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# The Mystery of Mary

He let himself silently into the house with his latch-key, and tip-toed up to his room. The light was burning low. He put the hat-box in the farthest corner of his closet, then he took out the rain-coat, and slipping off his shoes, went softly down to the hall closet.

In utter darkness he felt around and finally hung the coat on a hook under another long cloak, then gently released the hanging loop and let the garment slip softly down in an inconspicuous heap on the floor. He stole upstairs as guiltily as if he had been a naughty boy stealing sugar. When he reached his room, he turned up his light, and, pulling out the hat-box, surveyed it thoughtfully. This was a problem which he had not yet been able to solve. How should he dispose of the hat so that it would be discovered in such a way as to cast no further suspicion upon the maid?

He took the hat out and held it in his hand, looking at it from different angles and trying to remember just how the girl had looked out at him from under its drooping plumes. Then with a sigh he laid it carefully in its box again and went to bed. The morning brought clearer thought, and when the summons to breakfast pealed through the hall he took the box boldly in his hand and descended to the dining-room, where he presented the hat to his astonished sister.

"I am afraid I am the criminal, Cornelia," he said in his pleasantest manner. "I'm sorry I can't explain just how this thing got on my closet-shelf. I must have put it there myself through some unaccountable mix-up. It's too bad I couldn't have found it before and so saved you a lot of worry. But you are one hat the richer for it, for I paid the bill yesterday. Please accept it with my compliments." Cornelia exclaimed with delight over the recovered hat.

"But how in the world could it have got into your closet, Tryon? It was impossible. I left it in my room, I know I did, for I spoke to Norah about it before I left. How do you account for it?"

"Oh, I don't attempt to account for it," he said, with a gay wave of his hand. "I've been so taken up with other things this past week, I may have done almost anything. By the way, Mother, I'm sure you'll be glad to hear that Judge Blackwell has made me a most generous offer of business relations, and that I have decided to accept it."

Amid the exclamations of delight over this bit of news, the hat was forgotten for a time, and when the mother and sister finally reverted to it and began to discuss how it could have gotten on the closet shelf, he broke in upon their questions with a suggestion.

"I should advise, Mother, that you make a thorough search for your rain-coat. I am sure now that you must have overlooked it. Such things often happen. We were so excited the morning Cornelia missed the hat that I suppose no one looked thoroughly." "But that is impossible, Tryon," said his mother, with dignity. "I had that closet searched most carefully."

"Nevertheless, Mother, please me by looking again. That closet is dark, and I would suggest a light."

He beat a hasty retreat, for he did not care to be present at the finding of the rain-coat.

"There is something strange about this," said Mrs. Dunham, as with ruffled dignity she emerged from the hall closet, holding her lost rain-coat at arm's length. "You don't suppose your brother could be playing some kind of a joke on us, do you, Cornie? - never did understand jokes."

"Of course not," said practical Cornelia, with a sniff. "It's my opinion that Norah knows all about the matter, and Tryon has been helping her out with a few suggestions."

"Now, Cornelia, what do you mean by that? You surely don't suppose your brother would try to deceive us—his mother and sister?"

"I didn't say that, Mother," answered Cornelia, with her head in the air. "You've got your rain-coat back, but you'd better watch the rest of your wardrobe. I don't intend to let Norah have free range in my room any more."

### CHAPTER VIII.

Meantime, the girl in Chicago was walking in a new and hard way. She brought to her task a disciplined mind, a fine artistic taste, a delicate but healthy body, and a pair of willing, if unskilled, hands. To her surprise, she discovered that the work for which she had so often lightly given orders was beyond her strength. As the weary days succeeded each other into weeks, she found that while her skill in table-setting and waiting was much prized, it was more than offset by her discrepancies in other lines, and so it came about that with mutual consent she and Mrs. Rhinehart parted company.

This time, with her reference, she did not find it so hard to get another place, and, after trying several, she learned to demand certain things, which put her finally into a home where her ability was appreciated,

and where she was not required to do things in which she was unskilled.

Then the son of the house came home from college in disgrace, and began to make violent love to her, until her case seemed almost desperate. She dreaded inexpressibly to make another change, for in some ways her work was not so hard as it had been in other places, and her wages were better; but from day to day she felt she could scarcely bear the hourly annoyances. The other servants, too, were not only utterly uncompanionable, but deeply jealous of her, resenting her gentle breeding, her careful speech, her dainty personality, her room to herself, her loyalty to her mistress.

Sometimes in the cold and darkness of the night-vigils she would remember the man who had helped her, who had promised to be her friend, and had begged her to let him know if she ever needed help. Her hungry heart cried out for sympathy and counsel. In her dreams she saw him coming to her across interminable plains, hastening with his kindly sympathy, but she always awoke before he reached her.

It was about this time that the firm of Blackwell, Hamyer & Dunham had a difficult case to work out which involved the gathering of evidence from Chicago and thereabouts, and it was with pleasure that Judge Blackwell accepted the eager proposal from the junior member of the firm that he should go out and attend to it.

As Tryon Dunham entered the sleep-er, and placed his suit-case beside him on the seat, he was reminded of the night when he had taken this train, with the girl who had come to occupy a great part of his thoughts in these days.

All during the journey he planned a campaign for finding her, until he came to know in his heart that this was the real mission for which he had come to Chicago, although he intended to perform the other business thoroughly and conscientiously.

Upon his arrival in Chicago, he inserted a number of advertisements in the daily papers, having laid various plans by which she might safely communicate with him without running the risk of detection by her enemy.

If M. R. is in Chicago, will she kindly communicate with T. Dunham, General Delivery? Important.

Mrs. Bowman's friend has something of importance to say to the lady who dined with her October 8th. Kindly send address to T. D., Box 7, Inter-Ocean office.

"Mary," let me know where and when I can speak with you about a matter of importance. Tryon D., Record-Herald B.

These and others appeared in the different papers, but when he began to get communications from all sorts of poor creatures, every one demanding money, and when he found himself running wild-goose chases after different Marys and M. R.s, he abandoned all hope of personal columns in the newspapers. Then he began a systematic search for music teachers and musicians, for it seemed to him that this would be her natural way of earning her living; if she was so hard-pressed that this was necessary.

It was the evening of the third day after his law work was finished that



A Short, Baggy Figure Shambling Along.

with a sad heart he went toward the hotel where he had been stopping. He was obliged at last to face the fact that his search had been in vain.

He had almost reached the hotel when he met a business acquaintance, who welcomed him warmly, for far and wide among legal men the firm of which Judge Blackwell was the senior member commanded respect.

"Well, well!" said the older man. "Is this you, Dunham? I thought you were booked for home two days ago. Suppose you come home to dinner with me. I've a matter I'd like to talk over with you before you leave. I shall count this a most fortunate meeting if you will."

Just because he caught at any straw to keep him longer in Chicago, Dunham accepted the invitation. Just as the cab door was flung open in front of the handsome house where he was to be a guest, two men passed slowly by, like shadows out of place, and there floated in his ears one sentence voiced in broadest Irish: "She goes by the name of Mary, ye says! All right, sorr. I'll keep a sharp look-out."

Tryon Dunham turned and caught a glimpse of silver changing hands. One man was slight and fashionably dressed, and the light that was cast from the neighboring window showed his face to be dark and handsome. The other was short and stout, and clad in a faded Prince Albert coat that bagged at shoulders and elbows. He wore rubbers over his shoes; and his footsteps sounded like those of a heavy dog. The two passed around the corner, and Dunham and his host entered the house.

They were presently seated at a well appointed table, where an elaborate dinner was served. The talk was of pleasant things that go to make up the world of refinement; but the mind of the guest was troubled, and constantly kept hearing that sentence, "She goes by the name of Mary."

Then, suddenly, he looked up and met her eyes!

She was standing just back of her mistress's chair, with quiet, watchful attitude, but her eyes had been unconsciously upon the guest, until he looked up and caught her glance.

She turned away, but the color rose in her cheeks, and she knew that he was watching her.

Her look had startled him. He had never thought of looking for her in a mental position, and at first he had noticed only the likeness to her for whom he was searching. But he watched her furtively, until he became more and more startled with the resemblance. At last he broke in upon the conversation:

"Excuse me, but I wonder if I may interrupt you for a moment. I have thought of something that I ought to attend to at once. I wonder if the waitress would be kind enough to send a 'phone message for me. I am afraid it will be too late if I wait."

"Why, certainly," said the host, all anxiety. "Would you like to go to the 'phone yourself, or can I attend to it for you? Just feel perfectly at home."

Already the young man was hastily writing a line or two on a card he had taken from his pocket, and he handed it to the waitress, who at his question had moved silently behind his chair to do his bidding.

"Just call up that number, please, and give the message below. They will understand, and then you will write down their answer!"

He handed her the pencil and turned again to his dessert. Apparently his entire attention was devoted to his host and his ice, but in reality he was listening to the click of the telephone and the low, gentle voice in an adjoining room. It came after only a moment's pause, and he wondered at the calmness with which the usual formula of the telephone was carried on. He could not hear what she said, but his ears were alert to the pause, just long enough for a few words to be written, and then to her footsteps coming quietly back.

He had applied the test. There was no number upon the card, and he knew that if the girl were not the one of whom he was in search, she would return for an explanation.

If you are "Mary Remington," tell me where and when I can talk with you. Immediately important to us both!

This was what he had written on the card. His fingers trembled as he took it from the silver tray which she presented to him demurely. He picked it up and eagerly read the delicate writing—hers—the same that had expressed her thanks and told of her safe arrival in Chicago. He could scarcely refrain from leaping from his chair and shouting aloud in his gladness.

The message she had written was simple. No stranger reading it would have thought twice about it. If the guest had read it aloud, it would have aroused no suspicion.

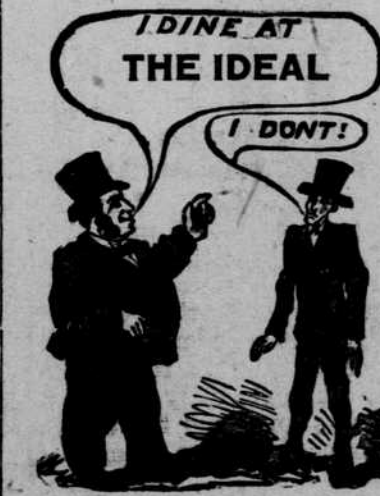
Y. W. C. A. Building, small parlor—three tomorrow.

He took his leave early in the evening and hurried back to his hotel. As he crossed the street to hail a cab, he thought he saw a short, baggy figure shambling along in the shadow on the other side, looking up at the house.

He had professed to have business to attend to, but when he reached his room he could do nothing but sit down and think. That he had found her for whom he had so long sought filled him with a deeper joy than any he had ever known before. That he had found her in such a position deepened the mystery and filled him with a nameless dread. Then out of the shadow of his thoughts shambled the baggy man in the rubbers, and he could not rest, but took his hat and walked out again into the great rumbling whirl of the city night, walking on and on, until he again reached the house where he had dined.

He passed in front of the building, and found lights still burning everywhere. Down the side street, he saw the windows were brightly lighted in the servants' quarters, and loud laughter was sounding. Was she in there enduring such company? No, for there high in the fourth story gleamed a little light, and a shadow moved about across the curtain. Something told him that it was her room. He paced back and forth until the light went out, and then reverently, with lifted hat, turned and found his way back to the main avenue and a car line. As he passed the area gate a bright light shot out from the back door, there was a peal of laughter, an Irish good-night, and a short man in baggy coat and rubbers shambled out and scuttling noiselessly down to the back street.

(To be Continued)



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