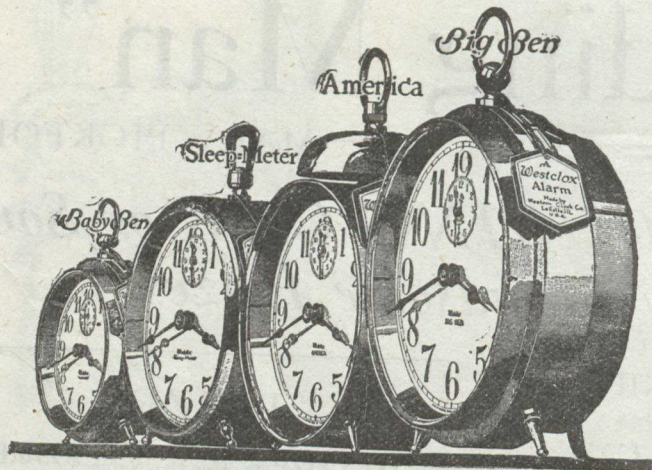




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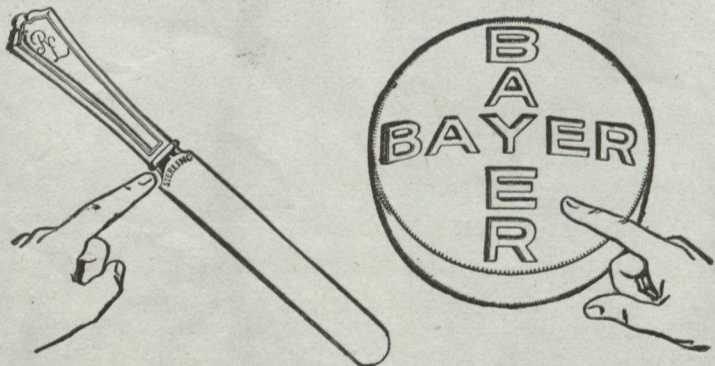
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If Time Drags, Turn to Page 58

It will sharpen your wits and brush up your brain to try this interesting puzzle.

"EVERYWOMAN"

(Continued from page 16)

that was all for tonight, miss. If I may suggest it, miss, you had better take a bromide before you sleep. Good night, miss."

ALONE. Yet the room echoed to the strange words she had thought to hear. What was it a woman wanted most of life, what dazzling gift, what fair white temple shining on what high Acropolis? She flung her bare, round arms wide, beating to the pulse of life, a-hunger and a-thirst. "If I only knew!" she cried. "If I only knew!"

She turned the lights out, filling the room with shadows. Through the parted curtains the moon showed, a silver bowl, brimming with the wine of dreams that spilled in pools about her slim white feet. If she knew—if she knew—

She seated herself, on sudden impulse, before her mirror, searching her beauty wistfully. And as she gazed it seemed a face came out of the shadows and looked into the glass beside hers, a face with smirking lips and fawning eyes, loose lips, too moist and red, eyes like clouded agate, gleaming with the light of moonlight reflected in a muddy stream. As she looked the lips moved to form words.

"You are very beautiful," they said. "You can have anything you want. You can be loved and courted and desired, you can play with men's red hearts as if they were shuttlecocks, you can learn to the full the power and the might of womanhood."

Her body seemed very heavy with the popped wine of fatigue. She stepped out of it as out of a discarded garment and turned to the man at her side without wonder, for she had left that sleeping with her corporeal body, together with fear and reason and all other daylight things. "Who are you," she asked, noticing his greedy eyes of admiration with pleasure.

"I am Flattery," he told her. "Surely Everywoman knows me? I have been your friend since the beginning of time. Trust me and come with me."

But still she hesitated. "How do I know I shall succeed? Perhaps—I should not find fame at all, but only failure and mockery."

The moist red lips drew close to her, whispering that she was too beautiful to hide herself—that others might fail, but never, never she! Whispering that she had been born for something better than most women, presently her doubts melted, though she knew that he lied. And hand in hand she followed Flattery into the world.

On the threshold three were waiting, one in a white gown, one in a green gown, one in a gown that flashed with precious stones, and, as she would have passed, they stopped her, touching her with tender hands.

"I am Modesty," said the one in white, lifting her pure brow. "I always start out with Everywoman on her journey"—her voice grew sad—"but too often we are parted before the end."

"And I," said she in the green with the wreath of rosebuds on her arm and the laughter running through her voice, "am Youth, the best friend of Everywoman. I will stay with you as long as I can."

"Everywoman loves me," the third said, tossing her head proudly, "for I am Beauty, and if I go with her she can tread on roses and lie on a soft bed."

AND LO, with her three attendants, Everywoman went out to where in the night the city, a courtesan with bosom strung with jewels, ogled in the sky. And here, on the great stage of one of the theatres, she learnt what Flattery had told her—that she was a woman, and hence all-powerful; learnt what it was to be acclaimed by a thousand voices, what it was to stand in the spotlight that men might feast upon her beauty.

Modesty, alone, of her companions, drooped in the glare of the footlights, begging her to come away, sobbing that if she did not she could not stay. "And you need me—you will never find what Everywoman wants without me. For I can lead you to love, but without me you will be as one following false fires over the marsh of danger."

But Everywoman, grown self-willed, only laughed at her. "You are too old-fashioned for modern life," she declared. "Youth and Beauty are enough, if you insist upon going. And as for Love, I have already found him, here in the theatre, he whom they call Passion."

The girl in white burst into tears and clutched her hand. "No, no! He lies to you if he says that he is Love. Look!" She pointed to where, upon the hot glove of the dressing-table light, a

white moth beat her fragile wings to rags. "That is what Passion does to a woman. When she follows him she loses her wings. Passion is no more Love than the ghastly light that beats upon the stage yonder is like the wholesome sun. Everywoman, you are in danger! Oh, listen to me."

A knock sounded upon the door, and a gross figure stood on the threshold. He licked his thick lips as he stared at Everywoman with small, unblinking eyes. In one over-manicured hand he held a jewel-case, and his short, fat fingers gleamed with rings.

"Wealth to see Everywoman!" Flattery fawned at his side. "I'm giving a banquet for you at the Café of Pleasure," boomed Wealth. "Don't disappoint me, my dear. Everybody that is anybody will be there."

"And think of the honour—to be feted by Wealth, who can have his choice of all the women in the world," whispered Flattery. "Everywoman can't resist, surely."

Modesty watched while Everywoman shook out the necklace of iridescent pearls and hung them about her white neck, then stole sadly away, hiding her face in her hands. And when, later, Everywoman returned Passion's kisses, Modesty shrank out into the night and was gone, sobbing, into the darkness.

But with the hot tang of his kisses burning upon her lips, Everywoman drew back, trembling. "If this is Love, why does it hurt me? Why does it scorch me here?" She laid her hands over her heart. "I am afraid of you! It is not you I am seeking—oh, go away!"

Passion caught her close. She felt his hot breath on her cheeks, felt the world reeling beneath her feet, and struck out blindly, knowing that if she did not she must be swept away in the black torrent of emotion. She tore with sharp, feline claws, she set her white teeth into the hands that held her with terrible strength, and at length, bruised, disheveled, all her garments torn and rent, she freed herself, and, aflame with anger, sent him crestfallen away. But when she looked into her mirror to array herself for Wealth's, fete, the face that gazed back at her seemed almost a stranger's, and then she knew that Modesty had left her and called aloud in despair.

"Youth—Beauty—stay with me or I am lost!"

IN THE house of Wealth the light blazed down from myriad crystal chandeliers and great tables set with gleaming napery and silver-plate, stretched the length of the banquet-room. Hothouse blooms, already heavy and turning purple in the wine-fumed air, glowed sullenly from massed banks along the wall. Delicacies from the earth over were set before the glazed, indifferent eyes of the guests, who hardly touched them, but drank eagerly from goblets ever filled. Everywoman sitting on the right-hand side of the host, suffered him to paddle her hand with his gross fingers and whisper his coarse compliments into her ear.

"But—are you Love, whom Everywoman seeks?" she asked, wide-eyed. "I think he does not look like you. For somewhere—I heard that Love was tall and very straight and good to look upon, and his eyes were like clear water in the sun."

"They told you wrongly, Everywoman," Wealth wheezed. "I am greater than Love, who cannot live in the dank stench of poverty, eh! A delicate, sickly lad, Love! You do not need him if you have me. But promise that if I marry you, you will always keep these pretty wenches, Youth and Beauty, with you. I like to have them about me."

"Then you do not want me for myself," said Everywoman, proudly, "but for my friends, whom some day I may lose. No, I know now that you are not Love, for he would want me for myself alone."

Beside her, Dissipation, an old man with sly, furtive eyes and furred tongue, leaned close to Beauty, touching her unemptied glass. "Come, this will never do! No prigs allowed here in the house of Wealth!" he mumbled. "Drink, my girl, drink and be merry, for when you die you will be a sad sight to look upon. Drink to drown the thought of death!"

And so urged, Beauty lifted her glass and drained it to the last crimson drop. Her head fell back, heavily, and rising swiftly, Dissipation lifted her in his arms and hurried out of the room. A burst of laughter jangled among the crystal chandeliers, one of the guests flung an armful of sodden roses after him, another sent his glass crashing over his shoulder, but Everywoman, rising