

NANCY CHOOSES.

East flirted with West and West retorted in kind as the bell-boy carrying Nancy's bag pursued his polite, proprietary course through crowded corridors. Exotic, seductive pierrettes, inextinguishably feminine though in white satin pantaloons, angled for and won the attention of East Indian rajahs; Swiss mountaineers bent gallantly over vibrantly coquettish Spanish señoritas; a six-foot white rabbit stood on its hind legs and flapped grotesque paws for the delectation of a Dutch maiden who was none the less demure though she used lip-stick and powdered her pretty nose as she applauded him.

Eye-filling, all of it, for this was New Year's Eve and a carnival ball was about to close College Week at Lake Placid Club. But Nancy's eyes were very tired as she trailed the bell-boy. A new arrival, she was still hatted and gloved and the spirit of carnival merely eddied about her, leaving her untouched.

"Excuse me," murmured the bell-boy for perhaps the hundredth time, and so they gained access to the elevator.

There she smiled, friendly, at Nancy. "More than thirteen hundred people here," he announced proudly.

Nancy smiled back, but it was an effort. She positively ached. The elevator seemed tired too. But presently it achieved its destination and Nancy, after the bell-boy had performed the prescribed ritual of his craft, found herself alone in the room that was to be hers for a week or so.

A successful young business woman, Nancy. Absolutely and always. And yet her mirror drew her. But that, she would have said, was only that she might appraise the condition of her toilette, now that her fur coat was off.

Eleven hours in the train—she had left New York that morning—had not helped it. So Nancy's blue eyes, like shadowed under her puckered brows, frankly informed her. But it didn't matter. She would doff it soon—very soon, she hoped—to slip into bed and begin, with a long night's rest, both the New Year and the vacation that had been prescribed for her so persistently by those overlords who, now kindly, now irritable, ruled her days and her immediate destiny.

They had been insistent that she needed it. And almost absurdly determined that this, the Lake Placid Club, was precisely the spot for her. "Wonderful place," her immediate superior had boomed and beamed, with Jove-like benevolence. "Do you world of good."

This Nancy had protested though not as she would have liked to. "If you would only tell me what—if anything—I am to get out of all the big things to come you are all discussing so enthusiastically, it would help more than any vacation," she had felt like replying.

But hadn't, of course. One seldom does.

Instead, Nancy reflected bitterly, one came here, to Lake Placid Club, and—there she stopped. The knock on the door was repeated. She crossed swiftly to open it. Another bell-boy stood there, with satin frivolities, white and lustrous, over his arm. A carnival costume, obviously.

"But—but that can't be for me!" protested Nancy.

"Miss Sayles" asked the bell-boy. And, Nancy admitting it, dismissed the suggestion of error by placing the costume on her bed.

Nancy let it lie. She had arrived too late for dinner but had been told that she would be served something in the tea-room. The bell-boy offered to guide her. In it she discovered several of her fellow passengers on the trip north. Notably a girl who had slept most of the way, her spectacularly painted mouth a little open.

"Some deb who danced all night," Nancy had decided scornfully.

The little deb no longer slept; revitalized, she positively scintillated. For, obviously, the benefit of the male who kept her company as she ate. He was already costumed as one more pierrot; Nancy recalled that he had been at the desk when she registered.

A rather engaging youngster, the masculine complement of the girl with him; belonging, as she did, by mere accident of birth, to what passed for an American aristocracy. Enjoying, with unconscious arrogance, privileges they had never earned.

These were Nancy's thoughts for a second. Then her interest waned.

"Now just forget the office altogether," had been the parting injunction of her immediate superior.

Forget it! It had become her life. At nineteen, she had begun in that office as a stenographer. The company then, as now, manufactured castings for automobile engines. More recently it had developed a special alloy for pistons. This promised big things but had required new capital to develop its potential market. The capital had been secured. So much she knew. About it the overlords talked exultantly, if still mysteriously. And of a beneficent future just ahead.

"Yes—but what will it mean to me?" was what Nancy wanted to know.

The question was in her mind as she ate. Phrased in bitterness rather than optimism, for she very much feared it would mean little. She had, in ten years, developed a knowledge of the company's affairs that she felt was as comprehensive as that of any of its executives. This had not passed unnoticed. She was regarded as valuable. But always with the inescapable masculine qualification.

"It's too bad you're not a man," one of the first executives she had served had once told her. "You seem to have something more than a feminine aptitude for detail. Almost a masculine breadth of vision."

"Much obliged," she had felt privileged to comment. "But why consider vision a purely masculine attribute?"

"Well—look at the other girls in the office," he had suggested. "To

them a dictated letter is something to be typed. They get no more kick out of the acknowledgment of some order than the acknowledgment of a request for a catalog. They are all more vitally interested in the precise amount of stocking their skirts should show."

"And in their hats," she had contributed. But only that she might add with misleading meekness, "How about men? Don't they ever fuss about clothes?"

He had grinned, if sheepishly. She had him there—she was devilish quick. Only the day before she had taken a letter to his tailor concerning the cut of a golf coat he did not care for at all.

"You know darn well what I mean," he had countered. "Men consider business a career, women don't. They are in business merely until they get married. You yourself—"

"I'm in business to stay," she had assured him firmly.

"I doubt it," he had retorted as firmly.

And not without reason. She had been very pretty then—prettier, even, than the deb with the spectacularly painted mouth who, for all her air of careless nonchalance, was so patiently

Pierrot. Aside from her hair, which was dusky, and her teeth, which were exquisite, and her beautiful coloring and, as an overlay, that definite adjunct to charm that is so sketchily described as personality.

Even now, at twenty-nine—which she was this New Year's Eve—she was not, she supposed, unattractive to men. For all that she had become the determinedly successful young business woman type, she sometimes became conscious of a quickened interest in the roving male eyes.

Just as now, with a curious shift in her own interest, she realized that Pierrot, not wholly engrossed in the deb who displayed her wares feminine fashion, was actually observing her.

Unstirred herself, she merely stirred her tea.

Almost any time during the last ten years there had been some man on her horizon whom a minimum of encouragement might have brought to heel, eager to try emotional experiment. None had been encouraged.

One reason was that she had a widowed mother very much dependent on her. Quite aside from that, however, she scorned her masculine contemporaries.

They had so little to recommend them to her appraising eyes. Youth and assurance alone were at their command; they had yet, most of them, to discover that they were born to live and die as cogs. Whatever position they filled was as much a stop-gap, so far as they were concerned, as typing letters was to the fluffiest-headed, most frivolous-minded stenographer.

So she had come to twenty-nine and what, in a business woman, is accounted success. Yet: "Successful!" Nancy always felt like echoing when the adjective was applied to her. "If any man in the office had worked as hard as I have, acquired the same grasp of business, he'd be recognized as a real asset—and be paid three times what I am."

The new alloy for pistons was to be advertised aggressively. Not just in the trade publications for which she had prepared many advertisements—colorless technical stuff—but a national campaign, requiring dramatization, life and movement. And she could do it. She knew it. But would they give her the opportunity? As advertising manager—a real executive?

"Not a chance," she informed herself, candidly and bitterly. "Business is still like those men's clubs which have a restaurant for women guests. Women can go that far—but no further."

They—the overlords who ruled her immediate destiny—did not want to give her what she wanted and deserved. Yet at the same time they found her invaluable where she was. The idea was to keep her there, propitiated by those large, paternalistic gestures that so exalt the masculine ego.

So she had been given this vacation at the Lake Placid Club, with all expenses paid. And here she was.

Nancy glanced about her, blue eyes contemptuous. The carnival was about to begin. Male and female were pairing off. The deb with Pierrot rose quickly.

"I'll change in ten seconds—be down in a jiff," she promised.

She passed Nancy's table swiftly, her painted mouth still open, but eager and avid now. Pierrot lounged by more leisurely. Briefly his eyes encountered Nancy's. Blue eyes, too, but definitely masculine—and rather nice. They seemed, almost, to be asking some half audacious, half amused question of her. But that was preposterous. What question—amused or otherwise—could he, looking scarce twenty, costumed and eager for carnival, ask of tired thirty who, feeling twice that age, was eager for bed?

Which was where Nancy was going as quickly as possible. The costume which, designed for carnival, lay on her bed, was quite forgotten.

Nevertheless, it challenged her attention the moment she switched the light on in her room. But she ignored it. A few seconds later she had slipped out of her toilette and in that irreducible minimum of lingerie that even the successful business woman wears these days was forcing herself through her daily exercises. This was part of her ritual. Not to preserve the slim and lovely contours that the mirror caught and reflected, but to keep herself fit. For business!

Not until they were finished did her attention turn toward the bed. From that she removed the costume, purposing to drape it over a chair. Yet as the silken folds clung to, caressed her fingers, an instinct as old as Eve gave her pause.

"It's beautiful," she mused as, her slim arms extended, she held it before her. "I wonder if—it fits."

Twenty seconds later she discovered that it did. Exquisitely. The lower extremities sheathed ankle and knee tightly and then swung out, coquettishly, flaring like riding breeches. The bodice, with its black buttons fastened, swung up from waist to

shoulder as if she had been poured into it; a tiny ruff fitted snugly under her chin.

This much her mirror informed her. And business woman though she might be, a subtle intoxication, as thence as alcohol, glowed in her. She was, briefly, enamored with herself.

A mask had slipped to the floor from the costume's folds; she bent to retrieve it and discovered, inevitably, that she must try that on, too. It shadowed her eyes and quite concealed her straight nose; yet, revealing her amused mouth, added to the hint of youth and carnival that seemed to permeate the night and place. And, swiftly, gave her fresh impulse.

She removed the mask but only that she might powder her nose.

The elevator boy gave her a grin, half friendly greeting, half frank masculine admiration that was somewhat startling. She suddenly became self-conscious, might have retreated had that not seemed awkward. Accordingly she carried on to where the orchestra was playing something riotous that Carmen might dance with Pilgrim Father, Franciscan monk with Columbine. There she discovered that masks so soon had been discarded and so she must remove hers too.

Feeling absurdly like another Cinderella, she slipped swiftly into a seat well to the rear of those who merely watched. A spectator.

The carnival was just a swirl of color for a time. Then among the dancers she discovered Pierrot. His partner was the deb who had slept so much of the trip north. She wore a costume akin to Nancy's, but of black satin, to accentuate the blandness of the sleekly shingled head that was bent back that she might glance

had cut in and out of the last dance and who, at the end, had bade her good night.

"Of course you skate—everybody does," he had said. "But do you ski?"

"It's been forever since I skated and never since I skied," she had told him, eyes and voice aglow.

"Then you have a new thrill coming to you. May I introduce you to skis tomorrow?"

"Tomorrow," she announced firmly. "I shall be a hundred and ten. And skis, I fear, are not for me. I'm not as young and elastic as I used to be and—"

"Then appearances are once more deceptful," he inserted deftly. And added an audacious, "Are you really more than twenty? You don't look it."

It was late when she awoke the next morning and she didn't, as she candidly informed herself, either look twenty or feel it. But that was a merciless appraisal and in it Pierrot did not share.

"Who's a hundred and ten this morning?" he demanded gaily as they met in the lobby after breakfast. "I've been waiting an hour for you," he added without waiting for an answer to his question. "Is it going to take you another hour to get ready?"

To that she might have answered that she was practically ready now. She had planned to do more than a little skating; a white sweater and cap, with scarf and gloves to match, was, with the short skirt she wore, the extent of her sports kit. She had been feminine enough to realize that at the same time inadequate here and there to the sleekly shingled head that it didn't matter, really, in the least,

collegian about him. But the thought got no further. The blonde little deb, costumed for outdoors, swung near.

"Going out this morning, Tommy?" she demanded, addressing Nancy's companion—and definitely ignoring Nancy.

"Later," he answered—and turned back to Nancy.

The little deb passed on without another word. Yet Nancy knew that she had become the object of a bit of childish and unreasonable hatred.

"Why don't you go out with her?" she suggested impulsively, and with no thought of coquetry.

"Because," he answered, "I feel it a duty—and a privilege as well, if I may—to get you started right."

He was a nice child. She could not deny him that tribute. And she had been wired a hundred dollars for incidentals and commanded to use it.

"I'll probably be all of an hour," she warned. "I've got to buy everything."

"I'll wait," he promised. And ridiculous though it was, she did get a kick out of that assurance.

It wasn't quite an hour, after all, when she appeared, a little self-conscious but measurably pleased with herself. She had chosen one of the severely smart little skiing costumes, black like the deb's. It fitted exquisitely.

"You look simply ripping," Tommy assured her boyishly. "Let's go." Ski Hill was black with skiers. Or rather crimson and orange and every other color that ever was on land or sea, for the costumes, against the white background, were like confetti scattered across a table-cloth. Some of the skiers could, like Tommy, do

white fur at neck and wrists, swooped onto the ice.

"She took second at the Olympics last year," the woman beside Nancy remarked to her companion.

A bull-fight on the ice followed; after that a football game. Then again a single figure darted out of darkness to challenge and hold the eye.

Masculine, this time. No swirl of skirts but a marvelous cleanness and length of limb. A slim-hipped, wide-shouldered surge of power and surety that, with a breathless speed and with no apparent effort, defied all laws of gravity. She caught her breath again and again as the flying figure left the ice altogether, turned in air and came down, gracefully and easily as a thistle-down.

"Tommy Stirling," the woman next to her murmured. "They say he's Olympic material, although he's only been doing figure skating a little more than a year."

And swiftly an unauthorized yet authentic thrill ran through Nancy.

"He's a millionaire," the woman beside her added, "but quite unspoiled."

And Nancy suddenly felt cold, somehow.

A dance indoors, followed the carnival. But for that Nancy did not linger.

"You did a Cinderella on me last night," Tommy reproached, the next morning as they met in the corridor. "Where did you disappear to?"

"To bed," retorted Nancy. And added, deliberately, "As Cinderella would have after a day on skis had been thirty instead of barely sixteen."

He gave her a swift glance. "You do feel your years don't you! he commented. Why?"

This was unexpected. She had felt the need of—well, disillusioning him. Why he had sought her out she could not guess. That he found her attractive and so was drawn to her seemed too optimistically feminine an explanation for her to accept, although it had suggested itself to her indolently as she had lain awake the night before.

"You might feel your years too," she assured him now, if you had to work for a living as hard as I do."

Briefly, amusement flickered in his eyes, quirked the engaging line of his lips. "Why work so hard, then?" he suggested amiably.

"Some people do have to," she observed. "Have you ever worked your self—at anything?"

"Now and then," he grinned. "But I have never really been convinced that business should be permitted to interfere with pleasure."

Of course he wouldn't be. To come here at this season he must have had not only money at his command but the leisure as well. Which meant, obviously that he did not work seriously at anything, or without frequent, casually taken vacations. Unspoiled? Hardly, according to her creed.

"Especially," he was adding lightly, "at a place like this! Surely you didn't come here to think of business? Can't you forget it altogether?"

Nancy might have replied that she had done that at odd moments. But the truth did not suit her purpose now. "When it is my whole life—fills my days and nights—how can I?" she asked.

"As bad as all that?" he protested. "Why should it be? I can name half a dozen men of fairly large affairs here right now who seem to have let them slip completely from their shoulders."

"O, men!" conceded Nancy. "Men can!"

"Why men—more than women?" he asked.

"I'm afraid your business experience is scant!" she replied. "Else you wouldn't ask that. A woman in business can't hope to win advancement by being just a little better than the men around her. She has to buckle down, show herself three times as capable before she's given any consideration."

She shrugged slim shoulders, prepared to let the matter rest there. But through her voice ran a thread of bitterness that did not escape him.

"I suppose that's so," he began but was interrupted.

"Well," the little deb was demanding addressing Tommy and again ignoring Nancy, "what's on the program this morning?"

"I'm trying to persuade Miss Sayles to take a second lesson in skiing," replied Tommy, with a glance at Nancy.

"Sorry—but I've got letters I simply must write," announced Nancy and, with a smile, definitely detached herself.

(Concluded Next Week)

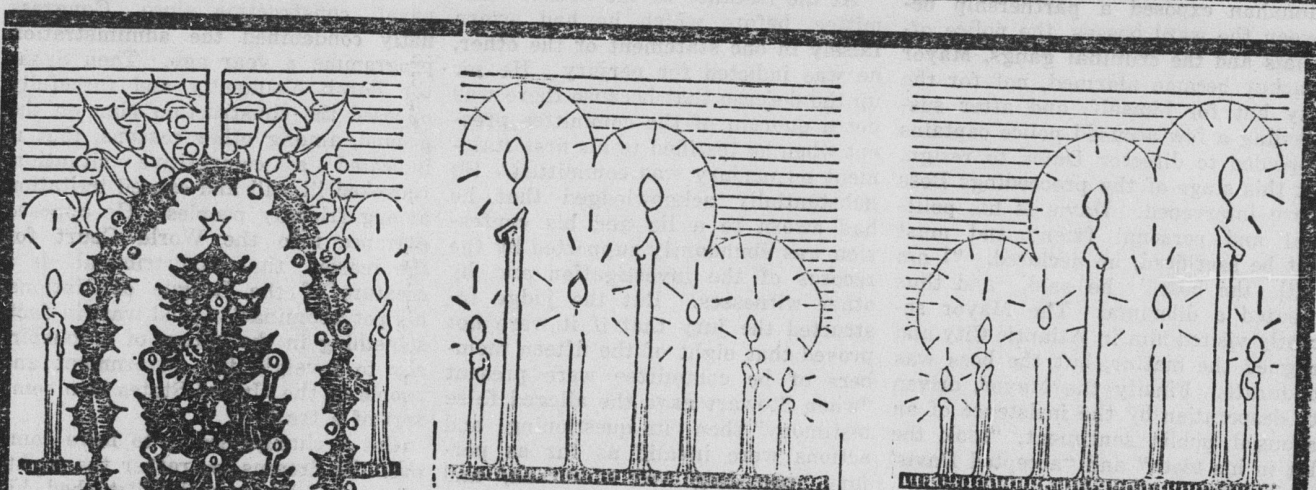
The Orchestra Baton Caused the Death of Its Inventor.

The orchestra season is again well under way and the baton is in full swing. Though simple in construction this invaluable equipment of the orchestra conductor was not a simple invention. It even caused the death of its inventor, the composer Jean Baptiste Lully.

Until Lully's time the custom was for the conductor to tap on the floor with his foot in marking time. Lully, while conducting Louis XIV's band of "Petits Violons," found it wearisome to mark time with his foot for a long period, and he sought to find a substitute for it. One day he appeared before his orchestra with a six-foot staff.

At one prominent court function when Lully was called upon to direct his band the composer-conductor was so intent on making a great impression on his audience that he brought down the end of his pole with unthought exertion. During the climax of the composition being given he brought down the pole with such force that, striking his foot, it caused a deep wound. Lully was so engrossed in his conducting that he paid no attention to the injury. Blood poisoning set in and spread rapidly to the heart, resulting in Lully's death. The pole, or baton, adopted by other conductors, was steadily made less and less unyielding until it was brought down to its present size.

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If you have a relative or friend who might be interested in what is going on in Centre county, who has no other means of contact than through the occasional letters you write him or her we are sure they would enjoy having the Watchman. It would tell them so many things that you forget to mention when you finally prod yourself into answering that letter you received weeks ago.

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Why not accept our suggestion that you send the Watchman for a year to that friend or relative. It will cost only \$1.50 and be fifty letters, teeming with news, that anyone would be glad to receive.

Send us \$1.50 and we will mail the Watchman for a year to any point in the United States. We will also mail a Christmas card to the recipient expressing your good wishes.

What could be nicer?

The Democratic Watchman

A Country Newspaper that is different,

up, provocatively, at Pierrot. They danced a few steps while Nancy watched, and then a Cossack cut in. Pierrot surrendered her with a smile and his eyes rove.

Evidently they sought another partner. But they seemed in no hurry, nor was their inspection confined to the dancers. And so it was for the second time that night that his eyes met Nancy's.

Ten seconds later he was smiling down at her. "May I?" he asked.

"It's been years since I danced," she protested. "I—"

"It's been years since anybody danced," he assured her, confidentially. "I feel very sure you won't find it difficult. Won't you try? Please?"

At any other time, any other place, she might have given him a flat refusal. But the orchestra was gorgeous, stressing the challenge that dance-music ever carries to mortals. She hesitated—and was lost.

"And you said you couldn't dance!" he murmured.

"I rather suspect it all depends upon whom you dance with," she heard herself reply, never realizing that her head, sleek but unbowed, was tilted back much as the little deb's had been.

"You are about to have the truth of that theory tested out," he remarked ruefully. "I have no luck tonight."

"What do you mean?" she demanded, puzzled.

"I am about to be cut in on—darn it," he explained.

Incredibly, it was true. And as incredibly it was after midnight when Nancy again confronted her mirror. In the interim, rediscovering a forgotten ecstasy, she had danced with all manner of men, in all manner of costumes.

It had been Pierrot, however, who

Yet now, with Pierrot smiling at her, something long disciplined did stir in her.

"Ready for what?" she demanded evasively.

"To ski, of course."

"I told you I couldn't ski."

"You told me you couldn't dance. If there is anything you lack, there's a shop here."

"Thanks," said Nancy dryly. "I've seen it."

The words had no more than passed her lips when a bell-boy approached. "Miss Sayles," he paged. "Miss Sayles—"

She beckoned him to her. "Telegram," he explained.

Nancy ripped the yellow envelop wide. To read:

An wiring one hundred dollars for incidental expenses. Buy whatever you need in the way of sports equipment and enjoy yourself to the limit. Remember you are only young once and this is our party.

"Not bad news, I hope," she realized Pierrot was saying.

She glanced up at him, lovelier than she guessed.

"Do you believe in fairies?" she demanded. "Or fairy godmothers?"

"Absolutely," he assured her.

"Even when they're bald and more than fifty and wear Masonic charms and when they are supposed to be engaged in conference, are telling you why they failed to break a hundred at golf?" she persisted.

"They," he assured her gravely, "can be either the worst—or the nicest kind of fairy godmother."

It was at that second, somehow, that she realized that he must be older than she had first supposed. Twenty-six or seven, perhaps. Boyish he might be, in manner and appearance, yet there was nothing of the callow

incredible things with incredible ease, but a majority, like Nancy, spent most of the time gyrating madly, riding for a fall. After it came, usually cataclysmic, they rose, powdered like doughnuts, gritted their teeth and—prepared to fall again. They were all victims of that strange virus that affects the neophytes of skiing. And so, soon, was Nancy herself.

Long before dusk settled over the Sentinels, with an afterglow in the west and one incredibly clear star riding above their lofty horizon, a new ambition, momentarily eclipsing all others, had taken possession of her.

"I'll master these darn things," she assured Tommy as they poled their way back to the clubhouse, "or die in the attempt!"

"You did wonderfully well," he told her.

"Polite—but insincere," she flashed back. "All the X's in the world couldn't cover the spots where I fell!"

Not until later, as she bathed, did she discover how tired she was. And again she considered an early retreat to bed.

"But you mustn't miss the ice carnival," protested Tommy. "Get a costume and join in."

This she negated. Instead, snuggled into her fur coat, she sat on the side-lines, again a spectator. The rink was brilliant with vari-colored lights; sky-rockets and aerial bombs were being set off continually. Then the band struck up and the costumed skaters came upon the scene. A rag-bag of color.

They circled the rink thrice, then ranged themselves along its farther side. Nancy caught her breath. An exquisitely graceful figure, sheathed in black velvet, short-skirted and with