

Madam Marquet

IDA MARIE LUCK

Madame Marquet chatted gaily to the little squirrel that sat watching her from the porch steps while she waited for her neighbor to come to the door.

"Caesar, you're a leel rascal, that's what," she teased softly, "but if you come over after while, Mama will geeve you something to eat."

The squirrel cocked his head to one side as though he were puzzled by her French flavored language; then he scampered quickly away as the front door opened. Madame Marquet giggled at his antics, wrinkling her nose in the manner of a high school girl.

Accepting Mrs. Thompson's invitation, she entered the living room and gracefully seated herself in the overstuffed chair near the door.

"I brought you something for your supper."

The neighbor graciously accepted the dish thrust at her. It was probably another French dish or a new, fiery-hot Mexican mixture that Madame Marquet had recently discovered, neither of which the family would eat.

Her hands free of the dish, Madame Marquet began to talk about her latest trip, the Mexican bracelets on her arm jingling faintly with each gesture. Her high soprano voice carried upstairs and soon brought Mrs. Thompson's father hurrying down to hear the interesting and humorous stories that her presence promised were in the offing. Madame loved to tell about her adventures in Mexico just as much as her neighbors and lecture audiences loved to listen to them. That dynamic and vivacious personality was as a magnet to excitement and hum-

orous incidents. Mexicans, just like Americans, were attracted by her charm and her delightful mixture of French, English, and Spanish to fit her needs. Both men and women were drawn to her, although the latter enjoyed her presence more when their husbands were not with them to be caught in her spell. She had an abundance of friends, so many that she often forgot their names, but no one seemed to mind. Such a youthful spirit and ability to entertain were not common in middle-aged women, and made her a desirable member of any group, from the exclusive families in Indianapolis whom she had met lecturing and singing for clubs to her husband's associates in educational circles. In Mexico her friends ranged from the higher families of Indian blood to the great musicians and political leaders of the land. Her only desire was to penetrate the exclusive circle of French people living there, so that she might someday be one of them when her husband would retire and they could move to the warmer land.

Madame Marquet's eyes sparkled with the mischievous glint of a six-year-old as she told of one dinner she had attended during her last Mexican visit.

"A verree famous general was there . . . General Castillo. While we were at dinner, he heard me say that something was cozy, and he said, 'Martita,' that was his pet name for me. They always make love to their guests as part of their hospitality. 'What eez zees word, cozee?' Well, I tried to explain that if he were sitting here and I were sitting here and we were having a nice chat, we

would be cozy.

"After dinner he sat down by the fireplace and wanted to talk to me, so he called, 'Martita! Come heere and be cozee with me.'" She giggled and wrinkled her nose, then suddenly opened her eyes in a wide, serious, expression, "It's a good thing Papa wasn't there."

Mrs. Thompson thought back to her first impression of Madame Marquet. The gay chatter and charming manner had not impressed her then as it did most people, for she recognized it as an artificial front. She had seen her neighbor cast it aside to scold the milkman or to argue with someone who had used her clothesline. It wasn't until she learned of the tragedy responsible for her temperamental disposition and superficial manners that she really began to like the

woman. She knew Madame Marquet for what she really was, a lonely woman who was trying to fill her life with substitutes for the child that she had lost many years before. She was able to overlook occasional temperamental outbursts, for she knew that her friend did not mean to be unkind, but was a victim of a great emptiness in her life. Her friend was the real woman underneath that so few people really knew, not the gay, rather naive but charming person most people saw.

"Well, I must go home now and feex supper for Papa. Poor man, he's been working so hard," and with that she patted Mrs. Thompson's father on the cheek, squeezed her hostess's hand affectionately, and the tall straight figure left the room.

Life Is What You Make It

BARBARA JEAN FARK

Having neither enough years on my beginning to see the advent of the horseless carriage or enough years on the other end (as yet) to witness the helicopter age, I am not in a desirable position to discuss, with nostalgia or anything else, treasured objects that are gone forever or are passing from American life. The only thing at the present date I'll never see again is the age of ten, or for that matter any part of my childhood—happy, happy days when nobody minded if I had a smudge on my face because he had two, when all I or my sister had on our minds was digging a cave from our backyard straight to China.

The first event I can remember in

my history is a little dancing school program directed by a neighborhood girl. Arrayed in blue and pink crepe paper feathers and slightly, ever so slightly, resembling a bluebird I hopped out of a clothes basket nest at the wrong time and bowed to the applause and cheers of the neighborhood. My life has been, since then, one continual flit.

Life began to pick up for me in the Year I of my education. Having missed school for two weeks due to a perennial childhood phenomenon known as measles, I returned to find the students engrossed in a little brown book with yes and no questions. If the question were correct "yes" was circled; otherwise one drew a