

THE CHISELLER

MRS. LANE, graciously farewelling her parting guests, saw them drift out in bright swarms to their waiting cars at the curb, and noted with satisfaction the fine array of motors assembled there—blue, black, green road-dragons with gleaming bodies and barrel lamps, heralds of power, wealth and elegance. No one could say she did not help to further her husband's business.

She was a handsome woman, in a black sheathe dress, and dieted to the last ounce. Her black hair, parted in the middle, flowed down her shapely head and met at the nape of the white neck in a shiny roll. Long crystal earrings flanked her narrow cheeks, and twinkled as she moved like Chinese wind-bells. Her hands were long, with pointed nails dyed to match the burning crimson of her lips.

Now that the rooms were cleared the most enjoyable time of the tea had come, when the helpers, pourers and servers assembled at the table to eat and talk free from restraint. There were still sandwiches on the trays, olives in the glass dishes, a whole log of ice-cream, brownbaked with rolled nuts, a little bit warped with the heat of the room, but all the sweeter for that, and someone had brought in a fresh pot of tea.

Mrs. Lane sat down among her admiring friends and took their homage. It was the peak of the day for her, when compliments would be showered on her. She knew her tea had been a perfect performance, and she was ready to take her curtain calls.