

VIRGINIA'S CHAPERON PAPERS

The Lament of the Chaperon A MONOLOGUE

By VIRGINIA NILES LEEDS



HERE is Summer coming around again and I must play match dog to those dreadful girls—the most indolent, inattentive girls that ever drew breath. I wonder why girls never want to rest for a change? They have danced all Winter, until one would suppose they would like to crawl into a hole and lie there dormant for the rest of their lives. But no; they are looking forward to tennis and rowing and swimming and all sorts of other strenuous things, with the thermometer at 90, and I am expected to sit and watch them, nobody caring that the freckles are coming thick and fast and that blisters are forming on the back of my neck. I'm only the chaperon.

Perhaps there are people who think a chaperon's life a merry jest. I wish they would try it for a while. It is the most thankless task on earth, and no wonder the girls' own mothers want to shift the responsibility upon some one else. They make the excuse that they have their hearts and other things, and I am engaged to keep an eye on the girls. The girls themselves hate it just as much as I do, and I know they call me griffin and dragon behind my back. I found out what "griffin" and "dragon" stand for.

They are forever leading me into danger and into blood-curdling situations. They climb out on slippery rocks at the risk of being cut off by the tide or swept away by the breakers, and they must as far as it is possible for human feet to penetrate, and I have to follow, with no one to hold my hand or help me over the rough places, and there I sit an hour or two in the cold and damp listening to nothing but their giggling, for that is the extent of the girls' conversational powers, and they indulge in it on all occasions, especially when my foot slips or a shriek of fear escapes me.

They are the most heartless girls on earth. That was borne in upon me forcibly the other day by a remark made by Elsie. I was telling her of a friend of mine who had been suddenly stricken with blindness, and who, moreover, was deaf and dumb. "Oh," she cried, clasping her hands in prayer, "what a chaperon she'd make!" and I sincerely believe that if I were stricken that way myself tomorrow, they would both be beside themselves with joy.

They have a passion for dark corners, and for the back seats of wagons on driving parties. They think I don't know who. But I wasn't always a chaperon. I was a young girl once myself, and perhaps I liked dark corners and the back seat, too.

Well, I certainly have to take a back seat now. They also take the greatest delight getting me into yachts and sailboats. They know I hate boats of any sort, and I'm always too ill to watch them; so that is their little game. They wait until I am bored, then they disappear and slip into the corners they so love and I am left alone with my usual de mer. If they were to elope in the middle of the stream, I should be obliged to find out what prevented it, and I can only be thankful that they haven't taken it into their foolish heads to do so yet.

Fancy what I said the other day! When I remonstrated with her about wishing to go driving alone with a young man in a runabout, telling her that no one but an engaged girl would do such a thing, she pulled out a note and said: "Oh, you poor old goose; just let me go, and I'll be engaged by the time I come back!" They are always losing their hearts to some insane object in a pink shirt and a beardless chin, and wearing his college pins and carrying his picture next their hearts. They rush him unmercifully for a week, and I have to follow as if it were after him, too, until my ankles ache, fit to drop off. Then they suddenly see another of the same brand, and they drop the first and begin the rush over again after the second. The first thing they always tell each other is that I am a match dog, and the fellow thing scowls at me and helps the girls outwit me at every turn. Oh, the joy of being a chaperon! They are never ready to go home from any place, and beg me for one more dance—just once more—until the lights go out. They must dance at least ten miles a night, but that doesn't satisfy them, and whenever I mention home they regard me as an injured man and act as if they were the most abused beings on earth. They have never sat in a back row, unattended, watching other people dance, for five consecutive hours. When they go home, instead of going to bed like Christiana, they sit up until daylight, talking and giggling over the time they've had and criticizing the boys they've met. Every time it is the time of the year, and nearly every boy is in their fate for sure.

Nobody ever thinks of fetching me a glass of punch or an ice. Chaperons are supposed to be like camels in the desert—able to go for an indefinite time without drink or refreshment. Frequently I have had to sit in draughts and once twice I have felt the grip developing during the cocktail. But do you think the girls would mind that? Not for a minute. They would think the grip might produce blindness or deafness, and would look upon it as the most desirable thing that could happen. They would gladly chloroform me and tie me in a chair from the beginning of a dance until the end. Thank heaven that the skating season is over! They had me out on the ice day after day last Winter, trying to follow me on the slippery surface. I on my feet and they on skates. I never endured such torture in my life.

They could speed away from me in the twinkling of an eye, and you can believe they did it. It was impossible for me to find them in the crowd, and I was chilled to the marrow at those girls' bones, and it is only God's mercy that I didn't catch pneumonia ten times over. For there is nothing so cold, so dreary and so cheerless as a job pond if you are watching others skate! I had to wait patiently at the end of the pond until the very last skaters were in; then my precious changes have into sight with four or five steaming youths whom they may have picked up on the ice for aught I know, for all their beak look precisely alike to me, saying how short the afternoon had been and making engagements to come again on the morrow. Swimming has taken the place of skating, and they are going in for that with equal vigour. They know I can't swim, so they take infinite delight swimming out where I couldn't follow if the salvation of my soul depended upon it. They strike out to a raft which very few other girls are able to reach, and there they sit with literally a raft of boys about their necks, leading man was their water and reveling in their freedom. I know if I could see that far that they are poking their tongues out at me while I sit on the beach with my umbrella. It would give them supreme joy to have me attempt to

swim out after them, for they know I should be drowned half way over. A chaperon requires the eyes of an Argus, all around her head. If I turn around a minute at a dance those girls are out of sight. They might have been under my very nose the instant before, but they vanish into thin air if I so much as blink. Then there is a great to-do to find them. If there are back stairs or a conservatory, those are the most likely places, and they always act as if I were the guilty party when they are discovered. How I pity the women with daughters! No wonder they engage duennas to look after them! It is a wearing and aging business. I cannot be too thankful that the matinee season is over. Saturday afternoon throughout the entire Winter they dragged me to name performances, which I had to sit through, while they gushed over the actors and stuffed chocolates. Afterward nothing but to linger for an hour at the stage door waiting for the heroes to come out, who never by any possibility did come out. Then they must scurry home again and write fond letters to the leading man, begging for his autograph and a lock of his hair. It did no good to remonstrate with each leading man was their idol, and because they had spent their week's allowance to see him they were

privileged to write him notes. One actor—the only one who ever answered—paid them off very cleverly. He sent a typewritten line, stating that he had turned their gracious communication over to his wife, who always attended to his correspondence for him. That settled him with them. They sent him a comic valentine and burned his pictures. Yes, indeed, I cannot be too grateful that the matinee season is over. I wonder why I was ever here? The chaperon, or a middle-aged widow, what have I done that such a fate should be mine? But an idea strikes me. Why not have a good time myself while watching the girls? I am not so aged and decrepit that I couldn't enjoy myself if I had the chance. My mirror tells me that I still have some pretensions to looks. Besides, being a widow is greatly to a woman's advantage. Why not sell in and catch some respectable elderly beau this Summer? It wouldn't be worth while to try to cut out my charges, which I am sure I could do easily enough! Their friends are mere toddlers and would bore me to extinction. But a good-hearted bachelor or a middle-aged widow, what suit my purpose admirably. I might put in a very agreeable season myself, and if I had some one to keep me company the chaperon business would not be so unbearable. It is an inspiration. I shall follow it up. What a surprise for the girls to see

the griffin sitting out dances with a beaming smile on her face and urging them to stay a little longer! Then of disappearing herself into dark corners and getting lost behind tall shrubs in conservatories! It would be a fine turning of tables, and I can picture their amazement. Their giggles might be stifled for once. I have heard of chaperons doing such things before now. Maud had a friend, Janet Somebody, who fairly doted on her chaperon and begged to have her with her on all occasions. Then it turned out that the chaperon had a best young man of her own and disappeared with him regularly the moment the girl took her eye off her, never showing up until the band played "Home, Sweet Home." On yachting parties it was the girl who was ill and the chaperon had all the men aboard about her, entertaining them with lively stories and banjo playing. The blight of chaperonage never fell upon her, and she thought it the most delightful occupation in the world. But she lost her profession, for she eloped with the fiance of her protegee and has done no chaperoning since. Why shouldn't I follow her example? It is certainly better than the dismal life I've been leading. I will try myself out with Summer girls and see how they like to have a little—what a little—is perfectly permissible nowadays—and shall be the gidgeest

chaperon imaginable. The girls themselves won't be giddy. They may even take a leaf out of my book. So goodbye to the dreignity of chaperoning. I believe I was considered something of a flirt in my young days. I shall brush up the art and if I don't make those giggling girls sit up! They won't get the back seat ahead of me, and as for the rocks—other people know where to find cozy corners as well as they. If they think they are going to monopolize the moonlight they are mistaken. I propose to have my rightful share of it on a sequestered corner of the porch and an occasional glance in their direction is about all I can waste on them. With agreeable company under my umbrella

hoplessly handicapped. But I firmly believe that the vast majority of people of your great middle class are instinctively honest. I believe that a large percentage of those who have reaped the most benefit from the reign of dishonesty are ready to move for its overthrow. I believe that it is natural for the civilized man to do the right thing rather than the wrong thing." Pursuit of the Dollar. "It has frequently been charged," observed Jefferson, "that the besetting sin of the American people was their love for the almighty dollar. They have been pictured as engaged in a wild race for it, a scramble for its possession, and a mania for its amassing. All races, all continents must have an end, and as I study this country, its wealth and its people I should say that the pursuit of the dollar is at its final stage. The dollar has been run down. It needs no compilation of statistics to prove that an insignificant percentage of your people have gained possession of an overwhelming percentage of your property. During all these years it has been possible to persuade the masses that despite a disparity in the holdings of wealth this was still a republic of equal opportunity. The boy was told that the dollar was still uncaught, and that he could enter the race with as good a chance as anybody. You find it difficult to make your boys believe that now, do you not? "We teach it to them in our public schools," said Brown, "but I find that my boy does not believe it as implicitly as I did." "If your churches and your intelligent middle class begin a crusade against what has been termed 'tainted money,'" continued Jefferson, "it will be a declaration of revolt against the system which has piled up the Rockefeller and other fortunes. It is the protest of the bankrupt player who finds himself unable to compete against marked cards." "What good will his protest do so long as the other fellow holds the winnings?" asked Brown. "There have been instances, personal and national," smiled Jefferson, "where the unfair winner was compelled to disgorge." Copyright, 1905, McClure, Phillips & Co. Two Cases Widely Different. Cleveland Leader. "Why do you have your paw so near the church door?" "In case of fire, you know, I could escape easily." "Ah! And what's your idea in always demanding a seat in the front row at the theater?" Almost Reconciled. Philadelphia Ledger. Mrs. Jinks—And how is that pretty young widow? Is she reconciled to her loss yet? Mrs. O'Ball—Well, she ain't smartly reconciled yet, but they say she has the man picked out.

The Shades Discuss "Tainted Money"

WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON AND SAMUEL ADAMS HAVE DECIDED VIEWS ON AN INTERESTING POPULAR TOPIC

BY FREDERICK UPHAM ADAMS. Author of "John Bull" and "The Kidnaped Millionaire."

Introduction.—The shades of Washington, Jefferson and Samuel Adams have returned to the country they helped to establish. Late at night they held the library room of Smith, an author, and find him in conversation with his friend Brown. A number of conferences since, after which the Shades depart on a tour of the country and make study of the conditions. They are again visiting Smith and Brown, when the following discussion takes place.

"HAVE you kept track of all this talk about 'tainted money'?" asked Brown, addressing me distinctly. "I have," I replied, "and I have been gushed guests, after an interval of silence. Without waiting for a reply, Brown launched into a tirade in which he said: "We have reached an intellectual stage in this country when the only subjects of popular interest are crimes, scandals and the sayings and doings of our ultra-rich. We would ignore the writings of a new Shakespeare or a Goldsmith in order to devour pages about the vulgar display at a moneyed wedding. For the same reason we become much excited when it is hinted that the money of a Rockefeller should not be used for religious purposes. When the gentleman whose gift is thus scrutinized deigned to take notice of the attempted rebuff the matter became a National issue. "It matters little how issues are raised," remarked Jefferson, "so long as they are forced on the attention of the more intelligent section of a people. The arrival of a cargo of tea in Boston harbor was the incident which caused the American people to seriously consider the question of their independence. The hanging of John Brown served the same purpose when the issue of slavery could no longer be ignored. Since that time no moral question has assumed National importance. Unless the signs are misleading, the Rockefeller incident may precipitate an issue which will effect another revolution."

Washington, rather than the acts of a corporation with which he is identified. Despite all the charges made and the agitation in consequence of the incident, the money was accepted, as it should have been. In my opinion this is the end of the matter."

Great Question to the Fore. "You are in error, Mr. Smith," deliberately asserted Samuel Adams. "On the contrary, it is the beginning of a very important matter. A great moral question has been pressed to the fore, the first one, as Mr. Jefferson has said, since the perpetuation of slavery was disputed. You are about to draw the line between honest and dishonest wealth, or rather, between the honest and dishonest holders of wealth. You are about to challenge laws, conditions and institutions which have placed a premium on dishonesty. You are about to coin a new proverb: 'It will take money some time to live down its past. I must confess that I would rather associate with tainted money than be forced to abide by tainted laws, tainted judicial decisions, also to listen to the platitudes and hypocrites of tainted patriotism.'"

"My friend Brown is an incorrigible radical," I said, turning to Washington, "and you must not take his statements too seriously. I incline to the conservative side of all questions, and therefore should have taken notice of your views, General Washington." I have neglected to explain that on the occasion of this visit these three illustrious shades seemed younger than when they first started by entering my room. I believe it is the rule that one pictures the departed, by their relatives or famous characters, by their appearance during their last days on this earth. Thus we people the hereafter with a large proportion of aged and infirm spirits. Whether or not we are justified in this assumption I do not know, and a consideration of it is foreign to a record of these strange happenings, but I do know that the shades of Washington, Jefferson and Samuel Adams appeared to me in the full prime and vigor of their years. I cannot account for this, but as has been said before, it is difficult to account for anything. Thus it was that the Washington who answered my question seemed the vigorous, courageous yet cautious Washington who risked his life and fortune in the

War of the Revolution, rather than the venerable patriot who spent his declining years in a study of the Constitution. Jefferson was that of the ambitious and aggressive man who relinquished diplomatic duties in France for the purpose of entering on a gigantic struggle with Alexander Hamilton. The Samuel Adams was the one who addressed the incipient revolution in Old South Church on the night when the tea was cast into the Boston Bay, and not the venerable patriot stricken with disease and sorrow.

Washington Not Conservative. Possibly they spoke to us as they would have done in the more virile years when they were conspicuous for action rather than for counsel. This is a mere conjecture of mine, and is suggested by the rather singular and aggressive answer made by Washington in reply to my request for his views as a conservative. "I discern an inclination," he said, with some emphasis, "on the part of many of our writers, speakers and molders of public opinion to confuse conservatism with cowardice. They pay me the supposed compliment of extolling me as a conservative character, and with my words and acts as an alleged premise proceed to justify conditions, defend abuses and extenuate errors which would have had my unhesitating condemnation. If the English language means now what it did then, the present generation is taught to regard me as a worshiper of precedent, a resister of innovations, a stickler for all that called itself law, a champion of material interests, one who frowned at all undemonstrated theories and was the exaltation of the matter-of-fact, the practical—to use your modern phrase, safe and sane. Such is the present political meaning of a 'conservative' in this country, and I resent the coupling of my name with that word."

I beg your pardon, General Washington, I exclaimed, amazed at his evident anger and uneasy under the stern glance of his eyes, "and plead as my excuse that I have been educated to class you as a conservative." A Constructive Radical. "After having read your school books and popular histories I can fully understand how you have fallen into such an error," he said in softened manner. "We had a conservative class with us, and their active and passive opposition to independence dragged the war out to seven years instead of less than that number of months. We called them Tories. They

were in favor of the British monarchy because it had been established before the case was hopeless. There is no doubt that the average man evades his tax if he can, and as a rule he does not hesitate to commit perjury. This is not because this average man is inherently dishonest. Your laws and your institutions have encouraged dishonesty until it has become not only inevitable, but popular and fashionable. Unless a capitalist or a merchant hides his property or makes false returns his income is seriously crippled. He cannot afford to be honest. If he desires the passage of a perfectly fair law at the hands of the Legislature or his Board of Aldermen he must pay for it. For more than half a century you have fostered dishonesty until it has permeated every institution in your country. Business, commerce, manufacturing, trade unionism, politics and even religion have become games in which it is deemed fair to cheat.

The Average Citizen Honest. "But I firmly believe that most of the participants in these games would rather change the rules and play fair. If present conditions are to continue the churches may as well close their doors for all the good they can do. You do not even make a pretense of punishing offenders against your written laws. Perjured tax-dodgers never dream of being called to account. Corporations appropriate money for the purposes of bribery, enter it upon their books and openly distribute it to legislators who have bribed voters for the chance to accept such plunder. But bear in mind that those engaged in these crimes constitute only a small proportion of your people. Your average citizen is honest. Yours—"

"In most instances the average citizen has no chance to be dishonest," interrupted Brown. "It makes no difference whether he is honest from choice or from lack of opportunity to be otherwise," responded Samuel Adams. "If naturally honest he is justly indignant at the abuses of which he is the constant victim. If he be honest from lack of opportunity he is ready to rebel against a system in which he is

can mention," began Brown, "declare against accepting contributions of 'tainted money' they will gather without salaries until they get new congregations. Their pews are filled with men who have committed perjury in order that they may receive their fair share of taxes. Men who have conspired at the bribing of Aldermen and Legislatures, men who have floated worthless stock issues, and men who have broken written and moral laws for the sake of pilging up money. There is not one man of great wealth in a hundred who can honestly plead not guilty to an indictment which taints his money. They draw dividends from stolen franchises, they benefit from purchased tariff rates, they have contributed to political corruption funds, and then their winning or their stealing, stealings to churches, charities and colleges. For every Rockefeller there are ten thousand frantic collectors of tainted money."

"You take too gloomy a view of things," Mr. Brown, said Samuel Adams. "Let us admit that all you say is true, and then see if the case is hopeless. There is no doubt that the average man evades his tax if he can, and as a rule he does not hesitate to commit perjury. This is not because this average man is inherently dishonest. Your laws and your institutions have encouraged dishonesty until it has become not only inevitable, but popular and fashionable. Unless a capitalist or a merchant hides his property or makes false returns his income is seriously crippled. He cannot afford to be honest. If he desires the passage of a perfectly fair law at the hands of the Legislature or his Board of Aldermen he must pay for it. For more than half a century you have fostered dishonesty until it has permeated every institution in your country. Business, commerce, manufacturing, trade unionism, politics and even religion have become games in which it is deemed fair to cheat."

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