

THE CITY OF MASKS

antiques, price-marks to the contrary. You are in the home of a Marchioness, and she is not a dealer in old furniture, you may be quite sure of that. She does not owe a penny on a single article in the apartment nor does she, on the other hand, own a penny's worth of anything that meets the eye,—unless, of course, one excepts the dust-cloth and the can of polish that follows Julia about the room. Nor is it a loan exhibit, nor the setting for a bazaar.

The apartment being on the top floor of a five-story building, it is necessary to account for the remaining four. In the rear of the fourth floor there was a small kitchen and pantry from which a dumb-waiter ascended and descended with vehement enthusiasm. The remainder of the floor was divided into four rather small chambers, each opening into the outer hall, with two bath-rooms inserted. Each of these rooms contained a series of lockers, not unlike those in a club-house. Otherwise they were unfurnished except for a few commonplace cane bottom chairs in various stages of decrepitude.

The third floor represented a complete apartment of five rooms, daintily furnished. This was where the Marchioness really lived.

Commerce, after a fashion, occupied the two lower floors. It stopped short at the bottom of the second flight of stairs where it encountered an obstacle in the shape of a grill-work gate that bore the laconic word "Private," and while commerce may have peeped inquisitively through and beyond the barrier it was never permitted to trespass farther than an occasional sly, surreptitious and unavailing twist of the knob.