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## MISS UNKNOWN

Written specially for  
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From time to time during the session, Congress had been wrestling with a bill concerning the irrigation of certain government lands in Colorado. A syndicate was endeavoring to get the privilege of watering these lands on the condition that alternate sections be deeded to it. No one seemed to understand the bill very thoroughly, but that was the gist of it. The members from the East paid little attention to the measure; but every time the bill came up Lorimor from Colorado made a speech against it, and in some mysterious way succeeded in getting it shelved. The bill came to be the butt of jokes, and whenever it was brought up cries of "Lorimor!" greeted it. Lorimor was always ready to make an indefinite little speech, hinting that there was something wrong about the bill, and juggling with words in such a way that he was successful in staving it off. It kept coming up so frequently, however, that it was evident that persistent lobbying was going on. Then the newspapers took it up, and Lorimor became famous as the antagonist of a bill that was supposed to be "off color" in some way. Rumors of all sorts went the rounds of the press, and reporters besieged Lorimor, but without success. He fairly barricaded his apartments, and those newspapermen who got past the fortifications found him absolutely interview proof. When it was rumored that Lorimor had managed to delay the bill for two weeks longer, and had left for Colorado to investigate the matter, public curiosity was goaded to the highest pitch.

On his way back to Washington, Lorimor sat in a Pullman car, and gazed out on the snow-covered Iowa cornfields. Here and there a cornstalk held a few withered leaves above the snow, but the view was much the same in all directions—prairies covered with snow and dotted with occasional farm buildings. The extreme cold caused the wheels to creak annoyingly. He tried to read, but the cars swayed so that his eyes tired; then his thoughts wandered back to Washington, and he smiled grimly as he contemplated the surprise he had in store for certain Congressmen. But he would have nothing but bills and debates and discussions when he got to Washington; and he felt bound to turn his mind to something else. He felt that he would like to talk to someone, yet there was not another person in the car, not even a porter. His thoughts ran back to his Eastern home, his college days, the friends he had left to go West, his law practice, and finally brought him face to face with his present condition—a successful politician, with scarcely a person in the world he could call a friend.

The train pulled into a little station, and Lorimor looked eagerly out of the window in the hope of seeing some passenger who would share the empty car with him. His hope was disappointed. The porter brought a wo-

man into the car—a young woman. She sat opposite Lorimor, where he could see her plainly. One look was enough to banish his feeling of loneliness. She was a tall, fine looking girl with a peculiarly sympathetic face and an air of independence that was charming. Lorimor had paid no attention to women's clothes for years, but there was something about the fur trimmed hat and the fur boa which this woman wore that reminded him of a girl he had taken to a Junior Promenade years ago; and, although he tried not to think of it, he remembered that he had almost loved that girl. Fifteen years vanished in a moment; all of Lorimor's later life was wiped out, and as a boy of twenty he raised his cap and sat down in the seat facing Miss Unknown.

He begged her to excuse his forwardness and explained how deserted the car had been for two days, where-

at Miss Unknown blushed slightly and made a remark about the monotony of travel in such weather that set them at ease. Presently the conversation turned to books, and Lorimor found that his tastes and Miss Unknown's were almost exactly the same. A girl who doted on Thackeray and Balzac was a little unusual, but he reasoned that girls had changed since his school days.

After an inquiring glance at Lorimor, Miss Unknown began speaking: "Perhaps you may think it queer of me to ask such a question, but I have not seen a paper for two days, and I should like to know what has come of the Colorado land bill that Lorimor was opposing?"

"Nothing more has been done with it, but I believe that it is to come up before the session is over," Lorimor replied, with an affected air of indifference.

"All my friends laugh at me for taking such an interest in legislative measures, but my father knows all about such things, and I see no reason why I shouldn't. This bill has interested me particularly, because I have felt all along that Lorimor will un-

earth some boodling scheme—you know he is out West now investigating the matter. I have conjectured as to the outcome, and I expect to hear that the syndicate was trying to get a large grant of mineral lands by merely pretending that it would water them. Does this seem reasonable to you?"

Lorimor hesitated for a moment. "No, I scarcely think that is the scheme. A friend who is well posted in the matter confided in me, and I imagine that he has hit upon the syndicate's plan. He thinks that they are buying the bill through Congress, and if the bill succeeds it will be found that men who are agents for the syndicate have pre-empted all the irrigable country adjoining the lands in question. In this way the syndicate will obtain many thousand acres of valuable land for almost nothing, and will gain control of all the available water. Of course it all hinges on the passage of the bill."

"Well," Miss Unknown began, "the scheme certainly is plausible. Another of those plans to defraud the government of its lands."

Just then the brakeman called "Des Moines," and Miss Unknown began pulling on her gloves in preparation for leaving the train. Lorimor helped her off the car and into a cab. As the cab disappeared through a side street he turned to his train, full of regret that this interesting girl had stopped so soon. He wished that he knew her name, and felt sorry that he had not introduced himself. As the train left Des Moines he looked out longingly at the lights that were springing into brightness one by one. Every lighted window would welcome somebody home that night, but nowhere in the world was there anybody preparing to welcome him. Then he pictured Miss Unknown presiding over a cheerful home, and he promised himself that he would soon retire from public life, and, together with a woman like the one he had just left, make a home where love should supplant ambition. He fell asleep picturing the girl whom he had taken to the Junior Promenade, and no knotty political problems disturbed his rest. When he awakened in the morning his first thoughts were of this sweetheart of long ago.

As the train neared Chicago a newsboy came through the car crying his papers:

"Lorimer speaks! The truth about the land swindle in Congress!"

Lorimer smiled when he heard the boy.

"Some fake interview," he mused; but he bought a paper and glanced at the headlines:

"Lorimor at last gives up the secret. Investigation unearths a proposed steal. Syndicate has pre-empted thousands of acres adjoining the tract it asks from Congress, and the passage of the bill would grant it a great body of irrigable land almost without cost."

He dropped the paper. The world had the story two days before he intended to explode the bomb in Congress. "Well done, anyway, and quick too," he reflected. "Only took her an hour to find out all she wanted to know. Well, I'm glad she was good looking."

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