

Henry? She would count upon the awful warning filtering through Mary's own family? Mary would be able to give her lover the truthful account of everything that had happened at the railway station before any scandal mongers interposed.

She began the letter. "My Dearest Henry! Thank you so much for sending 'Trends of Mind' for me to read on the journey down. It was thoughtful of you. We will discuss it when I see you in the Christmas holidays; so much more satisfactory to talk things than to write them, don't you think? By the way, the most absurd little incident happened just as I was starting off—"

Here she put down her pen and laughed lightheartedly. She was writing in the drawing room and had not noticed that the elder Homeleigh-Browne girl was sitting writing out ball programs on the window seat. This other engaged girl now looked up and smiled at her. "What are you laughing at, Mary?"

"O, my dear, how you made me jump! I was laughing at something I've got to tell my young man," explained Mary, blushing in that new and becoming way. "I—er—I expect you've heard what it is from Cousin Elizabeth."

"You mean that awful scandal about the affectionate stranger who saw you off?" I should think we had all heard of it. Priceless! Do tell me what you're going to tell your schoolmaster young man."

"Why, the truth," said Mary, "as I told Cousin Elizabeth, only she doesn't believe it."

"Do you mean to say that you think that your fiancé will believe it?"

Mary looked up, wild-eyed. "But—do you mean to say that you don't?"

Slight pause; then, "I believe it now. I can see by your face. But, you know, Mary, men don't see things as we do; that's why they don't always believe the same things."

"But, my dear," faltered Mary, with a sinking heart, "if I write everything in full detail to Henry—"

"Don't write. Always a mistake. If you have got to confess anything, it is much easier by word of mouth."

"But that means letting him hear through other people, perhaps. O, why was Cousin Elizabeth ever born? That means waiting until—"

"It doesn't. I'll let you into a secret a week old," said the other engaged girl. "We've asked Henry to this dance tonight. He's got to leave for the week-end. He's coming by the 4:45."

"Henry?" exclaimed Henry's fiancée in delight. "He's coming?" She was overjoyed. She was eager for Henry to see her in such good looks (she knew she was in good looks as never before). It seemed ages since she had seen her own lover. It would be wonderful to dance with him. And—this was a new thought to Mary who had always been rather too sensible and quiet for such ideas—it would be still more wonderful to be kissed by him again. She, who had never been one of those girls who are positively fond of kissing, actually wished for that!

The other engaged girl went on talking about the party there would be: "The boys, my young man, yours, the boys' Air Force friends. O, look out of the window Mary! One of them is turning in at the lodge gates now."

Mary thought, "Here's Henry." But the maid announced, "Capt. Prince."

Enter—the young man who had kissed Mary in the train.

Followed by a bad quarter of an hour; hectic prattle about Capt. Prince's motor run down to this place over swirling undercurrents of embarrassment. Instantly he had recognized Mary; she him. Girl-like Miss Homeleigh-Browne had leaped to the right conclusion, guided thereto by the look upon their faces.

Nothing was said. The others came in to tea, the Homeleigh-Browne boys escorting Mary's fiancé from the train.

What Mary went through in 10 minutes of that tea time aged her, she felt, by at least 10 years. It also beautified her, adding the sparkle of tension to her eyes and keeping that lovely, fluctuating color blazing up and down her cheeks.

"You are looking extraordinarily well for your change into the country," said her fiancé's voice, sedately approving.

Mary felt, rather than saw, that his approval was echoed by the eyes of all the other men there. Especially by the handsome eyes of that young man who had come on the motorcycle. Was it possible? Yes, he did; yes, he thought her lovely. As for young Homeleigh-Browne, he made no secret of what he thought of Mary now she'd come to life!

But what is the use of coming to life when there is some one staying in the house who makes it clear that what you deserve is to be put to death?

Cousin Elizabeth entered, in fact, at that moment. Desperately Mary had not hoped that when the young airman was introduced to her cousin Elizabeth would think that this Captain Prince was some one she had not met before.

Vain hope. By the icy bow and the polar atmosphere that spread around the room Mary realized that the scandalous one had been recognized.

All this undercurrent, you understand, surged below ripples of polite afternoon tea conversation appropriate to any country house party on the afternoon before any dance. Further, Mary became in some curious way conscious that two of the young men, not only one but two of them, were impatiently waiting for the opportunity to talk to her alone. One, of course, was her legitimate fiancé. Natural enough! The other was the eccentric airman, Captain Prince.

Also, perhaps, natural enough. Obviously he must explain to this girl that he had ophthalmia or night blindness or myopia, which caused him to take her for somebody else.

At last she found herself with Henry.

They went into the appropriate rose garden pursued by a glance from Cousin Elizabeth which was the equivalent of a hope that now Mary meant to confess her awful crime.

In the rose garden it was Henry who had the most to say.

Having kissed his betrothed's flushed cheek and told her once more that she was looking well, he began to ask her opinion on the book he had sent her which, of course, was in the circumstances an unfortunate opening. (She hadn't read a word of it.)

It dashed Mary's spirits. Then he told her about the offer he'd received of a better post, which meant that they would get married much sooner than had been anticipated. Curious! This, too, did not elate Mary as might have been expected. She thought to herself, "Something's making me feel wretched. Cousin Elizabeth, of course, would say it was a guilty conscience, but I feel just as if something most depressing had happened." She hadn't realized what it was when the dressing gong thundered out from the house.

"We must fly," exclaimed Mary. Midway on their flight to the house they encountered the young airman bent on some errand to the motor bicycle.

Without preamble he said to Mary, "Can you spare me some dances?"

"Yes," said Mary. (Well, she couldn't very well say no, could she?)

"Will you give me three and nine to start with, then?"

Again she could show absolutely no reason for refusal.

As they turned into the house her fiancé said, "Have you ever met that fellow before?"

"Once," faltered Mary, and fled upstairs, for she saw Cousin Elizabeth looming in the hall.

In her room it suddenly occurred to Mary why she had felt wretched in the rose garden.

After all, she hadn't liked it when Henry kissed her!

The quarrel—the first quarrel she'd ever had with her Henry—took place at the beginning of the dance, during numbers one and two, which, of course, she'd booked with him.

Now the two first items on a program are usually peaceful if not slow; people haven't got worked up.

Mr. Ferguson, however, had. He wouldn't dance. With a look of purpose he led his Mary to a secluded stairway corner, and, sitting out there, he made a row royal.

Immediately he demanded to know what she meant by her behavior; then, without waiting for the girl to reply to this question, he supplied the answer. He supplied the truly terrible fancy picture of Mary's character; hypocrisy, duplicity being the keywords. She, whom he had always considered so different from the jazz girl, the modern hussy who has no charm or reverence or modesty—she was just like them all. Only far, far worse, because she pretended to be different, and they didn't. At last she was sailing under her true colors!

Here he gave a searing glance at her frock—the one lent by Miss Homeleigh-Browne. It was a darling little gown of flaring tangerine color; glowing, passionate. Never before had Mary worn any color but washy pink or subdued sage blue. This vibrant orange made another creature of her.

At last, said Mr. Ferguson, he saw her as she was. Her own cousin had let him know the whole story

of Mary's disgraceful behavior at Paddington.

"Yes, I wish to explain about that," Mary put in.

Useless. Mr. Ferguson would let her explain nothing. He was well into his stride as a lecturer of little boys; he held forth to Mary as if she were some small defaulter in the lower third. He told her just how "thin" he thought her story about only having seen the young airman once before.

"But you can ask him," protested Mary, the pink flame in her cheeks just as vivid as the orange flame in her gown. "He will tell you."

"Yes, more variations on the same theme," retorted Mr. Ferguson bitterly.

"You mean you don't believe either of us?"

"Is it likely I should? I have your own cousin's word for the way in which you behaved at the station. I meet the young man himself staying in the house. Too much of a coincidence altogether. Then the change in you—in your dress, your manner, your appearance generally—"

—here another glance at Mary's quite lovely shoulders. Never before had she shown so much of them at any dance. Mr. Ferguson disapproved of every dimpled inch. He wound up with a curt, "Quite enough."

"More than enough," cried Mary flaming again. "You don't expect me, do you, to go on being engaged to a man who can't trust me?"

Henry Ferguson, who had been working up to the climax of saying, "You don't expect me, do you, to go on being engaged to a girl whom I cannot trust?" found the wind taken out of his sails. He could only hold out his hand to take the pearl ring which Mary, with an unmistakable gesture of finality, handed back to him, when a voice at the door said in a tone not to be denied, "Our dance, I believe!"

It was the airman. Mary rose and floated off with him, looking like a flame blown by the wind.

Three and nine were the dances for which she had been asked; actually the program showed something more like three to nineteen, and the extras. There was so much, so extraordinarily much to be said by both of them. Perhaps you think Captain Prince began by his apology and his explanation of the scene in the train? No, the first thing he said, was "Did my eyes deceive me or did I see you giving back a ring just now to that chap with glasses?"

"You did see me," admitted Mary, who indeed, could scarcely keep from laughter as they danced; "but what do you mean?"

"What do you mean by ever having been engaged to such a dud?"

By this time Mary herself wondered. I wasn't until number nine, after many other things had been said, that the audacious prince asked her if she had forgiven him yet for what happened the first time she saw him.

"I shall never forgive you," said Mary, with palpable insincerity.

"What a pity," returned the young man, perfectly unmoved. "You see unless I knew you I'd forgiven me, I couldn't explain to you what and how it happened."

"O, very well then," said Mary,

resigned. "I forgive you. Explain please."

And after all, the explanation seemed almost as impossible as the rest of the incident. "Why did I do it?" explained the airman. "Because I wanted to. I spotted you five minutes before getting your ticket for somewhere (never dreaming it was to here) and I thought 'What a dear little face! Only how sad; how easy to see that it has never been kissed.'"

"How easy to make mistakes you mean! I was engaged; I'd been engaged for two years."

"Well, doesn't it show that that didn't count? There are kisses that don't," he informed her. "They don't count any more than the wind blowing a dead leaf against your lips. They haven't. Have they?"

"Go on, please."

"This," went on the young man, "was when I'd gone to get my motor bicycle out of the Left Luggage office. Instead, I followed you to the train. I just wanted to see the last of a very taking 'asleep' little face."

"I'm not asleep."

"You aren't now. You were then. I saw you sitting at the carriage window, alone, as I thought, I thought, 'What a frightful shame! Nobody to see her off! Never has been any one to her off yet; quite possibly never will be any one in our moth-eaten state of civilization, when we all behave so circumspectly.' I thought, 'What a miserable world when a girl like that can be left to pine away unloved until she's 50, perhaps! I shall never see the little thing again,' thought I. Pity I can't give her one really decent kiss and wish her luck for a send-off! Can't do her any harm, just for once in her life, so here goes!—and there went."

"With a vengeance!" exclaimed Mary, indignantly (though she realized that the indignation was a little late). "As for 'no harm being done,' can't you see that you've completely wrecked my reputation for being a nice, quiet, sensible girl? You've given Cousin Elizabeth a stick to beat me with for the rest of my life. You've crashed my engagement—"

"To a dud; and I've shown you what being engaged really means. Yes! Don't be silly, darling," this child of impulse stifled Mary's protests. "Of course we're engaged. What else is there to be done? We shall never get anybody (except our mothers) to believe this wild legend of our not having met before. Consequently we may as well fall in with theirs; that we've known each other sweetly for ages. Perhaps we have, sweetheart. Anyhow, there's going to be another existence for us from tonight on," and he slipped his arm ingratiatingly about her shoulder, "a pretty different one. For the sake of appearances—"

"Yes. Do let's study those." Mary begged him, with a last attempt at satire.

"For the sake of appearance we won't give it out officially until—whatever the usual time may be. Unofficially, and in your ear"—which was already close against his lips—"I intend to take my answer here and now."

As I said, this story begins with a kiss. It also ends with one. Or, rather, with a great many.

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## The Magnificent Philanthropist

By Mary Day Winn

It's Surprising the Amount of Trouble That May Follow the Gift of \$200 from a Munificent but Absolute Stranger.

The telephone on the desk of the police station rang sharply; Kerrigan picked up the receiver with a scowl:

"Hello!"

"Hello! Long distance calling New York police."

"That's me; fire away."

"This is the Hillcrest Sanitarium at Rye, a private insane asylum. Tell your men to be on the lookout for an escaped lunatic headed your way. He knocked down a clerk in our office, picked up all the spare cash in the drawer, and got away."

"Huh?" grunted the desk sergeant in an aside to Morely, his clerk, covering the mouthpiece with his hand. "He says a lunatic picked up all the asylum's cash and got away." Then to the telephone again: "What does he look like?"

"Young man; well dressed; gray suit; straw hat; blue eyes; brown hair; he thinks he's Andrew Carnegie and is always trying to give away money. Gets violent if you refuse to take it. Notify us as soon as you catch him, and we'll send a man down to get him."

Kerrigan was hastily scribbling the description on a pad. "Has he any other marks of identification?" he asked. "Hello! Hello! . . . O, hell, he's rung off. Now, isn't that a description for you?" handing the note he had taken to Morely. "Well dressed; gray suit; straw hat! I wonder just how many thousands of

men there are in this little town who would answer to these points?"

"Well," drawled the clerk, "you could count on the fingers of an armless veteran the men of this 'erle' city who could pose for the last part of that pen portrait: 'Always trying to give away money and gets violent when you refuse to take it.' I wish he'd try some of his insanity on me. I wouldn't give him any cause to get violent."

His superior smiled appreciatively.

"Well, forget your grouch for a while and send out this alarm to the other stations, with the description—such as it is. Tell them to keep an extra sharp lookout in the neighborhoods of the Grand Central and the Pennsylvania. He may come in at one and go out at another. It'll be easy for him to catch a train and get out in a hurry if he gets a good start of them, and they'll have a chase before they catch him." Then a self-congratulatory smile spread over his face. "But he'll have to be pretty smart to get past our net, eh, Morley?"

A good many miles from the scene of this conversation Jerry Arth was engaged in performing the last solemn rites of his bachelor days. No, he was not burning old love letters; he was throwing away old clothes. When he had gathered together all the possessions worthy of his married life he took them to

the shining little cottage to which he was planning to bring his bride on the following day. These personal belongings were, exclusive of his trousseau, a rather pitiful collection: a private's uniform, kit bag and canteen; a battered silver mug; a fishing line and tackle; faded photographs of his long-dead parents and a snapshot of Amalie; a package of letters from Amalie, bound together with a shoestring; and a dusty china doll, dressed in faded crepe paper and mounted on a long stick. This last was a dance favor which had been given him by a pretty coquette in a Parisian restaurant when, one night on furlough, he and two of his buddies had gone the rounds. Jerry cherished this senseless toy because its possession set him apart as a "gay dog," and he had always hoped for some opportunity to say carelessly, in coming across it, "Golly, I thought I'd thrown that old thing away ages ago! Devilishly pretty girl gave it to me one night in a restaurant in Paris."

He slept that night in the cottage and was up the next morning before the milkman. Jerry shaved, this day of days, with particular care, anointing his plain, but rather likable face with cold cream, talcum powder and toilet water, an unusual procedure with him, but one that he felt the occasion demanded. Then his new gray suit came in for a careful brushing, and several seconds were devoted to adjusting a silk handkerchief in his coat pocket so that just the right amount of purple border would show.

Then the house must undergo its 20th tour of satisfied inspection. It was the realization of many months of dreaming, planning, and hard work, and Jerry was very proud of it. Finally, after one last look around, he locked the front door behind him and set off to meet his bride, as happy and as agitated as the surface of a bucket of boiling water. He caught the train and settled back to two hours of blissful dreaming, enjoying, in anticipation, the long planned-for meeting. He had fallen a victim to the lure of the little French girl's helpless femininity when his regiment had been stationed in her village, but he had not been able to persuade her to come to him until the rheumatic old grandmother, whose only relative she was, had died. But now Amalie was on her way.

Today her boat would reach Philadelphia, where a friend of Jerry's would meet her and put her safely on the train for New York. When she arrived, helpless and alone, in the ordered confusion of the Pennsylvania station, Jerry would be there. Thinking of this moment, he stared through the window with unseeing eyes.

Suddenly his reverie was interrupted; a politely modulated voice at his elbow was saying, "Pardon me, but is this seat taken?"

"Huh? O, no." Jerry came back reluctantly from his dream and moved over to make way for a well-dressed young man with brown hair and pleasant blue eyes. The stranger removed his straw hat and wiped his moist forehead. Although he

showed in his flushed face and slightly disheveled hair signs of having hurried, there was about him, somehow, an air of the most perfect composure. Finally he replaced his hat and sat regarding the other passengers with an air of benevolent interest. For a few moments they rode on in silence; Jerry looked him over covertly out of the corner of his eye.

"Wonder what he'd think," he mused, "if he knew that the fellow next to him was on his way to be married?"

As the train passed through Larchmont they could see through the window an imposing brick building. The stranger smiled pleasantly and pointed to it. "Fine library, isn't it?" he said.

"It sure is."

"Yes, I like it. I gave it to the town. I've given libraries to most of these towns around here."

The bridegroom's eyes opened wide. "You don't say so?"

"O, yes. That is nothing." Then, with an obvious attempt to be sociable: "Running down to the city on business or getting off in one of these towns."

"O . . . ur—going to the city," stammered Jerry; and then, impulsively, "I'm on my way now—to be married. Don't you think I look like a happy groom?"

The stranger turned to him quickly, his face alight with interest. "That's fine!" he exclaimed. "I congratulate you. Are you meeting your bride in New York?"

"Yes, she came in on the 1 o'clock train at the Pennsylvania station." (Continued on Page Seven.)