

The Courier's Magazine and Home Page

PETEY DINK — MURRAY HILL DOESN'T REALIZE PETEY'S IDEAL AS A CHAUFFEUR

BY C. A. VOIGHEI



LOVE INSURANCE

A COMEDY ROMANCE
By EARL DERR BIGGERS
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CHAPTER XIX.
Mr. Minot Goes Through Fire.

The Duchess of Lismore elected to give her dinner and dance in Miss Meyrick's honor as near to the bright Florida stars as she could. On the top floor of the De la Pax was a private dining room, only partially enclosed, with a picturesque view of the palm-dotted courtyard below. Adjacent to this was a sun room with a removable glass roof and this the duchess had ordered transformed into a ballroom. There in the open to offend the soft southern sky.

Being a good general, the duchess was early on the scene, marshaling her forces. To her there came Cynthia Meyrick, radiant and lovely and wide-eyed on the eve of her wedding.

"How sweet you look, Cynthia," said the duchess graciously. "But then, you long ago solved the problem of what becomes you."

"I have to look as sweet as I can," replied the girl wearily. "All the rest of my life I shall have to try and live up to the nobility."

She sighed.

"To think," remarked the duchess, busy over a great bowl of flowers, "that tomorrow night this time little Cynthia will be Lady Harrowby. I suppose you'll go to Rakedale hall for part of the year at least?"

"I suppose so."

"I, too, have had my Rakedale hall. Formal, Cynthia dear, formal. Nothing but silly little hunts, silly little shoots—American women die there. As happens—the hedges bloom in neat little rows—the trees blossom—they're bare again—Cynthia, sometimes I've been in a state where I'd give ten years of my life just to hear the rattle of an elevated train."

She stood looking down at the girl, an all too evident pity in her eyes.

"It isn't all it might be, I fancy—marrying into the peerage," Cynthia said.

"My dear," replied the duchess, "I've nearly died at times. I never was exactly what you'd call a patriot, but—often I've waked in the night and thought of Detroit. My little car rattling over the cobblestones—a new gown tried on at Madame Harbiers—a matinee—and chocolate afterward at that little place—you remember it. And our house on Woodward avenue—the good times there. On the veranda in the evening, and Jack Little just back from college in the east run. What became of Jack, dear?"

"He married Elsie Perkins."

"Ah—I know—and they live near our old house—have a box when the opera comes—entertain the Yale glee club every Christmas—oh, Cynthia, maybe it's crude, maybe it's middle-class in English eyes—but it's home! When you introduced that brother of Lord Harrowby's this afternoon—that big splendid chap who said America looked better than a title to him—I could have thrown my arms about his neck and kissed him!" She came closer to the girl and stood looking down at her with infinite tenderness in her washed-out eyes. "Wasn't there—any American boy, my dear?" she asked.

"I—hundreds of them," answered Cynthia Meyrick, trying to laugh.

The duchess turned away.

"It's wrong of me to discourage you like that," she said. "Marrying into the peerage is something after all. You must come home every year—just on it. Johnson—are these the best caviar bowls the hotel can furnish?"

And the Duchess of Lismore, late of Detroit, drifted off into a bitter argument with the humble Johnson.

Miss Meyrick strolled away, out upon a little balcony opening off the dining room. She stood gazing down at the waving fronds in the court yard six stories below. If only that fountain down there were Ponce de Leon's! But it wasn't. Tomorrow she must put youth behind. She must go far from the country she loved—did

tally rehearsing. The duchess glanced at her.

"The wittiest woman in San Marco," thought the hostess. "Bah!"

Mr. Paddock, meanwhile, was toying unhappily with his food. He had little to say. The attractive young lady he had taken in had already classified him as a bore. Most unjust of the attractive young lady.

"It's lamentable, really," Mrs. Bruce was speaking. "Even in our best society conversation has given way to the turkey trot. Our wits are in our feet. Where once people talked art, music, literature—now they tango madly. It really seems—"

"Everything you say is true," interrupted the duchess blandly. "I sometimes think the race of the future will be a trotting race."

Mrs. Bruce started perceptibly. Her eyes lighted with fire. She had been working up to this line herself, and the coincidence was passing strange. She glanced at the hostess. Mr. Paddock studied his plate intently.

"For one," went on the Duchess of Lismore, "do not dance the tango or the turkey trot. Nor am I willing to take the necessary steps to learn them."

A little ripple ran round the table—the ripple that up to now had been the exclusive privilege of Mrs. Bruce. That lady paled visibly. She realized that there was no coincidence here.

"I see the hostess firmly with an angry eye. "Because women could have the world at their feet—if they'd only keep their feet still long enough."

It was the turn of the duchess to start, and start she did. As one who could not believe her eyes, she stared at Mrs. Bruce. The "wittiest hostess in San Marco" was militantly under way.

"Women are not what they used to be," she continued. "Either they are mad about clothes, or they go to the other extreme and harbor strange ideas about the vote, suffrage, what not. In fact, the sex reminds me of the type of shop that abounds in a small town—its specialty is drygoods and notions."

The duchess pushed away a plate which had only that moment been set before her. She regarded Mrs. Bruce with the eye of Mrs. Pankhurst face to face with a prime minister.

"We are hardly kind to our sex," she said, "but I must say I agree with you. And the extravagance of women! Half the women of my acquaintance wear gorgeous rings on their fingers—while their husbands wear blue rings about their eyes."

Mrs. Bruce's face was livid.

"Madam!" she said, through her teeth.

"What is that?" asked the duchess sweetly.

They sat glaring at each other. Then with one accord they turned—to glare at Mr. Jack Paddock.

Mr. Paddock, prince of assurance, was blushing furiously. He stood the combined glare as long as he could—then he looked up into the night.

"How—how close the stars seem," he murmured faintly.

It was noted afterward that Mrs. Bruce maintained a vivid silence during the remainder of that dinner. The duchess, on the contrary, wrung from her purchased lines every possibility they held.

And in that embattled setting Mr. Minot sat, deaf to the delicious lip of the debutante at his side. What was woman's greatest privilege? Wasn't it—

His forehead grew damp. His knees trembled beneath the table. "Jephson—Thacker, Jephson—Thacker," he said over and over to himself.

After dinner when the added guests invited by the duchess for the dance crowded the ballroom, Minot encountered Jack Paddock. Mr. Paddock was limp and pitiable.

"Ever apologize to an angry woman?" he asked. "Ever try to expostulate with a storm at sea? I've had it out with Mrs. Bruce—offered to do anything to atone—she said the best thing I could do would be to disappear from San Marco. She's right. I'm going. This is my exit from the butlerly life. And I don't intend to say good-by to the duchess, either."

"I wish I could go with you," said Minot sadly.

"Well—come along—"

"No. I—I'll stick it out. See you later."

Mr. Paddock slipped unostentatiously away in the direction of the elevator. On a dais hidden by palms the orchestra began to play softly.

"You haven't asked to see my card," said Cynthia Meyrick at Minot's side.

He smiled a wan smile and wrote his name opposite number five. She drifted away. The music became louder, rising to the bright stars themselves. The dances that had furnished so much bitter conversation at table began to break out. Minot hunted up the balcony and stood gazing miserably down at fairy-land below.

There Miss Meyrick found him when the fifth dance was imminent.

"It's customary for girls to pursue their partners?" she inquired.

"I'm sorry," he said weakly. "Shall we go in?"

"It's so—so glorious out here," she sighed—a sigh of resignation.

"You asked me—what is woman's greatest privilege," he said.

"Yes."

"Is it—to change her mind?" She looked timidly into his eyes.

"—is," she whispered faintly.

The most miserably happy man in history, he gasped.

"Cynthia! It's too late—you're to be married tomorrow. Do you mean—you'd call it all off now—at the last minute?"

She nodded her head, her eyes on the ground.

"My God!" he moaned, and turned away.

"It would be all wrong to marry Harrowby," she said faintly. "Because I've come to—I—oh, Dick, can't you see?"

"See? Of course I see!" He clenched his fists. "Cynthia, my dearest—"

Below him stretched six stories of open space. In his agony he thought of leaping over the rail—of letting that be his answer. But no—it would disarrange things so—it might even postpone the wedding.

"Cynthia," he groaned, "you can't understand. I can't explain. I can never explain. But—Cynthia—Cynthia—"

Back in the shadow the girl pressed her hands to her burning cheeks.

"A strange love—yours," she said.

"A love that blows hot and cold."

"Cynthia—that isn't true—I do love you—"

"Please! Please let us—forget," she stepped into the moonlight, brave, smiling. "Do we—dance?"

"Cynthia!" he cried unhappily. "If you only understood—"

"Harrowby has the next dance—here!"

She was gone! Minot stood alone on the balcony. He was dazed, blind, trembling. He had refused the girl without whom life could never be worth while! Refused her, to keep the faith!

He entered upon the bright scene inside, slipped unnoticed to the elevator and, still dazed, descended to the lobby. He could walk in the moonlight until his senses were regained. Near the main door of the De la Pax he ran into Henry Trimmer. Mr. Trimmer had a newspaper in his hand.

"What's the matter with the women nowadays?" he demanded indignantly. Minot tried in vain to push by him. "Seen what those London suffragettes have done now?" And Trimmer pointed to a headline.

"What have they done?" asked Minot.

"Done?" They put dynamite under the statue of Lord Nelson in Trafalgar square and blew it sky high. It fell over into the Strand—"

"Good!" cried Minot wildly. "Good! I hope to hell it smashed the whole of London!" And, brushing aside the startled Trimmer, he went out into the night.

It was nearly twelve o'clock when Mr. Minot, somewhat calmer of mind, returned to the De la Pax. As he stepped into the courtyard he was surprised to see a crowd gathered before the hotel. Then he noticed that from a second floor window poured smoke and flame, and that the town fire department was wildly getting into action.

He stopped—his heart almost ceased beating. That was her window! The window to which he had called her on that night that seemed so far away—last night! Breathlessly he ran forward.

And he ran straight into a group just descended from the ballroom. Of that group Cynthia Meyrick was a member. For a moment they stood gazing at each other. Then the girl turned to her aunt.

"My wedding dress!" she cried. "I'm lying on my bed. Oh, I can't possibly be married tomorrow if that is burned!"

There was a challenge in that last

sentence, and the young man for whom it was intended did not miss it. Mad with the injustice of life, he swooped down on a fireman struggling with a wobbly ladder. Snatching away the ladder he placed it against the window from which the smoke and flame poured. He ran up it.

"Here!" shouted the chief of the fire department, laying angry hands on the ladder's base. "Wot you doing? You can't go in there."

"Why the devil can't I?" bellowed Minot. "Let go of that ladder!"

He plunged into the room. The smoke filled his nostrils and choked him. His eyes burned. He staggered through the smoky dusk into another room. His hands met the brass bars of a bed—then closed over something soft and filmy that lay upon it. He seized the something close, and hurried back into the other room.

A fireman at another window sought to turn a stream of water on him. Water—on that gown!

"Cut that out, you fool!" Minot shouted. The fireman who has suspected himself of saving a human life, looked hurt. Minot regained his window. Disheveled, smoky, but victorious, he half fell, half climbed to the chief of the fire department.

"Who was you trying to rescue?" the chief demanded. His eyes grew wide. "You idiot," he roared, "they ain't nobody in that dress."

"Damn it, I know that," Minot cried. He ran across the lawn and stood, a panting, limp, battered, ludicrous figure before Cynthia Meyrick.

"I—I hope it's the right one," he said, and held out the gown.

She took his offering, and came very close to him.

"I hate you!" she said in a low tone. "I hate you!"

"I—I was afraid you would," he muttered.

A shout from the firemen announced that the blaze was under control. To his dismay, Minot saw that an admiring crowd was surrounding him. He broke away and hurried to his room.

Cynthia Meyrick's final words to him rang in his ears. Savagely he tore at his ruined collar.

"Was this ridiculous farce never to end?"

As if in answer, a distant clock struck twelve. He shuddered.

Tomorrow, at high noon!

(To be continued.)

CLOUBURST DOES DAMAGE AT PEORIA

Peoria, Ill., Aug. 3.—Property damage estimated at \$300,000 was done in Peoria last night when a cloudburst visited this section. The government weather bureau reports a rainfall of 2.19 inches. The city's sewer system proved entirely inadequate, resulting in the flooding of streets and basements of business houses.

The storm extended for many miles outside of the city. For the third time in a few months, the tracks of the Peoria and Pekin Union railway were washed away six miles below Peoria. Heavy damage to the embankments of the Rock Island line also were reported. Surrounding towns report great damage to property.

LIBERTYVILLE.

Miss Margaret McGaw of Fairfield spent a few days last week at the C. Vaught home.

Mrs. L. B. Williams and Mrs. Ray Rodabaugh will be hostesses to the Big Sisters Sunday school class at the home of the former Saturday Aug. 7.

Mrs. Joe Fulton and daughters are visiting relatives in Davenport.

Mrs. John Winn is visiting relatives in Rockford, Ill.

Miss Jessie Gray of Fairfield is visiting at the H. D. Davis home.

Word was received here from John Gletty who was operated on in Rochester, Minn., as getting along as well as could be expected.

Mr. and Mrs. Sam Hoffman spent Wednesday in Ottumwa.

Miss Bertha Hill was shopping in Fairfield Saturday.

Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Swanson and son left Sunday for a visit in Albia at the Richard Swanson home.

Arthur Miller was a business caller in Chicago last week.

Miss Clara Mason of Omaha and Mrs. Harry Hamill of Peoria were here last week at the Frank Hurst home.

Miss Lucille Turnipseed entertained the Rebekah Embroidery club Saturday afternoon at her home near here. Light refreshments were served by the hostess. Mrs. H. S. Davis will entertain the club Friday afternoon Aug. 13.

Miss Edna Warren is reported very ill at her home with typhoid fever.

CHILDREN'S EVENING STORY

UNCLE WIGGILY AND THE SKIPPING ROPE.

(By Howard R. Garis.)
Pencil Newspaper Service.
(Copyright by Evening News Publishing Company of Newark, N. J., 1915.)

Out on the woodland path, in front of the hollow stump bungalow, where lived Uncle Wiggily Longears, the nice rabbit gentleman, some little animal girls were having fun. There were Susie Littletail, the rabbit; Lulu and Alice Wibblewobble, the ducks; Bright-eyes the guinea pig girl; Sister Sallie, Jennie Chipmunk, with her striped coat, and many others.

Some were playing with their dolls, wheeling them up and down in cart-riages made of corn-cobs; others were rollers skating on empty spoons of thread, and some were skipping the grapevine rope.

"I like to watch the skipping rope girls best of all," said Uncle Wiggily. "Why is that?" asked Nurse Jane Fuzzy Wuzzy, the muskrat lady house-keeper, who lived with Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, the skipping rope girls are so lively," the rabbit gentleman said. "They hop up and down, they run in and out, and the grapevine rope keeps turning. Why, it makes me feel as though I wanted to jump rope myself!" he exclaimed laughing.

"Hal! You'd better not try it—not with your rheumatism," Nurse Jane said.

"No, I s'pose not," agreed Uncle Wiggily. "An old rabbit such as I am has no right to be skipping rope."

However, Uncle Wiggily put on his tall silk hat, and took his red, white and blue striped barber-pole rheumatism crutch down from the piano stool, and went out. Uncle Wiggily could not help stopping to watch the little girl animals jumping rope. Lulu and Alice Wibblewobble, the ducks, were turning the grapevine at either end, and Susie Littletail, the bunny girl, was jumping.

"Now give me three slow-pepper!" Susie called to Lulu.

"And after that a little salt," suggested Alice.

"Yes," said Susie, "and then I want some mustard and vinegar!"

"My goodness me sakes alive and some ice cream pudding!" cried Uncle Wiggily. "What's all this about salt and pepper, mustard and vinegar? Are you going to make a lettuce salad, Susie?"

"Oh, you funny Uncle Wiggily!" laughed the rabbit girl, as she got ready to skip rope. "Those are only names for different kinds of jumping, she explained.

"Oh, are they?" asked the rabbit gentleman, sort of puzzled like, as he scratched his silk hat with his left ear. "Names for jumping, eh?"

"Yes," said Alice. "Salt jumping is very slow, and so is sugar skipping, but pepper is faster, and vinegar is faster still and mustard—well, mustard jumping is the fastest kind there is, Uncle Wiggily."

"We don't often do that kind," said Lulu.

"It's too tiring," added Susie. "Now, Uncle Wiggily, watch me jump!"

So, while the duck girls turned at either end of the wild grape vine rope Susie ran in and began skipping, first going slowly, like sugar or salt, and then jumping faster and faster until she was doing the mustard style.

"There—that's enough," she said, after a bit. "Now it is your turn to skip, Lulu."

So Lulu took her turn and then Alice jumped and so did others of the animal girls, all having a good time in the woods near Uncle Wiggily's hollow stump bungalow.

"Well," said the old rabbit gentleman to himself as he went on for his daily walk, "I wonder if skipping the rope wouldn't be good for my rheumatism? I could begin jumping sugar, or salt style, as that is slow, and, after a bit, I could go faster, until I was doing mustard."

"Now mustard is very hot, I know, and hot things are good for my rheumatism. I believe I'll try it. I'll get a rope and begin skipping. Of course, at first, I'll do it off in the woods by myself, where Nurse Jane won't see me and laugh."

So Uncle Wiggily went on through the woods until he came to a place where the wild grapevines grew. With his sharp, gnawing teeth he cut off a long piece of the vine, which was al-

most like the real rope that you real girls use for skipping.

"Now, I'll begin jumping salt style—slow," said the rabbit gentleman to himself. "But, hold on there!" he exclaimed. "I have no one to turn for me. What shall I do? I need some one to turn the rope!"

He looked through the woods, but he saw no one, and he was thinking he would have to give up his idea, when, all of a sudden, he saw Jackie Bow Wow, the puppy dog boy, coming along. Jackie had just been burying a bone in the woods.

"Hello, Uncle Wiggily!" he called, "What are you doing here?"

"Well, don't tell any one," the rabbit gentleman replied, "but I was going to jump rope for my rheumatism. Only I have no one to turn for me."

"I'll turn," said Jackie kindly.

"Oh, but we need two, one on each end of the grapevine," spoke Uncle Wiggily.

"Oh, no you don't!" said Jackie, with a laugh. "I can tie one end of the vine to a tree, and turn the other myself. Then you can jump salt and pepper and mustard and vinegar, just as the girls do."

"Very good!" Uncle Wiggily exclaimed. "Only first I'm going to begin with something slow, like sugar or molasses."

"All right," said Jackie. So, tying one end of the vine to a tree, the puppy dog boy turned the other end, and Uncle Wiggily began to skip.

Around and around, over the head of Uncle Wiggily went the grape vine rope. Up and down he skipped, and he skipped, and he was really doing quite well.

"That's very good," said Jackie. "You have jumped enough sugar and molasses style, though. Let's try salt now, and then go on to pepper."

"All right," agreed Uncle Wiggily. "But don't turn too fast for I—"

"Ha! Suppose I turn a bit!" exclaimed a voice, and then, out of the bushes jumped the bad old tail-pulling chimpanzee monkey. "I'll turn rope for you," said Wiggily, "he said, "and then well, I guess you know what I'll do after that."

"Will you—will you pull my tail?" asked Uncle Wiggily, wishing he could run away, but he couldn't because the bad monkey could run after and catch him.

"That's what I'll do—pull your tail, and that puppy dog's, too!" said the bad chimpanzee.

Then, all of a sudden Jackie thought of something.

"Before you pull my tail, or Uncle Wiggily's," said Jackie, "would you mind showing us how well you can skip rope, Mr. Chimpanzee. You can do it very well, I'm sure."

"Of course I can," proudly said the monkey. "Here, you turn, I'll jump and show you how, and then I'll pull your tails."

So, while Jackie turned, the monkey jumped. The puppy dog boy kept turning the grape vine faster and faster, from pepper up through mustard, and finally he was turning mustard.

"Jump! Jump! Skip! Hop!" cried the puppy dog boy, and he turned the grape vine so fast that he could hardly see it going.

"Stop! Stop! I'm all out of breath!" panted the monkey.

"No! No! You must jump!" barked Jackie and he turned faster than ever. Finally the chimpanzee was so out of breath that he fell down and couldn't get up again, because of skipping the rope so fast. And, as soon as he toppled over, Jackie ordered, "Nurse!"

"Come now, Uncle Wiggily! This is your chance. He is so out of breath that he can't catch us! Let's run!"

Then, leaving the bad tail pulling chimpanzee there in the woods, away ran Uncle Wiggily and Jackie until they were safely home.

"And the next time I skip rope I'll do it nearer my bungalow," said the rabbit gentleman.

"Oh, are you going to jump more?" asked Nurse Jane.

"Yes," said Uncle Wiggily. "It is almost as much fun as dancing."

So this teaches us that too much mustard is not a good thing. And in the next story I will tell you about Uncle Wiggily at Nurse Jane's party—and I hope the ice cream will not eat up all the cake so there will be some cracker crumbs left for the mice to play ball with.