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Little Man

IT IS BOTH SAD and amusing to see a former King of England reduced by the woman he loves to "Little Man"—to the rank of a meek husband. What should one do, laugh or cry, when one looks at the ex-Caesar in the role of handbag-carrier, a sort of walking ornament?

One should neither laugh nor cry. One should look at the gracious Duchess whose profession seems to be what is called "Putting in the Grand Appearance." For, according to society columnist Cholly Knickerbocker, the Duchess is No. 1 in the list of the world's ten best-dressed women.



The Duchess, who seems to have a very alert conscience, realizes that her principal duty is to live up to her Nobel Prize of Fashion. Therefore, several times a week during her long sojourns in New York, she condescends to show herself to the populace, which includes valiant armies of sycophants, snobs and title-worshippers.

The Windsors have three favorite haunts in New York—Le Pavillon, The Colony and El Morocco. All three of them are restaurants—the best in town. However, since it is impossible to be at several spots at the same time, one may take The Colony as the typical setting for the Royal Entry.

Gene Cavallero, owner of the restaurant, knows how to produce atmosphere. When he is expecting the Windsors, he stands majestically in the small lobby, surrounded by his aides. The welcoming committee looks very much like paintings depicting Napoleon and his marshals pondering Borodino.

The lobby is also teeming with the elite, since it is an open secret that the Windsors are coming. Lady members of the smart set are looking impatiently toward the door. There is a feeling of excitement in the air. Ah! At last! The Windsors are here!

Naturally, the Duchess comes in first. The moment she steps into the lobby, her face lights up. Her smile is a judicious blend of intimacy and

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reserve, uniting the mesmeric charm of an earthly woman with the aloof radiancy of a goddess. Her smile seems to say: "Hello, how very nice to see you again! Thank you for your admiration and homage."

Of course there is no applause; such vulgar demonstrations would be out of place at The Colony. The women who have met the Duchess are waiting with bated breath for a glance of recognition. When that supreme moment arrives, they execute the neatest curtsies on this side of the Atlantic.

This pirouetting mania of American women is the most curious phenomenon in the history of a country based on social equality. It may be but a small component of the whole Windsor legend. But it is significant. And disturbing. It is clear proof that many people, here in America, insist on living in a wonderland.

As to the Duchess, no picture ever did her justice. Somehow, the camera makes her nose and chin jut out. Her mouth, too, is exaggerated and becomes an elongated slit when not smiling. In reality her mouth is a marvel of perfection, and is fully open to inspection by the public when illuminated by the table candlestick in El Morocco's Champagne Room.

One of the wisdom teeth of the Duchess was removed years ago in Miami. This minor operation started rumors that she underwent a face-lifting under the cloak of dental surgery, and that the intricate business was performed by a wizard who did not possess a diploma.

Weigh this gossip carefully. Why should the Duchess go under the scalpel of a quack when she could engage the best plastic surgeon to fix her face? She had her appendix removed by the most skilful surgeon in New York. Early in 1951, when a slight operation was to be performed, a noted Edinburgh specialist was invited to fly to New York for consultation with nine other physicians. Would she, then, allow bootleg hands to tinker with her face? It simply isn't consistent.

The Duchess is not beautiful, but she is certainly a fascinating apparition. Almost always she is dressed in blue—Wallis blue. You will very seldom see her in the same dress twice; having served as a bedazzling prop in the Grand Entry, it is usually sold to an intimate friend.

The Duke trails behind his Duchess at The Colony. His erstwhile Majesty Edward VIII, by the Grace of God, of Great Britain, Ireland and the British Dominions Beyond the Seas King, Defender of the Faith and Emperor of India, is a short, frail and vacant-faced man. He looks a bit bewildered and somewhat bored; and despite a generally youthful appearance, gives the impression of a distinguished mummy.

By some odd travesty of fate that singles out certain physiognomies

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to play practical jokes on, Windsor resembles the late John D. Rockefeller, Sr., minus the shiny dimes that the petroleum Croesus used to pass around. The Duke of Windsor passes nothing around. Except melancholy.

One can't help pitying this hapless mortal who by chance was born to such high station, who, at one time, held one great lever to the equilibrium of the world in his hand, and who now appears as a middle-aged spouse, reverent and filled with domestic fear like any husband after 15 years of submissive marriage.

The ever-glamorous Duchess has never deviated from the smart feminine strategy that won the Prince of Wales the moment the two met. The then Mrs. Simpson, sizing up the situation and the man, spoke to the Prince as no one had ever spoken to him before—in a challenging, provocative manner.

She still does. Sarcastic phrases like: "Are you out of your mind?" "Don't be silly!" and "I'm not castle-bred as you are!" are frequent. Apart from this verbal flagellation, the Duke also receives other kinds of discipline.

Some time ago the Windsors were dinner guests of an American in Paris. Upon arrival, the Duchess, after the usual greetings, inquired: "Is — here?" When the host replied that their good friend had not yet arrived, Wallis burst out angrily: "Extremely rude! She was fifteen minutes late for dinner last night at my house!"

When at last her friend appeared,

the Duchess upbraided her. The lady apologized. She then pointed out that the Duchess, observing the night before that the friend's hair looked "like nothing on earth," had arranged for her own hairdresser to fix it. This artist of the coiffure had come late, thus delaying her. She was awfully sorry.

She then turned to the Duke with a confident smile and asked: "Sir, do you also think that I have committed a grave sin?"

Before answering, the Duke glanced at his wife. Then, frowning, he looked back at the culprit and said: "Yes. You oughtn't to arrive after Wallis. Extremely rude!"

In 1950, the Duchess suddenly dropped out of circulation. She was in a hospital, awaiting an operation, with the worried Duke in constant attendance. He was photographed on the hospital steps; his expression was one of anguish, and he had the full sympathy of the American public. Upstairs, the feeling was different.

The Duke sent his wife a daily gift of roses, and himself brought caviar. Ailing neighbors of the Duchess could not help overhearing this conversation:

"This caviar is salty."

"But, darling, this is fresh Beluga."

"It is salty, I tell you!"

"But it's the finest Beluga I could get, darling."

"This caviar is salty!"

"But, darling. . . ."

At this point a solicitous nurse closed the Duchess's door.

Iles Brody

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