



The Waltham

HER DAY OF DAYS

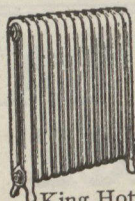
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to be the shadow of his fellow men. You must believe that. But," he hesitated for a moment, and then went quietly on, "when, in the future, you think of me, I will ask you also to remember the imaginary food which was found outside an imaginary tent on Selwyn Lake." He bowed to Natalie, and held out a long hand to Pearson. "My lord, I have the honour to bid you good evening!"

As he came, he went—tall, noiseless, and mysterious. At the door he turned, bowed slightly, and vanished.

PEARSON breathed hard. It seemed difficult to get air into his lungs. Slowly his eyes met those of the girl, and hung there, piercing far into their starry depths. Her lips were parted, and it seemed that her spirit paused ere it rushed to meet his own.

In another moment, a voice broke in: "And now, sir, will you do me the honour of taking a glass of wine, and perhaps the lady will, also?" Natalie nodded brightly and with relief. She was beginning to be afraid of the tumult in her soul.

Their host lifted a brimming glass. "To your very good health." He emptied it at a draft.

"You are very kind, for, as a matter of fact, we are celebrating a very happy event. Accept my compliments."

The manager bowed. "I'm doubly fortunate. And now, I am sorry, but my duty—" He saluted them again and vanished.

The young man refilled his glass, and stared at the girl over its shining edge. In the bubbling depths he saw life and joy and a new, intoxicating future. Across the table was beauty and love.

"Why didn't you tell me before?" he said, slowly.

"Don't you see? If you had known, you would have gone to the police and demanded protection, and then," she faltered, "not only would they not have been able to protect me, but you, too, would have been in great danger. Dearest, it was not Lord Aldwych I learned to love, but," here she lifted her own glass, "I shall not love him less."

His brow wrinkled. "So you would have let me go?"

"My heart would never have let you go; but since my presence would have meant peril to you, I would have slipped away from you forever. But now—" the rest was lost in an unutterable look.

He lifted his wineglass. "To ourselves," he smiled. "We need it."

She nodded, and drank. Then, with a curious gesture, she dropped the glass. Their eyes mingled again as it shattered into fragments.

"You did that once before," he put in, suddenly.

"Yes—and for the same reason: 'To the very end.'"

Half an hour later, they were walking, arm in arm, up Broadway. He stopped at a jeweler's window. "I should like to buy an engagement ring for the future Lady Aldwych, if she will kindly advance me the necessary amount," he laughed, with worship in his gaze. "It's only for a day or two, and I'll give excellent security."

They leaned over the counter and surveyed the jewels. The salesman glanced at them and opened a drawer and brought out a magnificent diamond.

"You can't do better than this," he remarked, admiringly; "it's a perfect stone, set in the latest fashion—in platinum."

Her lips trembled. "It's beautiful," she said, under her breath, "but not—not in platinum."

THE END.

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