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The MASQUERADER

By Katherine Cecil Thurston,
Author of "The Circle," Etc.

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CHAPTER XIV.

LODER entered Lady Bramfell's feeling far more like an actor in a drama than an ordinary man in a peculiar situation. It was the first time he had played Chilcote to a purely social audience and the first time for many years that he had rubbed shoulders with a well-dressed crowd ostensibly brought together for amusement. As he followed Eve along the corridor that led to the reception rooms he questioned the reality of the position again and again; then abruptly, at the moment when the sensation of familiarity was strongest, a cheery voice hailed him, and, turning, he saw the square shoulders, light eyes and pointed moustache of Lakey, the owner of the St. George's Gazette.

At the sight of the man and the sound of his greeting his doubts and speculations vanished. The essentials of life rose again to the position they had occupied three weeks ago, in the short, but strenuous period when his doctored activities had been stirred and he had recognized his true self. He lifted his head unconsciously, the shade of misgiving that had crossed his confidence passing from him as he smiled at Lakey with a keen, alert pleasure that altered his whole face.

Eve, looking back, saw the expression. It attracted and held her, like a sudden glimpse into a secret room. In all the years of her marriage, in the months of her courtship even, she had never surprised the look on Chilcote's face. The impression came quickly and with it a strange, warm rush of interest that receded slowly, leaving an odd sense of loneliness. But, at the moment that the feeling came, her attention was claimed in another direction. A slight, fair haired boy forced his way toward her through the press of people that filled the corridor.

"Mrs. Chilcote!" he exclaimed. "Can I believe my luck in finding you alone?"

Eve laughed. It seemed that there was relief in her laugh. "How absurd you are, Bobby!" she said kindly. "But you are wrong. My husband is here. I am waiting for him."

Blessington looked around. "Oh!" he said. "Indeed!" Then he relapsed into silence. He was the soul of good nature, but those who knew him best knew that Chilcote's summary change of secretaries had rankled. Eve, conscious of the little jar, made haste to smooth it away.

"Tell me about yourself," she said.

"What have you been doing?"

Blessington looked at her, then smiled again, his buoyancy restored. "Doing?" he said. "Oh, calling every other afternoon at Grosvenor square, only to find that a certain lady is never at home."

At his tone Eve laughed again. "The boy, with his frank and ingenuous nature, had beguiled many a dull hour for her in past days, and she had missed him not a little when his face had been filled by Greening.

"But I mean seriously, Bobby. Has something good turned up?"

Blessington made a wry face. "Something is on its way. That's why I'm on duty tonight."

Lady Bramfell and the other ladies were working it between them, so if Lady Bramfell or Lady Astrupp happen to drop a fan or a handkerchief this evening I've got to be here to pick it up. See?"

"As you picked up my fans and handkerchiefs last year and the year before?" Eve smiled.

Blessington's face suddenly looked grave. "I wish you hadn't said that," he said. Then he paused abruptly. Out of the hum of talk behind them a man's laugh sounded. It was not loud, but it was a laugh that one seldom hears in a London drawing room. It expressed interest, amusement and in an inexpressible way it seemed also to express strength.

Eve and Blessington both turned involuntarily.

"By Jove!" said Blessington.

Eve said nothing.

Loder was parting with Lakey and his was the laugh that had attracted them both. The interest excited by his talk was still reflected in his face and bearing as he made his way toward them.

"By Jove!" said Blessington again. "I never realized that Chilcote was so tall."

Again Eve said nothing. But silently and with a more subtle meaning she found herself echoing the words.

Until he was quite close to her Loder did not seem to see her. Then he stopped quietly.

"I was speaking to Lakey," he said. "He wants me to dine with him one night at Cadogan Gardens."

But Eve was silent, waiting for him to address Blessington. She glanced at him quickly, but though their eyes met he did not catch the meaning that lay in hers. It was a difficult moment. She had known him incredibly, unparadoxically absentmindedly, but it had invariably been when he was suffering from nerves, as she phrased it to herself. But tonight he was obviously in the possession of unclouded faculties. She colored slightly and glanced under her lashes at Blessington. Had the same idea struck him, she wondered? But he was studiously studying a suit of Chinese armor that stood close by in a niche of the wall.

"Bobby has been keeping me amused

while you talked to Mr. Lakey," she said pointedly.

Directly addressed, Loder turned and looked at Blessington. "How do you do?" he said, with doubtful cordiality. The name of Bobby conveyed nothing to him.

To his surprise Eve looked annoyed and Blessington's fresh colored face deepened in tone. With a slow, uncomfortable sensation he was aware of having struck a wrong note.

There was a short, unpleasant pause. Then, more by intuition than actual sight, Blessington saw Eve's eyes turn from him to Loder, and with quick tact he saved the situation.

"How do you do, sir?" he responded, with a smile. "I congratulate you on looking so—so uncommon well. I was just telling Mrs. Chilcote that I hold a commission for Lady Astrupp tonight. I'm a sort of scout at present—reporting on the outposts." He spoke fast and without much meaning, but his boyish voice eased the strain.

Eve thanked him with a smile.

"How sweet of you to come!" she murmured. And it seemed to Loder that a more spontaneous smile lighted up her face. Then she extended her hand to him. "And you, too?" she added. "Though I fear we shall bore you dreadfully."

Watching her with interest, he saw the change of expression as her eyes turned from Eve to him and noticed a colder tone in her voice as she addressed him directly. The observation moved him to self assertion.

"That's a poor compliment to me," he said. "To be bored is surely only a polite way of being insane."

"What!" she exclaimed. "You defending your social reputation?"

Loder laughed a little. "The smaller it is the more defending it needs," he replied.

Another stream of arrivals swept by them as he spoke. Eve smiled at their host and he followed. As he gained her side the little court about Lady Bramfell was left well in the rear, the great throng at the farther end of the room was not yet reached, and for the moment they were practically alone.

There was a certain uneasiness in that moment of companionship. It seemed to him that Eve wished to speak, but hesitated. Once or twice she opened and closed the fan that she was carrying, then at last, as if by an effort, she turned and looked at him.

"Why were you so cold to Bobby Blessington?" she asked. "Doesn't it seem discourteous to ignore him as you did?"

Her manner was subdued. It was not the annoyed manner that one uses to a man when he has behaved ill; it was the explanatory tone one might adopt toward an incorrigible child. Loder felt this, but the gist of a remark always came to him first, its mode of expression later. The fact that it was Blessington whom he had encountered—Blessington to whom he had spoken with vague politeness—came to him with a sense of unpleasantness. He was not to blame in the matter, nevertheless he blamed himself. He was annoyed that he should have made the slip in Eve's presence.

They were moving forward, nearing the press of people in the second room, when Eve spoke and the fact filled him with an added sense of annoyance. People smiled and bowed to her from every side; one woman leaned forward as they passed and whispered something in her ear. Again the sensation of futility and vexation came to him; again he realized how palpable was the place she held in the world. Then, as his feelings reached their height and speech seemed forced upon him, a small man with a round face, catching a glimpse of Eve, darted from a circle of people gathered in one of the windows and came quickly toward them. With an unjust touch

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LA
EDIT

FORTY-FIFTH YEAR

AMERICAN ITALIANS ITALIANS

New Line Ha
Catorello o
on South—
Enthusiasm

By Special Wire to the Courier
Rome, May 25, via Paris.

The bulletin issued by the to-day announcing that he had entered upon Austrian territory, caused great enthusiasm. It showed that the Italians were all the mountains between Idria and Isonzo rivers, advancing, they had taken which commands the road Gorizia, an important Austrian frontier station from the north to the center Friuli, the report into the Italians also had occupied of Versa, which is near of the same name, and the Gradisca, Austria, and that in southern Friuli, Cervigo other important Austrian frontier leading to Monfalcone Trieste had been taken.

The Giornale d'Italia comes in the bulletin says: "The advance occupied a front of kilometers (about 66 2-3) has as extreme points Capri north, to the Gulf of Tarento." The first coming of Italians penetrated into the territory distances ranging from four miles.

AUSTRIAN RETIR
Rome, May 26.—Offensive resulting in the occupation of Austrian territory along from Lombardy to the Adriatic claimed in an official statement last night by the war office troops have seized various the Trentino and forced through the mountain defiles lower Isonzo, attacks were to gain the line of the river. Austrians are reported to be destroying bridges behind an aviators bombarded the near the Gulf of Trieste.

Rome, via Paris, May 26.—The Italian people on the occasion of departure from Rome last night and German diplomats. The paper says this is specifically of notice because the peace incensed over the bombardment of Ancona and Venice, and reports that Italian ships had been treated inconsiderately while attempting to return.

The indignation of the people added to-day by the report that an Austrian torpedo boat had been struck by a shell pursuing Italian squadron in the Gulf of Trieste.

PEOPLE EXULT
Udine, Italy, May 25, via Rome.—From here to Montebelluna, the ancient capital of

PTE. G. M.
HAS R
A

Has Taken Part
Ypres and Arras
and V

The first Brantford man this morning by a Courier's engagement at Ypres, when distant. He has also been ten months there it was so and feet frozen. Such was the footwear, he got his feet broken off. He left with the British troops. He stayed while there when not on duty during which time he was Pte. Cunningham, during for the German snipers. A apart, some of them were with hand grenades. The young lad is looking and friends. He has secured