

Secretary of Frivolous Affairs

by MAY TUTRELLE

Copyright 1911
BOBBY-MERRILL COMPANY



SYNOPSIS.

Jo Codman and her sister Louie are left orphans. Their property has been swept away by the death of their father and they are compelled to cast about for some means to earn a living. Louie answers an advertisement of an invalid who wants a companion. She declines the position. Louie advertises for a position as companion, and Mrs. Hazard replies. She offers Louie a position as her "secretary of frivolous affairs." Her chief work is to steer Mrs. Hazard's son and daughter in the right matrimonial path. Louie talks baseball to Hap Hazard and also gains the confidence of Laura Hazard. The Duc de Trouville is believed to be interested in Laura. Mrs. Hazard gives a big reception and Louie meets many people high in the social world. Natalie Agazziz, to whom Hap has been paying attention, loses an emerald bracelet during the reception. She declares there is not another like it in the world. It develops that Natalie has lost several pieces of jewelry under similar circumstances. Hap takes Louie to the baseball game. He tells her he is not engaged to Natalie and has been cured of his infatuation. The scene changes to the Hazard country place, where many notables have been invited for the summer. Louie and Laura visit the farm of Winthrop Abbott, an inventor, in whom Laura takes considerable interest. Duc de Trouville arrives at the Hazard place. Louie hears Winthrop's motor boat out late at night. Next morning the papers announce the robbery of several nearby homes. Natalie accuses Louie of stealing her ruby pendant. Mrs. Hazard assures Louie of her confidence in her. Hap declares his love for Louie. She reciprocates, but will not admit it as she fears what Mrs. Hazard will say. Louie is excused from dinner on account of a headache. She is bombarded with notes from Hap imploring her to see him. Winthrop is arrested in the presence of Hap and Louie, charged with robbing General Schuyler's home and shooting the general. A box of jewels is found in Winthrop's safe, among them an emerald bracelet exactly like the one which Louie lost. Natalie apologizes to Louie for causing her of theft. Louie goes to bed at midnight and finds Hap in her room. Next morning Hap explains that he was in pursuit of a mysterious woman he had seen in the corridor and who eluded him by passing through Louie's room.

CHAPTER XVIII.—Continued.

"Of course, I might have been mistaken, but the Duc d'Aubigny is not easily forgotten. He has a peculiar scar—"

"Yes, I know," I interrupted. "A saber cut."

"He's a handsome devil," she mused. "Saturday he seemed a bit shabby, and his hair was cropped close, as if he hadn't been out of prison long, and still he was handsome. I had leisure to observe him, and I am absolutely sure of him. We were caught in a matinee crush, and the Duc d'Aubigny was standing at the curb not six feet away from me. He saw me. He looked at me just as one glances at any stranger, but he knew me! I started to speak to him, but I never act on impulse, and there was a bare chance that I had made a mistake. But if he wasn't the Duc d'Aubigny it was his ghost!"

"But how could the Duc d'Aubigny have taken the ruby?"

"Sh-h-h-h!" she whispered. "I haven't dared think that far. He couldn't possibly have been connected in any way—"

"You won't mention this to a soul, will you, Miss Codman? It's rather absurd—"

"But if Winthrop should need—"

"You said his arrest was not serious," she interrupted.

"No, it isn't. Do you think Mr. Abbott is a thief?" I asked her plainly.

"I did think so. I'm sure now he isn't."

"Why?" I wanted to know. "Have you a reason?"

"Yes. I've come to my senses," she smiled.

Just how that red-headed reporter managed to come back up the driveway in a noisy car without either Hap or myself seeing him was an unexplained mystery. We both were within earshot on the tennis courts, and I was not playing. If only Hap had instructed Burrows not to take the card to Natalie! But he never thought of that.

Natalie, at first, sent back word that she was not there, but on the back of a card which bore the name "Mr. Samuel Dick, Evening Columbian," the reporter wrote something sufficiently magical to bring Natalie down-stairs, and the conversation that followed was sufficiently magical to send Natalie to her room to don a hat. She climbed in the car with the red-headed reporter, and was driven away. Two hours later she returned, went to her room, and sent Minette to say to Mrs. Hazard that she had a slight headache and didn't wish to be disturbed.

The Evening Columbian fell like a bomb into our midst at Lone Oak just before dinner. I remember one awful line in that glaring heading:

"Miss Agazziz Positively Identifies Emerald Bracelet."

Poor old Winthrop!

CHAPTER XIX.

The Arrival of Jo.

There's something so self-reliant about Jo. She drove up under the porte cochere late Wednesday afternoon, jammed on the emergency, pushed up her goggles and alighted, totally oblivious of the surprised and admiring glances directed at her from those who happened to be having tea, and things, on the terrace. Jo drives

and I suppose a lone woman in a hulking brute of a car was just a little out of the ordinary. Benny Bliss arose, taking his high-ball with him, and perched frankly on the stone coping until Lydia pulled his coat and gave a sidelong glance in my direction.

"Where's the garage?" Jo asked as I came to meet her.

"Vincent will take the car around for you," I told her.

I sounded the buzz for Vincent and took her upstairs. It was good to see her again. I felt that she was going to be a strong, firm prop in a sagging house-party still suffering from the shock of that awful damaging evidence against Winthrop. When we reached my sitting room she took me in her arms, kissed me and went straight to the point.

"Now, what's the matter?" she asked. "You look pale and droopy."

"Matter?" I echoed. "Everything's the matter. Haven't you seen the papers about Mr. Abbott?"

"Yes, but I mean, what's the matter with you? You don't suppose I think I was sent for about a man I've never seen?"

"Oh, it's all over about me now," I told her. "Natalie lost a very valuable ruby and accused me of taking it. The circumstances were against me, but after we had telephoned for you she told me she knew I hadn't. I am no longer suspected."

"And is that all?" asked Jo, with that same unerring penetration.

I shook my head and tried to swallow a silly lump in my throat.

"He loves me," I said.

"He is Mr. Hazard—of course? Oh, Louie! Louie!"

She caught me in her arms and drew me close, and I cried on her motherly bosom while she kissed my hair.

"Jo, it had to happen," I sobbed. "He's so perfectly dear."

"They always are," Jo replied with a sigh. "And you love him! And of course you've got to break your heart and give him up!"

"What else could I do, Jo?" I asked.

"Why, I haven't a penny; I'm practically a servant. I couldn't do anything else, could I?"

"You could," replied Jo, "but you won't. My poor little girl."

After I had finished my cry and doctored my nose I told her all the queer things that had happened in connection with those lost jewels. She had seen Winthrop's part of it in the newspapers. I even told her of that midnight chase where Hap suddenly had found himself in my bedroom, and what Natalie had told me of being sure she had seen the Duc d'Aubigny in town. It wasn't violating confidences, for Jo is Jo.

She thought it all over, and I was sure she was going to see a bully way of connecting the stray threads of the mystery. She has such a logical mind. But her question rather disappointed me.

"Is there any one here I know?" she asked.

"Not a soul," I answered. "There's no one we ever knew who ever poked his nose in the presence of any one who ever poked his nose in this class, Jo. They all are terribly exclusive and awfully rich. I don't believe there's any one here who can think of less than a million, unless it's Mrs. Cutler, and she isn't poor by any means. Of

Jo gave him her hand and smiled. "Mr. Crowninshield," she murmured in the most approved tone. Jo was never cut out for a dressmaker.

"Why didn't you tell me?" John complained, and somehow our duke drifted into the background.

Jo's answer I didn't catch. I wondered what on earth John was talking about, what he meant by his question. He tried to maneuver her to a seat, but I came forward quickly.

"I want you to meet Miss Abercrombie, dear," I said, and drew her toward Lydia; and all the while I was aching to get her to herself and ask her a few plain questions.

I was terribly upset. I didn't intend to have John falling in love with her, and he was doing it, for he was looking at her just as moony as Hap always looks at me. She couldn't marry him any more than I could marry Hap, especially now, with this dress-making nonsense, and I wasn't going to have those gorgeous eyes spoiled; it was all right for me to cry, but not Jo.

It was a horrid dinner party. Laura didn't come down, which reminded everybody of Winthrop; Natalie was late, Mrs. Hazard was plainly worried, and Natalie's vacant chair added another pucker to her brow. Hap was silly, and kept trying to hold my hand under the table; and I was cross and didn't dare show it.

Natalie was shockingly late. She didn't come in until after the fish, but she was not in the least disturbed. She drifted to her place, all aglitter with her jewels, which was most unusual; jewels were saved for occasions. Everybody noticed them, but

course, I don't count the duke, for he's a duke; he has a title and prospects.

"Who is Mrs. Cutler?" asked Jo.

I brought out my list and showed her the entries; then I launched into social history. But it was all too much for her at once; she held up her hand for me to stop.

"You're scaring me to death," she said. "Why, I won't have courage to go down. I haven't but two dinner gowns to my name, and they're great goodness! I'll stay tonight and go home tomorrow, since you are no longer suspected."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

Poor old beautiful Jo! But she always looked lovely in anything she put on. I rang for Celine to unpack.

Celle knows a beautiful woman when she sees one; and she never disguises the fact that she thinks so. She hooked Jo into a very simple black gown that I had never seen before—and paused to wonder where she got it—then sat back on her heels on the floor and squealed Frenchly over the effect, as if she were entirely responsible for it.

"Ah, mademoiselle is most charming, most beautiful—out out, oh, out out!" Jo knew enough French to understand that. "Mademoiselle has the grand air; mademoiselle is exquisite!"

Mademoiselle undoubtedly was. But I stood by with the most beautiful gown Mrs. Hazard had provided for me hanging upon my shoulders unhooked and unnoticed.

"Well, Celine, I remarked, 'you might quit scrambling around on your knees and give me a little attention. Mademoiselle isn't going to run away; she is here for a week.'

"Ah, mademoiselle, pardon!" Celine cried. "My sweet, charming mademoiselle, I am all contrition. But mademoiselle la soeur is most beautiful. I am entranced!"

Jo paused in contemplation of her tall, slim figure in the mirror when Celine disappeared for a moment.

"How do you like my gown?" she asked.

"It's lovely. Where did you get it?"

"Made it."

I looked at her tolerantly, the way she has of looking at me.

"I may be a nitny, but I'm not that gullible," I retorted. "It looks like a model."

"It is a model," Jo said calmly. "And marked 'Paris,' but it never saw Paris."

"What are you driving at?" I demanded.

"The establishment is Madame Gautier, Robes et Manteaux."

I looked at her as if she had taken leave of her senses, then gradually the truth dawned upon me.

"Then you're not studying botany!"

"No, dear, I'm learning a business. I'm already designing. I expect to have my own establishment next year."

I just wanted to sit down and weep. I felt that I could never forgive her, never, never! She caught me to her and pressed her cheek against mine.

"Don't be angry, dear. I couldn't let you do all the work. And Louie, I simply couldn't bear the idea of teaching."

"Teaching! Fiddlesticks!" I snapped. "Dressmaking! More fiddlesticks! I wanted you to have your course in botany, and I'm so disappointed I'll never get over it."

She calmly turned and picked up my list of entries without trying to console me. She knew I'd get over it. She ran her forefinger down the page.

"Knew the duke abroad," she read. "Which duke? The Duc d'Aubigny, or the Duc de Trouville?"

"Why, the Duc de Trouville," I answered irritably. "Whatever made you think it was the Duc d'Aubigny?"

"Oh, I think of silly things like that sometimes," she replied. She stood so still for so very long, while her eyelashes swept her cheeks, that I began to fidget. "Did Miss Agazziz absolutely identify the emerald bracelet as her own?" she asked finally.

"Absolutely. It puts Winthrop in an awful hole, and Jo, Winthrop never took that bracelet. He's not a thief; he's a dear, and there's a horrible mistake somewhere."

When we came into the drawing-room Hap was lounging near the door waiting for me, quizzically regarding the animated circle of which His Grace was the center. John was all the way across the room, sitting near one of the open windows, but when he saw us he stared, got up, nearly upsetting a table, and upon my soul, I believe he would rudely have interrupted the duke's involved speech over Jo's hand if I hadn't interfered.

"My sister, Miss Codman, Mr. Crowninshield," I said in a hurry, for fear he would actually kiss her before I got them introduced—John, who never looked twice at a woman in his life.

Jo gave him her hand and smiled.

"Mr. Crowninshield," she murmured in the most approved tone. Jo was never cut out for a dressmaker.

"Why didn't you tell me?" John complained, and somehow our duke drifted into the background.

Jo's answer I didn't catch. I wondered what on earth John was talking about, what he meant by his question. He tried to maneuver her to a seat, but I came forward quickly.

"I want you to meet Miss Abercrombie, dear," I said, and drew her toward Lydia; and all the while I was aching to get her to herself and ask her a few plain questions.

I was terribly upset. I didn't intend to have John falling in love with her, and he was doing it, for he was looking at her just as moony as Hap always looks at me. She couldn't marry him any more than I could marry Hap, especially now, with this dress-making nonsense, and I wasn't going to have those gorgeous eyes spoiled; it was all right for me to cry, but not Jo.

It was a horrid dinner party. Laura didn't come down, which reminded everybody of Winthrop; Natalie was late, Mrs. Hazard was plainly worried, and Natalie's vacant chair added another pucker to her brow. Hap was silly, and kept trying to hold my hand under the table; and I was cross and didn't dare show it.

Natalie was shockingly late. She didn't come in until after the fish, but she was not in the least disturbed. She drifted to her place, all aglitter with her jewels, which was most unusual; jewels were saved for occasions. Everybody noticed them, but

course, I don't count the duke, for he's a duke; he has a title and prospects.

"Who is Mrs. Cutler?" asked Jo.

I brought out my list and showed her the entries; then I launched into social history. But it was all too much for her at once; she held up her hand for me to stop.

"You're scaring me to death," she said. "Why, I won't have courage to go down. I haven't but two dinner gowns to my name, and they're great goodness! I'll stay tonight and go home tomorrow, since you are no longer suspected."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

"Jo, it had to happen, He's so Perfectly Dear."

Natalie chose to be unconscious of the stir her late, dazzling entrance had caused.

Hap spoke across the table to her when she sat down.

"Good morning," he said, laughing.

Everything was rather hushed and still except for the clatter of dishes and silver as the course was changed, and everybody heard it. Everybody tittered—everybody but the duke, who didn't understand it, and Jo, who was never so undignified as to titter.

"I had rather wear them than lose them, dear," Natalie drawled in answer to a question Lydia smilingly fung at her when the laugh subsided. "Who knows when our North Shore thieves will descend upon Lone Oak?"

"Don't worry, my dear," Mrs. Hazard assured her. "There will be a detective here tomorrow to look after us all."

"Detective!" shrieked Lydia. "How interesting!"

"Dee-tee-tee!" repeated His Grace, struggling with his pronunciation. "For why have we ze dee-tee-tee?"

"For precaution, Your Grace," Mrs. Higginson answered him. "We Americans believe in locking the stable before the horse is stolen."

His Grace gazed at her amazed. Poor little duke! I wished that I could have been near to explain it in French. I don't know how he interpreted it.

"Well, I'm not afraid of thieves!" Lydia declared. "I always put my things in a stocking and toss it carelessly near my slippers under the bed. It's the last place on earth a thief would look for anything. That's Abercrombie system. Clever, isn't it?"

"Oh, mother keeps hers in a shoe, now," Dorothy burst in naively.

"I've changed again," Mrs. Abercrombie laughed. "Under the pillow. It's so old it may be new."

"I've changed, too," Dorothy ad-

mitted. "I'd rather lose everything than be scared to death with 'Your money or your life!' So I put half of what I possess in plain sight on the dressing-table, and hope Mr. Thief will think that's all and go away satisfied without waking me. Isn't that clever?"

"Next!" Hap called, and everybody applauded.

"I think I have the best scheme of all," Mrs. Higginson ventured. "I have presumably a hot-water bottle, but really it's a chamois bag. Now, no thief would ever think of looking for jewels in a hot-water bottle."

"You win!" Hap exclaimed, and he tossed her an olive. I think from his expression that His Grace was a bit scandalized at the proceeding.

"I'm trying to devise a method of protecting what I have left," Natalie drawled, "but"—she paused for a moment, effectively—"I shall not tell it."

The rebuke was accepted good naturedly, but the conversation about thieves and jewels ended, at least so far as the women were concerned, when Mrs. Cutler remarked:

"I have a new hat, a perfect beauty! It came on the last express!"

And everybody wanted to know the color, and what it looked like.

CHAPTER XX.

The Picture Gallery.

I thought I knew Jo. I don't. She had either changed since we separated, or there were latent qualities in her that I never suspected. She had never been curious, especially about things that were none of her business, but she linked her arm through mine as we went toward the drawing-room after dinner.

"Who is the duke in love with?" she wanted to know.

"Natalie," I replied.

"Not wants to marry," she qualified, "but cares for—loves?"

"If you mean anything horrid, clandestine—why, I don't know anything about it, and I don't think you have any business thinking such things."

She merely smiled at my outburst.