

The Lady Of The Geraniums

A Humorous Complication that Results in an Editor and "The Lady of the Geraniums," Forming a Life Partnership.

A clay pot filled with geraniums fresh-leaved and in bloom stood on the outside sill of the apartment house window, and all about it were the pots and sashes of a March afternoon. Harvey Chambers was not particularly emotional, but the sight of the green leaves and the red buds, contrasting so vividly with the dead whiteness of the snow, made him want to cry or write a poem or do something equally desperate.

He wondered what the owner of the geraniums could be like. One holiday, while he sat in his room chewing on the end of his pencil and trying to write a chapter of The Great American Novel, his patience was rewarded. The Lady of the geraniums was in her room writing, like himself. Her shapely little head was bent over the paper and he could not see her face. She had a trick of tossing her head, though, that attracted him mightily. It reminded him of a certain delightfully impossible person he had not seen for three years, and from whom he had been parted by a mere whim. It was not his fault. He had assured himself of that a thousand times.

One morning returning from early Mass, he met "The Lady of the Geraniums" in the hallway.

"Clarabelle!" he shouted joyfully. She recognized him with a cry of joy, but thought of their little rift and passed out proudly without a word. He was in despair. He haunted her apartments and invented excuses for speaking to her. He learned that she was living with her mother—a little woman like herself—and that she had essayed the thorny paths of authorship.

One afternoon, coming home a little earlier than usual, he found Clarabelle's mother had fainted on the sidewalk in front of the apartment house. Harvey was equal to the occasion. He lifted her up bodily and carried her to her room, where she recovered quickly. It was merely an attack of vertigo. But when she discovered the identity of her "rescuer," as she called him, she became quite talkative. In spite of his protests, she told him many confidential things about her daughter. When she learned that he was an editor her face lighted up with joy. She hastened to Clarabelle's desk and pulled out a bundle of manuscript. The gallant Mr. Chamber was dismayed at this unexpected movement.

"Has—has it ever been sent out?" he asked, dubiously looking at the frayed edges of the copy.

"Yes, three times," she replied with energy, "and been rejected each time."

"Perhaps," he said, sparing for time, "Miss—Miss Clarabelle may be offended at my taking her manuscript."

"No matter," replied the philosophical parent, "she's a genius and a modern manager. I'm her manager. Take it."

Harvey did not have the heart to look at the story. He had glimpsed many tragedies during his brief editorial career. He hated to think of the army of scribbles who were wasting good paper and ink and breaking their poor little hearts in the ineffectual attempts to write fiction. And now Clarabelle had joined that ever growing army. She was charming. He would fight any man who disputed that fact. She was the light of his eye. He worshiped her. She could write pleasant chatty little letters. But he never, even in the moments of his wildest delirium, credited her with the creative faculty.

Next day he went to the office with a sad heart. He laid the manuscript, which he had been afraid to gaze upon, on the editor's desk and said with a degree of timidity that surprised himself that he would be grateful if he got a decision within a month. The editor, who was his personal friend as well as superior, looked at his assistant with a reproachful air. He was a long-suffering man—was the editor—he had read manuscripts that were written on tinted paper and tied with a blue ribbon, and he had waded through hundreds of impossible stories simply because they were written by sisters, cousins or aunts of villains who had the shameless audacity to call themselves his friends. And now Harvey Chambers had betrayed him. That was the unkindest cut of all.

Harvey walked out with a guilty air of that day. He hoped in his heart that the story would not prove quite as bad as he was sure it would prove. He thought the atmosphere of the office had suddenly become very chilly. Perhaps it was imagination. At any rate, the editor did not invite him to take luncheon with him at his club as he was wont on Mondays.

That was a positive fact which could not be denied. Harvey felt quite bad. He would not have felt that bad if one of them had been written by the only girl in the world.

He walked home that night quite despondent, with himself. As he neared the familiar apartments he suddenly thought of the other phase

All Stuffed Up

That's the condition of many sufferers from catarrh, especially in the morning. Great difficulty is experienced in clearing the head and throat.

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Hood's Sarsaparilla

Cures catarrh—it soothes and strengthens the mucous membrane and builds up the whole system.

of the case. What of Clarabelle? She had not asked him to submit her manuscript. She would hate him for his imperiousness. He did not learn anything that night, but in the course of the next few days little bits of information dribbled from the other side of the house which convinced him that Clarabelle was furiously angry over the "larceny" of her manuscript.

She said that in carrying off her story, he had been guilty of an unpardonable breach of good manners. Harvey smiled grimly at this, and tried to get some comfort in thinking of the experience he had had with the loving but persistent mother of his adored one. He even contrived to laugh at the ludicrous side of the affair.

But he was really unhappy. He had taken a manuscript from a girl who did not wish him to have it—submitted to an editor who was by no means anxious to read it. He felt criminally guilty. He was between two fires. He had gone against the grain of the one man and the one woman for whom he cared more than any other persons in the world. Perhaps they were mere morbid fancies. At any rate, in future he resolved to think of himself as "Blundering Chambers."

He met her in the corridor one day and she gave him a very formal and very frigid nod. Poor Harvey was in despair. When he first met her in that corridor he had felt that her conquest would only be a matter of time and patience. Having failed to win her by storm, he thought to employ strategy. And now all of his finely worked out plans had gone to smash. The story would be severed and Clarabelle after that would only be a came to him.

He wondered vaguely if there were not some way of averting complete disaster. A brilliant thought came into his mind. He would withdraw the manuscript. The editor would be surprised, but also, no doubt he would have a sigh of relief. He could say to the editor with some degree of truth that the story had been offered under a misapprehension. He could return it to Clarabelle with an abject apology for his part in the affair. She would no longer scorn him. But alas! A new phase of the situation dawned on him. He would appease the daughter, but he would bring on himself the withering indignation of her mother. And some how or other, he quailed at the thought of incurring the anger of the masterful old lady.

After three unsatisfactory weeks had passed Harvey, one morning learned with regret that Clarabelle's mother was seriously ill. He called to express his sympathy, and was informed by the trained nurse that the patient was not permitted to see any one. He inquired for her regularly though, and once or twice was emboldened to send her fruit or flowers. But he got no word from Clarabelle herself, which he regarded as a bad omen.

In the meantime the doctor was paying daily visits to the modest lodgings, and through him the young man was kept informed concerning the actual condition of the old lady. From another source he learned that Clarabelle's indignation over her "poisoned manuscript," as she insisted upon calling it, had had a depressing effect upon her mother. She realized that the girl's heart was in the story, and she feared that another rejection would crush her young spirit entirely. The thought of this had worried the old lady into a bed of sickness. Heretofore the mother had sustained the daughter by words of encouragement and good cheer. The tables were turned now, and the child was exerting all of her wit and intelligence to keep the parent from sinking into a state of despondency.

One afternoon, just thirty days after he had received the story, Harvey tapped at the door, and it was opened by Clarabelle. She looked more dainty and fragile than ever. Sorrow and the strain of the sick room seemed to have spiritualized the girl. Harvey who was in doubt regarding the reception he might receive, hesitated to put himself in the right.

"Pardon me for disturbing you at a time like this," he said gently, "but

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I've been charged with a message from the editor-in-chief."

"Yes," she exclaimed, with an eagerness he had not anticipated, "did he make his decision?"

"That's what I came to talk about," began Harvey the editor probably thought I could make it clearer than if he had written—"

The look of disappointment in her face made him pause. Simultaneously a faint voice in the next room called:

"What are you children talking about? Come right in here!"

They started for the sick room together. As they reached the threshold, Clarabelle nervously clutched his arm.

"Bad news would kill her," she whispered; "tell her the story's accepted. I'll undeceive her when she grows stronger."

"Well," chirped the old lady, looking at them with a gleam of old-time vivacity, "what's the verdict?"

"The best possible," smiled Harvey, falling into her mood, "Clarabelle's story is to be published."

The girl, standing at the foot of the bed, flashed him a message of gratitude. The old lady, in her excitement, sat upright.

"I knew it, she exclaimed. 'I knew that any editor who understood his business would grab at that story.'"

"Still, mother," ventured Clarabelle, "it was rejected by three of them."

"And very properly," commented Harvey; "you made the common mistake of sending it to the wrong market."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the doctor. Harvey discreetly withdrew to the living room, where he whiled away the time by a first hand examination of the little red and green geraniums which had attracted his attention on that fateful morning five or six weeks before. The doctor's visit was brief. He came bustling out of the bedroom followed by Clarabelle.

"It's most astonishing," he said, "a marvelous improvement. Yesterday she gave evidence of sinking into a slow decline. Now she's bright and chipper and on the high road to recovery. She's a bundle of nerves. Some one must have brought her good news."

As soon as the physician left, Clarabelle carefully closed the door of the sick room. She turned to Harvey with a look of tranquillity.

"You have been very good, Mr. Chamber," she said quietly.

"Good?" he murmured, feeling his face beginning to flush.

"Yes, in helping me. It was a merciful deception. But as soon as she is able to hear it I will tell her the truth. You know I—I—didn't expect—"

"My dear young lady," interrupted Harvey, "you don't have to tell her anything. She has the truth now."

"What do you mean?" snapped Clarabelle, and unconsciously she became a reproduction of the little old lady.

"I mean that your story has been accepted."

"Accepted?" she gasped, and sank slowly into the folds of a great armchair.

"That's just what I said," he retorted cheerfully.

She lay looking at him in silence for some moments. Presently she spoke in a subdued tone.

"But you didn't say that before we went into the room."

"You didn't give me the chance."

"No?"

"No. I told you I had a message from the editor."

"What is it?"

"Simply that he's delighted. It's the best thing that's come his way in a month of Sundays. I've read it, and I agree with him. Why, Clarabelle, it's simply great. And I know where you got it."

"Where?" she asked weakly.

"From your own heart. It's your own story. I know it. I knew it the minute I read it. It's throbbing with life and vitality. It's as far above mechanical fiction as heaven is above earth."

"Oh, please, don't," she murmured.

"I shall," he cried dauntlessly, "but it has one fault—it's the only objection any one could have to the story."

"What is the fault?"

"It's the unhappy ending."

"It's the only ending it could have," she said, her face scarlet, "otherwise it would not be art; it would not be true to life."

"Butter art," cried Harvey, throwing discretion to the winds, "it must and it shall end happily. Before I left the office I assured the chief that I would make you change it."

She had risen and was backing toward the door of the sick room. She spoke very softly.

"How can I do it?"

He moved toward her quickly and took her two little hands in his broad palms.

"By marrying me," he whispered. "Oh," she cried, and the next moment a dainty head was pillowed on his breast, and tears of happiness were trickling down a pair of flushed cheeks.

They were aroused by a tapping from the next room. They opened the door and walked in hand and hand. The little old lady peered at them absently from out an ocean of snowy white bed linen.

"What are you children talking

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about?" she demanded imperiously.

"Mother," said Harvey, placing his left arm around a slender waist, and raising his right hand in dramatic fashion, "Clarabelle and I have just made a compact. We're going to collaborate in writing The Great American Novel."—George Boston in Bazar's Magazine.

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Her Father—"Just between you and me, my dear, I don't know her yet."

"What does your husband find time to do his reading?"

"Usually when I want to tell him something important."

Mary Ovington, Jasper, Ont., writes:—"My mother had a badly sprained arm. Nothing we used did her any good. Then father got Hagyard's Yellow Oil and it cured mother's arm in a few days Price 25 cents."

Grandmother—"Whatever are you doing with the boy?"

Grandfather—"He's gone and took his medicine without shakin' the bottle, so I'm shakin' it for him."

Minard's Liniment cures Neuralgia.

"So Betty didn't marry a lord after all?"

"No, but she married a man who gets as drunk as a lord."

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Dinner—"I told you I wanted two fresh laid eggs on toast. Do you call these fresh laid?"

Waiter—"Yes, sir, fresh laid on the toast, sir."

Minard's Liniment cures Neuralgia.

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"What are you children talking

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