make him feel her resentment.

And then came these words again:

"Git out of the way, kids, so the pup kin breathe."

She straightened up in her seat. The pain of this phrase brought an idea into her mind like a lightning flash revealing the objects of the night, and it seemed to be one which satisfied several angles of her problem. She picked up the speaking tube and asked Jacobs to draw the chauffeur district, the red brick barracks, the rumbling viaduct of the Central, this was new land, and something inside of her pained just a little.

"Jacobs," she said, "I'm anxious to find a good home for Millicent. It—there has been an unfortunate occurrence at the hotel and I do not wish to keep her there. Do you know of any one who would like my dog well enough to be kind to her?"

"Well, ma'am," began the chauffeur, awkwardly, "if you'd expect cologne water baths an' cream an' cheese, I don't know. You see, ma'am, a dog's an expense these days. I got a little hodge of my own an' my wife would like a dog, but we couldn't do what you do for her. We got a little girl, too."

A sense of her own futility suddenly flooded Mrs. Walters. Why did every one speak in terms of children the moment she placed her foot beyond the childish portals of the Hotel Van Buskirk? Children! Then, with no apparent connection to any thought she had in mind, there came, as if upon the air, the name "Lillian." It seemed like the faint tinkling of a bell in her ears, and like a vignette she saw dimly a plump, laughing face and dreamy chignon and pink rosebud ribbons.

"Jacobs," said Mrs. Walters, rising quickly and placing Millicent upon the pile of cushions beside her. "I shall go back to the hotel in a taxi. You take the dog to your home—and give her to your little girl. And then, Jacobs, go back to the Albenmarle and ask the janitor to take you to the woman who lived in that vacant apartment. When you see her tell her and the janitor that Mrs. Walters has made arrangements for her to move back and that the rent will be the same as before." She stopped speaking a moment, then added: "When you come back to the hotel, please say nothing about these arrangements to Mr. Walters."

It was half an hour later that Mrs. Walters entered her apartment in the Van Buskirk. She found Mr. Walters in the state of a small boy expecting whipping, and with that inherent psychology of women she knew how to treat with such a mood. He had smoked innumerable cigars, interspersed with a dozen cigarettes, and had she kissed him she would have discovered evidence of other fortification.

She leisurely removed her hat and gloves, stood before a mirror, and still maintaining her silence, watched his reflection narrowly as she went through the maneuvers of arranging her hair and applying some face powder. The air grew heavier as she continued these slow and methodical movements, and she saw her husband begin to pace up and down the adjoining room, casting a guilty glance at her with every turn he made.

When she had given him sufficient time to tie up each separate and expectant nerve she calmly walked to the telephone and took down the receiver.

"Let me speak to the manager, please."

Judson T. Walters halted his pacing.

"Hello," Mrs. Walters called sweetly over the telephone. "Is this the manager? This is Mrs. Walters—yes. I want to tell you that Mr. Walters and I have decided to give up our apartments here. What? Yes. We shall quit Monday."

She returned the receiver to the hook and faced her husband for a moment and then took a chair. At this Mr. Walters exploded into speech.

"Look here, Martha," he exclaimed, "what is all this about?"

"I should imagine you would know."

She laid a heavy accent upon the word "you."

"It's all over this damned dog. Well, what could I do? We were ordered to take her out."

"Judson," said Mrs. Walters, evenly, "have you ever been in the Albenmarle?"

"Er. Occasionally. Why?"

"Why? What a question! You don't deserve to own property."

"Indeed," said Mr. Walters with some plume. "Perhaps you could manage it better—and get diamond collars for it."

"Judson, please remember I am not at the Albenmarle on Park avenue. Her words cut with their sarcasm. "Yes, I do think I could manage it better, and that is exactly what I was coming to."

"You mean—"

"I mean I want you to give me that building—what do you do, make out a lease or deed, I believe?"

"Now, don't be foolish, dear. You don't want to bother about that place. It's not a woman's work. I'm sorry you—you went there."

"Will you give me that place or not?" Mrs. Walters rose from her chair in the manner of one about to take a decisive action.

"But—dear—why—why do you want it?"

"Because it isn't fit for a dog to live in, if you want to know."

Mrs. Walters lit a cigar and allowed himself enough time to ponder upon the strange ways of women and their pets. Suddenly he said:

"It seems fit enough for children."

"Judson!"

Mrs. Walters turned away and walked toward the adjoining room.

"I'm sorry, Martha. Please. I didn't mean to hurt you. Certainly you can have the building. Go into the real estate business if you wish. Fix it up and make it a k— a private home for Millicent. Do anything you wish, dear, but don't be angry because I was hasty."

"Then you will give the place to me and I can manage it just as I please?"

"Of course, dear, anything."

"Will you make out the papers tomorrow?"

"The first thing you are going to fix up that apartment for you?"

"Of course. Why, Judson, it was awful. To think of even Millicent living there. That bathroom, and those terrible windows, the floors—ugh!"

"Do as you please, so long as you love your husband in the bargain. I shall make that part of a deed. The consideration, we call it. In consideration