

LADY LARKSPUR

By MEREDITH NICOLSON

COPYRIGHT BY CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

"AND AS TO FANS—"

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 (invalidly) 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. Singleton reads Searles' play and thinks highly of it. "Aunt Alice" arrives unexpectedly, meets with a lively reception and turns out to be young and charming. Mrs. Farnsworth is her traveling companion. Torrence, Bashford's lawyer, suspects the two women and warns Singleton "Aunt Alice" may be an impostor. The mysterious stranger, Count Montani, makes a call.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

Montani spoke of the porcelains. "Oh, to be sure! They don't show to best advantage in electric light, do they? But I can have a few of the prize pieces taken into the dining-room," said Alice.

Mrs. Farnsworth had excused herself to finish a letter, and from my chair I could see her head bent over the big desk in the library. Alice rang for Antoine, and I followed her into the hall to offer my aid.

"Oh, don't trouble," she said. "Antoine can do anything necessary. Yes; thanks; if you will turn on the dining-room lights."

I was gone hardly half a minute. When I reached the drawing-room door Montani had crossed the room to the table on which Alice had dropped the fan and was examining it closely. He faced the door, and the moment he detected me exclaimed carelessly: "An exquisite little bauble! I am always curious as to the source of such trifles. I was looking for the maker's imprimatur. I know a Parisian who is the leading manufacturer of the world. But it is not his, I see."

As we stood talking of other things he plect the fan carelessly as though for the pleasure of the faint scent it exhaled, and when Alice called us he put it down carefully where he had found it.

He really did seem to know something about ceramics and praised, with lively enthusiasm, the pieces that had been set out on the table. One piece, as to whose authenticity my uncle had entertained serious doubts, Montani unhesitatingly pronounced genuine and stated very plausible reasons for his opinion.

On the whole, he was an interesting fellow. When he had finished his inspections he lingered for only a few minutes and took his leave, saying that he was spending the night at an inn near Stamford.

"Well," said Alice when the whirl of his machine had died away, "what do you think of him?"

"A very agreeable gentleman," I answered. "If he doesn't know porcelains, he fakes his talk admirably."

"And as to fans—" suggested Mrs. Farnsworth.

I had not intended to mention Montani's interest in Alice's fan, and the remark surprised me.

"Oh, I saw it all from the library," laughed Mrs. Farnsworth. "My back was to the door, but I was facing a mirror. The moment you and Alice went into the hall he pounced upon the fan—pounced is the only word that describes it. He concealed his interest in it very neatly when you caught him examining it."

"Fans are harmless things," said Alice, "and if there's any story attached to this one I'm not aware of it. My father bought it in Paris about three years ago, and it has never been out of my possession except to have it repaired. There's a Japanese jeweler who does wonderful things in the way of repairing trinkets of every kind. I left it with him for a few days. I can't tell now which panel was broken, he did his work so deftly."

I took it from her and balanced it in my fingers. It was a beautiful piece of workmanship with the simplest carvings on the ivory panels.

"He couldn't have seen it anywhere before tonight," observed Alice musingly. "In fact, I hadn't used it at all for a year. It was really by mistake that my maid put it into my trunk when I went to Japan. I didn't want to risk breaking it again, so I've been carrying it in a handbag. The last day we were in Tokio I think I had it in our sitting room in the hotel, to make sure it wasn't jammed into the trunk again. We had a good many callers—a number of people came in to bid us good-by, but I'm sure Count Montani was not among them, and it would have been impossible for him to see it at any other time."

"Oh, there is nothing disturbing in the count's interest in the thing," said Mrs. Farnsworth with an air of dismissing the matter. "If it were a jade trinket inscribed with Chinese mysteries, you might imagine that it would be sought by some one—I have heard of such things—but Alice's fan has no such history."

"We weren't very hospitable," said Alice. "I might have asked Count Montani to dine with us tomorrow; and we might even have put him up for the night in this vast house."

Not with Antoine on the premises!" I exclaimed. "Antoine is convinced that the man is what we call in America a crook. And Antoine takes his responsibilities very seriously."

While I was breakfasting at the garage the next morning Antoine appeared and, waiting until Flynn was out of hearing, handed me a slip of paper.

"That's a New York automobile number," he said. "It was on the tag of that machine the party came in last night. I heard him saying, sir, as how



Clung to the Sideboard Listening.

he had motored up from the Elkton Inn at Stamford. Visitors from Stamford would hardly send in to the city for a machine."

I bade him wait while I called the Elkton by telephone. No such person as Giuseppe Montani had spent the night there or had been a guest of the house within the memory of the clerk. Antoine's chest swelled at this confirmation of his suspicions.

"If the man returns, treat him as you did last night—as though he were entitled to the highest consideration."

"He won't come back—not the same way," said Antoine. "He mentioned the Elkton just to throw you off. The next you hear of him will be quite different."

"You mean he'll come as a burglar?"

"That's what's in my mind, Mr. Singleton. Everything seems very queer, sir."

"Such as what, Antoine?"

"The widow has been telegraphing and telephoning considerable, sir."

"There must be no spying upon these ladies!" I admonished severely. "All the people on the place must remember that Mrs. Bashford is mistress here, and entitled to fullest respect."

He had hardly gone before Torrence had me on the wire to hear my report and to say that Raynor had left Washington for a week-end in Virginia.

I assured him that nothing had occurred to encourage a suspicion that Mrs. Bashford was not all that she pretended to be. The day was marked by unusual activities on the part of the waiters and bell-hops. Instead of the company drills to which I had become accustomed they moved about in pairs along the shore and the lines of the fences. I learned that Antoine was obeying him with the utmost ser-

iousness. The "service" on the estate was certainly abundant. It was only necessary to whistle and one of the Tyringham veterans would come running.

In spite of the complete satisfaction I had expressed to Torrence as to the perfect integrity and honest intentions of the two women, the curiosity of the American state department and the visit of Montani required elucidation beyond my powers. At dinner they were in the merriest humor. The performances of the little army throughout the day had amused them greatly.

"How delightfully feudal!" exclaimed Alice. "Really we should have a moat and drawbridge to make the thing perfect. Constance and I are the best protected women in the world!"

We extracted all the fun possible from the idea that the estate was under siege; that Alice was the chateau of a beleaguered castle, and that danger of being starved out by the enemy. They called into play the poetry which had so roused Antoine's apprehensions, and their talk bristled with quotations. Alice rose after the salad and repeated at least a page of Malory, and the Knights of the Round Table having thus been introduced, Mrs. Farnsworth recited several sonorous passages from "The Idylls of the King." They flung lines from Browning's "In a Balcony" at each other as though they were improvising. The befuddlement of Antoine and the waiter who assisted him added to the general joy. They were undoubtedly thought the two women quite out of their heads, and it was plain that I suffered greatly in Antoine's estimation by my encouragement of this frivolity. Mrs. Farnsworth walked majestically round the table and addressed to me the lines from Macbeth beginning:

Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised,

while Antoine clung to the sideboard listening with mouth open and eyes rolling.

Later, in the living room, Alice sang some old ballads. She was more adorable than ever at the piano. It was a happiness beyond any in my experience of women to watch her, to note the play of light upon her golden head, to yield to the spell of her voice. Ballads had never been sung before with the charm and feeling she put into them; and after ending with "Douglas, Douglas," she responded to my importunity with "Ben Bolt," and then dashed into a sparkling thing of Chopin's, played it brilliantly and rose, laughingly mocking my applause.

I left the house like a man over whom an enchantment had been spoken and was not pleased when Antoine blocked my path: "Pardon me, sir."

"Bother my pardon; what's troubling you now?" I demanded.

"It's nothing troubling me, sir; not particularly. If you give me time, I think I'll grow used to the poetry talk and playing at being queens. It's like children in a family I served once; an English family, most respectable. But in a widow, sir—"

"God knows we ought to be glad when grownups have the heart to play at being children and can get away with it as beautifully as those women do! What else is on your mind?"

"It's about Elsie, sir." I groaned at the mention of Flynn's German wife. "I'm sorry, sir; but I thought I should report it. It was a man who came to see her this afternoon. You was out for your walk, and Flynn had taken the ladies for a drive, so Elsie was alone at the garage. This person rode in on the grocer's truck from the village, which is how he got by the gate. As it happened, Pierre—he was a waiter at the Tyringham, a Swiss, who understands German—had gone into the garage for a nap; he's quite old, sir, and has his snooze every afternoon."

"He's entitled to it," I remarked; "he must be a thousand years old."

"From what he heard Pierre thought the man a spy, sir. He wanted Elsie to steal something from the house, it was a fan he wanted her to take most particular, and it was to be done soon, today if she could manage. It was for the love of the Fatherland that he wanted her to do it. Did you notice, sir, that Mrs. Bashford didn't have the fan tonight? Not that one she carried last night."

"Antoine's guard makes an exciting capture."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The "Punch" in Gasoline. The genie that came out of the bottle in the "Arabian Nights" story became, when liberated, a monstrous power. The energy stored in a pint of gasoline is hardly less stupendous.

One pint of gasoline represents 12,000 "B. T. U.'s" of energy. A "B. T. U." (the abbreviation for British thermal unit) will lift 750 pounds one foot. Thus there is in that single pint of innocent looking fluid enough power to lift six tons 750 feet into the air—that is to say, 200 feet higher than the top of Washington monument.—Kansas City Star.

Tree Seeds for Belgium. Kentucky's commissioner of forestry is having a hundred bushels of maple and oak tree seeds collected in his state for shipment to Belgium, to be planted in the war-devastated areas of that country.

Post-Holiday Reflection. A holiday is a day when most people feel less hollow than usual.

THE CHIC BLOUSE

Garment Essential to Complete Spring Wardrobe.

Short Sleeves Preferred and Made in Collarless With Neckline Deeper at Shoulders.

Your task of buying your spring suit is not really completed until you have invested in at least one blouse to go with it, observes a fashion correspondent. And, although there is no further doubt concerning the return of the lingerie blouse to favor, still you know that this type of blouse is not the one to select to be worn under your suit jacket. It is sure to show creases when you take off the jacket. Moreover, if you do take off the jacket you want a blouse that gives an unbroken line with the suit skirt, and this cannot be accomplished if you are wearing a white blouse.

It really is wise to have one blouse that almost exactly matches the suit, and the new material selected for such a blouse is tricolette or some other sort of knitted silk fabric, which seems proof against wrinkles. This season the short sleeve, elbow or shorter, will be the preference for these blouses and usually the mode is collarless with a neckline open at the neck, sometimes deeper at the shoulders than from front to back.

However, the handmade batiste, linen or voile blouse is in high favor and will be worn for summer and resort wear. It reminds one of a decade ago, for now as then the well-dressed women are ordering these handmade blouses in numbers, many women having laid in as large a supply as a dozen, all hand made, for the spring and summer season. They will be worn with the separate sport skirt. Then there are colored wash blouses, flame and green and toast, and these are to be worn often with the separate skirt of white.

The blouse that extends far below the waistline is little in evidence. However, most of the blouses, save the conventional sort of lingerie blouses that have made their appearance and,

Materials include Cotton Poplin for Dresses for Girls and Suits for Boys.

The time is certainly past when children's clothes can be purchased ready to wear for a mere song. Making them at home is a great saving this season, especially if the stores are carefully "shopped" for bargains in materials. Fortunately no one style dominates the style field for children (for the matter of that, great leeway is admitted in fashions for grown-ups as well) and variety is really the important point to achieve.

Cotton poplin is in high favor for sturdy service dresses for little girls and for suits for small boys. Cotton crepe is another fabric that is a favorite when clothes for everyday wear are under consideration. The small girl will be becomingly outfitted in voile, organdie, swiss and similar transparent fabrics when really warm weather arrives—that is, for somewhat dressy occasions—but the sturdy percales, poplins, chambrays and cotton crepes will be played for play hours.

Vivid, rather dark, or at least medium shades are in great favor for service clothes for members of the younger set. Jade green is liked and is very smart when becoming. Marigold yellow and a medium blue are also much used.

Mousquetaires.

A shortage of imported French kid gloves is influencing mere liberal displays of the finer lightweight domestic leather gloves, says the Dry Goods Economist. Silk gloves, of course, are shown most extensively, particularly in the 16-button length. In white, as well as in the fashionable mode, champagne and pongee shades, the finer grades of silks add a zest.

Bed Jackets.

Bed jackets are among the latest novelties in negligees.

Colors are Now in Limelight

Toast Shade, Newest of Light Brownish Tones; Pumpkin, Ruby and Brick Are Seen.

Toast is by all means the newest of the light brownish tones, though it isn't very different from other light browns of other seasons, it goes by a new name, at least as applied to the color.

Then there is pumpkin color, which is seen in some of the new cotton materials, and seems to be much admired. It combines very well with some of the dull lighter greens, as well as with blues.

Ruby and brick are shades of red that are much in demand and, strange as it may seem, there are reds seen in the smartest of spring suits.

Tangerine, which isn't very different from what we usually call orange, is in for considerable popularity.

Canard is what you will call a blue green; that explains itself when you recall that canard means duck in French. You know the blue green feathers on a wild duck's back.

Hycinth blue is a shade that one sees occasionally in smart evening frocks.

Gold is a shade of yellow that seems to be winning favor. It is not a bright gold, but suggests bits of the antique metal.

The White Center Piece.

While colors in riotous confusion or symmetrical shadings for all sorts of household decoration are entirely in order and permissible in almost any

"DREAMY" GOWN FOR SPRING



This charming creation is of sky-blue taffeta and exquisite filet lace, with just a touch of wool embroidery in contrasting colors.

CLOTHING FOR YOUNGER SET

Materials include Cotton Poplin for Dresses for Girls and Suits for Boys.

The time is certainly past when children's clothes can be purchased ready to wear for a mere song. Making them at home is a great saving this season, especially if the stores are carefully "shopped" for bargains in materials. Fortunately no one style dominates the style field for children (for the matter of that, great leeway is admitted in fashions for grown-ups as well) and variety is really the important point to achieve.

Cotton poplin is in high favor for sturdy service dresses for little girls and for suits for small boys. Cotton crepe is another fabric that is a favorite when clothes for everyday wear are under consideration. The small girl will be becomingly outfitted in voile, organdie, swiss and similar transparent fabrics when really warm weather arrives—that is, for somewhat dressy occasions—but the sturdy percales, poplins, chambrays and cotton crepes will be played for play hours.

Vivid, rather dark, or at least medium shades are in great favor for service clothes for members of the younger set. Jade green is liked and is very smart when becoming. Marigold yellow and a medium blue are also much used.

Mousquetaires.

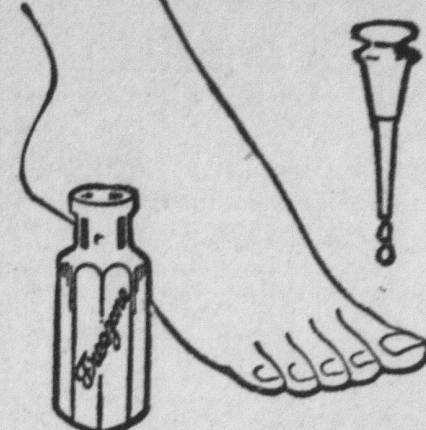
A shortage of imported French kid gloves is influencing mere liberal displays of the finer lightweight domestic leather gloves, says the Dry Goods Economist. Silk gloves, of course, are shown most extensively, particularly in the 16-button length. In white, as well as in the fashionable mode, champagne and pongee shades, the finer grades of silks add a zest.

Bed Jackets.

Bed jackets are among the latest novelties in negligees.

Lift off Corns!

Doesn't hurt a bit and Freezone costs only a few cents.



With your fingers! You can lift off any hard corn, soft corn, or corn between the toes, and the hard skin caluses from bottom of feet.

A tiny bottle of "Freezone" costs little at any drug store; apply a few drops upon the corn or calous. Instantly it stops hurting, then shortly you lift that bothersome corn or calous right off, root and all, without one bit of pain or soreness. Truly! No humbug!—Adv.

Another Guess at Sun's Age.

A new calculation of the age of the sun was made recently by M. Peronnet, who read a paper on the subject before the French Academy of Science. Here is his version in a nutshell: On the principle that the mean temperature of a star remains approximately equal to the surface temperature it had when first formed, and giving the sun an internal temperature of 12,000 degrees Centigrade, or double that of its surface, and calculating its mass to be 2 by 10,30 kilograms, the sun cannot have been formed more than between 2,000,000 and 6,000,000 years ago. A star with a surface temperature of 600,000 degrees Centigrade would have been formed from a nebula in 300 days and one with 6,000,000,000 degrees in seven hours.

WATER WITH ASPIRIN

Bayer Company, who introduced Aspirin in 1900, give proper directions.

The Bayer Company, who introduced Aspirin, tell in their careful directions in each package of genuine "Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" that to get best results one or two glasses of water should be drank after taking tablets.

"Bayer Tablets of Aspirin" to be genuine must be marked with the safety "Bayer Cross." Then you are getting the genuine, world-famous Aspirin, prescribed by physicians for over eighteen years.

Each unbroken "Bayer" package contains proper directions for Colds, Headache, Toothache, Earache, Neuralgia, Lumbago, Rheumatism, Neuritis, and Pain generally.

Handy tin boxes of twelve tablets cost but a few cents. Druggists also sell larger "Bayer" packages. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacturing of Monoceticacidester of Salicylicacid.—Adv.

Sensitive Underworldings.

"John," said the nervous woman, "I think there is a burglar in the house."

"Well, he won't find a thing of value."

"That's what frightens me. The fact may irritate him and cause him to make himself especially disagreeable."

WHY DRUGGISTS RECOMMEND SWAMP-ROOT

For many years druggists have watched with much interest the remarkable record maintained by Dr. Kilmer's Swamp-Root, the great kidney, liver and bladder medicine.

It is a physician's prescription. Swamp-Root is a strengthening medicine. It helps the kidneys, liver and bladder do the work nature intended they should do.

Swamp-Root has stood the test of years. It is sold by all druggists on its merit and it should help you. No other kidney medicine has so many friends.

Be sure to get Swamp-Root and start treatment at once. However, if you wish first to test this great preparation send ten cents to Dr. Kilmer & Co., Binghamton, N. Y., for a sample bottle. When writing be sure and mention this paper.—Adv.

This the Exception.

She (after the quarrel)—You used to say that you liked to see me in anything.

He—I hadn't seen you in a rage then.—London Answers.

ALLEN'S FOOT-EASE DOES IT.

When your shoes pinch or your corns and bunions ache get Allen's Foot-Ease, the antiseptic powder to be shaken into shoes and sprinkled in the foot-bath. It will take the sting out of corns and bunions and give instant relief to Tired, Aching, Swollen, Tender feet. Sold everywhere. Don't accept any substitute.—Adv.

It's an easy matter for a judge to issue an order restraining a woman from talking, but what's the use?

No, Harry, a man doesn't necessarily have paint in his eyes when he is color blind.

The occasional use of Roman Eye Balsam at night will prevent and relieve tired eyes, watery eyes, and eye strain.—Adv.

It sometimes happens that faith, hope and charity fill the stage to the exclusion of gratitude.