

of philosophy. "Whatsoever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, do all to the glory of God!" applies with singular force to the abstinence. So may he come victorious from the battle of life to be received with tender kisses by some green-robed archangel, and crowned with mystic vervain in the Emerald Gateway of the Opal City of God.

VII.

And now the café is beginning to fill up. This little room with its dark green woodwork, its boarded ceiling, its sanded floor, its old pictures, its whole air of sympathy with time, is beginning to exert its magic spell. Here comes a curious child, short and sturdy, with a long blonde pigtail, her slave sly and side-long on a jolly little old man who looks as if he had stepped straight out of the pages of Balzac.

Handsome and diminutive, with a fierce moustache almost as big as the rest of him, like a regular little Spanish fighting cock, Frank, the waiter, in his long white apron, struts to them with the glasses of ice-cold pleasure, green as the glaciers themselves. He will stand up bravely with the musicians by and by, and sing us a jolly song of old Catalonia.

The door swings open again; a tall dark girl, exquisitely slim and snaky, with masses of black hair knotted about her head, comes in; on her arm is a plump woman with hungry eyes, and a mass of Titian red hair. They seem distracted from the outer world, absorbed in some subject of enthralling interest; and they drink their apéritif as if in a dream. I ask the mulatto boy who waits at my table (the sleek and lithe black panther!) who they are; but he knows only that one is a cabaret dancer, the other the owner of a cotton plantation up river. At a round table in the middle of the room sits one of the proprietors with a group of friends; he is burly, rubicund, and jolly, the very type of the Shakespearean "Mine host." Now a party of a dozen merry boys and girls comes in; the old pianist begins to play a dance, and in a moment the whole café is caught up in the music of harmonious motion. Yet still the invisible line is drawn about each soul; the dance does not conflict with the absorption of the two strange women, or with my own mood of detachment.

Then there is a "little laughing lewd gamine" dressed all in black save for a square white collar; her smile is broad and free as the sun, and her gaze as clean and wholesome and inspiring. There is the big jolly blonde Irish girl in the black velvet béret and coat, and the white boots, chatting with two boys in khaki from the border; and there is the Creole girl in pure white cap-à-pie, with her small piquant face and its round button of a nose, and its curious deep rose flush, and its red little mouth, impudently smiling. Around these islands seems to flow as a general tide the more stable life of the quarter. Here are honest goodwives seriously discussing their affairs, and heaven only knows if it be love or the price of sugar which engages them so wholly. There are but a few commonplace and uninteresting elements in the café; and these are without exception men. The giant Big Business is a great tyrant; he seizes all the men for slaves, and leaves the women to make shift as best they can for — all that makes life worth living. Candies and American Beauty Roses are of no use in an emergency! So, even in this most favored corner, there is dearth of the kind of men that women need.

At the table next me sits an old, old man. He has done great things in his day, they tell me, an engineer, who first found it

possible to dig Artesian wells in the Sahara desert. The Legion of Honor glows red in his shabby surtout. He comes here, one of the many wrecks of the Panama Canal, a piece of jetsam cast up by that tidal wave of speculation and corruption. He is of the old type, the thrifty peasantry; and he has his little income from the Rente. He says that he is too old to cross the ocean — and why should he, with the atmosphere of old France to be had a stone's throw from his little apartment in Bourbon Street? It is a curious type of house that one finds in this quarter in New Orleans; meagre without, within one comes unexpectedly upon great spaces, carved wooden balconies on which the rooms open. So he dreams away his honored days in the Old Absinthe House. His rusty black, with its worn red button, is a noble wear.

Black, by the way, seems almost universal among the women, is it instinctive good taste? At least, it serves to bring up the general level of good looks. Most American women spoil what little beauty they may have by overdressing. Here there is nothing extravagant, nothing vulgar, none of the near-Paris-gown and the just-off-Bond-Street hat. Nor is there a single dress to which a Quaker could object. There is neither the mediocrity nor the immodesty of the New York woman, who is tailored or millinered on a garish pattern, with the Eternal Chorus Girl as the Ideal — an ideal which she always attains, though (Heaven knows!) in "society" there are few "front-row" types.

On the other side of me a splendid stalwart maid, modern in muscle, old only in the subtle and modest fascination of her manner, her face proud, cruel and amorous, shakes her wild tresses of gold in pagan laughter. Her mood is universal as the wind. What can her cavalier be doing to keep her waiting? It is a little mystery which I will not solve for the reader; on the contrary —

VIII.

Yes, it was my own sweetheart (no! not all the magazines can vulgarize that loveliest of words) who was waiting for me to be done with my musings. She comes in silently and stealthily, preening and purring like a great cat, and sits down, and begins to Enjoy. She knows I must never be disturbed until I close my pen. We shall go together to dine at a little Italian restaurant kept by an old navy man, who makes the best ravioli this side of Genoa; then we shall walk the wet and windy streets, rejoicing to feel the warm subtropical rain upon our faces; we shall go down to the Mississippi, and watch the lights of the ships, and listen to the tales of travel and adventure of the mariners. There is one that moves me greatly; it is like the story of the sentinel of Herculaneum. A cruiser of the U. S. Navy was detailed to Rio de Janeiro. (This was before the days of wireless telegraphy.) The port was in quarantine; the ship had to stand ten miles out to sea. Nevertheless Yellow Jack managed to come aboard. The men died one by one. There was no way of getting word to Washington; and, as it turned out later, the Navy Department had completely forgotten the existence of the ship. No orders came; the captain stuck to his post for three months. Three months of solitude and death! At last a passing ship was signalled, and the cruiser was moved to happier waters. No doubt the story is a lie; but did that make it less splendid in the telling, as the old scoundrel sat and spat and chewed tobacco? No, we will certainly go down, and ruffle it on the wharves. There is really better fun in life than can be got by going to the movies, when you know how to make terms with Reality.