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Cinderella

(By Gally Ryland.)

Mrs. Stanton was sitting on the white pillared piazza awaiting the arrival of her daily letter before she sought her room for her afternoon siesta.

The long line of windows above were open to catch the first faint breath from the mountains, the breath that collects its sweetness from deep lying beds of damp moss and fern filtered through the pine tops as it descends.

From the window in Ellinor Cary's room just overhead came a ripple of laughter. Ellinor herself, framed in its curtains, stood furbishing a dainty pair of bronze slippers to wear that evening to the cotillon. As she perched one of them upon the window sill and stepped back to view the effect of her handiwork the lace of her dressing sack caught in its buckle and sent it whirling down upon the dark brown head of a young man who was standing in the piazza below.

Mrs. Stanton caught a horrified look on Ellinor's face as she darted back and then turned her glasses on the young man who had been so unceremoniously treated.

He had laid the slipper on the palm of his hand and was examining it carefully.

"What Cinderella dropped it, do you think?" asked one of the loungers, scanning the windows above.

"I don't know," said the young man slowly. "He had only just arrived. I don't know, but I am going to play the prince and find out."

"And marry the girl who can wear it?" they chaffed.

"Perhaps," he said. "Who knows?" And he dropped the slipper into his coat pocket and stroled away.

But the best laid plans of men, mice and even princes, going aft agley. Fate, in the uniform of a black button, was even then relentlessly pursuing the prince, and half an hour later, in response to an urgent telegram from his partner, he was throwing things into his suitcase to catch the afternoon train to New York. As he exchanged his flannels for the home-spun of travel something fell from the pocket.

"Cinderella's slipper!" he exclaimed, picking it up tenderly. "Ah, well, the search for its owner is but a pleasure postponed, so I'll just take it along." And he tucked it carefully under his cuffs.

"How do I look, dear Mrs. Stanton?" asked Ellinor, revolving slowly before the critical longnettes.

"As charming as Cinderella at the ball, my dear," said Mrs. Stanton smiling. "And that reminds me to ask if you have ever heard anything of your prince of the slipper?"

"Not a word," laughed Ellinor. "I had almost forgotten that little episode of last summer. His name was—let me see?"
"Don't ask me," cried Mrs. Stanton, offering her shoulders to the maid for her wrap. "Are you quite ready, dear? Jack is most particular about his dinner parties. He likes every one to come on the stroke of the hour."

"I am glad I am to meet the eighth wonder of the world at last," said Ellinor, "this prince of perfection, Jack Stanhope. But I know I shall detest him," she added viciously under her breath. "He is too handsome, too charming, too brilliant, too good, in fact, to be true. You have done nothing but sing his praises to me since I came to New York, my dear lady, and now that I am honored with one of his long hoped for, much coveted invitations to a dinner in his apartments I believe you think I have fulfilled my destiny."

"Wait till you meet him," murmured Mrs. Stanton, leading the way to the carriage.
Ellinor found her bad humor vanishing before the charming welcome of her host, and she was ashamed of the little thrill of satisfaction which crept over her when she found she was to have the seat of honor on his right.
"His rooms are really in excellent taste," she admitted to herself as she drew off her gloves. His table appointments are perfect," she commented a little later on, "and he himself is all Mrs. Stanton claims for him," she confessed reluctantly as she noted his cleverness at keeping the conversational ball rolling and the tact with which he put each one at his or her best to even shy little Amy Grey found herself confiding a timid anecdote to seven pairs of appreciative ears.
"I acknowledge that toasts have become a nuisance," Jack Stanhope said as they rose from the table, "but there is just one little one I would like you all to drink standing before we adjourn to the library for coffee and cigarettes.

It is, 'To Cinderella.' Have you gone back to your fairy tale days, Jack?" asked Joe Gibson, putting down his empty glass. "Let's have the story; come now, there's a good fellow."

"The story? Certainly, old man! I'll give it to you with an illustration," Jack answered as they followed the ladies into the library. "This is the illustration—have one?" And Ellinor's breath quickened and her eyes grew wide with dismay as she watched him take from a little recess a small bronze slipper filled with Turkish cigarettes and hold it up in full view.

"I am going to tell you the story of the Cinderella who dropped this," he said, smiling, "and when I am through I expect to fit it on Miss Grey, Miss Severn and Miss Cary in turn. Only Mrs. Stanton is exempt, because she was fitted long ago by a better man."

Ellinor grew pale and red by turns as the story spun itself out, and Jack wound up laughingly with, "And I've vowed to marry the girl who can wear it—if she will have me."

"It is silly to be embarrassed by so small a thing," she said to herself. But, try as she might and did, the hot blood rose guiltily to her cheeks when, after Miss Grey had timidly put forth a short, fat foot, murmuring, "It is no use for me even to try it on," and Miss Severn showed a slender toe a good two inches beyond the little bronze slipper, Jack Stanhope called out gayly, "Your turn now, Miss Cary."

"—really," she began helplessly, turning to Mrs. Stanton. But that lady was obdurate. Perhaps this was what she had anticipated. "Try it on," she said smiling. "I, your chaperon, command it." And Ellinor, obediently but blushing drew her foot from her satin slipper and slipped it easily into the little bronze one.

For a moment there was a little embarrassed pause. Then they all began to talk at once, and Mrs. Stanton insisted that her carriage was waiting and swept Ellinor away before the girl was quite sure that she should not have resented Stanhope's unnecessary pressure of her hand or that she had heard him murmur under his breath as he accepted Mrs. Stanton's invitation to call, "I have really found her at last—my Cinderella."

It was in June that the good steamship Lucania cast off her chains of bondage and swung her nozzle slowly oceanward.

From the rear side of her railing a handsome pair strained their eyes to catch a glimpse of a figure on the pier.
"There she is, God bless her! Wave your handkerchief, Jack," cried the girl. "Why, what are you doing you absurd boy?" For the man had fastened to the top of his stick a little bronze slipper and was hoisting it high above his head.

"Only saluting her with my talisman, dear little Cinderella," he answered tenderly as the pier swung out of sight.

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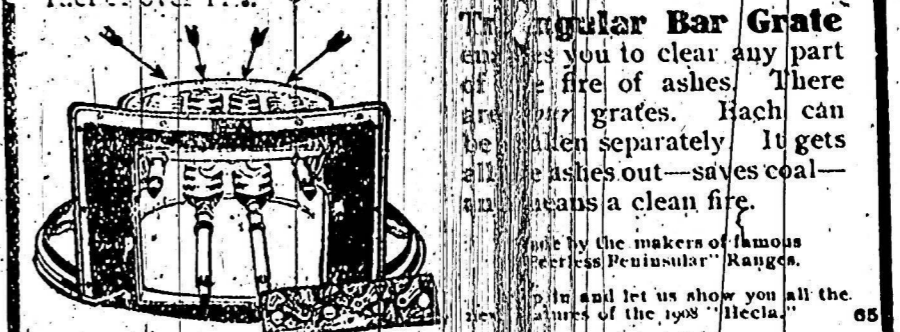
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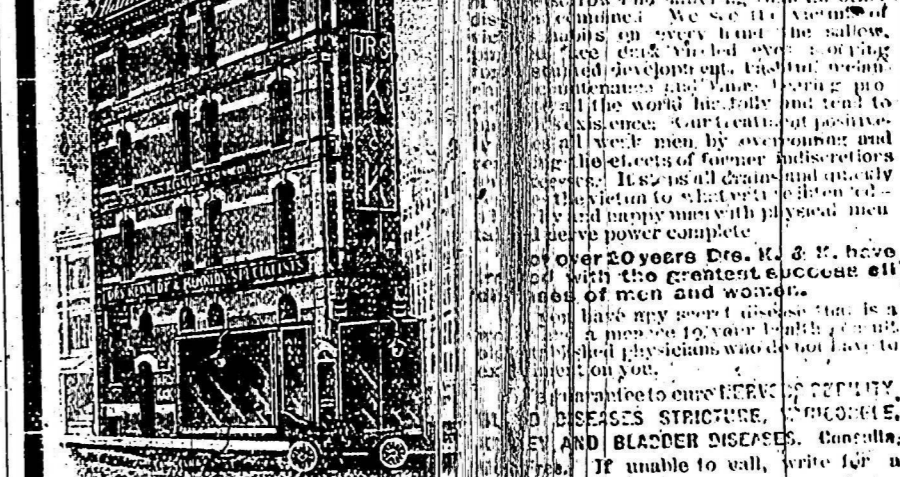
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