

# THE Masquerader

By KATHERINE CECIL THURSTON,  
Author of "The Circle," Etc.

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"Well?" he said. "Well?" Lakeley smiled. "We all know that Seaborough's ministry is—well, top-heavy," he said. "Seaborough is building his card house just a story too high. It's a loss up what'll upset the balance. It might be the army, of course, or it might be education, but it might quite as well be a matter of foreign policy."

They looked at each other in comprehensive silence. "You know as well as I that it's not the question of whether Russia comes into Persia, but the question of whether Russia goes out of Persia when these Hazaras are subdued! I'll lay you what you like, Chilcote, that within one week we hear that the risings are suppressed, but that Russia, instead of retiring, has advanced those tempting twenty miles and comfortably encamped herself at Meshed—as she encamped herself on the island of Ashurada." Lakeley's nervous, energetic figure was braced, his light blue eyes brightened by the intensity of his interest.

"If this news comes before the Easter recess," he went on, "the first nail can be hammered in on the motion for adjournment. And if the right man does it in the right way I'll lay my life 'twill be a nail in Seaborough's coffin."

Loder sat very still. Overwhelming possibilities had suddenly opened before him. In a moment the unreality of the past months had become real; a tangible justification of himself and his imposture was suddenly made possible. In the stress of understanding he, too, leaned forward, and, resting his elbows on the desk, took his face between his hands.

For a space Lakeley made no remark. To him man and man's moods came second in interest to his paper and his party politics. That Chilcote should be conscious of the glories he had opened up seemed only natural; that he should show that consciousness in a becoming gravity seemed only right. For some seconds he made no attempt to disturb him, but at last his own irrepresible activity made silence unendurable. He caught up his pencil and tapped impatiently on the desk.

"Chilcote," he said quickly and with a gleam of sudden anxiety, "you're not by any chance doubtful of yourself?" At sound of his voice Loder lifted his face. It was quite pale again, but the energy and resolution that had come into it when Lakeley first spoke were still to be seen.

"No, Lakeley," he said very slowly, "it's not the sort of moment in which a man doubts himself."

## CHAPTER XIX.

AND so it came to pass that Loder was freed from one responsibility to undertake another. From the morning of March 27, when Lakeley had expounded the political programme in the offices of the St. George's Gazette, to the afternoon of April 1 he found himself a central figure in the whirlpool of activity that formed itself in Conservative circles. With the acumen for which he was noted, Lakeley had touched the keystone of the situation on that morning, and succeeding events, each fraught with its own importance, had established the precision of his forecast.

Minutely watchful of Russia's attitude, Fraide quietly organized his forces and strengthened his position with a statesmanlike grasp of opportunity, and to Loder the attributes displayed by his leader during those trying days formed an endless and absorbing study. Setting the thought of Chilcote aside, ignoring his own position and the risks he daily ran, he had fully yielded to the glamour of the moment and in the first freedom of a loose rein he had given unreservedly all that he possessed of activity, capacity and determination to the cause that had claimed him.

Singularly privileged in a constant personal contact with Fraide, he learned many valuable lessons of tact and organization in those five vital days during which the tactics of a whole party hung upon one item of news from a country thousands of miles away. For should Russia subdue the insurgent Hazaras and, laden with the honors of the peacemaker, retire across the frontier, then the political arena would remain undisturbed; but should the all important movement predicted by Lakeley become an accepted fact before parliament rose for the Easter recess, then the first blow in the fight that would rage during the succeeding session must inevitably be struck. In the meantime it was Fraide's difficult position to wait and watch and yet preserve his dignity.

It was early in the afternoon of March 29 that Loder, in response to a long standing invitation, lunched quietly with the Fraides. Being delayed by some communications from Wark, he was a few minutes late in keeping his appointment, and on being shown into the drawing room found the little group of three that was to make up the party already assembled—Fraide, Lady Sarah—and Eve. As he entered the room they ceased to speak, and all three turned in his direction.

In the first moment he had a vague impression of responding suitably to Lady Sarah's cordial greeting, but he knew that immediately and unconsciously his eyes turned to Eve, while

a quick sense of surprise and satisfaction passed through him at sight of her. For an instant he wondered how she would mark his avoidance of her since their last eventful interview; then instantly he blamed himself for the passing doubt. For, before all things, he knew her to be a woman of the world.

He took Fraide's outstretched hand, and again he looked toward Eve, waiting for her to speak.

She met his glance, but said nothing. Instead of speaking she smiled at him—a smile that was far more reassuring than any words, a smile that in a single second conveyed forgiveness, approbation and a warm, almost tender sense of sympathy and comprehension. The remembrance of that smile stayed with him long after they were seated at table and far into the future the remembrance of the lunch itself, with its pleasant private sense of satisfaction, was destined to return to him in retrospective moments. The delightful atmosphere of the Fraides' home life had always been a wonder and an enigma to him, but on this day he seemed to grasp its meaning by a new light as he watched Eve often under its influence and felt himself drawn imperceptibly from the position of a speculative outsider to that of an intimate. It was a fresh side to the complex, fascinating life of which Fraide was the master spirit.

These reflections had grown agreeably familiar to his mind. The talk, momentarily diverted into social channels, was quietly drifting back to the inevitable question of the "situation" that in private moments was never far from their lips, when the event that was to mark and separate that day from those that had preceded it was unceremoniously thrust upon them.

Without announcement or apology, the door was suddenly flung open and Lakeley entered the room.

His face was brimming with excitement, and his eyes flashed. In the first haste of the entry he failed to see that there were ladies in the room and, crossing instantly to Fraide, laid an open telegram before him. "This is official, sir," he said. Then at last he glanced round the table.

"Lady Sarah!" he exclaimed. "Can you forgive me?—But I've given a hundred pounds to be the first with this!" He glanced back at Fraide. Lady Sarah rose and stretched out her hand. "Mr. Lakeley," she said, "I more than understand!" There was a thrill in her warm, cordial voice, and her eyes also turned toward her husband.

Of the whole party Fraide alone was perfectly calm. He sat very still, his small, thin figure erect and dignified, as his eyes scanned the message that meant so much. Eve, who had sprung from her seat and passed round the table at sound of Lakeley's news, was leaning over his shoulder reading the telegram with him. At the last word she lifted her head, her face flushed with excitement. "How splendid it must be to be a man!" she exclaimed, and without premeditation her eyes and Loder's met.

In this manner came the news from Persia and with it Loder's definite call. In the momentary stress of action it was impossible that any thought of Chilcote could obtrude itself. Events had followed each other too rapidly, decisive action had been too much thrust upon him, to allow of hesitation, and it was in this spirit, under this vigorous pressure, that he made his attack upon the government on the day that followed Fraide's luncheon party.

That indefinable attentiveness, that alert sensation of impending storm, that is so strong an index of the parliamentary atmosphere was very keen on that memorable 1st of April. It was obvious in the crowded benches on both sides of the house, in the oneness of purpose that insensibly made itself felt through the ranks of the opposition and found definite expression in Fraide's stiff figure and tightly shut lips, in the unmistakable uneasiness that lay upon the ministerial benches.

But notwithstanding these indications of battle the early portion of the proceedings was unmarked by excitement, being tinged with the purposeless lack of vitality that had of late marked all affairs of the Seaborough ministry, and it was not until the adjournment of the house for the Easter recess had at last been moved that the spirit of activity hovering in the air descended and galvanized the assembly into life. It was then, amid a stir of interest, that Loder slowly rose.

Many curious incidents have marked the speechmaking annals of the house of commons, but it is doubtful whether it has ever been the lot of a member to hear his own voice raised for the first time on a subject of vital interest to his party, having been denied all initial assistance of minor questions asked or unimportant amendments made. Of all those gathered together in the great building on that day, only one man appreciated the difficulty of Loder's position, and that man was Loder himself.

He rose slowly and stood silent for a couple of seconds, his body braced, his fingers touching the sheaf of notes that lay in front of him. To the wait-

ing house the silence was effective. It might mean overassurance or it might mean a failure of nerve at a critical moment. Either possibility had a tinge of piquancy. Moved by the same impulse, fifty pairs of eyes turned on him with new interest, but up in the ladies' gallery Eve clasped her hands in sudden apprehension, and Fraide, sitting stiffly in his seat, arched and shot one swift glance at the man on whom, against prudence and precedent, he had planned his faith. The glance was swift, but very searching, and with a characteristic movement of his wiry shoulders he resumed his position and his usual grave, attentive attitude. At the same moment Loder lifted his head and began to speak.

Here at the outset his inexperience met him. His voice, pitched too low, only reached those directly near him. It was a moment of great strain. Eve, listening intently, drew a long breath of suspense and let her fingers drop apart. The skeptical, watchful eyes that faced him, line upon line, seemed to flash and brighten with critical interest. Only Fraide made no change of expression. He sat placid, serious, attentive, with the shadow of a smile behind his eyes.

Again Loder paused, but this time the pause was shorter. The ordeal he had dreaded and waited for was passed, and he saw his way clearly. With the old movement of the shoulders he straightened himself and once more began to speak. This time his voice rang quietly true and commanding across the floor of the house.

No first step can be really great. It must of necessity possess more of prophecy than of achievement. Nevertheless it is by the first step that a man marks the value not only of his cause, but of himself. Following broadly on the lines that tradition has laid down for the conservative orator, Loder disguised rather than displayed the vein of strong, persuasive eloquence that was his natural gift. The occasion that might possibly justify such a display of individuality might lie with the future, but it had no application to the present. For the moment his duty was to voice his party sentiments with as much lucidity, as much logic and as much calm conviction as lay within his capacity.

Standing quietly in Chilcote's place, he was conscious with a deep sense of



His voice rang quietly true and commanding.

gravity of the peculiarity of his position, and perhaps it was this unconscious and unstudied seriousness that lent him the tone of weight and judgment so essential to the cause he had in hand. It has always been difficult to arouse the interest of the house on matters of British policy in Persia. Once aroused it may, it is true, reach fever heat with remarkable rapidity, but the introductory stages offer that worst danger to the earnest speaker—the dread of an apathetic audience. But from this consideration Loder, by his sharp consciousness of personal difficulties, was given immunity.

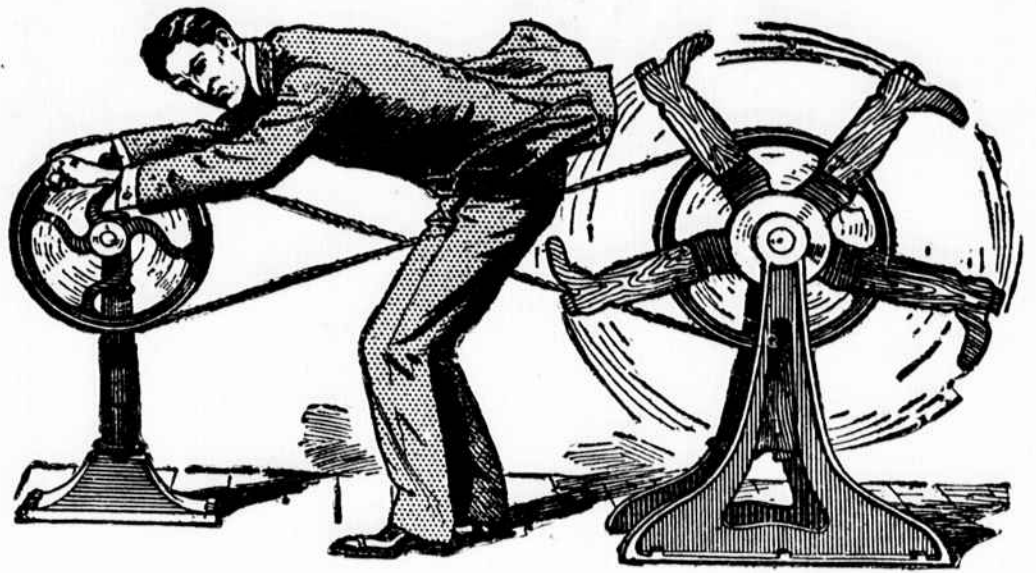
Pitching his voice in that quietly masterful tone that beyond all others compels attention, he took up his subject and dealt with it with dispassionate force. With great skill he jostled on the steady southward advance of Russia into Persian territory from the distant days when, by a curious irony of fate, Russian and British enterprise combined to make entry into the country under the sanction of the grand duke of Moscow to the present hour, when this great power of Russia—long since alienated by interests and desires from her former co-operator—had taken a step which in the eyes of every thinking man must possess a deep significance.

With his usual quiet persistence he pointed out the peculiar position of Meshed in the distant province of Khorassan, its vast distance from the Persian gulf, round which British interests and influence center, and the consequently alarming position of hundreds of traders who, in the security of British sovereignty, are fighting their way upward from India, from Afghanistan, even from England herself.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

One-third of the real estate transfers in San Francisco since Jan. 1 have been to Japanese purchasers. Perhaps the Jap's way of thinking is, if you don't like us for neighbors, we'll buy you out and you can go."

Mr. Harriman may become bold enough to assert that money ought to be turned over to the development of railways instead of being applied to founding colleges and libraries.



This man bought a supply of tobacco without acquainting himself with the distinctive taste of SCHNAPPS Tobacco, which has the cheering qualities that gratify his desire to chew, and at less expense than cheap tobacco.

SCHNAPPS has been advertised in this paper so that every chewer has had an opportunity to get acquainted with the facts and know that drugs are not used to produce the cheering quality found in the famous Piedmont country flue-cured tobaccos, and that SCHNAPPS is what he ought to chew. Still there are chewers who accept other and cheaper tobaccos that do not give the same pleasure.

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## Ashes for Fuel.

Expert chemists are now making a careful examination and analysis of the discovery made by a Pennsylvania cobbler whereby coal can be made to perform several times its usual function as a fuel.

According to reputable authority, here is the formula for this preparation which, if it will accomplish what the inventor claims of it, will work wonders as a fuel: "Common salt, one pound; oxalic acid, two ounces; water, one gallon. Mix, and then moisten a mixture containing one part coal and three parts of the mixture with water. This will produce a better fuel than coal."

This mixture of ashes with coal and other ingredients causes a chemical combination which is said to be wonderful, and if it can be demonstrated that common ashes can be put to the good use which the cobbler-inventor sees in it, the result will be felt almost instantly. Of course, all manufacturers and others who make power on a large scale are interested in this new process and they will follow the experiment with closest attention. To be able to utilize ashes to such an advantage would mean one of the greatest discoveries of the times.—Greenville Daily News.

## Of Interest To Women.

To such women as are not seriously out of health, but who have exacting duties to perform, either in the way of household cares or in social duties and functions which seriously tax their strength, as well as to nursing mothers, Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription has proved a most valuable supporting tonic and invigorating nerve. By its timely use, much serious sickness and suffering may be avoided. The operating table and the surgeon's knife, would, it is believed, seldom have to be employed if this most valuable woman's remedy were resorted to in good time. The "Favorite Prescription" has proven a great boon to expectant mothers by preparing the system for the coming of baby, thereby rendering childbirth safe, easy, and almost painless.

Bear in mind, please that Dr. Pierce's Favorite Prescription is not a secret or patent medicine, against which the most intelligent people are quite naturally averse, because of the uncertainty as to their composition and harmless character, but is a medicine of known composition, a full list of all its ingredients being printed in plain English, on every bottle wrapper. An examination of this list of ingredients will disclose the fact that it is non-alcoholic in its composition, chemically pure, triple-refined glycerine taking the place of the commonly used alcohol, in its make-up. In this connection it may not be out of place to state that the "Favorite Prescription" of Dr. Pierce is the only medicine put up for the cure of woman's peculiar weaknesses and ailments, and sold through druggists, all the ingredients of which have the unanimous endorsement of all the leading medical writers and teachers of all the several schools of practice, and that too as remedies for the ailments for which "Favorite Prescription" is recommended. A little book of these endorsements will be sent to any address, post-paid, and absolutely free if you request same by postal card, or letter, of Dr. R. V. Pierce, Buffalo, N. Y.

Dr. Pierce's Pleasant Pellets cure constipation. Constipation is the cause of many diseases. Cure the cause and you cure the disease. Easy to take as candy.

The only place where peaches are grown for market and are wholly uninjured, so far as can be told, is Belmont, Ga. Even the most tender vegetation there is uninjured and, it is said, frost never falls there, vegetation being killed only by winter freezes.

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Schedule in effect January 13, 1907.  
Between Union and Buffalo.

Morning.  
No. 1 leaves Union 7:30 a. m., arrive at Buffalo 7:45 a. m.  
No. 2 leaves Union 12:30 p. m., arrives at Buffalo 12:45 p. m.  
No. 5 leaves Union 3:45 p. m., arrives at Buffalo 4:00 p. m.  
No. 2 leaves Buffalo at 8:45 a. m., arrives at Union 9:00 a. m. Evening.  
No. 4 leaves Buffalo at 1:30 p. m., arrives at Union 1:45 p. m.  
No. 6 leaves Buffalo at 4:45 p. m., arrives at Union 5:00 p. m.

Morning, D. D. L.  
No. 34 leaves Union at 9:30; leaves Monarch 9:35; leaves Crawfords 9:40; leaves Gregory's 9:45; leaves Medors 9:55; leaves Neal Shoals 10:05; leaves Red Point 10:15; arrives at Pride 10:25 a. m.  
No. 33 leaves Pride 10:55; leaves Red Point 11:05; leaves Neal Shoals 11:15; leaves Medors 11:25; leaves Gregory's 11:30; leaves Crawfords 11:35; leaves Monarch 11:40; arrives at Union 11:50 a. m. Evening.

No. 32 leaves Union 5:15; leaves Monarch 5:20; leaves Crawfords 5:25; leaves Gregory's 5:30; leaves Medors 5:40; leaves Neal Shoals 5:50; leaves Red Point 6:00; arrives at Pride 6:10 p. m.  
No. 31 leaves Pride 6:40; leaves Red Point 6:50; leaves Neal Shoals 7:00; leaves Medors 7:10; leaves Gregory's 7:15; leaves Crawfords 7:20; leaves Monarch 7:25; arrives at Union 7:35 p. m.

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