

MY LADY OF DOUBT BY RANDALL PARRISH

A romance of the Revolution with hero and heroine brought together in a series of nerve-racking adventures threaded on a mystery that deepens with every chapter.

CHAPTER I. A Perilous Mission.

SEVERAL of us had remained rather late that evening about the cheerful fire in front of my hut...

It must have been midnight when I crept into a bunk, and even then I found sleep absent, my eyes gazing out through the open door...

"Yes, What is it?" I swung to the floor, unable to recognize the voice. The man's hand rose to salute. "I am Col. Gibbs's orderly, Gen. Hamilton wishes you to report at once at headquarters."

Washington's eyes were upon the door until it closed; then he turned slightly, facing me. Before he spoke again, Hamilton broke in:

"This is the officer, sir, recommended by Gen. Maxwell—Major Lawrence of the Maryland Line."

"I bowed silently, and the Commander rose to his feet, extending his hand."

"Lawrence is a Massachusetts name." "Not exclusively," I returned, "as our branch are Virginians."

"Indeed; from the eastern shore then. I recall now having once met a Judge John Lawrence, whose wife was a Lee."

"My father, sir." "His hand rested firm on my shoulder, as his glance turned to Hamilton."

"I require no further commendation, Colonel. You will find the papers in the second drawer. Please explain all the details carefully to Major Lawrence."

"He bowed toward me, and sank back once more into his chair, one hand shading the eyes that still regarded us. Hamilton opened the drawer designated, extracted an official document, and addressed me rapidly in lowered voice."

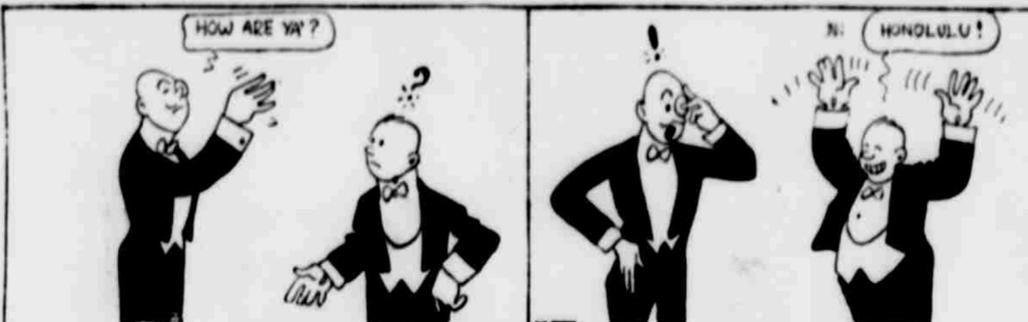
"This is a simple duty, Major, but you have been selected because of previous successful efforts of a similar nature, but the Commander-in-Chief does not order your going; we seek a volunteer."

"Without asking the nature of the service," I answered sincerely, "I rejoice at the privilege."

"I knew that, Lawrence," he heartily, "That answer accords with your well earned reputation throughout the army. I will explain briefly the situation. Early this evening our pickets were caught near and captured a British officer, in field uniform, on his way from New York to Sir William Howe in Philadelphia. The prisoner was brought here, and an examination proved to be Lieut. Edgar Fortesque of the Forty-second Regiment of Foot. These troops came over with the last detachment and arrived in New York less than a month ago. On searching Fortesque's clothing we found this despatch, holding out the sealed paper, which we opened. It is not of any great military importance, being merely an order for Howe to proceed at once to New York, taking with him certain vessels at his disposal and placing a naval vessel at his disposal."

"He paused, turning the paper over in his hands. "However," he went on slowly, "it affords us an opportunity we have long been seeking of getting a competent military observer into Philadelphia. Now that Sir Henry Clinton is in command of the British forces directly opposing us, it is necessary that we know accurately their number, state of discipline, guns, and any point of weakness in the defenses of the city. We require also information regarding the division of troops under Sir Henry's command—the proportion of British, Hessians,

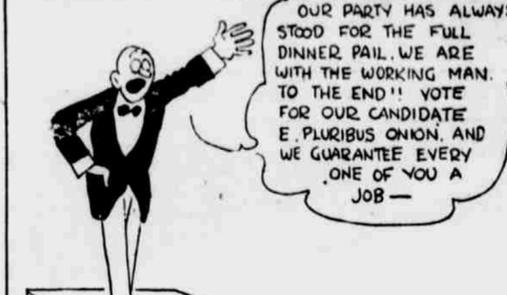
Life's Little "Ifs" By Jack Callahan



JACK WOULD HAVE MADE GOOD IN SOCIETY



RALPH WOULD HAVE RECOVERED HIS HEALTH BY FOLLOWING THE DOCTOR'S ORDERS



BILLY BLOWUP WAS SOME STUMP SPEAKER AND HIS ELOQUENT WORDS WOULD HAVE IMPRESSED HIS ENTIRE AUDIENCE.



IF HE HADN'T MISTAKEN A GENTLEMAN'S HAND SHAKE FOR A LODGE SIGN -



IF - HE HAD ONLY UNDERSTOOD THEM!



IF HE (THE AUDIENCE) HADN'T BEEN SUCH A HOPELESS LOW BROW!!

ter mess here with my staff, Mabry, turning to the aide, "see that Lieut. Fortesque has breakfast and procure him a pass good indefinitely within our lines. You will pardon my withdrawal, as the officers of the garrison promise me an exceedingly busy day. We will meet again, no doubt."

CHAPTER III. The Fete of the Afternoon.

I CONFESS that up to this time I had experienced little interest in the affair. But now I dared not remain indifferent, and in enthusiasm of my companions became contagious, and I joined with them eagerly as they hurried forth to the best point of view. Once there the sight revealed aroused me to an enthusiasm scarcely less than that of those crowding about."

Well out in the stream lay the vessels of war—the Fanny, Roebuck and Vigilant—together with a long line of transports stretching as far as the eye could see, flags flying and decks crowded with spectators. At the foremost of the Roebuck fluttered the Admiral's flag, and the shore line was jammed with soldiery, the varied uniforms a maze of colors. The pagoda came down with the tide, moving in three divisions to the inspiring music of several bands, the oars of galleys and barges keeping exact intervals. These were decked out with all manner of colors and streamers, and above fluttered the division flag. Six barges, darting here and there, kept open space amid the swarms of small boats. Everywhere the eye swept over a riot of color, and the ear caught a babel of sound. As the last barge glided by, the man next me growled in disgust:

"Those are lucky dogs off duty today."

"Why?" His eye caught mine. "Why don't you go after them, Fortesque? There will be plenty of fun afoot yonder where they land." "Where is that?" "At the old fort; follow the crowd and you'll not go astray. Have you a ticket?" "Capt. Andre honored me with one this morning."

"Then you are good for the first row. Don't miss it, man," with enthusiasm, "I'll give such a sight as has not been witnessed since the Field of the Cloth of Gold."

allenge. As if they fought well that day, those White and Black Knights, on the mimic field, first charging together, shivering their spears; the second and third encounters discharging pistols; and in the fourth attacking with swords in most gallant combat. At last the two chiefs—Lord Cathcart for the Whites, and Capt. Watson of the guards for the Blacks—were alone contending furiously, when the marshal of the field rushed in between and struck up their weapons, declaring the contest done, the honor of each side proven. As the company broke up, flowing forward to the great house beyond, the vast crowd of onlookers burst through the guard lines, and like a mighty torrent swept over the field. It was a wild, jubilant, yelling mass, so dense as to be irresistible, even those of us on horseback being pressed forward, helpless obits on the stream."

I endeavored to press back, but my roeving animal, started by the dig of the spur, the yelling, the waving of arms, refused to face the tumult, and whirled about for a moment. I all but lost control, yet even as he plunged rearing into the air, I saw before me the appealing face of a woman, lovely and slender, and the air parted, and how she had become separated from her party had never been made clear. But this I saw, even as I struggled with the hard-mouthed brute under me—a slender, girlish figure, flowing and lady of the Blended Rose, a white, frightened face, arms outstretched, and dark blue eyes beseeching help."

In another moment she would be underfoot or hurled into the air. Reckless of all else I dug in my spurs, yelling to the Light Dragoon beside me, even as my horse leaped, I felt the cruel, cold hand gripped my legs; soldiers were hurried left and left, cursing as they fell. I must have hurt some, but had no thought except to reach her, or how it was accomplished—only I had the reins gripped in my teeth, both hands free. That instant I caught her; the next she was in my arms, swaying safely to the saddle, held to me with a grip of steel, the animal dashing forward beneath his double burden into the open field. The Dragoon, rising hardly, gripped the bit and the affair was over, although we must have galloped a hundred yards before the horse was brought to a stand. Leaving him to the control of the soldier, I sprang to the ground, bearing the lady with me. We were behind one of the pavilions, facing the house, and she reeled as her feet touched the earth, so that I held her from falling. Then her lashes lifted, and the dark-blue eyes looked into my face."

"You must pardon my roughness," I apologized, "but there was no time for ceremony."

She smiled, a flood of color coming back into her cheeks, as she drew slightly away. "I appreciate that, sir," frankly, shaking out her ruffled skirts, "and you have made knightly real."

"Then," I ventured, "may I hope to receive the reward, fair lady?" She laughed, a little tremor of nervousness in the sound, but her eyes full of challenge.

"And what is that?" "Your name; the hope of better acquaintance."

Her eyes swept my uniform questioningly. "You are not a member of the garrison?" "No, a visitor just arrived from New York."

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CHAPTER V. The Beginning of Trouble.

ER hand was in mine, my arm already around her waist, when the officer bowed before us. He had been but a dim figure in the afternoon, but now I saw him for a tall, slender man, somewhat of a face, with black hair and mustache, a keen eye, attired in the green and white of the Queen's Rangers. He smiled, but with a sarcastic curl to the upper lip not altogether pleasant."

"Your pardon, Mistress Claire," he said boldly, "you accept my surrender quickly, sir—I am not sure but this was Capt. Grant's dance, and he is coming now."

"By mistake, Captain," her lips smiling, her eyes steady. "It seems I had overlooked a promise made during the afternoon."

"Oh, indeed?" he turned toward me, staring insolently. "The hero of the rescue, I presume."

"This is the gentleman who protected me from the mob, if that be what you mean. Presently, I present Capt. Grant of the Queen's Rangers, Lieutenant—pardon my having already forgotten your name."

"Fortesque," I stammered, intensely hating the necessary deception. "Ah, yes—Lieutenant Fortesque of the Forty-second British Foot."

"We bowed silently, neither extending a hand, the man in twisting his mustache as he continued staring at me."

"Fortesque," he repeated slowly, "Fortesque; not of this garrison, I believe."

"No, from New York," coolly, "I regret having interfered with your programme."

"Don't mention it; there are other gallant acts was worthy the reward; a pleasant evening, sir," and he drew aside, stiffly military. Eager to lose as little as possible of the measure I swung my partner forward, catching glimpse again of the man's face as we closed.

"Pleasant disposition," I ventured, without meaning to be uncivil. "Oh, very," and her eyes met mine frankly. "But you must not quarrel with him; that is his one speciality, you know."

"I have little use for any man who swaggers about seeking trouble," I returned, as she insisted. "It has been my experience that there is usually cowardice back of such a disposition."

"In this case," earnestly, "Capt. Grant's courage has been sufficiently tested already. I warn you not to presume on your theory so far as he is concerned. I advise the safer course."

"What is that?" "Her eyes met mine, smiling slightly, and yet grave enough in their depths."

"To let this one dance prove sufficient reward for your act of rescue."

"You request this?" "Her lashes lifted, and then fell before my gaze."

"I must ask to be excused from discussing this matter further now, but—but her voice trembled to a whisper, "I—I am sure your safety depends upon your leaving me."

"Astounded by these words, suddenly wondering if she suspected me, scarcely comprehending what she meant, I stared into her face, as we circled the room."

"Lean your head just a little closer," she said, "I—I know you, Major Lawrence, and—and I wish you well."

(To Be Continued)