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Opening extract from

Mary-Mary

Written by

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Mary-Mary Goes Visiting

ONCE upon a time there was a little girl called Mary-Mary.

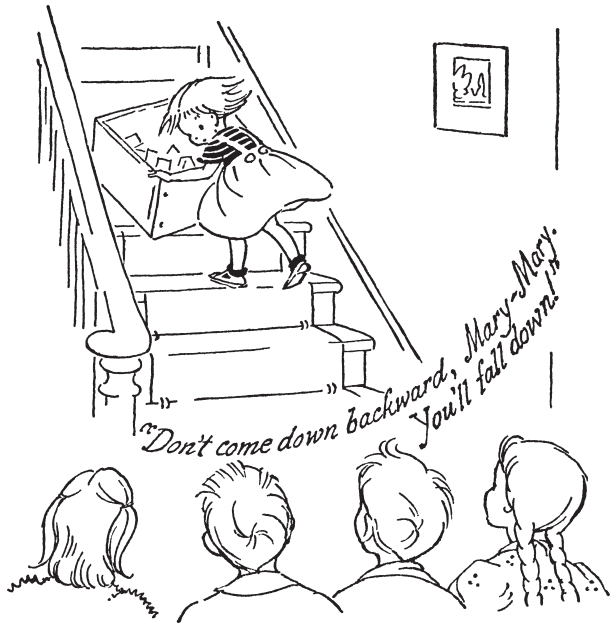
She was the youngest of five, and all her brothers and sisters were very big and clever, and knew all about everything. Mary-Mary didn't know much about anything; so all her big brothers and sisters, who were called Miriam, Martyn, Mervyn, and Meg, used to say to her, "Don't do it like that, Mary-Mary. Do it like this!" or "Don't go that way, Mary-Mary. Come this way!"

Then Mary-Mary would say, "No. I shall do it my own way," and, "No. I am going the other way."

And that, of course, is why she was called Mary-Mary instead of just Mary, which was her real name.

One day Mary-Mary started coming downstairs backwards, pulling a box of bricks behind her.

Miriam, Martyn, Mervyn, and Meg were all standing together in the hall, and when they heard Mary-Mary coming



bumpety-bump down the stairs backwards they all started shouting at her at once:

"Don't come down backwards, Mary-Mary. You'll fall down!"

Mary-Mary fell down. And all the bricks came after her.

"There!" said Miriam. "We said you'd fall down."

"There!" said Martyn. "We knew you would."

"There!" said Mervyn. "Just as we said."

"There!" said Meg. "What did we tell you?"

"You told me to fall down," said Mary-Mary, "and I think it was very silly of you."

She sat on the bottom stair and looked to see which of

her legs was broken. Neither of them was, so she picked up her box of bricks and sat them in her lap. She wasn't really hurt, only surprised.

Mother ran out of the kitchen.

"What was that bump?" she said.

"My bricks fell down and I'm nursing them better," said Mary-Mary.

All the others started talking to Mother at once. They were all wanting to do different things.

"Can I go round to Barbara's house?" said Miriam. "She wants to show me the new kitten."

"Can I go fishing with Billy?" said Martyn. "He's got a new fishing-line, and I can use his old one."

"Can I go and play with Bob?" said Mervyn. "He's got a new electric train."

Mother put her hands over her ears and said, "Please, please, don't all talk at once. Yes, Miriam, you can go to Barbara's. But be back in time for tea. Yes, Martyn, you can go fishing with Billy. But do be careful. Yes, Mervyn, you can go and play with Bob. But don't break his new train. Yes, Meg—what do you want?"

"Can I go shopping with Bunty?" said Meg. "She wants me to help her choose a present."

"Oh, yes," said Mother. "That will be nice for you, especially as all the others have been asked out too—all except Mary-Mary, of course."

"Why 'except me, of course'?" said Mary-Mary. "Why doesn't anyone ask me out?"

"Oh, but they do," said Mother. "You and I quite often

get asked out, don't we?"

"By myself, I mean," said Mary-Mary.

"Don't be silly," said Miriam.

"You're not old enough," said Martyn.

"You couldn't go alone," said Mervyn.

"You're too little," said Meg.

Then they all said, "Never mind, Mary-Mary," together, and went off to get ready.

Mary-Mary dragged her box of bricks out into the garden, talking to herself loudly all the way.

"When I'm a lady," she said, "I shall have lots and lots of children, but they'll all be exactly the same age. I won't have even one a little bit older than the others."

She began building a little house out of bricks for Moppet, her pet mouse.

Moppet was a toy mouse, with a key to wind him up, but he looked very real and was quite good for frightening people with if they didn't already know him.

Mary-Mary wrapped him in her handkerchief and put him down to sleep inside the little brick house.

"There you are, my pet," she said. "What you would do without me to look after you I just don't know. Now go to sleep, and when you're bigger I may let you go out visiting all by yourself."

Then she dragged the brick box close to the garden wall and climbed up on to it so that she could see over the other side.

Miriam, Martyn, Mervyn, and Meg were all tall enough to see over the wall into the next-door garden if they stood

on tiptoe, but Mary-Mary couldn't. She was too little.

Just then Miriam came running out on her way to Barbara's house.

"Good-bye, Mary-Mary," she said. "Don't look over the wall. It's rude."

"Good-bye," said Mary-Mary. But she stayed where she was. Then Martyn came running out on his way to go fishing with Billy.

"Good-bye, Mary-Mary," he said. "Don't stare over the wall."

"Good-bye," said Mary-Mary, still standing on the box.

Then Mervyn ran out on his way to play with Bob.

"Good-bye, Mary-Mary," he said. "You'd better get down off that box."

"Good-bye," said Mary-Mary. But she still stayed where she was.

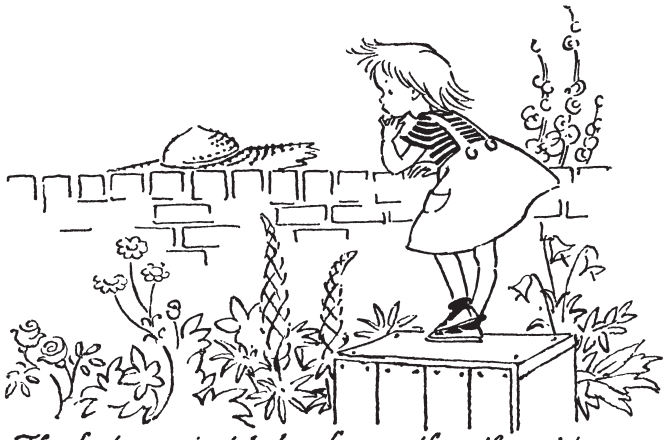
Then Meg ran out on her way to go shopping with Beauty.

"Good-bye, Mary-Mary," she said. "Don't stand on that box. And don't stare over the wall. It's rude. Anyway, you'll fall."

Mary-Mary fell, and by the time she had picked herself up again Meg had gone.

"Bother that girl," said Mary-Mary. "She's always making me fall down."

She peeped into the little brick house. Moppet's beady black eye was showing over the top of the handkerchief blanket. Mary-Mary brought him out, unwrapped him, and put him on top of the wall. Then she kicked down the little brick house and shouted in Moppet's voice, "Don't kick



The hat was just below her on the other side

the house down. It's rude." After that she walked once round the garden, then came back to Moppet, who was still sitting on the wall where she had left him.

"Moppet," said Mary-Mary sweetly, "you mustn't stare over the wall. It's rude. Anyway, you'll fall."

Then, quite by mistake, she gave him a little push with her hand, and he fell over the other side of the wall into the next-door garden.

Mary-Mary climbed up on the brick box and looked over the wall. But she couldn't see Moppet. He had fallen into the flower-bed and was too far down for her to see.

"Alas, poor Moppet," said Mary-Mary, and she got down and began walking round and round the garden, wondering how she was going to get him back again.

In a minute she heard the sound of a door opening, and then of footsteps in the next-door garden. Soon she saw

the top of a large straw hat moving along behind the wall.

She climbed up on the box again. The large straw hat was just below her on the other side.

Mary-Mary made a little humming noise. The hat looked up, and there was a lady's face underneath it.

"Hallo," said the lady under the hat.

"Hallo," said Mary-Mary.

"How big you are!" said the lady. "Fancy being able to see over the top of the wall!"

"Yes," said Mary-Mary, "I am quite big." She thought for a minute and then she said, "But I'm not quite as big as this really. I'm standing on a box."

"Oh, I see," said the lady. "And what is your name?"

"I'm Mary-Mary. Who are you?"

"I'm Miss Summers. I'm your new neighbour. I've only been living here a few weeks."

"I've been living here for years and years," said Mary-Mary, "so I suppose I'm your old neighbour. Just now I'm looking for my mouse."

Then she told Miss Summers how Moppet had fallen over the wall.

Miss Summers looked all along the flower-bed, but she couldn't see Moppet.

"He must be somewhere," she said. "Perhaps one of your big brothers and sisters would like to come over and see if they can find him?"

"They are all out," said Mary-Mary. And she told Miss Summers all about how Miriam had gone to Barbara's house and Martyn had gone fishing with Billy and Mervyn had

gone to play with Bob and Meg had gone shopping with Bunty, and how she had to stay at home until she was big enough to be asked out by herself.

"Well, then," said Miss Summers, "would you like to come? I wonder if I could lift you over the wall."

"If you would like me to come as a proper visitor I would come round to the front door," said Mary-Mary.

Miss Summers thought that would be a good idea.

"Yes, do come as a proper visitor," she said.

So Mary-Mary ran indoors, and along the passage to the front door. The front-door handle was rather high, but she could easily reach it if she jumped.

Mary-Mary held on to the net curtain that hung over the glass part of the door, and jumped. Something snapped, and the curtain fell to the floor.

Mary-Mary picked it up, put it round her shoulders, and looked in the hall mirror. She nodded at herself and said, "Good afternoon. I believe you are expecting me?" Then she went out, shut the door behind her, and walked slowly and politely round to the front of the next-door house.

Miss Summers opened the door at once.

"Good afternoon," said Mary-Mary. "I believe you are expecting me?"

"Oh, yes," said Miss Summers. "Good afternoon. Do come in. How nice of you to come."

"That's right," said Mary-Mary. "I'm glad you knew what I meant about being a proper visitor."

They went in. It was a very grown-up house with no toys anywhere, but there was a cuckoo clock in the hall and a



rocking-chair in the sitting-room, and in the kitchen, when they looked inside the door, Mary-Mary saw a plate of little pink cakes on the table.

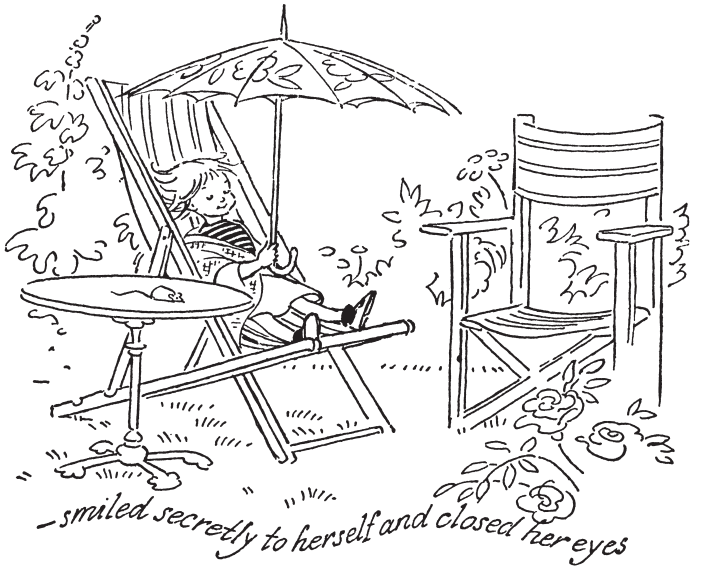
"Those look pretty," she said.

"Yes," said Miss Summers. "I've just finished making them. We will have them for tea."

When Mary-Mary had rocked in the rocking-chair, played the piano, and seen the cuckoo come out twice, she went out into the garden, and there she found Moppet standing on his head under a hollyhock.

Miss Summers brought out two deck-chairs and a little table, and put them in the middle of the lawn.

"We will have tea out here, as it's so nice and sunny," she said. And she found a real lady's sunshade (which she didn't need herself, because she had her large straw hat),



and lent it to Mary-Mary. Then she went indoors to put the kettle on.

Mary-Mary sat in the long deck-chair, with the net curtain round her shoulders and the real lady's sunshade over her head, and felt like a very proper visitor.

When Miriam and Martyn and Mervyn and Meg came home they couldn't see Mary-Mary anywhere. They looked all over the house and all round the garden, but she was nowhere to be seen. Then they saw her brick box still standing by the wall.

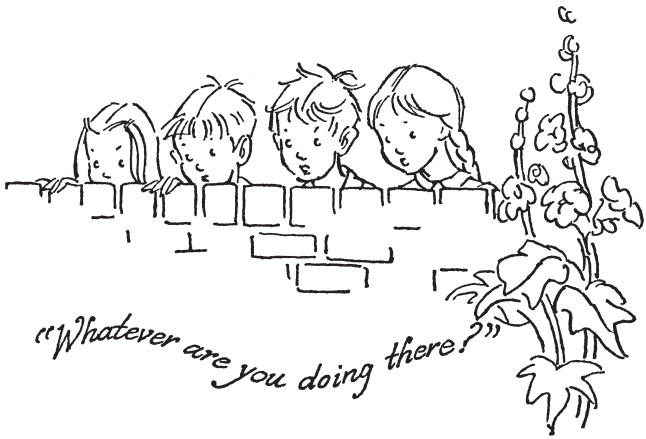
"She couldn't have gone over, could she?" said Miriam.

"Oh, no," said Martyn, "she's not big enough."

"She wouldn't dare," said Mervyn. "It's too high."

"Let's just look and make sure," said Meg.

So they all stood in a row on tiptoe and looked over the wall into the next-door garden. And there what should they



see but Mary-Mary sitting in a deck-chair with a little table by her side and a sunshade over her head!

"Mary-Mary!" they all said together. "Whatever are you doing there?"

Mary-Mary smiled secretly to herself and closed her eyes. It was very pleasant to be sitting in the sun like a grown-up lady.

Miriam and Martyn and Mervyn and Meg all started whispering together on the other side of the wall.

"Oh, isn't she naughty!"

"She's got over the wall."

"She's sitting in the next-door garden."

"Just as if she belonged there."

There was more whispering and rustling, and then the four heads appeared over the top of the wall again.

"Come back at once, Mary-Mary," said Miriam.

"Or we'll tell Mother," said Martyn.

"Someone might see you," said Mervyn.

"Hurry," said Meg.

Mary-Mary turned round slowly and smiled at them all

like a very beautiful lady.

"You mustn't look over the wall," she said. "It's rude."

Just then Miss Summers came out of the house carrying a tea-tray with two cups and saucers and the plateful of little pink cakes.

Miriam and Martyn and Mervyn and Meg all bobbed down behind the wall when they saw her coming, but Mary-Mary could hear them whispering together.

"Perhaps she was invited."

"She couldn't have been!"

"I wonder if Mother knows."

"I can't believe it."

When Miss Summers had put the tray down on the table Mary-Mary said, "Did you see a row of children with rather dirty faces looking over the wall just now?"

Miss Summers smiled.

"Yes, I thought I did," she said. "Were they your brothers and sisters?"

"I'm afraid so," said Mary-Mary. "They shouldn't have stared over the wall like that. I'm always telling them not to. But I'm sure they didn't mean to be so rude."

"Oh, I'm sure they didn't," said Miss Summers. "Now, do help yourself to a pink cake, won't you? Take two, as they're so small."

So Mary-Mary went visiting by herself after all, and that is the end of the story.

