

# MARY'S ANSWER

DICK JERRAM presented himself at the office of Carrington Bros. in a very sanguine frame of mind. He still felt that Boer bullet in his right leg and his complexion, as well as his eyes, reminded him of the fever which had brought him near to death's door. Worst of all was the news from Neller-ton.

Mary Dudley—his Mary—had inherited £20,000 from her uncle Harold, and, if that letter of the rattling tongue gossip, Miss Brayshaw, to his mother was to be believed, Mary was on the high road to a title. Sir Taryer Brown was very little other than a baronet; but the attraction of a "richship" could hardly help tempting even such a girl as sweet Mary Dudley.

The younger member of the firm received Dick with sympathy, but no enthusiasm.

"You don't look fit for an office desk, Mr. Jerram—oh, I beg your pardon, Lieut. Jerram, isn't it, now?" he said, with a sneering laugh.

"I was offered a commission, but I did not feel that I could accept it, sir," said Dick. "I want to take up my work again—for various reasons."

Mr. Ernest Carrington's eyebrows rose and subsided.

"I'm very sorry, Mr. Jerram," he said, "but just at present there is no vacancy. We will, of course, give you the first chance—the very first chance that occurs."

"Do you really mean it?" he asked, faintly.

"My dear fellow, you really are not fit for office work just yet. Take a holiday after your trying labors—your noble and—er—patriotic self-sacrifices. I dare say, in a few months, at the most, we can squeeze you in somewhere, though I fear even then we cannot offer you the same salary you received in 1929."

With an effort, Dick pulled himself together, and stood up, like the disciplined soldier he had become.

"Your words are final, sir?" he asked.

"Provisional, Jerram—only provisional. But we can't afford to cheer you with hopes that may not come to fruition. Anything we can do in the way of recommendations, it will give us the utmost pleasure to do. Good heavens! it is the least we could do!"

Dick bowed his head. The smile on his lips was just a little bitter.

"Quite so," he said. "It is something to be grateful for that you are so willing to do the least possible. Good morning."

And then Dick found himself in St. Paul's churchyard, and conscious that the last straw had been piled upon his head.

Mary as good as lost to him—more certainly now than before, anyway—his situation filled up, his health broken, and no one to whom he could honorably look for help in his time of trouble.

He found comfort in the recollection that his mother's own poor little income was sufficient for her well-measured requirements.

"As for me—"

He shrugged his shoulders and tottered down Ludgate hill. On his way he noticed a jeweler's window, with watches and chains and pins and rings of price beneath his eyes—especially rings. And the rings reminded him of what it hurt him most to remember.

He looked at his left hand with the plain but solid gold ezelet, set with a tiny diamond, and the words, invisible to his eyes, but pressing his finger: "Forever and forever!"

That was Mary's voucher to him for her lifelong love.

At length he moved again. "Yes, that's what I'll do," he murmured. "Poor girl! One can't blame her. She shall marry him with a free conscience, at all events."

Then once again he whispered:

"As for me—"

At the Kings Arms inn of Neller-ton that evening, Dick took pen and paper and wrote the letter to Mary which was to accompany the returned ring. It was short and to the point:

"Dear Mary: Somehow, though I would like to keep this, I can't do it, and so I bring it back to you; and you mustn't think I mean to be nasty by making it come to you on your birthday. I quite understand that things are changed between us. Without spoiling all the happiness life can give you, believe me, sincerely yours always,  
"RICHARD JERRAM."

"No deivel in that, I think," he said, with a pang of pride when he had read it and folded it up. The ring was in a little box and the letter was now wrapped round the box. The whole was addressed to Miss Mary Dudley, 2 Devonshire road.

In the darkness he tottered out Devonshire road way. He gazed at the house and the lighted window in Mary's bedroom—gazed and gazed till he felt silly. And then he tottered back and went to bed.

He lay restlessly, now wishing wild-

ly, now dumbly resigned to all things.

Once it occurred to him to wonder what the maid of the inn meant by smiling like that when she gave him his candle and said a gay "good night." But he had far too intense stimulants to thought than that, and the damsel soon drifted away from him.

His most strenuous moments followed the realization that he had been careless enough to leave Mary's packet downstairs on the mantelpiece in the little parlor.

"Shows what I am!" he said, fiercely, as he made an attempt to get up, light a candle and go down for it.

But he found the effort quite appallingly severe, and gave it up.

He dozed drowsily, played with Mary in boy-and-girl fashion, danced with her, had her all to himself in the Brackshaw woods, wooed and won her all over again. Off and on he woke, to gasp and groan and utter exclamations.

For the second time the girl knocked at his door.

"Your hot water, sir!" she cried, and set her ear to listen.

She did not listen long, but hurried downstairs, with word for the master that the gentleman in No. 3 was shouting in the queerest way.

"I think he's ill, sir," she said. "He looked bad last night."

The landlady made no bones about entering Dick's room when he, too, had rapped to no purpose. He gazed at Dick for a few moments, and felt his blood chill a little at Dick's furious cry: "I tell you you are dead, Mary, so don't deny it!" touched Dick's burning forehead, and left him.

"He's in a fever—that's what's the matter with him," he said. "You just go for Mr. Barker, Jane, right away."

"Poor young fellow!" said Jane, eagerly. "That I will, sir."

Moreover, being in love herself, she determined to kill two birds with one stone.

"It's maybe a present for Miss Dudley," she said to herself, and, putting on her hat, carried off Dick's little packet for No. 2 Devonshire road.

"Nurse!"

The darkness had passed from Dick's brain, and having opened his eyes and seen things as they were, though with an imperfect grasp of the facts, he whispered, the monosyllabic.

The quick rustle of a dress answered him, and the words:

"Yes, my dear boy!"

"You, mother?" said Dick, looking up at the face that was the best and truest object in life for him.

She clasped his hand—a bony shape, loosely laced with skin.

Suddenly the sound fell from him.

It all came back—wound, fever, the long weeks in hospital, the voyage home in weakness and anxiety as well as hope, the news of Mary's fortune and Sir Taryer Brown, his rebuff in St. Paul's churchyard and his journey to Neller-ton.

He groaned in spite of himself, and turned his face to the wall.

"Now, then, dear, let me raise your head."

"What's the use?" he murmured.

It was his one and only flash of peevishness. The next instant he obeyed orders with a smile. It was a dreary smile, yet a smile.

"How I must have worried you, mother!" he said, quietly, as he settled after the tonic. "I suppose this is Neller-ton?"

She kissed him as mothers do kiss their grown sons of whom they are very proud.

"Try and sleep again, dear," she said, rather tremulously.

But Mary Dudley and her infidelity—her excusable infidelity—were vivid in his mind. How could he sleep amid such realizations?

"All right," he said, shutting his eyes.

Then a sunny gray mist settled upon his brain, and his surroundings were to him as if they were not. It was not so much sleep as translation of spirit.

"O. Mary, Mary, what shall I do without you?" his lips cried aloud, even while his mind was active in some remote atmosphere.

"Nothing, dear Dick; you shall not do without me as long as we live, for we will be always together." A hand was laid on his forehead—a little satiny hand, with love warm in all its pores. And instantly Dick opened his eyes.

"Mary!" he gasped.

This time Mary Dudley laid her face by his on the pillow, smiling, and whispered, with her mouth close to his mouth:

"Of course, Dick, who else should it be?"

But it was not until the evening that she was allowed to give him in full measure the only tonic that could be warranted able to make him himself again in spirit and in truth. Then she did not spare him.

"I ought not to feel ashamed of you, Dick," she explained; "for, supposing, if only for one second, that I could care anything for my money apart from you? Sir Taryer Brown, indeed! Why, it was just waiting for a sign from you. And I got it—my own sign! O, Dick!"—London Answers.

A Burst of Generosity.

A man from Dunedin once visited

the town of Wellington. An Irish friend insisted upon the visitor staying at his house instead of at a hotel, and kept him there for a month, playing the host in detail, even to treating him to the theaters and other amusements, paying all the cab fares and the rest. When the visitor was returning to Dunedin, the Irishman saw him down to the steamer, and they went into the saloon to have a parting drink.

"What'll you have?" asked the host, continuing his hospitality to the very last.

"Now, look here," said the man from Dunedin, "I'll hae nae pair o' this. Here ye've been keepin' me at yer house for a month an' payin' for a' the theaters an' cabs an' drinks—I tell ye I'll stan' nae more o' it. We'll just hae a toss for this one!"—Scotsman.

**Physicians in Hawaii.**  
Hereafter no physician who is unable to speak the English language will be given a certificate allowing him to practice his profession in the territory of Hawaii.—Chicago Inter Ocean.

**Read it in His Newspaper.**

George Schaub, a well known German citizen of New Lebanon, Ohio, is a constant reader of the Dayton Volkszeitung. He knows that this paper aims to advertise only the best in its columns, and when he saw Chamberlain's Pain Balm advertised therein for lame back, he did not hesitate in buying a bottle for his wife, who for eight weeks had suffered with the most terrible pain in her back and could not get no relief. He says: "After using the Pain Balm for a few days my wife said to me, 'I feel as though born anew,' and before using the entire contents of the bottle the unbearable pains had entirely vanished and she could again take up her household duties." He is very thankful and hopes that all suffering likewise will hear of her wonderful recovery. This valuable liniment is for sale by all druggists.

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