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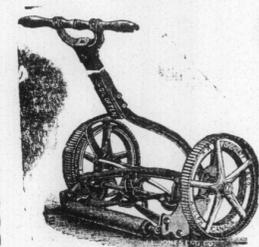
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THE MASQUERADER

By Katherine Cecil Thurston,
Author of "The Circle," Etc.
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Then, at the moment that he replaced them, a peculiar thing occurred. From the farther side of the dark partition came the quick, rustling stir of a skirt and the slight scrape of a chair pushed either backward or forward. Then there was silence.

Now, silence can suggest anything from profound thought to imbecility, but in this case its suggestion was not that something had happened, then some change had taken place, was as patent to Loder as the darkness of the curtain or the band of light that crossed the floor, but what had occasioned it, or what it stood for, he made no attempt to decide. He sat biting his lips, his hands spread open on the table under the scrutiny of eyes that were invisible to him, vividly aware of the awkwardness of his position. He felt with instinctive certainty that a new chord had been struck; but a man seldom acts on instinctive certainties. If the exposure of his hands had struck this fresh note, then any added action would but heighten the dilemma. He sat silent and motionless.

Whether his impassivity had any bearing on the moment he had no way of knowing; but no further movement came from behind the partition. Whatever the emotions that had caused the sharp swish of skirts and the sharp scrape of the chair, they had evidently subsided or been dominated by other feelings. The next indication of life that came to him was the laying down of the crystal ball. It was laid back upon the table with a slight jerk that indicated a decision come to; and almost simultaneously the seer's voice came to him again. Her tone was lower now than it had been before, and its extreme case seemed slightly shaken—whether by excitement, surprise or curiosity it was impossible to say. "You will think it strange," she began. "You will think"—Then she stopped. There was a pause, as though she writhed for some help, but Loder remained mute. In difficulty a silent tongue and a cool head are usually man's best weapons.

His silence was disconcerting. He heard her speak again. "You will think it strange," she began once more. Then quite suddenly she checked and controlled her voice. "You must forgive me for what I am going to say," she added in a completely different tone, "but crystal gazing is such an illusive thing. Directly you put your hands upon the table I felt that there would be no result, but I wouldn't admit the defeat. Women are such keen anglers that they can never acknowledge that any fish, however big, has slipped the hook." She laughed softly.

At the sound of the laugh Loder shifted his position for the first time. He could not have told why, but it struck him with a slight sense of confusion. A precipitate wish to rise and pass through the doorway into the wider spaces of the conservatory came to him, though he made no attempt to act upon it. He knew that, for some inexplicable reason, this woman behind the screen had lied to him—in the conservatory. There had been one moment in which an impulse or an emotion had almost found voice; then training, instinct, or it might have been diplomacy, had conquered, and the moment had passed. There was a riddle in the very atmosphere of the place—and he abominated riddles. But Lady Astrupp was absorbed in her own concerns. Again she changed her position, and to Loder, listening attentively, it seemed that she leaned forward and examined his hands afresh. The sensation was so acute that he withdrew them involuntarily. Again there was a confused rustle. The crystal ball rolled from the table, and the seer laughed quickly, obeying a sudden impulse, Loder rose. He had no definite notion of what he expected or what he must avoid. He was only conscious that the pavilion, with its silk draperies, its scent of musk and its intolerable secrecy, was no longer endurable. He felt cramped and confused in mind and muscle. He stood for a second, then he changed directly forward, passed through the portiere.

After the dimness of the pavilion the conservatory seemed comparatively bright, but without waiting to grow accustomed to the altered light he moved onward with deliberate haste. The long green alley was speedily traversed. In his eyes it no longer possessed greenness, no longer suggested freshness or repose. It was simply a means to the end upon which his mind was set.

As he passed upon the flight of steps he drew his rings from his pocket and slipped them on again. Then he stepped into the glare of the thronged corridor. Some one halted him as he passed through the crowd, but with Chilcote's most absorbed manner he hurried on. Through the door of the supper room he caught sight of Blessington and Eve, and then for the first time his expression changed, and he turned directly toward them. "Eve?" he said, "will you excuse me? I have a word to say to Blessington." She glanced at him in momentary

surprise; then she smiled in her quiet, self-possessed way. "Of course," she said. "I've been wanting a chat with Millicent Gower, but Bobby has required so much entertaining"—She smiled again, this time at Blessington, and moved away toward a pale girl in green who was standing alone.

Instantly she had turned Loder took Blessington's arm. "I know you're tremendously busy," he began in an excellent imitation of Chilcote's hasty manner—"I know you're tremendously busy, but I'm in a fix." One glance at Blessington's healthy, ingenious face told him that plain speaking was the method to adopt.

"Indeed, sir?" In a moment Blessington was on the alert. "Yes. And I—I want your help." The boy reddened. That Chilcote should appeal to him stirred him to an uneasy feeling of pride and uncertainty. Loder saw his advantage and pressed home. "It's come about through this crystal gazing business. I'm afraid I didn't play my part—rather made an ass of myself. I wouldn't swallow the thing, and—Lady Astrupp"—He paused, measuring Blessington with a glance. "Well, my dear boy, you—you know what women are?"

Blessington was only twenty-three. He smiled again and assumed an air of profundity. "I know, sir," he said, with a shake of the head. Loder's sense of humor was keen, but he kept a grave face. "I knew you'd catch my meaning. But I want you to do something more. If Lady Astrupp should ask you who was in her tent this past ten minutes, I want you"—Again he stopped, looking at his companion's face. "Yes, sir?"

"I want you to tell an immaterial lie for me." Blessington returned his glance; then he laughed a little uncomfortably. "But surely, sir—" "She recognized me, you mean?" Loder's eyes were as keen as steel. "Then you're wrong. She didn't." Blessington's eyebrows went up. "There was silence. Loder glanced across the room. Eve had parted from the girl in green and was moving toward them, exchanging smiles and greetings as she came. "My wife is coming back," he said. "Will you do this for me, Blessington? It'll be smooth things." He spoke quickly, continuing to watch Eve. As he had hoped, Blessington's eyes turned in the same direction. "Twill smooth matters," he repeated—"smooth them in—a domestic way that I can't explain." The shot told. Blessington looked round. "Right, sir," he said. "You may leave it to me." And before Loder could speak again he had turned and disappeared into the crowd.

CHAPTER XVII.
HIS business with Blessington over, Loder breathed more freely. If Lady Astrupp had recognized Chilcote by the rings and had been roused to curiosity the incident would demand settlement sooner or later—settlement in what proportion he could hazard no guess. If, on the other hand, her obvious change of manner had arisen from any other source—he had a hazy idea that a woman's behavior could never be gauged by accepted theories—then he had safeguarded Chilcote's interests and his own by his securing of Blessington's promise. Blessington he knew would be reliable and discreet. With a renewal of confidence—a pleasant feeling that his uneasiness had been groundless—he moved forward to greet Eve.

Her face, with its rich, clear coloring, seemed to his gaze to stand out from the crowd of other faces as from a frame, and a sense of pride touched him. In every eye but his own her beauty belonged to him. His face looked alive and masterful as she reached his side. "May I monopolize you?" he said with the quickness of speech borrowed from Chilcote. "We—we see so little of each other." Almost as if compelled, her lashes lifted, and her eyes met his. Her glance was puzzled, uncertain, slightly confused. There was a deeper color than usual in her cheeks. Loder felt something within his own consciousness stir in response. "You know you are yielding," he said. Again she blushed. He saw the blush and knew that it was his words, his personality—that had called it forth. In Chilcote's actual semblance he had proved his superiority over Chilcote. For the first time he had been given a tacit, personal acknowledgment of his power. Involuntarily he drew nearer to her. "Let's get out of this crush." She made no answer except to bend her head, and it came to him that, for all her pride, she liked—and unconsciously yielded to—domination. With a satisfied gesture he turned to make a passage toward the door.

But the passage was more easily desired than made. In the few moments since he had entered the supper room the press of people had considerably thickened until a block had formed about the doorway. Drawing Eve with him he moved forward for a dozen paces, then paused, unable to make further headway. As they stood there he looked back at her. "A study in democracy a crowd always is," he said. She responded with a bright, appreciative glance, as if surprised into naturalness. He wondered sharply what she would be like if her enthusiasms were really aroused. Then a stir in the corridor outside caused a movement inside the room, and with a certain display of persistence he was enabled to make a passage to the door.

Here again, they were compelled to halt. But though tightly wedged into his new position and guarding Eve with one arm, Loder was free to survey the brilliantly thronged corridor over the head of a man a few inches shorter than himself, who stood directly in front of him. "What are we waiting for?" he asked good humoredly, addressing the back of the stranger's head.

The man turned, displaying a genial face, a red mustache and an eyeglass. "Hallo, Chilcote!" he said. "Hope it's not on your feet I'm standing." Loder laughed. "No," he said. "And don't change the position. If you were an inch higher I should be blind as well as crippled."

The other laughed. It was a pleasant surprise to find Chilcote amiable under discomfort. He looked round again in slight curiosity. Loder felt the scrutiny. To create a diversion he looked out along the corridor. "I believe we are waiting for something," he exclaimed. "What's this?" Then quite abruptly he ceased to speak.

"Anything interesting?" Eve touched his arm. He said nothing. He made no effort to look round. His thought as well as his speech was suddenly suspended. The man in front of him let his eyeglass fall from his eye, then screwed it in again. "Jove," he exclaimed, "here comes our sorcerer! It's like the progress of a fairy princess. I believe this is the meaning of our getting penned in here." He chuckled delightedly. Loder said nothing. He stared straight on over the other's head.

Along the corridor, agreeably conscious of the hum of admiration she aroused, came Lillian Astrupp, surrounded by a little court. Her delicate face was lit up; her eyes shone under the faint gleam of her hair; her gown of gold embroidery swept round her gracefully. She was radiant and triumphant, but she was also excited. The excitement was evident in her laugh, in her gestures, in her eyes, as they turned quickly in one direction and then another. Loder, gazing in stupefaction over the other man's head, saw it—felt and understood it with a mind that leaped back over a space of years. As in a shifting panorama he saw a night of disturbance and confusion in a faroff Italian valley—a confusion from which one face shone out with something of the pale, ethereal radiance that filtered over the hillside from the crescent moon. It passed across his consciousness slowly, and in its light the incidents of the past hour stood out in a new aspect. The echo of recollection stirred by Lady Bramfell's voice, the re-echo of it in the sister's tones; his own blindness, his own egregious assurance—all struck across his mind. Meanwhile the party about Lillian drew nearer. He felt with instinctive certainty that the supper room was its destination, but he remained motionless, held by a species of fatalism. He watched her draw near with an unmoved face, but in the brief space that passed while she traversed the corridor he gauged to the full the hold that the new atmosphere, the new excitement, had gained over his mind. With an unlooked-for rush of feeling he realized how dearly he would part with it.

As Lillian came closer the meaning of her manner became clearer to him. She talked incessantly, laughing now and then, but her eyes were never over the corridor, then glanced over the heads crowded in the doorway. "I'll have something quite sweet, Geoffrey," she was saying to the man beside her as she came within hearing. "You know what I like—a sort of soufflé wrapped up in sugar." As she said the words her glance wandered, and Loder saw it rest uninterestedly on a boy a yard or two in front of him, then move to the man over whose head he gazed, then lift itself inevitably to his face.

The glance was quick and direct. He saw the look of recognition spring across it; he saw her move forward suddenly as the crowd in the corridor parted to let her pass. Then he saw what seemed to him a miracle. Her whole expression altered, her lips parted, and she colored with annoyance. She looked like a spoiled child who, seeing a bonbon box, opens it to find it empty.

As the press about the doorway melted to give her passage the red-haired man in front of Loder was the first to take advantage of the space. "Jove, Lillian," he said, moving forward, "you look as if you expected Chilcote to be somebody else, and are disappointed to find he's only himself!" He laughed delightedly at his own joke. The words were exactly the tone Lillian needed. She smiled her usual undisturbed smile as she turned her eyes upon him. "My dear Leonard, you're using your eyeglass. When that happens you're never responsible for what you see." Her words came more slowly and with a tone of ingenuit amusement. Her composure was suddenly restored. Then for the first time Loder changed his position. Moved by an impulse he made no effort to dissect, he stepped back to Eve's side and slipped his arm through hers—successfully concealing his left hand.

The warmth of her skin through her long glove thrilled him unexpectedly. His impulse had been one of self-defense, but the result was of a different character. At the quick contact the wish to fight for—to hold and defend—the position that had grown so dear woke in renewed force. With a new determination he turned again toward Lillian.

(To be continued.)

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COL. GENET'S
Lt.-Col. Genet left visit to Niagara can not yet announced his 58th Battalion, but Major (Dr.) Ballach mentioned as one.

The lead given by the officer to his men in active service was followed by applicants last forces, artisans, clerks, kinds and conditions of ed themselves, and befid was over upwards of two been enrolled.
Dr. Palmer had a busy evening last night with his general way seem few difficulties for the front.
Had a soldier an inch a vein too prominent, it out with kindly humor homely advice was thro old Doc—es all right," w lar verdict. "He let's a soft, don't e," queried a voice, and a partner e does."

The group which as night was remarkable b its youth, and few ind men who had passed 24 A few made inquiries at enlistment in the 35 this unit enlistment had the anxious directed to t at Niagara.
Among those who en list last night were: Geo. A. Follows, 3 yrs. Geo. Durnford, 7 mos. Chas. Read, 3 yrs. 4th. Frank LeConte, 2 yrs. Bruce Stipe, 2 yrs. Du Cantton Vesey, 3 yrs. D. A. Philpott, 3 yrs. D. W. Muirton, 3 mos. D. W. Heckson, 3 yrs. 25th. A. Thomson, no service. W. Cowan, 3 mos. D. G. A. G. Buck, 3 mos. D. Of the above group it passed the medical exam nevertheless deserve of their pluck in coming if completed list of the men will be available for to-sue.

At 10 o'clock the me coming in, and the wait many names of late wro ed on to undergo the ordi medics at an early date.
N.C.O. CLAS
An N.C.O.'s class of a busy on the floor under and some hard work was coming the day and th them in their section and

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as Artiller

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