

Captivating Mary Carstairs

CHAPTER I

THE CHIEF CONSPIRATOR SECURES A PAL

In a rear room of a quaint little house uptown, a great bronzed-faced man sat at a piano, a dead pipe between his teeth, and absently played the most difficult of Beethoven's sonatas. Though he played it divinely, the three men who sat smoking and talking in a nearby corner paid not the least attention to him. The player, it seemed, did not expect them to: he paid very little attention himself.

Next to the selection of members, that is, no doubt, the most highly prized thing about the Curzon Club: you are not expected to pay attention unless you want to. It is a sanctuary where no one can bore you, except yourself. The members have been chosen with this in mind, and not chosen carelessly.

Lord Pembroke, who married a Philadelphian, is quoted as saying that the Curzon is the most democratic club in a too confoundedly democratic country. M. Arly, the editor, has told Paris that it is the most exclusive club in the world. Probably both were right. The electing board is the whole club, and a candidate is stone-dead at the first blackball; but no stigma at-