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# The MASQUERADER

By Katherine Cecil Thurston,  
Author of "The Circle," Etc.  
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Loder dined with Lakeley at Chilton's club, and so absorbing were the political interests of the hour—the resignation of Sir Robert Selborne, the king's summoning of Frailie, the probable features of the new ministry—that it was after 9 o'clock when at last he read himself and drove to the Arcadian theater.

The sound of music came to him as he entered the theater—light, measured music suggestive of tiny streams, toy bells and painted shepherdesses. It sounded singularly inappropriate to his mood—as inappropriate as the theater itself with its gay gliding, its pale ones of pink and blue. It was the setting of a different world—a world of laughter, light thoughts and shallow impulses, in which he had no part.

It was the interval between the first and second acts. The box was in shadow, and Loder's first impression was of voices and rustling skirts, broken in upon by the murmur of frequent amused laughter. Later, as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he distinguished the occupants, two women and a man. The man was speaking as he entered, and the story he was relating was evidently interesting from the faint exclamations of question and delight that punctuated it in the listeners' higher, softer voices.

"Ah, here comes the legislator!" exclaimed Leonard Kaine, for it was he who formed the male element in the party.

"The revolutionary, Lennie," Lillian corrected softly. "Bramfel says he has changed the whole frame of things." She laughed softly and meaningfully as she closed her fan. "So good of you to come, Jack," she added. "Let me introduce you to Miss Esseltyn. I don't think you two have met. This is Mr. Chilcote, Mary—the great, new Mr. Chilcote." Again she laughed.

Loder bowed and moved to the front of the box, nodding to Kaine as he passed.

"It's only for an hour," he explained to Lillian. "I have an appointment for 11."

"Only an hour! Oh, how unkind! How should I punish him, Lennie?" Lillian looked round at Kaine with a lingering, caressing glance.

He bent toward her in quick response and answered in a whisper. She laughed and replied in an equally low tone.

Loder, to whom both remarks had been inaudible, dropped into the vacant seat beside Mary Esseltyn. He had the unsettled feeling that things were not falling out exactly as he had calculated.

"What is the play like?" he hazarded as he looked toward his companion. At all times social trivialities bored him. Tonight they were intolerable. He had come to fight, but all at once it seemed that there was no opponent. Lillian's attitude disturbed him; her careless gracefulness, her evident ignoring of him for Kaine, might mean nothing, but also it might mean much.

"It is a good play," she responded. "I like it better than the book. You've read the book, of course?"

"No," Loder tried hard to fix his thoughts. "It's amusing, but far fetched."

"Indeed?" He picked up the programme lying on the edge of the box. His ears were strained to catch the tone of Lillian's voice as she laughed and whispered with Kaine.

"Yes; men exchanging identities, you know."

He looked up and caught the girl's self possessed glance. "Oh?" he said. "Indeed?" Then again he looked away. It was intolerable, this feeling of being caged up! A sense of anger crept through his mind. It almost seemed that Lillian had brought him there to prove that she had finished with him, had cast him aside, having used him for the day's excitement as she had used her poodles, her Persian cats, her crystal gazing. All at once the impotency and uncertainty of his position goaded him. Turning swiftly in his seat, he glanced back to where she sat slowly swaying her fan, her pale, golden hair and her pale colored gown delicately silhouetted against the background of the box.

"What's your idea of the play, Lillian?" he said abruptly. To his own ears there was a note of challenge in his voice.

She looked around languidly. "Oh, it's quite amusing," she said. "It makes a delicious farce—absolutely French."

"French?"

"Quite. Don't you think so, Lennie?" "Oh, quite," Kaine agreed.

"They mean that it's so very light and yet so very subtle, Mr. Chilcote," Mary Esseltyn explained.

"Indeed?" he said. "Then my imagination was at fault. I thought the piece was serious."

"Serious?" Lillian smiled again. "Why, where's your sense of humor? The motive of the play debars all seriousness."

Loder looked down at the programme still between his hands. "What is the motive?" he asked.

Lillian waved her fan once or twice, then closed it softly. "Love is the motive," she said.

Now, the balancing—the adjusting of impression and inspiration—is, of all processes in life, the most delicately fine. The simple sound of the word "love" coming at that precise juncture changed the whole current of Lo-

thought. It fell like a seed, and like a seed in ultraproductive soil, it bore fruit with amazing rapidity.

The word itself was small and the manner in which it was spoken trivial, but Loder's mind was attracted and held by it. The last time it had met his ears his environment had been vastly different, and this echo of it in an uncongenial atmosphere stung him to resentment. The vision of Eve, the thought of Eve, became suddenly dominant.

"Love?" he repeated coldly. "So love is the motive?"

"Yes." This time it was Kaine who responded in his methodical, contented voice. "The motive of the play is love, as Lillian says, which was love ever serious in a three act comedy—on or off the stage?" He leaned forward in his seat, screwed in his eyeglass and lazily scanned the stalls.

The orchestra was playing a Hungarian dance, its erratic harmonies falling abruptly across the plinks and blues, the gliding and lights of the pretty, conventional theater. Something in the suggestion of unfitsness appealed to Loder. It was the force of the real as opposed to the ideal. With a new expression on his face, he turned again to Kaine.

"And how does it work?" he said. "This treatment that you find so—French?"

His voice as well as his expression had changed. He still spoke quietly, but he spoke with interest. He was no longer conscious of his vague uneasiness; a fresh chord had been struck in his mind, and his curiosity had responded to it. For the first time it occurred to him that love—the dangerous, mysterious garden whose paths had so suddenly stretched out before his own feet—was a pleasure ground that possessed many doors and an infinite number of keys. He was stirred by the desire to peer through another entrance than his own, to see the secret, alibiing byways from another standpoint. He waited with interest for the answer to his question.

For a second or two Kaine continued to survey the house; then his eyeglass dropped from his eye, and he turned round.

"To understand the thing," he said pleasantly, "you must have read the book. Have you read the book?"

"No, Mr. Kaine," Mary Esseltyn interrupted. "Mr. Chilcote hasn't read the book."

Lillian laughed. "Outline the story for him, Lennie," she said. "I love to see other people taking pains."

Kaine glanced at her admiringly. "Well, to begin with," he said amiably, "two men, an artist and a millionaire, exchange lives. See?"

"You may presume that he does see, Lennie."

"Right! Well, then, as I say, these beggars change identities. They're as like as pins, and to all appearances one chap's the other chap—and the other chap's the first chap. See?"

Loder laughed. The newly quickened interest was enhanced by treading on dangerous ground.

"Well, they change for a lark, of course, but there's one fact they both overlooked. They're men, you know, and they forget these little things!" He laughed delightedly. "They overlook the fact that one of 'em has got a wife!"

(To be continued.)

## VANESSA

Milton Proper and family also J. P. Henry and wife motored to Hamilton on Saturday afternoon.

Arthur Shepherd and Miss Smith of Welsh spent Sunday afternoon with H. F. and Mrs. Henry.

Mrs. A. Bartholomew is seriously ill. We hope for her speedy recovery.

J. V. Durham and John and Mrs. McNeill, also Sam and Mrs. Crane, spent Sunday with Sam and Mrs. Arthur at Hawtree.

Will and Mrs. Jamieson of Gladstone, motored to Vanessa on Sunday and spent the day with Mrs. Jamieson's parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Robertson.

Mrs. Johnston, of Scotland, is spending a few days with relatives in this place.

John and Mrs. Shepherd spent Sunday with Jacob and Mrs. Goswell.

Leonard Gould and Mrs. Gould motored to Guelph last week.

James Smith of Scotland spent Sunday with J. B. Henry.

Elmer and Mrs. Birdsell spent Friday with their daughter, Mrs. H. F. Henry.

Will and Mrs. Leonard of Boston, spent Sunday with Albert and Mrs. Shepherd.

Some of the farmers have started haying.

Mrs. M. Proper spent part of last week with Mrs. William McKelvie, who is ill.

General Pole-Carew, Inspector of the Territorial Force was thrown from his horse the other day while riding in Antony Park, Cornwall, and sustained concussion of the brain. He was taken unconscious to his home at Antony.

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