

the man himself. He's strikingly handsome and talented, and not unknown on Wall Street, where his father—— What's that?"

"I didn't say anything."

"Oh, I thought you spoke. I hope you're taking all this down. To continue: 'And the girl—well, she's a good deal more closely connected with your Claudia than I dare tell you. She's handsome, too, in her way, and——' Say, don't you think this ought to make an impression on Claudia, my taking all this trouble for her?"

"I'm sure it will;" she was intently drawing scrolls on her blotter. "Why, I know how I feel to dear Bennington when he helps me." She lifted her eyes with an evident desire to note the effect of this, and then they both laughed.

"I'll tell you what," he said, bending over her chair. "We'll marry Bennington off to Claudia and let Aunt Plenty go and live with them."



CLAUDIA FRIBBLE, SOCIETY WRITER.

"But I can't spare them," she objected with a frown. A fool might have feared to tread; but a wise man knows when to rush in.

"Oh, I've a new nom-de-plume all



BENNINGTON STOKER, "OBSERVED ABOUT TOWN."

ready for you," he said, drawing the pencil out of her fingers. "You'll like it so much you'll drop even your own name for it." And he wrote something on the edge of the blotter. But she hid her face against his coat and refused to see what it was.

Juliet Wilbor Tompkins.

THE STOLEN SAINT.

THE magic light of the unshaded wax candles lay on the white robed table. They were placed in a dozen sticks of old silver and burned low and singly, and their pure glimmer, and the lilies which stood in silver vases, gave an air of holy mystery to this very worldly entertainment.

Marion Lamont turned to the man on her left. He was speaking.

"I feel like a nun," he said. He had an odd face of a uniform ruddy color, friendly eyes, and an expressive twist to his lip. "It isn't too white for you?" he asked.

"Oh, no!" said she.

"It chills me," he said. "I like red

shades and a heap of roses. This wouldn't be bad at a hunt dinner with the men in pink, but tonight it's unearthly. There is only one man here who doesn't look a florid sinner."

She followed his eyes down the table, and they indicated a man of about thirty, whose profile alone was visible to them.

"He is very handsome," said Marion.

"And this really seems to become him,

"No," said he, "not black—only scarlet. And, after all, I would rather you believed nothing at all about me."

"Why?" asked Marion.

"Well," said he, "you are a *débutante*, and your illusions must not be shattered."

"If they are false?" she asked.

"Illusions are no more false than anything else," said he. "An illusion is like a woman or a rainbow—a beautiful vision set above a man somewhere between him



"THERE IS ONLY ONE MAN HERE WHO DOESN'T LOOK A FLORID SINNER."

just as it does you," her friend went on. "They are playing a 'Largo' of Handel's now! If this keeps up, Miss Lamont, I shall be confessing all my sins to you."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried, with a pretense of stopping her ears. "Not to me, please. I am too young."

"Too young to be shocked, perhaps?" he asked, and laughed. Then he leaned toward her and looked along the table. "I suppose," he said, "your soul is just like that—a glimmering whiteness, with here and there your good works burning like little candles."

Marion laughed. "And you want me to believe," said she, "that yours is as completely black."

and heaven. It is intangible, but it is real; it fades, but the memory of it lasts, and, anyhow, it is good for him to look up."

Marion said, "I see you still have illusions, though you are not a *débutante*."

"No," said he, "not illusions, but theories. I live near the earth myself, and if I look up, it is through other men's eyes."

At least, he could look down very pleasantly. He smiled and said, "Miss Lamont, you remind me very much of a friend of mine. I haven't seen him for six years until today."

"We are alike?" Marion asked.

"It's just an expression," he answered. "When two faces wear the same look the

minds are relatives. Thinking of him has made me talk so much about illusions, and perhaps has made me so considerate of yours."

"Then, if it is a pleasure to be reminded of him," said Marion, "tell me something about him for a reward."

"You would rather hear it than a confession of my sins? I shall like better to tell you. Besides, you have the eyes that understand. Perhaps if I have an illusion left, it is that my intuitions are trustworthy."

"I rely on mine," said Marion.

"I should imagine that you do," he answered. "So did my friend. There wasn't an illusion he didn't enshrine in the lofty temple of his thoughts. When he was eighteen he was so happy burning incense before his ideals that he wasn't good for much else. The next year a friend went back on him—forged his name, and disappeared."

"He forswore friendship, took up philanthropy, and went to work in a mission church, where he fell in love with one of the girls in the choir. Her mother kept a shop, but what did it matter? Not a bit to my friend. It brought about a quarrel with his father, though, who disinherited him and died. You can guess that the relatives kept the money and turned up their noses at the little saleslady. By this time most of my friend's illusions were gone. Experience is an iconoclast. The temple had been desecrated, and the sacred images had been thrown down. There was only one shrine left, and here he had placed a little golden figure of a saint. It was love he worshiped, and with that left he scarcely seemed to miss friends or father, money or position. After all, a chapel does as well to pray in as a cathedral. He was perfectly happy till his pretty chorister

went on the stage, took a boy's part in a comic opera, and married the tenor."

"He should have been glad to have escaped," said Marion.



A MAN OF ABOUT THIRTY, WHOSE PROFILE ALONE WAS VISIBLE TO THEM.

"I don't think he took that view. It wasn't that he regretted her; but you see, Miss Lamont, she had stolen his golden saint. For the hundredth time I congratulated myself that my mental bric-à-brac was inferior and dispensable. There was my friend with a long life before him and no taste for living. I think he would have ended it, only he has a great deal of persistency, hates to beg off, wants to carry out what he begins. So he pulled himself together, looked out for hard things to do, made life an intellectual gymnasium, cultivated a distaste for women, studied Russian, and buried himself in Siberia for six years."

He stopped and turned to Marion. "There," he said, "you have the history of the man with the lost ideal."

She looked at him rather strangely. "Is that all?" she asked.

"Not quite," he answered. "I met him again today, and I find that once more the altar is illumined and the service going on as before. Some one has restored his golden image."



"Why," said Marion, "that is the best part of the story."

There was a quiver in her voice, and a brightness like tears on her lower lids. She was looking down the table at the man they had noticed before, and his eyes were fixed on her face, adoringly.

"The candles are alight on the altar," said Marion's friend. He asked, "Then you know him?"

"Yes," she said. "We are engaged to be married. We met last summer in St. Petersburg."

Ann Devoore.

THE READING AT THE WALDORF.

SUSAN VILLARS, writer, journalist, literary hack, smiled across the table at her husband. His face showed heavy lines where sleeplessness had plowed.

"I'm afraid I'm becoming impregnated with Mrs. Pierce-Rollins' views."

"How so?"

"Why, here I am wavering again, whether to go or not. Yesterday I had fully decided that there was more than enough to keep me home, and now—what say you, Eric?"

"What's the occasion, and why go if you are not inclined?"

"Mrs. Pierce-Rollins' reading at the Waldorf is the occasion, and I suppose I ought to go just to keep in the swim—at least, that's her latest advice to me. There might be a good natured publisher around, or a literarily inclined dowager who'd enjoy being patron to a rising young genius like—yours truly."

Susan interrupted her light speech to call the maid. "There's no sugar in the bowl, Kitty."

"None in the house, ma'am."

"Oh, isn't there? No matter. I'll get some later. The milkman couldn't change my check, so I'm penniless."

"How about coal, Sue? If you can help with two dollars, I'll order a half ton."

Sue allowed her mental groan to escape. "It's deeply mortgaged already, Eric. Oh, if you only could get something to do!"

"Hush, girl, for God's sake. I'm doing my best, but things don't come my way, somehow."

Susan, helping

him on with his coat, smiled into his eyes. "You'll have to leave me car fare—to see my swell friends; or," she called after him, "suppose I stay home altogether."

Villars turned round. "Didn't you say something about a publisher?"

"Well, that's not sure. Such things happen, you know, when you keep in the swim."

His answer was a look that tried to be smiling. Then the door closed. "Poor Eric!" However, time was too pressing for sympathizing monologues. Her belittled desk appealed to her. "No, I think I'll water the plants now; then on with my things."

Ten minutes later. "Kitty," she called, "I'll be back at one. Have a cup of tea for me, good and hot, will you?"

"No sugar, ma'am."

"Oh, that's so! Well, I'll see when I get back. Meanwhile, try to manage."

"I will, ma'am. Don't be catchin' cold, ma'am."

The functionaries guarding the tapestried chambers leading from the foyer of the Waldorf directed Susan Villars to a door before which stood two attendants. Each rolled his half door softly back, allowing her to pass into the apartment. She was late. Mrs. Pierce-Rollins, from the raised dais upon which she was standing, saw her and gave her a half veiled, recognizing smile. She was a tall, graceful woman, with a wealth of brown hair rolled back from an open, good natured face.

Sue sank into a white satin, lyre backed chair next Virgie Merriman. The softly shaded chandeliers, the exquisite tapestries and frescos, were reflected in the mirrored walls. A lamp beside the reading desk shed its rays upon the reader, while the strains of the poet whose literary greatness it was her special province to elucidate fell mellifluously upon the ears of her audience. Susan remembered their last conversation. Mrs. Pierce-Rollins' tone had been advisory and friendly, but grating upon the ears of an idealist.

"I made eight hundred dollars by my readings last year. I mean to double it this year."

"Do you need it very much?"

"No, not exactly, but it helps out my trip to Europe immensely. Why don't you do it? You're not a bit clever."