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LADY LARKSPUR

MEREDITH NICOLSON

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(Continued from Last Week.)

"I found those lovely screens in the garret and thought we might as well enjoy them, and that Lang Yao Jar you see on the sideboard oughtn't to be hidden in the vault."

"I am sure Uncle Bash would be happy to know you care for these things so much," I said, noting that the white roses she had chosen for the jar—I knew the choice was hers—served to emphasize the deep red of its exquisite glaze.

"I am among the unselect," remarked Mrs. Farnsworth. "When I am told that such things are beautiful I am immediately convinced. I say they are beautiful, and that is enough."

"That has always been enough for me," I replied, "My uncle used to try to interest me, but he gave it up when he found that my pagan soul was aroused by nothing but pottery idols. I am a heathen!"

"I am gratified that you make the admission so frankly," said Mrs. Farnsworth. "I have always been a great admirer of the heathen. But, you know, Mr. Singleton, Alice and I never can agree as to just what a heathen is. All our squabbles have been about that. I am disposed to include all who believe in fairies good, or bad, and persons who honestly believe in signs, omens, and lucky stones, and all who have the receipt of fern-seed and walk invisible—there's Shakespeare for that."

"I think," said Mrs. Bashford soberly, "that I have always believed in witches; and if I keep on believing I shall see one some day. We shall find anything in this world that we believe in hard enough."

She was talking very gravely, as though witches were the commonest topic of conversation, but finding my eyes turned upon her in frank wonder, she laughed at my amazement.

"Let us be honest with you, Mr. Singleton," Mrs. Farnsworth explained, "and tell you that we are just testing you. It may be a breach of hospitality, and you are but a stranger, but we are curious to know whether you are of that small company of the favored of heaven who can play at being foolish without becoming idiotic. Alice is sometimes very near idiocy. You admit that, Alice!"

"I not only admit it, but I might even boast of it!" my aunt replied.

At the mention of witches I had caught Antoine crossing himself as he turned to the sideboard. I confess that I myself had been startled by the drift of the talk. Mrs. Farnsworth and my aunt treated each other as

though they were contemporaries, and it was Alice and Constance between them. As the talk ran exhaustively through the lore of witches and goblins I had hoped that one or the other would drop some clue as to the previous history of my amazing aunt. It was as plain as day that she and Mrs. Farnsworth indulged in whims for the joy of it, and her zest in the discussion of witches, carried on while Antoine served the table, lips tightly compressed, and with an exaggeration of his stately tread, was the more startling from the fact that my aunt's companion was a woman of years, a handsome woman with a high-bred air who did not look at all like a person who would discuss witches as though they had been made the topic of the day by the afternoon newspapers. And when the shape of a witch's chin became the immediate point of discussion I knew it was in Antoine's mind that such conversation was unbecoming, an offense to the memory of Raymond Bashford. Mrs. Farnsworth's brown eyes sparkled, and the color deepened in my aunt's cheeks as we discoursed upon witches and the chins thereof. I had a friend in college who used to indulge in the same sort of piffing, but that my uncle's widow and her elderly companion should delight in such absurdities bewildered me. I had been addressing my aunt as Mrs. Bashford—it seemed ridiculous to call her Aunt Alice—and in the heat of our argument as to whether witches are necessarily naughty and malign beings I had just uttered the "Mrs." when she bent toward me and said gravely and

visitors," I said, loud enough for the others to hear. "Mr. Torrence will be here shortly, and it would be annoying to have him ushered in on a shuter."

"I know why this is the land of the free and the home of the brave," laughed Alice. "One has to be brave to live here."

Antoine departed with a resentful twist of the shoulders, and I decided to meet squarely the matter of the visitors who had so troubled him.

"Please don't be frightened," I said as lightly as possible, "but these old fellows haven't enough to do, and they are full of apprehensions. They have been alarmed by an agent of some sort who wants to welcome you to America by selling you a piano on easy payments."

Antoine had been hovering inside, and my remark brought him to the door.

"Beg pardon, Mr. Singleton, but that party is not an agent, but quite different, sir. He came to the house, quite like a gentleman, several times, and asked if Mrs. Bashford had arrived. He came in a big car, and seemed disappointed, madame, that you were not here and not expected. A very well-spoken gentleman, and we'd have thought nothing of it except that a few days later I caught a man I was sure was the same party, but dressed in rough clothes, sneaking across the veranda right there where you're sitting. When I called to him he ran as hard as he could, and Graves—he's the vegetable gardener—saw him leaving the property by the back way."

We had coffee on the veranda (Alice thought it would be nicer there), and as Antoine gave me my cup he edged close to my chair to whisper:

"That party, sir. If he should come—"

"Tell the troops not to attack any

"It's hardly possible that a man who impressed you as a gentleman when you saw him at the door should have returned in disguise and tried to break into the house."

"Oh," exclaimed Mrs. Farnsworth. "It would be so much more delightful if that were true! Any one in disguise is bound to be interesting. A disguise suggests most beautiful possibilities."

I could not be sure in the dim light of the veranda, but I thought I detected a white slipper cautiously reach out and touch a black one. At any rate, Mrs. Farnsworth lapsed into silence.

"Thank you very much, Antoine," said Alice. "It is very proper for you to tell me anything of any stranger on the property, but I see nothing here to be alarmed about. If the same gentleman calls again, let me know instantly."

"Very good, madame." And then, turning as though conferring upon me a part of his responsibility for the security of the premises: "It's a party with a limp; just a trifling limp, sir; you'd hardly notice it. A smallish man, rather dark, with a little mustache turned up at the ends."

(Continued on page two, this section.)

Goose Eggs Best.

Geese lay the best eggs, from the point of view of nourishment. Then come ducks and guinea fowl. Hens are fourth on the list, with turkeys and plovers following.

For Sale SULPHATE OF LIME (Land Plaster)

Greaves and Carter (Journal of Agriculture Research, Vol. 16 No. 4, p. 123) say of gypsum: "Calcium sulphate is the most powerful stimulant known. This is not due to a direct nutritive value but to the liberation of plant food. The main influence is upon the bacterial activities of the soil, especially the ammonifying and nitrifying organisms of the soil. In this manner the available nitrogen in the soil is increased. Furthermore in the metabolic processes of the bacteria there are formed acids and other compounds which act as solvents for the potassium and phosphorus of the soil."

\$14 per ton

J. L. M. Irby
Laurens, S. C

Are We Downhearted? NO!

We are a Southern Company, with a firm belief in the South's future. We are confident that the conditions causing the present low price of cotton are temporary and will soon pass. But we realize that many of our friends who have planned to install lighting plants and water supply system this Fall are holding off until a better price can be secured for their cotton. Therefore, having the courage of our convictions, we offer the advanced price NOW so that our customers may have the use of their equipment without delay and WE will await the time when cotton will bring a price nearer to its true worth. Therefore,

From This Date Until November 10th
**WE WILL ACCEPT
COTTON at 27c a POUND
Middling Basis With Market Differential
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"LALLEY" Farm Lighting PLANTS**
For further particulars get in touch with our local dealer. If you do not know him write us at once and we will gladly forward his name.

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