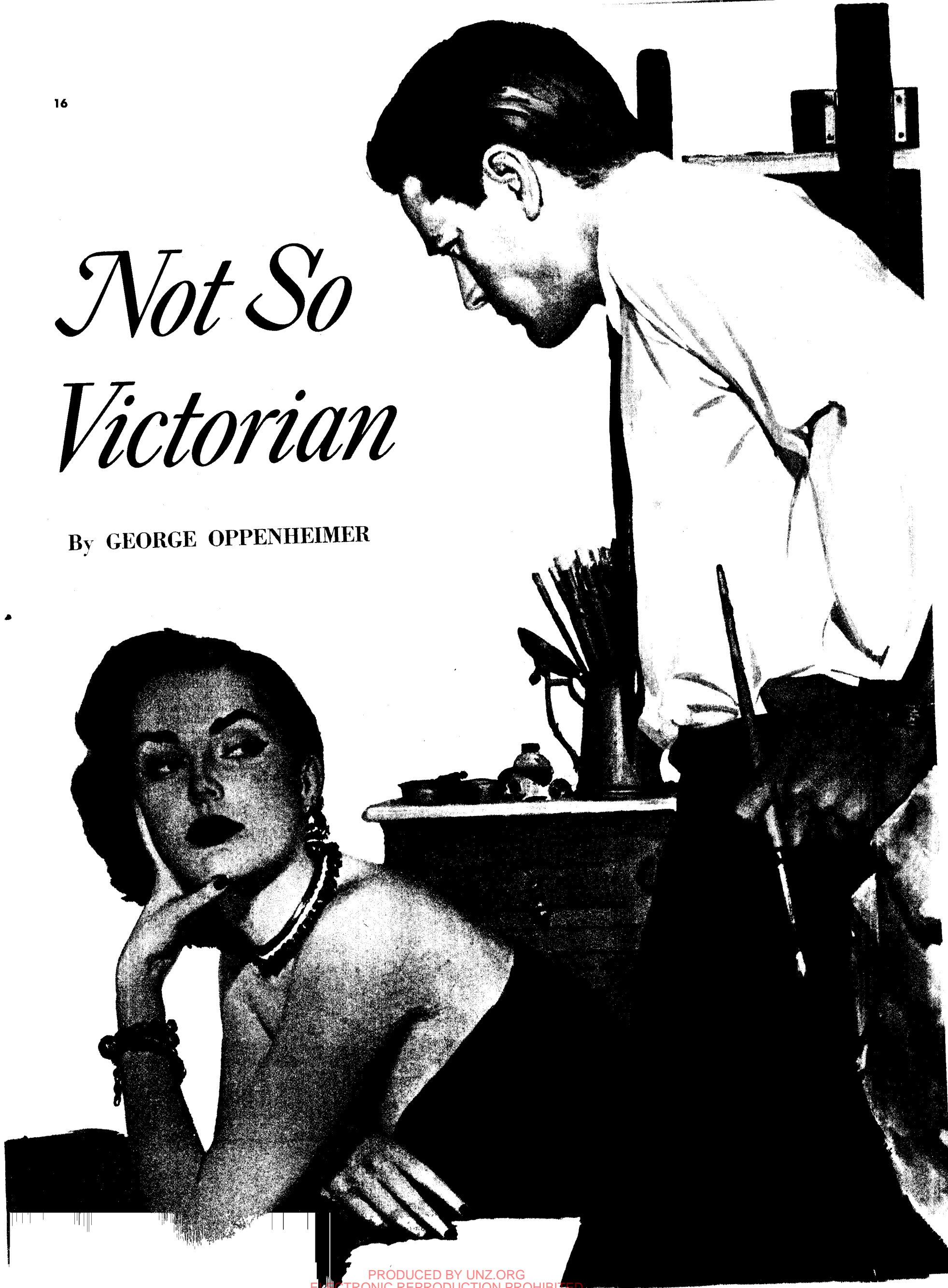


# *Not So Victorian*

By GEORGE OPPENHEIMER



Mrs. Freeman was a charming woman and she treated me with friendly respect. But I knew that for reasons of her own she was determined to stop me from marrying Mary—and I hated her for it

A SUMMONS to one of Eve Marden's cocktail parties was a warning either to leave town or turn off the telephone. The invitation usually arrived a week before the event, but that was only the start of Eve's relentless sales campaign. By the following morning she was on the telephone. "Darling," she would say in a hostile tone of voice, "I've told everyone you're coming. You just can't let them down."

"Them" was a widely assorted group. There were Eve's society friends, who stayed together in one corner of her living room and limited their conversation to derogatory comments about the other guests. There were, inevitably, the unidentified young men who looked as though they had been carefully removed from bandboxes in Eve's cedar closets and would be repacked as soon as the party was over. And finally there was the bait—one or more current celebrities whom she used to lure her other guests.

With all due modesty I must admit I was bait. In the past few years, I had become fairly well known as a portrait painter.

Even if I had wanted to go to Eve's party, which I definitely did not, I was still too busy to take the time off. However, my sales resistance is low, and with a supersaleswoman like Eve it touches bottom. Then, too, I was fond of Eve, who had done a great deal to help me along when I was still an unknown artist. So it was out of devotion and gratitude, and against my will, that I went to Eve's cocktail party.

I saw, as soon as I got there, that this was one of Eve's gaudier gatherings. She had succeeded in bagging quite a collection: an English poetess, a doe-eyed young motion-picture actor, a drama critic and a successful playwright. Deciding that there were quite enough celebrities to make the party a success without me, I retreated to a secluded corner of the room.

It was not secluded for long. Eve approached, bringing with her a young and incredibly beautiful girl. The moment I saw her, I started to plan her portrait—the high light of her auburn hair, the beautiful line of her cheekbones, her long and graceful neck. . . . Then Eve was beside me.

"Phil," she said, "this is Mary Freeman."

Suddenly I was back seventeen years—back at a church bazaar in Stanton and I could hear the voice of Mrs. Sommers, my school principal. "Phil," said Mrs. Sommers, "this is Mary Freeman."

I was twelve years old then, and Mary Freeman was nine. I had never met her, but I had seen her hundreds of times—riding in her pony cart with her governess; in the front seat of a shiny roadster, sitting close to her adoring father; along the main shopping street of the town with her mother. Everyone in Stanton knew Mary Freeman, if only by sight or by reputation; knew the show place where she lived; knew and admired the patrician beauty of her mother; knew that her father, Grant Free-

man, had the money and power to affect the lives of everyone in the town.

I remembered my mother's excitement when I came home that evening and told her I had been introduced to Mary.

"I hope you were polite to her," she said.

"Aw!" I said. "What's so special about her?"

I didn't need Mother's gasp to tell me what was so special. Our tiny three-room house was only a quarter of a mile from the Freemans', but there were the boundaries of wealth, social position and residential selectness that exist in any small town.

I was abruptly brought back to the present by Mary's voice.

"Phillip Loomis?" she asked and before I could answer, she turned to our hostess. "Really, Eve," she said, "when you do snag a celebrity for one of your parties, you might at least introduce him properly."

"My dear Mary," said Eve, "if you will insist upon living your life in the backwoods of Stanton, you can't expect me to educate you."

"Shall we tell her?" asked Mary, smiling at me.

"Tell me what?" asked Eve.

"Mr. Loomis is a product of Stanton," said Mary.

Before I could speak, Eve had turned on me indignantly.

"Well!" she said. "You never told me that."

"I haven't lived there in years," I answered apologetically. "Not since I was fourteen."

Eve still looked at me as though I had betrayed her. Fortunately, at that moment she spotted the poetess furtively easing toward the front door and left us to cut off her retreat.

"Why does anyone come to these parties?" asked Mary as soon as Eve was out of earshot.

"Why did you?"

"Civic pride. I wanted to see the home-town boy who'd made good. Do you mind if I touch you?"

"That's what I came here for."

Mary laughed and patted my cheek.

"There!" she said. "Now tell me the story of your life."

Amazingly enough I did.

"Your mother must have been quite a person," said Mary when I'd finished. "My mother used to tell me how she worked to send you through art school. I think Mother was trying, not too subtly, to make clear to me how much children owe to their mothers."

It was strange how close we seemed to come in those few minutes. Stanton was all we had in common, but something else attracted us to each other. I hadn't been back there to Stanton in years, and Mary apparently spent as much time in New York as she did there. Her father had died, she told me, when she was seventeen, and with him had died the aliveness and excitement of her home.

"I adore Mother," she said, "but since Father's death, she's been living in the past. I can't live that way."

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What she said was true, and yet I was afraid to let her go. Several times I had worked without her, and no matter how I tried, I could never capture the expression I wanted





# ICE CREAM—*Sundae,*

By ROBERT FROMAN

For centuries, this frozen delicacy was the favorite of kings. Then, just 100 years ago, the enterprise of a Baltimore milkman made it available to everyone. Now it's a national habit

ON THE evening of May 8, 1942, the famed USS *Lexington*, gallant queen of the flat-tops, was nearing her end. Through the thunderous Battle of the Coral Sea she had ripped the Japanese fleet with her torpedo and dive bombers, but she had absorbed ton on ton of explosives in return. At 5:00 P.M. the order to abandon her finally went out. By then roaring flames were searing through the lower decks, and shells in the ammunition stores, too hot to touch, threatened to erupt volcanically at any moment.

It was at this point that some unsung hero among the crew assembled on the flight deck had, in the midst of all the uproar, a quiet little inspiration. He recruited a couple of friends and with them plunged back down through the stifling smoke to

the ship's canteen. There they filled their pockets with wooden spoons, scooped up armloads of ice-cream cans, returned topside and proceeded to gorge themselves and several dozen shipmates before scrambling down the nets.

"Very refreshing," was the way one of them later debonairly described this snack.

Ice-cream manufacturers, naturally, were delighted with the story and have repeated it far and wide. But they fail to see anything astonishing in the incident. It merely helps back up, they think, their boast that ice cream is all America's favorite weakness.

In the course of a coast-to-coast tour seeking the low-down on ice-cream factories and fountains, I found no evidence contradicting that claim. You

can buy ice cream on Skid Row, on Park Avenue or on the open highway, in more different flavors, shapes and combinations than any other food. You can serve it with confidence to both Tobacco Roaders and the Duchess of Windsor. Even Bob Hope and Bing Crosby amicably share a spontaneous and unsponsored yen for it. When Hope is returning home from a tour, his wife orders several gallons, and Crosby's monthly ice-cream bill at one Los Angeles store often passes the \$200 mark.

The figures seem to back up the ice-cream makers' boast, too. Last year we ate more than half a billion gallons, or 14.4 quarts apiece for every man, woman and child in the country. This is more than sufficient to put ice cream into the billion-dollar-industry bracket. And during 1951

Collier's for June 9, 1951