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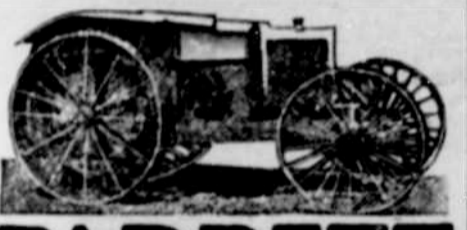


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Men no longer scratch matches on their trousers, because it leaves a mark. It will occur to the men some day that matches will do the same thing on a wall.—Kansas City Star.

## Fifteen Hours in Durance

By **SUSAN CLAGGETT**

(Copyright, 1918, by the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.)

The train for Winchester and points south pulled out on time, although even then the tracks were deep with the snow that had been falling steadily for 24 hours. Because of the storm her friends had endeavored to persuade Louise Cochran to remain in Washington, but she had laughed at their prophecies that unpleasant things would happen and had wished them good-by with apparent light-heartedness.

In reality she was apprehensive. She dreaded the delay to which she might be subjected. She was in haste to reach Staunton, at which place she would still be 12 miles from home, and the prospect of the long drive over country roads late at night did not appeal to her.

But she made herself comfortable, looked about, taking an inventory of the passengers. Seeing no one whom she knew, she applied herself to her knitting with an occasional glance out of the frost-rimmed window while the train kept on its way with ever-increasing slowness. There was a pause now and then for some passenger to alight. Then the train would start on again with ever-diminishing speed. Finally it came to a dead stop, apparently miles from anywhere. The worst had happened. They had run into a drift and were stalled. And this occurred before they had reached Winchester, not many miles from Washington.

It is one thing to be snowed up with plenty of warmth in the coaches, another when the thermometer gets down to zero and there is no heat. Something went wrong with the steam.

But after several hours one and all snuggled down into their wraps, and accepted the inevitable. It was cold, horribly cold, and everyone was hungry. Louise had divided her lunch between two little girls sitting near her. Between hunger and cold she was feeling very forlorn, when a familiar voice said to her:

"Even if you are not on speaking terms with me, Louise, I think for the moment you had better call a truce. Stand up, please, while I put this around you."

Her teeth were chattering, but she managed a "N-no, I am c-comfortable, thank you."

"Don't be silly, girl," Robert Lee said roughly. "My coat cannot hurt you. Stand up or I will pick you up. Surely you do not want everyone in the car craning their heads to see what the fuss is about."

"That is the t-trouble with y-you," Louise chattered. "Y-you always t-try to make m-me do things I don't want to."

She did not move, and she stooped over, slipping his arm behind her shoulders. She shrank from him and the boy—for he was little more than a boy in spite of his six-feet-two—drew back, his face white. Then he took her hand and drew her to her feet.

"I must say," he muttered, "I had no idea you could act so foolishly. I know you have quarreled with me, but that is no reason you should freeze to death when I can make you comfortable." He drew the coat well about her, then seated himself. "What is it all about? Your ring is in my pocket with a note that I haven't been able to make anything of. After you are warm you are going to give me an explanation."

"I saw you when we left the Union station, and if it had not been for this confounded storm I would have left the train without speaking to you, but now, believe me, there will be a perfect understanding between us before we are out of this."

The warmth of the fur-lined coat was having its effect, and without consciously doing so, Louise was taking little bites of chocolate, thereby finding a comfort she had not known before. She looked at the big fellow and remarked casually:

"It is very good of you to take this trouble. I did not appreciate how cold I was, nor how hungry." Here she bit into the chocolate with every evidence of enjoyment. "Do you always carry sweets about with you?"

But he was absorbed in the contents of a note he had taken from his pocket and did not answer. When at last he raised his head there was a curious contraction of his eyes and a bulldog set to his chin that bespoke something of that animal's tenacity.

"What made you write this, Louise? When I saw you a week ago there was no friction between us, and last night this reached me out of a clear sky. What is the meaning of it?"

"Are you sure you don't know?"

"My conscience is clear," He looked at her steadily. "There is no use fencing for time. You had some motive

that is beyond me. I must be stupid, for I am completely in the dark." For a moment his anger got the better of him. "I thought you different from that crowd of butterflies back there," nodding his head in the direction of Washington. "It seems, however, that I am mistaken."

"Butterflies!" Louise exclaimed indignantly. "Butterflies, indeed! Every one of the crowd is at work, and hard at work, at that. Do you think it easy to spend all night at Union station meeting troop trains and to stay there until six o'clock in the morning handing out coffee and sandwiches to men who have had nothing to eat for hours and hours and—"

"The uniform is becoming," he retorted in an ugly tone. "I saw you in yours."

"To say nothing of the strain upon one's sympathy. Only last night Marion Harland cried like a baby over an old man and his wife who had come for a glimpse of their boy who they had heard was on his way to Camp Gordon. Did they find him? No. Instead, they were told his company had left suddenly for France. The boy was in the engineers. If the girls were butterflies do you think they would have been moved over the sore trouble of those two old people?" Her voice was steady in its wrath. "Would butterflies go day after day to surgical dressing rooms; would they care for three Belgian children and knit and knit, and knit?"

"Hysteria," he returned stubbornly. "There are a great many in dead earnest, but there is also a certain number that have gone into the thing for excitement and effect. But this is aside from the matter in which I am interested. Why did you write this note and send back your ring?"

"Of what he said she caught but one word. 'Hysteria! Oh! You great brute.' Two angry tears rolled down her cheeks. He saw them, although she had quickly turned her head.

Leaning forward he took her resisting hand firmly in his.

"We do not seem to be getting anywhere, Louise, just further and further from the thing that means everything to me, to both of us. In spite of my bewilderment I know you think you have some good reason for what you have done. Leave the others out of it. Dear, I am very unhappy."

But she harked back to something he had said. "Where did you see me in uniform?" she asked, abruptly.

"At the station two nights ago."

"And you did not speak to me?"

"Unfortunately, I could not. I was with the general."

"I did not see you." There was an edge to the tone that caught his attention.

"That would not be surprising in the crowd."

"You were not in the crowd when I saw you. There were but two, you and—"

He took her hands now and forced her to turn toward him. "You saw me? Did you see who was with me?"

"I saw a woman's head against your shoulder. That was enough."

"Was that why you returned your ring?"

"Wouldn't you call it a sufficient reason?"

"Appearances are often deceptive," he said slowly. "I thought you trusted me."

"Against the evidence of my own eyes?"

"Yes, and because you say that you believe me unworthy of trust."

"If conditions were reversed, what would you think?"

"That would be an entirely different matter," he returned shortly. "Often situations arise that place a man in a position in no wise touching the loyalty he owes the woman he loves, and I love you, Louise."

"You will not explain?"

"I cannot, dear. You must accept my word that there was no disloyalty."

She turned to him impulsively. "I would have given everything I possessed to get that letter back. I begged the carrier to give it to me, but he wouldn't. He looked sympathetic and said: 'Sure, if you've quarreled with him, miss, you'll have to write another. This now belongs to him.' I was furious. And I was heartsick and started home to have it out with myself."

"That was what I was doing. I was given a week's absence and was on my way home. I have a dandy plan to prevent future complications. What do—"

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Happiness of heart and soul can be willed. It is psychologically true that the laugh which is at first forced may later be made genuine. Try it. Try reading the joy column of the papers and magazines. Treasure the good ones and pass them on to friends. Don't destroy a play because it is for laughing purposes only. Hunt such comedies and tell others of them. Start every day in good humor, with a smile. It will help brighten the day for others.

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