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LADY LARKSPUR

MEREDITH NICOLSON

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MRS. FARNSWORTH.

Synopsis—Richard Searles, successful American playwright, confides to his friend, Bob Singleton, the fact that, inspired by the genius of a young actress whom he had seen in London, he has written a play, "Lady Larkspur," solely with the thought that she should interpret the leading character. This girl, Violet Dewing, has disappeared. Singleton, an aviator, has just returned (invalided) from France. His uncle, Raymond Bashford, a wealthy man, had contracted a marriage a short time before his death, while on a visit to Japan. He left Singleton a comparatively small amount of money and the privilege of residence in the "garage" of his summer home, Barton-on-the-Sound, Connecticut. Mrs. Bashford is believed to be traveling in the Orient. The household at Barton is made up of broken down employees of a New York hotel, where Bashford made his home. Singleton goes to Barton, taking with him the manuscript of "Lady Larkspur." There he finds the household strangely upset, some of its members being suspected by their comrades of pro-Germanism. Antoine, head of the establishment, informs him that he has been perplexed by the somewhat mysterious visits of a stranger, apparently a foreigner, seeking Mrs. Bashford. Antoine has formed the male members of the household into a guard for protection. Torrence, Bashford's lawyer, informs Singleton that Mrs. Bashford is in America and may be expected at Barton at any time. Singleton reads Searles' play and thinks highly of it. "Aunt Alice" arrives unexpectedly and meets with an unusual reception. Bob is mystified to find her a young and attractive woman.

CHAPTER II—Continued.

This struck me as the pleasantest thing imaginable, though I was still dazed and my tongue seemed to have died in my mouth. This girl, this wholly charming and delightful young woman, was the monstrous being I had conjectured as the globe-trotting widow who had kidnaped and married my uncle. Not only had she married my uncle Bash and in due course buried him; she had been a widow when she married him. The thing was staggering, bewildering. She was clearly anxious to be friendly, but nothing that I had thought of saying to her fitted the situation.

"In the first place," I finally began, "I must apologize most humbly for the earnest efforts of the servants to murder you last night. Mr. Torrence had promised to let me know when you would reach here, but he must have forgotten it. I had motored to a friend's house to dine and didn't get back until the mischief was done. I'm very sorry."

"Not for the world would I have missed that," she exclaimed with a merry laugh. "It was perfectly delicious! And it was all my fault. I meant to remain a day at Hartford, you know, and send a message to Mr. Torrence from there, but I found that by pushing on I could reach here yesterday. And you know we English always expect strange things to happen in America. I don't understand yet why those people at the gates were so jolly anxious to kill us; but it doesn't matter; you would spoil the joke by explaining it."

However, I did my best—it was a weak attempt—to explain the nervousness of the veteran servants and their display of violence. Her arrival made it likely that we should soon know more about the "parties" whose visits and inquiries had so alarmed Antoine and his comrades. I told her with all the humor I could throw into the recital of the drilling of the bell-hops and of the uncomfortable relations between the Allied forces and the Teutonic minority on the estate.

"It was dear of Mr. Bashford to provide a home for these people; wasn't he really the kindest soul that ever lived?" she said softly.

She gazed wistfully seaward, and I saw the gleam of tears on her long lashes. My uncle had, then, meant something to her! No one, in speech or manner, could have suggested the adventures less; uncle Bash was a gentleman, a man of esthetic tastes, and the girl was adorable. More remarkable things had happened in the history of love and marriage than that two such persons, meeting in a far corner of the world, would honestly care for each other.

"You stopped at Hartford," I began, breaking a long silence. "You have friends there—?"

"Not one! I had made a pious pilgrimage to Mark Twain's last home at Redding, and hearing that he had lived at Hartford, I came through there to render my fullest homage. He has always been one of my heroes, you know."

"Our introduction is complete," I said reverently. "Let's consider ourselves old friends."

"I rather thought we understand each other," she said in her even, mellow tones. "You know, we had your photograph out East—a very good one, it seems—so I had an idea of what you looked like."

"He was very fond of you. He was very proud that you had gone into the war."

"I am glad to hear that; I thought he was disappointed of me for refusing to go into business. He offered me a substantial interest before he sold out."

"I know that; but I think he liked you rather better for refusing it. Business with him was merely a means to an end. And it was doubly sad that he should die just when he was free to enjoy the beautiful things he loved."

It was at the tip of my tongue to say that the loss of her companionship was even more grievous; but nothing in her manner invited such a comment. She talked for some time of Uncle Bash's life in the East, of his short illness and quite unexpected death.

"But I'm keeping you," she exclaimed suddenly, jumping down from the wall. "And I must finish my unpacking."

As we walked to the house I answered her questions about the neighborhood, and promised to telephone Torrence immediately on my arrival. "You will have luncheon with us— or maybe dinner would be better— or both? I shall think you resent my coming if you don't dine at the house every day. Mrs. Farnsworth—my friend and companion—is a very interesting woman. I am sure you will like her."

The information that she was protected in her youthful widowhood by a companion was imparted neatly.

"It was really much nicer, meeting this way," she said, giving me her hand. "We shall expect you at seven."

I found them on the veranda. She came toward me, a slender figure in



"I Might Even Boast of It!" My Aunt Replied.

white. She seemed taller in white; as she took a few steps toward me, I was aware of a stateliness I had missed at the shore. A queenly young person, but as unaffectedly cordial and friendly as in the bright morning sunlight.

"Mrs. Farnsworth, Mr. Singleton." Mrs. Farnsworth was a pleasant-faced, white-haired woman with remarkably fine, dark eyes. If the positions had been changed—if Mrs. Farnsworth had been my uncle's choice of a wife, the situation would have been much more real. I instantly liked Mrs. Farnsworth. She uttered a few commonplace in an uncommon place tone without pausing in her knitting. Mrs. Bashford had been knitting too, and as she sat down she took up her yarn and needles. Her manner of knitting was charming. She knew that I was watching her hands and remarked with a graceful turn of the head:

"For an English boy somewhere! I began by knitting for my brother and cousins, but—her head bent lower—"that isn't for me to do any more." Her eyes, turned upon me for a moment, were bright with tears.

It had been years since the house had known a woman's hand, and it was astonishing how humanized it had become in a few hours. The long dining-room, always a bare, forbidding place, had been reduced to cosy proportions by screens, and a small round table replaced the massive, oblong affair that always looked as though it had been built into the house by the carpenters.

"I found those lovely screens in the garret and thought we might as well

enjoy them, and that Lang Yao jar you see on the sideboard oughtn't to be hidden in the vault."

"I am sure Uncle Bash would be happy to know you care for these things so much," I said, noting that the white roses she had chosen for the jar—I knew the choice was hers—served to emphasize the deep red of its exquisite glaze.

"I am among the unelect," remarked Mrs. Farnsworth. "When I am told that such things are beautiful I am immediately convinced. I say they are beautiful, and that is enough."

"That has always been enough for me," I replied. "My uncle used to try to interest me, but he gave it up when he found that my pagan soul was aroused by nothing but pottery idols. I am a heathen!"

"I am gratified that you make the admission so frankly," said Mrs. Farnsworth. "I have always been a great admirer of the heathen. But, you know, Mr. Singleton, Alice and I never can agree as to just what a heathen is. All our squabbles have been about that. I am disposed to include all who believe in fairies good, or bad, and persons who honestly believe in signs, omens, and lucky stones and all who have the receipt of fern-seed and walk invisible—there's Shakespeare for that."

"I think," said Mrs. Bashford soberly, "that I have always believed in witches; and if I keep on believing I shall see one some day. We shall find anything in this world that we believe in hard enough."

She was talking very gravely, as though witches were the commonest topic of conversation, but finding my eyes turned upon her in frank wonder, she laughed at my amazement.

"Let us be honest with you, Mr. Singleton," Mrs. Farnsworth explained, "and tell you that we are just testing you. It may be a breach of hospitality, and you are but a stranger, but we are curious to know whether you are of that small company of the favored of heaven who can play at being foolish without becoming idiotic. You admit that, Alice?"

"I not only admit it, but I might even boast of it!" my aunt replied.

At the mention of witches I had caught Antoine crossing himself as he turned to the sideboard. I confess that I myself had been startled by the drift of the talk. Mrs. Farnsworth and my aunt treated each other as though they were contemporaries, and it was Alice and Constance between them. As the talk ran exhaustively through the lore of witches and goblins I had hoped that one or the other would drop some clue as to the previous history of my amazing aunt. It was as plain as day that she and Mrs. Farnsworth indulged in whims for the joy of it, and her zest in the discussion of witches, carried on while Antoine served the table, lips tightly compressed, and with an exaggeration of his stately tread, was the more startling from the fact that my aunt's companion was a woman of years, a handsome woman with a high-bred air who did not look at all like a person who would discuss witches as though they had been made the topic of the day by the afternoon newspapers. And when the shape of a witch's chin became the immediate point of discussion I knew it was in Antoine's mind that such conversation was unbecoming, an offense to the memory of Raymond Bashford. Mrs. Farnsworth's brown eyes sparkled, and the color deepened in my aunt's cheeks as we discussed upon witches and the charms thereof. I had a friend in the same sort of puffing, but that my uncle's widow and her elderly companion should delight in such absurdities bewildered me. I had been addressing my aunt as Mrs. Bashford—it seemed ridiculous to call her Aunt Alice—and in the heat of our argument as to whether witches are necessarily naughty and malign beings I had just uttered the "Mrs." when she bent toward me and said gravely and with no hint of archness: "Can't we make it Alice and Bob? I think that would be a lot friendlier."

I experienced a curious flutter of the heart the first time I tried it, but after that it came very easily. She was simply the jolliest, prettiest girl that had ever crossed my horizon, and to be talking to her across the table gave me thrills compared with which sliding out of clouds in an airplane is only a rocking-chair pastime for old men.

We had coffee on the veranda (Alice thought it would be nicer there), and as Antoine gave me my cup he edged close to my chair to whisper:

"That party, sir. If he should come—"

"Tell the troops not to attack any visitors!" I said, loud enough for the others to hear. "Mr. Torrence will be here shortly, and it would be annoying to have him ushered in on a shutter."

"I know why this is the land of the free and the home of the brave," laughed Alice. "One has to be brave to live here."

"Those women are playing a trick."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Convertible Skates.

A Chicagoan has invented a convertible skate. Which reminds us—though it is nothing appertaining to the subject—did you ever notice how quickly a man sobers when his wife sights him? The convertible skate is not new by any manner of means.—Buffalo News.

DADDY'S EVENING FAIRY TALE

MARY GRAHAM BONNER

SAVED ZEBRAS.

"Would you like to hear my story?" asked the zebra.

"Very much," said the others. "Well, you know," said the zebra, "I do have to laugh when I see little babies being brought to the zoo and being fed on bottles."

"Why does it make you laugh?" the others asked. "Oh, I can't help but laugh," he said. "I can't help but laugh."

"Do tell us why," the others asked. "You see," said the zebra, "I was brought up on a bottle and so when I see those babies acting as though they were so proud of their bottle and clutching it so hard as though they wouldn't let anyone else have a show at all I feel like laughing and saying: 'There, there, little man, or little lady, whichever you plan to be, you mustn't think that you're the only creature to have a bottle, and you mustn't think that babies are the only ones to have bottles. No indeed for this zebra was brought up on one.'"

"I was brought up on a bottle, too," said one of the other zebras in the zoo. "Yes, I heard about you, too," said the first zebra. "As you are older won't you tell your story first and how it happened with you? You're Mr. General, aren't you? Allow me to present to you the other animals."

"Of course, the second zebra knew the other animals as well as the first zebra, but the zebra was very happy and jolly this day and he thought this would make every one a little more friendly.

"How do you do, Mr. General Zebra," they all said, bowing their heads and swishing their tails and speaking in their best voices.

"How do you do, everybody," said the second zebra. "But you know it isn't correct to say Mr. General. I don't want to be rude, you see, but I just thought I'd like to explain."

"Of course, of course," they all said. "So it isn't correct to say Mr. General?" asked the first zebra. "Well, I'm glad to know that. I'm glad to know it. The more I know, the more I'll know. Ha, ha, you all thought I was going to say something different, eh? I fooled you all. Ha, ha."

So all the animals laughed and then they said: "Pray, General, tell us your story."

"Well," said the General, "I'm but a zebra, but I was named after a very famous general named Pershing. I'm three years old now."

"Well," said the others, "that was a great honor. That was fine, really fine, to think that a zebra should be named after a great general like that."

"Well, you see," said the zebra, "my keeper was a great admirer of the general's and is still for that matter and always will be, too, and when I was born he said: 'I must just name this zebra after my hero.' And he did."

"Well, you know that our mothers are very apt to sit on us here in the zoo when we're born and so when I was born the keeper hurried me away from my mother so I wouldn't be used as a pillow. So that I would be kept from being suffocated that way—which is a long word meaning not to breathe because one's nose and breathing parts

are covered up and one can't—he took me off. That's not the sort of ideal sentence a general would make, but remember I'm a zebra and I'm trying to explain things in simple zebra language."

"The keeper brought me up on a bottle until I was strong and well and here I am, a healthy striped zebra. Now tell us your story, first zebra."

"I, too, was snatched from my mother, whose name is Gramp, because the keeper feared the same thing might happen to me as almost happened to you. Then I, too, was brought up on a bottle. It's quite a fine thing I think to be classed in with little babies who have blue eyes or brown eyes. And I was named Victory because I was born on Memorial day. We have nice names, eh, General?"

"You're right," said the general, "you're right."

Let It Shine Out. You cannot keep a laugh to yourself. Your mirth shines out of your eyes, and creases your cheeks into those lines which mean amusement, and someone who does not know the joke, seeing your laughing face, is likely to laugh too. There is no reason why we should try to keep our pleasure to ourselves. If there is happiness in your heart, let it shine out. —Girls' Companion.



SALTS IF BACKACHE AND KIDNEYS HURT

Stop Eating Meat for a While if Your Bladder Is Troubling You.

When you wake up with backache and dull misery in the kidney region it generally means you have been eating too much meat, says a well-known authority. Meat forms uric acid which overworks the kidneys in their effort to filter it from the blood and they become sort of paralyzed and loggy. When your kidneys get sluggish and clog you must relieve them, like you relieve your bowels; removing all the body's urinous waste, else you have backache, sick headache, dizzy spells; your stomach sours, tongue is coated, and when the weather is bad you have rheumatic twinges. The urine is cloudy, full of sediment, channels often get sore, water scalds and you are obliged to seek relief two or three times during the night.

Either consult a good, reliable physician at once or get from your pharmacist about four ounces of Jad Salts; take a tablespoonful in a glass of water before breakfast for a few days and your kidneys will then act fine. This famous salt is made from the acid of grapes and lemon juice, combined with lithia, and has been used for generations to clean and stimulate sluggish kidneys, also to neutralize acids in the urine so it no longer irritates, thus ending bladder weakness.

Jad Salts is a life saver for regular meat eaters. It is inexpensive, cannot injure and makes a delightful, effervescent lithia-water drink.—Adv.

Can't Do a Good Turn. First-Class Scout—Did you read about the scout who swallowed his teaspoon? Tenderfoot—No; what happened to him? First-Class Scout—Oh, he can't stir.—Boys' Life.

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