

Secretary of Frivolous Affairs

by MAY TUTTLE

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Illustrations by
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SYNOPSIS.

To 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 takes her position as secretary and also gains the confidence of Laura Hazard. Winthrop, who is believed to be interested in Laura, Mrs. Hazard gives a big reception and Louie meets many people high in the social world. Natalie Agassiz, 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 author, in whom Laura takes considerable interest. Due 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. Hap declares his love for Louie. She reciprocates, but will not admit it as she fears what Mrs. Hazard will say. Louie is accused 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 lost by Natalie. Natalie apologizes to Louie for accusing her of theft. Louie is awakened 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 scar 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 mafinee 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—" She did not finish. "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. It 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 downstairs, 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 Agassiz Positively Identifies Emerald Bracelet."

Poor old Winthrop!

CHAPTER XIX.

The Arrival of Jo.

There's something so self-reliant about Jo. She'd come up under the porte cochere late Wednesday afternoon, jammed on the emergency, pushed up her glasses 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 like a man; she's so sure of herself,

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

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—great goodness! I'll stay tonight and go home tomorrow, since you are no longer suspected."

I hadn't thought of her clothes

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

Celia 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, Celia," 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."

"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 Celia 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 dummy, 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 Agassiz 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 scheming 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 dressmaking 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 ally, 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

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 uttered—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 flung 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 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.

"Is there a picture gallery here?" she asked presently.

"Yes, why?"

"Oh, no reason particularly. There always is in these houses, isn't there?"

"No. There always isn't. Everybody I know, except the Hazards, have their pictures in town."

"Louie, what was the name of the German count who took us to the Spring Exhibition?"

"Count Felix von Brunner," I answered promptly.

"Of course!" she exclaimed. "I've racked my brain for an hour trying to think of it."

I turned about and faced her.

"Now look here, Jo, you are making me crazy with curiosity. You're asked me three questions for no reason on earth that I can see, and I want to know why."

"And you haven't asked me the one question I expected you to ask." Jo smiled quizzically.

"Suddenly I thought of it."

"Where did you know John?" I demanded.

"He has a client who wants to buy our stock in the mine," she answered; "a client who thinks he can pump it dry."

"Can it be done, Jo?"

"I don't know." She laughed outright at my excitement. "He wants to buy up all the stock. He can get it cheap, except ours. He offers us five thousand dollars for it. It's worth nothing unless the mine is pumped out, wasn't it, Mr. Crowninshield never guessed who I was? And of course I didn't tell him."

"Gracious me!" I exclaimed, rather breathless at the prospect. "What does Mr. Partridge say?"

"Sell."

"Well, what are you—we—going to do? Sell?"

"I'd rather have the income," she answered.

"But there isn't any," I pointed out. "If a man knows—and he does know, Louie—that he can pump that mine dry, can buy up all the stock practically for nothing, except ours, and he lets our little bundle keep him from pumping, he's crazy. And if he pumps we will have an income. It's a gambler's chance, and I am going to take it."

"Yes, sounds gammy," I commented. "What the poker players call a bluff."

"I'm not bluffing—I'm standing pat," Jo reminded me. "And I'm taking the chance because I want to end this work of yours, dear, and these silly—accusations."

We had walked to the end of the wide hallway, and I dropped down in a window seat, grossly neglecting my duties and forgetting that my fends were apt to get mixed. The prospect of going back to that tidy little life Jo and I once led suddenly appalled me.

"I don't want you to—to end it," I stammered. And seeing Jo's amazed expression, I hurried on; "Being Secretary of Frivolous Affairs isn't important, I know, but it's my life now. I can't go back to things as they were. I would never be satisfied."

"You can't seriously mean that you want to keep on with this? Being a well-paid servant of the rich?" she asked.

"Yes, I admitted.

"I'm sorry, dear," she said softly.

"Why sorry?"

"It's dangerous!"

"Why dangerous? I'm quite capable of taking care of myself. You said so."

"You're already in trouble."

"Yes, but my heart's broken now, and there isn't anything more to worry about. I'll never love any one else. I have a good job, and—well, I'm going to stick to it. And when the Hazards don't want me any longer the Dykemans do, and there's a long list of others I won't bother you to name. I've made good in my job, which reminds me that if I don't go look after it I may not have it very long." I rose; it never occurred to me that I was pushing Jo out of my scheme of life. "Use the stock to finance the dressmaking, dear, and take a little tip from me—you take care of yourself!"

"Why, what do you mean?" Jo asked, but I'm sure she knew what I was going to answer.

"John Crowninshield never looked twice at a woman in his life; he has looked at you I don't know how many times, for I don't know how many interviews have been necessary about that stock, but"—I thrust out a rigid forefinger dramatically—"beware!"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Musical Insects.

A carefully trained mind and ear are indispensable to enable one to detect and to discriminate readily from the general insect medley any particular species of musician.

As with birds and their songs, much of the charm and pleasure to be gotten from insect music depends on the emotional coloring associated with it. We are enraptured with the notes of the peep in spring, or the earlier piping of the frogs, not because these sounds in themselves possess any intrinsic sweetness, but because they recall endearing memories of many happy, hopeful springtimes. They are always the harbingers of another verdant season. Their plaintive notes add to our minds an emotional warmth and sunshine. The yawken for us an inner, subjective springtime.

In a similar way the crickets and katydids gladden and inspire us with their music in proportion as their notes have become associated in our minds with the emotional coloring of past memories—Country Life in America.

The Stopping Bishop.

Nat C. Goodwin was defending a clergyman who had gone wrong.

"I don't condone his offense, mind you," said Mr. Goodwin. "But I want you to be sorry for him. Don't cackle and rejoice over his downfall. We are all human."

Then, in his musical and thrilling voice, the famous comedian resumed: "I know a very beautiful actress who died one Sunday evening at a bishop's. After dinner the bishop, as he helped her to put on her cloak, stooped—stooped in more ways than one—and imprinted a kiss on her white shoulder."

"She turned and, looking at him disdainfully, she said:

"Remember, sir, if I am an actress, I am a lady, too."

"The bishop made a low and humble bow.

"And will you please remember," he said, "if I am a bishop, I am also a man?"

NEWS OF NORTH CAROLINA

Latest News of General Interest That Has Been Collected From Many Towns and Counties.

Hickory.—The city's alarm system has just been tested and has proven quite satisfactory.

Newbern.—There has been an epidemic of bicycle steaming in Newbern during the past few weeks and as a result a large number of local cyclists are now going around with long faces telling how it happened.

Gastonia.—At its regular meeting for September the City Council took the initiatory step looking toward a solution of one of the gravest problems the city is going to have to face in the next few years, that of eliminating grade crossings.

High Point.—Mayor Tate has been requested by H. Logan Page, president of the American Road Congress and director of the United States Office of Public Roads, to appoint three delegates to attend good roads meeting in Detroit to be held during the week of September 29.

Lenoir.—Work on the telephone line between Lenoir and points in Watauga county, including Blowing Rock and intermediate points, is progressing nicely. Mr. J. E. Deal, who has charge of the construction, was in Lenoir and reports that the line will be ready for service in about 60 days, if the weather is favorable.

Raleigh.—The city commissioners discussed finally the matter of discounting taxes paid in September and ordered a two per cent reduction on all taxes paid during this month. The commission has had this in mind many weeks and had not determined what it would do until the final meeting.

High Point.—Mayor Tate has received the regular monthly analysis of the city water, which shows it to be absolutely pure in every particular. The city's filtration plant is producing month after month water that is absolutely pure, which is commented on by the state health authorities as being as good as the best.

Greensboro.—The Chamber of Commerce has just issued a 12-page pamphlet telling of Greensboro, which is described in the first line of the first page as the "Pearl of the Piedmont," and which says that there is every social, educational and industrial opportunity. Some of the facts and figures contained in it are interesting.

Kinston.—Probably without precedent in the legal annals of the state was a case of municipal court here in which J. L. King of Greensboro, was fined \$50 and minor costs for failure to pay a license tax of \$100 imposed by a city ordinance on wholesale horse dealers. King conducted an auction sale of live stock in Hyatt's grove at Neuse River recently.

Raleigh.—After entering a plea of nolo contendere of the charge of selling liquor Dr. L. B. Capeheart, a negro physician of this city, was allowed to pay the costs with suspended judgment when Solicitor Norris read a petition signed by several of Raleigh's prominent prohibitionists, asking that the alleged blind tiger be given light punishment.

Newbern.—The first authentic information from Goose Creek Island since the recent storm was received when William Patton, a resident, passed through here. Mr. Patton said the island was entirely submerged during the storm and that most of the live-stock at Goose Creek was drowned but no human life was lost. Many buildings were demolished.

Asheville.—It appears that Asheville and the other cities of the state which have been working in an effort to have the cruiser North Carolina named in honor of them when the name of his state is transferred to a battleship is premature, a message having been received here from Senator Lee S. Overman to the effect that the battleship will not be completed or named for three years.

Salisbury.—The Board of Aldermen of Salisbury and the City Water Board held important joint sessions in effort to formulate plans for an adequate water supply. The city is now furnishing water to East Spencer at a small cost and the supply is growing rather short. It is the opinion of the Water Commissioners that a line will eventually be laid to the Yadkin river.

Rockingham.—Jesse, the 7-year-old son of Mr. W. H. Meacham, was bitten twice by a full-grown rattlesnake pilot. Three physicians have been with the little fellow through the hours since the unfortunate occurrence, and it is now thought that he is out of danger.

Statesville.—The Carolina Motor Company of Statesville is to be incorporated, a charter having been applied for this week. The authorized capital will be \$25,000, with \$6,000 paid in by Messrs. H. H. Yount, S. B. Miller, J. M. Deaton and G. L. McKnight, the latter of Mooresville.

Kinston.—Will Grant, a negro, was wounded in his right arm, in the right side and in the left leg while trying to escape from officers at Contentnea Neck, several miles from here. Grant escaped from the Craven county chain-gang recently after doing six weeks of a ten-months' sentence for larceny.

Raleigh.—Arranging matters for the forthcoming extra session of the General Assembly, Lieutenant-Governor E. L. Doughty, of Rocky Mount, was a visitor to Raleigh recently. While here he sent out notices to employees of the Legislature to report for duty on September 24.

