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The Major

By Alice G. Allen

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The Major munched his hay and mottled. The girl had given him an apple that morning, and he had been eating it all day.

The Major had taken the apple carefully from the girl's hand. He had looked at it with a kind of awe.

Next to Dick, Major loved the girl. Sometimes he grew impatient with Dick. Now was one of those times.

The rich flavor of that late August apple lingered in his mouth. He wondered—the Major—if the girl had never grown impatient with Dick.

Of course the girl loved Dick. One couldn't help that, even if one did grow impatient sometimes and want to go off on a stiff job when one was told to walk.

But did Dick love the girl? Or was it Geraldine?

He went to see Geraldine nearly every week, and almost never to see the girl. But time was, not so long ago, when they—Dick and the Major—had waited before the girl's door nearly every day.

To be sure they always had failed. And sometimes, the Major remembered now with a sigh, he had grown restive and impatient with the long delay.

But in time the girl had always come—well worth waiting for. And before she stepped into the carriage she had always stroked his nose and fed him a lump of sugar or told him admiringly what a fine horse he was.

Geraldine never noticed him at all, except to screech when he jumped at an automobile. The Major didn't approve of Geraldine, although, perhaps, she was prettier than the girl. But Dick evidently did approve of her.

The Major chewed away on his crisp hay and meditated. Sometimes he felt that he must do something desperate, something that would open Dick's eyes to the superiority of the girl.

The Major meditated a long time over his hay before Dick came to harness him. The Major saw, with joy, that it was the single carriage which was drawn out, not the surrer. That only two people should ride together in the same carriage at the same time was one of the Major's pet theories.

Dick whistled all through the harnessing. The Major didn't know one tune from another, but he did know that when Dick whistled he was in good humor. So he, the Major, pranced a little as he had always done when he was young, to show that he, too, was light hearted.

The Major crossed the bridge with a slow, steady trot, increased his pace up the long hill, dashed determinedly by the turn which led to Geraldine's and, his head held high, drew up before the girl's house.

When he looked around at his master, Dick did not seem ill pleased. He seemed surprised, but that may have been because the girl was ready and waiting.

She came down the walk. She wore a blue shirt waist and her prettiest hat. In her stender, ungloved hand was a great lump of sugar.

"Here for you, sir," she said, reaching up the crisp lump to Major. Then she stood on tiptoe and patted his nose. "Good Major, good old Major," she said, smiling to him. "I believe," she added to Dick as he helped her into the carriage, "that the Major understands the thoroughly."

"Lucky Major," said Dick as he took the lines. "I wish I had horse sense."

The girl laughed. Major would go a mile over sandy roads to hear her laugh. Now he started off at his best gait. He soon found that they were going out into the country. Of that the Major approved fully.

Dick and the girl conversed readily enough on various subjects—the weather, the roads, the outlook for a good hay crop. Interesting as this last topic usually was to Major, he felt vaguely dissatisfied now. Why couldn't that stupid Dick say something which would bring back to the girl's voice the tone she had used when she said "good old Major"? One had only to look at her, the Major knew. "I was easy enough."

Major sniffed and trotted on. Well he knew the road—every inch of it. It led up hill and down, past gay little brooks, between fields bright with cowslips, and orchards white with the snow of cherry blossoms, to the pine grove on the bank of the river where the arbutus grew.

The wind was soft and sweet with the kisses it had stolen from the violets. Hosts of dainty bluests raised their pretty parasols in the dust of the wayside. The world was very fair and in its May.

The Major wished that he could talk. How stupid to be only a horse! For as they went on and on silence fell upon the occupants of the carriage. The Major's head dropped lower and lower. He went more and more slowly.

The girl hummed a careless little tune under her breath. Dick addressed all of his remarks to the Major, and the Major did as he thought best about obeying.

"Major's lazy today," said Dick gloomily. "He's scarcely worth his feed; believe I'll sell him when a chance offers."

The girl's voice was sweet, but a trifle strained, when she responded. The Major who paid more attention to tones than to words, knew that something must be done for her. What should it

be? He mused as he walked slowly along the road.

Then they turned from the main road, and went along a rough, shabby wagon-track through a pasture toward the woods.

In the woods something might happen. Woods sweet with pine and hick with arbutus offered gay opportunities for the adjustment of complicated love affairs.

Once under the pines, before Dick could fasten the Major to a tree to a cleared space the girl was out of the carriage and away through the green glades.

Dick followed more slowly. Major stood quietly. Things seemed to go well at first. Then there came a silence, then another longer one, then there was no conversation at all.

After a while the girl came out from under the trees. Her face was sober. Dick came behind her. She ran up to him—the Major—and gave him some grass. She slipped her arm around his neck and said in a very low voice: "Major, I wouldn't be so stupid as your master is, not for worlds! Would you?"

Then she ran away again through the soft gold grass shadows. Dick followed. There was a look on his face which Major remembered to have seen there once before when he, the Major, had entered a loop trap.

Major munched the grass and listened. He could hear Dick's voice speaking earnestly. Then came the girl's again. If only they could wait long enough matters would be decided. Then it was that the Major looked at his own ears. He pulled up his head and said: "I was quite foolish. He pointed to the Major, and again, each time, Dick had been thinking of other things than the one he was trying to say. It slipped, he thought, the latter. The Major was free to do as he liked."

With good care he measured his space. There was just room to turn around. Very carefully he did it, kicking the carriage quietly. Then, picking his way over the rough road and broken bridges, he went slowly away. He did not turn. He walked quietly and bravely as for a soldier's march. Any one seeing him would have said that he was driven.

He reached the main road and started off for home.

Surely somewhere in the pine woods, or on that long walk home, the two, Dick and the girl, would come to an understanding.

He went on leisurely, trotting easily up the little hill, then walking slowly again, coming nearer and nearer to the first dwelling this side of the pine woods, a little farmhouse nestled among the maples.

A woman putting weeds from a flower bed looked up at the sound of Major's steps. She pushed back her hat, she glanced at the empty carriage, then she sprang to her feet and called "Whoa?"

But the Major didn't stop. The woman ran down the walk and through the gate and caught his bridle. "You're Dick Churchill's horse," she said with a soft touch on his head. "Where is your master?"

The Major didn't wish to talk. And he did wish to be on his way. But the woman didn't understand. How could she? She was only a woman. She led him through a gate and along a driveway to a big barn. He went readily enough. The Major was always polite to the girl and her apples and lumps of sugar.

In the barn the woman fastened him securely and gave him a drink of water and a handful of hay. "Your master'll be along soon enough looking for you up," she said as she went back to her work.

Almost an hour later Dick walked hurriedly along the road and up to the farmhouse. Major heard his step and his voice. "Can I borrow a horse and carriage here?" he was saying. "My horse has gone off without me."

"Guess you'll find him in the barn," said the woman. "He won't walk along by here quite a spell ago. Anything wrong?"

There was nothing wrong. In fact, to the Major's way of thinking, everything was right, for Dick's face looked just as it did after he (Major) had won that race many years ago.

When Dick and the Major reached the woods there was the girl sitting on the pine as usual. She had a check on her eyes—well, the Major just wished she'd look at him as she did at Dick.

"Oh, Dick!" was all she said. But Major knew.

Buffon's Lassness.

Buffon rode always with the sun, and he used often to tell by what means he had accustomed himself to get out of bed so early. "In my youth," said he, "it was very fond of sleep. It robbed me of a great deal of my time, but my poor Joseph this domestic was of great service in enabling me to overcome it. I promised to give Joseph a crown every time that he could make me get-up at 4."

The next morning he did not fail to awake and torment me, but he received only abuse. The day after he did the same, with no better success, and I was obliged at noon to confess that I had lost my time. I told him that he did not know how to manage his business; that he ought to think of my promise and not to mind my threats. The day following he employed force, and I begged for indulgence, I bit him because, I stormed, but Joseph persisted. I was therefore obliged to comply, and he was rewarded every day for the abuse which he suffered at the moment when I awoke by thinking accompanied with a crown, which he received about an hour after. Now, I am indebted to poor Joseph, for ten or a dozen of the volumes of my work."

Last of the Twelve

By Lucy G. Hampton

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"Come in."

Elizabeth's voice came from some where near the fireplace and was so faint and lacking in enthusiasm that it penetrated where I stood in the doorway. The room was dim excepting for the firelight, which threw a ray across Elizabeth's face as she came smiling. It is to greet me.

If you were any one else I would be obliged to see you. Dick, she began, "because I'm most terribly unpleasant tonight. You don't mind leaving the lights, do you? I'm so much more comfortable in the dark, don't you think so?"

"Oh, come. What's the trouble? They don't light in the evening to have anything like this, do they?"

"No, because you will only laugh, and I don't feel like being laughed at tonight." A smile came to spite of her effort to hide it.

"It's strange you should have forgotten that I live in a house with a million windows. If you can't guess, you know, Dick, tomorrow is the 12th."

"By Jove, little girl, so it is! But I would have remembered, of course. Have I ever forgotten?"

She smiled again and looked toward me.

You know I don't mean about the 12th. You'd never forget that, I believe. If I lived to have a thousand birthdays, it's always very sweet of you."

I must explain that ever since Elizabeth was a graceful little fairy of twelve and I an ardent admirer of her, several years her senior I had sent her a bunch of American Beauties, her favorite flower, one for every year she was old on each birthday.

"Let's see, how many is it this time—twenty-three, twenty-four. Why, Dick, it will be an even two dozen this time, won't it?"

"Hush—hush—don't tell will you? That's what I meant while ago about your not remembering. I hope when I keep getting older and older some time you may forget just how many years old I am. I'm ashamed even now to have any one know I'm so ancient. I can trust you not to tell, I know."

She was so serious I did not dare to smile, so I sat wondering just how long this mood of hers would last. Usually she finds it hard to be serious longer than five minutes at a time. As she sat there, her bright head in the shadow, her eyes half closed to conceal something she did not care to have me see, I knew whether mischief or something really serious I couldn't tell—I couldn't help thinking, how many things I have so right to think since one winter several years ago when Elizabeth decided we were to be only friends, but the very best friends that ever were. And so we are.

"You don't know how terrible it is, Dick, to be a girl and to have a twenty-fourth birthday so near. Don't laugh. Aunt Alice says she believes I am going to be a spinster."

In spite of her warning I had to laugh now, trying to think of her as an old maid—Elizabeth the beautiful, as she was called, Elizabeth the loved of all who ever knew her, Elizabeth as an old maid.

My ninth birthday check when she remarked next in the most cheerful way.

"Mr. Herrington was here last night."

Another silence, not so pleasant as the last. I do not like Mr. Herrington, and Elizabeth's Aunt Alice does. Besides, Mr. Herrington is considered very desirable. He is rich, he is well liked by all, and he is a very good fellow. I am frank to say I do not know why exactly—and he is very fond of Elizabeth. For this I admire his taste, but it does not tend to make me noticeably fond of him.

"Poor old duffer! Did he—or propose again for the third and last time, eh, Dick?"

"He isn't so old, and you don't need to call him names, Richard Wells! He doesn't need so much sympathy either, please!" She flashed a look at me and once herself up in such a haughty manner that I immediately subsided. What did she mean? Surely she—she couldn't have—

It was my turn to be serious now.

"Please, Elizabeth, I beg—please look at me and tell me you refused that man for the last time. You know you cannot love him."

"Why, you see—well, I'm ashamed to tell you what I have been thinking. I don't care enough for him to marry him, I'm afraid. But he happened to be the last—well, I'll call him the last of twelve."

"The last of twelve—what?" I demanded. "You don't mean to tell me, Elizabeth Denton, that you have had twelve separate and distinct lovers in your short life of twenty-four years?"

"Most of them did not count, they were so long ago; but they were just as serious as the others while they lasted. You can't guess who was my first lover, Dick. Billy Trenton! He proposed to me one night at a party. I was only fourteen, I think. I remember we had some sort of games, and in one of them he chose me as the one to level best, and afterward came the declaration in the conservatory. Only a short time after this Cousin Frank proposed. You never knew he was one of my old lovers, did you? He was

very desperate for a month or so and vowed he would die if I refused him. Then he met Alice, and I was forgotten."

"Well, who came next?" I was getting interested.

"The college boys, I believe. You know a girl was not considered at all popular in college there in the west unless she had at least one proposal a year."

"You were there a year, as I remember," I interrupted, and you averaged thirty."

"I had almost forgotten the dozen who visited Grace the winter after I came home from school. He was an English. He must have proposed to every girl he met that winter, and I came in with the rest. Let me see, who was next? Oh, the doctor, and he really did count for he was a big man, and I liked him."

"She smiled as one to emphasize her story that I grew impatient.

"Do go on," I entreated. "You see we have had only one that counted so far."

"Well, we went to the mountains in the summer, the usual place—no one around, excepting two men and one of them was a millionaire. It was the youngest of the men and—there were some other girls there."

Elizabeth looked so innocent and free from guile when she is plotting her own game that I find it rather hard to count her down. But I hold up eight accusing fingers.

"The next? Now who was next?"

"That winter I knew of a house and found all sorts of interesting things. It was that winter Alan had been to—

And, why, Dick, it was just winter that you proposed."

Just then one of the legs broke and a piece flew out on the rug. I stopped to pick it up, and raising my head suddenly was surprised to see Elizabeth's cheeks a bright pink.

"No one would ever think to see us now that we—"

"That I was over madly and hopelessly in love with you," I finish.

"You acted very foolishly about this time, didn't you?"

Alan I never understood why you should have insisted that I was in love with him, because I wasn't with you."

No reply. So we both went on looking into the fire as though we expected to find some answer there. Presently she turned with one of her quick little gestures and laid her hand on my arm.

"What a good old friend you have been, Dick, in spite of all I have done to hurt you. I often wonder if you are as good as I that we are such good friends."

As I look into the dear face I had loved, and would go on loving until the end of time, and thought what it would mean to me not to have the privilege of being her "comrade," even though I longed to be something more than that, it was not hard to tell her that I found it my greatest joy to be considered her "best friend."

"So that is why I wanted to talk to you of Mr. Herrington," she continued. "He is the twelfth and—yes, the last of them all."

"But why the last? Why not wait until No. 13 appears?"

"The unlucky thirteenth? Never! Seriously, Dick, I am getting far too old to wait much longer. Mr. Herrington is very nice, and I'll never marry for love, I feel sure, so why not make up my mind to accept him? Dick, you aren't fastening to a word I'm saying."

I drew my chair close beside hers.

"I have been thinking out a plan to help you, if you care to hear it."

"It's this: To save yourself—from the last of the twelve or the possible unlucky thirteenth you not go back and accept one of the others—for instance?"

"Her hand lay so temptingly near that I reached over and took it between both of mine."

"For instance, Elizabeth—well! No, don't think I am getting far too old to wait much longer. Mr. Herrington, don't love me, I know, but you like me better than Mr.—than No. 12, don't you, dear? And I—well, the fact is, Dick, I never got over that little case of love I had for you long ago. Oh, dear little girl, did you think I could? I love you, I can't help it, and—look at me, Elizabeth, dear—couldn't you care enough to let me save you from the last of the twelve?"

By the light from the log I had thought burned out, but which leaped right over the face I wanted to see, I caught a light in Elizabeth's eyes that I never had to find there. What she said was—well, I am afraid Mr. Herrington's hopes will be gone forever, when he knows about it.

"Was She Complimented?"

A certain literary woman, feeling herself under an obligation to a very eminent author and wishing to show her appreciation, bought a box of candy, meaning to present it to the author at the earliest opportunity. On the same shopping excursion she bought herself a box of tooth powder, the two purchases making packages of similar size and appearance. Thus she sought out her benefactress.

Having a sweet tooth, she inquired and presented one of the neatly wrapped packages. The offering was accepted gratefully, and the donor departed, much gratified at the accomplishment of her act of recognition.

When she got home she unwrapped her remaining package to try the new tooth powder. Removing the last piece of wrapping paper, she read on the box: "Chocolate Bonbons—Extra Quality."—Harper's Weekly.

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