

hand store, but Marie finds old lustre jugs and rosewood stools."

"I only got one lustre jug," said Marie, "and I feel a little mean about it, for the proprietor was out and I bought it from the girl, who didn't know lustre from blue enamel. It's a beauty, and I only paid a quarter for it."

"You didn't feel mean enough to return it the next day to make restitution, though," Helen said.

"No, not that mean. I have certain scruples, but they are under control." Marie's laugh was silvered over with the musical tinkle of her crystals.

"And now, when we are all here in one charmed circle," said Helen, "just six of us, who know the worst of each other, just tell us the story of the walnut desk that you purloined and pirated from our leading departmental store in broad daylight, and under the eyes of the full staff, one floor-walker and two doormen."

Marie's eyes kindled.

"Now, I will admit, without argument, that this was a fairly smooth transaction. But I swear you to secrecy. If Bob knew this he would disown me. Bob prides himself on the fairness of his dealing—he gives the other fellow all the breaks all the time. I don't—I believe in the motto, 'Let the buyer beware,' and everyone else. I believe a person has to be ruthless to get anywhere in this world. Theoretically, bread cast on the water comes back, but who would want it then? But here's the story: I went to the furniture sale at Brenton's to buy an end table, but my eyes detected a beautiful walnut desk among the sales stuff—which you may have noticed in the living-room. A card lay on it stating the sale price was thirty dollars. I looked around to get a clerk who